

**ROSA BONHEUR'S PLOWING IN THE NIVERNAIS (1849):
THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SUCCESS.**

By

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ABSTRACT

Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), the mid-nineteenth century French painter of rural landscapes, has been heroically constructed by twentieth century studies as an independent and strong-willed 'woman artist.' This personality attributed to Bonheur has also been conflated with her success as an artist in the Second Empire. This thesis will focus on Rosa Bonheur's painting Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849, the occasion of her first major critical acclaim, with regard to the issues of landscape, gender and patronage in the political context of 1848 and 1849. The main interest of this study will be to suggest historically based reasons for her reception at the Salon of 1849, thereby deconstructing the myth of the 'woman artist' as responsible for her success.

Chapter One will look at the chief aspects of Bonheur's mythic identity, investigating discrepancies between these and the case of politically active women in 1848 and 1849. While discussing the history of these Republican years, reasons for Bonheur's large commission will be examined in regard to her prior career, personal political connections, to painting category of landscape and to the market. Chapter Two will deal with the historical and political significance of Nivernais as a location and with the means of representation of this rural landscape in terms of a rural myth. Chapter Three will focus on critical reception of the painting at the Salon of 1849 with attention to two particular ways in which the discourse (amongst other factors) causes the painting to function positively at this particular historical moment in France.

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INTRODUCTION

The young French artist Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899) entered her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais for exhibition in the Salon of 1849. The painting, 173 by 260 centimetres in dimension, showed a scene of peaceful, constructive labour in the French countryside and focused on a large team of oxen plowing a field. It evolved from a commission offered by the Second Republican government in July 1848 (see Fig. 1 and discussion, Chapter 1) and was completed by Bonheur shortly before the Salon's opening in mid-June, 1849. Several critics reviewing this Salon entry in 1849 suggested it to be the outstanding work of the exhibition, and the tenor of the critical response toward it was on the whole overwhelmingly positive.¹ This reaction by the critics to Rosa Bonheur's painting (the work of a heretofore minor artist) occurred at a time in France when social behaviour was extremely confined by gender and class restrictive codifications. Respectable bourgeois class women characteristically inhabited a private, domestic interior which served to both define and separate their 'feminine identity' from their masculine counterparts' associations with commerce, competition, and the streets. The currency of roles such as these had purchase not only in society at large, but also in the artistic marketplace where the critics viewed production by women as apart from male or

¹ For a complete list of the critical reviews read for use in this thesis, see the Bibliography under the heading 'Reviews of the Salon of 1849.' The critical response to the Salon of 1849 is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

mainstream practice.² When placed in this milieu, the major critical acclaim received by Rosa Bonheur at the Salon of 1849 for her painting Plowing in the Nivernais becomes a subject layered with provocative and intriguing dimensions insofar as historical analysis is concerned. Coherent with this observation, the specific focus of this thesis is the examination of how Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais functioned within the social and political framework of France's short-lived Second Republic (1848 - 1851) to produce such an enthusiastic response upon exhibition at the Salon of 1849. To this end, my thesis investigates the relationships between the pertinent theoretical issues of landscape painting, gender, patronage, and politics in respect to Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais in 1848 and 1849. It also focuses on the mythic, heroic identity accorded Rosa Bonheur as the explanation for her success by twentieth century writers, and the historical deconstruction of that mythology.

It is intended that this discussion will contribute specifically to an understanding of how Rosa Bonheur could initiate a flourishing career in 1848 and 1849 (the dates of her first major critical recognition) and continue this into following years. For example, in comparison to artists such as Millet and Courbet,³ whose rural subjects were rejected by the government and by academic critics, Bonheur

² Lynda Nead in Chapter One "The Norm: Respectable Femininity," Myths of Sexuality (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1988) outlines the parameters of this concept, though with specific reference to Victorian Britain. For a discussion of women artists' separation from the mainstream and the main reasons for this, see Charlotte Yeldham, Women Artists in Nineteenth Century France and England, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984). In her "Abstract" to volume one, she says "After long efforts women were admitted to the Royal Academy Schools in 1860 and to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1897, but they were not allowed to study from the nude figure at these institutions until 1903 and 1900 respectively. Throughout the century women who wished to study from life encountered difficulties, particularly in England, whether because of the lack of facilities or social taboo. Women's art was generally stigmatized as accomplishment art." Yeldham, n.p.

³ 'Millet' and 'Courbet' are Jean-François Millet (1814 - 1875) and Gustave Courbet (1819 - 1877).

eventually became a painter whose rural landscapes were acquired by both the left Republican regime in 1849 and Louis Napoleon's subsequent conservative Second Empire which came to power in 1851. Additionally, the study of a specific rural landscape with a peasant labourer, commissioned during the Second Republic, will also contribute to a fuller understanding of how and why certain categories of images - in this case, rural landscapes - were invested with significance within a specific historical period of mid-nineteenth century France. Finally, integral to discussion of key issues in regard to Rosa Bonheur's success at the Salon of 1849 is the presentation and examination of critical discourse from the Salon reviews. Such discourse further informs the matters of landscape, gender and patronage in respect to the historical milieu of 1848 and 1849. The Salon reviews first of all provide evidence of the exhibition audience's reaction to Bonheur's painting. A more detailed investigation of the discourse presents a subtext of varying critical responses in terms of the issues surrounding Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais in 1849. Finally, investigation of the critics' analyses of Bonheur's rural landscape reveals their employment of particular types of articulation in relation to the issues of landscape and gender. Through an enclosure which is not specific to the history of 1848 and 1849, the critical discourse regarding these issues dispenses myths which permeate the nineteenth century. Examination of such discourse contributes to an understanding of the critics' role in Rosa Bonheur's success at the Salon and in the particular political circumstances of 1849, as well as to an indication of why her success continued in subsequent years after 1849.

CHAPTER ONE

ROSA BONHEUR'S MYTHIC IDENTITY AND ITS DECONSTRUCTION

The creation of a myth in the literature.

Several major treatments of Rosa Bonheur's life and her artistic production have appeared in the twentieth century, and some of these in recent years.⁴ These studies create a mythic, heroic identity for Rosa Bonheur apart from her historical circumstances. This identity is used by the authors of these studies to explain Rosa Bonheur's success as an artist.

The art critic Dore Ashton in her book Rosa Bonheur, a Life and a Legend (1981)⁵ constructs Bonheur as a painter undervalued and for the most part ignored after the major success experienced by the artist during her lifetime.

⁴ For example: Dore Ashton, Rosa Bonheur, a Life and a Legend (New York: Viking Press, 1981); Albert Boime, "The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should A Woman Want to be More like a Man?" Art History 4, n.4 (December 1981), 384-409; Danielle Digne, Rosa Bonheur ou l'Insolence, Paris: Gonthier, 1980; Theodore Stanton, ed. Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur, New York: D. Appleton, 1910; repr., New York: Hacker Art Books, 1981. This thesis does not treat the work by Digne because it is similar to that of Ashton in its main premise, the heroization of the artist as an exceptional woman. The relationship of Boime and Ashton to Stanton's earlier work is discussed in detail from p.7 on.

For nineteenth and early twentieth sources, see also Anna Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur: Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1909); Eugene de Mirecourt, Rosa Bonheur (Paris: Gustave Havard, 1856); René Peyrol, Rosa Bonheur (London: n.p., 1889); L. Roger-Miles, Rosa Bonheur, Sa Vie - Son Oeuvre (Paris: Société d'Édition Artistique, 1900). These will be part of further work on this subject in the future.

⁵ Dore Ashton, Rosa Bonheur, a Life and a Legend (New York: Viking Press, 1981).

Ashton seeks to retrieve Bonheur from the margins of nineteenth century art while making a case for her success with a certain conservative circle or audience. She attempts this by elevating Bonheur as a 'woman artist' remarkable through supposed personal attributes such as extreme individualism and independence of spirit. Ashton depends on this characterization to simultaneously set Bonheur apart from her times and to explain her success through, as the author sees it, force of personality.⁶ Also pondering Bonheur's successful artistic career within the context of a conservative financial elite is an article entitled "The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should a Woman Want to be More like a Man?" (Art History, December 1981)⁷ by art historian Albert Boime. Boime compiles selected information largely on a personal level to produce what he intends to be a composite portrait of the artist. But this time, Bonheur's successful career is interpreted in terms of a psychosexual reading.⁸ Boime constructs a psychological identity for Bonheur as an androgyne who, integrating masculine and feminine traits, subsumes these into her

⁶ The foreword to Ashton's book, written by photographer Denise Browne Hare, neatly sets up this premise. She comments "We would investigate ... most especially how she took advantage of the new options open to her. To be an eccentric and a maverick; to be single-minded and ambitious; to produce a large body of work - these were some of the possibilities no longer limited to the male sex." Ashton, xii. The underlining in this selection is mine.

⁷ Albert Boime, "The Case of Rosa Bonheur: Why Should a Woman Want to be More like a Man?," Art History 4, n.4 (December 1981) 384 - 409.

⁸ Boime as well as Ashton places Rosa Bonheur within a constructed identity as an individualistic, forceful 'woman artist' who by virtue of this personality could overcome every opposition in her path to success. Attempting to legitimize this constitution by enclosing it in a quasi-historical context, Boime explains his views on how such an identity brought the artist success. He claims "Before Rosa Bonheur, a woman's indulgence in art was generally viewed as a pastime, but she broke through the confining Victorian restrictions and excessive sexual polarization to make her love and need for painting a full time occupation." However, Boime's reading of how Rosa Bonheur accomplished this then imparts a further interpretation beyond Ashton's of this artist's personality and its separation from social norms. He notes that Bonheur's 'breaking through' gendered restrictions (see above) "... entailed committing herself to a wholly independent and unconventional way of life." Attempting to then rationalize Bonheur as more than a woman of her time in order to be successful, Boime collects what he believes to be examples of an androgenous sexuality. Commenting darkly on the artist's ruse of wearing male clothing in public spaces to avoid attack, he says "Bonheur obviously donned the masculine cloak for a more fundamental reason" and labels her longterm relationship with companion Nathalie Micas part of a "butch-femme syndrome." Ibid, 384-386.

imagery. Bonheur does this, according to Boime, by expressing an antipathy for the human subject and a great love for animal life as apart from socially coded gender identification and roles.⁹

These two accounts of Rosa Bonheur's career visit a certain constructed personality upon the eventual course of her artistic recognition. Though both Dore Ashton and Albert Boime purport to utilize analytical approaches current in art historical practice such as gender study, Marxist criticality, and in the case of Boime, psychoanalysis, both studies are in actuality conceived in an ahistorical manner. For example, though Dore Ashton's Rosa Bonheur, a Life and a Legend promises to "re-evaluate Bonheur's work within the context of her time"¹⁰, few historical texts are cited in the bibliography, identifications of quotations through footnotes (including dates) is absent, and the wealth of detail that does occur is categorized under generalized biographical, social, or political subject headings. In this way, Ashton removes historical specificity from her text, and the overall structure of her book inevitably provides a work that can only be characterized as non-evaluative biography.¹¹ Through a similar process, Albert Boime's analysis of Rosa Bonheur's

⁹ Boime, as part of this construction, claims that Rosa Bonheur could not psychologically bear to paint male faces. He conflates this with her production, saying "In sketch after sketch, the human figures appear vacuous alongside sprightly animal counterparts; people are faceless and shadowy, while animals are solidly modelled and possess wonderfully expressive physiognomies ..." Boime, 396 - 498.

Interestingly, on examining the Bonheur print file in the Bibliothèque Nationale's Cabinet des Estampes, it became apparent that Rosa Bonheur's brother Auguste executed male faces in exactly the same manner. This evidence seems to put into dispute Boime's theory, suggesting that the reasons for this particular technical approach by Bonheur might issue from another concern.

¹⁰ Ashton, jacket frontispiece.

¹¹ In a review of Ashton's Rosa Bonheur, a Life and a Legend, art historian Eleanor Tufts comments not only on Ashton's lack of historical criticality but also on the consequences of this. Tufts says "But as attractive as the concept of this new biography is, the finished product is essentially a photographic essay focusing on the artifacts of her [Bonheur's] life ..." Eleanor Tufts, "Review," Women's Art Journal 3, n.1 (Spring/Summer 1982): 52.

life and her career is characterised by his active conflation of the identity he constructs for Bonheur (an androgenous one) with her production. Bonheur's success therefore emerges as an effect of her personality as constituted by Boime. Assessing Rosa Bonheur's production and its reception through the perspective of their fictions rather than through historical context, both Dore Ashton and Albert Boime strip the artist's identity and her production of their historical significance.

Though the types of identity Ashton and Boime construct for Rosa Bonheur are different in that the former stresses her as a strong and individually directed woman and the latter additionally characterises her as an androgenous personality, both versions are to a large extent encoded with the same feature of independence from circumstance. In this manner, both versions are erected by their authors as heroic ones. It is interesting to note that both Dore Ashton and Albert Boime's works rely heavily for much of their information upon an early biography published in 1910 by writer Theodore Stanton and titled Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur.¹² It is clear that nonanalytical tendencies noted in Ashton and Boime's orientation to their subject in large part derive from biases available in the 1910 publication by Stanton. For example, as Nancy Mowll Mathews has noted in her review of a reprint of Stanton's book Reminiscences of Rosa Bonheur, "... Theodore Stanton treats his subject as a great 19th century "hero" (sic.) who gained that status by being an artist. He was her friend, and composed the

¹² Stanton, Reminiscences.

"Stanton, Paris correspondent for the Inter-Ocean, was the son of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the pioneer American suffragist ..." Boime, 406, n.4.

Both Boime and Ashton's accounts of Rosa Bonheur have frequent references to Stanton's book in their footnotes.

biography from his own and other's reminiscences, Bonheur's own memoirs and numerous letters. He concentrates on Bonheur as a personality ..."¹³ Besides informing her readers that this early work viewed Bonheur's production through the dominating notion of personality, Mathews explains that the type of personality Stanton awards Bonheur is based upon his personal views in addition to those of others rather than upon any historically based definition. Commenting on the direction Stanton's approach takes, his reviewer says that it "...must in part, at least, be credited to attitudes instilled in him by his mother, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Evidence of the strong and widespread women's rights movement of the day surfaces only sporadically in the art historical literature of the period. But Stanton, author of The Woman Question in Europe (1885), makes it an important part of his biography."¹⁴ Though Stanton's perception of Rosa Bonheur's so-called independent spirit takes the avenue of the women's rights' movement as its focus, his approach to the latter is seemingly without specific historic reference, as is found to be the case with Ashton and Boime's more recent descriptions.¹⁵ In these works, Rosa Bonheur is still assessed within the mythology of the wilful and at times eccentric 'woman artist' who travels the streets of Paris dressed in men's clothing while singlemindedly pursuing her animal models at fairs and slaughter houses.

