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# The 'Faithful' versus the 'Flattering' in Nineteenth-Century Portraiture

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## Abstract

The nineteenth century's creation of different optical devices such as the *camera obscura*, the kaleidoscope and the thaumatrope signifies a change in the perception of vision at the time. The aim of this dissertation is to examine the work of four artists with reference to nineteenth century concerns surrounding vision. The scope for this examination is limited to the painted portraiture of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Singer Sargent and photographic portraiture of Julia Margaret Cameron and Félix Nadar Tournachon. Rossetti and Cameron represent two Victorian artists whose vision is turned inward to the imagination, with feelings of nostalgia and sentimentalism evoked in their portraits. This dissertation argues that the act of turning the eye inwards to the imagination is at the root of the flattering quality of these two artists' portraits.

A further argument is that the sustained use of literary reference is the catalyst to the inward vision seen in these two Victorian artists' work. I examine Dante Gabriel Rossetti's later phase of idealised and 'flattering' portraits of women in relation to the sonnets that Rossetti began to physically attach to either the frame or canvas of the portrait. The use of literary reference as catalyst to the inward vision is discussed namely through Julia Margaret Cameron's photographic portraits based on Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*. Cameron's allegorical and often mythological portraits of women are then analysed in order to establish the 'flattering' quality of her portraits.

With regards to the two artists who have been termed 'faithful', an examination of their more outward vision and focus on the exterior realities is discussed. An exposition surrounding Félix Nadar Tournachon's 'faithful' photographic portraits of nineteenth-century celebrities follows the discussion on Cameron. In order to further enquire into the notion of nineteenth-century celebrities, an examination of John Singer Sargent follows. With the idea of Sargent being torn between the faithful and the flattering, I examine his more faithful Portrait of *Madame X* in relation to his later flattering celebrity portraits painted in the Grand Manner. In conclusion it will be suggested that Victorian and French ideas of vision and representation differed, exemplified by these four artists. These two very different perceptions of vision, one inward and the other outward, is the root of my distinction between the 'faithful' and the 'flattering' as manifested in portraiture.

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University of Cape Town

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## Introduction

Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion – all in one.<sup>1</sup> –

*John Ruskin*

### *i) Aims*

Portraiture in the nineteenth century evolved from being an art for the privileged to an art for all, due to photography. From the time when portraits painted in oils were reserved to the elite, the photograph and its reproducibility and availability “transformed the social function of the portrait. What had been a declaration of a socially privileged identity could become an instrument of control and detection and a product for commercial distribution.”<sup>2</sup> Besides believing that “l’industrie photographique était le refuge de tous les peintres manqués,”<sup>3</sup> in his *Salon de 1859* Baudelaire comments on the effect of the photographic portrait in society,

la société immonde se rua, comme un seul Narcisse, pour contempler sa triviale image sur le métal. Une folie, un fanatisme extraordinaire s’empara de tous ces nouveaux adorateurs du soleil.<sup>4</sup>

This statement by Baudelaire, regardless of its hostility towards the medium, emphasises the revolutionary effect photography had on the genre of portraiture. Portraits in oils, by the very use of the medium, emphasised status and significance. Oil paintings provided a sense of depth and luxuriance, which aids a sense of illusion, but the illusory effects of oils could be taken too far and by the mid nineteenth century French ‘official’ painters such as Meissonier were over exploiting the medium’s capabilities. Michael Fried describes how “the eye goes right through the surface of a Meissonier painting into a world of fantasy. Such pictures are both realistic and

<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, “Modern Painters,” in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook (London: George Allen, 1912), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, *Victorian literature and the Victorian visual imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1995), xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Translation: “As the photographic industry was the refuge of all the lacking painters.” Charles Baudelaire, “Le Salon de 1859: Lettres à m. le directeur de la Revue Française,” [http://88-191-151-184.rev.dedibox.fr/ressources/pdf/oeu\\_4.pdf](http://88-191-151-184.rev.dedibox.fr/ressources/pdf/oeu_4.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Translation: “The revolting society rushed, like a lonely Narcissus, to contemplate their trivial image on the metal. A madness, an extraordinary fanaticism taking hold of all these new worshippers of the sun,” Charles Baudelaire, “Le Salon de 1859: Lettres à m. le directeur de la Revue Française,” [http://88-191-151-184.rev.dedibox.fr/ressources/pdf/oeu\\_4.pdf](http://88-191-151-184.rev.dedibox.fr/ressources/pdf/oeu_4.pdf).

unreal; they have nothing to do with Realism.”<sup>5</sup> Gustave Courbet and the Impressionists’ use of a palette knife to produce a thick impasto on the canvas was used to discredit the Academic *fini*, or licked and polished surface, of the Official painters. The effect forces us to realize that we are in fact in front of a piece of art, a representation, not a window onto the world. From the middle of the century, an increasing number of artists began to explore artistic innovation, rejecting some of the traditional aims and ideals. This tendency is notably seen in the work of the Impressionists and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

This dissertation aims to examine four artists who were part of, or influenced by, these two groups of innovative artists: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Julia Margaret Cameron, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (Nadar) and John Singer Sargent. Each artist has been categorised as creating either ‘flattering’ or ‘faithful’ portrait representations of their subjects. An investigation into what produces either the flattering or faithful quality of these artists’ work is the main focus of this thesis. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the painter, and Julia Margaret Cameron, the photographer, both worked in Victorian England and both produced flattering and idealised portraits of their subjects. Nadar, the photographer, and John Singer Sargent, the painter, both worked in France and produced what I describe as faithful portraits. Sargent, however, was conflicted, and with his move to England began to paint more flattering portraits. In this thesis I would like to explore how Rossetti, Cameron, Sargent and Nadar attempted in painting and photography to create portraits within the framework of the faithful versus the flattering. I will argue that the flattery of Cameron and Rossetti’s works takes root within the notion of the Victorian visual imagination and will expand on this through a discussion of their flattering portraiture.

Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, in their jointly edited book *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, attempted a study that provides an account of vision and visuality in nineteenth-century British art and literature.<sup>6</sup> I will define the term ‘Victorian visual imagination’ in the following subsection in order to produce an analysis of flattery with regards to Rossetti and Cameron. In doing so, I will examine the link between flattery and literature in these artists’ work. In general, I will be asking and exploring what the nature of the relationship between art and literature in Victorian England was, and why it produced a flattering quality in the later portraiture of Rossetti and the portraits of Cameron. Therefore my interest is to uncover

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Fried, *Courbet’s Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 265.

<sup>6</sup> Christ and Jordan, xxii.

the relationship between portraiture and literature in the works of these two artists. Rossetti and Cameron represent two Victorian artists whose vision is turned inward to the imagination, where feelings of nostalgia and sentimentalism are evoked in their portraits. This dissertation argues that the act of turning the eye inwards to the imagination is at the root of the flattering quality of these two artists' portraits. A further argument is that the sustained use of literary reference is the catalyst to this inward vision.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was trained academically; however, his work represented a rejection of the ideals of the Academy through his repudiation of classicism, his adoption of medievalism and his idealization and romanticism, as well as through his sustained use of literary reference. I am interested in Rossetti's pairing of his own sonnets with his portraits from the 1860s and I will examine whether his sonnets provide a context for the portraits, if the portraits give weight to his poetry, or if the accompanying poems help bring to life the bodies he pictures. To contextualise this, in the first chapter I will discuss the industrial revolution and the retreat into the imagination. I will then examine Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata* in order to emphasise the flattering quality evident in Rossetti's style. Consequently I will discuss *Lady Lilith*, and its corresponding sonnet *Body's Beauty*, to illustrate Rossetti's sustained use of literary reference. My aim will be to emphasise that the literary component of the artwork encourages a retreat into the imagination. Finally and in conclusion, I will discuss *Proserpine* in order to conclude the discussion surrounding the word-image relationship in Rossetti's artworks and the question as to whether his sonnets illuminate the portraits or vice versa.

In my study of Cameron, I am interested in why she created sentimental photographic portraits based, most often, on the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson, and I enquire into the relationship in her work between word and image. The aim is to analyse if the literary associations give weight, or form, to the portraits. The portraits I am choosing to examine by Cameron do not represent or signify reality; they signify an *escape* into a world of literature, allegory and medievalism, an *alternative* reality. However, through this alternative reality and through the symbols that one deciphers one discovers an understanding of, for example, class and gender divides and religious concerns so inherent to the Victorian period. Cameron's assimilation of fiction, poetry and biblical stories into the practice of photography sees this new 'mechanical' medium of photography take on all the textual and aesthetic richness of the traditional visual arts. The second chapter of this dissertation will therefore first examine the

nineteenth-century debate surrounding photography as a new ‘mechanical’ medium and photography’s ability to rise to the status of the traditional visual arts. Secondly, it will examine Cameron’s style of photography and how this impacts on her retreat into the imagination. Thirdly, it will discuss her portraits for Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* in order to establish Cameron’s sustained use of literary reference in her portraits. Lastly, it will examine Cameron’s portraits of men and women and examine the differences and similarities between the two.

The dissertation will then extend to a discussion surrounding the faithfulness of the portraiture of Nadar and John Singer Sargent, in France. Nadar is a natural subject of study here, and an interesting complement to Cameron as his photographic portraits represent a break from the norms of established painted portraiture. This is seen through his choice of Bohemian subjects, who marked themselves as ‘different’ and displayed an ‘otherness’ to the higher classes. It is seen also in the lack of any material props used by Nadar, a sort of cleansing of the image of supporting reference.

The proliferation of photographic images in the nineteenth century accentuated the notion of the ‘other’, especially through anthropological and colonial endeavours; the photograph established “colonial populations along a developmental timeline extending from people classified as primitive and implicitly degenerate to those who were contrastingly modern and progressive.”<sup>7</sup> Liz Wells argues that “the photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.”<sup>8</sup> I will argue that photography and the proliferation of photographic images of people displaying an otherness to the standards of representation seen in either Grand Manner portraits is evident in Nadar’s images of his Bohemian contemporaries. In these, he makes a point of referencing difference through creativity. The marking of himself and his contemporaries as creative was spelt out through the contemporary Bohemian dress of his subjects, and often clothes are recycled in Nadar’s portraits, emphasising his management of this aspect of the setting and the scene. With regard to Nadar’s sitters, the Bohemians, does photography heighten their visibility and enhance their image? The third chapter will begin with a discussion surrounding Nadar’s Bohemian subjects, and what they represented in nineteenth century France. Secondly, I will examine how these sitters impacted on Nadar’s simplicity of

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy Armstrong, “Realism before and after Photography: The fantastical form of relation among things,” in *A Concise Companion to Realism*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 103.

<sup>8</sup> Liz Wells, Introduction to *Photography: a Critical introduction*, ed. Liz Wells (London: New York: Routledge, 2000), 12.

style and props and the photographer's representation of them, creating faithful representations of his subjects.

John Singer Sargent was academically trained in the Grand Manner and initially he submitted portraits to the Paris Salon, and yet for a period in his early career he believed in portraying his subjects frankly. Without physical flattery of the face or figure, he aimed to hold the mirror up to life and paint his subjects as he saw them. With the damning criticisms Sargent received for his faithful portrayal of Virginie Gautreau in his *Portrait of Madame X*, he left France for England and returned to painting in the Grand Manner of the Fine Art tradition. Sargent was torn between the faithful and the flattering in his career. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will first examine Sargent's training in the Grand Manner and then discuss *Madame X*. I will consider Sargent's move to England and return to the Grand Manner. The notion of celebrity and of making oneself visible, pertinent to Nadar's portraits, occurs here as well, in a discussion of sitters who were largely figures of wealth and prestige.

## ***ii) Setting the Scene: the Victorian visual imagination and an art-historical introduction***

In order to contextualize my investigation it will be necessary to discuss the concept of the Victorian visual imagination and to uncover how this links to industrialized Victorian Britain. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan first used the term in 1995 in their book *Victorian literature and the Victorian visual imagination* and Kate Flint re-used it five years later in her book *The Victorians and the visual imagination*. The 'Victorian visual imagination' forms a foundation to my examination into the flattering portraits of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Julia Margaret Cameron.

Christ and Jordan explain that aesthetic theorists in nineteenth-century Britain regarded the eye as the "pre-eminent organ of truth" and that poetic theory of the nineteenth century hailed the "inward eye" and the poet's power of "painting a picture to the inward eye", thus creating a word painting.<sup>9</sup> The painting of pictures in one's mind's eye is seen in the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson, John Keats and William Blake, where their extensive descriptions of Nature are used to produce what Henry James called "the illusion of life."<sup>10</sup> With an emphasis on description

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<sup>9</sup> Christ and Jordan, xxii – xxiii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, xx.

and minute details of nature, pictorial and verbal representations were often intertwined. This link between aesthetic theory and nature created a visual experience in literature, a poetic picture. These poetic pictures or picture poems offer to the viewer or reader visual representations of the written. The visual representations of the written bred a Victorian interest in the experiment between art and literature, which in turn drew one in to the visual imagination. Christ and Jordan's definition of the 'Victorian visual imagination', then essentially, can be applied to my notion of flattery and to Rossetti's and Cameron's linking of their portraits to poetry and allegory. The notion of the 'Victorian visual imagination' signals the turning of the eye inward, to the imagination, through literary associations.

With Jonathan Crary's "Techniques of the Observer"<sup>11</sup> as the foundation of their arguments, Christ and Jordan examine the changing perceptions and the new model of subjective vision of the observer that emerged in the early nineteenth century. However, they note that on the other hand the invention of the camera and other optical devices aided to extend the powers of objective observation. My terms 'faithful' and 'flattering' are also rooted in the nineteenth century preoccupation with vision and the attempts to navigate a method of acquiring visual knowledge truthfully and objectively. With regards to the notion of 'flattery,' Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* is relevant. Crary argues that the invention of different optical devices, such as the kaleidoscope, *camera lucida* and the Thaumatrope<sup>12</sup>, accounted for a new debate surrounding visual subjectivity in the nineteenth century. He explains this new debate through Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 'Theory of Colours' published in 1810. In his theory, Goethe uses the *camera obscura* as the site of his studies. Goethe examines what happens when one seals off the hole of the *camera obscura* and explains that upon doing so he looks to the darkest corner of the room and states that he sees the image of a circle floating before him.

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<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Crary, "Techniques of the Observer", *October* 45 (Summer, 1988): pp. 3-35,

<sup>12</sup> A kaleidoscope is a cylinder comprising of mirrors and coloured objects that one looks into, light from the opposite end creates different unique colours and patterns as it lights through the mirrors and objects. The *camera Lucida* was used as a drawing aid that superimposed the subject on to a piece paper that the artist drew upon. Almost like a telescope, the *camera lucida* comprised of two mirrors in the eye piece. One whole mirror and one slivered. The subject is then reflected through the mirrors and the paper also. The artist would then trace the subject on the paper.

The Thaumatrope was a small disc that had an image on either side (Say a bird on one side and a cage on the other). On each side of the disc were two strings that if one pulled made the disk spin, superimposing the images together, making them one image.

