SPECTACULAR MANEUVERS: EXPLORATIONS OF SEXUAL DEVIANCY AND
EARLY FILM IN HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC’S AU CIRQUE SERIES

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Kimberly Musial Datchuk

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The dissertation of Kimberly Musial Datchuk was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Nancy Locke
Associate Professor of Art History
Dissertation Advisor
Chair of Committee

Charlotte M. Houghton
Associate Professor of Art History

Sarah K. Rich
Associate Professor of Art History

Willa Z. Silverman
Malvin E. and Lea P. Bank Professor of French and Jewish Studies

Craig Zabel
Associate Professor of Art History
Head of the Department of Art History

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

My analysis of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec examines previously overlooked aspects of his work. It begins with a consideration of Lautrec’s depiction of sexual deviancy in the Au cirque series and its relationship to the rise of the feminist movement in France. After exploring how his drawings engaged in the changing experiences and desires of women in the fin de siècle, I investigate how Lautrec represents the divergent pressures of masculinity in the series. I then turn to the role animality plays in the Au cirque drawings. Finally, I evaluate the relationship between Lautrec’s portrayal of movement in his work and the scientific and technological innovations made toward recording movement. I incorporate elements of Lautrec’s experiences and those of his family and friends, and build my analysis on a strong theoretical framework. My analysis looks at both the contemporary discourses on sexual deviancy, masculinity, animality, and the recording of movement, as well as current research on these subjects. The biographical details of Lautrec’s life anchor the theoretical aspects of my argument to the time period and demonstrate the extent to which the issues occupied the artist’s mind. Ultimately, I examine how Lautrec’s work participated in a cultural moment that grappled with changing gender roles and rapidly developing technology.
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Introduction

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s life and work have received ample attention in popular and scholarly literature due as much to his innovative depictions of his subjects as his late night antics, including drinking excessively and carousing with prostitutes. His representations of celebrities of Montmartre in the fin de siècle ignite viewers’ imaginations about the time. Furthermore, his personal relationships with the people that he depicted have enhanced the appeal of his work. Indeed, Lautrec’s biographical details color much of the scholarly analysis of his work, especially his *Au cirque* series from 1899, which he produced while a patient in a sanitarium. Yet the significance of Lautrec’s œuvre extends beyond the circumstance of his life. From his adolescent drawings to his late work, we see the artist exploring subjects that had important implications in fin-de-siècle culture. He painted and drew images that have violent, sadistic undertones during a time when the medical community and some of the reading public discussed the nature of sexual deviancy. Through his representations of violence, Lautrec provides viewers with insights into the changing experiences of both genders as women fought for more social and political rights. Many of the works that have suggestions of violence include animals. Therefore, as we look at Lautrec’s œuvre, we need to consider the roles that animals play in the pictures and in the artist’s construction of human nature. Finally, Lautrec investigated these issues at a time when the technology for recording movement progressed rapidly. We can find evidence of Lautrec’s engagement with new technological advances, animality, gender, and violence throughout his career, but they are particularly prevalent in his *Au cirque* series.

In order to understand how the scholarship on Lautrec has developed and the place that my analysis of his work has in the literature, I will examine Lautrec’s life and artistic
development. Then, I will consider how his artistic influences shaped his style, as well as how he engaged in contemporary debates about sexuality, feminism, masculinity, animality, and movement in some of his most famous works. Next, I will review some of the main themes in the literature and situate the research of key scholars in Lautrec studies in relation to one another. This exercise will reveal some of the oversights in the scholarship, as well as the significant contributions each has made to the field. I will conclude with a summary of the arguments that I will pursue in the rest of my analysis of Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series.

Lautrec was born on November 24, 1864 to an aristocratic family that traced its lineage to Henry IV. His mother, Adèle-Zoë Tapié de Céleyran, married her first cousin, Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa. The close familial relationship between his parents had severe repercussions for Lautrec’s health, leading to brittle bones, a prominent nose, and tumescent lips from which drool routinely dribbled. When Lautrec was three years old, his parents separated, and he lived with his mother. Lautrec and Adèle had a close relationship for his entire life. When he was a child, she doted on him. She sought the best medical care when he broke his legs, and they spent ample time at spas in the south of France.¹ As an adult, Lautrec ate Sunday dinner with

¹ The first inkling that something was amiss with Lautrec’s health occurred when he was six months old. The family doctor cautioned that even though Lautrec’s foot was not currently a problem, it needed close attention. See Julia Frey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life* (London: Phoenix Giants, 1995), 18. It was originally published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in Great Britain in 1994.

When Lautrec was a boy, Adèle removed him from school for reasons relating to his health. In January 1875, he left the Lycée Fontanes to go to Neuilly to receive treatment for his legs from Monsieur Verrier. Then, in March 1877, he had “electric brush treatment” on his legs, consisting of either muscle massages or a series of electrical impulses applied to his legs to increase circulation. (See Frey, 72-73.) Lautrec wrote to his paternal grandmother, Gabrielle d’Imbert du Bosc, about leaving his professor behind to undergo the treatment. (See Herbert D. Schimmel, *The Letters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, trans. divers hands (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Letter 23.)

Lautrec faced another obstacle to his health in May 1878 when he broke his left femur by slipping on the freshly waxed floor of his grandmother Gabrielle’s salon. He wrote to his cousin Raoul Tapié de Céleyran on May 22 to inform him of his fall and assure him that he was not in pain. Lautrec signed the letter, “Henry – Broken-Paw” (Schimmel, Letter 17). Lautrec showed signs of good humor in his letters to other family members, referring to himself as “Mr. One-
his mother almost every week. Even when he was at his most reckless, routinely getting drunk and staying out until the early morning, he made time to see his mother.

As a child, Lautrec demonstrated a talent for drawing. At his younger brother Richard-Constantin’s baptism, he signed his name by drawing an ox. By the time he was fourteen, he had begun to study art formally with René Princeteau, a family friend. Princeteau was well known for his paintings of animals, and Lautrec adopted the subject matter of his master. In 1882, Lautrec’s art education became more regimented when he left Princeteau’s tutelage to study with Léon Bonnat in Paris. His time in Bonnat’s studio was brief. A few months after Lautrec joined the atelier, Bonnat closed it to teach at the École des Beaux-Arts. Bonnat did not ask Lautrec to join him. This was likely not a surprise to Lautrec. The two had a rocky relationship, but Lautrec learned to appreciate Bonnat’s demanding nature after joining the easy-going studio of Fernand Cormon towards the end of 1882. He remained with Cormon until 1887, by which time Lautrec had set up his own studio on rue Caulincourt in Montmartre. In Cormon’s studio, he befriended Vincent van Gogh, Emile Bernard, and Louis Anquetin. Together, they admired Impressionist paintings and studied Japanese prints at the Durand-Ruel Gallery.

The lessons Lautrec learned while looking at Impressionist and Japanese works with his friends during these years remain evident in his most famous works. *Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando)*, 1887-88 (figure 1), *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*, 1891 (figure 2), *Ambassadeurs: Footer* and “Your crutch-walking godson” (See Schimmel, Letters 29 and 31). His letters to his family are full of self-deprecation and confidence that he will recover shortly. Lautrec’s leg took a year to heal, and shortly after it did, he broke his right femur when he fell into a ditch. In a letter to his maternal grandmother, Louise d’Imbert du Bosc, he joked that he was a “clumsy fellow,” and told her that worrying about him “just isn’t worth it” (Schimmel, Letter 43). Despite his upbeat attitude, Lautrec and his family must have known that his condition was serious and unlikely to improve greatly. For an overview of Lautrec’s broken bones and their repercussions, see Frey, 87-115.

Aristide Bruant, 1892 (figure 3), and his lithographic series Elles, 1896 (figure 4) bear the influence of the Impressionists’ experimentation with color and engagement in modernity, and the shifting perspectives and cropping of objects in Japanese prints. In addition to demonstrating Lautrec’s influences, these works mark his innovation as an artist. He produced an immediately recognizable lithographic style that had people sneaking through Parisian streets after dark to remove his posters from walls and take his work home with them. Félix Fénéon praised Lautrec’s “outrageously daring and crass” posters as superior to those of other artists: “When it comes to drawing and color, he doesn’t fool around: large patches of white, black and red, and simplified forms – that’s his thing.” Lautrec’s formal choices set his paintings and lithographs apart from those of his peers and made his posters desirable to collectors.

Yet more than this, Lautrec’s work is inextricably connected to the issues of sexual deviancy, gender, and technology in the fin de siècle. If we take a closer look at some of works mentioned above, we can see the extent to which Lautrec engaged in the concerns his time. For example, in addition to considering the entertainment of the circus in Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando), he also investigates sadomasochism. The painting depicts a woman performing with her horse while a ringmaster holding a whip watches her. The serious expressions of the

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equestrienne and the ringmaster, as well as their rigid postures and the ringmaster’s whip, give the scene a sadistic edge. It was around this time that sexual deviancy, especially sadomasochism, occupied the minds of the medical community and the book-buying public. Indeed, performing a search for the number of times that the word “sadisme” appeared in books printed in French between 1870 and 1905 reveals that the word began its rise in usage in 1880. This upward trend continued until it reached its peak in 1899 (see Appendix B for graphs of Google N-Gram analytics of word usage). In 1883, the novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, already famous in France after the publication of Venus in Furs in 1870, was made a chevalier in the Legion of Honor. When he visited Paris for the first time in 1888, daily newspapers reported on his activities. Sacher-Masoch wrote semi-autobiographical novels about sadomasochism at the same time that the medical community was studying sexual deviancy. One of the best known doctors considering so-called sexually deviant behavior was Richard von Krafft-Ebing. In 1886, he published Psychopathia Sexualis, which defined and analyzed forms of sexual deviancy and examined case studies of people who had non-heteronormative sexual proclivities. The wealth of material from the late 1880s to early 1900s concerning sadomasochism indicates that Lautrec’s exploration of the subject in his art participated in the cultural context in which he produced his work.

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6 By using the N-Gram feature in Google Books, I charted the number of times the word “sadisme” was used in French texts during the time period 1870 to 1905. The tool has limitations (such as the only the books that are part of Google Books are analyzed in the search and one does not know the total number of books that Google has examined per year), but it can be useful for seeing general trends in word usage. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., “Quantitative Analytics of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,” Science 331, no. 6014 (January 14, 2011): 176-182. It was published online ahead of print on December 16, 2010.

7 During an article announcing Sacher-Masoch’s newest literary venture, Auf der Höhe: Internationale Review (a progressive literary journal that expressed sympathy for controversial issues such as feminism), Adolphe Racet notes Sacher-Masoch’s celebrity status in France. Racet, “Paris au jour le jour,” Le Figaro, October 4, 1881.

8 Adrien Marx, for example, dedicated two and a half columns on the front page of Le Figaro to Sacher-Masoch’s visit to Paris. Marx, “Sacher-Masoch,” Le Figaro, December 19, 1886.
The same can be said of Lautrec’s investigation of masculinity in works like *Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant*. In this poster, he depicts the working-class persona of the cabaret singer Aristide Bruant. Bruant wears his signature blue jacket and red scarf, and he holds a walking stick. The policeman standing in the shadows suggests the dangers found on the street and in the person of Bruant. *Ambassadeurs* presents the viewer with a vivid portrait of masculinity: physically large and powerful, slightly menacing, working-class, and assertive. The poster has the deceptive appearance of representing a one-dimensional view of masculinity in the figure of Bruant because no one viewing the poster would doubt Bruant’s dominance of the scene.

However, upon closer analysis, we see that Lautrec collapses two distinct forms of masculinity in his depiction of Bruant. On the one hand, Lautrec draws on a masculinity that is aligned with the dominant masculinity, which can be defined as the type of masculinity valued and reinforced by cultural practices, social ranking, and social interactions. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France, upper middle-class men typically exhibited characteristics associated with dominant masculinity, including social acumen, political power, and wealth. On the other hand, a key aspect of Bruant’s persona is its working-class status, which ranks below the bourgeoisie in terms of masculinities. Lautrec’s seamless combination of these divergent forms of masculinity in *Ambassadeurs* is an example of what Demetrakis Z. Demetriou calls the “hybrid bloc:” an assemblage of qualities from a diverse range of masculinities in order to maintain a dominant position in society. In *Ambassadeurs*, Lautrec examines the components

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9 The poster also intimates gay cruising in the figure of the police officer with his close attention to Bruant.

10 Raewyn W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt describe some of the components of dominant masculinity, including “[c]ultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives.” Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (December 2005): 846.

of what Sofia Aboim has called “plural masculinities,” or the possibility that a man can inhabit more than one masculinity at a time. In his representation of Bruant, Lautrec recognizes the presence of diverse masculinities in the figure of Bruant in order to construct a more powerful image of masculinity for the performer. He did this at a time when the France experienced a crisis in masculinity after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Even though the war ended twenty-one years before Lautrec made the poster, the loss continued to haunt the nation. Moreover, the question of what would become of the young men in France remained unanswered.

In addition to engaging in contemporary discourse on sexuality and masculinity, Lautrec also addresses the nature of human-animal relationships in his work. His œuvre contains multiple examples of human and animal interactions, such as the one that we find between the woman and her horse in *Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando)*. By giving as much attention to the animals in his paintings as he gives to humans, Lautrec elevates the status of animals to that of their human counterparts. Furthermore, he expands our understanding of humanity through the exploration of animality. For example, in *Equestrienne*, the woman and horse rely on each to complete their stunts. They run along the perimeter of the performance space toward a paper ring held by a clown. When they reach the clown, the equestrienne will spring from the horse’s back, jump through the paper, and return to the back of the horse. The bodies of the woman and the horse synchronize to complete the trick. Their competence in the ring is the result of the close

14 Hugues Le Roux wrote a series of articles titled “Nos fils” that ran on the front page of *Le Figaro* approximately every two weeks from August 1896 to January 1897. In the articles, he considers the circumstance in which young men found themselves and their prospects for the future.
relationship that they forged in rehearsals. Through this close relationship, they enter into a process that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call “becoming.”¹⁵ The process of becoming is a continuous one that extends the boundaries of the participants. In the case of Equestrienne, the division between woman and horse is blurred. Through becoming-woman and becoming-horse, the horse and the equestrienne embark on a transformation that does not have an end. The process opens up a new space for discourse, a “rhizomatic” space that allows for resistance.¹⁶

Lautrec’s work not only considers human-animal relationships, but also examines the elements of animal nature exhibited by humans. For example, in Elles, a series of lithographs about the life of prostitutes when they are not occupied with clients, he reveals facets of our animality. The art critic Gustave Geffroy points out the “animal madness” of the women in Lautrec’s series.¹⁷ While one could argue about the accuracy of his assertion in regards to this series of lithographs, the link between women and animals in many of Lautrec’s pictures is strong. Indeed, writers like Geffroy and Frantz Jourdain align women and animals in contrast to men and bourgeois mores in their analyses of Lautrec’s work.¹⁸ Thus, I suggest that the animality that Lautrec grants his human figures has a greater purpose than scholars have acknowledged.

We have seen Lautrec allude to sadism, gender relations, masculinity in crisis, and human-animal relationships in Equestrienne, Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant, and Elles. All of these issues occurred during a time in which photography was edging closer to new technologies that actually recorded movement. In addition to engaging in contemporary discourses on these issues, Lautrec also explores how to convey movement in two-dimensional works. To do so, he

¹⁶ See Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 6-8 and 21-25.
applies lessons from scientists and filmmakers to his pictures. For example, Eadward Muybridge and Etienne Jules Marey took split-second photographs of the progression of an action. Their photographs allowed viewers to see the intricacies of movements, which they recorded in a series of photographs taken at measured intervals during the performance of an action. Each series of photographs reveals the details of the climactic moment of a movement, an event that happened too quickly for the naked eye to see. Similarly, Lautrec records the most exciting moment in La Goulue’s performance in *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*. He freezes her kick at the point when her foot reaches the pinnacle of the movement. It is the moment that the audience most craved, but that lasted for the least amount of time. By representing this moment, Lautrec not only demonstrates the lessons that he learned from Muybridge and Marey, but he also allows the brief flash of La Goulue’s leg and rear end to endure.

Lautrec repeatedly explores aspects of sadism, masculinity, animality, and movement, which are tightly linked to the cultural moment, throughout his career. He investigates them in detail in his *Au cirque* drawings from 1899. The *Au cirque* series consists of over fifty drawings, and they are one of the last major artistic productions of his life. In works such as *Voltige* (figure 5) and *Travail sur le panneau* (figure 6), he examines the facets of the sometimes violent and sadistic character of the relationship between the ringmaster and equestriennes. Each drawing depicts the ringmaster’s mastery of the situation. In *Voltige*, he has complete control as he holds a whip and surveys the equestrienne’s execution of the stunt. The equestrienne holds onto the side of the horse with both hands; she is suspended above the ground and vulnerable. In contrast to the defenseless performer in *Voltige*, the equestrienne in *Travail sur le panneau* looks directly at the ringmaster and does not submit to his display of authority. Not only does Lautrec consider sadomasochistic encounters in the interactions between the ringmaster and equestriennes, but he also contemplates the challenges of masculinity, the nature of animal-human relationships, and best way to convey movement. His inquiry into these subjects continues throughout the series in
drawings such as *Travail de panneau à travers un cerceau* (figure 7), *Ballets, fantaisie nautique et japonaise* (figure 8), *Travail de répétition* (figure 9), *Écuyère de panneau (Elle est gentille la demoiselle)* (figure 10), and *Le Rappel* (figure 11). Every drawing reveals a different aspect of the four themes, all of which resonated in the culture at the time.

Lautrec drew the *Au cirque* series while he was institutionalized at Dr. René Sémelaigne’s clinic in Neuilly-sur-Seine for alcoholism. Before Lautrec was admitted to the clinic, he suffered from paranoia and hallucinations. Given the intense psychological experience Lautrec undoubtedly underwent at the clinic, scholars have approached these drawings through the artist’s biography. Anne Roquebert, for example, writes: “Strictly speaking, these drawings do not conform to the Kantian definition of art: that is, they are not an end in themselves, but refer to a vital need: the artist’s desperate urge to regain his liberty: by proving that he was not mad, Lautrec would be able to get out of the clinic.” While it is true that Lautrec used the drawings as a means to prove his sanity to his doctors, I argue that they should not be limited to this one function that they served. If we were to believe Roquebert’s assertion that the drawings are exclusively linked to the circumstances of their production and therefore the artist’s biography, we would miss the depth that these works possess. Roquebert’s argument privileges Lautrec’s


20 Colta Feller Ives draws a similar conclusion. She writes, “These fifty and more sheets, executed in the spring of 1899 [at the sanitarium in Neuilly] display trained animals, clowns, bareback riders, trapeze artists, toe-shoe dancers, a tightrope walker, a fancy baboon, and other creatures performing in a circus ring, and probably represent metaphorically the artist’s view on his own circumscribed situation.” Ives, *Toulouse-Lautrec in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 58.

Likewise, Jan Polášek considers Lautrec’s drawings to be only reflections of his experience in the sanitarium: “Par le moyen des dessins, Lautrec voulait montrer qu’il était absolument sain. Il entendait ainsi protester contre l’emprisonnement forcé à la clinique psychiatrique. Même s’il fût finalement relâché (peut-être prématurément), il faut considérer ces dessins non comme une expression artistique mais comme un effort tenace pour lutter contre ce qu’il croyait être une injustice. Ce qui frappe au premier coup d’œil dans le cycle *Au cirque*, c’est la précision, la possession profonde du milieu, l’élaboration précise du dressage des chevaux, des chiens des singes. La connaissance parfaite des mouvements des acrobates, des cavaliers et des
personal experiences during those three months above all else, and it negates the relationship these drawings had to his other work and larger concerns and interests of the time period. I am interested in the ways in which Lautrec continues to examine sexual deviancy, masculinity, and animal-human relationships in the *Au cirque* series. I contend that it is this connection to larger social and cultural concerns that makes Lautrec’s work, and in particular his *Au cirque* series, meaningful. 21 These avenues of contextual research will also be fruitful for understanding Lautrec’s œuvre.

Scholars have relied on Lautrec’s biography to explain all aspects of his career from his adolescent drawings of horses to his brothel paintings. The biographical thread in the literature weaves together events in his life and their relationship to his work. 22 It ranges over Lautrec’s

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22 Lautrec is not the only artist whose biography is an albatross in the scholarly literature on his work. In *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O’Keeffe*, Anne Middleton Wagner explores the extent to which biography has informed the analysis of Eva Hesse’s, Lee Krasner’s, and Georgia O’Keeffe’s œuvres. She writes, “…autobiography in painting is not the mere residue of any encounter between paint, brush, canvas, and the agent who brings them into contact to make a work of art….Yet painterly autobiography can occur if and when the viewer is provided the pictorial means to suspect (indeed, to be convinced) that some such communication is at issue.” Clearly, the pictorial evidence of Lautrec’s life is present in his work, but that does not mean that it should be the primary means through which scholars approach it. Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner, and O’Keeffe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 155. Similarly, Jacqueline Rose
heavy drinking, his time spent in dancehalls, his friendships with entertainers such as Yvette Guilbert and Aristide Bruant, and his difficulties with women. In addition to scholarly analyses of Lautrec’s œuvre, popular examinations of his life and work also emphasize his physical and emotional struggles. Pierre La Mure’s *Moulin Rouge: A Novel*, published in 1950 and made into a film directed by John Huston in 1952, is one example of that.

Even as the art historical community has widely recognized the limitations of a biographical approach when it comes to most major artists, it seems impossible for research on Lautrec to move away from it. Furthermore, banishing the artist’s life completely from all analysis of his work is hardly a sensible solution to the problem. For an artist like Lautrec whose work had close ties to particular friends and leisure activities, it would be impossible not to consider some aspects of his life in a study of his work.

My analysis of Lautrec examines previously overlooked aspects of his work. It begins with a consideration of Lautrec’s depiction of sexual deviancy in the *Au cirque* series and its relationship to the rise of the feminist movement in France. After exploring how his drawings engaged in the changing expressions of desires and the new experiences of women in the fin de siècle, I investigate how Lautrec represents the divergent pressures of masculinity in the series. I, caution against focusing too narrowly on biography. She chastises scholars who have diagnosed Sylvia Plath through her prose because even though Plath is a part of her writing, her work also involves fantasy and contradictions. In contrast to these biographical readings of the author, Rose argues that the most valuable facet of a piece of literature or art is what it exposes about the culture and society from which it emerged. See Rose, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* (London: Virago Press, 1991).


then, turn to the role animality plays in the *Au cirque* drawings. Finally, I evaluate the relationship between Lautrec’s portrayal of movement in his work and the scientific and technological innovations made toward capturing movement. Although I, too, incorporate elements of Lautrec’s experiences and those of his family and friends, I build my analysis on a strong theoretical framework, looking at both the contemporary discourses on sexual deviancy, masculinity, animality, and the recording of movement, as well as current research on these subjects. The biographical details anchor the theoretical aspects to the time period and demonstrate the extent to which the issues occupied the artist’s mind, but they are only one part of my analysis. Ultimately, I examine how Lautrec’s work participated in a cultural moment that negotiated changing gender roles and rapidly developing technology.

To demonstrate the necessity of such an approach in Lautrec studies, I will analyze how the scholarship on Lautrec has developed and the current state of research of the field. The literature can be divided thematically into four categories: Lautrec’s role documenting Montmartre dancehalls and nightlife, his participation in and promotion of the culture of celebrity in Montmartre, his troubled relationship with women, and his institutionalization. These categories provide an overview of the way lines of research have developed and where they have overlapped from the 1880s to the present. As we will see, each of these themes relies upon biography to some extent.

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25 Richard Thomson summarizes some of various ways Lautrec’s contemporaries regarded Lautrec’s work in “Toulouse-Lautrec: Low Life and High Society,” *Art News* 91, no. 5 (May 1992): 106-111. He considers a brief article in the conservative *L’Echo de Paris*, which delivers scathing argument that Lautrec’s confinement at Neuilly was the result of his gross lack of morals; a balanced, though surprisingly chiding, mention in *Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui* from 1896; and a profession of admiration for Lautrec’s keen powers of observation in the liberal *La Justice* in 1893. Thomson reminds us that much of the misunderstanding about Lautrec’s work sprung from those who removed it from its context. Therefore, to analyze it, we must remember the specific cultural moment in addition to the social and commercial expectations and opportunities of it.
The best place to begin when delving into the Lautrec literature is Madeleine Grillaert Dortu’s catalogue raisonné, *Toulouse-Lautrec et son œuvre* from 1971, comprised of six volumes. Not only does she compile all of Lautrec’s known work; she also suggests dates for some of his early work. Additionally, she culled the archives for newspaper and journal articles about the artist during his lifetime. These excerpted pieces provide the reader with an understanding of what Lautrec’s peers and the public thought of the man and his work. While she refrains from delving too deeply into her own analysis of Lautrec’s work, she assembles the salient critiques from his lifetime and the early twentieth century.

Twenty-one years later, Gale B. Murray updated the catalogue raisonné with her retrospective of Lautrec. In addition to including color reproductions of many of the works, she also provides full-length, translated versions of many of the excerpted articles in Dortu. The retrospective serves as a guide to the primary and secondary source literature on Lautrec. Moreover, she adds to our understanding of his early career and revises the chronology of some of his works. In this respect, the retrospective builds upon her *Toulouse-Lautrec: The Formative Years, 1878-1891*, which grew out of her dissertation and was published in 1991.

In all the analyses of Lautrec’s life, scholars have emphasized the impression and experiences others have had of Lautrec. The information, though accurate of the thoughts and feelings of those who provided it, often lacks Lautrec’s own voice. Philippe Huisman and Madeleine Grillaert Dortu sought to correct this oversight in *Lautrec by Lautrec*, 1964. Their purpose was to counter all the gossip and suppositions that people have made about Lautrec and allow him to speak for himself. One drawback to this approach is their tendency to describe

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Lautrec earnestly, almost with naïveté. For example, when discussing Vincent van Gogh’s and Lautrec’s work, they write, “Their was an art devoid of artifice, the direct and sincere expression of their hearts.”

Despite this sentimentality for Lautrec and his art, their analysis is done with great care for him as an artist and a person. They remain determined throughout the text to avoid and correct the caricatures of Lautrec, and they demonstrate for scholars the range of Lautrec’s personality and interests, from a hard-working artist willing to explore new avenues for his art to his fascination with the celebrities of Montmartre and his passion for bicycle racing and automobiles.

Huisman and Dortu’s examination of these aspects of Lautrec as a person paved the way for more in-depth studies of the connection between Lautrec’s art and the nightlife of Montmartre. However, like many before them, they argue that the subject of Lautrec’s work, regardless of the apparent theme, is Lautrec. His œuvre, in their opinion, “chronicles his own joys and disappointments,” and he devoted all of his strength and focus to his work, even during his illness.

While Huisman and Dortu explore the texts written by Lautrec’s contemporaries about the artist’s work, two of Lautrec’s close friends, Maurice Joyant and Thadée Natanson, wrote their own accounts of Lautrec’s life and work. They provide scholars with insights into Lautrec’s daily life that are unavailable elsewhere. Joyant’s personal relationship with Lautrec and his deep belief in the worth of his œuvre (he lobbied for the creation of the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec after the artist’s death) cast a shadow over his analysis of the artist in *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* from

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29 Huisman and Dortu, 64.
30 See Huisman and Dortu, 38-65.
31 See Huisman and Dortu, 66-117.
32 See Huisman and Dortu, 176-197.
33 Huisman and Dortu, 239.
34 They write, “His entire existence revolved round the exigencies of his work. However ill and exhausted he became, he continued to paint. In his complete dedication to art he not only made his works ‘reflections’ of himself, but devoted all his strength to their creation.” Huisman and Dortu, 240.
In this two-volume work, he approaches Lautrec’s work chronologically. Joyant draws heavily on contemporary criticism to reinforce his arguments. From the beginning of his analysis, two things are clear: he cares greatly for his friend and he would do anything in his power to promote his work. He points out that from the age of three, Lautrec knew that he wanted to be an artist. His childhood experiences (the death of his brother, the separation of his parents, his close relationship with his mother, and his health issues) stayed with him throughout his life, and shaped him as a person and artist. Joyant believes that the artist’s talent was natural, though his teachers helped him refine it. Lautrec, in his opinion, was a “Visionary of reality,” who “is closer to Giotto than Félicien Rops.” That is to say, Lautrec offered a new way of seeing the world, similar to Giotto’s break from medieval compositional strategies and perspectives, rather than distorting it in a manner that highlighted its darker, more violent side, as Rops did in much of his work. Joyant argues that Lautrec came into his own as an artist in 1888-89, during which time he began to represent dancehalls and the nightlife of Montmartre and fine-tuned his ability to capture the essence of his subjects.

Joyant’s examination of the artist is most valuable for the author’s close relationship with Lautrec. He recounts conversations between Lautrec and his models and friends. For example, Joyant summarizes a disagreement between Aristide Bruant and the manager of his cabaret the Ambassadeurs, Pierre Ducarre, over Lautrec’s representation of Bruant in his poster, *Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant*, 1892. By including these private exchanges, Joyant provides scholars with access to information about Lautrec and his models unavailable elsewhere.

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37 Joyant, 2:2.
38 Joyant, 1:6.
40 Joyant, 2: 106.
Furthermore, he gives scholars a chronology of significant projects and events in Lautrec’s life. His timeline has served as the starting point for Murray and Dortu, among others.

Like Joyant, Natanson allows his friendship with Lautrec to inform his account of the artist in *Un Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, published in 1951. Although the work serves foremost as a biography, Natanson refers to Lautrec’s work and analyzes the content of his pictures based on his personal experiences. It also became one of the most cited in the literature due to the author’s relationship to Lautrec and his detailed description of all aspects of his life. Natanson, the cofounder of *La Revue blanche*, and his wife Misia were close to the artist and witnessed his rise in fame and decline in health.41 The book attempts to summarize Lautrec’s personality and his friends’ opinions of him. Natanson describes him as a carouser, alcoholic, frequenter of brothels, and a gourmand. While jovial, Lautrec could be cruel to prostitutes and those around him.42

The first half of Natanson’s account provides a biographical sketch of Lautrec and his understanding of how the events in the artist’s life affected his work, and the second half of the book focuses on Lautrec’s specific models and artistic projects. The author’s friendship with the artist provides a uniquely intimate, though at times biased, interpretation of Lautrec’s influences, relationships, and work.43 Ultimately, the usefulness of Natanson’s *Un Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* lies in his closeness to the artist and his affection for him. He summarizes the important

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41 In 1894, Lautrec began producing illustrations for *La Revue blanche*.

As Natanson frames it, Van Gogh and Bonnard liberated Lautrec’s artistic vision and their art encouraged him to experiment further with color and the medium of lithography. For example, Lautrec produced his first poster in 1891, the same year that he saw Bonnard’s *France-Champagne*. Although Bonnard’s poster impressed Lautrec, Natanson argues vehemently for Lautrec’s originality in posters and painting. He writes, “D’imaginer que Lautrec ait pu copier quoi que ce soit de Bonnard serait absurde. Même en rien reproduire et il n’y a pas, entre leurs affiches, de resemblance. Sinon qu’en profondeur.” See Natanson, 138-139.
events and people in Lautrec’s life and organizes them around themes that often coincide with the subject matter of his work: spectacles, women, brothels, theater, alcohol, and love. Natanson’s admiration of Lautrec and his art persuasively and subtly makes the argument for the reader to form the same opinion, and it is easy to succumb to this way of thinking. That is not to say that he glosses over Lautrec’s flaws and episodes of bad behavior, but his love for his friend allows one to continue to sympathize with Lautrec. In this example, Natanson’s biography of Lautrec truly is inextricable from his œuvre and the author.

The writings of Joyant and Natanson demonstrate Lautrec’s personal connections to his subject matter. They make it impossible to say that Lautrec’s biography has no place in an analysis of his art. They also situate Lautrec as deeply involved in the nightlife and new entertainment of his time, something that more recent art historians, such as Phillip Dennis Cate and Mary Weaver Chapin, continue to investigate. Despite the generally compassionate view of Lautrec’s life and work in the scholarship rooted in biography, not all scholars who take a biographical approach are so forgiving of what they perceive as Lautrec’s shortcomings. Lesley Stevenson, for example, situates Lautrec as a mediocre artist who painted common scenes and gained popularity and acclaim because of his personal life. Stevenson’s work provides an overview of the artist’s career, including his childhood, the influence of Impressionism on his work, his entrée into the bohemian life of Montmartre, and his time in the clinic at Neuilly. It is through the subject of popular entertainment venues that Stevenson sees Lautrec’s pictures as modern. She writes, “Lautrec’s images are ‘modern’ in so far as they acknowledge the cynical transaction between the purveyor of the commodity and the advertising industry.” Within these spaces of commercial transactions, Lautrec’s prints, which had crossed into high art thanks to their frequent disappearance from Parisian walls, shaped the style, as well as the

45 Stevenson, 101.
commodification, of modernism. Stevenson frames Lautrec’s posters as implicitly critical of the entertainment industry that they promote. In doing so, she acknowledges the agency of an artist even when employed by others. This point deserves more attention.

Stevenson’s approach straddles the boundary between a biographical approach to Lautrec’s œuvre and a social art historical approach. While she provides some useful insights into the culture of Montmartre and the role Lautrec’s posters played in it, her reliance on the circumstances of the artist’s life, such as his alcoholism and difficulty with women, anchors her analysis in realm of biography. Whereas Stevenson’s work stays within the parameters of a biographical approach, other scholars have emphasized Lautrec’s contribution to the culture of Montmartre while still providing a brief biography. Among them, Jacques Lassaigne stands at the forefront. In 1939, he published *Toulouse-Lautrec*, an account of Lautrec’s life and work.\(^\text{46}\) In this book, he presents a balanced biographical analysis of Lautrec’s œuvre. While Lassaigne introduces some works as part of biography with little critical evaluation of individual works, he examines Lautrec’s paintings and posters depicting cabaret and dancehall stars as part of a social context. He also places these works in relation to Impressionists. Above all, it is the formal characteristics of Lautrec’s work that he believes will mark its artistic importance in the future.\(^\text{47}\)

Lassaigne emphasizes the formal characteristics and influences on Lautrec’s work in *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Paris of the Cabarets* (1970). In this examination of Lautrec, he places the artist’s work in the context of Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Edouard Manet in addition to the milieu of cabarets and entertainers in Montmartre. From these artists, Lautrec learned techniques for the application of color. Additionally, Modernist artists exposed Lautrec to


\(^\text{47}\) In regards to the formal qualities of Lautrec’s work, Lassaigne writes, “In reality, the work of art does not depend on the morality of its subjects, but on the faithful truth of the rendering of whatever it may be. The only thing that matters is that the work should reach a formal perfection, which lies in pre-established authentic truth. That alone will insure it life and durability, the life that will live down any elements of scandal, when the novelty has worn off.” Lassaigne, 28.
paintings subjects, beyond the purview traditional spaces and genres. Lassaigne presents a case for moving away from a physiological explanation of Lautrec’s work, but he maintains a need for a “spiritual” evaluation of it, one that takes into consideration the artist’s psychological state. Lassaigne argues that Lautrec’s state of mind left an indelible mark on his work. Lassaigne points to Lautrec’s violent brushstrokes that in his words “might be compared to rape – the desire to take possession by force and to dominate.” His extreme description of Lautrec’s brushstroke extends to near-obsessive observation of the world around him. Lassaigne’s analyses are torn between the critical formal and social historical readings of Lautrec’s work and an inability to shake the psychological force of the man from his work.

At its core, Lassaigne’s argument rests on his assertion that Lautrec’s work is about “piercing through the surface…and depicting unmasked human nature as it basically is.” Any aspect of his representation of people as deformed or ugly bears no relationship to Lautrec’s physical appearance. Rather, the ugliness is an accurate representation of people that he painted. He was so precise that his work could be described as “super-natural.” Indeed, the figure, in Lassaigne’s opinion, was all that mattered to Lautrec. Their “ever-changing, never-changing oneness” never ceased to intrigue him. By focusing on Lautrec’s faithfulness to truth and reality, Lassaigne attempts to discredit negative interpretations of Lautrec’s work and his supposed misanthropy. Therefore, his analyses, though often tied to the artist’s psychological state, more often emphasize the spirit of the figures that Lautrec depicted rather than that of the artist himself.

48 He notes, “Genius cannot be explained by physiology in Lautrec or in anyone else.” Lassaigne, Toulouse-Lautrec, 9.
49 Lassaigne, Toulouse-Lautrec, 8-9.
52 Lassaigne, Lautrec: Biographical and Critical Studies, 10.
53 Lassaigne, Lautrec: Biographical and Critical Studies, 112.
When considering Lautrec’s œuvre, Lassaigne gives priority to Lautrec’s internal motivations, and he also highlights the significance of the artist’s choice to live in Montmartre. This subject leads us into the second category of scholarship on Lautrec: his connection to the entertainment industry of Montmartre. Lautrec painted and resided in the working-class neighborhood known for its crime and rough characters. It seems unsurprising that his life and subject matter would overlap or that this link appears frequently in the literature, and this line of analysis is an important one in Lautrec studies.

Pierre Mac Orlan emphasizes Lautrec’s role in producing the culture of Montmartre in *Toulouse-Lautrec: peintre de la lumière froide* from 1934. While Montmartre is at the center of the project, Mac Orlan focuses more on biography of Lautrec and his process of producing art than providing a detailed analysis of his work. Mac Orlan was in Paris during that same time as Lautrec, in 1899 or 1900, likely after the artist’s confinement at Neuilly-sur-Seine. He saw Lautrec, but he never interacted with him. In the book, Mac Orlan emphasizes the genius of Lautrec and the absence of suffering he endured due to his wealthy family; he never experienced hunger or poverty. However, this seems to be more of a statement on the time when Mac Orlan wrote this book (1934 in the midst of a worldwide depression) rather than something that pertained to Lautrec himself.

Indeed, Mac Orlan notes that the only difficulty Lautrec endured throughout his life was his physical deformity, the pain of which viewers can clearly see in his pictures. He writes, “He [Lautrec] never suffered except in his physical disgrace, which one can feel in equally in all his works. In Lautrec’s expression of genius, one sometimes finds the gift of vengeance shamelessly

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54 Mac Orlan was born as Pierre Dumarchey, and is known for his novels and popular songs. His books include *A Bord de l’Étoile Matutine* (1920) and *Le Quai des brumes* (1927), and among his songs are “Fille de Londres” and “Le Pont du Nord.”

given by the character of an intelligent and skilled man.\footnote{Mac Orlan argues that the artist’s deformity affected his art. In his view, Lautrec had two sides: the normal, robust half and the vicious, deformed half.\footnote{Mac Orlan characterizes Lautrec as a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde whose sudden transformation could catch his friends off guard. Both aspects of his personality left their marks on his pictures because both were part of the artist. Mac Orlan points out that the fin de siècle was not inherently vulgar or filthy. If it appears this way in Lautrec’s paintings, it is because this is how he chose to depict it. Mac Orlan notes that Lautrec could lucidly capture a moment and paint it in vivid colors. Lautrec treated subject such as prostitutes without judgment, as if they were objects. He served as a witness to his time period and recorded it. Mac Orlan’s assumption that the misery and baseness represented in Lautrec’s paintings of Montmartre reflected his own inner life has played a role in the interpretation of his works from the beginning. In 1893, for example, Gustave Geffroy pointed to the artist’s turpitude. In addition to noting the keen observation and spontaneous motion in Lautrec’s work, he asserts that Lautrec does not lose the beauty in life despite the cruelty he paints; it was one of the ways that his deformity ennobled his art. While Lassaigne and Mac Orlan continue to privilege Lautrec’s biography over a social art historical approach, Reinhold Heller’s brief and insightful \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec: The Soul of}}

\footnote{{"Il n’a jamais souffert que de sa disgrace physique, et cela se sent également dans son œuvre. Dans l’expression du génie de Lautrec on trouve parfois comme un don de vengeance imprudemment offert par la nature à une homme intelligent et habile." Mac Orlan, 62-63.}}

\footnote{Mac Orlan, 62.}

\footnote{Still, it was thanks to his deformity that Lautrec developed into a great artist. Mac Orlan asserts, “Toute la vie littéraire et artistique de Toulouse-Lautrec apparaît comme une conséquence de son extraordinaire et inoubliable silhouette. Deux petites jambes malhabiles prolongeaient un torse d’homme normal. Lautrec était ainsi déformé d’une manière burlesque comme une ombre sur le trottoir d’une rue.” Mac Orlan, 12.}

\footnote{Mac Orlan, 50.}

\footnote{Mac Orlan, 42.}

\footnote{Mac Orlan, 18.}

\footnote{Gustave Geffroy, \textit{La Justice}, February 15, 1893, reprinted in \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec et son œuvre}, 1:38.}

\footnote{Mac Orlan, 13.}
Montmartre restores Lautrec’s work to the context of Montmartre without defaulting to the circumstances of his biography. Heller begins the study from Lautrec’s habitation in the arrondissement as a student, and he frames it within a discussion of the artist’s aristocratic family. He argues that by moving to Montmartre and making a living as an artist, Lautrec cut ties to his family’s noble past to forge a path for a future of his own making, complete with commercial interests and a colorful entourage. Heller presents nuanced formal readings of Lautrec’s work, while connecting it to the cultural currents of the time. For example, he identifies the unusual point of view depicted in Lautrec’s work from the early 1890s as Lautrec’s attempt to insert himself into the paintings, even when he does not appear as a figure in the final works. Lautrec accomplishes this by placing the viewer at shoulder- or chest-height in relation to the figure in the work, or, in other words, the height that Lautrec himself stood. For example, in At the Moulin Rouge, he positions the viewer on the dance floor looking up at May Milton. By locating the viewer in such a manner and cutting off objects with the edge of the picture, Lautrec emphasizes both the spontaneity of the moment and the truthfulness of it because the viewer becomes a witness to the scene.

As Lautrec began making lithographs, Heller notes that he helped produce a new culture of celebrity around cabaret stars such as La Goulue, Jane Avril, and Yvette Guilbert. Heller also points out the connections between Aristide Bruant’s bawdy lyrics and the subject matter and titles of Lautrec’s paintings, such as À Grenelle ou La Buveuse d’absinthe, 1886 (figure 12). Not only did Lautrec’s subjects link him to the proletariat via Bruant’s songs, but they also connected him to the anarchist movement. Heller posits that Lautrec revealed his leftist leanings through his choice of subject matter and style. By depicting the cabarets and dance halls of Montmartre and

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painting in a progressive style, Lautrec made his sympathies known to viewers. His choices were not accidents. 

Although Heller firmly roots his examination of Lautrec’s work in social art history, he does not ignore the implications of Lautrec’s painterly decisions. He points out that Lautrec had a knack for matching his style with the subject matter that he depicted. The aptness of Lautrec’s depiction of Montmartre in part explains the popularity and impact of his posters. The posters also provided him with an avenue into public consciousness. His posters increased the visibility of his art, and he immediately became associated with Montmartre in the public’s imagination.

When Heller does venture into the biographical details of Lautrec’s life, he focuses on how events affected Lautrec’s artistic production rather than using them to interpret the meaning behind Lautrec’s work. By analyzing Lautrec’s work using a social historical model, Heller reveals the complex web of connection among Lautrec, his models, and the entertainment venues of Montmartre. His insights have shaped the way that scholars situate Lautrec’s art and understand its role in popular culture and high art.

An exhibition of Lautrec’s work in 2001 at the Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign titled Toulouse-Lautrec: Artist of Montmartre also considered the artist’s connection to the arrondissement. It eschewed the artist’s early life to start with his move to Montmartre. Curators Gisele Atterberry and Marcel Franciscono focused on Lautrec’s works on paper. They examined the risqué character of Montmartre; the culture of celebrity that Lautrec’s posters helped develop; the influence of

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66 Heller, 48-51.
67 Heller, 64.
68 Heller, 72-75.
Japanese artists, especially Sharaku who depicted Kabuki actors, on Lautrec’s formal decisions; and his relationship with the famous inhabitants of Montmartre.

In her essay, Atterberry characterizes Lautrec as the transcriber of a certain kind of popular entertainment found in Montmartre. She finds that Lautrec the man is inseparable from the subject matter he depicted and work he produced: “As much as these prints and posters capture the atmosphere of Montmartre, they also describe Lautrec, brilliant, witty, and acerbic, they mirror the man as well as the place.” Like Atterberry, Franciscono posits Lautrec as a transcriber of a specific, fleeting moment in Montmartre’s history. Yet Franciscono moves away from the mirror relationship that Atterberry emphasizes in her essay. Franciscono notes that Lautrec’s graphic works “seem to epitomize not only his style and artistic personality but the decade itself.” He considers the way that Lautrec’s depictions of Montmartre in the fin de siècle captured popular imagination about the time period. Franciscono examines the shorthand formulas Lautrec used to depict specific people in his posters, including slanted eyebrows and pursed lips influenced by Japanese prints. He argues that these features express Lautrec’s critical eye in depicting his subject matter.

In the catalogue, Atterberry and Franciscono consider Lautrec’s work in relation to the culture of Montmartre and Paris in general. They also provide new insights into the specific ways Lautrec interpreted the Japanese style of printmaking in his work. However, as much as they read Lautrec’s work in the context of the entertainment in Montmartre and a commercial enterprise, they cannot break from a reading of Lautrec’s work that is ultimately colored by the biographical facts of the artist’s life. For example, Franciscono writes, “But whatever the truth of

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70 Atterberry, 13 (emphasis added).
72 Franciscono, 20-25.
Lautrec’s pictures may be, it is one that has been strongly inflected by a deforming artistic temperament.”

Like Atterberry and Franciscono’s exhibition in 2001, the 2005 exhibition *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre* at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. examined Montmartre and its residents as depicted in Lautrec’s work in the accompanying catalogue. Whereas Lautrec’s biography detracted from the interpretation of his work in *Toulouse-Lautrec: Artist of Montmartre*, the 2005 exhibition did not look to Lautrec’s personality for an explanation of the appearance of his art. While it is difficult to unravel Lautrec’s biography from the pictures because of his first-hand experiences with the places and people that he depicted, curators Richard Thomson, Phillip Dennis Cate, and Mary Weaver Chapin did not rely on biography to interpret Lautrec’s work. Instead, they located particular Lautrec pictures within the culture of Montmartre: lax morals, the mixing of social classes, and celebrities. Each scholar’s essay in the accompanying catalogue elucidates the social history of a facet of Montmartre and situates Lautrec as absorbing the influence of the nightlife around him and helping to shape the way that people viewed the culture of celebrity at the time. In this way, the catalogue serves as a continuation of these scholars’ previous work on the artist and time period.

73 Franciscono, 18.
The second half of the catalogue introduces the reader to specific aspects of the *quartier*: cabarets, dancehalls, café-concerts, brothels, and the circus. While Lautrec remains a prominent figure in these essays, the authors convey the spirit of the establishments and their clientele. They also compare Lautrec’s interpretation of the experiences to his peers’ work on the same subjects. The authors reveal the circumstances of the artist’s life as they relate to his work. Yet they do not unnecessarily stress this point. The only small exception is in Thomson’s essay about the circus, in which he connects the subject matter to Lautrec’s mental state during his confinement at Neuilly-sur-Seine. Overall, Thomson, Cate, and Chapin balance social historical and biographical approaches to enhance the reader’s understanding of the time period and Lautrec’s personal and artistic place within it.

The exhibitions considering Lautrec’s role in the shaping of the culture of Montmartre, as well as Heller’s and Mac Orlan’s analyses, focus mainly on the celebrities and entertainment of Montmartre, but another aspect of that culture plays a significant role in the literature on Lautrec: prostitution. This brings us to the third category of Lautrec scholarship, which addresses Lautrec’s difficult love life. Pierre Paret investigates Lautrec’s relationship with women and how this affected his depiction of them in his works. Like many writers, Paret notes Lautrec’s physical appearance as the cause of his frustration with women who found his small stature and exaggerated facial features grotesque. He finds it ironic that Lautrec had such an eye for beauty when he himself was not considered beautiful. To formulate his analysis of the artist’s despairing relationships with women, Paret turned to Thadée Natanson’s account. Although

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Paret is one of the few scholars to focus solely on this aspect of Lautrec’s life, he nevertheless considers it as part of larger examinations of the artist’s work.79

Likewise, Lautrec biographer Julia Frey assumes that Lautrec experienced trouble with women and this struggle translated to his canvases. She writes:

> When he was sober, Henry was perfectly aware that this was his own situation with women, that his handicap was too great a deterrent, that in general he would never be loved for his qualities and that he would have to pay for sexual favors. Perhaps it gave him some satisfaction to see women also suffered from lack of love.80

As Frey interprets Lautrec’s work, the artist punished the women that he depicted by showing them alone, miserable, or inebriated. She mentions the misogyny in the Lautrec family’s discussion about maiden relatives; in their opinion, any husband would be better than no husband.81 However, one must remember that during this time the majority of the population would have likely agreed with that statement.

Joyant’s interpretation of Lautrec’s depiction of women concurs with Frey’s reading of his work. He describes Lautrec’s women as encased in a “ring of cynicism” due to his physical disadvantages.82 In contrast, Joyant notes that he had great respect for the women in his family and his friends.83 Yet, he recognizes that the women in Lautrec’s work matter less and less as time passed. Their stories and personalities fade into history, and we are left with a snapshot of

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79 Huisman and Dortu are two exceptions to this practice of looking to Lautrec’s relationships with women. In contrast, they emphasize the admiration that Lautrec had for prostitutes, and they avoid crediting his failures with women for this appreciation. They write, “For Lautrec, beauty was inherent in life, in movement, in the absence of physical or moral restraint, and he wished to indicate the unquestionable superiority of the prostitutes in this respect over other women.” Huisman and Dortu, 142. Likewise, Mac Orlan does not emphasize Lautrec’s difficulty with women or the effect his physical appearance had on his interactions with people, although he does mention his physical suffering and refers to him as “gnome” more than once, and he credits Lautrec’s dwarfism for his entire artistic output. Mac Orlan, 12.

80 Conversely, Frey notes argues that when Lautrec painted portraits of men, he demonstrated great sensitivity to their physical and mental states. He formed close friendships with them, and they gave him the emotional support that he could not find with women. Frey, 252, 283-84.

81 Frey, 252.

82 Joyant, 2:53-54.

83 Joyant, 2:52-53.
life at the time rather than a particular person. In this last point, Joyant minimizes the significance of the artist’s relationships with women.

The quest to shift away from biographical readings of Lautrec’s work to representations of larger cultural concerns presents many challenges to scholars, especially when it concerns the *Au cirque* series. For example, the 1991 catalogue *Toulouse-Lautrec* by Claire Frèches-Thory, Anne Roquebert, and Richard Thomson demonstrates the desire of Lautrec scholars to move beyond biography and the difficulty they face in doing so. In the introductory essay “Rethinking Toulouse-Lautrec,” Thomson traces the history of relying on biography to explain Lautrec’s work, beginning with newspaper articles that appeared during his lifetime in the *L’Echo de Paris* and *Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui* and continuing through the twentieth century. He points to scholars’ emphasis on Lautrec’s biography, Lautrec’s admiration for Degas, and his break from his classical training as reasons the oversight of Lautrec in art history. Thomson also suggests new research questions that will bring Lautrec the scholarly attention he deserves: “how was his choice of subject matter determined? do his means of representation – media, composition, touch, color – suggest certain artistic objectives? and do subject and means ally to require or promote particular readings of his images?” The questions that Thomson introduces are important, and the organization of the catalogue keeps them at the forefront. The first part informs the reader of the general state of Lautrec scholarship, his exhibition history, his reputation, and his technique. The rest of the tome divides Lautrec’s work thematically and roughly chronologically, including his early work, depiction of Montmartre, celebrities, brothels, and his late work.

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84 Joyant, 2:56.
85 The exhibition was at the Hayward Gallery in London from October 10, 1991 to January 19, 1992 and Galeries nationales du Grand Palais in Paris from February 21 to June 1, 1992.
87 The 2005 catalogue *Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre* from the National Gallery exhibition, to which Thomson also contributed, follows a similar organization.
The challenge to move beyond biography in the analysis of Lautrec’s work is upheld until the examination of Lautrec’s late work, specifically the _Au cirque_ drawings. In the introductory essay about the series, Roquebert makes a strong link between the works and Lautrec’s institutionalization, and she questions whether the drawings have any significant outside of Lautrec’s institutionalization.\(^{88}\) While the drawings are connected to this period in Lautrec’s life and served the purpose of proving his sanity to his doctors, they do not stop having a relationship to the rest of Lautrec’s artistic production, the art world, or society. Such a narrow reading limits our understanding of his project and its significance. Furthermore, Roquebert’s melodramatic interpretation of Lautrec’s motivation in depicting these scenes and his identification with them severely hinders our ability to examine their significance to his œuvre and art at this time, and it provides exactly the kind of analysis that this catalogue aimed to end.

Because the scholarship on Lautrec’s _Au cirque_ series is more likely to be associated with his mental state and personal struggles than any of his other work, it is notable when scholars diverge from this trend. Marcus Verhagen accomplishes this in his dissertation, “Re-Figurations of Carnival: The Comic Performer in Fin-de-Siècle Parisian Art” from 1994 and to a lesser extent in his article “Whipstrokes” from 1997. In the former, he examines the history of the circus, its position during the last decades of the nineteenth century, Lautrec’s connection to and depiction of it, and the representation of the circus and its performers in art in the fin de siècle.\(^{89}\) On the whole, Verhagen sticks to a social historical approach and avoids dissecting the _Au cirque_ drawings in terms of Lautrec’s mental state. In the latter, he veers more into the realm of biographical and psychological reading of the pictures, identifying a connection between the caged animals in the drawings to Lautrec’s feelings of confinement in the clinic.\(^{90}\) He also

\(^{88}\) Roquebert, “Late Work, 1898-1901,” in _Toulouse-Lautrec_, Frèches-Thory et al., 466-467.

\(^{89}\) Marcus Verhagen, “Re-Figurations of Carnival: The Comic Performer in Fin-de-Siècle Parisian Art” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1994).

expands upon his earlier history of the artist-clown relationship, which he began in
“Refigurations.” In these projects, Verhagen aims to position Lautrec within a tradition of the
artist-as-clown and the history of the carnivalesque in the circus.

The first writer to avoid a biographical analysis of Lautrec’s work was his friend and
critic, Arsène Alexandre. In the year after his death, Alexandre wrote an article for the *Figaro
illustré* (which filled the entire issue) about the misunderstanding of Lautrec and his work by the
general public and critics. He laments that a man could be so well known but remain such an
enigma.\(^9^1\) He argues that Lautrec’s familiarity with Montmartre did not make him depraved, but
rather it allowed him to depict the neighborhood and its stars with tremendous accuracy.
Lautrec’s curiosity about the world around him and his extreme perceptiveness made his work
stand out from his contemporaries due to its jarring insights. Alexandre bemoans the brutality that
others saw in his friend’s work, and in contrast argues for his sensitivity and intuitive
understanding of his subjects.

Among Lautrec’s paintings and prints that Alexandre reproduced in the article (including
reproductions of his paintings, lithographs, and preparatory drawings), he included nine drawings
from *Au cirque: Clownerie* (figure 15); *Travail sur le panneau; Travail de panneau à travers un
cerceau; Ballets, fantaisie nautique et japonaise; Dans les coulisses* (figure 16); *Clownerie et
cheval* (figure 17); *Travail de répétition; Clownerie et cochon* (figure 18), *Écuyère de panneau
(Elle est gentille la demoiselle); Chocolat, scène comique* (figure 19); *Amazone* (figure 20); and
*Dans les coulisses: l’attente* (figure 21). This was the first time that the general public had seen
these works, although Lautrec had begun to think about publishing them through Joyant Manzi
and Company as early as October 1899.\(^9^2\) Alexandre included these drawings (which have

\(^9^1\) Arsène Alexandre, “‘Toulouse-Lautrec,’” *Le Figaro illustré*, April 1902.
\(^9^2\) In 1905, Goupil & Cie, Manzi Joyant & Cie, Éditeurs, Imprimeurs, Successeurs published
twenty-two of the *Au cirque* drawings in *Toulouse-Lautrec au cirque: Vingt-deux dessins aux
 crayons de couleur*. For the full letter to Sands, see Schimmel, Letter 584.
garnered so much attention due to circumstances of their production) in an article calling for the analysis of Lautrec’s work based on its merits rather than his persona or life. This inclusion of the drawings indicates the extent to which Alexandre believed in their ability to stand alone as works of art.

Some of the few twentieth-century scholars to move away from a biographical interpretation of Lautrec’s work include Fritz Novotny, Gale B. Murray, and Dominique Jarrassé. Novotny avoids a biographical approach for a strict formal analysis of Lautrec’s œuvre in *Toulouse-Lautrec.* Indeed, he insists on the need to move away from biography in the preface: “The interest in biographical facts is justified, but there is also a need for an anti-biographical study.” Furthermore, he criticizes those who approach Lautrec’s work with an uncritical eye. Believing that the artist has simply transcribed the world around him, unhindered by his own thoughts and opinions on the subject, does a disservice to the artist and the work. In a few instances in the text, Novotny refers to Lautrec’s fantasy life or his personal circumstance in regard to certain works, especially concerning the *Au cirque* series. Though he does caution against the reliance on biography to explain Lautrec’s work, he concedes that it can be a useful tool when looking at this series. Even so, the time has come to look into other facets of the drawings. In his discussion of the series, he acknowledges that the drawings have a “nightmarish” quality that has sprung from the artist’s fantasies. However, he does not delve into a deep psychoanalysis of the artist or use these factors to serve as the full explanation for the pictures in question.

Novotny’s call for less reliance on biography has not received as much attention as it deserves. Although some scholars have made an effort to demonstrate the ways Lautrec’s work

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94 Novotny, 5.
95 Novotny does not identify any individuals guilty of this line of thinking. Novotny, 9.
96 Novotny, 51.
97 Novotny, 53.
possessed technical innovations (especially his lithographs), more needs to be said about his interpretation of Montmartre.\textsuperscript{98} Too often his vision of the \textit{quartier} does not receive close enough scrutiny. It is more common for scholars to use Montmartre to illustrate an element of the environment rather than ask what the formal qualities of Lautrec’s work tell us about the time. In particular, questions of masculinity, technology, sexuality, and psychology (other than Lautrec’s own) need to be asked. My study of Lautrec’s work aims to begin to investigate these issues.

Like Novotny, Murray seeks to avoid a psychoanalytical critique of Lautrec’s work and move away from the biographical interpretations of it, which rely heavily on his alcoholism and illness. She accomplishes this by providing close formal readings of Lautrec’s work in \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec: The Formative Years, 1878-1891}, published in 1991. In this book, Murray focuses on Lautrec’s early drawings and paintings, his artistic education, and the beginning of his career as an independent artist. One major contribution of the book is her correction of the chronology of Lautrec’s early work, such as \textit{Artilleryman Saddling his Horse}, c.1878.\textsuperscript{99} To do so, she cross-references Lautrec’s correspondence and contemporary events. She reads the works closely, including the development of the artist’s brushstroke and his changing palette, and she pays particular attention to stylistic developments as he changed instructors and was exposed to the avant-garde.

Additionally, Murray argues that Lautrec favored conservative subject matter and style as a student and in the early years of his career. She contradicts Joyant’s assertion that Lautrec had a defiant streak as a student and left the studio of his teacher, Fernand Cormon, in 1884. First, she

\textsuperscript{98} For Novotny’s analysis of Lautrec’s lithographic techniques, how they changed, and his influences, see Novotny, 16-47.

\textsuperscript{99} This painting had been dated 1879-80 by Dortu as well as Joyant. According to the journal \textit{L’Avenir militaire}, the military held training exercises in the Bosc region in August and September 1878. It did not return to Bosc or Albi for three years. Furthermore, Princeteau wrote that Lautrec painted and drew the soldiers while staying at the family home in Bosc during the summer of 1878. See Gale B. Murray, \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec: The Formative Years, 1878-1891} (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 19.
points to his contribution of illustrations for the Victor Hugo project, *Poésie*, first published by Edition Nationale in Paris in 1885. In the spring of 1884, Cormon asked him to prepare some drawings for the publication. Although the publisher rejected Lautrec’s submissions, his instructor approved of his work. Therefore, Lautrec was clearly part of Cormon’s studio and likely one of his favorites to have been chosen among the other students. Moreover, Murray reinterprets Lautrec’s *Parodie du Bois sacré aux arts et muses*, 1884. Whereas scholars had categorized it as Lautrec’s move against academicism and idealization, Murray emphasizes the mixture of admiration and satire in the painting. She quotes François Gauzi’s recollection of the paintings as a collective effort by Cormon’s students that mocked the flatness of Puvis de Chavannes’s painting, which contradicted Cormon’s instruction.

Murray’s thorough analysis of Lautrec’s early work avoids a biographical interpretation and places him in the artistic milieu of Paris in the 1880s and early 1890s. She challenges some of Dortu’s and Joyant’s dating by looking closely at correspondence, the dates of events (such as military maneuvers in Bosc), and the similarity of the works to dated works by Lautrec and Princeteau. Her interpretation of Lautrec’s work does not venture far from artistic influences and trends of the fin de siècle, and she does not stray from Lautrec’s biographical timeline; she meticulously situates the paintings in regard to Lautrec’s habits. Therefore, while Lautrec’s personal life does not drive the analysis of his works, it does anchor it. Throughout the book, Murray frequently cites his friends and experiences to clarify the date of their completion and their allegiance to avant-garde ideals. In general, she finds Lautrec’s early work far more conservative than other scholars have acknowledged. Thus, while she humanizes the mythic figure of Lautrec, she does so by tying his work to his interests at specific times, his social circle, and correspondence, thereby leaving social, cultural, and technological questions unasked.

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Whereas Murray sought to correct errors and oversights in the scholarly literature on Lautrec, Jarrassé focuses on the mythology surrounding Lautrec. She notes that Lautrec scholarship is overly reliant on anecdotes about the artist, and she attempts to separate his work from these stories in *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: Entre le mythe et la modernité*. She points out that contemporary accounts of the artist’s work emphasized his alcoholism and short stature, and biographies written about him focus on his aristocratic heritage and his family’s noble interests. These two lines of research frame Lautrec as suffering from deformities and disorders. These difficulties, then, created a trajectory for his life that diverged from his aristocratic family. She argues that he was not like Paul Cézanne or Vincent van Gogh, whose inner turmoil and anxiety fueled their work. Lautrec’s modernism was Baudelairean in the sense that he found beauty in the ugliness of life and captured the contradiction of modern life. His choice to paint the nightlife of Montmartre and the private moments between prostitutes in brothels on the scale of history painting demonstrates his commitment not only to modernity but also to the traditional genres of painting.

Jarrassé contribution to the literature is an overview of Lautrec’s career from circa 1886 to his death. She identifies the tendency of critics and scholars to read biography into the works and hand out a moral judgment, especially in the *Au cirque* drawings. Unfortunately, she does not have the space to consider any of Lautrec’s works in detail. Rather, she provides a cursory treatment of a variety of subjects including printmaking, celebrity culture of Montmartre, brothels, the circus, cafés, theater, Baudelaire and modern painting, and portraits. Jarrassé’s examination of Lautrec lacks a thorough analysis of his individual works. Such an approach could have resulted in a greater move to reposition Lautrec studies away from biographical readings.

103 Jarrassé, 132.
104 Jarrassé, 132.
105 Jarrassé, 150-163, especially 160-163.
As we have seen, the literature on Lautrec demonstrates the intricate connection between Lautrec’s life and work. Much of the literature relies to a great extent on the biography of the artist in its analysis of his œuvre. This may take the form of a direct biographical interpretation of the work (as we frequently see in the analysis of the *Au cirque* series), but more often we find the personal connections between Lautrec and his subjects at the heart of the discussion. Yet scholars such as Novotny, Murray, and Jarrassé have successfully escaped from the shadow of biography from their analyses of Lautrec’s work, and others like Thomson have called for a respite from the biographical approach. In 1992, he wrote:

> Stripped of spurious emphasis on heroic isolation and self-immolation, that work [made by Lautrec] needs to be reconsidered as the product of a life shaped by certain social assumptions and attitudes of a career molded by specific training and particular exhibition opportunities, commercial options, and collaborative decisions.\(^\text{106}\)

Thomson asks for a careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the production of Lautrec’s art over the mythologization of the artist.

While I argue for a separation of Lautrec’s life and his work, I recognize that such a severance is neither possible nor entirely desirable. Therefore, my analysis of his work will also refer to books he read, comments he made to friends, and some of his life experiences. By moving away from a predominantly biographical approach, I am not lobbying for a complete death of the author, as I believe that the life of the artist can provide insight into his work.

Although some aspects of biography inform my reading of Lautrec’s work, it is not my primary interpretive model.

In writing about the modernity that he saw around him, Charles Baudelaire notes two sides to modern art: the contingent and the eternal.\(^\text{107}\) My analysis of Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series

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highlights both these aspects, both formally and thematically. The first chapter considers his representation of dominant and submissive scenarios in drawings such as *Voltige* and *Travail sur le panneau*. I contend that the sadomasochistic undertones of these works deserve further unpacking than they have received in the literature. In addition to examining the sexual tension in the drawings, I place them in dialogue with the debates about so-called deviant sexuality, which exploded in the last half of the nineteenth century. As the theories about sadism and masochism filled medical journals, they also gained attention in general interest newspapers and magazines. The obsession with these sexual proclivities moved beyond strictly sexual situations, and some writers even referred to any violent, foreign, or incomprehensible event as sadistic.

I argue that Lautrec’s inclusion of sadomasochistic element in the *Au cirque* series participated in a wider discussion of the phenomenon that had its roots in not only medical discourse but also in the changes gender roles underwent in society. To explore this facet, I look to the simultaneous debates about feminism that could be found in the daily newspapers. As women sought more rights as citizens and obtain a wide-range of rights in the decades following France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71, gender roles became unstable. I suggest that the parallel rise in the feminist movement and the urban public’s interest in sexual deviancy, especially sadism, was not purely coincidental. Rather, these twin phenomena indicate the need to restore balance and order to a society in flux. Lautrec’s drawings react and respond to that.

After considering feminism and the role of women in society in the first chapter, I explore gender roles from the point of masculinity in Chapter 2. I consider Lautrec’s depiction of male sitters throughout his career and the ways in which it grew more complex in his work and more fraught in society. Although the word “masculinity” was not used in the fin de siècle, newspaper articles pondered the virility of men and the fate of the nation’s male youths after the paintings in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7.
Franco-Prussian War. While feminists faced backlash, young men encountered questions about their health and potential for success in adulthood in sources like Le Figaro. In his portraits of men like his father in Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1879-81 (figure 22), Désiré Dihau, 1890, (figure 23), and Aristide Bruant in his Cabaret, 1893 (figure 24), Lautrec examines what it means to be a man. These complicated depictions of masculinity convey the difficult, and often contradictory, experiences of manhood in the last decades of the 1890s.

In the third chapter, I continue to examine the relationship between women and men in the Au cirque drawings through the lens of animality. I build upon the emergence of feminism from Chapter One and consider the role of women in society, specifically how the dominant ideology relegates them to the sidelines and links them to nature and the animal. In addition, I consider the ways in which animals serve as an extension of the male and female human body. I analyze Lautrec’s depiction of animals from his early work to the end of his career through his portraits of his family’s animals like White Horse, “Gazelle,” Bosc (figure 25) and Little White Dog (figure 26), both from 1881, to his representation of animals in Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando), 1887-88, and Cheval pointant, 1899 (figure 27). I explore the theoretical basis for the connection between women and animals beginning with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of “becoming-animal” as a means to extract oneself from a difficult or dangerous situation. I then examine the ways in which animals can empower humans. Finally, I consider the rise of furry culture in regards to human-animal relationships. I demonstrate that Lautrec’s inclusion of animals in the Au cirque series exceeds his own experiences at the sanatorium. The drawings expand what it means to be human and the possibilities that being human offers.

The last chapter shifts from analyzing the content of Lautrec’s work to considering the way in which he depicts his subjects. The excitement found in the Au cirque series has as much to

do with the tension between the figures as the way in which Lautrec often represented them: in mid-maneuver. To understand the development of movement in Lautrec’s œuvre, I connect his technique to the technological and scientific developments in recording movement by dividing his work into three periods: his youthful work (c. 1875 to mid-1887), his professional career (mid-1887 to 1894), and his mature work (1895 to his death). These divisions not only coincide with Lautrec’s style and method of depicting motion but also scientific advances. These include Eadward Muybridge’s photographs of human and animal locomotion, Etienne Jules Marey’s chronophotography, and the emergence of early film. I am particularly interested in what Tom Gunning has called the “cinema of the attractions.” He defines this genre of early film as “an exhibitionist cinema…a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator.” These films offer the viewer a spectacular performance or point of view, directly address the audience, and have simple narrative structures. I argue that Lautrec learned from the scientific and film communities, applied that knowledge to his drawings, and ultimately challenged the emerging medium of film in his work, culminating in the *Au cirque* series.

By focusing on the social, political, and cultural events of the fin-de-siècle more than the biographical details of Lautrec’s life from my analysis of his work, I am able to place him firmly in the time that he lived. I demonstrate that his work, while indicative of his personal relationships to his subject and his experiences, has greater significance than the circumstances of his life. It engages with some of the most contested contemporary topics: sexual deviancy, feminism, masculinity, and cinema. By returning Lautrec’s work to its context beyond the artist, we can see how he molded and responded to these issues. As a result, we can begin to understand the extent of his engagement with his contemporaries and move past Lautrec the man.

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Chapter 1

Crack that Whip: Sadomasochism in the Fin de Siècle as Depicted in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Au cirque Drawings

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, tales of sexual deviancy enthralled readers of popular novels and medical theory. Accounts of men begging to be whipped by women filled the literary landscape and pages of specialized scientific journals. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s Venus in Furs (1870), Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis (1886), and Octave Mirbeau’s Le Jardin des supplices (1899) were all published as the century drew to a close.¹ Krafft-Ebing enjoyed a wide readership, spanning psychologists, artists, and the public at large. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec even owned a copy, and he enjoyed quoting specific cases from it and discussing them at length with his friends.²

Examining the plot of Sacher-Masoch’s novel Venus in Furs, we can see reversals of power throughout the novel. It is a tale that recounts the sadomasochistic relationship between

¹ Sacher-Masoch was enormously popular in France from the mid-1870s through the 1880s. In 1876, the theater critic Jules Prével described him as “décidément à la mode,” and Adolphe Racet noted that his work was well known in France in 1881. Sacher-Masoch was named a chevalier in the Legion of Honor in 1883, and during his first visit to Paris in 1886, the press fawned over him. For example, on the front page, the Figaro cited his affinity toward France, his handsome appearance, and his charm: “On se rappellera qu’il est non seulement un véritable ami de la France. Il a toujours considéré, d’ailleurs, notre pays comme sa seconde patrie et l’a toujours défendu…Il est grand, brun, rasé, ne portant que la moustache et de longs cheveux; ses yeux bruns, pleins de flamme, révèlent dès le premier instant un homme qui est ‘quelqu’un,’ comme l’on dit.” Furthermore, Henry Guillaume Schlesinger painted a portrait of Sacher-Masoch in 1887 for the Salon. Prével, “Courier des théâtres,” Le Figaro, September 12, 1876. Racet, “Paris au jour le jour,” Le Figaro, October 4, 1881. “À travers Paris,” Le Figaro, December 15, 1886. For a summary of Sacher-Masoch’s 1888 visit to Paris, see Wanda de Sacher-Masoch, “Confession de ma vie, suite 1,” Le Mercure de France 66, no. 236 (April 15, 1907): 676-708.

² Gerstle Mack writes that Lautrec used to tell his friends, “If I were not a painter, I should like to be a doctor or surgeon.” Indeed, he enjoyed following his cousin to observe surgeries and painted some of what he saw. Mack, Toulouse-Lautrec (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 231. Thadée Natanson, Un Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Paris: École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1992), 60.
two upper class individuals: Severin, who longs to be whipped, and Wanda, the woman who caters to his desires. In this semi-autobiographical book, Sacher-Masoch exposed his desire for women to dominate him; Krafft-Ebing later coined the term masochism after the author. Men’s preference to take on the feminine, submissive role in sex had previously occurred only in the privacy of bedrooms and brothels. The novel made these instances public. It concludes with Severin renouncing his need for pain and humiliation and embracing the role of the sadist. Wanda’s fickle affection and extreme cruelty, especially finding a new lover and humiliating Severin in front of the man, drove Severin to the conclusion: “Whoever allows himself to be whipped, deserves to be whipped.”

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4 Sadomasochism first gained widespread attention in the 1790s and early 1800s with the clandestine publication of the Marquis de Sade’s novels. Sadomasochism remained underground throughout the nineteenth century, but it breached the surface in the last quarter of the century thanks to Venus in Furs, decadent writers, psychologists, and artists. One man, referred to only as Case 44 in Psychopathia Sexualis, had no idea that others shared his desires. He wrote: “I read everything related to my cherished ideas. ‘Rousseau’s Confessions,’ which then fell into my hands, was a great discovery. I found a condition described that resembled mine in essentials. I was still more astonished at the similarity of my ideas to those I read of in the writings of Sacher-Masoch. I devoured them all with avidity, though the blood-curdling scenes often far outdid my imagination, and then excited my aversion.” Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study, 7th ed., trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia: F.A. David Co., 1894), 92. It was originally published as Psychopathia Sexualis: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung: Eine medicinisch-gerichtliche Studie für Ärzte und Juristen by Ferdinand Enke in Stuttgart in 1886.

5 Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs and Selected Letters of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Emilie Matajha, trans. Uwe Moeller and Laura Lindgren (New York: Blast Books, 1989), 210. It was first published in as Venus im Pelz in Germany in 1870, and it was included in a larger volume published the same year titled Heritage of Cain, Volume 1.
Like Severin, the figures in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s 1899 *Au cirque* drawings participated in a violent and erotic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century. The series consists of over fifty drawings depicting a rehearsal space of the circus, including acrobatic stunts, equestriennes and their horses, performers waiting in the wings, and clowns. His drawings do not approach the explicit narrative of *Venus in Furs*, but they depict aggressive acts that implicated the nineteenth-century audience and required it to construct meaning, a meaning that class and prevailing sexual theories and practices shaped.

The pervasiveness of popular and medical texts about so-called sexual deviancy speaks to a society negotiating changing gender roles. Modernity transformed gender relations at home and in the public sphere: women, though still denied the right to vote, were gaining power. Feminist congresses occurred regularly during the 1890s, and they received ample attention in newspapers and journals. Although some writers expressed their sympathy and even admiration for the women, many met the feminists and their agenda with anger, fear, and insults. It is clear from these responses that the rise in feminism posed a threat to the dominant ideology. At the same time that feminists were becoming more vocal about their rights as citizens, France also faced the question of what would become of its men. In the thirty years following the Franco-Prussian War, the health of the nation’s men, and by extension the nation, preoccupied politicians and journalists of *Le Figaro*.

