Tom the Physique Artist
Looking at a copy of Flesk Art Quarterly, it is remarkable how Tom’s work stands out from the rest of the drawings that surround it—as much for what it doesn’t do as for what it does. The majority of early gay pornography is dominated by a desire to return to a mythical past. Images of fauns playing lyres, gladiators, medieval knights and pages, and other never-never lands of gay desire. Tom’s drawings, on the other hand, are always of contemporary subjects. Even when they portray cowboys, you know there is a pickup truck or motorcycle lurking around the corner.

This is a world of today, a world of constantly intersecting erotic gazes and gestures, where sexual activity is always a possibility. Over the years, Tom has adopted different styles of dress and hair length to maintain a contemporary look. Tom also abandons the gay figure of the ephbe, the slender hairless teen whose purity and fawn-like bearing presage the sensitive and willowy man. Tom’s men are lugs, and the closest he comes to the ephbe are drawings of robust teens who ride around on motorcycles looking to get fucked.

Tom has always drawn images from his own experiences and the world around him, but as his work began to appear in the pages of America’s physique magazines he began to receive suggestions for subject matter and commissions from his publishers and readers. These magazines functioned not only as a source for pin-up pictures, but also as a ground for the exchange of ideas for fantasies and types of identities. They began to form the image reservoirs from which gay men were able to construct new codes for dress and behavior. They began to constitute a placeless community for gay men before physical communities existed.

The physique magazines should be seen not as cute precursors to today’s hard core porn, but as an underground press equal in importance to the first gay political magazines. Tom’s drawings passed from the private fantasies of a man in Europe to the underground images that would shape a generation’s ideas of how a gay man could look and act. Tom has drawn not only on the paper in front of him but on the consciousness of the men who viewed and continue to view his work.

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Rosa Bonheur was one of the greatest animal painters in the history of Western art and certainly the best known woman artist of the nineteenth century.1 She received international recognition during her lifetime and in late years became a hero of the feminist movement. Before Rosa Bonheur, a woman’s indulgence in art was generally viewed as a pastime, but she broke through the confining Victorian restrictions and excessive sexual polarization to make her love and need for painting a full-time occupation. Gautier once wrote: ‘Avec elle, il n’y a pas besoin de galanterie; elle fait de l’art sérieusement, et l’on peut la traiter en homme. La peinture n’est pas pour elle une variété de broderie au petit point.’2 Like George Sand and George Eliot, this entailed committing herself to a wholly independent and unconventional way of life. She early decided never to become an adjunct or appendage to a man and wished to compete with her male peers on their own terms. Eliot exclaimed while looking at one of Bonheur’s pictures: ‘What power! That is the way women should assert their rights.’3

Like Eliot, Bonheur was one of several notable Victorian women whose life-style embraced elements of a masculine guise. While she and her contemporaries often presented her case for doing so in practical terms — stressing the convenience of male attire for work or in the hunt and the need for camouflage in male-dominated activities where an unescorted woman would have been vulnerable — Bonheur obviously donned the masculine cloak for a more fundamental reason. As a young student at the Louvre, her bizarre mode of dress earned her the nickname of ‘le petit hussard,’ and later she wore a ‘grotesque’ male outfit that had a friend gasping:

It consisted of a frock-coat, loose gray trousers with under-straps, boots with spurs, and a queer hat. She held a riding whip in her hand, and the effect, as a whole, was that of a girl dressed as a man.4

At By, where she eventually settled permanently, she wore more conventional male clothing almost continuously. Occasionally, she made exceptions for
certain visitors whom she particularly loathed to offend. When the American painter and critic, Henry Bacon, visited her she had forgotten the appointment and almost apologized for her masculine attire: 'Now you have seen me, I need not change; but had I expected you so early, you would have found me en dame.' During the Franco-Prussian War the local townspeople organized a kind of home guard which Bonheur enthusiastically joined. As one witness recalled the lone woman in the unit:

More than once did I see her at that time, with her gun over her shoulder, march and drill with her male neighbors. Of course, her men's clothes made this all the easier and more natural.6

Bonheur was passionately fond of tobacco, rolled her own cigarettes and chain-smoked most of her mature life (plate 9).7 Her love of hunting and shooting earned her the nickname 'The Diana of Fontainebleau,' and she told one friend: 'How much I regret not being able to bring my gun and massacre all your husband's game.'8 She was quite tough and resolute, despised cowardliness and admired heroic actions. Once when frustrated by work she moaned: 'What a profession! How much better I should like to charge a body of men, sabre in hand, and so allay my rage, instead of having to fret and fume before a bit of canvas.'9 Her desire to assert authority is shown in her remark after an encounter with a squad of soldiers in the field: 'I assumed the air of the Little Corporal before Horace Vernet's sentinel.'10

She identified almost always with the masculine point of view. She despised feminine frills and jewelry, and at social functions when the women left the dining room she remained behind to smoke and exchange stories with the males. Bonheur emphatically rejected the domestic role for herself and often ridiculed marriage, especially during her peak years of activity. She praised a disciple for preferring art to marriage, 'which more often than not takes a woman in.' According to Bonheur, marriage transforms woman into a subaltern who is never permitted to express her authentic self. She is exploited as a companion and accessory of the chiefs of the community and no matter how great her contribution to the chief's success, 'elle restera dans l'ombre.' But if she never contemplated conventional marriage for herself, she acknowledged that the institution was indispensable to social organization and viewed the marriage contract as the bonding agent of society.11

In family correspondence, Bonheur often refers to herself in such masculine terms as 'grandson' and 'brother'; in noting that she and Auguste Bonheur thought alike she quipped: 'We are not brothers for nothing.' She also took great delight in being mistaken for a male. She loved to tell the story of the policeman who arrested her as a male transvestite, and recalled with irony how she was once taken for the lover of a dying woman whose bedside she visited. An expert driver, she seldom left the carriage reins to males; on their initial encounter the Victorian painter Frith assumed she was a French abbé filling in as coachman.12

At the same time, Bonheur professed to despise the male sex and proclaimed the superiority of her own. Once when a male acquaintance spotted
her accompanying a mutual friend’s husband, he remarked that the scene was sure to arouse the wife’s envy. Bonheur retorted: ‘Oh, my dear sir, if you only knew how little I care for your sex, you wouldn’t get such queer ideas into your head. The fact is, in the way of males, I like only the bulls that I paint.’ Indeed, it may have been this anecdote which inspired Dubufe’s popular portrait of Bonheur with her arm affectionately embracing the neck of a bull (plate 10). On another occasion, she wrote her friend Nathalie Micas: ‘I must tell you ... that at present I detest women folk. I now like only men, because I find them in general so stupid that it flatters me.’

Bonheur formed deep emotional attachments only with members of her own sex; men were of no interest to her erotically, although they made good friends and companions. She lived with her beloved Nathalie Micas for over forty years, and after the latter’s death found solace in the intimate relationship with Anna Klumpke who moved in with the elder painter during the closing months of her life. In her relationship with Nathalie Micas — a remarkable person in her own right — Bonheur reflected the ‘butch-femme’ syndrome; Nathalie assumed the role of the devoted wife and managed their domestic affairs to free Rosa for her professional activities.

While Bonheur openly caressed and embraced women who sometimes felt discomfited by the public display, there is no documented evidence that her intimate relationships with women were sexually consummated. The suppression of overt sexuality — particularly in the Victorian era — in many deeply committed relationships was not uncommon, and it is an obvious choice in a society where ‘romantic friendships’ are tolerated if sexuality is denied. Nevertheless, Martin and Lyon, in their pioneering work on Lesbian women, claimed: ‘A Lesbian is a woman whose primary erotic, psychological, emotional and social interest is a member of her own sex, even though that interest may not be overtly expressed.’ By definition, there can be no doubt about Bonheur’s sexual orientation.

Bonheur was thus one of the genuine characters of the last century. Her life-style was an expression of revolt against the compartmentalization imposed on women of her time. She in turn was often vilified by critics, many of whom relished referring to the eccentric old ‘Mademoiselle Bonheur’ who imagined herself the equal of any male. Ultimately, her masculine cloak represented an attack on French males and by definition male-dominated French society. She cultivated her English and American audiences out of reaction to suppression at home, and it is no coincidence that her success abroad was far greater than in her own country. She even naïvely attributed the growth and progress of the United States to what she perceived as generous attitudes toward women.

Paradoxically, while Bonheur defied the most rigid social customs in Western society, her mature art and political views took on a conservative hue. Her first work unfolded in the context of naturalism, but she despised its later offshoots like impressionism and neo-impressionism and identified more with Gérôme and Bouguereau than with Monet and Pissarro. Her primal social views sprang from the radical social doctrines of Saint-Simonism, but consistent with the development of many ex-members of the sect like the Pèreire brothers, Michel Chevalier, and Paulin Talabot she eventually committed herself to the
9. (top left) "La Cigarette."
Photograph of Rosa Bonheur reproduced in Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur, p. 93


11. (centre) Les moines de Ménimontant. Lithograph c.
1832. Reproduced in Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur, p. 149

12. (right) Leclerc. Le père Enfantin. Lithograph, 1832

13. (far right) Mallevie, Jeune Dame saint-simonienne. Engraving, c. 1832
14. (top left) Atelier de Mlle Rosa Bonheur, c. 18… Reproduced in L'Illustration, vol. 19, 1852, p. 284
15. (top right) Tigre royal, Lion. Reproduced in Georges Cuvier, Le Règne animal, Paris, 1836-49, vol. 1, pl. 41
16. (above left) Rosa Bonheur, Tigre dans les gran… Watercolor, 1877. Present whereabouts unknown
18. (left) Rosa Bonheur, Cerf aux écoutes, 1900. Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York
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policies of the Second Empire. It is as if she required a traditional aesthetic and conservative political viewpoint to support her unorthodox life-style.

