

THE ROLE OF THE BROTHEL MONOTYPES
IN DEGAS'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE
IMAGERY OF THE NUDE

by

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ABSTRACT

Within the context of the revolution of subject matter in painting and sculpture that occurred during the nineteenth century, especially in the work of French painters, the imagery of the nude has been explored of late mostly with a view to illustrating the underlying sexism of these images and the degrading treatment of women as objects in these works. In this discussion, the work of Edgar Degas, an artist whose subject matter in his mature work is dominated by the nude, has been treated very little. Yet with Degas, the development of this imagery is particularly clearly demarcated throughout his career. The nudes of his early period, the history painting nudes, are very different than those of his mature work, those executed after c.1885. As well, the fact that Degas abandoned the subject for a period of almost twelve years would tend to indicate an abrupt change in his conception of the imagery from his early to his mature paintings.

With the publication by Theodore Reff of Degas's notebooks, it is now possible to trace his development of the subject with firmer dates than was possible heretofore. As his first explorations of the subject in oil and pastel occur in 1879, it is then obvious that Degas's monotypes of bathers and brothels, executed c.1876-78, are his first real treatment of the nude of modern life, a discovery that makes the monotypes all important to this discussion. Further, it can be readily demonstrated upon close examination of these prints in relation to size, handling, motifs and poses that Degas did not consider the bathers and the prostitutes as two separate subjects and that the distinction is one imposed by later cataloguers of the monotypes.

Degas's interest in the subject of prostitution is by no means an isolated case in the later nineteenth century in France. Other writers and artists chose it as one which conformed to the prevailing theories of naturalism as a truly modern theme. Nor did Degas ignore a long tradition of nineteenth century lithographs with naughty subjects in his depiction of the nudes. The interest in prostitution in this context and Degas's awareness of the lithographic tradition shed some light on the reaction of the press and audiences towards Degas's mature nudes that he exhibited in 1886. His public found the pastels and oils offensive, probably because the images did resemble the prints of the lithographers of the Romantic era and the paintings of similar subjects by other artists in the seventies and eighties whose subjects could be clearly identified with the subject of prostitution and were rejected by the official body, the annual Salon. Degas's later, mature nudes were regarded as slightly salacious subjects for many years and their initial reception by the public in the eighteen-eighties forms yet another chapter in the study of the changes in subject matter that were hotly debated in artistic circles during the nineteenth century and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

Degas has always been called the painter of dancers and bathers as these two figural motifs dominate his oeuvre. However, despite the fact that Degas painted the nude more than any other single motif in his career, studies of this imagery in his work have been few. Ronald Pickvance's recent article¹ has somewhat redressed the paucity of writing on the subject, but in general, the imagery has been taken as a given in the monographs on this artist. Kenneth Clark has offered the view that all of Degas's nudes constitute a coherent group concerned with the depiction of movement.² While this is to some extent true, it reveals only one aspect of this large body of work. The nudes of his post-history painting period are very different from those of the 1880's and later. As well, for a period of more than ten years, Degas did not execute more than two or three nude subjects. This gap of a decade or so in his use of this imagery is a puzzle. It could be that when Manet posed the problem of the nude of modern life with his exhibition of Olympia in 1865, Degas, with the artistic and literary background to appreciate the wit of Manet's solution,³ realized the difficulty of painting a truly modern nude. It was during the mid to late seventies that Degas executed his monotypes of bathers and brothels and it is obvious upon close examination that when he did return to the large scale nude in oil and pastel in the eighties, that it was with the gestures, poses and motifs that he established in the monotype prints. Yet these nudes of the eighties in oil and pastel were greeted with charges of obscenity when exhibited in 1886. It will be shown that his reliance upon the monotype configurations of nudes

informed his later work and that the echoes of violated privacy and salacious connotations found in the later large scale nudes were the basis of their poor reception by the general public.

The monotypes have been treated largely as an interesting but rather unimportant adjunct to his main oeuvre,^{3A} probably because of the odd medium. Degas is now considered one of the masters of nineteenth century graphic art for his work in lithography and etching, yet his works in monotype outnumber his work in the other two media by more than three to one.⁴ It would seem that Degas himself found monotype the more satisfying of the three. As well, this subject of the nude in his work and the large gap of a decade can now be explored since the publication by Theodore Reff of the notebooks⁵ makes it possible to redate a large number of works.

With a chronology established, the monotypes become important in the study of Degas's nude imagery. When the monotype nudes of the brothels and bathers are studied in terms of chronology, size, handling and motif, the distinction between these two subjects breaks down. It may be readily demonstrated that when he first treated the nude after a hiatus of more than ten years, Degas did not produce two separate categories of nudes, but treated the scenes of women at their toilette as part of the brothel scenes.

The first chapter of this thesis will determine the differences between the nudes of his history painting period and those of the eighties and later. The nudes of the early to mid seventies will be explored and the chronology of the monotype nudes will be established with the aid of the subjects depicted in the notebooks. The chronology,

size, technique and motifs of the monotype nudes will be examined in order to establish the difficulties of treating the early bathers and brothel scenes as distinct subjects. A discussion of the social and literary topic of prostitution during the later eighties will establish the context in which Degas produced these images in Chapter III. Finally, his nudes will be compared to similar subjects by his contemporary artists in order to illuminate the charges of obscenity which greeted the nudes exhibited in 1886.

Although Eugenia Janis has explored the origin and importance of the monotypes in Degas's working method in detail in her essay preceding the catalogue of the 1968 exhibition of monotypes at the Fogg Art Museum, a brief survey of the literature on the monotypes and a general discussion on their subject matter and technique is in order.

Françoise Cachin's statement that the monotypes remained "a closed book to the public for many years"⁶ must be qualified. The catalogue of the Third Impressionist exhibition of 1877 lists three "dessins fait à l'encre grasse et imprimés" among Degas's entries, as well as six pastels which we now know to have monotype bases.⁷ The monotypes were not mentioned in any of the reviews of the show, and it is not certain that they were indeed submitted. Degas, always ready at the last minute for these events, often failed to produce the promised number of works.⁸ Two of the famous series of nudes shown in 1886, at the last Impressionist show, were also monotype-based.⁹ These prints were certainly known to other artists of Degas's circle, including Lepic, Pissarro, Gauguin and Forain who all executed works in this medium. Several of the pure monotypes, including a number of the brothel scenes, were in private

collections, such as those of Roger Marx, Alfred Beurdeley, and Jacques Doucet, before Degas's death. The exhibition of 1892 at Durand-Ruel's was composed entirely of landscape monotypes.¹⁰ Degas even allowed Vollard to reproduce one in the facsimile edition of Degas's works published in 1914.¹¹ Hence, it can be seen that while the monotypes were not exhibited as extensively as his pastels, they were known to the people whose opinion really counted with Degas, his fellow artists and men whose print collections were widely admired.

It is true, however, that it was not until the atelier sales of 1918 that the monotypes were accessible to the general public.¹² Henceforth, these prints came to be associated with the brothel scenes as these constituted the largest single group of subjects. From this time on most major Degas exhibitions included at least a few monotypes and usually many pastel-covered monotypes. This is true of the large show at the Galeries Georges Petit in 1924¹³ and the Orangerie shows of 1931 and 1937.¹⁴ Thirty-three monotypes were shown in Copenhagen in 1948.¹⁵ The largest group were shown in London after the sale of the collection of Maurice Eteens, who, with his father-in-law, Gustave Pellet, bought most of the monotypes offered at the atelier sales.¹⁶ It was not until the 1968 show at the Fogg that the monotypes constituted an entire exhibition. The accompanying essay, checklist and catalogue written by Eugenia Janis were the first major research of these prints.¹⁷

During Degas's lifetime, the monotypes were mentioned only by Beraldi in his Les Graveurs du XIXe Siècle.¹⁸ The author described the process but made no mention of the subject matter. After the atelier sales, two articles appeared which dealt with the prints. Arsène

Alexandre wrote that this part of Degas's oeuvre was where the artist showed himself to be "le plus libre, le plus entraîné, le plus endiable".¹⁹ Marcel Guerin wrote in more detail on the process of the monotypes but made little comment on the subject matter.²⁰ A wealth of confusion existed in regard to technique and subject matter in the monographs on Degas published during the early part of this century. Lafond,²¹ Meier-Graefe,²² and Fosca²³ spoke of the frightful coarseness of the women of the brothel scenes, their lamentable appearance due to their dissipated life. Rivière, calling the prints "araquelles et dessins" felt that they displayed nothing ignominous and described them instead as "rabelaisiens".²⁴ Coquit mentioned the maisons closes but not in connection with the monotypes.²⁵ Manson barely mentioned them²⁶ and Jamot ignored them completely.²⁷ The introduction to the London catalogue of 1958²⁸ dwelt on the technique of the monotypes as did Rouart's short essay preceding the plates of the monotypes in his publications of 1948.²⁹ It was not until the catalogues and accompanying essays of Janis and Cachin that any attempt was made to research the importance of these prints or the motifs therein. As their work is so fundamental to any understanding of the prints, their research will be discussed at length in Chapter III.

When Degas first starts executing monotypes about 1874, he uses them as a base for pastel. Indeed, one quarter of all of Degas's pastels have a monotypes base.³⁰ Later he uses it as an independent medium, free of pastel, as book illustrations³¹ and for his scenes of brothels, a subject exclusive to the monotype medium. Degas treats all of his subjects of the seventies and eighties, the nightlife of Paris, the

racing scenes and the ballet, in these prints which number over three hundred and twenty.

We now believe, notwithstanding the opinions of Lemoisne and Rouart,³² that Count Ludovic Lepic, painter, etcher, author and member of the Société des Aquafortistes, taught Degas the monotype technique. Deagas's first monotype, a print depicting a ballet master and dancer on stage, executed in the dark field manner, is signed by Lepic and Degas on the plate. Of these signatures, originally written backwards, the latter's is assured while Degas's is tentative and crude. It would seem that Lepic provided the expertise for Degas's first experiment with the medium.

Lepic devoted a chapter in his book, Comment je deviens graveur,³⁴ to his technique of encrage or eauforte mobile, a process in which much ink is left on the plate to achieve, in separate proofs, the effects of different times of the day and year. About 1875, Degas pulled from a plate which he had first etched in 1857, a proof using the encrage technique.³⁵ The etching of Joseph Tourney, based on Rembrandt's Young Man in a Velvet Cap, is, in the later proof, heavily inked. Janis sees in this example of Degas's use of encrage his discovery of "the means to portray the form-constructing power of light in opposition to dark; in other words, the principle of chiaroscuro of which Rembrandt was considered to be the master."³⁶

Degas's early monotypes, all of which depict ballet scenes under artificial light, are, like Castiglione's,³⁷ experiments in the compositional uses of chiaroscuro. Like the seventeenth century master's, they are all done in the dark field or subtractive method in which the

plate is inked all over and highlights are wiped away. According to Blunt "this method gave Castiglione the freedom that he wanted, and allowed him to further produce rich effects of chiaroscuro".³⁸

From the beginning, Degas covered a second, lighter proof with pastel, and used the monotypes as a means of setting out the tonal pattern of a work. We can only agree with Janis's analysis that monotype helped Degas to integrate his composition and tonal harmony at an early stage of the work.³⁹

The first monotypes, as noted above, are ballet scenes. Later, in the mid-seventies, Degas used monotype for café-concert scenes, again executed in the dark field method and often covered with pastel. The street scenes, jockeys and portrait heads of this period are small and executed in the light field method, in which the image is painted on a clean plate. With the brothel scenes of the later seventies, a new technique emerges. The lines are drawn on the plate with a small brush loaded with printer's ink diluted with essence or spirit. Other areas are brushed with undiluted ink and modeled in the subtractive method. The light field technique predominates in the illustrations for Ludovic Halévy's La Famille Cardinal executed, according to the evidence of the notebooks, around 1878.⁴⁰

The group of monotypes of nudes and women bathing belong to the late seventies and early eighties. Done for the most part in the dark field manner, the first impression is often left bare and dedicated to a friend or admirer, such as the critic Phillippe Burty.⁴¹ The last monotypes of Degas's career are the landscape prints executed in 1890 and exhibited at Durand-Ruel's in 1892. These are printed with coloured

inks and rarely retouched with pastel. From studies in chiaroscuro to light-filled colour landscapes, Degas uses monotypes increasingly as an independent medium. Initially depending on monotype as a solution to compositional problems, he later allows it, with the introduction of colour, to stand as a finished and self-contained medium.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Ronald Pickvance, "Some Aspects of Degas's Nudes", Apollo: 83(January 1966), pp. 17-23.

² Kenneth Clark, The Nude: A study in Ideal Art, (London: Penguin Books, 1956), p.211

³ For a discussion of this painting and its significance, see Theodore Reff, Manet and Olympia (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

^{3A} See Eugenia Janis, "The Role of the Monotype in the Working Method of Degas", Burlington Magazine CIX, Part I (January 1967), pp.20-27; Part II (February 1967), pp.71-81; Janis, Degas Monotypes: Essay, Catalogue and Checklist (Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum, 1968); Janis, "Degas and 'The Master of Chiaroscuro'", Art Institute of Chicago: Museum Studies 7,1(1972), pp.52-71; Janis "The Monotypes of Edgar Degas"(Unpublished Phd. Thesis, Harvard University, 1974); and Francoise Cachin and Jean Adhemar, Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes, translated by Jane Breton, foreward by John Rewald, (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

⁴ 320 unique monotype images as opposed to 107 lithographs and etchings, Jean Adhemar and Françoise Cachin, Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs and Monotypes, translated by Jane Breton (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

⁵ Theodore Reff, Catalogue of the Notebooks of Edgar Degas, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁶ Cachin, Degas, p.75.

⁷ Lionell Venturi, Les Archives de L'Impressionisme, 2 Vols. (Paris: Durand-Ruel, 1939), pp.259-60.

⁸ John Rewald, The History of Impressionism, 4th edition (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974), p.336.

⁹ Paul André Lemoisne, Degas, Un Catalogue Raisonné de son Oeuvre 4 Vols. 2: L.1086, 1154. (Paris: Paul Brame et Caesar de Hauke, 1946-49).

¹⁰ Harold Lay, "Degas at Durand-Ruel, 1892", Print Collector's Quarterly 9, #5 (November-December 1978), pp.138-42.

¹¹ Ambroise Vollard, Degas Album: Ninety-Eight Reproductions (Paris: Vollard, 1914), p.23. The monotype is J.178. (Hereafter, in the text and notes, "J" refers to the number in the checklist in Janis, Degas Monotypes. "L" refers to the number in Lemoisne's catalogue raisonné, Lemoisne, Degas.)

¹² Catalogue des eauxfortes, vernis-mous, aquatintes, lithographies, et monotypes, par Edgar Degas, et provenant de son atelier (Paris: Galerie Manzi Joyant, 1918).

¹³ Galerie George Petit, Paris, Exposition Degas, peintres, pastels, et dessins, sculpture, eauxfortes, lithographies, monotypes, 1924.

¹⁴ Musée de L'Orangerie, Paris, Degas portraitiste et sculpteur, preface de Paul Jamot, catalogue par Jacqueline Bouchet-Saupique et Marie Delaroche-Vernet, 1931; Musée de L'Orangerie, Paris, Degas, preface de Paul Jamot, 1937.

¹⁵ Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Edgar Degas, 1834-1917, skulpturer og monotypier og tegniger og malerier, 4-26 September, 1948.

¹⁶ Lefevre Gallery, London, Degas, Monotypes, Drawings, Pastels and Bronzes, foreward by Douglas Cooper, April - May, 1958, (p.3).

¹⁷ Janis, Degas Monotypes.

¹⁸ Henri Beraldi, Les Graveurs du XIX^e Siècle, 8 Vols. (Paris: Conquet, 1885-92), 2: 153-54.

¹⁹ Arsène Alexandre, "Degas, graveur et lithographe", Les Arts #171 (1919), p.19.

²⁰ Marcel Guérin, "Notes sur les monotypes de Degas", L'Amour de L'Art V (March 1924), pp.75-80.

²¹ Paul Lafond, Degas (Paris: Floury, 1918), 2: 63-71.

²² Julius Meier-Graefe, Degas, translated by J. Holroyd-Reece (London: Ernst Benn, 1923), p.71.

²³ François Fosca, Degas (Paris: Société des Trentes, 1921), pp.56-57.

²⁴ Georges Rivèrièrè, M. Degas: Bourgeois de Paris (Paris: Floury, 1935), p.163.

- 25 Gustave Coquoit, Degas (Paris: Librairie Ollendorf, 1924), p.86.
- 26 J.B. Manson, The Life and Work of Edgar Degas (London: The Studio, Ltd., 1939), p.36.
- 27 Paul Jamot, Degas (Paris: Editors Gazette des Beaux Arts, 1924), p.45.
- 28 Lefevre Gallery, Degas Monotypes, (p.3).
- 29 Dennis Rouart, Degas Monotypes (Paris: Floury, 1948), p.5.
- 30 Janis, Degas, p.xix.
- 31 Illustrations for Ludovic Halévy's La Famille Cardinal (Paris, 1880). The illustrations were rejected by the author.
- 32 Lemoisne and Rouart believed that Degas first thought of the process while watching his printer pull proofs of his etchings. Paul André Lemoisne, Degas, 4 Vols. (Paris: Braume et de Hauke, 1945-49), I:46; Rouart, Degas à la Recherche de sa Technique, (Paris: Floury, 1945), p.62.
- 33 Janis, Degas Monotypes, checklist #1
- 34 Ludovic Halévy, Comment Je deviens Graveur (Paris: Cadard, 1876).
- 35 The discussion of this paragraph is indebted to Janis's article "Degas and 'The Master of Chiaroscuro'", Art Institute of Chicago: Museum Studies 7 (1972), pp.52-71.
- 36 Ibid, p.53.
- 37 Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione: Master Draughtsman of the Italian Baroque, foreward by Anthony Blunt, introduction and catalogue by Ann Perry (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1971), p.150.
- 38 Anthony Blunt, The Drawings of G.B. Castiglione and Stefano Della Bella... (London: Phaidon Press, 1954), p.8.

³⁹Janis, "The Role of Monotype in the Working Method of Degas - I", Burlington Magazine CIX (January 1967), p.27. See also Janis, Degas Monotypes, p.xxviii.

⁴⁰Reff, Notebooks, I: 126.

⁴¹J. 137. See also J. 119, 121, and 141.

Chapter I

With the exception of about thirty landscapes, Degas's subject matter throughout his long career is the human figure.¹ At either end of his working years his copying and collecting activities underline this over-riding concern. His copies are almost always of one figure, a group of figures, or an arresting pose or gesture. His art collection becomes a near obsession towards the turn of the century when his eyesight deteriorates to the point where any activity beside the tactile work of sculpture is an exercise in frustration. The collection consists of three still-lives, some landscapes, a few drawings of horses, and hundreds upon hundreds of paintings and drawings of figural motifs. Indeed, Degas often buys drawings related to paintings which he had copied as a student.

Kenneth Clark, in his discussion of the nude in art, places Degas's figures in the context of the nude of energy which communicates the idea of movement.² Upon closer inspection, however, of all of Degas's nudes, it is evident that the majority of the later bathers could just as convincingly be discussed under Clark's category of Venus Callipygus.³ Further, the nudes of Degas's early career, that is the nudes of his history paintings, are of two types, sometimes expressing energy and at other times, often in the same painting as in The Daughter of Jephthah,⁴ pathos. These two types are evident even in his early copies after Botticelli and Michelangelo. His last two history paintings, The Young Spartans Exercising⁵ and The Misfortunes of the City of Orléans,⁶ are almost exclusively concerned with the depiction of active poses descriptive of motion.

Another misconception regarding this early phase of Degas's art is that he is, from the beginning, a devotee of Ingres's style of drawing.⁷ Although Degas does make some copies of this master's works at the exhibition of 1855,

it is not until about 1860 or later that Degas's style resembles that of Ingres.⁸ This growing similarity is especially evident in his various studies for the second version of The Young Spartans Exercising. In these drawings, the outline takes precedence over interior modelling. Degas begins to give outline the dominant role in his drawing only with the studies for the second Spartans series. Here, he even uses the finely pointed pencil on smooth paper which Ingres used to achieve a strongly accented line to define form.

Always a conservative, Degas's interest in figural art and especially in the nude may be partly explained by his training. He studied for a year in the studio of Louis Lamothe, himself a student of Ingres's disciple Flandrin. The following year, 1855, Degas studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts¹⁰ and his course undoubtedly followed the usual method of copying various models in a set pattern; engravings of the masters, plaster casts and finally, the nude model. He was a devoted copyist and was registered in the Cabinet des Estampes from 1855 to 1868.¹¹ At this time, the nude was considered to be the perfect pedagogical device as its forms yielded the greatest variety of shapes for the mastery of the physical world. It was also considered to be ideal for the study of anatomy and its associations with antiquity and Greek art in particular pointed to its position as the ideal form.¹²

Among Degas's first drawings is a pencil copy of an engraving by the sixteenth century Florentine, Marcantonio Raimondi (Figure 1).¹³ The copy depicts a nude man climbing onto a river bank from Michelangelo's lost Battle of Casina. Beside it on the paper is a fainter copy of a helmeted male nude bending a bow from Raimondi's Man with a Banner. The drawing of the first figure carefully copies the exaggerated musculature of the engraving. The passages of modelling are closely hatched and the drawing retains the

sharp outline of the print, especially that of the figure's right leg. The other figure is as carefully modeled as the first but its outline is stressed even more.

These poses of strenuous activity are not as typical as some writers have supposed during Degas's early work. His other copies, again fragments or figures from other works, are usually of more static poses. This latter group includes copies after Michelangelo's The Slave in the Louvre,¹⁴ the crucified thief from Mantegna's Crucifixion,¹⁵ of the same collection and the central figure of Botticelli's Birth of Venus.¹⁶ The first two figures, while displaying an obvious anatomical interest for copyists, are as well striking in their emotionally evocative gestures.

In the Villa Medici in Florence where he studies informally for a time, Degas frequently draws the nude model in conventional studio poses. Even when the model assumes a fairly active pose, the artist concentrates more on the pattern of interior modelling and less on the movement of the figure. The finest example from this period is a pencil study (Figure 2) depicting a male model who rests on his right hand, reaches up with the left, and tilts his head upwards.¹⁷ In this study, Degas follows the curving line of the pattern of modelling from the upraised arm, across the neck, down the left side of the torso and left leg to the calf of the right leg.

The more static poses in Degas's copying begin, towards the end of 1858, to give way to more vigorous and expressive models drawn from Hellenistic figures rather than the calmer Parthenon reliefs and the later Raphael and Michelangelo rather than the Italian primitives.¹⁸ Degas makes small oil copies of the entire compositions of works by Poussin and Delacroix and the latter's Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople greatly influences one of

Degas's first major history paintings, The Daughter of Jephthah (Figure 3).¹⁹

Beginning in 1859, Degas works on this painting for about two years.²⁰ The story is from the Book of Judges and depicts the moment when Jephthah, having promised to sacrifice the first person to greet him in return for victory in battle, realizes that he must sacrifice his own daughter who has come to meet him outside the city walls after his victory. In contrast to earlier depictions of the subject, Jephthah sits on his horse, head bowed and eyes closed in an attitude of dread and resignation. Degas highlights this moment of pathos by placing the daughter with her outstretched arms pointed at Jephthah's head in the foreground. The emphasis on resignation is the same in Vigny's poem on the subject and, as Vigny was reportedly one of Degas's favourite authors, it is highly likely that Degas's interpretation arises from this poem. Degas's interest in attitudes of action and pathos is evident throughout the project.

