NADAR
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
Maria Morris Hambourg
Françoise Heilbrun
Philippe Néagu

With contributions by
Sylvie Aubenas, André Jammes, Ulrich Keller,
Sophie Rochard, and André Rouillé
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TO PHILIPPE NÉAGU
1943—1994
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Sponsor’s Statement

THE SPRINGS OF ACHIEVEMENT SERIES
ON THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Nadar was an innovator in photography at a time when the technique was itself new. As this exhibition makes clear, his portraiture went beyond first impressions. Nadar’s greatest passion was people. His searching portraits immortalized the great men and women of his era, those who were themselves defining the arts and humanities in the 1850s. Then he pushed his art beyond the technologies of the time, aspiring to speed human progress through a photography wedded to science. The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrates Nadar’s achievements with the first major exhibition of his work in this country and the publication of its accompanying catalogue.

Springs Industries is proud to sponsor this long-awaited exhibition at its only American venue. The most recent addition to The Springs of Achievement Series on the Art of Photography, now in its seventeenth year, this exhibition exemplifies our commitment to honoring creative expression and bringing to the public outstanding achievements in photographic art.

Walter Y. Elisha
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Springs Industries
Directors’ Foreword

Although the large American public for Impressionist painting is generally unfamiliar with the photography that flourished in Paris after 1850, a surprising number of people have heard of Nadar. The name recognition is probably due not to the vivacity of Nadar’s portraits alone, nor even to the additional power of his magnetic personality, but primarily to his precocious instinct for self-publicity. One of the first artists to understand and make regular use of the media to advance his career, Nadar was ingenious in promoting his curious name.

But if today the name is known and vaguely connected to an early photographer of celebrities, who among us could sort out the following definitions?

NADAR: Adolescent nickname, affectionately bestowed by bohemian friends, for Félix Tournachon (1820–1910).
NADAR: Pen name of a witty, highly visible Parisian journalist and caricaturist during the 1840s and 1850s.
NADAR: Signature of a new photographic studio in Paris where Félix and his younger brother, Adrien, collaborated in 1854–55.
NADAR: Disputed trademark and cause célèbre. The courts eventually ruled that Félix was “the only, the true Nadar.” While Adrien and his studio fell into bankruptcy, Nadar’s telling photographic portraits of writers, artists, and friends won great acclaim.
NADAR: Public figure and aeronaut fictionalized by Jules Verne as Ardan in From the Earth to the Moon (1865).
NADAR: From 1860 to 1871, a famous photographic emporium on the boulevard des Capucines. It turned out standardized portraits that were stamped “Nadar” but made by assistants. In this space the Impressionist painters had their first group exhibition (1874).
NADAR: From the 1880s until World War I, a glamorous portrait studio run by Félix’s son, Paul, who enlarged the name’s fame but further muddled its identity with modish, commercial products.

NADAR: Author of several semiautobiographical memoirs, such as When I Was a Photographer (1900), that romanticized the artist’s life and prepared his legend for the twentieth century.

This book and the exhibition that accompanies it grew from a desire to untangle the multitude of Nadars and allow the great portraitist to come forth in all his singular glory. Our enterprise therefore focuses on the years from 1854 to 1865, when Nadar made his finest portraits, initially with his brother, Adrien, and then alone in his private studio on the rue Saint-Lazare. In her essay Françoise Heilbrun addresses the devilish problem of distinguishing the “hands” of the two brothers and traces the artistic development of Nadar’s characteristic portrait style. The exhibition also charts Nadar’s pioneering explorations of other applications for photography during the 1860s: for example, his haunting documentation of the Paris catacombs taken by electric light. These more scientific facets of Nadar’s photography are presented by Sylvie Aubeas.

The photographs in the exhibition, almost all of which are reproduced here as full-size plates, were selected with great care by the curators, Maria Morris Hambourg, of the Metropolitan Museum, and Françoise Heilbrun and the late Philippe Néagu, of the Musée d’Orsay. The individual complexities of these prints, which were made by Nadar or under his direct supervision, are beautifully rendered by the extremely sensitive five-color offset reproductive technique developed by Jean Genoud for this printing. It is our hope that the rich hues, suave light, and velvet texture of Nadar’s original salted paper prints will delight the public, and that viewers will now recognize this authentic, personal, and autographic aspect of Nadar’s work as readily as they do his famous name. The history of these prints and the reasons for their rarity are admirably explained by André Jammes, while the distinctions between prints of different periods and generations are thrown into helpful relief by Ulrich Keller.
The experiences that drove Nadar to develop into one of the finest portraitists of all time, that refined his sensitivity, motivated his choice of medium, and determined his approach, are sketched out by Maria Morris Hambourg in the introductory essay, a study of the formative and creative years (1820–65) in which Nadar’s life and career are seen to mirror his age.

Photography enabled Nadar to realize a personal vision that conveyed his flair and empathy as well as his romantic glorification of the individual. In his humane, engaging portraits, every man is a potential genius, every woman a unique personality. Nadar’s central ethic of the idiosyncratic artistic self was, however, at odds with mass production and other homogenizing tendencies of the Second Empire, and thus he shifted from photographing his creative friends to more disinterested, scientific pursuits aimed toward a universal benefit. In the end, as André Rouillé points out in these pages, the life of a romantic lived over long naturally resulted in reminiscence and self-memorialization.

The essay on Nadar the art critic, who turned his knowledge of paintings to advantage in his photographic portraits, is groundbreaking but incomplete work by the late Philippe Néagu. This rare man, who helped Françoise Heilbrun create the Musée d’Orsay’s photographic department and mount numerous exhibitions, was a passionate and perspicacious connoisseur of photography and of nineteenth-century French culture. He in particular knew that Nadar’s *Figures contemporaines* definitively embodied the artistic spirit of its age.

The exhibition in New York and this catalogue were made possible by a grant from Springs Industries, longtime patrons of photography, whose commitment to excellence and generosity we gratefully acknowledge.

Philippe de Montebello

*Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Henri Loyrette

*Director, Musée d’Orsay*
Acknowledgments

Since all aspects of this book and exhibition issue from and ultimately depend upon the photographs themselves, Françoise Helfbrun and I wish first to express our thanks to the individuals and institutions who generously loaned their original prints. We are grateful to the private collectors Manfred Heiting, André and Marie-Thérèse Jammes, François Le Pape, Gérard Lévy, Michael Mattis and Judith Hochberg, David and Mary Robinson, and Suzanne Winsberg; to institutional collections in the United States: The Art Institute of Chicago, The J. Paul Getty Museum, the Gilman Paper Company, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania; and to institutional collections in Paris: the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, the Musée Carnavalet, the Musée du Louvre, the Musée d’Orsay, and the Société Française de Photographie.

We are particularly indebted to M. and Mme Jamme, whose foresight in collecting Nadar’s photographs is at the origin of the exhibition, and also to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for an important number of loans and for the timely, expert assistance of Sylvie Aubenas, consultant curator for the project.

The look of this book is due primarily to the keen talents of Bruce Campbell, its designer, and of Jean Genoud and his team, especially Daniel Frank and Martin Senn, who printed it to the most exacting standards. The painstaking production was entrusted to Gwen Roginsky, Jay Reingold, and Susan Chun. John O’Neill, Editor in Chief, deftly guided the book’s form and content, while Ruth Lurie Kozodoy scrupulously edited, and vastly improved, all the texts. We are most grateful to these individuals as well as to the former director of the Musée d’Orsay, Françoise Cachin, who concluded Philippe Néagu’s unfinished essay; Sophie Rochard, who provided emergency research and catalogue entries; Eugenia Janis, Anne McCauley, and André Rouillé, who criticized and corrected the biography; André Rouillé, for supplying the basis of the Nadar bibliography; Jayne Kuchna, bibliographic editor; Frederick Brown, Mary Laing, and Joachim Neugroschel, translators; and Robert J. Palmer, indexer. The French edition of this catalogue, Nadar, Les années créatrices: 1854–1860, which differs somewhat from our book, also owes much to the labors of Pierre Apraxine, Juliette Armand, Caroline Benzaria, Jeanne Bouniort, Pierre-Louis Hardy, Frédéric Illouz, Brigitte de La Broise, Guénola de Metz, Anne de Mondenard, Matthew Pimm, and Jacques Venelli.

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Finally, we take great pleasure in thanking Springs Industries for believing in Nadar and for making it possible. The enthusiastic support of Walter Elisha and the gracious collaboration of Robert Thompson were essential and are most deeply appreciated. On behalf of photography’s public we salute the beneficence of this remarkable company.