Bonheur's father was himself a dedicated Saint-Simonist to whom she gave partial credit for her liberated outlook:

Pourquoi ne serai-je pas fière d'être femme? Mon père, cet apôtre enthousiaste de l'humanité, m'a bien des fois répété que la mission de la femme était de relever le genre humain, qu'elle était le Messie des siècles futurs. . . . Je dois à ses doctrines la grande et fière ambition que j'ai conçue pour le sexe auquel je me fais gloire d'appartenir et dont je soutiendrai l'indépendence jusqu'à mon dernier jour. Du reste, je suis persuadée qu'à nous appartient l'avenir; . . . si les Américains marchent en tête de la civilisation moderne, c'est à cause de la manière admirablement intelligente dont ils élèvent leurs filles et du respect qu'ils ont pour leur femmes. 18

Saint-Simonism advocated the emancipation of women and the overcoming of traditional sex roles. Enfantin, the père who assumed leadership of the movement, wanted to raise woman up from her inferior position, to make her ruler of her own destiny and free to choose her own mate. A split occurred within the movement over the feminist issue; Bazard accused Enfantin of perverting Saint-Simonist doctrine to legalize promiscuity. Enfantin defended himself by adopting the notion, probably borrowed from Charles Fourier, that the social individual is a couple composed of a man and a woman, that is, the individual citizen is a symbolic androgynous. The female would thus have an equally important position as the male in this joint performance of the citizen's social functions.

The declaration of this influence on Bonheur would seem to make her father the key to understanding her personality. Indeed, Raimond was in many ways a remarkably liberated father for his time. A painter himself, he generously shared his knowledge and skills with all his children; he did not treat Rosa differently from her brothers and taught her everything he knew. He paraded before her imagination the example of Mme Vigée-Lebrun, and even encouraged her to surpass the older artist. 19 In part this support related to her position as the eldest in the family, but mainly it sprang from the ideals of Saint-Simonism. A loyal disciple of Enfantin, Raimond moved with the père and his other devoted followers to Ménilmontant where they set up a form of commune. Raimond participated in the communal activities, and applied his own special skills to the designing of the group's costumes and promotional materials. A popular contemporary print illustrating the individual responsibilities of the members at Ménilmontant shows Raimond digging a garden (plate 11).

Yet this very act of self-sacrifice emphasized the general instability of Bonheur's father. For him to take up the communal existence of the Saint-Simonists meant almost total separation from his family. While no one, including Rosa herself, would have contested his sincerity and idealism, it is important to point out the pattern of his desertion of the family. When the family still lived in Bordeaux, the ambitious Raimond quit the city for Paris leaving behind

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his wife and their three infant children, Rosa, Auguste and Isidore. Sophie Bonheur had to fend for herself and the children for over a year before the family reunited.

Once situated in the capital, the entire family participated to some extent in the Saint-Simonist movement. They visited the community at Ménilmontant on Wednesdays, and Rosa and her mother wore specially designed Saint-Simonist bonnets. Rosa recalled that children taunted her and threw stones. Thus she learned early about the social hostility aroused by those who do not conform to a social norm. Indeed, the Saint-Simonists distinguished themselves in public, both male and female, by the unique costumes designed by Raimond and his colleagues (plates 12 and 13).

Sophie, a highly intelligent woman who shared her husband's ideals, wanted to participate in the movement's missionary activities but was rejected for want of adequate financial resources. This caused her a great deal of anguish, as did Raimond's continual absence. As Rosa recalled:

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\text{J'ai compris ce qu'il y avait de noble dans la nature de mon père, mais aussi les angoisses et les douleurs de ma pauvre mère, et j'ai revécu un drame émouvant dont les péripéties ont exercé une influence incroyable sur ma vie.}^{20}
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And when the government broke up the movement and Enfantin shifted his interests to canal projects in Egypt, Raimond was frustrated because family responsibilities prevented him from leaving once again. He grew to hate his marriage, and regretted not having remained a célibataire. It became a constant point of contention between husband and wife, and whenever it came up Rosa's mother embraced her child and wept. While Rosa only partially understood the words and their meaning, she recalled their devastating influence: 'Elles n'ont point été sans influence pour m'écartier du mariage.'\(^{21}\)

Even in her own time, critics were fond of attributing Bonheur's unconventional life-style to her father's views. But she insisted on the equally decisive role of her mother. Sophie was gifted artistically and musically, and for a while supported the family by giving piano lessons. Sophie recalled the beautiful singing voice of her mother and to the end of her life retained a fascination for musically inclined women. Sophie taught Rosa to read, write and draw from an early age, and when she observed the child's difficulty with her French lessons ingeniously instructed her to draw animals alongside the characters of the alphabet. Bonheur's first intellectual breakthrough came when she drew un âne next to an A, un boeuf next to a B, and un chat next to a C. Frail and always in a state of delicate health, she constituted the lyrical and mystical side of Bonheur's temperament. When the grandfather died, Sophie was denied her portion of the heritage, and suffered deeply from the disappointment. It really brought home to Rosa the glaring injustice of the legal system experienced by women.

Around 1833 Rosa took sick and her totally exhausted mother nursed her single-handedly. Sophie died shortly afterwards, and it is clear that Rosa blamed her illness for her mother's death and carried the guilt as a permanent
legacy of the event. Ever afterwards she was attracted to females of delicate health whom she could nurse and mother, and even her perennial collection of animals reflected a working-out of her guilt by mothering fragile creatures. While nursing a pup whose mother died, Rosa wrote a friend: 'In the meanwhile, I am a dog's mother, and, what's more, I hope to save my daughter.'

Recurring visions of her mother in dreams and in reverie encouraged her on her definitive path. Once when returning with her father from a visit to the cemetery, she pitied her father lost in thought and mused that she would soon be all alone: 'Alors mon affection pour lui me suggéra l'idée de placer mes pieds dans la trace des siens. D'où me venait cette pensée, surprenante chez une enfant? Peut-être de ma mère.' At this point, she began drawing animal casts in earnest, as much to master her favorite subjects as to distract her from 'the, obsessive thought of my poor absent mother.' One night in a dream she saw her mother clad in white before her bed; Rosa tried to embrace her but felt paralyzed. She cried: 'Chère maman, tu n'est donc pas morte?' Her mother smiled, placed the index finger of her left hand to her lips in the gesture of silence and disappeared. The souvenir of this dream was a lifelong consolation:

Depuis lors, je n'ai cessé de garder la conviction que ma mère s'était montrée à mes yeux dans le dessein de me faire comprendre qu'elle était toujours vivante auprès de moi. Que de fois, dans les moments difficiles, j'ai senti les effets de sa protection! ... Oh, oui, c'est elle qui a été mon 'ange gardien.'

This notion of the 'guardian angel' is still another key to understanding Rosa Bonheur; she applied the term as well to her dear companion Nathalie Micas whom she encountered soon after her mother's death. Nathalie's parents owned a factory which produced leather belts and cases, and the mother ran a small branch workshop with about twenty women employees. Micas, who was worried about his daughter's precarious condition, commissioned Raimond to do her portrait for posterity. Her warm expression and delicate figure moved Rosa and set off several childhood associations and dreams. Bonheur confided in Micas, even telling her of the dream she had about her mother which until then she had guarded as a deep secret. When Nathalie observed that Rosa was incapable of keeping her room straight or of taking care of her clothes she came earlier than the appointed hour to do the housework. The two became intimate friends and the relationship filled the gap left by Sophie. During this period, Raimond fell in love with a young widow, Mme Peyrol, whom he married. This was a traumatic event for Rosa, jealous of a stepmother only nine years older than she and reigning over the Bonheur household 'en maîtresse.' Aided by the Micas family, Rosa now set out on a more or less independent road. She rented her own studio where Nathalie visited every day. They lived and worked 'tête-à-tête'; Nathalie traced drawings for Rosa and projected them on to canvas to spare Rosa unnecessary labor. Nathalie's health improved, and Rosa began intensive studies of animal anatomy in this period.

Raimond continued to set before her the example of Mme Vigée-Lebrun, and when she asked him if it were possible to become famous by confining
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herself strictly to the portrayal of animals he assured her that she could. She then started copying old masters who depicted animals: Karl Dujardin, Potter, Wouwermans, Van Berghem, and Salvador Rosa. She was only nineteen when two of her works were accepted at the Salon of 1841, _Chèvres et moutons_ and _Deux lapins_. She was also admitted to the Salons of 1842, 1843 and 1844 — ‘toujours des animaux.’

In 1848 Monsieur Micas died; with his ebbing strength he blessed Rosa and Nathalie and told them to remain together always. Since that moment Rosa and Nathalie became a couple, and Mme Micas, a woman with remarkable managerial skills, looked after both of them. Bonheur’s first great triumph came during the short-lived Republic of 1848; she won a gold medal for her Salon picture and a commission which became her celebrated _Labourage niervnais_. Raimond Bonheur, who envisioned the Provisional Republic as the realization of his ideal government, saw his hopes fulfilled in its patronage of his daughter.