The painting proceeds from a series of compositional sketches and studies of individual figures. The compositional sketches in the notebooks (Figure 4)²¹ emphasize the dramatic swirling line of movement formed by the figures. In the final painting the movement flows from the upper left corner with the column of troops with horns and banners, to the central group of Jephthah and two soldiers in the foreground, to a group of men in the right foreground and finally to the women in the center right background.

Following traditional procedures, Degas's individual figure studies are nudes while those of the final painting are draped. Degas's concern for expressing both pathos and movement is especially evident in a group of four of these studies. The first drawing (Figure 5)²² depicts two possibilities for the figure of the daughter. The motif on the left of the sheet is

finally chosen and shows the woman swooning as she is caught under the bosom by an attendant. The study shows her crumbling legs, arms reaching to the right and her head falling forward and to the left. A study for the figure of Jephthah²³ stresses even more so than in the painting, the attitude of pathos. He sits, eyes closed, head bowed behind his upraised arm with his sword still raised in the other hand as if to underline the price of his victory.

From these studies it would seem that Degas wishes to juxtapose physically active figures with those smitten by the emotion of the event. In his final version, however, he relies more on the position of the figures in relation to each other and on the swirling banners to create the impression of activity and motion.

This emphasis on the ability of the stance of figures to convey emotion is clearly seen in a project chronicled in the notebooks but never completed. Degas sketches the scene from the Iliad which depicts Hecuba and Andromache running to the wall to view the death of Hector below. The first rapid pen sketch (Figure 6)²⁴ shows Hecuba at the wall tearing her hair while being restrained by an attendant. Both are nude studies in which the springing motion of Hecuba's body is especially striking. A second sketch (Figure 7)²⁵ in Notebook 13 depicts the entire scene with Hecuba at the wall and Andromache racing up a stairwell to join her mother-in-law. In another sketch (Figure 8)²⁶ the figures are again nude but here Andromache, supported by an attendant, is in a far more static pose. The final sketch (Figure 9)²⁷ depicts a draped Andromache with arms raised above her head in an attitude of lamentation. It seems as if Degas can not decide which action on which to concentrate, the frantic Hecuba or the more restrained and pathetic Andromache. At any rate, he carried the project no further.

In his Young Spartans Exercising (Figure 10) Degas concentrates on figures in motion. Devin Burnell has seen three separate projects connected with this painting dating from 1859 to 1864.²⁸ The first project results in the unfinished Detroit canvas, the second in an oil sketch now in the Fogg Art Museum collection, and the third in the canvas now in London. The sketches and studies which constitute the three phases allow us to trace Degas's changing ideas on the role of his nude figures in this large tableaux.

The subject, drawn from Plutarch, is the perfect motif for the display of active young bodies. Delacroix's treatment of the subject²⁹ for a pendant of the library of the Palais Bourbon is quite different from Degas's. The former artist depicts two pairs of wrestling girls and one girl in the foreground tying her sandals. He conceives of the figures as nubile young things, carefully modelling their adolescent breasts, hips and stomachs. Degas's nudes are androgenous in comparison.

An early sketch³⁰ in a notebook (Figure 11) emphasizes a line motion from left to right through the frieze of running figures. A slightly later sketch (Figure 12)³¹ shows that Degas, at this early stage of the project, wishes the faces of the girls to convey much of the challenge which they issue to the boys. In cahiers from this period Degas makes notes to himself on various seventeenth and eighteenth century theories on the science of human facial expression.³² The foremost figure who issues the challenge has expressive, angry eyes. But this early sketch is exceptional as later drawings for this same phase show the girls' profiles to be interchangeable and expressionless. As Burnell notes, the emphasis changes from the face to the figure and "dramatic action is registered in the classical manner, not in these generalized faces, but in the more specifically descriptive positions of the body."³³

The second phase, dating from 1861-62, is documented by nine drawings and an oil sketch in the Fogg Museum (Figure 13).³⁴ In this phase the figures are carefully studied and slight changes occur in which the figures assume more physically strenuous poses. Degas changes the figure of the crouching boy (Figure 14)³⁵ on the left so that his arms are further apart and his head displays the alert challenge evident in the final painting. The boy standing to the left with his arms above his head and his legs apart is studied with more attention to his straining muscles.³⁶

At this point Degas is concerned with the landscape setting of the figures. In the Fogg oil sketch (Figure 13)³⁷ he places more space between his figures in each group and reduces the size of the figures overall in relation to the whole composition. He retains the Phygian caps on the girls' heads but eliminates the temple in the background.

For the final version there are three oil sketches, one in Oslo of the four male figures (Figure 15),³⁸ one of the crouching boy (Figure 16)³⁹ and one of the two girls to the center right.⁴⁰ Three drawings⁴¹ related to these sketches rely even more on a firm outline than the drawings of the earlier Fogg version. The changes in this group of studies from the second version to the final version of the London canvas are slight. These changes tend to emphasize the physical activity more than the poses of the second phase.

The puzzling painting of The Misfortunes of the City of Orléans (Figure 17)⁴² is Degas's last attempt at history painting. This title appears at the time of the atelier sales but when he first exhibited the painting at the Salon of 1865 it was titled Scènes de Guerre de Moyen Age. Many scholars have tried to decipher its meaning without success.⁴³ The only known source is a painting by Joseph Lies (1821-65) titled Les Maux de la Guerre exhibited at the Salon of 1859.⁴⁴ It depicts horsemen leading a group of sprightly.

chained figures. None of the figures are nudes and Lies seems far more concerned with the rich medieval costumes than with the plight of the war victims.

Degas's original compositional sketch (Figure 18)⁴⁵ shows two horsemen to the right of the sheet, a pleading woman in the centre foreground, a corpse on the left and a group of four women huddled under a blasted tree in the left middleground. One of this group stands in the position of the Venus Pudica, another sits comfortably with a hand under her chin in a position more evocative of contemplation than of suffering.

The final version is quite different. Here there are three nude corpses, three nude women and three horsemen, one of which flings a final arrow at the departing group of females. The changes in the three women are most significant. One flees, hunched over her garments; another is tied by one wrist to a tree and a third bends down, hands on knees, as if to avoid the last arrow.

The Cabinet des Estampes has about twenty pencil and black chalk studies for the figures of this painting, but unfortunately few have been reproduced. The most striking is the study⁴⁶ for the figure of the bound woman. The model is rather short and round and Degas elongates her body in the final painting. He redraws the bound arm and the back leg in order to emphasize the curve of her body. The same model appears in the two studies (Figure 19 and 20)⁴⁷ for the mounted archer, the first of the two is nude and the second draped. The figure in both of the studies and the painting is poised and just about to release the arrow. He is however, exceptional in the work in that he is active. Degas poses the women, especially the bound woman, in positions that are more evocative of suffering than of physical activity. Degas here returns to the nude of pathos reminiscent of The

Daughter of Jephthah and the Hecuba and Andromache project. The Misfortunes stands as a fitting end to Degas's early nudes for here, in the words of Ronald Pickvance, are "a whole variety of poses pendentically laid out for us."⁴⁸ The Spartans and The Misfortunes with their lack of specific thematic content seem to be pieces executed solely for their virtuoso display of nude figure painting.

After 1865, Degas ceases to paint historical subjects and turns to portraiture to explore human expression in a modern setting. By this date he is in close contact with Duranty and Manet and their ideas on the depiction of modern life. Given his obsession with the nude throughout his career, the absence of the nude in his work is puzzling. This absence may be partially explained by his preoccupations of the years of the late eighties, sixties and seventies, his "worldly phase" as Reff calls it. With the portraits, racing scenes, the ballet pictures, the pastels and oils of the café-concert and the bars and laundries, Degas explores, perhaps in response to the prevailing theories of naturalism expounded by Duranty and Manet, his own dear city of Paris.

About 1885 however, he returns to his earlier concern for the formal aspects of painting and drawing and settles on two subjects, the dancer and the bathing woman, as his format. With the exception of the thirty or so colour landscape monotypes, these two themes dominate his oeuvre.

The transition to these two subjects as dominant in his work is by no means sudden. Degas's pastels and charcoal drawings of the late eighties and nineties are the result of a long process in which Degas becomes increasingly concerned both with the role of colour in the depiction of volume, the ability of drawing to depict relief and with the depiction of motion.⁴⁹

This interest in the movement of the human figure occupies Degas increasingly from about 1880 onwards, not throughout his whole career as Clark maintains. Degas seems to be particularly interested in Muybridge's researches in this area. He even notes the issue of La Nature of 1878 where the photographs first appear in France.⁵⁰ However, the greatest exposure of Muybridge's work occurs during his visit to Paris in 1881 and again in 1882.⁵¹ As usual, Degas requires time to absorb new information and his sculptures of horses show a development from less to more movemented poses from 1884 onwards.⁵²

The studies of ballet dancers display this same development to a greater emphasis on movement but the changes occur earlier than in the sculptures of the horses. About 1870, Degas's focus shifts from the pit of the orchestra, as in Le Ballet de Robert Le Diable,⁵³ of 1868, to the spectacle on stage, as in Répétition d'un Ballet sur la scène of 1874.⁵⁴ In his work in portraiture as well as in the ballet scenes, the picture space becomes shallower and the point of view closer to the figures. In the ballet scenes, he reduces the number of figures in a composition until by about 1878, a pair of figures or a single figure is the norm.⁵⁵ These studies of a single figure are in essence studies of movement. From about 1885, Degas narrows his focus even more to concentrate on individual gestures such as dancer adjusting her shoulder strap or earring.

Given his interest in movement, it is surprising that he does not use nude models to pose for the dancers until after 1882 as the nude is better suited to the definition of positions of the dance which Degas is so careful to reproduce accurately. Indeed, the nude studies of dancers are found only in the notebooks⁵⁶ and not on separate sheets until much later.⁵⁷

In both the dancers and the bathers, Degas gradually increases the

size of the figure in relation to the size of the canvas or paper and places the figure closer to the picture plane.⁵⁸ One excellent example of this is the famous Une Femme au Tub (Figure 21)⁵⁹ which depicts a woman seated in a shallow tub washing her lower back. She is seen from behind and above so that her gesture is effectively silhouetted. The more familiar Le Tub (Figure 22)⁶⁰ of the Louvre collection shows a woman in a pose of the Crouching Venus. She squats, balanced on one hand and washes the back of her neck. In La Toilette (Figure 23),⁶¹ a plump woman sits on a divan, hands on hips and her head back as a maid attends to her hair. These poses, while not overtly strenuous, with the exception of that of Le Tub, are attitudes taken from a series of movements. Degas has extracted the telling and characteristic pose from a particular activity.

As with the dancers, Degas concentrates more and more on the movement of the figure in his pastels of bathers, bringing them closer to the picture plane and decreasing the space between the figure and the edge of the paper. A motif he draws often around 1900 is the bather beside the tub drying her ankles. In one variation of this motif in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (Figure 24),⁶² the smudged shadows of the modelling carries the eye from the shoulder of the figure to the buttock and down the left leg. In other variations the model bends further forward but the movement remains essentially the same.

As his eyesight deteriorates, Degas turns to sculpture. His last two-dimensional works are charcoal drawings of sections of the bodies of his models, the poses ones which he had been using since the mid-eighties. These were never intended for exhibition and caused a scandal at the atelier sales. They aptly display Degas's near obsession with movement.

But movement is not the only area of experimentation for Degas in the bathers. They are as well researches into the role of relief in two-dimensional art. Degas constantly reduces the pictorial space to the minimum required to accommodate his figures.⁶³ In the seventies he uses diagonal arrangements and sharp upward or downward views which function to both create space and to flatten it. Later he uses lighter and more intense colours and a more broken fracture in the pastel hatchings to draw his figures closer to the plane. His use of pastel during the eighties is especially important in this regard. The unblended strokes of the chalks at once define three-dimensional volume and to hold that volume to the surface. He manages, by the early nineties, to compress space to almost total flatness while maintaining the palpability of the figure.

As we have seen, Degas's early nudes of the history painting period alternate between figures evocative of pathos and those that display energy and movement. His nudes of the eighties and later are concerned as much with the use of colour in depicting volume, and the ability of drawing to depict relief as with the depiction of movement. Clark's view that the nudes of his oeuvre are a coherent whole cannot be maintained upon examination of the works themselves. As well, his view ignores the gap of a decade or more in Degas's use of the nude in his work. With the publication of the notebooks by Reff, one can trace the development of his use of the nude after the history paintings and establish a chronology for the monotype nudes and those in oil and pastel, such as they are, of the seventies. In the next chapter, this chronology will be established and the paucity of a division of the monotype bathers and brothel scenes will be shown. Degas's nudes of the eighties and later are infused with the ambiance of the brothel as he experimented with a few settings for nudity in the mid-seventies and

abandoned them. It was only the bather in an interior which arose from his brothel series which satisfied his service to the prevailing theories of naturalism.

¹ Anne M. Wagner, "Degas' Collection of Art: An Introduction Essay and Catalogue, (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1974), p. 3. This paragraph is indebted to the research and opinions of Wagner's thesis.

² Clark, The Nude, p. 211.

³ Ibid, p. 186.

⁴ Lemoisne, Degas et Son Oeuvre, II, #94, oil on canvas, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass.

⁵ L. 70, oil on canvas; The Tate Gallery London.

⁶ L. 124, essence on paper applied to canvas; The Louvre, Paris.

⁷ Reff, The Notebooks, I: 13. The opinion is expressed by Jacob Rosenberg in Great Draughtsmen From Pisanello to Picasso, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 104.

⁸ Reff, The Notebooks, I: 13.

⁹ Devin Burnell, "Degas and His 'Young Spartans Exercising,'" Art Institute of Chicago: Museum Studies 4 (1969), p. 62 and Reff, The Notebooks, I: 15.

¹⁰ Jean Sutherland Boggs, Degas Drawings, (Saint Louis: City Art Museum, 1966), p. 20.

¹¹ Theodore Reff, "Copyists in the Louvre," The Art Bulletin 20 (December 1964), p. 555.

¹² Albert Boime, Strictly Academic: Life Drawing in the Nineteenth Century (Binghamton, New York: University Art Museum, SUNY Binghamton, 1974), p. 5.

¹³ Pencil on paper, The Detroit Institute of Art; reproduced in Boggs, Degas Drawings, #14.

¹⁴ Pencil on pink paper, Private Collection; Ibid, #15.

¹⁵ Pencil on white paper, Private Collection; Ibid, #17.

¹⁶ Pencil on white paper, Private Collection; Ibid, #16.

¹⁷ Boime, Life Drawing, #8. Pencil on white paper, dated 1858, David Daniels Collection, New York.

¹⁸Reff, "Degas's Copies of Older Art," Burlington Magazine CV (January 1963), p. 245.

¹⁹Reff, Degas: The Artist's Mind (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 58-59.

²⁰*Ibid.* Information in this paragraph is from this source.

²¹Reff, The Notebooks, N.B. 14A, p. 27; N.B. 15, p. 17, 42; I: 19.

²²Pencil on paper, Wildenstein and Co., New York; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #29.

²³Pencil on paper, present whereabouts unknown; Reff, Degas, p. 153, figure 110.

²⁴Reff, The Notebooks, N.B. 12, p. 95.

²⁵*Ibid.*, N.B. 13, p. 7.

²⁶*Ibid.*, N.B. 13, p. 9.

²⁷*Ibid.*, N.B. 13, p. 111.

²⁸Burnell, "Degas and His 'Young Spartans Exercising,'" p. 50.

²⁹Sara Lichtenstein, "Cézanne: A Sheet of Copies after Delacroix," Master Drawings V #2 (1967), p. 185, plate 106.

³⁰Burnell, "Degas," p. 53, figure 4.

³¹*Ibid.*, figure 5.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 54. See also Reff, Degas, pp. 214-220.

³³Burnell, "Degas," p. 54.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5, figure 3.

³⁵Pencil on paper, The Toledo Museum of Art; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #35; Burnell, "Degas," figure 8.

³⁶Pencil on white paper, Detroit Institute of Art; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #34.

- ³⁷Burnell, "Degas," p. 60.
- ³⁸L. 73.
- ³⁹Oil on canvas, The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #36.
- ⁴⁰Present whereabouts unknown; 3rd Degas atelier sale, #31.
- ⁴¹Burnell, "Degas," figure 17. The other two are discussed on p. 62.
- ⁴²L. 124, Scène de Guerre Au Moyen-Age, essence on paper laid down on canvas; Louvre .
- ⁴³They are listed in Pierre Cabanne, "Degas et 'Les Malheurs de La Ville d'Orléans,'" Gazette des Beaux-Arts LIX (May 1962), pp. 363-4.
- ⁴⁴Phoebe Pool, "The History Paintings of Degas," Apollo 80 (Oct. 1964), p. 311.
- ⁴⁵Cabanne, "Degas," p. 365, figure 2.
- ⁴⁶Pencil and black chalk, Cabinet des Estampes, The Louvre; M. Serullaz, Great Drawings of the Louvre Museum: The French Drawings (New York: Georges Braziller, 1968), #91.
- ⁴⁷Pencil on grey paper, Cabinet des Estampes, The Louvre; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #40. Pencil, sanguine and white crayon on grey paper, Cabinet des Estampes, The Louvre; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #41.
- ⁴⁸Pickvance, "Degas's Nudes," p. 17.
- ⁴⁹Charles Millard, The Sculptures of Edgar Degas (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 42.
- ⁵⁰Ibid, p. 21.
- ⁵¹Ibid.
- ⁵²Ibid, p. 23.
- ⁵³L. 294, Le Ballet de Robert Le Diable, oil on canvas; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- ⁵⁴L. 400, Repetition D'un Ballet Surla Scène, essence on paper laid down on canvas; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

- ⁵⁵Phoebe Pool, Degas (London: Spring Books, 1963), p. 20.
- ⁵⁶Reff, The Notebooks, N.B. 36, pp. 2-3, dated 1882-85.
- ⁵⁷The first is Three Nude Dancers, charcoal on tracing paper, collection unknown; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #88, dated to 1895-1980.
- ⁵⁸Ronald Pickvance, Degas: 1879, p. 5; Pool, Degas, p. 20; Millard, Degas Sculptures, p. 43.
- ⁵⁹Pastel on paper, L. 940; Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland.
- ⁶⁰Pastel on paper, P. 1286; The Louvre.
- ⁶¹Pastel on paper, L. 1295; The Hayemeyer Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- ⁶²After the Bath, C. 1900, charcoal on tracing paper mounted on cardboard; Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; Boggs, Degas Drawings, #140.
- ⁶³Millard, Degas Sculptures, p. 42.

Chapter II

According to Reff's reading of the notebooks, Degas does not begin to explore the nude bather in an interior setting until 1879 at the earliest and only in the notebooks at that. Reff bases his opinion on the fact that the first studies of bathers appear only in Notebook 32 which Degas uses between the years 1879 and 1883. Neither are there any known studies on single sheets of the subject which can be dated before this period.¹ Lemoisne's dating has long been called into question.² Working as he was from photographs, his cataloguing of the works in pastel and oil was an enormously ambitious undertaking given the sheer volume of Degas's oeuvre. It is not then surprising that Reff's research has lead to the revision of the dates of many works of the years 1856 to 1885, the years when Degas used these cahiers. Lemoisne dated the first pure pastel interior bather to c. 1879. This should now be changed, according to Reff, to 1881-83.³

Degas did execute a few nudes during the mid-seventies but these are atypical due to the fact that the settings are not those of a bather in an interior. The first of these is an oil on canvas of a beautiful young woman.⁴ She turns her head to one side letting her hair fall over one shoulder. Lemoisne has dated this work to 1874 on stylistic grounds. This frontally posed portrait bust is unique in Degas's oeuvre and may have been inspired by an exceptionally lovely model as all his other works with the exception of one discussed below ignore the facial features of the sitter. Another oil of an intimate scene (Figure 25)⁵ is dated by Lemoisne to 1877, yet because the coiffure is one seen in the pictures of dancers of a few years earlier⁶ and the brushwork and subject are closer to Le Pedicure securely dated to 1873, a date of 1874-75 is more satisfactory. It depicts a seated woman in chemise and corset fixing her hair before a mirror. The

point of view is from above and to one side so that the curve of her waist and her face are clearly defined.

In 1874, Degas exhibits a drawing which he titles "Après le Bain. Etude. Dessin." in the catalogue of the first Impressionist exhibition.⁷ No scholar has found a work which corresponds to this title and which is stylistically early enough for this date. It could have been either an indoor or an outdoor scene as his next two exhibited nudes are set in a landscape. At the second Impressionist show Degas exhibits two bather scenes. The first (Figure 26) is titled Petites Paysannes se lavant a la mer, le soir.⁸

It depicts four young women, three of whom stand knee-deep in the water while a fourth sits behind them on the shore combing her hair. The three bathers form a frieze-like arrangement parallel to the picture plane. Lemoisne believed his Femmes se Peignant of his catalogue raisonné to be the picture corresponding to the title in the 1876 catalogue.⁹ The latter depicts three women in chemises on a river bank fixing their hair. In the absence of a more likely candidate, this canvas best fits the description of the original catalogue entry.¹⁰

In the catalogue of the exhibition of 1877, Degas submits two interior bathing scenes which are monotype-based pastels. The first, Une Femme Sortant du Bain (Figure 27),¹¹ shows a plump woman stepping out of a tub while her maid holds a towel in readiness. The interior includes a large tub, an armchair and a screen which partially obscures the tub. The textures of the carpet and wallpaper are rich and an atmosphere of warm soft ease pervades as the chair and screen serve to enclose the figural group. The second work (Figure 28)¹² depicts a woman seated on a pouffe, clad only in stockings and slippers. Beside her are a shallow tub, an armchair and a dressing table with a mirror above. In the background a screen and a

curtained window can be seen. The woman is seated with her back to the viewer and appears to be drying herself. She occupies only a small part of the picture at the lower left-hand side.

These two nudes of 1877, are very different in conception from those of the series exhibited in 1886. They are small in scale, the figures are only one element in the composition and they wear bits of clothing, a bracelet in the first and stockings and slippers in the second. The later bathers are completely nude, tend to fill the space, and the rooms which they occupy are only summarily indicated.

Another setting for nudity occurs in a notebook of about 1877.¹³ Here two nude women are attended by a maid in a Turkish bath. Degas's drawing is a mere sketch in a notebook that he keeps at his friend's, Ludovic Halévy's, as an afterdinner entertainment for the other guests and Degas never repeats the subject.

One other dated work has come to light. Degas draws a sketch for Après Le Bain (Figure 29)¹⁴ in a notebook that he uses between 1879 and 1882. On this evidence Reff dates the work to this period although Lemoisne had placed it to 1882-85. In all, the interior is well-defined, the nude figure is not cropped by the edge of the paper, and in size the figure occupies more space than in the pastel covered monotypes of 1877 and less than do those of the 1886 series.

