JEAN LEON GÉRÔME (1824-1904):
A STUDY OF A MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY
FRENCH ACADEMIC ARTIST

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is not a monograph on Gérôme. Rather it is an analysis of selected paintings and the themes that occur in them.

My approach has been iconological, as subject-matter was, for Gérôme, the most important aspect of painting. But I have also endeavoured to tie a formal analysis of Gérôme's art to its content.

Chapter I contains a brief biographical sketch, as most of this information is readily available elsewhere this chapter is quite brief.

Chapter II deals with Gérôme's néo-grec painting, both for its own sake and to introduce my thesis--that Gérôme's painting is an extension of his role as collector and that the world he creates is an extension of the nineteenth-century French intérieur.

Chapter III continues and expands on this argument and deals with Gérôme's ethnographic work and attempts to explain his use of a photographic style.

Chapter IV deals with Gérôme's serious history paintings and relates them to historiographic discourse in nineteenth-century France.

Chapter V, the conclusion, summarizes my arguments.
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CHAPTER I:
GÉRÔME'S CAREER

Gérôme's career was a charmed one, whatever difficulties he may have had in his personal life, whatever eccentricities, have been withheld from us by his biographers, or rather by Gérôme himself who furnished them with his life story. There is no real reason to doubt the account which Gérôme has given us, full of lacunae as it is, nor is there any reason to doubt the embellishments upon this tale given to us by those who knew the painter. But it all reads rather oddly; nineteenth century biography was perhaps the nadir of that literary form. For the Victorians, French and English, biography meant an account of a man's achievements in the public arena with only the merest hints of what motivated him. Therefore the image of Gérôme that emerges from the literature about him is of a man reading a script. However, we can infer certain things about Gérôme from these books and articles which are not stated directly. After all, we have the works of art.

Gérôme was born on the 11th of May, 1824, in Vesoul, a small town in North-eastern France, about halfway between Basel and Dijon. He was the son of a moderately well-to-do silversmith, who being a maker of objets d'art himself, encouraged his son's ambition to become an artist. It was this childhood that gave Gérôme his lifelong devotion to an
arduous work schedule and an attitude towards his art that was very much a craftsman's more than an "artist's".

In 1839 he went to Paris to enroll in the atelier of Paul Delaroche. This was a prestigious studio, if not the most prestigious at the time. It had been handed down from David to Gros and then to Delaroche (and subsequently to Charles Gleyre). Delaroche himself was only rivalled by the towering figures of Delacroix and Ingres, and he was a personal friend of Louis-Philippe. In other words, a favored student of Delaroche's had privileged access to the Salon, to the coveted Prix-de-Rome and to state and private commissions. In 1843, after a student died as a result of the often rowdy initiation practises, Delaroche closed his studio, handing it over to Charles Gleyre and encouraging his students to go to either Gleyre or Martin Drölling. Gérôme, however, was utterly devoted to Delaroche and went with him to Italy for a year.

In 1845 Gérôme returned to Paris and enrolled in Charles Gleyre's studio so that he might compete for the Prix-de-Rome. He was unsuccessful, but in the following year he sent his first painting to the Salon, *The Cock Fight*. This painting received a Third Class medal, rather unusual for a first Salon, and made Gérôme a recognized painter. At twenty-two, he was famous.

One would like to know a great deal more about the group that then gathered around Gérôme. These young painters,
all students of Gleyre, lived together in a studio on the Rue de Fleurus (later made famous by Gertrude Stein's residency there). Le Chalet, as the group called themselves, included Toulmouche (Claude Monet's cousin), Hamon, Picou and the sculptor Jobbe-Duval. Théophile Gautier was a welcome and frequent guest at what he called "a little Athens". Perhaps following the example of Gleyre, Le Chalet also housed a large number of animals, and Gérôme's chimpanzee, Jacques, would often accompany him to restaurants.

They were all rather poor and very idealistic, and they seem to have participated in the spirit of 1848. Gérôme headed a petition to abolish marriage in that year as well as entering the contest for an allegorical figure of the Republic.  

The image we get of Gérôme as a young man is of someone who was driven to succeed. His devotion to his work inspired those around him. He had a great deal of personal charm which he could turn on or off at will which made him the central figure of the group, "le chef des néo-grecs".  

In the 1850s he received several important commissions and exhibited regularly at the Salon. In 1854, while researching for a large commission he made what was to be the first of many voyages east.  

In 1862 he married Marie Goupil, daughter of the art-dealer. They had four children, three daughters and a son who died at the age of 27 in 1891. By this time Gérôme was
living in a house on the Rue de Clichy.

In 1863, Gérôme along with Cabanel and Pils was appointed to a professorship at the École des Beaux-Arts, a post he held until his death in 1904. In 1865, at the fairly young age of forty-one, he was elected to the Institute. His long tenure at the École and his violent opposition to realism and impressionism have contributed to his image as the ultimate Academician; it was an image he seemed to have enjoyed. His students included Henri Rousseau and Thomas Eakins, both of whom admired him.6 Among his last students was Fernand Léger.

The honours heaped upon Gérôme during his lifetime were too numerous to list here. He was the only painter to be awarded the Grand Medal of Honour three times. He travelled in many social circles, among his friends were the Goncourts, Prince Napoleon, the Péreîres, and the Rothschilds.

As a man Gérôme is consistently described as trim, energetic and very elegant in his manners. All the photographs and paintings of him give him a very arch appearance, the eyebrows raised in a permanent mask of disdain.

Gérôme lived by a strict regimen--when not travelling--he would ride almost every day in the Bois de Boulogne, often with James Rothschild. He painted almost every day of his adult life, making him a very prolific artist, especially considering the amount of time that goes into work of this type.
He practised all sorts of genres throughout his life, often exhibiting a néo-grec or historical work at the same Salon as an ethnographic work. This thesis deals with his néo-grec, ethnographic and historical paintings. But besides these there are religious paintings, a few portraits, among them one of the actress Rachel, a few landscapes, often with animals, especially lions, which Albert Boime suggests, he may have thought of as sort of a personal totem. He was among the most popular painters of his time. The Salon made painting a subject of public attention to a degree almost unimaginable today; perhaps the cinema would be a reasonable comparison. One can, I think, understand why Gérôme's meticulous renderings of exotic subjects were popular. First of all, they were legible as stories and a great many people expected that of art; they were also escapist. The sexuality of many of the paintings, hardly noticeable by today's standards, allowed sexual fantasy within the protective confines of art. As a man, he was a paragon of bourgeois virtue. He himself had said that "perspicacity and good sense" were the foundations of the French character, and he made himself the embodiment of these qualities. He gave France an image of an artist who was not a wild Romantic, contemptuous of middle-class values, nor a realist who might be a socialist as well, nor was he given to "high-brow" discussions of his art. Rather he treated art as though it was a profession, which was to be approached in a business-
like manner. Words like "imagination" and "poetry" have no meaning when Gérôme uses them.

Gérôme had the misfortune of seeing his career begin to disintegrate. From the 1880s on he saw his prices begin to fall. He still won awards at the Salon, but by this time the Salon had begun to be replaced by the private art gallery. When he died in 1904 no retrospective was shown. Although there was small Gérôme exhibitions at Vassar College in 1967, it was not until Gerald Ackerman and Bruce Evans organized a Gérôme show for the Dayton Art Institute in 1972 that the painter has been given a major retrospective. Due to the new field that Academic painting offers to art historians and the rising taste for photo-realism, Gérôme's reputation has taken a turn for the better after seventy years of complete neglect. The artist who emerges was of modest accomplishment but interesting and worthy of a place in the history of nineteenth century art.
Notes - Chapter I


4 In 1851 he received a commission for several panels in the refectory of old St. Martins, Paris which was being restored as a library. In 1852 he did two murals in the Chapel of St. Jerome, St. Severin, Paris, by all accounts he was considerably outshone by Hippolyte Flandrin who also did murals in St. Severin at this time.

5 He received a commission (20,000 francs) for a large allegory on a passage from Bousset. This commission is discussed in Chapter III.


8 Hering, 1892, op.cit., p.vi.
CHAPTER II:
THE NÉO-GREC PAINTINGS

At the urging of his teacher, Paul Delaroche, Gérôme sent his first major work, \textit{The Cock Fight} (fig. 1), to the Salon of 1847. Even though the painting was hung rather far above the line, it attracted attention and praise. Théophile Gautier wrote enthusiastically in \textit{La Presse}: "Un peintre nous est né, il s'appelle Gérôme. Aujourd'hui je vous dis son nom, et je vous prédis que demain il sera célèbre."\(^1\) The painting even charmed the vituperative Gustave Planche into writing a favorable notice.\(^2\) The Salon jury awarded \textit{The Cock Fight} a third class medal.\(^3\) Thus, at the age of twenty-two, Gérôme had become a famous painter; he had a Salon medal, and perhaps more importantly, he had the support of Gautier, who was one of the most influential critics of the time.

\textit{The Cock Fight} was the first of a number of paintings Gérôme produced in a style known as \textit{néo-grec} or \textit{pompeiste}. This style was one of a number of short lived "styles" that emerged in the July Monarchy which were neither Classical nor Romantic but attempted something in between.

\textit{Néo-Grec Painting and Its Relationship to "High" Art}

\textit{Néo-grec} painting was characterized by its placing of everyday, even trivial, subject-matter in an antique setting. The \textit{néo-greces} abandoned the mythic and heroic image of antiquity practised by David and espoused by Ingres for an
Figure 1
image that was softer, less demanding, and showed the ancients in their day-to-day pursuits. Néo-grec art is anecdotal rather than narrative, lyric rather than epic, and for this reason it can only be called history painting with qualification, although it everywhere refers to the standards of history painting.

History painting, what the Academy deemed high art, as conceived by David or Ingres, was concerned with the depiction of events that embodied elevated moral conflict and purpose; events which celebrated the heroic and were meant to ennable the viewer. David's Oath of the Horatii and Ingres' Apotheosis of Homer have didactic energy, they are icons in every sense of the word.

Academic history painting, in theory, emphasized those aspects of painting that could be calculated and learned, it was an art of the intellect rather than of the heart. Colour was kept dull, as it was associated with feeling, whereas precise drawing was thought to engage the mind. The surface was highly polished. Evidence of the artist's hand, which might indicate the spontaneous gesture of the inspired--and therefore temporal--moment was abjured and hidden. And because the surface was highly polished the details assumed importance. In the styles of David and Ingres, unlike that of Delacroix, the finer points of the architecture and accessories could not be merely suggested but had to be clearly defined. The Beaux-Arts' student
was required to have a grasp of classical literature, not just as a source for elevating subject-matter, but also as a repository of information about the visual environment of the ancients. He was also taught archaeological methods of extracting meaningful information from coins, bas-reliefs, vase drawings etc., so that he could create an historically accurate *mis-en-scène* for the classical subjects of high art.

In matters of composition and proportion Academic painting used the proportions and geometric values that were found in classical art. Symmetry was the guiding principle of composition and the figures not only used classical proportions they often were quotations of ancient statuary.

The figures are often life-size, as in the *Oath* and the *Apotheosis*; this factor, as well as the use of Renaissance perspective, postulates a homogeneity between the space of the painting and the space that the viewer occupies in the real world. But the space of these paintings, unlike "real" space, is very limited and gives an image of figures frozen in action forever, relieved of the burden of time.

The shallow space and frontality of the figures underline the heiratic, authoritative nature of high art. According to the French poet Yves Bonnefoy: "Dans le langage de toutes esthétiques, la frontalité signifie l'éternel, par opposition à la profondeur, par où se réintroduit la temporalité, et le plan exprime l'être ou l'essence, bref, l'intemporel." The shallow space denotes the eternal values
which the subject-matter illustrates within it. It at once
refers us to the bas-relief and reminds us of the more dur-
able medium of stone. We are thus distanced in time from
the world of high art. In the Apotheosis, Ingres adds to
the authority of the painting by asking us to look up as if
our eye level corresponded to the bottom edge of the canvas
where the figures are cut off at the waist.

Néo-grec art remains high art in several critical ways.
It displays the results of research and erudition on a highly
polished surface. Line dominates the colour, the brush work
is invisible. The human figure is idealized and the space
is often quite flat in the background, if it is not actually
shallow. In The Cock Fight, the figures are life-size. And
néo-grec art can point to Hellenistic art for a classical
justification of its everyday subject-matter. It is high
art in every way except the most important. The subject-
matter is not especially morally edifying, self-sacrifice
and patriotism and the celebration of the heroic or the
authoritative are everywhere abandoned for epicurianism.

Fini, the idealization of the figure, etc., have an
aesthetic value rather than an ethical one. High art proper
refers us to a cult of the state, of the gods and of tradition;
néo-grec art refers to a cult of the Beautiful. As Gautier
said of the néogrecs at Le Chalet, "...living like Sybarites,
painting from palettes of ivory, crowning their heads with
roses." In fact, néo-grec painting has all the characteri:
istics of genre painting in a high art disguise, or vice versa.

Genre Painting During the July Monarchy

Although the Academy certainly valued history painting above all other kinds of art; the notion that it completely shunned genre painting in the nineteenth century is something of a myth. Painting from classical or biblical sources was the sort of painting that one had to enter for the Prix-de-Rome contest, a prize which constituted "arrival" and a competition which most Beaux-Arts' students entered. But Granet and Drolling, among others, both practised genre painting which was executed in a highly realistic style that owed a great deal to seventeenth century Dutch and Flemish realism and both became members of the Institute in the 1830s.

A quick look at the auction rooms of Paris, a reliable indicator of fashionable taste, shows that genre paintings, mainly French, Dutch and Flemish fetched respectable prices in fairly large numbers in mid-century. Arsène Houssaye, who knew Gérôme, wrote a book about Dutch painting in 1846.

So if Gérôme's néo-grec painting is recasting genre painting into a classical mold, he is not reviving genre painting, which was fairly healthy at the time. Instead he must be seen--although we must be careful not to exaggerate the young Gérôme's conscious intention here--to be "reviving" high art, or rather salvaging what was left of it at the end
The situation of Academic art at this time is best examined—for the purposes of this thesis—by a discussion of the two teachers who taught Gérôme his tradition, Paul Delaroche and Charles Gleyre.

Gérôme's Teachers I: Paul Delaroche

Gérôme's most important teacher was Delaroche. Delaroche's painting was characterized by a highly polished, and therefore Academic, handling of traditionally romantic subject-matter. This style was known as *juste-milieu*, an appellation that comes from political terminology. Delaroche was Louis-Philippe's favorite painter and friend; and he came to represent in the world of art what Louis-Philippe stood for in politics. The reign of Louis-Philippe was, in the words of Alfred Cobban; "...so lacking in principle that it could only be known by the month of it's founding, as the July Monarchy. Louis-Philippe's policy was an attempt to please both the right and the left by fence-sitting. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that Delaroche's attempt to temper romanticism with a little precise drawing will be forever associated with it. But, as Nancy Bell pointed out, Delaroche's compromises had a measure of success, whereas the king's did not:

Delaroche was a painter after the heart of Louis-Philippe, that monarch who vainly strove to bridge over the gap between aristocracy and democracy, and to rule on the so-called *juste-milieu* system. What the king failed to do in politics, his favorite painter succeeded in accomplishing in
art...Delaroche became the idol of the middle-class.

One rather doubts whether Delaroche's style was meant to correspond to the policies of Louis-Philippe, at least not consciously. But most of the popular artists of this period, Delaroche, Ary Scheffer and Horace Vernet, were all seen as having solved the Classic-Romantic conflict. This conflict may often seem obscure to us—as those terms have since had to carry the burden of German philosophy—but at the time it was quite clear where certain people stood. Ingres stood for classicism, political conservatism and traditional values; Delacroix and Hugo for a romanticism associated with republican and democratic ideals. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848 were seen as victories of one style over the other. So the juste-milieu art of Delaroche was seen as metaphorical of and appropriate to Louis-Philippe's policy of depolarization—which is, of course, itself a tactic of the right.

But there is a split in Delaroche's artist personality. His large hemicycle for the École des Beaux-Arts, *The Artists of All Ages* (fig. 2) is clearly modelled on the Ingresite formula of the *Apotheosis*, and considering where this painting is placed, how could it be otherwise.

Most of Delaroche's art differed dramatically from this public display of support for high art. In *The Children of Edward IV* (fig. 3) the strong, even light of high art is eschewed for a dramatic chiaroscuro which probably was meant
to suggest the dark depths of Richard III's murderous heart. The theme itself is Shakespearian and therefore (by the standards of the July Monarchy) romantic. The handling is, however, highly finished. The details are picked up, brought into sharp focus and dwelt upon. Delaroche, as Nancy Bell writes, "was ever on the lookout for effective incident, and spared no pains to make sure of accuracy of detail in costume and in furniture." This attitude towards detail is a variation on the academic insistence on erudition, although one certainly feels that Delaroche's detail work lavishes attention on objects for their own sake and not to make an archaeological point. Delaroche's manner here must be derived from Dutch realism—varnishes and furs. And The Children of Edward IV came in for some rough criticism from Gustave Planche on this account: "...everything is discouragingly new: furniture, clothing, the faces themselves are new and have never lived..."