Maria Morris Hambourg

*Curator, Department of Photographs*

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*
N A D A R
Nadar, the most astonishing expression of vitality.

—BAUDELAIRE ¹
A Portrait of Nadar

M A R I A  M O R R I S  H A M B O U R G

In 1856 Félix Tournachon went to court to defend his exclusive right to the pen name Nadar. This tall, red-haired dynamo was thirty-six years old at the time and already famous as a novelist, journalist, and caricaturist. The extravagant meanderings of his youth were behind him, and now his multiple energies had drawn him toward a new calling—one perfectly attuned to his character and experience. Yet just as Nadar was discovering in photography the right arena for his talents, he found himself repeatedly thwarted by another photographer—a foxy character who was appropriating his pseudonym and stealing his glory.

There were scores of photographers in Paris in the mid-1850s, but only that one was a threat to Nadar. His early friends the Bisson brothers and Gustave Le Gray had become famous for their studies of landscape and architecture; their specialties did not encroach on Nadar’s field, which was portraiture. Even the closer competition of Mayer & Pierson, portraitists to the emperor, and Disdéri, inventor of the popular carte de visite, was easily tolerable, for Nadar despised the politics of the glittering court of the Second Empire, and the bourgeois clientele that frequented Disdéri’s and other studios on the boulevards was frankly beneath his interest. What he could not abide was his own nickname being brazenly usurped and displayed by a prominent boulevard studio, the studio of a man whose sensibility was not unlike his, whom he had always generously and fraternally assisted and, truth be known, secretly resented: Adrien Tournachon, his younger brother.

Scarcely rancorous or mean-spirited, Nadar had tried repeatedly to resolve the dispute with Adrien before finally bringing suit against him. He was forced to this extreme not just because he was losing money to a brother who tried to take shelter in his fame, but because Adrien’s appropriation of the name Nadar represented a challenge to Félix’s very being. Although old resentment surely added fuel to the flame, Nadar would have attacked anyone—friend, relation, or foe—who interfered with his assertion of his artistic personality. It was a life-or-death struggle, for in a time when individuality had become the supreme attainment, Nadar’s name was everything: his priceless identity, a trademark as personal as the artist’s own fingerprint.

* * *

Born in Paris in 1820, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon was the first child of Thérèse Mailet (1794–1860) and Victor Tournachon (1771–1837), a printer and publisher from Lyons who moved to Paris in 1817. Victor came from a distinguished family of merchants and printers, and was himself large-minded, honest, and valiant; Nadar remembered, with characteristic exaggeration and republican pride, that his father read eight languages and had joined the fierce Lyonnais uprising during the Revolution. By the time Adrien, his second and last child, was born in 1825, Victor’s modest publishing firm in the Latin Quarter of Paris was a lively if already insolvent enterprise. His catalogue listed Buffon’s Histoire naturelle (seventy-six volumes), Lamennais’s popular defense of human dignity, Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion (1817), the first novel and first play of Dumas père, and many other titles in French, English, Italian, Spanish, Latin, and Greek. Because of its liberal tone, the press was closely watched by government censors (a Spanish translation of Rousseau’s Contrat social was among the provocative volumes), but it was less Victor’s love of liberty than lack of business sense that forced him to close in 1833. Overextended by the cost of publishing the massive Dictionnaire universel de droit français and faced with a declining demand for books from a public that was beginning to prefer reviews and newspapers, the ruined Victor Tournachon nonetheless paid all his debts and thereafter lived on his dwindling stock. 3

Félix was evidently much attached to his father. After

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Figure 1. Nadar. Self-portrait, ca. 1855 (See catalogue entry for pl. 16.)
attending elementary school in the passage du Commerce, just two steps from his family's apartment in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, he was sent in 1831 to a school in Versailles, the "Pension Hubert, run by a Swiss who beat us frequently." In a diary of his first days there Félix expressed disappointment when his father failed to visit on Sunday, pleasure with the books his father gave him, and pride in his good grades. And in a letter to his rather unaccommodating mother a year later he asked for a hat and coat, but only after offering her a droll account of his attempts to mate his two male turtledoves—an "inconvenience" he managed to resolve with the help of the local fowler.

Félix wanted to be the pride of his parents, and he could count the scholastic prizes won in his first year and a half in school as proof of his good faith. But between 1833 and 1836, when he studied at the Collège Bourbon (today's Lycée Condorcet) in Paris, his confidence in a brilliant future eroded by degrees under the pressure of emotional turmoil. Although Félix was awarded scholarships throughout this period, his performance was uneven; he became a turbulent and undisciplined troublemaker who emerged from every fray the scapegoat. Certainly the disastrous decline of Victor's fortunes was mortifying; it had even caused Thérèse Tournachon to attach Adrien's acceptance at the collège to his brighter brother's success. Thus, from the sixth form (age thirteen or fourteen) onward, Félix's increasingly hard-won achievements did not just serve his own self-esteem but were also burdened with the family's honor and mortgaged to the continued education of a dreamy, and in Félix's eyes, "worthless," younger brother. Then in 1836 Victor fell sick and moved back to Lyons with his wife.

With no aptitude for the abstractions of mathematics but a born observer's lively interest in natural science and a delight in language, Félix had by 1836 become a passionate lover of literature. It was the heyday of Romanticism, and the literary and aesthetic issues that swirled around such writers as Hugo, Vigny, Dumas, and Gautier became the subjects of hot debates among Félix, his close friend the future author Charles Asselineau, and a dozen other adolescents. "The young people of that era were drunk on art, passion, and poetry; brains seethed, hearts palpitated with inordinate ambitions," wrote Gautier of the reception given Vigny's play Chatterton when it opened on February 12, 1835. "The parterre . . . was full of pale, long-haired youths who firmly believed that the only acceptable earthly occupation was to make poems or paintings. . . ." Whether or not he was actually at the theater that night, Félix was an earnest member of that group of would-be writers. In 1836 he published his first story in the school's review and won a prize for it. Full of his success, he wrote to his mother in Lyons asking her or "Papa" to provide him some pretext on which to visit the great Alexandre Dumas, whose portrait, he added, hung in the pension where he lived.

Papa probably did not answer, for his illness had attacked his mind, which was rapidly degenerating. It was a devastating period for Félix. Despite the privileged care of M. Augeron, a kindhearted surrogate father who owned the boardinghouse on the rue de Clichy where Félix lived, he felt imprisoned and abandoned, and his best resolutions were ever undone by a devil of unruliness that finally forced even the charitable Augeron to dismiss him. Nadar later recounted that he had been forced to leave the collège after blowing up the school stove with a box of newfangled German matches, but whether the fireworks were real or a magnified drama concealing less picturesque escapades, the image of the exploding stove was an apt one for the internal combustion of this spirited sixteen-year-old whose shock of red hair crowned six feet of gangly, untempered growth.

On finding his protégé a vagabond, Augeron relented and took Félix back at the pension, where he was put to
work for his lodging. But he never returned to the school. In old age Nadar remembered this as “the most frightful time of my life, full of miseries and bitter pains, but all preferable to the collège.”

When Victor Tournachon died of an unspecified brain disease in August 1837 in Lyons, Félix left Paris and went back to his family. Perhaps seeking the source of his father’s debilitating illness or even of his own turbulent nature, he enrolled in the medical school at Lyons. He interspersed his studies with writing theater criticism for the Journal du commerce et des théâtres de Lyon, the Fanal du commerce, and perhaps also L’Entraîne l’acte lyonnais. But after a year of shuttling between the dissecting theater, the theater proper, and the editorial office, this “tormented, impressionable soul, devoured by a need for action” fled the provincial capital, with its stodgy, ungenerous public and uninspiring actors—and, it would seem, escaped his mother and brother as well.

Arriving in Paris in the summer or fall of 1838, Félix continued his medical studies informally during the next year, auditing classes at the Hôtel-Dieu and at Bicêtre in Gentilly, the most advanced hospital in France for the new field of psychiatry and the treatment of mental disease. Mental illness was the mysterious malaise of the nineteenth century, the recurring blight that defied the power of science. In the classes Félix audited he probably learned that efforts to find pathological causes of insanity were proving unproductive and that phrenology, the study of character and emotion couched in the material geography of the skull, was also losing favor. In the absence of physical or structural cause, medical opinion was divided; did mental illness spring from manner of living, morality, heredity, or some combination of the three?