Degas's first nudes of the seventies then are few and far between. He finds the outdoor setting unsatisfactory and abandons it after two canvases. Finally settling on a woman performing her toilette in a bedroom as the best motif, he executes more and more of these scenes. The interest in the depiction of movement, Clark's opinion notwithstanding, is evident only in the

works executed after 1882.¹⁵ In the earliest bathers, Degas concentrates far more on the pictorial aspects of the rooms and far less on the figures themselves. It is precisely during this period of 1877 to 1879 that Degas executes his monotypes of prostitutes. When examined closely, it is evident that the brothel and the bather scenes are similar in conception and handling, giving rise to the notion that the women performing their toilette were originally part of the maisons closes series.^{15A}

Both Janis and Cachin in their catalogues of the monotypes have used two categories to divide the images of nude women; the bathers or women performing their toilette, and the scenes of the maisons closes or prostitutes. Yet the earliest of the bathers and the brothel scenes are so similar in handling, size and motifs that the division seems somewhat arbitrary. They are both executed during the same eighteen month to two year period of 1876-78. This common chronological origin must be established carefully before the similarities may be discussed at length.

Lemoisne's date of 1879 for the brothel scenes relies on the three prints which he includes in his catalogue but which are not in the least typical of the group as whole. Deux Filles Assises de Face (J.77, L.550) and Trois Filles Assises de Face (J.62, L.549) depict the prostitutes from a close point of view. These are the only images among the brothel scenes which display an interest in the physiognomy of a woman and Degas indicates a similar interest in the physiognomy of a type only in a work titled Physionomie de Criminale which is securely dated to 1879.¹⁶ Lemoisne also includes La Fête de la Patronne (J.89, L.548) which is unique among these scenes because it depicts a specific incident. It is much larger in size and is far more complex in its composition. Hence the established date of

the brothel scenes rests on the evidence of three prints which are atypical of the group as a whole.

Cooper in his 1958 catalogue and Janis in her checklist of the monotypes published in 1968 reiterate this dating of 1879. Janis expands this date to include the year 1880 in her introduction but does not explain why she has dated some of the prints to 1878 and others to 1877 in the individual checklist entries. She suggests that the first evidence of interest in brothel imagery on Degas's part is the group of sketches illustrating Edmond de Goncourt's La Fille Eliza in a notebook which she dates to 1876-77.

This notebook is one of two which Degas keeps at the house of his friend, the librettist Ludovic Halévy.¹⁸ The artist drew rough sketches in them for the amusement of the other guests after dinner. La Fille Eliza, which will be discussed at length in the next chapter, is the story of the fall and degradation of a working class woman, in which her short career as an inmate of a brothel near the Ecole Militaire is only one incident. Degas chooses only these scenes from the book to illustrate and depicts the soldiers and chemise-clad prostitutes amiably chatting and playing cards in the salon. Given this date of publication, Reff dates the two notebooks to 1877.

In her catalogue of the monotypes, Françoise Cachin dates the brothel scenes to 1876-85.¹⁹ She notes the evidence of the Halévy notebook and the contemporaneous appearance of naturalist novels on the subject of prostitution, particularly Huysmans' Marthe, Histoire d'une Fille (1876), De Goncourt's La Fille Eliza (1877) and Zola's Nana (1879). Cachin concludes that "there is nothing to indicate that Degas executed all the monotypes in the course of the same year; in the end it is impossible to date them more precisely than between 1876 and 1885."²⁰ Her opinion has been

challenged by others than the present writer.

In an article published in 1970,²¹ Reff dated the brothel scenes to 1879-80 but, in his publication of the notebooks in 1976, he revises this to c.1877.²² Other reasons for antedating the brothel monotypes besides the evidence of the notebooks, is their size and technique which are the same as the two pastel-covered monotypes which were exhibited in 1877.²³ It is here held that Degas executed the brothel prints over a period of one or two years for the majority of these prints are cohesive in terms of both style and size. Degas's treatment of pictorial space and the size of the figure in relation to that space remain the surest method of establishing the chronology of the prints. Millard,²⁴ Pool,²⁵ and Pickvance²⁶ all trace a development in Degas's work in which figures become larger in relation to the picture space. In his catalogue on Degas's work in 1879, Pickvance also sees a tendency for Degas at this period to use diagonal lines to create space in his compositions,²⁷ a feature which is not evident in the brothel scenes or in the two bather prints of 1877. In these prints, Une Femme Sortant du Bain (J.175) (Figure 27) and La Toilette (Une Femme Nue Accroupie de Dos (J.191) (Figure 28), the figure occupies only a small part of the composition and does not dominate the space. The monotypes depict almost the whole of the room, and the recession to the far wall is clearly punctuated by various pieces of furniture.

The brothel scenes have compositions in which the figures are small in relation to the picture space and are placed well back from the picture plane. The interiors are detailed and well defined, and include chandeliers, armchairs, heavy carpets, tables, beds and mirrors in the bedrooms and chandeliers, mirrors, carpets, and plush settees in the salon. Degas works

with essentially the same compositional arrangements and degree of detail in the two pastel bather prints and in the brothel monotypes. Both are done on small plates of six by eight inches, and in a method which combines the light and dark field techniques. Hence a date of 1877 for the majority of the brothel scenes is here held to be more logical than the later date used by Lemoisne and followed by Janis and Cooper.

Degas executes seven other pure monotypes and pastel cognates of bather scenes that are very similar to those exhibited in 1877 (J.175, J.191). All depict the whole figure as opposed to part of it, all place the figure a fair distance from the forward plane in well-defined and detailed interiors, all use a combination of the light and dark field methods, and a small sized plate, and so are here dated to c.1877.

However, these now require to be discussed in some detail. Thus Une Femme Sortant de Bain (J.175, 6 1/2 x 8 1/2 ins.) of 1877 depicts a maid holding a towel as a woman steps out of a tub. Degas uses the same two figures, in the same size and position in J.174 (6 3/4 x 10 ins.) (Figure 30.) in the print of the same title. There, however, the figures are seen from behind instead of from the front. The interior includes a tub, two arm-chairs, a wardrobe with a mirror, a window to the right and patterned wallpaper. The pure monotype La Sortie de Bain (J.176, 6 1/2 x 4 3/4 ins.) (Figure 31) depicts the same two figures, a tiny bit larger and in the same position as in J.175, only reversed to face the left side of the composition. A tub, mirror and a low table with a basin and ewer set, and wainscoting and wallpaper constitute the details of the room.

Le Bain (J.172, 8 1/2 x 6 1/4 ins.) (Figure 32), another pure monotype depicts a woman seen from behind, standing in a tub. The interior includes

the tub, an armchair with a gown thrown over it, a mirror, and striped wall-paper. Une Femme Nue à la Porte de sa Chambre (J.180, 9 1/4 x 5 1/2 ins.) (Figure 33) is a pure monotype which Degas transferred to a lithographic stone which accounts for the slightly grainy texture of the ink which remains on the sheet.²⁸ The figure here is very small and stands at the back of the room. The interior includes a bed, a rug, an armchair and a pair of slippers and a gown on the floor. Curiously, Cachin dates this print to c.1880 although, in the same catalogue, dates the lithograph which results from it to 1876-79.²⁹

Une Femme Nue Accroupie de Dos (J.192) (Figure 34), is so similar in composition to J.191, the pastel-covered monotype of the same title exhibited in 1877, that it must be given a similar date. Its dimensions are unknown but Cachin believes that it was drawn on the same plate as J.191. In both prints, the woman is seated on a pouffe fixing her hair; she is placed in front of the bed, towards the foreground and slightly to the left, clad only in stockings. In both prints a tub with a sponge in it lies on the floor to the right.

In printing Le Lever (J.170, 6 1/4 x 8 1/2) (Figure 35), Degas must have moved the plate or paper as the print's registration has produced double lines. Despite the unsatisfactory registration, it is clear that this print should be included in the group of 1877. Degas here uses the dark and light field methods. The woman sits on a bed putting on her stockings and the room includes a bed, a dresser and patterned wallpaper. La Sortie de Bain (J.178, 8 1/4 x 6 1/4 ins.) (Figure 36), is the only one of this group which crops the figure. The nude stands fixing her hair with her back to the viewer and although she is slightly closer to the forward plane than in the other prints, she does not by any means dominate

the space. The room includes a table with a basin and ewer, two armchairs, a window and wallpaper. In J.170, the woman wears only stockings and a necklace; in J.178 she wears only stockings. These states of semi-undress appear in the two prints of 1877, J.191 and J.175, as well.

All of these pure monotype and pastel-covered monotypes, the two of 1877 and the seven discussed above, use the same technique and the same conception of picture space. They are all small and they use similar figures and details in the rooms. Therefore I am suggesting that a date of about 1877 seems appropriate for all these works.

The chronology of the remaining bather monotypes is more problematic. Here, Degas uses the dark field method, and he usually uses the second, paler cognate as a base for a pastel. The scenes depict women in gowns and nightcaps getting up from or going to bed, women bending over basins washing themselves, and recumbant nudes reading after the bath. Degas often dedicates the latter to friends or admirers such as Lepic or the critic Phillippe Burty. Janis originally dated these scenes between 1880 and 1885. Cachin, for the most part, concurs with Janis's dates, although she does place a few slightly later.³⁰ Janis revises the dates of the dark field nudes in an article of 1972 and in her 1974 thesis.³² She now feels that monotypes numbering 119-164 of her checklist are earlier, and dates them to about 1877.³² Her reasoning is as follows:

It is now almost certain that the monotypes stage of these pastels dates from the mid to late seventies since one of them probably appeared in the Third Impressionist Exhibition of 1877.... I assigned dates in the eighties to most of the nudes listed between 119-164 because I loosely associated them with the larger pastels of nudes some of which have an eighties date. I now think that each work's monotype date is probably mid to late seventies.³³

The pastel cognates, J.174 and J.191, discussed above are the only two

monotypes which have been clearly identified as appearing in the 1877 show. The other three "dessins a l'encre grasse et imprimés" of the catalogue are not mentioned in the reviews, hence it is impossible to confirm that Degas did indeed exhibit them. If they were indeed included, they could have depicted ballet or café-concert scenes, portraits or illustrations for La Famille Cardinal. Janis' revision, while sound as to the antedating, rests on an assumption and, in terms of the size, technique and handling, the mid-seventies date seems too early as we shall see.

These nudes are characterized by the use of large plates and the dark field method, by summarily indicated interiors, and by a figure which dominates the image by virtue of its proximity to the picture plane or by its size.³⁴ In the dark field nudes, the figure often becomes the composition. The highlighted limbs create lines which Degas arranges in distinctive patterns. The figures are huge, and, are much closer to the Glasgow bather of 1884 discussed in Chapter 1. In Une Femme Etendue sur son Lit (J.137, 7 7/8 x 16 ins.) (Figure 37), the figure fills the picture space.

Another feature of these nudes is Degas's extensive use of diagonal lines in the composition.³⁶ Often a vector from one corner divides the rectangular format, vectors formed by the corner of a table or couch or by the limbs of the figure. This use of diagonal lines is the characteristic which Pickvance sees as typical of the works of 1879.

Given Degas's development from small to larger figures in relation to the picture space and the compositional device of diagonal lines which he begins about 1879, it is reasonable to assume a later date for the dark field nudes than for the bathers of the 1877 group, Janis's opinion notwithstanding. I believe that Degas executes the scenes of women arising or

going to bed and washing themselves in basins about 1878-79, because the figures, while large, are not as dominating as those of recumbant nudes of readers. As well, the diagonal lines in the compositions are not as prominent as in the reader group. The readers probably date from about 1880-83 as they approximate the figure size and compositions of the nudes of the eighties in pastel more than the earlier bather and bedroom scenes.

Degas executed the brothel scenes and the nine bather scenes in the combination method in about 1877. Having established the common chronological origin of the brothel and bather prints, the question of the differences in the conception between the two groups logically follows. It will be demonstrated that this distinction is at best arbitrary and that Degas uses the same technique and indeed the same poses and motif in the prints of both groups.

One feature of the brothel scenes which is used by Janis to distinguish them from the bathers is that the women of the maisons closes are only partially nude. In some of the scenes they wear striped stockings, black ribbon necklaces, bracelets and slippers, and occasionally the chemise costume. Accordingly to Cachin, prostitutes at this time wore chemises in the salon and did not appear in that room of the maisons dressed only in stockings as Degas often depicts them.³⁵ He must have chosen this costume of semi-undress to underline the vulgarity of these women. The women in five of the early bather prints wear similar articles of clothing. In J.175, the woman wears a bracelet, and in J. 178, 191, 192 and 170 they wear stockings, while in the nudes of the eighties in pure pastel the women are completely nude.

Janis and Cachin have both stated that the brothel scenes are done in the light field method.³⁶ In actual fact, Degas uses the combination of the

light and dark field methods, as Cooper correctly pointed out in his 1958 catalogue. Degas establishes the main elements of the composition with broad areas of thick ink which he then wipes to produce certain details of the furnishings, the patterns of the wallpaper and the texture of the carpets. He then adds smaller details of the lighting fixtures and the figure with a small pointed brush loaded with the thick ink.

Besides the majority of the brothel scenes which employ the combination technique, there are eight brothel prints which are executed in the dark field method. Janis and Cachin support their segregation of the two groups by pointing to the differences of technique. With this rather large number of exceptions, the distinction tends to break down. Un Coin de Salon de Maison Close (J.171) is done almost entirely with the dark field technique as are Le Repos (J.73), L'Attende (J.103) and a monotype which recently appeared on the New York art market (Figure 38).³⁷ As well, Repos sur le lit (J.93), Sur le Lit (J.109) and Le Bidet (J.110) (Figure 39) are all classified as brothel scenes but are done in the dark field method.

Le Foyer (J.159) (Figure 40) is a most puzzling print. It depicts a room illuminated by a fireplace in which two nude women, one seated in an armchair and one standing, are placed. This large print is done entirely in the dark field or subtractive method. Both Janis and Cachin place it among the bather prints, yet as Janis notes "this is the only instance where the mood of the maison closes penetrates the monotypes in the dark field manner."³⁸ It can be argued that the lone bather in a room depicts a young woman and not necessarily a prostitute. But a situation in which two nude women appear together in a room could only occur in the sorority situation of a brothel. Le Foyer is merely another example of the confusion which results from an arbitrary distinction between the two groups.

Aside from the fact that Degas uses similar techniques in both groups, he uses the same poses in a number as well.³⁹ Three poses in particular can be distinguished. A woman perched over a bidet is used in Le Bidet (J.110) (Figure 39) and in Une Femme à sa Toilette (J. 153), while Janis classifies the former as a bather scene, the latter is supposedly a brothel scene. The second pose is one of a women reclining with her legs wide apart. The pose appears in the so-called bather prints Le Sommeil (J. 135), Une Femme Etendue sur son Lit (J.137) and in Le Lecture Après le Bain (J.139), as well as in eight of the supposed brothel scenes, Le Repos (J.73) (Figure 41), Deux Jeunes Filles (J.81), Au Salon (J.82), Waiting for the Client (J.84) and four prints entitled by Janis Le Repos sur le Lit (J.91, 93, 95 and 96). The pose in which a woman lies on her back with her legs in the air, or the "bicycler" as Janis terms it, is a common motif in the brothel series and appears in La Sieste au Salon (J.72) (Figure 42), Le Repos (J.73), The Courtesans (J.74), La Sieste (Scène de Maison Close) (J.75) and in L'Ebat Matinale (J.94). The same pose occurs in two prints of the bather series, Une Femme Nue se Chauffant (J.160) and in Une Scène de Toilette (J.161).

It should be remembered in discussing the appearance of similar poses in the prints of the two groups that Degas is, throughout his career, concerned with the telling gesture of the seasoned practitioner.⁴⁰ When he depicts dancers, laundresses, and milners, it is with a limited number of poses or gestures appropriate to each occupation. Even with the charcoal studies of nude dancers of the nineties, there is no possibility of confusion with the bathers as the poses are so clearly those of the ballet. The fact that Degas uses the same poses in each group underlines the arbitrary nature of the segregation imposed by cataloguers of the prints.

To further the confusion, Janis and Cachin fail to agree on the classification of four of the prints. A Girl Putting on her Stockings (J.169) (Figure 43) depicts a slim young girl sitting on a bed donning her stockings. It is executed in the combination method and the girl wears the black ribbon necklace so common in the brothel prints. Janis places it among the brothel scenes while Cachin classifies it as a bather print. Its small size, technique, necklace motif and light tonality ally it with both the early bather prints and with the maisons closes monotypes. Le Boucle d'Oreille (J.99) (Figure 44) is incorrectly titled as the woman, who appears to be adjusting an earring is actually wiping the side of her neck with a fringed handtowel. She is totally nude and is seated on a bed or divan. Janis feels that it is a brothel scene while Cachin classifies it as a bather. Again, its small size, and detailed interior are similar to the bather prints of 1877 and the other brothel scenes. An untitled print (J.113) again depicts a woman wiping her neck with a towel. Janis classifies it as a brothel scene while Cachin places it among the bathers. The room contains the usual bed, a table with a basin and ewer set on it and a curtain that divides the room. Le Bidet (J.110) (Figure 39), discussed above is the fourth print for which the two cataloguers disagree on the classification.

A further point indicates that the two groups of prints are of a common conception for the artist. Apart from the fact that these prints were executed during the same period of the artist's career, that he used a similar technique, the same sized plates, the same poses and motifs, there are no preparatory drawings for any of the monotypes of these two groups,⁴¹ an unusual situation for an artist such as Degas who admonished the young Daniel Halévy to draw and draw again.⁴² Boggs dates the first study of a nude bather to c.1883.⁴³ The earliest sketch of this subject in the note-

books according to Reff is 1879 at the earliest.⁴⁴ We know from the accounts of friends and models that in the later eighties, Degas did use models extensively in his studio for the pastel bathers, and even kept a metal tub there for these scenes.⁴⁵ If Degas did use a model for the early bather and brothel scenes at least a few of the drawings would have survived. As there are no extant drawings or evidence of them in the literature or in any of the memoirs, we can only conclude that these monotypes were the product of Degas's prodigious visual memory.⁴⁶ As the ink remains tacky and malleable for some time on the plate, the image can be changed, but as we do have evidence that Degas did use preparatory studies for café-concert and street scenes,⁴⁷ it may be concluded that Degas did not use any studies for the nudes.

There are three monotypes whose motifs tie the two groups even more firmly. In these images, the male client of the brothel observes with obvious enjoyment a nude woman performing her toilette. This short, balding, mustached gentleman appears clothed in the salon surveying the prostitutes who loll about on settees in various states of undress in a number of the brothel scenes. In the three mentioned above, he is in the bedroom with the woman. In Admiration (J.184) (Figure 45) the man crouches, clutching the rim of the tub as the nude woman arises from her bath in a pose reminiscent of the figure in Ingres's La Source. Because the man is facing the viewer, his enjoyment of the spectacle is obvious. In Une Femme Nue Se Coiffant (J.185) (Figure 46), he sits on a divan as the woman, clad in stockings and shoes, combs her hair. This monotype was heightened with pastel and the bright Prussian blue and orange stockings serve both to brighten the print and to draw attention to the state of undress of the woman. The third print in this group of the scantily clad woman with a male admirer in a bedroom is Le Tub (J.189) (Figure 47). In all of these prints may be found the details

such as the tub, a table with a basin and ewer set, a rug and patterned wall-paper which appear in the bather print of 1877, Une Femme Nue Accroupie de Dos (J.191).

Janis regards these prints as a separate category from the other brothel scenes while Cachin places Admiration with the bather scenes yet states in her catalogue description that it is "without doubt a brothel scene."⁴⁸ There is one print in which one of three prostitutes in a bedroom washes herself in a basin while the others recline on the bed [Les Femmes (J.118)] (Figure 48). These images, the three with the gentleman as audience and the washing prostitute, all depict the activity of bathing in the brothel setting.

To reiterate then, the division of the early monotypes into two categories, the bathers and the brothel scenes, used by Janis and Cachin does not seem logical as with the notebooks, it has been established that Degas executes these works during the same period around 1877. For both he uses small plates, the combination of the dark and light field methods or the dark field method and no preparatory drawings. Often the women in both so-called groups of prints wear a bit of clothing and they assume a limited number of poses. Further, the confusion regarding the classification of several prints between the catalogues of Janis and Cachin underlines the arbitrary nature of these divisions. The three prints of the admirer and the washing prostitute tie the prints more.

Other writers have noted that Degas explores the nude in a modern setting first in the brothel series. Some have hinted at a connection between the brothel and bather imagery yet their comments on the subject are tentative and not fully explained. Jean Bouet, for instance, notes that absence of nudes in Degas's work for a long period and states "that

about 1878-80 he took up nude studies in the form of his monotypes of prostitutes."⁴⁹ Pickvance, in his recent catalogue of the works of 1879, includes a bather monotype with the brothel scenes, stating that while it belongs to the series of women at their toilette, he includes it "to show something of Degas's daring treatment of this related theme...." (emphasis mine).⁵⁰

Cachin is the only one to attempt to explain the relation between the two groups. She introduces the section of her catalogue on the bathers with the following remark: "with the exception of a few monotypes linked with the brothel scenes the Women at their Toilette are very close to the pastels and drawings on the same theme produced between approximately 1880 and 1890...."⁵¹ While contending on the one hand that there are a small number of linked scenes, she states elsewhere in her essay that "there can be no doubt that the monotypes [of the brothels] played as important a part as the studies of dancers in the development of Degas's concept of the nude."⁵² Cachin concludes that it is a similar point of view that connects the two groups. Citing the distinctive character of a monotype as drawing kept in a portfolio for the delectation of one person at a time, she believes that with this private quality, the monotype medium is appropriate for "the most personal area of Degas's vision, his voyeurism, if that is not too strong a word - the brothel scenes, the nudes and the pictures of women washing themselves."⁵³

As will be discussed in the next chapter, Degas first becomes involved with brothel imagery at a time when low-class prostitution is a very topical subject in Paris and when the naturalist writers deem the brothel as one which is appropriately modern. The bather images of about 1877 are part of the brothel imagery and include these small prints which depict the

women in a state of semi-nudity performing their toilette. After a hiatus of more than ten years in his use of the nude and a few unsuccessful outdoor nude scenes, he executes the brothel monotypes which include the scenes of women bathing or going to bed. As he gradually loses interest in the brothel imagery, he becomes more involved with the totally nude bather, dropping the salacious connotations which women clad only in stockings evoked in French nineteenth century art. Degas undoubtedly sees in the bather imagery a solution to the problem which Manet had posed in 1865 with his Olympia, that of the nude of modern life. The bather scenes provided a plausible setting for nudity without the framework of mythical or historical allegory. He signals his reawakened interest in the nude with the exhibition of his Young Spartans painted almost twenty years before, at the Impressionist show of 1880.⁵⁴ From 1878 onwards, he executes more and more of the bathers until he feels assured enough about them to exhibit ten large pastels and oils of this subject in 1886. As his interest in the depiction of urban nightlife declines and his fascination with the depiction of movement increases, he turns almost exclusively to the two subjects which best allow him to render motion, the nude bodies of the bathers and the dancers. From about 1880, these two motifs dominate his work.