A realistic handling of detail invades even the work of Ingres. As Robert Rosenblum has noted, Ingres had a wide variety of styles and subjects as his command. Rosenblum has advanced the thesis that Ingres would change his manner to suit his subject, Raphaelesque for his Virgin with a Crown, Northern late Gothic for The Duke of Alba at St. Gudule, or the model of classical statuary for Vergil Reciting from the Aeneid. Rosenblum writes: "Like a nine-
teenth century architect, he [Ingres] was acutely aware of choosing a style that suited his subject. Ingres was most realistic in his portraits.

During the July monarchy, both the government and the artists had to deal with a powerful bourgeois constituency who were weary of the endless debate: Republic, Empire, Monarchy and who chose as a compromise, Louise-Philippe, Orleanist claimant to the throne and a man who reportedly had republic ideas. This choice seemed rational and non-rhetorical—it was motivated by an urgent desire for a society that would allow the affairs of business to be the affairs of the world. This rising bourgeois class began to buy and collect art, and it was probably they and the tone they set that was responsible for the rise of a kind of painting that celebrated things, and possessions, the visible signs of wealth.

So the kind of eclecticism we see the néo-grecs practising high art and genre painting—is far from innovating rather such "experiments characterized most of the art of the July Monarchy as well as the Second Empire."

Gérôme always recognized his debt to Delaroche. Late in life he wrote that he himself belonged to the school which Delaroche had "founded by the side of these two opposing schools (Classicism and Romanticism). This, Gérôme, assured his reader, was the "School of Good Sense" But Delaroche did not found l'école de bon sens, although he was not unrelated
to it. 17

Gérôme's Teachers II: Charles Gleyre

Gérôme's contact with the école de bon sens was through his second teacher, Gleyre. Gleyre had been a student of Delaroche's and it was he who took over the latter's studio in 1844. Gérôme's actual relationship with Gleyre remains ambiguous. While Gérôme's notes on his early years are full of praise for his beloved Delaroche, Gleyre is mentioned only once. Gérôme was only registered in Gleyre's studio for three months in 1845. His reason for doing this, was, by his own account, only in order that the might be eligible to compete for the Prix-de-Rome, which required that contestants be registered in a recognized Parisian atelier. 18 He did not win the Prix that year and never tried again. The jury apparently told him that he failed because of the deficiency of his figures. So he embarked on a year's study of the nude--the end result of which was The Cock Fight. It is important to note that he did not continue his studies under Gleyre at this time but returned to Delaroche as a private student. 19

Gérôme's reasons for erasing the influence of Gleyre from his accounts of his formative years are beyond the scope of this thesis. That Gleyre was, in fact, important to Gérôme seems beyond question. 20

The members of Le Chalet, Toulmouche, Hamon, Picou, Aubert and Jobe-Duval were, along with Gérôme, all Gleyre
students. In fact, it has been put forward that néo-grecism actually originated in Gleyre's studio.\textsuperscript{21} Thumbing through Charles Clement's catalogue of Gleyre's oil painting one can find—at least two paintings which—by description at least—seem to be néo-grec in sensibility which were executed before 1846, and thus before \textit{The Cock Fight}.\textsuperscript{22} One of these paintings is called \textit{Lucrece} and was the result of a series of planned illustrations for François Ponsard's play of the same name.\textsuperscript{23}

Just as Gérôme's painting earned him the title "le chef des néo-grecs", Ponsard's 1843 stage success earned him the title "le chef de l'école de bon sens". As Gleyre was close to Ponsard, although we don't know if he went as far as to label himself of the \textit{école de bon sens}, we might reasonably expect that Ponsard will illuminate one of the brief traditions that informed the néo-grec movement.

\textit{L'école de bon sens}

One hundred and fifty years after the fact the difference between a \textit{juste-milieu} and an \textit{école de bon sens} sensibility may seem a little \textit{raffiné}. Both occupy little outposts on the vast wasteland of art history between the polar extremes of classicism and romanticism. \textit{Bon sens} really has to do with the stage, which like painting in the early nineteenth century was a battleground between romanticism and classicism. The difference between Delaroche's art
and Gleyre's, considered in these terms, was that Delaroche leaned towards the romantic while Gleyre leaned towards the classic.

The école de bon sens attempted to reform classicism in order to crush romanticism. In this aspect it was an agent of the Academy and in 1845 Ponsard won the Institute's prix de tragédie, which had been founded in 1831 (note the date): "pour opposer une digue aux envahissements du romantisme."²⁴

In order to rescue classicism Ponsard and his fellow playwright, Émile Augier (with whom Gérôme travelled to Egypt in 1856) tried what seems in retrospect to perform an impossible task. They wished, like the néo-grecs, to aestheticise the classical ideal. But they went further than epicurianism, they wished to tinge the classical esprit with scientism and republican politics. As Ponsard's biographer, Daniel Stern, wrote: "La sagesse de Ponsard, il fait bien l'avouer, n'était pas d'un stoïcien, mais plutôt d'un épicurien, au sens vrai du mot, qui fait consentir le bonheur dans la volupté, mais la volupté liée à la raison et à la moderation."²⁵ (Stern here quotes Littré's dictionary—Littré was a friend of Ponsard's and supported him in the Second Empire when his Charlotte Corday was banned). Lucrece, for example, argued for "les droits impérissables de la science et de la raison contre la superstition et la fanatisme."²⁶

Ponsard, Gleyre, and the young Gérôme were all associated
with Saint-Simonian ideas. Gérôme went as far as to lead a petition demanding the abolition of marriage in 1848.²⁷

If this association with Saint-Simonian circles does not directly affect Gleyre's or Gérôme's painting style beyond, perhaps, inhibiting the mythological imagination that is necessary to pull off a high art history painting, it introduced them to groups of men who would later be buyers of their paintings. Many of the entrepreneurs whose financial activity was responsible for the rapid industrialization of France during the Second Empire were Saint-Simonians. Saint-Simon, usually referred to as a "utopian socialist", believed strongly in credit and industrialization (a word he coined), and has the unique honor of being both a formative figure of socialist thought and a direct inspiration to the development of high capitalism in France. The taste of men like the Péreire brothers who built railways and founded the Crédit Mobiler, tended toward not only the kind of painting that Delaroche, Gleyre and Gérôme practised, but also towards the kinds of painting in the past that inspired these painters. According to Albert Boime: "Among the various schools represented in the collections of entrepreneurs around mid-century, two stand out significantly from the rest; seventeenth century Dutch and eighteenth century French painting."²⁷

Although we have to wait until the impressionists to see a revival of something of the spirit of eighteenth century
French painting, néo-grec painting, like rococo painting, celebrated leisure, elegance and refinement. These kinds of paintings would appeal to this rising bourgeois for several reasons. An important factor is simply that this kind of painting was constantly appearing on the market as old aristocratic collections split up. These styles reminded the new bourgeois of an old splendour which they wished to recreate for themselves. And as I have noted, the Dutch realism celebrated objects and was thus suited to the tastes of men devoted to the acquisition of wealth.

This class of men, entrepreneurial Saint-Simonian industrialists, were interested in the arts. Delaroche painted a portrait of his friend Émile Péreire and it was Péreire who organized the Delaroche retrospective at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1857.28

Néo-grecisme, when it arrived on the scene, had a ready-made and immediate audience in these sorts of men. The climate in the arts at the Salon of 1847 was one of boredom and impatience. Salon visitors hadn't seen a good history painting for several years and eagerly awaited Couture's long promised Romans of the Decadence, which was the last major history painting to excite the public. And when Alexandre Dumas saw The Cock Fight he exclaimed: "One breathes freely again before such works as this."29 Both Gautier and Planche used words like, "fraîche", "calme", "simplicité", to describe Gérôme's first painting. Indeed, Gérôme himself
prided his work on those points:

At this epoch—I speak from a general point of view—there was a complete absence of simplicity. Effect (le chic) was in great favour when accompanied by skill, which was not infrequent. And my picture had the slight merit of being painted by an honest young fellow, who, knowing nothing had found nothing better to do than lay hold on Nature, and follow her, step by step, without strength perhaps, without grandeur, and certainly with timidity, but with sincerity.  

Le chic is difficult to define, but given what The Cock Fight looks like, and given that Gautier and Planche both hated Delaroche's paintings, le chic probably meant an excessive amount of melodrama on an altogether too slick surface. One might note that Ponsard's Lucrèce was greeted with the same words of praise as Gérôme's néo-grec painting, "fresh", "calm" and "simple". And Gérôme's friend, Frédéric Masson, would later write: "On a salué dans l'art de M. Gérôme, l'équivalent en peinture de la réaction littéraire, Ponsard-Augier."  

It was the Salon situation itself which created a climate eager for novel styles. It was an annual public spectacle and the public demanded the novel but not the radical. Gérôme's néo-grecisme was an ingenious move in this situation if it was not the radical move that Courbet was shortly to make.

Thus far I have discussed in fairly general terms the place of néo-grec painting in tradition and sketched out the kind of audience that received it. But one must also examine it for its own sake and decipher the meanings of the images Gerome presented in the néo-grec works.
The Cock Fight

It is far from clear that Gérôme actually had a program in mind when he painted *The Cock Fight* (see above quote, p.14). Rather, one might just as easily suppose that it was the success of this particular painting which led him to produce more of the same. There was also the encouragement of Gautier, whom Gérôme met while the later was gazing, rapt with admiration, at his first painting.

That *The Cock Fight* was an attempt to merge two or more manners of painting is all the more evident by its failure to achieve a blend between them. Gérôme apparently wished to strike a note between Ingresist classicism and the Dutch inspired realism of Delaroche. The painting emphasizes this divided concern rather than hides it. Champfleury noticed this and chided his friend, Gautier, for overlooking what he considered to be a serious flaw in the painting:

...vous, Gautier, vous admirez beaucoup les coqs, mais ils ne sont vus par le même oeil qui a vu les enfants....Les jeunes Grecs sont en marbre, les coqs sont en chair et en os; les personnages sont peints d'après le procédé Gleyre, les animaux d'après nature.32

However, the *personnages* do not quite inhabit the same world, despite what Champfleury might think, and this is of slight but significant interest. The boy has an almost palpable sensuousness, and although he is perhaps a little too beautiful for this world, he is not disturbingly less *après nature* than the cocks. The girl, on the other hand,
with her hair set in glue and her limbs of white stone, appears to have fallen, somewhat the worse for wear, from the angelic world of Ingres. Poised next to the birds, which could have popped out of a seventeenth century Dutch painting, she exhausts our credibility. In many ways this painting sets the tone for Gérôme's entire output. The vast majority of his white women are over-idealized compared to their environments, whereas men and women of other races are more naturalistic. And his depictions of animals are perhaps the most naturalistic passages in his paintings. In some way, this hierarchy of realistic treatment according to sex, race and species is a result of his attempt to make realistic classical genre painting. The female nude was more rigorously guarded by the canons of high art than were men or animals. Ingres paints her as La Source and she occupies the highest place on the altar of the worshipper of Beauty. She is the very mediatrix between the Ideal and the real, she is the angel who informs high art. Upon her body, la ligne draws the curves and proportions that also direct the course of the stars.

In The Cock Fight, Gérôme has placed his ideal nude in an anecdotal rather than a divine circumstance, involved in a conceit rather than a theme with some grandeur. This conceit has something to do with "la vanité de toute gloire." Behind the figures stands what is either a tomb or a dried up fountain which functions as a symbol of death or sterility.
This is meant to contrast with the bloom of the youths and the lively battle of the birds. In other words, one is constrained, although it might tire one to do so, to contemplate the transient and ephemeral nature of youth, beauty and love. Again, the theme is lyric and sentimental rather than epic and heroic.

However, there is real chilliness beneath the calm lyricism of this Mediterranean afternoon. It may be hard for us to detect this, but in 1847 paintings were read much like stories and all possible implications of an image were brought under discussion. One receives a slight jolt when reading Sarah Tytler's commentary on The Cock Fight, but her view was far from being atypical: "The subject was this early in his history characteristic of Gérôme, who has shown a decided preference for incidents in themselves horrible or morally repulsive."\textsuperscript{33} Mrs. Tytler's sense of delicacy must have been very finely honed indeed.

But one can see what she was getting at. The subject, obviously a steal from seventeenth and eighteenth century depictions of low-life, is fairly bloody.\textsuperscript{34} And Gérôme's dreamy presentation, which in effect thrusts low-life into high art, tends to accentuate the moral horror. After all, these youths are not peasants who don't know what they are doing, they are icons of ideal beauty and ought to be more responsible.

The dialectic of desire that \textit{The Cock Fight} portrays becomes an unintentional hommage to sadism. Although the
girl seems to draw back from the cock fight--that is if her
gesture can be read as anything other than a tribute to
Ingres' Comtesse d'Haussonville--her face exhibits neither
alarm nor squeamishness, none of that "feminine" hysteria
one might have expected from such a subject. Rather she is
cool, calm and deliberate--in full possession of herself. If
she smiles it is a coy grimace of sexual wistfulness. On
the boy's face we find open delight and wonder. The passion
which animates his face is scientific (a passion which ani­
mates Ponsard's characters on the stage). The Cock Fight
combines sexual coyness with a life and death struggle of
the birds. In fact, the interaction between the boy and the
girl is mediated by the cock fight. Imagine for a moment
the young man's expression is directed at the girl and not
the birds--that it is his bold ardour she teasingly backs
away from and not the birds. The actual cock fight, so
placed, becomes a commentary on the nature of desire.

Indeed, most of Gérôme's néo-grec paintings have some­
thing to do with desire, although they are surprisingly rich
in other meaningful ways as well.

Gérôme's Other Néo-grec Paintings:

The Female Nude as an Icon of High Art

Throughout his néo-grec works Gérôme develops the theme
of desire, and in certain paintings he uses this theme to
make a point about the nature of his art.
Among the more successful of these paintings is his Phryne Before the Areopagus of 1861 (fig. 4). The stylistic difficulties which marred The Cock Fight had by now been overcome. But the tension between two worlds of art remains. The figure of Phryne is an idealized, classical nude. The magistrates are treated more realistically, but Gérôme has mitigated the discomfort that this might have caused by the use of broad exaggeration in their gestures and grimaces. In doing this he steers the painting perilously close to outright caricature. Of course, this treatment is most appropriate to the story of the painting, and in turn the narrative of the painting is a commentary about the painting styles used to unfold it.

Gérôme has depicted the Greek courtesan, Phryne, at that moment in her trial for impiety— which was then a capital charge—when her advocate, Hyperides, rips off her peplos in a last-ditch attempt to secure her an acquittal. And, so Athenaeus tells us, the judges were so moved by the spectacle of her physical beauty they could impute no possible crime to her.  

The story's clear moral message is that physical beauty has a power and purity and that rather than offending the gods it is their gift and sign. But in his naturalistic treatment of this moment Gérôme has chosen the astonishment of lust and not expressions which might indicate that these magistrates are witnessing some theophanic occasion. For
this reason many contemporary critics found the work a little disturbing. As an English critic wrote, not a little chauvinistically: "Only a Frenchman would venture to depict the carnal desire which kindles the faces of the old judges."\textsuperscript{36} Theodore Thoré, and this is odd coming from the man who defended Courbet, wrote in a similar vein: "M. Gérôme offers to the young ladies of Paris a doll undressed before disorderly, licentious old satyrs, who smirk as though they had a real woman before their eyes for the first time."\textsuperscript{37}

Like two similar néo-grec works, King Candaules of 1859 (fig.5) and Cleopatra of 1864 (fig.6), Phryne Before the Areopagus depicts a moment of dramatic devoilement. Again, this presentation of the female nude was considered by some to be too much; Ferdinand de Lasteyrie wrote of Cleopatra: "Soon modest women will not stop before M. Gérôme's pictures."\textsuperscript{38} In this critical atmosphere one admires Gérôme's courage, but Manet's simply takes one's breath away.

In these three paintings, a woman, drawn in Gérôme's version of the Ingresiste ligné, is placed by a sudden gesture into a condition of nakedness. In each case the drama of the painting centres on this unveiling.

One might suppose that Gérôme has deliberately picked these anecdotes to display Academic bravado. For he must convince us that, indeed, these beauties are splendid enough to cause the commotions that they do. This factor might have been uppermost in Gérôme's mind, but the historian must see
that by picking such stories Gérôme has involved himself, intentionally or not, in a discourse about the Academic nude.

Ingres had made the female nude, the location par excellence of a demonstration of skilled draughtsmanship. The nude might awaken sexual feelings, but in an Academic rendition the ligne ought to transform these feelings into a relationship with abstract Beauty. The central place of the nude in the Academic view of art is demonstrated by the naming of nude studies as académies. Unlike Ingres, Gérôme (as far as I know) never painted a solitary nude figure. In the three examples we are discussing the context is dramatic and a great deal of our attention, as viewers, is forced upon the spectators in the painting. And it is very likely that Gérôme means these painted spectators to be uncomfortable mirror images of the viewer of the painting. His gawking areopagists do remind one of Daumier's leering Salon visitors.