¹³ Nancy Mowll Mathews, "Review," Women's Art Journal 1, n.1 (Spring/Summer 1980): 67

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ In a critique applying just as well to Boime's article as Ashton's book, Eleanor Tufts notes what is missing from literature on Rosa Bonheur to date: "... the task of addressing Bonheur's oeuvre still remains. Now perhaps another art historian will essay Bonheur's artistic output and thereby determine her true position in the history of art. Certainly there is much more to be said about the oeuvre and impact of an artist whose painting The Horse Fair - mighty in both physical size and number of reproductions circulated in Europe and America - was once the most popular picture of its century." Tufts, 55.

History vs. myth, a new look at success

By the 1850's and 1860's, Bonheur was so well known as a painter of rural landscapes that her works were purchased not only by the American industrialist John Rockefeller but also by Great Britain's Queen Victoria.¹⁶ In 1865, Empress Eugenie of France personally presented to Rosa Bonheur the nation's most prestigious official award, the Cross of the Legion of Honour, in recognition of what the state saw as her contribution over the years to French culture. Yet up to 1849, Rosa Bonheur had generally been regarded as only a minor though promising painter. After her first entries to the Salon of 1841 when she was nineteen, Rosa Bonheur exhibited work in each subsequent annual Salon up to 1849.¹⁷ For the first few years that she sent paintings to the Salon, she received no critical attention. But by 1845, finishing six works for the official exhibition, Bonheur received her first acknowledgement from the jury. Her Plowing Scene received a third class medal.¹⁸ This painting represents a farmer, a small boy, and two horses in a large empty field, and the background has just a few trees and a vast expanse of sky. Her rural scene was praised by the liberal left critic Théophile Thoré, who commented that Bonheur's execution of her subject was superior to that of Brascassat, an established and academically oriented

¹⁶ Rosa Bonheur's patrons in the 1850's and 1860's are discussed in Ashton, 90-95. They revealed through their identity the existence of a wealthy and conservatively oriented international audience for her work. The artist's growing fame in Europe and Great Britain amongst the titled and upper class must be partly attributable to the efforts of her dealer Ernest Gambard, who promoted her work after 1852 and the beginning of the Second Empire. Ibid.

¹⁷ Ellen M. Thurnau reports in detail on the works Bonheur entered in the Salons up to 1848. (M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1981), 15-17.

¹⁸ Plowing is cited by Ellen Thurnau from Anna Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur: Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1909), 175. Thurnau, ii and 16.

animalier.¹⁹ At the newly liberated Salon of 1848,²⁰ Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape painting Red Oxen at Cantal won a prized gold medal "first."²¹ It was a few months later that Rosa Bonheur received a substantial commission of 3,000 francs from the Second Republican government. Between the presentation of the commission on July 11, 1848 and the opening of the Salon of 1849 in June, Rosa Bonheur produced her large rural landscape painting Plowing in the Nivernais.²² As already noted in the introduction to this thesis, when her painting was exhibited in the Salon of 1849, it was the subject of critical remark or commentary in the Salon reviews. Though the response varied with several writers naming it as the best painting in the exhibition while others viewed it more critically, the tenor of the attention received by Bonheur's rural landscape was in general a positive one. The years of 1848 and 1849 are thus identified as a pivotal point in Rosa Bonheur's career and mark her change in status from an artist identified as minor or 'young' to that of a painter of considerable stature insofar as critical attention was concerned. The recognition which Bonheur won in 1848 and 1849 continued

¹⁹ L. Roger-Miles, Rosa Bonheur, Sa Vie - Son Oeuvre (Paris: Société d'Édition Artistique, 1900), 42.

²⁰ The newly liberated Salon of 1848 was organized by members of the recently appointed Provisional government in 1848. Its important feature was that it had no jury. T.J. Clark describes its organization thusly: "For a while after February there was no structure, and the politicians improvised with advice from their friends. A painter named Jeanron, a Bonapartist and a revolutionary of sorts, was put in charge of Museums and Fine Arts ... he organized a Salon - the first ever without a jury - on 15 March." Clark, The Absolute Bourgeois (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 50. The nineteenth century critic Champfleury involves the Minister of the Interior in his description and tells of the large number of entries to the non-juried Salon: "Le 29 février 1848, Ledru-Rollin, Ministre de l'Intérieur, décide que "tous les ouvrages envoyés cette année seront reçus sans exception. Aussi, le Salon qui s'ouvrit le 15 Mars 1848 au Musée National du Louvre ne comptait pas moins de 5,180 numéros." Champfleury, Le Réalisme, textes choisis et présentés par Geneviève et Jean Lacambre (Paris: Hermann, 1973), 153, n.4.

²¹ Ashton, 63.

²² Rosa Bonheur's commission is dated July 11, 1848 (see page 18). Her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais bears the completion date June 7, 1849 on the lower right corner of the painting, currently hung in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

into the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon. Rosa Bonheur, daughter of an impoverished painter,²³ enjoyed such steady patronage after 1849 that she could purchase a chateau at By near Fontainebleau in 1860.

In order to address the potential reasons for the enormous response at the Salon of 1849 to Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais, the social and political history of 1848 and 1849 requires investigation. The complex political dynamics of 1848²⁴ - the Revolutionary year - must first of all be examined since they function as a necessary prelude to understanding the circumstances under which Bonheur received her government commission and play a role also in the critic's eventual response to Bonheur's rural landscape one year later at the official exhibition.

It is important to note that the 1848 Revolution had two phases. After the initial revolution in February, 1848, which overthrew the monarchy of the "bourgeois" King Louis Philippe, the moderate reform party and the radical left were the most visible members of the new Provincial Assembly. The moderates wanted democracy, which in 1848 was defined as universal suffrage for men. On the other hand,

²³ Ashton's account of Raimond Bonheur says that "he described himself in his marriage certificate as a classical 'history painter' ..." who received a "modest living" from sale of his work and teaching. He was Rosa Bonheur's only teacher. Ashton, 3 and 115.

²⁴ There are, of course, many historical accounts of and perspectives on the revolution of 1848. Karl Marx's well-known Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon (New York: International Publishers, 1964) views February 1848 as a complete victory by the left which is later overtaken by the formerly ousted right. More recently, historian Roger Price in The French Second Republic; a Social History (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972) notes the mixture of ideologies from left to right initially participating in the Republican action in February 1848. Price continues this critical perception by examining the slow movement towards dominance by various strands of the right (as well as the gradual movement from left to right by moderate left) in the months of the new Republic between February and June 1848. My account of 1848 in this text follows that given by Price. Other accounts of 1848 noting social history are: Alexis de Tocqueville, Recollections (New York: Meridian Books, 1959); George Duveau, 1848, the Making of a Revolution (New York: Pentheon Books, 1968); Maurice Agulhon, The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Robert W. Lougee, Midcentury Revolution, 1848: Society and Revolution in France and Germany (London: D.C. Heath, 1972); John M. Merriman, The Agony of the Republic; the Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France 1848-1851 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

the radical left or social democrats campaigned for not only suffrage but also social democracy. This they defined as equal opportunity for employment and the right to vote, again for males only.²⁵ Interestingly, the radical left faction in government received support from the recently organized activist women's groups in Paris, which emerged after February 1848.²⁶ These women's groups had similar, social democratic goals for themselves, and felt that their political objectives would be best served by their groups' visible support of the radical left.²⁷ The initial dominance of the left and factions supporting the left in February was not stable throughout 1848. In March and April, 1848, economic confusion caused by the uncertainty of revolutionary upset had the effect of making cautious those Parisians holding property or involved in business ventures. As a result, the moderate reform sector gradually moved to the right, leaving a depreciated radical social democratic left as the only left faction in the spring of 1848. Various small insurrections by this radical left in March, April and May lead up to the infamous 'June Days' in Paris

²⁵ Immediately before the 'June Days,' the supporters of the left defined their political and social goals by placing "a placard on the barricade at the Porte St. Morceau on June 23, 1848, describing the "democratic and social republic" as "democratic in that all citizens are electors ... social in that all citizens are permitted to form associations for work." Merriman, 51.

²⁶ Newspapers published by the activist women's groups of 1848 and 1849 provide much information on the identity of the women participating in the politicization as well as their goals. "The years after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848 were unprecedented for the proliferation of women's newspapers of a political rather than fashionable type. Most of these twenty papers were politically radical, though some were evidently male satire of the women's movement. The most important of them, La Voix des Femmes, L'Opinion des Femmes, and La Politique des Femmes, were published by women printers and drew links between women's rights and worker's rights by concentrating on women in the paid work force. They remain a valuable source for the movement for associations and workers' cooperatives and for the role of Saint-Simonian and Fourierism in the history of the women's movement." One of these papers, La Voix des Femmes, "... was founded by Eugene Niboyet, an experienced journalist from a wealthy, Bonapartist, and Protestant background Amongst its contributors were Desiree Gay, Jeanne Deroin, Suzanne Voilquin [all three from the working class], Anais Segalas, Gabrielle Soumet, Adèle Esquiros, and Hortense Wild. After the first issue, 400 women, mainly workers, congregated at Niboyet's home and formed a political club" Patricia M. Hutton, ed. Historical Dictionary of the Second French Republic (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 1105 and 1128.

²⁷ Claire G. Moses, French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 128.

in mid-1848. During June 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th, the conservative right faction grouped around the military forces of General Cavaignac literally massacred in the streets of Paris the radical left's working class supporters in a show of brute strength which demonstrated the right's renewed political clout at this point in 1848.²⁸ Only sixteen days after the conclusion of the 'June Days' massacre in Paris, Rosa Bonheur received her substantial commission of 3,000 francs from the Second Republic's Ministry of the Interior for a rural landscape with animals.²⁹

Through examination of the historical circumstances surrounding Rosa Bonheur's commission in 1848, certain assumptions common to Theodore Stanton's 1910 biography along with both Dore Ashton and Albert Boime's recent studies regarding Bonheur's successful patronage are thrown into question. Though with admittedly varying perspectives, all three works dwell on Rosa Bonheur's supposed 'independent-mindedness' as a feature of her personality which in their studies is strongly connected to her acquisition of patronage. They base their construction of Bonheur as an individual to a large extent on the fact of Rosa Bonheur's father Raimond having been a member of the social utopian Saint Simonian cult in the 1830's. They cite the latter's ideals of sexual equality, and Rosa Bonheur's early exposure to these ideals through her father as the

²⁸ General Cavaignac as leader of the army in June 1848 " ... crushed a popular uprising: six thousand were killed and fourteen thousand insurgents were put into prison." From Bouret, 142. On the question of which class of citizens were grouped in the massacre, Roger Price says "... republican strength was based on lower middle class and artisan support." Price, 138. After the insurrection, Cavaignac solidified his political position: "... on the 28th of June ... the Assembly cheered Cavaignac, who 'had deserved well of his country,' and placed the executive in his hands with the title and powers of President of the Council and the right to choose his own Ministers, the latter to be responsible to the Assembly." In René Arnaud, The Second Republic and Napoleon III, trans. E.F. Buckley (London: William Heinemann, 1930), 30.

²⁹ Rosa Bonheur's letter of commission was dated July 11, 1848 (Fig. 1).

cause for what they claim to be the artist's 'independent' behaviour.³⁰ This presumed stance by Bonheur is coincidentally, almost magically, attached to the attainment of patronage. For example, even though Mathews as the reviewer of Stanton's reprint promises criticality early in her article when she notes the strong tendency towards heroization by Stanton (and thus Ashton and Boime), she too eventually is enthralled by the preceding notion to the extent of proselytizing in its favour. She reiterates the above myth uncritically in process of review, saying "Raymond Bonheur, the artist's father, ... was active in the San Simonist movement in Paris in the 1830's and involved his whole family. The Saint Simonians, an early socialist group, held beliefs in the equality of men and women that paralleled those of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the American women's rights movement. Rosa Bonheur cherished those ideas throughout her life, and they contributed to her success."³¹

The reductivist tendency of this rendering of Rosa Bonheur's artistic success rings hollow when its substance is examined against the particular moment of 1848. This latter year is, as mentioned in the review of Rosa Bonheur's career, the date of her gold medal at the Salon, of her large commission from the Ministry of the Interior, and, through these awards, of the path to her first great critical success in 1849. In regard to this success one might logically first of all question if Rosa Bonheur's

³⁰ Without recognition of specific circumstances, Boime comments that "In view of the vitality of the androgenous image, it is not surprising to find that the leading French feminists like Tristan, Sand and Bonheur developed out of the Saint-Simonist milieu and assimilated the image in their intellectual system and/or life-style." Boime, 403. While stating that "Saint-Simonism advocated the emancipation of women and the overcoming of traditional sex roles," Boime works to further his formulation of Saint Simonism directly affecting Rosa Bonheur's life by paradoxically emphasizing her father's dominant role in this matter: "The declaration of this influence on Bonheur could seem to make her father the key to understanding her personality." Ibid, 387.

³¹ Mathews, 67.

father, Raimond, because of his Saint Simonist social utopianism, enjoyed a privileged connection to the Second Republican social democratic government in 1848. Dore Ashton's study appears to favour this reading of events, stating that Raimond Bonheur was a member of the Saint Simonian cult at Menilmontant in 1830 and a Republican sympathizer in 1848.³² She identifies Rosa Bonheur as holding a similar political position in support of the left and continues this narrative by revealing the artist ultimately gaining patronage from the government, thus implying some unstated political bond between the Bonheurs and the Republican government³³. However, Raimond Bonheur's Republicanism appears to have been of a rather private nature since no historical fact exists to date to substantiate his contact with members of the radical left in power in 1848 and 1849, nor his execution of political deeds which may have brought him to their attention. Dore Ashton's characterization of Rosa Bonheur as a recognized left sympathizer through the influence of her father Raimond, and Ashton's use of this connection as a reason for Rosa Bonheur's patronage by the Second Republican government in 1848 thus remains in the realm of unfounded conjecture.³⁴

The second constructed implication of Rosa Bonheur's inadvertent projection as an 'independent-minded' woman is that through the accretion of Saint Simonian precepts at an

³² Ashton, 60 - 73.

³³ Boime sees Rosa Bonheur's "mature art and political views" as of a "conservative hue" in contrast to Ashton's declarations of Bonheur's "Republicanism". Boime, 386.