¹For Reff's discussion of the redating see The Notebooks, I: 5-6, 151. The earliest studies of nudes after 1865 occur in N.B. 32 (1879-83), pp. 11 and 42 and are studies for Après Le Bain (L.707) and Une Femme Mettant Ses Bas (L.751).

²Ibid, p. 5.

³Ibid, p. 151.

⁴Buste d'un Femme (L.304), oil on canvas.

⁵Une Femme Se Coiffant (L.436), oil on canvas.

⁶See for example Répétition d'un ballet sur la scène, oil on canvas, 1874-5, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and La classe de danse de M. Perrot, oil on canvas, 1874-6, Private Collection.

⁷Venturi, Les Archives (Paris: Durand-Rerel, 1939), I: 259. Entry #62 of the catalogue of the First Impressionist exhibition, 1877.

⁸Ibid, p. 265.

⁹L.377, oil on canvas.

¹⁰The second canvas of nudes in a landscape is Femmes se lavant le soir (L.376), oil on paper applied to canvas.

¹¹L.423, J.175, pastel over monotype, 6 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, Cabinet des Estampes, Le Louvre (Caillebotte Bequest).

¹²La Toilette, L.547, J.191, pastel over monotype, 6 1/4 x 4 3/4 inches, Cabinet des Estampes, Le Louvre, (Caillebotte Bequest).

¹³Reff, The Notebooks, N.B. 29, p. 35.

¹⁴L.707, N.B. 32, p. 11.

¹⁵Millard, Degas Sculptures, p. 42.

^{15A}Eunice Lipton, in a recent article, has arrived at a similar conclusion. She states that all of the bathers executed after c.1875 are prostitutes. Her evidence is based on the similar poses and motifs used in the brothel monotypes and the later large pastels and certain observations regarding hygienic practice in the nineteenth century. She does not bother with the dating of works nor with the hiatus of ten years. Although she credits this author with the main idea, I cannot agree entirely with her.

If Degas had depicted prostitutes, with his insistence on honesty, the later nudes would have been so titled. I tend to the idea of a common conception with the brothel scenes for the early bathers. Eunice Lipton, "Degas' Bathers: The Case for Realism, Arts Magazine 54 (May 1980), pp. 947.

¹⁶L.639. The studies for this work are found in Reff, The Notebooks, II, N.B. 33 (1879-82), p. 4,5,7.

¹⁷Janis dates to c.1878 J. 71, 75, 76, 77, 88, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 101, 102, 108, 109, 110, 111, and 112. She dates to c. 1877 J. 94 and 98.

¹⁸Reff, The Notebooks, II, N.B. 28, N.B. 29.

¹⁹Cachin, Degas, p. 274.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Reff, "Degas and the Literature of His Time - I," Burlington Magazine CXII (September 1970), p. 586. Reprinted as Chapter IV in Reff, Degas: The Artist's Mind.

²²Reff, The Notebooks, I: 31.

²³Jean Boggs in her review of the 1968 exhibition of the monotypes by Janis, concurs that Une Femme Sortant du Bain (J.175) and La Toilette (J.191) were exhibited in 1877. J.S. Boggs, "Degas Monotypes at the Fogg," Burlington Magazine CX (July 1968), p. 430.

²⁴Millard, Degas Sculpture, p. 42.

²⁵Pool, Degas, p. 20.

²⁶Pickvance, "Some Aspects of Degas's Nudes," p. 19.

²⁷Pickvance, Degas: 1879, p. 5.

²⁸Janis, Degas, J.42.

²⁹Cachin and Adhémar, Degas, #45.

³⁰For example, Cachin dates J.125 to c.1882-85 while Janis places it to c.1880-85, J.127 to 1882-85 as well, and J.129 to c.1885 while Janis places both to c.1880-83.

³¹Janis, "Degas and 'The Master of Chiaroscuro,'" p. 69, note 12 and Janis, "The Monotypes of Edgar Degas" (Unpublished Phd. Thesis, Harvard

University, 1974), p. 200.

³²Janis, "Degas and 'The Master of Chiaroscuro,'" p. 69, note 12.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid, pp. 56-59.

³⁵Cachin, Degas, p. 84.

³⁶Ibid, p. 82. Janis, Degas, p. XX.

³⁷David Tunick, David Tunick Inc., New York, New York.

³⁸Janis, Degas, #37 of the catalogue.

³⁹First pointed out by Pickvance, "Some Aspects," p. 19.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. XX; Pool, Degas, p. 21.

⁴¹Pickvance, "Some Aspects of Degas's Nudes," p. 18.

⁴²Rewald, The History of Impressionism, p. 382, note 50.

⁴³Pencil on grey paper, Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum, study for L.890, Boggs, Degas Drawings, #131.

⁴⁴See note 1 above.

⁴⁵Rewald, The History of Impressionism, p. 525.

⁴⁶Wagner, "Degas' Collection," p. 23. Cachin, Degas, p. 80.

⁴⁷Studies for the monotype Mme. Becat aux Café des Ambassadeurs (Adhemar and Cachin, Degas, #43) occur in Reff, The Notebooks, II, N.B. 27, p. 89.

⁴⁸Cachin, Degas, p. 276.

⁴⁹Jean Bouret, Degas, translated by Daphne Woodward, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 186.

⁵⁰Pickvance, Degas: 1879, p. 27.

⁵¹Cachin, Degas, p. 82.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid, p. 80.

⁵⁴Venturi, Les Archives, II: 285.

CHAPTER III

Because of the monotype medium and seemingly odd subject matter, most writers have tended to regard Degas's brothel scenes as a curiosity, as an interesting adjunct to his main oeuvre. Yet taken in the context of his other subjects of the seventies, the brothel scenes are not surprising. These writers tend to ignore two important conditions which went into the making of these prints. Degas was very committed to the percepts of naturalism during this decade and the brothel scenes form a part of his scenes of Parisian nightlife which include the tableaux of the café-concerts and the backstage of the Opera, both typical haunts of the upper or middle class gentleman. More important is the fact which will be discussed at length below, that the system of réglementation was a hot, topical subject in Paris, indeed in all of Europe, during the later eighteen-seventies.

Degas's general position to the naturalist movement is well illustrated in his relations with the other Impressionists. Despite his commitment to figural as opposed to landscape painting, he was an ardent supporter of the Impressionist group shows from the beginning and he exhibited in all but one of the eight shows. The exhibitors to the first show in 1874 agreed to cease submitting any works to the Salon. Throughout the years, only Degas and Pissarro remained loyal to the original agreement.¹ Although Degas's record of acceptance at the Salon had been most favourable, he ceased to send works to the official body after the Franco-Prussian war.²

When the first show was being planned by the artists who frequented the Café Nouvelle Orléans, Degas was among the busiest of the organizers. His letters include solicitations to other artists to support the movement³ and his notebooks reveal that he spent much time tramping about Paris in

search of suitable exhibition space.⁴

In his book, The History of Impressionism, John Rewald has portrayed Degas as a dissonant, querulous voice among the fraternity of pure landscape painters.⁵ He depicts Degas as the harasser of the misunderstood genius, Cézanne.⁶ Yet the fact that Degas included nine of Cézanne's works in the carefully chosen collection belies Rewald's view of their relationship.⁷ Rewald sees Degas's refusal to participate in the show of 1882 as indicative of his attitude and attempts to undermine the solidarity of the group:

Never has the Impressionists organized an exhibition so lacking in alien elements, never had they been so much to themselves. After eight years of common struggle they managed at last (but with what difficulties) to stage an exhibition which truly represented their art. (emphasis mine)⁸

Degas's refusal to exhibit in the 1882 show was a result of his insistence that Raffaelli be allowed to join. The rest of the group refused and Degas withdrew, followed by Mary Cassatt.

Rewald's account of the situation suggests that Degas's support of Raffaelli and others such as Forain and Zandomeneghi, was an attempt to tone down the radical nature of the show, a reading which has more to do with Rewald's view that the landscape painters were the true precursors of modernism, than with the reality of Degas's intentions. These three artists were all figural draughtsmen whose work embodies a view of modernism close to Degas's. All depicted lower class types and professions in a detached, objective manner which was the underlying tenet of the naturalist movement in literature. Huysmans described this point of view succinctly in an article of 1878:

We are artists who are athirst with modernity.... We go into the street, the living, teeming street, into hotel bedrooms as well as into fine mansions; into dark corners as well as into well-lit highways. We do not, like the romantics, want to create puppets

more beautiful than nature.... We want to let creatures of flesh and blood stand on their own feet.⁹

Raffaelli, Forain and Zandomenghi all depicted people in their occupational surroundings. Degas does the same in his images of laundresses, café-concert singers, ballet-rats and portraits. Degas wishes to include these artists in the show because their art approximated his own views on modernism more than did those of the landscape painters such as Monet and Pissarro. What Rewald sees as a reactionary attitude was really a divergent opinion on Degas's part as to what constituted modernity.

Theodore Reff has devoted two chapters in his book, Degas: The Artist's Mind, to Degas's affinities with the reliance upon the writers Zola, de Goncourt, Huysmans and Duranty.¹⁰ These writers inspired Degas's preoccupation with the contemporary scene which dominated his art from about 1867 to 1885. To illustrate the truth of Reff's view, one need only look at Degas's Interior,¹¹ an illustration of a key scene in Zola's Thérèse Raquin (1867). Degas chooses the scene in which Thérèse and Laurent, after murdering Therese's husband, find that they cannot consummate their marriage due to their feelings of guilt and remorse. In L'Absinthe,¹² Degas exemplifies the isolation of modern city life so evident in Huysmans's work and more specifically in Zola's L'Assomoir (1876). The pastel and oil versions of Miss Lala au Cirque Fernando¹³ foreshadow de Goncourt's interest in circus performers in Les Frères Zenganno in 1879. Reff sees "a broad range of social, psychological, and stylistic affinities" between the work of Degas and de Goncourt as the two shared a "mutual interest in portraying the labours and pleasures of modern Paris."¹⁴

Degas's work of the late sixties and seventies with its depiction of psychologically tense situations (Boudure, L'Absinthe, Interior, and Portrait

de Michael Levy), his scenes of urban nightlife (the audiences of the café-concert and the ballet) and various occupations (laundresses and millners) are types of subjects heralded by Baudelaire, Huysmans and de Goncourt as those which are the essence of modernity.¹⁵ For Baudelaire, as seen in his Salon de 1846, Salon de 1859, and La Peinture de la Vie Moderne, only the contemporary urban scene is a modern subject.¹⁶ Huysmans, in his reviews in Le Voltaire, La Reforme and La Revue, reiterate the list of Baudelaire's appropriate subjects. Huysmans, in his review of the Salon of 1880, isolates Degas as "the ideal painter of modern life." He goes on to describe Degas as "the pictorial equivalent of the brothers de Goncourt,"¹⁷ the early heroes of Huysmans.

Given Degas's affinities with the novels and subject matter of the naturalist writers and his own appreciation of the domestic scenes of seventeenth century Dutch art,¹⁸ the interior scenes of the brothels are not as surprising. They do not seem as odd when placed in the context of the contemporary urban scene. Like the laundresses, café-concert singers and ballet rats, the prostitutes are lower class women plying their trade. They are depicted in attitudes characteristic of their profession; they wait in the salon or bedroom, administer to the clients or perform their toilet.

The nineteenth century in France has seen a gradual increase in interest in the social implications of prostitution. Parent-Duchalet's De la Prostitution dans la ville Paris first appeared in 1825 and was revised and reissued throughout the century.¹⁹ It consisted of voluminous statistical information with few generalizations drawn from the material. The author examined the prostitute population with regard to county, province, and

town of origin; marital, social and economic status of the parents; the various factors involved in the choice of the profession and the numbers of the various types of prostitutes. Other books continued to appear throughout the century, notably Charles Jerome Lecour's La Prostitution à Paris et à Londres, 1789-1870, augmenté des chapitres sur la prostitution à Paris pendant le Siège et la Commune²⁰ and Paul Lacroix's Histoire de la Prostitution chez tous les peuples du monde.²¹

The statistical tracts were gradually superseded by books which denounced the system of legalized prostitution such as J. Meugy's De l'Existence de la Prostitution: Pétition au Sénat, session de 1865²² and Yves Guyot's La Prostitution, Revue et augmentation,²³ an important book which will be discussed at length below. The movements to reform the conditions of poor women who were forced into prostitution as a way of life, both in England and in France, were part of the wider struggles for social justice.

The brothels became a hotly debated subject in Paris during the seventies. They were the mainstay of the system of réglementation which was increasingly attacked in the press.²⁴ France had legalized prostitution in 1635 and subsequent laws were enacted to regulate the obvious social problems related to prostitution: public nuisance and venereal disease.²⁵ The French laws stipulated that prostitutes could not sollicit in the streets and public places or display themselves at their windows, and, by 1802, the system of inscription was in force. All prostitutes had to be registered with the Bureau des Moeurs and had to submit to regular medical examinations for venereal disease.

During the nineteenth century there existed two types of prostitution:

legal and clandestine. There was also a clear hierarchy of prostitutes. The "courtisans" and the "lorettes" comprised the clandestine type. These women were not inscribed and led a relatively charmed existence in contrast to their more unfortunate sisters. The "courtisans" were socially prominent especially during the Second Empire and thrived on the rise of the new industrialist class. The "lorettes" were most often employed in menial jobs and lived with succession of lovers. Although they rarely charged for their services, they were classed as prostitutes by virtue of their promiscuity.

The "filles en carte" and the "filles à partie" were inscribed prostitutes who plied their trade freelance or with the help of a "ponce" or pimp. The "filles en numéro" and the "filles à soldat" were the lowest on the scale. They lived in licensed brothels under the supervision of a madame. They were fed and clothed in return for their services and were allowed to keep only small gratuities given to them by clients. Often they were shamefully exploited by the madame who overcharged for basic amenities and kept them so deep in debt that the girls could rarely hope to ameliorate their situation.

The freelance prostitutes were constantly harrassed by the police and the "agents des mœurs."²⁶ Imprisonment was the punishment for failure to inscribe oneself, for missing a medical examination and for solicitation in a public place. The "agents" had wide powers and could incarcerate any woman who they believed to be a prostitute. In such a system, it was the poor who suffered as the "agents" tended to imprison poor, unaccompanied women. During the seventies, many cases were reported in the press of women who were imprisoned without cause. Most often, they were respectable women who had legitimate reason to be out at night. In one such case, the woman was on an

errand to fetch medicine for a sick child. She was apprehended by the "agents," imprisoned for three days and the child died. Many spent days in confinement before their families could find them and arrange for their release. The plight of these respectable women only served to point out the lack of civil rights accorded to the prostitutes and the abuses of the agents directed against respectable women.

The abolitionist movement in France was closely allied to the English movement. The adherents to both countries felt that the system was a failure and a scandal. Josephine Butler, head of the Ladies National Association, the vanguard of the English abolitionist movement, visited Paris in 1874 where she met with the upper echelons of Parisian society and was greatly encouraged in her determination to unite the groups concerned with prostitution in all of the European countries.²⁷ These reformers saw that venereal disease had not been brought under control and in an era before the use of antiseptics, the medical examinations spread the disease more than they controlled it.²⁸ The brothel system tended to keep the women in a state of bondage that made it difficult for them to change their lives for the better.²⁹ The wide powers of the agents were often abused and the practice of inscription branded a woman for life.³⁰ In some recorded cases, women were forced into brothels if they were unlucky enough to be picked up by the agents a second time.³¹

The national reform movements of Europe culminated in a series of conventions which received a great deal of publicity in the press. The first International Congress on Prostitution was held in Geneva in 1877, the second in Liège in 1879 and the third in London in 1881.³² France did not abolish the system of réglementation of brothels until the Second World War³³ but the public outcry against the system was well along the way by 1880.

Two naturalist novels on prostitution appeared at this time. Huysmans, fearing censorship from the Division des Beaux-Arts, took his manuscript of Marthe, Histoire d'une Fille to Belgium in August of 1876.³⁴ Jean Gay, a specialist in erotica, published the work for Huysmans. In September, Huysmans attempted to import four hundred copies into France. The bulk of these were confiscated at the border, but many copies did reach Paris where they sold for fantastic prices.

Marthe is the story of an artificial pearl maker who, after living with a series of lovers, becomes an inmate of a brothel. Huysmans describes the boredom and torpor of the prostitutes in great detail and, in the most vivid scene of the book, relates Marthe's terror of the agents des moeurs one night as she escapes from the brothel to wander the streets in bewilderment and despair, a feeling described in the reported cases of innocent women accosted by the agents in the press of the late seventies.

Despite its subject matter, the book is not pornographic. Huysmans, in describing the brothel life, centers on the salon and discreetly leaves the activities of the bedroom and the early scenes between Marthe and her various lovers to the reader's imagination. Its impact lies in the fact that Huysmans does not provide the conventional, sentimentalized view of prostitution embodied in the "lorette" or "courtisan" of the literature of the Romantic period. Dumas fils had treated the subject first in his Dame aux Camelias (1848). It was followed by the opera La Traviata (1853) based on the earlier novel, and by a host of other books and plays on the subject.³⁵ These works all portrayed the women as "courtisans" or "lorettes," and as women more sinned against than sinning. They were the "whores with hearts of gold" in the tradition of Fanny and Moll Flanders. Marthe was the first novel to deal with the brothel and the low class prostitute.³⁶ The heroine

is really a cardboard character but this appropriate to Huysmans's theme of a woman shaped by social forces into a destitute and depraved being.

Huysmans hurried the completion and publication of his book because it had been announced that de Goncourt was planning to publish another novel dealing with prostitution, La Fille Eliza. Huysmans sent de Goncourt a copy of Marthe, and in an accompanying letter, warned de Goncourt of his own difficulties with the censorship of the border authorities.³⁷ De Goncourt did make certain changes in light of this information and the book was not censored.³⁸ Its first printing of 10,000 copies which appeared in March of 1877 sold out immediately, a fact which underlines the topicality and popularity of the subject during the late seventies in Paris.

La Fille Eliza chronicles the life of a woman, who again after a series of lovers, is forced into a brothel due to extreme penury. She ends up in a prison for the criminal and the insane which enforces a strict rule of silence. Eliza may have escaped censorship because, as de Goncourt so carefully pointed out in his preface, the book was about "prisons and the prisoner" more than about "prostitution and the prostitute."³⁹ Indeed, Eliza's stay in the brothel is only one incident in her downward slide to the prison.

Zola's Nana, which dealt with a high class "courtisan," was serialized in 1879 and published in book form with a printing of 55,000 copies in February of 1880.⁴⁰ The serialization in Le Voltaire was accompanied by the biggest publicity campaign in French literary history to date. The campaign employed advertisements in other newspapers, sandwich-board men and posters everywhere in Paris including the public latrines. At one point during the campaign, Paul Alexis, Zola's disciple, felt compelled to write

a newspaper article pointing out that the author of Nana was not responsible for the publisher's attempt to increase the circulation of Le Voltaire. The vulgar publicity was probably the subject of adverse comment in the artistic circles of that time.

While many writers and painters of the period treated this subject of prostitution, only Huysmans received a great deal of criticism. It would seem then that the subject of prostitution itself was not objectionable but the depiction of low class prostitution was. Yves Guyot, himself a doctor who once served with the Bureau des Moeurs, described the reactions of the French public as follows:

La Fille Eliza a été un scandale, parce que M. de Goncourt a quitté la région du Demi-monde, où s'agitaient les Dames aux Camélias, les lorettes et autres Lionnes, pour jeter un coup d'oeil sur la fille pauvre. "La fille entretenue," "la cocotte!" on sourit en prononçant son nom, elle a des journaux uniquement consacrés à ses moeurs et au récit des actions d'éclat des favorisées ou des habits. "La fille en carte" est considérée avec dégoût. Un homme qui avoue ses rapports avec la première n'avoue pas ses rapports avec celle-ci. La "fille en bordel!" c'est le dernier échelon, et la fille en carte elle-même dit avec hauteur: "Je ne suis pas une fille de bordel, moi!"⁴¹

Guyot eventually became closely allied with the abolitionist movement in France. Here, he cogently pinpointed the unease and distaste which his contemporaries felt when confronted with the subject of the brothel variety of prostitution.

We know that Degas did read La Fille Eliza from his illustrations for it in the Halévy notebook. But these sketches are different from his brothel monotypes. The women in the illustrations are clad in chemises and appear only in the salon of the house. They chat and play cards with the soldier clients. The brothel monotypes, as we have seen, depict the women waiting in the salon or bedroom, administering to the clients or performing their

toilette. This activity of waiting is precisely what dominates Huysman's depiction of the brothel. Huysmans sent his novel to both de Goncourt and Zola,⁴² hence it is entirely possible that Degas read Marthe shortly after its publication via the writers in his circle.

Reff had alluded Degas's brothel scenes with Marthe, noting that the subject "is imbued with that melancholy spirit of isolation and disillusionment which each [Huysmans and Degas] identified with a modern sensibility."⁴³ Both expressed a cynical attitude to the prostitutes and depicted them "in the same positions of total physical abandon" not seen in the more conventional treatment of Constantin Guys in his drawings of "les filles" or of de Goncourt in Eliza.⁴⁴ Indeed, Baudelaire, in La Peinture de la Vie Moderne, devoted a paragraph to the subject of prostitutes and noted that their physical postures were especially appropriate for the painter concerned with modernity.⁴⁵

Degas's brothel scenes are however, much more explicit than the novels of Huysmans and de Goncourt. Degas follows the prostitutes into the bedroom and shows her administering to the client in scenes which depict the act of fellatio. The monotypes dwell on the leering faces of the women, on their fat bodies, and on the overwhelming ennui which characterizes the brothel life. His attitude to them is objective in that he does not prettify them or discreetly leave their bedroom activities to the imagination. Janis, Cachin and Pickvance have described the monotypes as more comic than obscene with the characterful facial types as evidence of a light, frivolous approach to the subject matter. Reff's opinion, that the fat bodies and ugly faces are evidence of Degas's distaste for women of the lower classes,⁴⁶ seems more likely given the strong connections between Degas's and Huysmans' work.

The brothel monotypes were undoubtedly inspired in part by Huysmans novel. Degas's interest in the subject was part of the general attention given to the matter of low class prostitution in Paris in the years 1876 to 1879. But he tired of the subject, possibly as a result of the excessive publicity which accompanied the serialization of Zola's Nana. Degas's attitude had cooled towards the writer considerably by this time.⁴⁷ He probably viewed Zola's novel as an attempt to cash in on the topicality of prostitution after the novels of Huysmans and de Goncourt, the latter having inspired Degas's illustrations in the Halévy notebook.

Degas, then, in response to the novels of Huysmans and de Goncourt and to the coverage of the abolitionist movement in the press, treats the au courant subject of low class prostitution in his brothel monotypes. His interest is sustained for a period of about eighteen months to two years from 1877 to 1879. It is left to compare Degas's work with similar scenes by other artists in order to demonstrate that the brothel monotypes had a profound influence on the later bathers and that this influence was unconsciously felt by the audiences who charged that the bathers were obscene.