The situations that the paintings portray are analogous to the situation of high art exhibited in the Salon. Phryne's gesture of humiliation becomes a metaphor for the work of art in conditions which tend to erode its authority. Since the Salon was opened to the public in 1793, it assumed the nature and scale of a public spectacle. And for perhaps the first time in modern history one finds masses of people looking at images in a context that had nothing to do with religion or the apparatus of the state. Before this, art objects were usually seen by a few individuals at a time who, speaking
figuratively, contemplated the object and engaged themselves in a mode of perception very much like a ritual. Public art, in churches or public buildings, whatever else one may say about it, was at the service of an authority and protected from secular scrutiny or use by the heiratic distance of that authority.

The salon was the beginning of the erosion of the authority of the work of art as a unique object in the nineteenth century. How could any viewer achieve the required dignified elevation of mind that a painting like The Apotheosis of Homer requests of him in the circus-like hub-hub of the Salon. In Phryne Before the Areopagists not a single judge manages the appropriate response, although displayed before their eyes in the actual model for Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos and of Apelles' Aphrodite Rising from the Waves. All they can muster, and largely because there is a group of them in a secular context, is the astonishment of lust. A large number of people looking at paintings in the Salon is the inverse of what happens when a work is widely reproduced by photography or lithography, but the effect is similar. In both cases the "I-thou" relationship between the object and the viewer is severely disrupted and the authority of high art is shaken by circumstances which are inimical to its function as sort of a ritual object in a secular, even if extremely profane, cult of the beautiful.

Phryne Before the Areopagists depicts this situation
metaphorically. Gérôme places the icon of high art before a public who react inappropriately. This interpretation is supported by the evidence of a much later painting, Roman Slave Market (fig.7). This painting, one of a number of similar works, is significant because of the pose Gérôme has used for his slave, it is Phryne seen from the rear. Here the gesture is clearly meant to be read as one of acute embarrassment and humiliation. Certainly a prime motivation for the occasion of the work was to display Gérôme's facility at drawing the nude figure, or académie. But this merely begs the question. Again, the female nude, the icon of high art, is found in disconcerting circumstances. In this painting she has become a commodity with a highly charged fetish value, in which the relationship between the owner, or buyer and the art object is transparently sexual.

One would not expect Gérôme to think of these paintings in the terms in which I am discussing them. I am reading them as cultural documents because I expect the attack launched on Academic art in the nineteenth century to have had an effect on that art. The Salon was not the only factor in the erosion of the authority of the high art image. Much more drastic was the advent of mechanical reproductions of works of art. Gérôme's relationship with this new phenomena had a major effect on the way he painted.
Mass.; reproductions of paintings began just before the July Monarchy. One of the earliest companies that dealt in this commodity was Goupil et Compagnie which was founded in 1827. There was a large and lucrative market for reproductions. For example, in the 1840s Charles Landelle signed a contract with Goupil for the first offer on the rights to reproduce his work. In 1871 alone, Landelle received 39,000 francs in royalties from the Goupil firm, this was considerably more than a Landelle original would fetch. Gerôme's relationship with the company is well known, almost all of Gerôme's major paintings were reproduced by Goupil. In 1862 he married Marie Goupil—Marie's brother, Alfred, not only ran the company but lived next door to the Gérômes on the Rue de Clichy.

The Goupils seemed to have been a mercenary lot whose business practices were a little questionable—but not, perhaps, by the standards of the Second Empire. For example, in the 1870s the heirs of Vernet, Scheffer and Delaroche sued Goupil for royalties from the sale of reproductions of works by those artists which were in public collections. Albert Boime has unearthed a letter which reveals the somewhat sordid side of this episode. Goupil won the suit, but seems to have engaged in bribery to do so. The letter, from the superintendent of the Beaux-Arts to the firm, requests that the company pay the government's expenses in the case.
The theory being that if one pays for a trial one ought to win. The naked commercial aspect of all this, especially, when it involved his own family against his beloved Delaroche, must have disturbed Gérôme. It brought home what was involved in the mechanical reproduction of works of art.

The reproductions were commodities, pure and simple. The unique work of art, although bought and sold, always could count on being somewhat aloof from the fate of the commodity. Eventually the work of art would participate the tradition of ownership which lifted it out of the marketplace of mass produced items. And in the case of a painting by an old master, say Leonardo or Raphael, these objects were hors de commerce, and even in the nineteenth century it was impossible to imagine affixing a price to such rarities. The reproduction divested the work of art of this tradition and its aura of being a unique object in the world. The reproduction is not unique in time or place, the viewer or user does not meet it on its own territory, rather the work of art enters the viewer's time and place, where it can clearly have no ritual authority—no "rareness".

This situation, along with changing factors in taste, which were discussed above, changed the way a painting looked. As Walter Benjamin observed: "To an even greater degree the work of art becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility." The unique work takes on the function more or less like a mold in a factory, or, more tellingly, like the
negative of a photograph. This factor lies behind the juste-milieu and néo-grec styles. They were ostensibly willing compromises in the battle between classic and romantic and between idealism and realism, but they were actually forced into being what they were. The realism of Vernet and Delaroche was predicated partly by a desire to temper romantic painting using a highly finished surface, and was thus also an abandonment of traditional high art subject-matter and presentation. It is no accident that the high art format seems untenable at that moment when the authority of the unique work of art becomes questionable in terms of the public reception of images. Nor is it a coincidence that a realistic handling of romantic subject-matter comes at the same time as mechanical reproduction. One can easily see that the reproduction process demanded that the image be clear and legible. At this stage in its history this process was unable to reproduce the effect of colour or brushwork and they were thus redundant for the purposes of reproducibility.

Gérôme was then caught in a double bind. He was the arch defender of Academic art and his painting style was meant to curb the decline of high art by reinvigorating it. He could hardly be expected to have known that the Salon and Goupil and Company were the forces behind this decline and not realism and impressionism, two styles which, for a time, did rescue the authority of the unique object.
The Néo-Grec "Fashion" and the "intérieur"

The School that Gérôme founded in 1847 (if we do not give Gleyre and Ponsard previous credit) was limited to a fairly small group of painters. Their works is rare today, and thus far the whereabouts of the most famous néo-grec work by a painter other than Gérôme, Hamon's Ma soeur n'y est pas ici (fig.8) remains unknown. Théophile Gautier wrote "néo-grec" poems and his version of the King Candaules' story probably inspired the Gérôme painting of the same subject. The high point of the fashion was its appearance in architecture. Prince Jerome Napoleon began work on a Pompeian house in 1856. Gérôme and Cabanel were commissioned to do some wall panels, and the former's Intérieur-grec (fig.9) hung in the completed house as not only an image of the pompeian intérieur but as an image of life within the intérieur. A painting by Gérôme's friend, Gustave Boulanger, depicts the atrium of the Prince's mansion during a rehearsal of Émile Augier's bon sens or néo-grec play, The Lute Player (fig.10). Among those represented are Gautier, Augier himself and the Prince's mistress, the actress Rachel (who was the subject of one of Gérôme's few portraits in which she appears dressed à la néo-grec).

The néo-grec fashion--if it ever really reached the stage of a fashion--seems to have died out shortly thereafter and the bored Prince sold his house in 1865, after a scant seven years of somewhat scandalous use.
The Pompeian house must really be seen in the context of several other concurrent fashions. While the Prince built his house others built similar period fantasies. The vogue for extravagant intérieurs should be seen as a social phenomena which the néo-grec style was a part of. In the nineteenth century parvenu bourgeois lavished their wealth on the creation of intérieurs, stuffed with exotica and art, and often, as in case of Prince Jerome, the entire decor was a fantasy world.

Walter Benjamin has these astute remarks about the function of the intérieur in the nineteenth century:

With the July Revolution the bourgeois had realized the aims of 1789 (Marx)....

For the private citizen, for the first time the living space became distinguished from the place of work. The former constituted itself as the interior. The office was its complement. The private citizen who in the office took reality into account, required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions.... From this sprang the phantasmagorias of the interior. This represented the universe for the private citizen. In it he assembled the distant in space and in time.... The interior was the place of refuge of art. The collector was the true inhabitant of the interior. He made the glorification of things his concern. To him fell the task of Sisyphus which consisted of stripping things of their commodity character by means of his possession of them. But he conferred upon them only a fancier's value, rather than a use value. The collector dreamed that he was in a world which was not only far off in distance and time, but which was also a better one, in which to be sure people were just as poorly provided with what they needed as in the world of everyday, but in which things were free of the bondage of being useful.

Several of Gérôme's néo-grec paintings celebrate the exotic
intérieur, notably the Intérieur grec, King Canduales, and Socrates Seeking Alcibiades at the House of Aspasia (fig. 11) which is sort of a hommage to the eternal salon. Néo-grec paintings depict domestic scenes and domestic events in the never-never land of the leisured class of ancient times just as Ponsard's plays emphasized the importance of the intérieur by "l'abondance et l'importance des scènes domestiques, la maison, le foyer, la famille..."  

The opulent homes and art collections of Albert Goupil, the Péreire brothers, Portalès and others reflect this new cultural event as did the Prince's néo-grec house, Émile de Girardin's Roman palace, the Marquis de Quisonas' Gothic castle, Jules de Lesseps' Tunisian chateau, and Mme. Páiva's Renaissance hotel. The homes of artists and writers tended to imitate this world of eclectic collecting and fantasy. The amount of bric-a-brac from the four corners of the globe that Zola had stuffed into his house at Medan shocked the ascetic Cézanne, who immediately identified Zola's crammed intérieur with parvenusim and bourgeois philistinism.  

The contents of Albert Goupil's house merited two lengthy articles in Gazette des Beaux-Arts. Gérôme's house was similarly rich in collected objects. M.H. Speilmann visited Gérôme in 1884 and has described the painter's Clichy studio: 

The antechamber forming the hall was filled a la Chinoise and filled with bronzes, ornaments, china, bric-a-brac of every kind, with brilliant stuffs and shaggy frowning masks—and every object
perfect of its class....carpets, handrails, stained-glass windows, musical instruments, bronze pagodas and dragons, and suits of armour, bewildered the visitor with their variety and profusion. Amid this is the man who will be best remembered for his modern antique sculpture!

Gérôme's paintings emerge from this place and are a product of it as much as anything else. As Benjamin observed, the intérieur was an extension of the interior of its owner or inhabitant. Arsène Houssaye, who bought the Pompeian house with Jules de Lesseps, has given us a poem which celebrates the deep spiritual rapport that could take place between the owner of a house and its decor, the objects which constituted the life of the intérieur. The poem is addressed to a sphinx which was in the atrium (probably behind the plant facing the pond in the Boulanger painting):

Rabbin, prophète, oracle, brahme,
Les sibylles de la forêt,
L'eau qui chante, le vent qui brame,
Ne m'ont jamais dit le secret.

--O sphinx, daigne m'ouvrir ton livre
À la page de la Raison:
--C'est dans sa MAISON qu'il faut vivre,
La FENÊTRE sur l'horizon,

La MAISON, c'est mon corps. La joie
Y fleurit comme un pampre vert.
La FENÊTRE ou le jour flamboie,
C'est mon âme--le ciel ouvert.

This poem's eclectic stance is similar to the néo-grec concern to employ different styles to a single end.
King Candaules and Antiochus and Stratonice:
The Decline of Neo-Classicism

Gautier had thought that Ingres' Antiochus and Stratonice (fig. 12) of 1840 had been a key inspiration for the néo-grec movement, as a frequenter of Le Chalet he was in a position to hear the young Gérôme and his friends discuss art. One can see why Gérôme and Gleyre would have been impressed by Stratonice. Gérôme's King Candaules is clearly a quotation of the Ingres masterpiece. Stratonice is a néo-grec painting insofar as it is an overwrought celebration of an intérieur, but one must remove the figures who are absorbed in a high dramatic moment. The Ingres painting is firmly grounded in high art. In Gérôme's painting, the anxiety of the king replaces the delirium of Antiochus. The calm and rather calculated presence of Nyssia is substituted for the haunting self-absorption of Stratonice.

The implications of the narrative are vastly different although both stem from desire. Ingres has dealt with incest, and self-sacrifice amid passion that approaches madness. Gerome deals with pride, anxiety, and actions not of self-sacrifice but of self-interest.

However, one must admit that the authoritative neo-classicism of Stratonice shows evidence of the decline or transformation of the classical ideals of the French Academy. The realistic detail is almost overwhelming, yet Ingres has used his accessories to some psychological purpose. The red
columns accent the passionate mood of the painting. The "nervous, quivering fluidity" of the drapery patterns serves as an image of the delicate flutterings of the heart of Antiochus, who hovers somewhere between madness and death for the unrequited love of his step-mother. By contrast, Gérôme's painting, in which worry rather than passion is portrayed, presents a Lydian intérieur seemingly for its own sake.

Buffeted by romanticism, the Salon and the advent of mechanical reproduction, and the bourgeois taste for realism and scenes of epicurian leisure, neo-classicism seems in retrospect to have been destined to turn into néo-grecisme. The "frozen" eternal values that Academic painting tried to express in its shallow bas-relief format gave way to a celebration of the intérieur, that fantastic and magical place where objects are removed from the "burden of being useful".
Notes - Chapter II


3. Couture's Decadence of the Romans won the first-class medal. The third-class medal was considered a great honor, if not a singular one, I don't have exact figures for the Salon of 1847 but several medals of each class were awarded. Each year, the average between the years of 1815 and 1848 being 33, 11 in each class. But considering that upwards of 4000 paintings were submitted to the 1847 Salon and of these half accepted by the jury, to even be noticed was considered a triumph. (This information from Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965.) Table 5, p.48.

4. The extent and power of valuing erudition as a necessary virtue in the artist can be demonstrated by pointing to instances where it occurs in the criticism of—surprisingly enough—Thoreë and Baudelaire. I give two examples from critiques of Gérôme pictures. Thoreë on Phryne Before the Tribunal: "Gérôme is praised as a learned archaeologist of antiquity; there is nothing antique, nor above all, Attic, in this wretched composition of Phryne. If the scene, such as the painter has translated it, had taken place during the period of the Roman decadence, which has certain analogies with our own, it would perhaps be acceptable. But, in Greece, in the 4th century before our era, it is a false interpretation." Thoreë's main criticism on this score is Phryne's gesture of pudeur, which he finds unhistorical. Thoreë, not Gérôme was mistaken in this. (Quoted from Theophile Thore-Bürger, "Salon de 1861," reprinted in Linda Nochlin, ed., Realism and Tradition in Art 1848-1900, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966, p.12.

Baudelaire on The Death of Caesar: "Caesar cannot be made into a Moor; his skin was very fair; besides, it is by no means silly to recall that the dictator took as much care of his person as the most refined dandy. Why then this earthy colour with which his face and arms are veiled? I have heard
it suggested that it is the corpse-like hue with which death strikes the face. In that case how long a time are we to suppose it is since the living man became a corpse? Those who put forward such an excuse must regret the absence of putrefaction. ..." "The Salon of 1859," reprinted in The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies By Charles Baudelaire, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne, New York: Phaidon Publishers Inc., 1955, p.255.


6 C.H. Stranahan, A History of French Painting, New York; Scribners, 1897, p.313. No source given for quote. Also: "They constituted a kind of apostleship around Gérôme of artists of most delicate conceits, and formed in art 'a sort of little Athens' in which Théophile Gautier fondly made himself at home." Ibid., p.329.

7 Drölling in 1833, Granet in 1830.

8 Three main sources for this kind of information are: Charles Blanc, Le trésor de la curiosité, 2 vols. Paris: Jules Renouard, 1857 - 1858; Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste: Vol. 1, The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices 1760-1960, London: Barrie and Rockliffe, 1961; and White and White, op. cit. White and White have systematically analysed the information in Blanc (which contains records of all Paris auctions from 1737 to 1857). Categorizing the paintings by genre and nationality, the Whites have made some interesting Tables. According to their calculation 37 percent of the paintings sold between 1838-1857 in Paris auctions were genre, as opposed to 30 percent for history paintings and 33 percent for landscape paintings. Forty-two percent of these paintings were French, 31 percent Dutch, 14 percent Spanish. In the same period the average price for a Dutch genre painting was 11,954 francs, as opposed to 3,867 francs for a French genre painting or 6,191 francs for a Flemish genre painting. This demonstrates, I think, that not only were genre paintings popular, but Dutch genre paintings particularly so.


12 Ibid.


15 Indeed, this kind of painting occurs in the First Empire as well. Robert Rosenblum describes something called the style troubadour, which were medieval scenes with a high finish: "Just as other students of David tried to reconstruct with growing accuracy the archaeological data relevant to their scenes of Greek and Roman history, so too did these little masters of the style troubadour--Richard, Jean-Antoine Laurent, Jean-Baptiste Vermay, Pierre-Sylvestre Coupin de la Couperie--attempt to include a maximum of precise information about costume, furniture and decor for the period they illustrated." From, "Painting Under Napoleon, 1800-1814," in French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution, p. 169.

16 In his "preface" to Hering, 1892, op. cit. p. vi.

17 Strictly speaking, I suppose, "l'école de bon sens, refers to a kind of writing for the stage, but the stage and the world of painting were related--both dealt with story, gesture and tableaux, and often a movement in one area would affect the other. The playwright, Casimir Delavigne wrote a play Les Enfants d'Edouard, 1883 inspired by and dedicated to Delaroche.