A significant factor in her success was the naturalism which emerges from the new social consciousness of the period. As in the case of other naturalist painters, Dutch art served as a precedent in her painting of animals — a genre which increased in importance after 1848. While Bonheur occasionally produced pot-boilers, she rejected the mawkish sentimentality and romantic themes of Landseer and the majority of the contemporary animal specialists. She depicted animals as she actually observed them with their individual psychology.

Yet Bonheur reached an affluent middle-class audience through her approach to animal genre, which, while having socio-political implications for her, was less politically suggestive than the work of the leading realists, Courbet and Millet.25 Through the efforts of the French-born London dealer, Gambart, who promoted her work, she established an astonishing clientele in America and England who accepted naturalism only through the back door.26 Major themes of the animaliers were the hunting field and the race-course, and a large portion of this output was destined for export. Thus her brand of naturalism grew out of realism, but succeeded because it did not deal openly with realist political themes but used animals as protagonists. Like the works of the academicians whom she admired over the _avant-garde_ tendencies, her work seemed to avoid the explicit references to the capitalist mode of production and the culture it encouraged. She eventually satisfied the consensus taste for realism without the political implications of a Courbet or Millet.

Earlier, her powerful _Labourage niervnais_, exhibited at the 1849 Salon, reached a more radical audience through its celebration of rural work. Like Courbet’s _Stonebreakers_ and Millet’s _Sower_, she pinpointed the laboring peasantry, but her emphasis on animals made her painting also acceptable to more conservative reviewers. Bonheur’s political ideal was related to that of the Barbizon School, an agrarian vision espoused by Thoré in his _Salons_ of the 1840s. He dedicated his 1846 _Salon_ to George Sand, who that year published the very pastoral novel which inspired Bonheur’s _Labourage niervnais_.27 ‘Labourer’, ‘labourage’ were key words in this period, and celebrate the un tarnished innocence of the country as opposed to corrupt city existence with its

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associations of conservative political and aesthetic views.\\(^28\\)

*Ploughing in the Nivernais*, while based on Sand's first chapter of *La Mare au diable* — the first of her pastoral novels of country life which had a great appeal for the Bonapartist regime — is an image of great power controlled for the tilling of the soil. Typically, animals dominate the composition; but here the oxen move in accordance with a specific task which the painter emphasized by the processional arrangement. The Nivernais region was not particularly fertile, but its animal husbandry was well known throughout France. The breed of the nivernais-charollaise cow and the oxen of Morven enjoyed a great reputation, and it is appropriate that Bonheur's image of labor in this area focused on the driving team of oxen. At the same time, the Nivernais had a well-organized Left, and was one of the few rural areas that not only took up arms against Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* but opposed it with stiff resistance.

The transition to the new regime, and its impact on French society, marks Bonheur's progress. In addition to her friendships with the ex-Saint-Simonists who enjoyed political power under the Second Empire, she was also courted by the government because her type of realism was perceived as an alternative to the radical realism of Courbet and Millet. In 1853 she exhibited her famous picture, *The Horse Fair*, together with a *Vaches et moutons* which was purchased by the Comte de Morny, one of the most powerful members of the Second Empire Court. Indeed, *The Horse Fair* (also bid for unsuccessfully by the government) was a type of homage to Morny and Napoleon III since they were well-known horse fanciers. In this picture Bonheur also depicted a particular kind of horse, *la percheronne*, the indigenous, native French breed from Normandy. Now as opposed to the Nivernais, the *percheronne* was associated with a highly conservative region which also had national associations. Napoleon III was especially fond of the breed; the imperial stables were filled with them and they were used to draw coaches, as well as by the imperial posting service which supplemented the railroad in some parts of the country. Indeed, his demand for these horses raised their price on the market. Brigades of the posting service always followed the court to Compiègne, Fontainebleau and other areas in the provinces. *The Horse Fair* therefore glorified the Second Empire, just as the earlier work manifested a closeness to the Republican regime.\\(^29\\)

At this moment, conservative critics positioned her as an alternative to coarser realism: Delaborde, who in 1853 hesitated even to mention Courbet's name, noted that while Bonheur's scene took place in a specific place and carefully drew for its substance on actuality, it was none the less a work of art. It was not simply an affair of horses or workers in their blouses, but a picture animated with passion and which ennobled elements of nature.\\(^30\\) Delaborde's downgrading of the worker's role also coincides with Bonheur's typical subordination of the male figure and with her treatment of the animals in this composition. Here they do not work as in the *Nivernais* but are paraded on display. They establish a dazzling variety of actions for the amusement of buyers and spectators. Finally, this breed contributed to the luxuriant ambiance of the Court.

If Bonheur aroused the hostility of society for her social behavior, she
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succeeded as an artist because of a fortuitous combination of historical circumstances. Her rise to prominence is related to the influence of feminism around 1848 and the emergence of the realist movement in the same period. The work of the male social reformists and the untiring efforts of Tristan, Sand and others paved the way for acceptance of gifted women writers and artists. Above all, the Second Empire wanted to create its own brand of realism and to neutralize the realist style of the Left. The Beaux-Arts administration encouraged the rise of alternative realist styles to rival the radical artists; Rosa Bonheur, who personally had little regard for Courbet, helped formulate the official realism.31 It was the Second Empire that conferred upon her the first Légion d’honneur ever bestowed on a French woman. If Napoleon III had reservations about bestowing the award on a female painter, he allowed Empress Eugénie to do so as regent in his absence in 1865. Her famous remark to Bonheur — ‘Genius has no sex’ — exemplifies the changed social atmosphere as well as the political and economic clout of Bonheur’s friends and patrons.

When Raimond died in 1849, Rosa succeeded him in the direction of the École de dessin pour jeunes filles. She remained at this post for over ten years from 1849 to 1860 and the school thrived under her supervision. She was a tough disciplinarian and often belittled the untalented students, but those that survived the ordeal became very close to her. By the end of the 1850s, however, her increasingly busy schedule and numerous commissions became too overwhelming and she retired from the directorship.32 She purchased the lavish estate at By in 1860. Mme Micas and Nathalie moved in, shared the expenses and assumed ‘la direction de la cuisine, de la basse-cour et des animaux, de telle sorte que je n’eus à me préoccuper d’aucun détail de la vie matérielle.’33 Here she established a circus, zoo and a Noah’s Ark all rolled into one. She owned almost forty sheep (the animal she loved the most), goats, horses, lions, oxen, mules, a wide assortment of creatures and often in large numbers.

Nathalie thrived as well. Her strong scientific and medical bent, as well as surgical skills, could now develop freely. She acted as veterinary surgeon when the animals took sick, and was soon on the spot if any inhabitant of the village required emergency treatment. She was continually inventing things. One of her notable achievements was a new brake invented to curb the numerous railway accidents of the period. For a demonstration, she laid down a miniature tramway on the grounds at By, where small platform cars provided with the brake mechanism were operated, and invited engineers, railway directors and executives to observe it in operation. The invention was patented, but never adopted. A retired foreman of one of the railway shops claimed that railroads want their inventions to come from the inside; a new idea from an outsider, ‘especially if this outsider be a woman, is looked upon as a sort of intrusion and does not receive a warm welcome.’ Micas’s hopes were thus frustrated by the familiar prejudice, despite the fact that experiments with the brake proved successful.34

There is evidence, however, that Bonheur herself looked upon Nathalie’s scientific interests with a kind of condescending amusement. While Micas carried out her experiments in deadly earnest, Bonheur referred to the brake project as ‘une toquade de ma chère amie.’35 She also ridiculed her painting

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efforts and Rosa’s caricatures suggest that she beheld Nathalie’s talents in a less than favorable light. It would seem that Rosa perceived Nathalie’s role primarily in terms of the kitchen and not in terms of ‘man’s work.’

While Bonheur strongly rejected organized religion, she was a profoundly religious and sentimental person, manifested in her espousal of a variety of mystical and magical beliefs. Bonheur subscribed to astrology, metamorphosis, metempschosism, androgyny, and avidly read the works of Louis Figuier, Camille Flammarion, and other Saint-Simonist inspired authors who combined magic, religion and science in a fresh synthesis. Her commitment to the animal world was founded on mystical ideals.

One manifestation of this was her appreciation of the writing of Lammenais, a catholic reformer who enjoyed a great vogue during the first half of the century. In his treatise on aesthetics Lammenais gave a place to all creatures, high and low, as a reflection of spiritual beauty. Each animate being represents a stage of existence mounting ‘vers le Beau absolu.’ The artist must not simply catch the material envelope of an object but also suggest the immaterial phenomenon of its place in the spiritual hierarchy. Since Bonheur claimed that ‘Lammenais a défini tout ce que j’ai cherché,’ we may assume that Lammenais’ Platonic notions provided a rationale for painting animals while still maintaining a hold on the grand tradition.