¹John Rewald, The History of Impressionism, 4th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), pp. 560-578.

²Ibid, p. 596, 598, 600, 603, 604.

³See the letter of Tissot in Marcel Guerin, Degas Letters, by M. Kay (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1947), pp. 38-39.

⁴Reff, Notebooks, p. 32.

⁵Rewald, Impressionism, pp. 311, 313, 445, 521.

⁶Ibid, p. 314.

⁷Anne Middleton Wagner, "Degas' Collection of Art: An Introductory Essay and Catalogue" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Brown University, 1974), pp. 160-161.

⁸Rewald, Impressionism, pp. 470-471.

⁹Quoted in Henry R.T. Brandreth, Huysmans (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1963), p. 23.

¹⁰Reff, Degas, Chapters 4 and 5.

¹¹L.348, 1868-69.

¹²L.393, 1876.

¹³L.552, 1879.

¹⁴Reff, Degas, p. 170.

¹⁵Anita Brookner, The Genius of the Future (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 72, 74.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 154.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ian Dunlop, Degas (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 58-61.

¹⁹Alexandre Parent-Duchalet, De La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris, 3rd ed. (Paris: J.B. Bailliere et fils, 1857).

²⁰Charles Jerome Lacour, La Prostitution à Paris et à Londres, augmenté des chapitres sur la Prostitution pendant le Siècle et la Commune (Paris: Asselin, 1872).

²¹Paul Lacroix, Histoire de la Prostitution chez tous les Peuples du Monde (Paris: Charpentier, 1867).

²²J. Meugy, De l'Existence de la Prostitution: Pétition au sénat, session de 1865 (Paris: Gauthier et frères, 1865).

²³Yves Guyot, La Prostitution: Revue et Augmentation (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1883).

²⁴Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Prostitution: An Illustrated Social History (New York: Crown Publishers, 1978), p. 244.

²⁵La Grande Larousse du XIXe Siècle, "Prostitution" (Paris: Larousse, 1875), p. 296. Information in this and the following two paragraphs is from this source.

²⁶Guyot, La Prostitution, pp. 123-127. Information in this paragraph is from this source.

²⁷E. Moberly Bell, Josephine Butler: Flame of Fire (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 118.

²⁸Bullough, Prostitution, p. 180.

²⁹Guyot, La Prostitution, pp. 477-84.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid*, p. 405.

³³Bullough, Prostitution, p. 262.

³⁴Brandreth, Huysmans, pp. 19-21. Information in this paragraph is from this source.

³⁵Martin Seymour-Smith, Fallen Women (London: Nelson, 1969), pp. 160-183.

³⁶Brandreth, Huysmans, p. 21.

³⁷*Ibid*, p. 22.

³⁸Edmond de Concourt, Eliza, translated by M. Crosland (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), pp. 9-11. Information in this paragraph is from this source.

³⁹Ibid, p. 15.

⁴⁰F.W.J. Hemmings, The Life and Times of Emile Zola (London: Paul Elek, 1977), pp. 94-95. Information in this paragraph is from this source.

⁴¹Guyot, La Prostitution, p. 10.

⁴²Brandreth, Huysmans, p. 22.

⁴³Reff, Degas, p. 180.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 181

⁴⁵Quoted in Dunlop, Degas, p. 146.

⁴⁶Reff, Degas, p. 165.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 181.

CHAPTER IV

Degas's interest in prostitutes is by no means an isolated phenomena among writers and artists in nineteenth century France, nor more specifically in the decades of the seventies and eighties. As well, there exists a long tradition of intimate bathing scenes, mostly lithographs, that has been traced by two writers on French art, Beatrice Farwell in her study of Courbet's nudes¹ and by Carol Duncan in her work on themes of la vie galante in her thesis on the Rococo revival in nineteenth century French art.² Both authors point to a large body of prints, many anonymous, that depict both bathers and grisettes, the lower class, clandestine prostitutes, of Paris.

According to Farwell, the scenes of ladies at their bath in anonymous late eighteenth century prints, often with a peeping Tom present, included maids who revealed the charms of their mistresses to the viewer of the print or to a gentleman in the composition.³ Beginning about the turn of the century lesbian themes became common.⁴ By the 1830's and 1840's, the grisette taking off or putting on her stockings is a motif used by Octave Tassaert, Achille Deveria and a host of other lithographers.⁵ This image of stockings on an otherwise naked woman become a symbol of "low-down sin and lust" according to Farwell and connotations continued throughout the century to the works of Lautrec and Bonnard.⁶ Degas's monotypes of bathers and prostitutes contain many examples of nudes with maids, notably Une Femme Sortant du Bain (J.175) exhibited in 1877.⁷ As well, the stocking theme appears in twenty of the so-called brothel and in ten of the bather prints.⁸ Women in nightcaps were another motif common to the scènes galantes⁹ that are seen in Degas's monotypes J.129-131, 133-135, 146, 153-155, 164-165, and 167-168. One of Degas's monotypes of a nude even includes a small dog¹⁰ as does the print by Tassaert La Volupté.¹¹ Degas devotes

one monotype to a lesbian theme.¹² Farwell concludes that "it is perhaps not too much to suggest that the entire output of intimate bathing scenes by Degas, and those by Manet as well, were inspired by this tradition of bather prints."¹³

Degas was familiar with this imagery through prints or possibly photographs. His own collection contained prints by Gavarni who also depicted a bather albeit a more modestly covered one than most of the genre.¹⁴ Degas knew Deveria, who was curator of prints at the Cabinet des Estampes during the years that Degas was a student.¹⁵ He almost certainly knew Constantin Guys (1802-92) from the Café de Nouvelles Orléans¹⁶ and it is possible that he was familiar with Guy's drawings of prostitutes that included all the stock poses of women with their legs apart,¹⁷ lolling on settees just as Baudelaire described the subject in his Salon of 1846 as a fittingly modern scene.¹⁸ Guys's women also wore the stockings and short chemises of the earlier depictions. Degas could have known the cartes de visites photographs as he was so interested in photography from the beginning.¹⁹ The similarities of these photos and the drawings of Guys has been noted elsewhere.²⁰

Other artists, contemporaries of Degas, depicted prostitutes. Felicien Rops (1833-1898), the Belgian etcher and former political cartoonist, is largely remembered for his erotic prints. His subjects included bathers, streetwalkers and other sordid scenes.²¹ Rops himself once wrote to a friend:

One must not draw a classical nude but the nude of today. One must not draw the breast of the Venus de Milo but the breast of Tata, which is less beautiful but is the breast of today.²²

Jean Francois Raffaelli (1850-1924) and Jean-Louis Forain (1852-1931),

both admirers of Degas, did drawings and prints of bathers and prostitutes, Raffaelli in a series of drawings of soldiers' prostitutes of 1883-85²³ and Forain with his bathers and his frontespieces for Marthe, Histoire d'un Fille.²⁴ The first print depicts Marthe nude except for a pair of striped stockings, a format rejected by the publishers as too provocative²⁵ while the second version depicts the heroine clothed.

Lautrec executed his brothel scenes in the years 1892-95.²⁶ They include the stock poses and costumes and indeed, when arranging a photo to be taken by his friend, Gauzi, of the inmates of his favourite maison, Lautrec posed some of the women nude except for stockings and others in the short chemises.²⁷

Two outstanding examples of the high profile of prostitute imagery during this period are Manet's Nana (Figure 49)²⁸ and Henri Gervex's Rolla (Figure 50).²⁹ Nana, probably titled after the character in Zola's L'Assomoir, was refused at the Salon of 1877. It was exhibited in a gallery in the Boulevard des Capucines where it was the object of great curiosity.³⁰ The woman in the painting is not the inmate of a brothel. Her luxurious clothing and well-dressed admirer indicate a "courtisan." Unlike the naturalist novels, the painting deals more with her pulchritude than her exploited position in life. Gervex's Rolla suffered a similar rejection by the Salon and subsequent private exhibition in 1878. It was greeted by charges of obscenity in the press. In researching the painting, one writer has determined that the outrage was based on the fact that the woman was a streetwalker and this holds with the origin of the character in a poem by Alfred de Musset.³¹

In all of these bathers and prostitutes of the seventies and eighties,

the artists tend to portray the faces of the women, a tendency not seen in Degas's works. Indeed the differences between Lautrec's and Degas's prostitutes for example have been noted as follows:

[Degas] also did some brothel scenes, but they lack the deep, knowing sense of familiarity exuded by Lautrec's more numerous images of this kind. It must be remembered that both of these artists had posed themselves a heroic lifetime project: that of scrutinizing Paris itself and of compassing the whole gamut of what might be called Parisian womanhood. Degas's whores, like his laundresses, are simply another essential set of female models....³²

Manet's interest in nudes and bathers is almost contemporaneous with that of Degas. After Olympia, painted in 1863 and exhibited in 1865, Manet did not execute another nude for nine years,³³ a hiatus that parallels Degas's own in the use of this imagery. Manet's first two nudes, Brunette Nude of 1872 and Blond Nude of mid-decade are half-length studies of pretty women posed without a specific setting or action. They are then very close to Une Femme Nue Assise (L.304) and Une Femme se Coiffant (L.436), the two early busts of women that Degas painted before turning to the bathing woman in an interior setting. From 1876 to 1879 Manet executed a number of oil and pastels of bathers and women tying their garters and washing. These women are much prettier and more comely than those of Degas and have individualized faces. One need only compare for example Une Femme dans un Tub (Figure 51)³⁴ and Woman Fastening Her Garter (Figure 52)³⁵ by Manet to Le Bain (Figure 53) (J.126) and La Toilette Fillette (J.150) (Figure 54), both pastel-covered monotypes by Degas to see that Manet emphasized the pretty bodies and pert faces of his models far more than Degas.

Manet exhibited ten of his pastels and oils of bathers at the offices of La Vie Moderne, a popular magazine edited by Georges Charpentier, a friend of the Impressionists, in 1880.³⁶ The reviews of the show were generally favourable. It is interesting to note with regard to Manet's choice of

exhibition space that one researcher has found a development in the fashion press, a move from plates depicting Opera, ball, dinner, concert and racing scenes of the seventies to the boudoir in the eighties.³⁷ This tends to tie the bathers by Manet and Degas to contemporary sources even more so than the motifs they used in common with early 19th century lithographs.

When in 1886, Degas exhibited ten pastel and pastel-covered monotypes of bathers to the last Impressionist show, the press reacted negatively.³⁸ As Rewald has shown, reviewers saw the works as obscene. Pickvance feels that it must have been the close point of view, "that oppressive sense of participation, the uncanny feeling of being in the very presence of the model that upset the visitors to the exhibition."³⁹ As we have seen, Degas's bathers and prostitutes are faceless and oblivious to the viewer as the women in such scenes by his contemporaries are not. These characteristics emphasize the sense of violated privacy noted by Cachin, the voyeurism inherent in Degas's prints.

It is possible to conclude from his own statements on the subject that Degas himself was aware of the effect of his bathers on the viewer and was not surprised if even a trifle bitter, that his attempt to treat the modern nude in a bathing scene on a large scale and in oil was greeted with little praise and understanding. He described this voyeuristic point of view to George Moore:

Hitherto, the nude has always been represented in poses which presuppose an audience. But these women of mine are honest, simple folk, unconcerned by any other interests than those involved in their physical condition. Here is another; she is washing her feet. It is as if you looked through a key-hole.⁴⁰

Degas reiterated this interpretation of his bathers to Walter Sickert at about the same time:

Qu'est-ce qu'ils feraient à l'Academie Royale si je leur envoyais ça?

Ils vous mettraient surement à la porte!
 Je m'en doutais. Ils n'admettant pas le cynisme dans l'art.⁴¹

"Cynism" in nineteenth century France did not mean, as it does in English, the disillusionment with ideals once held.⁴² Instead it connoted a violation of societal and especially sexual mores. It was defined as "impudeur, effronterie, dépravation et éhontée;" while its antonyms were "bienséance, chaseté, décence, déconim, modestie, pudeur, pudicité, réserve, et retenue." It connoted, in its philosophical usage, the cynics of ancient Greece who affected to live in a state of nature without the constraints imposed by civilization in the form of behaviour dictated by decency and politeness. Given Degas's proficiency in Greek and his interest in vocabulary, it is safe to assume that he was aware of both the literal and the philosophical meanings.⁴³ If Sickert has indeed transcribed exactly the painter's thoughts on the subject, it would seem that Degas was prepared for the charges of obscenity that greeted the large pastel bathers in 1886.

Degas's development of nude imagery in his oeuvre can now be traced. He abandoned history painting in about 1865 and with it the nude. He later tried conventional settings for nudity, such as the seaside or forest and river bank but dropped that subject after only two canvases. He returns to the nude in the mid-seventies, but only at first in the context of his scenes of urban nightlife of which the brothels are part of the activity of the Parisian gentleman. The early monotypes of prostitutes and women performing their toilette are not, in any sense, academic. The figures are small, their anatomy only barely sketched in contrast to the detailed studies of the history painting nudes of a decade earlier. The figures of the early monotypes are an integral part of the tableau and would be lost without the setting. Later, towards the early eighties, Degas turns his

attention to the depiction of movement and the dancers and bathers are his choosen vehicles. But even as he eliminates the more overtly salacious elements of the scenes, the stockings, slippers, necklaces and bracelets, he could not render the nudes sexually neutral. The settings of cheap hotel or furnished rooms, evoked the settings of naughty lithographs of Deveria and others of the mid nineteenth century which still, in the eighties, connoted sinful sexuality.

More importantly however, the sense of violated privacy, of the peepshow, not present in the prostitute scenes of Felicien Rops, Forain, and in Manet's Nana, remained in the later bather scenes of Degas as all are oblivious to the viewer. Degas's history painting nudes had faces and individualized presenses. With the brothel monotypes, the settings and violated privacy are prominent. The large pastel bathers of the 1886 show then retained the interiors and the close point of view first explored in the brothel monotypes of the seventies, and these two characteristics made the pastels unacceptable to the audience as an art suitable for public display.

¹Beatrice Farwell, "Courbet's 'Baigneuses' and the Rhetorical Feminine Image," Art News Annual 38 (1972), pp. 68-75.

²Carol Duncan, The Pursuit of Pleasure: The Rococo Revival in French Romantic Art (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1976).

³Farwell, "Courbet," p. 70.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. See for example Louis Dunard, La Femme Vue par des Lithographies Romantiques (Lyon: Musee des Beaux-Arts, 1974) #21, 23, 24, 26.

⁶Ibid, p. 70.

⁷Others are J. 161, 173-176.

⁸They are J. 64-70, 72-75, 81-86, 89-91, 93, 95-96, 100-101, 104, 109, 118.

⁹Duncan, The Pursuit of Pleasure, p. 107-8.

¹⁰J.164.

¹¹Deveria, lithograph, reproduced in Dunard, #24.

¹²Deux Femmes, J.117.

¹³Farwell, "Courbet," p. 70.

¹⁴Anne M. Wagner, "Degas' Collection of Art: An Introductory Essay and Catalogue" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1974), p. 76.

¹⁵Lemoisne, Degas, 1: 9.

¹⁶Rewald, History of Impressionism, p. 197.

¹⁷J.-P. Dubray, Constantin Guys (Paris 1930), plates 30, La Cigarette, 34 Les Deux Amies and 48 Chez Elles.

¹⁸Quoted in Dunlop, Degas, p. 146.

¹⁹Aaron Scharf, Art and Photography (Baltimore: Baltimore Press, 1974), p. 356

²⁰A d'Eugnyet et R. Coursayet, Au Temps de Baudelaire, Guys et Nadar.

²¹See for example Untitled etching and aquatint, Chicago Art Museum Collection R1127c.; La Dèche (Poverty, scene of a streetwalker reproduced in Maurice Exteens, L'Oeuvre Gravé et Lithographie de Felicien Rops (Paris: Editions Pellet, 1928), 1: #846; and Woman by a Lamp Exteens #352.

²²Vitor Arwas, Felicien Rops (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), p. (6).

²³Maurice Joyant, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1864-1901 (Paris: Henri Floury, 1926), p. 149.

²⁴For a fuller discussion of this project see Janis, "The Monotypes of Degas" (Unpublished Phd. thesis), p. 189.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Joyant, Lautrec, p. 149.

²⁷Reproduced in P. Huisman and M.G. Dortu, Lautrec by Lautrec (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 173.

²⁸Dennis Rouart and Sandra Oreitti Tout L'Oeuvre Peint d'Edouard Manet (Paris: Wildenstein, 1970), 1: #256.

²⁹Holly Clayson, "The Young Henri Gervex and Naturalism," Abstracts of Papers in Art History Sessions, 66th Annual Meeting, The College Art Association of America (New York: College Art Association, 1978).

³⁰Rewald, History of Impressionism, p. 403-4.

³¹Clayson, "The Young Henri Gervex and Naturalism."

³²Parker Tyler, Degas/Lautrec (New York: Doubelday & Co., Inc., 1968), p. 99.

³³Anne Coffin Hanson, Manet and the Modern Tradition (New Haven, Conn.,: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 101. Information on Manet's nudes in this paragraph is from Hanson, pp. 90-102.

³⁴Rouart and Oreitti, Manet, #24.

³⁵Ibid, #263.

³⁶Rewald, History of the Impressionists, p. 447.

³⁷David Kunzle, "The Corset as Erotic Alchemy," Art News Annual 38 (1972), p. 120.

³⁸Rewald, History of Impressionism, p. 526.

³⁹Pickvance, "Degas's Nudes," p. 19.

⁴⁰George Moore, Impressions and Opinions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 318.

⁴¹Quoted in Robert Emmons, The Life and Opinions of Walter Richard Sickert (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), p. 63-64.

⁴²The definition, synonyms and antonyms of this paragraph are from Pierre Larousse, editor, Le Grand Dictionnaire de XIXe Siècle (Paris: Librairie Classique Larousse et Boyer, 1869), entry for "cynisme." See also Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française, 6th ed. (Paris: Imprimerie et Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1835), p. 467.

⁴³Reff, Degas, p. 147-148. Also J. Fevre, Mon Oncle Degas, pp. 50-51, 71-73.

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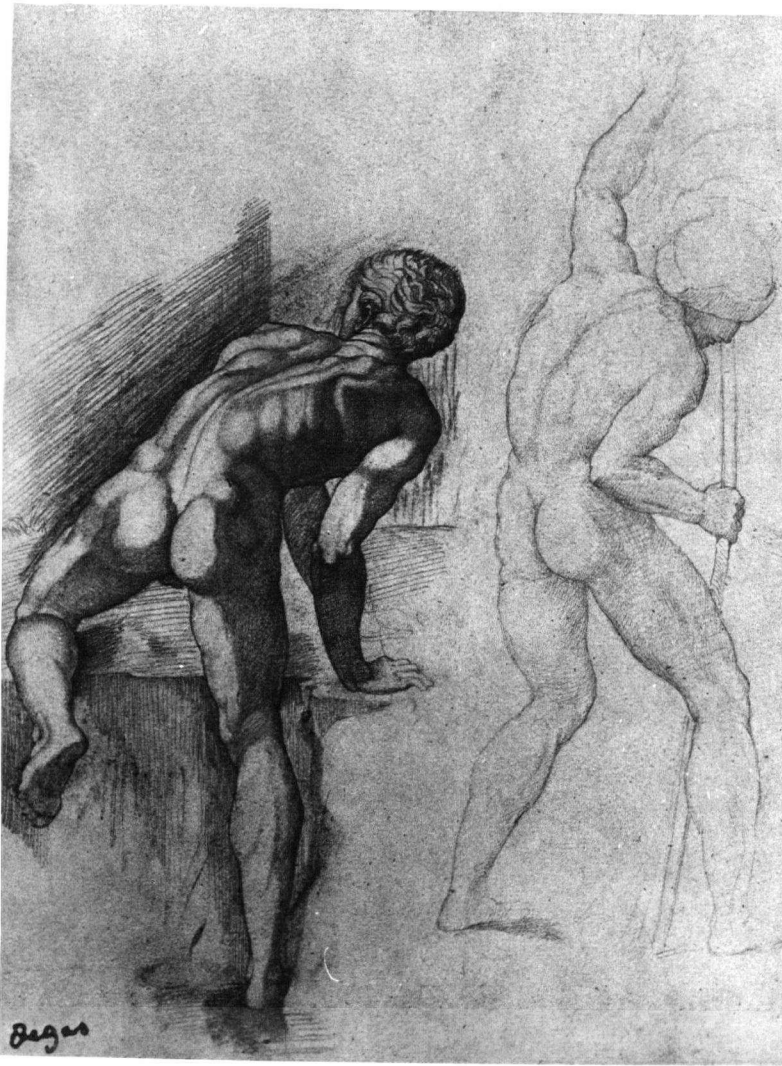


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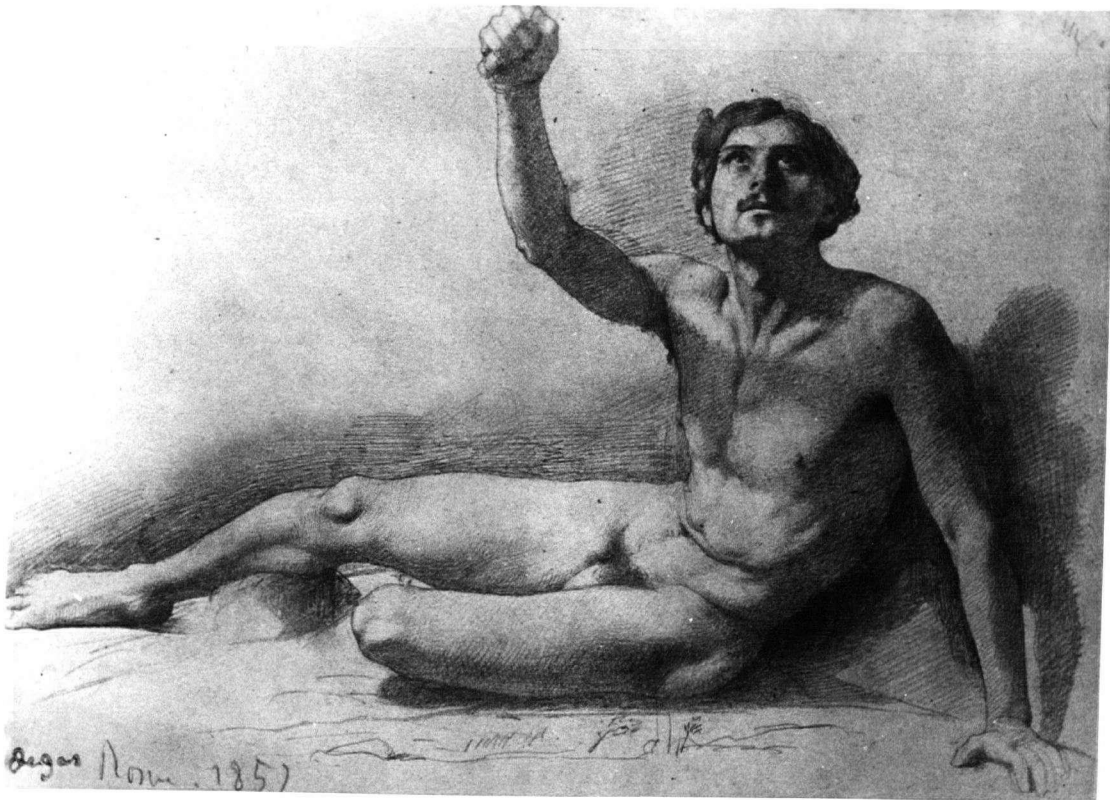