Furthermore, Goethe states that,

[t]he middle of the circle will appear bright, colorless, or somewhat yellow, but the border will appear red. After a time this red, increasing towards the centre, covers the whole circle, and at last the bright central point. No sooner, however, is the whole circle red than the edge begins to be blue, and the blue gradually encroaches inwards on the red. When the whole is blue the edge becomes dark and colorless. The darker edge again slowly encroaches on the blue till the whole circle appears colorless.<sup>13</sup>

Crary's claim is that this 'optical experience' was new, that it did not fit into the nineteenth century's classical model of vision and optical experience. Crary again points to how "Goethe explains at length, [that] they [the images] are 'physiological colors' belonging entirely to the body of the observer."<sup>14</sup> As the perception of these colours belongs entirely physiologically to the observer, Crary is highlighting how subjective the act of perception, and thus the acquisition of visual knowledge, is. Due to this subjectivism inherent in one's perception, Crary notes that "the ramifications of Goethe's color theory are manifold and have little to do with the empirical 'truth' of his assertions or the 'scientific' character of his experiments."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, what Crary points out as 'crucial' to

Goethe's account of subjective vision is the inseparability of two models usually presented as distinct and irreconcilable: a physiological subject who will be described in increasing detail by the empirical sciences in the nineteenth century, and an observer posited by various 'romanticisms' and early modernisms as the active, autonomous producer of his or her own content.<sup>16</sup>

The empirical sciences in the nineteenth century were heavily grounded in positivism, which can be summarized as the belief that knowledge is the product of science, observation, reason and sensory experience.

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<sup>13</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Eastlake (Chicago: MIT Press, 1970), 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Crary, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

Crary argues that in the nineteenth century

Vision, rather than a privileged form of knowing, becomes itself an object of knowledge, of observation. From the beginning of the nineteenth century a science of vision will tend to mean increasingly an interrogation of the makeup of the human subject, rather than of the mechanics of light and optical transmission.<sup>17</sup>

This statement highlights specifically the debate surrounding visual subjectivity that emerged in the nineteenth century. Crary's debate surrounding Goethe's theory and the increased debate surrounding nineteenth-century optical devices highlight the challenge to the classical model of vision. Christ and Jordan base their argument on the work of Crary, stating that "much in the standard literary history of the nineteenth century supports Crary's claim that an analysis of vision gives crucial insight into the way the Victorians constructed experience."<sup>18</sup>

Kate Flint's *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* also emphasizes the role of sight in Victorian culture. Flint states that "the Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of reliability – or otherwise – of the human eye, and of the problems of interpreting what they saw,"<sup>19</sup> thus highlighting the Victorian debate surrounding what Christ and Jordan labeled scientific objectivism and personally singular subjectivism in Victorian England.<sup>20</sup> For Flint "in each case, the act of seeing was something performed by individuals, each with their own particular subjectivities and ocular physiology."<sup>21</sup> What arises from the act of seeing, the question of reliability and of interpretation, gives rise to what Flint calls "outward and inward seeing," outward seeing belonging to observation and inward seeing to the imagination.

The relation between the art produced in the nineteenth century and the socio-political climate is inextricably linked. In France, revolutions and social upheaval brought many changes, changes that profoundly affected the art of the nineteenth century. But in France, these socio-political changes gave rise to an avant-garde call for depictions of the 'real', a revelling in urban life. By contrast, nineteenth-century British literature and art often manifested a disdain and fear of the city and a retreat from industrialization into the sentimental and romanticised.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Christ and Jordan, xix.

<sup>19</sup> Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the visual imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Christ and Jordan, xxii.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 2.

Isobel Armstrong describes Victorian modernism as

belonging to a condition of crisis which has emerged directly from economic and cultural change. In fact, Victorian poetics begins to conceptualise the idea of culture as a category and includes itself within the definition...[T]o be 'new' or 'modern'...was to confront and self-consciously to conceptualise *as* new elements that are still perceived as the constitutive forms of our own conditions.<sup>22</sup>

This condition of crisis in society defined the new modern era in England and France and saw an increased importance laid on sight, seeing, and the eye as the organ of truth, not just in visual art but in literature as well, as emphasised by the quote from John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* at the beginning of this introduction. The eye as the organ of truth extends to photography as well where in 1839 Louis Daguerre's development of the daguerreotype marked "the moment when sensation became the only reliable basis of knowledge, and the sense of sight assumed priority over all other senses."<sup>23</sup>

With the advent of photography, the genre of portraiture changed dramatically, as previously mentioned. It became easier for public figures or celebrities to advertise themselves. In the words of Linda M. Shires, photography became a perfect medium for "public figures whose fame rested on their exploitation of themselves as spectacles."<sup>24</sup> After the revolutions the monarchy and clergy became tainted in the eyes of the working class, and the class struggles visible in France and England gave rise to what Shires calls

a host of new public figures – Military men, scientists, authors, whose fame was earned and worked for, not inherited. This new form of 'fame' depended on being seen – seen at certain places, with certain people, and in particular outfits or poses. As we know, the Victorians worshiped celebrities from Wellington to Nightingale, even unwinding the shrouds of corpses in their Carlylean quest for some authority to gaze upon.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Isobel Armstrong, *Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy Armstrong, 103.

<sup>24</sup> Linda M. Shires, "The Author as Spectator and Commodity: Elizabeth Barret Browning and Thomas Hardy," in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1995), 198.

<sup>25</sup> Shires, 199.

Thus, the nineteenth-century celebrity can range from heiresses and writers to public figures such as Nightingale. The concept of celebrity subjects brings me back to the discussions surrounding vision and the primacy of vision, for celebrity was parasitic upon a 'vision-hungry' public. In the discussions of Sargent and Nadar, it will be interesting to consider how faithfulness connects to the representation of Nadar and Sargent's 'public figure', as Sargent often represented the famed of the bourgeoisie, and Nadar, the famed Bohemians, both of whom worked for their fame through modern modes of visibility.

However, within this 'faithfulness' that connects many of the photographic images of public figures, there is an element that belies the transparency and objectivity that the medium claimed to possess. With the use of props and lighting, photographers and painters were adept at manipulating a scene in order to project the best appearance of their subject. In attempting to portray the beauty of a subject, or rather to enhance any pleasing physical features the patron or subject possessed, the photographic artist found ways to manipulate them. Melinda Boyd Parsons explains how the growing importance in representing the beauty or the essence of the subject can be seen through the enhancement of the subject's self "through the arrangement of elements in the original scene and the decorative, expressive disposition of those elements across the picture surface."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the notion of representing the sitter's beauty or 'essence' relies on the artist's manipulation of the scene and also the subject's ability to put their best face forward, so to speak, and to self-stage. It is an interesting paradox that it was thought that 'essence' is best brought out through enhancement of the subject.

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<sup>26</sup> Melinda Boyd Parsons, "The Fine Art Tradition," In *British Photography in the nineteenth century*, ed. Mike Weaver (England: Cambridge University press, 1989), 281.

### *iii). Faithfulness versus Flattery*

In this thesis I have labelled each of the artists I am discussing as either producing faithful or flattering representations of their subjects in the portrait genre. These 'labels' refer, in essence, to Realism and idealism, though I have termed the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Julia Margaret Cameron as flattering, and not simply idealistic, in order to better incorporate notions of Romanticism and the visual imagination of the Victorians. I have termed the portraiture of Nadar and some of that by Sargent as faithful. With regards to the term 'faithfulness,' I am thinking of the French Realist tradition's aim of producing spontaneous and unglamourised images from life. However, ultimately, 'Realism' becomes an insufficient label for Nadar, as the collaborative component inherent in his portrait production invites subjectivism on the part of the artist, and as I will discuss, self-staging on the part of the subject. On another level, the subjects of Sargent's and Nadar's portraiture also prohibit their works from being defined in terms of Realism. Sargent and Nadar created portraits of 'celebrities.' The subject matter for this portraiture is still entrenched in the commissioned portrait tradition where artists were paid to represent elite members of society. Portraiture, in regards to Nadar and Sargent, is obviously not the socialist art of Courbet and the other French nineteenth-century Realist School, as they are rarely representing the everyday man or woman.

'Flattery', then, is a term I shall use for the portraits of Rossetti and Cameron, portraits that combine the Romanticism and Idealism of Victorian sentimentality, within the general aim of making visible a subjective narrative. 'Faithful' is used to specify a kind of Realism specifically reconstituted for portraiture. Faithfulness as an idea *aims* to hold the mirror up to life but to a life that is often writ large, a life of flamboyant outsiders, celebrities, who contribute to their pictured representation as much as does the portraitist.

## Chapter One

### Dante Gabriel Rossetti's flattering poem-portraits of women

The focus of this chapter is Rossetti's portraits of women from the 1860s until his death in 1882. This final phase in his artistic *oeuvre* marked a change within Rossetti's style and execution, as well as a change in the subject matter and literary references. After his Pre-Raphaelite years, Rossetti's final phase is comprised solely of idealised and flattering portraits of women. Specifically, in this study, I will be looking at Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata* (Fig. 1, 1859), *Lady Lilith* (Fig. 2, 1868) and *Proserpine* (Fig. 3, 1874). *Bocca Baciata* will be used to emphasise the flattering quality evident in Rossetti's style. The discussion of Rossetti's style will extend further to *Lady Lilith* as well. However, I will be using the painting *Lady Lilith*, and its paired sonnet *Body's Beauty*, to examine Rossetti's use of literary reference and the role of his accompanying sonnets, inscribed on either the frame or canvas of his portraits.

Questions that I have asked myself with regards to the sonnets are: Do the sonnets contextualize these portraits? Is their presence necessary in order to decipher the symbols and codes so inherent to Rossetti's portraits of women from the 1860s onwards? *Proserpine* will bring the discussion full circle to the debate surrounding the Victorian visual imagination. These debates about the Victorian visual imagination address the question of the 'inward eye' and the conflict that was present in nineteenth-century British debates about objective and subjective models of perception. Specifically, they highlight the complex relationship between science, the ocular devices popular in the nineteenth century, and art and literature.

By examining these portraits I aim to make clear that Rossetti not only embodies the Victorian visual imagination through his flattering treatment of his models and portraits, but also through his sustained use of literary reference. I will argue that the sustained use of literary reference produces a link between art and literature and encourages a turning of the eye inwards to the imagination.

*i). The industrial revolution and the escape into imagination*

The concept of the ‘Victorian visual imagination’ acts as a broad umbrella term that encompasses Victorian sentimentalism and what Edward Berry Burgum in 1928 called ‘Victorianism.’ Burgum described ‘Victorianism’ as epitomizing the sentimentalism so blatantly seen in the art and literature of the period, and regarded this as a result of the industrial revolution. Burgum discusses the consequences of the industrial revolution with regards to the shifting of classes at the time. The nineteenth century, he says,

brought into social prominence and political control a new class, whose prosperity was recent and came from ownership not of land but of factories...Afterwards, persons chiefly of this class took advantage of the centralization of industry in their towns and became prosperous within a generation through the cheap and rapid production of goods by machine instead of hand labor. Within less than a century their numbers had bloated into bourgeoisie, and they faced the task of reconciling old habits to new circumstances.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the industrial revolution, which brought into being consumerism and rapid laboured production of goods, gave rise to a new class that held the monopoly of factory production. This class, the bourgeoisie, was, however, a small percentage of the population. For many, the industrial revolution brought a dislocation to the cities for work in factories and squalored living conditions. The visual imagination, then, in nineteenth-century British literature and art represented a disdain and fear of the city and a retreat from industrialization into the sentimental, nostalgic and romanticised.

The art produced in the nineteenth century and the sociological climate became inextricably linked. A condition of crisis defined the new modern era and represented an increased emphasis on sight, not just in visual art but in literature as well. Victorians had a way of selectively seeing what they wanted to in society and also, it seems, in art. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Julia Margaret Cameron’s art represents a retreat into an idealised world, typical of many of the artists and writers of the time. Rossetti’s sentimentalism was first seen in his Pre-Raphaelite artworks, depicting medieval or mythological times, and later continued to transport

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<sup>27</sup> Edwin Berry Burgum, “Victorianism,” *The Sewanee Review* 36, no. 3 (July 1928): 273-291.

the viewer to an alternate reality through his portraits of women. Cameron's photographic portraits take one on much the same journey.

*ii). The Flattery of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's portraits from the 1860s*

Many of Rossetti's most successful poem-paintings were achieved from the 1870s until his death in 1882. In this section I will examine how we can place Rossetti's well-known portraits of "beautiful women with floral adjuncts," as William Michael Rossetti called them, within these debates about the Victorian visual imagination. I will introduce the argument that the relationship between art and literature asked for the viewer to read the portraits as one would a written text, through deciphering the symbols and codes, an argument that extends to the work of Cameron as well. Much Victorian art and literature stimulated the visual imagination in a sentimental way that led Victorian viewers to reminisce about the past, and so often "Victorian painting encouraged in the viewers a nostalgia and a flood of associations, as well as inviting an active imaginative participation in narrative ends."<sup>28</sup> At the Royal Academy many artists dealt with historical and literary themes, much like Rossetti. However, Roberts suggests that Rossetti does not aim for realism or a truthful depiction of his desired subject incurred through rigorous research.<sup>29</sup> I will illustrate that he took these narratives of the past and literally made them his own. Particularly striking about Rossetti is that he would take an allegory or story from mythology, folklore or literature and write his own accompanying sonnet for the portrait, and he would always write the sonnet after the portrait had been painted. Rossetti often attached the sonnet to the canvases or frames. Therefore, the literary accompaniments cannot be seen as mere sources for his paintings. Rossetti himself is present in these portraits both as poet and as artist. This is what made him different from Royal Academy artists. Rossetti used literary themes as devices to carry one into the visual imagination.

The writing of accompanying sonnets to his portraits marks Rossetti's move away from the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Lucien Agosta states that from the 1860s there is present a creation of a new and alternate reality in Rossetti's art, very much opposed to Huntian

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<sup>28</sup> Helen E. Roberts, "The Dream World of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Victorian Studies* 17, no. 4 (June 1974): 373.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 375.

Pre-Raphaelitism<sup>30</sup> and its notion of the exact imitation of nature<sup>31</sup>. The greatest distinction to make of his portraits from the 1860s in comparison with those of the 1840s and 1850s is in the medium itself. These later portraits are in oil as opposed to the earlier watercolours. The use of oil makes these portraits look glossier, which is especially seen in the waving lustrous hair of Rossetti's subjects. The dissolution of what could be called the Huntian Pre-Raphaelite style seen in Rossetti's watercolours is due to Rossetti's new lack of interest in portraying Nature's external details realistically or faithfully. Rossetti's portraits of the 1860s onwards were marked primarily as being non-mimetic and can be seen as a retreat into the imagination as Rossetti's "final ability to reconcile hand and soul, theory and artistic practice."<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Prettejohn makes clear that the inspiration behind these later portraits showed a break from the influence of the 'Primitives'<sup>33</sup> that were such an influence upon the Pre-Raphaelites. In this late phase of his career Rossetti identified himself rather with the art of the Venetian High Renaissance and particularly that of Titian and Veronese. Technically, as well, Rossetti switched from smaller brushstrokes that were so much a part of Pre-Raphaelitism, as he found them inadequate to paint the larger canvases. Rossetti adapted the style of Veronese and moved away from the Pre-Raphaelite stippling of the flesh. In an 1859 letter to William Bell Scott, Rossetti writes of his portrait *Bocca Baciata*,

I have painted a half figure in oil, in doing which I have made an effort to avoid what I know to be a besetting sin of mine, and indeed rather to P.R painting – that of stippling on the flesh<sup>34</sup>

This was first seen in Rossetti's portrait *Bocca Baciata*.

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<sup>30</sup> William Holman Hunt was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with Rossetti and John Everett Millais. Hunt believed in the spirituality that could be found in creating art that was truthful to nature and held a religious feel through medievalism. Medievalism implies a devotion to the spirit or beliefs of the Middle Ages, for the Pre-Raphaelites this is seen especially in the appropriation of the painterly ideals from art and literature of the Middle Ages.

<sup>31</sup> Lucien L. Agosta, "Animate Images: The later Poem-Paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1981): p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>33</sup> The Primitives, refers to the artists before the time of Raphael and the high renaissance, such as Fra Angelico and Giotto. These artists often produced predellas and frescos that were deeply religious. The artists of the High Renaissance such as Raphael termed these pre-Renaissance artists as primitives. Their lack of *chiaroscuro* and depth of field in their paintings in turn made them regarded as primitive in comparison to the Renaissance.