At this point, it may very well be asked whether any of this touches on Bonheur’s art. I believe that there is indeed a profound connection between her life-style, mystical beliefs and fascination for animals. Her love of quadrupeds lies at the deepest layer of her personality and affected her mental and spiritual growth. Comparing Landseer — the popular English animalier — and Bonheur, Ruskin noted: ‘Landseer studied and loved dogs, but Rosa Bonheur’s feelings for animals were, I think, more akin to the menagerie keeper’s love.’ Rosa’s earliest recollection was of the animal designs on the wallpaper in her mother’s bedroom, and we may recall how Sophie Bonheur taught the child to read by encouraging her to draw animals next to the letters of the alphabet. As a young child, Rosa would have been exposed to Bordeaux’s popular Museum d’histoire naturelle, then located at the Academy on the rue Jacques Bel. Later she read the works of the great naturalists Buffon and Cuvier, and was inspired by the physiognomic studies of the seventeenth-century painter, Charles Le Brun, who executed a series of plates showing the resemblance of certain human types to animal counterparts. Later, she studied with both amusement and wonder the cartoons of Grandville and his reversal of the animal-human relationships. She also knew and loved the fables of La Fontaine who believed in the intelligence of animals and rejected Descartes’ theory of animals as blind automatons. La Fontaine tried to undermine Descartes’ theory by pointing out that animals have something that is very close to human reason. While La Fontaine’s examples are hardly compelling scientific models, his zeal to demonstrate the similarity of animal and human behavior and knock over the theory of the animal machine would quite naturally have struck a responsive chord in Rosa Bonheur.

She kept all kinds of household pets and even sheep and goats in the family studio, some of which had to live on the balcony of their apartment. Her
favorite goat had to be carried down six flights of stairs by her brothers for an occasional airing. Later, when she struck out on her own, she transformed her studios into virtual stables and kennels, as one print of the period demonstrated (plate 14). The estate at By provided the much-needed space for her animals, and one critic observed:

The love of animals is general in the family, and with Rosa it is peculiarly strong. She does not talk of animals as a jockey or as a fancy stock-grower; it is always of their intelligence or their human resemblances, the brightness of their eyes, their glossy coats, and their picturesque qualities. Her place is the asylum for all stray dogs; if one is found in the neighborhood, it is instantly carried to the chateau, and is sure of admittance. When she paints in the open air, the dogs lie about her in a circle, and the stag in the park rubs her nose against her like a pet hound.  

Rosa Bonheur related to animals in a highly personal way. They aroused in her unconscious urges and spontaneous warmth. It was as if they evoked some primitive instinct and stimulated her to get beneath the outer shell and disclose the locus of animal personality. Shortly after the Bonheur family moved to Paris, they took rooms on the rue Saint-Antoine, across the street from a charcutier. The sign advertising the shop was a boar sculpted from wood which seemed alive to Bonheur. She often stroked it and empathized with it in imagining the imminent slaughter of the boar. This capacity to identify with animals is a critical aspect of her career, and central to her projections was 'l'expression de leur regard.' She believed that the eye was the mirror of the soul in all creatures, and it was through the eye that she could penetrate the nature of animals.  

Her belief in metempsychosis was intimately bound to her compassion for animals, and she often wondered if some beasts were former humans condemned to wear the skin of animals for their misdeeds. She possessed hundreds of birds in cages in her studio, and claimed that birds have souls 'qui finissent par devenir humaines et que dans leur forme suprême ces âmes conservent des sentiments qui subsistent malgré les metamorphoses.' Since all animals were reincarnations she could easily identify with them. In this she shared the philosophical outlook of her literary idol, George Sand, who could write:

**Expliquera qui voudra ces affinités entre l'homme et certains êtres secondaires dans la création. Elles sont tout aussi réelles que les antipathies et les terreurs insurmontables que nous inspirent certains animaux inoffensifs. Quant à moi, la sympathie des oiseaux m'est si bien acquise, que mes amis en ont été souvent frappés comme un fait prodigieux.**

After musing that 'feathered bipeds' had played 'un rôle fatal dans mes existences antérieures,' Sand declared that everyone shares biases for or against certain animals, probably because

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20. (top right) Rosa Bonheur, Le berger et ses moutons, 1841. Present whereabouts unknown
21. (below) Rosa Bonheur, Le labourage nivernais, 1848, Fontainebleau, Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau
22. (right) Constant Troyon, The Coming Storm, 1860, Williamsburg, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
23. (bottom left) Rosa Bonheur, Etude de taureau, Black chalk drawing
24. (bottom right) Rosa Bonheur, Etude de cavalier, c. 1889, Black chalk drawing


tous les types, départis chacun spécialement à chaque race d'animaux, se retrouvent dans l'homme. Les physionomistes ont constaté des ressemblances physiques; qui peut nier les ressemblances morales? N'y a-t-il pas parmi nous des renards, des loups, des lions, des aigles, des hanneons, des mouches?46

The problem posed here is that of the frequent identification of human beings with animals, and it has to do with the relations between people and nature, relations which involve art and magic as much as society and religion.

Bonheur rejected human society altogether in favor of the animal kingdom. Her remarks on the horse recall the satirical bias of Swift’s Houyhnhyms:

Le cheval est comme l'homme la plus belle ou la plus misérable des créatures; seulement c'est le vice ou la misère qui font l'homme indigne et laid; il est presque responsable de sa décadence, tandis que le cheval n'est qu'un esclave que le Créateur avait confié à l'homme et dont celui-ci abuse dans son ingratitute et sa misère lâche et égoiste, jusqu'à devenir au-dessous de la brute même.47

Bonheur was fond of comparing humans to animals unfavorably, typified by this excerpt from a letter of 1886: ‘I am still surrounded with my animals. My old Nathalie and I love them more than we do three-fourths of our own species.’ And again: ‘I need the society of no one, I care nothing for the fashionable. What can the world do for me? A portrait painter has need of these things, but not I, who find all that is wanted in my dogs, my horses, my hinds, and my stags of the forest.’ When she began raising lions, she declared: ‘We find them more frank, more grateful — these wild beasts — than are most human beings.’ She could also declare that ‘the human race generally is not worth as much as the dumb animals.’ Hence her fondness for animals reflects her anti-social attitudes, as if the animal kingdom constituted a more humane society than that formed by mankind.48

Bonheur’s identification with dumb creatures is further affirmed by the many references to herself as an animal. As we have seen, she often viewed her pets as children. When referring to an unsatisfactory portrait of herself accompanied by a dog, she said that at the first opportunity she would ‘work on the dog’s head in order to make it match the calf’s head.’ She ended one letter with the statement: ‘I remain at By like an old owl,’ and signed another to Isidore, ‘Your old animal of a sister.’ She often compared herself to a donkey ‘between two stools,’ and when feeling hemmed in she expressed it as ‘kenned up.’ She was restless ‘like the bristling hair on the back of a mad dog’ and in her desire for solitude possessed ‘the nature of old boars.’ Finally, she once wrote: ‘I am a mixture of dog and tortoise. However, on making a closer study of myself, it is the bear, I think, which predominates over the various other animals that I am.’49

Her preference for animals over human beings is amply demonstrated in her art. She painted animals mainly for themselves rather than as accessories to people or as metaphors for the human predicament. Landseer, her closest rival,
almost always gave his creatures human attributes or entitled his works with familiar narrative quotations or sentimental homilies. Rarely do we find in her work an event of great import or an intricate allegorical complement, as in the ferocious beasts of Barye, Delacroix, her compatriot from Bordeaux, Brascassat, and the anthropomorphic monkeys of Decamps. Her animals are seldom engaged in violent acts and shown generally in contemplative poses or at rest. Occasionally, they have the uncomplicated air of an illustration for Cuvier’s *Règne animal* (plates 15-18). In this she has an affinity with her friend Gérôme, but, unlike his, her landscapes serve only as a backdrop to the animal protagonist and barely detract from the concentration on the principal feature. Above all, animals are never shown as servile before the human as was typical of high and popular imagery in the Darwinian age (plate 19).

An early work, dating from when she was nineteen, already anticipates her mature attitude. *Le berger et ses moutons* focuses on the ram and the sheep while the shepherd is marginally located and incorporated into the movement of the tree as a kind of compositional device (plate 20). The shepherd is also weakly executed and lacks expression; by contrast, the ram is executed with a strong modeling and brightly lit and confronts the spectator with a powerful gaze.

Bonheur’s first major work, *Le labourage niervais*, perfectly embodies her definitive perspective (plate 21). The oxen clearly dominate the composition, not only in terms of sheer bulk but in the fact that they create the main compositional movement. Their rugged bodies completely overshadow the peasant drivers who are lost among the animals and subordinated to the diagonal movement formed by the oxen. Bonheur’s inspiration derived from George Sand’s novel, *La Mare au diable* (1846), where the author invited an artist to paint the noble scene she suddenly came upon in the country. But whereas Sand depicts a struggle of animal and human in which the human imposes by intelligence, Bonheur makes the central ox, who looks out at the viewer with a contemptuous regard, the hero of her pictorial epic.

Bonheur’s treatment is more easily understood if we compare it with a similar subject by Troyon, *The Coming Storm* (plate 22). While the size differentiation between man and animal is still stressed, the man is total master of the situation. He occupies the compositional center, and his luminous white sleeves sustain his prominent position. He controls the animals with a pole whose horizontal position parallels the picture plane and the heads of the lead team of oxen. The overriding effect of this gesture is blockage and intelligent control of brute force.