Within this fraught cultural environment, Lautrec produced his *Au cirque* series. He made the drawings during his treatment for severe alcoholism at Dr. René Sémelaigne’s clinic in Neuilly-sur-Seine. Scholars have examined these works as a means by which Lautrec could process his experience in the clinic. While there can be no doubt that Lautrec’s time in the clinic

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6 Krafft-Ebing notes the relationship to “moral decadence” and “times of effeminacy, sensuality, and luxury.” Kaja Silverman also examines the effect that threats to the dominant ideology have on sexual relations and masculinity. See Krafft-Ebing, 6-16. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15-124.
affected his production of these works, I contend that the instances of violence that we see in series have wider implications beyond the artist’s personal trauma. Important questions about gender roles and feminism dominated the nation’s concerns. These issues concerning gender compounded curiosity about regarding the symptoms, diagnosis, and practices of so-called sexual deviants expressed in French newspapers. Through an analysis of contemporary discourse focusing primarily of Le Figaro, I will demonstrate that France’s interest in sadism was broad. It extended beyond sexual activities that included violence and/or humiliation. In the 1890s, journalists of the newspaper used it loosely to refer to literature, cultures, and performances that were difficult to understand. I will argue that “sadism” had wide-ranging connotations in fin-de-siècle French culture, and it metamorphosed from a medical diagnosis into a way to disclose one’s uneasiness in a situation and the Otherness of non-Western cultures.

The current state of scholarship of Lautrec’s drawings reveals an interest in the subtle sadomasochistic aspects of them. Yet, as we will see, scholars focus almost exclusively on Lautrec’s relationship to the scenes that he drew, and they do not address the significance that these works may have had beyond the artist. Richard Thomson, for example, has written extensively on Lautrec and the fin de siècle. In the 2005 catalogue for National Gallery of Art’s exhibition Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre, he notes the undertones of violence present in the drawings, and he connects it to the Lautrec’s family confining him to Dr. Sémelaigne’s facility against Lautrec’s will. Thomson identifies the subject matter of the series as “training and discipline.”7 The animals in the drawings must obey their trainers, who restrict their freedom and set limits on their behavior. He compares these conditions of circus animals to those that Lautrec experienced while hospitalized. He writes:

In the end, the series is about order—at one level the discipline of circus performances, and at another the artist’s psychological order. Both involve restraint and a degree of pain; both require mastering nature. The circus served as an ideal metaphor for the disordered Lautrec to articulate pictorially his inner struggles and trauma.\(^8\)

The circus provided Lautrec with an outlet for his pain and frustrations. He could perform the victimization that he felt in the clinic through his drawings.

Like Thomson, Marcus Verhagen approaches the topic with a strong biographical slant. He associates the experience of the animals, especially the elephants, in the drawings to Lautrec’s feelings of isolation and captivity at the clinic.\(^9\) He notes that Lautrec exploited the carnivalesque nature of the circus for his own purposes. It allows the shifting of signifiers and therefore permits Lautrec to play with sadomasochistic themes in the drawings. Verhagen also discusses the history of artists identifying with the clown in relation to Lautrec’s depiction of the clownsse, Cha-U-Kao. He aligns this identification with the outsider status and feelings of inadequacy that Lautrec’s dwarfism imbued in him. Additionally, Verhagen emphasizes the possibility of Lautrec occupying the role of the dominator and the dominated in *Equestrienne (At the Circus Fernando)*, 1887-88 (figure 1). It is through the theme of the circus, then, in Lautrec’s many depictions of it that he dealt with his frustrations.

These analyses are thorough, but they only consider the artist’s personal relationship with the *Au cirque* series. This approach may be sensational and intriguing for a reader, but it does not explore the effects that the drawings had and continue to have on the viewer. Moreover, it does not address the context in which Lautrec produced these works beyond the realm of the asylum. The works participate in a far broader and more significant field than one man’s battle with his demons and perversions. They require a closer, more nuanced reading that asks how they participated in contemporary artistic production and discourses on sexuality.

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\(^8\) Thomson, 241. Additionally, see Elisabeth Luther Cary, “The Last of Lautrec,” *Parnassus* 3, no. 8 (December 1931): 1-3.

Even during Lautrec’s lifetime, critics pointed to his physical and mental states as explanations of his work. The conservative writer Edmond Lepelletier, for example, believed all of Lautrec’s work was stained by his circumstances. In his obituary of the artist, he writes:

There is no better way of judging Lautrec; his talent is born of bitter perversity and terrible joy. Lautrec’s pencil flagellates, Lautrec’s pencil brands with red-hot irons those marked for prison and for death. But sickly and fragile as he was, because of wanting to live in this frightful milieu, Lautrec succumbed to the insanity of his characters, the madness of his heroes; from seeing crazy people around him all the time he went crazy himself….His work overwhelmed him; his work killed him…

Lepelletier cites the “crazy” denizens of Montmartre as the cause of Lautrec’s illness, which did not include insanity. He also describes the formal characteristics of the artist’s work in terms of violence, and he concludes that Lautrec’s œuvre appears the way it does because of the people he surrounded himself with and his own dour outlook on life.

Perhaps the most explicitly biographical explanation of the *Au cirque* drawings comes from Anne Roquebert. She considers the drawings to have been an essential, therapeutic exercise for the artist. She writes:

Strictly speaking, these drawings do not conform to the Kantian definition of art: that is, they are not an end in themselves, but refer to a vital need: the artist’s desperate urge to regain his liberty: by proving that he was not mad, Lautrec would be able to get out of the clinic.

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11 Lepelletier does not deny that Lautrec had talent. He openly acknowledges this. Unfortunately, Lautrec’s poor view of humanity, in Lepelletier’s opinion, marred all of his work. He writes: “Among the painters of our epoch, Lautrec definitely leaves the marks of his intriguing talent, of his poor talent, the talent of a deformed human being who sees everything around him as ugly and who exaggerates the ugliness of life by pointing out all its defects, all the perversity, all the reality…” Lepelletier, 321.

The drawings did serve a practical purpose for Lautrec while he was kept at Neuilly. He referred to the drawings as his means of escaping the sanitarium. However, this does not mean that the drawings can or should be read only as a means to an end, his release.

Physicians, too, have weighed in on the issue. In the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Pierre Maroteaux and Maurice Lamy went so far as to assert that all of Lautrec’s work bears the effects of his physical and mental illness. They write, “Although infirmity and physical suffering have profoundly affected the work of many artists, few lives have been so extensively influenced by illness as that of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.”\(^{13}\) After rehearsing the various hypotheses put forth about the precise genetic disease that afflicted Lautrec, they conclude that Lautrec had pycnodysostosis, which manifests in patients as short stature, brittle bones, small hands and feel, a large head, and a receding chin.\(^{14}\) Without explaining precisely how this disease may have affected Lautrec’s work, Maroteaux and Lamy assert: “Despite the lack of decisive radiological and anatomical data, it can be stated with substantial assurance that this rare disease bequeathed us the artistic works of one of the greatest painters of our time.”\(^{15}\)

The biographical reading of the drawings is an important one; however, the drawings remain connected to his previous work on the subject and the culture of the circus, which includes explorations of other expressions of sexuality. By not considering the other aspects of the drawings, we limit them to one very specific meaning for one person at a particular time. If they are significant pieces of art, as I believe they are, they must be more than this. In March 1899, Alexandre Hepp wrote that viewers would read the marks of Lautrec’s illness on all of his work because of his institutionalization.\(^{16}\) Similarly, Jacques Lassaigne notes the violence and coldness of Lautrec’s character, and he connects them to the formal elements of Lautrec’s work.

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14 Maroteaux and Lamy, 716-17.
15 Maroteaux and Lamy, 717.
writes that Lautrec’s aggressive brushstrokes “might be compared to rape – the desire to take possession by force and to dominate.” It is as if the die was cast at the moment of Lautrec’s death. If we continue to restrict our analyses of these works to the artist’s mental state at the time he made them, we deny the works their broader, cultural significance.

In contrast to much of the literature on Lautrec’s work, my analysis of the Au cirques series will focus on the medical discourse on sexual practices classified as deviant and the popular discussion of these so-called deviant behaviors in the press and literature. I will also provide close formal readings of the drawings to argue that the complexities of a sadomasochistic interpretation of the works go beyond a private struggle within the artist’s mind. We will see that they have implications beyond the man who drew them; they involve the viewer in their transgressions. Furthermore, the circus was viewed as a space of lax morals, and its performers, by extension, were thought to exist outside the standards of bourgeois decency. Thus, I will bring other artists’ approaches to the subject of the circus as well as popular opinion about the circus to bear on my analysis of Lautrec’s drawings and sexual deviancy.

In the second half of this chapter, I will consider some of the reasons why studies of sexual deviance and reports of these activities aimed at a general audience saw a surge in the last

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18 My use of the term deviant does not cast judgment on the behaviors. Rather, it signifies the way that medical professionals classified various expressions of sexuality that they deemed in some way abnormal.
thirty years of the nineteenth century. The timing of this increased attention coincides with changes in society, particularly France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and the rise of the women’s movement and the *femme nouvelle*. Scholars often point to France’s loss in the Franco-Prussian War as a turning point for the country. We will see that it had deep ramifications for gender relations; in particular, the concern over the wounded and sick male body permeated the media. In contrast to the weakened view of men, women surged ahead with their fight to have more of the rights that man possessed. The women’s movement, though diverse and working toward a wide range of goals, demonstrated the strength of women at a time when the male gender was perceived in political speeches and daily newspapers as being at its most vulnerable. Individually, these issues could have influenced the way that France viewed the genders, their relationship to each other, and the well being of the nation; together, they chipped away at what the French had believed was the bedrock of society. Of particular importance in this chapter is how the women’s movement eroded the already tenuous position of men and masculinity in France during these years. Lautrec captured some of this tension between genders in his drawings. Indeed, it is an essential element in their sadomasochistic charge.

The structure of this chapter is anchored a careful formal reading of Lautrec’s drawings. From this analysis, I connect the works to the outpouring of interest in sadomasochism in the last half of the nineteenth century. As we will see, the lexicon of so-called sexual deviance infiltrated the vernacular in the fin de siècle, and it became commonplace to describe non-sexual activities, even those that were not particularly cruel or humiliating, as sadistic in daily newspapers. As I consider the complexities of sadomasochism and the variety of interpretations at the end of the century, the drawings and their malleability come to the foreground. The fluidity of the roles participants play in sadomasochistic encounters mirrors the flexibility of roles the figures and the viewer enjoy in Lautrec’s work.
The drawings in the *Au cirque* series depict a variety of behind-the-scenes moments one would find at the circus, such as rehearsals and performers waiting to enter the ring. Though composed of more than fifty drawings, the series does not present a chronological story for the viewer. Rather, it shows a collection of separate incidents in circus life. In this way it more closely resembles the *Untitled Film Stills* by Cindy Sherman (1977-80), which invent iconic scenes from imaginary films. In both, the artists emphasize a climatic moment in the action, allowing the viewer to easily imagine the full scenario.

One of the most striking drawings from the *Au cirque* series is *Voltige*, 1899 (figure 5). In it, Lautrec drew an equestrienne on horseback rehearsing under the watchful gaze of the ringmaster and a clown. She clings to the side of the horse with her left arm secured over the back of the animal while her right hand grasps a lock of its mane. She pushes her head back, points her toes, and arches her spine at an acute angle that mimics the arc of the horse’s neck. One cannot distinguish the shadow of the woman from that of the animal; the beast frozen in mid-gallop and the woman suspended in the air merge into one being.

Across from the pair stand the ringmaster and clown. The ringmaster watches the equestrienne with his back turned to the viewer; only the end of his mustache and the contour of his brow are visible. He anchors his legs more than shoulder-width apart with his feet firmly planted on the ground. His fingers grip the handle of a long whip. The end of the whip lies strewn on the floor in an idle, semi-coiled position ready to be cracked. Unlike the ringmaster, the clown next to him glances back at the viewer. His pose is nonchalant. He holds his hands behind his back. His weight rests on his left foot, and he pushes his right foot forward. This casual arrangement of his body serves to make his sideways glance more significant because his look to the viewer seems to be his only purposeful action. The slight tilt of his head and the location of his pupil at the far corner of his right eye suggest the viewers’ initiation into the scene and implicate their complicit participation in the action. The absence of an audience in the stands and
the clown’s eye contact lead the viewers to believe that they witness a scene to which they should not have access. They are flattered into thinking that they receive a privileged view, something clandestine; their voyeuristic appetite is piqued.

The drawing transfers the power and vulnerability of its figures onto the viewers. One can empathize with the perilous position of the equestrienne. She performs her trick under the scrutiny of the ringmaster. The length of his whip could easily reach her or the horse if he wished. The maneuver requires that both of her hands stayed on the horse, leaving her open for the ringmaster to lash her. The ringmaster, in contrast, dominates the scene. He scrutinizes her performance with a smirk on his face. He appears to be the same ringmaster as the one Lautrec portrayed in *Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando)*, whom scholars have identified as Louis Fernando, a man with a reputation for his violent treatment of animal and human performers alike.19

*Voltige* and a number of other drawings in the *Au cirque* series have a sadomasochistic charge. Richard von Krafft-Ebing was one of the first and is perhaps the best-known doctor examining sexual deviancy in the late nineteenth century in Europe.20 His *Psychopathia Sexualis*

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19 Verhagen notes Fernando’s rough treatment of those in his circus, see Verhagen, 133. For a detailed contemporary account of Fernando’s behavior, see Hugues Le Roux, *Les jeux de cirque et la vie foraine* (Paris, 1889), 121.

20 Harry Oosterhuis characterizes Krafft-Ebing as the person who initiated the study of sexuality and Albert Moll, another doctor examining sexology, as his successor. He points out that the two men corresponded and used cased studies on their work. The key difference between them is that Krafft-Ebing based his theories on case studies that occupied a large section of his work while Moll punctuated his theories with case studies. The abundance of autobiographical accounts in their studies gave readers who had felt marginalized or ostracized for their sexual desires a source of compassion and understanding. Both doctors discussed a range of behaviors that the so-called deviant forms could take, and they did not support the criminalization of these behaviors. For more on how Krafft-Ebing’s and Moll’s work compare, see Oosterhuis, “Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,” *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (April 2012): 133-155.

Another doctor, Emile Laurent, also used a wealth of examples in his writing on sexuality, however his examples came more from literature than the personal experiences found in the writings of Krafft-Ebing and Moll. His work was accused of being hasty and too reliant on literary examples of conditions. A reviewer for *L’Année sociologique* writes, “Si la sociologie
was published in German in 1886. In 1892, the first English translation was printed, and in 1895, it was translated into French. The book was published in seventeen editions; twelve of these Krafft-Ebing oversaw himself (he died shortly after finishing the twelfth edition). Upon his death, the Figaro published an obituary on December 25, 1902. It describes him as “a famous specialist in nervous illnesses” and informs readers that he died in Gratz at the age of sixty-two.  

It also notes that he directed an institution and served as a professor of mental illness at universities in Strasbourg and Gratz.  

In Psychopathia Sexualis, Krafft-Ebing collects a vast array of case studies that he obtained by observation, medical care, interview, and unsolicited autobiographical letters. Through these, he defines forms of sexual deviancy, including sadism, masochism, and fetishism. Dr. Dumas reviewed the work in 1896 for Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’étranger. He praises it for its abundant documentation of a variety of conditions and precise analysis of the patients and their maladies, and he only finds one flaw with the work: its emphasis on deviant sexuality. The first chapter’s title is “Fragment of a Psychology of the Sexual Life,” which suggests that sexual life in general, not only the abnormal manifestations of it, will be discussed. However, Dumas recognizes that his criticism does not diminish the importance of the knowledge that the book conveys to readers.


22 Le Figaro had previously reported on Krafft-Ebing’s work. In 1887, the front page described that the Duchess of Alençon suffered from “une surexcitation nerveuse très prononcée,” causing her to travel to Gratz to seek the doctor’s advice. Two years later, it described Krafft-Ebing’s inability to help Elisabeth, Empress of Austria, but he reassured the public that she was not in any pain. See “À travers Paris,” Le Figaro, June 14, 1887 and “La Santé de l’Impératrice d’Autriche,” Le Figaro, April 20, 1889.  

Krafft-Ebing wrote *Psychopathia Sexualis* for the medical community, but he found that these subjects had a wide appeal to a general audience, as his many mentions in the *Figaro* may attest. The translator of the English edition, Dr. Charles Gilbert Chaddock, notes the popularity of the book in his preface to the seventh edition, which was translated into English and published in 1894. He quotes Dr. A. von Schrenck-Notzing, who wrote in 1892:

> Moreover, attention has been directed to the baneful influence possibly exerted by such publications as ‘Psychopathia Sexualis.’ To be sure, the appearance of seven editions of that work could not be accounted for were its circulation confined to scientific readers. Therefore, it cannot be denied that a pornographic interest on the part of the public is accountable for a part of the wide circulation of the book.²⁴

Despite believing that the lay readers of the book sought only a pornographic thrill, Schrenck-Notzing acknowledges the positive impact of the book:

> But, in spite of this disadvantage, the injury done by implanting knowledge of sexual pathology in unqualified persons is not to be compared with the good accomplished. History shows that uranism was very widespread long before the appearance of ‘Psychopathia Sexualis.’ The courts have constantly to deal with sexual crimes in which the responsibility of the accused comes in question.²⁵

In addition to disseminating well-researched information about sexual deviancy in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Schrenck-Notzing concedes that the behavior Krafft-Ebing describes in the book is not new to humanity. The judicial system has heard cases involving these acts for a long time. He points out one advantage to the book’s popularity: the courts will have a greater understanding of the culpability of those committing the crimes.

*Psychopathia Sexualis* was widely read by the medical community and the general public, which is why my analysis of sexual deviancy in this chapter will return to the work repeatedly; however, it is not the only medical tome that professionals feared would fall into the “wrong” hands. In 1893, Emile Gautier reviewed Albert Moll’s *Les Perversions de l’instinct*

²⁵ Krafft-Ebing, vii.
genital, published that same year and with a preface written by Krafft-Ebing. Like Krafft-Ebing, Moll incorporates case studies into his analysis of deviant sexuality. He does not sugarcoat or gloss over the symptoms and desires that plagued his patients. Gautier writes that he read the book with “sadness,” and although he does not feel comfortable going into the details of the book in the Figaro where anyone could read it, he notes the importance of the study as pure science.26 Although he recognizes the difficulty that some reviewers have had with the material, he believes that Georges Carré’s attempt to get the book deemed pornographic went too far. Yet Gautier clearly has concerns about the book being read by the general public. He writes, “This is a medical book, perfectly incapable of corrupting just anyone, but which professionals, on the other hand, have the right – at the very least, I would say the need – to consult.”27 Not only did journalists worry about the bad influence medical texts could have on the general public, but they also concerned themselves with the subjects depicted in literature. In 1885, a person writing under the vague pseudonym “Quidam” or “someone” fretted on the front page of the Figaro about the reprinting of the Marquis de Sade’s books, Justine and Malheurs de la vertu. He points out the fanaticism that Sade’s fans had for him, saying that they view him as the high priest of a new religion, like a prophet of pornography.28 He hopes that the people professing their love for the books are merely posers who have not read the works. Furthermore, he laments the number of writers following in Sade’s footsteps. The genre promises no money for

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26 He writes: “Or, ce livre, je l’ai lu, avec tristesse peut-être – car il ne saurait y avoir rien de gai à éplucher les ordures de la chair en folie et à remuer les dessous fangeux de la bête humaine – mais avec intérêt, et j’y ai trouvé plus d’un enseignement d’un haut intérêt philosophique ou moral, et si je n’en ai pas parlé dans le Figaro, c’est parce que toutes les vérités ne sont pas bonnes à dire, surtout dans un journal qui, n’étant pas rédigé en latin et pouvant tomber dans toutes les mains, n’a pas le droit de se permettre certaines brutalités.” Emile Gautier, “Feuilles de vigne,” Le Figaro, June 25, 1893. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

27 “C’est un livre de médecine, parfaitement incapable de corrompre qui que, ce soit, mais que tous les professionnels, en revanche, ont le droit – pour un peu, je dirais le devoir – de consulter.” Gautier, “Feuilles de vigne” (emphasis in the original).

28 Quidam, “Le divin Sade,” Le Figaro, April 27, 1885.
the authors, but they cling to the badge of honor that it bestows upon them despite the poor view
of humanity that they promulgate.

The author known as “Quidam” had support for his position. In La Presse in 1892, A. de
Metz also lamented the type of subject matter writers emphasized in their work. He begins his
article by noting that they live “[i]n a time when our writers of the first order prostitute their pens
to detail the filthy sophistication of sadism and the mysteries of Lesbos.” Even though the
subject of the article has nothing to do with sadism or lesbianism, the author used them as well-
known markers for society’s decadence. Likewise, Victor Charbonnel bemoaned the shrines that
modern writers have built to hashish, alcohol, and desire. In 1896, he singled out Charles
Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs du mal (published in 1857) for its celebration of vice, and accused
Barbey d’Aurevilly of “catholicisme sadique.”

Yet not all of the novels that featured some aspect of sadism were deemed to be filth. La
Nouvelle Revue, for example, reviewed Jean Lorrain’s Buveurs d’âmes and found it to depict a
complicated view of love, which happened to include aspects of sadism. Likewise, in his
ruminations on modern love, Catulle Mendès considers how sadism could have tender aspects
and not always aim to injure the other party. These diverse views of sadism suggest that the
practice had a wide range of interpretations in literature, among critics, and in the medical
community. Still, choosing to include a sadomasochistic plotline in a novel was not without its

29 Metz writes, “A une époque où des écrivains de premier ordre prostituent leur plume à détailler
les raffinements immondes du sadisme et des mystères de Lesbos, il y a quelque hardiesse à
traiter dans un grand journal parisien les graves et saines questions de morale et de philosophie.”
A. de Metz, “Le Bouddhisme parisien,” La Presse, June 22, 1892.
30 The article looks at the rise of Buddhism in Paris. At the end of it, he wonders why anyone
needs Buddha when they have Jesus. A. de Metz, “Le Bouddhisme parisien.”
31 Victor Charbonnel, “Les Mystiques dans la littérature présenté (suite), troisième partie: à
travers les chapelles mystiques,” Le Mercure de France 17, no. 75 (March 1896): 340-355.
32 “Bulletin bibliographique: romans, poésies, théâtre – Buveurs d’âmes, par Jean Lorrain
33 The article was considered important enough to be featured on the front page. Catulle Mendès,
risks. In 1902, André Barre lost his job at a lycée in Montpellier due to the content of his book, Les Sages, published in 1901. The book as a whole was not deemed unacceptable, but some offending sections were judged “immoral and bearing the mark of sadism.”

However, even some novels that did not address the topic of sadism or sexual deviancy in the direct manner that Buveurs d’âmes did still created a space in which a man played a controlling role in the life of a woman. For example in Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s Eve of the Future Eden, Thomas Alva Edison invents a machine in the form of a woman. A woman can lose her charm and allure once a man becomes well acquainted with her, but a machine programmed to have all of a particular woman’s pleasing qualities and none of her distressing ones could never disappoint. Therefore, he creates a machine or Andreid, which he names Hadaly. He forms Hadaly in the image of his friend Lord Ewald’s lost love, Miss Alicia. In addition to building a woman to meet Lord Ewald’s needs and desires in a partner, Edison also controls another woman named Mrs. Annie Anderson with an iron ring. Mrs. Anderson suffers from a disorder that causes her to sleep for days. After attempting to cure her with no alleviation in her symptoms, Edison makes two iron rings, one for him to wear and one for her, that he uses to control her. While he orchestrates her actions, Mrs. Anderson does not feel or act like herself, and after a few months under Edison’s influence, she asks to change her name to Any Sowana. In her alternate state as Any Sowana, Mrs. Anderson gains the ability to read minds as well as guide the behavior of Hadaly. The novel does not touch upon the issue of sexual deviancy and, aside from noting that Miss Alicia had given herself to a prior suitor, does not address the topic of sex. Yet the desire to

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34 Le Figaro describes the problems with the book: “D’après notre confrère, cette révocation aurait eu pour cause un chapitre du livre où l’auteur parlait avec amertume des misères de la vie de répétiteur. La véritable cause de la révocation est, non pas dans ce chapitre, mais dans certains passages du livre tellement immoraux et empreints d’un tel sadisme, que la mesure s’est imposée.” “Hier et demain,” Le Figaro, February 9, 1902.

shape the actions of women and the belief that women have animal-like drives ruling their behavior coincides with much of the underlying issues fueling the clashes between genders in some novels, medical literature, and newspaper articles exploring sexuality and sexual deviancy.

In such a climate in which the medical community, novelists, and the reading public debated the causes, dangers, and morality of sexual deviance, the presence of sadomasochistic elements in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings seems less startling and strange. What we see in *Voltige*, then, is an engagement with the medical discourse that so much of the general public, including Lautrec, had been reading as well as the popular debates surrounding sexual deviance. The drawing includes elements of danger and humiliation. The woman risks injury when she attempts the difficult stunt. If it goes wrong and she loses her grip on the horse, or the horse does not follow her commands, she faces harm and the disappointment of failing. More than this, though, she faces the ringmaster with his whip in waiting, holding the threat of pain and humiliation if the equestrienne does not perform to his standards.

Lautrec tantalizes the voyeuristic viewer again in his re-presentation of *Voltige* in *Travail sur le panneau*, 1899 (figure 6). In this drawing, the woman, no longer dangling from the flank of the horse, has pulled herself onto its back, mounting from the opposite side. She, like the woman in *Voltige*, forms a union with the horse, producing a single shadow that fuses their bodies together. Her elaborate costume enhances her physical presence on top of the enormous stallion with undulating muscles. Both she and the ringmaster wear performance attire; however in *Voltige*, the woman wears significantly less than her male counterparts. This discrepancy heightens the sexualization of the equestrienne in the drawing. Rather than appearing to be subjected to and objectified by the men in *Travail*, the equestrienne holds her head high and, together with the horse, dwarfs the ringmaster. He faces her with a stern expression and downturned mustache while staring her down. His dominance in these drawings seems correlated to the length of his whip.
In *Travail*, the proud equestrienne presents only her back to the viewer, who must imagine the sight to which the ringmaster is privy. One can picture her legs spread apart and pressed against the side of the stallion, her body moving in tune with his, as Lautrec painted in *Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando)*. She wears an elaborate green costume (the same green as the fabric draped over the horse) with a low-cut back. A layered tulle skirt radiates out from her waist across the horse’s back. One can visualize the short skirt bouncing up with each step that the animal takes, teasing the ringmaster with the hope of seeing further up her thighs.

A similar teasing of the viewer occurs in Jean-Léon Gérôme’s *The Snake Charmer*, ca.1870 (figure 28). Linda Nochlin notes that Gérôme toys with the viewer, and uses the nudity of the boy and his young age to enhance the viewer’s excitement. The exposure of the boy to his attentive audience in the painting (as well as to the viewer) and the threat of danger mimic the position of the equestrienne before the ringmaster. The boy stands with his back to the viewer. A snake is coiled around his torso and extended left arm. A group of men lined against the wall watch the act, enjoying both the performance and the boy’s body. Although viewers do not have access to the frontal view of the boy, they can derive some satisfaction from the boy’s bare bottom and supple physique while imagining the view to which they do not have access. Similarly, *Travail* refuses the viewers’ desire to see what the ringmaster sees, and then doubles their frustration by thwarting the viewers who yearn also to see the equestrienne’s exposed backside; the costume simultaneously exasperates and entices them.

Lautrec masters visual manipulation in these drawings. He offers just a glimpse of the women’s bodies, enough to grab the viewer’s attention, but he reveals very little of the bodies and none of the most exciting bits. Furthermore, he hints at the possibility of violence. The tension and psychological struggle for dominance in the drawing are clear, especially in *Travail*, but

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Lautrec does not depict any violence happening to the women. Lisa Z. Sigel notes the increased effectiveness of the promise of violence or sexual encounters over the explicit depiction of them in postcards from this time. She concludes that by only showing the build up to the act and not the act itself the photograph “implied imminence rather than closure.” The semi-nude girls on the postcards are forever undressing just as the equestriennes in Lautrec’s drawings endure the constant threat of violence and humiliation. The threat never materializes, and therefore, the viewer is left in a state of anticipation.

The promise of violence laced with desire in Lautrec’s drawings harkens back to Krafft-Ebing’s definitions of sadism and masochism. He views sadism as the “perfect counterpart” to masochism, and its enthusiasts found pleasure in dominance and, at times, abuse. It was commonly assumed in the medical community that male sexuality complemented masochistic female sexuality and had its roots in sadism. Krafft-Ebing believed that sadism was “natural to primitive man,” and civilization masked this characteristic and introduced compassion to man. This introduction dampened the influence of sadism on his character. In contrast, for Sigmund

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38 Nude and semi-nude photographs of women and girls were especially popular in the 1890s and early 1900s. In 1893, *La Revue de médecine légale et de jurisprudence médicale* published an article lamenting the circulation of these photographs and the exploitation of the women and girls in them. The anonymous author traces the practice back to Tardieu in 1861, and he laments that the practice has expanded into a way for brothels to promote their ladies. He writes, “Ces reproductions authentiquement d’après nature en apprennent long sur la prostitution infantile et la part qu’y prend le proxénétisme des renancières: comme la classique procureuse de Suburre, elles ont le droit de ‘corporaliter et propter res venerarias curare virgines.’ Elles cherchent à vendre tout cela de deux à cinq francs l’exemplaire, selon le degré de curiosité vicieuse ou d’imbécilité du client.” “Les Maisons de tolérances et la morale publique,” *La Revue de médecine légale et de jurisprudence médicale* (1893): 132 (emphasis in the original).
39 This state of anticipation or “imminence rather than closure” is one that I will explore in more detail in regards to early film in Chapter 4.
40 Krafft-Ebing, 148.
41 Krafft-Ebing, 86.
Freud, sadism was one stage in the construction of an adult sexual identity rather than being a remnant of the journey from barbaric to civilized man.\textsuperscript{42}

As a part of human evolutionary development, as well as an aspect of sexual development, sadism was always lurking under the surface, ready to strike at any moment. Perhaps this is why psychologists did not differentiate between light spankings and brutal sadistic criminal acts, including murder. Even a person who fantasized about a sadistic act was viewed as the same as one who acted on those impulses.\textsuperscript{43} Although the manifestations of sadism may have varied, doctors classified them as the same perversion.\textsuperscript{44}

For Freud, sadism and masochism are two expressions of the same aberration. The masochist can request that punishment be inflicted on his or her body. The desire for punishment, regardless of the body on which the punishment is focused, is a sadistic request. Likewise, the delivering of lashings to another can offer masochistic pleasure when the person holding the whip imagines what it would feel like to be lashed.\textsuperscript{45} In this view of sadomasochism, the two planes of


\textsuperscript{43} Alison Moore is one of the scholars who notes this common feature of nineteenth-century physicians and psychologists, including Krafft-Ebing. See her “The Invention of Sadism? The Limits of Neologisms in the History of Sexuality,” \textit{Sexualities} 12, no. 4 (August 1, 2009): 489.

\textsuperscript{44} Krafft-Ebing writes, “Sadistic acts vary in monstrousness with variation in the power of the perverse instinct over the individual afflicted, and with variation in the strength of opposing ideas that may be present, which almost always are more or less weakened by original ethical defect, hereditary degeneracy, or moral insanity. Thus there arises a long series of forms which begins with capital crime and ends with silly acts which afford the perverse desires of the sadistic individual merely symbolic satisfaction.” Krafft-Ebing, 61.

perversion slide and bump against each other. They, thus, allow for multiple points of entry for the participants and for those viewing the interaction. The limits of sadism and masochism are unclear and the roles are malleable.

The interchangeable nature of the sadistic and masochistic roles is an essential feature of Lautrec’s drawings. Viewers can decide which position they would like to assume, and they can switch at any point. The figure of the ringmaster provides the most obvious point of identification for a viewer seeking to inhabit the space of the sadist/dominator. In contrast, the equestrienne and the horse offer those seeking a more passive role to explore. However, the equestrienne occasionally challenges the ringmaster’s authority, such as in Travail sur le panneau. Thus, in this work, a viewer can experience the roles of the dominant and passive participants in one figure. As we examine these drawings more closely, we will see the complexity of the figures’ relationship to each other and the viewer.

If we turn our attention back to Travail, we see that the number of figures represented enhances the tension between the ringmaster and the equestrienne. A small group of spectators along the perimeter of the ring in Travail remains oblivious to the provocative teasing happening mere feet away from them. Lautrec drew the men standing in the shadows next to the stands. From their silhouettes, we can deduce that they are a motley group of performers, which includes at least two clowns, and a man in a top hat. He placed them in a tight space, and they look in different directions. A few of them look toward the performers, but they do not appear to be particularly impressed or enthralled by the proceedings. The emphasis, thus, remains on the battle of wills occurring between the equestrienne and the ringmaster. It is a power struggle that radiates sexual tension.

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The distracted crowd in *Travail* allows the viewer to sneak a peak at the private moment between the ringmaster and his performer. Like Lautrec, Georges Seurat also depicted a distracted crowd in *Cirque*, 1890-91 (figure 29). In this painting, half of the people in the stands scan the crowd, gossip to neighbors, or gaze into space in response to the performance in the ring. Similarly, the onlookers in *Travail* remain engrossed in their conversations, distractions, and boredom. They do not look directly at the equestrienne and ringmaster who stare at each other, nor do they glance out at the viewer. It is in fact the gaze of the horse, not the crowd, that initiates the viewer into the scene in a similar manner as the clown in *Voltige*. The intensity of the equestrienne’s and the ringmaster’s locked eyes and the positions of their bodies betray a battle of wills, which the woman seems to be winning.

Lautrec painted an equally powerful exchange in *Equestrienne (At the Circus Fernando)*. Although both *Equestrienne* and *Voltige* share a common theme (a possibly sadomasochistic circus) and cast of characters (an equestrienne, a horse, clown(s), and a ringmaster), they convey different tones. *Equestrienne* pulsates with a highly charged atmosphere of playful sexual tension stimulated by the locked eyes of the equestrienne and the ringmaster. The ringmaster’s firm phallic whip extends to the horse’s leg and then goes limp at the bottom of the canvas while well-dressed men and one woman in the stands watch. Two clowns with parts of their bodies cut off from view perform in another part of the ring; they serve as secondary figures to the more prominent drama between the ringmaster and equestrienne.

Like *Equestrienne*, *Voltige* also has an element of suspense emanating from the ringmaster and the woman, but it contains no other performance on which to focus: the licentious clown peeking out watches the action with the viewer. Anne Roquebert interprets the vacant stands as a testament to Lautrec’s solitary experience in the sanitarium. She points out that aside
from his attendant and another patient Lautrec rarely saw anyone during his day. While it may be true that Lautrec spent most of his time alone at Neuilly and the unpopulated stands of the drawings parallel this aspect of his experience, we cannot limit our analysis of the drawings to only this facet. The barren stands convey more than emptiness and loneliness. They provide a form of protection for the viewer.

Additionally, the dearth of figures endows the work with a sense of secrecy. The empty stands in *Voltige*, and in the other drawings from the *Au cirque* series, intensify the privacy of the moment for the viewer in contrast to the act performed for populated stands in *Equestrienne*. In these drawings, Lautrec makes our behind-the-scenes access to the circus clear. The performers practice in a space cordoned off from prying eyes. The ringmaster and his performers act out their quests for dominance within the practice space. The intensity of their gazes, the scantily dressed equestriennes, the precariousness of the women’s poses, and the connotations of the circus itself indicate a clandestine pleasure to the viewer. This pleasure goes beyond that of the artist at the time he drew the pictures. It is one that every viewer who sees the works shares. Indeed, Lautrec began thinking about a wide audience for his drawings soon after his release from Neuilly. He wrote to W. H. B. Sands on October 28, 1899 to inform the London-based publisher of his plans to collect some of the drawings for a book to be produced by Joyant Manzi and Company. Moreover, the size of the drawings enhanced the intimacy and the secrecy that the empty stands suggest to the viewer. Most of them measure approximately twenty-five by thirty-five centimeters (ten by fourteen inches). This relatively small size compared to the painting

Equestrienne, which is four times as large, increases the viewers’ ability to engage with the work. They can hold the drawing in their hands and peruse their treasure at their leisure. Furthermore, the size lends the drawings a forbidden tone. By virtue of their relative smallness, the works could easily be hidden and viewed in private; a feature that no doubt enhanced the appeal of their unconventional subject matter for viewers.

With the publication of twenty-two of the drawings in 1905, the audience for the Au cirque series expanded. The drawings resonated with a larger audience than Lautrec’s family and friends because the subject matter was familiar and ignited viewers’ fantasies. Circuses attracted their audience in part due to their exotic animals and acrobats. They also drew crowds because sex sells. The sexualized nature of the Au cirque drawings reflects the public’s attitude towards the circus and the material used to promote it in the fin de siècle. The aura of sexuality around the circus enhanced the erotic appeal of the drawings.

Circus memorabilia routinely displayed semi-nude women engaged in questionable activities. One program for the Cirque Molier in 1893 included a drawing by Albert Guillaume (figure 30) consisting of eight insets featuring women in various states of (un)dressing, evoking popular girlie postcards of the period. Men in formal attire cluster around the boxes and peep at the women as they prepare to go on stage. The next year’s program contained two drawings by Adolphe Willette titled Mlle Magnitta en charmeuse de serpents (figure 31) and C’est la faute à Molier (figure 32) that suggest heterosexual and lesbian encounters. Mlle Magnitta depicts a

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48 Susan Stewart examines the effect that the size of an object has on the viewer’s experience. See her chapter “The Miniature” in On Longing: Narratives on the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 37-69. It was originally published in 1984 by Johns Hopkins University Press.

49 It is important to remember that performers in the Cirque Molier came from both the aristocracy and the working class. One cannot determine the class background of the women depicted, but one could assume that a respectable woman would not allow herself to be seen in a state of undress. Thus, the voyeurism is at the expense of working-class women, adding an additional level of fascination and exploitation. For a detailed examination of the Cirque Molier, see Ernest Molier, Cirque Molier: 1880-1904 (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1905).
snake winding around the body of a clothed woman in a domestic setting. The woman and snake pose in a manner similar to that of the boy and his snake in Gérôme’s *Snake Charmer*: she supports the serpent’s body with her right arm and stretches her face towards its head.\(^{50}\) The proximity of the phallic animal’s head to the woman’s mouth and her delicate grip on the snake as demonstrated by the extension of her pinky finger suggest fellatio.\(^{51}\) The other picture shows two women in a bedroom. The dress of the woman on the left hangs below her breasts, fully exposing them to her partner and the viewer. The woman on the right extends her hand, palm upturned and fingers beginning to curl in anticipation of fondling the other woman’s breast.\(^{52}\)

These drawings appeared in programs at the circus. Anyone in attendance could purchase them. These were popular promotional materials and keepsakes. They are playful and direct. The compositions contain less innuendo than Lautrec’s drawings. This was likely due in part to the medium; a program does not engender close reading. Most often, one flips quickly through it, stopping only at the most interesting articles and pictures. These images certainly would have caught the attention of someone absently browsing the book. They are quite different from Lautrec’s more implicit drawings.

While programs were certainly popular, they were not the only titillating depictions of the circus nor were they the only items for sale at the circus. Henri-Gabriel Ibels’s lithograph *Champ de foire 25 rue Fontaine*, undated (figure 33) and Henry Gerbault’s design for the Cirque Molier’s souvenir handkerchief, 1892 (figure 34), also demonstrate the common conception of

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\(^{50}\) Lautrec portrayed a similarly posed woman with a snake winding up the body of Jane Avril in *Jane Avril*, 1899, color lithograph (Wittrock P.29).

\(^{51}\) Bram Dijkstra examines the association between women and snakes. He cites Arthur Singer’s musing on the subject in a July 1900 issue of *The Smart Set*: “O sinuous being, lithe and strange,’ he cried, ‘Soft tiger-soul, snake-spirit shy, / Of you which will they make - / A velvet padded hunter, or / A shadow-loving snake?” Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 305. I explore the connection of women and animals in more detail in Chapter 3.

\(^{52}\) This drawing may also be related to the subject of lesbianism in brothels. It was a popular belief that prostitutes kept themselves busy with their colleagues in between clients.
the circus as a place of “mysterious morals.” The nineteenth-century audience perceived the circus as existing in a separate ethical sphere that celebrated words and actions unthinkable in polite bourgeois society; like Alice falling through the looking glass, the audience fell into a world of inversion.

In Ibel’s lithograph, a man who is presumably part of the circus, lifts his hat and holds the curtain open for a woman dressed in the latest fashion. The half-open curtain conceals the show inside and builds the audience’s anticipation for what is to come. The scene has the something of the illicit and exciting activity of going behind the red velvet curtain at certain video rental establishments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Performers and musicians outside the tent lure people inside to see the show. The man holding the curtain wears tight-fitting clothing and eyes the woman with a licentious expression. The woman walks up the stairs to enter the doorway, hiking her skirt, a saucy maneuver that exposes the length of her ankle. A man with a top hat and cane in the lower left corner wipes his forehead as he climbs the stairs. The black lines denoting the vertical rises of the steps vacillate between appearing to be steps and looking like a railing that separates the distinguished gentleman from the woman and the spectacle.

53 An anonymous writer referred to the “mysterious morals” of the circus in praise of the entertainment on page 10 of Le Courrier français on May 27, 1888. He writes: “Long live the Circus, where there is nothing that disturbs the spectator, neither the events often difficult to follow—even while traveling—nor the dialogues of the living, which recall so many times the dialogues of the dead! Long live the Circus with its sandy ring, its prideless palfreys, its jovial clowns, its gracefulness, its robustness, its mockery, its rides, its mimicry, its trapeze at the top, its carpet at the bottom, its somersaults, its gibberish, its acrobatic prowess and the mystery of its morals.” As cited by Phillip Dennis Cate in “The Cult of the Circus,” in Pleasures of Paris: Daumier to Picasso, exh. cat., ed. Barbara Stern Shapiro (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1991), 38.

54 The 2006 Whitney Biennial employed the popular red velvet curtain to conceal/reveal Francesco Vezzoli’s Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal’s “Caligula,” 2005 (the video is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpUzCyLiMmM). The curtain was used in part to hide the racy short film from general view; the camp quality of the curtain was likely also appealing.
More evocative than Ibels’s lithograph is Gerbault’s drawing of a nearly naked woman holding a banner. Clothed only in her gloves, stockings, and high-heeled shoes, she provides the audience with a view of her backside and flawless face. She coquettishly leans with one leg resting on the top of the stool and looks over her shoulder at the viewer. The pose allows her to extend her back fully and arch it to expose the silhouette of her right breast. The banner she holds reads, “Cirque Molier 1892.” This picture appeared on souvenir handkerchiefs. Even more than Lautrec’s drawings, this object could be tucked secretly and safely away in one’s pocket. When released from its hiding spot, it provided the owner with private enjoyment.

These depictions of the circus reinforced the bourgeoisie’s notion of the circus as debauched. The indiscreet costumes and contortions, in addition to the usually lower class origins of the performers, fueled the mistrust of respectable society. However, concerns over the rectitude of the circus troupe and skepticism about mingling with the lower class did not prevent the bourgeoisie from enjoying the entertainment. On the contrary, the mingling of sex and class most likely enhanced their experience.55

The prevalence of sex in the promotional materials of the circus reveals the battle emerging between the Victorian standards of proper behavior and the public’s preoccupation with sex in nineteenth-century France. Although polite society banished the subject from its lips, it felt a compulsive need to classify and identify deviant forms of it. Michel Foucault notes that as sex was pushed out of conversation, doctors focused their efforts on categorizing and studying sexual behavior and desires that they deemed abnormal.56 The subject became an obsession as societal

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55 The Cirque Molier went so far as to hold a special performance for those wealthy women who preferred not to mingle with the masses. See Cate, 44. For a discussion of class interactions in other public venues including dance halls, see T. J. Clark, “A Bar at the Folies-Bergère,” in The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 205-258. It was first published in 1984.

regulations and notions of purity de-eroticized sex within marriage, and men sought out
prostitutes to find solace from perfunctory sexual encounters. In contrast to the tamed sexuality
though appropriate for bourgeois marriages, the Decadents seemed to flaunt their sexuality in
their personal lives by dressing androgynously and taking lovers. They also explored salacious
subjects in their writing and art. Sadomasochism ranked highly among the various sexual sins of
the fin de siècle. Individuals who took part in this behavior either require or prefer their pleasure
to be laced with violence and/or humiliation.

In the fin de siècle, degeneracy was believed be passed from generation to generation;
one was born into it. Dr. B. A. Morel writes:

The clearest notion we can form of degeneracy is to regard it as a morbid deviation from an original type. This deviation, even if, at the outset, it was ever so slight, contained transmissible elements of such a nature that anyone bearing in him the germs becomes more and more incapable of fulfilling his functions in the world; and mental progress, already checked in his own person, finds itself menaced also in his descendants.

If a person has a degenerate tendency, then there is no doubt that it will be transmitted to his or her children, who will continue the degenerate line. These tendencies reveal themselves in one’s physical appearance. In a period that believed in phrenology, one would expect no less. Max Nordau identified many “stigmata,” as he called them, that a degenerate would surely exhibit:

58 Krafft-Ebing dedicated a large portion of Psychopathia Sexualis to examining manifestations of this “disorder” including lust murder, symbolic sadism, sadism, sadistic acts on animals, and bondage. See Krafft-Ebing, 56-151, 378-401.
60 One can see this interest in the relationship between psychological disorders and appearance in dictionaries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in contemporary autobiographical interpretations of Lautrec’s work.
Such stigmata consist of deformities, multiple and stunted growths in the first line of asymmetry, the unequal development of the two halves of the face and cranium; then imperfection in the development of the external ear, which is conspicuous for its enormous size, or protrudes from the head, like a handle, and the lobe of which is either lacking or adhering to the head, and the helix of which is not involuted; further, squint-eyes, harelips, irregularities in the form and position of the teeth; pointed or flat palates, webbed or supernumerary fingers (syn- and poly-dactylia), etc.\footnote{Nordau, 17. The characteristics and deformities that Nordau describes were often applied to women and Jews. I discuss this issue in regard to Lautrec’s \\textit{Reine de joie}, 1892 in Chapter 3.}

Degeneracy manifests itself physically on the body of the afflicted individual most prominently, according to Nordau, on an individual’s head. The head of a degenerate will exhibit asymmetry and malformation, which will appear irregularly on the skull and face like a mutant Mr. Potato Head. His or her fingers will also show the mark of degeneracy.\footnote{A similarly decrepit array of deformities overcame the titular character of Oscar Wilde’s \\textit{The Picture of Dorian Gray}. However, instead of the degenerate features overtaking the face and body of Gray, they manifested on a portrait of him. Oscar Wilde, \\textit{The Picture of Dorian Gray}, ed. James Gifford (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 2011). Originally published in 1890.} With such a list of deformities, one cannot imagine that degenerate people would dare to venture out of the home.\footnote{Joris-Karl Huysmans tells the story of a man, le duc Jean des Esseintes, who sequestered himself in the countryside to sate his particular desires in \\textit{À Rebours (Against the Grain)}, 1884. His extravagant tastes, such as encrusting a tortoise’s shell with gold and jewels to complement a rug, and affinity for writers who explored the more sinister and side of human nature, affected his health. He suffered from nightmares, hallucinations, overpowering smells, nausea, and fevers, which worsened when he indulged his desires. Doctors concluded that the only hope for him to recover his health would be to return to Paris and participate in “regular” life. Huysmans, \\textit{Against the Grain}, trans. John Howard (Project Guttenberg, 2004).} If they did, they could be easily avoided, should one be so unfortunate as to encounter a brazen degenerate on the street.

However, so-called degenerate behavior did not physically manifest itself on a person, and men could conceal their degenerate tendencies from their wives with the help of brothels.\footnote{Women did not have outlets for their degeneracy that were as easily found as brothels. Therefore, they may have had a more difficult time concealing and fulfilling their desires. The accounts of sadists and masochists who hid their afflictions from their partners detailed in Krafft-Ebing are all male.} Krafft-Ebing shared cases in which men went to brothels on a regular schedule to satisfy their needs without revealing their predilection to their wives and families. One man, referred to in
Case 44 in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, learned of other men’s masochistic desires from the prostitutes that he visited. He wrote to Krafft-Ebing:

I have heard numerous stories about it [masochism] from numerous prostitutes here in Berlin, and in Vienna; and I thus learned how numerous my fellow-sufferers are….Simple flagellation is so common that almost every prostitute is familiar with it; but cases of real masochism are very frequent. The men subject to this perversion submit themselves to the most refined cruelties. In this they always act the same farce with the instructed prostitutes – humiliating subjection of the man, treading upon him, commands, threats, and scoldings that have been committed to memory; then flagellation, blows on various portions of the body, and all kinds of punishment, pricking with needles, etc….Twice prostitutes have shown me heavy iron chains with handcuffs, which their patrons had made for them; and the dried peas, on which they kneeled; the seat set with needles, on which they sat at command; and many other similar things.65

Men visiting prostitutes felt comfortable making specific requests to suit their particular masochistic desires. Some even went so far as to have specialized chains and manacles manufactured for their sessions. Lautrec likely witnessed similarly equipped rooms in 1893 and 1894 when he lived in two different brothels; one was located on Rue d’Amboise, and the other was on rue des Moulins, which had specific rooms dedicated to clients’ fantasies. For example, one of the rooms had a medieval theme with torture equipment.66 Krafft-Ebing repeatedly notes the frequency of these interactions and the openness with which prostitutes discussed these interactions with clients. Given the apparent regularity of sadomasochistic encounters and the

65 Krafft-Ebing, 95-96.
66 Charles Bernheimer describes the wide array of fantasies to which the brothel on rue des Moulins could cater: “An extensive costume collection [at the rue des Moulins brothel] permitted inmates to dress according to a client’s fantasies. Hence it was possible to encounter in the brothel’s corridors a nun, a nurse, a bride in white, a widow in mourning, an Indian dancing girl, a kimono-clad Japanese, and a tamer of wild beasts, whip in hand. So exotic and showy was all this that proper society ladies came by to see what everyone was talking about, giving rise to Lautrec’s quip, ‘Les plus putains sont celles qui visitent.’” Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 195-196.
similarities among prostitutes’ accounts, Krafft-Ebing and at least one of his patients concluded that masochism in men is indeed widespread.67

Just as masochism could hide in an average-looking individual, it could also appear in men who are apparently happily married, but who would go to brothels to have their fantasies enacted. Case 47 in Psychopathia Sexualis describes a man who visited a brothel one to two times a year to have the women whip him over the course of several days. During the beatings, he would beg for mercy, and then be granted a respite from abuse, after which the women would resume their role as flagellators and jailers. When he returned home to his family, he claimed that they had no inkling of the true nature of his trip.68 Another patient, referred to in Case 50, was a thirty-five year old male who described himself as “mentally and physically normal.”69 He stated that he loved his wife, but required a prostitute to satisfy his masochistic desires. He said:

Punctually, then, with the occurrence of libido, came the masochistic fancies again, which, in spite of my great love for my wife, necessitated coitus with another, with the accompaniment of masochistic ideas. It is here worthy of not

67 Those who wrote to Krafft-Ebing and those with whom he worked primarily lived in Europe. Case 50 notes:

“Finally, I should mention that, according to my experience, the number of masochists, especially in large cities, seems to be quite large. The only sources of such information are – since men do not reveal these things – words of prostitutes; and, since they agree on the essential points, it may be concluded that certain facts are proved.

“Thus there is the fact that every experienced prostitute is accustomed to keep some suitable instrument (usually a whip) for flagellation; but it must be remembered that there are men who have themselves whipped simply to increase their sexual pleasure; who, in contrast with masochists, regard flagellation as a means to an end.

“On the other hand, almost all prostitutes agree that there are many men who like to play ‘slave,’ – i.e., like to be so called, and have themselves scolded and trod upon and beaten. As has been said, the number of masochists is larger than has yet been dreamed.”

Krafft-Ebing observes at least ten cases in which men visited prostitutes to be trod upon and bound. Of course, there is little mention of the legions of deformed men traversing the boulevards of Europe during this period, as one who staked his/her beliefs in phrenology would expect. Krafft-Ebing, 89-137.

68 One may find it curious that the man’s wife never inquired about the lash marks from the ordeal; however, the man believed that his secret was safe. Whether or not his wife had questions about any physical evidence of the beatings, remains unknown. It seems clear that whatever concerns she may have had went unspoken. Krafft-Ebing, 101.

69 Krafft-Ebing, 106.
that *coitus maritalis*, which was later resumed, did not prove sufficient to banish the masochistic ideas, as masochistic coitus always does.\textsuperscript{70}

This man was capable of intercourse without a masochistic element, something many of Krafft-Ebing’s patients were not able to do; however regular marital sex did nothing to sate his desire. Eventually, he would have to give into to his masochistic tendencies and seek fulfillment in a paid encounter.\textsuperscript{71}

Thus far, I have focused my discussion on theories concerning masochism in men. The reasons for this are twofold. First, all women were believed to have some form of masochism. Second, the figures in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings offer the viewer multiple opportunities for identification; one could easily slip from one figure, for example, the ringmaster, to another, such as the equestrienne. During the nineteenth century, most doctors believed that women possessed a natural disposition to masochism; it was in their nature, they were born this way, and there was

\textsuperscript{70}Krafft-Ebing, 106-107.

\textsuperscript{71}To give the reader an idea of the diversity of masochistic behavior displayed by Krafft-Ebing’s patients and those of contemporary doctors, here is one more case described in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Case 53 was taken from a man identified as Doctor Cox in Colorado. He described it for the Colorado State Medical Society, and the *Alienist and Neurologist* printed it in 1883. It is as follows: “X., a model husband, very moral, the father of several children, has times – i.e., attacks – in which he visited brothels, chooses two or three of the largest girls, and shuts himself up with them. He bares the upper portion of his body, lies down on the floor, crosses his hands on his abdomen, closes his eyes, and then has the girls walk over his naked breast, neck, and face, urging them at every step to press hard on his flesh with the heels of their shoes. Sometimes he wants a heavier girl, or some other act still more cruel than this procedure. After two or three hours he has enough. He pays the girls with wine and money, rubs his blue bruises, dresses himself, pays his bill, and goes back to his business, only to give himself the same strange pleasure again after a few weeks…. X. sometimes likes one of the heavier women to stand on him with her heel pressing into his eye for four to five minutes. \textit{The author speaks of dozens of similar cases that are known to him.}”

This case contains several elements that we have seen already: a married man with children conceals his masochistic desires from his family, preferring to enact them with prostitutes. Additionally, the man has heard of many other men who share his tendencies. His masochistic inclinations vary from the previously discussed cases. Rather than being bond and/or whipped and beaten, he desired zaftig women to walk upon him wearing heels. Again, there is no indication that his wife had any idea the events that had transpired.

Furthermore, the man in Krafft-Ebing’s Case 44 recounted the prostitutes with whom he visited. The women told him that they performed autoerotic asphyxiation that on other clients, as well as cutting, cuffing, and chaining clients in addition to making clients kneel on dried peas and sit on chairs with seats made of needles. Krafft-Ebing, 113, 95-96.
nothing more to be said about the subject. Anthea Callen notes that women usually served as a foil for men in psychological studies. The medical community privileged the male body as ideal and the female as “intrinsically pathological” due to the fact that it was not male. Krafft-Ebing concludes that a tendency toward masochism “is to a certain extent a normal” in women. He bases this analysis on women’s position in society. In his reasoning, he notes that men have an active role in the sexual encounter while women receive. Additionally, the structure of society places women in the service of men as wives and mothers and bars them from active roles in political life. Therefore, the position of subjugation is a familiar one. According to Krafft-Ebing’s theory, women are either naturally inclined to passivity, which resulted in the current patriarchal structure of society, or they have internalized it and no longer resist it.

At the end of the nineteenth century, people viewed selflessness, to the point of self-destruction, in women as highly desirable. In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra examines novels, paintings, and medical literature that valorized frail, injured, and dying women as models of the feminine condition. The heroine and title character of George de Maurier’s novel *Trilby* (1894), for example, grows thinner and weaker in the story to point of helplessness. She eventually goes insane. The book was one of the bestsellers of the 1890s and garnered praise and attention from young women who emulated Trilby’s style and mannerisms. The examples Dijkstra compiles extoll the virtues of emaciated, sickly women and lust after women with bodies bent at acute angles and unconscious women in a state of exhaustion (a condition known as neurasthenia). They present a particular male voyeur’s fantasy to the viewer featuring pliable females that could be manipulated at will.

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73 Krafft-Ebing, 138.
74 Krafft-Ebing, 137.
75 Dijkstra, 35.
The findings of doctors during this time fall in line with these male desires for women.

Dr. Bernard S. Talmey surmises:

The submission to pain or subjugation in itself is in no wise pathognomonic of masochism. It may not be pathological at all. Even entire sexual bondage is not, properly taken, pathological, if it be only the means of obtaining or retaining possession of the coveted person. It is not perversion, if fear of losing the companion and the desire to keep him or her always amiable, content, and inclined to love, are the motives for submission….A moderate degree of submission to the wishes and the will of the man she loves is, therefore, characteristic of the feminine nature and is not abnormal. Many a young woman worships her husband and wishes nothing better than to kneel before him. This is done because her husband means for her the whole sex and his importance to her becomes very great.⁷⁶

From Talmey, we learn that not only are instances of masochism in women acceptable, but they are also at times necessary; it may be the only way for her to keep the interest of her husband.

Again, the lack of social and political agency dictates the resources available to women. By playing the part of the victim, a woman could hope to influence or even determine the outcome of the situation. The idea that the masochist in an encounter actually controls the events that unfold is one that we will return to later.

In the drawing Voltige, the viewer is presented with a woman inhabiting the masochistic role. The equestrienne’s body hangs off the side of the horse under the gaze of the ringmaster. He oversees the rehearsal and holds onto a whip to correct any missteps quickly. The equestrienne is in a doubly subservient position: she is a woman and an employee. Society dictates obedience from those inhabiting both roles. Regardless of gender, the viewer can garner enjoyment from the figure in the position of submission or dominance.

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Sadomasochism, thus, served as a tool for artists to confront and explore the new social dynamics. Male artists and writers like Lautrec and Sacher-Masoch illustrated the mutability of gender roles through the shifting of sadistic and masochistic desires.\(^7\) The figures in *Travail* do not have static identities. The equestrienne dominates the horse (over which the ringmaster also exerts control through his whip) and locks eyes with the ringmaster. At the same time, she remains vulnerable to the ringmaster due to the exposure of her splayed legs. Viewers identify with the woman due to the composition of the drawing, and therefore share her shifting sadist-masochist role. Moreover, they hold the picture in their hands like a private devotional object worshipped at the altar of deviance. The illusion that the viewers control the scene provides them with the luxury of taking the role they prefer at that time in addition to giving them a field in which to imagine ultimate power in their fantasies.

Similarly, Edgar Degas illustrates the latter in *Miss Lala at the Cirque Fernando*, 1879 (figure 35). A scantily clad trapeze artist clamps her teeth on the end of a wire precariously suspended over the ring. She risks her life while displaying her nearly naked body for the crowd. Jeopardizing her life fuels the audience’s enjoyment. Critics in 1879 noted the brutality Degas conveyed in this picture. In *La Vie Moderne*, Silvestre writes, “Miss Lala, her crimped head violently reversed, her spine stretched in an arc, her legs hanging.”\(^8\) The review describes the unnatural angle of Lala’s body, the extreme tilt of her head, and her dangling limbs. It all but

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7 Sadomasochism had a different purpose when the author was a woman. In the circle of decadent writers, there were few women, but Rachilde was one. She explores sadism in her novel *La Marquise de Sade* (1887). Her use of violence parallels that of male writers, but she has a uniquely feminist bent. Mary Barde, the main character, uses sex to get what she wants: money, power, and freedom. She does not want to marry, but it is a necessity in a male-dominated society. Her pursuit of blood is a reaction to the ill treatment that she experienced as a child and the disadvantages that she faced in adulthood due to her sex. Therefore, sadism in Rachilde’s work fundamentally differs from that of her male counterparts. Rachilde [Marguerite Vallette-Eymery], *The Marquise de Sade*, trans. Liz Heron (Sawry: Mercure de France, 1994), 255. First published as *La Marquise de Sade* in Paris in 1887.

condemns Degas for abusing his figures; the female body is at the mercy of the whims of the artist’s brush and sadist’s gaze. The moment appears frozen and permanent. Degas provides no indication of that the performance will conclude soon. Because the composition does not include any other figures, it is difficult to determine how long the performance has lasted and whether the climactic moment has been reached. Instead, it endures, and Lala hangs before our eyes perpetually with no relief in sight.

In much the same way the audience/viewer enjoys Lala’s performance, the sadist demeans his or her partner, relishing his/her lover’s pain. In 1912, Sigmund Freud concluded:

> The principal means of protection used by men against this complaint [an inability to perform with the one he loves] consists in lowering the sexual object in their own estimation, while reserving for the incestuous object and for those who represent it the overestimation normally felt for the sexual object. As soon as the sexual object fulfills the condition of being degraded, sensual feeling can have free play, considerable sexual capacity and a high degree of pleasure can be developed.79

Therefore, according to Freud, if the respectable bourgeois shares too many qualities with the man’s mother, the fear of incest overtakes him at the critical moment, rendering him useless and frustrated. To compensate for his inability to follow through with the woman he admires, he must resort to destroying the altar on which he had previously placed her. He can accomplish this within his imagination, fantasizing that instead of being a proper lady, she is a common prostitute. Alternatively, he may, if she is willing, enact a scenario that features her as a vulgar character. Either way, the man must supply a narrative. As Laura Mulvey notes, “Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and

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strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end. The sadist uses the story to transform his/her lover into a character in order to abuse him/her.

The participants’ production of a story indicates the power of fantasy and suggestion in sadomasochistic encounters. Violence resulting in pain is not the primary goal; rather, the idea of inflicting and enduring pain in a loving relationship titillates both the sadist and masochist. The slippage of power occupies the core of the relationship. The illusion of having complete control over another propels the fantasy forward, but one must keep in mind that the acquiescence of power remains an illusion. In an actual sadomasochistic encounter, the masochist determines how far s/he will allow the sadist to go. The experience is usually fully planned, including the masochist’s bad behavior and subsequent punishment. This limitation of violence does not exist in Lautrec’s drawings, in which the sadist feeds his desires into the object.

An additional complexity to the sadomasochistic encounter is the mutability of a participant’s role as sadist or masochist, as we have discussed. Freud hypothesizes that sadism and masochism are parts of the same phenomenon, and thus the same patient has both desires. He writes:

The most striking peculiarity of this perversion [sadomasochism] lies in the fact that its active and passive forms are regularly encountered together in the same person. He who experiences pleasure by causing pain to others in sexual relations is also capable of experiencing pain in sexual relations as pleasure. A sadist is simultaneously a masochist, though either the active or the passive side of the

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80 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley (New York: Routledge, 1988), 64. The essay was first published in *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975).
81 In *Venus in Furs*, Severin indicates his dependence on narrative to Wanda. He says, “You know I am suprasensual. With me, everything has its roots in imagination.” Sacher-Masoch, 97.
82 In *Venus in Furs*, Severin loses interest in masochism when he doubts Wanda’s affection for him.
84 Multiple scholars and sadomasochists view the masochist as in control of the encounter and thus having the more powerful position in the relationship. See Weinberg and Kamel, 20 and Weinberg, “Sadism and Masochism: Sociological Perspectives,” in *S and M*, 106-107.
perversion may be more strongly developed in him and thus represent his preponderant sexual activity.\textsuperscript{85}

The ability of a sadist and a masochist to change roles in different situations adds another dimension to the fantasy, a reversal in which each participant imagines how it feels to be the other person in the scenario, to administer and endure abuse simultaneously. Furthermore, it is the fantasy, the suggestion of violence that arouses the sadist and masochist more than any physical enacting of the desire.\textsuperscript{86} The transferability of the roles in a sadomasochistic encounter, therefore, complements the importance of fantasy in the experience.

In order to transition easily from one role to another, the narrative of the sadomasochistic encounter must be clear. A clear narrative also plays an important role in photography, which captures one moment in a series of events. The medium coaxes the viewer to construct a story using the figures in the photograph. It allows for the preservation of episodes in the public and private realms. Pierre Louÿs (a novelist, poet, and writer of lesbian fiction) employs these aspects of the new technology in nude photographs of his lover, Marie de Régnier; at least one of his photographs of her depicts a possible sadomasochistic fantasy.\textsuperscript{87} In this photograph (figure 36), a naked Régnier sits upright on a chair guarded by a bed and a nightstand. Her legs extend straight in front of her and bend at ninety-degree angles, following the contour of the wooden chair. She

\textsuperscript{85} Freud, “Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex: The Sexual Aberrations,” 538. Paul H. Gebhard found similar results in his work from the 1960s: “Relatively few sadomasochists are exclusively sadists or exclusively masochists; there is generally a mixture with one aspect predominant. This mixing is sometimes necessitated by circumstances: sexual partners are extremely difficult to find and consequently, for example, if two masochists meet they are obliged to take turns at the sadist role. The role-taking is made easier by ability to project. The masochist playing the sadist may fantasy himself receiving the pain he is inflicting.” Paul H. Gebhard, “Sadomasochism,” in S and M, 37.


\textsuperscript{87} Louÿs’s works include Les chansons de Bilitis (1894), Aphrodite: mœurs antiques (1896), and La femme et le pantin (1898). In 1909, he became a Chevalier in the Légion d’honneur, and he became an Officier in 1922.
makes unabashed eye contact with the viewer, but her stern gaze offers a warning, rather than an invitation, in a manner reminiscent of Édouard Manet’s *Olympia*, 1863 (figure 37).

Bound, Régnier plays along with the scenario in this photograph, feeding the sadist/viewer. The alternative viewpoint is also possible. Her stoic expression challenges the sadist/viewer. Through her defiance, she gains some control of the situation. As Thomas S. Weinberg suggests, the dominated party dominates the situation.88 Tangled masses of bushy dark hair surround Régnier’s face and pubic region. Her arms are pinned behind the back of the chair; one cannot determine whether her arms are bound or simply held there of her own volition. The pose provides maximum exposure of her breasts. The ambiguity of the scene, the possible violence captured within the confines of bourgeois domesticity, requires a narrative to be understood.

When one interprets the photograph as a woman restrained (possibly against her will), the confrontational eyes locked on the viewer and her set mouth seem like an appropriate response, as does the position of her legs. Rather than spreading her knees apart to expose her genitals, she keeps her legs close together, guarding herself in the only way that she can against the persistent gaze of the viewer. Alternatively, she could be playing along in a sadomasochistic game, withholding from her lover the full view of her body in a psychological battle of wills, similar to the showdown between the equestrienne and ringmaster in *Travail*. Her face does not betray any sign of fear. On the contrary, the hint of a smirk in the upturned corners of her mouth communicates a challenge to the viewer to consume her, to hit her, to ravage her. The black slit-shaped shadow between her knees prohibits a view of her vagina, but its centered location produces a tantalizing and erotic effect.

Like Louÿs’s photograph, Lautrec’s *Voltige* seemingly demands that the viewer insert the scene into a sequence of possibly violent events, but the meaning is unclear. The ringmaster strikes neither the woman nor the horse. Moreover, there is nothing overtly sexual about the image: the equestrienne wears a revealing costume that bares her legs, but it is typical performance attire. Likewise, Félicien Rops (a painter and printmaker working in the style of the Symbolists, and an illustrator of erotic books) does not overtly depict a violent sex act in *La Saltimbanque*, 1878-80 (figure 38), but one can infer from the woman’s exposed breasts, the whip in her hand, and the gaze locked on someone or something behind her that she would be ready for anything. In this piece the woman maintains control: she holds the whip, she rides the horse, she looks back over her shoulder; whereas in *Voltige*, the woman is at the mercy of the two men.

Lautrec’s equestrienne cannot free a hand to ward off a blow without letting go of the horse. The clown’s sidelong gaze invites the viewer into the action, providing both a point of entrance to the picture and a devious expression (a wink-wink moment) that betrays the sadistic charge of the image. The woman’s serpentine pose and arched back could be read as sexual, but they remain open to interpretation.

An essential element of the sadomasochistic narrative, which the viewer may choose to read into the drawing, is the interplay between pleasure and power. For example, the ringmaster may revel in his dominance over the equestrienne, who may or may not enjoy the lingering threat of the whip. Power and pleasure also played a role in *scientia sexualis*. The medical community of the nineteenth century felt the need to identify and classify sexual practices that they viewed as aberrant, resulting in what Foucault refers to as the “instrument-effect.”89 He defines this as the correlation of the instances of so-called abnormal sexual practices and the reach of governmental authority: cases of sexual deviants and categories of perversity multiply as instruments of power invade the sexual behavior of private citizens. Doctors fervently sought out those who exhibited

89 See Foucault, 48-49.
what they considered anomalies in their sexual appetites, but they continued to uncover more peculiar behavior instead of reducing the number of cases. Power could not eradicate the forms of pleasure that did not meet normative sexual standards; instead, pleasure and power mixed in the space of sexual *mœurs*.

The play of power is essential in *Voltige* and in Whidopff’s *M. Jules Roques* from a Cirque Molier program in 1888. In Whidopff’s drawing, Jules Roques rehearses a performance with an actress while another one watches (figure 39). In *Voltige* and *M. Jules Roques*, the men have the power. The two men, one holding a whip and the other a stick, fixate their glances on the women, their objects of desire, ready to strike without hesitation. Whidopff’s drawing is more ostensibly sexual as the women’s bodies are exposed under diaphanous dresses and the man points his stick directly at the woman. It should be more captivating and titillating, but it fails to deliver the heightened emotion of *Voltige*. Whidopff gives too much away: the naked body of the women seductively decorated with a ribbon garter and heels, the full exposure of the woman’s breasts, her self-contained satisfaction indicated by her closed eyes and slight smile, and Roques’s wide-eyed consumption of the woman’s body. The viewer does not need to supply any additional information to get a cheap thrill on par with soft-core pornography. *Voltige*, however, does not give itself up as easily. It provides all the pieces (dominant male figure, voyeuristic sidekick, and a defenseless woman) for the viewer to compose a narrative.

To identify sadomasochism in these works one would have to be familiar with the literature on the subject or the sexual underbelly of Paris, particularly brothels catering to fantasies. The medical community considered sadism and masochism to be severe mental disorders. Krafft-Ebing concludes that those with these “disorders” should be under the careful watch of professionals at all times: they are dangerous and not well. The need to categorize deviant sexual behaviors and snuff them out became a fetish in its own right. The medical community, with the support of the government, infiltrated citizens’ most private moments in the
name of purifying the home and the sanctity of marriage. Relationships that fell outside of what
doctors considered normal heterosexuality (in which sex had the purpose, the duty, to ensure the
continuation of a strong French nation) were not acceptable. The increased obsession with proper
sexual practices led to more subdivisions of perversion.

When examining these theories of sexual deviancy, it is important not only to consider
the theories themselves but also the cultural moment of their emergence. As Krafft-Ebing notes
this relationship between behaviors and their cultural settings:

Periods of moral decadence in the life of a people are always contemporaneous
with times of effeminacy, sensuality, and luxury. These conditions can only be
conceived as occurring with increased demands upon the nervous system, which
must meet these requirements. As a result of increase of nervousness, there is
increase of sensuality, and, since this leads to excesses among the masses, it
undermines the foundation of society, - the morality and purity of family life.
When this is destroyed by excesses, unfaithfulness, and luxury, then the
destruction of the state is inevitably compassed in material, moral, and political
ruin.  

Krafft-Ebing worries that the increasing sensory experience of the city (due to industrialization
and modernization overwhelmed citizens) is diminishing the nervous systems’ ability to fight off
decadent and degenerate behavior. Degeneracy affected the entire society – men, women, and
children – and the language of deviance infiltrated the vernacular and the way that people
understood the times in which they lived.

During the 1890s, hardly a month passed without some mention of sadism in the daily
newspapers. Indeed, Vernon Rosario notes that Krafft-Ebing recognized that sadism was a “mot
courant” in French literature when he began his work on the subject. Yet the qualities that gave
sadism its currency in popular culture had little to do with the medical definition of the word put
forth by Krafft-Ebing and his colleagues in the medical profession. What had begun as a medical
diagnosis of so-called deviant sexual behavior became a way for a writer to signal the corruption

90 Krafft-Ebing, 6.
91 Vernon A. Rosario, The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1997), 149.
of an innocent woman. Journalists also used the word “sadism” to indicate their uneasiness, intrigue, or confusion regarding the subject at hand. As we will see, the person or event in question may not have even had a connection to sex, violence, or humiliation – all factors in sadism.

Marcel Prévost identifies the trendiness of sadism in literature in his article “Le secret sentimental,” which was printed on the front page of the Figaro on May 20, 1900. He focuses his attention on young men writing their first novels. They tend to write stories about men who they imagine themselves becoming in the future, and these stories always involve the moral demise of a young woman. The sadism that Prévost defines in his article has little to do with the medical definition of sadism. Rather, it concerns the downfall of a formerly honest woman caused by a young man who risked little in return. The issue worries Prévost because the novels reflect real life. He writes, “The contemporary novel is a story of mœurs: everyone agrees on this point.” The violence that these writers perform on their female characters is, in Prévost’s opinion, a form of “literary sadism:” “The crime is inexcusable, and one can unfortunately recall examples, this strange literary sadism of certain artists, can especially recall the suffering that befalls their forsaken favorite.” This form of sadism has little connection to any sexual act or

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94 “Le roman contemporain est l’histoire des mœurs: tout le monde s’accorde sur ce point.” Prévost, “Le Secret sentimental.” Prévost’s assertion echoed the opinion of writers such as Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert, who regarded the novel as the domain of les mœurs.
95 “Le crime inexcusable et l’on en peut malheureusement rappeler des exemples, c’est l’étrange sadisme littéraire de certains artistes, racontant spécialement ce qui fera souffrir la favorite abandonnée.” Prévost, “Le Secret sentimental.”
fulfillment. Rather, Prévost uses the term to describe a form of violence enacted against the character of a woman in a novel.

Similarly, Emile Bergerat frets over the state of literature in France after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Such a response does not seem unreasonable in the wake of a devastating defeat; however he wrote the article eighteen years after the war ended. He blames the effects of the loss on the proliferation of novels of questionable literary worth. The success of books addressing subjects like crime, scatology, and psychotics disturbs him not only because of the material, but also because of what it says about the state of French society. He writes:

Oh, these tears of Jules Favre! Here are their flowers, Pathos, the Physios, the Psychos, the Scatos, the Criminologicals, and the Stendhalism, the Balzacism, the Sandism and the Medanism, the Sadism and Gaboriauxism and all the schools of general Schopenhauering! They have produced, these tears of defeat, the rain, the crying, the whining, the childishness, the funereal, the obscene, the documentary, the gibberish and the degeneration on the robust soil of the powerful lifeblood, under the limpid sky without fog and without veils. They contaminate a race whose strength is its gaiety and its good sense is its health!