<sup>34</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti Volume I: 1835-1860*, ed. O. Doughty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 358.

### iii) *Bocca Baciata*

*Bocca Baciata* (Fig. 1, 1859) means “lips that have been kissed,” and is a head and shoulders portrait. *Bocca Baciata* comes from an Italian proverb by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), from his *Decameron*, (1370-71) where he recounts the tale of a princess, Atelial, who wins the King after deceitfully presenting herself to him as a virgin bride. Rossetti used his muse/mistress, Fanny Cornforth, as the model for the character of the princess Atelial for this portrait. Cornforth’s lips are enlarged to create Baciata’s full sensual red lips. Her hair is loose, and flowing. There is a gold ornament placed in her hair and she wears a marigold necklace. The flowers in the background of the portrait are yellow marigolds, which in Victorian symbolism represented pain, grief or sorrow, and were considered the flowers of the Virgin Mary. The flowers may, then, represent Baciata’s deceit of claiming to be a virgin to Atelial. The portrait is enclosed with a parapet at the bottom on which she has laid her hands, her right hand holding a strand of hair and a marigold. On the parapet lies an apple, perhaps referencing the fall of Adam and Eve and Eve’s deceit to Adam. The white rose in her hair symbolises innocence. On the back of the canvas Rossetti attached, “*Bocca baciata non perde ventura, anzi rinnova come fa la luna*,”<sup>35</sup> the proverb from Boccaccio.

*Bocca Baciata* was painted and exhibited before this literary reference was attached to it. And, with the exception of *The Blessed Damozel* (1875-9), this was true of all of Rossetti’s portraits from the 1860s onwards. In this way, Rossetti reversed the traditional relationship of painting to a literary ‘source’, by painting the work first and giving the work its literary reference later. This, then, eradicates the idea that the paintings are mere illustrations of a literary text. Prettejohn reiterates this by stating that by not ‘illustrating’ the associated text “the pictures move resolutely away from Victorian conventions for narrative painting...no action, and no specific emotion is dramatized.”<sup>36</sup> However, this does not mean that the textual sources or the sonnets are not as valuable as the painted work. As Prettejohn highlights, this is far from the case as the textual “reference is ingeniously chosen not only to reflect the visual character of the picture but to extend and deepen its implications.”<sup>37</sup> When the two come together, the portrait

<sup>35</sup> ‘The mouth that has been kissed does not lose its savour, indeed it renews itself just as the moon does.’

<sup>36</sup> Elisabeth Prettejohn, “Beautiful women with floral adjuncts,” In *Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1828-1888*, ed. Julian Treuherz, Elisabeth Prettejohn and Edwin Becker (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003), 69.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

relies heavily on the literature associated with it to provide the dimensions that Rossetti explores symbolically through the paint. Catherine Golden eloquently describes the equal value of the poetic and visual component of the work and how they are inextricably dependent on each other by saying that,

the sonnet, readily conveying the meaning and history behind the figure on canvas, directs and organizes the reader/viewer's response to the mythology of the painting which can only be hinted at on canvas through symbols and meaning-laden details. Reciprocally, the painting, acting as a visual referent for the poem, posits in the reader/viewer a concrete graphic knowledge which strengthens and specifies the visual imagery of the sonnet.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, both the portrait and the sonnet rely on each other. The practice of attaching the proverb to the back of the canvas, where the viewer would not be aware of its existence, was short lived. Throughout the 1860s Rossetti attached the literary accompaniments to the frame of the painting and eventually to the canvas itself so as not to lose the literary reference should the buyer of the painting reframe it. By writing his own literary accompaniments in the form of sonnets that correspond fully to the symbolism in the painting, Rossetti would focus on a mythological or historical figure, paint them, and then write the accompanying sonnet. I will be looking at *Lady Lilith* next in order to examine Rossetti's own sonnets that he began to attach to his canvases. I will argue for the flattering quality that emerges through this word-image relationship and the inward-turning of the eye.

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<sup>38</sup> Catherine Golden, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Two-Sided Art," *Victorian Poetry* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 375.

#### iv) *Lady Lilith*

*Lady Lilith* (Fig. 2, 1868) was painted nine years after *Bocca Baciata*. It is here that I need to make the distinction between Rossetti's portraits from the beginning of the 1860s until 1869 and the portraits from then onwards. Agosta argues that *Lilith* acts as a point of further transition in Rossetti's works as

this poem-painting...serves as an interesting transitional work from the fleshy paintings of the 1860s to the mature poem-paintings of the 1870s in which he no longer distinguished women beautiful of body from those beautiful of souls.<sup>39</sup>

The subject, Lilith, is described in the attached poem, *Body's Beauty*, as “[o]f Adam's first wife, Lilith,.../ (The witch he loved before the gift of Eve)” (Lines 1-2). Lilith is painted seated, at her toilette. She is combing her long flowing loose hair while looking at herself with her eyes downcast towards a small hand mirror. The significance of the mirror is seen where Lilith is described as “subtly of herself contemplative.” (Line 6) Lilith could be perceived as ‘naked’ or ‘fleshy’, which is emphasised by the title of the accompanying sonnet, *Body's Beauty*. Rossetti's later portraits possess what Prettejohn calls an “erotic potential.”<sup>40</sup> This “erotic potential” is seen in Lilith's state of undress, and in Rossetti's flattering idealisation of her physical features. He has elongated the neck and fingers, enlarged the lips and drawn the attention of the viewer to the subject's enlarged eyes. Lilith combs her hair while admiring herself in a mirror. The mirror comes to symbolize vanity. This narcissism renders Lilith inaccessible to the viewer; by being only interested in herself she denies the reciprocation of any sexual interest or desire that may stem from the viewer. This is further emphasised by the mirror in the upper left hand corner of the portrait. At first one would think it to be a window to the outside, but upon closer inspection we see the candle reflected in it, decisively making it a mirror.

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<sup>39</sup> Agosta, 97.

<sup>40</sup> Prettejohn, 65.



Figure 1: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, oil on canvas, 33.7 x 30.5 cm, Boston Museum.

The mirror reflects not the viewer as it should, but rather an overgrown garden that surrounds Lilith. This second mirror denies the viewer a place in Lilith's toilette. Miller takes this from a male viewer's perspective and states that,

The specular encounter, when the male looks in the mirror and does not find his image there, does not even find the answering look of his female counterpart, but sees a woman seeing herself, is the linguistic moment. In this moment occurs the dismantling of that male speculative system which ought to lead to absolute knowledge of the self by itself. Possession becomes dispossession; appropriation, expropriation. The male is entangled in the web of Lady Lilith's hair.<sup>41</sup>

This entanglement in Lilith's hair extends to an interesting point that Agosta makes about this portrait. In the first version of it, he notes, Fanny Cornforth was very obviously the model, making Lilith more human and recognizable. After some tinkering, in the second version, the "repainted version portrays the maleficent, cunning, inhuman femme fatale that Lilith was supposed to be."<sup>42</sup> Cornforth becomes less recognizable, as Lilith becomes less human. Normally one can identify quite plainly who the models for Rossetti's portraits are, especially so in the paintings representing Jane Morris. Rossetti's paintings were, in a sense, portraits of people of importance in his life, his family and friends, as seen in, for example, his mother and sister in the *Girlhood of the Mary Virgin*, and the watercolours of Elizabeth Siddal, his late wife. An exception is *Lilith*, where we know the model is Cornforth, from writings and letters, yet the subject's resemblance to her is tremendously modified, in order to depict Lilith as less than human, soulless. This representation of Cornforth corresponds more to the image Rossetti wanted to portray of Lilith in the accompanying poem *Body's Beauty*. Lilith's soullessness is seen in the sonnet:

Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went  
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent  
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.  
(Rossetti, *Body's Beauty*, line 12-15)

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<sup>41</sup> J. Hillis Miller, "The Mirror's Secret: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Double Work of Art," *Victorian Poetry* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1991) 345.

<sup>42</sup> Agosta, 97.

This “one strangling golden hair” is Lilith’s ensnaring of Adam through her physical beauty that she and others so admire. The mirror heightens a sense of the sitter’s inaccessibility in this portrait. In a similar way, in all of Rossetti’s portraits from the 1860s onwards, his women seem to occupy a space that is not of our time, nor of the Victorians’. Rossetti’s women occupy a different reality, one that resides in the imagination.

Rossetti visually imagined the source of his portraits and then wrote his own sonnet as accompaniment. As Oswald Doughty states, inspiration stems from the artist’s childhood. Doughty argues that Rossetti’s disconnect from reality originated

in the narrow, uncongenial environment of his poverty-stricken London childhood. Driven to create in imagination the beauty he craved but which the external world denied, he had gradually acquired an idealistic, imaginative bias which was partly no doubt the result of these early privations, partly the irresistible bent of his nature. In his own dream-world of beauty, both sensuous and emotional, he lived his ‘real’ life, his most significant existence.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, the flattery present in the portraits of Rossetti is entirely of his imagination. Doughty classifies this dream state as a profoundly important element in Rossetti’s aesthetic development.<sup>44</sup>

Lilith’s placing in a space beyond our own, and especially a time beyond the nineteenth century, is emphasised by the line “young while the earth is old” (Line 5). The foliage of the background further develops this feeling of her disconnectedness from time, and her distance from our earthly reality, reflected as they are in the larger mirror behind Lilith.

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<sup>43</sup> Oswald Doughty. “Rossetti’s Conception of the “poetic” in Poetry and Painting”, in *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. James Sambrook, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 160.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 159-60.



Figure 2: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1868, oil on canvas, 95.3 x 81.3 cm, Bancroft Collection, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware.

The second larger mirror creates an unsettling of the convention of perspective, disturbing the viewer's conception of space; is one viewing the subject from inside her space or from outside? The mirror is placed on a wall with wallpaper, yet the reflection suggests that there is a garden on the other side of the room. She is represented in a shallow space where the background intrudes into the foreground through the white roses that surround her. Rossetti has no intention of creating an illusion of depth, and this strangely shallow picture space seems to transport us to the world of the visual imagination, into the alternate reality of the Victorian visual imagination.

Even though *Lady Lilith*, and many other paintings of the 1860s, might be superficially described as a woman at her toilette in a state of undress, Rossetti does not allow these subjects to be understood as easily as this, as purely physical. Paired with the titles and the sonnets, and with the unsettling of traditional perspective, it becomes clear that Rossetti is turning the eye inward, into an alternative reality that explores the soul.

**v). *Proserpine*:**

*Proserpine* (Fig. 3, 1874), too, is a work that draws on an essentially Victorian visual imagination. Rossetti's sonnet of this name describes how Proserpine inadvertently binds herself to Pluto, the god of the underworld, when she eats six pomegranate seeds. Each seed represents a month that she is bound to Pluto. She is therefore forced to spend six months of the year in the underworld with Pluto, and the remaining months on earth with her family. The world suffers through Autumn and Winter in the six months that Proserpine is away and celebrates Spring and Summer for the six months when she returns. *Proserpine* is less 'fleshy' and less erotic than *Lady Lilith*. The painted figure is, however, just as inaccessible as Lilith, trapped in her own, other-worldly reality. Through the connection between the sonnet and the visual symbol of the pomegranate that Proserpine is holding, as the viewers we turn our eyes inwards, to the visual imagination. The pomegranate becomes the most important symbol in both the portrait and the sonnet as it aids us to uncover the mythology behind *Proserpine*. In the painting we see a small area of sunlight that reaches down to the underworld, representing the world from which Proserpine comes. This small area of sunlight, Agosta suggests, represents the viewer entering

the underworld and he argues that Proserpine's soliloquy at the end of the sonnet reflects "our uneasy thoughts in this new region."<sup>45</sup> The soliloquy is as follows:

Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing  
 Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign:  
 And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,  
 O, Whose sounds mine inner sense in fain to bring,  
 Continually together murmuring (*Proserpine* lines 9 – 14.)

The soliloquy gives Proserpine the ability of speech, a self-reflective speech; Rossetti gives to his subject an active part in the work of art, explaining her state of mind through text in addition to the image. Proserpine's slight melancholic expression is endowed with speech through the soliloquy where she tells her story to us; one moves behind her eyes into her mind and imagination. The eyes again become the focal point. One is directed to them by the light and the row of ivy, a symbol again of the world from which she comes. The occupation of a space separate from our time, in the visual imagination, heightens the inaccessibility of the subject, as seen previously in *Lady Lilith*. Helen E. Roberts argues that "this quality of inaccessibility is a constant characteristic of Rossetti's images of women"<sup>46</sup> and I argue that this is because they are essentially creations of a hybrid verbal and visual imagination.

I have chosen to examine *Bocca Baciata*, *Lilith* and *Proserpine* in order to emphasise how Rossetti used poetry and painting to turn one's eye inward to the visual imagination. These poem-pictures and picture-poems rely on each other equally. Finally, in the last decade of his life, Rossetti managed to give himself recognition as both artist and poet. Increasingly, he devised ways to permanently attach the accompanying sonnets to the portraits, from *Bocca Baciata* where the literary attachment was written on the reverse side of the canvas, to *Lilith*, where the sonnet was attached to the frame, and finally in *Proserpine*, where he painted the sonnet onto the canvas in the top right hand corner. The flattery of Rossetti's portraits is not simply seen in the pictorial idealisations he made through elongation of necks, or aggrandizing of lips; it is rooted also in the literary associations of the portraits and their paired sonnets. The sonnets, joined with the portraits, operate in a way that aids the viewer to turn the eye inwards, into a world far away from the contemporaneous one.

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<sup>45</sup> Agosta, 88.

<sup>46</sup> Roberts, 379.



Figure 3: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Proserpine*, 1874, oil on canvas, 126.4 x 61cm, Tate Gallery.

## Chapter Two: Julia Margaret Cameron's portraits of the visual imagination.

To begin the discussion on Julia Margaret Cameron's 'flattering' portraits, it will be necessary to place her within the nineteenth-century debates on photography and its status as art. In this discussion I will examine how Cameron defies the prejudiced view that photography was the product of a mechanical device that precluded artistic innovation. By doing so I will be preparing for the consequent discussion where I examine how Cameron's sustained use of literary texts exemplifies many of the ideals of the Victorian visual imagination that I examined in the previous chapter. The word-image relationship was a prominent point of discussion in the section of Rossetti and I will continue this discussion by examining Cameron's portraits for Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* (published in 1864). In the poem, Tennyson makes pictorial plays with light and dark, visible and invisible. Cameron sustains this play in her portraits too. Moreover, Cameron chooses to illustrate a certain *moment* in the poem, the second stanza, yet she does so in a way that, artistically through symbolism, alludes to the unfurling of the poem as a whole, allowing one to engage in subjective interplay with the poem. In both ways Cameron demonstrates the same interest shown by Rossetti in the power of word and image to reinforce the message of romantic and sentimental escapism and unreality. But I close this chapter by arguing that Cameron's images of men are often interesting exceptions to her project of flattering idealization.

### *i). The photography debate in the nineteenth century:*

Jennifer Green-Lewis argues that nineteenth-century photography debates can be divided into two; positivist realism and metaphysical romance.<sup>47</sup> Proponents of these two positions argued, respectively, for photography's power to empirically validate and represent the world, or to provide an account that possessed the ability to represent the world with fictive inaccuracy. However, the questions regarding photography's ability to imaginatively invent were outweighed by the excitement over the possibilities that the camera possessed with regards to documentation. This excitement led to a general tendency to regard the photographic medium as representing the

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<sup>47</sup> Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2.

real. Photography was perceived in the minds of many as an empirically objective medium; the photograph became the standard for truthful representation and fact.