Although he was certainly interested in these questions, Félix lacked his baccalauréat and could not actually enroll in the prestigious institution, and, since returning to finish at the Collège Bourbon was impossible for this free spirit, he gave up on medicine. Insufficiently schooled for his chosen profession and without family, protector, or patron in Paris, Félix was now adrift. Relying on wit and buoyancy to stay afloat and gathering up colleagues for comfort, he proceeded in an errant and madcap fashion through an extended second youth, during which he became known as Nadar.

The name came from the practice, common to adolescents, criminals, and others who battle established authority, of creating a linguistic analogue of their separateness—an insider’s argot to mystify the uninitiated. For Félix and his
friends in the 1830s, the typical lingo was not pig Latin but a sort of fake medieval French one might call Sophomoric Gothic, formed largely by racking onto the last syllable of each word a nonsensical suffix, of which “dard,” “dar,” and “mar” were current favorites. Thus, “Tournachon est un nom trop bourgeois” (Tournachon is too bourgeois a name) might become “Tournachondar estergue undar nomaille tropmuche bourgeoisdar.” The mouthful “Tournachondar” was scrambled into Tournard, Chondar, and Nadarchon, eventually emerging as Nadard and finally, Nadar.

While the pseudonym proceeded from the last letter of the family name, it was attached to that root only insofar as Félix’s honor, literary ambition, and humanitarian concern were nourished by his father’s example. In the arenas of friendship that substituted for the family foyer after 1837, this inheritance would be remodeled. Félix, son of Victor, had not fulfilled his father’s hopes or his own promise; under his nickname he tried growing up again, this time outside the system and according to his own rules.

Between 1838 and 1848 Nadar migrated from one dwelling to another with the frequency of a swallow. He scratched out a living penning articles, stories, and caricatures for a dozen or more ephemeral little newspapers, wrote a novel, and accumulated a colony of friends, most as destitute and a few as ambitious as he. A member of the original bohemian crowd made famous by Henri Murger in his Scènes de la vie de Bohème (Scenes of Bohemian Life, 1845–49), Nadar lived a kind of existence that is difficult to pin down and thus easy to confute with the sweet and funny sketches of his close friend Murger. Better known today through Puccini’s opera La Bohème, which was based upon them, these endearing stories describe the romps of a convivial band of young artists who duel with their landlords, their creditors, and their lot with ingenuity and fantasy, and live mostly on water and insouciant good humor (see figs. 3 and 4).

Years later, after Murger’s death in 1862, Nadar and two friends wrote a somewhat truer account of bohemia. In Histoire de Mürger . . . par trois buveurs d’eau (Story of Murger . . . by Three Water-Drinkers), Adrien Léliou, Léon Noël, and Nadar re-created the tissue of experience from which Murger had drawn his gossamer stories. Although Murger’s poetic and picturesque account was popularly believed to mirror the Paris of their youth, the reality, Nadar protested, had been far less enchanting. The little band of friends was in fact born of acute deprivation, a hardship that he had experienced in isolation as absolute misery but had found much less painful when shared and shouldered mutually. Not revealing himself as the subject, Nadar elliptically described a particularly distressing winter when he was reduced to sleeping in the street in the snow, and other days when he and his confreres went without food or at best subsisted on raw potatoes.

He starved less after he met Karol d’Anelle in about 1839. Always “Karol” to Nadar, this half-Polish, half-French lithographer earned Nadar’s sobriquet “la mère de la bohème” (the mother of bohemia) because of his generous, patient nature and his perennial open house. Karol enlisted Nadar for anti-crime walks through the narrow, viscous streets of the Latin Quarter at night; by day they gathered wood in the Bois de Boulogne, from which they made pipes that they sold to tobaccoists as the work of “some miserable refugee.” In Karol’s two-room attic in the rue Saint-Jacques, Nadar invariably found something to eat and the gay camaraderie of a score of other aspiring artists and writers, among them Murger himself, then a painter and poet, and Noël, a poet and engraver from Orléans. This fraternity was a blessing to Nadar, and he was marked forever by the solidarity of the experience. Karol’s honesty, ingenuity in the face of difficulty, active assistance to the needy and oppressed, and especially the largeness of his charity—which in Karol’s imagination extended even to the liberation of Poland—Nadar found exemplary.

From the dives and garrets of Left Bank bohemia to the society of the boulevards, Nadar, like many of his contemporaries, moved easily; when finances permitted, he dressed to be noticed and sauntered forth amid the crowd in the fashionable spots of the bustling Right Bank. Although a true bohemian was not supposed to sacrifice his talent for his well-being, material existence usually required employment, which most young writers found in the popular press—in the shallow-rooted little papers that sprang up like weeds at the crossroads of society, art, and commerce in early-nineteenth-century Paris. It was here that modern life was represented in its essential vigor and its variegated, ever changing character.

On returning to Paris Nadar had found his first employment as a pasteur artist in the toney Journal des dames et des modes, and upon its demise in January 1839 he and Noël founded a luxurious literary journal, the Livre d’or, of which they managed to publish nine issues by consuming the inheritance of a young neighbor on the rue Jean-de-
Beauvais, Alfred Francey. In the process of putting out the
journal, the nineteen-year-old Nadar finally met his idol
Alexandre Dumas as well as the two great Romantic poets
who would become his friends, Théophile Gautier and
Gérard de Nerval. He also gathered endorsements and arti-
cles from other playwrights, critics, and poets such as
Arsène Houssaye, Alphonse Karr, Eugène Labiche, Jules
Sandau, and Alfred de Vigny — as well as from a number of
liberal or “socialist” writers, among them Alphonse
Esquiros, an ardent admirer of Lamennais; Pierre Lacham-
baudie, the Saint-Simonian author and performer of
the modern morality plays Fables populaires; and a host of
others influenced by the socialist theories of Saint-Simon
and Fourier. The romantic son of a liberal publisher, the
nineteen-year-old Nadar was already confidently collecting
his stable of notable contemporary authors.

Although he was instinctively in step with the advanced
romantic and socialist tendencies of the day, Nadar miscal-
culated in trying to publish an expensive review whose only
revenues came from subscriptions. His father’s experience
might have taught him that the expansion of the bour-
geoisie had produced a reading public that shunned books
and high-minded reviews for inexpensive topical rags, espe-
cially those graced with installments of popular fiction.

With one foot already in that camp, Nadar found that the
best way to pursue his literary ambitions was to continue
contributing to a succession of little papers.

Many of his early articles were theatrical reviews for La
Revue et gazette des théâtres. Although assigned three the-
aters on the Left Bank, Nadar also attended theaters on the
“boulevard du Crime,” the home of vaudeville — a charac-
teristically Parisian genre of exuberant satiric comedy born
of the Revolution. During the July Monarchy (1830–48),
vaudeville was popular not only with the common folk
who were its intended audience but also with the literati —
especially the critics Jules Janin and Champfleury, and
Gautier and Nerval. Here was the stage where the actor
Frédéric Lemaître brilliantly embodied the versatile
scoundrel Robert Macaire. The other genius on the boule-
dvard du Crime was Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard Deburaux (called
Baptiste), an acrobat’s son who transformed the doltish
comedia dell’arte character Gilles into the wily chameleon
Pierrot — a white-faced mime whose dreams and dramas
represented the hopes and trials of everyman and whose
bodily grace and expressive gesture became symbolic prop-
eties of the romantic generation. From 1839 to 1842 Nadar also worked for Polydore

Millaud, a publisher of questionable taste with a sharp nose
for business, writing in his papers Le Négociateur and
L’Audience. The latter became famous for its comic and
lurid fictionalized accounts of crime and of court cases.

There, Charles Bataille reported, “they took to an extreme
the cult of the ghoulish and the ghastly. When M. Millaud
came to see his wild collaborators, he would shower them
with all kinds of paternal endearments to encourage them
in their macabre pursuits. ‘Make it crawl! my sons! make it
swarm!’ he would say, rubbing his hands together.” The
task was hardly objective reporting, but rather an ironic
and irreverent substitution for ordinary fact of the exaggerat-
ed, the grotesque, and the imaginary — a valid prescription
for success in the raffish world of the ephemeral press, and
a perfect utilization of the talents of the young scribblers of
the bohème.

The advantages of personal flair, the sensational event,
publicity — all lessons of apprenticeship chez Millaud —
Nadar easily absorbed. He took his bow as director of his
own theater of personality when he papered Paris with lith-
ographed invitations from “M. le vicomte de la Tour
Nadard, homme de lettres” (the viscount of the Nadard
Tower, man of letters) to a brilliant soirée in his rooms,
where notable actors and literati would be present. In case
that was not enough to entice le tout Paris, he added “There
will be decent women.” According to the actor and poet
Théodore de Banville, who was only seventeen at the time,
the evening was an unqualified success that drew so large a
crowd it spilled down the stairs and into the street.