The French defeat stole the country’s innocence and left it to decay into a darker, more sinister version of itself. Jules Favre served as the Vice President, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Government of National Defense, which was in power from September 4, 1870 to February 13, 1871. He negotiated peace with Germany in the Treaty of Frankfurt, but his ineptitude set France on this tumultuous course. Moreover, not only has France’s fall into decadence hurt itself, but

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97 “Oh! ces larmes de Jules Favre! Voici leurs fleurs, les Pathos, les Physio, les Psycho, les Scato, les Crimino-Logies, et le Stendhalisme, et le Balzacisme, et le Sandisme et le Médanisme, et le Sadisme et le Gaboriauxisme et toutes les écoles du générale shopenhauerdement! Elles ont engendré, ces larmes de défait, le pleurard, le geignard, le bébête, le funèbre, l’obsène, le documentaire, le charabiateux et le déliquescent sur un sol robuste aux sèves puissantes, sous un ciel limpid sans brouillards et sans voiles; elles empoisonnent une race dont la gaieté était la force et le bon sens, la santé!” Bergerat, “Chronique parisienne: les larmes de Jules Favre.”
also its neighbors: “The Belgian, the Swiss, the inhabitant of Languedoc, all of the Volpuks of desolation fill the stairs of Babel, and we poison the world with the opium of our decadence.”

By the late 1880s, sadism had taken on a life of its own and become a blanket term that described any form of violence or spectacle that jarred the audience in some way. In addition to literature, another area of French society that received the label of sadism was capital punishment. Hugues Le Roux recounts the experience of an English doctor, P. –T. Bowes, who witnessed a man guillotined in a French prison. He titles the article “Sadisme.” He begins by locating sadism as a subject of discussion that men engage in after lunch or while smoking cigars, recounting second- and third-hand tales that they have heard. During one of these discussions, Bowes asks the men if they would like to hear his personal story. He tells them of visiting the guillotine the day before an execution and meeting a man who was to face the machine. The next day, he has a difficult time watching the execution, tottering on the brink of consciousness for part of it. On his journey back to the police station afterwards, he has the shocking realization that the corpse next to him in the vehicle is that of the man to whom he had spoken the previous day. When he finishes speaking, the men ask what else happened. Bowes says that there is nothing else, except that this vice does not exist in England. Le Roux seems to agree with Bowes.

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98 “Le belge, le suisse, le languedocien, tous les volapücks de la désolation emplissent les escaliers de Babel, et nous empoisonnons le monde de l’opium de notre décadence.” Bergerat, “Chronique parisienne: les larmes de Jules Favre.”
100 While this may be true of capital punishment, England had a reputation for its brothels catering to those interested in experimenting with sadism. A reviewer in Gil Blas described London as the place for Parisians with an interest in practice to go: “…Londres, ce qui est le summum du sadisme chic pour un Parisien, tandis que vous offrez simplement la moitié d’une chambre sur le boulevard, ce qui est très suffisant pour le commun des mortels.” M. L’H., “Petit Billet du Matin: Au rentier de Beyrouth,” Gil Blas, December 26, 1892. Moreover, Jean de Villiot [pseudonym for Georges Grassal de Choffat or Hugues Rebell] published a study on flagellation in England in 1899. He includes information from Mary Wilson, a famous flagellator in London in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He divides the people who seek out flagellation into three categories: those who like to be whipped by a pretty woman, those who like to whip the flesh of a pretty woman, and those who like to watch the whipping of others. He takes the reader into the private chambers of prostitutes catering to the needs of these men and reveals
regarding the brutality of the practice and agrees to raising its status to that of sadism. His finding concurs with that of another journalist named Nestor. In 1888, Nestor deemed public interest in the execution of prisoners to be a form of sadism. He writes, “It is absolutely necessary to say: an execution in Paris is a triumph of the most sinister theatricality, of perverse curiosity, of sadism of the most odious spirit, a movement of bloody sludge in the basest souls.”

The concept of sadism, then, went beyond any clinic definition Krafft-Ebing or his colleagues could offer. Although the public’s interest in what had been medically classified as an abnormality may have begun with Krafft-Ebing’s clinical examinations of the proclivity, it quickly became a way to identify an act, behavior, idea, or even culture as distasteful, violent, titillating, or difficult to understand. To gain a firmer grasp on how pervasive the term transformed, one needs only to browse the periodicals from the 1880s to the early 1900s. In an article about the inefficiencies of bureaucracy and the high frequency of train accidents, a journalist with the penname Sancho enumerates the possible reasons for the sudden increase, including that the engineers suffer from a very particular form of sadism that lusted after the piling up of train cars. The suggestion is clearly made in jest, but the ease with which he includes it in his list of possibilities is telling. Another writer examining those who practiced some of the desires and conflicted feelings of the men. Jean de Villiot, *Étude sur la flagellation à travers le monde, aux points de vue historique, médical, religieux, domestique et conjugal* (Paris: Ch. Carrington, 1899).


102 Sancho writes, “On a bien essayé d’expliquer cette épidémie de différentes façons. Les uns ont trouvé que les actionnaires touchaient des dividendes trop élevés, les autres ont insinué que les mécaniciens lisaient trop de journaux bon marché; cependant, comme d’un côté, les accidents coûtent de l’argent et diminuent les dividendes, et que, d’un autre côté, les premiers écrabouillés sont toujours les mécaniciens, il me semble nécessaire de chercher une autre explication. Il serait peut-être bon de faire interviewer les aiguilleurs: il s’en trouve peut-être quelques-uns qui éprouvent un sadisme toute particulier à la vue des wagons culbutés et des locomotives éventrées.” Sancho, “Choses de Paris et d’ailleurs,” *Gil Blas*, October 22, 1891.
usury, particularly watchmakers, mentions a sadism of cheapness. Additionally, M. L’H. writes about a “sadism of the imagination,” while Paul Bonnetaín recounts a letter from a group of students in Holland upset over an excerpt of his novel printed in the newspaper, and he accuses them of “intellectual sadism.”

Yet perhaps the most unusual and most disturbing use of sadism to describe an activity that did not directly involve sex or arousal was Maurice Guillemot’s four summaries of the Exposition Universelle of 1889 titled “Sadisme d’Exposition.” Highlighting the Otherness of the cultures on display and the strange feelings that they stir in him, Guillemot examines belly dancers and the dances of gypsies, inhabitants of Kampong (a Malaysian village), and a group he called “les répugnants,” referring to a religious sect from Tunisia. When Guillemot watches the belly dancer, the rhythm of the music and the gyrating body of the woman produce an intoxicating effect that fans the flames of desire in the hearts of men. When she finally stops dancing, she is covered in sweat and the sequins of her costume cease to catch the dim light. He calls her a “sadistic apparition.” Spectators emerge, see the Eiffel Tower, the giant “iron erection” casting its shadow on the city, and ponder the strangeness of the exposition.

Guillemot follows a similar formula in his descriptions of dancers from other cultures. He emphasizes their Otherness in both dress and movement. He describes the gypsies’ wild

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105 The students, calling themselves the “Cercle des Étudiants (Minerva)” from Leyde, found fault with Bonnetaín’s story “L’Amour malade” in the January 17, 1892 edition of *Gil Blas*. The story is about a young soldier’s experience with love. Paul Bonnetaín, “Chronique: de Lyde à Tokio,” *Gil Blas*, January 23, 1892.
gesticulating and shouts of “Olé! Olé!” as they leap and clap their hands.\textsuperscript{107} He calls them “ragpickers, mischief seekers, assassins, bohemians, rebels” who “live in the dens of thieves.”\textsuperscript{108} When writing about Kampong, he calls it a “success of exoticism.”\textsuperscript{109} The young girls hardly move, but their hands are extremely expressive. Their slight smiles remind Guillemot of a Gustave Moreau painting. He finds them hypnotizing and delightful. However, he is much less captivated by the “répugnants,” who he describes as having “emaciated faces, thinner bodies, and foolish and blissful air.”\textsuperscript{110} He is relieved to escape their violent dancing that left their faces mixed with blood and sweat.

By labeling these performances at the Exposition Universelle sadistic, Guillemot is not referring to any sexual acts performed. He uses the term to refer to dances from cultures that he does not understand. They remain murky to him even after watching the performances because he could not stop viewing them as fundamentally different from himself and other Parisians. Still, the dancers and their movements, especially the belly dancers, spark lust and interest in him despite, or perhaps because of, their forbidden nature in polite French society. Rather than examining the cultures objectively or attempting to analyze their dances and customs to gain a better understanding of them, he blames them for the feelings that they engender in him. It is easier than reconciling those desires in himself.

The prevalence of popular discourse in newspapers like the \textit{Figaro} involving sadism suggests that contemporary viewers of Lautrec’s work would have noticed the multiple sadistic undertones of the \textit{Au cirque} drawings. Beyond the obviously violent and sexual edge that the drawings possess, they also have aspects of the other connotations of sadism in the discourse of

\textsuperscript{108} “Rageurs, méchants, voleurs, assassins, ce sont, ces bohèmes, des insoumis; aux portes de Grenade, ils vivent dans des repaires.” Guillemot, “Sadisme d’Exposition II: Les Gitanas.”
the time, including Otherness and decadence. The performers did not face the same restrictions on their behavior and actions that other people, especially women, did in everyday situations. The performers could wear provocative clothing, manipulate their bodies in unusual ways, and live outside the boundaries of acceptable social mœurs in the circus. When Arsène Alexandre published nine of them in the *Figaro illustré* in 1902, readers likely recognized these differences between the performers depicted and themselves even though Alexandre does not mention them. The nine drawings from the series reproduced in the article include *Travail, Écuyère de panneau (Elle est gentille la demoiselle)* (figure 10), *Travail de répétition* (figure 9), and *Travail de panneau à travers un cerceau* (figure 7). In each of these, Lautrec suggests sexual tension and the possibility of violence. *Travail*, as we have discussed, depicts a battle of wills between the ringmaster and equestrienne. They stare at each other, neither succumbing to the pressure. The ringmaster extends his arm from his body and holds the whip ready to strike.

A similar battle of wills ensues in *Écuyère de panneau* and *Travail de répétition*. In the former drawing, a clown angrily looks at the equestrienne who demurely sits atop her horse and brings her hand up to her mouth. In the latter drawing, the ringmaster watches the equestrienne going through the paces with her horse in the practice ring. These drawings lack the thrill that *Travail* and *Voltige* possess. The players in these situations have clear roles that none of them challenges. No one struggles for dominance; it is assumed, given. Therefore, while they maintain a relationship between a dominant and a submissive, the spark between them is absent.

In contrast, *Travail de panneau à travers un cerceau* amps up the thrills by presenting a different and enticing angle to the viewer: the rear. Here, an equestrienne is about to break through a paper hoop. She has brought her knees up and reached out her hands in anticipation. The clown who holds the paper ring shares our point of view: the pink, plump back side of the equestrienne. The rosy color highlights her rear end, and no doubt found appreciation among
those interested in flagellation. It delivers enough intrigue on its own without needing to enhance it with tension between the figures.

*Travers de panneau à travers un cerceau* was not Lautrec’s first depiction of this stunt. He had previously painted on the taut surface of a tambourine: *Au cirque: écuyère*, 1888 (figure 40). In this version, both the horse and the woman are in the process of leaping through the paper hoop, the shape of which is repeated in the shape of the tambourine. They have nearly completed the stunt, leaving the viewer with no doubt about its success. Furthermore, Lautrec has completely obscured the rear end of the woman in loose brushstrokes and her tutu (the horse, however, has his rear fully on display). Even though Lautrec has thwarted the viewer’s peek of the equestrienne’s pink flesh, he has given the viewer something equally provocative: the ability to smack the woman’s and horse’s bottoms repeatedly, which shocks the tambourine to life.

In painting the tambourine, Lautrec also experienced an aspect of the thumping that a musician would eventually beat out on the instrument. Four sets of jingles inhabit the outer rim of the tambourine (three of those appear in pairs and one includes three jingles). While Lautrec painted it, he would have unleashed the trills of the jingles with his brushstrokes. Moreover, the taut vellum on which he painted his composition would have vibrated and hummed as the pressure and length of his brushstroke changed. The volume and degree of response from the vellum and jingles were directly correlated the pressure of Lautrec’s touch. The process of painting the tambourine, then, foreshadowed the sonic response from the instrument as a musician slaps it. Furthermore, in the action of slapping the tambourine, the musician hits actual

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111 Rosario notes the connection that Paul-Emile Garnier of the Special Infirmary of the Police Prefecture of Paris found between flagellators and “buttock fetishists.” Rosario, 150.


113 I will address the connection between women and animals in Chapter 3.
skin rather than the promise of it, as occurs in the drawings. Because vellum is animal skin, it shares many of the characteristics, including the texture and appearance, of human skin. Additionally, the translucency of the vellum reinforces the delicate nature of the material while revealing its strength by literally bouncing back after it is hit.

The ringmaster in *Au cirque: écuyère* holds two tools to encourage the horse and rider through their stunt. In his left hand, he hold a short thread stem whip, and in his right hand he likely brandishes a whip similar to the one in *Travail*, although the frame of the tambourine cuts it off. Unlike most of the depictions of the ringmaster in the *Au cirque* series from 1899, Lautrec painted the ringmaster on the tambourine as having an active role. The ringmaster’s left knee is bent, and he lunges toward the pair as they jump through the hoop. His extended right arm and forward momentum suggest that he already has or will soon lash the horse to encourage it as it performs the trick. By whipping the horse (most likely near its rear end), he mimics the action of the musician spanking the tambourine. However, unlike the ringmaster, the musician slaps the woman as well.

Regardless of the level of friction between the equestrienne and her male counterpart in these drawings, we witness the negotiation of gender roles. In *Travail*, we see them being challenged, while in the others, the figures seem to fall effortlessly into their assigned positions. The question about how a woman should behave and what she could or should do received intense scrutiny at the end of the nineteenth century. In the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, the stability of these roles faced greater challenges, and as a result, they held immense importance to those concerned, especially to women attempting to gain more of the rights that men held exclusively. It is to these that we will now turn our attention.114

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114 The question of how these issues affected men is equally important, and I will address it in Chapter 2.
I suggest that the shift in the social structure during the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century contributed to the proliferation of art and literature that dealt with sadomasochism in France. During these years, women encroached on what had formerly been all-male territory such as higher education and politics, but the women’s movement had a far greater impact on men psychologically. Critics feared that women would abandon their traditional role and usurp the position of men, leaving men aimless and emasculated. Conservatives envisioned brazen women dressed in drag relinquishing their roles as mothers and wives to satisfy their selfish wish for a career and suffrage at the expense of the keystone to the nation: the family.\footnote{Gaston Deschamps describes the fear without irony: “Enfin l’éducation des filles est, comme de juste (malgré certains excès de zèle), l’objet de la solicitude publique et de l’initiative privée. Les cours, les conférences, les matinées classiques abondent. Même on prévoit le temps où les femmes, stylées par les meilleurs professeurs de l’Université, seront intellectuellement supérieures à leurs maris.” Deschamps, “Les Féministes,” \textit{Le Figaro}, December 17, 1896.} New laws, such as the divorce law of 1884 and the 1893 law bestowing full legal capacity upon single and separated women, rattled the bourgeoisie’s sense of equilibrium. While it remained difficult to obtain a divorce, at least until more legislation passed twenty years later, the new laws introduced a threat to men’s power as head of the household, particularly as women sought divorce more often than men.\footnote{James F. McMillan, \textit{France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society, and Politics} (New York: Routledge, 2000), 153.}

What started slowly in the 1870s, with moves toward more protection for female factory workers, increased its momentum in the 1880s.\footnote{In December 1874, the legislature passed laws about the conditions of female minors in factories and protecting women who worked itinerant jobs. Then, in August 1878, it addressed the conditions of women who own colonial property. For a summary of the passage of laws that concerned women in France from 1850 to 1905, see Jennifer Waelti-Walters and Steven C. Hause, eds., \textit{Feminisms of the Belle Époque: A Historical and Literary Anthology} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 44-47. The 1880s saw the passage of laws relating to the education of girls, including free primary school education in 1881 and then compulsory primary school education in 1882, regulation of grants and scholarships for girls in 1882, the ability of women to run for election on primary school councils in 1886, and laws relating to...} The 1880s saw the passage of laws relating to the education of girls, including free primary school education in 1881 and then compulsory primary school education in 1882, regulation of grants and scholarships for girls in 1882, the ability of women to run for election on primary school councils in 1886, and laws relating to...
teachers in 1888. In addition, women gained the right to have their own savings account that they could access without their husband’s permission in 1881, access to medical, law, and pharmacy courses at universities in 1882, and the right to unionize 1884.\textsuperscript{118} In the 1890s, lawmakers gave more attention to women’s rights as citizens: the right of a widow to have an interest in her deceased husband’s estate (1891), the right to grant permission to her children to marry (1896), the right to be a legal witness (1897), and the right to vote in the Board of Labor (1899).\textsuperscript{119} Even though women were not guaranteed equal access to all professions and opportunities in civic life, they made tremendous strides toward this in the last quarter of the century. Such rapid changes in society cannot occur without encountering some resistance.

Moreover, a general uneasiness about the dangers of the \textit{femme nouvelle} pervaded society. The \textit{femme nouvelle} pushed the boundaries of traditional gender roles. She took an interest in politics, education, and a career. With the passage of new education laws in the 1880s, more women gained access to secondary schools and the university. As a result, a demand for female teachers increased.\textsuperscript{120} Between 1876 and 1896 the number of \textit{institutrices} rose to 46,000, an increase of over 20,000.\textsuperscript{121} Additionally, a new style of less restrictive, flowing dresses compared to the layers of undergarments, gloves, hats, veils, and muff of bourgeois style characterized the \textit{femme nouvelle}’s sartorial choices.\textsuperscript{122} The change in costume enabled women to have greater mobility, especially on newly invented, sexually-charged machines: bicycles.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{118} See Waelti-Walters and Hause, 45-46.  \\
\textsuperscript{119} See Waelti-Walters and Hause, 46-47.  \\
\textsuperscript{120} McMillan, 144-148.  \\
\textsuperscript{121} Susanna Barrows, \textit{Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France} (New Haven: Yale University, 1981), 55.\textsuperscript{122}  \\
\textsuperscript{122} Patrick Waldberg, \textit{Eros in La Belle Époque} (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 23.  \\
\textsuperscript{123} Christopher Thomson examines how the sexualization of the bicycle altered the way women dressed, acted, and were perceived. The new pastime had doctors questioning its sexual effects. Additionally, some like Maurice Barrès believed the bicycle to turn women into “demi-males.” Thompson, “Un troisième sexe? Les bourgeoises et la bicyclette dans la France fin de siècle,” trans. Fiona Ratkoff, \textit{Le Mouvement social}, no. 192 (July-September 2000): 9-39.  \\
\end{flushright}
Increasingly, women pushed for more influence and power in realms outside the home. In April 1896, the Congrès féministe internationale met in Paris to discuss the status of women in Europe and plan its next steps. The Figaro reported on the conference. The tone of the writer, Maurice Leudet, sets it apart from similar coverage of events geared toward men. He begins his article with a description of the variety of conference attendants, who were composed mostly of women from Europe and a few men:

Naturally women made up the vast majority of participants there: there were young and pretty women, brunettes and blondes, of all nationalities. The others,

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124 Throughout Leudet’s coverage of the event, he refers to a number of well-known feminists. Maurice Leudet, “Le congrès féministe,” Le Figaro, April 9, 1896. By the end of November that year, anyone wishing to learn more about these women and their peers could do so in a special volume of Revue Encyclopédique titled Les Femmes et les féministes. It included three hundred engravings, fifty of which were portraits of feminists. The front page of the Figaro praised it: “Trois cents gravures, dont cinquante portraits, illustrent ce magnifique numéro qui constitue une véritable anthologie du féminisme, la plus complète et la plus originale qui ait été réalisée jusqu’à ce jour.” À travers Paris,” Le Figaro, November 27, 1896. Again on December 2, 1896, the Figaro encouraged readers to seek it out because it is “une véritable anthologie – la plus complète et la plus originale qui ait été réalisée jusqu’ici – de ce mouvement qui va chaque jour grandissant.” Le Liseur, “Revue des journaux, a travers les revues,” Le Figaro, December 2, 1896.

Such a compendium of feminists doubtlessly aided the public’s understanding of the complex movement. Not all feminists lobbied for the same goals, and they ranged from the very conservative to the very liberal. Gaston Deschamps describes the word as being pretty but having a vague meaning: “Féministe. C’est un joli mot, doux à prononcer, mais dont le sens encore indistinct, vague, ‘flou’ comme la première blancheur de l’aube commençante.” He also worries about the liberal influence of feminism from other countries such as America, Great Britain, and Scandinavia. Deschamps, “Les Féministes.”

The difficulty of defining feminism continues today. Karen Offen considers the varieties of feminism in Europe in the nineteenth century in “Liberty, Equality, and Justice for Women: The Theory and Practice of Feminism in Nineteenth-Century-Europe,” in Becoming Visible: Women in European History, 2nd ed., eds. Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Mosher Stuard (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987): 335-73. She also investigates the persistence of the problem in writing about historical feminism. She explains, “The term ‘feminism’ can be endlessly qualified, but it seems impossible to eliminate it from our vocabulary. In order to use it adeptly, therefore, I see no alternative but to grapple with the complex problem of definition itself. We must have a definition that can bear the weight of the historical evidence and make sense of it.” She suggests two ways to define the historical discourse on feminism: relational and individual feminism. Relational feminism refers to “women’s rights as women;” whereas individual feminism focuses on each person’s rights as a citizen regardless of gender. See Offen, “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach,” Signs 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 119-157.
less favored by nature in the areas of age and beauty, who had common faces or intelligence sparkling behind glasses or pince-nez.\textsuperscript{125}

Leudet clearly felt the need to describe the appearance of the congress participants. Later in the article, he touches on the “adorable brouhaha” that ensued over the newly elected president’s practice of keeping a “family house” on the Champs-Elysées.\textsuperscript{126}

After these distracting observations by Leudet and feisty outbursts from the participants, the journalist and the congress turned to the issues. Mme. Maria Deraismes gave a speech highlighting the basic tenets of feminism. She notes that men have taken over all of the positions

\textsuperscript{125}{\textquoteleft}Naturellement les femmes y formaient la grande majorité: il y en avait de jeunes et jolies, brunes et blondes, de toutes nationalités. D’autres, moins favorisées par la nature sous le rapport de la beauté et de l’âge, avaient des têtes point banales, ou l’intelligence pétillait derrière des lunettes ou des lorgnons.” Leudet, “Le congrès féministe.”

Descriptions like these of female participants in the congress remain common today. A woman’s appearance is just as likely to be included in a story as her abilities; sometimes it is more likely. One need only think of the episode, “One Man’s Trash,” from the second season of the television show \textit{Girls} in which the main character, Hannah, spends two days with a handsome older doctor (played by Patrick Wilson) in his brownstone. An overwhelming number of stories appeared in the subsequent week. They did not criticize Lena Dunham’s performance as Hannah, but they doubted the likelihood that someone as good-looking as Wilson would give someone as average as Dunham the time of day. Dunham addressed the controversy in a \textit{Los Angeles Times} interview, saying: “People questioning the idea that a woman could sleep with a man who defied her lot in the looks bracket hews so closely to these really outdated ideas about what makes a woman worth spending time with. Really? Can you not imagine a world in which a girl who's sexually down for anything and oddly gregarious pulls a guy out of his shell for two days? They're not getting married. They're spending two days [having sex], which is something that people do.” Wilson’s wife, Dagmara Dominczyk (@DagDom17), tweeted a reply to the critics, “@IreneDavies funny, his wife is a size 10, muffin top & all, & he does her just fine. Least that’s what I hear ;) rule # 1 – never say never.” The disheartening reality is in many ways feminism still has a long way to go. Glenn Whipp, “Lena Dunham Analyzes Three Episodes of \textit{Girls},” \textit{L.A. Times}, June 6, 2013, accessed September 2, 2013 [http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/showtracker/la-et-st-lena-dunham-girls-20130606,0,3395164.story]; Dagmara Dominczyk, Twitter post, February 12, 2013, 7:48 a.m., https://twitter.com/DagDom17.

\textsuperscript{126}Mme. Maria Pognon won the support of the majority of the congress participants. However she faced a group of dissenters who criticized her, saying: “Il parait qu’effectivement Mme Pognon a le tort impardonnable de tenir un ‘family house,’ et dans le quartier des Champs-Elysées encore! Vives protestations, comme vous pouvez vous l’imaginer de la part des amies de Mme Pognon, altercations dans la salle. \textit{C’est un adorable brouhaha.”} (Emphasis added.)

Excitement erupted again when one woman, Mme Potonie-Pierre, tried to reproach another by noting that her husband was a city councilor. The crowd burst into cries of “mon mari, mon mari,” and as Leudet put it, “L’hilarité est générale.” Leudet, “Le congrès féministe.”
of power in society, leaving women in an unfair and disadvantaged position. The laws that made this current order are arbitrary and the congress does not recognize their authority.

Reading these statements in the newspaper and seeing among the congress’s participants some men, though few, must have affected the Figaro’s audience. The lengthy article appears on the second page of the paper and suggests the changing ideas around gender roles and what it means to be a man and a woman. These ideas are no longer stable. Even the congress felt uneasiness when members began to ask for more extreme measures. For example, Paul Robin advocated for sexual liberation, which met with only a lukewarm response from the others in attendance. In general, the congress did not aim to disrupt the family unit or reorganize society. The delegates sought equal rights with men and the opportunity to have their opinions heard and matter. Surely these measures did alter the gender roles in society and within a family. Jules Bois hinted at these when he brought up the hazy distinction between women who have a job to

127 Some writers implied that men had also taken the lead in the feminist movement. In a review of the Théâtre-Féministe, Eugène Thebault notes that even though women wrote the pieces performed, Jules Bois organized the event. He wonders why a woman did not have this role, especially when Maria Oheliga could have done it admirably. Eugène Thebault, “La Vie littéraire: une conférence ridicule,” L’Humanité nouvelle 2, no. 1 (1898): 356-358.

128 Mme. Maria Deraismes expounded on this point: “La société en effet, ne se transformera, n’arrivera à cet équilibre social que nous rêvons tous que par le concours de l’homme et de la femme. Vous avez pris toute la place dans la société, messieurs; ce n’est pas juste et ce qui n’est pas juste ne peut durer éternellement; il ne faut à nous aussi notre place au soleil à côté de vous. L’humanité agit, qu’elle le veuille ou non, selon les lois naturelles; si elle les néglige ou les méconnaît, elle est bien vite rappelée à l’ordre par dame Nature qui se venge et fait souffrir l’être qui lui désoheit. Ainsi la collectivité qui accepte des lois factices souffre de ces lois et est obligée de revenir au principe éternel et immutable de la justice de la vérité!” Leudet, “Le congrès féministe.” In 1895, Deraismes published a collection of her writing in two volumes: Œuvres complètes de Maria Deraismes: France et progrès, conférence sur la noblesse, Ève dans l’humanité, les droits de l’enfant (Paris: Félix Alcon). Eugène Lintilhac favorably reviewed the volumes, but could not call himself a convert to the cause, even though he admired it, because he worried that its measures were not sufficient. Eugène Lintilhac, “Jeudis Littéraires: Maria Deraismes,” Le XIXe siècle, February 28, 1896.

129 Of course gender roles and attributes undergo constant renegotiation and revision. However before feminism emerged as a movement in the nineteenth century, it was rarely so extreme and publicly debated.

130 Leudet, “Le congrès féministe.” Robin ran the first orphanages to house and educate both girl and boys together in Cempuis. He also advocated for birth control.
support their family and those who are threatening gender roles and therefore the foundation of society. He distinguished between the two with the terms “la femme conscience” and “la femme nouvelle.”

The congress continued the following day, as did Robin and Bois’s debate. Bois condemned Robin’s call for free love, free motherhood, and access to abortions as immoral and in conflict with the opinion of the majority of the members who were religious and moral people. He also accused Robin of practicing bestiality and néantisme, which earned Bois a standing ovation while Robin’s supporters grumbled. The two groups went out into the streets and continued to take sides.

It is clear that although the feminists at the congress wanted changes to their situation, they did not want to undermine the family. Those who Leudet quoted and mentioned in his articles belonged to the middle class and their husbands appeared to hold respectable positions in their communities, like the town councilor whose status was invoked by his wife to give credence to her opinion. They did not want to resign as mothers or wives. Therefore, the debates and comments from the second day are even more powerful. One woman from Sweden bemoaned the pedestal on which society and the congress placed mothers:

The word “mother” rings a thousand times in my ears since the beginning of this Congress, as though it were a title of honor for women. But it’s not a title of honor. As for me, I have children, but I don’t brag about it… I think that in Catholic countries, they attach a superiority to mothers, it is because of the figure of the Madonna. Your Venus de Milo in the Louvre is much more beautiful than the Madonna. For me, she is much cuter than the Madonna, even though she doesn’t have any arms.

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131 Leudet, “Le congrès féministe.”
132 Néantisme is a philosophical stance based on nothingness. It has similarities to nihilism. Nearly fifty years after this debate, Jean-Paul Sartre reexamined the concept in L’Être et le néant (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1943).
134 “Le mot de ‘mère de famille’ a sonné un millier de fois à mes oreilles depuis le début du Congrès, comme si c’était un titre d’honneur pour les femmes. Mais ce n’est pas du tout un titre d’honneur. Moi, j’ai des enfants, mais je ne m’en vante pas… Je pense… que dans les pays
The woman’s comment elicited laughs and cheers from the crowd.\textsuperscript{135} As this woman pointed out, even within the congress the tendency to revere the traditional role of motherhood persisted. In trying to introduce some of the realities of motherhood (being a mother but not bragging about it) into the conversation, she did not seek to destabilize the role, but it seems to me that she wanted to suggest that being a mother was not the height of her aspirations, nor did the Madonna (the prime example of motherhood) encapsulate her ideal.

Bois presents a different side of the conference in his own article for the \textit{Figaro}. He mentions key women attending the congress from all over Europe: Belgium, Italy, Germany, Poland, etc. In addition to being intelligent, he describes them favorably as people. For example, he notes that Miss de Broen is very nice and a Christian woman; Mme Potonié-Pierre has an innocent and big heart, she and her husband love everyone; Mme Griess-Traut tries to save the poor; and Mlle d’Ervieux is a model of generosity and intelligence.\textsuperscript{136} He also remembers and describes briefly those who could not make the conference. Despite the positive characterization of specific feminists, one glaring omission remains in the article: the purpose of the congress. Why write an article that only describes some of the participants of a conference and not the proceedings or the goals of the conference? The most likely reason is that people were afraid or worried about the conference and had preconceived notions of what a feminist was. Bois, though he does not say this in the article, wrote the piece to demonstrate the flaws and inaccuracies of people’s stereotypes of feminists. Why else describe their good works, intellectual achievements, and good qualities (kindness, generosity, etc.) but not their aspirations as a group?

catholiques, si l’on attache une supériorité aux ‘mères de famille,’ cela est le fait de l’atavisme de la Madone. Votre Vénus de Milo au Louvre est bien plus belle que la Madone. Pour moi, elle est \textit{bien plus adorable} que la Madone; quoiqu’elle n’ait même pas de bras.” Leudet, “Le congrès féministe,” \textit{Le Figaro}, April 13, 1896.
\textsuperscript{135} Leudet, “Le congrès féministe,” \textit{Le Figaro}, April 13, 1896.
\textsuperscript{136} Jules Bois, “Quelques silhouettes de féministes,” \textit{Le Figaro}, April 8, 1896.
In addition to this litany of feminists, he also briefly mentions Mme Hammer, who is young, gracious, and whose gestures move in beautiful harmony, and Mme Maria Martin’s three beautiful daughters. These descriptions fight against the androgynous or masculine idea about feminists that many held. For example, Maurice Dancourt describes women who desired to work in masculine professions and have equal rights as “femmes-hommes.”\textsuperscript{137} He classifies them as occupying a third sex that had the appearance of women, but the mind and heart of men. He writes, “The femme-homme is not in favor of petticoats, and she derides the ‘prerogatives’ of her sex to only dream about the [male] attributes that she does not have.”\textsuperscript{138} For Dancourt, the feminist, or femme-homme, who wishes to have equal rights in society and more freedom in their dress and behavior, is no longer fully a woman. Instead her gender becomes hybridized, with the appearance of a woman, but the heart and mind of a man. Likewise, Otto Weininger theorized that gender existed on a spectrum. He described these as “innumerable gradations” that existed between the Ideal Man and Ideal Woman, neither of whom existed in reality.\textsuperscript{139} The most masculine aspects to her character and being, the more a woman will desire equality with men.\textsuperscript{140} Still, he found the best example of woman “inferior” to the worst example of man.\textsuperscript{141}

When Le Correspondant reported on the Conseil international des Femmes in the American pavilion at the Exposition Universelle during the first week of September in 1900,\textsuperscript{142} it

\textsuperscript{137} Maurice Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe,” Le journal amusant, July 2, 1892. The idea of the feminist as a feminized man or masculinized woman persisted into the twentieth century. Gaston Deschamps, for example, referred to women as “garçonnes” in his article “Les Féministes.” Such practices persist today.

\textsuperscript{138} “La femme-homme ne supporte pas ses jupons, et se moque des ‘prerogatives’ du sexe qu’elle paraît avoir, pour ne rêver que des attributions qu’elle n’a pas.” Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.”


\textsuperscript{140} Weininger, 57.

\textsuperscript{141} Weininger, 230.

\textsuperscript{142} Le Correspondant examined the multitude of conventions occurring during the Exposition Universelle (126 according to the journal), which according to the anonymous reporter,
also began with an observation of the beautiful sights available to those in attendance: “If the doctrines there are not enticing to you, at least those attending offer the most charming spectacle with the fashions, the silks, the ribbons, the laces that animate this stylish group.”\textsuperscript{143} But more than the flirtatious fashions, the congress addressed important issues about the status of women in society. Like the earlier congress, it too examined the losses of rights suffered by married women in other countries.\textsuperscript{144}

These changes in women’s opportunities in public life and the shifts in the structure of the family factored into a declining national birthrate, a disturbing trend in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and rising nationalism across Europe.\textsuperscript{145} Writers blamed feminists, anti-Semites, the Franco-Russian alliance, and others for the weakening of the country.\textsuperscript{146} Georges Thiébould, for example, pointed to the surge in these groups and their followers’ positions in the government as the source of a fundamental misunderstanding between the government and the French people. He believed that the government embodies a foreign spirit that limited its ability

certified to the cultural bankruptcy that counterbalanced the celebrations associated with the exposition. The congresses mentioned include grocers, dentists, doctors, pharmacists (which some women), and bacteriologists. “Les Œuvres et les hommes,” \textit{Le Correspondant} (August 25, 1900): 787-789.
\textsuperscript{143} “Si les doctrines n'y sont pas attirantes, au moins l'assemblée offre le plus charmant spectacle avec les toilettes, les soieries, les rubans, les dentelles qui s'agissent ce cadre coquet.” “Les Œuvres et les hommes,” 787.
\textsuperscript{144} In addition to congresses addressing feminist issues, the journal \textit{Femina} published articles on the subject bimonthly from 1901 to 1914. Although the articles rarely displayed militant feminism, they catered to the interests of young women and encouraged them to play a larger role in society and pursue an education while maintaining their femininity. For an analysis of the journal’s impact, see Lenard R. Berlanstein, “Selling Modern Femininity: \textit{Femina}, a Forgotten Feminist Publishing Success in Belle Époque France,” \textit{French Historical Studies} 30, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 623-649; and Rachel Mesch, \textit{Having It All in the Belle Époque: How French Women’s Magazines Invented the Modern Woman} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).
\textsuperscript{145} See McMillan, 141 for a detailed description of French birth and death rates between 1871 and 1914.
\textsuperscript{146} While the feminist movement was divided into more or less radical factions, anti-feminists united under the cause of preserving the family. For an examination of some of the challenges feminists faced and disagreements within the movement, see Marilyn J. Boxer, “‘First Wave’ Feminism in Nineteenth-Century France: Class, Family and Religion,” \textit{Women’s Studies International Forum} 5, no. 6 (1982): 551-559.
to meet the needs and desires of its citizens.\textsuperscript{147} After the revolutions and the Franco-Prussian war, France underwent an obsessive focus on masculinity, prizing strength, youth, assertiveness, and courage.\textsuperscript{148}

In June 1882, the strength of the French military and French men took center stage during a toast on the occasion of the regional exam at Chaumont (Haute-Marne). General Wolff, commander of the seventh corps of the army, addressed any concerns attendants might have had about the virility of the military:

\begin{quote}
No! No part of serious symptoms of decadence appears in our military spirit. Is that to say that everything is for the best? Evidently no, we still have, we will always have progress to make; but the truth is that yes, after our misfortunes of 1870, France no longer has the claim of useless pride, she no longer has no reason to doubt who she is.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

Even twelve years after the Franco-Prussian War, it remained on the minds of the military. The occupation of a foreign army had threatened the French national identity, and the defeat was so crushing for France that neither the military nor the general population could easily shake it from their memories or their fears.

\textsuperscript{147} On the front page of the \textit{Figaro}, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
“Et elle éclate encore, par une sorte de logique inhérente à la force des choses dans le culte instinctivement ravivé des énergies nationales, personnifiées en Jeanne d’Arc et en Napoléon.

“Chez ceux dont le patriotisme pratique s’attache moins au passé qu’au présent par la recherche, dans des embryons d’hommes nouveaux, de ces énergies éteintes et de ces clairvoyances disparues.

“Que si, franchissant le cercle de nos frontières, l’appréhension nationale se précipite, avec un visible soulagement, dans les bras entr’ouverts du Tsar ou du Pape, c’est toujours pour obéir à cette préoccupation unique, à ce pressentiment persistant, que la France a un impérieux besoin de se ressaisir si elle ne veut pas être défigurée.” Georges Thiébaud, “La réaction nationaliste,” \textit{Le Figaro}, December 30, 1894.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{149} “Non! nulle part n’apparaissent des symptômes sérieux de décadence dans notre esprit militaire. Est-ce à dire que tout soit pour le mieux? Evidemment non; nous avons encore, nous aurons toujours des progrès à réaliser; mais la vérité est que si, après nos malheurs de 1870, la France n’a plus à se prévaloir d’un vain orgueil, elle n’a pas non plus de raison pour douter d’elle-même.” “Allocution à l’armée,” \textit{Journal de la Gendarmerie de France} 44, no. 1320 (June 21, 1882): 232.
As late as 1896, the devastation of the war continued to weigh on the psyche of France. During Senate hearings about railroad workers’ right to strike and whether to incorporate them into the army for the good of the country, the senators referred to the war. M. Trarieux argued that for the security of France railroad workers should not have the option to strike. He recalled the strike in 1891 and that since that time the minister of war has been “intensely preoccupied” with the security and defense of the country. The only way to ensure that every worker is doing his job is to place the workers under the authority of the military. In his view, this was the best way to guarantee the safety of France. During a war, the military has the authority to commandeer the railroad for the defense of the country, but France what about during times of peace? If workers were to strike then, a country could easily invade and use it to its advantage. The neighboring country at the forefront of his mind was, of course, Germany. He concluded his argument with a plea and flourish:

What if I speak of Germany? But did it enter into the mind of anyone that the major state of Germany has the power in an instant of suffering caused by the disorder of a strike shattering the railroads, where the stations resemble barracks? (It’s true!)

Messieurs, I believe I have said enough. I invite you now to reflect and to close your eyes to the demands of the committees and clubs. Only daydream of France, only the country! You have to decide for yourselves with strength a very serious question. (Applause)

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150 "La sécurité et la défense nationales préoccupent vivement, depuis la grève de 1891, le ministre de la guerre. Il est évident qu’une grève de chemins de fer paralyserait absolument la mobilisation. Sans doute, en cas de guerre, il est facile de placer tout le personnel des chemins de fer sous la main de l’autorité militaire et d’assurer ainsi la présence de chacun à son poste. On peut bien par ce moyen empêcher la grève de survenir une fois la mobilisation décidée; mais on ne peut pas empêcher la grève en temps de paix. Or, une fois le service désorganisé, sa réorganisation serait œuvre d’assez longue haleine, et une puissance étrangère pourrait parfaitement profiter de ce moment pour engager les hostilités avec une avance assurée de plusieurs jours largement.” “Sénat session ordinaire de 1896: Compte rendu in extenso - 7e séance, séance du lundi 3 février,” Journal officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires. Sénat (1896), 56-57.
I ask you if it is possible that we will agree to rest in a state of inferior preparation for war in this regard to our neighbors beyond the Rhine.\textsuperscript{151}

After twenty-five years, the threat of Germany again invading France is all Trarieux needed to push the right emotional buttons to sway the room into his favor, with senators shouting in agreement and applauding him. The defeat of France at the hands of Germany left an indelible scar on the nation that lingered for decades after the war ended.

The combination of the war, the image of the \textit{femme nouvelle}, and changes in the structure of the family in France contributed to a crisis of masculinity. Men felt the need to prove themselves as men when confronted with women encroaching their territory in school and business. Carolyn J. Dean characterizes the change in attitude:

Thus in the name of restoring virility, politicians were said to have undermined it, to have turned some men into passive instruments of a war machine so that others could indulge themselves in luxury, perversion, and pornography. This rather paradoxical insistence that derepression…did not refer to the dissolution of corporeal boundaries, the loss of discipline and hence to the acting out of dangerous longings, but to the restoration of an expressive, integral male self that had been commodified in pornography, in consumerism, and especially in war. Pornography thus symbolized the fragmentation of the male psyche.\textsuperscript{152}

Men suffered under the strains of war and capitalism, and even the slightest form of deviance from the norm threatened masculinity. Furthermore, androgyny associated with the Decadent movement\textsuperscript{153} and the change in women’s fashion and behavior in the form of the \textit{femme nouvelle} also forced men to reevaluate their roles.

\textsuperscript{151} “Que serait-ce, si j’avais parlé de l’Allemagne? Mais entrerait-il dans la pensée de personne que l’état-major allemand pût un seul instant souffrir que le désordre d’une grève éclatât sur des chemins de fer, où les gares ressemblent à des casernes? (C’est vrai!) Messieurs, je crois en avoir assez dit. Je vous invite, maintenant, à vous recueillir et à fermer l’oreille aux réclamations des comités et des clubs. Ne songez qu’à la France, qu’au pays! Vous avez à vous décider avec virilité dans une question des plus graves. (Applaudissements.) Je vous demande s’il est possible que nous consentions à rester dans une sorte d’infériorité pour la préparation de la guerre, à l’égard de nos voisins d’outre-Rhin?” “Sénat session ordinaire de 1896: Compte rendu in extenso - 7\textsuperscript{e} séance, séance du lundi 3 février,” 57.

\textsuperscript{152} Carolyn J. Dean, \textit{The Frail Social Body: Pornography, Homosexuality, and Other Fantasies in Interwar France} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 85.

\textsuperscript{153} Mosse, 256.
Lautrec did not shy away from depicting strong or challenging women in his work. *Travail* is perhaps the most fraught example in his œuvre, but he returned to the subject repeatedly. His work has abundant examples from confident female performers like Jane Avril and La Goulue to women at ease and living their lives without husbands in brothels in *Elles*, 1896 (figure 4). Even his portraits of women granted them autonomy. In *Mademoiselle Dihau at the Piano*, 1890 (figure 41), he depicts Marie Dihau in profile playing the piano. She and her music dominated the scene: she plays the instrument intently; music books surround her; and an enlarged page of sheet music encroaches on the foreground. Even though she engages in an activity regarded as feminine, her concentration and proficiency demonstrate her autonomy.154 Similarly, in *Étude (Hélène Vary)*, 1889 (figure 42), Lautrec paints the figure in profile sitting with excellent posture. She looks straight ahead of her, and she appears content with her hands on top of a newspaper in her lap. She does not exude weakness or softness. Instead, she is selfpossessed and confident.155 Indeed, Jean-Pierre Peter notes that Lautrec and Degas, whom Lautrec admired, broke away from the stereotypical, mythologized representation of women in art, as exemplified by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. He also observes that fantasy of woman represented in Renoir’s paintings continued to permeate the medical community’s ideas about women.156

154 For an analysis of the painting and a comparison to other artists’ depiction of women at pianos, see Anne Roquebert, “*Mademoiselle Dihau au Piano,*” in *Toulouse-Lautrec, Frèches-Thory et al.*, 150.
155 For more about Lautrec’s depictions of Vary, see Anne Roquebert, “*Etude (Hélène Vary),*” in *Toulouse-Lautrec, Frèches-Thory, et al.*, 144.
The claims of previous scholars that Lautrec’s circus drawings of 1899 had an intimate connection with his psychology and could have served as testaments to his sanity seem flimsy and less important when one considers the work of contemporary artists. Lautrec may have felt a particular connection with one or more of the figures in his drawings, but they have significance beyond this. Sexual discourse in 1899 was steeped in “deviant” behavior, especially after the publication of *Venus in Furs*. The medical community wrote tomes on what it considered to be perverse sexual proclivities, while the literate read novels about the same behaviors. To examine Lautrec’s drawings only as they pertain to his psychosis is to deny their complexity as well as their participation in a larger cultural movement. Furthermore, the strangeness of the drawings and the implicit sadistic situations would do little to prove Lautrec’s health in the eyes of doctors, especially during a time when the medical profession was closely examining “abnormal” sexual preferences. Lautrec’s pictures lure the viewer into ambiguous relationships and present enticing implicitly violent scenes.

The complexity of the relationship depicted in the *Au cirque* series mirrors the complicated relationship France had to sadomasochism and sexual deviancy in the fin de siècle. What had begun as a way to understand and classify so-called abnormal sexuality became a way to describe any form of violence or erotic exoticism. From literature to the criminal justice system, writers applied the term so freely that the sexual satisfaction ceased to be a primary component of the term. In its place was a sensation that stirred the breast and sent the mind racing. When a concept or act elicited both an emotional and physical response. Whether describing feeling faint while attending an execution or excited from watching dancers from another culture perform, people attributed these strong sensations to a form of sadism.

Contemporary audiences reacted strongly to Lautrec’s works, and they based much of their opinions on the moral uprightness of how they perceived the artist to live his life. Arsène Alexandre lamented how Lautrec enjoyed a great deal of fame during his lifetime, but he
remained extremely misunderstood. Edmond de Goncourt, for example, wrote about seeing Lautrec’s work at Maurice Joyant’s gallery in 1896: “Exhibition at Jouault [sic] of the lithographs of Toulouse-Lautrec, a ridiculous homunculus, whose caricatural deformation appears reflected in each of his drawings.”

One might have very easily accused Lautrec of a sadistic art for the way that he depicted his sitters in relentless honesty and the unsettling feelings his works engenders in viewers.

Even so, the crux of the Au cirque drawings is the relationship between men and women. During a period of rapid change in the rights of women in French society and the inevitable effect this had how men and women interacted with each other, Lautrec’s drawings suggest the struggles and difficulty in forging a path toward gender equality. Debates raged in the press over the issue of feminism, and the leaders of the movement gained recognition as they ceaselessly rallied for their cause. The drawings are powerful, therefore, not only because of the sexual tension and sadomasochism that they suggest, but also because they depict the negotiations that men and women increasingly found themselves in during their everyday lives. They represent more than Lautrec’s struggle with sobriety. They reflect a society struggling to free itself of its prejudices and inequities among the sexes, and the excitement and dangers involved in this journey. As we will see in the next chapter, the fin de siècle presented challenges to men as well as women. I argue that while Lautrec explores the various aspects of these difficulties in his representations of men throughout his career, it is in his Au cirques series that he reveals the full complexity of the masculine experience at the end of the nineteenth century.

157 Alexandre, “Toulouse-Lautrec.”
Chapter 2

Negotiating a Man’s World: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Representations of Masculinity

In the previous chapter, I broached the subject of masculinity in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series, 1899. Of particular interest was the relationship between sadomasochistic themes in the drawings and the changing gender roles in French society. Many of the drawings in the series such as *Voltige* (figure 5) and *Travail sur le panneau* (figure 6) represent men and women locked in a psychological struggle for power. It is a struggle replete with sexual tension, and often the ringmaster grips his whip as he oversees the rehearsal of an equestrienne and her horse. The suggestive tone of the drawings matches the bawdy character of the materials used to promote the circus. In this way, the drawings are characteristic of the subject matter. Yet the violence with which Lautrec laces sensuality in the works is less prominent in the programs and advertisements for the circus, and this discrepancy alludes to the larger issues of gender relations, and in particular, sexual deviancy.

As the women’s movement gained momentum throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it disturbed the balance of power between the genders. Even though the majority of feminists did not seek full equality with men, the small gains that they hoped to achieve in education, job opportunities, and citizenship upset the traditional roles and responsibilities of the genders and challenged the position of men in society in the fin de siècle. In the first chapter, I considered the connection between the increased attention given to behavior classified as sexually deviant in medical and popular journalism in connection to the surge in the feminist movement in the wake of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. I argued that Lautrec’s drawings contributed to the popular examination of sadomasochism. In doing so,
they also participated in the negotiation of gender roles in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Closely related to the relationship between the genders was the question of sexual deviancy. Sexual deviancy was not relegated to dusty tomes of medical literature. Rather than being an arcane academic interest, it had widespread popularity in novels and daily newspapers. Sadism was one form of sexual deviancy that received close critiques in medical and popular literature. It became so well known to the general public that it became a way for journalists to convey their uneasiness about a subject or the Otherness of a situation or event. In my examination of sexual deviancy and gender relations in Chapter 1, I concentrated on only certain aspects of these issues, namely those concerning women and feminism. In this chapter, I will extend my analysis of Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series to consider men’s role in it.

My previous discussion of men was limited to sexual deviancy and reactions to the rise of feminism, but the representation of the male figure in Lautrec’s work was not confined to the context of sadomasochism. Indeed, what we learn from the *Au cirque* series and see throughout his œuvre is that a man’s place is never as stable or obvious as it may first seem. In the series, the subject of men and the various masculinities that they exhibit appears numerous times, with almost every drawing featuring at least one man. Yet Lautrec’s examination of masculinity and its many crises is greater than what he depicts in the *Au cirque* series. From his early works, Lautrec calls attention to the male figure, makes the viewer aware of his presence and his role in the events transpiring, and reveals the constructed quality of gender either through reinforcing or confounding the viewer’s expectations. Through the representations of male figures, Lautrec illustrates the changing terrain of masculinity and being a man. These are complicated and fraught issues that grew and changed throughout Lautrec’s career. Therefore, to give the question of how Lautrec represented masculinity the analysis it deserves, we must expand our scope beyond the *Au cirque* drawings to include his early depictions of his father and himself, his
portraits of male friends and family members, and men from different social classes. Only by considering the range of male figures and masculinities that he represented can we begin to understand the issues at play in the *Au cirque* series.

The function of the male figure(s) in each *Au cirque* drawing differs, illuminating the variety of masculinities operating in any one image. In the series, Lautrec depicts a strongman, acrobats practicing feats of strength, a horse rising above the ringmaster on the ground, clowns enacting romantic scenes, and a clown as voyeur. The drawings show men in control, vulnerable, strong, at the mercy of an animal’s will, and as part of the hierarchy of performers and top-hatted onlookers. Throughout the series, Lautrec demonstrates the different qualities of masculinity, indicates some of the ways in which masculinity faces challenges, and provides the viewer with insights into numerous performances of masculinity.

The ways in which male figures perform masculinity do not remain constant in Lautrec’s œuvre. As we examine the work from his early career to his posters and the *Au cirque* series, we see a shift from a masculinity rooted in the customs and pursuits of the aristocratic man of leisure in his pictures from the early 1880s to the slick man about town in his work from the late 1880s to early 1890s. By his late work, he has begun to present a nuanced view of multiple masculinities functioning simultaneously. An examination of the form masculinity takes in his pictures and its transformation throughout his career coupled with a study of contemporary gender issues will provide a framework my examination of masculinity and the changing relationships between men and women in the fin de siècle.

My analysis of Lautrec’s depiction of men and their various displays of masculinity begins in the most obvious place: his father, who he painted in *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1879/81 (figure 22). Alphonse embodied ancien régime masculinity during a time when the aristocracy faced challenges from the encroaching bourgeoisie. In contrast to the powerful and noble masculinity of his father, Lautrec represented himself in the process of creating his identity
as an artist and a man in *Self-Portrait before a Mirror*, 1880 (figure 43). By drawing on the concept of the phallus and mirror stage from Jacques Lacan, I will establish the psychoanalytic foundation of these portraits. Yet these paintings indicate more about the masculinity of the time than the Lautrec men’s navigation of it. Therefore, I will also address the performative aspect of gender as it applies to masculinity and the challenges of constructing gender during transitional periods.

The portrait of Alphonse and Lautrec’s self-portrait indicate that more than one form of masculinity can operate in culture simultaneously. Lautrec’s depictions of men in the early to mid-1890s emphasize this point. The next section of the chapter will analyze how Lautrec portrays masculinity in his portraits of men during this period and how they differ from his depictions of women. Raewyn W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, which examines the co-existence of multiple masculinities at any given time and their relationship to the dominance of one, informs my investigation of the relationship among these various forms of masculinity in the paintings.¹ By scrutinizing Lautrec’s representations of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity, we will see how complex and unstable masculinity was in the fin de siècle.

Because masculinity is not a static concept, we must ask why and how it re-invented itself at the end of the nineteenth century. Throughout the last two decades of the 1800s, writers struggled with the question of masculinity. While they did not use the term masculinity in their examinations of the topic, they voiced their concerns about the physical health of men (and by extension the health of the nation) the career prospects for young men, and the perceived growing effeminacy of men. These contemporary arguments and worries reveal a nation that had not fully recovered from the trauma, both physical and psychological, of the Franco-Prussian War.²

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² Similar arguments also appeared following World War I.
By the end of the century, the instability of masculinity was evident. No single definition could encapsulate all of its diverse manifestations in society and within individuals. Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series demonstrates its complexity. His representations of the ringmaster elucidate the various, and sometimes conflicting, aspects of an individual’s masculinity. Through the depiction of the ringmaster’s plural masculinities, Lautrec engages in the contemporary construction of masculinity, a dynamic process that is never completed. Furthermore, in this series, he begins to explore the beauty and strength of the male body, a subject that had received little attention in his work prior to this point and in the literature on Lautrec. As the debate over the fate of France’s young men and the health of the country raged in the newspapers, there was also a growing interest in bodybuilding and strongman competitions. The public fawned over athletes like Eugen Sandow for their glorious physiques and feats of strength. In the last section of the chapter, I will consider how Lautrec’s depiction of male beauty and plural masculinities participated in the multiple directions of contemporary masculinity.

When discussing gender during this time period, one must be cognizant of the differences between how we think of gender today and how it was thought about in the nineteenth century. In doing so, we must remember that gender is an historically and culturally specific construction. Joan W. Scott provides a useful evaluation of the application of current conceptions of gender to earlier historical periods. She argues that in order to analyze gender critically, one cannot isolate

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3 Judith Butler notes that although gender is tied to culture and sex is tied to biology, they do not form a straightforward analogy. She emphasizes the role of culture in the construction of gender: “As a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations.” Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 8-10, 14. For a consideration of representations of masculinity in French art in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Male Trouble: The Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

4 As Michel Foucault reminds us, the idea that gender identities are fixed, that one either identifies as a man or a woman, is a relatively new concept. Foucault, “Introduction,” *Hercule Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougall (New York: Pantheon, 1980), xii-xvii.
it from its specific historical circumstances. To use today’s gender categories as they currently exist when studying previous eras suggests an unchanging and fixed gender binary removed from history, which would be inaccurate. Rather, an investigation of historical gender relations should “disrupt the notion of fixity, to discover the nature of the debate or repression that leads to the appearance of timeless permanence in binary gender representation.” One must consider how gender identities are formed and the social, cultural, economic, and political forces acting on that formation. When looking at the fin de siècle, we must be vigilant about preventing current gender debates to structure our analysis. Even the term “masculinity” itself could be problematic. For example, Anne-Marie Sohn points out that one was much more likely to find what we would call masculinity described as “virilité.” Furthermore, writers made connections made to the biological, rather than the gendered, body in the literature of the nineteenth century. I have anchored my use of the term masculinity in the particulars of the time period, including issues of class, politics, and culture, and the specific details of the works being discussed. As we will see, Lautrec did not use a formula for the representation of gender. He based it not only on the individual in question, but also on that person’s status, attitudes, and the particulars of the situation. Masculinity, thus, is neither one-dimensional nor fixed in Lautrec’s œuvre, but it is one

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6 Scott, 1069.
7 *Virilité* is itself a fraught term. Though it is often a synonym for masculinity in the fin de siècle, to use it in that way today would be a mistake. Pascale Molinier points out that *virilité* now has two meanings: the social attributes associated with masculinity, such as violence, courage, and domination of women; and sexual virility. She sets up two constructions of masculinity, *la masculinité créatrice* and *virilité défensive*, to explore how masculinity is established and maintained. See her “Virilité, défensive, masculinité créatrice,” *Travail, genre et société*, no. 3 Le genre masculin n’est pas neutre (March 2000): 25-44.
at the heart of his work. In 1890, Eugène Demolder described the artist’s paintings in precisely these terms: “There’s vice even in the colour he uses…strong, male, spicy color.”

In Lautrec’s earliest paintings from adolescence, he turned to his father for a model of masculinity. Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec embraced the aristocratic lifestyle of the pre-Revolutionary era. He remained an avid falconer, horseman, and hunter throughout his life. He even went so far as to have a place for his falcon to reside in his Parisian apartment. His insistent grip on the manners and pastimes of a bygone era lent him an air of eccentricity. It also spoke to a refusal to accept a changing, modernizing world. His inability to adapt his habits to the strictures of modernity suggests that he could not merge or alter his concept of masculinity and propriety to fit the newer ideals and shifting gender relations. When we look at his son’s portrait of him, we can see the tenacity with which he remained committed to an aristocratic masculine ideal.

In *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1879/81, Lautrec depicts his father on horseback with his falcon either returning to or preparing to fly from his arm. The count appears at ease on the horse. His body is relaxed; his posture is upright; and his right hand holds the reins. His horse stands calmly under his authority, but its raised right front leg indicates it has energy ready to burst forth when the count commands. The subdued demeanor of the horse conveys the mastery that Alphonse has over it. Alphonse possesses the power in the relationship. His authority

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9 The question of gender itself is neither simple nor static. It involves a variety of experiences and attitudes from every facet of life. Due to its numerous factors, it cannot be summarized neatly. Michael Kaufman reminds us, “Because of the multiple identities of individuals and the complex ways we all embody both power and powerlessness – as a result of the interaction of our sex, race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, intellectual and physical abilities, family particularities, and sheer chance – gender work is not a linear process. Although gender ideals exist in the form of hegemonic masculinities and femininities, and although gender power is a social reality, when we live in heterogeneous societies, we each grapple with often conflicting pressures, demands, and possibilities.” Kaufman, “Men, Feminism, and Men’s Contradictory Experiences of Power,” in *Men and Power*, ed. Joseph A. Kuypers (Halifax: Fernwood Books, 1999), 64.

is established, and the horse accepts it. Similarly, the falcon obeys the count’s commands. It bows its head and looks toward him with its wings extended, read to follow his master’s orders.

Alphonse’s pose with the falcon perched on his raised left arm denotes his aristocratic status.\textsuperscript{11}

The painting illustrates a man who is the ruler of his environment.

The mastery that the count displays over himself and his environment signals a specific kind of masculinity. It is an active one that seeks to dominate and control. His body is physically connected to both the horse and the falcon, and the trio fills the space of the painting. Danièle Devynck observes that the vertical orientation of the painting “underlines the manly pose, both horse and rider are built up with distinct brushstrokes that express life and movement.”\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, the outstretched wing of the falcon extends to the upper right corner of the painting, while the hooves of the horse reach to the bottom edge. Moreover, the background of the painting lacks distinct details. Lautrec applied brushstrokes in thick vertical and horizontal lines. The effect is more like a mosaic than landscape. Its lack of focus further emphasizes the prominence of the count and his animals. In this way, Lautrec represents the magnitude of his father’s influence and authority in no uncertain terms.

The count’s hunting pursuits received ample coverage in the Parisian literary periodical \textit{Gil Blas} from 1880 to 1888. Numerous articles commended his skill on horseback, commitment to the medieval sport of falconry, and role in preserving the aristocratic tradition of the hunt. In 1885, Baron de Vaux, who had known the count since serving with him in the military in 1859-60, described him as a “fanatical sportsman” and the “glory of his regiment.”\textsuperscript{13} The count

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\textsuperscript{13} He writes: “C’était déjà à cette époque un fanatique sportsman, pratiquant tous les sports et jouissant dans le midi d’une très grande réputation. Au château du Broocks [sic], près Toulouse, où il fut élevé, ses exploits cynégétiques étaient écrits sur tous les murs, et chaque fois qu’il
possessed such vigorous masculinity that he exhausted three horses before he became fatigued. He was both agile and fast on horseback.\textsuperscript{14} Vaux notes that the count took up falconry when he ended his military career in 1870, and he credits the count, Paul Gervais, and Alfred Belvalette with preserving this medieval, chivalric sport of gentleman.\textsuperscript{15} Although falconry remained a sport of limited participation, the count continued to throw elaborate hunting parties in the 1880s. In July 1886, \textit{Gil Blas} reported that the “glory days of falconry are returning” at the Château de Brock where the count was organizing a grand hunt, including three species of falcons.\textsuperscript{16}

We not only see the representation of power \textit{Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec}, but also desire. Devynck points out the obvious yearning that the artist had for the physical prowess of his father: “Who cannot feel in this painting the young man’s longing for a world from which he is henceforth excluded?”\textsuperscript{17} Yet, the longing depicted in the work is not a clear-cut wish for athletic talents. It is bigger than this, and it goes to the heart of father-son relationships.\textsuperscript{18}
The immensity of the count’s imposing physical stature and his clear dominance of the panel suggest that what we encounter here is more than mere admiration and envy for his father’s hunting talents. To examine what is at stake in this painting, Jacques Lacan’s work on the phallus can provide a useful model for analysis of who has the power and where he holds it. In this painting, Lautrec fils joins able-bodied sons who find themselves lacking when confronted with their fathers, the men to whom they look with a mixture of admiration and jealousy. Lacan notes, “The phallus is the privileged signifier of this mark in which the role [part] of Logos is wedded to the advent of desire.” The phallus is a veiled signifier. Although it exists as a real object, it only possesses power when it remains hidden and everyone thinks that everyone else has it.

The phallic power that Lautrec depicts in *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec* operates on at least two levels. The first relates to the real-life relationship between Lautrec and his father, who held the role of an authority in his life. The little time the two spent together even when Lautrec was a child could only have enhanced Alphonse’s aura of power by virtue of being out of his son’s reach. The question of phallic power within this painting is a complicated one that is tied to the version of masculinity presented in the work. The phallus acts as the primary signifier of power in the father-son relationship, and relationship between Lautrec père and fils is complex. As Devynck notes, Lautrec fils could no longer participate in physically demanding activities after breaking both of his legs in separate incidents as a child. Even after convalescing for months, his bones remained brittle and prone to injury. Thus, the count and his son were predisposed to have a more pronounced discrepancy in the division of power between them than other fathers and sons experienced.

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Yet this painting bears the mark of the phallus and masculinity beyond the specifics of the Lautrec family’s relationships, and it is here that we find the second level of phallic power in the *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec*. In the body of Alphonse, Lautrec locates the power of the patriarchy in general. One does not need to know that the person represented has any familial relationship to the artist to notice that he is the source of authority in the work. Lautrec emphasizes the count’s phallic power through his compositional decisions. The bodies of the count, his horse, and the falcon form a triangle rising up from the sturdy base of the horse at a diagonal that peaks at the open wings of the falcon. The strong phallic tower clearly indicates the power that the count possesses while concealing its source and location. Beyond his relationship with his son, his sturdy presence in the painting suggests his enduring and broad phallic power. His body becomes a signifier of both the phallus and masculinity in general.

The phallic power contained in the figure of the count is further enhanced by the manner in which Lautrec painted him. The thick brushstrokes of the background become more emphatic and cohesive in the figures of the falcon, horse, and Alphonse. What had been an airy and loose collection of strokes in the sky and foliage becomes a solid unit that stands out from its surroundings. The calmness in the count’s facial features, his relaxed posture on top of the horse, and the graceful gesture of his arm to hold the falcon signal his confidant authority. He does not wield his power in an aggressive manner or seek to intimidate the animals in the painting or the viewer, yet we sense that he possesses something that we lack – the phallus.

Not only does the figure of the count become an indication of the phallic power, he also represents the symbolic and real power of the nobility in France. This form of power faced instability in the nineteenth century as the aristocracy felt the impact of the changing political and economic structures. In the aftermath of the Revolution and throughout the nineteenth century, the new dimensions of the recently complicated class relationships confounded the aristocracy. Prior to the Constitutional Assembly of 1789, only the nobility had the right to hunt; the Third
Estate could only shoot rabbits that happened across their land. In 1815, the nobility, with the future Charles X leading the charge, reclaimed hunting as its exclusive right. Despite extending permits to those who could afford the fee beginning in 1844, the aristocracy possessed knowledge of the sport, the resources to participate in it, and the leisure time to pursue it that the bourgeoisie lacked.²⁰ Beginning in the 1870s, the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie began to display more of an interest in hunting with the extension of the railroad into rural areas of France and the new surge in leisure time. Yet their interest, for the most part, remained tied to the act of shooting rather than hunting itself. After the Commune, the government provided subsidies to those wishing to learn how to shoot. Shooting, after all, was a useful skill for potential soldiers defending the country to have.²¹

At the same time that the government encouraged the middle class to take up shooting as both a form of sport and a patriotic act, the aristocracy closed in their ranks more tightly than before against this bourgeois encroachment on their leisure activity. The cost of a hunt, estimated at 80,000 francs a year, filtered out most commoners.²² Even so, a rising class of financiers, with the Rothschilds at the helm, began to infiltrate the sport and close-knit aristocratic society. However, no matter how much wealth a commoner had acquired, it remained nearly impossible for him to gain full acceptance into aristocratic society.²³ The relationship between very wealthy commoners and the aristocracy was one forged out of necessity and permitted through the complementary needs and desires of the two groups: money for the aristocracy and prestige for the upper bourgeoisie. The loose alliance allowed the aristocracy to continue its expensive hobby,

²¹ As Holt points out: “The President of the Republic had game birds bred for him at Rambouillet, but significantly the head of state was not expected to know how to hunt. Shooting, on the other hand, was regarded as an eminently Republican sport. It taught the citizen how to defend his country.” Holt, 21.
²² A hunt of this scale was an elaborate activity. It included a fleet of horses, hounds, feasts for the hunters and their respective entourages, and at times stocking the land with game.
²³ Holt, 35-37.
but centuries of separation, hostility, and suspicion posed formidable obstacles to the creation of strong and lasting ties.

Lautrec’s *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec* draws on the aristocratic tradition of the hunt, and thereby, the conceptions about masculinity from the *ancien régime*. Alphonse clung to this hobby and its link to traditional masculinity in the face of a changing world. Lautrec may have shied away from his noble upbringing to live in bohemian Montmartre as an artist, but his father encased himself in these signs and ceremonies. The elder Lautrec embraced the hunt as both a leisure activity and a declaration of his noble lineage. Consequently, we should not be surprised that the form of masculinity that he exhibited in photographs of himself and in this painting reiterates his aristocratic status.

Not only does the activity of Lautrec père point to his nobility (and therefore his separateness from the bourgeoisie and workers), but also his clothing. He wears Ottoman-inspired garb, including a fez, a blue and gold belted jacket, and matching pants. It is an unusual combination that defied typical hunting and riding garb.24 Photographs throughout the count’s life captured his eccentric sartorial displays.25 This kind of flamboyant and peculiar clothing further emphasized his social status; only a member of the nobility could afford such outrageous


In addition to an elaborate costume, Lautrec paints Alphonse wearing a sword, an accessory that frequently graced his hip. The artist’s friend and biographer, Maurice Joyant, notes that Lautrec paired a unique, modern sensibility with a respect for the past. He credits Lautrec’s education, which included Classical cultures, as well as ancestral traditions for the artist’s point of view. These ancestral traditions ran deep in Lautrec’s family, who traced their lineage back to Henri IV. Alphonse struggled to keep these alive in a time when the aristocracy had lost its relevance. With his eccentricities, he ignored the changing times and fought against them. Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 1:8.

25 The count once came to dinner dressed in a Scottish tartan and a tutu in the place of a kilt. Frey, 16.
costumes and ignore contemporary taste without rebuke. In this painting and in his daily life, the count’s clothing solidified his connection to the Old Regime and the pre-Revolutionary way of life that he so admired. He played a part in *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec* similar to one he played in his life. In his choices, he sought to uphold a way of life that was coming to an end. By clinging to this persona, he performed a very different masculinity than bourgeois masculinity, which we will see was currently dominant.

The performative aspect of the count’s masculinity is one that deserves further unpacking. The idea of gender as a performance owes a great deal to feminist studies, especially Judith Butler’s contribution to the field. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), she emphasizes that gender does not inherently possess any one set of qualities. Rather, what we identify as gender is culturally determined, produced as signs, and located on the surface of the body. Therefore, a


For Butler’s examination of the performance of gender and its purposes, see *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 185-193. The text was first published in 1990. She refines her definition of the performative nature of gender in her 1999 preface to the text. She describes the performance as having two parts. The first part concerns the fulfillment of expected behaviors of a gender, and the second deals with the ritualization of performance. As a subject repeats the gendered performance, it becomes naturalized. See Butler, xv.
display of gender is a performance of culturally accepted mannerisms, fashion, and manners of masculinity or femininity. The performance of gender is driven by heterosexuality in order to control and manage it; it is what Butler calls “a regulatory fiction.” That is not to say that gender is a closed and unchanging field. By definition, it is enmeshed in culture, and culture constantly transforms. Therefore, gender undergoes continuous, minute adjustments, like an amorphous shape shifting and redefining its borders.

Feminist literature since the 1990s has expanded upon the idea of gender performance. The element of performance has also had a place in masculinity, as well. Just as those who

29 Butler, 192.
30 Butler explains: “Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time. An open coalition, then, will affirm identities that are alternately instituted and relinquished according to the purposes at hand; it will be an open assemblage that permits multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure.” This formulation of the openness of gender anticipates Sofia Aboim’s theory of plural masculinities, which I will examine in closer detail later in the chapter. See Butler, 22. Aboim, Plural Masculinities: The Remaking of the Self in Private Life (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).
31 Scholars of masculinity frequently borrow from the feminist theory. Some of the most cited articles include Scott’s previously discussed “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” and Karen Offen’s “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach.” Signs 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 119-157 and “Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin-de-Siècle France,” American Historical Review 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 648-676. Additionally, Butler’s Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’ (New York: Routledge, 1993) continues to influence the way gender and gender roles are constructed and understood in the literature on masculinity. For a concise history of the ways feminist thought has affected the concept of masculinity, see Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theory” in Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and Raewyn W. Connell (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 35-50. In the essay, Gardiner summarizes feminist thought and the categorization of women from Aristotle to Christine de Pizan to Simone de Beauvoir, Nancy Chodorow, Butler, bell hooks, and Donna Haraway. She considers how masculinity has been defined in contrast to femininity, as the dominant gender, as well as the prominent role heterosexuality has had in analyses of the construction of the two genders. As Gardiner moves through time to the twentieth century, she examines how scholars have brought other issues, such as economics, race, and social justice, into the discussion about gender. Gardiner also edited a collection of essays about the relationship between feminist theories and masculinity titled Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

While these studies consider how the field of masculinity has borrowed from feminist theory, Anthony McMahon examines the aspects of feminist theory that masculinity studies ignores, namely the issue of sexual politics, in “Male Readings of Feminist Theory: The
identify themselves as female have a set of rules to follow and expectations to meet so that their culture will consider them feminine, men, too, have codes of masculinity governing their performances. One only needs to consider Marlon Brando’s depiction of male characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and *The Wild One* (1953) to see the performance of masculinity.32 His t-shirt and jeans hugged the curves of his muscles while he snarled and smoked cigarettes. He shaped the landscape of masculinity for the next decade, influencing James Dean and Bob Dylan, and his characters continue to shape contemporary notions of masculinity.33

Yet even stereotypically masculine characters, such as Brando’s portrayal of Stanley Kowalski in a *Streetcar Named Desire*, have shades of the feminine in them. Gender is not neat or discrete. Masculinity, for example, does not seal in everything masculine and exclude everything feminine. Moreover, gender can be manipulated. As Joan Rivière argues in “Womanliness as Masquerade,” a woman may emphasize her femininity to fit into a male profession. By putting on a mask of overt femininity, she could reassure men that she was not trying to usurp their authority or steal their position.34 The mask of femininity could obscure a woman’s “masculine” attributes, which drove her to achieve and compete in a male-dominated field. Rivière explains:

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33 Bordo notes that James Dean bordered on stalking Brando, phoning him and following him around town, to copy his signature performance of masculinity. See Bordo, 132-134.

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods.\textsuperscript{35}

The mask of gender can conceal one’s true intentions and desires, which can help women achieve success in the workplace. Yet what happens when the genders are flipped, and it is the man who must perform his masculinity for other men or women? What happens when one is supposed to be the rightful possessor of the goods, but it is all façade? How does one prove one possesses what should be unquestionably his? Additionally, when thinking about gender, we must keep in mind that we are applying the term to a real physical, sexed body. While gender and sex may not be the same, one should be careful not to disembody gender, which can be tempting to do when thinking about the constructed nature of it.\textsuperscript{36}

Lautrec presents an identity for himself in contrast to his father’s aristocratic persona in \textit{Self-Portrait before a Mirror}, 1880. Although the persona differs from his father’s masculinity, it is just as strong.\textsuperscript{37} The painting depicts a modest, sparsely decorated room with an array of common objects, including candles, bowls, and his easel. In this painting, Lautrec disentangles himself from the opulence and legacy of his father. Neither the space around him nor his costume betrays his noble heritage. He looks out toward the viewer; his facial features are set in a serious

\textsuperscript{35} Rivière, 38.

\textsuperscript{36} Raewyn W. Connell argues for the importance of keeping the sexed body in the conversation about gender. In “Men’s Bodies,” she summarizes three approaches to the male body and gender. The first is determined by biology. The second professes that culture inscribes gender on the body; this includes the semiotic approach (Butler, for example, applies this mode of thought in \textit{Gender Trouble}). The third is a combination of the two. Connell criticizes all three lines of inquiry of neglecting the male body, which has desires that it seeks to fulfill. See Connell, “Men’s Bodies,” in \textit{Masculinities} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 45-66.