In sketch after sketch, the human figures appear vacuous alongside sprightly animal counterparts; people are faceless and shadowy, while animals are solidly modeled and possess wonderfully expressive physiognomies, e.g. *Etude de taureau* (plate 23), *Peaux-rouges attaquant des bisons, Etude de cavalier* (plate 24); the animal monarch in *Le roi de la forêt* (plate 25) clearly dominates his habitat, but humans in the woods such as those in *Les bûcherons en forêt* are scarcely present and seem as amorphous as the fire around which they gather (plate 26). A striking instance of her indifference to the humans in her pictures is the equestrian portrait of Buffalo Bill, a person whom she deeply admired in
actuality and met at the World’s Fair at Paris in 1889 (plate 27). Instead of emphasizing the flamboyant performer as others did at this time (plate 28), she makes him look stupidly off to the right out of the picture while the magisterial horse strides toward the spectator with a grace and authority that completely overshadows him.

The same holds true for her celebrated masterpiece of 1853, *The Horse Fair* (plate 29), a work which has antecedents in the grand tradition. Harking back for inspiration to the Parthenon frieze, Stubbs, Delacroix, and especially Géricault’s *Cour de chevaux à Rome* — it nevertheless differs from the past by the exceptional emphasis on the horses. In the Géricault, like the Troyon, the brawny grooms check the wild horses by matching strength with strength. In Bonheur, it is precisely the opposite: the men are swallowed up in the dramatic sweep of the horses, both as a result of the exaggerated and disproportionate size relationships and their curious formal distribution. The humans are never allowed to form a silhouette of their own but are instead absorbed by the dynamic, undulating curve of the horses moving laterally across the canvas. It is clear from preliminary sketches that Bonheur first worked out the design in terms of the animals and then stuck in the human figures wherever there was space (plate 30). Observers in both France and England sensed this but did not clearly articulate their impressions. One friend observed that her painting of human figures ‘was heavy and insignificant; one cannot help the impression that her interest was concentrated upon the animals.’

An English breeder of horses was overall impressed by ‘the extraordinary beauties’ of *The Horse Fair* when it was exhibited at London in 1855. He took note of several eminent artists who could successfully paint an animal at rest, but until Bonheur’s masterpiece was exhibited, he ‘almost despaired of finding among the present generation an artist who could grapple with the subtle difficulties of depicting horses in motion.’ But he also observed a disturbing feature:

There is surely some disproportion in size between the horses and their riders — muscular and brawny fellows as they are evidently intended to be. The large horses look quite Mammothean in comparison with the men.

Ruskin, the great Victorian critic of the period, also called attention to her indifference to the human figure:

This lady gains in power every year, but there is one stern fact concerning art which she will do well to consider, if she means her power to reach full development. No painter of animals ever yet was entirely great who shrank from painting the human face; and Mdlle. Bonheur clearly *does* shrink from it. . . . In the ‘Horse Fair’ the human faces were nearly all dextrously, but disagreeably, hidden, and the one chiefly shown had not the slightest character.

Despite these objections, a look at individual studies for the males in the picture reveals that Bonheur was quite skillful at drawing the human figure.
(plate 31). It was not technique but psychology that hampered the treatment of humans in combination with animals: she lavished her whole interest on the horses and suffered a loss of conviction and interest at the point of rendering the persons. Unconsciously, she built up the animal forms at the expense of the human and the final impression is again the kind of reversal that we get in Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels.

Another fundamental trait of Rosa Bonheur’s work is the personalization and humanization of the animals. This has nothing in common with the monkeys of Decamps or Landseer’s heart-rending pooches, but reflects an unusually perceptive grasp of the animal’s individuality. She often achieves this with frontal views and stress on the heads. By portraying the front view she minimizes animal features like muzzles and snouts, and the resulting personalization attests to her empathy with animal subjects. While some of these have a ‘cute’ aspect and were painted for export to America and England, a number of them show a confrontation with the animal on its own terms. Ravago, with its poigniant glance — painted as if each brush stroke was a caress; the gentle veau; Bélier, with its dewy-eyed expression; Wasp, with its shyness; Lion, with its expression of ‘Dis donc?; Bouc, with its wall-eyed charm and sagacity reminiscent of the comic Marty Feldman; and finally, the marvellous Grisette, a favorite mare named after La Grise, the animal hero of Sand’s La Mare au diable, whose elegance identified it as one of Swift’s Houynhmys (plates 32-5).

Bonheur’s work suggests a profound antipathy for the human subject and conversely a great love for animal life. There is, moreover, a conspicuous absence of females in her painting; the sex that comes in for unfavorable comparison is the male. But there remains the connection with her perception of herself as a kind of masculinized woman, a sexual neuter whose relationship with Nathalie invoked the wrath of society. Despite her independence and strong personality, she suffered from the abuse and ridicule heaped upon her by her stepmother and the wider society. Her life-style could not have been altogether fulfilling in the Victorian age: news of a harmonious marriage made her feel wanting, and then she regretted being unloved most of her life. She desired a child to teach how to draw, and perpetuate her legacy. Art for her was a means of assuring her immortality.

Her subjects were of paramount importance to her in this respect, as the subjugation of the human to the animal unmistakably reveals. Yet she must have felt much more at home with animals for other reasons as well. Sex typing is clearly more culturally than biologically determined, and Bonheur could work out her identity conflicts more easily with the simplified life experience of the animal kingdom. Sometimes we even attach gender roles to animals on the basis of their visual characteristics rather than actual biological traits. Kittens are called ‘she’ because they are soft and fluffy, and dogs ‘he’ because of size. At the same time, one may express unreserved affection for animals of one’s own sex, as a popular comic strip demonstrates (see plate 36). Clearly we are less aware of sex differentiation among animals. Indeed, when we look at works by Bonheur in which male and female animals are present, traditional sex roles are maintained, e.g. Sheep in the Pyrenees, Remise de cerfs dans la
forêt, Harde de cerfs en forêt, Cerfs traversant un espace découvert, Chevaux au pâturage (plates 37-9).

Bonheur also depicted certain species—oxen, mules and lions—whose sex roles are exceptional. As she would have known from the work of Buffon, the lioness often hunts for the brood, while her male counterpart strays or otherwise remains in the background. Rosa adored her pet lioness Fathma, evident in this photo where she assumes a position sympathetically attuned to the feline (plate 40). Bonheur could openly express sexual reversal through this animal. She occasionally calls herself a mule and often painted the animal as well as hundreds of oxen—asexual symbols of force and power. Similarly, she identified with Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, another human whose biological affliction prevented him from being a sexual person. Thus animals were more to Bonheur than a Darwinian speciality which had commercial or new aesthetic possibilities; they were fundamental expressions of her earthly existence and the means by which she worked through the social problems that plagued her in a Victorian world.

Not surprisingly, her conflicts are manifested in her ambivalence toward the persons and creatures she cherished most in life. We have already noted that her relationship with Nathalie resembled that of the traditional male-female roles of her society. Nathalie acted out the role of the jealous housewife, brought biscuits to Bonheur while she worked, kept the château tidy and renounced her own talents in favor of her mate’s: upon receiving an award from the King of Spain, Rosa exclaimed that Nathalie was “as proud as the wife of an old soldier!” Bonheur took a condescending view of Micas’ abilities, and it seems that she granted her only second-class status in the estate at By.

The same ambivalence was expressed toward her beloved animals: despite her empathy with these creatures she had a passion for the hunt. She shot large and small game regularly, and rarely missed an opportunity to shoot. When one of her own animals had to be killed, whether a horse or a fowl, she insisted on doing it herself, “so that the animals suffered as little as possible.” Her dear friend, the Princess Stirbey (Mme Fould), observed this contradiction in her character—that while she loved her animals she had them killed if she saw them suffer or grow old.

We may try to grasp Bonheur’s fundamental relationship to animals and the contradictions it implied by focusing on her obsessive interest in lions. She told Klumpke that this fascination began in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war. As was the case for most French people, Bonheur first received the news of the declaration of war with enthusiasm; a fervent admirer of Napoleon III she saw the war as another occasion to enhance the prestige of the French nation. But she was moved to bitter despair at the outcome, and for many years afterwards it colored her outlook with “une sorte de tourmente tragique.” At this point, she abandoned the study of domestic creatures in favor of lions and tigers. In 1873 she made intensive studies of a lioness at the Cirque d’hiver at Paris, and subsequently raised wild beasts, including two favorites named Fathma and Nero. She confessed that of all the animals she knew the lion was “le plus intelligent, le plus noble et le plus reconnaissant de tous.”

Bonheur was no doubt affected by the example of her idol Gérôme, whose
32. Rosa Bonheur, *Ravafio*

33. Rosa Bonheur, *Tête de belier*, 1845

35. Rosa Bonheur, *Grîcette*. Black and white chalk drawing

1. Rosa Bonheur, *Lion*, 1879
passion for lions was well known. The academic painter, whose patron saint was St Jerome, and whose second forename was Léon, used the animal as his persona. By identifying with one of the desert’s most powerful indigenous creatures he thus dispelled the isolating fear of desert peril. But Gérôme, too, displayed a strong ambivalence toward animals, which he shared with Bonheur.