18 "On my return from Italy, I entered the atelier of M. Gleyre, who had succeeded M. Delaroche. Three months of study--nude figures." Quoted in Fanny Field Hering, "Gérôme," in The Century Magazine, vol. 38, February, 1889, p. 488. This is his only reference to Gleyre. (Note that although Gleyre had taken over Delaroche's studio when the later went to Italy
in 1843, Delaroche had turned over many of his students to Drolling.) This is speculation, but perhaps Gérôme blamed Gleyre for this failure to win the Prix-de-Rome.

19 Delaroche did not have an atelier at this time, but took his favorite pupil on as an apprentice, Gérôme claims that he worked almost a year on the former's Charlemagne crossing the Alps. Hering, 1889, op. cit., p.363: "M. Gerome a benignement profité des leçons de M. Gleyre." Of course, Champfleury and Planche would have expected to see the lessons of Gleyre in Gérôme's work as he had entered his first Salon as a student of Gleyre.

21 By Albert Boime in Instruction of Charles Gleyre and the Evolution of Painting in the Nineteenth Century," in Charles Gleyre ou les illusions perdues, op.cit. p.104: "Under Gleyre's influence, Gérôme and several fellow students... produced many works of antique genre, and they were hailed as a new school, the 'Néo-grecs'."


23 Referred to by Albert Boime in his, "The Instruction of Charles Gleyre and the Evolution of Painting in the Nineteenth Century," op.cit. p.104. Ponsard's Lucrèce was first performed in 1843.


25 Ibid. p.xxxvii.

26 Ibid. p.xxviii

27 Boime states that Gleyre was a follower of Saint-Simon in article referred to above (n.21): "An ardent republican deeply attached to the Saint-Simonists (his atelier was even referred to as a "Republic"), Gleyre fantasized about a utopian society." (p.102) Stranahan, op. cit., p.313, says: "He [Gérôme] ...in 1848, headed a delegation to petition for the abolition of marriage," a remark which has lead Albert Boime in his, "Jean-Leon Gérôme, Henri Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy and the Academic
Legacy," Art Quarterly, Vol. 34, 1971, p.22, n.14 to state: "Gérôme, who seemed to have espoused Saint-Simonian ideas early in life,..." I would like to believe this, since several things point to it: the brand of epicurianism that was néo-grecism was Saint-Simonian, many of the collectors which Gérôme knew and befriended were also Saint-Simonians in varying degrees. However, just because Stranahan says that Gérôme headed this anti-marriage delegation, which would certainly indicate radical beliefs, doesn't make it so--she is not a reliable source.


29 As cited in Hering, 1892, op.cit. p.19.

30 Gérôme, as cited in Hering, 1889, op.cit., p.488.


33 As cited in Hering, 1892, op. cit. p.16. From Thore's Modern Painters and Their Paintings. Hering finds this an "extraordinary accusation."

34 Reitlinger notes: "In the 1820's there was already a tendancy for middle-class genre pictures, soft in tone and fresh in colour, to gain ground from the grubby paintings of low company, which had been so popular in the eighteenth century among the classes who were not obliged to meet the original models" op.cit., p.139f.

35 Athenaeus XIII. 590e,f. (Loeb edition)


39 Thoré associated Phryne's gesture with pudeur, but if this is the case it is really a reversal of pudeur; she cannot bear to look or look at the Areopagists who are looking, but she in no way tries to avoid being seen, for her hands could certainly been more usefully deployed if that were the case.

I have tried to find a source in classical or renaissance art for this pose. Strahan (Shinn) claims that the pose is a Gérôme original. At least we know that is not so. The pose can be found in a Nadar photograph of the woman upon whom Murget based the character of Musette, (fig.13).


41 This information from Boime, "Entrepreneurial Patronage," *op.cit.*, p.199, n.123.


46 Referred to in Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.225. Richardson quotes Gustave Claudin: "All modern French architects spell out and vaguely dream of a style which one be tempted to call the Neo-GrecoGothico-Pompadour-Pompeian."

47 Vollard quotes Cézanne as follows: "I was not at my ease there any longer [Medan] with the fine rugs on the floor,
the servants and Émile enthroned behind a carved wooden desk. It gave me the feeling that I was paying a visit to a minister of state. He had become (excuse me, M. Vollard--I don't say it in bad part) a dirty bourgeois." Ambroise Vollard, Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art, (translated by Harold L. Van Doren), Crown Publishers: New York, 1937, p.103f.


50 This poem, from the man who wrote a néo-grec play, Les Danseuses de Pompeia, "presque tout l'act où l'on mettait en scène de tableau de Gleyre," is prefaced by the following remarks: "J'ai encore chez moi le sphinx de atrium. Ce beau sphinx semble garder le secret de l'Antiquité. Souvent je le questionne encore dans son impassibilité." Arsène Houssaye, Confessions, Tome V, Paris, 1891, pp.176-177.

The poem clearly owes much to Baudelaire's notion of correspondences, but here mixed with a most un-Baudelaarian respect for "raison".

51 The story of King Candaules is found in Herodotus, Book I, 8-13 and in Gautier's Le Roi Candule which was serialized in 1844. The story is as follows: Candaules, king of Lydia, full of pride in the beauty of his wife Nyssia, has ordered his reluctant friend, Gyges, to hide in the royal bed-chamber in order to see Nyssia disrobe. But Nyssia sees Gyges leaving the room and realizes what has happened; this is the moment which Gérôme has depicted. The next day, Nyssia gives Gyges a choice; he may kill himself or defend her honour by killing Candaules. Gyges became the next king of Lydia.

Besides the obvious comparisons that can be made between this painting and Ingres' Stratonice there is a similarity in the stories. In Ingres' work, Antiochus lies pining for the love of his step-mother, Stratonice. Antiochus' father, realizes the situation and gives his wife to his son. Both stories have submerged homoerotic themes, in which the woman stands for some unresolved love between the men.

One might also note that Nyssia, like Phryne and Cleopatra, considered as an icon of high art, is shown in the narrative as being on display. These narratives are metaphorical of the situation of high art in the nineteenth century Salon where the exhibition value of a work of art replaced the ritual value.

CHAPTER III:

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PAINTINGS

Painting the orient had been a part of French art for some years before Gérôme began to travel there regularly from the mid fifties on. Napoleon had taken artists with him on his Egyptian campaign in 1798. Chateaubriand had romanticised the east in his Genie du christianisme, which was published in 1802. Hugo published his Orientales in 1828, Lamartine his Voyage en Orient in 1835. Decamps, Marilhart, Girodet, Vernet and Delacroix are just a few of the French artists who painted scenes of middle-eastern life in the first half of the nineteenth century. The painters tended to follow the paths that were opened up by French commercial interests. Delacroix' first trip to Tangier in 1832 was undertaken as part of the official party of the new ambassadorto Morocco, the Comte de Mornay. As Albert Boime puts it: "The governments of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire made great efforts to get Frenchmen to invest in Algeria, and here again the trail of the artists (both avant-garde and conservative) was mapped out by entrepreneurial ventures."

Under the aegis of a group of French Saint-Simonians, who believed that in the despot Mohammed Ali they had found their Dionysius of Syracuse, Egypt was the first non-white country to begin industrialization. As Eric Hobsbawm puts it:
The extraordinary sect of Saint-Simonians, equally suspended between the advocacy of socialism and of industrial development by investment bankers and engineers, temporarily gave him [Mohammed Ali] their collective aid and prepared his plans of economic development. They also laid the foundations for the Suez canal (built by the Saint-Simonian de Lesseps) and the fatal dependance of Egyptian rulers on vast loans negotiated by competing groups of European swindlers, which turned Egypt into a centre of imperialist rivalry and anti-imperialist rebellion later on.2

Gérôme never shows us this Egypt, which by the time of his first voyage there, with Émile Augier in 1857, had become a colony of European capitalism. Instead he gives us the romance of the orient, warriors, harems, street-scenes of pre-capitalist commerce, dancers, desert nomads, and men at prayer. But Gérôme's oriental scenes cannot be called Romantic paintings, the style is highly finished and one always senses that we are getting something of a travelogue rather than images which are meant to stir the heart with vague longings for adventure.

Almost two-thirds of Gérôme's output were so-called "ethnographic" paintings. As the néo-grec works were genre paintings of ancient life, the ethnographic works were genre paintings of the orient. If the néo-grec paintings present the viewer with an image that is distant in time, the ethnographic ones present an image of the distant in space. Despite any high art values or any claim these paintings have to partake in a world of the Imagination, they, much more than the other kinds of painting Gérôme produced, have—or had—a commodity status. Although Gérôme employs the techniques and skills of the Academic artist, these paintings—with exceptions—
were not attempts to make high art, rather they were pictures for the art-market. There are literally hundreds of them; several stood out at the time and still do as fine paintings. However, Gérôme seems to have had a mechanical attitude towards them. Looking through them one sees the same models, the same costumes and objects, the same bits of architecture—as if Gérôme had abandoned any notion he may have had of originality for the lesser demands of inventiveness. One finds it difficult to believe that many of these paintings meant anything at all to Gérôme, they are so repetitive. Just how many times can one painting a dancing almeh—who is transparently a Parisian grisette—before one is manufacturing pictures and not making art.

Whether they were successful or not, the néo-grec and historical paintings attempted to achieve a tableau; that is, a memorable image that would stick not only in the viewer's mind but the mind of the culture. The ethnographic paintings make no such attempt—with notable exceptions—and are rather morceaux—bits and pieces of a world that is never disclosed in its entirety. But despite the mechanical way in which Gérôme put many of these pictures together, or rather because of this aspect, the ethnographic pictures are highly interesting, especially as Gérôme works out a new way of making history paintings through his practices as an ethnographic artist.
The Content of Gérôme's Ethnographic Painting I: Physiognomic Types

Gérôme's first eastern voyage was undertaken in 1853, when the artist was twenty-nine years old. With the actor Edmund Got (a star of Arsène Houssaye's Comédie-Français), Gérôme headed down the Danube to Moldavia intending to go from there to Moscow. But the outbreak of the Crimean war forced Gérôme and Got to be detained at Galatz for two weeks before they could return to Paris. Having little to do, Gérôme sketched Russian soldiers, and from these sketches came his first ethnographic work, Recreation in a Russian Camp (fig.14), which no doubt, 120 years later inspired the design on Canada's new fifty dollar bank note.

But Gérôme's intention in making this journey was not specifically to gather material for an ethnographic painting—that such a painting resulted from the journey was a fortuitous result of circumstances. Rather, his intention was to gather ethnographic material, not for its own sake, but as research for a project of quite a different order.

Gérôme had received a handsome commission (20,000 Francs) to do a large (7x10 meters) machine from a passage of Bousset. This was to be a large Apotheosis of Augustus (this painting has never been reproduced and is currently in the storage facilities of the Musée d'Amiens), which as Gérôme tells us, was to be cast in the high art mould of Ingres Apotheosis of Homer. This painting, which could be studied from Gautier's exhaustive description of it, has an intrinsic
interest as what would be Gérôme's last attempt at traditional high art. But of even greater interest is the reasoning behind Gérôme's voyage of research for this painting.

He had undertaken his trip in order to gather "types" or "physiognomies" for the painting. Like other nineteenth century Europeans, Gérôme believed that beyond the borders of Western Europe, peoples, being "untouched" by civilization, had retained the customs and racial appearance of their ancestors for thousands of years. As Charles Timbal observed, Gérôme wanted to go to Russia because "il esperait revoir sur le visage des descendants d'Aminius et d'Attila quelques-uns des traits de leurs pères..." 

This attitude about the orient was fairly widespread. Renan and Chateaubriand believed that Palestine had not changed since New Testament times. And Renan felt that it was necessary to travel there to imbibe the atmosphere for his book, *La Vie de Jésus*. As Rocheblave has noted, interest in the orient revived religious painting—if one suspends one's disbelief long enough to consider Ary Scheffer's paintings a "revival"—as the French imagination conflated the orient opened up by capitalism with that of the Bible: "Des Juifs d'Alger, des Bédouins, des Arméniens ont profilé depuis leurs silhouettes autour de la crèche de l'Enfant-Jésus, ou dans le cortège de l'Entrée à Jérusalem." 

For Flaubert, modern Tunisians were ancient Phonecians for the purposes of the description of physiognomies in
Salammbô. Gautier summed up the European attitude towards these non-Europeans when he wrote (in a discussion of Gérôme's ethnographic work): "The fellahs and Copts have not changed since the time of Moses: such as you see them on the frescoes of the palaces or tombs of Amenoteeph, of Toutnes, and of Sesourtasen--such are they today." 

Delacroix also saw the ancients in his Tangier:

Just think,...how wonderful it is to see walking the streets or mending sandals, people exactly like Roman consuls--Cato, Brutus and their ilk--who have even the distainfull air the masters of the world must have had in the great days of Rome.

Gérôme's ethnographic paintings were praised for their portrayal of the "types" or "physiognomies" of the "ancient" races of the east. Charles Blanc wrote: "Gérôme, among other merits, has not his equal in the art of particularizing races, and of transforming into powerful types the most profoundly individualized physiognomies." And Théophile Gautier admired Gérôme's ethnographic works for much the same reason: "Different characteristic types--fellahs, Copts, Arabs, negroes of mixed blood from Senaar and from Kordofan--so exactly observed that they could be used in the anthropological treatises of M. Serres." 

The process which Blanc and Gautier suggest is rather odd and merits a closer examination. Did Gérôme really, as Blanc would have it, "transform" individual physiognomies into "types"? The question is a difficult one to answer. Gérôme used the same models several times, thus giving the impression that he was interested in a type. But did he
choose a model because he thought that he or she was typical—or merely a striking individual? I think one should lean towards the former possibility. In Gérôme's era it was a common discursive mode to extract the general from the particular in any given area of observation. This attitude was partly the result of the enormous influence of positivism which maintained that the methods of the natural sciences—one process of extracting general laws, similitudes, and regularities from the observable events of the natural world—could be applied to all areas of intellectual activity; history, philosophy, sociology, etc.¹²

Ethnographic painting should thus be seen as apart of the nineteenth century fascination for the typical physiognomy. Balzac prided himself on being able to practise that art of the modern city-dweller, that is the ability to imagine the character and circumstances of strangers seen on the street. Writers like the Goncourts always include in their descriptions of physical appearances remarks which indicate that they felt one could "know" a man through his physiology. Gérôme's physical appearance and bearing appealed to everyone who wrote about him, for he seemed in life to be like the Bashi-bazouks he painted. Edmond Goncourt wrote of Gérôme: "...me plait, lui [Gérôme], avec son physique énergique, sa figure cabosée son regard au grand blanc, enfin, avec toute cette physiognomie, qu'on dirait, hélas! la physiognomie d'un talent farouche."¹³ (compare figs. 15 & 16)
A high interest in physiognomic generalization was what led Gérôme east in the first place and this interest is maintained throughout the ethnographic paintings.

The races of the orient were seen by nineteenth century Europeans in a variety of ways. Gérôme tends to ennoble these peoples so he may have felt, like Gautier that in the east, "the human clay, less altered by civilization, seems here to retain the still visible imprint of the divine hand."¹⁴ For others, the orient attracted because it was a, "une societe barabare, mais vivante,"¹⁵ This image of the orient, formed during the romantic era, remained strong throughout the Second Empire. Gérôme's canvases make his attraction quite clear, he is interested in the virile, self-sufficient men (with whom he seems to have identified) and fantasies of sensuous, imprisoned women. For Gérôme the orient offered an alternative to the splendid but often stifling atmosphere of the Second Empire. Flaubert wished to escape sophisticated Paris when he wrote: "It will no longer be a despot who oppresses the individual but the masses... I shall return to the Bedouins who are free."¹⁶ And there is the example of Rimbaud, who did precisely that.

Modern capitalism had created the conditions which made the modern alienated city-dweller; the intérieur, and travel to and fantasies of exotic lands were, for those who could who could afford it, attempts to escape, if temporarily from this modern condition.
The Ethnographic Paintings and Photography

Some people seemed to think that Gérôme's ethnographic paintings functioned like photographs and told the same truths. Celia Stranahan calls them "official reports". And Émile Galichon wrote of *The Prisoner* of 1863 (fig.17) (a painting Van Gogh admired) as if he believed it was an actual record of an event Gérôme had witnessed:

...le captif oppose l'impassibilité de l'oriental, pour ne point réjouir le coeur de son rival heureux qui, assis à la proue, la main appuyée sur son fusil, le garde avec l'air hautain du musulman. Tout l'orient est là, avec son fatalisme implacable, sa soumission passive, sa tranquillité inaltérable, ses insultes honteuses et sa cruauté sans remords. En rendant simplement ce qu'il voyait, M. Gérôme a fait un œuvre éminemment morale et philosophique.

Gérôme may have seen this event, as Galichon suggests, but then again he may not. It is, however, rather ironic that verisimilitude should be seen as a virtue of one of the few ethnographic paintings that attempt a tightly composed tableau.