\textsuperscript{37} Although Lautrec pursued a different branch of masculinity than his father, he approached it with as much determination and commitment as his father did his own. Jacques Lassaigne observes: “And so Lautrec, imitating his father, forged for himself since childhood a separate existence and a world of his own, down to the smallest material details, such as the choice of his walking-sticks and hats, the care for his cuisine or the invention of a conventional and picturesque language, intelligible only to a few initiated friends.” Lassaigne, \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec}, trans. Mary Chamot (New York: Hyperion Press, 1939), 9.
expression and his upright posture suggests his confidence and an air of defiance. It seems that not only is Lautrec’s identity as an artist at stake in this self-portrait but also his separate identity from his father. He is not content to lean on the history of his heritage.

Furthermore, the identity that Lautrec expresses in this painting is not formed fully. We see evidence of this in the manner he painted the work. In contrast to some of his other youthful paintings, the background does not feature a flurry of brushstrokes. Although the brushstrokes remain visible and do not adhere to a uniform directionality, the greys and browns subtly fade into each other. Additionally, Lautrec appears to have applied them with a lighter touch. The impasto is significantly lower in the background of this painting than in *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec*. Rather than focusing on the background in this self-portrait, Lautrec diverted his attention to the objects displayed before him and his own body. His white painting jacket contains an erratic collection of brushstrokes. On the sleeve of his jacket, they zigzag, abruptly change direction, and crash into each other. The juxtaposition of blue, yellow, white, and brown hues produces deep shadows across the front of the jacket and down the sleeve. Lautrec also painted his face shrouded in a deep shadow. Out of the shadow, two dark eyebrows parallel to the picture plane catch the viewer’s attention. Like beacons, they seek out the viewer and make it impossible for him/her to avoid the artist’s gaze. The effect of the combination of Lautrec’s dark eyebrows and relaxed jaw is not as threatening as it is determined.

Lautrec painted *Self-Portrait before a Mirror* before he had separated from his instructors to work on his own. The painting presents the viewer with an unambiguous declaration of his career choice and his dedication to it. His mother, Adèle, wrote about his diligence and dedication to art while he studied with René Princeteau: “Henri is working frenziedly and tires himself out with this constant activity.”

In the self-portrait, we witness the construction of his artist’s

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38 While a student in Fernand Cormon’s atelier, Lautrec remained focused on his art. A fellow student, Henri Rachou, described him “diligently” spending his morning at work in the studio.
identity. Situated in front of a mirror (the frame of which is located at the right side of the painting), the painting depicts not only the way Lautrec appeared at the time, but also the way in which he wished to be perceived. Like a child seeing his reflection as a more competent version of himself, this self-portrait that Lautrec painted while a student suggests the confidence and aplomb he hoped to possess after he finished his studies.

The contrast between the self-possession and artistic skill that Lautrec hoped to have and the student that he continued to be suggests a parallel to Lacan’s mirror stage. Lacan describes the mirror phase, which typically occurs in a baby aged approximately six to eighteen months, as one of desire, projection, and identification. In this phase, the child recognizes himself in a mirror and sees the connection between the movements that he makes and their replication in the mirror, the “imago.” The imago represents an “Ideal-I” that seems to lack the clumsiness that the subject feels he has. His reflection presents him with what he will become. Lacan explains:

The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as Gestalt, that is to say, in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size (un relief de stature) that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him.

Lacan points out that the actions reflected in the mirror are more “constitutive than constituted,” conveying the essence or impression of the action as a whole rather than composed. The reflection that the child sees in the mirror has evened out the awkwardness that he feels himself to before leaving to paint the models in the neighborhood in the afternoon. His attention to his art remained strong throughout his career. Moreover, he was not afraid to pursue commercial projects for the sake of the purity of his art. He looked for every opportunity to be paid for his work and to have it seen. Even after drunken nights at the cafés in Montmartre, he would appear at his printer’s office early in the morning. Huisman and Dortu, 32, 44, 75.


have, and he sees instead a fluid display of gestures. By establishing the relation of the subject’s gestures to those reflected in the mirror, the mirror stage makes the subject aware of his relationship to reality, the Innenwelt and the Umwelt.  

In *Self-Portrait before a Mirror*, Lautrec painted himself as he saw himself in the mirror, surrounded by the tools of an artist, wearing the clothes of an artist, and in the process of painting. He also painted himself as he wished to be seen by others and in the identity that he had chosen for himself. By painting himself already engaged in that profession, he painted his desire as the reality that he saw reflected when he looked into a mirror. We see him transforming himself into the person that he wishes to be. Lautrec, therefore, enacts Lacan’s mirror stage in his self-portrait. For as Judith Butler notes, the mirror stage “suggests the capacity to project a morphe, a shape, onto a surface is part of the psychic (and phantasmatic) elaboration, centering, and containment of one’s own bodily contours.” She denies that the mirror stage functions as a developmental phase, and instead focuses on the subject’s process of knowing himself. By challenging what he knows about himself through “self-division and self-estrangement,” he gains a greater knowledge of himself and the ability to metamorphose into the person he would like to become.

The idea that we might look to Lacan’s mirror phase and its construction of the Ideal-I as a model for the construction of identity in the self-portrait is only one element at work in such a painting. When seated before a mirror to paint or draw oneself, the artist must rely on his or her memory as much as or more than the mirror. The reason is simple: it is impossible to look into a mirror and at what we paint or draw simultaneously. Our attention must be split. Either we move the brush or pencil while staring into the mirror, or we look at what we paint or draw but not the

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mirror. We can jump back and forth from the mirror to the page, but we cannot divide our vision in such a manner to accommodate these dual tasks at the same time.\textsuperscript{44} Relying on memory to compose and execute a self-portrait causes artists to suffer from blindness.\textsuperscript{45} The reflection that we see haunts us as we attempt, on the one hand, to reconstruct it and, on the other, to produce it because we do not replicate a memory without filtering it through our cognitive mind first.

Yet the blindness one experiences in not being able to look into a mirror and at the canvas or paper simultaneously is only one of the forms of blindness and construction at work in Lautrec’s self-portrait. In it, and indeed in all self-portraits, the artist looks out into the mirror from the place that we, the viewers, occupy. Jacques Derrida describes the process as a “blinding” of the artist:

\begin{quote}
The spectator replaces and then obscures the mirror, he makes one blind to the mirror by producing, \textit{by putting to work}, the sought after specularity. The spectator’s performance, as it is essentially prescribed by the work, consists in striking the signatory blind, and thus in gouging out – \textit{at the same stroke} – the eyes of the model, or else in making him, the subject (at once model, signatory, and object of the work), gouge out his own eyes in order both to see and to represent himself at work.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

When looking at a self-portrait, the viewer stands in the place of the mirror upon which the artist relied when making the painting. By taking the place of the mirror, the viewer, who in this way is

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\textsuperscript{45} Derrida explains, “\textit{On the other hand}, and in anamnesis itself, there is \textit{amnesia}, the orphan of memory, for the invisible can also lose its memory, as one loses one’s parents. On a different trail, which perhaps comes down to the same one, the draftsman would be given over to this other invisibility, given over to it in the same way that a hunter, \textit{himself in relentless pursuit}, becomes a fascinating lure for the tracked animal that watches him. In order to be absolutely foreign to the visible and even to the possibility of the visible, this invisibility would still inhabit the visible, or rather, it would come to haunt it to the point of being confused with it, in order to assure, from the specter of this very impossibility, its most proper resource. The visible \textit{as such} would be invisible, not as \textit{visibility}, the \textit{phenomenality or essence} of the visible, but as the singular body of the visible itself, \textit{right on} the visible – so that, by emanation, and as if it were secreting its own \textit{medium}, the visible would produce blindness.” Derrida, 51-52 (emphasis in the original).

\textsuperscript{46} Derrida, 62.
\end{quote}
part of the work from its inception, metaphorically blinds the artist. In the finished piece, the viewer usurps the artist’s place in the mirror and inhibits the artist’s ability to see.

As a result of these multiple sources of what Derrida calls blindness and construction operating in Lautrec’s self-portrait and the genre in general, the work itself is “an object of culture” and not an easy transcription of reality on the part of the artist.47 From the moment that Lautrec looked at himself as an artist in the mirror, his reflection demonstrated his desire to be an artist and the aplomb he needed to succeed in this role. In this account, when it came time to paint his self-portrait, he depicted not an exact replica of the mirror image before him, but a memory that his Ideal-I enacted for him in the glass. Then, as viewers standing before Lautrec’s self-portrait, we find ourselves in the place of the artist looking into the mirror, whose frame is clearly visible in the painting. The only thing that is left is the reflection of an idealized self, the self that Lautrec wished himself to be, but one that he had not yet become. He, himself, as he was during the time that he painted the work, is nowhere in the picture.

In looking at the distinct performances underway in these two paintings depicting father and son in *Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec* and *Self-Portrait before a Mirror*, we not only see the clear markers of divergent life choices, but we also see two different versions of masculinity. Alphonse projects an ideal of masculinity through his clothing and posture that values physical action and prowess. It is a masculinity to which his son had limited access due to his adolescent injuries. Indeed, it is around the time of his son’s debilitating injuries that the father grew more distant from him. Unable to relate to one another outside of physical, aristocratic pastimes, their relationship became more difficult. Additionally, masculinity for Alphonse appears tied to aristocratic status, which seems to bolster his virility. His physical presence, his rigidly straight back, square shoulders, along with his command over his horse and

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47 Derrida, 64.
the falcon assert a masculinity rooted in dominance over one’s environment, calm composure, physical strength and presence, and status as an aristocrat.

Alphonse’s heavy reliance on this mode of masculinity that has already become outdated indicates both the difficult task of adapting one’s masculinity during periods of rapid social change and wide gap between his masculine ideals and those held by his son and his peers. As we will see, many other kinds of masculinity existed outside of the nobility, but he did not appear to have much use for them. His dress and actions, though often eccentric, were his own.\textsuperscript{48} His inability to connect to his son outside of this realm indicates its importance for his definition of his own masculinity and identity. When Lautrec is no longer able to participate in demanding physical activities and rejects his duties as a nobleman (as practiced by Alphonse in his ritual of hunting), his father does not seem to comprehend his choice and remains critical of him even after his death.\textsuperscript{49}

In the self-portrait Lautrec painted in 1880, the masculinity on display echoes some of the postures of his father; however, they have a vastly different significance. In his self-portrait, Lautrec painted himself at work in front of an easel. Both men have rigidly straight posture, but Alphonse seems at ease in his portrait. He does not confront the viewer in the bold manner his son does. He does not need to prove himself because his command over the falcon and his social class grant him all the justification he may need. In contrast, Lautrec depicted himself in a new

\textsuperscript{48} Huisman and Dortu, among others, point out that Alphonse’s fashion choices and behavior “caused a good deal of scandal.” Huisman and Dortu, 17.

\textsuperscript{49} When Alphonse gave Maurice Joyant execution of his son’s estate after the artist’s death in 1901, he said: “I’m not making a generous gesture in giving you all my paternal rights, if there are any as heir of whatever our deceased produced; your brotherly friendship had so quietly replaced my weak influence that I am being logical in continuing this charitable role for you if you so desire, simply for the satisfaction of your kind-heartedness toward your classmate; so I have no plans to change my opinion and, now that he is dead, praise to the skies something that during his life I could regard only as audacious, daring studio sketch studies.” Alphonse’s disparaging comments to Joyant, who hoped to begin a museum dedicated to the artist, about his son’s ability and the value of his work suggest he was unable to relate even on a basic level to his son or to see his son’s achievements as an artist. Herbert D. Schimmel, The Letters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, trans. divers hands (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Letter V. 5.
role, that of professional artist. His unflinching gaze at the viewer dares the audience to challenge him. He does not yet seem at ease or confident in his identity as an artist, as he is still a student and dependent to some extent on his instructor.

After Lautrec left Fernand Cormon’s studio and embarked on his independent artistic career in 1887, his depiction of men extended from those in his family and friends to include entertainers and inhabitants of Montmartre. With a shift in subjects came new perspectives on masculinity. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, Lautrec began painting men from more diverse classes. We start to see top-hatted bourgeois men, workers, and entertainers in his work. From Désiré Dihau and Louis Pascal to a laundryman and Aristide Bruant, Lautrec filtered his interpretation of masculinity according to the class distinctions of the period.

Lautrec painted Désiré Dihau a number of times in the 1890s; in *Désiré Dihau*, 1890, (figure 23), Lautrec painted him in a secluded garden. Dihau, dressed in a black jacket and top hat, reads the newspaper while sitting in a straight-backed wooded chair. Lautrec positions him at an angle facing away from the viewer; we only see a portion of the left side of his face. His bushy mustache is one of the few indicators of his age. Much like Édouard Manet’s *Woman Reading*, 1879-80 (figure 44), which also features a person reading a newspaper outside, the newsprint is blurred by crosshatched brushstrokes, though Lautrec has reversed Manet’s view and the gender of the sitter.

Whereas Manet presents the female sitter in a three-quarter pose toward the viewer, Lautrec only allows us to see a small portion of Dihau’s face. In doing so, he shifts control to Dihau and away from the viewer. The viewer has to piece together Dihau’s appearance from the limited information conveyed by his back. In positioning Dihau in such a way, Lautrec gives the

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viewer the impression of spying on Dihau. Although Dihau seems to be close to the viewer, Lautrec creates distance. The positioning of Dihau in the front of the painting, and the bottom edge of it cuts off the lower portion of the chair and his legs. Combined with the higher perspective of the painting, as if the viewer is looking down at Dihau, it suggests that the viewer watches unbeknownst to the sitter. The hidden vantage point suggests that the viewer is not really part of the scene; s/he is at a disadvantage, lurking at the fringes hoping to sneak a glance at Dihau.

In contrast, Manet’s woman reading faces the viewer. Her attention is focused on her newspaper, freeing the viewer to look without fear of being caught. Like Dihau, she is dressed in bourgeois finery, a high ruffled color, black dress, and kid gloves, and she is located close to the viewer. Her expression is alert, but passive as her eyes focus on the paper in front of her. Pursed red lips, blue eyes, and pink cheeks provide viewers with a blank canvas on which to project their desires. Laura Mulvey’s formulation of woman as man’s other aptly describes the viewing experience of Manet’s reader:

Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.52

Onto the screen of the woman’s face, the viewer can impose meaning on the blank face of the woman reading. More than other examples, her expressionless visage allows the viewer to place a variety of meanings on her. Furthermore, her preoccupation with the newspaper and her gender give the viewer, who has an unimpeded view of her, the position of power in the interaction.


Woman Reading, in addition to providing a space for male viewers to project their desires from a powerful position, also suggests how women fuel male creative energies. Charles Baudelaire suggests women have an important role in the imagination of men, especially male artists. He writes:

…[It is woman] for whom, but above all through whom, artists and poets create their most exquisite jewels; the source of the most exhausting pleasures and the most productive pains – Woman, in a word, for the artist in general, and Monsieur G. in particular, is far more than just the female of Man. Rather she is a divinity, a star, which presides at all the conceptions of the brain of man; a glittering conglomeration of all the graces of Nature, condensed into a single being; the object of the keenest admiration and curiosity that the picture of life can offer its contemplator.53

Woman, then, behaves as the conduit for the materialization of the best work of (male) artists and poets. For Monsieur G. (Constantin Guys) and other artists, she has an otherworldly quality that sets her apart from Man. The wonder that Baudelaire has for woman is another type of the projection that Mulvey describes. The exceptional aspects of woman that set her apart and make her an object of fascination and passion also strip away her personhood. Thus, woman becomes a screen onto which man projects his genius. By describing woman as “a star” igniting men’s ideas and creativity, Baudelaire personifies male creativity in the form of woman; woman becomes the ultimate inspiration and vehicle for male artistic genius. His idolatry of woman is really a worshipping of male creative energy. Therefore, in his construction of woman, she not only serves as a vehicle for men to project their desires, but she also fuels artists’ creative drive.

If we apply Baudelaire’s and Mulvey’s conceptions of the role of woman in art to Woman Reading, we find the woman depicted functioning for men. In the abstract, she is the drive behind the artist’s creative impulse. Her enigmatic expression allows for multiple interpretations of her, and it facilitates the (male) viewer’s projection of various desires onto her. In this reading, Manet aids the viewer’s projection onto the woman with his handling of the medium. The paint and

brushstrokes appear on the verge of obscuring the body of the woman. The impasto of the brushstrokes and saturation of the pigment produce a shield across the body of the woman. The weight of the brushstrokes across her hands and body has a material presence that blocks the viewer from straightforward access to it. Yet Manet reduces the impasto on the woman’s face. The soft peach and pink hues illuminate her face and contrast her funerary black vestments. She becomes the canvas onto which viewers paint their own desires.

If the female body in Woman Reading acts as a place for male viewers to project their desires, male viewers have a different experience when looking at Lautrec’s portrait of Dihau. Lautrec situates him in a position of power compared to the viewer. Dihau sits with his back turned to us and a small section of the left side of his face visible. His mustache prominently protrudes from the side of his face, the only clear distinguishing feature of the sitter. It also marks his status as a man, as well as his masculinity. By closing him off from the viewer, Lautrec keeps the viewer at a distance. Rather than offering Dihau as a blank canvas for viewers to inscribe their desires, Lautrec asserts Dihau’s masculinity and protects it. The distance between Dihau and the viewer produces a hierarchy of power in the painting, and the viewer does not yet have the status necessary to meet Dihau as an equal. It also suggests the performance of masculinity for the viewer.

Thus far, we have examined Lautrec’s portraits of men whom he knew or with whom he was acquainted. Each one focuses solely on the man in question with very little else to distract the viewer’s attention. Furthermore, in every painting, Lautrec distills the sitter to those qualities that

55 Sohn notes the importance of the mustache in marking the transition from boyhood to manhood. In the early nineteenth century, mustaches separated soldiers from civilians. When civilians began to grow mustaches from the 1810s to the 1830s, soldiers started fights with them over the right to have facial hair. See Sohn, 27-31.
defined his masculinity. For his father, that includes his enthusiasm for hunting and adherence to aristocratic traditions. Dihau’s masculinity remains connected to prosperity, as his tailored clothing suggests, and he engages in a solitary activity in a domestic space. In the next section, we will examine more of the range of masculinities operating in France during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Additionally, we will analyze the broader reasons and implications of these masculinities, but first, we need to consider the audience of these men. For whom did they behave they way they did? What motivated their choices concerning their appearance and manners? What were the stakes in these decisions? How did their expressions of masculinity differ from expressions of femininity?

Masculinity is a social construction that differs depending on the historical circumstances.\textsuperscript{56} Certain characteristics mark one as a man. These may include biological traits, but the more significant ones are tied to attitude, posture, gestures, and other socially performed behaviors. Many behaviors and traits can signify masculinity even during the same historical moment. However, society does not value all of these iterations of masculinity. The primary judges of masculinity are men. Their bestowal of respect or repugnance determines another man’s place in their company. Michael S. Kimmel describes masculinity as “a homosocial enactment.”\textsuperscript{57} Men perform their masculinity for the approval of other men in contrast to women.\textsuperscript{58} In such a

\textsuperscript{57} Kimmel, 64 (emphasis in the original).
\textsuperscript{58} Women serve as the Other for men in this formulation. Kimmel draws his understanding of gender from Sigmund Freud’s Oedipal phase in which the male child constructs his gender identity in contrast to his mother’s female gender identity. For Kimmel’s interpretation of Freud, see Kimmel, 63. Kimmel also addressed the question of the how masculinity is formed in “The Contemporary ‘Crisis’ of Masculinity.” Instead of looking to Freud in this essay, he considers the sociological impulses to both the production and continuation of masculinity. He writes: “The historical evidence suggests that while both masculinity and femininity are socially constructed within a historical context of gender relations, definitions of masculinity are historically reactive
situation where men critique each other for continuous proof of masculinity, fear of being found wanting in a crucial area underlies men’s interactions with each other.\textsuperscript{59}

The masculinity on display in \textit{Désiré Dihau} is performed for the consumption of male viewers. Lautrec places the viewer at a disadvantage in his position to Dihau by situating the viewer behind him. Despite an elevated viewing position so that the viewer literally looks down on Dihau, Dihau maintains an air of relaxed ease as he reads his newspaper. It is a very different view of the sitter from that in \textit{Justine Dieuhl}, 1889 (figure 45). Painted with in a similarly lush garden, Dieuhl faces the viewer nearly straight on. Although Félix Fénéon described her as a “hostile woman” in 1889, she does not scowl or provoke the viewer aside from looking directly at him.\textsuperscript{60} Lautrec paints her eyes slightly askew with her right eye veering toward to the right and her left looking forward. Combined with the position of her body of about a fifteen-degree angle to the left of the canvas, her mismatched eyes create a boundary between the viewer and the woman. Lautrec reuses this pose and reverses it in \textit{Désiré Dihau}. The effect is to reverse the power structure away from the viewer and onto the subject in his portrait of Dihau. Further contributing to Dieuhl’s submissive position is her posture: she sits up straight and holds her

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\textsuperscript{59} Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia,” 64-65.

\textsuperscript{60} There is some disagreement about the history of this painting. Gale B. Murray claims that it may be the \textit{Étude de face} that Lautrec showed at Les XX in Brussels in 1888, but Anne Roquebert counters that it has more in common with the painting from the Salon des Indépendants from 1889 based on Fénéon’s description of it in his review in \textit{La Vogue} from September 1889. He describes the painting as depicting a “hostile woman sitting amidst a background of pharmaceutical plants, euphorbia, rhubarb.” For Murray’s argument about the work, see Murray, 226-227. For Roquebert’s position, see “Justine Dieuhl,” in \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec}, Fréches-Thory et al., 146.
hands, left over right, docilely in her lap. More than Manet’s *Woman Reading*, Justine Dieuhl offers the male viewer a person onto whom he can locate his desires.

A different kind of desire is present in *Louis Pascal*, 1893 (figure 46). In this portrait of his cousin, Lautrec again suggests the competitive nature of manhood. He paints Pascal dressed in his overcoat and top hat standing at an open door as if to leave. The cigar in his mouth and the cane tucked under his arm extending past his hips have obvious phallic overtones. In this portrait, the accoutrements of class also enter into the construction of masculinity more than in the portrait of Dihau. The top hat and cane identify him as upper class.

Lautrec presents a contrasting, though still phallic, representation of a working-class man in *The Laundryman*, 1894 (figure 47). In this painting, Lautrec depicts the laundryman delivering a very large and phallic bundle to a woman. Hunched over the enormous sack, he grasps it with both arms and hoists it between his legs. This posture is at once lewd (toward the woman) and

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61 Lautrec exhibited this portrait along with portraits of Dr. Bourges and Gaston Bonnefoy at the Salon des Indépendants in 1891. During this time, Lautrec painted a number of portraits of his male friends dressed and posed in a similar fashion. Frey notes that these portraits are emblematic of his close relationships with men and the emotional support that they gave to him. Frey, 283-284.

62 As children, Lautrec and Pascal competed in school. Pascal was only one year older than he, and Lautrec followed his cousin’s lead. Although Pascal was bright and initially excelled in his classes, he struggled academically when he entered adolescence. In contrast, Lautrec began to shine in his courses, and he rose to the role of leader. He remained close to his cousin and protective of him throughout his life. For information about Lautrec and Pascal’s relationship, see Frey, 55, 73.

63 Anne Roquebert mentions the phallic resemblance of these items. See Roquebert, “Louis Pascal,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec*, 152.

64 Around this time Pascal encountered financial difficulty, and Lautrec pleaded to his mother on his cousin’s behalf. Roquebert notes the troubles; see Roquebert, “Louis Pascal,” 152. Lautrec wrote about Pascal getting a job at the Comptoir National d’Escompte in Paris in January 1884. In 1891, he said his cousin had two positions lined up in insurance or with the Transatlantique in February (a month before the portrait of Pascal was hung at the Salon des Indépendants). He also wrote about beginning the portrait in February. In the middle of March 1891, he described Pascal’s imminent firing and failure to secure a new position. In November-December of 1891, Pascal’s prospects had not changed. In December, Lautrec first asked his mother to help Pascal financially. Pascal’s fortunes remained unchanged in 1892. In August, Lautrec pleaded for his cousin, “We’ll really have to give him [Pascal] a hand if you don’t want him to be ruined for good and lose everything that has been done up to the present.” Schimmel, Letters 89, 186, 189, 209, 211, 229, and 242.
demeaning (to himself); he thrusts the phallic bag toward the madam of the house, while he
simultaneously appears unable to control his package and looks to her for approval. Although
Lautrec usually refrained from judging his subjects, here we find an exception. The harsh lines
of the face of the laundryman and his bulging eyes threaten to reduce him to caricature. He is
dressed in dark, workman’s clothing. The sketchy brushstrokes and uneven color of his clothing
suggest his lowly status. His squatting posture and wide-eyed greedy expression signal his lower
status in the hierarchy of masculinity.

65 Gerstle Mack writes: “Lautrec’s viewpoint was intensely individual, yet curiously detached. He
probed deeply beneath the surface, he exposed vice with brutal frankness; but he condemned
neither victims of depravity nor the conditions that were responsible for it. He was content to
record; he had no desire to reform.” Mack, Toulouse-Lautrec (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
1952), v-vi.

Fritz Novotny also praises Lautrec’s objectivity in his work: “He did not see the bizarre,
vulgar, perverse or corrupt elements in his subjects primarily with the eye of a curious analyst. He
simply regarded them as manifest forms of the instinctive drives. This amoral, aesthetic view of
the instinctive element in man is his dominating characteristic, it is his most common, his
determining attitude to his subjects, which he of course chose as the most striking examples to

Much of the scholarship about Lautrec’s lack of moral condemnation concerns his representation
of prostitutes. Huisman and Dortu, for example, note that Lautrec “portrayed prostitutes with
complete sincerity and without branding them as inferior beings.” He did not judge the women or
stereotype them because of their profession. Huisman and Dortu, 134.

Likewise, Dominique Jarrassé and Devynck both point out the lack of judgment in
Lautrec’s depiction of prostitutes, and Pierre Mac Orlan writes that Lautrec treated prostitutes like
any other subject in his paintings. Additionally, Jacques Lassaigne mentions Lautrec’s lack of
judgment of his subjects. In 1893, Gustave Geffroy offered a dissenting opinion of Lautrec and
his work. He wrote: “M. de Toulouse-Lautrec is mocking, cruel, and over-tolerant when he
throws open for our inspection his dance-halls, his brothel scenes, and the unnatural sex
relationships of some of his models. Yet he remains a sincere artist, his pitiless observation is
aware of the beauty of life, and the philosophy of vice which he sometimes proclaims with
irritating ostentation nevertheless acquires, by the power of his drawing and the depth of his
probing, the value, for purposes of demonstration, of a lesson in moral surgery.” Geffroy’s
opinion is in the minority. Jarrassé, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: Entre le mythe et la modernité
(Marseille: AGEP, 1991), 102; Devynck, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec at the Albi Museum (Albi:
Editions grand sud, 2009); Mac Orlan, Toulouse-Lautrec peintre de la lumière froide (Brussels:
Raewyn W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity has gained traction in the literature on masculinity for its discussion of hierarchy. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity “as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answers to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.” Hegemonic masculinity is not fixed. Rather it transforms as social conditions change, and it “interacts” with race and class. In this way, it can maintain its hegemony over other masculinities and women. Even though hegemonic masculinity preserves the dominance of a particular form of masculinity, this does not mean that the majority of men enact all of the practices of it. As Connell points out, most men do not; however, they all “benefit from the patriarchal dividend.” In other words, all men, regardless of race and socio-economic status, reap the rewards that hegemonic masculinity provides, such as higher pay, more access to positions of power, and a greater ability to shape the political agenda to bolster their position at the top. Still, if men do not conform to hegemonic masculinity, they still must grapple with it at some point. It is the “normative” definition of masculinity that is based on the separation of gender from sex. In her previous work, she articulated the danger of sex role theories (which held sway in the late 1970s and early 1980s), as being too closely aligned with biological determinism. She argued that they fail to analyze the social aspects of sex role reinforcement and how they change over time. Furthermore, sex role theory cannot account for different masculinities and femininities. Connell, “Theorising Gender,” 260-272.

Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77. Mimi Schippers contends that this definition is insufficient because it does not adequately consider the place of women. She would prefer to see it revised to: “Hegemonic masculinity is the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.” Schippers, 94 (emphasis in the original).

Connell, “Theorising Gender,” 75.
Connell, “Theorising Gender,” 79.
masculinity, encompassing the most highly esteemed qualities of being a man. Furthermore, these qualities may change in different situations: workplace, family life, leisure activities.

When we compare Lautrec’s portraits of Dihau and Pascal to his depiction of the laundryman, we find examples of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities. The two bourgeois gentlemen, who appear well-dressed and in command, represent hegemonic masculinity, while the working-class laundryman, who is dressed in rougher garb, is part of nonhegemonic masculinity. The issue of class is an important one in the discussion of masculinity because hegemony is the means by which the ruling class maintains power; it naturalizes and solidifies their occupation of powerful positions while quelling discontent from the lower classes. Therefore, the laundryman, as a worker, is immediately representative of nonhegemonic masculinity. We see further indications of Dihau and Pascal’s hegemonic masculinity in their activities. Lautrec paints Dihau engaged in a leisurely activity: reading the paper in a garden. Dihau also holds a privileged position in the painting. He is semi-hidden from us, and we must sneak a peek over his shoulder to see him. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt argue that wealthy men (those most likely to display hegemonic masculinity) “deploy their wealth and establish relations of distance and dominance over other men’s bodies.” We see instances of distancing and dominance in the positioning of Dihau. Likewise, Lautrec asserts Pascal’s superiority over the viewer. Pascal’s eyes look in the general direction of the viewer, but he does not make eye contact; his features appear glazed over and unfocused as if the viewer were not present. Furthermore, the prominent position of his phallic cane suggests his virility.

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70 Raewyn W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (December 2005): 832.
71 Connell and Messerschmidt, 838.
72 Schippers examines the role that class plays in the hierarchy of female gender as well as the way that masculine hegemony affects women. See Schippers, 85-102, especially 90-94 for an analysis of masculine hegemony.
73 Connell and Messerschmidt, 852.
One of Lautrec’s most multivalent representations of hegemonic masculinity appears in his posters advertising Aristide Bruant’s cabarets, *Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant*, 1892 (figure 3) and *Eldorado: Aristide Bruant*, 1892 (figure 48). The posters, mirror images of each other, show Bruant with his trademark red scarf, wide-brimmed hat, and walking stick. His attire is non-specific working-class, and his physical presence is undeniable. His upper body occupies the majority of the posters. Additionally, he holds a thick (phallic) walking stick and does not appear to be in any danger from the man lurking in the shadows, his confidence and swagger serve as prophylactics against attack. Although Bruant embodies the power and confidence of hegemonic masculinity, one important aspect is missing: wealth. In these posters, and indeed in all of the publicity for his performances, Bruant assumes working-class status. Although he had humble beginnings, his cabaret act made him a wealthy man. So what are we to do with this discrepancy between Bruant’s appropriation of working-class masculinity and the wealth that his engagement in hegemonic masculinity leads us to assume?

First, we must separate Bruant’s manufactured persona from the artistic representation of it. Although the two are certainly related to, and in many ways dependent on, one another, the persona that Bruant assembled involved much more than Lautrec could represent in a poster, including working-class argot, gruff rebukes to patrons in his cabarets, and a decidedly vulgar

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74 The exact nature of the attack for which Bruant could fend off is open to debate. The way that the figure in the shadows leans and stares at Bruant suggests that his interest is more than casual and that he is perhaps admiring Bruant and his masculinity.
75 Félix Fénéon asserted as much while leaving Bruant’s cabaret, Le Mirliton: “The money that fellow used to collect in one evening during his heyday would have guaranteed a year’s work to one of our people.” Cited in Michael L. Wilson, “The Eccentric Masculinity of Aristide Bruant,” *The Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 36 (2008): 206-207.
76 Bruant was not the only performer to borrow elements of his persona from the working class. Nor was he the only performer to become wealthy but remain committed to his working-class attitude and mannerisms on stage. In the 1860s, the café-concert singer Thérésa was hailed for her ability to sing for “her people,” the working class who crowded around the perimeter of the café and sat under the trees. For an analysis of Thérésa and café-concert culture, including the mingling of classes and the manufacturing of the popular, see T.J. Clark, “A Bar at the Folies-Bergère,” in *The Painting of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1894), 205-258, especially 213-236.
repertoire of songs, in addition to his sartorial choices. While those aspects of the Bruant character certainly informed Lautrec’s depiction of him in the poster, they are two separate entities: Bruant the persona was formed by Bruant the performer, and the two-dimensional lithographic representation of Bruant created by Lautrec.\textsuperscript{77} Each one reveals a contested space of masculinity, but they have different implications. Michael L. Wilson considers the answer to this question of masculinity for Bruant the performer in “The Eccentric Masculinity of Aristide Bruant.” He examines Bruant’s rise from poverty, his stage presence and performance, and his adoption of a masculine but unconventional costume. Wilson flirts with the idea that Bruant opened up a new space of masculinity, but he does not consider a wider implication of this. He writes:

Bruant’s contestation was based in linguistic and behavioral mimicry, an imaginary occlusion of social class, and a monopoly on creativity. As a model of manhood, this proved far too dependent upon and imbricated in wider notions of ‘authentic’ experience to be stable or imitable, particularly in the face of fame and fortune. It also left in place (where it did not exaggerate) assumptions of male privilege and female inferiority.\textsuperscript{78}

Bruant appropriated the signs of a timeless working-class identity: the corduroy suit, his large black hat, and casual usage of street slang.\textsuperscript{79} Wilson argues that the persona that Bruant created was essentially a cardboard cutout without any substance to support it.

Indeed by 1896, Bruant’s working-class façade was revealed to be on shaky ground. By that time, he owned a château near Courtenay where the journalist Adolphe Brisson interviewed him for \textit{Le Temps} while touring his estate. His description of Bruant veers far from the working-class ruffian persona that the singer projected on stage. Despite wearing his trademark costume,

\textsuperscript{77} For Bruant’s biography, see Henri Marc, \textit{Aristide Bruant: le maître de la rue} (Paris: France-Empire, 1989).
\textsuperscript{78} Wilson, 207-208.
\textsuperscript{79} Bruant’s formula for a working-class persona was already well-known in 1893, and it had become a recognizable and imitable type: “Sa figure, popularisée par la gravure et l’affiche, est célèbre et restera légendaire. On dit maintenant le type Bruant, et des artistes se sont fait une spécialité de son imitation.” Oscar Méténier, \textit{Le Chansonnier populaire Aristide Bruant} (Paris: Au Mirliton, 1893), 6.
the “rogue’s poet” spoke and acted more like a “potbellied bourgeois.” With a river demarcating the boundary of his property on one side and a diverse landscape (including twenty-five hectares of forest, thirty hectares of prairie, an island, and a windmill), Bruant ruled over his estate with authority. Brisson describes him as “un autre marquis de Carabas.” Bruant had even been asked to serve as Counselor General of Courtenay, though he declined the offer. His bourgeois sensibilities did not end with his immense acquisition of property. He was a preeminent collector, accumulating not only art (much of it self-aggrandizing), but also the slang of the streets. His current obsession was the grammar of loucherbems, butchers from Paris and Lyons. This hobby betrays his identity as a bourgeois poser more than anything else. Only a member of the bourgeoisie would rather study a very specific working-class argot and profit from publishing a dictionary of it than preserve its secret and exclusionary history.

Bruant’s château continued to be news in the early twentieth century. Le Mercure de France published another profile of the singer in 1901. Like Brisson, Emile Magne describes the scenic view and rich history of Bruant’s estate, located near the ruins of the “Reine Blanche” tower. He writes about Bruant’s aspirations to increase his property and emphasizes his status as a landowner: “M. Bruant is a patriot, especially when, from his window towards Courtenay, he

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80 And a very happy one at that. Brisson concluded his article by writing, “J’ai donc vu un homme heureux!” Adolphe Brisson, “Promenades et visites: M. Aristide Bruant aux champs,” Le Temps, September 23, 1896.
81 Brisson, “Promenades et visites.”
84 Magne begins his article with a description of the château: “L’illustre M. Bruant ayant amassé, à engueuler les imbéciles qui fréquentaient son cabaret, une fortune rondelette, réalisa, en Touraine, le rêve agreste de Tityre. Non loin de Courtenay, son château voisina avec les ruines de cette tour où la reine Blanche promenait ses mélancolies….Les terrasses de son castel dominent le pays environnant, où s’érècinte au profit du potentat chansonnier le dur paysan serf comme autrefois. En son cœur n’a plus la moindre émotion socialiste.” Emile Magne, “Les Poètes des pauvres,” Le Mercure de France 38 (April-June 1901): 380
contemplates the immensity of his land and the going and coming of his domesticity. M. Bruant is *proprietary* a patriot.\(^85\) Additionally, Magne praises Bruant’s talent for writing about the poor, comparing him to Honoré de Balzac, Jean Richepin,\(^86\) and Jehan Rictus\(^87\) in addition to drawing parallels to Dante and Friedrich Schiller.\(^88\) Although Bruant took on the appearance of the working class during his performance, the persona that he created had no substance and could not sustain itself. It became overwrought when the real life of Bruant became involved. The two Bruants could not exist simultaneously, and his working-class persona could not survive off stage. As soon as he stepped off of it, the persona collapsed. That same confusion was not necessarily in store for Lautrec’s depiction of him.

Therefore, Lautrec’s representation of Bruant had something that Bruant himself did not have: staying power. The actual wealth of Bruant mattered little in posters. The two-dimensional representation did not have to contend with continuous performance of a character. This performance is distinct from the performance of gender that one enacts, although in the case of Bruant the two are closely related. Gender is a performance that becomes naturalized. It is this naturalization that makes it so powerful. For Bruant to inhabit a character is an additional layer of

\(^{85}\) “M. Bruant est patriote, surtout lorsque, de sa fenêtre de Courtenay, il contemple l’immensité de ses terres et le va et vient de sa domesticité. M. Bruant est *propriétairement* patriote.” Magne, 382 (emphasis in the original).

\(^{86}\) Richepin was a novelist, poet, and playwright. His work includes *L’Etoile* (written with André Gill in 1873), *La chanson des gueux* (1876), *Les morts bizarres* (1876), *Miarka* (1883), and *La Miséloque* (1892), and *L’Aïné* (1893). Like Bruant, his style was honest and full of energy: “Son style est net, franc, énergique, souple pourtant et varié quant il lui plaît; l’art des vers n’a pas de secret pour lui; nul ne manie avec plus d’aisance les rythmes les plus divers; il emploie aussi aisément la période ample et un peu majestueuse des classiques que le vers haché et brisé qui faisait peur à nos aïeux. Avec tous ces dons de nature au service d’une imagination fougueuse et en même temps précise. M. Richepin était assuré de produire des œuvres qui exciteraient l’admiration.” Benvolio, “La ‘Mer’ de M. Richepin,” *Le XIXe Siècle*, February 3, 1886.

\(^{87}\) Rictus wrote and performed his poems about the experiences of the poor in cabarets. His works include *Les Soliloques du pauvre* (a pamphlet including the poem “L’Hiver,” 1897), *Doléances* (1900), *Les Cantilènes du Malheur* (1902), *Les Soliloques du pauvre* (1903), *Fil de fer* (1906), and *Le Cœur populaire* (1914). Théophile Alexandre Steinlen illustrated the 1903 edition of *Les Soliloques du pauvre*.

\(^{88}\) Magne, 382-388.
masquerade and one that remains, at his heart, intentional, deliberate, and well-thought out. When we consider Lautrec’s representation of Bruant in the posters, the two become conflated. It is impossible to separate the man Bruant, the character of Bruant, and their separate masculinities. Furthermore, the character that Bruant assumes in the posters is not identical to one that he portrayed on the stage or in his everyday life. It is the culmination of Lautrec’s decisive artistic choices. He deviates from previous depictions of Bruant. As Maurice Joyant points out, earlier posters of the singer displayed a more naturalistic representation of Bruant, closer to a photograph than the schematic and abbreviated drawing by Lautrec.

In Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen’s numerous illustrations for Bruant’s songbooks, he fills in more detail of the singer, and he places him squarely in the singer’s stage persona. In “Fins de siècle: Monologue par Aristide Bruant,” c. 1894-95 (figure 49), Bruant stands on a table, looming over the audience, jaw jutting out, and his hands in his pockets while ladies lean across the table in a smitten haze and men in top hats watch. In this drawing, Bruant’s persona does not occupy the top rung of the hierarchy. His relationship with the paying bourgeois public is clear: he performs for their amusement, and therefore is beholden to them. Yet in Lautrec’s posters, he has flipped the script. The bourgeois audience has been banished. All that remain are Bruant and a menacing figure in the background. The theatrical nature of Bruant’s performance is hidden. As a result, he does not have to vie for authority in the poster as he had to do in his performance on

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stage and on the street. Lautrec removes the contradictions of Bruant’s situation, an increasingly wealthy singer performing vulgar street songs for a wealthy clientele in an upscale cabaret. Instead, Lautrec emphasizes the danger lurking in the dark, narrow streets of Montmartre and Bruant’s courage in the face of it, as well as the vague threat that he himself presents. In his posters for the Ambassadors and Eldorado, Lautrec finds his formula. The bold colors and uniform application of color in the posters reinforce the vision Bruant had for himself on stage. Yet, the works also offered another challenge to hegemonic masculinity. They were power statements, not merely “flat and decorative.”

When we look at Lautrec’s posters *Eldorado* and *Ambassadeurs*, we find a distinctively masculine approach to the lithographs. The primary colors of Bruant’s garb, the wall behind him, and the background shadows produce a bold statement that one cannot ignore. The red scarf around Bruant’s neck catches the viewer’s eye and refuses to release it. Meanwhile, the yellow wall behind him battles with the red scarf and black hat, as it repeatedly pushes itself forward in the viewer’s vision only to be forced back again by the competing colors. Additionally, the thick lines contouring the figures and folds in fabrics clearly delineate the boundaries of the figures and emphasize their rigidity. In 1893, Frantz Jourdain described Lautrec’s depiction of Bruant as striking and audacious. He writes:

> In the first poster, he [Lautrec] tried hard to render this untamed aspect, a little wild, this eulogist of the streets. It’s there, all right, the man of bitter ferocity, with talent, harsh and poignant, the writer of *Géomay* and *À St Ouen*. One reads in these traits the boldness, the head of a rebel, the audacious hatred for the filthy rich, the sadness that aches and pains of the poor give to him.

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90 Wilson, 208.
91 “Dans le premier il s’est attaché à rendre cet aspect farouche, un peu sauvage mais imposant qu’a ce chantre de la rue. C’est bien là, l’homme à l’amère féroce, au talent âpre et poignant, l’auteur de *Géomay* et de *À St Ouen*.
On lit sur ses traits la hardiesse, crâne du révolté, la haine de l’audacieux pour les ‘rupins’, la tristesse que lui ont donnée les douleurs humbles.”
The representation of Bruant that Lautrec manufactures conveys a confident and brash man oozing swagger. This image of masculinity was crucial to the French nation. After the Franco-Prussian War, social and athletic clubs as well as secular education sought to rebuild men stronger and more robust than before the conflict. In 1887, the Minister of Education, Eugène Spuller, and Charles Bigot described the qualities that these new men would possess, including “to be worthy of the name man” and “pur et dur.” Lautrec delivers a visualization of these qualities in his posters of Bruant through his formal choices and representation of authoritative masculinity.

Certainly, Bruant and Lautrec sought to convince their audiences that Bruant possessed a particular brand of masculinity. This was not a simple task. The singer belonged to the bourgeoisie and, although he had experienced difficult times in the past, his wealth increased with the popularity of his performances in his cabarets. His actual economic status differed drastically from the one that he portrayed on stage. The masculinity of Bruant the man was in stark contrast to the masculinity of the down-and-out working class persona that he put on each night. Both Bruant and Lautrec had to contend with this disparity.

The conflicting masculinities that Bruant assumed depended on the situation in which he found himself. They also had broader implications. They participated in a discourse on dominant and subordinate masculinities. The dominant, or hegemonic masculinity, was composed of

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92 See Charles Bigot, *Questions d’enseignement secondaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1886), 15 and *Le Temps*, August 2, 1887, cited in Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 155. The question of producing “manly” men also featured prominently in the concerns of England. In an article about the strongman Eugen Sandow, the building a population of physically fit and healthy young men was considered to be of the utmost importance: “Considering the enormous proportion of recruits who were rejected as physically unfit in Lancashire and the mill districts, it is indeed good news that a system has been devised by which we can arrest the bodily degeneracy of our race.” “The Physical Improvement of the Race: What Sandow Has Done,” *The Review of Reviews* 24 (July-December 1901): 514.
elements of the bourgeois, able-bodied, self-made entrepreneur. Subordinate masculinities included men in the working class, foreigners, and those who were unwell. Not only did these manifestations of masculinity co-exist in society, they also could appear in the same man in varying degrees. The discrepancy and tension between Bruant’s two performances of masculinity occurred on a larger scale in society.

In Wilson’s view, Bruant’s inclusion of elements of nonhegemonic masculinity temporarily disrupted but did not alter hegemonic masculinity because the persona was untenable.93 This ceased to be an issue in Lautrec’s posters. His depiction of Bruant reinforced the singer’s projection of working-class masculinity through its hard lines and even application of color. Both formal aspects of the posters opened up a space in hegemonic masculinity, in which it can shift its emphasis and increase its impact. Indeed, the adoption of nonhegemonic elements is precisely how hegemonic masculinity maintains its dominance through a process of what Demetrakis Z. Demetriou’s calls the “hybrid bloc.”94 He bases this idea on Homi Bhabha’s concept of “negotiation rather than negation” in which the dominant culture borrows elements from subcultures in order to open up a “third space” of power relations that allows new power relations to occur.95 The hybrid bloc exposes a transmutable space where aspects of nonhegemonic masculinities become part of the hegemonic masculinity.96

93 Bruant’s negotiation of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinity operated during his performance, as well as in his actual accumulation of wealth. On stage, he sang in the argot of the streets, but his characters did not seek to disrupt the social order. They appeared willing, if not happy, to continue as pimps and thugs with no wish to join the respectable bourgeoisie. For an analysis of Bruant’s stage persona and its relationship to the newspaper Le Père Peinard, see Howard G. Lay, “Réflecs d’un gniaff: On Emile Pouget and Le Père Peinard,” in Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France, eds. Dean de la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 82-138, especially 101-106.
95 Both the dominant culture and subcultures can benefit from and transform within the opening of the third space, as Bhabha demonstrates in his example of striking female miners in England in
Steinlen illustrates the confrontation of the hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities of the 1890s in his cover for *Le Mirliton*, June 9, 1893 (figure 50). In the drawing, a top-hatted, mustachioed bourgeois man (the novelist Maurice Barrès) carefully accessorized with a cigarette and cane stands in front of Lautrec’s *Aristide Bruant in his Cabaret* poster from 1893 (figure 51). In this poster, Bruant is dressed in his trademark black hat, red scarf, and black cape and

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1984-85. He explains the concept of the third space in “The Commitment to Theory,” *New Formations*, no. 5 (Summer 1988): 5-23, see especially 11-12 for his thoughts on “negotiation rather than negation” and the striking miners, and 21-23 for the third space.


97 The difference in the facial hair of these two men could have been significant, given the time period that Lautrec was producing posters for Bruant, 1892-93. In March 1891, the male café workers and servants submitted a petition to the Comité de la chambre syndicale des restaurateurs et limonadiers du Département de la Seine for their right to grow a beard or mustache if they so chose. At the time, the law required them to be clean-shaven.

They argued: “La moustache…n’est plus, comme dans la première moitié de ce siècle, le signe d’un caractère belliqueux, et le manque de soins est répugnant avec une barbe quelconque. L’habitude seule nous condamne aux favoris, et personne ne soutiendra qu’une habitude qui pèse fâcheusement sur des milliers d’hommes doive être à jamais conservée: le soutenir serait nier le progrès…”

Francisque Sarcey fought on their behalf in an article in *Le XIXe siècle*. Having endured a similar requirement while a teacher, he expressed his indignation over these rules. In his view, it was a man’s natural right and an expression of his masculinity to grow a beard. He wrote: “C’est un simple préjugé et qui va, ce semble, contre la nature des choses. Car la barbe étant par tout pays le signe de la virilité, il est tout naturel que des hommes, dans les fonctions où ils ont a faire preuve des qualités particulières à leur sexe, la déploient et l’étalent. Est-ce qu’un magistrat orné d’une belle barbe blanche n’impose pas plus de respect et n’a pas plus de prestige qu’avec le menton rasé, qui est l’apanage des femmes?” Others may say that the waiter who grows a beard or mustache does not look like a waiter. To which Sarcey replies, that may be precisely the point. Bruant’s lack of facial hair contrasts the mustaches of Dihau and Pascal in Lautrec’s portraits of them, as well as Barrès in Steinlen’s illustration. Although not all working-class men had to forgo facial hair (see for example the upturned blond mustache on Lautrec’s laundryman), Bruant’s decision to do so could have had a connection to the restrictions the upper-class imposed on certain members of the working class, especially since the waiters in Bruant’s cabaret would have been subject to the ban on facial hair that the workers were petitioning.

Lautrec was well aware of the significance that facial hair had in French culture at the time. In 1895, he bartended a party for Alexandre Natanson (Lautrec had a passion not only for drinking alcohol, but also for concocting new cocktails). When he arrived at Natanson’s apartment, he was clean-shaven. Paul Leclercq and Henri Bourges could not believe that Lautrec
hold his plain wooden walking stick. Lautrec positions him with his back to the viewer, looking over his shoulder out of the corner of his eye behind him. Placed in close proximity to the poster, Barrès sizes up the cabaret singer. Bruant and Barrès present divergent versions of masculinity: Bruant appears as a bulky, solid mass. His clothing, in contrast to Barrès’s, lacks adornment and unnecessary accessories, such as a flower in his lapel. Barrès wears a bell-shaped overcoat that falls below his knees. Although it takes up significant space around him, he clearly does not fill out the coat; it balloons around his thin legs as if to camouflage that his body lacks the sturdiness of Bruant’s. The two men and their respective masculinities size each other up. The poster of Bruant is placed on the wall so that the singer stands taller than Barrès. The similar scale of the two men, in addition to Bruant’s girth compared to the more daintily proportioned Barrès, reinforces Bruant’s domination of the scene. Even though hegemonic masculinity is associated with money and power (which Barrès exhibits in his dress and appraisal of the poster), it is losing the confrontation. Bruant’s adoption of nonhegemonic qualities (working-class toughness) compounded by his hegemonic qualities (assertion and large size) gives him the victory.

Let us remember that Bruant has not rejected all elements of hegemonic masculinity. He still holds a place of authority in his cabaret and derides those whom he deems inferior, including men and women, in his act. Even in this poster, he appears ready with a sarcastic and biting comment for anyone who crosses his path. Jourdain describes the singer’s brash attitude in his analysis of Lautrec’s posters:

Another poster, in genuine grand style, shows us a cocky, smiling Bruant in profile.

would degrade himself to such a degree to take on the appearance of a servant. Francisque Sarcey, “Chronique,” Le XIXe siècle, March 17, 1891. Frey, 405-406.
He comes, one believes, to sing a comical or rather patriotic couplet, and the skeptic in him reappearing, he becomes mocking, a trickster.\footnote{“Une autre affiche, véritablement de grand style, nous montre un Bruant de profil souriant, gouailleur. Il vient, croit-on, de chanter un couplet comique ou plutôt patrilique et, le sceptique réapparaissant en lui, il devient finalement railleur.” Jourdain, 490.}

Bruant, regardless of his working-class appearance, commands authority and judges others who do not live up to his standards. Steinlen exemplifies Demetriou’s description of the hybrid bloc of masculinity in the juxtaposition of Lautrec’s poster of Bruant and the figure of Barrès. Lautrec’s depiction of Bruant as bold, powerful, and possessing authority packaged in working-class attire demonstrates the appropriation of non-hegemonic qualities by hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the hybrid bloc with the form of dominant masculinity represented by Barrès illustrates the superiority of the hybrid bloc in its ability to surpass the bourgeois masculinity of Barrès.

If Steinlen’s drawing demonstrates Demetriou’s negotiation of the hybrid bloc, then we might say that Lautrec holds a significant place in the drawings. Lautrec’s signature featuring his initials enclosed in a circle appears in the upper right side of the poster in Steinlen’s drawings. In reality, Lautrec signed the poster in the lower left corner, a section of the poster cut off in Steinlen’s illustration. By moving Lautrec’s signature to a more prominent position in the drawing, Steinlen emphasizes the artist’s role in crafting this image of masculinity. Furthermore, he positions Lautrec’s signature on the picture plane rather than following the perspectival space of the drawing, pushing Lautrec to the forefront of the poster. It is clear that it is Lautrec’s Bruant that Barrès must come to terms with, not the singer himself.

At this point in the discussion, one may begin to wonder why hegemonic masculinity or the hybrid bloc held so much importance during this time period. The answer lies as much in the status of men as it does in the status of women. The future of France’s young men was on the minds of the nation and on the front page of the \textit{Figaro}. From August 1896 to January 1897,
Hugues Le Roux wrote a series of essays titled “Nos fils” that ran on the page one of the newspaper approximately every two weeks. In the series, Le Roux examines the obstacles men in their twenties faced entering the workforce, the perils of various careers, and where France stood in relation to its neighbors. Because of its scope and Le Roux’s comprehensive analysis of the issues, the series deserves careful unpacking. His observations and concerns illustrate the depth of anxiety surrounding masculinity during this time.

The first essay emphasizes the importance of initiative. During the season of graduations and awards ceremonies, Le Roux acknowledges that it is easy to laud students who scored highly on exams and chastise those who simply passed. However, he points out that high achievement in school and a bevy of prizes does not guarantee success in one’s career. Simple memorization and obedience lead students to these achievements, factors that do not contribute to success later in life. What matters most when building a career is taking risks and pushing the limits. Without these things, a young man will not find his fortune. Instead, he will drain his parents’ resources as they age.99 Le Roux notes that the bourgeoisie will face a number of challenges in the coming years. Many worry about money, but the forefront of their concern should be the initiative, or

99 Le Roux minces no words when describing the dire situation in which the young men will find themselves if they do not change their ways. He writes: “Cette inquiétude du destin des fils que nous avons mis au monde et qui, ne pouvant être tous polytechniciens, professeurs, médecins, avocats ou journalistes ou bureaucrates, ne sauront point se tirer d’affaire tous seuls et retomberont, fruits secs, sur les bras de leurs parents, limite plus que tout le reste le nombre des naissances dans cette classe bourgeoise qui semble touchée de stérilité. Cela ne coûte pas bien cher d’élever un fils jusqu’à vingt ans. C’est un compte que nous pourrons établir un jour ou l’autre. On sera stupéfait devant des chiffres de constater que l’on fait un homme à si peu de frais. Ce qui est insoutenable pour le père, c’est la perspective de voir sa vieillesse encombrée par la maladresse ou la niaiserie de fils qui ne savent que manger les fonds qu’on leur confie, les dots qu’on leur verse, et vivre aux crochet de parents qui avaient gagné leur repos.” Hugues Le Roux, “Nos fils,” Le Figaro, August 4, 1896.
lack thereof, that its young men exhibit. Countries that have the most success foster this attribute in their men. For France to remain competitive and relevant, it must do the same.

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100 Le Roux, “Nos fils.”

101 Within the “Nos fils” series, Le Roux devotes articles to the situation that young men in England (August 27, 1896), Germany (August 13, 1896), and the United States (September 6, 1896) faced. Though he maintains his staunchly critical eye in these columns, his admiration for these countries is clear.

For example, he describes the English practice of sending their sons away to school as soon as they are able to wash and dress themselves. While at school in the city, they are exposed to more culture than they were at home in the countryside. Unfortunately, the schools are laden with rules that stunt original thinking and initiative in the boys. They must sit quietly and learn through copying and memorizing material. Furthermore, even with the abundance of culture available to them, they remain philistines. When they venture into museums, they always rely on the information provided instead of their own knowledge. Once they are able to pursue their individual interests in school, their taste level and cultural aptitude plummet further.

Despite these shortcomings, Le Roux believes that the English have the French beat on two fronts. First, their birthrate far exceeds that of France. Le Roux writes: “C’est une mère spartiate. Elle met des fils au monde non pour elle-même, mais pour perpétuer la grandeur de la race anglo-saxonne. Une statistique que l’on vient de me montrer au Bureau municipal prouve qu’en un seul semestre il y a eu autant de naissances en Angleterre qu’en France dans la période des dix dernières années.” Second, English mothers do not balk at their sons’ independence the way that French mothers do (a phenomenon that Le Roux examines again in his conclusion in January 1897). By the time that their sons reach adulthood, English mothers are accustomed to them living in distant places. Le Roux ends the column with a plea for French mothers to develop this same kind of independence in their sons in order to demonstrate the country’s superiority across the globe: “Nous avons, nous bourgeois, mission de former une génération d’hommes qui résistera à la poussée des autres races et légitimera par la supériorité de son action les privilèges indispensables de notre caste. Il ne semble pas que ces soldats de la bataille moderne puissent continuer d’être élevés d’après l’idéal et les traditions d’autrefois. La vie de famille, la chère vie du foyer, avec tout ce qu’elle comporte de pusillanimité affectueuse, ne convient plus à des hommes qu’il faut créer indépendants et forts. Eh! oui, indépendants, - je le dis d’un cœur qui saigne – même de nos tendresses.”

In contrast to the English whose young men follow a decidedly practical line of education, the sons of the German bourgeoisie go to university for the sake of expanding their knowledge of the classics with no real-world application in sight. Le Roux disapproves of this kind of coddling of young men. Not only is it unnecessary for a successful business career, but also not everyone wants this kind of education. His inclination toward encouraging those who would rather follow the footsteps of their fathers in a trade is obvious in the language that he uses to speak of them. He prefers what he calls the “Délicatessen” route to the “Conditorei” route. The former is more practical; a young man learns and trade that is respectable and stable. Conversely, the Conditorei, or pâtisserie, path is indulgent and does not adequately prepare the young man to be successful. Le Roux, “Nos fils III: les Anglois,” Le Figaro, August 27, 1896. Le Roux, “Nos fils II: les Allemands,” Le Figaro, August 13, 1896. Le Roux, “Nos fils IV: ceux d’outre-mer,” Le Figaro, September 6, 1896.

102 In addition to the warnings that Le Roux issues for young men and their parents, he also voices concern over the decreasing population of the French people in the first article of the series. He
The question of initiative is one that Le Roux repeatedly returns to in this fifteen-part series. In his opinion, masculinity is not tied to a bourgeois ideal of a university education and a respectable career in engineering, medicine, or the military. Rather his construction of masculinity involves taking action and disregarding bourgeois expectations. And yet, simultaneously, in his examination of the challenges young men face, he encourages humility in men starting their careers. For example, he praises the shopkeeper in his article on September 15, 1896. He identifies the snobbery that many feel toward this profession as a holdover from the ancien régime, and he quickly points out that the bourgeoisie itself came just one or two generations ago from the very class upon whom it looks down. What Le Roux values about the shopkeepers above the bourgeoisie is the opportunity that they have to interact people from a variety of backgrounds. He notes that only the bourgeoisie limits its sphere to those from its own class. The insularity of it is stifling. What’s more, the bourgeoisie, with all of its education and opportunities, should know better than this. They have taken up the idleness and quest for luxury that the aristocracy had previously monopolized before the Revolution.

Like the bourgeoisie in the one hundred years since the Revolution, the shopkeepers also have their eye on social climbing. They would like their sons to become engineers and doctors. However, those who succeed face the prejudice due to their petit bourgeois background. As Le Roux puts it, a father does not want his daughter marrying a tailor like her grandfather. He

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Le Roux expands on this point: “Il avait une signification qu’il ne faut pas négliger alors même qu’on le condamne dans son excès. Il indiquait que la bourgeoisie française était assez éduquée pour estimer sa dignité plus que son argent. Le négociant qui vendait le coton en balles n’avait affaire qu’à ses égaux et à ses pairs, des négociants indépendants comme lui-même. D’autre part son commerce se traitait par lettres, il n’avait pas de contact direct avec la marchandise. Son genre d’affaires exigeait une culture générale, de larges connaissances géographiques et économiques, - toute une philosophie par laquelle le ‘négociant’ se sentait anobli.” Le Roux, “Nos fils V: Marchands et bourgeois.”
disagrees with this stance, and he argues that young bourgeois men should be encouraged to become shopkeepers, butchers, and tailors.\textsuperscript{105} With the sons of the petit bourgeoisie moving up in search of respectability, they leave their fathers as the last in a long line of butchers and haberdashers. Something must be done.

Le Roux concludes this essay with a cutting remark. He writes:

During previous centuries, when presenting a man in French society, one would immediately ask this disdainful question:

Was he born [to a good family]?\textsuperscript{105}

We fought a revolution to erase this prejudice. Today one asks:

What does he do?

Do we give in to the pressure of our time, or does one ask the question:

What does he value?\textsuperscript{106}

Le Roux bucks the preferred method of determining a man’s value based on his profession. In its place, he asks people to look at the man himself, who he is apart from his job. Only then will France be free of the snobbery that has persisted since before the Revolution. In doing so, Le Roux contradicts the prevailing assumption that a bourgeois job is superior to that of a shopkeeper. He also stresses that a man is more than his job and social class. Character, not social status, defines a person. However, in the nineteenth century, the French culture remained deeply rooted in tradition that continued to maintain something of a reverential attitude toward the

\textsuperscript{105} Le Roux, “Nos fils V: Marchands et bourgeois.”

\textsuperscript{106} “Pendant des siècles, quand on présentait un homme à la société française, elle posait tout d’abord cette question dédaigneuse:

- Est-il né?

On a fait une révolution pour raser ce préjugé.

Aujourd’hui on interroge:

- Qu’est-ce qu’il fait?

Touchons-nous au temps ou l’on se contentera de demander:

- Qu’est-ce qu’il vaut?” Le Roux, “Nos fils V: Marchands et bourgeois.”
aristocracy despite the Revolution. Therefore, Le Roux’s urging to prize character over the circumstances of one’s birth was not in keeping with the opinion of the majority.

Indeed, Le Roux received criticism for his encouragement of young men to strike out on their own. His article about men in America includes a profile of a man from England who left his homeland for the New World. The young man’s wit, charm, and ingenuity propelled him ahead. Le Roux praises the man for turning his knowledge into action and encourages the French to do the same:

It is well understood that I don’t propose this experience, a little tumultuous, as an example that I would like to see followed by our college students. We are here in front of a nearly volcanic eruption of this instinct of initiative that is so chilling in France. It seems to me that it illuminates the horizon of these solitudes, where those who want to be ‘just like their fathers’ are going to try the free life.

Le Roux hopes that young French men would combine their education and actions into the pursuit of a successful career, taking necessary chances to experience the freedom of making one’s own way. Despite admitting that he would not wish the difficult aspects of the young

108 “Il est bien entendu que je ne propose pas cette existence un peu tumultueuse comme un exemple que je voudrais voir suivre par nos bacheliers. Nous sommes ici devant l’éruption presque volcanique de cet instinct d’initiative qui est si refroidi chez nous. Il me semble qu’elle éclaire l’horizon de ces solitudes, où ceux qui veulent être ‘leurs pères à eux mêmes’ vont essayer la vie libre.” Le Roux, “Nos Fils IV: Ceux d’outre-mer.”
109 Le Roux is not the only journalist concerned what the comparatively sheltered education of French boys will have on their future and the future of France. In October 1897, Charles Bos chastised parents for coddling their sons and accused young men of laziness and entitlement. He compares French men in their twenties (who attend a university because it is expected but have little practical experience) to men in Germany and England (who leave their homes as young as age ten to apprentice and learn their trade). He notes that only one in one hundred French men speaks another European language and only one in one thousand has traveled to another country. In contrast, he asserts that it is common for Germans to speak three or four additional languages. He places the responsibility on fathers to mold their sons into independent and capable adults. To accomplish this, they must send their sons out into the world, regardless of how much their mothers claim that it is killing them. He writes: “Quel est le père de famille qui aurait le courage de se séparer ainsi de son fils? J’entends d’ici les cris de la mère: ‘Je vais perdre mon enfant, on va me la tuer.’ Et ce seraient des scènes de ménage, des gâteries, des précautions à n’en plus finir. C’est ainsi, d’ailleurs, que nos enfants perdent peu à peu leur audace native, manquent de virilité à l’âge d’homme par faiblesse, par paresse, se jettent dans les bras des belles petites qui mangent leur argent et celui de leurs parents.” Bos warns that if France remains on this path, it will lose its
Englishman’s journey for the young men of France, he received a multitude of dissenting opinions, which he addressed in his next column and believed was rooted in the bourgeoisie’s prejudice against shopkeepers.

In a move that both bolstered his approval of shopkeepers and criticized the current demands placed on young men, Le Roux points out the shortcomings of polytechnical institutes, engineering and medical careers, and mandatory military service, among others. The main problems, according to him, are the length and expense required to attain enough training needed to begin a career, the additional specialized training that one must undertake to work in some of these fields, and the value of the time that the requisite military service takes away from men when they are trying to establish themselves in their chosen fields. Compounding these issues are the dearth of jobs available in Paris and the unwillingness of men to go to the countryside to find jobs. Le Roux aims this last point at mothers who strongly encouraged their sons to remain close to home.

What we find in Le Roux’s “Nos fils” series are the struggles and challenges young men faced at the start of their careers. We also see the conflicts and contradictory messages that they encountered. They had been raised to strive to reach the economic status their fathers had achieved and surpass it. They put in their time at universities only to find themselves in debt and with few job prospects when they graduated. Even well respected careers had hidden pitfalls.

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111 Le Roux recounts the story of a smart young man who could not find work in Paris. When the director of his school contacted him about an opportunity, the man turned it down. The director and Le Roux were astounded. When asked why he would reject a job offer, the young man replied that his mother wanted him to remain in Paris even though he had not been able to find a job there yet. Le Roux, “Nos fils XVI: Conclusions.”
Doctors, for example, endured the suffering of their patients, blame for matters out of their control, and mistrust from those in the countryside. Those who did well in school and received accolades for their obedience and docility faced the obstacle of learning to think for themselves and challenge old, outdated ways of conducting business. They felt the conflicting pulls of family and job opportunities. Given these challenges and Le Roux’s stark description of the job market, it is a wonder that any men found employment and felt secure in their masculine identity.

During the 1890s, men not only faced challenges in the workforce, but also in the definition of gender. As women began to ask for more rights, such as equitable pay, they threatened gender identities. Some began wearing more masculine fashions, attending university, and working as doctors and lawyers. These changes destabilized the previously established gender norms. Maurice Dancourt described those embracing new roles as the “third sex” in 1892. According to him, the third sex does not differ greatly from the other two in appearance; the distinction lies in the area of morals. He defines the third sex as a person possessing the physical appearance of one sex and the intellectual qualities of the other sex. He divides the

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112 Le Roux, “Nos fils X: Seront-ils médecins?”
113 Le Roux was criticized for being too pessimistic in this description of the challenges young men face as they enter the workforce. He addresses this in his column, “Nos fils XI: Que feront-ils donc?” Le Figaro, November 24, 1896. He denies being unduly negative in his outlook and argues that he presented an honest review of the situation that young men and their parents faced. He writes, “Le malaise est vif surtout chez les mères de famille de la bonne bourgeoisie. L’homme est engagé dans les soucis de la bataille quotidienne. Il trouve qu’à chaque jour suffit sa peine. S’il est un père tendre, il forme le rêve de mettre son fils à l’abri des incertitudes, en le poussant tout justement vers les carrières libérales.” He emphasizes that parents are filled with anxiety over their sons’ futures and the future of the sons of the bourgeoisie is the future of France, so everyone should be concerned.
114 Maurice Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe,” Le journal amusant, July 2, 1892.
115 Dancourt mentions Alphonse Bertillon’s inability to find any physical distinctions between men and femmes-femmes and women and femmes-hommes. Bertillon was a the criminologist and anthropologist in Paris who made detailed measurements of suspects, which he combined with frontal and profile photographs to identify them. His system became known as signaletics or bertillonage. Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.” For an analysis of how Bertillon used photography in his system, see his Signaletic Instructions, Including the Theory and Practice of Anthropometrical Identification (Chicago: Werner, 1896) and Alphonse Bertillon’s Instructions for Taking Descriptions for the Identification of Criminals and Others by the Means of
third sex into two categories: “hommes-femmes” and “femmes-hommes.” While hommes-femmes may participate in “womanly” tasks, such as sewing and gossiping, Dancourt does not regard them as dangerous. However, he views femmes-hommes as an abomination: “It’s the devil! This virile brain in this virginal head, this heart of a lion under this bosom of a nymph rage.” He considers it both a pity and terrifying that the femme-homme rejects and mocks the traits of her sex to dream of possessing masculine traits. The femme-homme yearns for education, a profession, and a place in the legislature and the Academy.

Dancourt concludes the article by indicating that the inclusion of the femme-homme into these male-dominated spaces will rejuvenate them, but more importantly, it is the only way to maintain the peace. In doing so, he contradicts the terror and shame of the femme-homme that he had espoused earlier in the essay. Perhaps he has resigned himself to the conclusion that

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116 Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.”
117 “C’est le diable! Ce cerveau viril dans cette tête de vierge, ce cœur de lion sous cette poitrine de nymphé, font rage.” Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.”
118 “Preuve physiologique éloquente de la supériorité du moral sur le physique! Navrante explication de tant de phénomènes! Espèce à plaindre! Espèce à craindre!” Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.”
119 Dancourt, “Le troisième sexe.”
120 Richard von Krafft-Ebing professes a similar sentiment in the introduction to *Psychopathia Sexualis*. He postulates that periods of decadence mark themselves on the bodies any mental health of individuals. As a result of the moral deterioration of society, the body, mind, and culture also decay. He writes, “Periods of moral decadence in the life of a people are always contemporaneous with times of effeminacy, sensuality, and luxury. These conditions can only be conceived as occurring with increased demands upon the nervous system, which must meet these requirements. As a result of increase of nervousness, there is increase of sensuality, and, since this leads to excesses among the masses, it undermines the foundation of society, - the morality and purity of family life. When this is destroyed by excesses, unfaithfulness, and luxury, then the destruction of the state is inevitably compassed in material, moral, and political ruin.” Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*, 7th ed., trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia: F.A. David Co., 1894), 6. It was originally published as *Psychopathia Sexualis: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung: Eine medicinisch-gerichtliche Studie für Ärzte und Juristen* by
once the third sex has appeared, it will not disappear easily. Additionally, we must consider the publication in which the article was printed: *Le journal amusant*. The newspaper approached its articles with a sardonic or humorous touch. Therefore, the hope that women could invigorate the male-dominated spaces to which they sought admission was no doubt articulated in an ironic mode. As is often the case with comedy, however, the joke reveals the societal anxieties underneath. Moreover, Dancourt could have also been playing on the fear of masculinized women in the workforce and riding bicycles, exaggerating his disdain and despair over their audacity while downplaying the acceptability of men performing “female” hobbies. The fact that hommes-femmes and femmes-hommes were fodder for the humorous newspaper suggests the widespread fear that gender distinctions were becoming less defined.

The dilemma of what masculinity should entail spread across the daily newspapers. As men and women challenged gender norms in an attempt to navigate the changes that society continued to undergo, responses varied, encompassing encouragement, concern, and indignation. For an artist as in tune with his time as Lautrec was, it would be impossible to ignore these trepidations, hopes, and anxieties. In his portraits of men in the 1880-90s, he depicts a society in flux. We see hegemonic masculinity as an unquestioned and clearly established entity in his portraits of *Dihau* and *Pascal*. He paints both men at ease and in control of their environments. Furthermore, in *Dihau* Lautrec represents the sitter in a superior position to the viewer who is placed in the uncomfortable position of a lurker, peering over the shoulder of Dihau. In contrast, *The Laundryman* has a comical, almost caricatured appearance, heaving a turgid bundle of laundry between his legs. His lower status, both economically and in terms of the hegemonic masculinity, is abundantly clear. Lautrec depicts his face grimacing under the weight of the unwieldy bag of laundry. Even though the man offers his phallic laundry bag to the lady of the Ferdinand Enke in Stuttgart in 1886. See Chapter 1 for an examination of Krafft-Ebing’s work on sexual deviancy and its relationship to Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings.
Lautrec does not remain restrained by these one-dimensional representations of masculinity throughout his career. His posters of Bruant demonstrate his ability to appropriate traits from diverse masculinities to produce a hybrid bloc of masculinity that is more powerful and resilient than the previous hegemonic masculinity of the bourgeoisie. By building on the trademark costume of Bruant and molding his line, color, and composition to the bold, assertive, and brash characteristic of Bruant’s persona, Lautrec manufactures a masculinity that retains its authority precisely by incorporating the non-hegemonic qualities of working-class masculinity. Lautrec, therefore, achieves the kind of initiative that Le Roux urged young men to demonstrate in “Nos fils.” Throughout the series, Le Roux points out the pitfalls of traditionally secure career paths. A position in the military or medicine no longer guaranteed a successful and lucrative life. Young men faced challenges from financial burdens to long apprenticeships that hindered their progression through the milestones of adulthood. Le Roux challenges young men and their parents to re-examine their long-held beliefs about the path to financial independence from their parents. Accolades from universities do not translate to luminous careers, and professions traditionally considered “good” hold untold pitfalls in store that threaten to demoralize and burden young men. The answer for Le Roux is for young men to act with initiative, to be daring, and to break out of the molds of tradition to forge a new path for themselves, much like Lautrec did in his self-portrait and depictions of Bruant.

The representations of masculinity that we see in Lautrec’s work up to the early 1890s generally depict one form of masculinity in each work. Most of the men that he painted, aside from Bruant, lack depth in their representations; we can easily classify the form of masculinity
that we see. Even when Lautrec returns to a male subject multiple times during this period, we tend to see similar qualities represented. For example, Lautrec paints Désiré Dihau twice in 1890 (the portrait in profil perdu that we have discussed and a more traditional portrait, Désiré Dihau, basson de l’Opéra (figure 52)), drew him in the frontispiece of Les Vieilles histoires, poésies de Jean Goudezki in 1893 (figure 53), and produced a lithograph of him with his bassoon in 1893 (figure 54) and another one in 1895 of him in three-quarters pose (figure 55). Anne Roquebert notes the “complex body of imagery” that Lautrec produced of Dihau, and his success in “encompassing every aspect of his sitter’s personality and talent.” While these portraits reveal different aspects of Dihau’s personality (serious, kind, thoughtful, focused), they all place him within the same realm of masculinity: upper class, powerful, and respectable. In all of them, he represents the hegemonic masculinity of the time.