The elaborate entertainment Nadar had concocted was
detailed in a program. At the top appears a sketch (fig. 5) of
Pierrot and a very long-legged, long-haired dandy (Nadar
himself) holding between them a banderole emblazoned
“A Country Festival/88 rue Montmartre/at the Nadard
Paradise/Friday November 27/1840.” The fête began at
8 p.m. with a parade, pigeon shooting, and swings, followed
by two masques representing, first, “the lantern of merit lit
by the candle of opulence” and second, “The Muses (clever
authors) of Monsieur de Cuylin [Nadar’s friends Eugène
Labiche, Auguste Lefranc, and Marc Michel], aided
and abetted by Platus (Francey)” (Alfred Francey, former direc-
tor of Livre d’or). Then, following a “talking sketch by
M. Deburaux,” Léon Noël posed in nude “tableaux vivants”
(living pictures) of classical statuary, during which, Nadar
noted, “care will be taken to leave the windows open and
the ventilators running” (presumably, lest some observers
feel faint). There were several other ludicrous and racy
acts, including an anatomy lesson and a bacteriological spoof of Molière, La Varicocèle malgré lui (The Varicocèle in Spite of Itsself), enacted by masked ladies. The finale was a crescendo of lunacy: “A Great Raffle. Fireworks. Odious dances. Savage cries, unseemly personal Hallucinations of the clever authors,” and finally “a Surprise!!” Of the multitude of inversions of which the entertainment was composed, one apparently went unnoticed. Overturning expectations, Nadar had promised a spoken scene by the mime Debureau. Since Debureau never spoke on stage, no one could know that the voice emanating from the white-faced clown—that voice absolutely antithetical to his silent art—was not Debureau’s but that of a look-alike, a cellist named Bache.

Nadar’s carnival with its allegories, masquerades, and unmaskings was not just a parody of the classics and the theater, it was an auto-parody. It ridiculed dandyism, the sanctity of art, Nadar’s own efforts in publishing the Livre d’or, and finally, in the wild finale, the excesses of the romantic spirit. But however much the skits debunked their subjects, they conferred value upon them as well. Director, publicist, prankster, and illusionist, Nadar was never on stage but everywhere apparent. He had recognized at an early age that nothing is what it seems, that in the constantly shifting scenes of life’s performance, the artist can only play in the ambiguous place between truth and artifice.

Between 1842 and 1845 Nadar was associated with Le Commerce, initially as secretary to the editor, Charles de Lesseps, and then as editor of the newspaper’s “Correspondance générale.” “The editors set to work in the morning, running all over town, visiting the chambers of parliament, bringing back the news they had collected; it was transcribed at top speed on autographic paper, then printed, and at five o’clock the mail dispatched the completed article of each journalist-correspondent.” The interest of the paper was not just its simultaneous publication in provincial cities, but Charles de Lesseps’s overt opposition to Thiers and the politics of the bourgeois monarchy: “He was trying to form a Left... of the future... to create a party that... would be prepared to do combat with all factions for freedom.” Nadar was right at home with the paper’s republican stance, so much so that from the moment he joined Le Commerce, his activities aroused the suspicion of the police. An agent described him in 1843 as “one of those dangerous sorts who spread the most subversive doctrines throughout the Latin Quarter... one of the most enterprising of M. Lamennais’s fanatics. He is being closely watched.”

Nadar’s politics were indeed inflected by the spirit of Félicité de Lamennais (1782–1854), a priest who had imbued Rousseau from childhood and who attempted to reconcile his faith and his regard for personal liberty in several philosophical tracts, the first of which had been published by Nadar’s father in 1817. After the revolution of 1830, Lamennais ardently espoused the liberation of Poland from Russia as a struggle for a people’s rights, and in his Paroles d’un croyant (1834), which ran to over a hundred editions and was condemned by the pope, he emerged as a passionate prophet of democracy, advocating in this and subsequent books a “complete, disinterested devotion to the common cause, and a deep sense of justice cherished for its own sake.”

Lamennais’s notion of replacing universal reason with individual reason was welcomed by the Romantic poets and artists. Their rebellion, however, was not just against a pre-
ordained and fixed social system but also against the rationalism that produced it; with no affection for reason, they called for the sovereignty of the individual imagination and the morality of the heart. They naturally also embraced Pierre Leroux (1798–1871), whose numerous works, Baudelaire wrote, were *like a dictionary of human beliefs.* A social idealist, Leroux introduced the term socialism and the concept of “solidarity” into the discourse of the day. He exhorted both the Left and freethinkers to aspire to a universal, transcendent democracy and saw the role of the writer as animating this spirit in the reading public.

Victor Hugo and George Sand, both influenced by Lamennais, Leroux, and other socialist thinkers, were among those whose works helped spread these notions of freedom throughout France in the late 1830s and 1840s. The serialization in little newspapers of Sand’s socialist novels, several of which she wrote with Leroux, was a particularly effective form of dissemination, a fact not lost on Nadar. When he gathered his own stories of the 1840s and published them as the book *Quand j’étais étudiant.* *(When I Was a Student)* in 1846, he dedicated the volume to Sand with “servant enthusiasm and profound respect.”

Originally published in *Le Commerce, Le Corsaire-Satan,* and other papers, these stories convey Nadar’s assessment of the state of French society and reveal his principal preoccupations. Many are about doctors, invariably presented as generous and objective humanitarians faced with death, madness, and other mysterious diseases. Other characters consume themselves in self-advancement. Society is in constant flux, with fortunes made and lost in a day; chance dispenses constant reversals. But if life is a grand lottery, the luck of the draw is affected by kindness and charity; inhumanity can be reformed if it is exposed to incandescent goodness.

Most of Nadar’s stories are recounted by an eyewitness. Sometimes this “I” promises to render faithfully another’s account; at other times the narrator is clearly Nadar himself, the student of medicine or a student observing others in the Latin Quarter, as in “La Vie et la mort de Lequeux.” Here Nadar describes the Café du Progrès in 1835: “It is there that the intellectual elite of the university gathered, industrious or lazy, boisterous and spoiling for fights. There sedition brewed in all its forms.”10 Lequeux, an amusing, brilliant student, is, like Nadar himself, the irreverent joker and good-hearted bohemian whose purse and hand are open to his indigent friends and even to strangers. Prodigal in self-confidence, charity, and heedlessness, Lequeux fails to note that the calendar has left behind the red vests and heady debates of Romanticism; he does nothing, he drinks, and he dies in abject misery. In this somber denunciation of the carefree but fruitless life, which may well be read as a rejection of the same aspects of Nadar’s own *vie de bohème,* there are two morals: “The wrong one does to oneself alone is the wrong that others pardon with the greatest difficulty,” and “The world cares nothing for an intellect that understands unless it is an intellect that produces.”11

Like Balzac’s *Comédie humaine,* Nadar’s studies of contemporary manners depict an unstable, mobile society whose patterns of change are not understood and therefore are attributed to mere chance. The stories abound as well in detailed physical descriptions that carry moral and psychological baggage, also a familiar device of Balzac’s. But while the young journalist admired the prodigious novelist, he and many other socialist writers felt that Balzac’s work had more commercial surface than moral consequence. Nadar therefore made a point of correcting this imbalance and always offered the reader another moral, another piece of *bonet* (goodness) from his supply of passionate belief.

Observant descriptions of gait, costume, and physiognomy reveal Nadar’s considerable interest in the nature of human response, but his most searching perceptions drew on his own private experience. In “Le Terne sec,” the story of a penniless young doctor, he wrote, “The deepest injury that he could receive was to feel his inner wounds uncovered and publicly aired.” In “L’Indienne bleue,” a chapter titled “Confidences” tells of a twenty-four-year-old Dutchman who is rich and charming but not happy because he has “no family, no home” (pas d’intérieur). He lost his father when he was young, and his mother, while the best and most respectable of women, developed in widowhood an exigent and difficult character that left him increasingly needy, increasingly solitary. The protagonist concludes, almost certainly echoing the conviction of the twenty-four-year-old author, “I won’t stop being my mother’s son until I am married.”11

While Nadar’s introspection and attentive regard of others were not joined to the talents of a great writer, his observant eye endowed most of his stories with flashes of psychological insight. For the most part, however, his writing is verbose, partly the result of being paid by the line. It drowns in adjectives—the weakness, Musset noted, of the Romantic writer;12 and in pretending to objectivity it is unfaillingly subjective and often sentimental. Yet Nadar sustains the reader’s attention because there is evidently some-
thing at stake. The characters are the population of the
author’s own flesh—fathers are failing saints, younger
brothers are shiftless troublemakers—and they are driven
by undeniable forces. With their liveliness, color, even ur-
gency, these accounts are curiously attractive; the author
doesn’t second-guess his voice, and his energetic narrative,
a confident performance, draws us to him.