Some influential commentators, such as Charles Baudelaire in France and John Ruskin in England took a discouragingly negative view of the new medium. Christ and Jordan argue of portraiture that “what had been a declaration of a socially privileged identity [in the case of oil painting] could become an instrument of control and detection and a product for commercial distribution [in the case of photography].”<sup>48</sup> This commercial potential was at the root of Baudelaire’s concerns surrounding photography. Baudelaire was worried about the diminutive effects such a materialistic and reproducible industry might have on society. He was opposed to photography because he believed it might turn society into a narcissistic one. Scorning its democratising potential, Baudelaire found that photography’s value was in documentation and record keeping but that in the realm of Art, photography had “contributed much to the impoverishment of French artistic genius.”<sup>49</sup> This perceived impoverishment of French artistic genius is further reiterated when Baudelaire accuses the photographic industry of having “ruin[ed] whatever might remain of the divine in the French mind.”<sup>50</sup>

John Ruskin, on the other hand, began with praise of photography, yet very quickly was just as hostile towards the medium as Baudelaire. Initially, from his perspective as a draughtsman, Ruskin hailed photography for its ability to reproduce Nature faithfully, and thought of it as a great aid to art.<sup>51</sup> However, this soon changed and from letters dated between 1845 and 1846 we see his rejection of photography as an art. Ruskin states,

It is certainly the most marvellous invention of the century; given us, I think, just in time to save some evidence from the...wreckers. As regards art, I wish it had never been discovered, it will make the eye too fastidious to accept mere handling.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Christ and Jordan, *Victorian Visual Imagination*, xxvi.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Warner Marien, *Photography and its Critics: A Cultural History 1839-1900*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1859,” in *Photography in print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico press, 1981), 123.

<sup>51</sup> John Ruskin, “Letters,” in *Photography in print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of new Mexico press, 1981), 152.

<sup>52</sup> Ruskin, *Letters*, 152.

Ruskin argues that photography's place was as an excellent device to capture reality, to document it, specifically with regards to architecture and old buildings that in the near future could be no longer. However, he saw photography as no longer suitable for assisting artists in painting and grew completely disillusioned with the medium. From his *Lectures on Art* from 1870, Ruskin very long-windedly begins by speaking of *chiaroscuro* in order to question photography's ability to be considered a Fine Art:

Let me...recommend you once more with great earnestness the patient study of *chiaroscuro* of landscape...and this the rather, because you might suppose that the facility of obtaining photographs which render such effects, as it seems with absolute truth and unapproachable subtlety (sic), superseded the necessity of study and the use of sketching.<sup>53</sup>

The idea of “patient study” and preliminary “sketching” is very important to Ruskin, as it represents work and labour; it becomes a moral issue of patience and virtue. He goes on to describe the importance of the work and this moral virtue of patience that one puts into the *chiaroscuro* of a landscape as opposed to the instant gratification photography brings:

Let me assure you once and for all the photographs supersede no single quality nor use of fine art...they supersede no good art, for the definition of art is ‘human labour regulated by human design,’ and this design, or evidence of active intellect in choice and arrangement is the essential part of the work, which so long as you cannot perceive, you perceive no art whatsoever; which when you once do perceive, you will perceive also to be replaceable by no mechanics.<sup>54</sup>

The work that one does, and the patience exercised for the virtue of art, is what Ruskin was after. From his resentment for the industrialised age and the quick satisfaction and endless reproducibility of machines, Ruskin came to believe that the machine depreciated the value of labour, and human kind. Ruskin did not simply question photography's ability to provide an objective reproduction of reality, he dreaded the impact it would have on society by creating a lack of understanding and willingness to acquire a working skill through labour.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 153.

***ii). Julia Margaret Cameron's style and escape into the visual imagination***

It is against the background of these prejudices that Cameron produced her flattering photographs. Aware of the concerns about the camera's 'mechanical' eye, she was determined to show that photography might transcend these limitations and produce images that take their place among the fine arts. To this end, she aimed to elevate her subjects. She never aimed to create objective portraits of women and through her sustained use of literary reference she turned the eye inwards, as Rossetti did, and transported the viewer into the world of the imagination.

Cameron did not operate as many portrait photographers of her time did. Cameron had raised most of her children by the time she began photographing in 1863, when her daughter, Julia Hay Cameron, gave her the gift of a camera. By this time, she was 48 years of age. She never had a commercial studio and never did commissioned portraits. Her studio was a transformed glass chicken coop in her garden in the Isle of Wight and her darkroom, a converted coal cellar. Cameron did not have formal training in Fine Art and the beginning of her career involved much trial and error. Photography began as an amateur hobby and progressed to an all-encompassing and time consuming career between the years 1863 and 1879.

From the beginning of her career Cameron disregarded any subject matter that was not human, which saw her placing the figure at the centre of her work and documenting those who surrounded her at her home. From these studies of family and friends she produced work that was narratively rich and that took the medium beyond its usual functional limits. Her work contrasted considerably with the ever-popular *cartes-de-visite* photographs of the time. In several ways Cameron's work differed from that of André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819-1889), the Parisian studio photographer who was the inventor of the *carte-de-visite*, patented in 1854. The *carte-de-visite* was standardly an albumen print of around 6 x 9cm, mounted on a slightly larger card, thus creating a border. Disdéri innovated the printing of 8 of these negatives on a single plate, which effectively reduced the costs of producing these photographs and made them affordable to all classes. Cameron did not care for the formal aspects of the *carte-de-visite* genre, and did not care much either for depicting the fashion of the times, as inevitably the *carte-de-visite* did.

Sylvia Wolf explains that Cameron disliked the way that these portraits were seen as

the work of a tradesman, not an artist. Cameron also felt they did little to elevate the spirit. As most artists do, she believed that her art had moral value. Photography was not just a means of registering a likeness, but a format for enhancing moral rectitude and human behaviour.<sup>55</sup>

This allied her with Ruskin's theory as to the nature and function of art, something which she strove to realise in the medium of photography. Her desire to comment on moral rectitude and human behaviour is often seen in the literary texts that she draws inspiration from, many of them taken from the Bible.

Pam Roberts explains that as Cameron began to master the camera, her aims were threefold. Firstly, she wanted to document the people who surrounded her, whether family or friends. Secondly, she aspired to make money from her photographs but lastly, and most crucially, she wanted to elevate photography to the status of Fine Art.<sup>56</sup> She achieves her third aim through both style and choice of subject matter. In the beginning of her career, Cameron was producing photographs with a low depth of field and a short focus. She achieved this by creating an image where one aspect on the plane would be in sharp focus, but the rest would not and would recede into a blur. In *Annals of My Glass House*, Cameron explains, "[w]hen focusing and coming to something which, to my eye, was very beautiful, I stopped there instead of screwing on the lens to the more definite focus which all other photographers insist upon."<sup>57</sup> Roberts further explains that in a Victorian photographic studio one would expect the usual props of chairs, tables, fireplaces and painted backdrops. However, what was unseen in the final photographs was the "neck supports placed behind the sitter to hold the head still, they were a means of stopping undue movement during a long exposure."<sup>58</sup> Roberts notes that Cameron did away with these props and aids for the sitter, and simply demanded immobility from the subject, but rarely got it, turning into a virtue the resulting loss of focus. The soft focus disrupted the viewer's vision and the image's clarity and stood opposed to the prominent thought of the age

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<sup>55</sup> Sylvia Wolf, "Julia Margaret Cameron's women," In *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*, ed. Sylvia Wolf (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; New Haven: Yale University Press, c1998), 32.

<sup>56</sup> Pam Roberts, "Julia Margaret Cameron: A triumph over Criticism," in *The portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion, 1992) 50.

<sup>57</sup> Julia Margaret Cameron, *Annals of my Glass House*, ed. Violet Hamilton (Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, *A triumph over Criticism*, 54-55.

that the photograph best provided scientific verisimilitude. Therefore, it can be said that Cameron's photographs, with their deliberately poor focus, made no effort to provide verisimilitude. Cameron defied the thought that photography was transparent, by heavily manipulating the image. With her stylistic manipulations and literary themes she turned the eye inwards.

### iii). *The word-image relationship in Enoch Arden*

Cameron's fascination and experimentation with long exposure times, paired with her interest in the contrasts between light and dark and the blurring it created, makes it fitting that she was drawn to create portraits for Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*. *Enoch Arden*, and much of Tennyson's poetry, is full of interplays between light and dark. Tennyson's poems are intensely pictorial, heavily dependent on *ekphrasis*, "the verbal emulation of any visual experience."<sup>59</sup> Tennyson creates a poem like a picture and Cameron creates a picture like a poem, in line with the Victorian interest in the interplay between the two. As a poem-picture, *Enoch Arden* concerns itself with the limitations of vision and visuality, and it becomes a suitable poem to serve as literary reference to Cameron's art. In this section I will be analysing how Cameron created photographic representations of works of literature and how she created photographs that interwove the tropes of text and image.

*Enoch Arden* (1864) is a narrative poem which follows Enoch the protagonist on his journey to sea. Enoch is a fisherman and merchant sailor, who, in fulfilling his masculine duties as father and husband, leaves his family to go to sea in order to provide for his family. In leaving his family to better serve them as a breadwinner he becomes shipwrecked and his two companion sailors die, leaving him alone on an island for a decade. Upon his miraculous return home after ten years, Enoch discovers from a distance that his wife, Annie, is remarried to his childhood rival, Philip Ray. Consequently, Enoch never reveals to his wife that he is in fact alive and that he has returned, resulting in his death from a broken heart.

The primary example of the play of light and dark in this poem is through the familial hearth. When Enoch leaves for his patriarchal voyage he says to Annie, "keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me, / For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it" (II. 192-193). At the end of the

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<sup>59</sup> Miriam Bailin, "Seeing is Believing in *Enoch Arden*," in *Victorian literature and the Victorian visual imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ & John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1995), 313.

poem when Enoch sees his wife again for the first time in ten years, she is seated at the hearth, lit and illuminated, surrounded by her new husband Phillip Ray and their children. Enoch has been replaced as the patriarch of the family and his position at the familial hearth is no more. Alison Chapman explains that “the association of light and elucidation with the masculine, and darkness and opacity with the feminine, has a legacy that stretches back at least to the Enlightenment.”<sup>60</sup> As Enoch views this scene from outside in the dark, invisible to his family inside, it is clear that the character of Enoch struggles with his own visibility throughout the poem, first vanishing at sea and then as he slowly disappears from view from his family’s life, encapsulated by the darkness of the night. This failure of visibility for Enoch turns him into “a faint and feminized figure, whose outlines are blurry and uncertain.”<sup>61</sup> The feminization of Enoch is epitomised when he dies of a broken heart, a hystericization of emotion that was so much thought of as being a feminine ‘attribute.’

As Enoch fades into the dark, he is replaced at the familial hearth by Philip Ray, whose family name represents his presence and visibility, an illuminating salt in the wound to Enoch’s waning visibility in his wife’s life. Chapman argues that “in Tennyson, the tableau offers a stable and focused vision of patriarchal harmony that is radically undermined by Enoch, whose experience of seeing his familial scene around the bright and glittering hearth leads to his sense of substitution and displacement.”<sup>62</sup>

Cameron produced three photographs in illustration of *Enoch Arden: This is my house, this my little wife*, (Fig. 4, August 1872), *Three figures (Enoch Arden)*, (Fig. 5, date unknown) and *Annie Lee* 1864. In these three photographs, Cameron has posed children as the young versions of the three principal characters Enoch, Annie and Philip. *This is my house, this my little wife* shows a young Annie and Enoch. Annie is dressed in white and Enoch in a dark sailor’s uniform. Enoch’s left side is cut off by the frame, as he sits as close as he can to Annie; however, Annie’s figure is framed closely, and the scene is a claustrophobic one.

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<sup>60</sup> Alison Chapman, “‘A Poet Never Sees a Ghost’: Photography and Trance in Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* and Julia Margaret Cameron’s Photography,” *Victorian Poetry* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 51.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

Chapman refers to the claustrophobic framing of the photograph and states that,

the troping of the poem and disintegrating spaces at the beginning of the poem becomes transformed, in Cameron's illustrations, into a visual field taken up entirely, and claustrophobically, with her subjects, who entirely fill the space of her images.<sup>63</sup>

Even though the poem focuses on Enoch's gradual failure of visibility, the photographic portrait is uncharacteristically well defined and in focus. It is an artistic representation of what will happen to the characters in the poem. Therefore, the photograph becomes a very early precursory depiction of what will happen to Enoch if one allows the imagination to engage with the symbolism that is present in the photograph.

The title of the photograph is taken from line 28 of the poem, which describes the three children as playing house together, and traces the beginnings of the love triangle when Enoch proclaims "This is my house, this my little wife," Philip responds, "Mine too" (Line 29). Enoch will unfortunately be cut out of Annie's life when he goes missing at sea, emphasised in the way that his body is cropped in the photograph and suffers a loss of visibility with his dark sailor's uniform. Annie will marry again, which could be emphasised by the white dress; the white could also point towards Philip Ray. Enoch lays a protective hand on Annie, but she is stroking a peaceful cat. Philip Ray is present in this photograph, I would argue, through the cat on Annie's lap. In *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian literature*, George Landow, a critic, describes a cat to be a "rather blatant symbol for the man."<sup>64</sup> Frederic George Stephens also believed the cat to be "an image for the false, pitiless and cruel seducer...the cat symbolizes male domination and control made possible by unequal class and gender distributions of power."<sup>65</sup> Whether or not this is the intended symbolism of the cat by Cameron, it adds an interesting layer to the photograph; Philip Ray, through the symbolism of the cat, is the gentleman who seduces Annie after Enoch has disappeared, resulting in their bigamous marriage.

In *Three Figures*, we are shown the love triangle, emphasised by each boy holding one of Annie's hands. Philip Ray, one can assume, is the boy in white, in keeping with his surname.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 61-62.

<sup>64</sup> Deborah Denenholz Morse, *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature*, ed. Martin A. Danahay (USA: College of William and Mary, Canada: Brock University, 2007), 111.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 111.

This represents, as mentioned before, his visibility and place in Annie's life as Enoch fades away. Ray's more formal clothes are a contrast to the darker colours of Annie and Enoch. Phillip stares out of the frame at the viewer very confrontationally. Chapman argues that, "the confrontation is also, arguably, aimed at Annie and Enoch who are allied by their dark colours and averted glance, more reminiscent of the Cameron photographic style."<sup>66</sup> That Enoch is wearing black, again, emphasise his future feminized failure of visibility. The fact that he wears the same colour as his wife could further emphasise his feminization. However, the matching of dark colours between Annie and Enoch could emphasise the unity and marriage that they will share as well. The colours mirror the way that Enoch will recede from the family's view as Philip advances, making "the distinction between focus and faintness structured around the two rivals for Annie's affections."<sup>67</sup> Philip, here, watches while Annie and Enoch play house, paralleling the scene around the hearth where Enoch eventually watches in agony as Philip has taken his place.

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<sup>66</sup>Chapman, *A poet never sees a ghost*, 62.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 59.



Figure 4: Julia Margaret Cameron, *This Is My House, This My Little Wife*, August 1872, albumen print, 35.6 x 38cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Figure 5: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Three Figures (Enoch Arden)*, date unknown, albumen Print, size unknown, Private Collection.