Yet masculinity is more complicated than this. A man may exhibit different forms of masculinity in different situations or with different people. Sofia Aboim argues that even men who exhibit features of hegemonic masculinity have negotiated its terms. They, therefore, possess what she terms “plural masculinities” instead of one. She writes, “Plurality is, in my view, an intrinsic feature of any masculinity. It is its formative and generative principle. Therefore any masculinity is always internally hybrid and formed by tension and conflict.” Drawing from Georg Simmel’s theory of identity fragmentation in modernity due to the multiplicity of social circles, Aboim formulates a theory of plural masculinities that change as a man moves from his public to private life and through different social networks. She uses the example of the white,

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122 Connell and Messerschmidt also emphasize the “pluralities of masculinities” and that different ideals of masculinities hold esteem in different circumstances. Unlike Aboim, they do not analyze the ways that these pluralities are manifested and displayed in individuals. Connell and Messerschmidt, 846.
123 Aboim, 3.
affluent, successful man as the archetype of hegemonic masculinity today. Other non-hegemonic masculinities mediate that archetype to form new permutations of it, such as the successful, affluent, black man.\textsuperscript{125} The masculinity of the black man stands in a hybrid space between the “racialized subordination” of his skin color and his “socio-economic power.”\textsuperscript{126} Although the details of her example do not transfer directly to the historical moment concerning us, the idea behind it remains pertinent: in an historical moment full of change, especially in one transforming as rapidly as the fin de siècle, new spaces open up in the cracks of masculinity.\textsuperscript{127} The old archetypes no longer meet the needs of men’s modern experiences, but new archetypes have not yet been formed. Indeed, one may question whether the old archetypes are ever discarded or fully transformed since many of their features persist.

Whereas Lautrec’s work until the mid-1890s presents viewers with a one-sided expression of masculinity, his \textit{Au cirque} drawings from 1899 reveal the plural nature of it. We see this not only in the diversity of men represented, but also in individuals who are represented multiple times in the series. The ringmaster, for example, appears in \textit{Voltige, Travail sur le panneau, Travail sans selle} (figure 56), \textit{Cheval pointant} (figure 27), \textit{Travail de répétition} (figure 9), and \textit{Le Rappel} (figure 11). In these drawings, we see the ringmaster negotiating his role. As he

\begin{itemize}
  \item[125] Aboim, 59.
  \item[126] Aboim, 59.
  \item[127] During the fin de siècle it was less common for a black man in France to have the economic or political power of hegemonic masculinity. In Lautrec’s work, the black clown named Chocolat almost always had a lower status than do the other figures in the pictures. In the \textit{Au cirque} series, \textit{Chocolat, scène comique} (figure 19) depicts the clown unable to control his horse. He flings his arms around the neck of the animal while his limbs flail above it. The routine was undoubtedly meant to amuse the audience, but we cannot overlook the fact that Lautrec did not depict white, male clowns in a similar manner.
  
  Even though most black men at this time did not have access to the economic and political power of hegemonic masculinity, some historical examples of this exist. See Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, “Black Revolution, Saint-Domingue: Girodet’s \textit{Portrait of Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies, 1797},” in \textit{Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 9-63.
\end{itemize}
interacts with different performers, he reveals different sides to his masculinity. His range is far
greater than what we had seen Lautrec express in the figure of Dihau.

Lautrec depicts the ringmaster as the dominating force in *Voltige* and *Travail sur le
panneau*. In the former, he draws the ringmaster with his back to the viewer and with only a small
portion of his face and mustache visible. The positioning is similar to the way Lautrec poses
Dihau in the 1890 portrait in the garden (except that the ringmaster stands). The power that this
*profil perdu* bestows on the ringmaster is greater than that given to Dihau. Because the ringmaster
stands, his presence is amplified. Furthermore, Lautrec draws him in such a way that his body
fills as much space as possible, spreading the ringmaster’s legs into a wide stance and pushing his
right arm out from his body. By keeping his face concealed and amplifying his presence in the
drawing, Lautrec makes the ringmaster the most powerful figure in the drawing. The ringmaster
embodies hegemonic masculinity: well-dressed, composed, the bastion of power and authority.
Simply by enacting these signs of dominant masculinity, he has an advantage over the women
and men exhibiting non-hegemonic masculinities.

The ringmaster retains the power that he asserts in *Voltige* in *Travail sur le panneau*. In
*Travail sur le panneau*, Lautrec reverses our view of the ringmaster. Standing in the middle of the
ring, legs spread wide, and right arm extended, he oversees the equestrienne’s rehearsal.
However, in this drawing, his authority is less certain. His posture lacks the ease of *Voltige*, and
his mouth appears set in an expression that conveys more tension. The equestrienne stares back at
him with her chin up and a steady gaze. The ringmaster’s quest for dominance and control is less
secure than it had been in *Voltige*. By representing tension between the equestrienne and the
ringmaster, Lautrec indicates the flux of the power structure. To further emphasize the
ringmaster’s struggle for dominance in *Travail sur le panneau*, Lautrec does not conceal any of
the ringmaster’s body from the viewer, and we can plainly see the struggle on the ringmaster’s
face. Although he has many similarities in the two drawings, *Travail sur le panneau* provides the
viewer with access to the cracks in the ringmaster’s façade of authority, and s/he witnesses the
equestrienne challenging the ringmaster from atop her horse in. Now, she is the one that Lautrec
depicts from behind and the ringmaster is exposed.

Lautrec revisits and reverses the stunt shown in *Travail sur le panneau* in *Travail sans
selle*. Instead of the horse circling counter-clockwise and the equestrienne positioned with her
back toward us, the horse gallops clockwise and the equestrienne is turned toward us, head held
high, and a smile on her lips. The ringmaster, likewise, has a pleasant look upon his face; his
upturned mustache echoes his lips. Additionally, his posture has shifted in this drawing; it is
relaxed, as evidenced by his narrower stance and soft knees. Furthermore, his shoulders are at
ease, not squared off. The tension that hung over the other two drawings has dissipated as the
ringmaster and equestrienne work together as equals in this drawing. The whip, previously held at
the ready and menacingly long, is significantly shorter, and the ringmaster holds it nonchalantly.
We see elements of the hegemonic masculinity carried over into this depiction of the ringmaster
in his coattails and bow tie, but we also see facets of nonhegemonic masculinity. For example, his
grip on authority slackens as he exposes a willingness to cooperate with the female performer.
The variations that we see in the ringmaster’s demeanor and presentation of masculinity suggest
the plurality that Aboim theorizes.

We see other sides of the ringmaster’s masculinity in *Cheval pointant*. The ringmaster
lies on the floor of the ring while a horse hovers with his hind legs above him. He has placed
himself in a precarious position. He leans on his side, balancing his weight on his right hip and
leg and right hand with his left leg extended and his left arm raised holding a whip. He throws his
head back to look up at the horse. The horse’s two front legs are bent and are not even, suggesting
that he is moving them to keep his balance. The ringmaster’s pose indicates not only an enormous
amount of trust in the horse and a belief in his own ability to train and command the animal.
Moreover, it requires him to place his trust in the horse. From his prostrate position, he cannot
defend himself if the horse does not successfully perform the stunt. It requires vulnerability and confidence for the ringmaster to even attempt the maneuver. Through the combination of traits from hegemonic (confidence) and nonhegemonic (vulnerability) masculinity, the ringmaster performs his task.

Lautrec deviates further from hegemonic masculinity in his representation of the ringmaster in *Travail de répétition*. The ringmaster’s stern expression is back in this drawing, as is his wider stance and longer whip. However, a glaring difference is his attire. A bulky sweater and casual pants have replaced the fancy suit and bow tie. Lautrec transforms the ringmaster through a sartorial statement of affluence to a decidedly working-class one. Just as his demeanor in *Travail sans selle* indicates nonhegemonic masculinity, so does his change of clothing in *Travail de répétition*. This shift in class provides a significant departure from the dominant upper-class masculinity; however the ringmaster retains authority over another person in this drawing. When considering hegemonic masculinity, one must remember the importance of not only leading the classes but also dominating the opposition. In the discussion of gender, this would translate into men leading other groups of men, including those belonging to the lower classes, and dominating women. We see examples of both in *Au cirque*.

*Le Rappel*, for example, depicts of different iterations of masculinity in the same drawing. Here, the ringmaster assumes his hegemonic masculine role: he appears dressed in his suit and located in a position of power at the edge of the ring. As he looks on, a clown kneels before a ballerina *en pointe*. He clasps his hands in supplication while the ballerina crosses her arms across her chest in feigned indifference. In between these two extreme examples of masculinity is the top-hatted man next to the ringmaster. He turns away from the performance to

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128 By classifying the ringmaster’s clothing in the previous drawings as affluent, I am not suggesting that he was necessarily wealthy, simply that his clothing had the appearance of wealth, and appearance means everything in the performance of gender.

129 Demetriou draws on Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* (written between 1929 and 1935) for his interpretation of the roles of leadership and domination. Demetriou, 344.
lead a horse away from the ring. His clothing and his job place him in the middle ground of the masculinities depicted. He has not prostrated himself before a woman, but his place below the ringmaster in the hierarchy of circus workers is evident. The ringmaster witnesses the comical performance in the ring, as well as the clown’s performance of masculinity. In order to convey the comedy of the scene to an audience, the clown enacts a form of nonhegemonic masculinity that is weak, supplicant, and bowing to authority of the woman. It works because it deviates from traditional gender roles.

When we consider the ringmaster in Lautrec’s drawings in light of Aboim’s theory of plural masculinities, we see him inhabit different masculinities in different situations. Yet the circumstances do not differ considerably from one another since they all occur in the practice ring of the circus. Demetriou’s theory of the hybrid bloc may again prove useful in analyzing the complex display of masculinity at work in these drawings. In the case of the ringmaster, we see this in his working-class attire and cooperation with the equestrienne. Even though these features of his dress and behavior do not conform to the version of hegemonic masculinity in which the wealthy man exercises control over those around him in a literal sense, we still witness him maintaining his place of power in relation to his employees/performers by overseeing and coordinating the rehearsals. By adapting behaviors from nonhegemonic masculinities (working-class and egalitarian), the ringmaster can negotiate a variety of situations. At the same time, he is able to preserve his dominant role in the rehearsal space.

In addition to the various depictions of the ringmaster, another figure type reappears throughout the series of drawings: the strongman. In *Travail des poids* (figure 57), Lautrec draws a semi-nude muscleman posing with one hand on his hip, cocking the other out, and holding a

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130 Demetriou notes that a hegemonic bloc can alter itself in “a very deceptive and unrecognizable way. It changes through negotiation, appropriation, and translation, through the transformation of what appears counter-hegemonic and progressive into an instrument of backwardness and patriarchal reproduction.” See Demetriou, 355 (emphasis in the original).
block-shaped kettle bell in his other hand. He stands next to a long barbell. The picture, done in wash, highlights the angularity of the man’s muscles, particularly his gluteal muscles, calves, and chest. Other than a short arc suggesting the edge of the performance ring, the drawing lacks any defining features to indicate its location. The strongman’s body collapses into a phallic shadow on the floor. Lautrec’s emphasis for the first time moves to the male body.

In *Le pas de deux* (figure 58), a brawny man stands on top of two horses, one leg on each as he holds the reins in one hand. From his side, a woman extends her body perpendicular to his. She raises her arms over her head and braces herself against his body, planting one of her feet on his thigh and her knee on his chest. He holds onto her waist with his right hand and looks calmly in front of him. In this pose, Lautrec accentuates the grace, beauty, and strength of the man’s body in a manner that he had never attempted in his work prior to the *Au cirque* series.

The final drawing in which a muscleman takes center stage is *Travail de tapis* (figure 59). In this picture, a man is positioned with his back toward the viewer. A small woman stands on his shoulder, and he holds onto her with his right hand. With his left arm, he holds another, larger woman around her waist as she dangles above the ground and holds the hand of the woman on top of his shoulders. In front of this group, another strongman kneels on one knee; a woman stands next to him. The pair looks intently at the trio, as if studying their technique. This drawing suggests the importance of closely observing the body in order to improve one’s performance. Additionally, it gives the viewer a glimpse into the strongman culture, an aspect of the circus that Lautrec had not previously examined in detail.

The importance of physical fitness was a popular topic in the papers and in culture of France and her colonies.  

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131 Even Lautrec was an enthusiastic exerciser. Although he could not participate in many sports due to the brittle bones in his legs, he avidly rowed on a machine that he had brought to his studio while wearing a yachting cap and a red shirt. Moreover, Lautrec’s friends noted that he excelled at sailing and swimming. Huisman and Dortu, 180. Frey, 250.
Le Messager de l'Ouest in 1895 valorized the benefits of physical education and laments that so many citizens of the city Bel Abbès ignored the evidence of its importance. The author, identified as J. D., argues that physical education sustains more than the body; it cultivates intellectual prowess, character, and patriotism. Similarly, in 1902, Georges Demeny summarized the advantages of physical education into four components: health, beauty, dexterity, and virility or moral energy. In Les Bases scientifiques de l'éducation physique, he disputes the poor information and misunderstandings traditionally held by the public. As had J. D., Demeny contends that physical activity has a holistic effect on the body. It not only improves the appearance and ability of the body, but it also enhances the moral strength and vitality of the spirit. The combined effect of these results will produce an invigorated French population.

132 J. D., “Bel-Abbès, le 8 février 1895: L’Enfance de la gymnastique,” Le Messager de l’Ouest, February 8, 1895. Physical education had many critics due to a widespread misunderstanding of exercise that associated it with violence. In an article praising the restorative and healing power of exercise, Dr. H. Grollier bemoans the misinformation commonly accepted as true. He writes, “Malheureusement, et comme le fait remarquer le Dr. F. Lagrange, dans son excellent ouvrage, l’étiquette de gymnastique, appliquée au traitement par le mouvement, a créé les plus fâcheux malentendus dans l’esprit des médecins français; car c’est assurément l’idée d’exercice ‘violent,’ inséparable chez nous du mot gymnastique, qui a fait rejeter a priori un mode de traitement pourtant si rationnel.” Grollier advocates a therapeutic approach to exercise called “mécanothérapie.” It was designed by Dr. Zander in Sweden, and the movements of the exercise are precise and localized in order to strengthen and repair the body. Dr. H. Grollier, “Le traitement par les mouvements méthodiques,” Lyon médical: Gazette médicale et journal de médecine réunis 36, no. 39 (September 25, 1904): 490. See also Dr. F. Lagrange, Les mouvements méthodiques et la mécanothérapie (Paris: Alcan, 1899).

133 Physical education also had the ability to strengthen the French population and make it more resilient and less vulnerable to illness. It pushes people beyond their limits to achieve more than they thought possible. Undoubtedly, such an emphasis on physical health of the French people in their colony indicates a much larger preoccupation with the politics of imperialism, the colonial body, and confronting the Other. Raewyn W. Connell argues for scholars to broaden the scope of their studies from specific locations and time periods to a more comprehensive scope that incorporates “geopolitical struggles, Western imperial expansion and colonial empires, global markets, multinational corporations, labor migration, and transnational media. See Connell, “Globalization, Imperialism, and Masculinities,” in Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities, 71-89.

immune to moral and physical degeneracy and decadence. In addition to explaining the benefits of exercise, Demeny includes illustrations of the exercises to assist the reader in achieving a fitter body and mind.

The broad interest in physical education in France coincided with the new celebrity status of strongmen. During the 1890s, Eugen Sandow traveled Europe and America demonstrating his skill in feats of strength and advocating for a physical fitness regime that included weightlifting.\(^{135}\) He gained a reputation his weightlifting program designed to build strength and muscle definition in those with weak constitutions.\(^{136}\) He also trained the haute aristocracy of England, including the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York.\(^{137}\) *L’Athlète: Journal athlétique illustré internationale* called him “the most famous athlete of the time” in a front-page profile of the strongman,\(^{138}\) and a writer for *Le Figaro* wrote that nothing was more interesting that hearing “the professor” discuss his theories of fitness and exercise program.\(^{139}\) When he performed at the Casino de Paris in the summer of 1900, his physique was admired for its “perfection.” During the program, he demonstrated his technique for strength training, flexed his muscles, and lifted people into the air. *Le Petit Parisien* hailed him as a “professor” and praised his “famous” exercises.\(^{140}\) In a review of the performance, an anonymous journalist wrote, “He has the right to be proud of the result because it is impossible to dream of so much strength joined with so much

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\(^{135}\) French newspapers began to report on Sandow in 1897. *Le XIX\(^{e}\) siècle*, for example, published an article about his daily diet, which included on one particular day soup, potatoes, beef, peas, roast beef, pudding, cake, and beer for lunch followed by oysters, soup, fish, potatoes, chicken, ice cream, sorbet, cake, and biscuits with butter for dinner. G. M., “Athlétisme,” *Le XIX\(^{e}\) siècle*, December 3, 1897.

\(^{136}\) Sandow was said to have been a sickly and weak child who turned his life and body around through strict adherence to a fitness regime. For an analysis of Sandow’s career and his effect on the sport of bodybuilding, see David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginning of Bodybuilding* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).


\(^{139}\) Un M. de B., “Spectacles et concerts.”

flexibility. It is the perfect body with the maximum muscular power."

He also commended Sandow’s endeavor as both a “very interesting spectacle and profitable lesson.”

Not only was Sandow admired for his world-class athletic abilities, but also for his beauty: *Le Figaro* described him as having an “elegant build” and being a “descendant of Hercules;” and the British painter John Everett Millais nicknamed him “the perfect man.”

Sandow began to develop his physique as a circus performer from 1885-87. When the circus disbanded, he started training with Professor Attila (Louis Durlacher) in Brussels to become a strongman. During these years (1887-89), he also modeled for painters and sculptors.

J. B., author of the profile in *L’Athlète*, asserts that if he were alive during antiquity, Sandow would have been worshipped like a god. The British Museum in South Kensington even cast a nude mold of Sandow posed as Hercules to exhibit in 1901. Museumgoers found the piece “très innocence.”

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141 “Il a le droit d’être fier du résultat, car il est impossible de rêver tant de force unie à tant de souplesse. C’est la perfection plastique avec le maximum de puissance musculaire.” “Concerts et divertissements.”

142 “Concerts et divertissements.”


144 Un M. de B., “Spectacles et concerts.”

145 In *Le Figaro*, the journalist Un M. de B., wrote that the nickname was aptly given. Un M. de B., “Spectacles et concerts.”

146 Sandow competed in his first strength competition in 1889 against Sampson and Cyclops at the Royal Aquarium in Westminster. From 1893 to 1896, Sandow competed and performed feats of strength in America. When he finished his performance, he would take a bath in ice water, put on a tiny pair of briefs, and meet a small crowd assembled back stage. During these gatherings, he stood underneath a spotlight and lectured on the various muscle groups, flexing each group in turn. Then, he walked through the audience, encouraging the men and then the women to feel his muscles. The *Police Gazette* described one of these gatherings that took place in New York: “‘I want you to feel how hard these muscle[s] are,’ Sandow announced. ‘As I step before you, I want each of you to pass the palm of your hand across my chest.’ When the men in the small audience were given the opportunity to caress the handsome athlete’s muscles, ‘expressions of astonishment and admiration swept over their faces.’ Then it was the turn of the ladies.” *Police Gazette*, January 27, 1894 cited in Chapman, 74.

147 “Si Sandow avait vécu dans des temps plus anciens, on l’aurait adoré comme un dieu, rien que pour sa beauté corporelle.” J. B., 2.

148 In the article, the author refers to Sandow as “the most famous athlete in England.” The director of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington said that it took more than a month
In addition to opening gyms dedicated to teaching his physical fitness philosophy, Sandow also published magazines, including *Health and Strength*, which offered techniques and tips for strengthening the body. An article about his school and program published in 1899 asked readers, “Do you want muscles?” It extolled the virtues of Sandow’s fitness regime and the measurable results that one could expect. For example, spending three months at Sandow’s training facility in London could increase one’s chest measurement by seven centimeters. Luckily for those who did not have the time or resources to travel to London, one could purchase “Le Sandow,” illustrated in the article as a system of pulleys, for only twenty-one francs. In advertisements for the gadget, Sandow challenged readers to regain their vitality: “FRANÇAIS DEVENEZ VIGOUREUX!! LE SANDOW.” The popularity of the products led to imitators. One year after this advertisement ran, a new ad cautioned consumers against buying fraudulent products. It informed consumers that Sandow’s signature appeared on all authentic Sandow

for the mold to be made; during each session, Sandow had to pose the exact same way with the same muscles tensed. It was a tiring and difficult task, one that Sandow said that he would not repeat for any amount of money. “Échos,” *Le Petit Parisien*, November 26, 1901. The British journal *Review of Reviews* also attests to the difficulty of the endeavor: “The task was long, tedious, and exhausting. It was necessary, for instance, for him to hold his right arm in a position of tension exhibiting his magnificent biceps for fifteen minutes in order to enable the plaster to set. Let anyone try to hold his arm in one position for fifteen minutes, and, even with all the muscles relaxed, he will be able to form some idea of the nervous and physical strain entailed by this operation. The result, however, was completely successful, and those who wish to see Sandow as he has made himself will find his replica in plaster in South Kensington.” “The Physical Improvement of the Race,” 514.

“Échos” (emphasis in the original).

Not everyone supported Sandow’s advice. Dr. Grollier thought the devices Sandow pedaled were “reprehensible.” He wrote, “La seconde catégorie comprend les appareils dans lesquels la résistance est représentée par un ressort extensible (tube de caoutchouc, ressort à boudin, etc.), c’est-a-dire tous les appareils à traction élastique (renforceur de muscles de Sachs, exerciceur Michelin, appareils Sandow, etc.). Ils sont absolument condamnables et doivent être systématiquement rejeté comme étant en opposition formelle avec les lois indiquées, étant donné qu’ils reportent la plus forte résistance à la fin de la contraction musculaire, c’est-a-dire au moment où le muscle possède son minimum de force.” Grollier, 496.


“Voulez-vous des muscles?”

Advertisement, *Le Figaro*, November 27, 1902. The original ad was written in all capital letters and included the emphasis.
merchandize, and it urged them: “Don’t buy ‘a Sandow.’ Buy ‘the Sandow.’” By 1901, Sandow had successfully lobbied the legislature of New Zealand to include physical education in elementary schools, and he was working to get a law passed in England as well. Additionally, he trained followers in his gyms; his students ranged in age from youths to octogenarians, “who wish to make themselves fit for the continually increasing struggle for existence.”

In Lautrec’s drawings of the strongmen in *Au cirque*, he positions the men as objects of beauty, examples of physical strength, and bodily perfection. Like Sandow, they convey the physical possibilities of the body, and they speak to a new ideal in masculinity: a strong and fit body. Coupled with the lingering concerns from the Franco-Prussian War over the strength of the French body in general and male bodies in particular, and the uneasiness that the increasing demands of women to participate in social and political life, the figure of the strongman represented hope for the future of France and its men. He was the literal embodiment of the power that the country sought to regain.

The strongmen in Lautrec’s drawings differ from his previous depictions of men. Never before had the bodies of men garnered such scrutiny from the artist. In his portraits of his father,

155 Some schools had already implemented his program consisting of twenty minutes of strength exercises. The Orphan School at Watford, England, for example, had immense success. In 1901, Oliver C. Cockrem, the headmaster, described the changes that he witnessed in the students: “The improvements in their physique is most noticeable. They don’t slouch or have the Institution droop. Their breathing is perfect, and they have powers of endurance which are usually the subject of special culture. They are well developed, no part being neglected, and the improvement in stamina seems to give a power of resistance to disease. Educationally, the system helps to produce attention and concentration; it is interesting, and causes eagerness to know the why and wherefore of each little detail, for there is no part of any exercise but has its raison d’être. The boys are well set up, manly fellows.” Letter dated October 18, 1901 to the anonymous author of the article. “The Physical Improvement of the Race,” 514.
157 Twenty years before Lautrec’s depictions of strongmen, Gustave Caillebotte explored the allure and athleticism of the male physique. For an examination of this facet of Caillebotte’s work, see Tamar Garb, “Gustave Caillebotte’s Male Figures: Masculinity, Muscularity and Modernity,” in *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 24-53.
himself, Dihau, and Pascal, their actual bodies of the sitters receive little more than perfunctory attention. Instead, Lautrec emphasizes how they chose to cover their bodies than the nuances of their bodies’ contours and physicality. Furthermore, we see male bodies held up as examples. In *Travail de poids*, the strongman serves as an ideal for the viewers to strive to achieve, much in the same way that Sandow’s speaking engagements, school, and equipment stressed the ability of anyone in the audience, especially the weak and frail, to transform their bodies and develop their muscles. Indeed, Sandow’s endorsement and signature on Le Sandow reassured the buyer that the world-famous strongman believed in his ability to gain enviable strength if only he followed the program. Lautrec’s drawings of strongmen encourage the viewer to study their bodies. He bathes the right side of the body is light, enhancing the muscle definition, but he leaves the man’s face hidden in shadows; his physique, not his identity, is what matters.

Lautrec, rarely an artist to linger on a nude body of any gender in his work, paid female bodies similar attention in *Two Half-Naked Women Seen from the Back, rue des Moulins*, 1894 (figure 60). Instead of displaying the women’s bodies for the viewer, as he does with the weightlifter in *Travail de poids*, he paints them preparing for a doctor to examine them; the viewer only sees them from the rear as they wait in line. Their chemises and stockings cover most of their bodies, but he exposes some of their bottoms. Lautrec focuses on the two women without any description of the room in which they wait to distract the viewer. The doctor, who is presumably male, does not appear in the painting.

Indeed, in his work in the 1890s, Lautrec was more likely to push men to the sidelines or eliminate them altogether. In *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*, 1891 (figure 2), the focal point of the poster is the dancer La Goulue. Lautrec draws her partner, Valentin Le Désossé, in grisaille and relegates him to the edge of the poster. Instead of highlighting Désossé’s dancing, Lautrec uses him to guide the viewer’s attention to his partner through the positioning of his hand, which points directly to her rear end. Furthermore, in his lithographic series *Elles*, 1896, Lautrec
concentrates on the women in brothels, not their clients. In *Woman at the Tub* (figure 61), for example, he depicts a woman filling up a tub to bathe. Fully clothed, she bends with her pitcher to prepare for her daily ablutions. In this lithograph and throughout the series, Lautrec emphasizes the women’s everyday lives apart from the role they played with men: sleeping and lounging in bed, eating breakfast, drawing a bath, brushing their hair, and getting dressed. When we consider his examination of men in the *Au cirque* series, we see a complex investigation into masculinity unmatched in his earlier work.

Throughout his career, Lautrec examines different facets of masculinity from portraits of his father to his self-portrait to portraits of his friends. His depictions suggest the changing attitudes toward masculinity and the challenges that men faced in staking out their identities as men. In his portrait of his father, he explores the lingering influence of the aristocratic identity on his father’s construction of himself and he also confronts his father as a figure of authority. He continues to grapple with his father’s authority and his own identity as an artist in *Self-Portrait before a Mirror* from 1880. In this painting, Lautrec represents himself as he wished to be: an artist. In doing so, he constructs his ideal self and a masculinity that rested on his skill and hard work as an artist rather than a birthright, as his father’s masculinity had depended.

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159 Lautrec lived in a brothel located at 6 rue des Moulins in the early 1890s. In 1892, he followed one of the prostitutes, Blanche d’Egmont, to her new establishment on rue d’Amboise, and he designed sixteen paintings for the drawing room. During his time in the brothels, he grew close to the women living and working there. His friendship provided him access to private moments that clients did not normally observe. For a summary of Lautrec’s time in the brothels and his *Elles* series, see Huisman and Dortu, 118-143 and Thadée Natanson, *Un Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* (Paris: École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1992), 51-62.

160 The one exception to the absence of men is *Elles: Femme en corset*, 1896, in which a tophatted man watches a women (prostitute) putting on her corset. Richard Thomson notes the anomaly and compares it to Manet’s *Nana*, 1877, which features a similar composition and subject matter. Thomson, “*Elles: Femme en corset – Conquête de passage,*” in *Toulouse-Lautrec, Frêches-Thory* et al., 450.
As he moves through his career, Lautrec continues to paint his male acquaintances. In his portraits of Dihau and Pascal, he examines the trappings of bourgeois masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, and positions of power. He locates Dihau and Pascal in dominant positions in their portraits with the viewer placed at a disadvantage, either observing from behind, as in the portrait of Dihau, or looking up, as in the portrait of Pascal. Up to this point, Lautrec’s depictions of masculinity had been fairly straightforward. Whether painting an example of aristocratic masculinity or bourgeois hegemonic masculinity, he conveyed his sitter’s masculine identity clearly and without contradiction.

With his poster for Bruant, Lautrec begins to complicate his depiction of masculinity. The stage persona that Bruant created for himself contributed to the hybrid masculinity that we see in Eldorado and Ambassadeurs, but it does not explain the power of these works. The posters have the advantage of being purely a sign of one form of masculinity that combines the toughness and perseverance of the working class and the authority and power of the bourgeoisie. Unlike Bruant the man, the posters did not have to contend with the day-to-day difficulties of occupying two distinct realms of masculinity, such as playing a working-class character on stage but owning a vast estate in the countryside and penning a dictionary of working-class argot. Lautrec’s representations of Bruant remain untouched by these controversies because he marries the formal elements (crisp lines, a reduction of object and figures to their salient features, and bold colors) to the rough and dominant figure of Bruant’s persona.

Lautrec continues the exploration of complex masculinities that he began with Bruant in his Au cirque drawings. In these, he reconciles the various sides of the ringmaster’s plural masculinities: boss, partner, and worker. We see him in control of the rehearsal in Voltige, fighting for his authority in Travail de panneau, cooperative in Travail sans selle, vulnerable in Cheval pointant, and one of the guys in Travail de répétition. These drawings demonstrate the real and necessary negotiation of masculinity that men had to confront in the fin de siècle. By
repeatedly depicting the same man in different circumstances, Lautrec illustrates the male experience more accurately than he previously had. Rather than showing his subject in a stereotypical role or as a caricature of a specific kind of masculinity, he depicts the difficulty, compromises, and rewards associated with masculinity and the reality of plural masculinities in everyday life.

Yet the ringmaster is not the only man who enjoys a prominent place in the *Au cirque* drawings: the strongman appears repeatedly. With the strongman, Lautrec focuses on the male body in detail for the first time. He articulates the muscles, lean waist, and bold contours of the strongman’s body. With him, Lautrec examines cultural fascination with the health of the male body as a symbol of the strength of the nation and object of beauty. The popularity and acclaim of Eugen Sandow in the late 1890s indicates the surge of interest in the sport, as well as the concern about the health of men during those years. As a strongman, entrepreneur, and professor of fitness, Sandow embodied the multiple masculinities that men routinely donned in the changing world. By paying close attention to the male body in the strongmen in his drawings, Lautrec engages in the conversation about ideal male beauty and the increasing national emphasis placed on that men’s health.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, men lived in a different world than their fathers and grandfathers. Hegemonic masculinity (represented by bourgeois masculinity) faced challenges from the working class, the aristocracy, and from other nations. Concerns about the future of France’s young men filled the front pages of newspapers. Writers debated whether the country could regain its superiority in Europe. The onus of leading the country into the twentieth century unscathed fell onto men. To meet this challenge, they needed to redefine masculinity for themselves. Lautrec depicted the ways in which they met these challenges in his work. By examining various expressions of masculinity in his œuvre, we can see the how men from different classes navigated the fraught nature of masculinity. In his portrait of his father, he
represented a man holding onto a masculinity that was bound to an out-of-date way of life and the social implications of that. In Lautrec’s own self-portrait as a student, he explored how a man constructs his own masculine identity. Through his depictions of friends and male family members, he gave us different views of bourgeois masculinity full of confidence and in control of their lives. They stand in stark contrast to the working-class man in *The Laundryman*.

However, not all of his representations of male figures are as easy to classify. Lautrec’s posters of Bruant participated in the singer’s self-manufactured rough-and-tumble persona. Unlike the conflict between Bruant the successful businessman and the persona that he donned in his cabaret, Lautrec’s pared down drawing style and bold choice of colors leaves the viewer in little doubt over the toughness of the singer. Still, this seemingly straightforward representation of masculinity involved a careful negotiation of working-class and bourgeois masculinities. Lautrec clearly stated the lower status of working-class masculinity in *The Laundryman*, yet he turned some of these same qualities – physicality, coarseness, lower-class status – into assets in his posters of Bruant. Therefore, even though Lautrec’s depictions of Bruant are stripped of the conflicts between Bruant the man and Bruant the persona, they still have to harmonize two disparate elements: transforming qualities typically associated with non-hegemonic masculinity into those aligned with the values of hegemonic masculinity.

In Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series, his representations of masculinity became more complex. The figure of the ringmaster occupies various masculinities ranging from those that cooperate with female performers to those that command respect in during rehearsal for their air of brutal authority. By exploring the plural masculinities of the ringmaster in the series, Lautrec complicated his images of male figures. Additionally, we find him examining new facets of masculinity, namely the physical beauty of the male body. Not since his studies of the male nude as a student had Lautrec given so much attention to the male form. The interest in physical fitness
and strongmen increased at the turn of the century in conjunction with France’s concern about the health of the nation.

The challenges that Lautrec faced in the production of his images of Bruant (reconciling facets of disparate masculinities into the dominant masculinity) and in the *Au cirque* series (representing the plural masculinities and revealing the male physique) had parallels to the difficulties that young French men faced as they made their way into the world. After France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the world that their fathers knew ceased to exist with the same certainty as it once had. In combination with the disappointing job prospects and the encouragement to be more successful than their fathers had been, the task of finding and embodying a masculinity that commanded respect from others and oneself was arduous.

Lautrec’s investigation into new facets of masculinity in the *Au cirque* series demonstrates that even though he was isolated in the clinic in Neuilly, he remained connected to the concerns of the world outside the sanatorium through his drawings. Previous examinations of his œuvre have emphasized the biographies of Lautrec and the performers that he depicted. Stepping away from the circumstances of the works’ production reveals how deeply they were linked to the anxieties about masculinity in the fin de siècle. Expanding the scope of the literature to include the range of masculinities operating in Lautrec’s work helps to situate him in his time.

Men did not have many places to turn outside of themselves for support or empathy in their complicated task of staking out their masculinity. Although many people had opinions about the status of men, the nature of their habits, and their health, few concrete mechanisms were in place to help men deal with these issues. To whom or what could they turn? Lautrec offers one option to viewers in the *Au cirque* series: animals. In the next chapter, I examine the possibilities that animals present for empowering both men and women in the drawings. Not only do animals serve as allies for the equestriennes in the drawings, but they were also sources of strength and the means of escape.
Chapter 3

The Animal Inside: The Evolution of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Depiction of Animals

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s intimation of violence in the *Au cirque* series from 1899 involves not only men and women, as we discussed in the previous chapters, but also the horses that participate in the scenes. Their role extends beyond representing the common elements found in the circus. More than enhancing the setting, they complicate the sexual tension and violence suggested in the drawings. Furthermore, beyond the horses, all of the animals depicted throughout the series interact with human figures, and the bond that they share with their human trainers appears evident to the viewer.

From his portrait of a favorite horse to the animals in his *Au cirque* series, Lautrec remains fascinated by the animal body throughout his career. Full of power, energy, and passion, animals serve as faithful companions and beautiful bodies. In particular, horses receive careful attention in Lautrec’s œuvre. In *The White Horse* “Gazelle,” 1881, (figure 25), Lautrec captures the horse’s personality through subtle shading and upturned lips that translate into a goofy grin. Throughout *Au cirque*, he draws horses’ bodies in detail, their hard muscles glistening with sweat. Indeed, the fetishization of their bodies in the series goes hand in hand with the sadomasochism that we examined in Chapter 1. Yet even more than this, animals offer an escape from the demanding human world. This can take the form of leisure activities or sport, but it can also manifest as the coalition of humans and animals or the sharing of an animal identity.

As I explore Lautrec’s engagement with animal subject matter in this chapter, I will anchor my discussion in the *Au cirque* series. Beginning where Chapter 1 left off, I will consider the mixture of violence and desire manifested in and through the animal body. From here, I will
look at the roots of Lautrec’s interest in painting animals. Lautrec began painting animals when he was an adolescent, and he continued to develop this skill while studying with his first teacher, René Princeteau, who specialized in the painting of animals.¹ Even when Lautrec shifted his focus to the pastimes of Montmartre, he never ceased depicting animals.

Scholars have given much attention to Lautrec’s representation of the dance halls, cabarets, and celebrities of Montmartre. For example, Phillip Dennis Cate’s, Mary Weaver Chapin’s, and Richard Thomson’s analyses of these subjects in Lautrec’s œuvre have enhanced our understanding of the raucous quartier, the relationship between high and low culture, and Lautrec’s technical and artistic contributions to the medium of the poster.² However, this emphasis on one aspect of Lautrec’s work has overshadowed some of his other innovations. One underexamined facet is his depiction of animals. As we will see, he gave equal weight to his human and animal subjects. After investigating the role animals play in the sadomasochistic tension in the Au cirque drawings, I will consider Lautrec’s representation of animals in relation to his peers. By comparing his pictures that include animals to other artists’ portrayals of them, we will see the attention that he paid to animals.

Undoubtedly, part of Lautrec’s nuanced depiction of animals rests on the human-animal connections that he conveys in his pictures. His work suggests the possibilities of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have called “becoming-animal.” Their concept of “becoming-animal” postulates that in our relationships with animals, both human and animal enter a process of

transformation through which each becomes more like the other.\(^3\) The process of becoming never reaches an end point; each party remains on the journey, growing more and more like the other, but never losing all of his or her original identity. Through the process of becoming, one can produce a new identity, as well as resist the dominant ideology by forging a new path for those in the process of becoming-other, that that Deleuze and Guattari describe as “perpendicular.”\(^4\) They describe the perpendicular as a space that allows for new, previously unimaginable possibilities. In regards to becoming, it is a space where both human and animal can transform. By becoming something other than oneself, one enters into the territory of the nomad. The deterritorialization involved in this process opens up new space for discourse. In the case of Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings, the process of becoming-animal affects primarily the equestriennes and their horses. Through the process of the women becoming-horse and the horses becoming-woman, they form an ulterior space that resists the dominance of the ringmaster.

The care with which Lautrec painted women and animals will lead us back to the *Au cirque* drawings and the question of violence, specifically the shared experience of the equestriennes and horses in the works. Often painted as one unit, the female performer and her horse share responsibility for the successful completion of a stunt, and they face the same threat of punishment and injury if they fail. Their interlocking experiences mirror the argument that ecofeminists posit for the unification of the feminist and animal rights movements: both parties suffer under the dominance of the patriarchy. Ecofeminists argue that dominant culture relegates women and animals to the fringes, not allowing them to partake completely in society. By


\(^4\) Deleuze and Guattari write: “The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.” Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.
applying ecofeminist theories to Deleuze and Guattari’s model of becoming-animal, I will analyze why the connection between the female and animal figures in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings was necessary for the empowerment of both parties.

The connection between the equestriennes and horses demonstrates a continual process of adaptation and merging of identities across species. Becoming not only opens up spaces of opposition; it also allows one to assimilate qualities of the Other that one wishes to have and to find strength while doing so. A similar assimilation of traits operates in contemporary furry culture. Furries are known for their identification with animals, particularly anthropomorphized animals like those represented in cartoons. They feel most like themselves when they enact their animal persona, and some don costumes similar to those worn by mascots in order to realize their furry identity more fully. The furry culture can be a useful model to understand the human-animal relationships in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings. Even though none of the human figures in his works dresses him/herself as animals, the close relationship that they have with the animals in the pictures and the tension exhibited among all of the figures depicted parallel some of the experiences of furries. By bringing the current concerns of furries and ecofeminists to bear on Lautrec’s drawings, we will begin to unravel the complex relationship between humans and animals in Lautrec’s work and in Western culture.

Animals appear repeatedly throughout the *Au cirque* series, most often in the form of horses and dogs. Indeed, nearly all of the drawings include at least one animal. Violence, or the possibility of it, also plays a recurring role in the drawings. Both animals and violence feature prominently in *Jockey* (figure 62), *Cheval pointant* (figure 27), *Voltige* (figure 5), and *Travail sur le panneau* (figure 6). All contain whips and aggressive behavior, but the issues of power and violence are not confined to the human figures in these drawings: Lautrec extends these to the relationships between the horses, performers, and trainers. The sexualized horses caught in erect
poses in the works relate to art produced earlier in the nineteenth century that both satirizes and fetishizes animals, contemporary posters, and literary and medical texts.

In *Jockey*, a man in full riding attire brandishes a short whip above his head in his right hand and anchors his hidden left hand, presumably on the horse, to secure himself on top of the animal. His riding style is unusual, to say the least; he sits backwards on the horse, rump to rump, instead of looking ahead to see where the horse is going. The angle at which he holds his legs and his upright posture convey his control of his body and the horse’s movement, and they allow his bottom to remain stationed on the horse despite his flailing legs. Lautrec captures the horse in mid-gallop with all four of its legs bent and its head striving forward. Two sections of its mane, one located on the top of its head and the other sweeping down its neck, flow in the breeze. The horse wears no accessories save a bridle.

*Cheval pointant* also features a man and a horse in action, but the dominant and passive roles are not clear. The horse rears above the trainer who lies prostrate on the floor of the circus ring. The ringmaster leans on his right hip with his right leg curled underneath him; his left leg extends parallel to the ground; and his right arm supports the weight of his torso. His head juts back to expose the full length of his corpulent neck. He stretches his arms out in a straight line that opens up his chest while gripping a whip in one hand and a net in the other. One cannot determine with certainty whether the horse hovers over the trainer as part of a trick or as something more sinister. Lautrec seems to hint at the agency of the horse in this drawing by signing the drawing near the horse’s feet. The placement of the signature in conjunction with the manner in which Lautrec made it (erasing his initials in a scribble of pencil marks as if the horse’s

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5 One will notice a figure that appears to dangle on the edge of the stands in *Cheval*. This figure, like the profile of a head in the upper right corner of *Voltige*, is shadowy and undefined at best. They echo the action of the figures in the pictures (the man in the stands sprawled in a similar manner as the trainer and the head in profile the reverse angle of the profile of the clown and ringmaster), but they do not participate in the action of the main figural groups. They are small and difficult to decipher, but their presence haunts the drawings, and they remain a topic for further study.
hoof kicked the dusk in the ring to produce the signature) suggest that the horse may have the power in this interaction.

In each of these drawings, Lautrec captures the sensuality of the horses’ physiques. The skin of the horse in *Jockey* is pulled taut over its flexing hips and shoulders. The D-shaped highlight high on its left hip draws the viewer’s attention to the rear end of the horse, which awaits his penetrating glance. To entice him further, the horse appears to have worked up a sweat in his exercises, indicated by the brown and grey pencil strokes on the neck and trunk of the animal that produce the effect of glistening perspiration. Likewise, the horse in *Travail* possesses an impressive physique. Lautrec’s articulation of muscles clusters on its forelegs and throughout its body conveys its power. The strength of the horse’s body contrasts the coy glance it slips the ringmaster and/or viewer. The horse bends its neck downward, pulls its head into its chest, and flirtatiously diverts its eyes; the pose displays its luscious, full mane. Lautrec manifests in the viewer not only a desire for the equestrienne, but also for the horses in his drawings.

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6 Julia Frey connects the attention that Lautrec paid to rear ends and crotch-level points of view to his own sexuality and the possibility of repressed homosexuality: “So far as is known, Henry never had any homosexual relations. But his sexual interests and needs were ambiguous. His unfulfilled passions for women, the intense, exclusive friendships he developed with one male ‘best friend’ after another, his bragging about his life in the brothels, or the many times his art focused on anal material such as the hindquarters of horses, women’s buttocks and men either viewed from the rear, or holding phallic objects at groin-level, perhaps all bear witness to repressed homosexual longings or confused sexual orientation.” Julia Frey, *Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life* (London: Phoenix Giants, 1995), 383-384.

7 The lack of a female figure in *Jockey* also adds an interesting twist to Lautrec’s depiction of the rider. The jockey’s feet extend in from his ankles at an obtuse angle. The foot appears wavy and deformed, the lack of articulation at the ankles and the undulating shape of the boot robbing the foot of substance. The boots resemble empty pieces of cloth or black gloves rather than feet. The foot within the boot dematerializes like Yvette Guilbert’s empty gloves in Lautrec’s cover for *Yvette Guilbert*, 1894 (Wittrock 69). In this drawing, the gloves lie discarded on two steps, and appear vacant except for the fingers, which bend at the knuckles and point. Griselda Pollock describes the gloves as a “nasty image, sinister and deadly.” She notes a sadistic quality to the drawing and fetish objects in Lautrec’s *œuvre*. One of these objects is a black stocking. Lautrec fetishizes the feet of the jockey in a manner similar to his fetishization of dancers’ legs and Guilbert’s gloves: they lose their identification with feet or boots and take on heightened significance. The jockey, therefore, is also sexualized and displayed for the viewer’s delight. For a discussion of Lautrec’s fetish objects, particularly their relationship to his father, see Pollock,
While Lautrec’s attention to the allure of the equine body distinguishes his depiction of horses from those of many of his contemporaries, he was not the only artist to admire the animal’s physique. Théodore Géricault’s and Jules Chéret’s representations of horses serve as precedents for Lautrec. Géricault explores the allure of the equine body in his work, particularly *Twenty-Four Rumps and One Head*, 1813 (figure 63). The painting depicts three tiers of horses’ bottoms with the front half of one horse shown on the far left side of the middle register. One receives a variety of views of the back of the animals: right side, left side, and rear view. One can see the flanks of some horses, but the focal point is undoubtedly the rumps. Géricault treats them with great care, closely studying the slight differences in the shapes of their hips, legs, and rear ends the same way other artists would treat a female nude. This connection is significant as he rarely painted women; the horse, as Linda Nochlin argues, becomes a substitute for the female form.  

The horse as a substitute for the female form also appears in posters by Chéret. The artist, most closely associated with young, lithe, and sexy *chérettes*, portrays horses that possess a similar allure. In his *Hippodrome de Paris: Le cheval de feu*, 1879 (figure 64), the bucking white stallion holds the same pose as the horse in *Cheval*: forelegs up in the air with one raised higher than the other. The difference lies in the ways in which they hold their heads. Chéret’s horse

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8 Linda Nochlin puts forth this view of Géricault’s *œuvre* in “Géricault: the Absence of Women” in *Representing Women* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999): 59-79. It was originally published as “Géricault, or the Absence of Women,” *October* 68 (Spring 1994): 45-59. She examines not only horses, but also his depiction of men in need of rescuing and of damaged female figures. Additionally, Michael Fried examines the close relationship between the men and horses in Géricault’s work. He argues that the “animality” of the horses allows Géricault to paint their expressions as “grimaces” without them being perceived as such and without the entire painting falling into the realm of the theatrical. Fried, “Géricault’s Romanticism,” in *Géricault*, ed. Régis Michel (Paris: Documentation française, 1996), 2:641-656, especially 650-653.

bows its head in a gesture that is both majestic and inviting. Its large right eye gazes out at the viewer; it is so large that it seems that he looks at all of the spectators at once, regardless of their position. The stallion’s mane flows out in wavy locks behind it, and Chéret lavishes attention on its tail, creating an arc that echoes the curve of its rump and displays the thickness and volume of its hair. Chéret suspends the animal in the sky surrounded by clouds while rays of divine light grace its head. It is strong and sexy—who needs the white knight when his horse looks this good?

Lautrec had the opportunity to see both Géricault’s and Chéret’s representations of sexualized horses. In 1889, *Twenty-Four Rumps and One Head* was hung in the *Centennale de l’art français* at the Louvre. Because Lautrec was in Paris at the time, it is likely that he saw the exhibition or at least had knowledge of many of the works included in it. Additionally, Chéret’s posters were hung all over Paris, and he had a reputation for innovations in the medium of lithography. The precedent that Géricault and Chéret set with their sensual depictions of horses provided models to which Lautrec could refer in his representation of human-animal interactions.

The subject of the sexual practices of animals and their relationship to human sexuality fascinated psychologists and a sector of the public at the end of the nineteenth century. Most instances of bestiality, as observed by Charles Féré in 1903, involved men penetrating their animal of choice, but the *Archives de neurologie* reported the rare case of a woman who partook

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12 Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution as promulgated in *The Origin of Species* (1859) were well known by this time, and the interest in the connection between animal and human sexuality could be seen as part of an outgrowth of evolutionary thinking. Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Originally published in 1859.
in an exclusive sexual relationship with her dogs.\textsuperscript{13} A review of the study emphasizes the uniqueness of the female patient and the comparably common occurrence of bestial relationships involving men and a variety of animals.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Maisons de tolérance} also catered to bourgeois men’s bestial desires.\textsuperscript{15} Their performances included a show involving sexual acts between prostitutes and Great Danes while a small group of men watched.\textsuperscript{16} The fascination with bestiality, in instances when one actively participates or watches, testifies to the audience for such a subject in Paris around the turn of the century.

Despite the supposed prevalence of men involved in bestial activities, artists most often depicted women in circumstances in which they take an animal for a lover. The most common themes were mythological, such as the rape of Europa. A nineteenth-century audience, and those of previous centuries, did not view these paintings as odd or perverse because the subject matter’s basis lies in classical mythology. Gustave Moreau, for example, depicted women with lions and horses in implicit sexual relationships. His \textit{Le Lion amoureux}, c. 1881 (figure 65) features a lion with its head positioned close to the woman’s genitals. She stretches her arm to elongate her body and displays her figure to the lion mesmerized next to her. The drawing has a more explicitly sexual nature devoid of violence, but its sensuousness pushes the boundaries of bourgeois acceptability and verges on what a contemporary audience could label perverse.

\textsuperscript{13} See Charles Féré, “Cas de bestialité chez la femme,” \textit{Archives de neurologie} 7 (June 1903), 90. The doctor observed a seventy-two-year-old woman who engaged in sexual activity with two dogs. Though the medical report of such a case was unique, the scenario was common in eighteenth century erotic prints. The article is reviewed in G. Masson, ed., “Revue des journaux de médecine: Journaux français, année 1903, \textit{Archives de neurologie}: VII: ‘Cas de bestialité chez la femme,’” \textit{Annales médico-psychologiques}, no. 2 (1905): 293.

\textsuperscript{14} Masson, 293.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Maisons de tolérance} were essentially brothels run by a madam. They provided a place for the prostitutes to live, conduct business, and receive routine medical examinations. For a thorough explanation, see Alain Corbin, \textit{Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850}, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 10-12, and 53-84.

\textsuperscript{16} Corbin, 124.
One also sees intimations of bestiality in circus programs. An untitled drawing by Adolphe Willette for the June 15, 1894 Cirque Molier program (figure 66) depicts an equestrienne holding a hoop covered in paper with the name of the circus printed around the top rim. She wears an elaborate hat cocked to the side of her head and a modest dress. Her hands hold the bottom edge of the hoop; her right hand also grips a whip pointed downwards. A disembodied head of a horse penetrates the paper. The woman nuzzles her head against the lower portion of the animal’s face. The picture is tender, but the whip suggests that it could quickly turn violent.

Maurice Barrès, a writer at the end of the nineteenth century, ponders the parallels between the mating rituals of horses and humans in his journal. He writes:

> What Hugues Le Roux said to me, and what he has probably observed somewhere, of the stallion lashing out as he dismounts the mare as soon as he has finished dominating her.

> Civilization is above all located in the spaces in between natural actions. But doesn’t man secretly want to do the same thing to woman?\(^{17}\)

The mating rituals of horses intrigue Barrès, particularly the violence displayed by the stallion after copulation, and he wonders whether the horse’s response was part of nature that has not yet been purged from man. The source of this information is significant; Le Roux, who wrote behind-the-scenes accounts of the circus, relayed that shadows of violence fall over the mating practice of stallions. Whidopff playfully hints at the potentially brutal side of circus life in his drawing of women rehearsing for the Cirque Molier in *M. Jules Roques*, 1888 (figure 39). The women wear

sheer dresses, and Jules Roques sits in a chair overseeing one of the women’s performance while holding a stick pointed at her feet. The circus, as Whidoppff illustrates, is a realm where both humans and animals must be trained and made to perform. As such, it sparked Barrès’s rumination on the nature of human sexuality.

The connection between sadism in human sexuality and violence in animal sexuality is not limited to Barrès’s account. The medical world also recognized this tendency in animals. In the essay, “Le sadi-fétichisme” published in *Annales d’hygiène publique et de médecine légale* in 1900, Dr. Paul Garnier explains that a savage sexual instinct can become destructive; it resembles (and is possibly based upon) the sexual practices of some species. He describes sadism as being located between the desire to torture another person and to see the torturing of another. He labels those with sadistic impulses mentally degenerate. He defines sadism as:

> Perversion of the sexual instinct establishing, under the form of an impulsive obsession, a close relationship between the suffering actually inflicted, or mentally represented, and the genital orgasm, frigidity ordinarily remaining absolute without this condition at once necessary and sufficient.  

Dr. Garnier emphasizes that sadism is foremost a mental disorder; the pain could either be inflicted, witnessed, or imagined for the sadist to attain his or her pleasure (although most of the cases studied were male). The behavior has an obsessive element: the sadist needs to perform the same type of punishment to the same body part repeatedly in reality or in his/her imagination. Garnier theorizes that bestiality might precede sadistic behavior against humans.

One can observe Garnier’s connection between sadism and bestiality in Lautrec’s drawings. The horses in *Cheval* and *Jockey* have a direct relationship with the men in the pictures. The horse dangerously looms over the trainer in *Cheval*, and one cannot be sure whether this is

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part of the trick or a moment when the horse has temporarily taken control and acts out against its trainer. Conversely, the relationship between the man and horse in Jockey lacks this ambiguity; the jockey holds the whip above his head while balancing on top of the animal, goading it to run faster around the ring. The violence in these works is implicit, but the sensuality of the horses immediately strikes the viewer. This combination of effects flirts with sadistic bestiality.  

While the examples of Jockey and Cheval bring the sexuality of the horse and dominance of men to the foreground, the addition of women in Voltige and Travail introduces a new complexity to the human-animal relationship and the threat of violence. In Voltige, an equestrienne dangles off the side of a horse, holding onto its mane and pressing her body into its side. She engages both of her hands in the act of grasping the horse and maintaining her position. The closeness of their bodies and their reliance on each other to complete the stunt merge them into one unit. From the center of the ring, the ringmaster keeps his whip at the ready as he oversees their performance. Travail presents the viewer with a reversed view of a similar scene. Here, the equestrienne sits atop the horse with her back to the viewer. She locks eyes with the ringmaster holding his whip. These drawings present women and horses as unified against the threat of violence from the ringmaster.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the sadomasochistic edge of these drawings pits the women against the men. Yet the horses also participate in the violent sexuality of the work. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch explores the violent mingling of animals and women in sadomasochistic encounters in his semi-autobiographical novel, Venus in Furs (first published in 1870). Severin, the narrator, revels in the furs of his lover and dominator, Wanda, and he prefers her to wear them during their sexual escapades. While looking at a reproduction of Titian’s Venus with the Mirror, 

he thinks, “You are cold, while you yourself fan flames. By all means wrap yourself in your
despotic furs, there is no one for whom they are more appropriate, cruel goddess of love and of
beauty!”^{20} He associates the softness and luxury of the fur with beauty, but he does not forget that
fur is inherently linked to violence and death; hence, the material also connotes tyranny and
cruelty to him. He requests that Wanda subject him to acts of humiliation and brutality, including
whipping him, threatening to step on his throat, and recounting her desires for other men. Sadism,
for Severin, therefore involves a fetish for furs that connects sex, violence, and animals.^{21}

Severin imagines Wanda and the bear as linked. Lautrec also suggests the connection
between women and animals in the *Au cirque* series. In *Voltige* and *Travail*, he demonstrates the
coalition of animal subject and woman. The drawings depict the melding of the bodies of women
and the horses that they ride. The whipping of one results in the whipping of the other. The
dependence of the woman on the animal in *Voltige* for her safety (not falling to the ground)
leaves her vulnerable to the ringmaster wielding a whip; and she is also open to the ridicule of the
clown. Likewise, the woman and horse in *Travail* form one decorative unit in their matching
green costumes and coiffed hair under the careful watch of the ringmaster. A crack of the whip
would lash both the woman and stallion. A similar strategy is at work in *Equestrienne (At the
Cirque Fernando)*, 1887-88 (figure 1), in which the horse’s rear is displayed ripe for the taking,
and the equestrienne and horse must by necessity synchronize their movements to perform
difficult maneuvers. Lautrec’s drawings implicitly fetishize performers and animals. Thus, the
sadomasochism in these works not only operates implicitly, but it is also spiked with bestiality.

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^{20} Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs and Selected Letters of Leopold von Sacher-
Masoch and Emilie Matajha*, trans. Uwe Moeller and Laura Lindgren (New York: Blast Books,
1989), 67.

^{21} For a discussion on fur and animal fetishes, see Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia
Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study, 7th
Although the issue of sexuality between the human figures in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings is an important one to consider, it is not the only function the animals in the pictures perform. Indeed, to relegate the connection between the animals and women in the drawings to human sexuality places unnecessary restrictions on our conversation, not only on sexuality but also animals. As Michael Lundblad reminds us, bestiality is a “singular and reductive signifier.”

Too often, bestiality is diluted to include only the basest physical desires without regard to the animal’s well being. It does not address the emotional or loving aspects of this relationship.

Moreover, it does not elucidate what sex between a human and animal actually entails. From

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23 Kathy Rudy identifies four ways to think about sex with animals: bestiality (in which human use animals as props in sexual encounters; human pleasure matters above all else, including the safety of the animals involved; and animals are viewed as less than humans), zoophilia (in which human participants give animals human characteristics; encounters involve sexual intimacy and pleasure for both human and animals; and animals are given human subjectivity and seen as the equal of humans), ‘animal rights’ (which considers all sex with animals to be abusive because animals are incapable of giving their consent and the relationship is not one between equals in society), and ‘mental health’ (which views sex with animals as abnormal and an aberration that must be corrected in patients; the taboo of sex between humans and animals helps to define humans in contrast to animals and establishes the superiority of humans because it is natural to be disgusted by sex with an inferior being). Rudy, “LGBTQ…Z?” *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 606-607.

24 Midas Dekkers examines the sexual relationships between humans and animals as depicted in art throughout history in *Dearest Pet: On Bestiality*. He tends to reduce all physical contact to sexual urges without considering the multivalent meanings of touching. He identifies human attraction to animals as rooted in anthropomorphism and a transference of human male or female physical qualities (male: hardness and muscle definition; female: softness and rounded curves) to a person’s animal preferences. For example, men find the rounded rear end of a horse attractive because it reminds them of a woman’s backside; likewise, women prefer firm, sinewy muscles in animals because these features resemble the muscular male body. Dekkers ultimately reduces human-animal relationships to sex and a limited definition of bestiality. Michael Lundblad notes this problem exists in much of the writing on bestiality. In contrast to Dekkers, he argues for expanding the definition of love between species to encompass more than the usual sexual desire (this is a point upon which I will expand later in this chapter). In addition to his use of a narrow definition of bestiality, Dekkers has another significant shortcoming in *Dearest Pet*: the text is rife with speculation, generalizations, and assumptions lacking supporting evidence and citations. Dekkers’s study has met with controversy. His main premise is that not only does bestiality occur more frequently than we like to admit, but it has been a part of our human history from Greek mythology’s Leda and the Swan to the Virgin Mary’s impregnation via a dove. He does not cast judgment on the practice, an aspect with which many reviewers have taken issue, but rather outlines the impulses and consequences of such actions. Peter Singer (*author of Animal*
Liberation published in 1975, one of the founding texts of the animal rights movement in the 1970s) favorably reviewed Dearest Pet. He argues that adult animals perform cognitive functions at a high level, such as raising and protecting offspring, finding food sources, and forming social bonds. Therefore, for humans to regard animals as inferior than themselves is a form of speciesism. He posits that the truly distasteful facet of bestiality is that a human would lower him or herself to have sex with an inferior animal. What should concern us instead is whether the animal suffers from the encounter or whether it experiences pleasure.

Unsurprisingly, Singer’s review sparked outrage among conservative news sources, including the Wall Street Journal and The New Republic, but even more liberal publications, such as The Village Voice, found his stance unnerving. In her response to the criticism leveled at Singer, Karen Davis identifies humans’ desire to view themselves as special and separate from animals as the root of the disdain for Singer’s stance. She, like Singer, argues that animals function at a very high level in their daily lives and should not be considered “dumb.” Moreover, she finds the breeding and slaughter of animals for human consumption to be the more disturbing and pressing issue, and she likens it to bestiality. She writes, “Humans engage in oral intercourse with unconsenting nonhuman animals every time they put a piece of an animal's body inside their mouth.” The moral question of bestiality, then, has complex ties to larger questions of animal rights, the defining qualities of humans versus animals, and our responsibilities to our fellow creatures.

In addition to the moral outrage Singer’s review unleashed, Gordon Preece identifies five ways in which Singer’s animal philosophy is untenable. The strongest criticism he levels against Singer argues that Singer’s position is “based on a reductionist model of humanity, ecology, rationality and morality.” He accuses Singer of lacking a nuanced and consistent position on the rights of animals and our duties toward them. Preece’s criticism goes to the heart of the problem with Dekker’s Dearest Pet, Singer’s review of it, and Singer’s critics. While all of these arguments bring important insights to the question of bestiality, they are all limited in their definitions of bestiality and sex. The acts are straightforward anal, vaginal, or oral penetration. Aside from questioning the cruelty involved in the encounters, they do not look beyond traditional definitions of sex to expand its definition in regard to animals and humans. Furthermore, they do not delve into any issues deeper than sheer physical pleasure. Such analyses, though important to the field, neglect larger, more difficult, and, ultimately, more interesting questions.

In contrast, Laurie Adams Frost brings a greater sensitivity to the complexity of animal-human relationships in her analysis. Like Dekkers, she also considers the nature of human-animal relationships, but she confines her study to an analysis of literary works that prominently feature inter-species love instead of visual art. Works she analyzes include Rachel Ingalls’s Mrs. Caliban, Ted Mooney’s Easy Travel to Other Planets, and Marian Engel’s Bear. She concludes that these relationships are more complex than society generally gives them credit for being. Furthermore, she finds that the animals in these relationships provide the humans with a source of love, compassion, and understanding, among other things, that they could not find among other humans.

queer theory, we learn that a narrow definition of heterosexual sex is a limiting way to understand all sex, which is a far more varied and inclusive activity.\textsuperscript{25} For example, Kathy Rudy explores what it might mean to love her dogs and what sex with them would mean. She examines the closeness she feels to her dogs and the ease that she has always felt in the company of animals. She considers what this means for her sexual identity as a lesbian and the elasticity queer theory that has brought to our understanding of sex. Additionally, she seeks to confound the hierarchy of beings that places humans above animals. She writes, “My point, then, is not to make something called bestiality more visible, but by using animal love in various permutations, to disrupt the stability and superiority of human identity.”\textsuperscript{26}

Rudy’s analysis of animal-human relationships is deeply personal. She delves into her identity as a lesbian, and the ways in which her mentor, Eve Sedgwick, shaped her exploration of queer theory and pushed her to question boundaries. She also exposes her relationship with her dogs. These kinds of autobiographical analyses of issues of gender and sexuality have faced scrutiny in academia. If such essays have often been written by women who have established careers, academia has tended to discredit and dismiss them as non-critical analyses of issues or worse, fluff. Susan McHugh examines this gender bias against women who write about their relationships with animals autobiographically in “Bitch, Bitch, Bitch: Personal Criticism, Feminist Theory, and Dog-Writing.”\textsuperscript{27} In particular, she considers writers who, like Rudy, examine their lives with their dogs, and she homes in on the term “bitch” as both a form of classification and derision. She writes:

\textsuperscript{25} See Rudy, 601-615.
\textsuperscript{26} Rudy, 611.
\textsuperscript{27} Susan McHugh, “Bitch, Bitch, Bitch: Personal Criticism, Feminist Theory, and Dog-Writing,” \textit{Hypatia} 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 616-635.
By the turn of the twenty-first century, women writing about electing to share their lives with canine bitches are compelled to confront the terms of this abuse. For it is never simply the fact of gendered differences that is registered in the word ‘bitch,’ but a precise intersection between species, a crossing that, however beloved by the principals, inspires patronizing disdain in some observers, and even angry resentment in other.²⁸

McHugh states that both men and women scorn this genre of academic writing. Yet she argues that these autobiographical accounts can provide opportunities for scholars to expand the disciplines of women’s studies and animal studies.

Carolee Schneemann is an artist who has used autobiographical performance art and film to analyze her human and animal relationships. In these works, she explores what sex might mean with animals and what role domestic animals, particularly cats, play in human sexual encounters. Her films *Infinity Kisses*, 1991, and *Fuses*, 1967, question how her pet cats witnessed, participated, and navigated animal-human relationships. In *Infinity Kisses*, she filmed herself kissing her cat repeatedly. The action reveals the tenderness and affection of their relationship in addition to answering the question that Rudy would later pose about what sex with animals entails. Schneemann’s cat, Kitch [sic], does not have a starring role in *Fuses*. Instead, Kitch acts as a foil to, and in some ways an extension of, Schneemann and her lover, James Tenney. The camera cuts from close-ups of the couple to shots of Kitch and montages human body parts, sexual acts, and the cat. Kitch also appears in Schneemann’s *Kitch’s Last Meal*, 1978, which depicts Schneemann’s everyday life and the end of her cat’s life. In addition to considering animal-human relationships, Schneemann also criticizes the marginalization and abuse of animals and women in her films, such as *Vesper’s Stamped to my Mouth Hole*, 1992.²⁹

²⁸ McHugh, 617.
Schneemann’s films demonstrate that the inclusion of animals in a human sexual encounter is a complicated issue, and it does not easily fit into our heteronormative models of sexuality. At the same time, the addition of animals to human sexuality in works such as *Infinity Kisses* does not align with our connotations of bestiality. Schneemann’s exploration of human-animal relationships thwarts our assumptions about the nature of them. In this way, her work can be constructive to our understandings of Lautrec’s work. Like Kitch in Schneemann’s films, the animals in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series cannot be written off merely as brushes with bestiality. The sexuality that they suggest involves more than sex or sex appeal. It challenges the limits of physical love. In addition to providing another source of sexual tension, they also allow for the human figures to identify with them in a way that empowers the human figures (most often these are female acrobats and equestriennes). The sensitivity with which Lautrec depicts animals in his work allows for a complex relationship between humans and animals. His interest in painting animals dates back to his adolescence. By examining Lautrec’s investigation of animals throughout his career, we can see seeds of the tenderness for and rapport with animals that would grow into the intimate human-animal relationships in the *Au cirque* series.

When Lautrec began to study art, he worked with a family friend, René Princeteau, who was known for his paintings of animals, particularly horses. Given his mentor’s interest in the subject and his own love of animals, it is not surprising that Lautrec features animals in many of

his early works. Additionally, Lautrec’s father, Alphonse, and uncles shared his interest in animals, from hunting them to drawing them. Lautrec’s paternal grandmother would say, “When my sons kill a woodcock, the bird affords them three pleasures; those of the gun, the pencil, and the fork.” When Alphonse gave his eleven-year-old son a book on falconry for Christmas, he inscribed it:

Remember, my son, that the only healthy life is the daylight life of the open air: whatever is deprived of liberty soon degenerates and dies. This little book of falconry will teach you the value of outdoor life, and should you one day experience the bitterness of life, horses in particular, and also dogs and falcons, could be your treasured companions, and help you forget a little.

For Lautrec, animals were a part of his inner circle of friends as a child, and he drew and painted them as if they were family members. He captured their likenesses and personalities in detailed portraits. Indeed, Philippe Huisman and Madeleine Grillaert Dortu note, “[Lautrec] did not draw a distinct frontier between men and animals.” They also point out Lautrec’s penchant for

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30 Jacques Lassaigne writes of Lautrec’s love of animals: “This is more than a matter of acquaintance, it is a profound possession of a theme, which has become almost a natural attribute of his life.” Lassaigne, Toulouse-Lautrec, trans. Mary Chamot (New York: Hyperion Press, 1939), 12.
31 Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec cared for both the animals that he owned and hunted. He was not above carrying one of his tired or injured dogs back from a hunt on his own back, and he was known to have stopped a hunt because the participants did not follow protocol and at least give the animal a chance to save its life with a display of wits. Frey, 15.
33 Huisman and Dortu, 14.
35 Huisman and Dortu note the enjoyment Lautrec found in visiting the zoos of Paris, including the Jardin d’Acclimatation and the Jardin des Plantes. They characterize these excursions as the
portraying parallels between some of his human subjects’ traits and those of animal. This porous
division between humans and animals has a significant impact on the way that Lautrec
represented their relationships in the *Au cirque* series.

In Lautrec’s adolescent work, animals play a starring role. His school notebooks have
doodles of animals, among other subjects, including one with a monkey and bird perched on the
artist’s overlapping initials: H, T, and L (figure 67). The sketches demonstrate that even at a
young age Lautrec depicted animals in a way that went directly to their essence. As in his
portraits of humans and his paintings of performers, he targets the animals’ defining
characteristics and gets to the root of their personalities. In *The White Horse* “Gazelle,” he paints
a favorite horse that he could not longer ride due to his broken legs. The horse is seen in profile,
and his gaze is steady on something that we cannot see. Lautrec uses blues and greens to show the
contours and definitions of the horse’s face and neck. Aside from a cluster of ochre brushstrokes
near the base of the horse’s neck, the background is empty. All of the focus rests on Gazelle’s
face: perky ears, wispy bangs that flutter above his eyes; a calm, heavy-lidded eye focusing on
something that we cannot see; a gently curved nostril; a strong jawline; and a pleasant, upturned
mouth. Lautrec conveys the horse’s dependability, good nature, and gentleness in this portrait. It
is as subtle and insightful as any of his portraits of humans.

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36 Lautrec changed the way he signed his work a few times during his career, but this combination
of HTL is perhaps his most well-known.

37 Danièle Devynck suggests that Lautrec’s interest in painting animals, especially horses, helped
him cope with not being able to participate in physically demanding activities any longer, and it
opened the door to his serious study of art. Devynck, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec at the Albi
Museum* (Albi: Editions grand sud, 2009), 44.
Lautrec returns to the subject of Gazelle in *White Horse, “Gazelle,” Bosc*, 1881 (figure 68), in which he depicts the horse looking out from its stall. We see the upper half of his body, and he looks at us from a three-quarters view. His focus is steady, as in the previous portrait, but he appears more wary as he looks up slightly at the viewer. Again, Lautrec concentrates on the horse’s face and the lines of its body, and he leaves the background empty except for the door of the stall and the shadow within it. In 1882, he painted another picture featuring a white horse that is not identified by name. *Horse behind an Open-Work Gate* (figure 69) shows a white horse peering out of a gate with metal bars. He pushes his snout between the bars and his left eye opens wide, staring at the viewer. Although Lautrec obscures most of the horse’s face and body, the combination of the snout breaking free from its imprisonment and the wide, clear eye framed with long lashes is enough to evoke an emotional response from the viewer. Lautrec expresses the patient longing of the animal through these two features. His brushstrokes down the horse’s nose are thick and wavy, but he paints the eye economically, with only a few strokes of brown and white. The quietness of these brushstrokes anchors the painting and overshadows the less refined brushstrokes.

In addition to representing horses, Lautrec paints a number of portraits of dogs, including *Common Dog’s Head*, 1880 (figure 70), *Little White Dog*, 1881 (figure 26), and “Dun,” *Gordon Setter Belonging to Count A. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1881 (figure 71). The paintings done while Lautrec was a student vary in their intensity. The first, *Common Dog’s Head*, is a three-quarters bust of a basset hound. Lautrec’s thick brushstrokes contribute to the weightiness of the dog’s ears and jowls. His eyes look up, as if he is sitting in front of the viewer, and his face and ears are relaxed with his mouth open slightly to show a peak of his pink tongue. He appears docile and

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38 Lautrec continues to paint dogs later in his career. For example, he painted *The “English” Dog* around 1894 (Dortu D.3.07) and “Bouboule,” *Madame Palmyre’s Bulldog at La Souris* in 1897 (Dortu P.646). These works have a less finished appearance than his earlier portraits, but they maintain his exploration of the dog’s personalities and dispositions.
obedient, as though awaiting his master’s approval. In contrast, *Little White Dog* features a small
dog with an obstinate expression. His body faces the viewer, but his head looks away. His eyes
focus on a spot to the left of the viewer, and his mouth turns slightly down at the corner. This,
combined with the darkness of his lips and nose, suggests the dog is not pleased. The
temperament of the dog identified as Dun in the final painting falls somewhere between these two
animals. We see him sitting in profile, looking straight ahead. His ears are relaxed, but the
straightness of his back and rigidness of his paws suggest he is alert and ready for his master’s
command.39

Lautrec’s portraits of dogs and horses reveal a familiarity with them that encourages the
viewer to read human qualities in their interpretation of the animals. The care with which Lautrec
paints them engenders what Kay Milton calls “egomorphism” in the viewer. Milton defines
egomorphism as bestowing our feelings and emotions to an animal. It goes beyond
anthropomorphism, which she argues is misleading because it assumes that humans are the only
creatures that experience the emotions that they then apply to animals.40 She believes that
egomorphism is more “suitable” than anthropomorphism because “[i]t implies that I understand

egomorphism is the extreme emotional response that the Animal Planet television show *Meerkat Manner* evokes in its viewers when the show’s “stars” face injury, sickness, and death. The show
was filmed on the fields of the Kalahari Meerkat Project in South Africa’s North Cape province.
Throughout its fifty-two episodes, it shares the story of a pack of meerkats led by the dominant
female of the group, Flower, over a period of four years. It adopts the language of soap operas to
tell its stories. In his analysis of the series, Matei Candea finds, “The specific characteristics of
meerkats, but also their actions and their capacity to behave in surprising or predictable ways, are
as much a part of my story as the intentions and understandings of the human protagonist or,
indeed, the robustness and effects of the various nonliving things that complete the picture
(computer databases, cameras, radio collars, etc.).” Viewers of the show identify a wide range of
emotions and motivations in the meerkats. The extent to which the meerkats were capable of
experiencing these is questionable. Still, viewers vehemently cling to egomorphic interpretations
of the animals. Candea, “‘I Fell in Love with Carlos the Meerkat’: Engagement and Detachment
my cat, or a humpback whale, or my human friends, on the basis of my perception that they are ‘like me’ rather than ‘human-like’.41 Harry Pointer’s photographs from the late nineteenth century exemplify our inclination to egomorphically read the actions and motivations of animals.42 In one of his studies of cats, he photographs a kitten with spectacles perusing a book (figure 72); in another, he photographs one kitten pushing another in a baby carriage (figure 73).43 These overt forays into egomorphism make it easy for the viewer to attribute his or her own emotional reactions to the animals. Lautrec has a more subtle approach than Pointer, but the care with which he paints his subjects allows the viewer’s egomorphism to emerge, as it does in Pointer’s photographs.