Although Nadar was rambling in the right direction—
“sur le chemin du chemin”\(^{13}\)—when engaged in story-
telling, trying to follow the thread of his own story is rather
like trying to catch a butterfly without a net. In 1842–43
Nadar alit at 45, rue Monsieur-le-Prince, near his good
friend Théodore de Banville, and for a time he shared an
atelier at 56, rue de la Harpe with two members of Murger’s
band, the painter Salmson and Alexandre Schanne—the
Schaunard of Murger’s stories. Banville refers to Nadar’s
wild girls and sartorial excesses at this time,\(^{14}\) but when
Charles Barbara ran into Nadar on the street in December
1843, he was no longer the well-dressed dandy: “Fortune no
longer smiled on him. He was pale, his head philosophically
bowed, and he seemed plunged in dismal meditation... .
behind him, following step by step... was a skinny long-
haired spaniel, a stretched-out thing like its master, with
head and tail drooping.”\(^{35}\)

If there was little constancy in Nadar’s life, two condi-
tions seem to have reliably prevailed—painful, humiliating
poverty and Nadar’s “invincible good humor,” which, Jules
de Prémaray remembered, “was like the cheerful music of
our misery.”\(^{36}\) His capacity to enjoy whatever he could and
to the utmost, despite the real problems of existence, is
deliciously illustrated by the recollection of fellow caricatu-
turist and photographer Étienne Carjat, as reported by the
Goncourt brothers: “[Nadar] lived with a woman for two
months without going out, in bed, with no clothes to wear.
The woman had pantaloons and yellow leather boots, in
which she went to the Opera Ball. They had a passion for
oysters, and oyster shells piled up all over the room, finally
carpeting the floor.”\(^{37}\)

In 1843–44 Nadar occupied first one and then another
flat on the rue Richer, before his health (apparently an
arthritic condition) forced him into a clinic on the rue de la
Santé. Sometime during this period he occupied a garret
in the rue des Canettes, across the street from Murger,
Antoine Fauchery, and Auguste Vitu; Nadar recalled their
window-to-window conversations as an aerial performance
of verbal ballistics.\(^{38}\) In 1845 he was involved in a duel\(^{39}\)
and lived with a girlfriend in Versailles; in 1846–47 mail
reached him at the place Royale (today’s place des Vosges);
in 1848 he moved to Montmartre. His frequent disappear-
ances and successive addresses suggest that, like Fauchery,
his fellow contributor to Le Corsaire-Satan, he knew the bo-
hemian code: 1) rent should never be paid, 2) all moves are
made through the window, and 3) tailors, bootmakers, hat-
ters, and restaurateurs are relatives of Monsieur Crédit.\(^{40}\)
Whether or not Nadar practiced these tactics, his creditors
finally caught him. The days he spent in debtor’s prison in
1850 provided the substance for his fascinating description
of the insanity produced by incarceration and the basis for
his plea, a favorite liberal cause, to reform the rules of
criminal imprisonment.\(^{41}\)

If the boundaries of Nadar’s life are difficult to pin down
with any precision, it may be because the shape of his iden-
tity was neither clear nor stable. While he vacillated in ex-
ternal appearance between the exalted pose of the dandy
and the long-haired, loosely wrapped trappings of the bo-
hemian, by the mid-1840s these modish styles cloaked a
growing political activism, a need to turn his refractory
energy to some useful end. His account of his stay in the
prison of Clichy is typical: living the uninhibited artistic
life, he had flaunted his freedom from society’s discipline,
yet in writing about his imprisonment he felt called to turn
his experience to account for the good of mankind. Part
martyr to the cause of freedom, part prophet of freedom
for all in a socialist democracy, Nadar was transforming
his life into his art, and his art into a dialogue with the
public.

The dialogue was essential. Nadar could not live in isola-
tion, and he had no sympathy for the “art for art’s sake” of
Romanticism in which art was self-reflexive and cloistered
from the real world. For Nadar art was communication, and
the first thing it required was not self-sufficiency but an au-
dience. The artist, accordingly, was an actor, and his work
of art his performance. Nadar was first and foremost a con-
versational artist; his writings were attempts to give lasting
form to his dazzling but ephemeral repertory. In the words
of his friend Bataille, he was “one of the most irresistible
characters of the time. He is opinionated, passionate, spontaneous in his hates and in his loves, willful, changeable as
a thermometer in his impressions. He dazzles you every
minute with the glitter of his speech, which is full of turbulent and unexpected images, which gives you shivers like
the knives of Chinese jugglers.”

In 1846 Nadar began contributing to Le Corsaire-Satan
and La Silhouette, two satirical newspapers. The editorial
offices of the papers constituted an “adult school” of some
brilliance. At Le Corsaire-Satan, for example, Nadar re-
joined his friends and acquaintances Asselineau, Banville,
Baudelaire, Barbara, Champfleury (whom he actually dis-
liked cordially), Fauchery, Murger, and Privat d’Anglemont
in ragging the opinions of the day, exploring the seamy side
of society, and rubbing the fur of the fat cats the wrong
way. Sardonic, smart, and provocative, the newspaper was
also reformist and liberal in its politics. Sympathetic articles
on the wandering Fourierist missionary Jean Journet (pl. 81)
exemplify its radical, antiestablishment voice.

From 1845 to 1849 Murger’s Scènes de la vie de Bohème
appeared in installments in the same paper, gradually giving
the members of the group a certain popular fame, at least
among the artists, intellectuals, and students who were
its primary readers. But if the stories romanced lives of
poverty, unrealistically painting the heroes as carefree,
rebellious spirits who lived on water, wit, and fantasy,
Murger’s account also emphasized the barrenness of the
bohemians’ idealism and the real gap between their sus-
tained demand for personal liberty and the actual conditions
of modern life. By the time Murger’s stories were pub-
lished, anyone who really lived in the apolitical, personally
indulgent never-never land he so entrancingly described
would likely never make his mark in the world. It is worth
noting that with the exception of Murger, none of the
slight talents who belonged to the Société des Buveurs
d’Eau ever did.

Nadar later pointed out that he was an early colleague
but never a true member of Murger’s little band of effor-
scent struggling artists. He had not attended any of the
meetings of the short-lived society (1841–42), only shared
the companionship of its members and repaired to Karol’s
in moments of recurrent need. Although the friendship of
Karol, Murger, and Noël had been a crucial anchor when he
found himself adrift on returning from Lyons, Nadar’s im-
mense appetite for direct experience and for intellectual and
social stimulation could not be satisfied by a small circle
of wistful artists. Putting as much distance as possible between
himself and boredom, he ranged all over Paris with bound-
less energy. He made new acquaintances at the Bal Mabille,
chez Dinocheau, at outdoor tables at Divan Le Peletier, in
the newspaper offices, at Café La Rochefoucauld, Café
Dagneaux, Café Momus, the annual painting Salon, the the-
ater, in the Luxembourg Gardens—anywhere young free-
thinkers congregated. He later wrote that this was a time
when all Parisians knew all others, and indeed, during the

Figure 7. Nadar. Self-portrait, 1850–52. Pencil drawing. Musée du
Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts Graphiques
1840s Paris was his pond, a fluid element in which he navigated with ease.

In gradually collecting an inspiring and substantial group of colleagues, Nadar created his own extended family. He attached himself with all his zest and immediacy to individuals who attracted him,44 and he remained loyal to them to the grave. As he wrote of the moment he met Baudelaire in 1842/43, “We immediately confided everything since there was nothing to hide, everything in common in this corner of bohemia, each comrade ready for mutual aid in the placement of writings or any kind of cooperation.”45 Nadar’s talent for friendship gained him access to the many subgroups, among them Baudelaire’s and Courbet’s, contained within the large unofficial fraternity of late-Romantic artists and utopian radicals. It was this larger, heterogeneous bohème, not Mugr’s little group, to which Nadar belonged: a concentration of ardent believers in the sanctity of the self and the self’s free expression, in the individual, in art, and in liberty. This more consequent bohemia was the flip side of the coin of the bourgeoisie, that incurious, politically conservative, materialist middle class whose existence it needed as surely as a shadow requires the body that casts it.