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

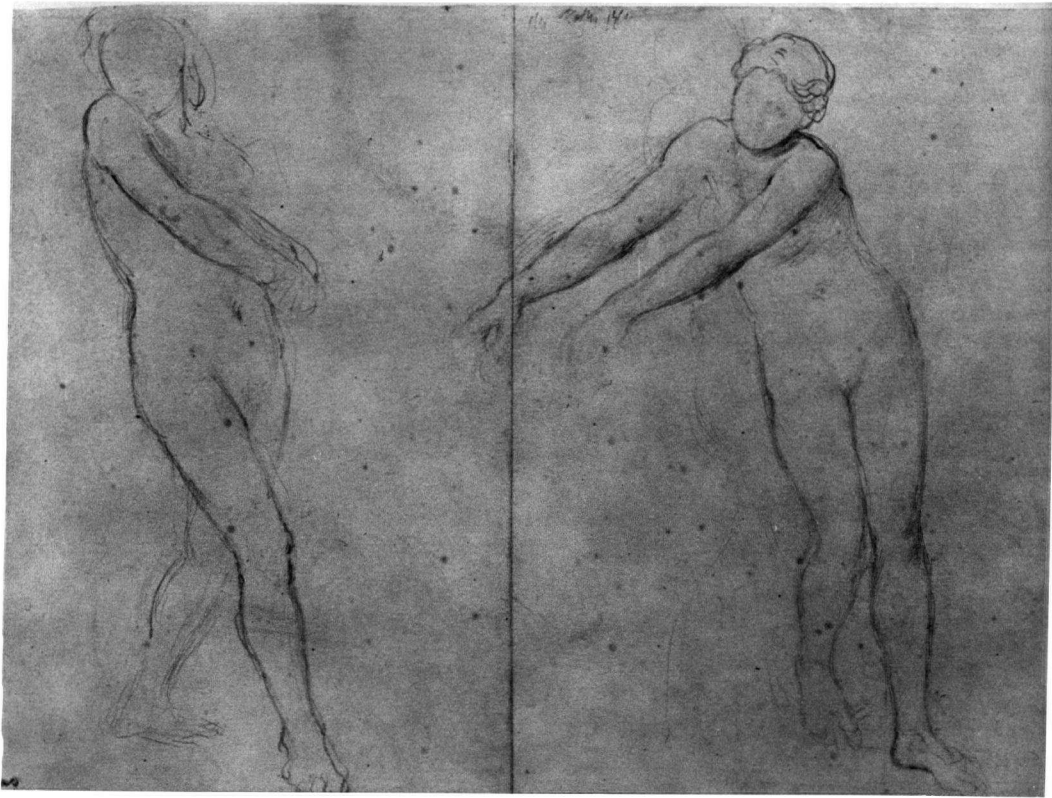


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

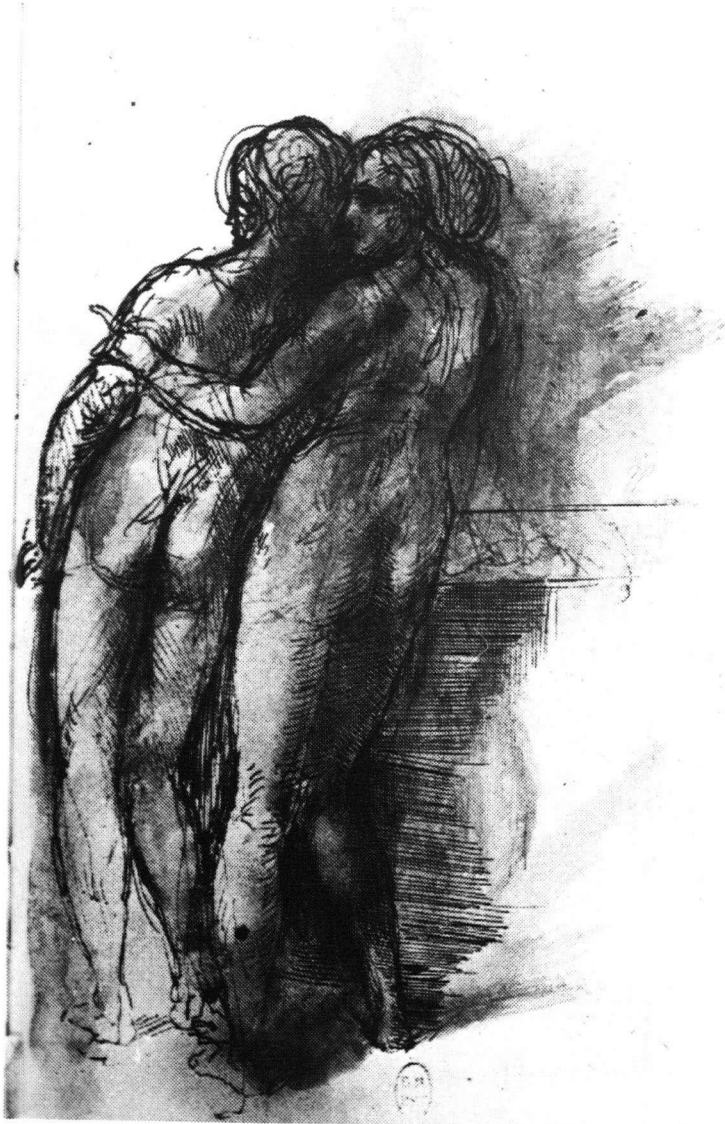


Figure 8



Figure 9

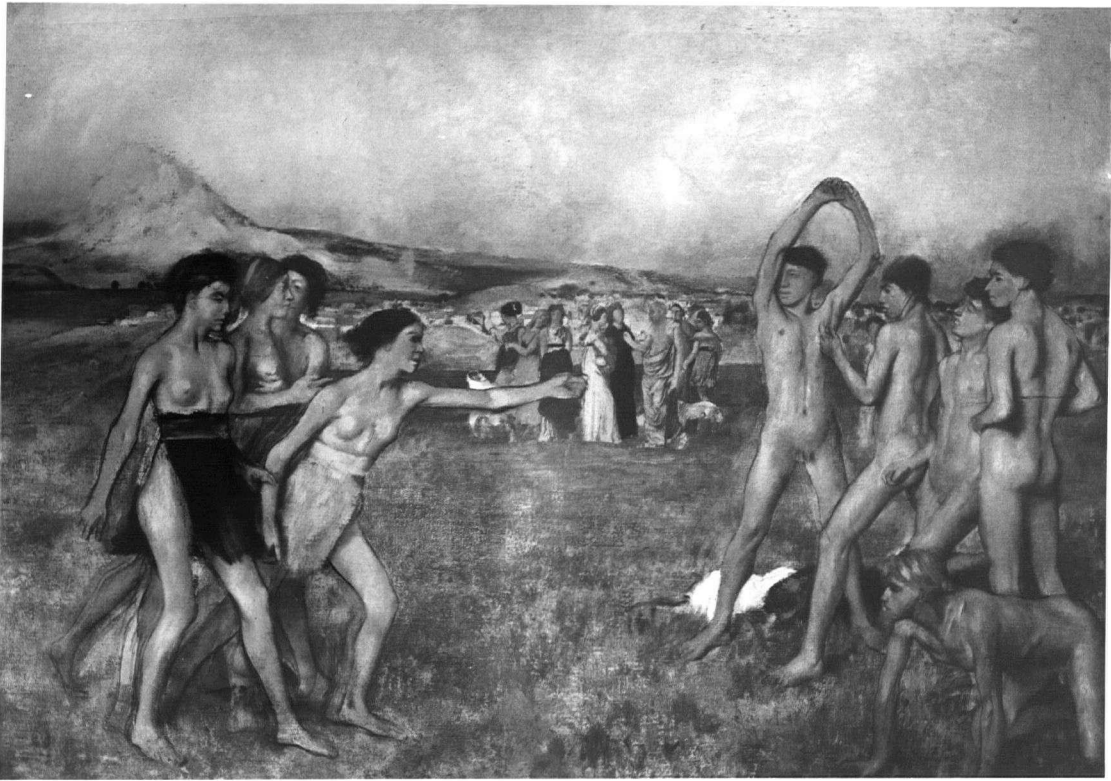


Figure 10



Figure 11

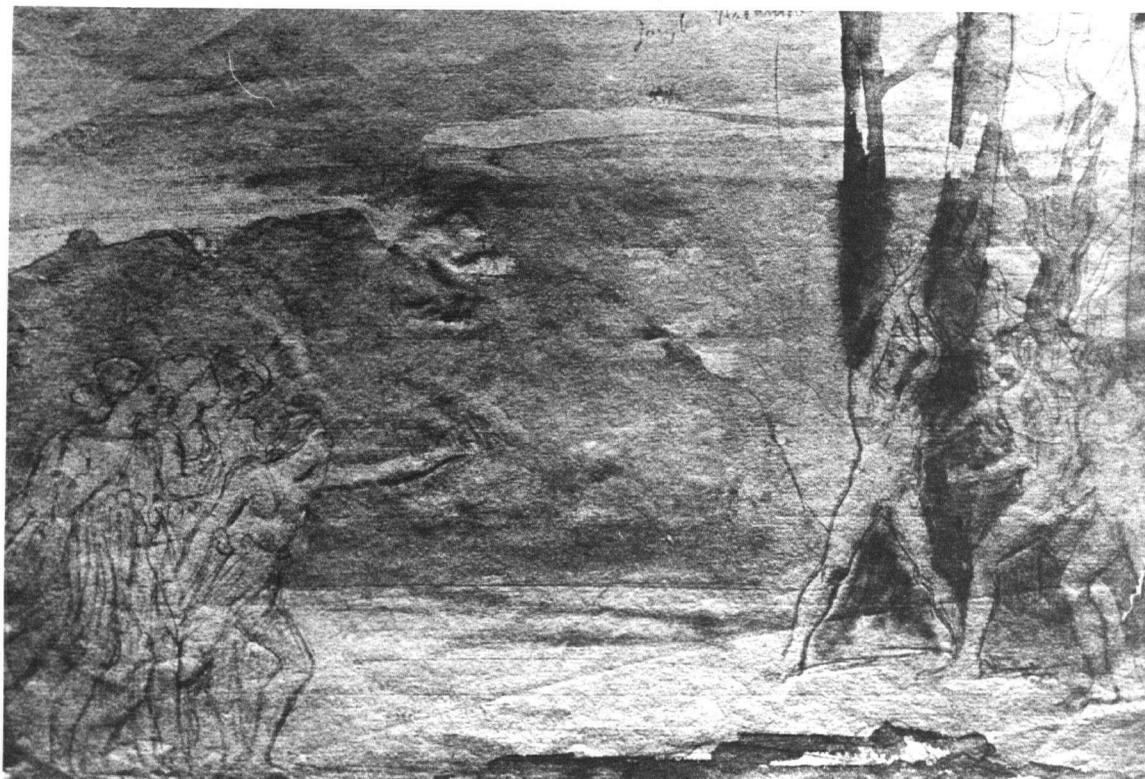


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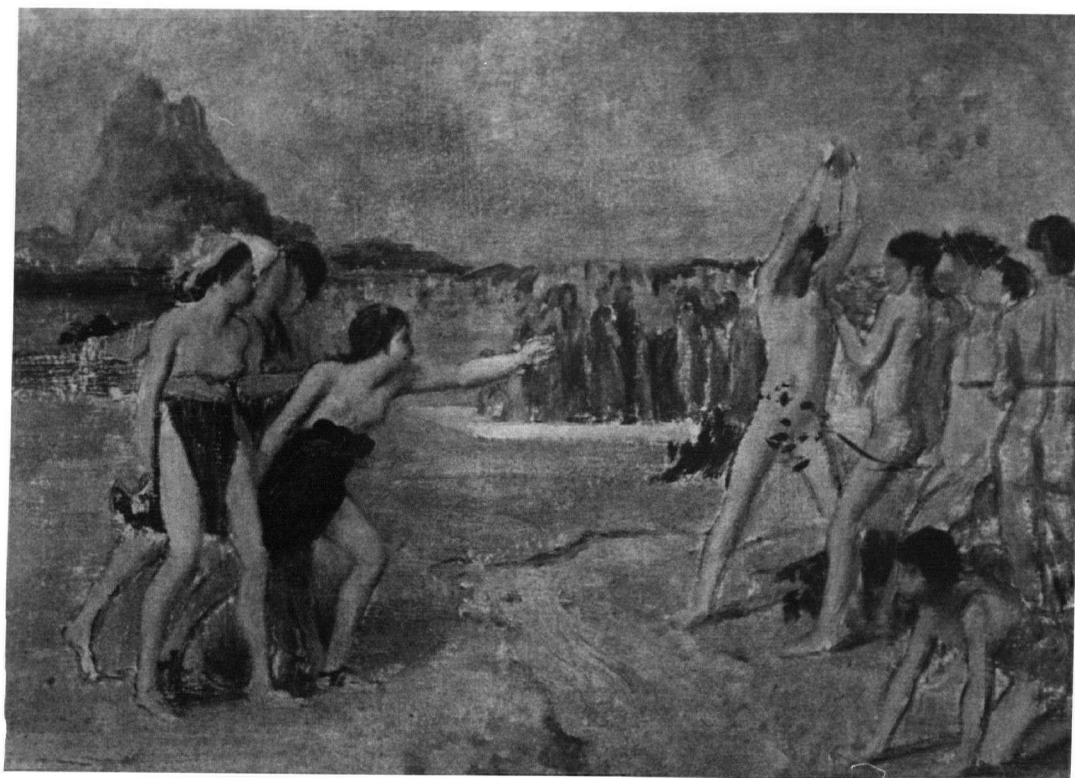


Figure 13



Figure 14

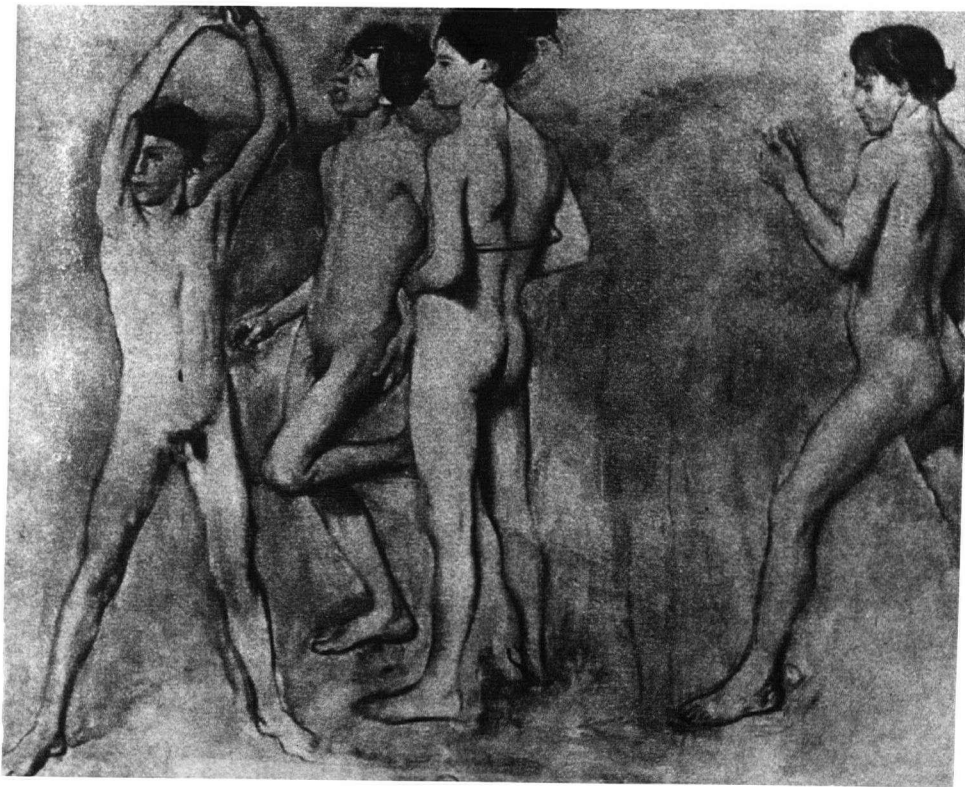


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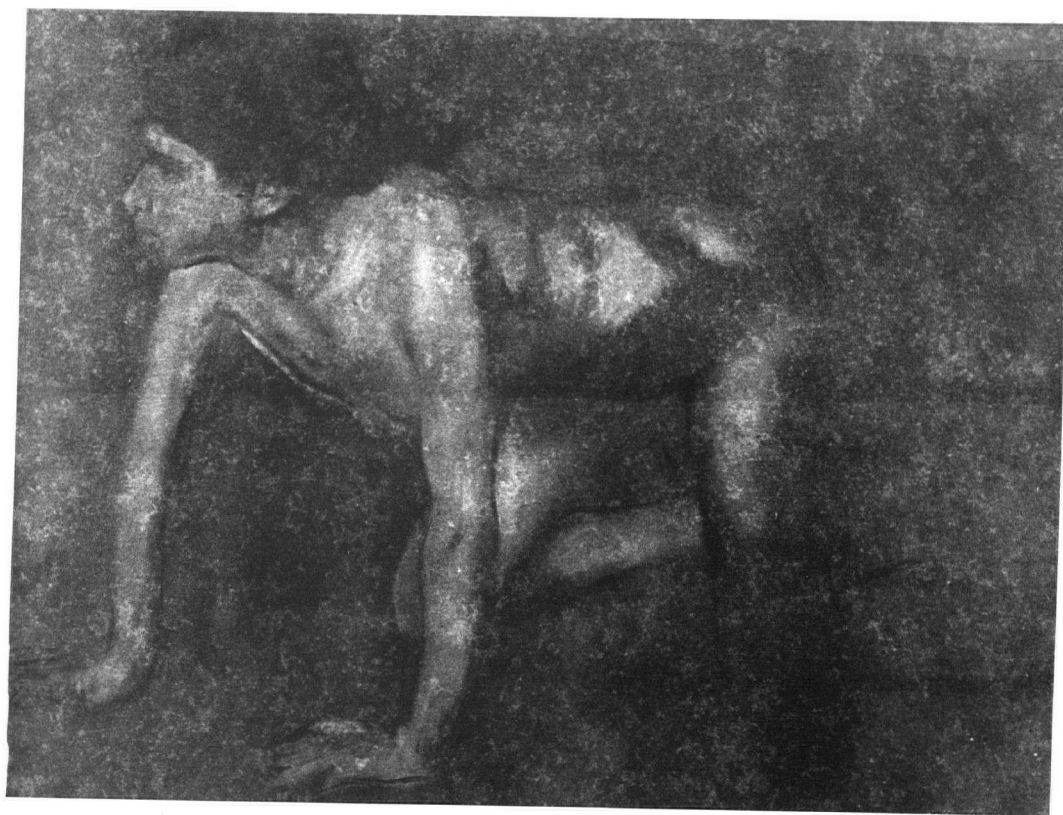


Figure 16



Figure 17

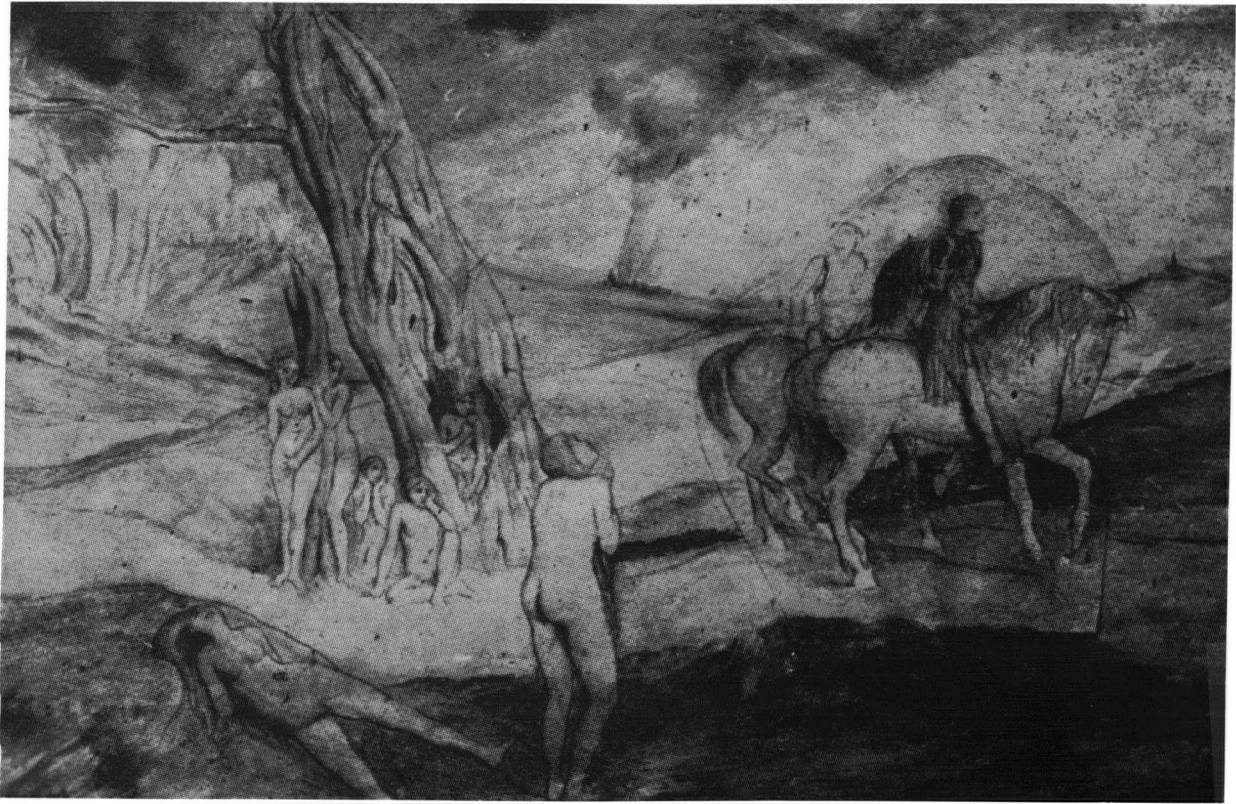


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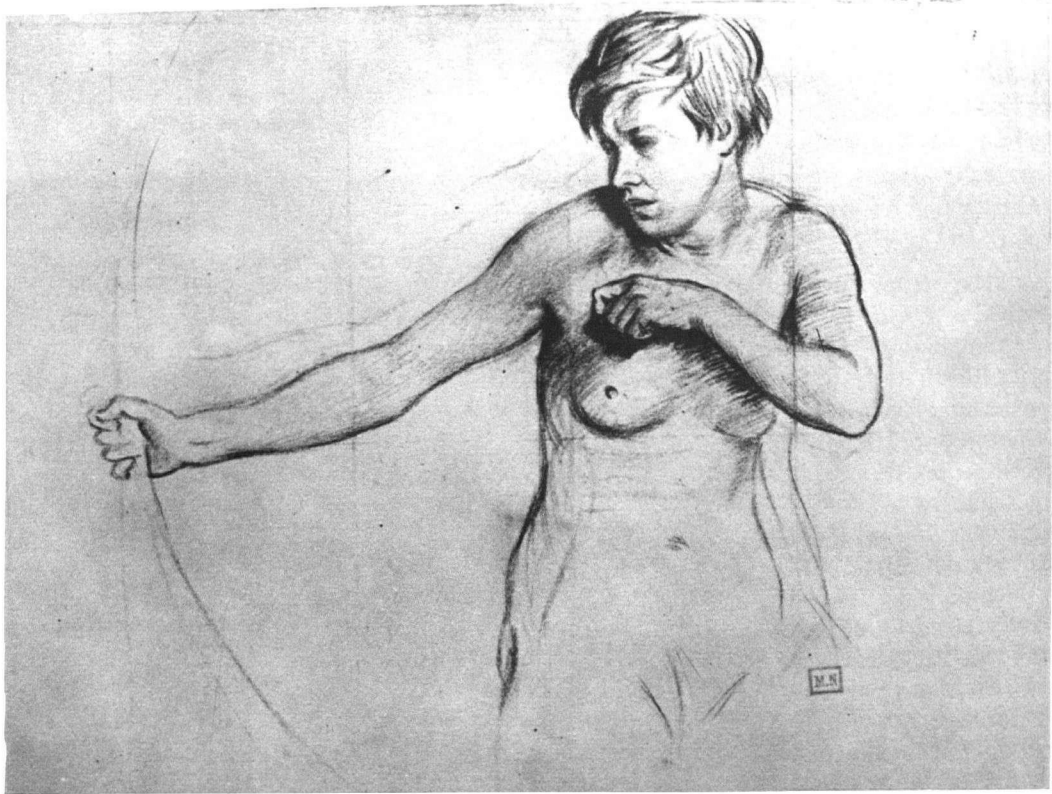


Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 28

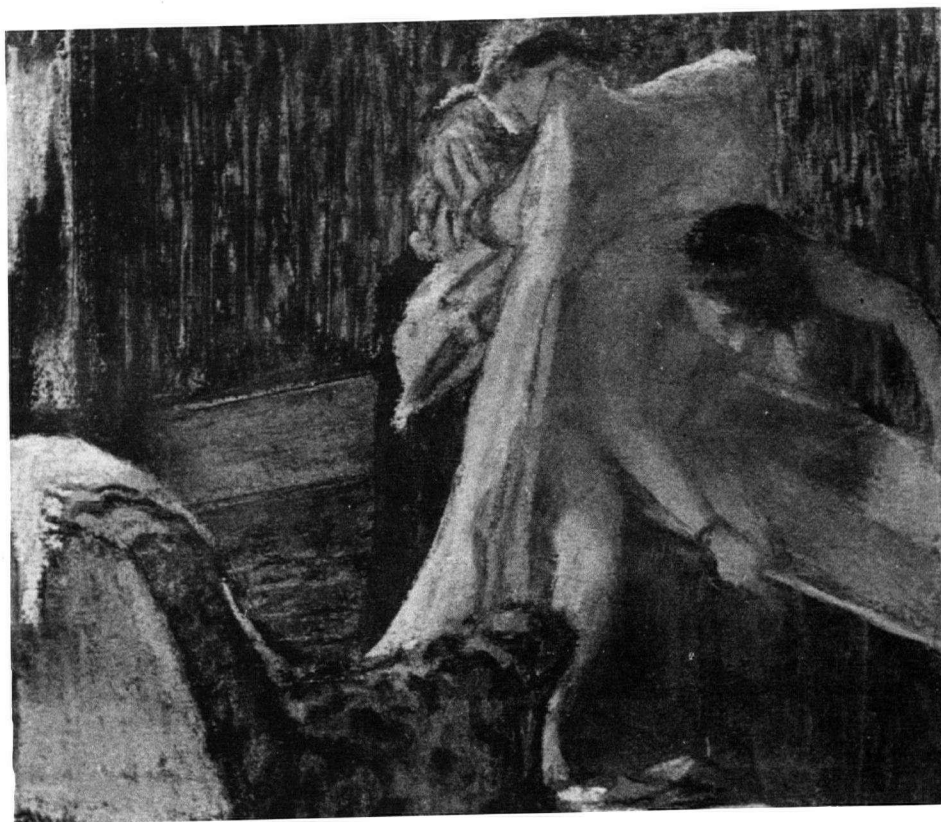


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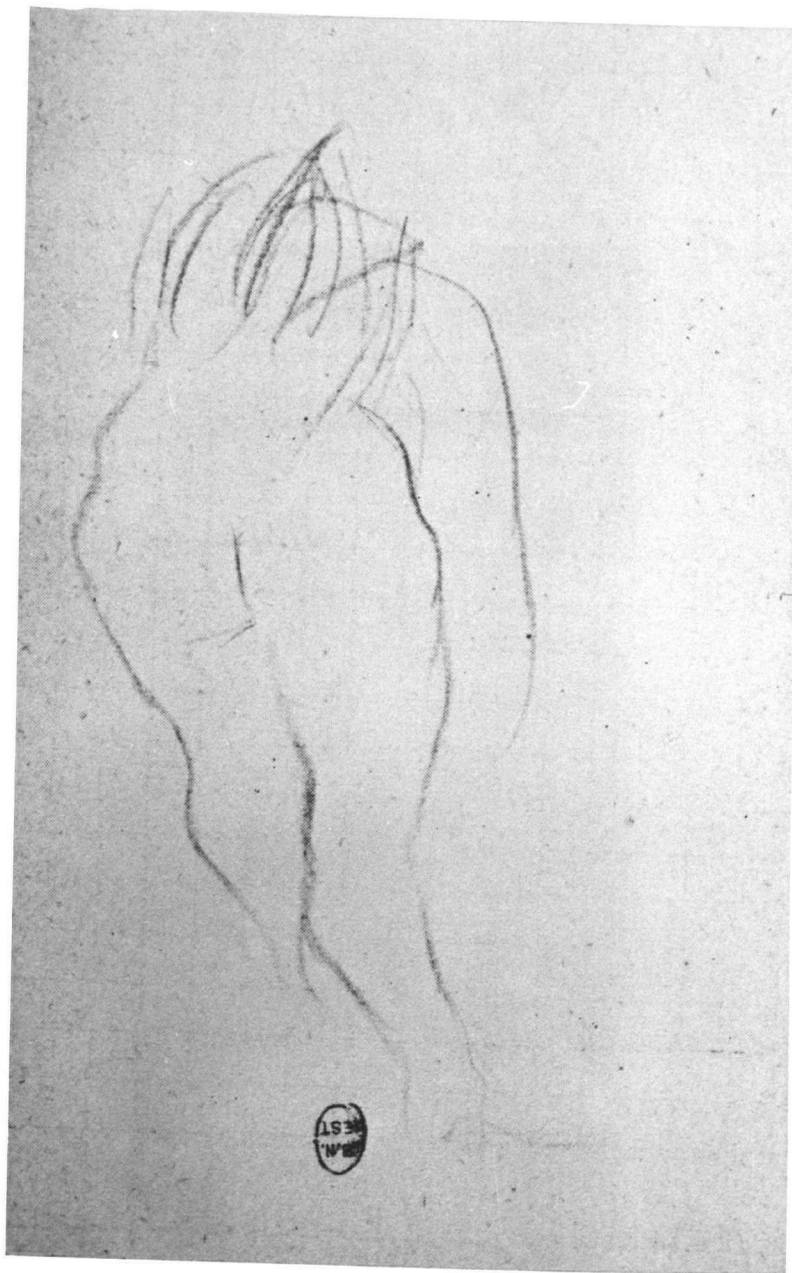


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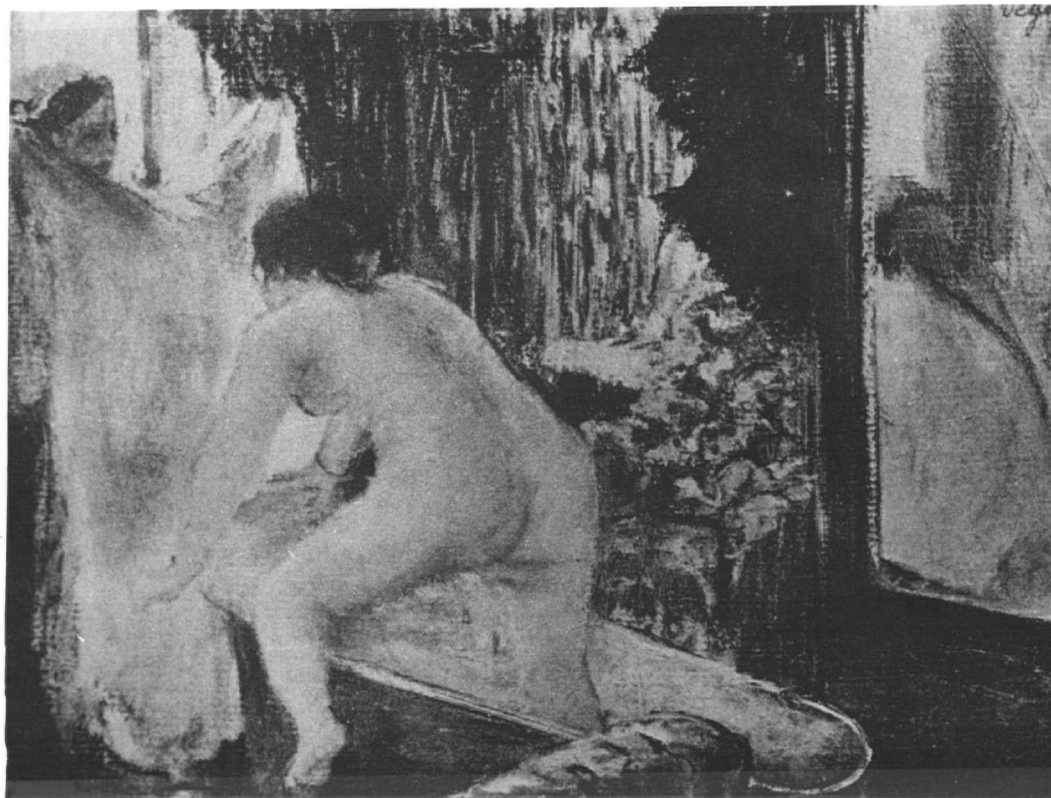


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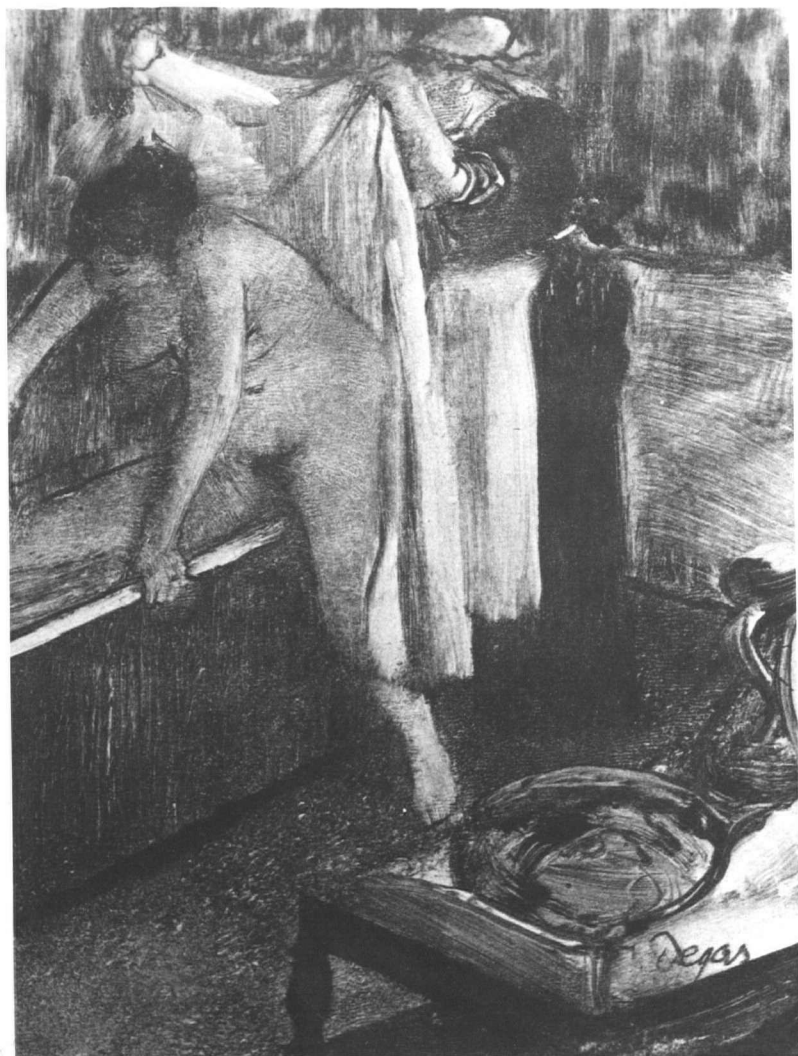


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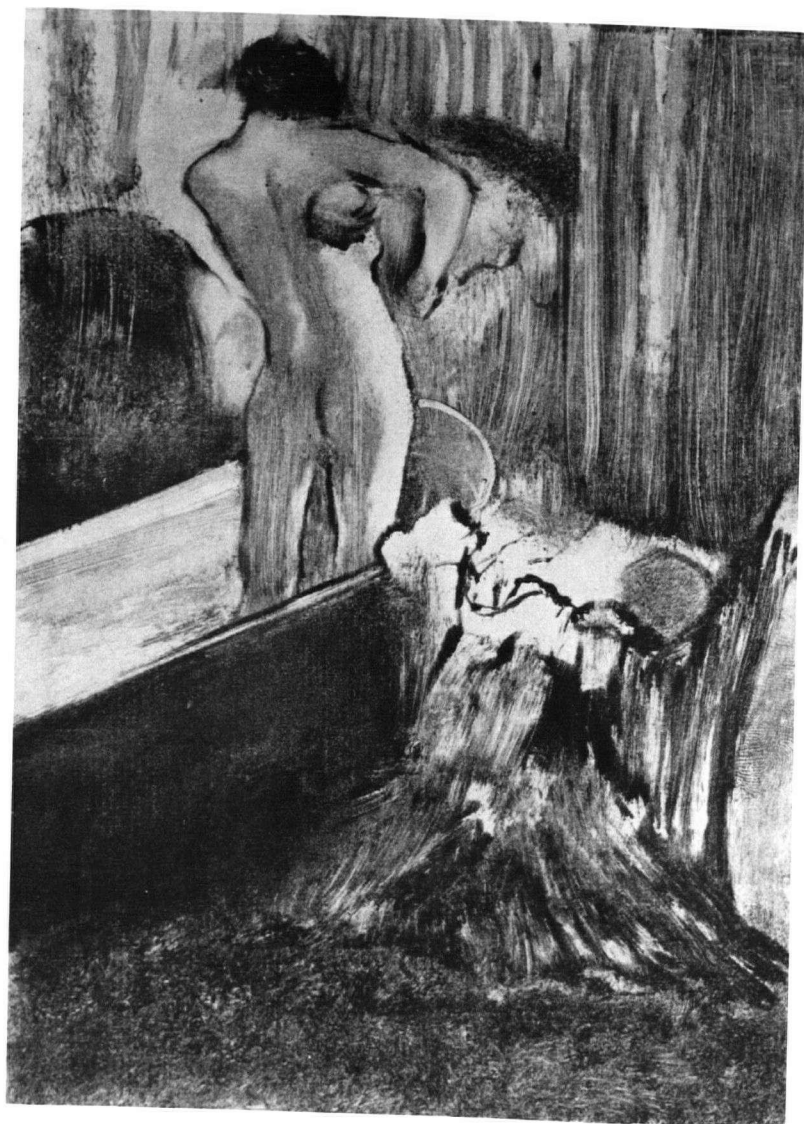


Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35

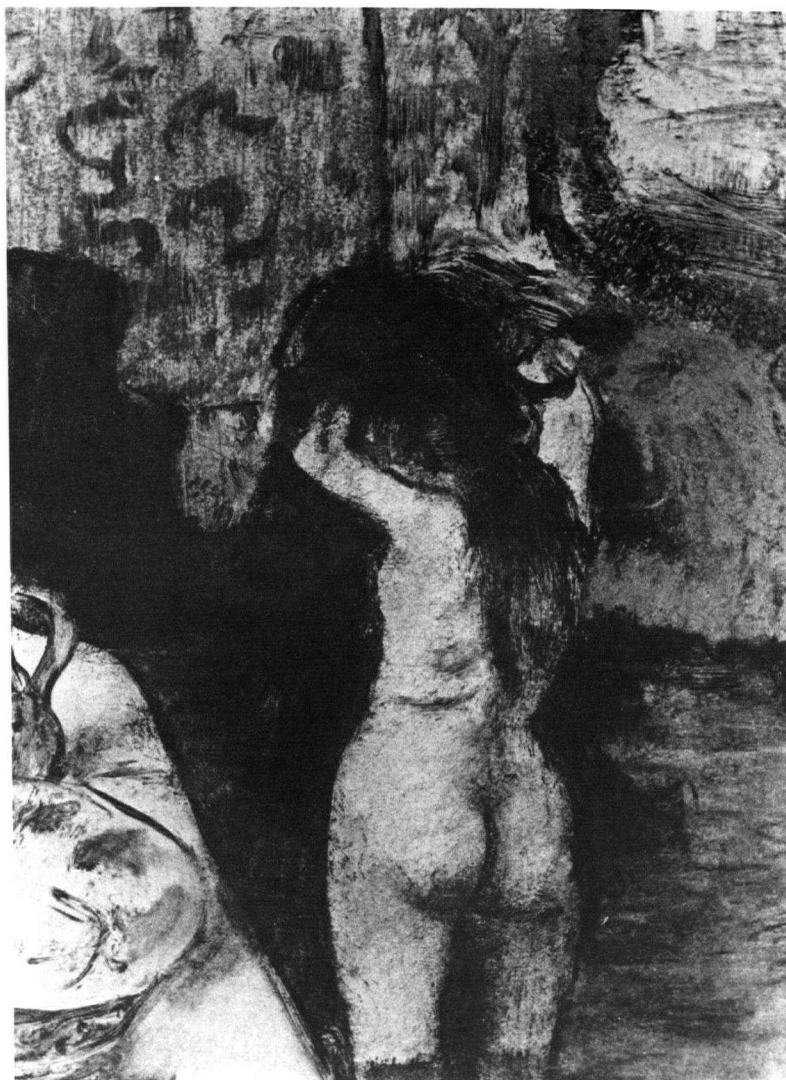


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Figure 38



Figure 39



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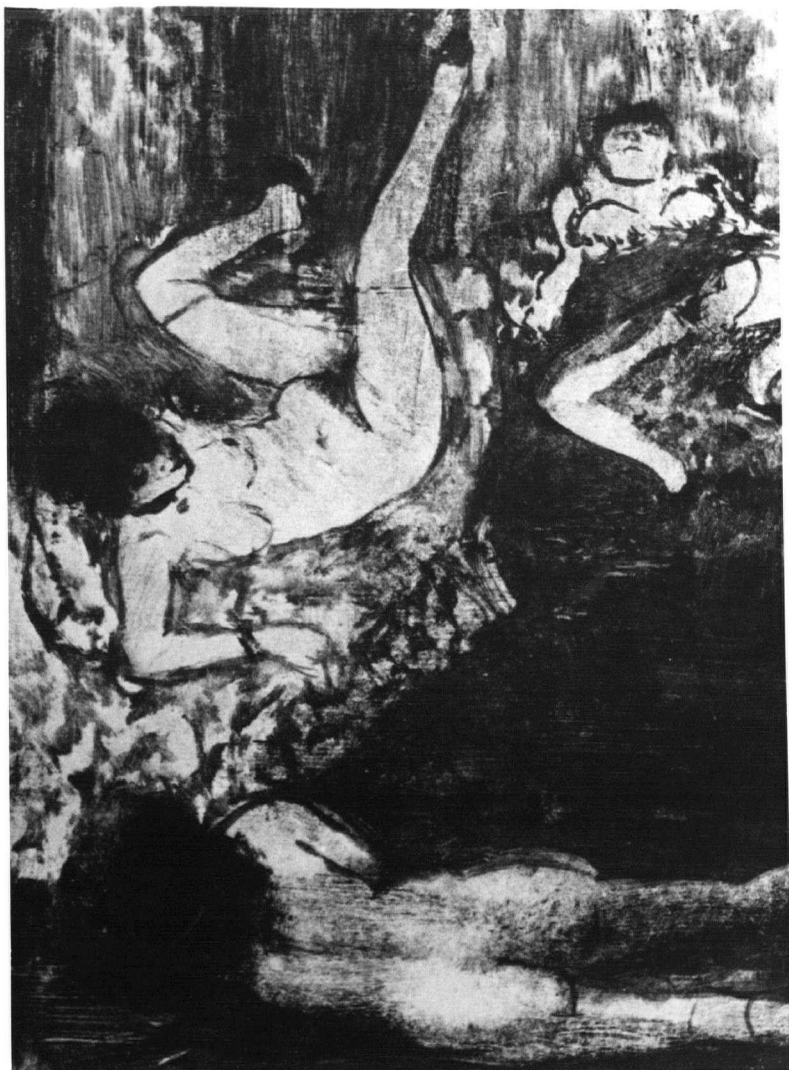