This ambivalence to animals recalls the child’s response to animal phobias. While a child may express hostile and frightened feelings about an animal, very often she/he may approach it with admiration and interest. Psychologists have observed that in many cases of animal phobia children tend to identify with the dreaded creature — displaying features in common with an obsessional trait of adult schizophrenics and the totemic rituals of rudimentary cultures, based as these are on belief in the kinship of the believers and their animal totem; and Ernst Kris has shown how a boy, frightened by a dog in actuality, acts out his trauma in play and reverses the roles: he conquers and tames the animal, and in turnabout the animal becomes the boy’s special friend and protector. These fantasies may persist into adulthood in the form of daydreams about the conquest of danger or a special ‘protector’ who wards off imminent threats, and can even be translated into action through the exposure of oneself to vicissitudes of many kinds involving animals; or else, the specific matter of play can persist and cause the adult to become a pet fancier or ardent student of animal nature. Bonheur exemplifies a combination of these elements; when Klumpke and her mother visited the artist they found her accompanied by four St Bernards whose bizarre presence merited the following explanation: ‘Ceux-là sont mes plus vieux amis. . . . Ce sont mes gardiens fidèles. Avec eux je n’ai rien à craindre!’ And when Klumpke returned to the USA for a brief stay, Bonheur gave her two studies of a lion, noting that ‘these will help you remember me’ (plate 41).

Of course, the identification of human and animal is not necessarily schizoid, totemic, or neurotic, and it is manifested in different degrees on a universal level. One commonplace manifestation of this process is the ‘personalizing’ of an animal pet. In an unconscious effort to assuage feelings, individuals attempt to achieve a homogeneity between themselves and the non-human creature, either by relating to it in personal terms or by perceiving themselves as being nonhuman like the animal. In this way animals very often become the bearers of an individual’s transferred feelings, projections, and identifications. In neurotic instances of this relationship, patients sometimes have repeated dreams in which they are portrayed ‘as various domestic or jungle-type animals.’

Bonheur’s relationship with animals was rooted in her desire to transcend the limitations of her earth-bound condition. While she was not religious in the conventional sense, she yearned for the prophetic vision of Isaiah, ‘the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.’ This mingling of animal and human was precisely related to her obliteration of sex categories: she understood from early age that gender was as much mental as it was biological. Her belief in metempsychosis and reincarnation further indicated how arbitrary were male-female and animal-human differentiations.

Bonheur’s other intellectual interests essentially relate to the blurring of
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gender trait and animal-human qualities. She had a passion for La Fontaine and her contemporary Cherville, who wrote sympathetically about animals.75 Her favorite opera was Mozart’s Magic Flute in which one of the characters, Papageno, is an effeminate bird-catcher eternally dressed in a suit of feathers,76 and her favorite myth was Diana and Actaeon in which the huntress transforms a hunter into a stag for having gazed upon her as she bathed. The tale ends with Actaeon destroyed by a pack of hounds. Bonheur wrote her own poetic version of the myth which makes Actaeon a reincarnated being condemned to eternal wandering on earth in his animal form.77

She transferred these fantasies to the realm of everyday life and her own immediate experience, deriving a perversive pleasure from the public response to her confused identity:

It amuses me to see how puzzled the people are. They wonder to which sex I belong. The ladies especially lose themselves in conjecture about ‘the little old man who looks so lively.’ The men seem to conclude: ‘Oh, he’s some aged singer from St. Peter’s at Rome, who has turned to painting in his declining years to console himself for some misfortune.’ And they shake their beards triumphantly.78

On a more positive level, Bonheur’s fantasies of animal and human hybrids took the form of an idealized union of male and female. When told of the happy marriage of a friend, she exclaimed: ‘Ah les mariages comme celui-là, bien-heureuses les femmes qui peuvent les contracter! . . . Ce sont les deux moitiés de l’être dont parle Platon, qui se rencontrent sur la terre et s’unissent pour l’éternité.’79 Bonheur was here referring to the image of the androgyne, a subject which preoccupied writers, artists, and philosophers throughout the nineteenth century. While the image assumed negative connotations toward the end of the century, during Bonheur’s youth and maturation it was widely cherished in France as a positive symbol. In France the image of the androgyne was more frequent than in any other country, and was characterized above all by its important historical, social, and even political associations.80

Generally speaking, androgyny is the capacity of a single person of either sex to embody the full range of character traits despite cultural attempts to render some exclusively masculine. The Victorian world was an anti-androgynous world, a world of excessive sexual polarization with the result that men and women were forced into roles so confining that their natural development was constrained and both they and the world were deprived of their creative potential. Rosa Bonheur tried to surmount this condition and integrate masculine and feminine traits and values.

The androgynous Adam — the primordial androgyne — assumed for many social reformers symbolic significance as an ideal of human progress. Pierre Ballanche, the influential historian-philosopher from Lyons, projected in writings like the Vision d’Hébal (1831) a single androgynous individual who comprised man and woman in a universal synthesis. Ballanche profoundly affected the Saint-Simonists; it seems certain that he inspired the introduction of the image of the androgyne as a social symbol into Saint-Simonism, where it
became intimately connected with the question of the emancipation of women. Ballanche predicted that at the moment woman ceased being the slave of the male and became his equal the conditions for the emergence of the androgyne would be fulfilled. In this utopian fantasy, social equality is the prelude for the reunion of the male and female principles. The image of the androgyne is therefore the symbol of social equality and of the emancipation of woman.\textsuperscript{81}

In the Saint-Simonist milieu of Sophie and Raimond Bonheur a child's genitals did not determine what the parents expected in terms of personality, behavior and work. They offered Rosa an androgynous ideal — the full spectrum of experiences and feeling covered by both male and female principles. Her earliest photographs show her as a strong individual, never wearing that soft, contemplative look so typical of female portraiture of the time; she gazes unflinchingly and confidently at the viewer. Typically, her father joined the Order of the Templars — originally a secret society established to subvert the Bourbon regime. Raimond had Rosa baptized as a 'petit Templier,' and she envisioned herself as a 'vaillante chevalier!'\textsuperscript{82} A photograph of her in the knight's costume indicates how open her father was to giving her the full range of experience (plate 42).

The Saint-Simonists and their circle of admirers considered God as comprising Father and Mother, and could point out that in the first chapter of Genesis the Creator brought forth 'male and female' simultaneously as opposed to the second chapter where a hierarchy is established. One notorious offshoot of Saint-Simonism was the sect founded by Ganneau, an ex-sculptor. He called himself Le Mapah, a name composed of the first syllables of mater and pater. Le Mapah's religion, founded in the late 1850s on the principle of androgyne, was very popular among contemporary artists and writers. According to Le Mapah, the union of the male and female principles was pervasive in nature and he fulminated against the artificial social barriers thrown up between the sexes. In modern fashion, he opposed the sacrifice of the wife's name to her husband's and proposed that each partner contribute the first syllable of their names to the unitary name of the couple,

\textit{afin que de ces deux génériques soit constituée l'unité dans la dualité;}\\
ainsi Évadam de Eve, Adam.

Thus Le Mapah called his religion Evadisme in honor of the primordial androgyne, Évadam.\textsuperscript{83}

Those who came under Le Mapah's spell included Alphonse Esquiros, Alphonse Constant (later the mage, Éliphas Lévi) and Constant's friend, Flora Tristan, the most vociferous proponent of women's emancipation in the nineteenth century. Tristan, whose novel \textit{Méphis} and social tract \textit{L'Emancipation de la femme} not only denounced woman's slavery in modern society, vindicated the rights of woman to dispose freely of her affections, to divorce, to receive education and equal pay for equal work, but even went so far as to advocate 'la souveraineté et l'autocratie de la femme.'\textsuperscript{84}

Her feminism was supported by philosophical arguments gleaned from Le Mapah and the Saint-Simonists, Swedenborg, Fourier and other 'utopistes


40. Photograph of Rosa Bonheur and her lion 'Fathma.' Reproduced in Klumpke, *Rosa Bonheur*, p. 281

42. Photograph of Rosa Bonheur in her Templar costume, c. 1834. Reproduced in Klumpke, *Rosa Bonheur*, p. 159
43. Title-page of Alphonse Constant's *L'Assomption de la femme*, 1841
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modernes.' Tristan posited a Divine Androgyne whose unity comprehends three elements: God is not only male and female but also 'embryo' — the world in creative evolution. Tristan always refers to this Triple Unity as 'Dieux,' but uses this plural grammatically as singular. She represented her androgynous religion by a triangular emblem which appeared on her stationery and on her seal; this sign stood for God and had one word on each side, 'père,' 'mère,' and 'embryon,' with the word 'Dieux' in the middle. In view of the vitality of the androgynous image, it is not surprising to find that leading French feminists like Tristan, Sand and Bonheur developed out of the Saint-Simonist milieu and assimilated the image in their intellectual system and/or life-style. While I have found no references directly linking Bonheur and Tristan, it is certain that their fortunes crossed.85

In the same period as L'Emancipation de la femme, the movement known as Fusionism began under the leadership of Louis-Jean-Baptiste de Tourreil. He designated his androgynous deity by the monogram 'MAP' composed of the initials of God's real name: 'MèrAmourPèrè.' Tourreil further espoused the androgynous ideal for the whole of humanity and the concept of metempsychosis as the process by which it would be achieved. The individual must perfect her/himself through various stages of existence until the unity of the androgyne is realized — the authentic image and likeness of God. The whole of creation — animals and plants included — is purified and achieves the unity of the universal androgyne in a series of transformations through time. Fusionism preached a universal religion of solidarity, fraternity and love which, excluding eternal damnation for any person, makes individual salvation, happiness, perfection and wisdom conditional on the progress of all living creatures. Hence the androgynous vision of the first half of the century constituted a form of utopian paradise for French society.86