One cannot look at the photographs alone and understand the poem. The photographs do not provide literal illustrations for the poem, yet they do provide a way of further connecting with the protagonists. The use of children as models creates sympathy for the textual characters. For her choice of scene, it is interesting that Cameron decided to focus on the youthful love triangle rather than the scene where Enoch looks through the window at his wife and her new husband, a tableau that could have offered a photographic formulation of a genre painting. In the two images of Enoch Arden, Cameron re-appropriated the story of the poem in a way that explains through symbolism what will happen to the three main characters. Through dress, the colour of their clothes, through light and through the placement of significant motifs, Cameron opens up the visual imagination of the viewer and creates a subjective narrative that unfolds and comes to life. The images of Rossetti's and Cameron's which are accompanied by text allow a narrative to progress between the reader of the story, viewer of the art, author and artist. If Cameron wanted to use photography to replace fanciful illustration and to provide a "new image of reality," she would have chosen to photograph Enoch, Philip or Annie as adults. Instead she offers the alternate reality of the visual imagination, allowing image and text to enrich each other and become mutually supportive.

*iv). Julia Margaret Cameron's female portrait studies*

Cameron's drive to elevate photography is seen in further ways. In this section I would like to return to the notion of flattery and the escapism of Victorian sentimentalism through a discussion of Cameron's portraits of adult women, arguing again that these images do not provide a signifier of reality, but instead a feeling of nostalgia rooted in the notion of the Victorian visual imagination. This is the root of the flattering quality of Cameron's portraits, which seek a hybrid of beauty, nostalgia and literary appeal.

This search is most strongly seen in Cameron's flattering portraits of women. Unlike her portraits of men, the portraits of women that Cameron produced were hardly ever titled with the model's name. In Cameron's pantheon, the men play themselves. The men, however, are also often dressed in clothing that is not mid-Victorian but medieval Arthurian wear that creates a feeling of nostalgia and of 'pastness'. In Cameron's portraits of men one can see Cameron's experimentation with dress. Often the men are draped in cloaks and hats in order to imitate

“portraits in historical paintings and sculptures and to hide mid-Victorian dress.”<sup>68</sup> Pam Roberts describes this dressing up of Cameron's male subjects as a way of displaying a hero. Roberts states that

men, with collars, ties and lapels are covered over with swathed rugs and velvet curtains in toga or robe fashion. Heroes did not wear collars and ties. Their nobility is often emphasised with a velvet beret, or, as with the women, with emphasis on the hair and the light diffusing through the hair.<sup>69</sup>

Cameron describes in *Annals of My Glass House*, “[w]hen I have had such men before my camera my whole soul has endeavoured to do its duty towards them in recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man.”<sup>70</sup> Through dressing her male subjects in formal historical wear, she is attempting to display their intellect and greatness. This greatness is seen by the figure taking up most of the space in the frame. In this pantheon of men we can see that “Cameron’s adoration of great men is in keeping with the Victorian glorification of the male intellect.”<sup>71</sup> Cameron’s aim was in a way to classically capture these men, to construct an image of these men in an artistic mode that would meet the requirement of traditional painted portraiture.

Cameron’s portraits of women stand as allegorical translations of literature that she felt had a moral value. Cameron due to her religiosity praises the Mother Mary as an ideal feminine type, and her portraits of mythological women in the case of *Ophelia* (Fig. 6, 1867.) and *Pomona* (Fig. 7, 1872) are of women who adhered to feminine values, yet also possessed an urge to defy them. Up until the beginning of the 1870’s Cameron would take close-up photographs of her models’ head and shoulders, very much like Rossetti, yet she did so in an exercise to experiment with how light and shade could enhance or affect the face, often with the eyes staring out of the face brightly. A drastic interchange between light and dark was very common to Cameron’s portraits of the 1860’s. In 1867 Cameron produced *Ophelia*. Joanne Lukitsch notes that one can see the reminiscences of the sensual and idealised women of Rossetti in this image.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Roberts, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, 55.

<sup>70</sup> Cameron, *Annals of My Glass House*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>72</sup> Joanne Lukitsch, *Julia Margaret Cameron* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), 23.

The madness of Shakespeare's Ophelia is evident in the way in which the subject's face is looking away from the viewer and through her slightly open mouth; her hair is loose and in disarray and her eyebrow is creased in a way that makes her look slightly quizzical. The focus of the portrait is on the white rose at the bottom of Ophelia's neck. Beyond her neck Ophelia is draped in a dark cloak, taking her out of Cameron's time by eradicating reference to contemporary dress. Ophelia is hereby placed in a time beyond Cameron's and our own; she becomes one from the visual imagination. The model was Mary Hillier, Cameron's house maid, often used in Cameron's portraits.

Hillier was perhaps best known in Cameron's studies of the Virgin Mary. In 1867 she posed for *Mary Mother*. Cameron's previous Madonna, *Mary Hillier and two children* (1864), inspired by Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, utilised Hillier as the model and she placed two children at each corner of the frame, and placed a halo above the head of Hillier. In *Mary Mother*, Mary is alone, shrouded in cloth, with gaze averted to the left. In *The Angel at the Tomb*, of 1869, Hillier is pictured with light flowing from the left in almost heavenly production. The inscription of the portrait makes clear why this lighting is used, "God's glory smote on her face, a coruscation of spiritual, unearthly light is playing over the head in a mystic lightning flash of glory."<sup>73</sup> The large presence of religion in Cameron's life links to the solemnity that is present in the models' expressions, which I will touch on later when discussing the portraits from the 1870's and *Pomona* in particular. Phyllis Rose explains that religion offered a comfort to the sorrows experienced in life in the Victorian age:

Christian love seemed to her and her friends the only possible response to the cruelties of nature. And whereas we tend to consider every disaster as an outage, for Cameron's generation disaster was a predictable part of life and one's charitable response the only thing that could be controlled. So the families are fluid. Orphans are adopted. Cameron puts in a lifetime as a wife and mother before picking up her camera, and then does not aim at realism but at giving exquisite form to the powers of the spirit.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>74</sup> Phyllis Rose, "Milkmaid Madonnas: An Appreciation of Cameron's portraits of Women," in *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*, ed. Sylvia Wolf (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; New Haven: Yale University Press, c1998), 20.

Armstrong argues that in these studies of the Virgin, Hillier possesses “a certain erotic appeal - and it resides, self-reflexively, in the very repeatedness of her pose, in the variation of her allegorical disguises or ‘covers’, and in the repeated meeting of white profile, dark, unbound hair, and shadowy drapery.”<sup>75</sup> These repetitions are also undeniably reminiscent of Rossetti's repetitions of models, whether it be Elizabeth Siddal, Fanny Cornforth, Alexa Wilding, or most importantly Jane Morris Burden. Cameron’s search for ideal beauty is reflective of Rossetti’s search as well. They each produced their own ‘ideal’ women, Cameron’s emotionally strong, Rossetti’s physically strong.

Cameron’s emphasis on the contrast of light and dark in the 1860’s gave way in the 1870’s to symbols that would originate from the locations and props with which she would surround the model. These portraits often include beautiful gardens, flowers and foliage and these gardens and flowers suggest a connection to femininity through nature. These later portraits also carry a solemnity and an air of melancholy and nostalgia that is more present than before. Sylvia Wolf argues that the number of photographs “of women from Greek mythology had been part of Cameron’s visual memory from her girlhood days at Versailles.”<sup>76</sup> *Pomona* of 1872 is a powerful image, depicting Alice Liddell. Alice’s hand is at her waist and she is staring straight at the camera wearing an almost forceful gaze, defiant. She shares that same sadness attributed to Cameron's many portraits of women, yet at the same time it is almost expressionless, as with Rossetti’s subjects. Jasmine surrounds her, yet her pose and expression, or lack thereof, pushes her outwards from the arch of jasmine framing her figure. In her left hand she is holding a bunch of the flowers, expressing Pomona’s link to the garden. Pomona was the Roman Goddess of trees, orchards and gardens, places that bear fruit. In this work the model’s defiant yet almost melancholic gaze speaks of the fact that Pomona was tricked into marriage to Vertumnus, the Roman God of seasons and change.

Over and above their literary reference, it becomes evident that Cameron’s female portraits, also speak to contemporary expectations of women. They are “expressive possible models of feminine behaviour and they reveal the ideals against which women of her day were

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<sup>75</sup> Carol Armstrong, “Cupid’s Pencil of Light: Julia Margaret Cameron and the Maternalization of photography,” *The MIT Press* 76 (Spring 1996) 115-41.

<sup>76</sup> Sylvia Wolf, *Cameron’s Women*, 54.

Note: Cameron’s grandmother lived in Versailles and she would often spend summers there as a child.

measured.”<sup>77</sup> The virtues of women and their expected conduct was much publicised at the time through books and periodicals. The defiance, solemnity and love that are characteristic of the expressions of Cameron’s female models speak to contemporary female virtues and the expected dependency of women on men. Their positions are laced with an uncertainty that represents the age of Victoria’s reign. The solemnity of the images links also to Cameron’s reliance upon her own religiosity and the comfort that religion provided in the Victorian age. Cameron’s infant son died at a young age. Her daughter, who gave her the gift of the camera, died during childbirth. Death was an unexpected yet not an uncommon experience in the Victorian age. For these reasons, Phyllis Rose argues that “Cameron’s women do not smile. Their poses embodied sorrow, resignation, composure, solemnity, and love, determined love, love which will have a hard time of it.”<sup>78</sup> Cameron takes Victorian women’s concerns, worries and sadness, mythologizes them and retreats with them into the world of the imagination.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>78</sup> Rose, *Milkmaid Madonnas*, p. 20



Figure 6: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Ophelia*, 1867, albumen print.



## Chapter Three: Félix Nadar and his faithful photography of Paris's Bohemians.

*The portrait I do best, is the person I know best.*<sup>79</sup> – Nadar

Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, better known by his pseudonym Nadar, was a Parisian portrait photographer whose faithful portrayals of his contemporaries are the focus of this chapter. Nadar was born in 1820 in Paris and grew up in the Quartier Latin with his parents, where “his father, a printer and publisher, ran more of a salon than a business, dealing professionally with the liberal intellectuals and artists whom he respected and admired,”<sup>80</sup> a foreshadowing of Nadar’s creative future. Nadar studied medicine in Lyon, but did not complete his studies and turned towards a career in journalism and caricature. Through this career Nadar became affiliated with those whom Julia Markus calls the “indigent ‘water-drinkers’, a group of devil-may-care Bohemian artists and intellectuals who gravitated to Paris’ Left Bank.”<sup>81</sup> Nadar took his first photographic portraits at the beginning of the 1850s. In 1853, he opened his first studio at 113 Rue Saint-Lazare, where he photographed his subjects in the garden. In 1861, he moved to larger premises in the already established studio on Boulevard de Capucines.<sup>82</sup> Boulevard des Capucines was the go-to street for photographic studios, as “anyone in the world of Paris photography could be found on the Boulevard des Italiens or the Boulevard des Capucines.”<sup>83</sup> Nadar’s studio on Boulevard des Capucines was a large glass and iron building, ideal for a photography studio whose photographer liked to experiment with light.

Through café life, theatre, and the annual Salon Nadar further developed a wide circle of acquaintances and friends.<sup>84</sup> At his Studio in St. Lazare, Nadar took portraits of these acquaintances and friends, photographing figures such as Delacroix, Daumier, Rossini,

<sup>79</sup> Felix Nadar, QuotesWave.com. Accessed November 14, 2012. <http://www.quoteswave.com/text-quotes/23597>.

<sup>80</sup> Julia Markus, “The Fiery Nadar took Paris’ pulse,” *Smithsonian* 26, no. 2 (May 1995), 72.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>82</sup> Milou Chomsky, “Scenes from Bohemian Life: The Photographic Studio at 35, Boulevard des Capucines,” in *La Bohème: Die Inszenierung des Künstlers in Fotografiens des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Herausgeber Bodo von Dewitz, pp. 326-328, (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 327.

Note: it was the first elevated building in Paris.

<sup>83</sup> Jean Sagne, “All Kinds of Portraits: The photographer’s Studio,” In *A New history of Photography*, ed. Michel Frizot (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 107.

<sup>84</sup> Markus, 22.

Meyerbeer, Wagner, Balzac, Baudelaire, Champfleury and Gautier.<sup>85</sup> The first studio on St. Lazare marked the beginning of what has been called the photographer's "six golden years" from 1854 to 1860.<sup>86</sup> Nadar's affiliation to the Bohemian circle in nineteenth-century Paris and the Bohemians' willingness, even eagerness, to be photographed, provided an ideal platform upon which Nadar could market himself.

In this chapter I will first examine Nadar's stylistic tendencies and his artistic innovations, specifically in comparison to that of Realist and avant-garde artists, such as that of Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas, with whom Nadar was acquainted. When discussing style, I will be noting Nadar's treatment of light and dark, his use of props and immediacy of focus. In a discussion of three photographs of Charles Baudelaire, I will be arguing that a form of spontaneity is present in Nadar's portraits, as opposed to those of Cameron's, which creates a faithful quality in these portraits. This spontaneity links to the faithfulness of these portraits, which, I will argue throughout the chapter, can be seen through the self-staging of Nadar's subjects. Bodo von Dewitz describes self-staging, especially in the case of an artist subject, as a conscious presentation of the self in front of the camera.<sup>87</sup> It is a mastery by the sitter of his or her image, seen particularly in those who do "not submit to any kind of respectability dictated by society's pictorial standards."<sup>88</sup> This self-staging of Nadar's Bohemian friends will be placed in opposition to the depiction of Cameron's subjects who predominantly did not have the opportunity to play themselves. When discussing Nadar's subjects and in connection to Nadar's 'faithfulness', I will be arguing that Nadar's choice of celebrity subjects and his insistence on his subjects' self-staging for his portraits is at the centre of the 'faithfulness' of his portraits. In relation to this self-staging I will discuss Nadar's portrait of Théophile Gautier.

With regards to my central theme of the 'faithful' versus the 'flattering', I will be arguing that, in comparison to Julia Margaret Cameron, the contemporary dress that Nadar's sitters wear signifies his attempt to engage with his own day and urban Paris, a great difference from the antiquarian wear that Cameron shrouded her sitters in. When discussing dress, I will be examining Baudelaire's views of fashion and his interest in the urban environment, as expressed

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<sup>85</sup> Lucia Moholy, *100 Years of Photography* (England: Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1939), 78.

<sup>86</sup> Markus, *The fiery Nadar*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Bodo von Dewitz, 'To love what is pleasant!' In: *La Bohème: Die Inszenierung des Künstlers in Fotografiens des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Herausgeber Bodo von Dewitz, pp. 344-351 (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 323.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1864). As the 'flattering' quality in Cameron and Rossetti's portraits represented a retreat into the Victorian visual imagination through their literary reference, 'faithfulness' arose from a revelling in nineteenth-century urban France.

### *i). Nadar's subjects*

Unlike Cameron, Nadar sought to photograph quintessential figures of the urban landscape, figures who represented the dynamism and also the *self-awareness* of urban consciousness. In modern Paris, as Amelia Jones has argued, artists attempted to stage themselves by representing themselves as creative beings. Jones attributes this representation and self-staging to the

shifting conceptions of artistic subjectivity and the changing relationships between the artist and the social. Creativity, however, is signified differently from period to period.<sup>89</sup>

Nadar's Bohemian subjects, sitters such as Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire and George Sand, staged themselves as 'creative' beings. In making visible their difference from the bourgeoisie, artists would often position themselves alongside the working classes. In order to signify this, they would wear clothes similar to that of the labourer; however, there would of course be an added artistic flair. Jones points out that painters in particular would make clear their creativity through their tousled and dyed hair, and facial hair. The suits that they wore for portrait photographs were often "monochromatic, in the darkened fabrics that signal their disaffection *vis-à-vis* bourgeois culture... In a sense the artist thus dressed is constructing himself as 'worker' or 'aristocrat' of culture; in either case, the artist marks himself as transcending bourgeois culture."<sup>90</sup> In doing so, they would signal their alignment with the working class, but at the same time identify themselves in an exaggerated sense as creative and artistic labourers.