³⁴ In 1848, after the 'June Days' and the shift of governmental power to the right, personal connections [should indeed the Bonheurs have had any] with the left as a cause for patronage become even more a matter of speculation. Ledru-Rollin had been dismissed as Minister of the Interior by the time of July 11, the date of Bonheur's commission, however he still argued for the 'right to work' clause in the Constitution at the Assembly. The painter Jeanron still remained as Director of Museums; his "... republican commitments had inspired a series of socially engaged images during the 1830s and 1840s." Neil McWilliam, "Art, Labour and Mass Democracy: Debates on the Status of the Artist in France around 1848," Art History 11, No. 1 (March 1988): 69.

early age, she thereby became a woman activist. This process is seen by Bonheur's narrators as being responsible for her success. This assumption can be examined for historical verification by locating it in the specific context of 1848. Early San Simonism, dating from the decades of the 1830's and 1840's - the period when Raimond Bonheur was so intimately involved with the cult - emphasized equality for women as part of its social utopian philosophy, however, its image of women's nature was different in practice. The San Simonians enmeshed 'woman' in a stereotypical construction of the feminine, one just as restricting as that held by the bourgeois class.³⁵ The San Simonians classified women as emotional and sensual rather than rational beings.³⁶ Through this characterization, they limited women's potential participation in public life just as much as the bourgeois class did with their concept of a passive, ideal femininity and its localization to the domestic sphere. The San Simonians' early model of the feminine changed to a different identity for women by 1848. The February 1848 Revolution and the social disruption endemic to it allowed certain shifts in identity for the former San Simonists from the 1830's and 1840's as well as other women interested in social democratic goals. Politicized in groups formed on the impetus of revolutionary turmoil, the activist women in 1848 promoted an intellectually based image of women in contrast to the earlier emotionally and sensually defined model. The

³⁵ Nead, 12-47.

³⁶ Margaret Weitz provides a useful portrait of the relations between Saint-Simonian men and women in the 1830's. "Le Père Enfantin (1796-1864) elaborated a new religion based upon the socialist utopian views promulgated by the social philosopher Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Charles Fourier (1772-1832) ... In the early 1830's, women from the bourgeoisie and working classes were attracted to the services of the charismatic leader. Their enthusiasm was short-lived. When the women saw that they were once again being exploited, disillusionment set in. This was predictable given the contradictions inherent in the movement. Women's freedom was linked to sexual freedom ... The women of these groups - including Claire Bazard, Eugenie Niboyet and Suzanne Voilquin wanted equality ... Weitz, Femmes: Recent Writings on French Women (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1985), 6.

activist groups visualized women functioning pacifically in society as rational teachers of moral behaviour.³⁷ This brief study of the differences between San Simonist notions of sexual equality in the 1830's and 1840's, and those of the politicized women's groups in the revolutionary year of 1848 clarifies the lack of homogeneity in philosophical goals between these dates.³⁸ Most importantly, it throws into question the assumption that Rosa Bonheur's success had anything to do with a status as a woman activist, motivated by Saint Simonian philosophy on gender relationships from the 1830's.

It can be seen from this discussion that neither the conflation of a constructed 'heroic' personality nor, as investigated previously, the assumption of personal political connections with the acquisition of artistic patronage are upon historical investigation found to be a fruitful or reliable means of accounting for Rosa Bonheur's substantial commission in 1848 or the large critical response to her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849. The focus in the remainder of this and subsequent chapters will be on a historical examination of Rosa Bonheur's success at the Salon of 1849 in relation to such mediating factors as the art market, landscape

³⁷ This attitude is displayed in the activist women's newspapers of 1848, such as L'Opinion des Femmes. "The chief editor of this paper was Jeanne Deroin, a seamstress and then teacher, and among the contributors were Olinde Rodrigues and Hortense Wild, two wealthy Saint-Simonians who sustained the paper, Desirée Gay and Pauline Roland It called for the elimination of all privileges of sex, race, birth, caste, and wealth, for the right to work and to subsistence, and for equal educational and job opportunities for women. However, despite its hostility toward Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the paper accepted a certain stereotype of women as embodying justice in a pacific and nurturing role."

In La Voix des Femmes, founded by Eugenie Niboyet of a wealthy, Bonapartist family, "the paper's concerns were very wide ranging, but tensions emerged over Niboyet's somewhat didactic tone, the primacy of education or social change, women's suffrage, and in particular Niboyet's conservative stance over social conflict and direct action." Hutton, 764 and 1105.

³⁸ It must be pointed out that although the profile of women's equality changed between the 1830's, 1840's and 1848, many of the women involved were the same figures throughout these years, such as Jeanne Deroin, Suzanne Voilquin, and Pauline Roland.

painting, and the issue of gender in 1848 and 1849.

The commission, the art market, landscape painting

By July 1848, the date of the Second Republic's large commission to Rosa Bonheur, Salon critics had publically recorded in newspaper reviews Bonheur's activity and (according to one critic at least) her artistic promise.³⁹ Additionally, the artist's constant participation in the Salons since 1840 was on record in the published livrets or Salon catalogues, with each of her submitted works listed by title. The brief survey of Rosa Bonheur's career as an artist up to the date of her commission in July 1848 indicates that her steadily increasing reputation as an artist lay in the context of rural landscape painting.⁴⁰ It was indeed this particular subject material that the government requested of Bonheur in their commission. Informal notice of the commission, announced within the Ministry of the Interior on a memorandum dated July 2, 1848, contained this stipulation.⁴¹ The official letter of award sent to Bonheur, dated July 11, 1848, states the same subject in a more formal fashion:

Mademoiselle, j'ai l'honneur de vous annoncer que par arrêt en date du 2^{me} ce mois le Ministre de l'Intérieur a bien voulu nous charger d'exécuter par le compte de nos Department et ... une ... de trois mille francs, un tableau représentant: des animaux dans un paturage. Le Ministre aime a penser, Mademoiselle, que vous apportez à l'exécution de ce travail tous les soins ... pour justifier la confiance d'ont nous éter l'objet.

³⁹ See pp. 9-10 for an example of critical praise before 1848 (Thoré's review of the Salon of 1845).

⁴⁰ Not only the lists of entries in the Salon livrets but also the works awarded medals publicly indicated Rosa Bonheur's long commitment to the rural landscape form. Thurnau, 15-17.

⁴¹ Paris, Archive National. Carton F²¹ 16.

Salut⁴²

The Ministry's letter of commission and its request for a 'landscape with animals' from Bonheur has a context not only within the history of her career but within that of the category of landscape painting. It is against this that her eventual product of Plowing in the Nivernais must be scrutinized in 1848 and 1849.

Patterns of patronage during the Second Republic differed from those evident during the previous monarchy of Louis Philippe (1830-1848), when history painting had always been the most highly regarded category.⁴³ At the time of the Second Republic's inception in February and March 1848, the direction of patronage was initially unclear. The relationship between imagery and ideology had shifted when the needs of a politically unsettled republic took over from those of a monarchy and the established art market of Louis Philippe's days had collapsed because of the resulting political and economic chaos. The demise of history painting from its privileged status under Louis Philippe left room for the consideration and support of other formerly less prominent categories such as landscape and genre painting. From among the 5,180 works submitted to the Second Republic's newly proclaimed 'open' Salon in February 1848, prizes went to 36 genre scenes, 43 landscape paintings, and 15 history paintings.⁴⁴ Since the award

⁴² Ibid. See Fig. 1.

⁴³ Providing a description of patronage and painting under the reign of Louis Philippe is Michael J. Marrinan's Ph. D. dissertation, Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Issues and Instruments of Propaganda in French Official Art, 1830-1848 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: U-M-I, 1988). However, the review by Jon Whiteby of Michael Marrinan's subsequent book by the same title [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988] gives the following critique: "the scope of the subjects Marrinan discusses - events in French history from 1789 to 1839 which were painted or exhibited in the July Monarchy, mostly by order of the king - is more restricted than the title of the book implies" In Oxford Art Journal 12, n.1 (1989):57.

⁴⁴ Clark, 183-186. Ashton, 64.

results by category are dependent upon a clear accounting of what was submitted to determine their significance in relation to category, the conclusion cannot be definitely drawn that the Second Republican government encouraged patronage in the direction of genre and landscape painting, but they can perhaps be taken as an indication of producers' and patrons' reciprocal interest in these forms.

Underlying the market of February 1848 was the Second Republic's emphasis on the individual as a political ideal of liberal bourgeois culture.⁴⁵ Art historians Francis Haskell, Frances Suzman Jowell, and Stanley Meltzoff have cited this ideal and have argued an ideological connection between such an ideal and landscape as a category.⁴⁶ In his Rediscoveries in Art (1976), Haskell makes the observation that rejection of the dictates of the Academy in mid-century was often read as the sign of a new individualism appropriate to non-monarchic eras.⁴⁷ Additionally, the studies by Frances Suzman Jowell⁴⁸ and Stanley Meltzoff⁴⁹ examine a re-appraisal in the late 1840's of Dutch seventeenth century landscape and genre paintings. They have shown that these re-appraisals emphasized landscape and genre subjects of the Dutch seventeenth century painters as a product of Dutch bourgeois Republicanism, and that these

⁴⁵ McWilliam, 64-87.

⁴⁶ Francis Haskell, Rediscoveries in Art (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976); Frances Suzman Jowell "Thoré-Burger and the Revival of Franz Hals," Art Bulletin 16, n.1 (March 1974): 101-117; Stanley Meltzoff, "The Revival of the LeNains," Art Bulletin, 24 (September 1942): 259-286.

⁴⁷ Haskell, 86-87.

⁴⁸ Jowell, 101-117.

⁴⁹ Meltzoff, 259-286.

subjects were therefore linked to modern nineteenth century liberalism. This previously argued connection of the landscape category with Second Republican emphasis on the individual as a political ideal of liberal bourgeois culture in February 1848 can be suggested as accounting for liberal left critics' praise of the landscape at this date. The Barbizon School artists whose work had received peripheral support from Salon juries during Louis Philippe's reign were now particularly patronized by the Second Republic. For example, this is especially true in the case of painter Theodore Rousseau, whose Barbizon landscapes were rejected in pre-Republican years.⁵⁰ The new Republic patronized the landscapes of the Barbizon painters⁵¹ for a number of reasons. First, the Barbizons' non-Academic orientation and their siting of landscape in specific identifiable national locales such as the Forest of Fontainebleau and the Barbizon area was in contrast to traditional Academic landscapes with their universalized and classicizing features.⁵² In addition to this, in terms of critical reception in the 1840's, Barbizon landscape was seen as the response of a specific individual, the artist, to a particular scene at a

⁵⁰ Robert L. Herbert makes the point that, though excluded from official exhibition by the juries, Rousseau's work nonetheless contributed to landscape form, saying "Rousseau was excluded from the Salon in the forties, but he continued to be the focus of the developments in landscape." Herbert, Barbizon Revisited (San Francisco, Calif.: Palace of the Legion of Honour, 1962), 27.

⁵¹ In 1848, "Ledru-Rollin commissioned for the State a painting by Rousseau for a fee of 4,000 francs (Looking out from the Forest of Fontainebleau at Sunset) ... and also a picture from Dupré for the same fee. Charles Blanc, the new director of the Beaux Arts, approved the decision" Jean Bouret, The Barbizon School and Nineteenth Century French Landscape Painting (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 141-142.

⁵² Albert Boime provides a thorough investigation of "The Academic Landscape: Traditional Procedure" in The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (London: Phaidon, 1970), 133-165. I also refer again to Haskell, 86-87, on 'rejection of the dictates of the Academy in mid-century being often read as the sign of a new individualism appropriate to non-monarchic eras' (see p.20).

particular moment.⁵³ This emphasis on the individual's part in the so-called 'creative process' and on the Barbizon landscape as rejecting a learned and authoritarian ideal was read by one critic at least as a sign of new democratic aspirations of the modern age. The republican critic Théophile Thoré articulated Barbizon landscapes in these terms in his Salon criticism of 1844 entitled "An Open Letter to Theodore Rousseau."⁵⁴

The foregoing discussion provides not only a political but also a critical context for Rosa Bonheur's commission in 1848 to some extent suggesting why the new Second Republican government should be interested in acquiring landscape and genre paintings. These had the potential to be read as signs of a democratic republic, of a non-monarchical state. Beyond this, specific investigation of the historical circumstances of Plowing in the Nivernais, which inevitably involves discussion of the painting's particular locale of Nivernais, a reading of the painting in light of this information, and an analysis of critical discourse surrounding the painting's reception at the Salon of 1849, supplies a wide and more historically relevant means of examination than do imposed myths of individual personality.

⁵³ Maureen P. Ryan, Peasant Painting and its Criticism in France 1875-1885; Themes and Debates, Ph.D. dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago, November 1987), 76-78.

⁵⁴ Théophile Thoré. Salons de 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848, avec un préface par W. Burger (Paris: 1848).

CHAPTER TWO

NIVERNAIS: SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCALE AND MEANS OF REPRESENTATION

Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais was begun after the 'June Days' in 1848 and painted with the expectation of exhibiting it in the Salon of 1849 for that year's audience in Paris. Through the title Plowing in the Nivernais and also the visual image alluding to oxen characteristically bred in and associated with Nivernais,⁵⁵ Rosa Bonheur particularized her landscape to a specific rural locale. The painting was based upon studies executed in Nivernais.⁵⁶ After she received her commission, she responded to the invitation by her father's friend, the sculptor Justin Mathieu, to visit his house located in Nivernais so that she could study from nature.⁵⁷ Bonheur's choice of the locality of Nivernais can then be appreciated as being partly due to the matter of convenience. It can also be recognized, though, as a statement of specific interest. Her gold medal winning 'first' in the Salon of 1848 indicated a desire to name a particular national locale through its title also, i.e., Red Oxen of Cantal. Since Bonheur at the Salon of 1849 entered a painting depicting

⁵⁵ In support of this point, Albert Boime states that "the Nivernais region was not particularly fertile, but its animal husbandry was well known throughout France. The breed of the Nivernais-Charollaise cow and the oxen of Morven enjoyed a great reputation" Boime, 391.

⁵⁶ Ashton, 64. The writer additionally makes the following possibly significant point about Bonheur's choice of Nivernais as a site pertaining to nature but does not provide further detail or document its source so it can be verified. Ashton says "she wanted to base her commission painting on nature" Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

another specific rural locale, that of Nivernais, which aroused a widespread response amongst its audience, it is worthwhile discussing what Nivernais was in 1848 and 1849.