When we consider how some of Lautrec’s contemporaries depict animal and human-animal relationships, we see how his representations differ from theirs and what qualities they share. The inclusion of animals in painting is nothing new. Whether carrying an allegorical significance, such as the dog (fidelity) in Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Double Portrait, 1434 (figure 74)44 or the ermine (purity) in Leonardo’s Lady with an Ermine, c.1490 (figure 75),45 indicating a

41 Milton, 261.
42 Dr. J.-M. Eder points out the popularity of this kind of cat portraiture with wealthy ladies in England: “Le photographe courait de plus le risque de se faire égratigner par de jolis ongles tout roses si, par erreur, il avait osé remettre à sa cliente le portrait d’un poussy quelconque, au lieu de celui du favori. En Angleterre, également, Poussy a eu l’honneur de se voir faire la cour par les photographes les plus habiles.” He considers Pointer’s animal photography and the challenges animals present to photographers in his chapter “Instantanées d’animaux,” in La Photographie instantanée: son application aux arts et aux sciences, trans. O. Campo (Paris: Gauthier-Villars et fils, 1888), 143-160.
43 Harry Whittier Frees also took egomorphic photographs of animals. His genre scenes featuring kittens, puppies, bunnies, and piglets dressed as humans depict the foibles and chores of daily life. For example, in one photograph (Prowler and Purra Try the Jam, 1915) a kitten dressed in coveralls boosts another kitten (also in coveralls) up to sneak a taste from a pot of jam. Frees collected his photographs in The Little Folks of Animal Land (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard Co., 1929). These photographs follow established trends in Victorian paintings by artists like Edwin Landseer.
mythological meaning, such as Michelangelo’s *Leda and the Swan*, c. 1529-31 (figure 76), or a study of nature, like Albrecht Dürer’s *Hare (A Young Hare)*, 1502 (figure 77), animals in art have a long history. Few artists in the nineteenth century did not expand the role of animals in art. For example, Édouard Manet depicts a black cat in *Olympia*, 1863 (figure 37), suggesting Olympia’s sexuality. He also includes a dog in *The Railway*, 1873 (figure 78) and paints a portrait of *Tama, the Japanese Dog*, c. 1875 (figure 79) and other dogs. In the former, the dog serves as a companion and accessory to the woman on whose lap it rests; in the latter, Manet studies the individual dog closely and indicates its country of origin with the Japanese doll lying in the foreground. Like the dogs in Lautrec’s portraits, Tama appears alert and has his attention focused on something that we cannot see, but Manet’s portrayal of the dog makes it more difficult...


for the viewer to project egomorphic characteristics onto the animal. Lautrec places more emphasis on the face and personality of the animals he paints.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir also depicted the dog Tama in c. 1876 (figure 80). He composes the painting with Tama sitting and focusing his attention on a falling leaf or petal. Like Manet’s portrait of the dog, Renoir’s portrait lacks the spark of Lautrec’s *Little White Dog* and *Common Dog’s Head*. In contrast to these artists, Lautrec emphasizes the expression of the dogs. Even when he paints the full body of the animal, as *Little White Dog*, he gives the face as much care as if he were painting a human sitter. Renoir’s *Head of a Dog*, 1870 (figure 81) has a more nuanced study of the dog’s expression and a liveliness that his portrait of Tama lacks. Yet, if we examine his inclusion of dogs in paintings with human figures, this care with which he paints *Head of a Dog* dissipates to focus on the human participants of the scene. For example, in *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, 1880-81 (figure 82), the dog acts as a distraction and object of affection for the woman who holds him up and puckers her lips at him. Similarly, the dogs in *Woman with a Dog*, c. 1880 (figure 83) and *Madame Georges Charpentier and her Children, Georgette-Berthe and Paul-Émile-Charles*, 1878 (figure 84) serve as companions and symbols of fidelity to the absent men. Conversely, Lautrec’s inclusion of animals in portraits of humans does not deny the subjectivity of the animals. In *Lady with a Dog*, 1891 (figure 85), for example, he pays as much attention to the position, expression, and energy of the dog as he does to the woman. The dog is more than a simple extension of the woman, plaything, or symbol. Lautrec does not draw parallels to their appearance, like John Singer Sargent does in *Miss Beatrice Townsend*, 1882 (figure 86). Therefore, I suggest that Lautrec grants agency both to woman and to dog.

As Lautrec’s career progresses, he remains committed to representing animals in his work. Although he shifts his focus to dance hall scenes and human portraits in his early career, he

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50 Lautrec admired Renoir’s work. For more about his interest in the elder artist, see Natanson, 5.
begins to return his attention to animals in 1895.\footnote{Mack, 222.} In 1897, Lautrec drew the illustrations for Jules Renard’s *Histoires naturelles*, published in 1899.\footnote{Anne Roquebert compares these drawings to the work of Flemish painters featuring animals: “If it were necessary to seek antecedents for these animal images, we need only think of the Flemish animal painters, Paulus Potter, M. d’Hondecoeter, Weenix or Steen. For this is a kind of bestiary, a vision of the *Earthly Paradise* – like the painting of that title in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, signed jointly by Rubens and Velvet Bruegel, in which rabbits appear alongside peacocks, deer and rats. In Japanese art, animals appear in the prints of Hokusai and Utamaro. Closer to Lautrec’s own world, the prints published by *L’Estampe originale* teemed with animals, such as *Les Lapins* by Charles Guérard (1893), or the cock in Félix Bracquemond’s *Vive le Tzar!* (1893).” Roquebert, “*Histoires naturelles* by Jules Renard,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec*, exh. cat., Claire Fréches-Thory, Anne Roquebert, and Richard Thomson (London: Hayward Gallery, 1991), 390.} Toward the end of Lautrec’s life, Maurice Joyant noticed his friend’s reinvigorated interest in horses. Horses are a constant feature in his paintings of the circus, and Lautrec paints them more frequently in his last years. Joyant notes that even when institutionalized, Lautrec could recall horses’ movements perfectly, and any given drawing was recognizable as a “Lautrec”.\footnote{Joyant claims that when people saw one of Lautrec’s horses, they would say, “Ça c’est un Lautrec.” Maurice Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 2:60-62. It was originally published in Paris in 1926.}

Thus far, we have established that animals had a sustained presence in Lautrec’s œuvre, but more than that, we have seen that their presence in his pictures has a weight rarely matched in other artists’ depictions. Lautrec conveys the complexity animals possess. They have a dual nature. On the one hand, domesticated and trained animals exist within a particular set of rules and expectations. They receive food, shelter, and the care necessary for their health in return for obeying rules, remaining within a predetermined boundary (whether that be explicitly defined as in a cage or implicitly, such as a neighborhood or yard), and responding to commands. On the other hand, animals have tremendous strength. They consent to living under the control of humans. If they do not want to do something, it can take a significant amount of convincing, through positive reinforcement or punishment, to persuade them to do it. Furthermore, even...
trained animals can be unpredictable. Their trainers must always remain attentive and anticipate their possible reactions. Otherwise, someone may get injured.

Certainly, the relationship between humans and animals, especially in regards to training and performing, is complicated. Beyond the firsthand accounts of what transpired behind the scenes at the circus and formal analysis of Lautrec’s work featuring animals, theoretical models can provide insight into the motivations, fears, and relief involved in these human and animal interactions. In the following section, I will analyze Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal and how it can be applied to Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings. I will argue that by opening up the possibilities of the human-animal relationship beyond the dialectic of trainer and trained we expand the limits of humanity. Additionally, I will demonstrate how the growing fields of animal studies and ecofeminism have refined and enriched Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming-animal. By exploring Lautrec’s drawings through these conceptual models, we will see that the drawings extend past Lautrec’s solitary experience in the sanitarium and develop into a means for investigating our inherent animality.

Up until now, I have been discussing Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings as operating within the hierarchy of power in the circus. The ringmaster oversees the performers and trainers, who in turn instruct the animals. The animals, no matter how well trained they may be, can display erratic and, at times, volatile behavior. The intersection of power and unpredictability forms the starting point for Deleuze and Guattari theory of becoming-animal. Becoming-animal offers an escape to someone confronted with a difficult situation or placed in a submissive position. Drawing from the man-turned-beetle in Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, Deleuze and Guattari construct becoming-animal as a means to, as they put it, “deterritorialize” oneself. They use this term as a way to describe the ways in which one divests oneself of the responsibilities and reason of polite and civilize society. They write:
To become-animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.\(^5^4\)

The becoming-animal state liberates one from the rules governing behavior. Order lacks meaning. Signs fail to signify. Intensity propels one forward. This intensity of feeling causes one to see red; the world and its meanings are rendered meaningless.

Although the process of becoming-animal offers a person a means to escape, it does not necessarily guarantee that the person will be free. Deleuze and Guattari point out, “We would say that for Kafka, the animal essence is the way out, the line of escape, even if it takes place in a place, or in a cage. *A line of escape, and not freedom. A vital escape and not an attack.*”\(^5^5\) This is an important point when considering the biographical lens through which scholars have interpreted Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings. Previous examinations of the function of animals and the nature of animal-human relationships in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings have focused on how the animals aided the artist while he was institutionalized. Marcus Verhagen, for example, notes the fondness that Lautrec had for elephants and the artist’s identification with the dog in *Clown dresseur* (figure 87). Verhagen also suggests that the elephant in the background of that drawing functioned as a stand-in for the artist due to the close connection Lautrec felt with the species.\(^5^6\) Yet the relationships between animals and humans on the page, separate from Lautrec’s personal issues, resonate beyond the artist. They perform the act of becoming-animal and give the viewer access to this process in the drawing. While Lautrec may have identified, like many artists before him, with the figure of the clown, we can learn more about the range of human emotions and


\(^{5^5}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 35 (emphasis in original).

\(^{5^6}\) Verhagen, 116.
relationships on display in his work when we step outside of readings of the drawings that focus on Lautrec’s personal relationship with them.  

Verhagen connects Lautrec’s feelings of isolation and confinement at the clinic at Neuilly-sur-Seine to the circus animals represented in the drawings. For example, in Clown dresseur, he sees Lautrec identifying with both the clown and animal figures in the picture. He writes:

His empathetic interest mitigated the easy moralizing that routinely attended the theme of man-into-animal-and-animal-into-man. The artist used the trope not to project a disparaging image of man but to instigate a dialogue of the

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contradictory terms, tenuously brought together by the imperative, both degrading and empowering, of identification.\textsuperscript{58} Within this analysis, Lautrec himself finds degradation and empowerment through the figures of the dog and the clown. Verhagen locates a slippery place both in Lautrec’s identification with figures in the drawing and as the artist of the drawing. It is an unstable position that provides Lautrec the ability to both dominate and be dominated. Whereas Verhagen considers the sadistic and masochistic roles afforded Lautrec by the clowns in his works, I am interested in the dynamic between figures within the drawings and their significance beyond Lautrec.

Similarly, Richard Thomson also considers the drawings in terms of the caged existence of the animals and compares it to Lautrec’s plight. He writes:

If Lautrec’s great 1899 circus series is about training and discipline, about forcing animals to act against their nature to suit their human masters, to sublimate their physical instincts to his or her command, then it is also about the artist’s own plight….He too was being forced to control his urges, to obey the rules, to conform to a certain code of conduct. Indeed, the whole process of making the drawings was a performance calculated to win his release, as a horse’s well-drilled paces might win it a lump of sugar.\textsuperscript{59}

Thomson relates the drudgery, domination, and pain involved in the training of animals to Lautrec’s experience in the clinic. While Lautrec may have felt a kinship to the animals that he drew due to the similarities in their circumstances, the animals have a greater function than markers of victimization and abuse. They do not all appear in dire situations. Furthermore, their relationships with the humans in the drawings have more layers than merely trainer-trained. As we look closely, we see the ways that both animals and humans are altered through their relationship with each other.

In the two former examples, the authors identify the artist as the locus of the sadomasochistic tension. The trained animals serve as pivot points with which Lautrec identifies and then moves on. They rely heavily on the details of Lautrec’s life to analyze the animals in the

\textsuperscript{58} Verhagen, “Whipstrokes,” 117.
*Au cirque* series. This has been the dominant model of interpretation for the whole series. However, the animals have a greater role to play in these drawings beyond Lautrec. By applying Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal to my analysis of the drawings, the series shifts from being about one man’s circumstances to an exploration of man’s animality. What we find is a universally applicable interpretation of the animals depicted in the *Au cirque* drawings. Lautrec’s identification with a caged animal (who is not depicted as literally caged in the drawings, although he certainly has limitations within the confines of the ring) remains part of the dominance/submission of his real life. While this is one of the underlying issues in these drawings, the other, and I would argue more significant one, is that of the freedom, power, and unpredictability of animals, regardless of training and domestication. These elements apply to the performers in and the viewer of the drawings as much or more than to Lautrec himself.⁶⁰

Before moving forward with my analysis of the drawings, I want to return to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of becoming-animal in order to examine its three main elements. Deleuze and Guattari outline the points as follows:

Let us remind ourselves, however, of several elements of the animalistic stories: (1) there is no possibility of distinguishing those cases where the animal is treated as an animal and those where it is part of a metamorphosis; everything in the animal is a metamorphosis, and the metamorphosis is part of a single circuit of the becoming-human of the animal and the becoming-animal of the human; (2) the metamorphosis is a sort of conjugation of two deterritorializations, that which the human imposes on the animal by forcing it to flee or to serve the human, but also that which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself (schizo-escape); each of these two deterritorializations is immanent to the other and makes it cross a threshold; (3) thus, what matters is not at all the relative slowness of the becoming-animal; because no matter how slow it is, and even the more slow it is, it constitutes no less an *absolute deterritorialization* of the man in opposition to the merely relative deterritorializations that the man causes to himself by shifting, by traveling; the becoming-animal is an immobile voyage

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⁶⁰ I suggest that these features of the drawings lead the series to meet the Kantian definition of art, to have significance beyond itself. Conversely, Anne Roquebert argues that the drawings do not have any significance beyond their therapeutic use in Lautrec’s treatment. See Roquebert, “Late Work, 1898-1901,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Frèches-Thory, et al., 466-467.
that stays in one place; it only lives and is comprehensible as an intensity (to transgress the thresholds of intensity).  

The summary that Deleuze and Guattari provide of their becoming-animal condenses their ideas about the process, but it remains dense. Essentially, the process of becoming-animal involves a transformation of both human and animal, which exists on a continuum that is constantly in flux. Through the transformation, both parties lose themselves. The animal in some way serves the human’s needs, thereby forsaking some of his independence. In contrast, the human sheds the constraints on his or her body or will. In this way, the animal provides an escape to the human. Becoming-animal does not require a person to abscond physically from a location. The relief that the animal provides from the situation produces a mental shift that allows the person to withstand or confront the event.

By entering into the process of becoming, the equestriennes and horse in Lautrec’s drawings ignite a very real act of transformation. Deleuze and Guattari explicitly state the reality of this process:

There is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory….It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted onto the man insofar as he is searching for a way out. It is a creative line of escape that says nothing other than what it is. In contrast to the letters [of Kafka], the becoming-animal lets nothing remain of the duality of a subject of enunciation and a subject of the statement; rather, it constitutes a single process, a unique method that replaces subjectivity.  

Deleuze and Guattari reiterate this point even more emphatically in A Thousand Plateaus:

“Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real.”

Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 35 (emphasis in original).


They continue: “But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming-animal does not consists in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not ‘really’ become animal any more than the animal ‘really’ becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not. This is the point to clarify: that a becoming
animal offers an escape from subjectivity. It does not include the literal adoption of animal characteristics, physical or mental like the experience of furries that we will explore later. Instead, becoming provides one with the opportunity to lose oneself.

This possibility of escape is the crux of the process for Deleuze and Guattari. It is also of supreme importance in our examination of Lautrec’s drawings. Let us remember that the woman and the horse both face the ringmaster’s whip. They form one unit that faces off against the ringmaster. Furthermore, they both occupy oppressed places in a society ruled by men. By joining forces in their training, performance, and relationship with each other, they engage in the process of becoming-horse and becoming-woman, respectively. This real process replaces their individual subjectivities with new identities in the process of becoming-other. This grants them with possibility of escaping their oppression/dominant society and forging a new mode of existence outside of it.

We can see evidence of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory in Lautrec’s drawings *Voltige* in which the equestrienne has allied with her horse. The equestrienne clings to the side of the horse. She drapes her left arm across its back and grabs a tuft of its mane in her right hand. Her body arches back against the animal’s flank while it bends its head forward, mimicking the curve of the equestrienne’s body. The pair performs its trick under the watchful gaze of both the clown and ringmaster; the latter stands with his back to the viewer and holds the whip. Both the woman and the horse would be in danger if the ringmaster decided to strike.

The danger from the ringmaster appears just as imminent in *Travail sur le panneau*, in which the ringmaster also closely watches as the equestrienne and the horse circle the ring. In contrast to *Voltige*, the equestrienne looks directly at the ringmaster and maintains a confident, even defiant pose, with her head held high, shoulders squared, and upright posture. The horse also lacks a subject distinct from itself; but also that it has no term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first.” Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 238.
conveys a strong confidence in this drawing. With bulging, flexed muscles, its taut and imposing body appears to effortlessly execute its paces. Draped in green fabric with yellow edging, the costumes of the equestrienne and horse reinforce the symmetry of their postures. Through the similarities in the appearance, the woman and horse present a unified front to the ringmaster with his ever-present whip.  

Indeed, the equestrienne profession was a very dangerous one, and it was not unusual for performers to be injured or killed if the rider or horse made the tiniest error. Even more than the whip, a disconnection between the rider and the horse posed a threat to the survival of both. Hugues Le Roux, a journalist and historian of the circus writing in the late nineteenth century, chronicles some of the worst accidents that he had witnessed in *Les Jeux du cirque et la vie foraine*, 1888. The most horrendous accident that he saw occurred during M. Prince’s debut performance with the Cirque d’été. During the trick, two horses were supposed to jump over a set of bars. However, one of the horses fell to its knees and threw M. Prince, who landed on his head. The other riders quickly ran over to him, threw a blanket over his body, and carried him out of the ring. Not wishing to alarm the audience, the announcer apologized for M. Prince’s sudden departure and brushed off the incident. Despite the casual excuses M. Loyal offered, M. Prince had severed his spinal cord and died. Regardless of the horror that had occurred (unbeknownst to the audience but fully understood by the performers), the show continued.

The dangers inherent in the trick-riding profession necessitated the close relationship between the horse and its rider. Le Roux describes the bond in romantic terms. He writes:

Hard work precedes the harmonious marriage of the écuyère and horse. Even though the woman and the horse have a slow practice to conquer together, until

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64 Verhagen points out that the equestrienne and horse that Lautrec paints in *Au Cirque Fernando* in 1888 share a similar relationship. In this painting, the woman and horse performing a similar stunt as *Travail*. Lautrec depicts the two from the front, as though they had just run past the viewer. Verhagen also notes the way that women and their horses were considered “twinned reflections” of the ringmaster’s authority. See Verhagen, “Whipstrokes,” 133.  
the perfect correspondence of wills and obedience, each of them does their training alone, slowly, to become relaxed, sure of themselves, to meet again as fiancés.  

The women and horses must master their roles separately as they become acquainted with each other. They start out awkward and unsure of themselves and each other, like a couple at the beginning of a courtship. As they become more confident in their abilities and more comfortable with each other, their partnership strengthens. Their trust in each other and their skills improves to the point where they can come together as equals to execute advanced maneuvers. One écuyère told Le Roux, despite being demanding during practice, she and her horse, Mouscou, loved each other. Love, therefore, is as essential to a successful performance as training.

Lautrec demonstrates the close relationship between the écuyère and her horse in Voltige through the intermingling of their bodies, and we see a codependence on a physical and mental level. The woman and horse appear as one. Not only do the positions of their bodies echo each other, but they also produce one shadow on the floor of the ring in the elongated shape of the horse that reinforces their physical connection. The link between the two goes deeper than this, however. While Lautrec draws the horse’s face in detail, he obscures the woman’s face. Only the right half of her face is visible to the viewer and much of it is hidden in shadows (her eye) or absent (her mouth and chin). The most prominent element of her visage is her profile, but even this is incomplete. Though strong around her hairline and nose, it disappears in the lower half of her face and blends into the objects around it: her shoulder and the horse’s back. Furthermore, her body complements and completes facets of the horse’s body. For example, in addition to

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66 “Le travail a été long qui précède pour l’écuyère et pour le cheval ce mariage harmonieux. Encore que la femme et la bête aient une lente habitude à conquérir ensemble, jusqu’à la correspondance parfaite des volontés et des obéissances, chacun d’eux a fait ses classes isolément, lentement, pour arriver assoupli, sûr de soi-même, à la rencontre des fiançailles.” Le Roux, 121.

67 “Je suis sans doute injuste, disait mademoiselle Dudlay, mais que voulez-vous! Mouscou et moi, nous nous aimons.” Le Roux, 126.

68 For more on training and the relationships between riders and horses, see Le Roux, 126-128.
reiterating the curve of the animal’s downturned head, the contrast of light and shadow on her right buttock continues the line of the horse’s belly, which is then completed in the placement of her leotard on her left hip.

The physical overlap between the equestrienne and the horse suggests the deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari describe in their becoming-animal theory. The woman and animal have each vacated their bodies to some extent in order to become one during the performance. They depend on each other to complete the trick and avoid a lashing. The physical merging of their bodies, therefore, also suggests their mental connection. The horse can provide a source of escape in the form of a partner; the equestrienne does not have to bear the threat of punishment alone. This kind of becoming-animal, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, develops and strengthens over time during their training together.

Lautrec also melds the bodies of human and animal in *Chevaux en liberté* (figure 88). This drawing depicts the conclusion of the rehearsal. Three horses line the ring. Two of them stand on their hind legs with their front legs resting on the top of the enclosing wall, and the third stands next to them as a trainer leads another horse out of the ring. The écuyer remains in the ring taking a bow. In each hand, he holds short whips, which rest casually on the ground. His right leg is positioned farther forward than his left as he bends at the hips to bow. The shadow that his pose produces is reminiscent of a horse’s body. The shadow cast from his arms and legs forms the legs of the horse, the longer whip produces the tail, and his forward tilt creates the head and neck of the animal.

Indeed, to successfully perform together, rider and horse must synchronize their minds and bodies. This happens, most often, unconsciously. Jean-Claude Barrey, a French ethnologist who studied horses and their relationships with riders, has described this melding of bodies and
minds as the “isopraxis phenomenon.” By this phrase, he means that while the rider thinks about the next move s/he wishes the horse to make, s/he also unconsciously acts out the movement with his/her own body. For example, if the rider wants the horse to move his front right leg, s/he will move his/her own right arm. The rider’s movement is slight and made without any conscious effort on his/her part. Nearly simultaneously, the horse will respond to a minute shift in his rider’s body and perform the desired movement. The two bodies, that of rider and horse, have merged into one as each anticipates the needs and movements of the other. Vinciane Despre sums up the relationship, “Human bodies have been transformed by and into a horse’s body.” In other words, the rider becomes-horse and the horse becomes-human.

Lautrec depicts a form of this isopraxis phenomenon in a lithograph from 1899. In The Jockey (figure 89), he shows the close physical connection between the bodies of the jockey and the horse. We see them both exerting themselves with their attention rapt on the end goal. When we consider the positioning of their bodies, we see the rider standing in his saddle and leaning forward, pushing his body to imitate the quadruped body of his horse. Although the subtlety of the jockey’s physical signals to his horse is lost in this drawing, their synchronized positions

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70 Despre, 115.
71 Although Despre does not use the word “becoming” in her analysis of animal-human relationships, Deleuze and Guattari’s theory bears a strong resemblance to what Despre calls “domestication.” To explain the practice, she describes a study from 1966 in which R. Rosenthal asked his students to observe the ability of their assigned rats to navigate a maze. He told some students that their rats had descended from “smart” rats who could efficiently find their way through the maze; he told other students that their rats were “dull,” meaning that they had no genetic advantage to help their through the maze and therefore would likely perform poorly. Rosenthal found that the overwhelming majority of students reported that their rats performing as expected despite there being no genetic difference between the “smart” and “dull” rats. He had lied to the students about their rats’ genetic predispositions. While some of the rats may have been smarter than others, they had not been intentionally bred to be that way nor were they assigned to students based on this quality. Rosenthal’s description of the experiment to the students affected their expectations of the rats and their behavior toward them. Likewise, the rats responded to the expectations of the students who trained them to navigate the maze. The feedback the students and rats gave each other shaped each of their behaviors. In the process, it set them on a path of becoming. Despre, 116-125.
convey their psychological and bodily link. In the horse and jockey pair closest to us, we see their limbs pulling back into their bodies as the horse runs down the track. In contrast, the pair in the background has their limbs extended. As the jockeys extend and contract the space under their chests, they mirror the lengthening and contraction of their horses’ legs below them. The synchronization of their bodies with that of their horses transforms their bodies into an extension of their horses.

Lautrec also demonstrates the synchronicity of a jockey training his horse in *Jockey*, from the *Au cirque* series. Riding the horse backwards and sitting rump to rump on atop his horse, the jockey urges the animal on with his whip poised high in the air. The jockey’s legs flare up behind the horse and bend at obtuse angles, while his ankles and feet remain relaxed. Without a saddle or reins, it is unclear how he manages to stay in place as the horse darts around the ring. Only by reading the signals in the horse’s movement and the shifting in his weight as he barrels forward can the jockey adjust himself. Similarly, the horse must interpret the cues of the jockey’s body in order to perform as the jockey commands. In this way, we see the isopraxis phenomenon that Barrey identifies combined with the becoming-horse that Deleuze and Guattari discuss.

Although Le Roux characterizes the relationship between equestriennes and their horses positively as a marriage, there is a darker side to this closeness and the circus. As Lautrec depicts in *Voltige* and *Travail*, the whip of the ringmaster awaits them if they misstep. His lashing will strike both of them equally if this happens. Indeed, some ringmasters, such as Fernando (the namesake of the Cirque Fernando), had a reputation for being exacting and heavy-handed in his training of his performers, human and animal alike. In an article about the Cirque Fernando in *Le Pierrot*, the anonymous author recounts the joy that he experienced while watching the performance. He praises the “interesting and charming Franz family,” and the talent and physical

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humor of the clowns.\textsuperscript{73} His saves his one criticism of the circus for Fernando: “Only M. Fernando shouldn’t command his pretty battalion like his forty horses.”\textsuperscript{74}

Fernando’s equally brutal treatment of his horses and human performers has two connections to Deleuze and Guattari’s \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}. The first involves the construction of a masochist, which leads into the second, becoming-animal. To examine masochism, Deleuze and Guattari investigate the situation in which a masochist wishes to be treated as a horse and, in so doing, has the realization that “what happens to a horse can also happen to me.”\textsuperscript{75} He wears the accoutrements from a bridle to a saddle, while his mistress rides, commands, and whips him as she deems necessary. Rather than working out issues related to the masochist’s father or mother, the masochist is enacting becoming-animal, “a becoming-animal essential to masochism.”\textsuperscript{76} Deleuze and Guattari explain the role of masochism in becoming-animal as the mixture of the rider overruling and taming the animal instinct of the horse, and the horse and masochist internalizing both the horse’s and rider’s forces. They write:

> There are two series, the horse’s (innate force, forces transmitted by the human being), and the masochist’s (force transmitted by the horse, innate force of the human being). One series explodes into the other, forms a circuit with it: an increase in power or a circuit of intensities. The ‘master,’ or rather the mistress-rider, the equestrian, ensures the conversion of forces and the inversions of signs. The masochist constructs an entire assemblage that simultaneously draws and fills the field of immanence of desire; he constitutes a body without organs or plane of consistency using himself, the horse, and the mistress.\textsuperscript{77}

The masochist feeds off of the horse, which the rider controls and trains to act against its instincts. As the horse, the masochist consents to his mistress dictating his instincts, as well. The experience affords him the opportunity to release his inhibitions while simultaneously having

\textsuperscript{73} “Au Cirque Fernando,” \textit{Le Pierrot}, December 7, 1888.
\textsuperscript{74} “Au Cirque Fernando.”
\textsuperscript{75} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 155.
\textsuperscript{76} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 155.
\textsuperscript{77} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 156.
them conquered. The circuit to which Deleuze and Guattari refer involves all three parties: mistress, horse (whether or not one is actually present), and masochist.

In order to become-animal, one does not have to experiment with masochism; it is only one of the various ways to release oneself from the confines of one’s subjectivity. Central to our discussion of becoming is the casting off of subjectivity and the possibility of becoming something other than oneself. The similar treatment of the human performers and animals in the Cirque Fernando and in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* drawings indicates the closeness of this relationship, and it is in this intimacy that we find the possibility of release. Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of becoming predicts that humans and the animals that they train and perform with will enter the process of becoming, which enhances their connection and sets them on a journey that stakes out a new space where their identities begin to merge. Deleuze and Guattari have several different avenues for becoming-other; one can become-woman, become-animal, become-homosexual, and become-black, among other things. The significance of what one can become is the position of that person or being in society: a minority. In their formulation, power and domination reside in the hands of the majority, and it is a standard by which others are measured. Therefore, they conclude, “There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.”

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79 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 106. Andrew Lattas examines the impossibility of becoming-majoritarian in “Primitivism in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 30 (December 1991): 98-115. He analyzes Deleuze and Guattari’s ethnocentric tendencies in *A Thousand Plateaus* through their repeated references to animals traveling in packs and identifies their underlying implication that, like animals, primitive peoples also live in groups. He finds it problematic that even though Deleuze and Guattari hold up primitive societies as examples of escaping the centralization of Western society, they do so through essentializing and simplifying the cultures. Not only do they simplify aspects of the cultures; they also misunderstand the importance of symbols that they tout, such as masks. Deleuze and Guattari praise the use of masks in primitive rituals for their de-individualizing quality, and they note the primitive culture’s de-emphasis of the face, which the mask, in their view, reinforces. In contrast, Lattas argues that the masks are
viable option because minority is “potential, creative and created,” whereas the majority is stultifying.\textsuperscript{80} The majority coerces everyone to conform to it. Yet this facet of the majority is also its undoing. Because it is domineering and strict, no one can fully belong to the majority and everyone, even the ultimate example of a member of the majority, is in the process of becoming-minority, at least a small sense.\textsuperscript{81}

Deleuze and Guattari compare the process of becoming to a rhizome, “a subterranean stem.”\textsuperscript{82} A rhizome has the ability to move in all directions simultaneously and forms an infinite amount of connections throughout its web: “Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.”\textsuperscript{83} Both of these aspects, the subterranean and the multitude of connections, are important. The underground component signifies that the being into which it is in the process of becoming does not belong to the dominant class. Existing outside of the dominant ideology provides the underground component rooted in male domination of the society. The symbolism and fear that they engender in women and children are precisely the tools that men wield to maintain their power.

\textsuperscript{80} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 106.
\textsuperscript{81} This idea of everyone being in the process of becoming-minority to some extent coincides with the biological theory that Lynn Margulis, et al. propose, namely that we are all symbionts. Symbionts participate in a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship. While surveying symbiotic relationships in the animal world, the researchers noticed that some symbionts could cross species and literally become part of another organism. In the process, that other organism is transformed into something else. They point to Robert Trench of the University of Santa Barbara whose research found that a certain species of sea slug, \textit{Tridachia crispata}, would puncture the cytoplasm of green algae and remove the chloroplasts. Then, it “introduces the chloroplasts into its own gut cells and continue[s] on its way while pretending to be a plant.” The symbiotic relationship allows the slug to straddle the animal-plant barrier. Margulis et al. conclude that the evolutionary drive to survive at all cost and “brute competition” is wrong. Rather, they argue that the evolutionary process altered beings, plant and animal, as they adopted symbionts to their structures. The symbionts fundamentally changed each other: “We are all symbionts and where microbial community ecology has become so tightly integrated it is now cell physiology.” We constantly change and grow. We are all symbionts; we are all becoming-minority. Margulis et al., “We Are All Symbionts,” in \textit{Gaia in Action: Science of the Living Earth}, ed. Peter Bunyard (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996), 167-185.
\textsuperscript{82} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 6. Kelly Oliver considers the importance of the underground and tangled nature of the rhizome in regards to difference and opposition in “Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference ‘Worthy of Its Name,’” \textit{Hypatia} 24, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 54-76.
\textsuperscript{83} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 7.
with the freedom to experiment and break the rules. The tangled nature of the rhizome reinforces the freedom and nonlinear nature of becoming. As a process, it defies the logical structures of dominant society. Indeed, it is the nomadic quality of the process of becoming that deterritorializes it and, therein, gives it its power.\footnote{For Deleuze and Guattari, the majority is associated with territory. In contrast, the minority lacks the power and dominance to possess territory of its own. Indeed, once one has territory, one becomes by default the majority. Only through the process of deterritorializing and renouncing the aspirations of the majority in favor of another, outside goal, can one instigate change. See Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Kafka}, 10-36.}

When we consider Lautrec’s inclusion of animals in the \textit{Au cirque} series, we see that their relationships with the humans depicted goes beyond a simple trainer-trained dynamic or even cross-species friendship and desire. We see the humans and animals lose themselves for a moment. They share a space, a body. \textit{Voltige} provides an extreme example of this as the horse and equestrienne coordinate their movements to successfully complete the stunt without any harm befalling either of them, but we also see examples with less at stake and more amusement than \textit{Voltige} in the series. In \textit{Clownesse et cheval} (figure 17), the clownesse Cha-U-Kao and a horse lie on their sides in the empty ring and shake their limbs. Cha-U-Kao sets the example for the horse, swinging her right leg above her left and jiggling it. The horse follows suit, lifting his rear legs in the air and resting on his front legs.\footnote{Lautrec also depicts Cha-U-Kao sitting in the ring with a small pig engaged in a similar activity of mimicking in \textit{Clownesse et cochon}, 1899 (D.4.559).}

Although Lautrec depicts both men and women interacting with animals in \textit{Au cirque}, only the drawings featuring women have an element of danger added to them. By danger, I do not mean the ever-present threat of injury when performing a stunt involving animals, acrobatics, or high wires. While that is certainly a factor in nearly all of the drawings, the danger to which I am referring concerns the threat of punishment if the equestrienne and horse do not perform the maneuver to the satisfaction of the ringmaster. The major drawings depicting this threat are, of course, \textit{Voltige} and \textit{Travail sur panneau} in which the ringmaster closely monitors the progress of
the human and equine performers. In these drawings, the fates of the women and the horses are closely intertwined. The ringmaster dominates both parties and the punishment of one will inevitably befall the other, so closely are their bodies aligned.

The special relationship between women and horses that we see in these drawings and their mutual domination is indicative of the alignment between women and animals plus nature in Western culture.\textsuperscript{86} As Kelly Oliver points out, the stories of creation in Genesis contrast Adam with either Eve or the animals, both of whom she names.\textsuperscript{87} Even Jacques Derrida, who strives to break apart binaries into multiplicities, cannot help but set up man in contrast to woman and animal.\textsuperscript{88} The reasons for this devaluation of women and animals in Western society are complex (we can only graze the surface in this discussion), but the factors behind such a conclusion should be addressed.

Nancy Chodorow has forged a path for this line of inquiry that associates woman with nature. She postulates that the biological and reproductive functions of the female body have historically limited women’s participation in public life. Lactation, for example, makes it convenient for women to be the primary caregivers of infants because children rely on them for nutrition and care. She points out that this is not the way that it has to be, but it is the way that it most often occurs. Women’s role in socializing young children within the home with the

\textsuperscript{86} Lori Gruen and Kari Weil argue that both women and animals are “othered” in dominant culture. They compare the othering that occurs in sexism and racism to speciesism. By extending women’s studies to include issues concerning animals, they believe that the forces of oppression and the social frameworks that maintain them will be made clearer. See their “Teaching Difference: Sex, Gender, Species,” in \textit{Teaching the Animal: Human-Animal Studies across the Disciplines}, ed. Margo DeMello (New York: Lantern Books, 2010), 127-142.

\textsuperscript{87} Oliver, 66-67.

\textsuperscript{88} Oliver writes, “In terms of sexual difference and animal difference, one is played off against the other such that opening one is premised precisely on closing the other. In this regard, we might say that philosophy is taking two steps forward and one step back. So while we may follow its lead up to a point, we must also be aware that philosophy’s dance can be a dangerous one.” Oliver, 64.
generations of women in the family further distances women from public life and the realm of men.\textsuperscript{89}

Like Chodorow, Sherry B. Ortner analyzes the limited roles women have been allowed to have in public life in her study of the association of women with nature and men with culture. She builds upon the fact that women are more likely to be the primary caregivers of children, and she analyzes the near-universal devaluation of women. To do this, she examines field interviews, symbolic devices that associate women with defilement and devalue their participation, and prohibitions on women’s roles in society, ritual, and/or government. She concludes that culture, and by extension men, seeks to tame and control nature, regardless of whether this is actually possible. As a result, women are excluded from full participation of culture and associated with nature because men also seek to control and “oppress” women.\textsuperscript{90} Given that Ortner published her analysis in 1972, her conclusions do not necessarily ring as true today as they did at the time. However, when one considers the restrictions and rights denied to women in the fin de siècle that we examined in the previous chapters, Ortner’s connection between women and nature and their mutual oppression by culture does not seem to be a stretch. Indeed, philosophy has a long history of negating or minimizing the agency of women and animals. For example, Aristotle excludes women and animals from moral life and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno point out the dominance of men over nature and women, pushing them to the margins.\textsuperscript{91}


\textsuperscript{90} Sherry B. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?” \textit{Feminist Studies} 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1972): 5-31.

When we consider the way scholars have discussed women in Lautrec’s work, the
devaluation of women and their association with animals become apparent. Regarding Lautrec’s
lithographic series, *Elles*, 1896, which presents the private, domestic lives of women in brothels,
Gustave Geffroy, writes:

> Without phantasmagoria and without nightmare, by the only prohibition of the lie and the will to speak without the truth, Lautrec created a terrifying œuvre, shining the cruelest light on the miseries of the hell and vices housed by our façade of civilization. Never has the poor cunning, the passive stupidity, the animal madness, and, even more still, a greater sadness, the possibility of so many, many women with naïve faces, of having a happy life, normal and simple – never has all this been uttered with the same clarity, with such a harsh tranquility.\(^92\)

Geffroy sympathetically regards the women in the *Elles* lithographs. He mourns their limited chances of escaping their life of prostitution and reads the effects of that life on their faces and bodies. In them, he sees “poor cunning, the passive stupidity, the animal madness,” yet if we look closely at the series, few of these traits are apparent in the women. While Lautrec draws the lithographs with “clarity,” one must question the “harsh tranquility” that Geffroy sees in the series.\(^93\)

Before arguing any more against Geffroy’s interpretation of *Elles*, the subject matter of the series needs to be examined more closely. *Elles* depicts prostitutes as they partake in their everyday routines (bathing, sleeping, getting dressed), as well as the myth that they have female

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93 The acerbic manner in which Lautrec sometimes depicts his female subjects also caught the attention of Frey. She hypothesizes that Lautrec seeks to reveal a side of the human experience not typically captured in art. She goes further to suggest that the figures’ disgruntled or hostile expressions reflect Lautrec’s own experience of feeling like an outsider. See Frey, 233.
lovers. Aside from one bourgeois gentleman watching a woman at her toilette (Femme en corset: Conquête de passage, figure 90) and another in the background of a picture of Cha-U-Kao sitting on steps (La Clownsse assise, figure 91), men do not appear in the series. Far from being sad or downtrodden, the women convey a sense of pride in their appearance: they exude self-worth, independence, and the possibility of living a full life outside the strictures of proper society.

The existence of these women outside respectable bourgeois society is significant, especially in Geffroy’s analysis of them and in light of the association between women and nature. The possibility that the women depicted in Elles had fulfilling lives without having husbands and, in some cases, taking female lovers seems impossible to Geffroy, but Lautrec presents that very possibility in the series. In none of the lithographs do we find women sad, moping, or in any way miserable. They appear to be at least content and satisfied with their choices, if not exuberant. For example, in Femme au plateau: Petit déjeuner (figure 92), Lautrec depicts an older woman clearing the breakfast tray of one of a younger woman in bed.94 The young woman leans on her arm, lying on her side. Her hair is tousled, and she smiles slightly. Similarly, the woman in Femme sur le dos: lassitude (figure 93) lies on her back across her bed with both hands behind her head. She, too, has a slight smile on her face. She does not appear to be in the sad state that Geffroy describes. That is not to say that the life of a prostitute was without its struggles and danger; Alain Corbin examines the profession in the nineteenth century in detail and analyzes the hardships that these women faced.95 The point is that even though Geffroy identifies these facets of the life of a prostitute in Lautrec’s lithographs, when we look at

94 The older woman, Madame Baron, was the mother of the younger one, Mlle Pauline (Popo). The mother as maid to her daughter who was either a kept woman or a prostitute was a common conceit. See Richard Thomson, “Elles: Femme au plateau – Petit déjeuner,” in Toulouse-Lautrec, Frêches-Thory et al., 442.
95 Corbin explores the economic inequity between women and men that drove many women into prostitution, at least part-time, the demographics of prostitutes, and the effects of stricter regulation of the profession in his Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850.
them closely, we see none of them present. Indeed, we find a study of the women whose life choices do not conform to bourgeois expectations.

Like Geffroy, Frantz Jourdain also compares Lautrec’s depiction of the woman in the poster *Reine de joie*, 1892 (figure 94) to an animal in *La Plume* in 1893. He writes:

In this poster, Lautrec wanted the woman animal-like and ugly giving the hideous foreignness and haunting like a nightmare; but certainly, it’s not by his inability to draw beauty because he rendered for us in the *Divan Japonais* the svelte spectator with keen eyes and, provocative lips, and tall, thin, adorably vicious body.\(^96\) Jourdain explains that Lautrec depicted the woman in the *Reine de joie* in an unattractive manner, making her into a monstrosity. He points out that this is not a failing of Lautrec as an artist; the problem is not that he is incapable of depicting a beautiful woman. As proof of this point, Jourdain points the reader’s attention to the artist’s portrayal of Jane Avril in *Divan Japonais*. Lautrec draws her as lovely, lithe, and feminine. In the critic’s opinion, she is everything that the woman in *Reine de joie* is not.

\(^96\) “Pour cette fois, Lautrec a voulu la femme animale et laide d’ne [sic] hideur étrange et obsédante comme un cauchemar; mais cerce ce n’est pas par impuissance de faire joli car comme il nous a rendu agréable pour le ‘Divan Japonais’ la svelte spectatrice aux regards aigus, aux lèvres provocantes, au grand corps mince admirablement vicieux.” Frantz Jourdain, “L’Affiche moderne et Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec,” *La Plume*, no. 112 (November 15, 1893): 490.

Jourdain was not the only journalist to compare women to animals in his writing. In 1896, Gaston Deschamps suggested some of the women who identify themselves as feminists have cut their hair in a most unbecoming way. He describes the style as “à la chien,” and he laments what he saw as the masculinization of women. He writes: “Mais enfin, Pallas Athéna était une femme. Elle en avait l’air et le beauté. Tandis qu’on ne sait plus dans quelle catégorie ranger l’androgyne des temps nouveaux. Oh! la ‘masculinisation’ de la femme. Oh! ces êtres déssexués, inquiétants, qui déjà se culottent à la zouave, se plastronnent de chemises d’homme, s’engoncent en des cols droits, se coiffent de chapeaux mous, coupent leurs cheveux ‘à la chien,’ portent des lunettes, fument des cigarettes, se démènent en déhanchements garçonniers! Oh! l’‘Eve nouvelle,’ non plus entrevue dans le mirage des rêveurs, mais rencontrée, cou données dans les tramways de New-York, sur les steamboats des fiords norvégiens, dans l’aula des Universités russes! De grâce, mesdames et messieurs les féministes, si vous voulez avoir notre confiance, éloignez de nous cette vision...Sans quoi nous craindrons qu’un jour, dans votre Salente égalitaire, on ne cherche en vain, parmi tant de doctresses, de révoltées, de névrosées et d’étudiantes, le charme envoûté, le sortilege évanescent. Ce jour-là, le feminism aurait tué la femme.” Deschamps, “Les Féministes,” *Le Figaro*, December 17, 1896
While it is true that Avril and the woman in _Reine de joie_ have different qualities, they do not appear to be polar opposites, as Jourdain argues. Jourdain’s interpretation of _Reine de joie_ deserves further unpacking. The woman, a courtesan named Alice Lamy, hardly has the visage of a monster or animal. Her updo with accompanying ringlets highlights her dainty, upturned nose, while her pale skin stands in contrast to her ruby red lips and dress. The poster is an advertisement for the novel by Victor Joze, _Reine de joie: mœurs de la demi-monde_ (published in 1892). The story has anti-Semitic overtones and caricatures an important character, a Jewish banker, Baron de Rozenfeld (based on the Jewish banker, Baron Alphonse de Rothschild), who pays for the apartment and luxuries of Lamy, the main character. Considering the rampant anti-Semitism in France at the time, one must read Jourdain’s critique of the poster with this in mind.

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97 Joze dedicates the novel to the Baron de Vaux, who was an acquaintance of Lautrec’s father, Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec and wrote an article extolling the elder Lautrec’s hunting prowess. See Baron de Vaux, “Hommes de sport: Le Comte de Lautrec-Toulouse,” _Gil Blas_, August 18, 1885. In the article Vaux jumbles the order of the count’s last name, referring to him as Lautrec-Toulouse-Monfa instead of Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa.


What we see happening in Jourdain’s review, as well as Joze’s novel, is the marginalization of minorities (the Jewish banker) and women in a way that dismisses them and marks them as lacking. Jourdain does this by comparing the courtesan Lamy to an animal. Donna Haraway argues that dominant culture denies humanity’s “joint kinship with animals and the machine.” To do this, it labels any such association as “monstrous and illegitimate.” The dominant culture devalues elements that do not conform to or forward its interests, and in so doing, it eliminates the threat of minority voices. Similar to Geffroy’s response to Elles, Jourdain’s negative comparison of the character Lamy to an animal and a nightmare defuses a potentially disruptive figure by pushing her farther to the margins.

The alignment of women and animals in the analysis of Lautrec’s work is the overriding duality to which the writers like Geffroy and Jourdain adhere. They posit women and animals against men and bourgeois mores. Lynda Birke and Luciana Parisi examine the connection

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90 Haraway, 154.
91 Haraway, 154.
92 Villiers De l’Isle-Adam also compared women and animals in Eve of the Future Eden. In the novel, Thomas Alva Edison invents a robotic woman who possesses all of the charming traits of a particular woman without any of her unpleasant ones. He describes the process of building an improved version of a woman to his friend Lord Ewald, whose heart was broken by a woman whom he deemed immoral: “I shall be the murderer of her stupidity, the assassin of her trimphant animality. I am first going to reincarnate all of her exterior which is so delectably fatal to you in an apparition whose human resemblance and charm will exceed all your dreams and expectations! Next, in place of the soul which repels you in the living creature, I shall instil [sic] another kind of soul, les self-conscious perhaps (and yet what do we know about it? and what different does it make?), but giving rise to impressions a thousand times more beautiful, noble, elevated. They will be clothed with the eternal character without which anything human is mere farce. I shall reproduce strictly. I shall make a double of this woman with the sublime aid of light. And projecting her upon its radiant matter, I shall illuminate with your melancholy the imaginary soul of this new creature, who will astonish angels. I shall bring illusion down to earth! I shall make it our prisoner. In this vision I shall force the Ideal itself to show itself for the first time to your senses, palpable, audible, and materialized.” De l’Isle-Adam, Eve of the Future Eden, trans, Marilyn Gaddis Rose (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1981), 72-73. It was originally published as L’Ève future and written between 1880 and 1886.
made between women and animals and nature in ecofeminism.\footnote{Lynda Birke and Luciana Parisi, “Animals, Becoming,” in \textit{Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life}, ed. H. Peter Steeves (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 55-74.} In this branch of feminism, the issues concerning the rights and freedoms of women and the preservation of nature and sanctity of animal life are championed. Birke and Parisi take ecofeminism to task for the way that some advocates maintain dualism in their rhetoric. For example, the dyads of man/woman, culture/nature, and man/animal remain in place in the arguments. What is challenged is withholding certain rights and privileges to women, nature, and animals because of their subordinate position.

Using Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming and its “asymptotic process,” in which beings participate in a continuous transformation but never fully metamorphose into a minority (be it woman, animal, or some other minority group), Birke and Parisi argue in a Deleuzian fashion that it is the very existence of boundaries that must be questioned.\footnote{Birke and Parisi, 64.} Any ecofeminism that passively allows the ideological divisions of man/woman, culture/nature, and man/animal to continue unimpeded hinders the progress of the cause. The more effective model involves questioning these boundaries and tapping into the rhizomatic connections among women, nature, and animals. They write, “To argue for a politics of affiliation is to see politics as networks and connections that are not rooted in essential kinds or boundaries. What (much of) feminism shares with the politics of animal causes is precisely the need to challenge rigid boundaries of self and Other.”\footnote{Birke and Parisi, 69.} An ecofeminism that exposes the ideological framework that permits the domination of men at the expense of women, animals, and nature has the opportunity
to dismantle it. When women and animals do not behave as expected or step outside of their boundaries, their status as other becomes clear.

Given the devaluation of women and animals and the significance of the rhizomatic nature of becoming, it is now evident that the equestriennes and horses in Lautrec’s drawings occupy a space below the dominant male culture as represented by the ringmaster. It is at this point that we will return to the importance of de-individualization in the process of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari note:

The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

Becoming carves out a new space for discourse and opposition in contrast to the dominant culture. The “perpendicular” space that becoming creates opens the possibility of countering oppression in both theory and practice. ‘Others’ are not only marginalized by contemporary cultural practices, but negated by the process of defining a powerful self. …By recognizing that the exploitation that occurs as a result of establishing power over one group is unlikely to be confined to that group only, ecofeminists are committed to a reexamination and rejection of all forms of domination.” See Gruen, “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection Between Women and Animals,” in Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, ed. Greta Claire Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 60-90.

106 Lori Gruen also argues for an inclusive form of ecofeminism. She analyzes the shortcomings of socialist, anthropocentric, and radical feminisms, and she finds that by narrowly defining the victims of oppression (women), feminists overlook the overarching issues of the patriarchy. Nature and non-human animals endure exploitation at the hands of dominant culture as frequently as women. In order to address the macro causes of exploitation and bring an end to it, feminists need to expand their field of concern and let compassion for all animals guide their efforts. Gruen explains: “An inclusive ecofeminist theory suggests that compassion is crucial to undoing oppression in both theory and practice. ‘Others’ are not only marginalized by contemporary cultural practices, but negated by the process of defining a powerful ‘self.’…By recognizing that the exploitation that occurs as a result of establishing power over one group is unlikely to be confined to that group only, ecofeminists are committed to a reexamination and rejection of all forms of domination.” See Gruen, “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection Between Women and Animals,” in Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature, ed. Greta Claire Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 60-90.

107 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 25 (emphasis in the original).

108 Christopher Penfield examines the significance of perpendicularity in regards to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming and Michel Foucault’s idea of madness. He summarizes his purpose in mining this area of study, writing: “Between Foucault and Deleuze, cutting across three decades, there runs a transversal line whose trajectory impels both thinkers in a reciprocal process or block of becoming. This line, shaping the contours of an exceedingly rich philosophical friendship, issues into the concept of transversal resistance, which, I will argue, is indispensable for understanding of the political thought of both Deleuze and Foucault.” All of them refer to a form of madness (for Deleuze and Guattari it is schizophrenia while Foucault refers to madness in general) as a means of acting outside of the dominant culture. Society pushes
the dominant culture. By navigating the terrain between opposing, binary forces, one can produce a separate space in which signification exists in flux, as do new possibilities. When we look at Lautrec’s work and consider the relationship that he develops between humans and animals throughout his œuvre, we realize that in these works he produces a new space of possibilities. The comparison drawn between women and animals was not limited to critics; even Lautrec, himself, likened his female models to animals. His friend Thadée Natanson, the publisher of *La Revue blanche*, recalls Lautrec claiming:

…The model is always stuffed, they, they live…I wouldn’t dare to give them one hundred sous for the pose and yet God knows if they wash them…They stretch on the couch like animals…You know?…It is the only place still where they know how to polish the shoes and where you don’t have to listen to too much bullshit. They are so without pretensions…You know?110

the schizophrenic outside its boundaries because s/he does not conform to its expectations for social mores and behaviors. Being outside of culture is the only way to effect change and ignite the process of becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari. Unfortunately, the schizophrenic’s condition limits his/her ability to continue the process of becoming. Likewise, Foucault positions madness as outside of the state and, therefore, a position of subversion. Similarly, the condition of madness overcomes the person to the point where subversion is no longer possible. In considering Deleuze and Guattari, Penfield argues that becoming plays a role in all relationships. When two parties enter into a relationship of any kind, they begin a process of transformation, of co-becoming. He writes: “Friendship should not be conceived as a line running back and forth from one fixed point to another but, rather, as a perpendicular vector passing between the friends and impelling their co-becoming….friendship is an auto-poetic relation, which is de-individualizing, insofar as the subject-position of an original self in relation to the other is displaced in favor of a constituent movement of joint becoming.” It is through “joint becoming” that we open new oppositional spaces. Penfield, “Toward a Theory of Transversal Politics: Deleuze and Foucault’s Block of Becoming,” *Foucault Studies*, no. 17 (April 2014): 134-172.

109 Deleuze and Guattari’s “perpendicular” space shares some qualities with what Homi Bhabha calls the “Third Space.” Bhabha argues that the real work in opposing the dominant ideology occurs in the space in between. He describes this in between space as “a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the Other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the ‘moment’ of politics.” See Homi K. Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” *New Formations*, no. 5 (Summer 1988): 5-23.

110 “…Le modèle est toujours empaillé, elles, elles vivent…J’ n’oserais pas leur donner les tentes (cent) sous de la pose et pourtant Dieu sait si elles les lavent…Elles s’étirent sur les canapés comme des animaux…Vous savez? Ce sont les seuls endroits encore où l’on sache cérer les souliers, où on n’entende pas trop de conneries…Elles sont tellement sans pretentions…Quoi?” The ellipses are in the original. Thadée Natanson, *Un Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* (Paris: École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1992), 54.
Lautrec, never one to shy away from provocative proclamations, talks about the advantages of prostitutes over female models. Prostitutes behave as if they were reacting naturally – stretching and lounging on a sofa – when they pose for artists. He appreciates their tendency not to put on airs. He could easily have conveyed this idea without drawing a comparison between these women and animals. What is it about animals that made the comparison seems natural and obvious to him?

Perhaps we can find a partial answer to this by examining some of Lautrec’s drawings of women. In two works, *Dans l’escalier de la rue des Moulins*, 1893 (figure 95) and *Redheaded Nude Crouching*, 1897 (figure 96), Lautrec depicts women on all fours. The first picture shows a woman with only her top half covered crawling up a staircase; her pale rear end stands out in contrast to her dark surroundings. She turns her head to look back at the viewer, and she is anything but coy. Her downturned mouth and narrowed eyes convey an impassive or annoyed expression. Lautrec could have arranged her body on the staircase as playful, enticing, or ironic, but instead he chose a darker moment that reads as closer to the real experience of the women in the brothel on the rue des Moulins. In contrast, Lautrec lightens the tone of *Redheaded Nude Crouching*. Like *Dans l’escalier de la rue des Moulins*, it depicts a woman on all fours with her rear pointed toward the viewer. In contrast to the women in the former picture, this woman does not make eye contact with the viewer; she focuses her attention straight in front of her. She is also nude, rather than partially clothed. This has the effect of making her appear more natural and less confrontational, as if we happened to come upon her in this position. Yet, the straightness of her arms and the tension in her fingers as they bend to brace the weight of her body and steady it suggest that she has positioned her body in this manner for a reason; she does not appear at ease. On the contrary, she seems to brace herself. Within the setting of a brothel and in the company of paying clients, Lautrec downplays the women’s subjectivity in favor of playing up their sexuality and catering to the carnal desires of the clientele. He manages to make the women appear
dangerous, or at least formidable opponents, in these works. Like the wild animal that can be trained but not tamed, these women can be docile and play the game of seduction, but they refuse to relinquish their spirited nature.

Lautrec applies animal characteristics to human figures in *Dans l’escalier de la rue des Moulins* and *Redheaded Nude Crouching*. However, these two paintings are not isolated examples. As Fritz Novotny notes:

…on a deeper level, there is his fascination with the animal nature of his subjects which emerges, curbed or unbridled, harmless or disturbing, in the precisely-caught movement of a body, in the tenseness of the girl riding bareback, in the racing cyclist, in the frenzied ecstasy of the acrobatic dancer.

Lautrec has a knack for pinning down the essence of his subjects, and often, this essence is the kinetic energy or vigor of the sitter. In *La Roue*, 1893 (figure 97), for example, we see a female dancer bent backwards, kicking up her leg. Her skirt fans out in front of her, obscuring her raised leg. We see her positioned on her tiptoes, leaning back at a ninety-degree angle, with her eyes closed and face relaxed. All the tension of the movement manifests in her claw-like hand and bent arm. In this drawing, Lautrec captures the dancer’s energy and poise while making the movement seem natural for her rather than the complicated contortion that it is.

We see Lautrec paint performers in a similarly natural manner in *The Moorish Dance*, 1895 (figure 98). Here, he depicts the dancer, La Goulue, with a straight back, kicking up her leg and flaring out her skirt. He plays with the angles of her hips, leg, arms, and elbows to produce a

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111 The connection between women’s rear ends and animals came to a head in the early nineteenth century in France and England when visitors flocked to stare at Sarah Baartman (the Hottentot Venus). Of particular fascination was her voluptuous bottom, which suggested her close relationship to apes to contemporary experts and lay people alike. Sander L. Gilman analyzed the differences in the interpretation of black and white bodies in popular and scientific literature in “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 204-242. Zine Magubane reconsiders Gilman’s argument and finds it rife with biological essentialism in “Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralist, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the ‘Hottentot Venus,’” *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (December 2001): 816-834.

balanced and fluid movement. To the left of La Goulue, the piano player pauses with his hands poised over the keyboard as he looks to La Goulue for his cue. On the other side of the canvas, male and female musicians tentatively eye the audience and keep time on their drum and tambourine. As the figures in this work suggest, to say that Lautrec captures the animal-quality of his subjects is not to reduce a person to an animal or make them one-dimensional. On the contrary, it enhances their complexity and highlights their talents. In these examples, Lautrec makes the actions of his subjects appear natural and part of their nature. The ease with which they perform belies the difficulty of the actions. The animal nature to which Novotny refers emphasizes the joy, passion, energy, and repetition of a skill that has become instinctual to these trained performers.

Lautrec’s combination of animal qualities and women that we see in these four works prefigures the association and connection between women and horses that we see in Voltige and Travail de panneau. In these drawings from the Au cirque series, the women and horses rely on each other to perform the stunt. More than taking on the characteristics of another species, the women and their horses enter the process of becoming-horse and becoming-woman, respectively. As their bodies come together, they act in unison, adjusting and modifying their movements to match and compensate for the others. They go beyond the rigid bodily definitions of their species to produce new forms – becoming-horse and becoming-woman – that allow them to perform stunts that they would be incapable of completing without progressing beyond the limitations of woman and horse.

I argue, therefore, that Lautrec challenges the borders of human and horse in the Au cirque series. By opening up a subterranean space of new possibilities, one can challenge boundaries and limitations placed on beings and break apart the paternalistic governance of society and culture. Donna Haraway’s model of the cyborg is useful for understanding this interspecies phenomenon. In “A Cyborg Manifesto,” she puts forth a new way of viewing humans
that breaches bodily and psychological limits.\textsuperscript{113} She defines cyborg in myriad ways, including “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction,” “a creature in a post-gender world,” a being with “no origin in the Western sense,” and “resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence.”\textsuperscript{114} She constructs the essay as “an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction.”\textsuperscript{115} It is through the dissolution of divisions that new opportunities reveal themselves. By building a society that includes cyborgs (which Haraway argues we all are) the old, stale categories of gender no longer apply. Therefore, we need to forge new ways of imagining and understanding the world.

The cyborg can lead the way for our new comprehension of our definition of ourselves. Haraway identifies three features of the cyborg: it obscures the boundaries between human and animal; it blurs the lines between organisms and machines; and it is omnipresent and invisible.\textsuperscript{116} Cyborgs have two very different trajectories. On the one hand, their ubiquity signals the ever-increasing presence of surveillance and control of the masculine State machine. However, on the other, Haraway, like Deleuze and Guattari, postulates that they offer the possibility of radically new shifts in the system capable of opening it up and turning it on its head. She writes, “Cyborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate; in our present political circumstances, we could hardly hope for more potent myths for resistance and recoupling.”\textsuperscript{117} At center of the rearrangement and realignment of human, animal, machine, and their myths is the demolition of the traditional view of the self. Through its implosion, we can construct a new self that is free from preconceived

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{114} Haraway, 149-151.
\bibitem{115} Haraway, 150.
\bibitem{116} Haraway, 152-153.
\bibitem{117} Haraway, 154.
\end{thebibliography}
notions about identity, gender, and subjectivity. Haraway considers this to be the cyborg’s greatest asset and one the feminist needs to embrace.\textsuperscript{118}

Crucially, the cyborg offers an escape from dualisms that we find in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming by producing an entirely new type of being. Haraway does not conceive of the cyborg as an entity that necessarily appears different or distinct from what we typically think of when we think of a human. Much of the transformation occurs invisibly and psychologically. Yet, at least one subculture’s members embody their transformation: furries. An examination of this phenomenon reveals that, like cyborgs that smudge the divisions between animals and humans, furries identify themselves as not fully human and at least partially animal. The subculture of furries provides us with different insight into the various coping strategies animals can provide to humans and the diversity of the kinds of relationships that humans and animals can forge.

Furries are a relatively new phenomenon in popular culture, dating back to about the last quarter of the twentieth century. They are people who have an intense interest in, and often identify with, anthropomorphized animals, such as cartoon characters or mascots. Many furries are drawn to a particular kind of animal, often animals associated with cuteness such as cats, dogs, foxes, and bunnies.\textsuperscript{119} They first appeared in a documentable manner in 1976 with the publication of Vootie, a magazine about the antics of funny animals that lasted until 1983 and

\textsuperscript{118} Haraway, 163.


In a psychological study of furry convention attendees, Kathleen Gerbasi et al. found that none of them identified with primates. Kathleen C. Gerbasi et al., “Furries from A to Z (Anthropomorphism to Zoomorphism), Society and Animals 16 (2008): 205.
whose mission *Rowrbrazzle* continued in 1984. The first furries convention, in which those of the furry persuasion joined together to celebrate their passion for anthropomorphic cartoon animals, occurred in 1985 during a science fiction conference in Sacramento. Mark Merlino (whose furry persona, or fursona, is Syls Sable) held an informal furry party in his hotel room. Anthrocon is one of the largest furries conferences in America. Its inaugural meeting attracted 300 attendees; in 2010, 4200 furries attended the event. From these loosely organized gatherings grew a subculture that has started to break into mainstream media. In 2003, the television show *CSI* aired an episode on CBS titled “Fur and Loathing in Las Vegas,” in which a team of forensic scientists investigates a murder at a furry convention. HBO also tackled the issue in *Entourage*. Additionally, furries have appeared in music videos, such as Miley Cyrus’s “We Can’t Stop” and Kesha’s “C’mon,” both released in 2013.

Anthropomorphization is not a new phenomenon. We see examples in mythology, such as Leda and the Swan, fairy tales, such as “Riding Hood,” and literature. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, the line dividing humans and animals was not as crisp as it became after the

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124 The episode “The Day Fuckers” aired June 30, 2007 and features three of the characters, Vince, Johnny Drama, and Turtle, competing for sex. Turtle finds his partner on Craigslist, and when he arrives at her house, he discovers her furry predilections.

125 Additionally, Cyrus brought a band of furries on stage for her performance of “We Can’t Stop” and “Blurred Lines,” with Robin Thicke, at the MTV Video Music Awards on August 25, 2013.
Lewis C. Seifert notes that animals in myth and fairy tales never lose all of their animal-ness, and in this way, they provide an example against which humans can identify themselves. In his analysis of Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s (c.1650 – 1705) use of animals in her fairy tales and stories of animal metamorphosis, he argues that the animal and the human exist alongside each other, complement each other, and overlap each other. D’Aulnoy’s protagonists in *Babiole* and *Prince Wild Boar* undergo their transformations from humans to animals as infants. They do not return to their human forms until the end of the stories. They learn to act as human as their animal forms allow, and they are intelligent and can speak. Even after they regain their human bodies, the protagonists rely on the co-existence of their human and animal natures to navigate the world.

Furries channel the coexistence of the animal and human. Much like d’Aulnoy’s protagonists, they need both aspects in order to make it through the world. In the comparative study of college students and furry participants by Kathleen C. Gerbasi and her team, researchers found that many furries felt a link between themselves and animals. The connections most frequently selected were “sharing characteristics in common with” nonhuman species (80.9%), born with a connection to their furry species (43.1%), and possessing a mystical connection to the species (47.6%).

For many furries, the animal form feels more natural. Marshall Woods, whose “fursona” is Ostrich, describes the affinity he has always felt toward animals: “When I was very young, I knew I wanted to be some type of animal. I didn’t necessarily want to be the animal, but I wanted to have the animal shape, as far back as I can remember. It’s that way for a

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126 After the Enlightenment, animals functioned more as a foil to humans. More importantly, they served as the other against which humans could exalt themselves. Women and minorities became lumped with animals as not measuring up to men. See Molly H. Mullin, “Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationships,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 201-224.


128 Seifert, 257.

129 Gerbasi et al., 213-214.
lot of people.” In addition to identifying with animals, many furries, like Sam Conway, the chairman of the 2010 Anthrocon, seek a deep connection to animals. Conway says, “There’s something about animals – we yearn to deal with them on a higher level.”

The fursona, moreover, allows a furry to embrace his or her identity fully and to share it with the world. Merlino explains:

Being a furry is all about claiming your identity. In this country [America], what are you really? Are you your name? No. That was given to you by someone else. Your social security number? No. That’s just a number. Your job? That’s something you do to make money. But when you choose a fursona or totem, you are choosing a more acceptable representation of who you really are. In so much of society, there are so many layers of bullshit. It’s hard to be yourself. But the whole fursona thing is really cool. It strips away human reluctance in many forms.

The fursona performs a dual function. First, it gives furries the opportunity to choose their identity in a unique manner. It is an identity that is freely chosen and not dictated from outside pressures. Second, it gives furries the ability to release their inhibitions and fear. In this way, the fursona provides an escape from the guidelines society imposes and its regulation of acceptable behaviors. As a furry, one is not fully human and not fully animal. Therefore, the rules governing furry behavior are more lenient than the human code of behavior.

A furry will produce a new identity for him- or herself based on animal species that possesses characteristics that s/he admires or with which s/he most identifies. A person can also create his/her fursona from a combination of two different species. In this way, the furry actively produces a new unique identity separate from his/her human personality. A furry may or may not dress up as his fursona. Full furry suits resemble college mascot costumes and can cost thousands of dollars. Therefore, some furries slowly accumulate pieces of the costume or

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131 Fuoco, “Anthrocon Event Brings out the Animal Enthusiasts.”
132 Caudron, 189-190.
133 Gerbasi et al., 198.
routinely wear only a few key pieces, such as a tail or nose. Yet dressing up in a costume or donning a tail is not required for a furry; the shift into the fursona is mainly mental. Once in character, furries often say that they feel more in control of their lives and more assertive than they normally feel as their human selves. O. Holcomb (fursona March Hare) explains how being a furry has helped him in his day-to-day life:

> It gives me thunder. I can walk into any situation and go, ‘I am the dude!’ It’s like having a switch, a psychological switch you can tap into and turn something on…[While manning the grill in a restaurant, you have thirty orders up there. If I wasn’t the hare, I wouldn’t be fast enough to get those thirty orders out—and in under three minutes—and be the dude.]

Holcomb as his human self found it difficult to perform his duties at work in a high-pressure situation, but his fursona gave him the confidence to confront challenging situations and excel. Becoming-hare offers him a means of responding to difficult situations. He is no longer his human self, with the inherent slowness and clumsiness of the human form, but, rather, he is a hare, speedy and deft.

Transforming the body, or the mind’s conception of the body, is an essential feature of furry culture. The act of producing a new identity for oneself shares much with cyborgs or posthumans. Francesco Paolo Adorno describes the power in creating a new, posthuman identity: “The constant element is represented by the staging of the body as the site of subjectivity that is

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134 One man in Pittsburgh attempted to change his name legally from Gary Guy Matthews to Boomer the Dog in order to mold himself into the person he feels he truly is. The judge denied Matthew’s petition in the 2010 case, claiming the name could cause confusion and put people in danger if he called for help using the name Boomer the Dog. Matthews was disappointed over the decision and began to search for other options: “All I know is that I’ve been trying to realize my identity for a long time, like many people have I guess.” Timothy McNulty, “Boomer the Dog to Remain Gary Guy Mathews: Judge Denies Green Tree Man’s Petition to Change his Name,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 12, 2010, accessed July 20, 2011, [http://ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/741738677?accountid=13158](http://ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/741738677?accountid=13158).

135 Interviewed in Gurley, “Pleasures of the Fur.”

136 Similarly, Carlson finds that the furries that she has interviewed regard their fursona and fursuits as liberating: “…the furries with whom I have spoken all describe a sort of engagement with humans that animal masquerade frees them to experience.” Carlson, 198.
to be rescued from its passivity in order to reveal itself as a mark of one’s autonomy and independence.” In F.P. Adorno’s writing, the posthuman body is one that melds with a machine to extend consciousness and, in essence, grants a form of immortality. Like Haraway’s definition of the cyborg, it is a human making traditional and assumed bodily and psychological boundaries obsolete. Regardless of the status of the person in the culture, s/he can reclaim power through the invention of a new persona that more closely aligns with whom s/he feels s/he really is. The new self does not need to involve surgery, a costume, or any physical manifestation. A mental shift, a decision to live more truthfully, is enough. F.P. Adorno points out that bodily alterations have been a part of cultures dating back to prehistory, and in many, if not most, of the cases, these transformations have reinforced the dominant system, whether they had religious ceremonies, rites of passage, or political significance. He cautions that the dominant system could have ability to use these transformations for their own purposes and thereby undercut the freedom that Haraway saw in them. Therefore, one must remain critical and vigilant of how they are being used and appropriated by the dominant ideology or the State.

By altering their outer appearance through the donning of fursuits and/or shaping their identities with their fursonas, furries construct new, and in their eyes more accurate, identities for

138 F.P. Adorno, 348. Mike Kelley, whose artwork frequently involves stuffed animals, succinctly describes the force involved in reclaiming the body for oneself in his “Theory, Garbage, Stuffed Animals, Christ (Dinner Conversation Overheard at a Romantic French Restaurant).” In this conversation between two stuffed animals, they identify how to take control of one’s body:

- The way to make something yours is: you distort it, fuck it up. As it loses its identity, it becomes your identity.
- And it only takes the slightest bit of readjustment to do this, to transform its old identity into our non-identity.
- The best way to fuck something up is to give it a body.

Both F.P. Adorno and Kelley point to one’s ability disrupt an identity, and by extension the larger system or culture to which it belongs, is to alter its appearance, to “fuck it up,” and thereby change give physical evidence of the internal shift that has occurred. Mike Kelley, “Theory, Garbage, Stuffed Animals, Christ (Dinner Conversation Overheard at a Romantic French Restaurant),” Forehead 2 (1989): 12-21.
themselves. Irrespective of what the rest of the world sees when gazing at them, furries have altered their identity. This goes beyond a simple fantasy enacted online in a virtual world like Second Life or message boards.\textsuperscript{139} It is a real, tangible metamorphosis. Merlino describes the experience, “…we aren’t pretending to be furry; a furry is what we really are. The human being is what we are stuck with.”\textsuperscript{140} Like the process of becoming, being a furry is real. One does not pretend to become-animal, just as a furry does not pretend to be a furry. Both endeavors include the shedding of the role society proscribes in favor of an independently chosen identity, one that strays from the dominant ideology. They are subcultures that operate outside of the system and form their own society in contrast to the dominant one.\textsuperscript{141} They provide forms of escape and freedom for those who do not conform or ascribe to the dominant ideology. Furthermore, both have rhizomatic characters. Diverse processes of becoming connect to each other in a subterranean web of associations. Likewise, the furry subculture has links to the LGBTQ community,\textsuperscript{142} sexual fetishists,\textsuperscript{143} and animal liberationists.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{140} Caudron, 190.
\textsuperscript{141} Although some furries think the phenomenon could be more widespread. Sam Conway, for example, is one furry who thinks everyone has a little furry in them: “Anyone and everyone can be, and probably is at least to some extent, a Furry. If you talk to your cat and think they care, you’re a Furry.” Chris Togneri, “Furries Purr over Pittsburgh Reception,” \textit{The Pittsburgh Tribune Review}, July 6, 2007.
\textsuperscript{142} Carlson notes the prevalence of gay and bisexual furries at conventions, and Gerbasi et al. found that male furries that they studied were equally likely to be hetero-, homo-, or bisexual as their non-furry counterparts, and of the female furries that they studied, nearly sixty percent self-identified as heterosexual and approximately forty percent self-identified as bisexual. Gates hypothesizes that the strong presence of the gay community in the furry community could be attributed to the gay identity of some of the subculture’s founders who advertised events to the gay community in the early 1990s. They, therefore, may have been more aware of the furry subculture than straight people who would later be drawn to it. Marshall Woods finds that as more women attend furry conventions, the sexual opportunities for men increase, and more men who had previously identified as gay are now identifying as bi- or heterosexual. Carlson, 198; Gerbasi et al., 206-207;
When we consider Lautrec’s work featuring animals, we see the connection that he and the people that he depicts have with them. In *The Dog and Parrot*, 1899 (figure 99), he draws a longhaired dog looking up at a parrot. A lone human occupies the background of the scene, yet the pathos that the lithograph possesses is found in the relationship between the two animals.\(^{145}\)

For an examination of the fetishes of furries, see Katharine Gates, *Deviant Desires: Incredibly Strange Sex* (New York: Juno Books, 2000), 220-221 and Gurley, “Pleasures of the Fur.” Gurley’s article also includes an interview with Marshall Woods.\(^{143}\)

It would be a mistake to assume that all furries have some kind of fetish. Although some furries engage in forms of bestiality, enjoy having sex with stuffed animals (plushies), partake in crushing small animals for sexual pleasure (tramplers), or enjoy erotic art featuring furries, furries are quick to point out that those who participate in these activities are in the minority of the community. Brenda DiAntonis (fursona X-ian Jaguar) points out that many furries are introverts who have endured years of teasing and exclusion for their idiosyncratic preferences and behaviors. She says, “You know, it’s a huge misperception that everyone here is out for sex. That this is one big pervy community. The sexual element? It’s a lot of talk, if you ask me. Ninety-eight percent of people here had a bad childhood. Like me, these people were teased and isolated. What do you do when isolated? You do what I did. You retreat into fantasy. You don’t socialize. You don’t date. You don’t engage in normal social or sexual practices. Then, when you grow up and find that there are people like you, people who are shy and backwards, all those years of repression come out. You tend to overdo it. But while people here might be drawing sexually explicit scenes, or acting overly affectionate, they are not all going upstairs and having sex. Believe me, they’re still waaaay too repressed.” Caudron, 205.\(^{144}\)

When Caudron investigated the furry subculture, she interviewed Dennis Avner (fursona Stalking Cat) who surgically altered his appearance to look more like a tiger, his spirit animal. Avner points out the diverse array of spiritualities that incorporate animals into their belief system, including Native American (he has connections to the Lakota and Huron tribes) and Celtic traditions. Feeling a connection to animals and having a concern for their well-being informs his furry experience. Paul Nadasdy examines the topic from the point of view of hunters in the North Yukon and their reciprocal relationship with animals. Hunters believe that animals give themselves to the hunters as a gift between equals. The animals’ appearance only shields their underlying human rationality. In the furry subculture, this belief is reversed: a human façade conceals an underlying animal nature. Caudron, 194-196. Paul Nadasdy, “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 1 (February 2007): 25-43.\(^{145}\)

Frey suggests that Lautrec identified with the parrot and placed his pince-nez and hat on top of its head to indicate that it served as a stand-in for him. As a child, parrots represented evil for Lautrec. His great-grandmother and great-aunt owned the animal, although it is not clear why he associated them with evil. Frey connects the lithograph to his mental decline: “Henry’s childhood emblem of evil had finally come to represent himself. In the background, a frail stick-figure appeared to be trying to stop an oncoming train. Farther down the tract, in front of the train, was a prancing poodle. The drawing is dated 8 February 1899, almost certainly the day that Adèle returned to Paris.” Frey, 454.
Perhaps due to the absence of humans in the scene, many scholars have dismissed the work. While it is true that the singular focus on animals harkens back to his early work, Lautrec has grown from that time. His ability with the pen has become more deft and sure, and he has become more skillful in abbreviating features. Aside from his growth as an artist, the significant feature in this drawing is his signature. He signs with his typical overlay of his initials (HTL), and he encloses them within the silhouette of an elephant, his favorite animal.