Gérôme's orient, although certainly based firmly on his extensive travels and his personal observations, emanated from his Parisian studio, and has more than a little about it which is artificial. In his dedication of his novel, *Le Fellah*, to Gérôme, Edmund About described Gérôme's working method:

But the hospitality of the Ismail Pasha had swathed me in bands which paralyzed my movements not a little. I had no longer a right to publish ex-professo contemporaneous Egypt. Your example, my dear Gérôme, has at once fascinated and reassured me. No law forbids an author to work en peinture; that is to say, to assemble in a work of the imagination a multitude of details taken from nature.
and scrupulously true, though selected. Your masterpieces, small and great, do not affect to tell everything; but they do not present a type, a tree, the fold of a garment which have not seen. 

The selective attitude which About described results in the morceau quality of many of the ethnographic pictures. Despite Gérôme's penchant for formal composition, this morceau quality is also the result of his extensive use of photographs in making his oriental genre paintings.

Gérôme would sketch, collect and photograph on his eastern voyages while the finished paintings were done back in Paris.

He was not, however, by any means the first artist to work this way. As far as I know, this honour must belong to Horace Vernet. Vernet and Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet were taking daguerreotypes in the middle-east as early as November of 1839. This was a mere eleven months after Daguerre had announced the discovery of his photographic process. Our first actual record of Gérôme's use of photographic equipment is rather late, 1867. But he may have taken cameras with him before that date. For he was an ardent admirer of the medium from his youth until the end of his days. Moreau-Vauthier tells us that: "Dans sa jeunesse, il avait assisté à l'enthousiasme soulevé par les premiers essais de daguerréotype et sa propre admiration ne fit que augmenter avec les années." Gérôme's last address to the Institute was a defense of photography.

The example of the photograph obviously permeates Gérôme's painterly manner from almost the first ethnographic
work on. The photograph seems to have given artists like Vernet and Gérôme an opportunity to paint images which they felt were closer to verisimilitude than the techniques of an Academic artist. The effect which the photograph had on their work—which was a substantial change from the fini of David or Ingres or even that of Dutch realism—was what gave their images that "commonness" which has, more than anything else, caused their eclipse from the constellation of modern taste. The clarity of Gérôme's style combined with his abandonment of serious generalization—by which I mean, say, Ingres' submission to a sensuous line which prevents one from mistaking an Ingres portrait, despite the clarity of detail, for a photograph—immediately casts his paintings in with the proliferation of easily reproducible images that had begun to dominate the visual environment in the nineteenth century.

Gérôme's photographic style was developed in his ethnographic paintings. There are several reasons for this occurrence. Gérôme used photographs to make the oriental genre paintings and one can imagine how natural it might have seemed to imitate their appearance as he used them for models. That this should happen first in ethnographic paintings rather than elsewhere can be explained by commonplace historical factors. The same thing had happened to Vernet's painting through his ethnographic work. And Gérôme's orientalisme is of the Vernet, rather than the Delacroix, tradition.
Besides being taken with the exotic east for its own sake, Vernet and Gérôme, and artists like them, had a practical reason for their extensive work in the orient. They were attracted by the light, as Rocheblave wrote: "Lumière, forme, couleur, tout les frappait d'un aspect nouveau, vif, éclatant, les prenait aux sens et à l'âme."  

During his youthful stay in Rome Gérôme had travelled the country-side, sketching out-of-doors: "Je me mis à faire des paysages, de l'architecture, des animaux, toujours en plein air..."  

He never seems to have done this in France. There are however, plein-air passages in the ethnographic paintings. Ackerman points out a "impressionist" handling of the landscape seen through the window in Arnaut Smoking (fig.16), and suspects another hand. However, this painting is neither a unique nor the best example of this sort of thing in Gérôme's work. In Conducteur de Chameaux (fig.18), for example, the garden seen through the door has a distinctly "Monet" quality to it. However, Gérôme's interest in landscape for its own sake was not a large one and he remained primarily interested in interiors and architecture. And Gérôme's interest in the light or the orient effects his work through the photograph rather than through plein-airisme.

In 1839 the exposure time for a photographic plate in Daguerre's machine was between fifteen and thirty minutes. It wasn't until 1851 that the collodion process reduced the
minimum exposure time to thirty seconds, and not until 1878 that a new collodion process reduced exposure time to a fraction of a second. The amateur photographer, despite all the cultural attractions that the orient offered, must have been impressed by its technical attractions as well. The stronger light would have kept exposure times briefer than in France, thus making the camera more versatile, especially in the winter when Paris is often overcast. I don't wish to suggest that this was the primary reason for the early presence of the camera, allied to the painter's work, in the orient. Other reasons were clearly more important factors. But the light of the orient was a considerable attraction just as the good weather and strong light of Southern California made it an especially attractive site for the cinema industry in the early years of this century.

Besides the practical reasons for using cameras on his eastern voyages—the difficulties of carting about wet canvases in travel conditions that were often fairly primitive, the relative quickness of the photograph over sketching as a means of building an inventory of motifs for use in paintings—the particularizing veracity of the photograph appealed to Gérôme for its own sake. Unlike the eye, or the generalizing style of high art, the photograph picks up detail without discrimination. The photograph has the ability to celebrate a room full of bric-a-brac by presenting a vast array of objects all at once. And Gérôme's ethnographic pictures are tied to his object-hunting or collecting.
His Dance of the Almeh of 1863 (fig. 19)--which has a little hommage to Chardin in the lower left hand corner--is primarily a record of the activity of Gérôme the collector. He owned every object in the painting. The dancer was photographed in Cairo, Gérôme bought her costume and took it back to Paris and with his assembled costumes and accessories, using Parisian models and his photographs, he created his oriental interior.\textsuperscript{27} The effect of the photograph on his work was drastic--it is extremely easy to mistake a Gérôme reproduction for a photograph. Charles Blanc wrote about the effect of the photograph on the work of Vernet, but he might have said the same of Gérôme:

Vernet's eye was like the lens of a camera, it had the same astonishing character, but also like Daguerre's machine, it saw all, it reproduced all, without selection and without special emphasis. It recorded the details just as well as the whole--what am I saying?--much better, because with Horace Vernet the detail always took on an exaggerated importance, so that invariably it reaches a point where no trouble is taken to subordinate it, to give it its proper place and value.\textsuperscript{28}

Gérôme's photographic technique serves to hide the staginess of his procedure and serves to convince--say, someone like Emile Galichon--that we are seeing a document, that "we are there". Whereas Delacroix' orient was romantic and exotic, Gérôme's becomes merely foreign. His ethnographic works were seen as "anthropological treatises" or travelogues, in a way they were the visual equivalents of written travel books which were designed for the "armchair" voyager. At least this was how Gautier perceived them:
Photography, pushed today to the perfection that you know, relieves the artist from copying architectural and sculptural details, by producing prints of absolute fidelity, to which the happy selection of the point of view and moment of time can give the greatest effect. Is that not also the direction in which Gérôme has taken his work. His powerful studies as a history painter, his talent as a draughtsman, fine elegant, exact yet with lots of style, a special feeling which we would call ethnographic and which will become even more necessary to the artist in these days of universal and rapid travel when all people of the planet will be visited in whichever distant archipelago they may be hidden, all these things make Gérôme more suitable than any other to render that simple detail which up to now they have neglected, for landscape, monument and colour; modern explorations of the Orient—and man!29

Gautier's tangled prose is rich in cultural assumptions, one of which is his transparent belief in progress which he allies with universal travel. For Gautier, Gérôme's ethnographic works are sort of "explorations" of foreign lands. Because of this aspect of these paintings and the activity of the collector of types and objects that they record, they, like the néo-grec paintings can be seen as activities related to the creation of the nineteenth century intérieur.

The Content of Gérôme's Ethnographic Painting II:

The Intérieur

As I noted in Chapter II, Gérôme's style of living—not by any means unique—involved the creation of an intérieur which was crammed from floor to ceiling with objects collected
from the four corners of the world. The néo-grec works often refer to the intérieur but in the modes of fantasy and historical reconstruction using much of the vocabulary of academic high art. But the oriental genre paintings refer even more directly to the sensibility of the house in which they were made. For one thing they are genre paintings, made for the walls of the bourgeois home; in this they do not waver between high art and genre art in the way that the néo-grec paintings do. More importantly they record Gérôme's ownership of things and documentation replace Academic erudition and the ideal nude of high art is replaced by the appropriate type.

As Walter Benjamin observed, the "phantasmagoria" of the nineteenth century interior depended upon the collection of bric-a-brac, upon which the collector could confer a "fancier's value" rather than a use-value. Collecting, no matter what other purposes and pleasures may be involved, is, in part, an operation of rescue.

Gérôme's career took him right through what is often termed the era of high capitalism. It is the status of the commodity during this period which ought to interest us, if we believe, as Benjamin does, that the collector of exotica is somehow trying to transform this status.

According to Marxist historians, with the advent of capitalism the structure of commodity relationships on the market-place became the dominant model for society as a whole.
As George Lukács puts it: "...the development of the commodity to the point where it became the dominant form in society did not take place until the advent of modern capitalism."\(^{31}\)

This occurs because the self-regulating market turned the social relationships between men into relationships between things or commodities. As Lukács puts it: "Where the market economy has been fully developed—a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any other consumer article."\(^{32}\) Because its price is the result of a market where "supply and demand" determine the flow of goods the commodity contains in itself both a use-value—that is, what one does with it—and an exchange-value—that is, its value as determined in terms of other commodities. Marx described this relationship as follows: "The commodity ...is the direct unity of use-value and exchange-value, and at the same time it is a commodity only in relation to other commodities."\(^{33}\)

When a society comes "to satisfy all its needs in terms of commodity exchange", the social relations between men "assumes...the fantastic form of a relation between things".\(^{34}\) Thus commodities take on a fetish function as the form of social-relations becomes viewed as the content. This can be best illustrated by modern advertising which promises
that the purchaser of certain commodities can use them magically, to transform their social relations. But one cannot, for example, really make one's spouse a pleasant person to live with by buying decaffeinated coffee.

The nineteenth century interest in the orient was coloured by a romantic imagination of the east as pre-capitalist or pre-industrial. It was this attitude which led to the belief that the racial "types" found there retained in their physiognomies something as yet unaltered by modern European society.

Given this highly charged imagination of the orient—which was seen as a kind of paradise—the activity of the collector who brings back oriental exotica to furnish his intérieur becomes almost a magical operation of rescue. By purchasing and bringing back to Paris, weapons, costumes, carpets, objets d'art of the east, a man like Gérôme wished to create—by substituting a fancier's value for a use-value—in his own intérieur, a refuge, a special place for these things in which they could retain the aura of their origins, "barbare, mais vivante".

This activity inevitably bestows on the collected objects a fetish-value, in which they are meant to stand for the values and customs or the cultures they originate from. Gérôme, however, had a special advantage as a collector, he was also a painter and could perform a second magical operation by depicting his collection in scenes which showed them in their natural environment. The photographic style was an
especially appropriate strategy in Gérôme's attempt to give these objects their own time and place while they still served to create his intérieur.

As is well known, "primitive" people often react to the photograph with superstition and fear. Less well-known is that Europeans reacted much the same way to the first photographs. Balzac, for example, was sure that his image could not appear on the photographer's plate without divesting him of something of himself. Nadar explains Balzac's "theory" as follows:

According to Balzac each material object from whatever direction it is viewed, is composed of a number of infinitesimally thin layers or "spectres". Since it is impossible to make something out of nothing, the image on the plate could not be produced without detaching something from the body which is being photographed: thus each daguerrian operation involves attaching to the plate of one of these "spectres" and the consequent loss of part of the essence of what is being photographed.35

A superstitious attitude towards the photograph is implied in the language. We "take" a picture with a camera, whereas a painter paints or "makes" a picture. In other words, it was felt, and still is I suppose, that a photograph of an object is closer to the physical, tangible reality of that object than a painting or drawing of it. A typical nineteenth century view of the camera's power can be found in the 1870 number of The Westminster Review:

No miniature...will, so far as relates to mere resemblance, bear comparison to a Daguerrotype. The artist can soften down effects, and present the sitter in the most favorable aspect. The Sun,
however, is no flatterer, and gives the lineaments as they exist, with the most inexorable fidelity and the most cruel precision.  

Even today, the camera seems to have a magical function. Middle-class families take photographs of each other, their homes, their parties, their sacred events (weddings, Christmas, etc.), the world at large on their vacations: and they do this not for art or out of an aesthetic passion, but to perform an operation which goes beyond the merely commemorative in which the "photographed" is meant to become "owned" by the photographer. The photograph was and is used to objectify or reify the events which are photographed. In this way the middle-class photographer of family history compulsively stands outside of the social events around him and turns his relationship with them into a relationship to things, i.e. photographs.

The bourgeois photographer may be trying to bestow a commodity status upon the events and scenes he photographs, but Gérôme as a painter, was engaged in a parallel process that moved in the other direction. His ethnographic paintings show us the human context of the objects he collected in the orient and he uses the photographic style to celebrate them as richly as possible in painting. The ethnographic paintings contain traceries of two operations, that of collector and photographer, one complementing the other, which are an attempt to reify and then to rescue the world of the orient.
As a documentarian Gérôme engaged in the reifying activity of objectifying the east by taking photographs there and by collecting objects. But as a painter, back in his Paris intérieur, he engaged in a new operation which is a reversal of the former and tried to bring to life his collection by painting it in its environment. In fact, this operation was the primary raison d'être for these paintings and it was the real reason why Gérôme never actually painted in the east, although he certainly would have found studio space in Cairo or Alexandria. The ethnographic paintings had to be made in Paris, because it was there that Gérôme maintained the intérieur which was location and source of his sensibility as an artist. This after all, was the location of Gérôme's ownership of his oriental exotica, and ownership is, of course, the most intimate of possible relationships with an object.
Notes - Chapter III


3 I owe this distinction to Michael Fried who, in his "Manet's Sources," (Art Forum, Vol. 7, No. 28, March, 1969, pp72-73) discusses the difference between Manet and Courbet's approach to composition using the terms morceau and tableau. "Courbet's paintings tended to be seen by his admirers and his detractors alike either as agglomerations of superbly painted pieces of reality--e.g., a head, a hand, a dog, a woman's body, a stone outcropping, a breaking wave--or as entire large morceaux in their own right." The concept of the tableau has to do with powerful and memorable compositions, with the total effect of a painting on the viewer: "...one's experience of them...their vitality, their instantaneous power to attract or repel." Fried asserts that Manet's Olympia and his Déjeuner sur l'herbe are such tableaux. In Gérôme's work I would suggest that the néo-grec paintings are tableaux, attempts to make a memorable image through Academic composition techniques. The ethnographic paintings often attempt this, as in the case of The Prisoner, but even more often they do not. A tableau effect seems to be achieved by a confrontation with the viewer. In the Manet paintings, Victorine stares at us boldly, affecting an immediate "I-you" relationship between the painting and us. In Academic painting the same "confrontation" is achieved by the use of shallow space and/or "life-size" figures which push the space of the painting back into the actual space that the viewer occupies. In a morceau the viewer is reduced to the status of an uninvolved spectator.

4 The passage celebrates the Pax Romana of Augustus and notes that the birth of Christ was appropriate to this era of peace. I quote it in full:

Les restes de la république périssent avec Brutus et Cassius; Antôîne et César, après avoir ruiné Lépide, se tournent l'un contre l'autre; toute la puissance romaine se met sur la mer. César gagne la
bataille Actique; les forces de l'Égypte, et de l'Orient, qu'Antoine menait avec lui, sont dissipées; tous ses amis l'abandonment, et même sa Cléopâtre, pour laquelle il s'était perdu...
Tout cède à la fortune de César: Alexandrie lui ouvre les portes; l'Égypte devient une province romaine; Cléopâtre, qui désespère de la pouvoir conserver, se tue elle-même après Antoine; Rome tend les bras à César, qui demeure, sous le nom d'Augustus et le titre d'empereur, seul maître de tout l'empire; il dompte vers les Pyrénées les Cantabres et les Asturiens révoltés; l'Éthiopie lui demande la paix; les Parthes épouvantés lui renvoient les étendards pris sur Crassus, avec tous les prisonniers romains; les Indes recherchent son alliance; ses armes se font sentir aux Rhêtes ou Grisons, que leurs montagnes ne peuvent défendre. 
La Pannonie le reconnaît, la Germaine le redoute, et le Weser reçoit ses lois. Victorieux par mer et par terre, il ferme 'le temple de Janus. Out l'univers vit en paix sous sa puissance, et Jésus-Christ vient au monde.

As cited by Gautier in his Les Beaux-Arts en Europe, Michel Lévy Frères: Paris, 1855. p.218f. The reason I quoted the whole passage was to point out that somehow all the main parties mentioned by Bousset, as well as representatives of the nations involved, find their way into Gérôme's painting, and it was the need to gather ethnographic material which led him on this voyage. As for the choice of subject-matter itself. First it follows the Academic tradition of using Ancient Rome as an iconological idealization of modern France; the Republic for the Revolutionary Period; Caesar for Napoleon; Augustus for Napoleon III. Secondly, Bousset's passage notes the birth of a new world order, and it was felt by many Frenchmen in mid-century that their era was such a turning point in world history, only science and progress, not a divinity were to be the agents of a new dawn.