It is perhaps no coincidence that the two outstanding writers of the period on metempsychosis, Pierre Leroux and Jean Reynaud, had once been loyal Saint-Simonists although essentially hostile to Enfantin's sexual theories,87 and wrote ardently about the androgynous ideal.88 Reynaud wrote a series of articles in 1847 on animal intelligence for the Magasin pittoresque, and both Leroux and Reynaud collaborated on the Nouvelle Encyclopédie which devoted major sections to the concept of the androgyne and the theory of metempsychosis.89 Alphonse Esquiros was yet another Saint-Simonist who shared the mystical bent of Leroux and Reynaud, and further envisioned a unity of the animal and human kingdoms and analyzed the oppression of women in society. For these social reformers the unity of all the species and the dissolution of rigid sexual stereotypes were part of the same philosophical outlook.90

The androgynous creature represented an asexual being more than a bisexual being, and became an important image of radical ideals. The artist Chenavard, very much influenced by Ballanche and the Saint-Simonists, demonstrated a profound interest in the concept of androgyne. One of the murals designed for the abortive Panthéon commission depicted two colossal figures of Adam and Eve: 'les principes actif et passif, les deux portions séparées de l'androgyne primordial.'91 And his Divina Tragedia, conceived in the 1840s but only exhibited in 1869, is dominated by the figure described in the
catalogue as 'l'éternelle Androgyne, symbole de l'harmonie des deux natures ou principes contraires, coiffée du bonnet phrygien...'. The allusion to the Phrygian cap, the Republican symbol of liberty, also recalls how dear the image was to the artists supporting the 1848 Republic: when the provisional government ran a contest for the figure of the Republic a number of them depicted the figure as an androgynous being.

Bonheur surely assimilated these doctrines stimulated by the followers of Saint-Simon and filtered through her father. On the back of an engraving of the Virgin and Child in her possession she inscribed her Credo which was a modification of the Credo of the Catholic Church:

Je crois en Dieu, le Père tout-puissant, éternel, créateur de toute chose éternelle; je crois en son fils bien aimé, le couple sauveur, Christ androgyne, unique sommet de transformation humaine, sublime manifestation du Dieu vivant qui est en tout ce qui est; qui a été conçu dans le sein de la glorieuse nature humaine, toujours mère et toujours vierge, qui est né, qui est mort, pour renaître toujours plus parfait, qui est monté vers l'avenir qu'il nous ouvre où seront jugés les vivants et les morts.

Bonheur’s credo is a synthesis of the doctrines inspired by the androgynous ideal. The mystical tradition has always considered Christ an androgyne; the wound in Christ’s side was the analogy for female genitalia, and the image of Christ producing his bride, the holy Mother Church, through the wound in his side in the same way as the first Adam produced Eve, is to be found in Orthodox Christian theology and liturgy, and in St Augustine himself.

Bonheur was thus exposed to this image from infancy, and it seems to be the guiding ideal of her existence. Her important designation of ‘ange gardien’ for those closest to her — her mother and Nathalie — also participates in this ideal. Angels, and especially guardian angels, are generally shown as asexual creatures. That she perceived her mother in these terms suggests a sanction for her own direction of asexuality, and we may recall how Bonheur attributed much of her good fortune and activities to her ‘guardian angel.’

Bonheur’s fascination with the ‘guardian angel’ was also an outgrowth of the reformists’ ideals and was directly related to the theory of the androgyne. Angels, neither male nor female, and rather partaking of the qualities of both, were spiritual beings and taken as an incarnation of the androgynous ideal. Balzac’s famous novel, Séraphita, casts as the hero-heroine an androgynous angel who appears to both her female and male lovers as the opposite sex. It purports to contain an exposition of Swedenborg’s doctrines on angels, and it was indeed to the Swedish mystic that Balzac owed the notion of angelic androgyne. Both Conjugal Love and Heaven and Hell contain descriptions of the ecstatic marriage of angels, and of the fusion of two people into a single soul. In heaven, a married pair forms not two, but one angel, and in his vision he saw man and woman combined in the form of a single androgy nous angel.

In accordance with Swedenborg’s doctrines, Séraphitus-Séraphita represents the androgy nous synthesis of a man and woman. This androgy nous coincides with angelization, wherein the inner self has triumphed over the outer, the
 spirity over the flesh. This androgyne is itself formed by the marriage of man and woman, by their union in love. Swedenborg's concept of the angel found its way into the writings of many of the Saint-Simonist thinkers mentioned above, including Tristan's friend Alphonse Constant, whose book — L'Assomption de la femme treated the issue in the context of women's liberation (plate 43).99

Rosa Bonheur perceived herself in androgynous terms. In theory, a homosexual could be an androgyne in the sense of the psychological hermaphrodite. She wanted to mother Anna Klumpke, to raise her as her own child and transform her into 'a second Rosa Bonheur.' Klumpke, lame from childhood and gifted both musically and artistically, joined in her person traits of Rosa's mother and Nathalie Micas. At one point, Rosa claimed that the presence of Klumpke recalled her poor mother and declared: 'J'ai des ambitions maternelles pour vous mon enfant; il me semble que vous pourrez devenir la continuatrice de ma vie, de mon intelligence, de mon art....'100 Anna answered to Rosa's desire to be a mother; her resemblance to Sophie invoked the memories and emotional transfer of the mother-child relationship.

Anna now occupied Nathalie's room and received all the affection and ambivalent feeling that Bonheur had formerly bestowed on Micas. Rosa requested that she collaborate on her last great undertaking, La foulaison, which Bonheur meant to surpass The Horse Fair but could never finish. Klumpke was enjoined to write the biography of Bonheur that Nathalie had once hoped to execute, and the final result is filled with the kinds of intimate revelations which Bonheur could never have related to male authors who Bonheur believed incapable of doing her life story with impartiality and understanding. Bonheur made Klumpke the executrix of her entire estate and the latter dedicated many of her years to the perpetuation of Bonheur's reputation. Rosa's last words were addressed to Anna: 'Je... serai... ton... ange... gardien.'101

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NOTES

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L. Nohlin and A.S. Harris, Women Artists, 1550-1950, New York, 1976, pp. 223 ff.; G. Greer, The Obstacle Race, New York, 1979, pp. 20-1, 41, 57-60. Also the catalogues 19th Century European Paintings From the Collection of the Late Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge, Sotheby Parke Bernet, Inc., New York, Dec. 5, 1975, nos 4-28, May 14, 1976, nos 7-33. Curiously, Dodge shared Bonheur's obsession with animals; she spent a major portion of the family fortune on her 300 dogs and also provided shelter for a variety of other animals. See The Sale of the Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge Collection, Sotheby Parke Bernet, Inc., New York, 1978, pp. 114 ff. And see most recently D. Ashton, Rosa Bonheur, New York, 1981 which, however, draws upon the 'extensive research' (p. vii) of my manuscript for the present article.


4 Stanton, op. cit., p. 23. Stanton, Paris correspondent for the Inter-Ocean, was the son of Elizabeth Cary Stanton, the pioneer American suffragist, and was particularly sensitive to the feminist implications of Bonheur's career. See A. Young, Age Young: His Life and Times, ed. J.N. Beffel, New York, 1939, p. 8.


7 Ibid., pp. 95, 115, 303, 366-7.

8 Ibid., pp. 357, 358-9.

9 Ibid., p. 175.

10 Ibid., p. 205.

11 Ibid., pp. 269, 374; Klumpke, op. cit., p. 312; V. Demont-Breton, 'Rosa Bonheur,' Revue des revues, June 15, 1899, p. 611.


13 Stanton, op. cit., p. 566.


15 Ibid., p. 257.

16 Ibid., pp. 88, 97, 99-100.


18 Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 311-12. See also R. Bonheur and others, Le Carnet du théognoméphile, Paris, 1831, 'carnet de l'ami de Dicu, de la Femme, et du Peuple.'

19 Ibid., p. 164.

20 Ibid., p. 145.

21 Ibid., p. 152.

22 Stanton, op. cit., p. 356.

23 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 164.

24 Ibid., p. 168.

25 An example of her antipathy to the kind of realism introduced by Millet and Courbet is her remark on their disciple Bastien-Lepage: 'An artist . . . must not render too faithfully the exterior of the peasant; rather, the expression of his soul.' See Klumpke, Memoirs of an Artist, ed. L. Whiting, Boston, 1940, pp. 63-4.

26 For Gambart's relationship to Bonheur see J. Maas, Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World, London, 1975, pp. 70 ff., 79 ff., 252 ff., 279 ff.; E. Gambart (Sic), Monument érigé en mémoire de Rosa Bonheur à Fontainebleau, Macon, 1901, pp. 16ff., 20-1; Stanton, op. cit., pp. 98, 124, 279 ff. See also L.R. McCabe, 'How America Made Rosa Bonheur and Brought her Fame, Fortune, and a Friend to Whom She Left Her Home,' Ladies' Home Journal, vol. 98, Jan.-March 1, 1911, pp. 11, 63-5. French critics were critical of Bonheur's foreign clientele: see for example, M. de Saint-Santin, 'J.-R. Brascassat,' Gazette des Beaux-Arts, sér. 1, vol. 24, 1868, p. 575. Of course, Saint-Santin was trying to minimize the public success of Bonheur as against that of her rival compatriot from Bordeaux, Brascassat.