* 

In 1846 Nadar began to submit caricatural drawings to the satirical papers for which he wrote. It was a natural step, for the exaggerations and energy of Nadar’s style, coupled with his keen eye and psychological acumen, had already and quite naturally produced written portraits that were caricatural.46 Visual caricature, in many ways a product of 1789, had been an important vehicle of republican sentiment during Nadar’s adolescence until, in 1835, increasing government censorship finally forced Daumier and other artists to cover their political barbs or recast them as social critique. Since the journals of the 1840s gave pride of place to caricature, which treated the same events, opinions, and personalities as the articles but with greater economy and bite, it would have been surprising had Nadar not also tried his hand at drawing.47 That caricature required not only wit, political savvy, and acute observation but also artistic skill apparently seemed a low hurdle. Nadar barreled ahead, perhaps after soliciting a few drawing lessons from friends.48 Here was another way to make his life into his art: he could engage the transitory, the topical, and the personal—the very essence of life in the capital—while extracting from it both salutary levity and moral weight.

By 1847 Nadar had produced for the Journal du dimanche some sixty caricatures constituting a “Galerie des gens de lettres.”49 These were portraits-charges, drawings of a person with a small body and a large head with exaggerated features. Accompanying the drawings were Nadar’s biographical texts—quick impressions filled with anecdotes revealing the subject’s peculiar qualities of character. The notables were selected from the “family” Nadar had been collecting and ranged from the famous (Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, Musset) to personal friends (Asselineau, Nerval, Jourvet) to the world of small-circulation journals, the petite presse (Lepoitevin-Saint-Alme, editor of Le Corsaire-Satan, and Balathier de Bragelonne, editor of La Silhouette). Although the journal folded before Nadar had finished the hundred portraits originally planned, the experiment had evidently been to his liking, and within months he was submitting caricatural portraits, perhaps ones he had prepared that had not been used, to one of the most famous satirical newspapers of all, Charles Philipon’s Le Charivari.

At the same time Nadar was writing a novella with Jules de La Madélène, Les Gants vert-pâle (The Pale Green Gloves), the fictitious account of a band of Frenchmen inciting revolution in Switzerland.50 In February 1848, real revolution broke out in Paris, surprising many, including Nadar. Given his radical predisposition, one wonders why he (like Courbet) equivocated; why did he not mount the barricades, as Baudelaire did, and fight to bring the long-awaited republic to life? At the end of his life Nadar explained, somewhat disingenuously, “In this bohemian life we led, living from hand to mouth, all rambling, at loose ends or in fruitless agitation, of unimaginable heedlessness . . . that ceased neither day nor night, there never was for one second a chance to reflect. Officially . . . I was some twenty-eight years old. . . . Actually I was sixteen at most, and perhaps not even that. . . . February woke me up.”51

He tried to assuage his guilt by writing a pantomime, Pierrot ministre. The hero is Arlequin, “this bohemian in multicolor rags: he is the people; the people who suffer and avenge themselves, the people strong and protective of their liberties . . .” Arlequin makes mincemeat of Robert Macaire, who stands for “dethroned royalty,” and of his minister, Pierrot, played by Charles Deburau, son of Baptiste. The play was staged in the Théâtre des Funambules, “the true theater of the people,” on March 11, 1848.52 Two days later in Le Corsaire-Satan Champfleury disparaged Pierrot ministre, which had had the bad fortune to supplant his own pantomime on the docket. On March 19
At four in the morning on March 30, 1848, they assembled at the Barrière du Trône and began their march to the east. Three weeks later they were in Strasbourg, where Nadar had the time to write to Asselineau, apologizing for leaving without saying good-bye. "I jumped in headlong and wholeheartedly, happy over the greatest good fortune the world offers: to retrieve the enthusiasm one thought was lost forever with one's youth. ... The battle I had to wage against myself in all the ways that you know, before taking this step, gave me new life. I had finally found an opportunity to purify myself and to expiate my fecklessness by serving an idea larger than myself, and off I went."16

The only combat Nadar saw was the battle he waged with himself over lending his life to a generous humanitarian ideal. Instead of wagging his tongue among friends in Parisian cafés, he would prove himself accountable and courageous; abandoning his habitual insouciance, he would recover the self-respect that he felt had evaded him since his early youth. What an astonishing reconversion to the noble code of conscience of Victor Tournachon! The erstwhile wayward son even took his younger brother along on the expedition, but it is unclear whether this gesture was further penance or the first proof of moral reformation.

In another letter dated the same day, to Charles de Lesseps, Nadar wrote that he had volunteered because "I thought that there I could be good for something." We can hear in his comment the frustrated desire of his generation, descendants of revolutionaries or of soldiers of empire who had inherited the passion for liberty but lived under a conservative regime. Inspired by the example of their elders and by romantic notions of living or dying for an ideal, they caught fire in 1848. For one who had missed fighting in the streets of Paris in February, the Polish cause offered a second chance to redeem his ideals. As Nadar commented to Lesseps, not without irony, "It is very difficult to get killed usefully."17

The mission was, of course, a failure. The men were arrested at the fortress of Magdeburg and imprisoned at Eisleben in Saxony. Forced to work in the coal mines, they learned that Lamartine had publicly revoked the new Republic's sympathy with (and responsibility for) revolution in other European countries. The volunteers, doubly humiliated, were freed and returned to Paris on foot. With their false Polish passports and the earflaps of their vermillion shapskas upright on their heads, Turnaczeowski (a.k.a. Nadar) and his sidekicks turned up on the first of June at the Café de l'Europe and recounted their heroic misadventures.18
Attempts to create a socialist republic were also failing in Paris. The April elections had returned mostly moderate candidates; the workers' movement stalled while their needs became extreme, and in late June they went back to the barricades. Twelve thousand were arrested and fifteen hundred were killed in General Cavaignac's brutal repression of the insurrection. Nadar likely missed the carnage and the renewed opportunity to take a stand, for it seems he had left Paris shortly before the uprising.

The Polish adventure having proven abortive, upon his return Nadar had immediately offered his services to Jules Hetzel, private secretary to the minister of foreign affairs. Perhaps to keep the hotheaded volunteer out of the trouble that clearly loomed, Hetzel devised a mission for him: under the alias Frédéric Haak, Nadar spent the summer as a spy pretending to be a painter, traveling around Germany with his expenses paid. He was supposedly on the lookout for evidence of Russian presence and, finding none, returned from Berlin at the end of August.

Soon thereafter Nadar found work alongside Gérard de Nerval at Alphonse Karr's decidedly antisocialist, government-sponsored paper, Le Journal. Mme Tournaire had come back to Paris and, needing to support her and assist Adrien, Nadar was trying to be practical. As he was constitutionally incapable of writing in the service of a regime drifting back to the right, he opted for a job summarizing opinion from other papers and doing simple copyediting. But his conscience would not allow it. Karr remembered, "Gérard kept him under strict surveillance; [Nadar] had . . . a profound dislike for Lamartine, perhaps for not supporting him in his expedition to aid Poland; often he got up at night to come slip in some hostile lines about Lamartine, lines that Gérard or I, who didn't trust him, always managed to take out again. In politics, he professed the most violently anarchical opinions; an excellent lad otherwise, witty, decent, and very much devoted to his friends; more than once since then he has said to me, 'Politically speaking, I detest you. . . .' He has always shown me a constant affection and a very touching remembrance of the welcome I gave him back then. . . ."9

Although Nadar loved the kindly Karr, as he put it, like "a brother whom I would have chosen," he had to find a more open avenue for the expression of his political beliefs.6 Freedom of the press having been reinstated with the new Republic, in November 1848 Hetzel had founded La Revue comique à l'usage des gens sérieux (Funny Papers for Serious People) for the express purpose of mounting a campaign against Prince Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, considered a dangerous candidate for president in the eyes of the red republicans. As Daumier had skewed King Louis-Philippe in La Caricature, so Nadar roasted the "Prince pour rire" (Prince of Ridicule) in La Revue comique. In his comic strips Nadar detailed the opportunistic dishonesty of a right-wing reactionary dubbed Môssieu Réac, drawing on Daumier's masterly version of the unscrupulous Robert Macaire, whom Réac recalls. In different installments Nadar satirized the perpetrators of social evils, the deputies, prefects, industrialists, and other swindlers of souls who were all M. Réac in disguise. When Louis-Napoléon consolidated his power Hetzel had to close the paper, but before he did, Nadar took the opportunity, by way of personal consolation, to cuckold Réac. In "Déceptions," the tenth and last chapter of "La Vie publique et privée de Môssieu Réac," Mme Réac, having consortted with a shadowy insurgent, gives birth to a bevy of little revolutionaries in Phrygian caps.61 Then, putting himself briefly out of reach, Nadar went to London, his bag packed with contraband mail for Louis Blanc, Étienne Arago, Ledru-Rollin, and other friends and members of the Comité Démocratique Socialiste who had fled after the June Days of 1848 or the more recent abortive insurgency of June 1849.62