The locale of Nivernais

Nivernais commanded a large central portion of France and had a population spread between towns of various sizes and farms belonging to the rural countryside. Though in 1848 Nivernais did not yet have a railway, it had many transportation routes enabling communication both within the district as well as with Paris.⁵⁸ On an economic level, Nivernais had definite ties with Paris and its wealthy bourgeois class. Though not developed to the same extent as the North, it had some industrial development in forestry and mining. In a detailed description of "la grande industrie métallurgique à Fourchambault et à Imphy," the latter being two important industrial towns in the Nevers arrondissement, it is important to note that the financial resources for this key development in Nivernais' economy came from outside the district. A study of the Fourchambault steel industry's history comments to this effect that:

Il y a là un développement remarquables, mais on ne peut s'empêcher de noter qu'il est le fait, exclusivement, d'initiatives et de capitaux extérieurs à la region nivernaise. L'Etat ... ou des capitalistes d'origine étrangère à la Nièvre ... développent une grande industrie, alors essentiellement fondée sur les ressources du sous-sol.⁵⁹

Given Parisian industrialists' investments in Nivernais, it seems reasonable to speculate that Paris would have been

⁵⁸ N. Duclos, Annuaire de la Nièvre, pour 1848 (Nevers: I.M. Fay, imprimeur de la préfecture, 1849), 81.

⁵⁹ Jean-Bernard Charrier et Jean-Pierre Harris, Histoire de Nevers vol. 2 (Paris: Horvath, 1984), 265.

extremely aware of Nivernais and attentive to any suggestion of instability. The district had a core of left political opinion feeding various classes of society under the wealthy bourgeoisie but this potentially radical voice was kept firmly controlled through domination by the many upper class members of Nivernais' government.⁶⁰ These representatives from Nivernais' elite were also the local directors for industry, business, and banking.⁶¹

After February 1848, the time of the Revolution, the change in Nivernais' government was not a dramatic one. The new government in this region was at the most a liberal one in tendency. Though not hostile to social progress, Nivernais' government demanded that this be implemented in an atmosphere of order and legality, not in one of violence. It still held notions of paternalism to which class struggle was a contradictory concept. This was evident in one of the Nivernais government's first acts of February 28th, 1848. It voted for 1500 francs so a strong National Guard could be formed to 'carry out the wishes of the people.'⁶² What this actually assured was the existence of a government legislated force to be the guardian of order. Intent upon manifesting sympathy to whatever government was dominant in Paris and also upon maintaining the appearance of order,

⁶⁰ The fate of the various presses in Nivernais illustrate this point nicely. The right leaning L'Echo de la Nièvre established in 1830 reflected the opinion of Louis Philippe's government. During 1848, it was renamed the Journal de la Nièvre and sustained its publication throughout Republican years. During the sensitive post June Days in 1848, L'Union Républicaine, established in 1846 as the organ of 'l'opposition constitutionnelle' published its last number on July 6, 1848. The left leaning L'Avenir du Peuple which had begun publication April 1 suspended this on July 16, 1848. A newspaper formed March 13, 1848, named Le Sentinelle had as its editor-in-chief a Parisian journalist Ulysse Pic, and his press reflected the socialist conceptions of Louis Blanc. Judged to be the instigator of 'troubles' on April 17 and 18 at Nevers, Pic was arrested and forced to leave immediately., This, presumably, was the end of the radical left Le Sentinelle. Duclos, 16-17.

⁶¹ For example, ranking third in the 1848 elections was a wealthy member of the Nivernais bourgeoisie named E. Martin. His personal fortune as a merchant and industrial director was estimated at 3 million francs. Charrier and Harris, 265.

⁶² La Société Académique du Nevers, Memoires: La Revolution de 1848 à Nevers (1948), 18.

Nivernais' officialdom could signal the conditions for economic health to industrialists in Paris. Publications by the Nivernais government such as the official Almanach tended to emphasize a portrait of a well-functioning bureaucracy and to minimize description of what they termed 'troubles.'⁶³ On March 24, 1848, the Nivernais departmental almanac notes there occurred "troubles à Bazoches", and quietly leaves the extent of the insurrection unstated.⁶⁴ But it is more clearly and fully described in a private and official "lettre du procureur general de Bourges au ministre de la Justice 27 mars 1848."⁶⁵ This account outlines in detail the action of a horde of 800 peasants from the Communes de Metz-le-Comte et Teigny (Nièvre) and Fontenay (Yonne), who demanded the return of grazing space from M. de Vibraye at his chateau at Bazoches. This event occurred shortly after the February uprising in Paris with its promise of Republicanism, so, though one could not describe the event at Bazoches as the result of an organised politicization on the part of the peasants, it was very likely stimulated by Republican activism sweeping France following February 1848.

Accelerated politicization of various segments of Nivernais' peasantry accompanied by their open defiance, as in the early example of March 24, 1848, resulted in Nivernais soon becoming known after the huge Bazoches

⁶³ The Almanac in 1848 has this to say about 'troubles' (a small warning note to the rebellious): "Troubles à Nevers, arrestation du citoyen Ulysse Pic. Il est forcé de quitter Nevers." This entry from April 17th is minute in comparison to the usual descriptions of the monthly cyclic, traditional farmwork (i.e. "Octobre-continuer à labourer les terres arables ...") or the pages long, impressive descriptions of a full bureaucracy for each arondissement in Nivernais.

⁶⁴ Duclos, 130.

⁶⁵ Albert Soboul, Documents: Les Troubles Agraires de 1848 (Paris: R.F., 1948), 11-12.

insurrection as an extremely active radical left district.⁶⁶ The growing political consciousness of many peasants in Nivernais through the years after 1848 culminated in a large planned uprising against Louis Napoleon's coup d'état in 1851.⁶⁷

From the previous discussion, it is clear that Nivernais as a rural landscape in 1848 and 1849 contained an inflammatory mixture of radical and conservative forces motivated in their actions by varying rural, urban and class interests. Nivernais as part of the countryside would be part of the regional areas sought out by the urban left and defended by urban and rural right after Paris as a battleground for political struggle had been exhausted by the 'June Days' of 1848. The consequences of the 'June Days' in relation to the growing significance of the countryside is expressed in an important observation by T.J. Clark on this point:

The workers of Paris were defeated and silenced: repression of the press and clubs began. Paris was a lost cause: what mattered now were the provinces, the peasants who had voted in April as their masters had told them, and had come to Paris in June to defend their masters' Republic. So politics had changed ground, the propagandists and organisers left for the countryside, and the battle for peasant allegiance began.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ted W. Margadant has the following point to make about the growing peasant movement between 1848 and the coup d'état in 1851. "Montagnard secret societies had been implanted before the coup d'état in all the districts where large numbers of peasants and village artisans participated in the insurrection Montagnard leaders and militants organized every armed mobilization that involved the convergence of substantial rural contingents on urban centres." Margadant, French Peasants in Revolt (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 35.

⁶⁷ Nivernais was one of the areas most heavily involved in the resistance to the coup d'état in 1851, the latter action, according to Ted W. Margadant, generating " ... the largest provincial uprising in central France." In Nivernais, there were over 1,000 men involved in armed rebellion with a medium of 4,000 insurgents. Margadant, 8-11.

⁶⁸ Clark, 14.

Nivernais as a country district, as a rural landscape, would seem to be an area of significance to Paris because of its relative proximity and its industrial connections as well as its plentiful agricultural produce from large scale farms. The previously noted peasant uprisings in Nivernais along with the peasants' gradually increased politicization throughout 1848 and 1849 no doubt would have interested the Paris elite which eyed the safety of its investments while the urban right and left engaged in a propaganda war for political supremacy in the countryside. The less wealthy in Paris would have been concerned too; they feared a 'red tide' of anarchic peasants suddenly swarming the city and overtaking its government.⁶⁹ It is important to note that the presence of the urban left as propagandists in rural regions did not mean that the latter necessarily wanted the peasantry to independently revolutionize in 1848 and 1849. Judged to be outside of classed society in their proximity to 'nature', the peasantry's stability was an anxiety to both urban right and left.⁷⁰ Many members of the left had philosophical roots in San Simonism of the 1830's and 1840's.⁷¹ The cult espoused social democracy but founded

⁶⁹ Thomas R. Forstenzer points out that many historians dismissed Parisian anxiety over provincial peasant movement as a false phobia. He cites Charles Seignobos to this effect "'Red belts, ties or caps transformed themselves into rallying signals; a scuffle with a policeman in a cabaret became a rebellion against the Police.'" (Seignobos, La Révolution de 1848 (Paris: 1921), 157.) But Forstenzer suggests the danger may have been real, reasoning thusly: "... in the three days following the coup d'état, thousands of armed and organized Frenchman rose in rebellion against Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in many places throughout France. This fact suggests the obvious corollary that "subversive activities" had been going on unimpeded by the vigor and vigilance of the police authorities. In other words, perhaps the prefects and prosecutors were not exaggerating their problems in suppressing the left: perhaps, in fact, the police repression carried out under the Second Republic was not successful enough to satisfy the police authorities themselves. These are points that not any other historian of the Second Republic has made." In Appendix 2, 'The Standard Interpretation: Social Fear after 1849 as a Hoax.' Thomas R. Forstenzer, French Provincial Police and the Fall of the Second Republic (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 278-281.

⁷⁰ Citing a somewhat later event in 1851, Ted. W. Margadant draws attention to bourgeois constitutions of the peasantry as more akin to animals in their 'savagery' of response. "This mob scene at Clamecy seemed to confirm upper class fears of popular violence, and assault on gendarmes, which occurred in several other towns as well, came to symbolize popular savagery in the eyes of Bonapartist officials. Yet such outbursts...were exceptional...." Margadant, 265.

⁷¹ For example, the Provisional government of 1848's Minister of the Interior, Ledru-Rollin.

these ideas on the principle of constructive labour.⁷² Protest by the peasantry instead of acceptance of its circumstances could only be interpreted by the left as well as the right as political anarchy.⁷³

The image and the rural myth

Generally speaking, the subject of Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais is that of peaceful, constructive labour in the countryside. The image portrays a large team of powerful oxen plowing a field in the rural area of Nivernais.⁷⁴ The compositional focus is on the oxen rather than their accompanying drivers, who follow behind the team. The labouring oxen pull their plow in a diagonal line cutting across the field or picture plane from the left side to the right. The scene is painted in bright, rich colour suggesting a late summer or early fall planting as described in the Almanac for Nivernais.⁷⁵ In this painting, both Rosa Bonheur's method of working and her mode of representation in many respects bear reference to academic landscape painting.⁷⁶ For example, Bonheur made preparatory outdoor sketches in Nivernais in the late summer and autumn of 1848, then returned to her studio in Paris to meticulously prepare and complete her final canvas over the spring of 1849. Her completed canvas displays for much of its expanse the

⁷² The eventual interpretation of these principles had diverse outcomes according to individual. The Pereirs were apologists for and practitioners of French capitalism, whilst their cousin Olinde Rodrigues continued to work on behalf of such concepts as emancipation for women.

⁷³ See p.28, n.70.

⁷⁴ See Fig. 2

⁷⁵ "Août - on peut commencer les labours des terres qui recevront le seigle ou les fèves...." The Almanacs from year to year repeated the same agricultural information for the same reasons giving the impression of timelessness and lack of change to this work in the countryside. This selection is from 1852, after the troubled events from 1848 leading up to the insurrection at the coup d'état in 1851. Almanac du labourer de la Nièvre, pour 1852 (Paris: Brilly, Divry et Cie, 1853), 19.

⁷⁶ See Albert Boime "The Academic Landscape: Traditional Procedure," The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (London: Phaidon, 1970), 133-165.

academic penchant for 'finish' by evincing a smooth and fully rendered rather than sketchy or material surface. The latter is only apparent in the immediate foreground where the plowed up mud is depicted with what appears to be unblended but smooth layers -- unlike Barbizon impasto -- of dark brown and black paint. Otherwise, the detailed colouration of Bonheur's landscape and animals is produced through built-up layers of carefully blended pigment, very different to the "subversive" Barbizon materiality of paint application as intervention. Bonheur's brushwork attests to painstakingly executed craftsmanship in the individually rendered hairs of oxen fur, the drops of saliva falling from the animals' open mouths, and the blades of grass, weeds and flowers in the overturned pasture.

The generally harmonious technical execution of Plowing in the Nivernais extends into its subject. It is interesting to note that the conservative critic F. de Lagenevais in his review of the Salon of 1849 actually linked the notion of rural harmony and peace with Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape. He comments in the politically right leaning journal Revue des Deux Mondes that:

A voir l'extension plus grande qui prend chaque année le paysage, on dirait qu'un besoin des sensations fraîches, une sorte de soif de jeunesse porte la génération actuelle à chercher un refuge dans le calme et dans le paix de la nature. Toute oeuvre imprégnée d'un sorte l'odeur des champs est sûr d'être la bienvenue. C'est⁷⁷ ce qui arrive à l'idylle de Mlle. Rosa Bonheur.

In the passage cited above, F. de Lagenevais speaks of the desire of contemporary Parisians - as he voices this in 1849 - for an escape into the countryside as a refuge where calm and peace makes everything harmonious. Through a reading which emphasizes continued, traditional elements, Rosa

⁷⁷ F. de Lagenevais, "Le Salon de 1849," Revue des Deux Mondes (15 août 1849): 585.

Bonheur's rural landscape is represented as a peaceful scene of rural labour, where nothing disrupts the repetitive natural cycle of seasonal planting. The countryside is in a state of unproblematic replanting, promising the reward of a rich harvest in exchange for labour by peasantry and oxen. Affirming this wealth of return as a reasonable expectation is the physical condition of the oxen. The robust health of the animals is a testimony to their existence in a nature made plentiful through patient annual cultivation. The countryside and its inhabitants appear to jointly partake of an idyllic experience where harmonious nature is endlessly rejuvenating.

The whole sense of timelessness attached to the above description of Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape comes from its reference to what was constructed as a static way of life. As Christopher Parsons and Neil McWilliam have noted, such representation of the countryside in the nineteenth century stood as

...an affirmation of values located in the past - of forms of social organisation, national consciousness, epistemological outlook and creative process identified with a civilization untainted by nationalism and urban fragmentation. Within this constellation of sympathies the peasantry occupies a pivotal role, since they are deemed to have preserved intact certain attitudes and beliefs - certain notions of the individual's place within the natural order - which had become foreign to the urban mentality...the peasantry are unchanged and unchanging: their inertia guarantees the survival of fundamental values in a society otherwise characterised by decadence and instability.⁷⁸

Parsons and McWilliam in the above passage are actually speaking of the French nineteenth century critic Alfred

⁷⁸ Christopher Parsons and Neil McWilliam, "'Le Paysan de Paris:' Alfred Sensier and the Myth of Rural France," Oxford Art Journal 6, n. 2 (1983): 39.