The visible self-awareness of Nadar's subjects stems from an insistence on their self-staging. They are subjects who engage with Nadar and by extension with the viewer, as they play themselves, or the figure they wish to be seen as. Compared to Cameron's dreamy portraits of men shrouded in Arthurian or antiquarian wear, we see in Nadar's male portraits strong and self-

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<sup>89</sup> Amelia Jones, "'Clothes Make the Man': The Male Artist as a Performative Function," *Oxford Art Journal* 18 (1995), 19.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 19-20.

aware subjects in contemporary fashion. The creative platform upon which they construct or adopt their identities, Raymond Williams has argued, “operates through a rejection of bourgeois culture and of the femininity associated with bourgeois domesticity,” and stresses the artist as masculine within modernity.<sup>91</sup> This is particularly seen in Nadar’s 1856 portrait of Gautier (Fig. 8, 1855). In this work, Gautier stands with his left hand in his trouser pocket, the other hanging at his side, creating a pose that is assertive. His body is angled to the right, but his head is facing the left and the poet stares at something outside the frame of the photograph. The collar of his shirt is open, a scarf loosely tied around it.

The scarf, one can imagine, would be brightly coloured, differentiating Gautier from the working class that he otherwise aligns himself to and asserting that he is a creative being. Gautier ensures that he stages himself as “‘more than simple labourer’; he also clearly signals his disdain for bourgeois sartorial conventions.”<sup>92</sup> Like all of Nadar’s subjects, Gautier emphasizes his uniqueness, his artistic side, through dress, and Nadar’s studio provides him a platform to express and stage himself.

Nadar’s presentation of his sitters in contemporary dress does more to immortalize the sitter. As mentioned in the previous discussion, Cameron followed the established portrait tradition of dressing her models in clothes that could not be attached to the present time. Nadar does the opposite. By ensuring his sitters are in contemporary dress, Nadar is expressing a rejection of the Fine Art portrait tradition. The Bohemians used their dress as a way of identifying themselves with each other and as a way for others to identify them as part of the essentially *transient* modern moment.

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<sup>91</sup> Raymond Williams in Jones, *Clothes make the man*, 19.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 20.



Figure 7: Nadar, *Théophile Gautier in a White Shirt*, c 1855, albumen print, 23.5 x 18.6cm, Musée d'Orsay.

There is often a repetition of items of clothing in Nadar's portraits, showing that he kept several items of clothing as props at his studio. The recycling of clothes shows Nadar's hand in emphasizing the *difference* of his subjects, a group of creative Bohemian beings. The Bohemian costume is seen in several of his photographs of Baudelaire, Daumier and Rossini who all wear the same double-breasted coat with a velvet collar. The velvet cloak placed around the shoulders of Marie Laurent and the judge's wig crowning George Sand is worn by Nadar in his self-portrait from the year 1860.<sup>93</sup>

George Sand, the Romantic novelist, is photographed (Fig. 9, 1855) seated staring to her left at something outside of the frame. She is wearing a heavy velvet cloak. The light in this portrait seems to be coming from above, directly highlighting the face, with the dark scarf that falls down her chest leading one's eyes up to her face as well. Sand was well-known and criticized for wearing men's clothing, transcending social codes and the requirements women were expected to meet. As Amelia Jones argues "[i]dentity is not fixed by clothing but takes its meanings through an exchange between subjects, communicated through sartorial codes (as well as, of course, codes of skin color, body type, gesture, etc.)."<sup>94</sup> The judge's wig that she sports in this portrait could almost be taken as a comedic poke at these expectations.

By the mid nineteenth century, having a portrait produced of oneself was no longer a luxury of the aristocracy, but something open to all members of society, including the self-made man of the bourgeoisie (and this became particularly so with the photographic *carte-de-visite*). Artists especially felt the need to stage themselves in ways that would make visible their difference. In a society where artists were no longer pawns to the upper classes, and where class status had become fluid, they had to navigate a route to celebrity in the now open market of France's Second Empire. The notion of celebrity in the nineteenth century is rooted in the exploitation of the self as spectacle, in turn rooted in the importance of the sense of sight, bringing us back to the nineteenth-century preoccupation with vision. The notion of celebrity does not involve the act of 'seeing' so much as in the act of 'being seen.'

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<sup>93</sup> Kerstin Stremmel, "I am the Proudest and Most Complacent Man in France!: Gustave Courbet's self-stagings," In *La Bohème: Die Inszenierung des Künstlers in Fotografiens des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Herausgeber Bodo von Dewitz, p. 328-343 (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 328.

<sup>94</sup> Jones, 18.



Figure 8: Nadar, *George Sand à la perruque*, 1855, albumen print, provenance unknown.

*ii). The rise of Nadar and his photographic style*

In his *oeuvre* Nadar created two pantheons of prominent writers and personalities: the celebrities of his time. The first *Pantheon Nadar*, a caricatured assemblage that comprised 249 caricatures of celebrities, was published in March 1854. Nadar's initial aspiration of reaching 1000 figures was never met or completed. Nadar's photographic pantheon is the interest of this chapter. Notably, when one looks back at Nadar's accumulative photographic *oeuvre* of portraits and puts together his second pantheon, the photographic Pantheon, the absence of satire present in his shift from the pen to the camera is highly noticeable. As Cardinal explains,

Nadar was to play down any drama in his shift from caricature to portrait photography, he was in truth bound to wrestle with this very different medium. In his new capacity, Nadar emerges as a more serious and honest documenter of the cultural pantheon.<sup>95</sup>

The primary way Nadar attempted to honestly document the cultural pantheon is seen through his style and lighting. Nadar never adapted to a style of portraiture that overtly displayed the subject's social prestige. As established in the previous chapter, in the middle of the nineteenth century and in photography's infancy, a large group of amateur photographers who emerged at this time began to experiment with photography after unsuccessful attempts at an artistic career in traditional media such as painting. Nadar had never attempted to become an artist or to train in the Fine Arts, he was an amateur photographer who changed his career from journalism, yet he believed in photography's ability to be art. Examples of the early amateur photographers are Camille Silvy (1834-1910), the French photographer who worked mainly in London and photographed many members of the British Royal family and aristocracy, and André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819-1889), the inventor of the *carte-de-visite*. Yet, Nadar operated differently to these other amateurs.

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<sup>95</sup> Roger Cardinal, "Nadar and the photographic portrait in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion, 1992), 23.

Nadar describes the availability and affordability of the *cartes-de-visite*,

Puis, coup décisif, l'apparition de Disderi et de la carte de visite qui donnait pour quelque vingt francs douze portraits quand on avait payé jusque-là cinquante ou cent francs pour un seul.<sup>96</sup>

The *carte-de-visite* gained popularity throughout the nineteenth century and spread through Europe and even to America. In photographing celebrities such as the Queen of England and Napoleon, the *carte-de-visite* became a collectable and an item that could be traded. Silvy and Disdéri often adapted traditional studio set-ups in an effort to reference genre and history painting, such as the works of Reynolds. The use of props such as columns, lavish curtains and furniture were in keeping with the painted portrait tradition, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter with regards to John Singer Sargent. Roger Cardinal argues that the photographers would use these props in order to generate “redundant signals of social and financial prestige.”<sup>97</sup> Nadar was opposed to these redundant signals of social prestige and he began photography for reasons different from those of many early amateur photographers. Nadar never conformed to the ideals of the *cartes-de-visite*; his studio, however, did. Nadar described the *carte-de-visite* trend, “Ce fut la déroute. Il fallait se soumettre, c'est-à-dire suivre le mouvement, ou se démettre.”<sup>98</sup> Nadar somehow managed to do both, he resigned from the idea of photographing *cartes-de-visite* portraits, yet his studio and the studio photographers gave in to this genre of photographic portraits. As his studio on the popular boulevard des Capucines gained popularity in the 1860s, Nadar became selective about who he would photograph and who he would delegate to his assistants. Nadar delegated the *cartes-de-visite* photographs at his studio on the Boulevard des Capucines to his assistants and to his son, Paul, as the studio began to make its money in the photographic *cartes-de-visite* industry. In 1858 Nadar took the first aerial photographs of Paris from a hot air balloon, then in 1861, he journeyed into Paris’ sewers and catacombs.

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<sup>96</sup> Translation: “Then, the decisive blow, The appearance of Disderi and the *carte-de-visite*, which cost some twenty francs for twelve portraits, when up until then one had paid fifty or a hundred francs for one”. Félix Nadar, *Quand j'étais photographe* (France: Actes Sud, 1999) 128, <http://www.hibouc.net/lib/nadar.pdf>.

<sup>97</sup> Cardinal, 23.

<sup>98</sup> Translation: “This was a crushing defeat. Either you had to succumb, that is to say, follow the trend, or resign”. Félix Nadar, *Quand j'étais photographe*, 128.

Nadar's journeys underground and above Paris represents his lack of interest in academic painting and traditional media, which could explain his disregard for traditional pictorial standards. However, as a critic and a member of the public who frequented the annual Salon, I don't think his technical ignorance of the traditional medium is explanation enough; I think it lies more with his association to the Bohemians. Birgit Jooss argues that, perhaps due to the mechanics of the camera, many artists were too involved in solving technical issues than spending time questioning their own artistic stagings in relation to the medium.<sup>99</sup> By stripping his portraits to their stylistic essentials, Nadar's lighting of his portraits becomes the site of intrigue. Nadar was the first photographer to experiment with electric lighting in his photographs. However, Julia Markus notes that "when it did not work so well in portraits, taking too much time for exposure, he went underground and let his lights play on the modern sewers and the exposed skulls in the catacombs of Paris."<sup>100</sup> Max Kozloff describes Nadar's electrical lighting used for his photographs of the sewers and the catacombs as artificial lights powered by Bunsen batteries.<sup>101</sup> Kozloff also describes the natural light used for Nadar's portraits as being controlled from one side or above the head in order to create a clear and prominent photograph.<sup>102</sup> The clarity and prominence that Nadar was after with regards to his lighting, coupled with his rejection of retouching, was used in order to create work that, as Milou Chomsky in her essay 'Scenes from Bohemian life' states, was less artificial and simpler.<sup>103</sup>

Photographer intervention is evident in Nadar's portraits in the way that many of his sitters do not show their hands; we can assume that he often requested his sitters to hide them in their waistcoats or trouser pockets. In the first portrait of Baudelaire of 1855 (Fig. 10), Baudelaire is seated; one hand is in his trouser pocket and the other is awkwardly placed between two rows of buttons under his formal coat. His collar, bow tie and the right cuff of his shirt are visible. Baudelaire's face is highlighted by Nadar's manipulation of the lighting and he intently looks into the camera and out at the viewer. Baudelaire's body and face is slightly angled as his gaze meets the camera. Roger Cardinal states that in some of the reproductions of this

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<sup>99</sup> Birgit Jooss, "Ingenious and Charming Parlour Games: Living Pictures in Photography," in *La Bohème: Die Inszenierung des Künstlers in Fotografiens des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Herausgeber Bodo von Dewitz, pp. 344-351 (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 344.

<sup>100</sup> Markus, 12.

<sup>101</sup> Max Kozloff, 'Nadar and the Republic of Mind,' in *Photography in Print*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 140.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>103</sup> Chomsky, 327.

photograph the darkness of Baudelaire's jacket and the background merge, leaving an illuminated disembodied head and collar.<sup>104</sup> Cardinal suggests that Baudelaire's slightly slumped pose is "redolent of world-weariness."<sup>105</sup> This 'weariness' is not an expression or sentiment that one would typically find in painted portraiture, in which there is often pride and formality. Nadar's studies of his subjects can best be likened to the figure studies of Degas and Manet, informal and real, and evoking an impression of transience as if the subject is captured in a quick moment and about to move on. One can see this transience of fleeting moments in the weariness of the bar girl in Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère* (Fig. 12, 1882) to the untraditional poses of Degas's two slumped subjects in *L'Absinthe* (Fig. 11, 1876). In these Realist paintings, as in Nadar's portrait studies, the emphasis is on the ephemeral and the mundane truth of the contemporary moment.

Nadar wanted to keep his portraits simple, and he operated with subtlety. His manipulation of the portraits lay in his use of lighting, which was his only manipulation as he was opposed to retouching. With regards to the lighting in this photograph, it is evident that it is coming from above and from an angle at the left hand side of the portrait. This creates darkness in the background while the darkest area of the photograph is in the creases of the lapels of the sitter's jacket. On the left, Baudelaire's clothes merge in some places with their surrounding space. This lighting effectively draws one's attention to Baudelaire's face, with its contradictory mix of self-importance and world-weariness. With regards to props, Nadar's aim to produce striking but faithful portraits leads to great simplicity. The grand portrait tradition typically surrounded sitters with items that overtly display wealth, a point which will be discussed in the following chapter. But Nadar's sitters were Bohemian, artistic and creative. Self-made and endlessly re-creating themselves, they achieved celebrity "on the basis of individual talent, vibrancy, and brains – in short, personal qualities having nothing to do with a class structure, and therefore transcending it."<sup>106</sup> The simplicity that Nadar aimed for led to his rejection of the *carte-de-visite* genre as well as of the grand painted portrait style. What he sought was simplicity of backdrop that focused attention on the sitter alone and simultaneously signified a rejection of pomp, artificiality and tradition.

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<sup>104</sup> Cardinal, 18-19.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>106</sup> Cardinal, 137.

In the second portrait of Baudelaire, from 1855, he is seated again, yet this time leans against Nadar's mother's chair, the only visible prop in this portrait. This prop, in itself, holds little significance; the lighting which comes from above creates a silhouette and shadows the chair almost entirely. The chair becomes only a functional piece of furniture upon which the subject can sit. Baudelaire's pose on this chair, however, is untraditional and is very different from the poses influenced by traditional pictorial standards. Lucia Moholy describes the quality of this pose, and others in Nadar's *oeuvre*, as 'romantic', seeing in this image,

[that] feeling of warmth and contact [that] seems to tell a story of the interest which was taken in the person by the photographer...these pictures are realistic and yet they are romantic.<sup>107</sup>

Warmth and contact is seen strongly in this portrait of Baudelaire. One can assume from the lapels that Baudelaire is wearing the same style of coat as in the previous portrait. However, in this portrait Baudelaire's hands are visible, the left hand touching his cheek, and coupled with the lighting the viewer's eyes are drawn to Baudelaire's face again in this portrait. Baudelaire's right hand rests on his lap. Julia Markus argues that Nadar and Baudelaire have been deep in conversation and that Baudelaire "looks out with half-opened eyes, as if into his destiny."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Moholy, p. 60

<sup>108</sup> Markus, 12.



Figure 9: Nadar, *Baudelaire*, 1855, collodion print, 19 x 13 cm, provenance unknown.