From this time on Nadar worked closely with Charles Philipon (1800—1862), the doyen of caricature in France. Founder of the satirical papers La Caricature (1831) and Le Charivari (1832), Philipon was a genial publisher of the subversive, an indignant humanitarian and republican, a native of Lyons, and the last of Nadar's father replacements. His record of fines and arrests by the censorious government and his long, energetic, and successful support for a new kind of artist— one who aimed not for a grand style or high office but for contemporary social and political truths in modern dress—could only have impressed Nadar. Philipon thoroughly grasped "Le Dedans jugé par le dehors" (The Inner Judged by the Outer),63 and to read snippets of his text of that title is to walk down the boulevard beside him while he wittily points out, often through aphorisms, what a salutation, a costume, or a manner reveals of the person within. His verbal descriptions recall the caricatures of Daumier, which paint so knowingly the Parisians of the time and which he had published since 1829. Philipon understood that the psychology and morality of the day were inherent in every manifestation of metropolitan life and that these seemingly superficial but revelatory signs of human nature were the essential subject of modern
art. His conviction provided a crucial stimulus and support for Daumier, Gavarni, and many other caricaturists, a starting point for Baudelaire’s theory of the heroism of modern life, and the appropriate climate for the development of Nadar’s best work.

That Nadar understood the significance of Philipon’s position is evident in his own opinion of Daumier, the greatest of the caricaturists Philipon nurtured. Nadar offered an assessment of Daumier in the biography accompanying his caricature of the artist for his series “Lanterne magique”: “Daumier, unexpurgated Realism: the masterly pencil, bold and inexorable, which vividly and decisively cuts out these earthy effigies of bourgeois, janitors and bankers, creatures as strange as Etruscans, . . . [but] which coming generations will refuse to believe in, even though they are, alas!, and will remain, the perfect, da-
guerreotyped copy of real life in our ‘belle époque.’ Some short-sighted people can’t see through the telling exaggerations of his fervor that this trenchant genius, as our premier art critic M. Baudelaire rightly said, is the most accurate draftsman we have.”

Under Philipon’s tutelage, Nadar became an entrepreneur, heading a veritable factory of caricature from 1849 until Philipon’s death in 1862. He formed an atelier with Antoine Béguin, Gilbert Randon (a cousin), Émile Bayard, occasionally Célestine Nanteuil, his brother, Adrien, and half a dozen other artists, draftsmen, and assistants. Hundreds of drawings issued from the studio to be engraved on wood or lithographed on stone and printed in the pages of the satiric press: in *Le Tintamarre*, edited by Jean-Louis-Auguste Commerson, and especially in Philipon’s *Le Journal pour rire* and its successors, the *Petit Journal pour rire*, which Philipon created for Nadar to edit (fig. 9), the *Journal amusant*, and the *Musée français-anglais*. The drawings, vignettes, and caricatures were also often disseminated in cheap little paperbound books, for instance in the bi-weekly installments of *Les Binettes contemporaines*, or the annual roundups, such as the *Almanach du Tintamarre* (both with Commerson); still others illustrated the ever-popular chapbook studies of Parisian types, the “physiologies” invented by Philipon, and Nadar’s witty send-ups of the annual art Salons (see figs. 52, 56 and Philippe Néagu’s discussion of the *Nadar-Jury* in his essay).

Philipon saw in Nadar a sympathetic verve he could encourage and guide, but in truth Nadar was not a great draftsman, and his head for business was confounded by the dynamo of his desires. He was forever taking on too many jobs and invariably late for deadlines; he failed to oversee the quality of his assistants’ work, produced drawings without completing their captions, and expressed too pointedly his “opinions democ et soc.” His quick spirit, mercurial nature, and burning political convictions were harnessed to an energy and an ambition so outsized that he could not calculate the appropriate relation of input to output. This abnormal appetite, the vitality Baudelaire envied, was sardonically attributed by younger brother Adrien to a double endowment of viscera.

Although Philipon cajoled, counseled, and repeatedly forgave this “charming lad,” Nadar never mastered his mentor’s lessons in pragmatism. Nor could he spin his moral and political concerns, embedded as they were in his deep commiseration, into the pesky gaiety achieved by Philipon, even though his understanding of the language
of human expression was almost certainly refined by the influence of this mentor.

With Louis-Napoléon’s coup d’état in December 1851, the young Republic, whose future had grown increasingly dim, was replaced by the Second Empire, an authoritarian regime that again dropped the curtain of censorship over the press, even to the point of prohibiting any negative discussion of political events. The caricaturists’ battle was lost: Daumier retired Ratapoil, his character who acted as the hired bully of Louis-Napoléon, and Nadar penned an elegy, “Souvenirs et regrets,” under his drawing of Ratapoil’s mustache displayed as a relic in a museum case — surely an elliptical presentation of despair.21

Perhaps such indirection was the only way Nadar could deal with the end of optimism, a vast disappointment shared by everyone he valued. Two living generations of romantic idealists had held to a new concept of social and individual freedom, and although their aspirations had been repeatedly shortchanged and frustrated, they had never been as wholly and radically defeated as they were by Napoléon III. Their heroes — Louis Blanc, Auguste Blanqui, Armand Barbès, Pierre Leroux, Jules Hetzel, Pierre Lachambaudie, and others — were imprisoned or in exile, and these were now joined by the most celebrated of them all, Victor Hugo. The hope that had so animated and prolonged their youth was extinguished, and the ashes of the dream became a private ache: “Souvenirs et regrets.”

With political opposition no longer a possibility, after 1851 Nadar concentrated on caricatures of society’s mores, of the Salons, and of contemporary personalities. He returned to the drawn and written sketches he had made in 1847, before the republican interval, for his “Galerie des

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the heroic artist had become the heritage of a newly mass public, and when Paris reigned as the capital of the cult of personality, the project of a grand and clever portrait gallery of the great was exactly apropos.

Coordinating the production of the Panthéon was a mammoth task. It involved as preliminary steps not only soliciting the famous and near-famous and making appointments with them to come to the atelier for a portrait sitting, but also collecting existing portraits (drawings, caricatures, daguerreotypes, paper photographs) from those who could not come and working up the portraits-charges from this bank of visual documents, as well as requesting and compiling biographical information, preferably in the subject’s own words and if possible already distilled into the saucy, telegraphic style that was popular. Beyond this there was the task of composing the figures on the sheet and arranging all this physiognomic variety so as to allow infinite diversity of expressive posture and gesture—a choreography of faces, stances, and gaits as individualized and animated as life on the street, but condensed into a moment of time.

Nadar and his contemporaries recognized that the Panthéon would hold and preserve their celebrity for the regard of posterity. In a large preparatory sketch for an announcement of it (fig. 11), Nadar and his assistant Prévost presented Father Time seated on a dais with his scythe, an hourglass, and a quill pen, before a huge ledger. He is surrounded by scores of little devils, who frolic madly in a Boschian space that is part cellar loaded with alembics, explosives, and libations, part ether filled with flying machines and bats. The gremlin lieutenants gleefully bring Father Time the names of mortals to inscribe in his register. Although the sketch had promise, it was never issued as an announcement, probably because placing death at the center emphasized not the immortality of the great but exactly the opposite.

Producing the Panthéon proved more demanding, complex, and expensive than Nadar could manage. After two years, only one of the four giant sheets was anywhere near completion. As might be expected, it was not the sheet of playwrights and actors, nor visual artists, nor musicians, but the one devoted to the company he knew best and admired most, the gens de lettres (fig. 12). The assembly of 250 authors snakes downward from the top of the sheet, coiling around Nadar himself, who is seated by a signpost bearing the dedication. At the head of the parade is Hugo, who leads the company to a halt before the busts of Chateaubriand, Balzac, Frédéric Soulié, and George
As Nadar struggled to complete the Panthéon, gathering the hundreds of "heads" and paying his assistants for a product that was not yet salable, he was piling up debts. According to Roger Greaves, he had taken his young colleague Gustave Doré from Le Journal pour rire to visit Isaac and Émile Pereire, the Saint-Simonian bankers who were growing rich through the Crédit Mobilier. The Pereires advanced a sum to the caricaturists so that each could "establish an atelier of industrial art." When that loan ran out, Nadar sold 620 portrait drawings to Polydore Millaud, who allowed him to keep the sketches in the atelier for as long as he needed.