Sensier's writing on the painter of French peasantry, J-F. Millet, but Rosa Bonheur's representation of the countryside functions in a similar way. Available in her subject of rural labour for nineteenth century viewers are many of the same ascribed virtues, which, as in Sensier's case, stand outside of escape or historic change.⁷⁹ Plowing in the Nivernais incorporates the notion of stability, which calls up the honoring of past values and a commitment to local roots. The image portrays labour that is tied to the seasons, this being founded upon a stereotypical attachment to nature on the part of the peasant.⁸⁰ The myth implies as motivation for labour a devotion to community good, an enduring component in the functioning of a universalized rural society. Through its inclusion of traditional concepts as an ongoing fact of rural life, Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais thus contributes to the nostalgic myth of an infinitely harmonious rural France. This functions in opposition to the actuality of France's problematic and shifting society in 1848 and 1849.

The rural myth defined the countryside not only as 'unchanged and unchanging' but also characterised its inhabitants as beings forever dwelling 'within the natural order.' With a basis in the peasantry's proximity to the earth and animals, the constructed image of the peasant as close to nature effectively ordered a category for the peasantry as apart from that of so-called 'classed society.'⁸¹ As one stereotype, peasants were typified as

⁷⁹ Ibid, 40.

⁸⁰ The identity constructed for the peasantry within rural myth appropriated various stereotypical notions. For a description and comparison, see the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by Maureen P. Ryan, Peasant Painting and its Criticism in France, 1875-1885: Themes and Debates (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), ch. 1.

⁸¹ Ibid.

creatures of brute force⁸² who were dependent on other segments of society to form the political systems needed for their welfare. Their labour - necessary to France's economic and political survival - was viewed as productive by the urban bourgeoisie when the countryside was peacefully ordered. A countryside existing outside of time and inhabited by a resigned and accepting peasantry was essential to the bourgeois of both the political right and the left. Both these factions of the bourgeois class depended on a stable and cohesive rural population to maintain a platform for their propaganda assault on country areas.

The bourgeois class's own construction of the peasant as separate from the rest of society would have worked in a perverse fashion to reinforce their fears of an unsettled countryside in 1848 and 1849. As an irrational, blind force striking out against its circumstances, a disturbed peasantry was perceived as able to quickly reduce France into anarchy. After the bloody 'June Days' in 1848, the bourgeoisie anxiously fantasized about the possibility of a general peasant insurrection as a result of national instability since the Revolution in February 1848. The huge numbers of peasantry - in addition to their stereotype as close to nature - made them appear potentially overwhelming. In his study of French rural economy, John Horne provides ratios demonstrating the greater size of the peasant force in comparison to urban population and its production:

... in important respects France remained a rural society. The industrial revolution in England and Wales accelerated and completed the work of an earlier, long agrarian evolution in eroding small scale peasant farming and rapidly subordinating country to town, with 50% of the population living in urban areas by 1851. France only reached this

⁸² See p.28, n.70

figure in 1930 The value of French agricultural production compared to industrial production was 3:1 in 1830, 2:1 in 1850 and still 1:1 in 1900, while the small scale peasant, the sharecropper and the agricultural labourer remained central features of French society.⁸³

Rosa Bonheur painted her rural landscape in the politically explosive years of 1848 and 1849. These years combined an unsettled economy and constant political tremors with fears of a large and potentially revolutionary peasantry. It might, therefore, be conjectured that the Salon public - irregardless of political persuasion - would welcome harmonious depictions of the countryside. As mentioned previously, the critic F. de Lagenevais in his review of the Salon of 1849 had, in a conservative reading of Bonheur's painting, labelled her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais an 'idylle' and stated the public had a thirst for a refuge, for calm and peace. On the other hand, what is known about mid-nineteenth century economic and social condition for the peasantry clearly demonstrates that life for these inhabitants of the rural landscape was far from idyllic and was instead ground for vast discontent. The following discussion engages in deconstruction of the rural myth while investigating factors underscoring the peasant's economic identity, this in the historic context of France's rural districts in 1848 and 1849. Such a discussion also has the function of examining the nature and extent of Rosa Bonheur's construction of her rural image.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the North of France was sufficiently industrialised that its inhabitants could find employment in labouring jobs as an alternative to working

⁸³ John Horne, "The Peasant in 19th Century France (1840-1914)" in the catalogue The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Art (Dublin: The Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1980), 17.

the land fulltime.⁸⁴ On the other hand, the peasants inhabiting the more sparsely industrialized Centre and South rural districts in France - which included Nivernais - had few if any alternatives to drawing a living from the soil. The land in these areas was occupied by owner-cultivators of large farms and also by small scale owners, labourers and sharecroppers. The latter group of owners, those with small scale holdings, were in the majority.⁸⁵ These peasants were dependent on common grazing areas to keep their animals, and such areas were being gradually enclosed.⁸⁶ They did not own the amount of land proportionately large enough to graze a sizeable team of oxen, such as are shown in Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais. The robust health of Bonheur's team of oxen could only have been a possibility on a farm experiencing abundant annual returns at harvest season, an unimaginable proposition for the small farms where even the peasantry itself was rendered 50% unfit for army duty because of lack of a basic diet.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Agulhon points out the corollary of this in political terms. "In northern and western France, ... socialism had still not succeeded in penetrating" Maurice Agulhon, The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852, trans. Janet Lloyd (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Roger Price similarly states that there was in 1848 "... the growth of a rural and small town radicalism which appeared all the more dangerous because it was concentrated in particular regions. This occurred in the more economically backward areas amongst men who found their economic status and thence their social status threatened by the developing forces of market agriculture and industrial capitalism." Price, 2.

⁸⁵ Horne, 17.

An earlier article on the French peasantry by Albert Soboul maintains that at mid-century the small scale farm population - that using traditional farming methods - was at the height of its powers, having discovered itself as a political force in the matter of class struggle. At the same time, Soboul portrays it as being at a point of dramatic eclipse by large scale farming. He sees the latter as part of an immediately encroaching and inevitable economic capitalist movement. This account is at odds with John Horne's more detailed and critical account of the small scale peasantry's slightly diminished but nevertheless enduring presence well into the twentieth century. Soboul, 43.

⁸⁶ Soboul, 1.

⁸⁷ Both these authors provide a description of Nivernais' peasants poor diet and living conditions: Eugen Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), 132; G. Thuillier, Aspects de l'économie nivernais au XIXe siècle (Paris: Colin, 1966), 55-63.

Examination of the details attached to the above general description or typography of peasant subsistence on the land reveal a very different story attached to the majority of farm owners' lives in the countryside than the impression of pastoral plenitude evoked by Rosa Bonheur's image set in Nivernais. Small scale owners in the Centre and South suffered from isolation and poverty, the latter caused by small holdings, under-investment, and technological backwardness.⁸⁸ Closure of wooded and meadow grazing areas had important consequences for the peasants' agricultural production. Without animals, they would lack the physical source of power needed for traditionally executed labour. Without the more abundant resources of land and money available to the owner-cultivators of large farms, the small scale owner could not practice crop rotation, buy chemical fertiliser, or think about purchasing steam powered or more sophisticated machinery.⁸⁹ Subject to the mendacious and greedy practices of usurers to extend their credit in bad crop years,⁹⁰ the small scale owning peasantry continued - without recourse - their traditional

⁸⁸ Besides G. Thuillier's Aspects ..., pertaining particularly to Nivernais [see footnote 80], a portrait of the French peasantry's isolated and impoverished conditions in particular regions may be generally arrived at through reading Maurice Agulhon, G. Desert and R. Specklin's Histoire de la France rurale, vol. 3, Apogée et crise de la civilisation paysanne, 1789-1914 (Paris: Senil, 1976).

⁸⁹ Modern agricultural technology in the way of chemical fertilisers and farm machinery was available in 1849 for those such as large scale landowner-cultivators who could afford it. On June 4, 1849, a large industrial exhibition ('l'Exposition des produits de l'industrie') opened, and this shared newspaper coverage with the Salon the following week. A report in the Journal des Beaux Arts gives an impression of the industrial event's status through the newspaper's enthusiastic tone and description of its size. It said "Le nombre des exposants s'est élevé cette année à 4,500, sans compter les agriculteurs." (4 juin 1849): 7-8. The following week the Journal reported "Les machines sont une de plus belles parties de l'exposition; on y remarque, entr' autres, le locomotive Compton. Le travail de toutes ces machines est d'une grande perfection ..." (10 juin 1849):10. The Journal des Beaux Arts actually added the words "et des Arts Industriels" to its title on June 4th, the opening date of the industrial exhibition. The Parisian audience viewing Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais must have been aware of the other event, which would have presented a different vision of agriculture than the traditional one.

⁹⁰ In 1848, the imposition of a 45 centime tax for the funding of National Workshops by the Provisional government greatly angered a peasantry already under duress, making them feel that their needs were being ignored while 'parasitical' urban workers lived off money the peasantry could not afford to give. This unpopular measure by the new Republican government helped to push the peasantry into open expression of their discontent by March and April, 1848. Price, 107.

methods of farming. These simple forms of agriculture combined basic physical strength and the wooden plow. Dating back to the Middle Ages, woodcuts from astrological tables (early forms of Almanacs) and hand illustrated Books of Hours present images of such labour in rural France.⁹¹ Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape painting Plowing in the Nivernais presents this traditional form of agriculture, but her image does not represent the miserable conditions of the small scale peasant owner - the majority of the peasantry - in Nivernais in 1848 and 1849. Neither does her version of the countryside disrupt the construction of an 'idylle', of a harmonious, timeless refuge in nature which is both rejuvenating and unproblematic. Plowing in the Nivernais can thus be read in these terms as visually evoking a 'rural myth.' As discussed previously, this myth was perpetuated by the urban bourgeoisie as a whole since it functioned in the interest of their own immediate survival in 1848 and 1849.

An alternate reading of the landscape.

Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais through an academic practice and vocabulary evoked a conservative myth appealing to both left and right. At the same time, the painting could be read in terms of a new modern landscape idiom that was associated with individualism. This

⁹¹ See Fig. 3.

The traditional scheme for illustration of Books of Hours displays a two-page format, " ... which meant that there was more space for displaying the most important pictorial features of the Calendars - the labours or occupations of the months with their corresponding sign of the Zodiac The occupations are taken from the seasonal labours of the peasants and the pastimes of their feudal lords. A standardized sequence became established for Books of Hours." Ploughing and sowing are listed as traditional labour in the month of October. John Harthan, Books of Hours (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 24. Harthan later in his discussion notes the intended audience for Books of Hours, " ... the vehicle both of intellectual Christianity at its loftiest and of popular devotion on the most primitive level." Harthan, 31.

Griselda Pollock notes a relationship between the works of Millet - insofar as his 'biblical tendencies' are concerned - and late medieval Books of Hours. Pollock, Millet (London: Oresko Books Ltd., 1977), 15.

alternate reading of Bonheur's rural landscape in 1848 and 1849 can be viewed in light of the debate at this date defining the nature of art, the landscape in particular, and the status of the artist in France. In his article on the related subjects of 'art, labour, and mass democracy,' Neil McWilliam comments that the " ... antithesis between 'forme' and 'pensée', and the related issue of artistic individualism, was keenly debated under the Second Republic, its implications closely identified with the broader question of artists' relationship towards sources of power and authority." Further stating that the " ... attack on formalism and aesthetic convention was a defense of individualism ...," McWilliam reveals a positively conceived view of the latter at mid-century as signifying " ... a process of self-realisation which could fuel resistance to all forms of oppression - social, economic and aesthetic."⁹² It is true that by 1848, deviations from Academic practice were common. They have interest in 1848 and 1849, as McWilliam indicates above, not so much in relation to circumventing the Academy as an institution (as did the earlier Barbizon practice) but in the sense of suggesting an individualism current with republican ideals.

Formal features of Plowing in the Nivernais can be viewed as displaying an involvement with traditional academic practice as well as representation of the landscape linked to individualism and, in this sense, republicanism. Since the traditional features of Bonheur's landscape have already been discussed in this chapter in relation to the conservative so-called 'rural myth' and attached notions of order, harmony, and the universal, the following brief examination has the intention of identifying non-traditional

⁹² Neil McWilliam, "Art, Labour and Mass Democracy: Debates on the Status of the Artist in France around 1848," Art History 1 (March 1988): 70-71.

elements permitting an alternate reading. For example, there is the diagonal progress of the oxen over the Nivernais landscape, over the canvas, and over the three grounds traditionally held separate in academic practice. The oxen traversing the grounds are the important feature of the canvas, the diagonal line of their labouring path infusing their presentation with energy and their massive size in relation to all else further commanding attention from the audience. The vigorous sienna of the animals against the bright blue sky adds to their liveliness and this colouration is in contrast to the generally more subtle tones of academic landscape. The oxen are further noticeable because of their vivid lightness in comparison to the dark opaque patches of brown and black (nonacademic in their lack of blended pigment) representing muddy, fertilised earth in the immediate foreground. Rather than being nonspecific features embedded within a generalized landscape in academic tradition, these Nivernais oxen are prominent and recognizable. They labour within a particular French regional landscape. The rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais, painted by Bonheur in 1848 and 1849, is produced in the context of debate on the definition of art, the landscape, and the status of the artist (see p. 38) It is seemingly discussed by critics from the right and the left both in light of these issues and the alternate readings available through formal features of the artist's depiction of Nivernais. The complexity of the critical discourse contained in reviews of the Salon of 1849 is as turgid as that of political circumstances in 1848 and 1849.

CHAPTER THREE

CRITICAL DISCOURSE

The aftermath of the June Days in 1848 revealed a Parisian population dreaming of a country refuge, a calm and harmonious 'idylle' because it was tired of bloody battles between left and right for political supremacy. Struggle amongst these factions now took place outside of Paris in the form of a propaganda war for domination of the countryside.⁹³ It is important to note that although both left and right were interested in gaining support from the rural population, neither side wished the latter to be independent of its control. Both urban left and right feared anarchic action by the large rural population which they judged to be capable of a mass attack on Paris. Upon investigation, it is clear that some geographic regions of rural France were more unstable and volatile than others in 1848 and 1849. For example, the North because of its more industrialized economy was more stable than the Centre or the South. In looking at the department of Nivernais in the Centre of France, the area in which Rosa Bonheur specifically sited her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais, a class based difference amongst its inhabitants must be pointed out. Tied to Paris through the latter's support of what industry existed in Nivernais, the rural bourgeoisie was basically interested in behaving in the interests of the capital and whatever political tendencies

⁹³ Price, 202.

it was perceived as having. On the other hand, a peasantry barely existing through small scale farming vented their anger and desperation by open rebellion against those wealthy bourgeoisie and landowners they felt to be responsible for their misery in 1848 and 1849. The combined poverty and resultant violence symptomatic of Nivernais' peasantry in 1848 and 1849 by force of event divorced that particular rural landscape from mythic notions of a peaceful haven in a timeless, unchanging countryside. Nivernais' lack of stability amongst the peasantry during these years would render this location as a problematic one for the strife weary, post June 1848 Parisian population desiring to dream of a harmonious rural 'idylle.' Yet, in spite of the overtones of anarchic rebellion associated with Nivernais at this date, Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais received a very positive response from the critics⁹⁴ reviewing the Salon of 1849.