Figure 10: Edouard Manet, *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1882, oil on canvas, 134.1cm x 170.6cm, The Courtauld Gallery

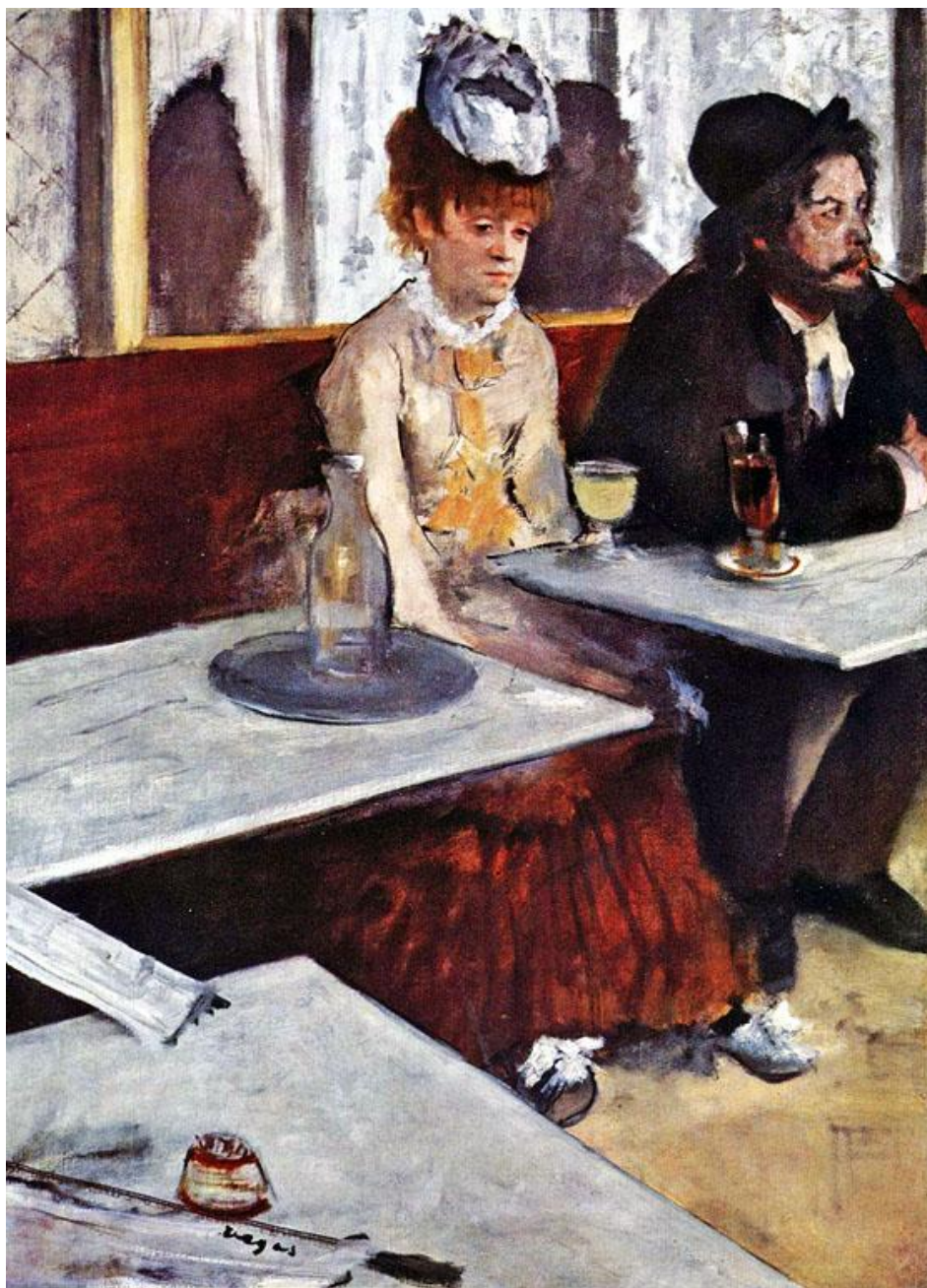


Figure 11: Edgar Degas, *L'Absinthe*, 1876, oil on canvas, 92 cm × 68 cm, Musée d'Orsay.



Figure 12: Nadar, *Charles Baudelaire au fauteuil*, 1855, unique salted print from a destroyed negative, 28 x 16.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Markus does not state how she knows that they are deep in conversation, but the presence of Baudelaire's hands in this photograph may provide a sign that they were in conversation and that Baudelaire may have been gesturing before the portrait was taken. The way in which he is staring into the camera suggests that he may have been staring at Nadar who is behind the camera, waiting for him to respond. The darkness of Baudelaire's jacket and the chair, and Nadar's manipulation of the lighting, rendering the jacket and the chair scarcely lit, again direct one's eye to Baudelaire's face. The attention to the face can be seen as a mode of revealing the sitter's 'essence', emphasizing that Baudelaire was a thinker, a critic and a writer.

Nadar's approach to portrait photography, from his studios at St Lazare to those at Boulevard des Capucines, remained the same. It was minimal in terms of props and background detail. Furthermore, in every single portrait we see Nadar's contemporaries seated or standing, never signaling or gesturing, a point which is complemented by the simplicity of the setting and dress, and which marks a strong contrast with Rossetti and Cameron's portraits, where expressive gestures told a story. A personal and unpretentious feeling is present in these portraits. Nadar wanted to present his sitters faithfully, to replace the pretensions of the portrait tradition with a simplicity and directness that spoke of urban modernity.

Two years later, Nadar photographed Baudelaire again. However, this portrait is very different from the previous two of 1855. Baudelaire is photographed standing, hands in his pockets and with an upright posture. Baudelaire is staring very intently at the camera, and thus, the viewer. Despite his upright posture and almost confrontational stare, physically, Milou Chomsky points out, Baudelaire has changed: "[a]lready [at 30 years old, Baudelaire's appearance] betrays a certain resignation with its lines around the mouth."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Chomsky, 327.



Figure 13: Nadar, *Baudelaire*, 1857, collodion print, 19 x 13 cm, provenance unknown.

However, in this portrait especially, Baudelaire's clothing is more crisply visible. In every portrait of Baudelaire, there is evidence of his self-professed dandyism, displaying himself in fine clothes. Dress here plays an important role in the self-staging of Baudelaire. Baudelaire's ideal of the artist as outsider to 'life', or as separate from the working and middle classes, is displayed through his dress. With their clothes, the dandies would align themselves to the aristocracy and often "sport[ed] the velvet and satin leisure clothing associated with an upper-class femininity."<sup>110</sup>

There is a distinction to be made between the dandy and the Bohemian. Entwistle describes the two as the Romantic Bohemian and the artist dandy. The dandy was seen as part of the aristocratic class, of displaying elegance and wealth. The dandy's dress was based on an older and more aristocratic style; one that Entwistle argues "privileg[ed] a mannered and artificial performance of the self, the Romantic Bohemian [sought] to be authentic and natural."<sup>111</sup> Even though Nadar attempts to represent Baudelaire faithfully there is a certain deception inherent in Baudelaire's self-staging. Baudelaire's clothing or fashion is not always 'faithful' to his true identity; he was not a member of the aristocracy, and later in life, and particularly when he was ill, he was very poor. The performance of Baudelaire's self-staging in contemporary dress could be said to fool the viewer of his true identity or class affiliation. Entwistle highlights that the *performance* of Baudelaire's identity correlates with Baudelaire's belief that "artifice is the privilege of culture, which is, according to Baudelaire, of a higher order than nature...for Baudelaire, artifice was an ennobling thing in itself since it severed one from nature; embellishing and improving on nature."<sup>112</sup>

In his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' Baudelaire argued that the painter who depicts "his subjects in older costume and not in the contemporary styles of the day betrayed a certain laziness."<sup>113</sup> But on the other hand, the painter of modern life who uses contemporary dress in his works "capture[s] the transient ephemera of modern life in addition to the eternal and unchanging elements of beauty."<sup>114</sup> To capture faithfully his subjects and most often friends, Nadar is exploring the transience of the modern as well as its artifice, it helped that he was also intimately acquainted with his sitters. He photographed friends and people with whom he shared

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<sup>110</sup> Jones, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Entwistle, 125.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>113</sup> Baudelaire, 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

intellectual conversations in Paris's cafés. This closeness helped Nadar greatly in his quest to faithfully express character. Perhaps the reason why Nadar's photographs taken during his six first years, known as his "golden years" (1854 to 1860), were so powerful was that he never "photographed a person he didn't like."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Markus, *The fiery Nadar*, 12.

## Chapter Four: John Singer Sargent and the pull between the ‘faithfulness’ of Realism and the ‘flattery’ of the Grand Manner.

John Singer Sargent was an American artist, born in Italy, bearing American ex-patriot status even though he only first visited America in his twenties. He was academically trained at *l'École des Beaux-Arts* in France, and also spent four years in the *atelier* of Carolus-Duran, a well-known French painter of many members of Paris high society. From his time with Carolus-Duran, Sargent was inculcated into the Grand Manner of portrait painting, the idealized style that traced its roots to the High Renaissance. In 1877 Sargent submitted his first portrait, *Fanny Watts* (Fig. 15, 1877), to the annual Paris Salon. In typical Grand Manner style, *Fanny Watts* was painted with flattering half tones in the face and the subject is seated and posed in an elegant and flattering manner. The colours are rich, dramatic and complement each other in a way that would glorify the sitter. After this fairly conventional start, Sargent's reputation in Paris was reassessed in 1884 with the exhibition of his *Portrait of Madame X* (Fig. 16), a work in which Realist experimentation was suddenly noticeable. By 1884, the influence of his training seemed to have given way to newer influences stemming from avant-garde circles centred around Manet. Sargent left Paris for London, at the recommendation of Henry James, after the criticism that arose from *Madame X* put his career in Paris on hold. The stagnation of his career in France marked his return to the Grand Manner of portraiture, which resulted in a very successful final period in England and America from 1890 to the end of his career.

I will examine how Sargent's return to the Grand Manner corresponded with his move to England, which eventually gave rise to Sargent's dissatisfaction with portraiture, its formulaic repetitions disallowing innovation on the part of the artist. Through an examination of Sargent's portraits produced after *Madame X* it will be pointed out that Sargent was torn between the innovation that Realism offered and the Grand Manner that he was trained in. For *Madame X*, Sargent adhered to the aims of French Realism by aiming to portray the subject frankly, but his later commissioned portraits became increasingly flattering. This is seen in their poses, in the rich use of colour, and through the opulence of the props. I will highlight this specifically through an examination of the portraits of Mrs Hugh Hammersley, Lady Agnew and Mrs Twombly. In Sargent's work, then, there is a tug of war between a faithful manner and the

idealization and pomp of a flattering one. In some respects the two are inter-twined throughout his career, and particularly in the enduring influence of Velázquez.

*i). Sargent's training and the beginning of his career*

Sargent studied under Charles Auguste Émile Durand known as Carolus-Duran (1837 – 1917), from 1874 to 1878. Carolus-Duran was a successful portrait painter of much of France's high society and in many ways a mentor in the style of the Grand Manner. But unusually, this formal painter shared the French avant-garde's admiration for the work of seventeenth-century Spanish artist Velázquez and passed it on to Sargent.

This influence of Velázquez is seen in Sargent's style of painting and primarily in his transferral of paint directly onto the canvas from the brush without sketch or under-painting, in a method called *alla prima*, 'at first attempt'. This is not to say that Sargent did not make numerous preliminary sketches, but his painting style was comprised of looser brushstrokes than the typical academic *fini* or licked surface, under the influence of Velázquez, and his affection for colour and the dramaticism of colour was influenced by Velázquez as well. The influence of Velázquez was something of a bridge between the Grand Manner and the painterly freedoms of the new French avant-garde. At this stage in his career, in the 1880s Sargent is described by Deborah Davis as "painting with a versatile style, one that reflected on the style of the old masters, like Velázquez, and the new renegades, like Manet."<sup>116</sup> Through Manet's influence, Sargent appropriated the style of Velázquez, which is seen in a work such as *Madame X*. In later portraits, Velázquez's influence is still present, but mediated by the style of more formal portraitists.

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<sup>116</sup> Deborah Davis, *Strapless: John Singer Sargent and the fall of Madame X* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), 142.



Figure 14: John Singer Sargent, *Fanny Watts*, 1877, oil on canvas, 105.7 x 83.5cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

### ii). *Portrait of Madame X*

At the beginning of his career Sargent was generally commissioned by other American expatriates in France, a form of patronage which lay behind *Fanny Watts* (Fig. 15) and *Madame X* (Fig. 16). Fanny Watts was a childhood friend of Sargent's. Virginie Amélie Avegno Gautreau, the subject of *Madame X*, was American born, but raised in Paris and married to a wealthy Parisian business man, Pierre Gautreau. Meg Robertson states that *Fanny Watts*, Sargent's first Salon submission, "did little to establish Sargent's reputation either at the Salon or at the Exposition Universelle of 1878 when it was again exhibited."<sup>117</sup> The *Portrait of Madame X* was Sargent's hope to win over the French public in order to encourage French commissions. Virginie Gautreau was a well-known 'beauty' in Parisian social circles. She was, however, described as not having the most classical beauty and was known to enhance her complexion with lavender-coloured face paint and body powder.<sup>118</sup> Over and above the whitening of the skin, Gautreau stencilled her eyebrows and rinsed her hair with a red henna dye to match her red stained lips. Stanley Olson describes Gautreau as a woman who,

[h]ardly deserved history's generous classification as 'a beauty'. Her nose was large; her chin over-prominent, her hairline strangely high on her scalp, her lips thin and mean, and her hair was an unlustruous shade of tarnished copper. Yet all these features combined, by some bizarre alchemy, to create an amazing profile. It was altogether striking and certainly arresting.<sup>119</sup>

However, Olson also declares that due to Gautreau's plastering of make-up powder, "her sarcophagal colouring had the effect of flattening the contours of her face and body, making her appear two-dimensional, and accentuating the line of her profile."<sup>120</sup> This is similar to Manet's rejection of half-tones, which likewise created a flattened image. Gautreau's two dimensionality is seen in the way Sargent painted her with her right arm leaning on a table and neck craned to the left, showing off her profile.

<sup>117</sup> Meg Robertson, "John Singer Sargent: His Early Success in America, 1878-1879," *Archives of American Art Journal* 22, no. 4 (1982), 20-26.

<sup>118</sup> Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 102.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

In the portrait, Gautreau is posed with her right palm on a table that is just below waist-height. The right shoulder slopes downwards as the hand rests on the table and the left shoulder lifts up in line with her chin. On her head, she wears a tiara, and clasped in her left hand is a fan and the folds of her black floor-length dress. The most controversial aspect of the portrait was the fallen strap from Gautreau's right shoulder. Deborah Davis states that Sargent would have "assured Amélie that [the fallen strap] was exactly what the portrait needed to distinguish it from other paintings of beautiful women in evening dresses."<sup>121</sup> Davis states that "Amélie's fallen strap, which called attention to the exquisite shoulder above, was enticing. Her profile, and her eyes averted into the distance, said she was unattainable."<sup>122</sup> Sargent feared that the unattainability would be misread and his fears were realised when the portrait was shown at the Salon and received much criticism.

Due to Gautreau's pallor, *Madame X* was painted in a different palette from his previous work, one that was practically monochromatic, an influence of Manet in his use of simplified colour. In comparison to *Fanny Watts*, with its background of a rose-like coloured palette, *Madame X*'s background is dark brown and flattened. The red of the ribbon hanging from Watts' neck is complemented by the stroke of green paint on the light yellow fabric draped over the chair she is sitting on. The red is mirrored in a lighter hue in Watts' lips. Her skin is alive, and bears much more colour than Gautreau's morbid pallor. This morbidity is two-fold: not only does her pallor determine Gautreau's appearance, but we know that the lead-based paints and powders that were often used to whiten the skin were highly toxic. However, the whitening of her skin reflected Gautreau's ambitions to rise in Parisian social circles. The paleness that she attempted to create suggests unattainability, and implied that she was a lady of leisure.

Sargent incorporated the morbid blue-ish purple hue of Gautreau's skin, but painting her skin was challenging. Elisabeth Bronfen argues that the blue and purple overtones of Gautreau's skin "had not been taken into consideration when he planned the picture."<sup>123</sup> A large issue with regards to Gautreau's skin colour was that it was not consistently the same shade.

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<sup>121</sup>Olson, 110.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>123</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, "Facing Defacement: Degas's Portraits of Women," in *Degas Portraits*, eds. Felix Baumann et al. (London: Merrell Holberton, 1994), 81.