5 This is more than apparent from Gautier's description of the painting. And Gérôme tells us that:..."it (the painting) lacked invention and originality, recalling by the disposition of the figures, and unhappily by this point only The Apotheosis of Homer by Ingres, of which it is, so to speak, a paraphrase." Cited in Hering, 1889, op.cit. p.489.

6 Timbal, op.cit. p.230.

As cited in Hering, 1892, *op. cit.* p.25; From Gautier's "Gérôme: Pictures, Studies and Sketches of Travel," I have been unable to find this article.


Ibid. p.25.

This discursive mode, so characteristic of the nineteenth century, is discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV.


Hering, 1892, *op. cit.* p.25.

Rocheblave, *op. cit.* p.287.

As cited by Hering, 1892, p.59.

Stranahan, *op. cit.* p.309.


Moreau-Vauthier, *op. cit.* p.69. Also from the same passage: "Gérôme ne cessè d'estime la précision de la photographie." Moreau-Vauthier tells us that Gérôme's last address to the Institute was in praise of photography on p.70. Gérôme seems to have been involved with Émile Bayard and wrote an introduction to the latters, "Le lnu esthetique", (fig.20). As one can see Bayard constructed Bourgereaou-like scenes in his studio and then photographed them—with the expected atrocious results.
LE NU
ESTHÉTIQUE
L'Homme, La Femme, L'Enfant

Album de Documents Artistiques inédits d'après nature

ÉMILE BAYARD

A Mon Père, Ma Mère et Ami
William BOUGUEREAU
de l'Artiste.

Figure 20
Ingres, on the other hand, referred to photographs as "fautographs".

21 Rocheblave, op.cit., p.287.

22 Masson, op.cit., p.23.

23 "Often in these works the hand of a collaborator or an assistant is suspected, as in the very loose landscape seen through the window in the upper right." Ackerman, 1972, op.cit. p.58.

24 It is rather difficult to tell from fairly bad black and white reproductions just what is happening in these passages, however, despite their "impressionist" look we should remember Gérôme and Monet had the same teacher, Gleyre, and that in Gleyre's work one can find landscape passages treated in a plien"air fashion. Also, painting out-of-doors in one sitting was academic practise, but as just that, as a painting exercise, such études were not considered finished paintings.


26 In 1887, at 63, Gérôme told Hering that, "during the months of November and December, the light is too poor to paint, but sufficient to model all day." Hering, 1889, op.cit., p.492.

27 Ackerman, 1972, op.cit., p.54. "After watching her dance in a local café, Gérôme invited her to his studio where he sketched her, photographed her, and then he bought her dancing costume to take home with him!"


29 Ibid. From an article by Gautier in "L'Artiste" of 1856.

30 The néo-grec paintings were, of course, made for the same walls, but they were also made for the Salon and the museum, to hang among the Raphaels and the Ingres.

32 Lukács, op. cit., p. 87.

33 Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Moscow, 1970, p. 41.

34 Lukács, op. cit., pp. 91 & 86.


CHAPTER IV:
THE HISTORY PAINTINGS

If we do not include the 1854 Apotheosis of Augustus, which was done in the grand manner, Gérôme's first serious history painting was done in 1859. His Ave Caesar, Morituri Te Salutant (fig.21) was the first of a series of historical works which were both more ambitious as paintings and more sombre in their implications than the néo-grec works, which nonetheless Gérôme continued to produce, along with ethnographic paintings, until the end of his career.

As Gérôme's history paintings are about history we might reasonably expect them to be informed by concurrent notions of "history". An examination of historiography which was contemporary to Gérôme's paintings will illuminate the cultural context of these paintings, which will in turn, bring forward their meaning.

In nineteenth century France, discourse about history occupied a central place in the intellectual concerns of the time. Why this should have been so will soon become apparent.

For Gérôme, his was an "epoch of moral and intellectual disorder." Perhaps the tightly controlled way he chose to paint was a response to the dérangement he perceived around himself. But in the main, bourgeois intellectuals responded with positivism. And the methods of positivism became the methods of historiography.
For a number of reasons "positivism" has become a difficult term to use with precision. As an English historian had remarked: "Positivism is a hopelessly ambiguous term." Intellectual historians tend to attempt a definition of positivism and then pinpoint its exact route through intellectual history. This is primarily a process of exclusion in which the trail of positivism is seen as progressively narrowing as we approach an adequate definition. Although my discussion cannot proceed without providing this definition, I am much more interested in broad discursive movements than the precise historial limits of the fate of something one might call "pure positivism". In other words, I am interested in commonplaces, nineteenth century discursive givens, no matter how much they are distortions of their origins in the writings of philosophers. Great intellectual breakthroughs are often diminished by the time they enter the common discourse which they in turn have shaped. Today, for example, everyone can use words like libido, repression or sublimation without having read Freud and still "know" what they are talking about. Often common usage of a concept is at quite a conceptual distance from its usage in the work in which it originated. In Gérôme's time, people would have understood by "positivism" a faith in science, a belief in technology and progress, a general hostility
to metaphysics and they might have associated the word with the ideas of Auguste Comte, Hippolyte Taine, Emile Littré, Ernest Renan and others. It is not philosophically rigorous to refer to these thinkers as positivists—with the exception of Littré—without a great deal of qualification. But I do not wish to artificially isolate something called "positivism" from its place in general discourse.

It was Auguste Comte who first used the word "positivism" to indicate a belief or an epistemology (for the positivist belief and method become the same thing). Although Comte's philosophy is by no means lucid or without contradictions—and positivism has come to mean, for some, merely the ideas of Comte—it can be defined. Basically, positivism is a definition of epistemology which proceeds from a single negation:

Dans l'état positif, l'esprit humain, reconnaissant l'impossibilité d'obtenir des notions absolues, renonce à chercher l'origine et la destination de l'univers et à connaître les causes intimes des phénomènes, pour s'attacher uniquement à découvrir, par l'usage bien combiné du raisonnement et de l'observation, leurs lois effectives, c'est-à-dire leurs relations invariables de succession et de similitude.  

In other words, knowledge must be limited to the observable phenomena of the world.

This method of inquiry, basically that established by the natural sciences, but applied universally by positivism, has several logical ramifications. It is taken as given that there can be no real difference between essence and phenomena: "We are entitled to record only
that which is manifested in experience." In other words, if one apperceives a white vase, there can be no talk of "whiteness" or "roundness" divorced from the phenomenon one has in front of one's eyes on its particular occasion.

There are no "ideas" in the Platonic or Hegelian sense of that word. Abstract idealizations are as metaphysical as dryads, and just as "imaginary"; they are merely conceptual tools (i.e. in mathematics: the circle or triangle) and not real things: "Our ideas are only intellectual instruments which serve to let us penetrate phenomena; they must be changed when they have played their part, as one changes a blunted lancet when it has served long enough."

Therefore, there are no such qualities as noble, ignoble, good, evil, beautiful, ugly etc.; all these words depend for their meaning upon world-views that go beyond an account of its visibility. This does not mean that there are no ethics, but that morals are just that; mores; social customs without reference to a universal standard.

This is essentially what positivism describes itself to be. It is anti-metaphysical in the extreme. One can easily see that high art, which depends so much on canons of Ideality which are not merely aesthetic but ethical as well, could hardly be expected to survive in such inimical intellectual atmosphere.

The positivist never asks, as the quote from Comte might imply, "why", but "how". Ontology is simply erased from the
the intellectual map.

In an undiluted form positivism would seem to have been a form of linguistic suicide. As Leszek Kolakowski has commented:

Suffering, death, ideological conflict, social clashes, antithetical values of any kind—all are declared out of bounds, matters we can only be silent about, in obedience to the principle of verifiability. Positivism so understood is an act of escape from commitments, an escape masked as a definition of knowledge, invalidating all such matters as mere figments of the imagination stemming from intellectual laziness. Positivism in this sense is the escapist's design for living, a life voluntarily cut off from participation in anything that cannot be correctly formulated. The language it imposes exempts us from the duty of speaking up in life's most important conflicts, encases us in a kind of armour of indifference to the ineffabilia mundi, the indescribable qualitative data of experience.

As Kolakowski is suggesting, positivism tends to be "reactionary" thought. Positivism had arrived in order to solve what its practitioners perceived as a crisis. Its main object of scrutiny was society. The crisis which made this object so prominently a problem was two-fold: The Industrial Revolution and the triumph of Capitalism, or as Karl Polanyi has described it: the birth of the self-regulating market economy and the subsequent dominance of the forms of that economy over the functions of society. Both the Marxist and the liberal historian agree on this point. Polanyi writes: "(The Industrial Revolution)...shifted the vision of men towards their own collective being as if they had overlooked its presence before. A world was uncovered the very
existence of which had not been suspected, that of the laws governing a complex society." The reason why such a vision should have arisen when it did, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was that the object, a society subject to one system of complex laws, had only recently developed. As Georg Lukács puts it: "for the first time in history the whole of society is subjected...to a unified economic process..." Thus," writes Lukacs elsewhere, "the recognition that society is reality becomes possible only under capitalism in bourgeois society."

As might be expected, Comte, Taine and Renan did not fully understand the nature of the object which they studied. Contradictions and inconsistencies plague the writings of the great positivists. As D.G. Charlton has observed: "Positivism is not...a unified system of thought but the activity of a divided mind." In the broad context of a discourse, positivism takes on the function of an attitude rather than a methodology, a masquerade rather than a true performance; what Lukacs calls "epistemological agnosticism". Once a positivist epistemology has been adopted, and nineteenth century French discourse about history is positivistic if it is anything, certain insurmountable difficulties arise. One cannot write about history or society without using some generalizing concepts, which are almost impossible to demonstrate empirically as "lois effectives" or "relations invariable de succession et similitude". Abstract and rather
arbitrary ideas had to make their way into the heart of positivist historiography, for as Polanyi writes: "The stubborn facts and the inexorable brute laws [of the self-regulating market economy] that appeared to abolish our freedom had in one way or another to be reconciled to freedom. This was the mainspring of the metaphysical forces that secretly sustained the positivists and the utilitarians." 14

These generalizing concepts are best discussed in the context of individual thinkers. It should be noted, however, that when "one" refers to an idea of, say, Comte's one is also referring to a widely held idea with a tradition. As George Boas put it: "Comte must not be imagined to be a lonely figure thinking out great ideas which were ahead of his time. His philosophy on the contrary was a much more eloquent expression of the total civilization of early nineteenth century France than that of any one man." 15

Among the sources which Comte drew upon was Saint-Simon, who:

...pretended to be promulgating a new religion divinely inspired in a dream. This religion, in which Newton seemed to occupy the place of Christ and Robespierre that of Satan, is the pursuit of man's happiness through science. 16

Indeed, nineteenth century positivism, and Comte's in particular, saw a faith in science as a replacement for religion.
Comte's basic theory of history depends upon a notion of "mankind" as the object of history (as Lukács points out: "the species...is no more than an individual that has been mythologized in a spirit of contemplation."\(^{17}\) For Comte, history is the history of the consciousness of the species imagined as an entity: "Ideas govern human history."\(^{18}\) Intellectual and scientific developments are therefore the determining factors in the progress of mankind.

In Comte's theory of historical progress he proposes a three stage development (this is an arbitrary aspect of his thought). From the infancy of mankind in the theological and metaphysical stages, Comte traces the history of individual sciences to their adulthood, "l'état positif". Each science has grown-up at a different rate and reached maturity at various stages of history, depending on the social circumstances. Astronomy, for example, reached the positive stage as the growing need for reliable navigation demanded that it do so.

Comte gives a rather short list of sciences in the order at which they reached the positive stage, from (in Comte's terms) the least to the most complex. They are; mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology. At the end of this development Comte places "sociologie"--a word he coins. When sociology reaches the positive stage--and it is the task of positivists to perform this task--the sciences will somehow coalesce by virtue of their unified
methodologies and there will be a universal science, which, under the aegis of sociology will ameliorate the human condition by discovering the "lois effectives" of a workable society. In short, by sociology Comte meant a political praxis.

Comte's ideas about a model society were fuzzy and eventually became a little pathological. In 1848, not an insignificant year, he founded his Church of Humanity, in an effort to promulgate a pseudo-religion of positivism. It may strike one that this was most bizarre, yet we see that again and again in nineteenth century France the béance created by a spirit of scientific rationalism in the place formerly occupied by religion was woven-over by a religious attitude towards science itself.

The Church of Humanity's vision of the future was a little disconcerting. It was an authoritarian scheme in which scientists and philosophers (positivist ones) would rule the world according to discoverable laws. The mass of people would, as usual, go to church, where they would chant scientific maxims as if a belief in the scientific method constituted a mythopoeic faith.

That an epistemology which attempts to deal with everything from a single methodology should end up proposing totalitarian political structures should come as no surprise. The epistemology of positivism engages its practioners in a totality, and this is what distinguished it from eighteenth century rationalism, it was this complete faith in the
scientific method.

Comte died in 1857, when Gérôme was thirty-three, but his thought was the most pervasive influence of the next generation of French intellectuals who came into maturity during the Second Empire.

Émile Littré, the famous lexicographer, considered by the intellectual historian to have been a "pure positivist", was meant to inherit the leadership of Comte's Church of Humanity. But the two men fell out over the events of 1851; Comte welcomed the dictatorship of Napoleon whereas Littré was a Republican. Littré, however, remained a disciple of Comte's thought, and he was able to rescue that part of Comte's thought which argued for rationalism from its more pathological aspects, and make positivism the dominant discursive mode of the Institute.

Littré valued Comte's theory of history as his most enduring contribution to the history of ideas. In Littré's hands historical processes become even more deterministic than Comte had made them. As Littré put it:

History...means research into the conditions which bring about the succession of one social state after another in a determined order. Events, therefore, play only a secondary role; being products of the passions and interests driving peoples and their leaders, they sometimes serve the spontaneous movement of mankind and sometimes obstruct it; but taken in all...they are dominated by this movement.

Needless to say, the "spontaneous movement" of mankind is the vaguest of concepts. This kind of historicism denies the possibility of class struggle, or of individual or group
action having a meaningful role on the stage of history. As I shall argue shortly, this was its purpose, to defuse the working class with scientism.

Littre's star was somewhat eclipsed during the Second Empire by "les deux grands maîtres intellectuels de cette generation", Ernest Renan and Hippolyte Taine. Both of these men were Gérôme's age, and as a fellow member of the Institute he must have been acquainted with them. He certainly would have known Taine. Both Taine and Gérôme became professors at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1863.²¹ (Gérôme was given one of three professorships in painting—the others going to Cabanel and Pils—and Taine succeeded Viollet-le-Duc in the professorship of Art History and Aesthetics).

Although hardly a strict Comtean or positivist, Taine shared with Comte and Littre a rigourously deterministic attitude towards his subject. As he said in the preface to the first volume of his important, Les Origines de la France contemporaine: "A historian may be allowed the privilege of a naturalist; I have regarded my subject the same as the metamorphosis of an insect."²²

In this monumental work, Taine presented a disturbing image of a France which was floundering in search of its appropriate system of government:

...the point is to discover it, whether it exists, and not submit it to a vote. Our preferences in this respect would be vain; history and nature have selected for us in advance; we must accommodate
ourselves to them as it is certain that they will not accommodate themselves to us. The social and political forms a people may enter and remain are not open to arbitration, but are determined by its character and its past.²³

Taine's enduring contribution to historiography lies in his method, which might be termed "sociological". Taine believed that the events, literature, art and politics of any given period can yield to the historian a coherent structure: "mankind is not a collection of objects lying next to one another, but a machine of functionally interrelated parts; it is a system and not just a formless pile."²⁴ Taine's strategy is still current in some circles, he felt that any given cultural event was a product of three converging factors: race, milieu and epoch.²⁵

This absolute determinism—useful in qualified arguments (like this thesis)—can be taken to an extreme in which the entire human enterprise is seen the result of inescapable mechanical laws. An imaginative man by temperament, Taine never became overly reductive, but he felt that he ought to have been. A severe critic of Taine has remarked: "both in Tainism and Hitlerism civilization has been replaced by biology."²⁶ This is perhaps unfair, but it points out that the drift of positivist discourse about history is to render it a natural science.

Despite Taine's icy objectivity—or his claim to objectivity—his writing has a deep class bias. Like Comte, Littré and Renan, or for that matter Marx, Taine saw his function as a historian as political. Taine apparently jug-
gled his facts to support his personal political beliefs; Cobban characterizes Taine's method in this regard as "vicious from its foundation." The main attack of *Les Origines* was upon the Revolution, revolution in general, and by extension, the aspirations of the working classes. His Revolution is a beggar's revolt which he painted with a brush dripping with gore rather than gloire. This unpleasant picture of the Revolution was "responsible for depriving Frenchmen of joy in their historical image." And was a key factor on the malaise of the Third Republic.