Figure 41



Figure 42

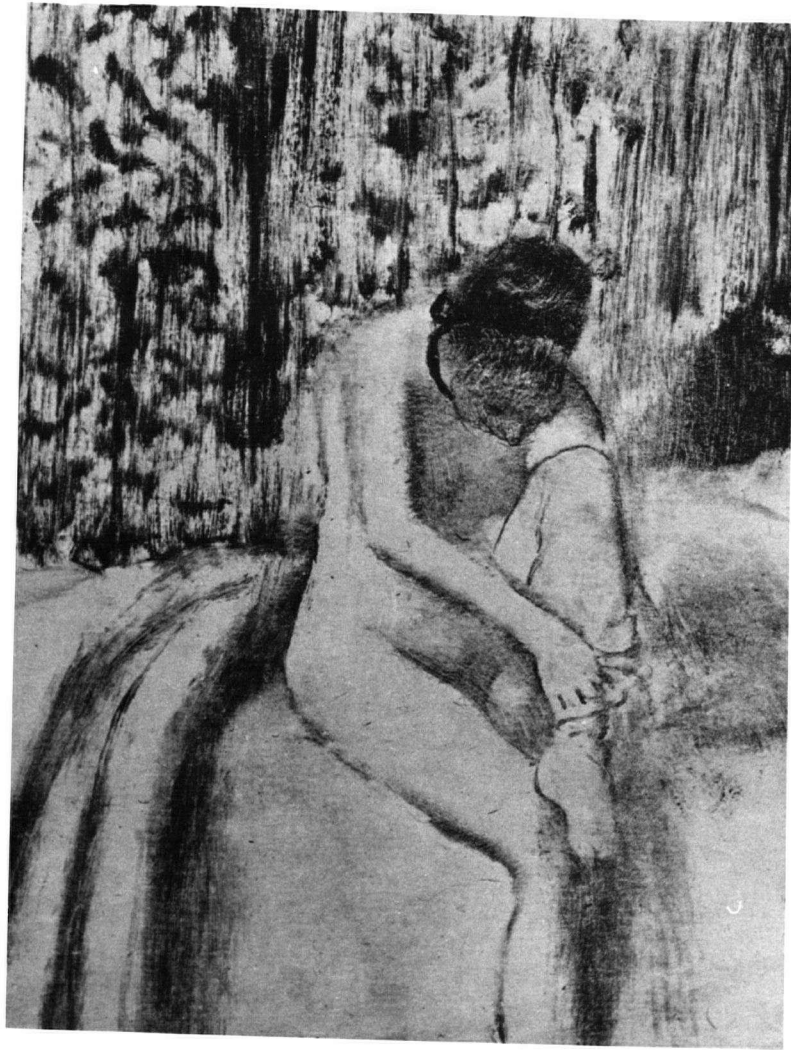


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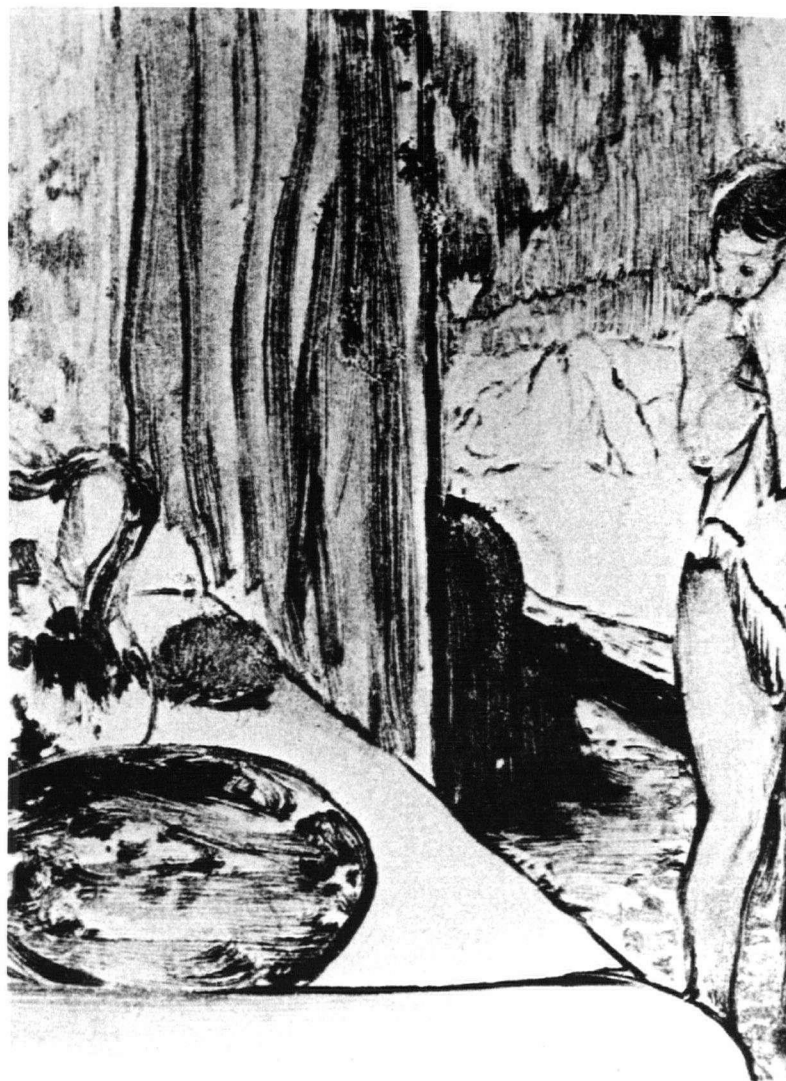


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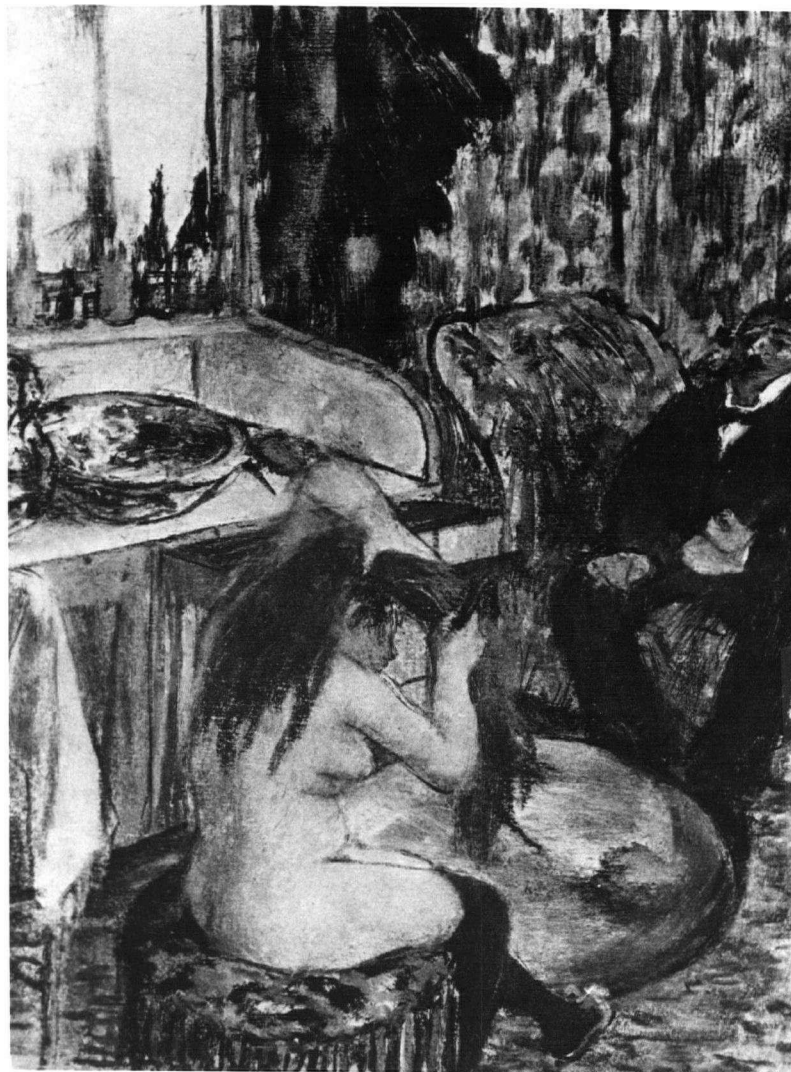


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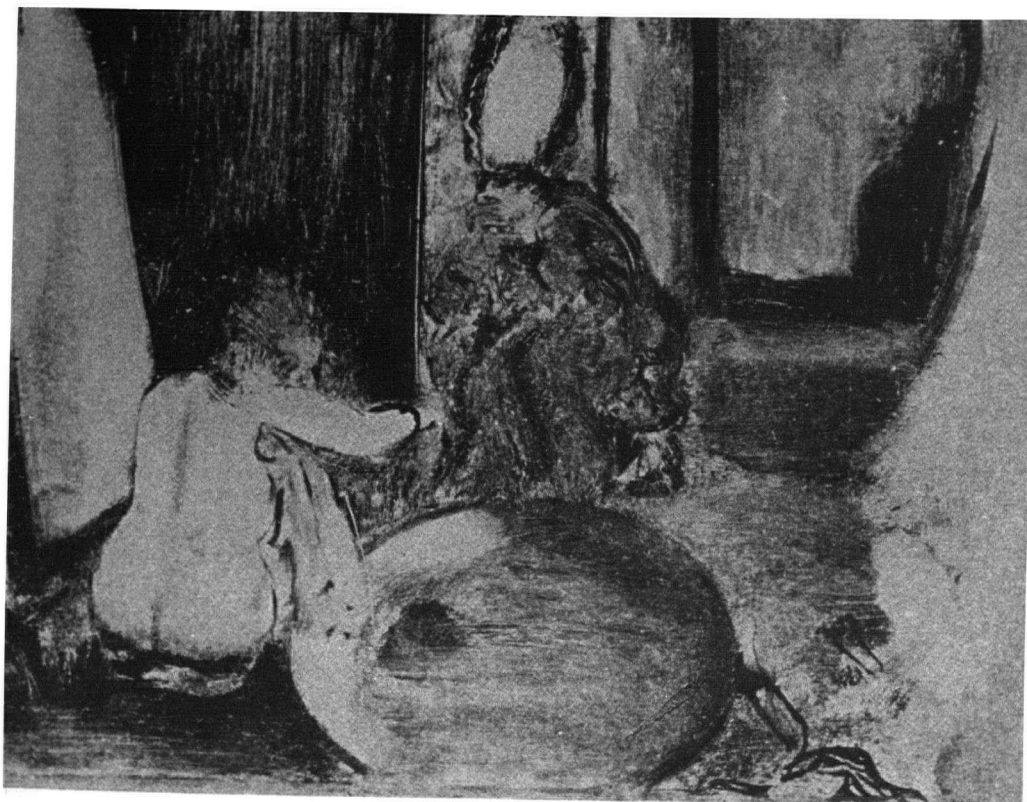


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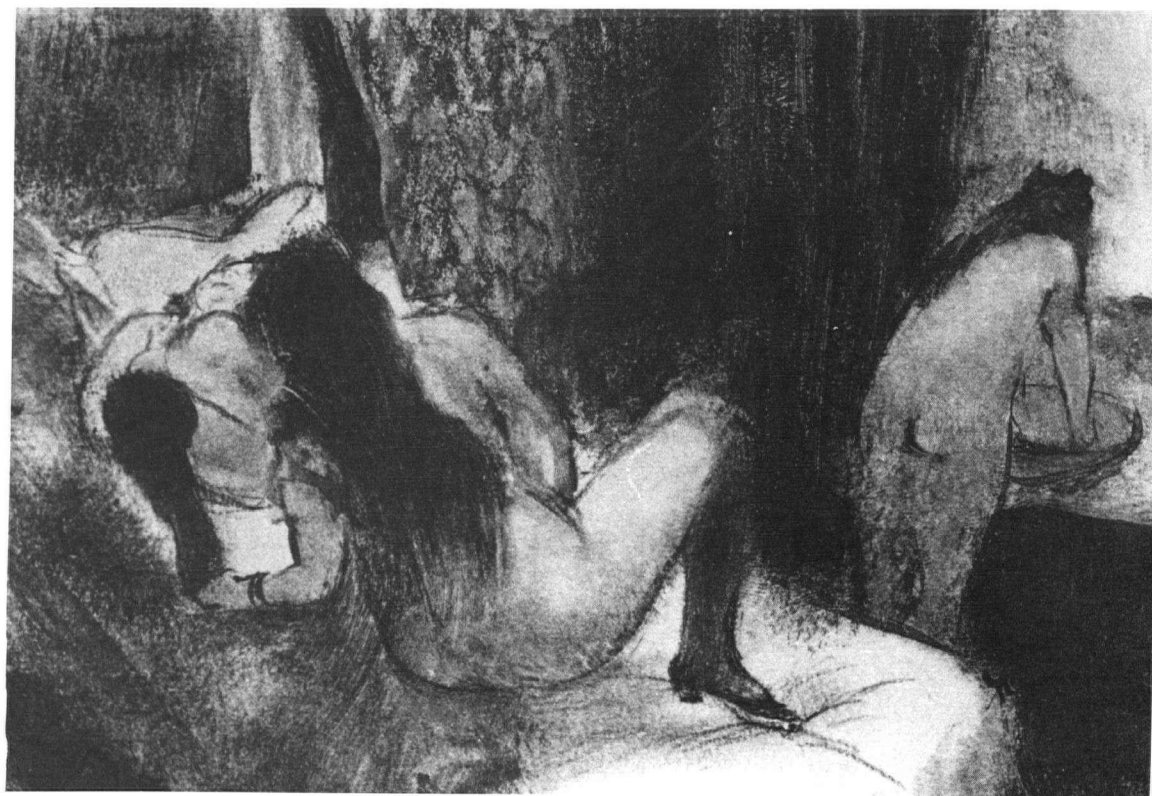


Figure 48



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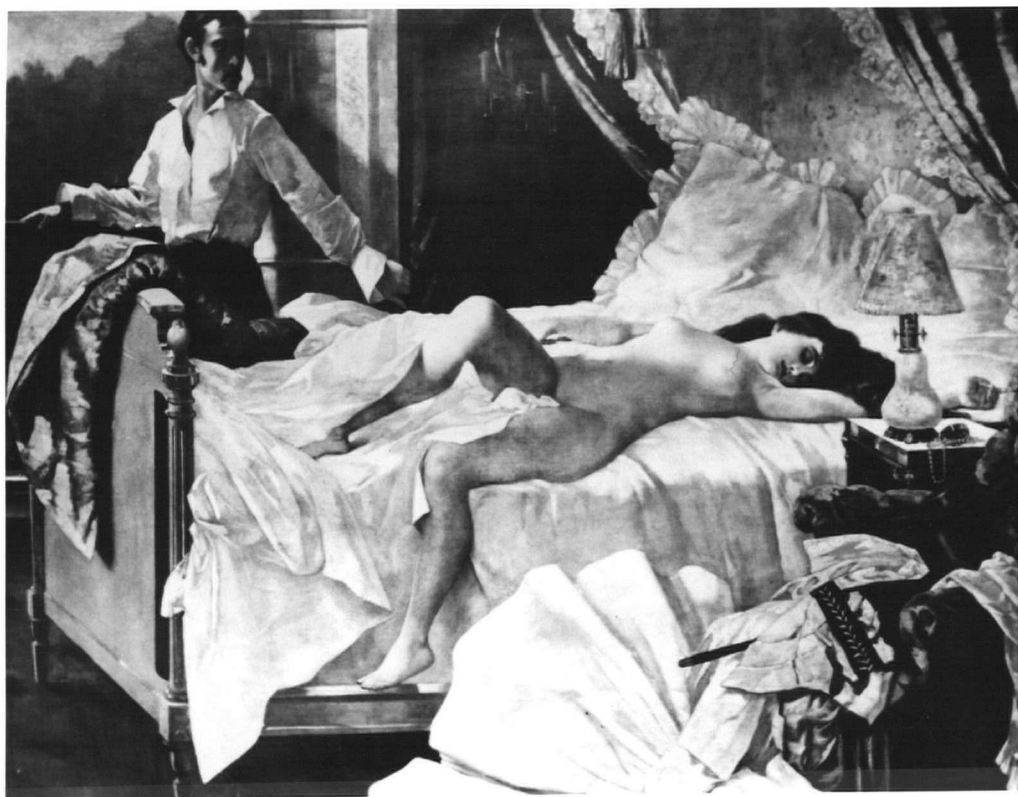


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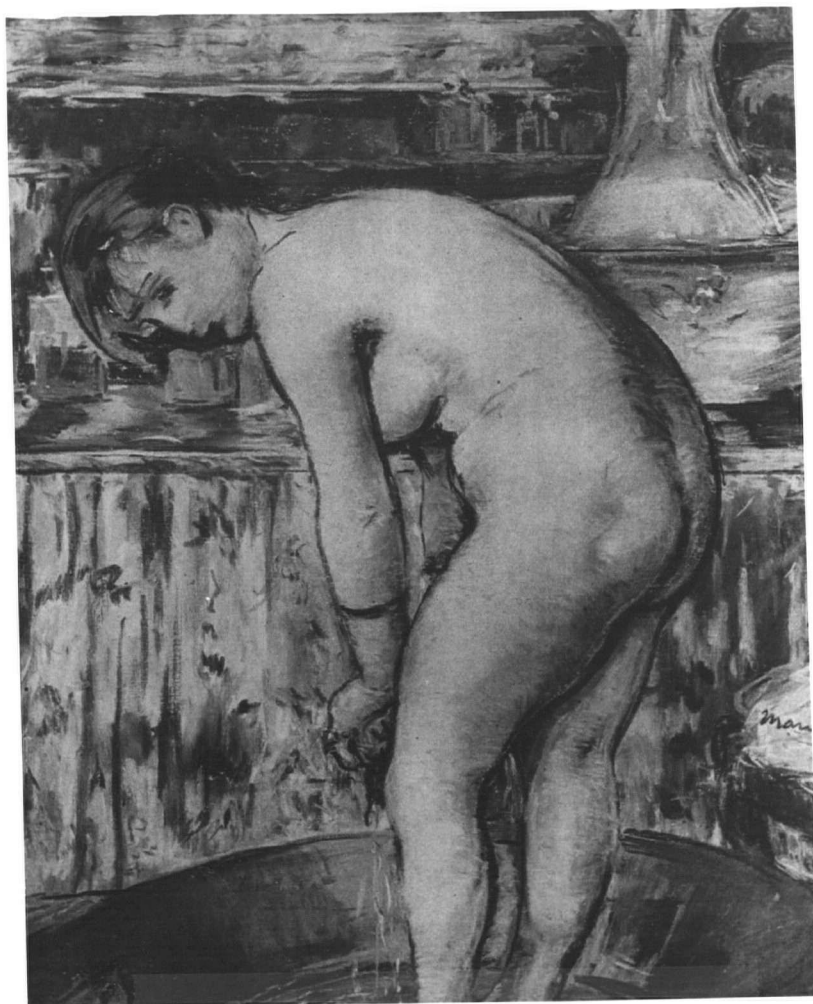


Figure 51



Figure 52

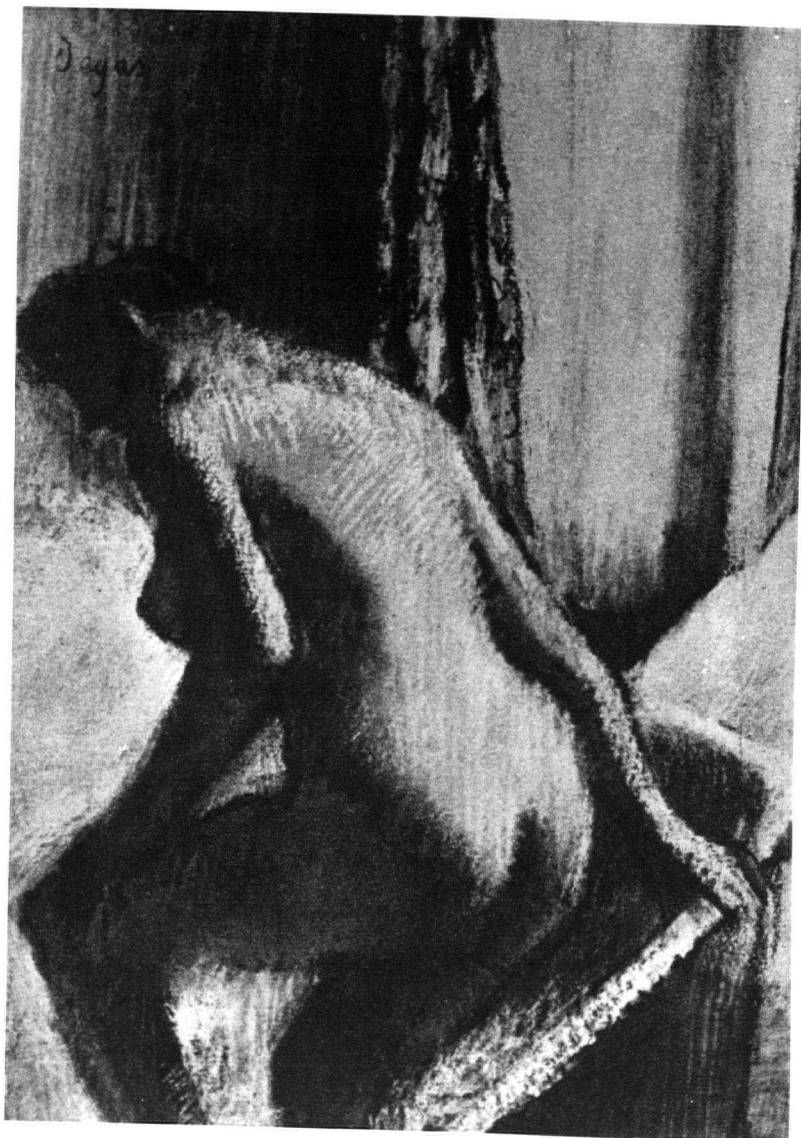


Figure 53

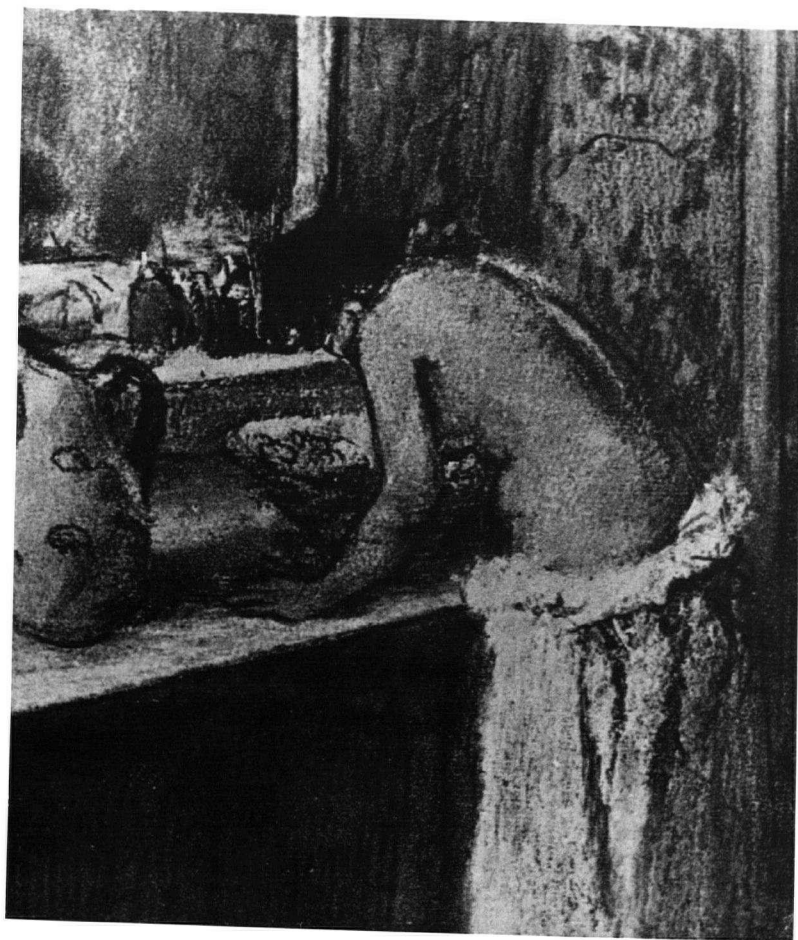


Figure 54