In the *Au cirque* series, Lautrec expands the definitions of human and animal through the human figures’ participation in Deleuze and Guattari’s process of becoming-animal. Becoming provides the human figures with a new way to navigate their experiences and interactions with the (dominating) ringmaster. It provides them an escape from the tension and empowers them. By becoming-animal, the human figures do not lose their humanity; rather, they enhance what a human can be. If we look closer at the animal-human relationships in the series, and in Lautrec’s œuvre, we find something more complex and less “nightmarish” than what scholars have previously argued. For example, Richard Thomson describes the series as terror inducing:

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146 Novotny argues that the lithograph shows traces of Lautrec’s alcoholism. He writes, “It shows the traces which drunkenness and illness left in Lautrec’s work and this cycle of ‘Circus’ drawings illustrates the means with which he tried to resist them.” Novotny, 52-53.

147 Lautrec first used this signature in journal *Nib*, a supplement to *La Revue blanche*, in 1895 (Wittrock 88). He signed the lithograph *La Chaîne Simpson*, 1896 (Wittrock P26), and on the invitation for Thadée Natanson’s cocktail party invitation for February 6, 1895 (Wittrock 90) in the same manner. Not only did he make the elephant part of his signature, but he also included a mouse, dogs, and caricatures of himself. Julia Frey emphasizes the phallic quality of the long trunks with which Lautrec endows the elephants. In addition to incorporating the elephant in his signature, Lautrec also combines a human face in that of an elephant in the drawing *Tête d’éléphant de face* (Dortu 3.889). Here, he makes the profile of a human face part of the frontal view of the elephant’s face. Furthermore, the picture includes a skull, perhaps making a connection to the vanitas and commenting on the share existence and mortality of animal and human. Verhagen notes the talismanic quality the elephant had for Lautrec since his childhood. Verhagen, “Whipstrokes,” 116. Devynck connects Lautrec’s addition of the elephant to his signature to his interest in Japanese art and the signatures of ukiyo-e printmakers like Hokusai and probably Utamaro. Devynck, “Le Japonisme en France,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec et le japonisme*, exh. cat., Michel Castel, Danièle Devynck, and Janette Ostier (Albi, France: Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, 1991), 15. For an analysis of the elephant, its Japanese roots, and its symbolism, see Frey, 401-402.
Lautrec’s animals have an almost nightmarish character. In sum, these drawings appear to have a subtext. They concern human control of bestial forces: by training, by rules and repetition, and if necessary by force, for the whip is a common element in the images. They project an artificial playfulness, which only thinly masks an atmosphere of restraint of the improper….He drew a top-hatted clown with a trained pony and baboon in which the voluminous costume and pancake makeup essentially dehumanize the clown; he – like the animals – has become a creature of the circus, trained to perform, acting alongside animals that have themselves been trained to do tricks outside their natural condition.\footnote{Richard Thomson, “The Circus,” in \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre}, 241.}

Thomson posits that any playfulness that we may interpret in the drawings merely cover the darker forces of control and manipulation at work in the training of human and animal performers. No levity exists in these works, only a dark undertone that clouds any element of joy that the viewer may detect. Undoubtedly, Lautrec calls attention to some of the darker facets of human nature; we only need to look at the heated standoff in \textit{Voltige} to witness this. Yet I disagree with Thomson’s conclusion that the drawings are fundamentally menacing. Rather, I would like to draw attention to their playfulness. Too many examples of lightness, solidarity, and triumph of will exist in the series to categorize the works as threatening and dark. Whereas Thomson argues that humans lose their humanity in these drawings and the animals terrify the viewer, we can see how the opposite is actually true. In these works, humans and animals cooperate and, through this cooperation, transform each other.

Lautrec’s depiction of animals in the \textit{Au cirque} series goes beyond performers, or even what they may have represented for Lautrec himself during his stay at the Neuilly-sur-Seine clinic. Gerstle Mack notes the fascination Lautrec had with animals throughout his life and the enjoyment he felt seeing them at zoos, but Mack suggests that his confinement in an institution increased the empathy Lautrec had for them. Mack writes, “Perhaps he looked at them now with different eyes, since he himself was in a sort of cage; but unlike the inhabitants of the zoo he was sure that he would soon be free again.”\footnote{Mack, 345.} This limited view of the multifaceted role of animals
and biographical orientation in Lautrec’s work contribute to scholars’ continued limited engagement with the drawings and their dismissal of them.  

By analyzing the power of becoming in these drawings, we can see the complexity that animals have in these works. They are not merely vehicles for the artist to convey his own caged condition or threatening creatures. Rather, they facilitate the empowerment and liberation of the human performers in the scenes. By becoming-animal, the performers not only execute their stunts successfully, they also have a means of escape from the threat of violence and domination that Lautrec suggests in his representation. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming opens the possibility of other responses to the situation that the equestriennes find themselves. Beyond a simple identification with another species, the process of becoming can allow for an expression of one’s identity that had previously been concealed.

The precedent for Lautrec’s connection between women and horses in the Au cirque series can be found throughout Western history. Both Nancy Chodorow and Sherry B. Ortner examine the tendency for women to be linked to nature and animals, and they argue that this association has led men (who are connected to culture) to relegate both women and animals to the sidelines of society and culture. Lautrec’s drawings illustrate this separation of women and animals from men. Becoming can offer the equestriennes a respite from the intensity and danger of their situations. As useful as Deleuze and Guattari’s model of becoming is, it does not fundamentally change the categories of human animal in the same manner that Donna Haraway’s model of the cyborg and contemporary furry culture do. Animal-as-cyborg and human-as-furry allow for the new expressions and explorations of identity. Similarly, Lautrec offers viewers a new mode of forming identity in the Au cirque series.

For example, see Anne Roquebert’s critique of the drawings not fulfilling the Kantian definition of art: “Strictly speaking, these drawings do not conform to the Kantian definition of art: that is, they are not an end in themselves, but refer to a vital need: the artist’s desperate urge to regain his liberty: by proving that he was not mad, Lautrec would be able to get out of the clinic.” Roquebert, “Late Work, 1898-1901,” Toulouse-Lautrec, Frèches-Thory et al., 466-467.
One of Lautrec’s friends, the art critic Arsène Alexandre, understood the complexity that the artist’s works contained. Lautrec may not always have depicted beautiful people or the best of humanity, but he had the ability to get to the core of his subjects. Alexandre could see in Lautrec’s subjects what they may not have even been able to see in themselves. This made Lautrec’s work both dangerous and alluring. Alexandre summarizes this quality:

For there is depth to that cruelty which constitutes Toulouse-Lautrec’s talent….If he thumbs his nose at life, if he makes fun of imbeciles and refuses to idealize prostitutes, he has an extraordinary flair for ugliness…Under finery, he instantly sees bestiality, under pretensions, stupidity, and he sees the animal in men and women.\textsuperscript{151}

To see the animal within does not necessarily mean that Lautrec focused on the basest of human behavior. As we have seen, to see the animal in another human can be the most beautiful, powerful, and transcendent qualities that can be observed.

Chapter 4


The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a rapid transformation in the way people understood the world and how they responded to it. In this short amount of time, Eadward Muybridge recorded equine locomotion, Etienne-Jules Marey photographed human locomotion and graphed the movement of animal pulmonary and circulatory systems, and the Lumière brothers projected the first films. Our understanding of our bodies and the world around us grew immensely. The new technologies not only played a role in science but also in entertainment. Magic lantern and panoramas, which enjoyed popularity at the beginning and middle of the century, made way for the zoopraxiscope, pantomimes lumineuses, and cinema that would transform leisure activities. As technologies changed people’s perception of the world around them, they also changed the way artists depicted the world. Artists flocked to see Muybridge lecture on his photographs, and they altered the way they painted horses to reflect his findings. Cinema had a great, and largely unexamined, effect on painting at the end of the century. This growing area of research has yet to address how the techniques of filmmakers such as Georges Méliès and the Lumière brothers, whose films could be seen throughout Paris, affected artists’ compositions. In particular, Lautrec’s Au cirque drawings, as well as many of his works from 1895 to the end of his career, share certain features with early films. Both Lautrec and filmmakers recorded feats meant to amaze audiences, emphasized the climactic moment of an action, and directly addressed the audience. In this chapter, I explore how Lautrec’s compositions changed with the birth of technologies for recording moving images. I suggest that by examining these
parallels we can not only get a better sense of Lautrec’s pictorial concerns, but we can also see the impact he had on the world of film.

The widespread interest in recording and replaying locomotion in the nineteenth century affected the representation of movement we see in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s work. Moreover, the invention of bicycles and automobiles intrigued him. It is not surprising, then, to discover that his work had a competitive relationship with the emerging technologies. As an artist who explored movement throughout his career, he modified his method of depicting action as the technologies advanced. From Muybridge’s animal locomotion studies to the time of the Lumière brothers’ films, Lautrec became more adept at conveying believable moments of movement. What’s more, he began to borrow techniques from filmmakers. By translating these methods to two-dimensional, still paintings and drawings, he altered their effect. The brief illusion that had materialized and vanished during a film was frozen at its most adrenaline-pumping moment. Furthermore, by putting his paintings and drawings in the hands of the viewer, Lautrec brought his pictures to the viewer in a way that gave him/her an intimate proximity that film lacked. Films lack this closeness and opportunity to peruse the details of the works. As we will see, the relationship between Lautrec and filmmakers was reciprocal. Not only did he use many of the same subjects as filmmakers, but also, he shaped the way filmmakers of his generation and later imagined the Belle Époque.

Throughout his career, Lautrec consistently drew and painted animals and people in motion. His method of depicting action changed as he honed his artistic skills and scientists increased their ability to capture movement and their understanding of it changed. Advances in science coincided with new forms of entertainment and performance that eventually led to the cinématographe. During these years of innovation and change, Lautrec’s compositional strategies

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1 Philippe Huisman and Madeleine Grillaert Dortu note that Lautrec and his friends, including Thadée Natanson and Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, followed these innovations closely and with enthusiasm. Huisman and Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 179.
evolved. We can see how Lautrec’s way of depicting figures in motion changed by dividing his career into three stages. The first, his youthful stage, includes the work he produced under the tutelage of René Princeteau (c.1875 – 1882), Léon Bonnat (April – September 1882), and Fernand Cormon (September 1882 – 1887).² It lasted until about the middle of 1887, at which point he embarked on his professional artistic career. His early career includes much of his lithography, as well as paintings of dancehalls and brothels. His final, or mature, phase includes works produced from 1895 until his death in 1901. By dividing Lautrec’s pictures in this manner, we can start to see similarities emerge in his work, as well as his responses to the changes in understanding animal and human locomotion and new technologies that captured movement during these time periods.³ As these technologies developed, Lautrec used them to his advantage,

² Lautrec first mentioned Princeteau in a letter to his paternal grandmother, Gabrielle d’Imbert du Bosc, dated December 1875. He recounted that he and his mother went to see Princeteau’s painting The 19th of October 1781, Washington, 1875-76, before it was shipped to America for the International Exhibition in Philadelphia from May 10 to November 10, 1876. A family friend, Princeteau shared Lautrec’s interest in animals and specialized in painting horses. Lautrec began studying with Princeteau after breaking his legs in 1878 and 1879. Lautrec included a sketch of himself and Princeteau working at their easels in a letter to his uncle, Charles de Toulouse-Lautrec, from May 1881. Lautrec remained on friendly terms with his first instructor throughout his life. In 1900, for example, Lautrec wrote to him while awaiting his visit, and the affection he held for Princeteau is clear: “I’m training my arms the better to squeeze you against my broad chest, and I’m going to show you some painting, I need say no more!” The feeling was mutual. When Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec wrote to his friend to inform him of his son’s death, he recalled that Princeteau used to call Henri, “the little one.” For these letters, see Herbert D. Schimmel, The Letters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, trans. divers hands (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Letters 17, 59, 600, V. 1, and V. 2 and illustration 14. See also Julia Frey, Toulouse-Lautrec: A Life (London: Phoenix Giants, 1995), 56-57, 116-119, 123, 126-130, 143.

³ Other scholars have followed a division of Lautrec’s work outlined by Schimmel: Child and Schoolboy, 1864-81; Art Student, 1882-86; Artist: The Early Years, 1887-91; Artist: The Middle Years, 1892-97; Artist: The Last Years, Breakdown, and the End, 1898-1901. From a biographical point of view, these divisions are logical and useful. However, I am interested in how Lautrec’s art changed throughout his career and how those changes related to social, cultural, and technological changes at the end of the nineteenth century in France. Therefore, I have chosen to use groupings that reflect artistic and societal transformations, including the zoopraxiscope and cinématographe. For Schimmel’s definitions of his categories, see Schimmel, xxiii-xli.
first by accurately depicting horses running and then by borrowing the attention-grabbing techniques of early film.

Scholars often note the prevalence of movement in Lautrec’s work, yet the significance of it has not been closely examined. For example, Richard Thomson observes the artist’s depiction of movement in the painting The Artilleryman Saddling his Horse, c. 1879 (figure 13). The artilleryman of the title is in the midst of preparing his horse to ride and seems ready to jump onto his back. The energy of the painting extends from the action itself to the rapid brushstrokes he used to paint the scene. 4 Gerstle Mack also praises Lautrec’s ability to convey movement in his work, especially his early paintings featuring animals. He finds them extraordinary “not only for their fidelity to nature but also for the extraordinary skill with which the young painter has succeeded in representing rapid and often complex movement.” 5 Likewise, Maurice Joyant notes the movement the young Lautrec achieved in his adolescent work. 6 While Thomson, Mack, and Joyant highlight Lautrec’s repeated representation of motion, they soon abandon the subject. Emile Schaub-Koch, too, points out the prevalence movement in Lautrec’s work. Rather than examining the depiction of motion, he connects it to the artist’s sexual life. While he admits that this is not always the case, he writes that it was unusual for the two not to be connected. 7

Conversely, Lincoln F. Johnson, Jr. takes a more thorough and less biographical approach. He examines the effect of elapsed time and motion on Lautrec’s paintings in contrast to Edgar Degas’s work. He finds that Lautrec stripped an action to its essential features, often cropping limbs of a figure to suggest the speed of the action. In contrast to Degas, who painted

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figures in the midst of moving, Johnson argues, “Lautrec created a figure for the motion itself.”

He concludes with the suggestion that Lautrec’s attempts to convey movement flirted with pure abstraction.

While these studies point out Lautrec’s engagement with portraying movement in his work, they leave readers in the dark as to how his depiction of movement changed throughout his career. Nor do they answer how the changing attitudes and technologies related to the representation of movement during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By addressing these questions here, we will begin to see the extent to which Lautrec’s pictures participated in the quest to simulate movement. His pictures’ incessant motion mirrored the race to record movement by Muybridge, Marey, and early filmmakers. We see the culmination of these efforts in the *Au cirque* series (1899). These drawings not only borrow from early film, especially the genre known as “cinema of attractions,” but they also strive to outdo these efforts by emphasizing those things unique to drawing: stillness, tactility, and smallness.

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9 Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault coined the phrase “cinema of attractions” at the Colloquium on Film and History at Cerisy in 1985. They borrowed it from Sergei Eisenstein’s essay “Montage of Attractions,” originally published in the Soviet journal *Lef* in 1923. It was reprinted as “Montage of Attractions: For ‘Enough Stupidity in Every Wiseman,’” trans. Daniel Gerould, *The Drama Review* 18, no. 1 (March 1974): 77-85. Gunning and Gaudreault used cinema of attractions to describe the most prominent genre of film produced between 1895 and 1906. These films are short in length and focus on a stunt, illusion, or unusual point of view. They instantly grab the viewer’s attention and directly appeal to him/her through eye contact, gestures, or framing techniques. Gunning first explained the phrase in print in “Cinema of Attractions, Early Film, Its Spectators and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (Fall 1986): 63-70. This essay was reprinted in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56-62. All future citations refer to the latter source. Since then, Gunning has refined the definition. Meanwhile, other authors, such as Gaudreault and Charles Musser, have contributed to the meaning of the phrase and the significance of this genre of film. For Gunning’s original summary of the cinema of attractions, see his “Cinema of Attractions,” 56. For his reconsiderations of it, see “The Whole Town’s Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 189-201, especially 190-192, and “Now You See It, Now You Don’t: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions,” *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (Fall 1993): 3-12. For Gaudreault’s analysis of the cinema of attractions, see Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “The
The last half of the nineteenth century included many innovations in forms of entertainment that suggested movement. By the time Lautrec was born in 1864, the magic lantern had become available for middle-class households to purchase. It projected images painted on glass slides onto a wall for viewers to enjoy. Although Athanasius Kircher had invented the device in the mid-seventeenth century, by the end of the eighteenth century, Etienne-Gaspard Robertson injected more drama into the performance by layering slides and turning them rapidly. It had the effect of images dissolving into each other and even moving.  

Panoramas (which consisted of painted scenes or slides projected onto an oversized canvas and were popular in the mid-nineteenth century) expanded the scope of the magic lantern, filled viewers’ fields of vision with their painted backdrops, and immersed viewers in the scene. When the panoramas unfurled slowly, they gave the illusion that viewers moved through the scene. Similarly, Charles-Emile Reynaud’s *pantomimes lumineuses* consisted of a strip of drawings. Instead of a landscape, though, Reynaud’s drawings depicted figures such as clowns enacting humorous gags for the viewer. This early form of hand-drawn cartoons was a popular attraction at the Musée Grévin beginning in 1892. With these various forms of entertainment that attempted to simulate movement, it is no wonder that recording objects and figures in motion played such a large role in Lautrec’s work.

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10 The magic lantern caught the public’s imagination in a number of ways, some of which were undoubtedly unexpected. Terry Castle investigated the connection among the magic lantern, ghostly images, and madness in “Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 26-61.

11 Vanessa R. Schwartz noted the changes photography had on the level of detail and increased naturalism in panoramas. They had the ability to ignite the collective memory of viewers, celebrate national history, and commemorate current events. See Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 160-164.

12 For an examination of Reynaud’s *pantomimes lumineuses*, see Schwartz, 178-186.
We can see Lautrec’s interest in capturing persons and animals in the midst of an action in his earliest work. In *A Dog Cart*, 1880 (figure 100), he depicted a horse pulling a small carriage containing the driver and a top-hatted man. He painted the passenger in the process of rising from his seat, gripping the frame of the cart. His shoulders hunch over in the moment before descending from the vehicle. The driver stares out into the background, ignoring his passenger and oblivious to the presence of the viewer. The horse, likewise, focuses on himself while he raises his back right hoof and bends his head. Lautrec painted the background using chaotic diagonal, horizontal, and vertical brushstrokes. They produce a frenzied atmospheric effect in the painting that contrasts with the anti-climactic action depicted in the scene.

One can attribute the lack of suspense in the painting mainly to the moment that Lautrec chose to depict. If we plot a timeline of events for this action, we find that this scene is located toward the beginning: first the man must rise, then stand at the precipice of the doorway, begin his descent, and finally land on the ground. The action in this painting falls too early in the sequence of events to spark any real curiosity in the viewer. We do not have to guess at what will happen next, and we can be quite certain that the passenger will stand up without incident. However, if Lautrec had chosen an action later in the timeline, for example, if the passenger stood in the doorway leaning out, we might question whether he would make the long step down easily or stumble and fall.

Compounding the lack of suspense in the painting is the complete absence of direct engagement with the viewer. None of the figures makes eye contact with us. The closest Lautrec came to this is the highlight on the horse’s right blinder, which suggests light reflecting off of the pupil of the horse’s eye. In this early work, Lautrec presented an action without producing a sense
of anticipation or desire in the viewer and without directly engaging him. We frequently find the absence of a pivotal event and lack of direct address of the viewer in Lautrec’s paintings from this early period.

For example, *Artilleryman Saddling his Horse* from one year earlier has the same shortcomings as *A Dog Cart*. In this painting, a man stands with his back to us as he saddles the horse. The scene is stuck in the realm of possibilities rather than action. His bent limbs and position next to the horse suggest the deftness of his body and the possibility that he will mount the animal, yet the potential energy has not translated into kinetic action. The previously mentioned movement that Thomson notes in his discussion of this painting is present, but it exists in a stale state. Brushstrokes swirl around the curves of the bodies of the man and horse and radiate out from the pair into the scenery. They suggest a rapid, frantic application of paint. However, they do not provide any more information about the action depicted in the work, nor do they give the viewer a sense of momentum.

Some of Lautrec’s early works are more successful in translating action from life to painting than these two examples. *Grape Harvest at Céleyran: Three Horses Pulling a Cart*, 1880-1883 (figure 101), for instance, illustrates three horses pulling a cart guided by a shouting, gesticulating man. This pen and ink drawing does not have scenery in the background, only a few lines to suggest a craggy road. Lautrec redrew the lines of each of the legs of the horse on the left at least twice. The lines are loose and thin, which give them the appearance of being quickly drawn. The hint of speed in the lines emphasizes the movement of the animals. In this drawing, Lautrec depicted a moment filled with more tension than *A Dog Cart* or *Artilleryman*. Here the man guiding the horses raises his fist and yells at the last horse in line, which has balked while the other horses in front of him continue to walk calmly. The man and defiant horse stand in close

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13 For ease of reading and clarity of the text, I have chosen to use masculine pronouns when referring to the viewer. This is not meant to suggest that the viewer is necessarily male or had to be male to enjoy or partake in the viewing experience.
proximity to each other. He holds a whip out in his far hand; it swings out into the air away from the horse.

Lautrec redrew the lines to convey an abrupt change in the horse’s movement. They achieve their purpose in this picture, yet he will find more effective and sleeker ways to do this in his later work. The excessive lines also read as indecision on the part of the artist, as if he were unsure where to position the horse’s legs. Though this drawing deviates from the anticlimactic subjects of the other two paintings, Lautrec continued to work out how best to depict an active scene. By the time he embarked on his independent artistic career, he had refined his style to punctuate the precision of the movements he captured.

While Lautrec learned how to draw and paint objects in motion under the watchful eye of his instructors, amateurs and scientists experimented with recording it. The most famous of the amateurs was Eadward Muybridge. His path to fame began in 1872 when Leland Stanford, the former governor of California, asked him to determine whether all four of a horse’s legs ever completely left the ground when it ran. Stanford believed that they did, but he had no evidence to prove his hypothesis. In 1876, he asked Muybridge to take photographs of horses in motion to settle the debate. Muybridge rigged a system of twelve wires connected to cameras set up at equal distances along a track. When a horse stepped on a wire, it increased the wire’s tension, which then caused the camera to snap a photograph. When one lines up the resulting photographs chronologically, it becomes easy to map the animal’s movement. Muybridge’s photographs proved that Stanford was correct: there is a point at which all of a horse’s legs are suspended in the air while it runs.

Muybridge published the results of his study in the scientific journal *La Nature* in 1878 (figure 102). The publication of the photographs brought him widespread recognition. He began

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14 Stanford served as governor of California from January 10, 1862 to December 10, 1863, and he was a US Senator for California from March 4, 1885 to June 21, 1893.
lecturing about his photographs, and in the fall of 1881, he arrived in Paris to share his research.

Through his connection with Stanford, who sat for a portrait by Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier and whose wife sat for Léon Bonnat (Lautrec’s instructor in 1882) in 1879, Muybridge was introduced to the artistic community in the city.\(^{15}\) He even gave a lecture to artists, including Bonnat, Alexandre Dumas and Jean-Léon Gérôme, at Meissonier’s studio in 1882.\(^{16}\) He recalled Meissonier’s enthusiasm:

\[\text{M. Meissonier was the first among Artists to acknowledge the value to Art design of the Author’s researches; and upon this occasion, alluding to a full knowledge of the details of a subject being necessary for its truth and satisfactory translation by the Artist, he declared how much his own impression of a horse’s motion had been changed after a careful study of its consecutive phases.}\]

Muybridge’s photographs were of particular interest to academic painters. Meissonier, for example, wanted to ensure that his paintings of horses in motion were accurate. Muybridge provided him with the information he needed to do this. The lecture was a resounding success. The Standard (London) reported, “M. Meissonier, who is a great lover of truthfulness in art, was almost as pleased at the hearty applause which the demonstration met with from his guests as the inventor himself.”\(^{18}\)

In addition to his fame in France, Muybridge enjoyed acclaim in England. The British Journal of Photography mentioned the diversity of the audiences he drew. Members of the art, fashion, and scientific community attended his lectures;\(^{19}\) even the Prince and Princess of Wales

\(^{15}\) Marta Braun noted Muybridge’s connections to these artists and his desire for others to see him as an artist. See Marta Braun, Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey, 1830-1904 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvi and 51-54.


\(^{17}\) Muybridge, 6-7.

\(^{18}\) “Events in France,” The Standard (London), November 29, 1881.

\(^{19}\) British Journal of Photography, reprinted in Muybridge, Appendix A, 7.
and their daughters were present at a special meeting at the Royal Academy to hear him speak.²⁰

His lecture at the Royal Academy of Arts attracted so many people that the hall overflowed.²¹

Newspapers raved about his photographs. For example, *The Leeds Mercury* noted, “Some of the illustrations were so striking and lifelike as to elicit loud applause.”²²

The curiosity that his work generated across several fields does not mean that everyone embraced Muybridge’s findings immediately. It was not until he passed the photographs in rapid succession through a magic lantern, which gave the impression of the horse moving in slow motion, that audience members relinquished their doubts.²³ His lectures remained popular even seven years after he debuted his photographs. The *Liverpool Mercury etc.* described the previously unknown species of animals Muybridge had photographed and reported, “These results are attracting a great attention in the metropolis just now, and Mr. Muybridge’s lectures are becoming exceedingly popular.”²⁴

Muybridge’s photographs may have had the appearance of scientific study and fact to journalists and artists; however, the scientific community soon began to question his methods.²⁵

After Marey’s initial enthusiasm upon seeing the photographs of equine locomotion in *La Nature* in 1878, he attempted to correspond with Muybridge about the possibility of capturing the flight of birds in photographs. He did not receive a reply. When Muybridge was in Paris, Marey invited

²¹ *Athenæum London*, reprinted in Muybridge, Appendix A, 16.
²² “Occasional Notes.”
²³ The *Standard* (London) noted the skepticism of artists at Muybridge’s lecture at Meissonier’s studio. They questioned the accuracy of the photographs by themselves. However after the magic lantern show, they acquiesced. *The Standard* (London), reprinted in Muybridge, Appendix A, 13.
²⁴ “Science Notes,” *Liverpool Mercury etc.*, May 9, 1889.
²⁵ Although reservations about Muybridge’s methods mostly came from the scientific community, one journalist voiced concerns about these. In article about his lecture at the Royal Academy London on March 14, 1882, the journalist wrote, “On the whole, Mr. Muybridge has put into the hands of sculptors and artists the means of analyzing the movements of animals, with a fair prospect of being able to master their nature; but, until he has reduced his observations to a system, these experiments remain incomplete and only partially useful.” “Art Notes,” *Liverpool Mercury etc.*, March 20, 1882.
him to give a lecture at his home on September 26, 1881. Marey also led him through a tour of his laboratory. Despite his initial hope for Muybridge’s work, Marey soon realized that Muybridge’s method had many flaws. Marey expressed his doubts about the unbiased quality Muybridge’s technique in his *Développement de la méthode graphique par l’emploi de la photographie.*

First, he pointed out that Muybridge’s photographic method was not foolproof. In order for the camera to take a photograph, the horse had to step on the wire connected to it. When the wire broke, it sent an electric impulse to the camera, signaling it to take a photograph. If the horse missed the wire, the camera would not photograph that moment. Second, one could only implement the method with any reliable results with large animals that walked on land (rather than flew or swam) because small mammals and birds do not possess the weight or strength to trip the wire without considerable effort. Finally, the act of tripping the wire could interfere with

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26 See Marey, *Développement de la méthode graphique par l’emploi de la photographie* (Paris: Masson, 1884), 12. Braun discussed Marey’s views on the shortcomings of Muybridge’s method. See Braun, 47-54. Despite these shortcomings, Muybridge returned to Europe for a lecture tour in 1889. *The Pall Mall Gazette* praised his showmanship and the value of his work for artists and scientists. For this event, Muybridge took the stage wearing a lab coat and waving a wand. The reporter noted, “Some lectures are too technical for the great public, but here was a subject in which every one is interested, and you have to take your notes in the dark, with giantesses on your two favorite corns and an aviary in front of you.” He also bemoaned the “Draconian law” that capped the lecture at an hour. During that hour, Muybridge discussed equine locomotion as it had been represented in art versus photographic evidence of how it actually worked. He also showed a variety of species in different stages of motion, including sloths and multiple birds. Muybridge’s presentation impressed the reporter, who concluded, “If ever we learn to fly our wings will certainly be constructed on the basis of Mr. Muybridge’s revelations.” “The Menagerie of Muybridge the Magician; Or, The Silent Secrets Revealed by the Limelight,” *The Pall Mall Gazette,* March 23, 1889. Additionally, *The York Herald* remained convinced that Muybridge’s photographic achievements merited attention from the scientific community. It reported, “…his long and patient observations are not only unique but of incalculable value to the artists and scientist,” and it mentioned the “crowded and distinguished audience listening to him” at the Festival Concert Room. “Lecture by Mr. Muybridge on ‘Animal Locomotion,’” *The York Herald,* November 29, 1889. Even though Muybridge adapted his method to be able to photograph a wider range of species, it remained too open to errors and manipulation to be considered truly scientific.

27 Muybridge did eventually photograph birds in flight. His method, however, certainly interfered with the bird’s flight. In order to photograph a bird mid-air during flight, it had to fly into a wire, which sent an electrical impulse to a camera. The camera then took a photograph. It was the same basic arrangement that he had used to photograph horses, and it contained the same inherent
the natural gait of animal. Furthermore, Muybridge replaced photographs that did not turn out with new ones taken at a different time, and he combined photographs taken from different points of view in his book *Animal Locomotion*. The manipulated sequences of photographs in *Animal Locomotion* demonstrate his allegiance to aesthetic concerns rather than scientific ones.  

In contrast to Muybridge’s flawed and unscientific methods, Marey paid close attention to the objectivity and reproducibility of his experiments and results. Like Muybridge, Marey sought ways to record human and animal locomotion; he did this by using chronophotography, which took multiple photographs in rapid succession, as opposed to the Muybridge’s series of cameras that each took one picture quickly (for an example of his work, see figure 103). In addition to recording the external movement of bodies, Marey recorded the circulatory system of humans and animals. His reputation as a scientist garnered him acclaim in the Académie de Médecine and in the popular press. He served as president of a number of societies and academies, including the Société de Navigation Aérienne (elected 1884), the Société Française de Photographie (elected 1893), the Académie des Sciences (elected 1895), and the Académie de Médecine (elected 1900). He also joined the Legion of Honor in 1896. It is no wonder that Parisian newspapers as disparate as *Le Figaro* and *La Croix* covered his accomplishments extensively. Marey firmly rooted his process in science, while Muybridge did not.

flaws. Indeed, one could say it had more because a number of the photographs did not contain the bird in the frame at all, only the sky. As *The Pall Mall Gazette* reported, “Almost the only subject in which Mr. Muybridge has not as yet been successful are those connected with the flight of birds. The accidental backgrounds of skies were extremely beautiful, and the whole lecture was suggestive and original to a very high degree.” “Occasional Notes,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, March 15, 1882.

28 For an analysis of the discrepancies in Muybridge’s photographs, see Braun, 238-252.

29 Although they only took one photograph at a time, Muybridge’s cameras did take stereoscopic photographs.

30 *Le Figaro* reported on Marey’s recording of human locomotion and muscle contractions on August 16, 1893, the publication of his book *Le Mouvement* on November 27, 1893, and the influence he had on the Lumière brothers’ development of film on April 7, 1896. *La Croix* informed its readers of Marey’s new graphic device to track human locomotion on June 9, 1887, his recording the flight of birds on October 9, 1889, the progress of his human locomotion studies
Objectivity and accuracy were of paramount importance to Marey. He fastidiously included measurements in his photographs and ensured that the photographic process did not hamper the subject’s action. He experimented with different ways to document animals’ movements objectively, including various photographic equipment and graphic devices.\(^{31}\) His goal was to understand biological movement, including locomotion and internal systems of the body. The machines served as prosthetic devices for human perception. They aided, supplemented, and, at times, replaced his senses so that he could observe phenomena that were impossible for the eyes and brain to process unaided. Marey noted in 1894:

> In representing movement, the artist is rightly preoccupied with showing what the eye can see of man in action. In general, the preparatory and final phases of motion are best perceived. In the same way that certain parts of a working machine are only seen at dead points, that is, at the short instants when their movement is finished in one direction, and about to commence in the opposite one, there are, in certain acts of man, attitudes that last longer than others. Chronophotography on a fixed plate would determine these attitudes.\(^{32}\)

Marey pointed out that without the aid of technology we are at the mercy of our neurological processes; we can only discern what he called “dead points,” or the beginning and ending, of an instantaneous action because our brains cannot process visual information fast enough to understand the precise movements that produced it. While we can see the dead points clearly, the action itself passes as a blur.

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\(^{31}\) For example, to capture the flight of birds, Marey used a chronophotographic gun. The camera had the shape of a shotgun. The shutter was located at the end of the barrel; at the other end was a trigger. Connected to the top of the shotgun was a disk with photographic plates that recorded the images. When one pulled the trigger, it initiated a sequence photographs to be taken. The gun had an intermittent shutter that would take twelve photographs in rapid succession. The photographic disk rotated slightly each time the shutter closed. When the camera finished taking the series of photographs, one could see the stages of the movement imprinted on the disk. To be precise, Marey made notes of the times when the disk started and stopped moving.

These dead points and limits to our perception to which Marey referred are the reason Stanford asked Muybridge to prove his hypothesis; it was impossible to use only the naked eye to determine whether a horse’s hooves ever completely left the ground. This impossibility likely also contributed to the dead points depicted in Lautrec’s early works. As an artist working in the realist tradition and observing from life, Lautrec placed great importance on the way people and objects around him actually appeared.\textsuperscript{33} The only way to know the world is to observe it closely, but the limits of perception can hinder the acquisition of knowledge. The early, and least exciting, portion of an action is the easiest to see because the shift from stasis to motion stands out to an observer. The intermediate positions of a movement, those that occur between Marey’s dead points, transpire rapidly, making it difficult for a painter, especially one still learning, to capture.

If we return to Lautrec’s early paintings, we see that he has depicted the dead points in a sequence of action. In \textit{A Dog Cart}, the passenger is in the midst of rising from his seat. He crouches at the doorway of the carriage, perhaps pausing for a moment to consider his footing before beginning his descent. This moment would be easily visible to the naked eye. Likewise, in \textit{Artilleryman Saddling his Horse}, the main thrust of the action, the point when the soldier’s body hangs suspended in the air as he mounts the horse, has not yet passed. Instead, Lautrec gave the viewer the moments leading up to that action. Furthermore, Lautrec’s familiarity with horseback riding would have supplied him with ample information about the preparatory phases of the

\textsuperscript{33} While he was Princeteau’s pupil, Lautrec painted people and objects from direct observation of them. For example, he witnessed soldiers stationed at Bosc, near one of his family’s homes, with Princeteau. The elder artist recounted painting the military exercises with his pupil in 1878. Gale B. Murray found evidence in military journals that corroborates Princeteau’s personal journals. The military practiced drills in Bosc in August and September 1878. No military maneuvers occurred in the region for the next three years. Dortu and Maurice Joyant had dated Lautrec’s paintings of these exercises, including \textit{Artilleryman Saddling his Horse}, closer to 1880, but Murray argues that he most likely painted these in 1878. Murray, \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec: The Formative Years, 1878-1891} (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 19.
The majority of the movement of these two paintings comes from the sweeping brushstrokes that produce a mosaic of color in the background. The most convincing movement, therefore, is the act of painting itself.

In Lautrec’s *Three Horses Pulling a Cart*, the thrust of the movement is in the bucking horse’s body. The other two horses carry on with their tasks. Studies of animal locomotion, such as those carried out by Muybridge and Marey, supplied artists with the information that they needed to depict the horses in motion accurately. Léon Bonnat, another of Lautrec’s early teachers, also attended Muybridge’s lecture, and we can gather from the ample press coverage that Lautrec could easily have been exposed to Muybridge’s work. We know that he definitely had seen Marey’s chronophotography. Through Princeteau, Lautrec met le vicomte Charles-Marie Du Passage, an artist who was excited about Marey’s discoveries. *La Vie moderne* published Du Passage’s drawings of Marey’s experiments on April 16, 1882, and Lautrec excitedly wrote to his father about them. Moreover, if we compare the way Lautrec drew the

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34 Lautrec’s father was an avid outdoorsman and an expert in the aristocratic hobbies of hunting and riding. His enthusiasm for sport fueled Lautrec’s examination of the subject. The artist loved horses, and even when he could not participate in hunting and physically demanding activities due to injuries, he drew and painted these scenes. Lautrec suffered two devastating broken bones in his legs. In the spring of 1878, he slipped on a wooden floor in his family home in Albi, France, breaking his left femur. Luckily, a doctor was visiting the home at the time and set it immediately. His leg remained in a splint until April 24, 1879. Then, a mere four months after regaining use of his left leg, he broke his right leg when he fell into a ditch while walking with his mother. His legs never recovered fully from these adolescent accidents. The rest of his body continued to grow, but his legs remained stunted. Some have speculated that a genetic disease caused by the close relation of his parents (they were first cousins) led to his dwarfism. This hypothesis has fueled the biographical interpretations of Lautrec’s work as manifestations of his alienation and misanthropy. For a discussion of the likelihood of various genetic abnormalities, see Pierre Maroteaux and Maurice Lamy, “The Malady of Toulouse-Lautrec,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 191, no. 9 (March 1, 1965): 715-717. More recently, the subject received popular attention in Philip R. Reilly, “Toulouse-Lautrec: An Artist Despite his Genes,” in *Abraham Lincoln’s DNA and Other Adventures in Genetics* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2000), 27-38. For information about Lautrec’s health woes, see Frey, 60-79, 87-95, 104-110.

35 In the letter to his father, Lautrec writes, “Yesterday I saw Du Passage, who asked me how things were with you. Yesterday, for *La Vie moderne*, he drew the different ways a horse jumps.” The letter is dated April 17, 1882. Frey, 123-124, 234. Schimmel, Letter 73.
horses in this example from 1883 to his early depictions of horses, we see some differences. Not only have his drawing skills improved; but also he enhanced the anatomical accuracy of his subjects.

In addition to Lautrec’s knowledge about Marey’s and Muybridge’s experiments, Lautrec replicated the format of their photographs in some of his sketches later in his career. For example, in *Au cirque: personnages en mouvement*, 1896 (figure 104), he drew a person in three stages of an action as he moves around the ring. The profile of the ringmaster on the right side of the page shows him watching the performer’s progression. Lautrec practiced depicting figures in motion again in *Au cirque: quatre croquis d’après un personnage travaillant aux anneaux*, c.1875-1899 (figure 105). Here, a man holds onto a pair of gymnastic rings while bending and extending his legs. Lautrec was not the only artist to use this technique to represent figures in the midst of moving. Edgar Degas also employed the repetition of a single figure in his paintings of ballerinas such as *Group of Dancers*, c. 1895-97 (figure 106). The similarity between Degas’s dancers and Muybridge and Marey’s photographs is so close that Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar suggest that their experiments “must have been a revelation” for the artist.\(^{36}\) Given the extent to which Lautrec admired Degas and his own exposure to the work of the amateur photographer and scientist, it is not shocking that Lautrec would follow their example in his own examination of representations of figure in motion.

Thus far, we have established that the first phase of Lautrec’s œuvre includes what Marey called dead points of movements, and that Lautrec amplified the urgency of these ordinary scenes with the fervor of his brushstrokes. In the second phase of his work, Lautrec portrayed the mid-point of movements with greater frequency. We see an example of this in his lithograph *Moulin*...
**Rouge: La Goulue**, 1891 (figure 2), in which he captured the high kick of the dancer Louise Weber, nicknamed La Goulue (The Glutton), during a performance at the bawdy Montmartre dance hall, the Moulin Rouge. A silhouette of the crowd forms a semi-circle around La Goulue and her partner, Jacques Renaudin, known as Valentin Le Désossé (The Boneless), who stands in profile. Lautrec chose to position him in the lower right quadrant and colored him in grisaille. This decision pushed the focus onto La Goulue, whom he placed slightly off center and depicted in full color. Le Désossé’s right thumb leads the viewer to the place where the crucial action occurs: the space in between La Goulue’s splayed legs. Lautrec froze this fleeting action in the fast-paced dance, *le chahut*. La Goulue balances on her left leg as she kicks her right leg out to the side. Lautrec displayed the rear view of the dancer, a vantage point that affords the audience

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38 The possibility that a dancer would kick high enough to give the audience a view of her undergarments or more was certainly part of the allure of the dance. Henri Vernier described the energy and sexual promise in La Goulue’s performance:

“A noisy crowd milled around in the brightly lit haze of reddish dust raised by the quadrille dancers, which settled on the lights and on the gilded ornaments, clouded the mirrors and the pictures already dimmed by cigar-smoke….The male dancers whirled about quite independently of their partners whose skirts, festooned with lace, swirled around, revealing through flimsy underclothing glimpses of delicately rose-tined flesh.

“At the back of the hall, on a platform surrounded by a handrail, the orchestra played with tremendous zest. The sonorous voices of the soberest of men could be heard through the pink haze crying, ‘Higher, La Goulue, higher still!’

Gross hands applauded the ever more revealing display, particularly when one of the dancers, sickened by an audience which had paid to see her underclothing and wanted plenty for its money, would flounce towards them and hurl a vulgar or abusive word in the direction of these incorrigibly offensive individuals.” Cited in Philippe Huisman and Madeleine Grillaert Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 92.
maximum viewing pleasure. He further stoked the spectator’s enjoyment by allowing him to gaze anonymously: La Goulue looks off to the right side of the lithograph away from the viewer.

In this work, Lautrec presented the viewer with a titillating scene, encouraged him to visually consume La Goulue without reproach, and captured the most exciting moment in the dance. Indeed, Frantz Jourdain pointed out in an article in *La Plume* in 1893 that the poster, and La Goulue in particular, caught viewers’ eyes as they walked down the street; not a small feat for a poster. Furthermore, he noted that one could feel the beat of the music and the pressure of the crowd encircling La Goulue and Le Désossé and populated by the various Parisian types in Lautrec’s poster. The drama and energy that we see in *Moulin Rouge* is the key feature of Lautrec’s independent artistic career. This aspect was missing from his youthful paintings. While the works in the second phase of the artist’s career succeed in building curiosity and desire in the viewer, they do not involve him in the scene. Neither La Goulue nor Le Désossé makes eye contact with the viewer. If the viewer is supposed to be present in the dancehall, it appears that the performers do not notice his presence in the scene. Additionally, the viewer does not have a place to occupy in the scene. The crowd forms a semicircle around the dancers, but the perspective is not consistent throughout the poster. The yellow orbs in the lower left represent the gaslights in the club. The lights seem to hover in the middle of the space, as though we were

39 Lautrec drew a similarly explosive kick from a different vantage point in *La Roue*, 1893 (figure 97). In this drawing, he positioned the viewer in the wings of the stage. Through the curtains, we see a dancer kicking her leg straight up as she bends back at the waist and her skirt fans out in front of her. The man in the orchestra pit enjoys the privileged point of view in this example.
41 Jourdain described the feeling the poster conveyed to the viewer: “Campée sur un pied dont les muscles se gonflent et se durcissent, la reine du lieu lève la jambe gauche, mécaniquement: et l’on devine sa danse, cadence par une énervante et râlante musique, rappelant l’atmosphère des bouges et les graisseux gâteaux forains. Bien que Lautrec n’ait qu’indiqué par une masse noire la foule pressée et bousculante entourant la danseuse, ne reconnaît-on pas dans chacune de ses ombres chinoises un des types parisiens mille fois rencontrés, vieillard gâteau banquier ahuri, gommeux hébété, boulevardiers blagueurs, fille aux aguets.” Jourdain, 489.
looking down at them. If one were not familiar with the interior of the Moulin Rouge, it might have been difficult to discern what the orbs were. The figures in the audience suggest an upward sloping point of view at odds with the placement of the lights. In contrast, Lautrec placed the two famous dancers directly in front of the viewer. Adding to the competing perspectives in the lithograph, the proximity of the dancers and the skewed arrangement of the audience leave no room for the viewer in the space of the poster. Lautrec effectively squeezed him out of the experience.

The lack of direct address of the audience and the compression of the space at the point of the viewer’s entrance into the picture, thus, fail to engage the viewer directly in the action taking place in the poster. This exclusion of the viewer is one feature that carried over from Lautrec’s work as a student into his early career work. That is not to say that there are no advantages to this strategy. The lack of address allows the viewer to have the pleasure of gazing without experiencing the guilt of being seen. He can covertly absorb the scene safely from a distance. However, while distance is essential to the peeping tom, it is not always desirable in a

picture. It separates the viewer from the scene and exiles him from the action depicted, relegating him to the edge of the frame and confining him to the status of an outsider.

During the second and third phases of Lautrec’s career, the cultural and scientific quest to record and play back movement continued. We see this most intensely in an attraction at the Musée Grévin in Paris. In 1892, Emile Reynaud’s *pantomimes lumineuses* became the first machine to project moving images to the public. Unlike the Lumière brothers’ *cinématographe*, Reynaud’s machine did not use film. Instead, he hand-drew illustrations on long bands that passed quickly through a projection machine to suggest movement. The bands contained three hundred to five hundred drawings each. The museum had three *pantomimes lumineuses* on view from 1892 to 1894: *Pauvre Pierrot*, *Le Clown et ses chiens*, and *Un bon bock*. Vanessa R. Schwartz notes that viewers seemed more excited about seeing drawings that appeared to move than the subject of the drawings or the narrative that unfolded in them.

The viewers of Reynaud’s *pantomimes lumineuses* watched the figures perform an action: examples included a clown and his dogs demonstrating a trick, and a restaurant worker sampling customers’ drinks. The hand-drawn figures on the bands did not pander to or mug at the viewer, as we will see later in live action films from 1895 to 1906, such as Georges Méliès’s *The Vanishing Lady*, 1896. The majority of these live action films were part of the cinema of attractions genre that depicted attention-grabbing stunts and actors who gestured and/or looked directly at the viewer. While the *pantomimes lumineuses* featured similar storylines and actions as the cinema of attractions films, they did not invite the viewer into the scene the way that the films did.

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43 The Musée Grévin not only offered visitors the chance to see animated films in the form of *pantomimes lumineuses*, but it also had wax displays and panoramas. Schwartz examines the museum and the other enticing displays available in late nineteenth-century Paris, including the morgue, in *Spectacular Realities*. For her analysis of the Musée Grévin, see Schwartz, 170-182.

44 Schwartz, 182.
Lautrec’s drawings during the second phase of his career shared this element of separation with the _pantomimes lumineuses_. We see it in _Moulin Rouge_ where the vying perspectives pushed the viewer out of the picture. It is also visible in his painting of another dance hall in Montmartre, the Moulin de la Galette, an establishment with a decidedly more working-class, and dangerous, clientele.\(^4^5\) In _Moulin de la Galette_, 1889 (figure 107), three women sit on a bench in the foreground. The back of the bench and a table separate them from the viewer. The table extends at a forty-five degree angle from the bottom of the canvas, which cuts off the edge of it. By slicing off part of the table, Lautrec extended the table into the viewer’s space. The viewer is, therefore, positioned as sitting at the table. Edgar Degas, an artist that Lautrec admired, also routinely used the edge of the canvas to cut off objects. In _In the Café or Absinthe Drinker_, 1876 (figure 108), Degas also suggested the extension of the space of the painting into the viewer’s space with the interruption of the table and newspaper in the lower left corner of the piece.\(^4^6\) Across from the table (and the viewer) in this painting sit a man and a woman. As in

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\(^4^5\) Richard Thomson compares two contemporary accounts of the clientele and activities that occurred inside the Moulin de la Galette. Marcel Schwob described a typical night at the dancehall in the conservative _Le Phare de la Loire_: “Polishers, bookbinders, seamstresses come to amuse themselves without ceremony; the crowd circulates around the dance floor or sits at tables with a drink.” Rodolphe Darzens provided a more colorful description in _Nuits à Paris_, a small book illustrated by Adolphe Willette. Like Schwob, he noted that the clientele was working-class, but he also included prostitutes and pimps in his list. Moreover, he mentioned that while dancing the girls kicked high enough to flash their pubic hair. Moulin Rouge built itself on the shoulders of older, established dancehalls like the Moulin de la Galette. Instead of being for the people who lived in the neighborhood, it catered to a middle- and upper-class clientele willing to pay for an “authentic” working-class experience. Furthermore, the Moulin de la Galette had significantly lower prices than the Moulin Rouge. For only twenty-five centimes, one could gain entry into the Moulin de la Galette. However, the Moulin Rouge charged patrons two or three francs, depending on the day, in 1900. See Thomson, “Dancehalls,” in _Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre_, 110-111. For an examination of how the Moulin Rouge established itself in Montmartre, its clientele, and practices, see Heller, 55-65. For cover charges and the character of the Moulin Rouge versus the Moulin de la Galette, see Charles Rearick, _Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France_ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 91.

\(^4^6\) The cutting off of objects and strong diagonals are common features in Japanese woodblock prints. Both Degas and Lautrec collected these works. Of course these were not the only two artists to use or admire this technique. The Impressionists, in general, adopted these features from
Moulin de la Galette, the viewer is situated in the space of the painting, but he does not interact with the painting's figures, who stare blankly around them. The viewer in these works by Lautrec and Degas is a player in the larger action of the dance hall and café, but he does not engage directly with any of the figures.

Lautrec emphasized the separateness of the viewer in Moulin de la Galette by wedging him into the corner of the canvas. The tabletop pins him in place while the back of the bench with the three women abuts the table and cordons him off from the revelers. Furthermore, these women keep their backs to him and look in the opposite direction. The man seated at the table across from the viewer leans toward the dance floor and watches intently. None of the figures or Japanese prints. They were able to view and purchase them at the Durand-Ruel Gallery. Lautrec and his fellow students in Cormon’s studio, including Vincent van Gogh, Émile Bernard, and Louis Anquetin, began spending time in the gallery in the mid-1880s. Lautrec wrote to his mother in April 1883 about the excitement in the studio over Impressionism: “Vive la Révolution! Vive Manet! The breeze of Impressionism is blowing through the studio.” Additionally, in a letter to his grandmother on December 28, 1886, he recognized the avant-garde nature of his current projects. He described his style as “outside the law.” Both Van Gogh and Lautrec traded their work for Japanese prints with Alphonse Portier. Schimmel, Letters 85 and 137. Frey, 229. For a description of the revolution brewing in Cormon’s studio in 1885 and 1886, see Murray, The Formative Years, 83-85. For analyses of the influence of Japanese painting on French artists in the nineteenth century, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, et al., Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art, 1854-1910, exh. cat. (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); Weisberg, et al., The Orient Expressed: Japan’s Influence on Western Art, 1854-1919, exh. cat. (Jackson, MS: Mississippi Museum of Art, 2011); Siegfried Wichmann, Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art Since 1858 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999); Karen Breuer, Japanesque: The Japanese Print in the Era of Impressionism, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and New York: Prestel, 2010); The Society for the Study of Japonisme, ed., Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001, 1980); and Colta Feller Ives, The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and New York Graphic Society, 1974). For the influence of Japanese art on Lautrec’s work, see Michel Castel, Danièle Devynck, and Janette Ostier, Toulouse-Lautrec et le japonisme, exh. cat. (Albi, France: Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, 1991) and Theodore Reff, “Degas, Lautrec, and Japanese Art,” in Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium, 189-213.

47 The proximity of these four figures suggests that they know each other. It is likely that the man is the women’s pimp, and he is looking for customers. Though prostitution was legal at this time, it required routine health inspections and the police closely monitored it. Because women were likely to have seasonal jobs and get paid less than men, it was not uncommon for them to turn to prostitution to make ends meet during their profession’s off-season. Alain Corbin explores the culture of prostitution and the circumstances that encouraged its growth in the nineteenth century.
aspects of the setting includes the viewer in the painting. Thus, dancing and drama unfold across the canvas from the viewer, but he does not participate in them.

The movement in *Moulin de la Galette* is less emphatic than it is in *Moulin Rouge*. Dancers fill the floor in the former, while the latter focuses on the kick of La Goulue. *Moulin de la Galette* presents the entire dance floor to the viewer. A man in the center prepares to lead his blonde companion in a dip. To the left of this couple, two women dance together. The sketchy appearance of the brushstrokes, which Lautrec produced by mixing turpentine with his paint to thin it out, emphasizes the movement of the group of dancers as they sway at opposing angles. The dingy palette of browns, greens, and yellows suggests the seedy reputation of the dance hall at night, and the precariously balanced stack of plates on the table may give a clue to the lack of sobriety in the club and the presumed state of mind of the patrons. On the right side of the canvas, a member of the vice squad has words with two gentlemen. Lautrec provided viewers with a scene containing intrigue surrounding the relationship between the women and the man at the table, the lesbian couple, and the vice squad. These elements pique viewers’ interest more than the scenes from the first phase of Lautrec’s career. However, he continues to designate the viewer as an outsider in these pictures.

Lautrec took a step closer to including the viewer in the action in *At the Nouveau Cirque: The Dancer and the Five Stuffed Shirts* from 1892 (figure 109). This drawing, which Louis Comfort Tiffany commissioned for a stained glass window for the Salon de l’Art Nouveau in 1895,48 depicts a dancer bending backward during a dance from *Papa Chrysanthemum* in the

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48 The curators of 1991 catalogue of Lautrec’s work argue that Lautrec made the drawing before Tiffany had approached him for the commission. The lag between the date of the drawing and the date of the stained glass suggests that Lautrec decided to submit a drawing that he had already made to Tiffany. For a detailed explanation of the argument, see Claire Frêches-Thory, Anne Roquebert, and Richard Thomson, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1991), 398-401.
performance ring of the Nouveau Cirque.\textsuperscript{49} Five men watch from the perimeter of the ring opposite the viewer. A well-dressed woman with opera glasses sits with her back to the viewer. The narrative of the performance follows a woman from the West as she falls in love with and marries an Asian king. It included an elaborate set. At one point in the performance, the ring flooded to create a lily garden. The Nouveau Cirque transformed the space of the circus into an Asian landscape before the audience’s eyes.\textsuperscript{50}

In this drawing, Lautrec captured a pivotal moment in the performance. The dancer bends backwards and leans as far as she can without falling over. The action is more intense than the dancing in \textit{Moulin de la Galette}, although the atmosphere is less fraught. Lautrec froze a climactic moment in the dance. The form of the dancer conveys her skill and the precision of her movements. Her pose is similar to the kick of La Goulue that Lautrec recorded in \textit{Moulin Rouge}.

\textsuperscript{49} Lautrec revisited this scene in the \textit{Au cirque} series in the drawing \textit{Ballets, fantaisie nautique et japonaise}, 1899 (figure 8). In this example, the audience is absent. Lautrec put the viewer in the midst of the performance. The main dancer is in the center, as in the earlier drawing, and the lily pads on which she prances are visible. Three women dressed in kimonos form a semicircle around the main figure in the foreground of the drawing. If there were any more lingering doubts about whether Lautrec painted the \textit{Au cirque} series from memory or from observation, this drawing should help put the question to rest. Jean Sagne’s introduction to \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec au cirque} indicates that Lautrec went to see circus rehearsals during his stay at the Neuilly-sur-Seine clinic and drew these pictures during or as a result of his visits. Marcus Verhagen dispels this theory in his dissertation, noting that many performers depicted in the drawings were not performing in Paris during the time of Lautrec’s confinement. Sagne, \textit{Toulouse-Lautrec au cirque} (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 16. Verhagen, “Re-Figurations of Carnival: The Comic Performer in Fin-de-Siècle Parisian Art” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1994), 231-233.

\textsuperscript{50} Elaborate pageantry like the flooding of the ring in \textit{Papa Chrysanthemum} had long been part of the entertainment and celebration for the nobility in Europe. For example, \textit{Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée} were held at the Palace of Versailles from May 5 to May 14, 1664. The festivities included an artificial lake, fireworks, and an opera. Israel Sylvestre recorded the events in engravings and André Félibien engraved the fireworks display. For a description of this and other displays of pageantry, see Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Early Modern European Festivals: Politics and Performance, Event and Record,” in \textit{Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics and Performance}, ed. J. R. Mulryne, and Elizabeth Goldring (Aldershot, Hants, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 15-25. For Félibien’s engravings of the fête, see his \textit{Les Plaisirs de l’Île enchantée. Course de Bague; collation ornée de machines; comédie, meslée de Danse et de musique; Ballet du Palais d’Alcine, Feu d’Artifices; et autres Festes galantes et magnifiques Faites par le Roy à Versailles le vii May 1664 et continuées plusieurs autres jours} (Paris, 1673).
In contrast to the kick, however, the dancer in this drawing probably remained in the bent position for slightly longer before righting herself. Unlike the drawings from the first phase of Lautrec’s career, these works illustrate pivotal moments of action. The number of these moments depicted in his work increased during the middle phase of his career.

During this middle stage of Lautrec’s career, his work has an affinity to Renault’s pantomimes lumineuses. Both artists depicted action unfolding. For Lautrec, this meant recording the crucial gestures. Renault, in contrast, drew episodes that conveyed the evolution of an action from its inception to its conclusion. The popularity of his pantomimes lumineuses at the Musée Grévin resided in the novelty of seeing an action drawn in its entirety. Lautrec conveyed a similar effect to viewers even though his work was not sequential in the way that Renault’s had to be. Instead of providing the viewer with the complete performance, Lautrec selected the most intense and thrilling moment to display. The viewer then unconsciously supplies the elements leading up to this moment and speculates about how the action would conclude. The end points of the movement (or dead points, to use Marey’s terminology) in Lautrec’s early work are less interesting than the pivotal moments that Lautrec had begun to produce in the second phase of his career. Both he and Renault learned from the scientific advancements relating to the recording and understanding of animal and human locomotion of the preceding years, and they applied their new knowledge to great effect in their work.

Despite the changes in Lautrec’s depiction of movement, we see elements from his early drawing style that continue to manifest themselves throughout the second phase of his career in At the Nouveau Cirque and Moulin de la Galette. Painted using a mixture of graphite, watercolor, and oil paint, At the Nouveau Cirque contains strong outlines of the figures and objects and brushstrokes that accentuate their contours and gestures. Sweeping green brushstrokes

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51 Because Moulin Rouge is a lithograph, we see do not see brushstrokes like we do in Lautrec’s paintings and drawings, and therefore it is not included in the following discussion.
of the performance ring form semicircles to the right of the dancer. These brushstrokes hug the curves of her body as she bends in the opposite direction. They also emphasize the direction of her movement. The layers of lines composing the ring overlap each other and repeat, suggesting the energy of the dancer’s movement. The abundance and thrust of the lines in *At the Nouveau Cirque* are more pronounced and obsessive than the lines in *Moulin de la Galette*. Additionally, *At the Nouveau Cirque* portrays a moment containing more action than the dancers in *Moulin de la Galette*. The hues in the former are much more saturated than the muddy colors of the latter. Moreover, the medium of drawing allowed Lautrec more freedom to play with his technique and apply color more loosely than painting.

When we compare *At the Nouveau Cirque* to *Three Horses Pulling a Cart* from nine years earlier, we see a similar repetition of lines to emphasize movement. However, the lines in the later drawing are not as frenzied or unsure as those in *Three Horses Pulling a Cart*. Lautrec did not repeat the outline of the dancer’s body as she leans back nor did he draw the position of her arms repeatedly to follow her movement as she reaches behind her. He had applied these tactics to the earlier drawing to convey the refusal of the last horse to follow orders, redrawing its legs in various positions. The effect was one of hesitance and uncertainty on the part of the horse and the artist. In *At the Nouveau Cirque*, Lautrec’s distinct lines demonstrate his skill and confidence as an artist.

Although Lautrec depicted decisive moments and energetic lines, he continued to limit viewers’ access to the scenes. In *Moulin Rouge*, he did this by combining different perspectives in a manner that occluded the viewer from the scene. The viewer does not have space on the floor and occupies an indeterminate location in the dance hall. Lautrec also sequestered viewers from

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52 Jacques Lassaigne reads Lautrec’s posters differently. He finds that the combination of the way Lautrec caught figures mid-action and placed the viewer on the same picture plane as the figures inserted the viewer into the scene. *Moulin Rouge* does not follow the trend that Lassaigne saw because the combination of multiple points of view destabilizes the viewer. Furthermore, Lautrec
the action in *At the Nouveau Cirque*. However, in this painting, he used the barriers of the performance ring to close off the viewer from the dancer and the action rather than recreating the competing perspectives that he employed in *Moulin Rouge*. Therefore, even though Lautrec provided us with the figure of the women in the foreground with whom we can identify and who can act as our surrogate within the space of the drawing, he has isolated her. The perimeter of the ring and the large, plush chair in which she sits separate her from the dancer and the viewer.

We begin to see the inclusion of the viewer in the action in Lautrec’s mature works. In *Voltige* (figure 5) from the *Au cirque* series of 1899, for example, Lautrec used the clown in the lower left quadrant to make eye contact with the viewer. The clown turns his head to look over his right shoulder at him. This direct acknowledgement of the viewer’s presence invites him into the scene even though the other figures have their backs to him. Unlike the female spectator in *At the Nouveau Cirque*, the clown is part of the performance. Furthermore, Lautrec did not draw any barriers between the clown and the viewer. The clown’s sideways glance transforms the viewer from mere witness of the act into one of the performers, thereby implicating him in the drawing. The glance initiates him into the rehearsal ring and the unfolding action.

The nature of the moment Lautrec chose to depict in *Voltige* also distinguishes it from Lautrec’s earlier work. The movement in this drawing outperforms Lautrec’s previously discussed pictures. The action in this drawing has more at stake than any the others. Here, the equestrienne has not yet completed her trick, and she remains in limbo during the most nerve-wracking moment of the performance. Her hands grasp the horse while she arches her back and points her toes against its side. The ringmaster stands guard with his whip, ready to strike if either of them performs the exercise unsatisfactorily. She would have no recourse if he decided to lash

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pushed Le Désossé right up to the picture plane, squeezing the viewer out of the action depicted. The closeness of the dancer does place the viewer on the dance floor; however, the space that he or she occupies is a claustrophobic one. Jacques Lassaigne, *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Paris of the Cabarets* (New York: McCall, 1970), 11.
her or the horse. The trick not only requires concentration but also balance, strength, and, most of all, both of her hands on the horse. If she tried to shield her body from the whip, she would surely fall. Furthermore, if the ringmaster decided to whip the horse, the equestrienne’s body adheres to so much of the animal’s body that he would hit her, too.\(^{53}\) The woman’s and horse’s bodies merge into one, and it remains to be seen whether she will hoist herself back onto the horse to complete the stunt. This drawing captures the engagement with the audience and excitement that the earlier pictures lack.

The change in the way Lautrec depicted movement in this later work may have something to do with his foray into book illustration. In 1898, he created a cover for *The Motograph Moving Picture Book*. The book, published by Bliss, Sands, and Company, is an example of the evolving format of movable books. These books, also known as movables, began to grow in popularity in the mid-eighteenth century when publishers increased their use of the format in children’s books.\(^{54}\) Movables first appeared in the thirteenth century in scholarly works. Volvelles, or discs that a reader could turn to see astrological and scientific theories illustrated, were the first manifestation of movable books. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that publishers produced movables for children.\(^{55}\) The books required various levels of active participation from their readers.\(^{56}\) In some, a child would have cutout figures to move around the

\(^{53}\) The equestrienne’s body covers so much of the horse’s flank that it seems out of scale. The size is necessary to convey the idea of the combined single body of the woman and horse.


\(^{55}\) The mid-eighteenth century was also the time when the notion of childhood as something unique and separate from adulthood began to take hold. Prior to this, children had been considered small adults. See Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

\(^{56}\) In 2001, the Bienes Center for the Literary Arts at the Broward County Library in Fort Lauderdale, Florida held an exhibition of movable and pop-up books. It featured examples from the Collection of Geraldine Roberts Lebowitz. James A. Findlay, Ann R. Montanaro, and Geraldine Roberts Lebowitz, *Pop-Up, Push, Pull, Scratch, Sniff, Slide, Spin, Lift, Look, Listen, Raise, Lower, Unfold, Turn, Open, Close: An Exhibition of Movable Books and Ephemera from*
page to act out scenes from the story. Other forms included layers of scenes that the reader could peep through and fold out pages extending as long as one foot, which resembled the popular panoramas of the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{57}

Unlike these examples of movables, \textit{The Motograph Moving Picture Book} relied on a different method for its mode of entertainment. The secret was in the transparent plastic sheet that came with the book. All the reader had to do was place the sheet over a picture in the book, move it up and down, and the figures came alive. Lautrec revealed the process in his cover illustration (figure 110). A redhead woman bends over a book and places a plastic sheet over the top of it. A blonde woman leans over the redhead’s shoulder to see. In the background, a man with splayed legs stands guard over the room. Just like the female figures on the cover of the book, the reader would place the transparent sheet over the illustrations to watch the two-dimensional drawings transform into three-dimensional pictures with moving figures. The scenes depicted in the book include a volcano erupting, a harlequin with a phallic sword prancing, and a woman dancing.

This last picture, \textit{The Serpentine Dancer} (figure 111), bears a striking resemblance to the performance of Loïe Fuller, an American dancer who became famous in France for her frenetic performances of swirling fabric and colored lights. In her act, she dressed in yards of fabric. Her choreographed dance emphasized the movement of her arms, which controlled large swaths of

\textit{the Collection of Geraldine Roberts Lebowitz}, exh. cat. (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Bienes Center for the Literary Arts, Broward County Library, 2001). The text of the catalogue is available online at \url{http://www.broward.org/library/bienes/lii13900.htm}. As the title of the exhibition catalogue reveals, the illustrations in movable books do more than simple pop up: they spin, make noise, and include scratch-and-sniff elements. The catalogue also includes a short essay by Ann Montanaro about the history of these books titled “A Concise History of Pop-Up and Movable Books,” \url{http://www.broward.org/library/bienes/lii13903.htm}.

\textsuperscript{57} Eric Faden examines movable books in connection to popular entertainment like panoramas, and he also considers the emergence of cinema. His essay explores the similarities between the spectacles present to audiences in films and those presented in movable books. He structures his argument on André Gaudreault and Philip Marion’s concept of the medium being born twice: the first birth is experimental, and the second is institutional. In the experimental phase, filmmakers had more freedom and could play with the medium more than they could once the medium was institutionalized into narrative films. See Eric Faden, “Movables, Movies, Mobility: Nineteenth-Century Looking and Reading,” \textit{Early Popular Visual Culture} 5, no. 1 (April 2007): 71-89.
her dress, rather than intricate footwork. As she twirled and whirled on stage, electric lights flashed from near her feet. The lights illuminated and colored the translucent fabric of her dress. The effect was a celebration of electricity that emphasized the novelty of her performance. 58 Her successful act inspired a slew of imitators.59

Lautrec made a series of lithographs of Fuller’s performance in 1893 titled Miss Loïe Fuller. In these works, he captured Fuller’s exaggerated gestures and her innovative movements of fabric. He positioned the dancer in the same way in all of the lithographs. He drew her with her head tipped back, and both of her arms thrown out at her sides. The only other parts of her body that are visible are her ankles and feet. Her costume dwarfs her body. Rather than changing Fuller’s pose in the lithographs, Lautrec altered the colors that he applied to imitate the changing light at her feet. For example, in figure 112, he colored the tip of the left fabric wing red. The majority of the dress is yellow. Only a transparent wash of blue colors the lower right edge of it.

In figure 113, the colors follow a similar pattern with the tip of the left side one color, the main

58 John Plunkett notes the similarity between The Serpentine Dancer and Fuller. He connects the inclusion of the dance in The Motograph Moving Picture Book to the author’s desire to associate the movement suggested in the book to the cinématographe, both in its choice of subject matter and in its depiction of it. It is only one example of how authors and publishers borrowed from the advancements in optical technologies in their literary tropes and the construction of books during the nineteenth century. Plunkett, “Optical Recreations and Victorian Literature” in Literature and the Visual Media, ed. David Seed (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: DS Brewer, 2005), 25.

59 Fuller built her career on marketing herself as an innocent, chaste, idiot savant. She claimed that she was not a dancer and chance played an important role in her performances. She often said that she had gone into a trance while on stage. Despite her protestations of naïveté, she fiercely protected her image, performance, and its technical aspects, frequently suing those whom she believed had impinged on her persona, stolen her secrets, or plagiarized her act. New technological advances such as phosphorescent salts on her costumes and electric lights were essential to her act. Like ballerinas who conceal the strength and endurance that their movements require, Fuller skillfully veiled the strain her dance placed on her body. Hidden under yards of fabric, she manipulated the cloth; no one could see her body move. The audience only saw the visually stunning effects of these maneuvers. Though she never studied dance, she opened a school of dance for girls, whom she outfitted and taught, at her home in Neuilly (coincidentally, this is the same city Lautrec would spend time convalescing while battling alcoholism). The students appeared in her act as a miniature army of her clones. For a comprehensive analysis of Fuller’s performance and its modernism, see “Fuller and the Romantic Ballet,” and “Scarring the Air: Loïe Fuller’s Bodily Modernism,” in Rhonda K. Garelick, Electric Salome: Loïe Fuller’s Performance of Modernism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 118-155 and 156-199.
section another, and a third color along the bottom right edge; but unlike figure 112, Lautrec changed the colors to yellow at the tip, purple on the dress, and red on the lower right hem. The colors also fade into each more so in figure 113 that the shifting of hues happen more gradually than in figure 112.

The manner in which Lautrec depicted movement in these lithographs exemplifies with the characteristics of his second phase. The moment that he chose to depict in these lithographs is one in which Fuller twirls and waves her arms in an expressive fashion. She produced the arc that we see on the upper left side of her dress by flicking her arm quickly from one direction to another. Moreover, she has launched almost all of the rest of the fabric on the right side into the air. This is not a pose that she could have held for long during a performance. It would have lasted only a matter of seconds before she arranged her garment into a new configuration. Thus, Lautrec captured a fleeting and powerful moment of the performance, as he did in Moulin Rouge. Also, like the other pictures produced during this period, he has not directly addressed the audience in any way. Fuller is the only figure on an otherwise barren stage. One has no sense of the setting or of a theater audience watching the production. Fuller is lost in her dance and the weight of the fabric. Lautrec has given her an eye and the outline of a nose, but we do not have access to the rest of her features. She is lost in the fabric and lights, as she would have been in a live performance.

While the Fuller lithographs possess the familiar second phase features, they also hint at Lautrec’s interest in transforming movement frozen on the page into something magical. He applied flecks of gold and silver to the lithographs in this series using a Japanese method. He spread the metals onto the stone in the process, and he was also known to dust the ground metals
onto the paper by hand. The metallic accents flicker in the light as a viewer moves the lithograph in his hands, giving the effect of light dancing across the page. Moreover, the metallic specks on the lithographs suggest movement. The movement would have been similar, though not as pronounced, as that in *The Motograph Moving Picture Book*.

Fuller’s performance caught the attention not only of Lautrec but also of the Lumière brothers. They filmed her act around 1899. In the film, Fuller spins around a small section of the empty stage. She waves her arms to transform her dress into butterfly wings. Then, she emerges briefly and swings her arms to envelop her body in the fabric. Her face is often obscured by her dress as she waves her arms and spins quickly. The dancer glides from one pose to another within seconds, leaving little time for the audience to admire the sculptural configuration she forms in the fabric before she moves onto the next. The film is hand-colored to convey the play of light on the fabric that was such a large part of the live performance.

With the film’s tight focus on Fuller and the bright hues used to tint the film, it drew upon some of the features of Lautrec’s lithographs. However, the film seems lacking when compared to the artist’s rendering of the performance. The lithographs appear more powerful than a faithful recording of the performance. While Lautrec’s prints suggest the graceful movements of the dancer, they also record the magical quality of the performance and the delight the audience must have felt watching the dancer illuminated in electric lights, drapery shimmering from phosphorescent salts. The metallic flecks on the lithograph shimmer across the lithographs and

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61 Fuller’s performance was a popular subject for film at the time. She continued to perform for filmmakers into the 1920s.

62 Indeed, Fuller’s ability to dissolve her own presence in the swaths of fabric during her performance was one of its main attractions. In the instances when she did shine through, critics met her with harsh responses, focusing on her sweaty appearance and zaftig figure. For an examination of Fuller’s early career and the public’s and critics’ responses to it, see Garelick, 1-8.
give the prints an otherworldly quality. The effect is one thing that the Lumière brothers’ film
could not capture.