Taine had thought that the crisis of modernity had had its roots in the enlightenment. Eighteenth century discourse was deeply flawed as far as Taine was concerned. In the name of Reason, the eighteenth century invented an image of man that was an automaton. The eighteenth century "Raison" was really a form of courtly elegance, altogether impatient with empiricism, it strove for the nicely rounded aphorism. Ideas about equality originate in a courtly context, but are only functional as a corollary of the symmetrical gardens of Versailles. Out of their context, that is, in the streets of Paris, they become dangerous. They incite the masses, whom Taine did not think very highly of: "Stupidity, violence, ignorance, cowardice, were the principle ingredients that God mixed together when making the human race."

Taine's unrelenting determinism and his desire "to communicate to the sciences called moral and political that
absolute certainty which like all scholars and philosophers of his generation he was accustomed to attribute to the physical or natural sciences," place his firmly within the context of positivist discourse.

His fellow intellectual, Ernest Renan, can not be so surely placed, yet takes up themes and attitudes of the positivist. Comte had tried to cast his Church of Humanity over the béance which pure scientism left in the place of religion, Renan went one better. As an American critic described Renan: "no one knew better than Renan how to gild positivism with religiosity and throw around the operations of the scientific intellect a vague aroma of the infinite." 30

Renan's idée fixe was to reconcile religion and science, but unlike Comte, his priority was the religious: "The sole value of science is insofar as it can replace religion." 31

In his 1864 succès de scandale, Le Vie de Jésus, Renan struck a note of concord between highly sentimental religious feeling and a scientific spirit of inquiry. Those interested in the phenomenon of nineteenth century sentimentality might look to Renan for their ultimate theoritician. Renan rejected the supernatural and fantastic aspects of religion--which require faith to sustain one's belief in them. But instead of calling for an end to the religious sensibility he calls for a renewal, based not on faith but on aesthetic feeling. Renan was, incidently, married to the niece of that
supreme master of religious sentimentality, Ary Scheffer. Renan astutely observed that the power of religious feeling is rooted in repressed sexuality.

In *Le Vie de Jésus*, he rather convincingly explains religious emotion as a human need rather than as an actual relationship with the divine. There is something of a parallel between what Gérôme did with high art and what Renan did with religion. Both introduce realism—in the literary sense of that word—into metaphysical realms. The difference between faith and sentiment is the difference between a classical contemplation of the Ideal and the aestheticism of the epicurian néo-grec paintings.

In both cases the movement is reversed from being an outward motion towards a world beyond the human limit—to Platonic forms and Ideas, to a divine Christ, to an invisibility—to a movement toward these things as signs of the merely human. Beauty and religious feeling occupy a "high" place in the worlds of Renan and Gérôme, but they became distillations or rather special attainments of the sexual—one might as well say biological—rather than the dim, shimmering appearance of something eternal, beyond the human limit, like a cosmological harmony or God.

**The Influence of Positivism on the Arts**

Nineteenth century discourse has themes and patterns which I have tried to point out in this discussion. To sum
up: it focuses on history, as Flaubert commented: "The leading characteristic of our century is its historical sense. This is why we have to confine ourselves to relating the facts." This close attention to history took a sociological bias, largely because society for the first time operated under the laws of a unified economic system. Scientism assumed the role of religion, the methods of the natural sciences are held up as a universal epistemology. One might also note that positivism is essentially the thought of bourgeois thinkers anxious to solve contemporary problems without ceding their power to the masses.

The influence of positivism was deep and widespread. M. Ferrez wrote in 1882: "Positivism...has become nowadays the dominant philosophy." L. Dugas in 1895 wrote: "Comte dominates our age...his vast doctrine nourishes the various currents of modern thought." Jaques Barzun could declare in 1958 that: "The majority of thinking men (in XIXth century France) either declared themselves Positivists or acted as such without knowing that they were."

Emile Littré had a special influence on the founders of the Third Republic; Gambetta and Ferry were both indebted to him. In 1871 Gambetta announced that Comte was "one of the great thinkers of this century," and at a banquet in 1873, held to honour Littré's completion of the first section of his Dictionary of the French Language, he said: "We are honoured to be the free and devoted servants of that doctrine
which it is your (Littre's) mission to spread....The day will certainly come when politics, restored to its true role,...will once again be what it should be, a moral science ....On that day your philosophy--and ours--will have triumphed."36

Taine was instrumental in the founding of the École libre des sciences politiques. According to Gargan the function of this school was to defuse the left "by a critical examination of the 'millenary' socialists from Babeuf to the International, thus exposing the dreams of the ignorant implanted by the semi-ignorant."37 The historian, Marc Bloch, has attributed the social disunity of the Third Republic in part to the influence of this school: "The École des sciences politiques was always the spiritual home of the scions of the rich and powerful families. Its graduates filled the embassies, the Treasury, the council of state and the public audit office."38

And in 1917, Clemenceau, pausing in front of Bonnat's portrait of Renan was heard to remark: "I don't show deference to many men, but I do to him, for he has made us what we are."39

Positivism's influence on the arts was as widespread as its influence among politicians and men of power, Juliette Adam, saloniste for Littre, Ferry and other republican positivists remarked: "The ideas of Auguste Comte and of Littre were influencing art (in the 60's) in the most curious way. Altruism, association, synthesis, humanity were everyone's
watchwords and stock in trade." These words from au courant vocabulary seem to come from Renan rather than Littré.

Flaubert, Zola, Saint-Beuve and the Goncourts knew Taine and Renan well. The Goncourts have depicted them at Princess Mathilde's and at the Magny dinners. Zola's Le Roman experimentale is held by some to have been inspired by the positivist philosopher, Claude Bernard. Anatole France's Thais is an exposition of Renan's theories about sex and religion. Flaubert asked Renan to write the introduction to the second version of his Temptation of St. Antony. More important than these specific points of contact was the sociological approach that Zola and Flaubert took in their novels, which really cannot be said to have been "influenced" by positivism, rather positivism and literature participated in similar modes of discourse, which arose in response to dramatic shifts in the way society was organized.

Of course positivism was not the entire picture. There was a reaction against it. Hugo's spooks, Flaubert's deep and touching belief in the irrational, Eliphas Levi's magie Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Gustave Moreau and Huysmans are only a few of Gérôme's contemporaries whose stance was resolute in its opposition to the positivist esprit. However, I have deliberately accounted for those discursive models which I felt most illuminated the work of Gérôme.
Gérôme's History Paintings

In some ways, Gérôme's more serious history painting—by serious one means simply having a serious theme, not necessarily cast in the mold of high art—develops themes that Gérôme worked out in the néo-grec paintings. The tinges of cruelty and sadism that glitter below the surface of paintings like *The Cock Fight* or *Phryne* (which on one level at least, is about humiliation) emerge into the full light of day with the openly brutal imagery of *Pollice Verso* of 1874 (fig. 22).

*Pollice Verso* depicts—at a certain rarified level of generalization—the same theme as *The Cock Fight*. Spectators watch a battle to the death for pleasure or entertainment. We can even see, in the figure of the woman who sits in the Imperial box, just above the standing gladiator and slightly to his right, a vestige of the young Greek girl of *The Cock Fight*. Only here the theme is more serious, instead of a conceit about young love it is about society and history.

*Pollice Verso* is just one of a group of paintings which depict Roman entertainments in the time of Vitellius. There is *Ave Caesar, Morituri Te Salutant* of 1859 (fig. 21) of which *Pollice Verso* is more or less an emendation. The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer (1863-1883) (fig. 23) was worked on for twenty years, being completely repainted at least three times. There are sculptural groups like *Pollice Verso* (fig. 24) which is the central group of the painting made into a bronze, and *La Martyre* (fig. 25). *Les Rentrees des felines dans la Cirque*
c. 1901, (fig.26), is an especially grisly piece of painting. There are others, but these examples serve to show the intensity of Gérôme's interest in the subject and just how graphic he was prepared to be.

Gérôme had been interested in things gladiatorial since his youth. During his year in Italy (1844) he was struck by some Roman game armour he had found in a Neopolitan museum. "Voilà qui m'ouvre un horizon immense!...Comment! tous les peintres, tous les sculptures sont venus ici, et pas un n'a songé a refaire un gladiateur," Gérôme seems surprised that Donatello made a David but not a gladiator. He immediately began to research the subject: "Je me recherche tout ce qui avait trait au gladiateur: des mosaiques, des peintures, des petites sculptures, le tombeau de Scorus, etc...etc... collections assez nombreuse car les gladiateurs ont joué un role considerable dans le monde romain : Panem et cirencenses."43

Note that Gérôme explains his interest as if it was sociological curiosity, he is interested in the authentic Rome of historical experience, rather than Roman high culture; just as he had been interested in anecdotes from Greek and Roman life in his néo-grec works, rather than the Davidian Rome of republican virtues.

This sociological interest was informed by a personal one. Gérôme was charmed by the strangeness and barbarity of gladiatorial equipment. I am not joking when I suggest
that this material, which he longed to possess, which he lovingly painted and sculpted, was in some secret way the ultimate bric-a-brac for him; the ultimate collectable upon which he could impose a fancier's value of some sexual significance.

In Pollice Verso and Ave Caesar the armour and weaponry were the real subjects of the painting. Pollice Verso was painted to correct inaccuracies in Ave Caesar, "which was incorrect in several archaeological points." Gérôme probably used artifacts in the Pourtalès-Gorgier collection to make Pollice Verso and he also had a friend ship casts of armour to Paris from originals Gérôme had found in a Roman museum. According to an American student, it cost Gérôme three thousand dollars to have armour made from these casts, this would almost be more than he could reasonably expect to get for the finished painting. This drive for absolute accuracy in detail was important because "...it adds to the general physiognomy and gives the characters an especial barbarous, savage and strange aspect." He hired a model to wear the armour and the fantasy was complete: "My model," wrote Gérôme, "dressed up in them is for all intents and purposes a gladiator." Gérôme may have had several things in mind when he painted this series of paintings. Of course, there was the prosaic reason of expense, once certain costumes and artifacts had been collected, a certain amount of time invested
in research, Gérôme naturally had to make more than one painting from them, or he would have gone bankrupt. But, as I have suggested, this particular theme was important to him for personal reasons.

In his series of Roman spectacles, Gérôme uses a "socio-logical" style. As one critic put it: "He wished to photograph Greek and Roman life." But this had been the method of his ethnographic paintings as well.

I think that we can assume that the Roman spectacles are a critique of civilization, of the barbarity of mankind. _Pollice Verso_ was painted three years after the Franco-Prussian war and the formation and brutal supression of the Paris Commune. In a letter to a young American who had requested that he explain the significance of _Pollice Verso_, Gérôme wrote: "...that the turned down thumb meant death to the vanquished and that when the Roman people wished to impart grace to the gladiator who had gone down but had fought valiantly, they raised two fingers of the right hand in the air." This is the gesture which the fallen gladiator in the painting implores the vestal virgins to make, as it was they who made the decision. "But," Gérôme continued, "this grace was rarely accorded for in those relatively far off times, man was already almost as ferocious (feroce) as he is today." Certainly such cynicism was considered an elegant mode of conversation in the Second Empire and beyond, but Gérôme has not only tossed off a _bon_ mot, he has laboured
over a series of paintings which emphasize the brutality of man. We should take him seriously when he suggested in his letter that he felt that things were worse in the nineteenth century, which he called "an epoch of moral and intellectual disorder", than they had been in Roman times.

In Pollice Verso, the sympathy of the viewer for the protagonists is only tentatively engaged. As spectators ourselves we are in something of the same position as the crowd in the painting, and certainly, if it were up to us we would grant clemency—but that moment has passed and the vanquished fighter is making his plea too late. (Note that this is not the case, strictly speaking with the sculptural group, where we are more literally in the position of that Roman mob and can perhaps reverse their decision). And given this situation we can only recoil and in recoiling withdraw any feeling we may wish to have had for the young man about to die. This uneasiness is close to the esprit of Pollice Verso—which like other Gérômes, is rather macabre—and I believe that it is the reaction Gérôme wishes to invoke and by so doing make his point.

We cannot really work up much feeling for the protagonists when the result of the context is such a foregone conclusion. The winner is not much better off than the loser, given his occupation. He will, no doubt, slay his young adversary, but not out of any volition that he himself may have; this decision is quite literally in the hands of others.
In fact his victory only reifies his fate: tomorrow, next week, he will be in the same ghastly circumstance. If there is no rescue from this arena other than death, then the extension of life which victory brings hardly matters. Our victor is a helpless puppet whose only sure prospect is a violent death.

In other paintings Gérôme amplifies this theme, which is about the meaninglessness of individual action and volition in an arena of action circumscribed by fate in the guise of historical necessity.

In Gérôme's Death of Marshal Ney of 1868, (fig.27) he deliberately refers to his Death of Caesar (fig.28) painted the year before. He thereby begs a comparison between the two events. The brutality of the Marshal Ney painting caused a controversy before it was exhibited at the Salon of 1868. As an École des Beaux-Arts professor there was little that could be done to stop him from hanging the painting, but an effort was made. Gérôme reported the event as follows: "The superintendant of the Beaux-Arts (Nieuwerkerke) begged me several times not to exhibit this picture; but I steadfastly refused to yield, for the sake of the principle involved, declaring to him that painters has as good a right to write their history with their brushes as authors with their pens." Gérôme's "principle" here is almost a paraphrase of Delaroche, from whom Gérôme probably received this particular form of the idea of the artist as a historian.50 Gérôme added,
not a little coyly; "Besides, this picture is only a statement of a well-known fact, without comment of any kind." 51

Of course, Gérôme's cold and "objective" eye, with its detached brutality is, in fact, "comment" enough as it hardly evokes the heroic mood that Nieuwerkerke might have wished to surround such subject-matter. After all, Gérôme could have chosen another moment, he could have depicted Ney about to be shot, or like Manet, in his Execution of Maximilian, he could have shown Ney being shot. 52 Instead, he shows us the once great general lying face down in the mud—Gérôme's Ney looks like a sack of potatoes that was jostled from a cart and forgotten, Ney and Caesar have not only been murdered, they have been abandoned.

Albert Boime has written of these paintings: "Unlike the figures in what we take as typical history paintings, these protagonists do not achieve heroic stature but are disclosed in moments of abandonment and isolation, pitted harshly against the overwhelming predominance of forces outside them." 53

In Gérôme's L'Oedipe(fig. 29), shown at the Salon of 1886, he depicts a diminutive Napoleon before the Sphinx at Giza. From the title one must assume that Napoleon expects some revelation of his destiny from this sandstone creature. In a sketch from this painting (fig. 30) Gérôme had given the general an answer, an Imperial eagle sits on the head of the sphinx. But by removing the "answer" or omen, Gérôme generalizes the situation and Napoleon becomes everyman wondering
what it will all come to—and receiving by way of a reply a knowing silence. As Gérôme's ebullient biographer, Fanny Field Hering put it:

The sphinx rears its massive head, and regards with a calmness born of absolute knowledge the vain struggles of a pygmy world...(Napoleon) mutely demands of the oracle the secret of his future. In vain! the steady gaze passes over even his head—on—on—doubtless beholding the snowy steppes of Russia, reddened with blood and the light of conflagration; the wounded eagle trailing his broken wings over the field of Waterloo; a lonely rock, at the base of which the sea makes incessant moan. But there is no warning, no sign.

The world which Gérôme has made in these paintings is rigorously deterministic; men do not make history in Gérôme's paintings, rather they are undone by history. Gérôme's manner of painting in these pictures fits his theme. His hard, polished surface, his tight line, absent of personality, the detail dwelt upon as promiscuously as if the canvases attempted to imitate the photograph, and the composition which dwarfs the protagonists in large, somewhat menacing architectural spaces, all serve to bring forward the theme of determinism. This technique, what one might call Gérôme's attempt at a "blank" style, a style "without comment of any kind", has all the appearances of positivist objectivity.

One commonly associates objectivity with positivism, as the faculty, rather than subjectivity, which the mind deploys in the activities of the natural sciences. Objectivity is associated with realism, in painting as well as literature.
Gerald Ackerman, who has done a great deal of work on Gérôme, has consistently described Gérôme as an "academic realist" or as a "realist", largely because of the photographic style of his paintings. But this issue is not a straightforward one. As Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, quite rightly I think, a photograph of a Cézanne motif looks less somehow "real" than the painting of it does. Obviously a different meaning of the word "real" is implied here than the one we invoke when we say "realist" in reference to a nineteenth century painting. On the latter occasion we mean not only a particular manner of painting--and we often do not mean the clarity of illusion in a highly finished painting--but a special range of subject-matter. Bernard Wienberg has put together the following definition of "realism" as the term was used in the critical literature between 1830 and 1870:

Realism is the exact imitation (calque, copy) of nature as it is, without choice of subject and without idealization or intrusion of the artist's personality, it emphasises the material rather than the spiritual aspects of nature: in matters of form it disdains "style", "elegance", "convention". It is synomous with materialisme, and positivisme and directly opposed to idéalisme, reverie, fantasie, poésie, imagination.