Positive critical reception

Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais was generally acknowledged to be the focus of critical attention at the Salon of 1849. The following critics wrote about Bonheur's painting as, on an overt level at least, the noteworthy painting of the exhibition. The conservative painter and critic Auguste Galimard wrote in a publication entitled Examen Critique: Salon de 1849 that "le Labourage Nivernais peint par Mlle Bonheur, est un oeuvre supérieure à bien des

⁹⁴ It has been necessary to construct as accurately as possible for the complex years of 1848 and 1849 the political orientation of the critics and newspapers named in this chapter since no one source reveals this. Several texts have provided some indication of ideological leaning. These are: Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral et Fernand Terrou, Histoire Générale de la Presse Française, T.2 'De 1815 à 1871', (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969); Chartres Musée des Beaux-Arts, Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870 (1983); T.J. Clark, Image of the People (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1973); Joseph Sloane, French Painting between the Past and the Present (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951).

titres."⁹⁵ The critic Hippolyte Acquier, writing in the left leaning paper La Liberté, cited Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape as a painting he found to be excellent. He said to this effect that " ... nous nous arrêtons ici après avoir nommée toutefois les excellents ... les animaux de P. Rousseau, Cogniard et ceux surtout de Mlle Rosa Bonheur."⁹⁶ The critic F. de Lagenevais in the conservative journal Revue des Deux Mondes warmly commented that "cet Attelage nivernais ... est ... un excellent tableau, et les boeufs de Mlle Bonheur n'ont pas leurs pareils à l'exposition."⁹⁷ Similar praise came from the critic 'Fab. P.' in the right leaning paper Le Moniteur Universel. He wrote of Bonheur's painting that "nous nous contenterons désormais d'appeler les regards du public sur les tableaux qui sont, comme le Labourage nivernais de Mlle Rosa Bonheur, tout proches de la perfection" ⁹⁸ The critic for the orleanist and liberal Le Temps, Léon Cailleux, additionally commented of Rosa Bonheur and her painting that "elle nous a donné cette année un bel attelage de boeufs" ⁹⁹ Writing his review of the 'Salon de 1849' in the right leaning paper La Presse, the critic Théophile Gautier praised Bonheur's rural landscape highly. He enthusiastically noted that "Mlle Rosa Bonheur ... est maintenant placé du premier rang dans la spécialité des animaux. Son attelage nivernais est un chef d'oeuvre ... Les boeufs appartient sans conteste à Mlle Rosa Bonheur."¹⁰⁰ Finally, the critic 'P.D.L.' in the left paper

⁹⁵ Auguste Galimard, Salon de 1849. Examen Critique (Paris: Guerin et la Motte, s.d.), 23.

⁹⁶ Hippolyte Acquier, "Salon de 1849," La Liberté (3 juillet 1849): s.p.

⁹⁷ F. de Lagenevais (Blaze de Bury), "Le Salon de 1849," Revue des Deux Mondes (15 août 1849): 585.

⁹⁸ 'Fab P.,' "Exposition de 1849," Le Moniteur Universel (24 juillet 1849): 2443.

⁹⁹ Léon Cailleux, "Salon de 1849," Le Temps (15 août 1849):s.p.

¹⁰⁰ Théophile Gautier, "Salon de 1849," La Presse (15 août 1849): s.p.

La République assessed Bonheur's work in the Salon of 1849 as the most outstanding of her career. He said that "nous ne craignons pas d'avancer que ce tableau est l'un des plus merveilleux qui soient sortis du pinceau de Mlle Rosa Bonheur."¹⁰¹

Some of the critics reviewing the Salon of 1849 perceived Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais as the outstanding work in the exhibition because of its success with the Salon audience. Writing to this effect was the critic Alfred Dauger in his 'Revue des Beaux Arts' in the right leaning Le Pays: Dauger commented "... nous aurons rappele le succès du charmant tableau de Mlle Bonheur, l'événement du Salon" ¹⁰² In the left paper Le Siècle, the critic Louis Desnoyer pointed out that Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais was, of all the paintings in the Salon, the most popular with 'the crowd'. He noted that "le tableau de Mlle Rosa Bonheur est sans contredit celui de tous qui obtient le plus de succès aux yeux de la foule" ¹⁰³ Similarly, the critic 'Courtois' in the left leaning legitimist paper Le Corsaire said of the Salon crowd that "... tout le monde a déjà nommé Mlle Rosa Bonheur." ¹⁰⁴

Critical discourse and the rural myth

In investigating reasons for Rosa Bonheur's success at the Salon of 1849 with her rural landscape, the critical discourse itself can be considered a mediating factor. The problematic locale of Nivernais in the historic context of

¹⁰¹ 'P.D.L.,' "Salon de 1849," La République (1 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹⁰² Alfred Dauger, "Revue des Beaux Arts," Le Pays (15 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹⁰³ Louis Desnoyers, "Salon de 1849," Le Siècle (27 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹⁰⁴ 'Courtois,' "Beaux Arts - Salon de 1849," Le Corsaire (30 juin 1849): s.p.

1848 and 1849 and the mythic identity of the countryside as unchangingly peaceful and productive are discrepant notions, but the critical discourse plays a large part in obviating that difference in the favour of a non-historic discussion. The critics' dialogue for the most part occludes Nivernais' problematic status through confining their analyses to the artist Bonheur's technical execution of the rural Nivernais landscape, and by describing this within a particular terminology surrounding a conception of an image as 'real'. As will be seen in the following examples, this dwells upon discussion of what is 'exact', 'true', or even poetic truth (poésie).¹⁰⁵ This has the effect of facilitating or naturalizing Bonheur's scene of peaceful country labour and dismissing the historical reality of peasant anarchy in Nivernais in 1849. Apart from this, it is important to note that though the discourse can be examined in terms of an overlying explicit direction which commented on what each critic saw as 'true', it is by no means homogenous in agreement on how or where within Bonheur's painting "le vrai" is expressed or located. This sizeable divisiveness of opinion has as its theoretical background in 1849 the debate amongst critics of varying political allegiances on 'forme' and pensée', behind which lay the current historically relevant question of the artist's status and goals in relation to authority.¹⁰⁶ In the critical discourse issuing from the Salon of 1849, these arguments in relation to Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais have also the very tangible locus in this canvas of her negotiation of academic practice and vocabulary along with the new modern landscape idiom redolent of individualism and republicanism in its varying moderations. Conflicts in the discourse are

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of 'poésie' see Ryan, Ch. III.

¹⁰⁶ I refer to Neil McWilliam's article on this subject: see p.38, n.92.

voiced by critics in conjunction with formal features previously discussed in this thesis as evidence of Bonheur's practical negotiation with contemporary theoretical issues. These conflicts are also articulated under related matters such as the following: technical execution, definitions of difference between 'exactitude' and 'poésie', the status of the landscape category as opposed to history painting, the contribution of the young French school to the growth of national culture in the Republican years, and the young French painters' status in comparison to the Italian 'old masters' or Dutch landscapists. Yet these concerns never supercede those pertaining to exactness, truth, or poésie as the critics write their reviews in the midst of controversy over the actual fate of the French countryside in 1849.

The notion of 'exactitude' (exactness, correctness, accuracy, or precision) as a primary focus in conjunction with that of the 'véritable' (true, genuine, real) constantly underlies the critics' discourse regarding the manner in which Rosa Bonheur executed her rural landscape Plowing in the Nivernais. The following two examples from reviews of the Salon of 1849 clearly demonstrate how these concepts were present in the critics' language. Théophile Gautier, in the right leaning paper La Presse, commented "... franchement les animaux de Mlle. Rosa Bonheur sont étudiés, dessinés et rendus avec une science et une correction anatomique" ¹⁰⁷ Louis Desnoyers, writing in the left leaning Le Siècle, stated "L'anatomie de ces animaux, la lourdeur de leurs attitudes, ... la lenteur de leur mouvement, tout cela a été ... exécuté avec une véritable perfection" ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Théophile Gautier, "Salon de 1849," La Presse (10 août 1849): s.p.

¹⁰⁸ Louis Desnoyers, "Salon de 1849," Le Siècle (27 juillet 1849): s.p.

The critics' comments on Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais in the Salon of 1849, variously expressed around these central ideas of 'exactitude' and the 'véritable,' chose to examine Bonheur's technical execution and the skill with which it was carried out. Thus, they remarked on her power of observation or ability to study ('étudier') 'nature,' as well as to shape ('modeler') and to depict ('toucher') nature on canvas. This mode of examination not only inferred Bonheur's 'exactitude' in rendering the Nivernais countryside but more importantly demanded no more than this from the artist in return for praise from the critics in 1849. For example, the critic Henry Trianon in the moderate paper Le Correspondant praised Bonheur's ability to observe and shape nature (understood as her subject), commenting that it made her rural landscape a better work than the painting by Philippe Rousseau. Trianon stated:

Si brillante que soit la palette de M. Philippe Rousseau, si large que soit sa brosse, nous croyons que, cette année, il doit céder le pas à mademoiselle Rosa Bonheur. Cette artiste il est vrai, n'entend ni le ton ni la lumière; mais elle étudie et elle modèle avec tant de soin, elle peint avec une telle vigueur, qu'on oublie les qualités qui lui manquent pour ne songer qu'à celles dont elle est si richement douée.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Henry Trianon, "Salon de 1849," Le Correspondant (s.d.): 469. A similar comment with regard to Bonheur's 'exactness' was made by an unnamed critic in Tablettes Européennes. However, apart from this praise, Trianon also added "Cette artiste, il est vrai, n'entend ni le ton ni la lumière..." On the other hand, several critics commented favourably on the related aspect of colour. For example, Léon Cailleux on the "Salon de 1849," Le Temps (15 août 1849) wrote "... le tout peint largement et d'une bonne couleur." The critic 'Fab P.' reviewed Bonheur's use of colour positively but criticized the lack of harmony induced by her perspective: "en exagérant la dégradation perspective, l'artiste a détruit la liaison qui devait unir l'un à l'autre le second et le troisième plan. Mais cette légère imperfection est largement compensée par des beautés incontestables, au nombre desquelles on remarque principalement le ton ferme et vrai de la couleur..." 'Fab P.', "Salon de 1849," Le Moniteur Universel (19 juillet 1849): 2443. The critic Alfred Dauger admired Bonheur's perspective, however, saying "Comme la perspective est bien comprise!" He also commented favourably on the 'ton' of the earth, "cette terre...est si vraie de tons..." Dauger, "Revue des Beaux Arts," Le Pays (4 août 1849): s.p.

Some of the critics commented on Bonheur's 'exactness' through giving an overview impression. For example, 'P.D.L.' in La République positively noted of Bonheur's oxen: "... comme ces boeufs semblent les aspirer à pleins poumons et s'en servir pour réparer leurs forces." (1 juillet 1849): s.p.

In the newspaper Le Corsaire, the critic 'Courtois' defended the rural landscape form and Dutch art (ie., Paul Potter) against history painting and the Italian 'masters' (ie. Raphael, Titian, and Veronese). 'Courtois' criticized what he viewed as the latter's lack of skill in rendering animal subjects with exactitude, saying on this point that "c'est à douter quelquefois de l'espèce qu'on a voulu rendre." Continuing to use skill in depiction as the context for his critique, 'Courtois' thereby placed Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais above Paul Potter's landscapes. He stated:

Plus heureux que Paul Potter qui, disait-on
faisait mieux les animaux que le paysage et les
hommes, Mlle Rosa Bonheur touche avec un égal
succès les figures, les terrains et les animaux.¹¹⁰

In contrast, the reviewer Louis Desnoyer who is of all the critics the most negative about Bonheur's landscape in his criticism, said on the one hand that "L'anatomie de ces animaux, ... a été ... exécuté avec une véritable perfection..." but stated that this is "... dans la juste limite de la vérité idéale." He then continued in a negative vein to criticize the foreground, seeing this as detracting from the portrait of the oxen: "... les quartiers de cette terre sont trop bien peints, ... Mlle Rosa Bonheur a risqué de faire des boeufs de sucre candi, labourant une terre de chocolat." Desnoyers, "Salon de 1849," Le Siècle (27 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹¹⁰ 'Courtois,' "Beaux Arts - Salon de 1849," Le Corsaire (30 juin 1849): s.p. The critic Théophile Gautier also praised Bonheur's painting over that of Potter. He said "... nous préférons de beaucoup les boeufs de Mlle Rosa Bonheur aux boeufs et aux vaches de Paul Potter, si admirés et payés des prix si fabuleux... les animaux de Mlle. Rosa Bonheur sont ... rendus avec une ... correction anatomique que l'on chercherait en vain dans ce peintre dont le vogue nous a toujours étonné." Joining 'Courtois' in a show of nationalist preference, Gautier clearly stated "Le jeune artiste française est d'ailleurs bien supérieure à l'ancien maître comme paysagiste." Gautier, "Salon de 1849," La Presse (10 août 1849): s.p.

'Courtois' in comparing the Italian masters to Rosa Bonheur on grounds of 'exactitude', touched on the traditional hierarchy of subjects. In this extension of his argument, he said "... le meilleur tableau de ces 2,500 ... tout le monde a déjà nommé Mlle Rosa Bonheur ... Bah! disait un rapin (genre de l'histoire), ce ne sont que des animaux! Brave homme, ignorez-vous que dès les premiers temps de l'art, déjà l'on disait qu'il y avait cent mauvais peintres de héros, contre un bon peintre de moutons." 'Courtois' thus linked the notions of 'exactness', contemporary nationalism, and the rural landscape as executed by a young French painter in opposition to history painting by the Italian 'old masters' issuing from a monarchic era. But not all felt this way toward the category of landscape in 1849. The critic Auguste Galimard differentiated between the art of Rosa Bonheur, Léon Cogniet (an established landscapist), and those who were painters of heroes or madonnas. Of Cogniet's work Galimard said "Cependant cette peinture ne donne pas une idée vraie du soleil que celle de mademoiselle Rosa Bonheur, mais elle est d'une douce harmonie qui charme infiniment." Preferring harmony to "une idée vraie" found in Bonheur's work, Galimard expressed this liking more fully in his following critique: "... nous espérons amener la foule à reconnaître avec nous la supériorité de la haute peinture relativement à ces scènes ordinaires, dont les héros sont des boeufs ou des moutons... nous serions fâché de voir l'opinion s'égarer, et confondre l'importance morale de l'art des madones avec la représentation des êtres dépourvus de l'âme réservée par Dieu à l'homme seulement." Galimard, Salon de 1849. Examen Critique (Paris: Guérin et la Motte, s.d.), 128 - 129.