30 H. Delaborde, Mélanges sur l'art contemporain, Paris, 1866, pp. 82-3.

31 P.L. Hervier, 'Lettres inédites de Rosa Bonheur,' La nouvelle revue, Jan-Feb., 1908, pp. 187 ff., letter of May 23, 1876.

32 For Bonheur's pedagogical career, see Roger-Mills, op. cit., pp. 110 ff.; Paris, Archives Nationales F.24 517, Dossier: 'Miles de Montizon (Flore et Justine). In 1802, Mme Frère de Montizon, a student of Restout, founded the Ecole gratuite de dessin pour les jeunes personnes (i.e., jeunes filles). On March 8, 1810 the government took it over, and its ensuing history makes it a significant factor in encouraging the aspirations of artistically gifted young women. Raimond Bonheur assumed control in 1848, and Rosa inherited it after his death in 1849. It was then called the Ecole spéciale de dessin (later Ecole impériale) for les demoiselles (rue Dupuytren). Rosa Bonheur held the directorship until 1860 when Mile Nelly Marandon de Montyel — also a native of Bordeaux — replaced her.
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33 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 247.
34 Ibid., pp. 249 ff.; Stanton, op. cit., pp. 89 ff., 93, 84, 223.
35 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 250; Stanton, op. cit., p. 88.
40 Le Brun's animal-human comparisons were designed for a lecture given before the Académie royale on March 28, 1671. It was his last lecture and the drawings remained unpublished during his lifetime. See C. Le Brun, La Physionomie humaine comparée à la physionomie des animaux, ed. L. Metivet, Paris, 1916, pp. 11 ff. The drawings were previously reproduced in large format in 1806 by Baltard and Le Grand for the Chalcographie du Musée Napoléon, and were also included by Lavater in his study of physisomy. See the French edition, G. Lavater, L'Art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie, 10 vols., Paris, 1820, vol. IX, pp. 77 ff. Lavater himself was fascinated by the animal-human resemblance, and it seems certain that Bonheur derived inspiration from his ideas. He claimed, 'Chaque animal a une qualité essentielle qui le distingue d'un autre.... Chaque espèce a un caractère aussi-bien qu'une forme unique,' while Bonheur declared: 'I have to catch the rapid motion of animals, the reflection of light and colours on their coats, their different characteristics (for every animal has its individual physiognomy)." See R. Bonheur, "Fragments of my Autobiography," Magazine of Art, October, 1902, pp. 532-3.
42 Bacon, op. cit., p. 834.
43 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 180; Claretie, op. cit., p. 137. Bonheur once gave one of her lions to the Jardin des plantes; later, when she visited it she noted that, 'the poor animal rose up when he saw me, and his glance, so eloquent and pathetic, seemed to tell me -- I am wrong; his look actually said: "See what they have done to me, I am weary, I suffer. Save me! Take me back!"'
46 Ibid., p. 16.
47 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 308. This corresponds also to the views of Alphonse Trousseuel, a popularizer of zoological ideas. See his L'Esprit des bêtes. Zoologie passionnelle, Paris, n.d., p. 29. Trousseuel, a virulent anti-Semitic, whose entire work is pervaded by this anti-Semitic bitterness, even confines his zoology with his racism. See ibid., p. 65.
49 Ibid., pp. 261, 278, 160, 223, 167-8, 169, 166, 179, 244, 252.
50 For Bonheur's admiration for Landseer see ibid., p. 142; Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 267-8; Frith, op. cit., p. 182.
52 Zoology had become a crucial area of scientific investigation in France during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the zoo and museum of natural history of the Jardin des plantes were completely re-organized along the latest principles of classification. Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, director of the museum, and his equally famous disciples, the brothers Georges and Frédéric Cuvier, made lasting contributions to the science and also aroused wide public interest. Saint-Hilaire commissioned Raimond Bonheur to execute a series of plates representing important museum pieces, and no doubt Rosa spent much of her time in the Jardin des plantes. Saint-Hilaire's ideas would have certainly appealed to Bonheur, because he emphasized the unity of all the species, and sought analogies in the foetal state as well as in comparative anatomy. His son Isidore would also have been known to Bonheur for his work in Bordeaux, where he organized the Faculty of Sciences in 1838. Klumpke observed in Bonheur's library several works on 'des moeurs des bêtes,' and it is certain that she followed the development of the zoological sciences in her day. See Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 11, 158.
54 Stanton, op. cit., pp. 140-1.
55 Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 6, 8; W.F. Cody, An Autobiography of Buffalo Bill, New York, 1923, p. 325. For a sense of Buffalo Bill's appeal to the Parisian public see Young, op. cit., p. 8. It was Stanton, the editor of Bonheur's notes, who took Art Young, the future political cartoonist, to the World's Fair in 1889.
56 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 221; Stanton, op. cit.,

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pp. 379 ff. For the interest in Stubbs see Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
60 Klumpke, Memoirs, pp. 59-60.
61 Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur, pp. 107, 110. At one point, Bonheur gushed to Klumpke: 'C'est maintenant mon unique, mon plus ardent désir, je veux faire de vous une seconde Rosa Bonheur.'
62 Ibid., p. 376. This also involved Klumpke's biography since Bonheur was anxious that Klumpke take up the task initially projected by Nathalie Micas. Ibid., p. 107. Bonheur told Klumpke, 'Vous serez ma voix.'
64 Roger-Milès, Atelier Rosa Bonheur, vol. II, which does a statistical breakdown of her animal studies.
66 Stanton, op. cit., pp. 187-8; Klumpke, op. cit., p. 84, where Rosa tells Anna: 'Si ma Nathalie avait vécu, j’aurais terminé La fouaison; elle aussi voulait faire ce que vous me proposez; elle était si dévouée à ma gloire; elle avait tant d’ambition pour moi.'
67 Communication from Professor Robert L. Herbert, September 17, 1976. I am grateful to Professor Herbert for sharing with me his recollections of his visit to Bonheur's estate at By.
70 Bömm, 'Jean-Leon Gérôme,' loc. cit.
72 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 16.
73 When the American art dealer S.P. Avery requested sign-mark souvenirs of several regulars including Bonheur, she did a lion for him. See W. Coiffin, 'Souvenirs of a Veteran Collector,' Century Magazine, vol. 53, December, 1895, p. 244.
75 For Cherville's work see for examples, G. de Cherville, Les Aventures d'un chien de chasse, Paris, 1862; Les Bêtes en robe de chambre, Paris, 1863; Histoire d'un trop bon chien, Paris, 1867; Contes de chasse et de pêche, Paris, 1878. Here we may also mention the contribution of the English Anna Sewell (1820-78), almost the exact contemporary of Bonheur, whose popular Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse (1877), shares much with the works of both Bonheur and Cherville.
76 Klumpke, op. cit., p. 316.
77 Stanton, op. cit., pp. 271-3.
78 Ibid., p. 199.
81 Ibid., pp. 20 ff.
82 Klumpke, op. cit., pp. 159-60.
83 Busut, op. cit., pp. 31 ff. For Ganneau see E. Starkie, Petrus Borel the Lyantbrope, Norfolk, Conn., 1954, pp. 50 ff. Both Dumas and Charpfleurey recalled the colorful Le Maph in their reminiscences on the romantic epoch.
85 Tristan was very popular in Bordeaux where the workers' movement was relatively strong, and she visited the town several times. Her last visit was in September, 1844 when she was quite ill, and she died there two months later. The workers in Bordeaux then began a drive for subscriptions to build a monument to her, which was finally erected on October 21, 1848 - a crowning year for both Tristan and Bonheur. See J.-L. Puech, La Vie et l'oeuvre de Flora Tristan, 1803-1844 (L'Union ouvrière), Paris, 1925, pp. 178-9, 187, 272, 280, 284 ff. For the most recent and profound analysis of the work of Tristan see S.K. Dijkstra, 'Flora Tristan and the Aesthetics of Social Change,' unpublished dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1976. For the feminist movement of the period see L. Abensour, Le Féminisme sous le règne de Louis-Philippe et en 1848, Paris, 1913.
86 Tristan, L’Emancipation, pp. 118-19.
88 Pierre Leroux had been a friend of Bonheur's father: see Klumpke, Memoirs, p. 28.
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90 Esquiro was a friend of Le Mapah whom he introduced to Alphonse Constant, and like the latter wove together science and mysticism and displayed deep interest in the human-animal relationship. He envisioned a Golden Age where the human achieved the unity of all creation through the influence of civilizing values:

La lutte avec les animaux a été nécessaire; elle ne l’est plus. Le but de la domesticité n’est pas d’entretenir à la surface du globe une conquête violente qui ressemble toujours aux suite d’une guerre; c’est d’y établir la paix. La présence de l’homme doit communiquer des sentiments plus doux aux animaux eux-mêmes et humaniser en quelque sorte toute la nature. . . . L’homme est le lien moral de toute la création; c’est en lui et par lui que les mille rayons de la vie arriveront un jour à l’unité.


94 Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur, p. 322.

95 Klumpke, Memoirs, p. 42.

96 Reynaud, Terre et Ciel, pp. 309 ff.; Tourreil,


100 Klumpke, Rosa Bonheur, pp. 103, 107, 110-11, 85. Elsewhere, Bonheur confessed to Klumpke: ‘Je vous aime beaucoup, Anna, et votre vieille amie deviendra une mère, une sœur pour vous.’

101 Ibid., p. 398.