Loïe Fuller was not the only subject that the Lumière brothers and Lautrec shared. One of
the first films the Lumière brothers made was titled *La Voltige*, the same as Lautrec’s *Au cirque*
drawing. The word “voltige” means stunt in French, and it is often associated with acrobatics and
gymnastics. The Lumière film dates from 1895. In the film, a man repeatedly attempts to mount a
horse with the assistance of a uniformed man while another holds the horse steady. Our
protagonist consistently thwarts the helpful efforts of his uniformed aide. After the aide
demonstrates the proper technique, he steps aside to let the protagonist try. Instead of mounting
smoothly as in the demonstration, the protagonist fails to jump high enough to mount the horse.
The uniformed man gives him a boost but to no avail. When he does manage to climb on top of
the horse, he slides down the near side of it, slips off the other side it, and jumps off. Then, he
uses the animal as a pommel horse as he swings his legs over its back, much to the amusement of
the man holding the horse’s reins. In the end, he finally mounts the horse and remains on its back
sitting sidesaddle as the groom leads them away.

If the Lumières’ film succeeds in comedy, it does not elicit the level of viewer
engagement with the characters as Lautrec’s drawing of the same title does. The reasons for this
are threefold. First, there is very little at stake in the film. The men are not performing a
dangerous stunt; they are trying to get on a horse’s back. Furthermore, even though the
protagonist causes the uniformed man who tries to help him some frustration, they will not come
to fisticuffs over it. Finally, the amusement is separated from the viewer. The action unfolding
before the audience’s eyes happens in its own space, and the viewer is not invited into the action.
The groom acts as a kind of surrogate for the audience as it watches the interaction between the
two men and reacts to it. However, he himself is not integral to the action.
In contrast, the drawing *Voltige* pulls the viewer into the tension between the ringmaster and the equestrienne. The clown in the lower left side looks at the viewer, almost winking at him. It is a secret exchange separate from the other figures that brings the viewer into the performers’ circle, and it transforms the viewer into one of the performers. He is, therefore, an accomplice to what happens next, whether or not the ringmaster strikes the equestrienne and horse with his whip. Furthermore, the trick that the equestrienne attempts could be dangerous if she is unable to complete it. Falling to the ground and being kicked by the horse would be a much more painful punishment than a simple lash of the whip. Lautrec focused on a moment when the outcome has not yet been determined. He also had one figure make eye contact with the viewer. Thus, he increased the viewer’s investment in the picture and engaged him in a way that the film by the Lumière brothers fails to do.

In addition to sharing stunts involving horses, both Lautrec and filmmakers featured the clowns Footit and Chocolat in their works. Reynaud, for example, included them in a band for his *pantomimes lumineuses* at the Musée Grévin. For this band, he used a different technique than his previous ones. The museum hoped to draw a large crowd so it agreed to help Reynaud finance his idea. He combined the hand-painted method with chronophotography, using a machine that he called a *photo-scénographe*. His method was similar to the one Marey used for his animal and human locomotion studies. Reynaud photographed Footit and Chocolat performing one of their routines from the Nouveau Cirque in which Footit soaks Chocolate with a water gun out of *William Tell*; it was a familiar scene. After Reynaud developed the photographs, he hand-painted them and arranged them on a band like his other *pantomimes lumineuses*.

The Lumière brothers also filmed the two clowns. In 1899, they released *Footit et Chocolat: chaise en bascule*. The film begins with Chocolat watching Footit as he squats on the ground, sweeping one of his legs around in a circle. Then, he jumps up and slaps Chocolat, who

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63 Schwartz, 184-185.
retaliates by threatening Footit with a chair. The two make up and sit on the chair, which is positioned on its side. When Footit stands up, Chocolat falls to the ground. They continue to jump around and pretend to fight for the rest of the short film.

Like the Lumière brothers and Reynaud, Lautrec focused on the clowns’ act in his work. The artist knew them socially, and they often frequented the same clubs in Montmartre. Maurice Joyant recalled that they all drank at Achille’s Irish and American Bar. In 1894, Lautrec depicted them in a lithograph, Footit and Chocolat, which appeared in Nib: Supplément de La Revue blanche in January 1895 (figure 114). In it, Footit and Chocolat perform in the ring at the Nouveau Cirque. The first row of the audience frames the back of the scene as Footit kicks Chocolat in the rear. Chocolat jumps slightly and shoots his legs out in front of him at the impact. Lautrec also portrayed Footit in a series of drawings for Le Rire in 1895 (including one in which the performer, dressed as a ballerina, moons the viewer), in addition to painting Chocolat dancing in a bar in 1896.

Yet Lautrec shares more with filmmakers than representing particular actions and subjects. He also pioneered compositional elements that the filmmakers went on to use. The largest genre of early film was what Tom Gunning called the “cinema of attractions.” He described it as “an exhibitionist cinema… a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator.” These films feature straightforward gags, magnificent feats, and illusions that immediately caught the

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64 Joyant described the multicultural atmosphere of the bar. The bartender, Ralph, was Chinese and Native American, and had moved to Paris from San Francisco; an English woman and her mulatto son provided the entertainment. Joyant, “Lautrec in 1895-96,” in Murray, Toulouse-Lautrec: A Retrospective, 208.
65 Michelle Aubert notes the similarity in subject matter between Lautrec’s work and the Lumière brothers’ films at the end of her summary of the early film in France at the fin de siècle. Her essay suggests the similarity is merely coincidental. See her, “Le Cinéma en France au début du XXe siècle,” in Actes du colloque: 1901, ed. Danièle Devynck (Albi, France: Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, 2001), 54.
viewer’s attention, and they usually rely on fairly flimsy storylines. This is not to say that narrative does not exist in these films. Charles Musser rightly points out that an action unfolds in each of them and follows a logical structure. Nevertheless, this structure is limited, and the emphasis remains on the trick rather than the plot of the film. Furthermore, actors in the films frequently break the fourth wall of film to look into the camera at the viewer and gesture toward him to include him in the film. This genre of film ruled the cinema from its inception in 1895 until about 1906 when narrative films grew in popularity.

The filmmakers of the cinema of attractions sought to dazzle the audience with unbelievable tricks or new vantage points of everyday experiences. Even the viewing experience

68 Musser, 222. Furthermore, even though narration was not the explicit purpose of Muybridge’s or Marey’s photographic studies, it remained an essential component of them and provided a glimpse of the early cinematic efforts to follow. Leo Charney writes:

“Their [Muybridge’s and Marey’s] work linked the self-conscious elaboration of a beginning, middle, and end to the effort to imagine a continuity that could vanquish the isolation of fragmentary moments and the hollowness of empty presence. As Marey’s representations of a bird’s flight indicate, the narrative structure of beginning, middle, and end was even more germane to Marey’s carefully composed paths of movement than to Muybridge’s haltingly fragmentary serials. Dagognet ably articulates this aspect of Marey’s project: ‘The universe knows only surges and drops, fragments that we reassemble and that we thereby diminish. We ourselves fabricate a smoothed-out, rounded spectacle. Mareyism must shatter this lie, which philosophy (Bergson) reinforced.’ ”

“Muybridge and Marey thus anticipated the soon-to-emerge aesthetic of cinema in a simple and schematic manner: Both men used new technologies to re-present continuous motion as a chain of fragmentary moments.”

The scientific photographs supplied viewers with the entire sequence of movements that composed an action. Thus, the traditional elements of a narrative story (introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion) are present in the photographs, just as they are in the early films of the cinema of attractions. Leo Charney, “In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity,” in Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life, eds. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 290.

69 Calling any date the beginning of cinema is, of course, misleading. Film borrowed from a variety of artistic and scientific sources, such as the camera obscura and Marey’s animal locomotion studies. In using 1895 as the year of its inception, I am referring to the first time an audience gathered to watch a projected film as we would recognize it today. For an analysis of the technologies leading up to the production of cinema, see Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); Charney and Schwartz, Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life; and André Gaudreault, Cinéma et attraction: Pour une nouvelle histoire du cinématographe (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2008).
enhanced the effect of some films. For example, during the presentation of the Lumières’ first
film, *The Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat* (1895), the projectionist did not immediately begin to
play the film. Instead, he allowed the first still image to linger on the screen before slowly
cranking the reel to full speed. The delay in beginning the film was not only a form of
showmanship; it also enhanced the astonishment of the audience that was seeing moving pictures
for the first time.

The cinema of attractions’ straightforward narrative and concentration on illusion are
evident in Georges Méliès’s *The Vanishing Lady*, 1896. The film begins with Méliès, in the role
of a magician, coming onstage and addressing the audience. He then introduces a woman (the
vanishing lady from the title). Next, he spreads a sheet of newspaper on the floor and places a
wooden chair on top of it, a common conceit during live magic performances to prove to the
audience that there was no trap door on the stage. After he is finished with this display, the
woman sits on the chair. The magician places a large piece of fabric over her head, concealing her
body, and he proceeds to make her disappear. He gestures wildly, looks out at the camera, and

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70 Georges Méliès, who was in the audience at Lyon in 1895, recalled the experience:
   “...a still photograph showing the place Bellecour in Lyon was projected. A little
   surprised. I just had time to say to my neighbor: ‘They got us all stirred up for projections like
   this? I’ve been doing them for over ten years.

   “I had hardly finished speaking when a horse pulling a wagon began to walk towards us,
   followed by other vehicles and then pedestrians, in short all the animation of the street. Before
   this spectacle we sat with gaping mouths, struck with amazement, astonished beyond all
   expression.”

At first, the still image seemed to be part of the commonplace magic lantern show. As the
projectionist began to turn the reel, the images started to move, and the show became something
else entirely. Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous
Spectator,” in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick:
Rutgers University Press, 1995), 118-119. The essay originally appeared in *Art & Text* 34 (Spring
1989). All future citations of this essay refer to the anthologized edition of the essay.

71 Gunning emphasized the element of astonishment in the screening and watching of the cinema
of attractions films. He connected it to a widespread culture of astonishment during the fin de

72 Gaudreault examined the showmanship of magic performances, such as laying out newspaper
on the floor, and Méliès’s film editing in André Gaudreault, “Méliès the Magician: The Magical
conjures a skeleton to the chair. Finally, he places the fabric over the skeleton and brings the woman back. They bow and exit the stage and then return for another bow. They directly address the viewer in much the same manner that they would have addressed a live audience during a theater performance.

Indeed, Méliès based the film on his stage show at the Théâtre Robert Houdin in Paris.73 The theater was an important site for Méliès’s magical performances and his films. It was also an important place of innovation for new entertainment technology. Films were first shown in theaters, cafes, dance halls, and fairgrounds. The Eldorado, owned by Aristide Bruant (who embraced a gruff, working-class persona in his performances and whom Lautrec depicted in posters and drawings), was one of the places frequently listed in newspapers in the late 1890s for cinématographe screenings.

In the summer and early fall of 1900, the newspapers in Paris buzzed about the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre by Madame Vrignault at the Universal Exposition. The space was designed to resemble Marie Antoinette’s Salon frais at Versailles. The spectacle opened on June 8, and it involved the projection of famous actors and actresses performing memorable scenes from popular plays, in addition to singers and other entertainers like Footit and Chocolat. While the cinématographe (invented by the Lumière brothers) projected the films, a phonograph filled the theater with the actors’ voices. It was essentially a highlight reel of the best performances of last few years. It included the duel from Hamlet, starring Sarah Bernhardt, Pierre Magnier, and Suzanne Seylor; Les précieuses ridicules, featuring Mesdames Kerwich and Esquilar; Mesdames Mauri, Violat, and Mante dancing La Korrigane; and Benoît-Constant Coquelin (known as Coquelin aîné) in Cyrano de Bergerac.

73 Méliès bought the Théâtre Robert Houdin in 1888. He remained with the theater until 1913, one year after he made his last film, La conquête du pôle, 1912.
Le Figaro lauded the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre throughout the exposition. On April 28, 1900, it called the idea behind the show “very clever and amusing,” and it continued, “In a delicious reproduction of the Trianon salon of Marie-Antoinette, we can see and hear a cast of the best artists in Paris: Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin, Maurel, Rosita Mauri, Félicia Mallet, etc., in their most acclaimed performances.” On opening day, it praised the perfection produced through the combination of the cinéma-tograph and phonograph. It also called the design of the open-air pavilion located near the Seine “one of the most artistic and daring initiatives of our time.” Two weeks later, the attraction still held the critics’ and public’s interest. Jean de la Tour wrote, “One of the most elegant places every Friday at the exposition is always the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, which moreover triumphs every night. The public comes out delighted by this very pretty attraction where it experiences a truly refined piece of art.” Furthermore, G. Davenay believed that both parents and children alike would enjoy the attraction.

The Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre succeeded, no doubt, because it drew upon the key features of the cinema of attractions: an attention-grabbing performance and engagement with the

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74 “Puis le ‘Phono-cinéma-théâtre’ dont l’idée est très ingénieuse et amusante. Dans une délicieuse reproduction du salon de Marie-Antoinette à Trianon, nous verrons et nous entendrons tout l’état-major des plus grands artistes de Paris: Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin, Maurel, Rosita Mauri, Félicia Mallet, etc., interprétant leurs plus retentissants succès.” André Nède, “Au jour le jour: la rue de Paris,” Le Figaro, April 28, 1900. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

75 “Grâce à la combinaison complète et absolue de ces deux merveilles modernes, le phonographe et le cinématographe, on est arrivé à un résultat d’une rare perfection.” “Le Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre,” Le Figaro, June 8, 1900.

76 “Et l’on nous promet sous peu de nouvelles surprises, notamment des représentations phonocinématographiques en plein air, sur la terrasse du théâtre, dominant la Seine, et son merveilleux décor; ce sera un triomphe, et la récompense bien méritée d’une des initiatives les plus artistiques et les plus hardies de notre temps.” “Le Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre,” Le Figaro, June 8, 1900.


78 “…tous les artistes en renom, passent sous nos yeux étonnés et émerveillés; et cette revue, qui fait la joie des parents comme des enfants, puisqu’elle est de bon ton, soigneusement composée dans son répertoire, constitue chaque soir l’un des plus grands attrats de la Rue de Paris.” G. Davenay, “La Photographie mouvante et parlante du théâtre,” Le Figaro, September 8, 1900.
audience. Because it only showed a collection of the most well-known scenes from popular entertainment (including theater, dance, and vocal performances) and featured the A-listers of the time, it bombarded the audience with astonishing feats. The direct engagement of the audience mimicked a feature of stage performance without delays for costume changes or rearranging sets. The Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre was therefore more exciting to watch because all of the boring bits of the performance had been edited out for the audience. It was also efficient and cost-effective. During one screening, viewers could see several seasons’ worth of diverse performances.

While the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre employed the key qualities of the cinema of attractions, it also remained true to a tenet of live performances: no second chances. The filmmakers did not alter the performances significantly from what the audience that attended the actual performance had seen. Yet film offered the possibility of editing. Those working in the genre of the cinema of attractions took advantage of that. Thus, although Méliès borrowed the subject matter for The Vanishing Lady from a live performance, he used cutting and editing to surprise the audience rather than allowing the performance to play out as it would have on stage. We can see a cut when he first makes the woman vanish. The edge of her dress sticks out from under the fabric cover, and then it is gone. To achieve the sleight of hand, Méliès stopped filming, had the woman leave the chair, and then resumed filming, a technique known as resumption. With the successful completion of every trick, Méliès looks at the camera. By gazing into the camera and breaking the imaginary fourth wall separating the actors on screen from the film audience, he gave a nod to his feats as a magician (successfully making the woman disappear) and director (using editing techniques instead of a trapped door to make the woman disappear).

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79 Gaudreault finds that not only Méliès, who is often associated with resumption and editing, but also the Lumière brothers edited their early films. In other words, the directors did not simply let the camera roll for one long take as scholars had previously believed. See Gaudreault, “Méliès the Magician,” 169-170.
Méliès used a similar strategy in *The Man with the Rubber Head*, 1901, about a scientist (Méliès) working in his lab. The film opens with the scientist mixing chemicals, which he quickly puts aside. From a closet at the back of the room, he brings out a table. On top of this, he places a short stand with a tube and nozzle. Next, he reaches into a box and pulls out a miniature version of his own head, which he places on the stand on top of the table. The disembodied head looks around the room and makes a variety of facial expressions. The scientist gets the idea to fill the head with air. He looks into the camera and repeatedly opens and closes his arms in a pumping gesture before retrieving a bellows from the back of the lab. He attaches the bellows to the tube and inflates the head, then deflates it, and repeats this action for his assistant to witness. He delights in the stunt, slapping his knee, grinning, and holding his arms over his head in amusement. When the assistant accidentally overfills the head with air, causing it to burst, the scientist literally kicks him out of the lab and cries into his apron.

The illusion in the film is designed to amaze the audience. Both the head and scientist look directly into the camera, thereby involving the audience in their experiences. The head’s expression alternates between amusement and worry as its size continually changes. The scientist regards the audience as a co-conspirator. It becomes someone with whom he can share his plans (mimicking the pumping of the bellows before he brings it out), his joy (grinning and gesticulating wildly after inflating and deflating the head), and his grief (briefly surveying the damage in the lab and burying his face in his apron). In doing so, Méliès brings the viewer into scene as more than a witness. The scientist’s direct communication with him transforms him into an active participant in the action.

The features that define the cinema of attractions are illusions and performances meant to amaze the viewer and the direct address of the viewer. These are also the features that make the works from Lautrec’s final phase of his career his most captivating. In *The Man with the Rubber Head*, the scientist’s engagement of the audience (his eye contact, grimaces, and miming) alters
the viewing experience of the film. Similarly, the clown’s eye contact with the viewer in *Voltige* brings the viewer into the action. The spectator cannot remain passive while looking at the drawing. The clown initiates him into the scene, and the viewer becomes an accomplice to the unfolding events. This implication in the action enhances the viewer’s pleasure, particularly in light of the sadomasochistic charge between the ringmaster and the equestrienne, as I argued in Chapter 1. Once inside the picture via the clown’s glance, he cannot remain indifferent to the outcome of events.

But how does one gain access to the action in the picture when none of the figures looks out at the viewer? Many of Lautrec’s drawings in the *Au cirque* series, and a large number of his other work, do not contain figures who peer out at the viewer like the clown in *Voltige*. Further complicating these pictures is the artist’s tendency to depict rear views of figures instead of frontal views. As we will see, what may initially appear to be an obstacle to direct audience engagement in reality facilitates the viewer’s greater integration into the scene.

In *Travail de panneau à travers un cerceau*, 1899 (figure 7), also from the *Au cirque* series, neither the humans nor the horse makes eye contact with the viewer. The drawing features the traditional elements of circus performances: a woman on horseback breaking through a paper ring.\(^80\) In this work, Lautrec tightly framed the clown who holds the paper ring for the woman to jump through. We see him only from the hips up, and he fills about a third of the space in the drawing.\(^81\) This close depiction of his back allows him to function as a *repoussoir* figure with

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\(^80\) David Sweetman notes the popularity of the stunt and frequent representation of it. Lautrec previously represented the trick in *Au Cirque Fernando: Écuyère*, 1887-88 (Dortu P.312). Because the circus ring was small and the horse needed to build up speed in order for the equestrienne to jump through the ring successfully, the anxiety level peaked as the horse and equestrienne prepared to jump. See Sweetman, *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Fin de Siècle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 176-178. Additionally, Lautrec used the motif of a clown with the paper hoop to list the paintings he exhibited at *Les XX* exhibition in Brussels in 1888. It was published in Octave Maus, *Catalogue de la V° Exposition des XX* (Brussels, 1888).

\(^81\) This is not the first time that Lautrec drew this stunt. In 1887-88, he designed a fan that depicted an equestrienne standing on top of a horse approaching a paper circle that a clown
whom the viewer can identify. Caspar David Friedrich used this technique to great effect in his landscapes. In *Wanderer above the Sea of Mist*, c. 1818 (figure 115), he presented the back of a man standing on a precipice looking out into the fog-covered landscape. As we identify with the wanderer, we feel the overpowering sense of awe that he experiences while looking out into the distance. The terrifying and all-consuming power of the sublime engulfs the wanderer and the viewer. The *repoussoir* figure, thus, endows the painting with its power. This also applies to the *repoussoir* figure in *Travail de panneau*. Through the figure of the clown, we again change from spectators to participants. Moreover, he brings us closer the main attraction: the rosy rear end of the equestrienne.

The rear view of the equestrienne draws us into the critical moment of the stunt. At this point in the performance, the outcome remains unpredictable: Will the woman successfully break through the paper ring? Will she land softly on the back of her horse? Will she miss the horse and crash to the ground? This moment in the performance is filled with suspense; it is when the audience is most on edge. Viewers hold their breath and hope for the best. In this drawing, Lautrec selected the most exciting, tensest part of the performance to depict. This shift to illustrating the climax of an action exemplifies his understanding of the progression of

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standing on a stool held out for her. Much more of the performance ring is visible, including the ringmaster, clown, and a trainer. The composition has little energy or excitement. In 1888, he reworked this composition in *Au cirque: clown* (Dortu P.314). Instead of using an arc format, Lautrec emphasized the vertical (it measures 115 by 42 cm). He included the same figures, though he painted them from a different vantage point. The clown’s head occupies the bottom right corner and the bottom left corner cuts off part of the paper hoop. Though the clown looks at the viewer, the equestrienne has not yet reached the hoop, and the stunt is not imminent. Like the fan, it lacks the thrill of *Travail de panneau*.

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82 I am basing my use of the word sublime on Edmund Burke’s definition, which he first published in 1757. He described the sublime as awe-inspiring and terrifying. A sublime object is too large or magnificent for us to comprehend. The beautiful, in contrast, is easy for us to understand and possess. It lacks the complexity and mystery of a sublime object. See Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 36-37.
movements and his attention to the techniques of filmmakers. In this way, this shift can be taken as evidence for his growth as an artist in his later work.

The combination of the repoussoir figure of the clown and the exciting trick paused at its most nerve-wracking moment produces an engrossing scene in Travail à panneau. The rear view of the clown is essential to the inclusion of the viewer in the trick. While this was an established way to include the viewer in drawings and paintings, it was not limited to these media. We can also see this technique in early films, specifically the cinema of attractions.

In The Bewitched Inn, 1897, Méliès filmed the protagonist (himself) pacing, jumping, and scrambling around his room at an inn. Instead of facing us, he careens around the space, and we get a sense of the physicality of his performance and his exasperation. The film revolves around the contents of the room rearranging themselves independently of any human intervention. From the camera positioned in the place of the fourth wall of the room, we watch the action unfold. The scene opens with Méliès holding a suitcase as he walks into a modestly decorated room furnished with a bed, nightstand, chair, cupboard, and three paintings. The ghostly rearranging of objects begins when he sets his coat and luggage on the bed. They promptly disappear. Next, he places his hat on the cupboard. Rather than staying put, it jumps to the floor and glides across it. Méliès watches his hat with curiosity and fear as it sails past him. When he attempts to trap it with his

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83 In an earlier iteration of this theme from 1888, Lautrec made the viewer an actual participant in the action. He painted the scene of an equestrienne jumping through the hoop on a tambourine in Au cirque: écuyère (Dortu P.316). The tambourine itself becomes the hoop that the equestrienne traversed under the watchful gaze of the ringmaster, and the viewer/musician then becomes the clown. The combination of the literal movement of the tambourine through space and the rear view of the equestrienne and horse produces an enticing scene for the audience. The Art Institute of Chicago acquired this piece in 2010. For information about the acquisition, see Gloria Groom, “New Discoveries: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Au cirque: écuyère (At the Circus: The Bareback Rider),” Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 10, no. 2 (Autumn 2011), http://www.19thcenturyartworldwide.org/autumn11/henri-de-toulouse-lautrecs-au-cirque-ecuyere-at-the-circus-the-bareback-rider.

84 The term Rückenfigur is sometimes used in film theory to refer to repoussoir figures, but for the sake of consistency I have chosen to only use repoussoir when discussing both visual art and film.
hands, it too disappears. Trickery meets his every attempt to alter or control his environment. He
leaps, turns, crouches, and even lies on the bed in befuddlement. After the bed vanishes out from
under him, panic overcomes him. The film ends with all of the contents of the room and Méliès’s
belongings piled on top of the bed. He runs terrified from the room and closes the door.

The physical comedy and exaggerated reactions of the protagonist enhance the
audience’s enjoyment of the film. The enchanted items in the room produce feelings of
amazement in the viewer. Méliès used resumption and editing, techniques not available to a
theater director, to generate this effect. The position, as well as the editing techniques, allows
those watching to put themselves in the protagonist’s place. One can easily share the frustration
and confusion of the man because of these rear views because they allow us to imagine ourselves
enduring the calamities that befall him in the room. We can thus experience both the humor and
vexation of the situation. Though not as widely used as frontal views, these repousoir shots
encourage the viewer to insert himself into the film. In much the same way, Lautrec’s clown
serves as a repousoir figure in *Travail de panneau*.85

In Lautrec’s mature drawings, as in the early films by Méliès, the viewer is encouraged to
become part of the scene. Lautrec not only used repousoir figures to accomplish this, but he also
made space for the viewer in some of his works. We see this in *Ballets, fantaisie nautique et
ejaponaise*, 1899 (figure 8) from the *Au cirque* series. In this drawing, Lautrec depicted the same
scene from the play *Papa Chrysanthemum* as he did in *The Dancer and the Five Stuffed Shirts*
from 1892. Both pictures feature the part of the performance when the ring was flooded to create

85 Little is written about the use of repousoir figures or shots of the backs or sides of characters
in early film. This is likely due to the overwhelming prevalence of frontal shots. However, these
views did exist. Not only did *The Bewitched Inn* include rear and side shots of the protagonist, but
also Méliès’s *On the Roof*, 1897; the Lumière brothers *La Voltige*, 1895; and Edwin S. Porter’s
*The Great Train Robbery*, 1903. Additionally, films shot from the top or front of trains, such as
Méliès’s *Panorama on Top of a Moving Train*, 1898, placed the viewer in the center of the action. These films have been called “Phantom rides,” and Ann Friedberg calls this camera angle the
a lily pad pond. Whereas the central dancer in the earlier drawing bends backward, in the later
drawing she balances on the toes of her left foot, folds her body forward at the hips, arches her
back with her arms pulled back, and raises her right leg. The pose is reminiscent of a person
going into the King Dancer Pose (Natarajasana) in yoga. The lines of her body are visible through
her yellow dress. Three women dressed in kimonos populate the foreground with their backs to
us, forming a semicircle around the main dancer. Like the clown in Travail de panneau, only the
upper half of their bodies is visible. Two of them raise their arms and wave their fans in the air.

Unlike The Dancer, which presents the viewer with a repoussoir figure who is isolated
from both the viewer and the performance, Ballets provides the viewer with three opportunities to
become a part of the scene: a repoussoir figure who has a role in the performance, a figure who
makes eye contact with the viewer, and a space to occupy in the foreground among the women in
kimonos. The central kimono-clad woman has the largest amount of her body visible and acts as
the repoussoir figure in this drawing. She is situated slightly to the right, giving the viewer access
to the main dancer who partially fills the space to the left of the central foreground figure. To the
right of this figure is another woman in a kimono, but only her head and left shoulder are visible.
The turn of her head to the left suggests that the three foreground women form a semicircle
around the main dancer. It also allows her to make eye contact with the viewer as she peers to the
side, similar to the clown in Voltige. Lastly, the foreground figure on the left is cut-off by the
edge of the page. The right side of her face is visible and shown at an oblique angle. From her
raised right arm, the fabric of her kimono cascades down to form a V with the sleeve of the
woman next to her. In this empty space, Lautrec made for the viewer to fill. This drawing, thus,
presents a skilled dancer with her body on display performing in a lavish production featuring a
lily pad pond that fills the stage; and there are multiple ways for the viewer to insert himself into
the scene.
The variety of insertion points available to the viewer in *Ballets* is similar to the way the viewer can shift points of view in *Voltige*. In the latter drawing, the viewer can glean pleasure from the position of voyeur outside of the picture or from the position of the clown who looks at the viewer in the lower left side of the drawing. Moreover, he can gain satisfaction from the ringmaster and the equestrienne, who play dominant and submissive roles, respectively.\(^{86}\) This role slippage from viewer to clown to ringmaster predicts the complex relationship between the viewer and action in Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* from 1903. Released two years after Lautrec’s death, the film incorporates the rear views of figures, implicates the viewer in the plot, and allows the viewer to move fluidly through the actions of various characters in his film.\(^{87}\)

*The Great Train Robbery* begins with a pair of bandits tying up a man in a telegraph office. The bandits are filmed from the rear. After meeting up with the rest of their crew, they board a train, which they will later force to stop while they steal cash and jewelry from the

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\(^{86}\) The malleability of roles is an important facet of sadomasochism, which we see hinted at in the controlling and passive roles of the ringmaster and equestrienne. Sigmund Freud found sadism and masochism to be two expressions of the same perversion. In this view, the masochist wishes to be punished, and the sadist wants to witness a punishment delivered. The events can unfold in a straightforward manner with the sadist flagellating the masochist. Conversely, the imagination of the two participants can give them access to their desires even if they switch roles. For example, the masochist can derive pleasure from lashing his partner and imagining what it would feel like to be lashed. Thus, sadism and masochism are the two sides of the same coin. Sadomasochistic encounters, therefore, allow for multiple points of entry for the participants and for those viewing the interaction. The limits of sadism and masochism are unclear and the roles are changeable. For Freud’s analysis of this, see Sigmund Freud, “A Child Is Being Beaten – A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1974), 17:177-204. It was originally published in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 1 (1920): 371-395. For an examination of the slippage between sadism and masochism, see J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), 403.

\(^{87}\) Porter had worked in film since the early years of the Edison Manufacturing Company. He started as a projectionist, showing Vitascope reels in 1896, two months after Thomas Edison debuted the machine at the Koster and Bial Theatre in New York. Prior to this, he was an electrician and a telegraph operator. In 1898, he worked at the Eden Musée in New York, which projected and produced films. This is also the year that he began producing films. For a summary of Porter’s career and his contribution to the development of narrative cinema, see Charles Musser, “The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter,” *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 1 (Autumn 1979): 1-38.
passengers. Throughout the film, Porter filmed the bandits’ actions from behind and when he did show their faces, they are often in shadows. The rear view of the bandits is essential to the impact of the film. The bandits’ obscured faces add to their ability to terrorize the audience. They become anonymous, faceless men. The absence of specificity in their features and identities gives them a shadowy presence in the film and symbolizes a threat that could take many forms. Furthermore, by filming the bandits from behind, Porter embedded the viewer in the bandits’ gang. The camera trails behind them like a lagging accomplice, transforming the viewer into one of the bandits.

Despite being planted in the gang, the viewer also experiences sympathies for the bandits’ victims. About halfway through the film, the bandits force the train to stop. Two bandits threaten the engineer so he will unhook the engine car, and they drive away with him aboard. The rest of the train stands stranded outside of town. Three of the remaining bandits line up the passengers outside the train and walk down the line collecting their valuables; they shoot one man who tries to run away. Then, the bandits escape on the detached engine car and ride off. The next shot shows the train car stopping. All four bandits run into the woods with their backs to the camera, and the audience sees them from a distance as they make their way to their hideout. Porter’s emphasis on rear and side views of the bandits serves to insert the viewer into the action. Unlike The Bewitched Inn in which the viewer identifies with the protagonist and shares in his frustration with the unruly objects in the room, the viewer does not identify with one bandit in particular. Instead he is made to feel as though he is a member of the gang.

As The Great Train Robbery continues, the daughter of the telegraph operator at the train station finds her father and unties him. Now free, he runs into a dance hall to alert the dancers to the robbery. The dancers include men wearing hats and holsters, who at first glance may appear to be the bandits themselves enjoying some revelry after their heist. However, the astute viewer will notice that these men in the dance hall do not wear bandanas around their necks like the
bandits do. The bandanas are the only obvious difference between the “good guys” in the posse and the bandits. The posse rides their horses into the woods, shooting their guns in the air as they look for the bandits’ hideout. We next see the bandits rifling through their booty when the posse arrives with guns blazing. The posse shoots and kills all of the bandits. The final scene of the film shows the bandit played by Justus D. Barnes filmed from the waist up looking directly into the camera and firing his gun at the viewer.

If one had not realized the slight difference in costume between the posse and bandits, this final scene could seem as though the posse were shooting the last bandit, the viewer. However, if one recognized the difference between the bandits and the posse, the audience facing the gunman is not a criminal but a victim or a witness silenced forever. Adding additional ambiguity to this scene is its placement in the film, which was not fixed. A projectionist could decide to begin or end the film with this scene. When placed at the end, it gives the film a solemn sense of finality. It also emphasizes the viewer’s place in the plot that as one of the bandits.

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88 Noel Burch notes that Porter filmed The Great Train Robbery from a distance. The long and wide shots popular in early films allowed all of the action in the scene to be filmed at once and seen by the viewer. Filming actors at a distance also helped to keep their identities anonymous, which most directors did in the early years of film before the star system took hold. See Burch, “Film’s Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response,” October 11 (Winter 1979): 78-79.

89 The image of a gunman firing or taking aim at the viewer had already been used in painting in America by Charles Schreyvogel. Alan C. Braddock argues that Schreyvogel participated in what he calls ‘gun vision,’ which he points out “attained heightened effects of attraction by targeting the beholder with vivid pictorial devices” and dominated popular culture in the form of Wild Bill performances, popular myths about the western United States, and films featuring robberies or gun battles like Porter’s The Great Train Robbery. Schreyvogel often targeted the viewers by painting one of the figures pointing a gun in the direction of the viewers. He repeated this action in Breaking the Line, 1903, Protecting the Emigrants, 1906, and The Pickets, 1907. This feature, used most often in his paintings of the American West, immediately captured viewers’ attention and increased the realism of the work. One of his first paintings to use this strategy was My Bunkie, 1899, which was exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, where it was awarded a bronze medal. The gun in these works operates not only as an attraction but also as a metaphor for vision. Braddock examines the impact of Schreyvogel’s figures shooting at the viewer, the artist’s attention-grabbing compositions, and the relationship of Schreyvogel’s paintings to cinema in “Shooting the Beholder: Charles Schreyvogel and the Spectacle of Gun Vision,” American Art 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 36-59.
association with the bandits had been hinted at throughout the film with the shots of the bandits from the rear. Yet when the scene is placed at the beginning of the film, the viewer immediately becomes involved in the action in a different way: he is the first of the bandits’ victims.\textsuperscript{90} Drawn into the plot as casualty number one, he follows the bandits’ heist surreptitiously, trailing behind them or watching from the distance of the long shots.

In \textit{The Great Train Robbery}, the viewer is a voyeur who is deeply involved in the action of the film. Similarly, the viewer of Lautrec’s \textit{Voltige} becomes embroiled in the performance via the eye contact of the clown who transforms the viewer into an accomplice to the threatened violence. Likewise, \textit{Ballets} makes room for the viewer within the performance. The three women in kimonos watch the dancer before them in character, and they create a space for the viewer to occupy and participate as a character in the play. The rear view of the figures that Lautrec provided in the drawings facilitates the viewer’s insertion into the pictures.

The view of figures from behind was a recurring feature of Lautrec’s work. In \textit{At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance} from 1890 (figure 116), he depicted two figures dancing in the center of a dance circle. Lautrec painted the man from the side, with his delicate legs tapping out the beat. His partner is shown from the rear. The artist left a gap in the dance circle, near a brightly dressed courtesan. To the right of her, most of the crowd has their backs to the viewer as they converse with one another. Lautrec also presented figures from behind in \textit{At the Moulin Rouge: La Goulue and her Sister}, 1892 (figure 117). Indeed, it is the rear view that makes the images accessible to the viewer in many of the \textit{Au cirque} drawings. It pulls him into the work and

\textsuperscript{90} Charles Musser notes the added realism of the film with the inclusion of this shot, which incidentally is labeled “Realism” in the Edison catalogue. The scene of Barnes shooting at the camera strengthens the viewer’s relationship with the robbery victims. This connection to the experience of the train passengers links the film to the viewer-as-passenger convention of films shot from moving trains. See Musser, \textit{The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907}, History of the American Cinema (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 1:354-355. Also see Charles Musser, “Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity.” \textit{Yale Journal of Criticism} 7, no. 2 (1994): 224.
transforms him into a participant in the action. Rather than being relegated to the stands, he is in the ring with the performers rehearsing with them. The absence of barriers makes him one of them. We see have seen this already in *Travail de panneau* in which the clown holding the paper circle functions as a *repoussoir figure*, but Lautrec also portrayed figures from behind in *Clown dresseur* (figure 87), *Cheval Pointant* (figure 17), and *Dans les coulisses: l’attente* (figure 16). In each of these drawings, the viewer is positioned in close proximity to the figures. He is so close in *Dans les coulisses* that the shadows, which the bottom edge of the drawings cuts off, fall on him and push him into the picture.

Proximity, which locates the viewer in Lautrec’s drawings, is an essential characteristic of early films featuring trains. Whether the Lumière brothers’ *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, 1895, or Méliès’s *Panorama from the Top of a Moving Train*, 1898, trains facilitate the audience’s insertion of itself into the events of the film. *Arrival of a Train*, the first Lumière film shown to the public, features a train coming into the La Ciotat train station near Marseille. The tracks cut across the composition at a diagonal from the lower left corner to the upper right. As the train pulls into the station, it rushes toward the audience. Cars quickly pass by the viewer until the train finally stops twenty-eight seconds into the fifty-second-long film. Passengers exit the train while new riders step aboard, and the train departs. The diagonal angle of the train tracks

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91 The railroad and early cinema had many connections. For an examination of the development of these two technologies, see Lynn Kirby, *Parallel Track: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

92 Reports about the first screening of this film describe people running from their seats and screaming because they believed that the train was going to hit them. Scholars have cast doubt on the veracity of these statements, but they agree that some members of the audience did experience anxiety while watching the train hurtle toward them. For an analysis of the truthfulness of the accounts of spectators fleeing the theater, see Gunning, “An Aesthetics of Astonishment,” 31-36 and Michael Leja, “Seeing, Touching, Fleeing,” in *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880-1910*, exh. cat., ed. Nancy Mowll Mathews and Charles Musser, (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press in association with Williams College Museum of Art, 2005), 165-167. Stephen Bottomore also analyzes audience reaction to seeing trains in film, including why the legend of fleeing spectators was perpetuated and psychological reasons for strong reactions to seeing trains moving toward them in “The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the ‘Train Effect,’” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19, no. 2 (1999): 177-216.
pushes the movement of passengers to the foreground and closer to the viewer in much the same way that Lautrec’s *Ballets* places the viewer within the performance.

*Panorama* takes the viewer even closer than *Arrival of a Train*. With a camera positioned atop of a moving train, Méliès presented the audience with a little-seen view of the train’s journey. From the roof of the train, the train cars form an inverted V-shape as the train travels through a small town. Méliès emphasized the train as a focal point at the beginning of the film by framing the shot with fences on both sides. As the train moves forward, houses and other buildings lining the track limit the audience’s peripheral vision and provide an exciting new view of the city to the audience. The audience can only see this point of view in film; it is not one readily available to a passenger in real life. When one is a passenger, one has a restricted view from his window that shows him only one side of the scenery and little information about what lies in the distance ahead of the train. Only by removing people from the film does Méliès fully insert the audience into it.

In his *Au cirque* drawings, Lautrec similarly brought the viewer into the picture and removed hurdles of vision. He located the viewer in the practice ring with the performers in all of the drawings. One can barely see the stands in many of the drawings, and when they are visible, they are empty.93 The intimacy of the space provides the viewer with a glimpse of the circus that he would not otherwise have had. Even though it was common for people to walk around the tents and even peek backstage during performances, the rehearsal space remained closed. Thus, the combination of the figures in Lautrec’s work making eye contact with the viewer and his

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93 Fritz Novotny notes that the emptiness of the stands and the cut-off portion of the ring in the *Au cirque* drawings adds to their sense of movement: “Many of the drawings show a piece of the ring and in these smooth curves, above all when a *flat* section of the ring is chosen, Lautrec expresses an intensity of movement which far surpasses the purely illustrative function of the showing a portion of the edge of the ring.” Fritz Novotny, *Toulouse-Lautrec* (New York: Greenwich House, 1983), 51. In contrast, Anne Roquebert characterizes the ring and the empty stands served the purpose to emphasize Lautrec’s confinement at Neuilly in “Circus Drawings,” in *Toulouse-Lautrec*, Frèches-Thory et al., 480-481.
creation of space for the viewer to occupy in the center of the action in his late work brings the viewer into the space of the picture and makes him a participant in the action. By borrowing the techniques used in early film to entice the audience, he capitalized on the strategies of the new technology to bring a sense of immediacy to his work.

Yet Lautrec was not alone in including elements of early cinema in his paintings and drawings. The works of the Impressionists have also been compared to the new medium.94 The artists’ awareness of film varies, and the extent to which artists such as Lautrec attended screenings is not always clear. Lautrec did not mention film in any of his correspondence.95 However, the variety of locations in which one could see a film, including department stores and cabarets such as the Eldorado, for which Lautrec produced posters, suggests the ubiquity of early...
cinema. Furthermore, the culture around Lautrec was preoccupied with film. Recent publications that draw similarities between film and art made in traditional media at the turn of the century emphasize the similarity of subject matter rather than an in-depth analysis of techniques. To determine how Lautrec’s pictures stand out from those of his peers, it will be useful to summarize the arguments scholars have made about his colleagues’ work.

Two exhibitions about the overlapping subject matter in painting and early film have occurred in the last ten years. The first opened in 2005 at the Williams College Museum of Art: *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880-1910*. The catalogue features essays from film historians Charles Musser and Tom Gunning, as well as Marta Braun. The exhibition highlights the proliferation of early film in America and compares the ways different media portrayed the same subject matter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in America. Musser, for example, discusses the similar content featured in Edouard von Kilanyi’s *tableaux vivants*, Edison’s films, and Kinetoscope peephole films. The common themes encouraged audiences and critics to compare the execution of the subject matter and the media. In regard to this, he notes that contemporary critics measured the Lumière’s film *The Horses at their Morning Drink* (shown in Philadelphia in 1896) and Edison’s *Ninth U.S. Cavalry Watering Horses*, 1898 against Rosa Bonheur’s *The Horse Fair*, 1853-55. In his lecture series, Muybridge

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96 One could even see films in department stores like Grands Magasins Dufayel in 1896. Schwartz, 187.
also compared his studies of equine locomotion to *The Horse Fair*, criticizing the inaccuracies of the horses in motion in the painting.\footnote{Musser, “A Cornucopia of Images,” 16-24.}

Overall, the exhibition emphasized the new technologies and outlets available for audiences to see films and photography, as well as the coincidence of subject matter in painting and early film. J. Stuart Blackton, an artist who drew quickly and painted pictures on stage for spectators, even produced films featuring artists and the artistic process: *An Artist’s Dream*, 1899 and *The Artist’s Dilemma*, 1900.\footnote{For a discussion of Blackton’s work and the overlapping subject matter of art and film, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, “Art and Film: Interactions,” in *Moving Pictures*, 145-158.} The essays in the catalogue discuss paintings by John Sloan, Childe Hassam, George Luks, John Singer Sargent, and Maurice Prendergast. Most of the artists in the exhibition either worked before the advent of film (such as Bonheur) or after it had taken hold in American (after 1900). In contrast, we begin to see evidence of strategies used in the cinema of attractions films in Lautrec’s works beginning in 1895 and 1896.\footnote{Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, the French Minister of Culture and Communication, explains the purpose in the foreword of the exhibition catalogue: “[This exhibition] examines for the first time connections between painting and the birth of film and shows how the Lumière brothers’ films proceeded from the Impressionist tradition.” \[“…présente l’intérêt d’interroger pour la première fois les liens entre la peinture et la naissance du cinéma et de montrer combien les films des frères Lumière procèdent de la tradition impressionniste.”\] Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, “Avant propos,” in *Impressionnisme et naissance du Cinématographe*, exh. cat., ed. Sylvie Ramond (Lyon: Fage and Musée des Beaux Arts de Lyon, 2005), 163.}

Like *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880-1910*, *Impressionnisme et naissance du cinématographe* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon emphasized the common subject matter of the Impressionists and early filmmakers, especially the Lumière brothers.\footnote{For example, it examined the similarities in the content of Gustave Caillebotte’s *Le Pont de l’Europe*, 1876-77 and the Lumières’ *Panorama de l’arrivée en gare de Perrache pris du train*, 1896. The exhibition, which took place in the Lumières’ hometown, juxtaposed paintings and films about families, modernity, factories and industrialization, trains, the outdoors, and movement, calling attention to the way artists recorded the modern experience in different media. It posited the}
Lumières as “cousins” to the Impressionists, benefitting from the spirit of freedom produced in
Impressionist painting.\textsuperscript{102} The strength of the connection can be seen in the overlapping subject
matter of films and paintings rather than formal or stylistic elements, though they both presented
scenes in two-dimensions, took liberties in the framing of scenes, and played with the contrast
between light and dark.\textsuperscript{103} This overlap is intriguing since Louis Lumière claimed to disdain the
Impressionists, preferring the art of Alexandre Cabanel and William-Adolphe Bouguereau to that
of Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. However, his photographs and films share more
qualities with the Impressionists than with their more conservative peers.\textsuperscript{104} Let us remember that
the Lumières made films about twenty years after the first Impressionist Exhibition, and that by
the 1890s, the Impressionist style was no longer shocking.\textsuperscript{105} Furthermore, the worlds of
filmmakers and Impressionists overlapped. Méliès, for example, met Degas at one of Gustave
Moreau’s parties.\textsuperscript{106} The catalogue’s driving point is that we cannot ignore the coincidence of
film and Impressionism. Just as artists working in the middle of the nineteenth century had to
address the tension between painting and photography, so too did artists working at the end of the
century need to confront what painting meant in the face of film.

The third and most recent exhibition to consider the connection between film and
painting is \textit{Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement} exhibition from 2011 at the Royal
Academy of Arts in London. This exhibition went farther than these previous exhibitions in its
analysis of movement, technology, and painting. Curators Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{102} Gérard Collomb, “Introduction,” in \textit{Impressionnisme et naissance du Cinématographe}, 166.
\textsuperscript{103} Vincent Pomarède, “‘…dix tableaux vivants, animés d’une vie absolument intense…’
\textsuperscript{104} Pomarède, 175.
\textsuperscript{105} Pomarède notes that even though Neo-Impressionists continued to reinterpret their
predecessors’ style, Impressionism had stopped being the divisive style that it had once been. He
continues to say that filmmakers could have knowingly incorporated Impressionist touches to
their films since their work was part of the cultural moment that they experienced. Pomarède,
176.
\textsuperscript{106} Pomarède, 181-182.
\end{footnotes}
trace Degas’s experimentation with his own camera, which began in 1895 and lasted only one year. During that time, he photographed his friends, including Stéphane Mallarmé, experimented with light and shadow, and captured subjects for future paintings. Kendall and DeVonyar convincingly argue that Degas’s depictions of ballet dancers need to be analyzed in relation to Muybridge’s and Marey’s studies of locomotion. The artist frequently depicted multiple dancers who strongly resembled each other and whose poses could be read as consecutive points in a movement. For example, *The Greek Dance*, c. 1887-92 (figure 118) portrays three dancers whose long dark tresses and body types are similar. Their poses could be read as one dancer spinning in a circle as she moves from left to right across the stage. The repetition of the single figures in one frame mimics Marey’s chronophotographs, which record various phases of a movement on a single plate. However, Kendall and DeVonyar go beyond the similarities in subject matter (which did exist in the work of Degas, Marey, and Muybridge) to consider how Degas drew upon the appearance of the new technological studies to inform the way he suggested movement in his paintings.

As a growing number of scholars turn to film theory and film to analyze works of art in traditional media, let us not forget that an early film theorist, Vachel Lindsay, compared sculpture, painting, and architecture to different genres of film in *The Art of the Moving Picture* from 1915. In it, he drew upon his background in art and his many visits to the Metropolitan Museum, and he associated film with “the general Art Museum point of view of the world.” He

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107 Kendall and DeVonyar, 186-192.
108 Kendall and DeVonyar, 207-8.
109 Lindsay revised and reprinted the in 1922. He had a background in art. He studied painting at the Art Institute of Chicago for four years before moving to New York where his instructors included Robert Henri and William Merritt Chase. George Luks, George Bellows, and Rockwell Kent were his classmates in New York. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture*, The Movies Series, ed. Martin Scorsese (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), viii, 78.
110 Lindsay, 22. Moreover, the dedication of *The Art of the Moving Picture* reads: “Dedicated to George Mather Richards in memory of the art student days we spent together when the Metropolitan Museum was our picture-drama.” Lindsay, np.
wanted to see film considered high art in the category of masterpieces held in museums, and he believed the newly built Denver Museum of Art could serve as an entrance point for film into what he called the “circuit-exhibition.” Lindsay believed that films (photoplays) were the quintessential medium of the age. As such, they fell within the domain of the museum. Like the pictographs in hieroglyphics, the objects within films convey meaning about the story, setting, and characters to the viewer. After establishing his case for film to be considered an art form, Lindsay broke down film genres into three categories (action, intimacy, and splendor) and related each of these genres to a traditional art form (sculpture, painting, and architecture).

Despite the long-recognized relationship between traditional art media and film, Lautrec’s work has not been seriously compared to film previously. Yet he and his posters have fueled the cinema’s imagining of the fin de siècle. Vanessa R. Schwartz examines how Lautrec’s vision of Montmartre at the end of the nineteenth century shaped the American construction of Paris during the 1950s and beyond in It’s So French! Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of

111 Lindsay, 17.
112 Lindsay explained that action films emphasize speed and almost always involve a chase, like action movies today. The actors in these films react expressively to the events around them. Lindsay called these big reactions “high relief” due to the drama, strain, and struggle depicted in the actors’ faces and body language. He associated the deliberate gestures of the actors with sculpture. Baroque sculpture with its heightened emotional charge and twisting poses fit Lindsay’s theory particularly well, yet he noted even the friezes of the Parthenon depicting horses have informed cowboys and westerns. See Lindsay, “Sculpture-in-Motion,” in The Art of Moving Pictures, 65-74.

As sculpture influenced the action photoplay, so did painting influence intimate photoplays, which convey warm emotions. These films capture the serenity and warmth of interior scenes of paintings by the Dutch artist Gerard ter Borch and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Characters in these films fit into their surroundings rather than standing out. See Lindsay, “Painting-in-Motion,” in The Art of the Moving Picture, 75-83, especially 79-80. Lastly, films in the splendor genre, including fairy tales, religious epics, films featuring crowds, and patriotic films, are closely aligned with architecture. In these films, the setting takes on the importance as another character; the location is so essential to the plot that one cannot imagine the film taking place anywhere else. In the 1990s and early 2000s, we witnessed the importance of location in the HBO series Sex and the City, in which the city of New York was often called the fifth character. Businesses and neighborhoods frequented by the characters became a part of Sex and the City themed tours in Manhattan. See Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, Reading Sex and the City, Reading Contemporary Television (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), especially 219-227.
Lautrec’s interpretation is especially prominent in Vincente Minnelli’s *An American in Paris*, 1951, and John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge*, 1952. Lautrec appears as a character in both films in addition to the reproduction of his work. Minnelli made Lautrec’s work come alive, through Gene Kelly’s performance. Kelly freezes in the pose of the clown Chocolat, and then the camera dissolves from the drawing into Kelly dancing in the guise of the clown. Additionally, the ballet sequence is decorated with Lautrec’s work. In the script, the scenery is described as “a complete Lautrec environment.” Huston animated the artist’s pictures in a similar fashion; he produced a flipbook effect by cutting from the two-dimensional objects to dancers.

Schwartz points out that what certainly made Lautrec’s work so emblematic for American directors was its availability to the American public. Undoubtedly, the prominence of Lautrec’s work influenced directors. Yet, for Lautrec to have had captured their imaginations so completely, something more must have been at work. Countless artists depicted the dance halls and bohemians of Montmartre, however American directors singled Lautrec’s work out as the vision of fin-de-siècle Paris. Furthermore, there was a feeling that the film industry would have been a seamless fit for him. American artist Henry Botkin observed, “Hollywood is a ‘natural’ for art. If Lautrec were alive, he would find the Montmartre characters very second rate in comparison to the extras you find in the film industry.”

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114 Schwartz, *It’s So French!* 38.
115 She notes that Lautrec had significant exposure in publications in America in the early twentieth century. For example, *The Art Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* (a museum that has a significant collection of art by nineteenth-century French artists) published articles about Lautrec in 1929 and 1935. Furthermore, thirty-one of his posters were collected and published in a book reviewed by *Newsweek* in June 1951. Schwartz, *It’s So French!* 32-33.
Perhaps the reason lies in the inherent cinematic quality of his work, especially during the last years of his career. Lautrec’s paintings, drawings, and posters from 1895 onward depict more figures in motion, emphasize the supreme moment in an action, and regularly include the viewer in the space of the work. While we cannot say with certainty that Lautrec intentionally borrowed presentation devices from the cinema, he employed the techniques of the cinema of attractions in his work. Moreover, we do not see these elements in his work prior to 1895, the year the Lumière brothers projected the first film in Paris, *The Arrival of the Train.* Not only did Lautrec adopt these features, he managed to outdo their filmic counterparts. In a film, the caper lasts a matter of seconds, and the audience must experience it from a distance and within a crowd of other moviegoers. The viewer only has one vantage point (usually frontal). Even when he sees the characters from the side or back, the camera remains positioned in the same place, as we saw in *The Bewitched Inn.* Lautrec’s works, by contrast, preserve the most exciting moment of the act for the viewer while erasing the distance between an audience and a film. A lithograph, such as *La Chaîne Simpson,* 1896 (figure 119), enlarges the scene, allowing for both immediate understanding and lingering contemplation; and a drawing, like *Travail de panneau,* is relatively small, 25.3 by 35.5 centimeters, allowing viewers to hold it in their hands for a close examination of the details (and the rear end of the woman). The intimacy of Lautrec’s works is unmatched in film.

117 Lautrec wrote letters to friends and family about how hard he worked and his attempts to avoid drinking and staying out late. He did not focus on his influences or the reasons for his stylistic choices. Schimmel compiled Lautrec’s correspondence and some relevant letters written by his family and friends in *The Letters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec,* trans. divers hands (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

118 Susan Stewart examined the effect the size of an object had on the beholder. For her analysis of the miniature, see “The Miniature,” in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 37-69.

119 One should note that film does not lack intimacy altogether, but it provides a different kind of intimacy. Roland Barthes describes the “eroticism” of the movie-going experience produced in the darkness of the movie theater and physical closeness of anonymous audience members. See Barthes, “En sortant du cinéma,” *Communications* 23 (1975): 104-105.
Not only does the smaller size of Lautrec’s works lend tactility to his work, which films lack, but it also puts the viewer in an active position. Because the events leading up to the pivotal moment on display do not appear in the drawings, the viewer’s imagination supplies this information. It also determines how the action will conclude. Lautrec presented us with only the culminating point in a sequence. Unlike a film that provides the set up, climax, and resolution for a passive audience, Lautrec’s work requires an active and engaged viewer. We ultimately determine the circumstances and fate of the performers as we grasp them in our hands or peruse them as they hang on a wall. In these ways, Lautrec outmaneuvered film directors.

In the years following Lautrec’s death in 1901, artists continued to study movement and attempted to capture it in their work. The Futurists glorified new technology. They emphasized the novelty, speed, and brutality of modern inventions. The works of Giacomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni recorded the dynamism of the body as it moved through space. Unlike Lautrec, who focused on the culminating point of an action, they painted movements in their entirety. Cubists, likewise, expanded upon what paintings could show a viewer. By including multiple points of view of an object in their paintings, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque replicated the movement of our eyes and the bodies as we navigate around objects.

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121 For an examination of the relationship between Cubism and film, see Bernice B. Rose, ed., Picasso, Braque and Early Film in Cubism, exh. cat. (New York: Pace Wildenstein, 2007). In the first essay of the catalogue, “Cinema and the New Spirit in Art Within a Culture of Movement,” Tom Gunning examines the new model of seeing that the cinema offered to viewers and artists. Comparing the movable camera in film to the shifting vantage points available to cyclists, specifically Sengle, Alfred Jarry’s main character of Days and Nights, 1897. He demarcates new technology that not only transformed the visual experience of time and space, but also our understanding of it. He describes it as “a mode of spatial exploration and transit as much as contemplation.” Next, Rose examines how the formal qualities of Picasso’s and Braque’s Cubist
As the twentieth century proceeded, movement remained a significant point of analysis. Harold Rosenberg’s interpretation of Abstract Expressionism, for example, centered on the act of painting itself when he described the style as “action paintings.” The canvas became a document of the artist’s motion while producing the work. Rather than trying to portray the movement of another body in the work, artists left an indexical mark of their gestures. Instead of looking outward toward other media as a template for suggesting movement, artists turned inward to themselves.

By mentioning other artists’ exploration of movement, I do not want to imply that one can draw a line connecting these diverse artists in a singular drive to capture motion in their works. A teleological approach such as this would hinder our understanding of these complex works. However, I would like to suggest that Lautrec’s examination of movement was part of a larger focus of artists. Furthermore, by turning to film to help him solve the question of how to illustrate it best, he found solutions that later artists, like the Futurists, would build upon in their own engagement with art and technology.

Scholars and popular culture often pigeonhole Lautrec into the role of the malformed reveler. Although he was an aristocrat who frequented dancehalls and brothels in the seedier areas of Paris, he was also an innovator and a man deeply connected to his time. He not only integrated himself into bohemia, but also he found the most effective ways to depict it. His modernism extended beyond his subject matter and into his compositional strategies. He borrowed framing paintings from 1907-1914 confront and adopt film techniques of editing and viewing, including doubling, flickering images, and time, in “Picasso Braque and the Early Film in Cubism.” Finally, Jennifer Wild analyzes the multitude of cinema venues in the early twentieth century in Spain and France in her essay, “The Cinematographic Geographies of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.”

techniques and aspects of performance from early film. By emphasizing angles and moments
either not included or not lingered upon in film, Lautrec succeeded in outdoing early films.

Viewers can hold the pictures in their hands. This produces a sense of closeness to and ownership
of the works rather than the distance-generating effect of watching a projected film in a crowd of
strangers. His pictures allow the audience to savor the trick with all of its danger and sex appeal.
Therefore, they endure in the hands and minds of viewers in a tangible way with which film
cannot compete.
Conclusion

Throughout my examination of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series, I have argued for the extent to which he engaged in the critical issues of his day. The personal nature of the drawings for Lautrec and the high stakes involved in their production: his release from the clinic at Neuilly-sur-Seine. Many other scholars have used these circumstances as their primary means of interpreting the works. However, I emphasized throughout my analysis of the series fresh avenues of contextual research and applied new theoretical frameworks to Lautrec’s pictures in order to understand his investigation of sexuality, feminism, masculinity, and new technology. While examining these issues in his œuvre, I also considered the ways that Lautrec explored the possibilities of the medium of drawing while challenging its supposed limitations. In order to depict figures and animals in motion convincingly, Lautrec worked in the same milieu as directors of early films.

The *Au cirque* series serves as more than a testament to the healing that Lautrec underwent during his stay at the clinic in 1899. It stands as his last major artistic production. In the eighteen months after his release, Lautrec dramatically slowed the pace at which he completed paintings, drawings, and prints. During the height of his productivity, he worked tirelessly in his studio, plied his usual nightspots in Montmartre, and still delivered his lithographic stones to the printer bright-eyed at seven o’clock in the morning.¹ In addition to

¹ See Philippe Huisman and Madeleine Grillaert Dortu, *Lautrec by Lautrec* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 126-128. Despite his zealous revelry, Lautrec attempted to convince his family that he practiced self-control. In late 1886, he wrote to his mother asking for 300 francs: “I think that will be enough for the time being, but one can’t be sure of anything…I’M GOING TO WORK HARD AND TRY NOT TO DRINK.” Herbert D. Schimmel, *The Letters of Henri de Toulouse-
painting fewer pictures after leaving Neuilly, he also took fewer risks in terms of subject matter and composition. He replaced the cabaret stars and prostitutes in his pictures from the early to mid-1890s with scenes from the opera and close friends and relatives, and the liveliness disappeared from his figures and brushstrokes. In *An Examination at the Medical Faculty*, 1901 (figure 120), for example, Lautrec depicts his cousin Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran defending his thesis in medical school. In contrast to the confident and energetic application of pigment that we see in his work from a few years earlier, Lautrec’s brushstrokes here are loose to the point of sloppiness. Additionally, he has moved away from the vibrant hues he used in *Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant*, 1892 (figure 3), *At the Moulin Rouge*, 1892-95 (figure 121), and *Le Rappel*, 1899 (figure 11), and he replaced them with the heavy, somber colors. Instead of conveying the spirit of his sitters in a minimum number of tâches, his representation of the professors is unfocused. Their facial features dissolve into a blur of paint daubs, while their hands bear the marks of overworking and sit dead on the table in front of them.

By choosing to focus my analysis of Lautrec’s œuvre on the *Au cirque* series, I aimed to elucidate the extent to which he addressed the question of power. To accomplish this, I examined the sadomasochistic undertones of the performances in the works, as well as in the construction of masculinity. I also illustrated how the animals in the drawings supplied a way for women to escape and challenge figures of authority and the dominant ideology. Finally, I considered how Lautrec’s compositional strategies in the *Au cirque* series increased the impact that the pictures had on the viewer by exploring how his depiction of figures in motion changed as his career progressed and new technological advancements for recording movement emerged. By borrowing

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Reinhold Heller argues that Lautrec began moving away from the celebrity-culture of Montmartre after 1895. He writes, “Marketed by Joyant, celebrated above all for his lithographs, he withdrew from significantly controversial subjects, translated them into more neutral formulations, or accented technical refinements in their presentation.” Heller, *Toulouse-Lautrec: The Soul of Montmartre* (New York: Prestel, 1997), 101.
from and challenging the nascent film industry, Lautrec not only enhanced the energy in his images, but he also made the images and the issues that he investigated through them more powerful.

Furthermore, throughout my study of Lautrec’s œuvre, I strove to demonstrate that reading his work, especially his _Au cirque_ series, primarily as a reflection of his psychosis or as evidence of his personal relationship to the performers of Montmartre diminishes his contribution to his specific cultural moment and denies his active involvement in its construction. T. J. Clark’s work was instrumental reorienting the field of art history to recognize the artist’s decisive role in the production of art. He renounced the practice of reading an object merely as a reflection of the time period and the artist’s passivity, and in so doing, he returned agency to the artist. One could no longer claim a simple case of “influence” or argue that an artist’s work was the “product” of an economic or historical event. Rather, the artist critically adopted or ignored aspects of his or her progenitor’s work, and s/he engaged in and reacted to the circumstances of a particular moment. By reading Lautrec’s work as participating in the production of specific aspects of fin-de-siècle culture, I argued that Lautrec did more than record the people and places of Montmartre. He painted and drew his version of the events, and his representations have made their way into our cultural collective memory of them. His vision of the 1880s and 1890s has become one of the most meaningful depictions of the period by artist or camera.

Yet Lautrec’s contribution to our understanding of the last decades of the nineteenth century extends beyond merely encapsulating the risqué atmosphere of Montmartrois dancehalls and cabarets. In his paintings, lithographs, and drawings, he demonstrated how his

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contemporaries navigated their world, as well as probed their overarching concerns. In addition, he offered viewers a glimpse of the strategies for navigating the complexities of the time period. Drawings from the *Au cirque* series, such as *Voltige* (figure 5) and *Travail sur le panneau* (figure 6), that feature sadomasochistic undertones provide us with a point of entry into the web of issues enmeshed in Lautrec’s work. When we consider these instances of sadomasochism in the drawings beyond their connection to Lautrec’s personal experiences, we start to see that preoccupations with so-called sexual deviancy extended beyond Lautrec and the medical community to the general public.

In the mid-1880s, Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* opened the floodgates of information on sexual deviancy. As more information came to light, people realized, sometimes for the first time in their lives, that they were not the only ones with these urges or preferences. In this way, Krafft-Ebing’s and his colleagues’ investigations of sexual deviancy ironically had the effect of normalizing these “abnormal” desires. The discussion of sadomasochism and the demystifying of it in medical texts, novels, and newspapers accelerated the public’s education. As we have seen, journalists in the nineteenth century did not balk at applying the term to non-sexual and even non-violent contexts.

Through the sadomasochistic encounters represented in the *Au cirque* series, Lautrec not only suggested the extent to which sadomasochism had permeated popular culture in the fin de siècle, but he also pointed to the interlocking issues present in these discussion of it. The tension between the sexes in *Voltige, Travail sur le panneau*, and *Écuyère de panneau (Elle est gentille la demoiselle)* (figure 10) indicates the variety of forms sadomasochism could take. The drawings also point to the difficult transition men and women experienced as their roles in society changed. Lautrec’s female figures do not always succumb to the wishes of the male figures. Frequently, they challenge their male counterparts, including the most powerful man depicted in the series: the ringmaster. The encounters between the sexes are neither simple nor subdued; Lautrec
captured the most fraught moments of their interactions, and thereby, conveyed information about the state of gender relations in the face of the emerging feminist movement.

These issues of gender and their effect on our navigation of the world in Lautrec’s *Au cirque* series extend beyond one moment in his career. By exploring works that span his œuvre in my analysis, I demonstrated how Lautrec’s depiction of masculinity and the boundaries of humanity developed and changed. From his early portraits of his father (*Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1879/81 (figure 22)) and himself (*Self-Portrait before a Mirror*, 1880 (figure 43)), we see opposing masculinities: in the former, an established aristocratic masculinity identified with the *ancien régime*; and in the latter, a masculinity in the process of forming and tied to Lautrec’s identity as an artist. As his circle of acquaintances grew in the late 1880s and 1890s, his representations of masculinity became multivalent. Raewyn W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity provided a model for my investigation of the relationship among different masculinities in Lautrec’s work. By scrutinizing Lautrec’s representations of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity in *Désiré Dihau*, 1890 (figure 23), *Louis Pascal*, 1891 (figure 46), *The Laundryman*, 1894 (figure 47), and his posters of Aristide Bruant, we saw the extent of complexity and instability in fin-de-siècle masculinity.

In the *Au cirque* series, Lautrec demonstrated that no single definition of masculinity could sufficiently explain the diversity of masculinities operating at the turn of the century. By looking to Sofia Aboim’s concept of “plural masculinities” to examine Lautrec’s depiction of the ringmaster, I argued that Lautrec started to depict a far more complicated representation of masculinity in the 1890s than he had represented in the 1880s. In combination with this expansion of the boundaries of masculinity, Lautrec began to explore the beauty and strength of the male body in the figure of the strongman. His interest in this subject paralleled France’s

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obsession with the health of young men. Furthermore, it coincided with the rise of celebrity strongmen such as Eugen Sandow, who was renowned for the aesthetic quality and athletic capabilities of his muscular physique.

Not only did Lautrec expand his representation of masculinity in the *Au cirque* series, but he also stretched our understanding of our humanity. His thoughtful depiction of animals in the drawings blurred the boundary between human and animal. By using to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of becoming-animal to frame my analysis of Lautrec’s depiction of animals in the drawings, I contended that the women and horses in his drawings connect on a physical and emotional level that transcends the division of species.

Lautrec’s interest in representing animals began when he was a child. In my overview of the animals that he painted as a student, I noted the care with which he depicted them. He continued to create nuanced representations of animals throughout his career. However, they served a greater function in *Au cirque* than in his earlier work: they provide a path of escape and transformation. To reveal the multiple levels on which the drawings operate, I drew upon a diverse body of literature from animal studies, animal rights, sexuality, ecofeminism, and posthumanism. I suggested that the horses in *Voltige* and *Travail sur le panneau* facilitated the transportation of the equestriennes from a position of danger and potential violence to safety. The process of becoming opens up a new space to challenge the dominant ideology. Therefore, becoming-animal offered the women and horses the means to remove themselves from the position of danger and potential subjugation by the ringmaster.

Through an analysis of the complicated relationships among the figures in the *Au cirque* drawings, I sought to establish the necessity to look beyond Lautrec’s biography in our consideration of them. Yet Lautrec’s innovation in these works extends beyond the confines of subject matter, and it includes the manner in which he depicted the scenes. I argued that by borrowing elements from the cinema of attractions in the last years of his career, Lautrec
produced works that take hold of the viewer’s attention. At the same time, he increased the immediacy of his themes: sexual deviance, masculinity, and animality. Through an examination of the three phases of his career (adolescent work, early career, and mature career), I traced the changes in his method of representing movement. In the first phase, the bulk of the energy in his pictures came from his frenetic brushstrokes rather than the way he positioned the figures. At the same time that he was refining his artistic skills in René Princeteau’s, Léon Bonnat’s, and Fernand Cormon’s studios, technological developments in photography allowed scientists to record human and animal locomotion. The combination of this greater knowledge of how bodies moved through space and the refinement of Lautrec’s artistic skills led to more striking depictions of movement in his early career.

As exciting as these scientific developments were for Lautrec’s art, the invention of cinema as we would recognize it today posed the greatest challenge to artists: to produce a static image that could compete with one that moved. Lautrec found the answer in the cinema itself. Tom Gunning argues that most early films from 1895 to around 1906, such as those made by the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès, fall into the category of the cinema of the attractions. These films grab viewers’ attention with an exciting feat, directly address them by making eye contact or gesturing toward them, and often present a point of view or stunt they would be unlikely to encounter in their everyday lives. Although Lautrec appropriated elements from the cinema of attractions in his mature work, including the Au cirque series, he did not merely copy the filmmakers’ strategies. He exceeded the effect that films can achieve by exploiting a facet unique to two-dimensional, static works of art: the ability to prolong the anticipation of the feat indefinitely. As his work matured, Lautrec learned the benefit of depicting the climactic moment

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7 Tom Gunning first explained the phrase in print in “Cinema of Attractions, Early Film, Its Spectators and the Avant-Garde,” Wide Angle 8, no. 3/4 (Fall 1986): 63-70. This essay was reprinted in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56-62.
of an action. By freezing this moment in his painting, drawing, or print, he could maintain the feelings of anxiety, excitement, and anticipation in viewers as they marvel at the maneuver and wonder about its denouement.

Although Lautrec may have encountered difficult times at Neuilly, we cannot restrict our analysis of the *Au cirque* series to his feelings and experiences. As I have argued, such an interpretation strips his work of its complexity and entrenchment in a broader social context. If these works only related to his stay in the clinic, then they would not be worthy of our attention because they would tell us little to nothing about the fin de siècle and Lautrec’s participation in its social issues. However, Lautrec was acutely aware of the joys, hopes, concerns, and fears around him; Jan Polášek describes him as “the most contemporary of his contemporaries.”

His representations of the dancehalls and the celebrity culture of Montmartre demonstrate the depth of his involvement in these issues. Yet these subjects are not the only places in which Lautrec participated in broad cultural and social issues. My analysis of the *Au cirque* series asserted that these drawings not only engaged in some of the most critical questions of the last years of the nineteenth century (namely sexuality, feminism, masculinity, and technology), but they also testify to Lautrec’s career-long exploration of these issues. From his works as a student to his last pieces, he never stopped addressing what it means to be human. He continuously pushed the boundaries of our humanity to reveal the depth of our connections to each other and the world around us.

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Appendix A

Illustrations

Figure 1 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Equestrienne (At the Cirque Fernando)*, 1887-1888, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 161.3 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Joseph Winterbotham Collection
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Figure 12 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *À Grenelle ou La Buveuse d’absinthe*, 1886, oil on canvas, 55 x 49 cm. Museo Botero, Bogotá, Colombia
Figure 13 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Artilleryman Saddling his Horse*, 1879, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 37.5 cm. Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi, France
Figure 14 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Parodie de Bois sacré aux arts et muses*, 1884, oil on canvas, 172 x 380 cm. The Henry and Rose Pearlman Collection on loan to the Princeton University Art Museum.

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Figure 16 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Dans les coulisses*, 1899, black and colored chalks and graphite on paper, 31.1 x 20.2 cm. Harvard Art Museum/Fogg Museum
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Figure 23 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Désiré Dihau*, 1890, oil on cardboard, 56.2 x 45 cm. Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi, France
Figure 24 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Aristide Bruant in his Cabaret*, 1893, lithograph, 127 x 92.5 cm.
Figure 25 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The White Horse “Gazelle,”* 1881, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 56.1 cm. Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi, France
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Figure 47 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *The Laundryman*, 1894, oil on cardboard, 57.8 x 46.2 cm. Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi, France
Figure 48 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Eldorado: Aristide Bruant*, 1892, lithograph, 150 x 100 cm.
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Figure 72 Harry Pointer, Cat Reading, reproduced in Dr. J.-M. Eder, Photographie instantanée son application aux arts et aux sciences, trans. O. Campo (Paris: Gauthier-Villars et fils, 1888), figure 105
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Figure 115 Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Mist*, c. 1818, oil on canvas, 94.8 x 74.8 cm. Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany
Figure 116 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance*, 1890, oil on canvas, 115.6 x 149.9 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Henry P. McIlhenny Collection in memory of Frances P. McIlhenny, 1986
Figure 117 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge: La Goulue and her Sister*, 1892, lithograph, 62.2 x 48.3 cm.
Figure 118 Edgar Degas, *The Greek Dance*, c. 1887-92, pastel on joined paper laid down on board, 58 x 49 cm. Private collection
Figure 119 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *La Chaîne Simpson*, 1896, lithograph, 88 x 124 cm.
Figure 120 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *An Examination at the Medical Faculty*, 1901, oil on cardboard, 65 x 81 cm. Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi, France
Figure 121 Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge*, 1892-95, oil on canvas, 123 x 131 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection
Table 1 Google N-Gram Analytics for the word “sadisme” in French texts between the years 1870 and 1915
Table 2 Google N-Gram Analytics for the word “sadisme” in French texts between the years 1870 and 1905
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VITA

Kimberly Musial Datchuk

Education
2014 PhD Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
   Major Area of Study: Nineteenth-Century European Art
   Minor Areas of Study: The Northern Renaissance; Post-1945 American and European Art
2006 MA Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
2002 BA with High Distinction, University of Michigan

Peer-Reviewed Publication

Selected Papers Presented

Selected Awards
Creative Achievement Award, College of Arts and Architecture, The Pennsylvania State University, 2014
Graduate Scholar Award, International Conference on the Image, 2013

Selected Fellowships and Grants
2014 Department of Art History Dissertation Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University
2012 Department of Art History Dissertation Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University
2011 Louise D. Purcell Memorial Endowment, The Pennsylvania State University
2011 Department of Art History Research Grant, The Pennsylvania State University
2011 Francis E. Hyslop Memorial Fellowship, Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
2009 Babcock Galleries Endowed Fund, Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
2007 Art History Donors Travel Grant, Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University
2004 University Fellowship, College of Arts and Architecture, The Pennsylvania State University

Selected Teaching Experience
Instructor of Record: Romanticism to Revolution – European Art in the 19th Century, The Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2007, Spring 2009

Selected Curatorial Experience