Other critics discussing Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849 described it in a manner which encompassed the previously mentioned critics' variously articulated assessments of her work as possessing 'exactitude', but added another level of perception to this. They referred to Bonheur's rural landscape with its subject of labour in Nivernais as containing a truth or 'vérité.' For example, the critic Léon Cailleux in Le Temps remarked upon this quality in Bonheur's painting by saying that:

Elle nous a donné cette année un bel attelage de boeufs, creusant courageusement leur sillon. C'est toujours cette vérité d'aspect que l'on connaît, joint à ce grand et fort sentiment de la campagne et de ses travaux...¹¹¹

In La République, the critic 'P.D.L.' remarked on Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais as being devoid of an artificial manner (and therefore true). He said:

Elle peint comme elle voit, avec conscience, avec amour. Point de manière affectée, d'effets faux et fantastiques, de système bizarre, autant de vérité dans l'observation que l'exécution ... on sent que l'artiste a puisé son inspiration à sa véritable source.¹¹²

Additionally, some critics enclosed their discussion of Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais in relation to 'truth' by indicating that they defined this quality in landscape as nature successfully reformed into a further, poetic state of truth or 'poésie'. The critic 'Feu Diderot' in L'Artiste praised Bonheur's composition for possessing an air of energy, but complained that its execution was too

¹¹¹ Léon Cailleux, "Salon de 1849," Le Temps (15 août 1849): s.p.

¹¹² 'P.D.L.', "Salon de 1849," La République (1 juillet 1849): s.p.

Also noting that Bonheur's rural landscape was 'true', Alfred Dauger compared it favourably to painting by the established French animalist Brascassat and the Dutch landscapists: "je ne sais si M. Brascassat a peint ses bestiaux plus vrais que ceux-là, mais à coup sûr Paul Potter n'a jamais fait mieux, et le paysage est digne de Ruysdael ou de Berghem ..." Dauger, "Revue des Beaux Arts," Le Pays (4 août 1849): s.p.

prosaic making it too literal for poésie in his opinion. He stated in a comment prefatory to his discussion of Bonheur's work that he found the young French school to be sterile because, though it constantly produced work, its painting lacked poésie.¹¹³ Thus he noted of Bonheur's portrait of nature that:

Rosa Bonheur me suprend par un aspect nouveau, par un accent énergétique, par un air de virilité. C'est la nature pittoresquement comprise, mais rendue avec la manière conventionnel de M. Horace Vernet. C'est la prose poétique et non la poésie.¹¹⁴

Though all of the critics reviewing Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849 varied in their individual opinions about details of the painting itself, they all described it within the notion of truth to nature. By confining her rural landscape within these terms, they reified its tendencies toward the rural myth. By reading Plowing in the Nivernais within this conceptual relationship to a fictional reality, the critics provided their Parisian audience with a salve to sustain it during the harsh reality of the post-June Days in 1848 and 1849.

¹¹³ Feu Diderot said "L'école française est en plein épanouissement, elle monte avec une séve généreuse; mais c'est la séve de la forêt qui montre à peine des fleurs et qui ne donne pas de fruits. Ou plutôt l'école française est un moulin à vent qui tourne, tourne, tourne, mais qui a vide ... où est la poésie?" Diderot, "Salon de 1849," L'Artiste (1 août 1849): s.p.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., s.p.

Diderot compared Bonheur's work to that of Paul Potter, and, unlike the critics 'Courtois' and Gautier (see 99), he preferred Potter's rural landscapes seemingly because they were to him more moving: "Paul Potter est plus ému, il peint d'un pinceau plus large, il voit plus naïvement." Ibid., s.p.

Other critics wrote about Plowing in the Nivernais as combining truth and poetry, or being nature successfully reformed by Bonheur. E.J. Delécluze wrote thusly: "... l'ouvrage qui a le plus fortement fixé mon attention dans le palais des Tuileries, cet celui de Mlle Rosa Bonheur ... Cette peinture, pleine de poésie et de vérité, est traitée avec une science et une énergie tout à fait remarquables." Delécluze, "Salon de 1849," Journal des Débats (16 juin 1849): s.p. Alfred Dauger stated that Bonheur's painting reached another level of reality through its artful, seeming lack of artifice. "C'est si simple en effet; il y a là si peu de recherche, d'extraordinaire, d'emploi des grands moyens, les revers du coteau sont tellement exacts ... qu'on ne voulait pas admirer ce qu'on voit tous les jours" Dauger, "Revue des Beaux Arts," Le Pays (4 août 1849), s.p.

It was this rural refuge of peace and harmony desired by Parisians that the critic F. de Lagenevais dwelt upon in his review in the Revue des Deux Mondes:

A voir l'extension plus grande que prend chaque année le paysage, on dirait qu'un besoin de sensations fraîches, une sorte de soif de jeunesse porte la génération actuelle à chercher un refuge dans le calme et dans la paix de la nature. Toute oeuvre imprégnée d'une sorte de l'odeur des champs, est sûr d'être la bienvenue. C'est ce qui arrive à l'idylle de Mlle Rosa Bonheur.¹¹⁵

Within the context of the critical discourse, de Lagenevais' words acquire a new depth. The tendencies in Rosa Bonheur's painting toward the production of an 'idylle' seem to be welcomed as much by the critics as by the general public, and it is the critics' reading of Plowing in the Nivernais within the context of truth to nature that evokes the existence of a timeless, stable, harmonious countryside in the region of Nivernais.

The critical discourse issuing from the Salon of 1849 contains a second type of language of enclosure. This also functions in a way which locates Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais within a conceptual framework supportive of traditional social values and stasis, while further dissolving Nivernais' problematic historical reality as a site for rural insurrection in 1848 and 1849. This language used by the critics to speak about Bonheur's rural landscape as well as about the artist herself is emphatically linked to the issue of gender in society at this date.

Gendered discourse

Critics from both the right and the left place Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais in a discourse which is

¹¹⁵ F. de Lagenevais (Blaze de Bury), "Salon de 1849," Revue des Deux Mondes (15 août 1849): 559.

gendered in its construction. Such discourse functions to construct a separate category, apart from the mainstream, of 'women's art.'¹¹⁶ Through the constitution of this category, the artist Bonheur and her production is grouped with other artists who are women, and with their production. This characterization by the critics in regard to Rosa Bonheur's painting has the effect of nullifying Bonheur's particularity and stripping her work of its underlying richness of historical signification. In this manner, 'women's work' becomes identified with the conservative ideological values attached to French mid-nineteenth century society's constitution of the respectable bourgeois feminine identity.¹¹⁷ Thus the gendered discourse used by critics reviewing Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais forms one of the ways in which the potentially inflammatory subject of the rural landscape in 1849 is made to evoke a conservative reading. From this evidence, it appears that in Rosa Bonheur's case, critics from both the right and the left met on the central ground of gendered discourse¹¹⁸ in discussing

¹¹⁶ Many, many critics proposed the notion of women's affinity to non-heroic subjects and small size format in the reviews accompanying the Salon of 1849. This idea was naturalized by frequent reference to its supposed biological basis. The latter made woman's ideologically subordinate role in mid-nineteenth century society a rationalised one. This manipulation of women's ideological position circumscribed their production and reception. Providing an example of this is Paul Devoir's review in the right learning Revue Universelle. He said "Peu de femmes ont abordé la grande peinture avec succès: ce qu'il leur faut à elles, ce sont les petites pages, avec de petits personnages finement touchés, mis en action dans de petites scènes d'intérieur, animées par de petits sentiments. Dans ce genre restraint, mais qui n'est pas sans charme non plus, elles réussissent plus sûrement; parce que leurs qualités, naturelles les y rendent éminemment propres." Devoir let his readers know that biology was at the bottom of all this. Mme. Calamatta, a landscapist, was able to render her ethereal subjects because of her 'feminine' hands: Devoir said on this subject "Les deux sujets ... du Matin et du Soir, sont peut être ce que la main délicate d'une femme a jamais tracé de plus beau" Devoir, Salon de 1849," Revue Universelle (juillet 1849): 8.

¹¹⁷ See p.2, n.2.

¹¹⁸ T.J. Clark says of the critics in 1851 that "... they share to a certain extent a class identity, many of them on the fringes of the old or Napoleonic aristocracy, members of the 'liberal professions.' Eleven of the critics carried the aristocratic or pseudo-aristocratic prefix 'de'. The rest were impeccably bourgeois, except those who were dilettante landowners like Sabatier-Ungher. What matters is the curious repetitive rhythm of 'Salon' after 'Salon,' the common structure of likes and dislikes, the agreed language in which the objections are framed" Clark's observation seems to offer a reason based on social structure for the critics' very common terms of discussion in relation to gender in 1849. Clark, 136.

her work, just as politicians or apologists for the right and the left wished to envision the rural landscape - in this instance, that of Nivernais - within traditional (though mythic) metaphors of unceasing plenitude, peace, and order. In 1849, these constructions of 'woman' and 'nature' then seem to similarly belie a politicization demanding that both 'woman' and 'the peasant' (as part of the rural landscape) be ordered under the gaze of an ultimately patriarchal ideology. Rosa Bonheur's positioning in this context is doubly 'signed,' as an artist she is a woman and a painter of rural landscapes.

Several of the reviews displaying a gendered discourse refer to artistic production by Rosa Bonheur in terms of what they see as the Republic's positive attitude toward fostering the individual. The critic 'Courtois' in the paper Le Corsaire (part of 'le presse légitimiste')¹¹⁹ noted in the introductory portion of his Salon review that the Republican government promoted the principle of unlimited liberty in both society and art. He remarked that this era displayed more women than at any other time active in various forms of creative production, saying "jamais à aucune époque on ne vit autant de femmes marquantes dans les lettres, en peinture, en musique et même en sculpture."¹²⁰ Yet this comment by 'Courtois' does not indicate his approval of such liberty. The implication of it is that this special grouping of women as defined by him must be studied as entities unto themselves in the Second Republican era. 'Courtois' additionally introduced the courtly concept

¹¹⁹The Chartres catalogue refers to Le Corsaire as part of "la presse légitimiste." It says about the legitimists' identity that "Sous la Seconde République, les légitimistes, par delà leurs divisions, espèrent toujours une restauration des Bourbons. Regroupés au sein d'associations, bien implantées dans l'administration, tirent leurs principaux revenus de la rente foncière, ils occupent toujours une position importante en France, principalement dans le domaine artistique." Chartres, 60, 66.

¹²⁰'Courtois,' "Beaux Arts-Salon de 1849," Le Corsaire (30 juin 1849): s.p.

of 'gallantry' which undermined any notion of talent in his assessment of artists such as Rosa Bonheur. To this effect Courtois stated " ... chez le peuple réputé le plus galant du monde civilisé, ce qui le moins coûte c'est l'oeuvre d'une femme" ¹²¹ The critic named Rosa Bonheur as the woman producing the best painting in the Salon insofar as public opinion was concerned, but this declaration rings with a hollow tone when its positioning within a gendered discourse is taken into consideration. Finally, though 'Courtois' said of Rosa Bonheur and her rural landscape that "c'est l'émancipation de la femme par le talent," ¹²² he subsequently undermined this proclamation of talent by enclosing it with mention of another, specifically named woman artist. 'Courtois' stated "Mille pardons aux porte haut-de-chausses, mais c'est encore une femme qui l'emporte dans la miniature, Mme. Herbelin." ¹²³ The artist Mme. Herbelin produced within a format generally recognized as appropriate to woman's production, that of the miniature. 'Courtois' praised Mme. Herbelin for her accomplishment in this form, thereby reinforcing with this example which follows his discussion of Bonheur the notion of women's art as a separate category. 'Courtois' also said of Mme. Herbelin's miniature that it should not be criticized for its depiction of the body since women did not study in life classes: "Nous abandonnons à la critique le dessin des bras et des mains, les femmes n'étudiant pas l'anatomie" ¹²⁴ His comment further separates this woman painter and, by implication, Rosa Bonheur with whom he has grouped Mme. Herbelin, from male practice by making the observation that

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'Courtois,' "Beaux Arts-Salon de 1840," Le Corsaire (30 juin 1849): s.p.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

the education of women artists is both different and lesser than that of male artists. Though 'Courtois' initially declared that his subject was the emancipation of women in the Republican era, his enclosure of Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais within a gendered discourse has a limiting effect, circumscribing her painting's worth, and undermining the seeming optimism of his introductory statement. By grouping 'women artists' in 1849 and referring to them as 'remarkable,' he marginalized rather than honoured their achievement.

A review by a critic named Louis Desnoyer in Le Siècle¹²⁵ also spoke about production by women artists in the Republican years as evidence of an age of emancipation. But this writer who spoke from the platform of a left leaning newspaper, clearly grouped art by women under this distinctive category and at the same time derided the social aspirations of women in the politicized groups in a tone which is openly sarcastic. Beginning by saying "Une chose digne de remarque, c'est que ce sont les femmes qui l'emportent cette fois, du moins dans certains genres. L'art tombe en quenouille,"¹²⁶ Desnoyers set up the gendered enclosure of women's art. The reference to production by women as belonging to "la quenouille" or the distaff¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Referring to the status of Le Siècle in 1847, the Chartres catalogue calls it "un journal de l'opposition républicaine." Chartres, 37.

¹²⁶ Louis Desnoyers, "Salon de 1849," Le Siècle (27 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹²⁷ In connection with the use of the word 'distaff' as it relates to traditional peasant economy, John Horne cites a study by R. Thabault in 1850. It said "All the evidence [in 1850] goes to show that the peasant farmers continued to live, as far as possible, within a semi-enclosed economy, purchasing as few things as possible People still spin yarn on the distaff; all linen came from local home weavers" Horne, 23.