This definition only applies partially to Gérôme. Certainly he strove for objectivity, and that within a "positivist" imagination of the real. However, Gérôme was a defender of idéalisme, reverie, fantasie, poésie and the
imagination, Are we really prepared to call the painter of The Poet Touched by His Muse (fig. 31) a realist. Gérôme himself would have renounced the label, despite his photographic style he had strong opinions on realist subject-matter:

Today, in the epoch of moral and intellectual disorder there seems to be a sovereign contempt for those who seek to elevate themselves, to move the spectator, to have some imagination; for those who are not content to remain fettered to the earth, dabbling in the mud of realism. It is today the fashion to which all the world sacrifices, because it is granted to only a few to have a well-balanced mind, and because it is easier to paint three fried eggs than it is to execute the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.58

What Gérôme seems to have done was to wrestle from general discourse values that espoused objectivity and determinism—both aspects of the positivist stance—while retaining many of the values and ideas he received in his youth as a Beaux-Arts student. For according to the definitions we use to categorize nineteenth century painting, Gérôme's personality is decidedly divided between realism and Academic formulae.

Gérôme worked in different genres, and it was his work in the ethnographic genre which gave him the means and the vision to make his rather special "serious" history paintings. In 1854, it will be remembered, Gérôme had just completed a grande machine in the Ingresiste mode, he also painted his first ethnographic work. His painting, Russian Soldiers in a Recreation Camp was painted in a photographic style to give it a documentary feeling, this was a style of ethnographic painting developed in the previous generation by Vernet, using
Figure 31
actual photographs.

From documenting the orient, Gérôme began documenting historical periods. He used the photographic style to give a feeling of authenticity, a problem, which of course, had occupied Delaroche and Ingres before him. But they had used merely a high focus and clarity of detail, a sort of northern Renaissance realism, to accomplish this. Gérôme did the same, but he also uses compositional techniques that can only have been a result of his experience with photography. The Death of Caesar is a case in point--it looks like a stereoscope. As in Ave Caesar and other paintings, the background recedes with dizzying speed, partly as a result of the sweeping curves which tend to wrap around the field of vision--as if we are seeing a full one hundred and eighty degrees--and pulls the eye into the canvas.

Gérôme's attitude towards his historical subject-matter was conditioned by his temperament, he liked spectacle and he liked the exotic and the strange. But this almost romantic side of Gérôme finds itself expressed through the prosaic values of a provincial bourgeois, who measured accomplishment in terms of labour rather than inspiration. Gérôme's emphasis on hard work approaches the compulsive:

I am at work every morning and only leave my studio when the day had fled; and this since my youth. You see I have been hammering on the anvil for a long time. It is one of the examples I try to set to my pupils, that of being an ardent and indefatigable worker every day and under all circumstances.\textsuperscript{59}

Like Renan or Taine, Gérôme approached his subjects very
methodically. He never acknowledges Taine, but their working methods and aims were similar. Taine's attitude was:

Give up the theory of constitutions and their mechanism, of religions and their system and try to see men in their workshops, in their offices, in their fields, with their sky, their dress, tillage, meals, as you do when, landing in England or Italy, you remark faces or gestures, roads and inns, a citizen taking his walk or a workman drinking.60

Gérôme's approach to history was much the same:

I have studied much and in many countries, and have consequently learned a great many things which I try to put into practise, always seeking to remain natural and true, forcing myself to depict the character of the epoch which I represent on the canvas.61

In other words, Gérôme felt himself to be a historian in the Tainian sense, that is he focussed on milieu, race and era, rather than on individuals and their heroisms. If we take Pollice Verso as an example, we can see that this painting has a great deal of information in it, other than the unfolding drama itself. Renan had declared of this ancient Rome: "The circus had become the centre of life; the rest of the world seemed made only for ministering to the pleasures of Rome."62 And the Colosseum and Circus paintings endeavour to show us Roman civilization. Gérôme has shown us an entire society, the imperial powers in the box, the vestal virgins next to them, the senators and patricians behind and beyond them the mob of Rome.

In his Versailles paintings Gérôme has much the same method. The Reception of the Duc de Condé (fig.32) was made
according to one account to celebrate the staircase. Gérôme had felt that this had been improperly rendered or "restored" in the work of a friend. So this painting, despite its interest as an anecdote, is largely a scholarly rebuttal. Gérôme is saying—as much as anything else—'this is what the staircase actually looked like'. Gérôme probably felt, as Taine would have, that the architecture was immensely important to the action. It was Taine who declared that there were structural similarities between all manifestations of a particular culture. And Gérôme must have thought that we could not fully understand the story here—which is really only a gracious comment by the king—unless we knew what that staircase looked like. That Gérôme felt this way is brought out even more in his famous L'Eminence grise (fig.33). In this painting the syncopated gestures of the stream of courtiers—in which elaborate courtesy turns to intrigue as we mount the stairs—are themselves an image of the essence of a particular culture; just as the frenzy of the Roman pictures was an image of the essence of that culture.

The ethnographic paintings, with their emphasis on "type" are also examples of Gérôme's typically nineteenth century (i.e. postivist) penchant for extracting the general from the particular. Or to put it more accurately, this tendency to present an array of particulars and present the sum of those particulars as the general. For Gérôme and his
colleagues in philosophy and history the whole was the sum of its parts. As a critic noted of Gérôme's paintings: "He is the first French painter who has been scrupulous to give all the particulars." A parallel approach is found in Taine, whose method was ultimately the arrangement of cultural facts into a structure.

Gérôme's determinism, his vision of alienation and isolation which comes out not only in the history paintings but in a lifelong series of lion paintings (which Albert Boime has discussed in his, "Jean-Leon Gérôme, Henri Rousseau's Sleeping Gypsy and the Academic Legacy."), is very much a result of his sociological/photographic documentary approach to his subjects. Or perhaps it is the other way around, at any rate determinism, often of a bleak variety, and "the methods of the natural scientist" go hand in hand. This is because the aim of the social scientist—a role Gérôme assumes for himself, both of the orient and of the past—is to discover, as Comte would have it, "leurs relations invariable de succession et de similitude."

But Gérôme was not a scientist in this way, he was an artist. He presents essays on invariable laws; microcosims where the game is fixed. His gladiators, his Caesar, Napoleon and his Ney are struck down by the juggernaut of the determinable laws of history. Ney and Caesar are not presented as men who shaped history, but men who were executed when they tried to trespass beyond the limits of
the historically possible--this is Gérôme's vision of tragedy.

Both Taine's and Gérôme's view of alienated man have a common root, or can be explained by the same social phenomena. Positivism, after all, was a reaction to the development of capitalism, and society is perceived as an object of study at this historical moment because at this time, and for the first time, if we are to believe Polanyi and Marx, society as a whole became subject to one set of laws--the laws of the self-regulating market economy.
Notes - Chapter IV

1 As cited by Hering, 189, op. cit. p. 493.


3 The approach I have in mind is the one employed by D.G. Charlton, see note above.

4 Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive, i, 1864, pp. 9-10. Quoted in Charlton, op. cit., p. 6.


7 This paragraph was paraphrased from Kolakowski, op. cit. pp. 7-8. Kolakowski writes: "...we are not to assume that any value assertion (Kolakowski's examples are that it is "good" to cure the sick and that it is "bad" to abuse children) that we recognize as true "in itself", rather than in relation to something else, can be justified by experience."--Idem.


11 Ibid. p. 19.

12 Charlton, op. cit., p. 2.


18 "Ce n'est pas aux lecteurs de cet ouvrage que je croirai jamais devoir prouver que les idées gouvernent et bouleversent le monde, ou, en d'autres termes, que tout le mécanisme social repose finalement sur des opinions, Ils savent surtout que la grande crise politique et morale des sociétés actuelles tient, en dernière analyse, à l'anarchie intellectuelle." As cited in Charlton, *op.cit.*, p.38.

19 "Here (on the question of the Law of Three Stages) Litttré and his collaborators could reproduce the master's voice faithfully, so much so that Litttré praised Comte's work as the first philosophical appreciation of history and claimed that it was in this field...that he had been an accomplished specialist, apart from his synthesizing achievements in philosophy." W.M. Simon in *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 1963. p.30.


21 In November of 1863 the École des Beaux-Arts was completely overhauled under the then Superintendent of Beaux-Arts, Count Nieuwerkerke. Albert Boime has an forthcoming article on these reforms (for *Art Quarterly*). They are also described by Ernest Vinet in a "Letter from Paris, "Fine Arts Quarterly, Vol. 1, n.s., October, 1866, pp.432-446. Among the more important reforms was the installation of three master studios within the école itself for painting instruction, previous to 1863 only drawing instruction had taken place on the école premises.

Ibid. p.4.


See Linda Nochlin, op.cit. p.45.


Gargan, op.cit., p. xl.


As quoted in Linda Nochlin, op.cit., p.23.


36 From a speech made in 1873 honoring Littre on the completion of his Dictionnaire de la langue française, as quoted in W.M. Simon, op. cit., p.155.

37 Gargan, op. cit., p.xxxv. Gargan is summarizing Taine's article, "Fondation de l'école libre des sciences politiques," this originally appeared in the Journal des débats and was reprinted in Derniers essais de critique et d'histoire, Paris, 1923.


39 This incident is recounted in Wardman, op. cit., p.209.

40 Julliette Adam, My Literary Life, p.365, as quoted in Simon, op. cit., p.163.

41 "His [Bernard's] adventures were almost inevitably led to feel that science and knowledge were synonymous; Zola's Le Roman experimental is only the most notorious illustration of the scientists' profound philosophical impact." Charlton, op. cit. p.73.

42 Wardman, op. cit., p.210 reports this Renan's introduction, although written, was not published with Flaubert's book.


44 Hering, 1892, op. cit., p. 88.

45 Albert Boime writes: "Gérôme sought out the banker's set of gladiator armour to ensure that his painting Pollice Verso would possess archaeological verisimilitude." in "Entrepreneurial Patronage in Nineteenth Century France," op. cit., p.149.
The student in question was J. Alden Wier, who later took up the cause of Impressionism in America; from Dorothy Wier Young (ed. & intro), *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Wier*, New Haven, 1960, p.47.


Benson, *op.cit.*, p.682.


In his catalogue entry for the Gérôme exhibition, *op.cit.* p.65, Ackerman seems to see Marshal Ney as part of an ongoing dialogue with Manet and a response to the latter's *Execution of Maximillian* in particular. Ackerman thinks that Gérôme is trying to be more of a "realist" than Manet. "Manet either did not know or chose to ignore the realist dictum—that it was better to show the moment before or after the deed than the deed itself—which Gérôme now follows." This so-called "realist" dictum is in fact no such thing. It is a Davidian theory which comes from Diderot or Lessing (needless to say, it is also a canon of Attic tragedy). "Painting...can use but a single moment of an action, and must therefore choose the most pregnant one, the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow." (from Lessing's *Laocoon*. (trans. Ellen Frothingham, New York 1963, p.92). In an article which appeared in the Gazette des beaux-arts vol. 70, 1967, pp.163-176, "Gérôme and Manet", Ackerman carries this on his version of a dialogue between Manet and Gérôme.


In his introduction to the Gérôme catalogue, *op.cit.*, Ackerman makes a distinction between the objective realist (i.e. Gérôme) and the subjective realist (i.e. Impressionism). He writes: "It is a curious and poorly based prejudice of 20th century critics to bestow the title of 'realism' only upon pictures concerned with that which the artist could see in his "everyday life." (p.12) This "prejudice" is based upon the critical writing of the nineteenth century, which as Wienberg has pointed out used the word "realist" in regard to a certain type of subject-matter, or perhaps this "poorly based "prejudice" arises from Gérôme himself, who would have certainly never referred to himself as a "realist". 

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Nonsense*, Translated by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.13f.: "Cézanne wanted to paint this primordial world, and his pictures therefore seem to show nature pure, while photographs of the same landscapes suggest man's works, conveniences, and imminent presence."


Ibid. p.494.

As quoted in Nochlin, *op.cit.*, p.23.


Gérôme wrote an account of the action for W.H. Vanderbilt, for whom he had painted it: "In the year 1674, Condé had returned to Court, where he was received in triumph. The king came forward to meet him on the grand staircase, which was not his usual habit. The Prince was going up slowly, on account of the gout, which made him almost helpless. As soon as he saw the Monarch, 'Sire,' said he, 'I beg your majesty's pardon, to make you wait so long.' 'My cousin,' answered the King, 'do not hurry. When one is loaded with laurels as you are, it is difficult to walk quickly.'" As cited in The Dayton Art Institute, *op.cit.*, p.74.
64 Benson, *op.cit.*, p. 682.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

In Chapters Two and Three I argued, following Walter Benjamin, that the activity of collecting objects from the distant in time and the distant in space was an operation of rescue: that the collector who arranged his intérieur with exotic bric-a-brac wished to confer a fancier's value on his objects and rescue them from the burden of being commodities. I also argued that Gérôme's néo-grec and ethnographic paintings duplicate his activity as a collector. Much the same thing could be said about his history paintings, especially those which depict ancient Rome or Versailles. In these paintings the architecture often predominates; it is hard to tell whether it serves to accentuate the figures and their actions or if, indeed, the figures serve to accentuate the architectural space.

Like the néo-grec and ethnographic paintings, the history paintings are extensions of Gérôme's own intérieur, the paintings serve as imaginary locales for his collection of objets d'art. Gérôme placed his collection in realistically recreated scenes which were distant both in time and space from his own Paris studio. Their photographic veracity functioned to give these objects a reality which was previous to and far from the "reality" of objects as commodities.

This "secret" function of Gérôme's paintings explains their realistic style which so easily accommodates itself
to the celebration of things. Their narrative content often expresses what Gérôme must have felt was a fact of the human condition, a condition of alienation and helplessness.

But we must beware of thus thinking of Gérôme as "deep". Many of the themes I have discussed in regard to his work had themselves to be rescued from beneath the surface of his canvases where traditions of painting, social conditions like the Salon and the advent of mechanical reproduction, capitalism and the intérieur became the circumstances of Gérôme's art. Gérôme may have thought of his paintings in quite different terms than the ones I have used. For example, Pollice Verso, considered in the context of Gérôme's public polemics about "modern" art, might be considered as a self-portrait of sorts. Note that the victorious gladiator is middle-aged and somewhat flabby, perhaps only a few years younger than Gérôme's own fifty years, his age when he painted the painting in 1874. Is a message being implied? Are we to think that the older man has won because of his training and years of experience against the raw but naive brute strength of the younger man? If we are--and paintings like this were meant to be read this closely--then we may have an image of Gérôme, the experienced Academician vanquishing his foes, the realists and the impressionists.

More to the point, however, is the conception behind Gérôme's oriental types whom he admired greatly and to whom his friends often compared him. He admired men who could
face the misfortunes which fate had dealt them with an implacable calm and dignified reserve. This, as Galichon pointed out, was the point of a painting like *The Prisoner*.

Despite his "revisionism", Gérôme considered himself to be an Academic painter and a guardian of certain classical canons: of painting. If this thesis accomplishes anything outside of an interpretation of Gérôme then it is meant to be part of an examination of what happened to French Academic art after Ingres. Gérôme did not merely bastardize or continue a tradition whose raison d'être was no more. Rather, on several occasions he tried to bring that tradition up to date, although as we have seen, he was hardly alone or original in these endeavours. In the néo grec works, following the example of Gleyre, Gérôme presented the classical world in a less arch way than David or Ingres. In the ethnographic paintings he tried to bring some of the standards of academic art to the practise of genre painting. Vernet and Delaroche had shown him the way in this territory. In the serious history works he tries to make realistic history painting based on the image of photography. And here he is fairly unique or more successful than most.

His final attempt to inject life into the academic way of doing things was his revival of the practise of tinting marble and of making chryselephatine sculpture. And here again the transparency of his "real" task was obvious and Gérôme's activity as a collector affects the result. Speilmann
astutely caught the real nature of a statue like *Bellona* (fig. 34) when he wrote:

The figure, standing on tip-toe, screaming woe and warning, shouting "To Battle!" with flesh tinted ivory, eyes of emeralds, draperies, weapons, and cobra of many metals, make greater effect than would be believed from reproduction, for it looked more like life. But the subject missed the target, for this screaming Hecate suggests not so much "War" as "Madness"—and suggests not so much sculpture as sublimated bric-a-brac.

In other words, no matter what Gérôme did, he remained locked into his time and station in life and his art was symptomatic of the political economy of his era in a way that, perhaps, a greater artist would have managed to either transcend or face head on. Of course, it is Gérôme's status as a minor figure that makes him interesting in the first place. The minor figure will always yield to the historian the wide picture, the context from which sprang the great figures. A study of someone like Gérôme illuminates the problems which his contemporaries had to deal with and adds to our appreciation of those who solved these problems in a more striking and successful way. When one knows that Gérôme's paintings were often considered scandalous, one recognizes all the more the courage and boldness of a public gesture like Manet's *Déjeuner*. A study of Gérôme also opens up for investigation the social and intellectual context of mid-nineteenth century French painting, as the American critic/painter Eugene Benson expressed it:
...today, which is given to study, to travel, which is accurate, mechanical, unimpassioned, which cares nothing for military glory, which dreads revolution, which wishes to know, which exalts knowledge and longs for sensation, but is not poetic or heroic, is represented by Gérôme. Gérôme, today, in France, the popular painter of France, is closest to the moral spirit, and best shows the intellectual traits of his time.
Notes - Chapter V

1 Speilmann, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

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