Bronfen argues that the colour of her skin would change every day that she posed for Sargent as it was

depend[ant] upon the pro-portion of pigment to powder and the thickness of the application...minor variations invisible to her admirers would have wildly irritated a perfectionist such as Sargent. It was as if Gautreau's skin became an ever-shifting canvas that Sargent could not duplicate, let alone supersede.<sup>124</sup>

So In part the striking features of the work derived from the sitter, but in part they derived from the avant-garde impulse of the painter. The influence of Manet and his contemporaries is seen in Sargent's simple, and what he defended as Realist, depiction of Gautreau.

In 1884, *Madame X* was shown at the annual Salon. The reactions were varied. Marie Bashkirtseff, the Ukrainian born artist and writer, commented on the picture:

It is a success of curiosity; people find it atrocious. For me it is perfect painting, masterly true. But he has done what he saw. Beautiful Mme.- is horrible in daylight...Further, she paints her ears rose and her hair mahogany. The eyebrows are traced in dark mahogany colour, two thick lines.<sup>125</sup>

This was possibly one of the most favourable of all criticisms of the paintings, directing critical opinion towards the sitter rather than the artist, and hailing Sargent's representation as "true," an opinion that proved that Sargent had met his aim to "hold...the mirror up to life."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Susan Sidlauskas, "Painting Skin: John Singer Sargent's 'Madame X'," *American Art* 15, no. 3 (2001), 17.

<sup>125</sup> Olson, 104.

<sup>126</sup> "A Portrait by Sargent". *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 22 no. 4 (1927): 106-108.



Figure 15: John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of Madame X*, 1884, oil on canvas, 208.6 x 109.9cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Yet, ironically, Sargent had held the mirror up to a life that attempted to physically flatter itself, a sitter whose appearance was inauthentic and attempted to deceive. Olson states that Sargent “had painted her exactly as she was dressed, that nothing could be said of the canvas worse than had been said in print of her appearance in *Le Monde* etc.”<sup>127</sup> *L’Événement* published a review on the Salon, stating

Mr Sargent made a mistake if he thinks he expressed the shattering beauty of his model... even recognising certain qualities that the painting has, we are shocked by the spineless expression and the vulgar character of the figure.<sup>128</sup>

*Le Charivari*, a periodical famous for its caricatures, ran one depicting *Madame X*. In the caricature, Gautreau’s bodice is turned into a large heart to mimic that of a playing card, the Ace of Hearts. The fallen strap and Gautreau’s nose are exaggerated, the caption reading, “New model - the ace of hearts for a game of cards.”<sup>129</sup> These diverse and plentiful reactions to Sargent’s portrait reflected that Parisian society was ambivalent about his Realist ambitions. The expectation of Salon goers and critics would have been for Sargent to soften Gautreau’s features in order to flatter and depict her as a classical beauty. This reaction is reflected by Davis when she states that, at the time, “a painting, be it a portrait, landscape or historical scene, should enhance, ennoble and illuminate its subject. It was not meant to mirror, or in some way expose, reality.”<sup>130</sup> Sargent had failed in his critics’ eyes to have illuminated Gautreau, her features were not classical and her entire demeanour was something of a spectacle.

Therefore, the primary criticism of *Madame X* seemed to be that Sargent had failed to create a flattering portrait of his sitter. The representation did not match expectations of a grand portrait. The bad press resulting from *Madame X* had immediate results. Madame Avengo, Gautreau’s mother, and Gautreau herself were embarrassed by the picture and requested that it be removed from the Salon.

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<sup>127</sup> “A portrait by Sargent”, 104.

<sup>128</sup> Davis, 142.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 143.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, 144.



Figure 16: Jule Renard Draner, *Le Salon pour Rire*, *Le Charivari* (1 May 1884): 3.

Sargent did not wish to remove the portrait, but requested permission from Bouguereau, who was on the board of the Salon, to repaint the strap of *Madame X* and to place it on the subject's shoulder. This request was denied as removing the portrait from the Salon even temporarily was disallowed.<sup>131</sup> When Sargent finally reclaimed the painting he repainted the strap to the upright position on Gautreau's shoulder, but this did not help with the sale of the portrait and it stayed in his studio for many years. With the negative reactions towards *Madame X*, Sargent saw his failure to build a long term career as a portrait painter in France.

### *iii). Sargent's move to England and his return to the Grand Manner*

Sargent's aim to 'faithfully' represent his sitters falls away towards the end of the century, coinciding with his move to England in early 1886. Primarily, the loss of 'faithfulness' is seen in the establishment of the studio on Tite Street (1886). This studio was filled with props that Sargent could use to add to the setting or to give to the subject to wear, and while this is reminiscent of Nadar's practice the range of physical objects that Sargent used as props defied the simplicity and immediacy that Nadar was after. Props such as chairs, lamps, backdrops, silk and fine carpet would 'aid' Sargent in revealing the essence of the sitter, as suggested by Stanley Olson.<sup>132</sup> These objects, often of opulence and wealth, are not physically part of the subject, nor are they from their homes, as they belong to Sargent; instead they are tokens of the sitters' lives, symbols of their place in society. The purpose of these props was to bring forth the essence of the sitter in order to visually describe their character. This 'essence' aided by props would refer, firstly, to the sitters' class position as members of the higher ranks of society. Secondly, props would be used to reference the sitter's occupation; a sitter would hold a book to reveal his occupation as a writer for example. The use of these props marks a great contrast with Nadar as they prevent the immediacy and spontaneity sought by the photographer. Moreover, these props emphasise the class difference between Nadar and Sargent's subjects. The Bohemians rarely had any physical wealth to show and, coupled with their disdain for artifice, Nadar's use of a simple backdrop and maybe a chair to sit on, allowed the self-staging of the subject and described the essence and character of his sitters simply. On the other hand, Sargent's subjects were those who could afford oil portraits of themselves.

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<sup>131</sup> Davis, 143.

<sup>132</sup> Olson, 165.

As mentioned in chapter three, a portrait in oil, by nature of the medium, represented wealth. Therefore, Sargent's patrons were the people who Nadar's subjects resented most, the bourgeoisie, the high society and the aristocracy. The props, Olson argues, were the stock elements of the Grand Manner of English portraiture and he notes that "sitters showed no discomfort in trading [their] Empire furniture for columns, balustrades, pillars in rooms constructed of drapery that fitted their ancestry but dwarfed their person. They were asked to inhabit Reynolds and Gainsborough settings."<sup>133</sup> This trading of contemporary furniture for classical columns creates a visualization of the past, of an idealized and 'flattering' past.

The first two memorable portraits Sargent painted in England were *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley* (Fig. 18, 1892-93) and *Lady Agnew* (Fig. 19, 1892-93). Through these two portraits Sargent successfully made his mark with British patrons, creating a demand for his portraits. Mrs. Hammersley, a British socialite, is depicted on the edge of motion, as though about to speak and move. Lady Agnew, the wife of a barrister, is painted sedentary, calmly and beautiful whilst staring at the observer. After *Madame X*, as Olson notes, Sargent's "style was softer, his lighting more sympathetic; he had given greater play to subtlety and contrast."<sup>134</sup> This is reminiscent of the subtlety and use of half-tones which created the contrast seen in the Grand Manner style portrait of *Fanny Watts*. There was still little 'finish' in these works. The visible brushstrokes of the backgrounds show the enduring influence of Velázquez, but the overall aim and effect is to flatter rather than achieve faithfulness. A more sympathetic lighting is seen in the 'flattering' highlighting of the face, of the apples of the cheeks and the forehead, which serve to highlight facial features of beauty. The poses seen in the two portraits of Mrs. Hammersley and Lady Agnew were elegant and their poses in their formal clothing, together with the surrounding props, creates a grandness in these two works. The grandness of these portraits generated a favourable reception for Sargent in England, and with quite the opposite reaction to *Madame X*, *Lady Agnew* is said to have turned the sitter into a "society celebrity."<sup>135</sup>

Not only was Sargent making a mark in England, but after his first visit to America in 1889, he garnered a large following there and he would often return there at the demands of a patron. One portrait that resulted from this was *Mrs Hamilton Mckown Twombly* (Fig. 20) of 1890. Mrs. Twombly was the granddaughter of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, the wealthy

<sup>133</sup> Olson, 222.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>135</sup> Olson, 185.

owner of some of America's largest shipping and railroad businesses. She was well-known in social circles through the nineteenth and twentieth century and was regarded as a member of New York's old aristocracy. In this portrait, the formality of the Reynolds tradition is evident. Sargent poses Mrs. Twombly on an ottoman and she wears a long white ball gown. She wears a pearl choker and holds a fan in her right hand as she leans slightly on her left hand, which is placed on the ottoman. The column in the background stands next to a deep regal red curtain. Directly behind Mrs. Twombly is a large painting. Almost everything in this portrait references Mrs. Twombly's familial wealth and position in society. From the regal and opulent drapery to the classical column, Twombly's long elegant dress and her jewels, to the painting in the background, the viewer of this painting can easily place the subject in the higher ranks of society.

The portraitist's awareness of the class consciousness becomes very clear when comparing Sargent and Nadar. In Sargent's later portraits his earlier search for 'faithfulness' is replaced by a representation of not just the sitter, but also their wealth and prestigious place in society. The period of 1886-1900 is when Sargent was labeled "the Van Dyck of our times"<sup>136</sup> a designation coined by the sculptor Rodin. The columns and silk-curtained props of these later works represent a retreat into an idealized visual past and Sargent is allowed less room for his own artistic innovations as he retreats to the Grand Manner of portrait painting. Olson states that the "echoing [of] eighteenth-century masters turned [Sargent] into a cul-de-sac, cutting him off from the pleasures of portraiture all together."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> 'M. Rodin in London,' New York Times, May 18 1902, stable url: <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30D10FE3A591B728DDDA10994DD405B828CF1D3>

<sup>137</sup> Olson, 223.

Figure 17: John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley*, 1892-93, oil on canvas, 205.7 x 114.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 18: John Singer Sargent, *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw*, 1892-93, oil on canvas, 124.5 X 99.7 cm, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.



During his lifetime Sargent was torn between the 'faithful' and the 'flattering', moving from the orthodox *Fanny Watts* to the experimental *Madame X* and then reverting to a formal style again with later portraits such as *Lady Agnew* and *Mrs. Hamersley*. These latter two portraits and his portrait of Mrs. Twombly exemplify Sargent's flattering practice, seen in particular in the use of props and visual referents to his subjects' place in society. With works like these, John Singer Sargent became one of the most sought after portrait painters of his era and was known as the "Van Dyck" of his times and the painter of Edwardian values. Most praise of him derives from his 'flattering' portraits produced post-*Madame X*. And yet his interest in the 'faithful' values of the French avant-garde did not end with the bad reception of *Madame X*. The final part of his career is made up largely of Impressionist-style studies of landscape. His eventual dissatisfaction with the formulaic repetition and exclusion of artistic innovation of the 'flattering' Grand Manner demanded a return to more 'faithful' representations again at the beginning of the 1900's.



Figure 19: John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly*, 1890, oil on canvas, 229 x 143.5 cm, Columbia University, New York City.

## Conclusion

This dissertation began with a discussion surrounding the centrality of vision in the nineteenth century. There was a nineteenth-century fascination with the act of seeing and the questioning of reliability. Throughout the dissertation I had in mind Kate Flint's notion of *inward seeing*, which represented the imagination and a personally singular subjectivist experience. This stood in opposition to *outward seeing*, which represented observation. With the increased emphasis on sight, one saw the emergence of poem-paintings, or of painting a picture in one's mind's eye, a turning of the eye inward. My discussion drew also on the notion of the Victorian visual imagination. Vision became in the nineteenth century a subject of major discussion with the emergence of the debate surrounding visual subjectivity and its challenge to the classical model of vision. I have argued that Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Julia Margaret Cameron produced flattering portraits of their subjects by turning the eye inward to the visual imagination and that Nadar and John Singer Sargent produced faithful portraits of their subjects by focusing on outward vision and observation.

With regards to Rossetti and Cameron, I argued that Christ and Jordan's notion of the Victorian visual imagination acts as a broader term that explains the sentimentalism seen in Victorian literature and art, a sentimentalism stemming from the condition of crisis that modern Britain found itself in as a result of the industrial revolution. I have argued that the flattering quality of Rossetti and Cameron's portraits has much to do with their sustained use of literary reference, the artists encouraging the viewer to turn the eye inwards to the visual imagination, and away from the industrialized city, in works replete with sentimentalism and nostalgia.

The flattering quality of Rossetti's portraits of women is a consequence of their idealized appearances, their flowing hair, aggrandized lips and eyes and slender hands and fingers. But Rossetti's literary reference is crucial too. Rossetti wrote his own sonnets, and gradually developed his portraits so that the literary accompaniment and the portrait would be inextricably linked to each other. The way in which he accomplished this was by increasingly attaching the sonnet more permanently to the portrait. From *Bocca Baciata* and his attachment of the literary reference to the back of the canvas, he gradually progressed to *Lady Lilith*, upon whose frame the inscription of the accompanying sonnet appears. Finally, with *Proserpine*, Rossetti inscribed the top right corner of the portrait with his sonnet.

I have used these examples to demonstrate how Rossetti's sonnets and portraits are equally dependent on each other; neither is more valuable than the other. Similarly, with regards to Cameron's three accompanying portraits to Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* the literary reference draws the viewer into the world of the imagination. The word and image relationship take the viewer to the imagination through a turning of the vision inward.

In Cameron's portraits of women, it was noted that she always represents a character or personage from literature, whether it be myth, folklore or the Bible. Cameron's style and insistence on soft focus blurs the characters, and in doing so, defies the popularly-held nineteenth-century belief in the camera as a tool for objective documentation. Cameron's women do not occupy a space in the nineteenth century; they are from the imagination, as emphasized through the analysis of her portraits for *Enoch Arden* and her female and male portrait studies.

Nadar's portraits I defined as faithful, due to their effects of simplicity, transience and informality. Yet there were limitations to faithfulness in portraiture, and there is a paradox inherent in Nadar's simplicity, seen in his subjects' self-staging. Nadar's portraits represent the subjects as they are and yet also as they wish to be perceived, a group of devil-may-care Bohemians, inhabitants of modern Paris. As flattery represented a Victorian retreat from reality, faithfulness represented a French acceptance of the contemporary urban world.

In concluding with a study of Sargent, I ended with a portraitist who was torn between the faithful and the flattering. His interest in the French avant-garde gave rise to his *Portrait of Madame X*. However this portrait defied academic expectations of the day and was heavily criticized. Upon his consequent move to England, Sargent regressed to the training he had received in the Grand Manner, and he began to produce essentially flattering portraits of patrons. These four artists and the portraits they produced were closely tied to the cultural and societal developments of the nineteenth century. In Victorian England, Rossetti and Cameron were inclined towards a mode of portraiture that rejected present day realities and it is significant that Sargent's 'regression' to a flattering mode occurred when he moved from France to England. In a sense these four artists represent the cultural difference between a Parisian avant-garde and the world of Victorian conservatism.

Ultimately faithfulness and flattery are products of the age in which these four artists lived. As Stephen Spender wrote,

The French view of life was exactly the opposite of that of the English. It was, in brief, the idea of redemption through corruption with the world instead of self preservation from corruption... The French artists wrung their triumphs of transcendent beauty from a hard realization of the standards of the age in which they lived. Thus, more than any other people in the world, they saved poetry and painting from the most dangerous of all charges that have been laid against the arts in England: that they belonged to a childishly imaginative and undeveloped level of consciousness which man had outgrown in the scientific and industrial era of Victoria, and of Bismarck, and of Napoleon III.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Stephen Spender, "The Pre-Raphaelite Literary Painters", *New Writing and Daylight*, Vol. 6, (1945), pp. 123-31

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