The Larousse dictionary gives the following information related to the distaff and spinning as gendered material: "1. A cleft staff about 3 feet long, on which, in the ancient mode of spinning, wool or flax was wound. 2. Used as the type of women's work ME.; hence, for the female sex, female authority; also, the female branch of a family; a female heir. St. Distaff's Day, the day after the feast of the Epiphany on which day (Jan. 7) women resumed their spinning after the holidays." Larousse, 1494. In these definitions, the connection between women, their activity in gender defined

further entrenched work by women within a conservative, traditionally bound role. This expression refers to the activity of spinning, carried out only by women in forms of society with gender defined roles. Such activity was particularly appropriate to the countryside in 1849 rather than urban areas where spinning was the exception. It calls up craft making rather than art.

Desnoyers then openly mocked the aspirations of the politicized women's groups. Naming the 'citoyennes' Doria, Niboyet and Deroin¹²⁸ women prominent in these associations either as leaders or publishers of writing advancing the social cause of women - the critic commented on what he ascribed as their "foolish" notions with an acerbic wit. He began:

"Toucherions-nous à cette ère d'émancipation prédite par la citoyenne Doria, la citoyenne Niboyet et la citoyenne Deroin, où les femmes sont complètement affranchies de l'infériorité qui pese sur leur destinée sociale? où tandis que les hommes s'occuperont à leur tour des soins du ménage, feront de la couture et préparent la bouillie de moutards, ces dames exerceront les fonctions de représentantes, de conseillers d'Etat, d'avocats, d'hussières, de préfetes, de jugeuses et de garderesses champêtres? Nous ne savons, mais, en vérité, le Salon de 1849 est de nature à inspirer de sérieuses réflexions sur ce point."¹²⁹

Desnoyers thus joked about the political goals of women working for female emancipation, the projection of men taking on domestic labours, and the production by artists who are women. After this juxtaposition, Desnoyers discussed in particular the rural landscape by Rosa Bonheur,

society, traditional rural society, and the influence of the Church are interwoven to connect women and conservative or traditional values.

¹²⁸ See footnote 37 for the identities of Niboyet and Deroin.

¹²⁹ Louis Desnoyer, "Salon de 1849," Le Siecle (27 juillet 1849): s.p.

and what might at first appear to be praise is soon revealed as criticism of her work. He started by admitting how prominent Flowing in the Nivernais was amongst the works at the Salon: "Le tableau de Mlle Rosa Bonheur est sans contredit celui de tous qui obtient le plus de succès aux yeux de la foule et même à ceux d'un très grand nombre d'amateurs."¹³⁰ But in perhaps the most scathing comment of his review, Desnoyers attributed Bonheur's success to courtly 'galantry' on the public's part, to the charm implicit in her name, and also her ability. "Elle le doit à son mérite réel, à la galanterie du public et à l'influence charmante de son double nom."¹³¹ Through this gendered discourse, Desnoyers like 'Courtois' marginalizes Bonheur the artist and her production, carrying them far from the state of emancipation initially referred to. Upon examination of reviews such as those by 'Courtois' and Desnoyers, it is clear that the references by Stanton, Boime and Ashton to Rosa Bonheur's strong, heroically inclined individualism and independent stance (all of these things actually being part of their construction) are discrepant with how the critics actually placed her in relation to individual freedom in 1849.

In Le National, another left leaning publication, the critic 'Pr. H.'¹³² also placed Rosa Bonheur and her rural landscape within a gendered discourse and so evinced the same social attitudes toward artists who were women as the right leaning publications. 'Pr. H.' said

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² T.J. Clark mentions a 'P. Haussard' writing in Le National. In footnote 27, Clark, 185. Clark also defines Haussard as a critic of the left. Clark, 135.

The Chartres catalogue defines Le National as an "organe de l'opposition républicaine" in reference to its stance in 1842. Chartres, 37.

"Parmi nos dames artistes, Mlle Rosa Bonheur aura l'un des succès populaires et incontestantes du Salon. Son attelage nivernais (Salle 23) en est digne. Mme. E. Appoil ne nous avait jamais montré un art aussi éminent dans la peinture des fleurs. Le Pâtre, de Mlle Cappelaere est un petit morceau fort distingué."¹³³

Though 'Pr. H.' praised Rosa Bonheur's work, his approval of her work is modified by his practice of placing it within a certain group, that of 'nos dames artistes.' In the paper La République, the critic 'P.D.L.'¹³⁴ encloses Rosa Bonheur within another variant of gendered discourse. That is, he isolates Bonheur and the discussion of her painting to her case alone against the seemingly amorphous mass of women as a generalized whole. Observing the quality of " ... beaucoup plus de vigueur ..." in Plowing in the Nivernais, the critic 'P.D.L.' then sets this against painting practice and the handling of paint by women. He stated that Plowing in the Nivernais had " ... beaucoup plus de vigueur ... qu'on n'en trouve ordinairement dans la main d'une femme."¹³⁵ 'P.D.L.' with this remark both holds Rosa Bonheur's painting apart from the usual work of women while enclosing it within women's production by commenting on it as included in this category.

The conservative papers Revue des Deux Mondes and La Presse,¹³⁶ and the right leaning critics F. de Lagenevais and Théophile Gautier whose writing appeared in these respective titles, both engaged in a gendered discourse in respect to

¹³³ 'Pr. H.', "Salon de 1849," Le National (26 juin 1849): s.p.

¹³⁴ La République's subheading to its title is "journal fondé le 24 février 1848" indicating a republican status.

¹³⁵ 'P.D.L.', "Salon de 1849," La République (1 juillet 1849): s.p.

¹³⁶ The Chartres catalogue groups the following papers politically: "des critiques de journaux du juste-milieu (La Presse, L'Illustration, Le Moniteur Universel, La Revue des Deux Mondes)." Chartres, 56.

Rosa Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais. Aspects of their reviews utilized this categorization within the confines of the 'rural myth,' which in de Lagenevais' words expressed the motif of the countryside as an 'idylle.' Both F. de Lagenevais and Théophile Gautier compared Bonheur's painting to writing by the author George Sand. They made the specific comparison of works located in the countryside, that is, Bonheur's Plowing in the Nivernais to Sand's rustic novel La Mare au Diable (1846). F. de Lagenevais asserted

"Mlle Bonheur doit certainement avoir lu le prologue d'un petit roman publiée il n'y a pas longtemps par un éloquent écrivain, et où se trouve dépeinte avec une rare magie de style une scène absolument semblable à celle qu'elle a choisie."¹³⁷

Sand, who owned a large estate in the French countryside, wrote novels such as La Mare au Diable characterised by an idyllic, harmonious view of country life and a peaceful peasantry involved in productive labour. The critic de Lagenevais reacted negatively toward those portions of Plowing in the Nivernais which he felt did not render the rural landscape as poetically as Sand's written representation. Lamenting Bonheur's treatment of the plow furrows and the drivers of the oxen, the critic said that unlike Sand's,

les sillons de Mlle Rosa Bonheur's ne fument pas;
... et à la place de l'enfant à la chevelure
ébouiffée et couvert d'un peau d'agneau, elle met
un valet de charrue insignifiant. Décidément la
poésie fait tort à la peinture.¹³⁸

Viewing these more individually expressed elements as failed poeticism, de Lagenevais seemed to regard them as interrupting the coherence (or truth) of what he saw as

¹³⁷ F. de Lagenevais (Blaze de Bury), "Le Salon de 1849," Revue des Deux Mondes (15 août 1849): s.p.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Bonheur's rural 'idylle.' Théophile Gautier, the other critic comparing Bonheur's painting to Sand's writing, expressed this idea through the attributes pertaining to the rural myth. For example, Gautier said "Ce tableau, par sa placidité forte, par sa solennité rustique, nous a rappelé les premiers pages de La Mare au Diable, cette admirable bucolique de Georges Sand."¹³⁹ He buttressed these terms of likeness within a conservative mode by referring to Bonheur's oxen in league with traditional concepts, saying they have " ... quelque chose de primitif, d'antique, de religieux" ¹⁴⁰ Gautier's gendered discourse regarding Bonheur is thus further enfolded in other universalized levels of description which additionally carry consideration of the artist and her rural landscape away from historic reality and away from the context of artistic production in 1849.

Reasons for Bonheur's reception (1849): a historical reading

Upon investigation, the issues of landscape and gender in the political context of 1848 and 1849 appear to have had a strongly positive mediating effect on the reception of Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape painting Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849 as well as suggesting reasons for her subsequent patronage under the conservative Second Empire of Louis Napoleon. Landscape painting had gained popular appeal in the art market of the early Republican years, 1848 and 1849; its potential for reference to individualism was strengthened by Dutch representation's new prominence. But more specific reasons made landscape a highly significant subject for artistic representation at

¹³⁹ Théophile Gautier, "Salon de 1849," La Presse (10 août 1849): s.p.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

this particular time. After the bloodshed of the 'June Days' in 1848, urban dwellers tired of political insurrection and the left transported its struggle with the right to the new arena of the countryside. At the same time, the countryside became a source of anxiety to urban dwellers, who feared peasant anarchy. Parisians desired relief from upheaval and the 'rural myth' of a calm and ordered rural landscape served to placate their fears. Yet in specific areas such as Nivernais, just the opposite was true. Peasant violence erupted as a result of discontent with impoverished circumstances and growing Republican sentiment.

Rosa Bonheur's representation of Nivernais in 1848 and 1849 evokes the 'rural myth' through her subject of peaceful, productive labour in that particular region and through her means of representation. The latter is largely academic in orientation though traces of her negotiation with a new, modern language for landscape painting enable a reading in terms of republican emphasis on individualism. Bonheur's evocation of the 'rural myth' is bolstered by the particular mode of discussion by critics. First of all, their discourse describes Plowing in the Nivernais in terms of truth to the myth, though conflict amongst critics from the left and right occurs over the details of this. Secondly, their reviews display a markedly gendered outlook on Bonheur's rural landscape which has the function of enclosing her work within a nonproblematic, safe palatability and of sealing it off within the rubric of 'women's work' from painting in the Salon as a whole. It is thus apparent that not only the context of the art market and France's growing political conservatism, but also the subject and its site, the means of representation, and the particular terms of description employed by the critics,

intersected to positively mediate the reception of Rosa Bonheur's rural landscape painting Plowing in the Nivernais at the Salon of 1849. These social and historical factors rather than a heroic image of the artist as constructed in recent accounts are shown to be responsible for Rosa Bonheur's success at this specific time.

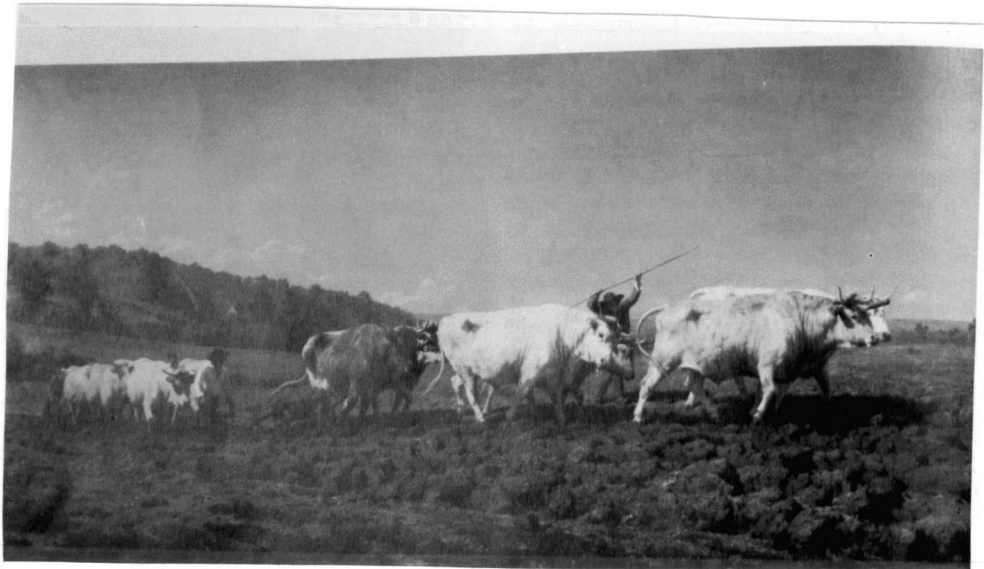


Fig. 2. Rosa Bonheur, Plowing in the Nivernais,
Paris, Musée, D'Orsay.

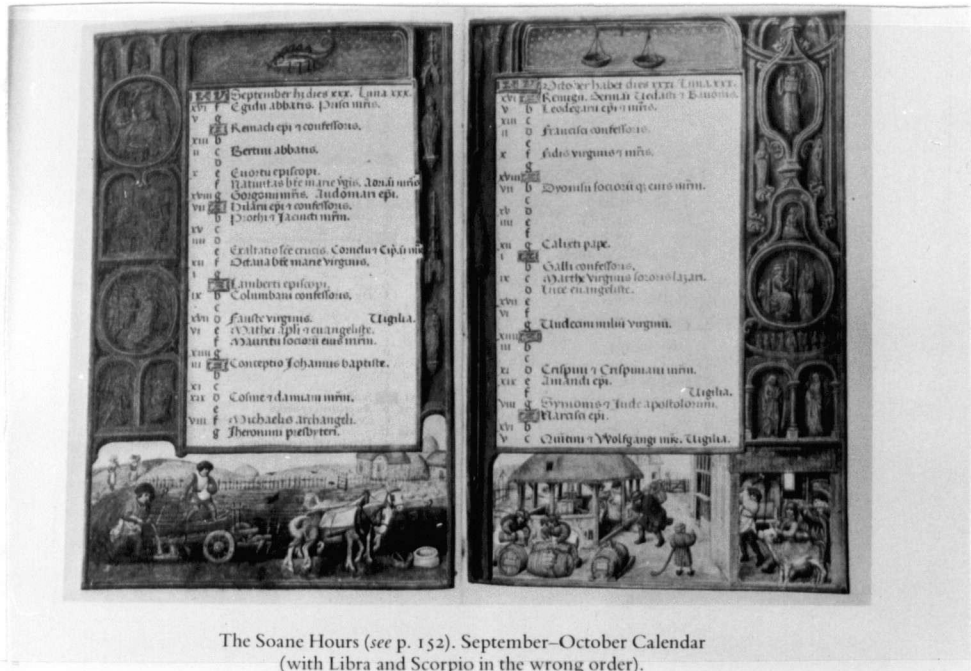


Fig. 3 The Soane Book of Hours. September - October Calendar.

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Section I lists nineteenth century Salon reviews and
Section II lists books, articles, and letters read for this
thesis.

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