It was perhaps Millaud's 8,000 francs that allowed Nadar to move his menagerie of animals, his mother, and himself into a ground-floor apartment with a garden at 113, rue Saint-Lazare in July 1853. At the time Adrien was traveling in Great Britain, trying, without much success, to secure portrait commissions; on his return he was back on his older brother's dole, doing odd jobs and sketching in the atelier. Once again saddled with his younger brother as he had been at school, Nadar prevailed upon Adrien to accept "the proposition of a friend to create a photographic establishment.... I gave him the means by paying for his apprenticeship with M. [Gustave] Le Gray, since, according to our agreement, I would assume a part in his enterprise."

Following the advent of the collodion-on-glass negative process in 1851, the number of photographers in Paris shot up, spurred by the perception (rather overestimated) of a lucrative new field of opportunity. It was symptomatic of the early 1850s that Nadar should promote his unemployed painter-brother as the principal operator in a photographic enterprise backed by a banker, his friend Louis Le Prévost. By early 1854 Adrien was installed in a studio on the heart of the grands boulevards, the fashionable district of cafés, theaters, and other popular distractions, which now included photography. Well satisfied with his new situation, Adrien told his brother that he preferred to go this new route alone and would no longer need his assistance.

But all this activity had piqued Nadar's interest in photography. He had remarked how quickly his brother acquired the new technique, and he was acutely aware that photography's speed revised the conditions of artistic production, quite specifically those of his Panthéon. As he knew, it was now possible to make paper photographs in less than two seconds with Adolphe Bertsch's new collodion, an emulsion much faster than others then available. The advantages Bertsch's invention held for portraiture had been set out in La Lumière in September 1852:

All portraits, and photographic portraits especially, have this particular quality, that the person represented wears an uncharacteristic expression, hard or serious or cross. That's because he has posed. But now there is no more posing with this collodion, since your picture can be taken while you are talking, just when you are completely unconcerned with what is going on around you. You are reproduced with your normal look, your natural expression.... With the person of whom the portrait is being made placed before the lens at some distance, the cameraman, while chatting with him, releases the shutter... the portrait is obtained, and it has taken only a fraction of a second of which one hasn't even been aware.

Even if the claims of rapidity were exaggerated, such a prospect must have tantalized an artist who had made it his business to seize the characteristic tic, the unselfconscious physiognomic trigger revealing the true shape of personality. Moreover, this new, instantaneous kind of portrait could be made during a friendly conversation, which beyond a doubt was Nadar's forte. It could hardly have been more natural than for him to look into the matter with Camille d'Arnaud, a friend who had been editor of the magazine L'Artiste and who had recently begun to photograph. Arnaud knew all the details of the fast collodion, for at the time he was making photographic portraits with Bertsch. In early 1854, soon after Adrien brushed off Nadar's collaboration, Arnaud taught him the technique and helped him set up a darkroom, and by April at the latest, Nadar was making portrait photographs of his family, friends, and colleagues in his garden.

Nadar's first experiments were not always successful. When his mother sat for her portrait, for example, he did not manage to get her in focus, but whether this is because he was myopic or because he had a hard time returning her stern gaze is impossible to judge. Seated with his long legs crossed and wearing his red vareuse, Nadar was somewhat more at ease looking back at the camera himself, although he seems more intent on willing some likeness to register on the plate than on any serious presentation of self (fig. 13).
But in another early portrait he got the gist of his sitter quite remarkably (pl. 40). Shrewd and cautious, this young woman knows and distrusts the man with the camera. Attempting to deflect Nadar’s effect upon her, she crosses her arms protectively and with narrowed eyes and firm jaw resolutely meets his challenge. She is Ernestine Lefèvre, and she is either just married or engaged to be married to Félix Tournachon.

Nadar’s friends must have been shocked: their spirited colleague of irregular bohemian habits — the devilish and womanizing dandy who dashed about town waving the flags of social liberty and individual freedom — had settled down with an eighteen-year-old bourgeoisie, a practicing Protestant from Normandy! And if his friends thought his marriage a contradiction, Nadar himself was divided. He invited none of his many associates to the private ceremony on September 11, 1854, for which he apologized a little sheepishly to Asselineau, “It’s rather funny that my first witness learns of my marriage fifteen days after it took place and from a written announcement … with the ceremony set for noon, I didn’t know at eleven if I would get married.”

Thirty-four years old, thousands of francs in debt, and domiciled with a bossy and implacable mother, Nadar must have known, as he had written in “L’Indienne bleue,” that he would be his mother’s son until he married and that in his marriage he was unhappy without a family, an “intérieur” of his own. Furthermore, the political fervor that had carried him through the colorful escapades of his youth was now reined to docility under the Empire. With his heroes exiled, Messrs. Réac and Crédit everywhere ascendant, and his Panthéon a grandiose dream mired in the complexity and expense of its production, Nadar may have recognized in Ernestine’s solidity, as well as in her dowry, the promise of a fresh start.

After two years during which his project’s appearance in the near future had been heralded repeatedly, in March 1854 Nadar finally printed his one completed sheet. The Panthéon Nadar was acclaimed as a triumph in articles by Gautier and other friends published that spring and summer, but the high price of the big sheet (20 francs) made for sluggish sales, the piquant biographies were omitted, and all initial profits were swallowed by the costs already incurred, especially the extensive advertising campaign previously mounted.

Moreover, trouble of another sort had begun at the launching of the project back in 1852, when Count Charles de Villedieuil, cousin of the Goncourt brothers and publisher of the newspaper L’Éclair, had reneged on his initial willingness to participate in the undertaking. In the ensuing row, which provoked outraged letters and a duel that fizzled, Villedieuil insinuated that Nadar was an extortionist. In revenge Nadar drew Villedieuil at the tail end of the Panthéon’s parade as a little figure who is ignominiously booted out of the glorious march toward posterity. The ridicule of this crooked and dishonorable aristocrat implied, of course, the ridicule of all such characters, which earned Nadar little good will in high circles. And, with the free press in bondage, it was easy enough for someone (perhaps Jules de Goncourt) to complain that Nadar had published his caricature without authorization. In October 1854 the minister of the interior accordingly ordered the Panthéon Nadar withdrawn from public sale.

After two years of effort, with only 156 copies of the first sheet sold and with the next three sheets to be composed of some 750 portraits, each of which now required the sitter’s personal release, Nadar had to admit defeat. The sun had set on the Panthéon. He abandoned the three other lithographs planned, recycled some of the completed...
portraits-charges as individual caricatures, and used part of Ernestine’s dowry to pay his bills.

At the same time, Nadar was hearing urgent pleas from Adrien to come help save his failing photography studio. He responded by working from mid-September through December of 1854 at Adrien’s atelier. “I am at Adrien’s all day,” he wrote Asselineau, and later, “I gave it everything I could: work, money, personal relations, and my pseudonym, which followed me.” Receipts account book beginning September 21 shows how much needed to be done. There were notebooks, inkwells, letter paper, envelopes, and sealing wax to buy, the carpenter was called in to put wheels on the chassis, all the chemicals had to be purchased plus glass for negatives, fancy frames for individual sitters, and so on. Nadar doled out his money carefully: 20 centimes daily for tobacco, 5 to 10 francs a day for Adrien (“pour lui”), 10 francs for Bertsch’s collodion, 20 francs for “a velvet case for the” Laffitte portrait. Receipts began to come in during October: Mme Reine paid 100 francs, De Belleme 40 francs, Lesueur 300 francs (pl. 38), Durand-Braguer 20. Was it symptomatic of trouble in the studio that within two weeks of Mme Reine’s payment she was suing (or being sued by) the photographers? Among other problems that arose, the most serious was the antipathy between the brothers. Félix dominated Adrien and Adrien bridled under his management. Once the enterprise was back on its feet, Adrien again moved to protect what he wanted to believe was his exclusive territory, and on January 16, 1855, he asked his brother to withdraw.

Nadar had worked hard to put the atelier in shape and bring it notice. He had invested 6,000 francs of Ernestine’s money, some of it to purchase a large camera, and had arranged for his friend Charles Debarieu, the mime, to come and pose. And, though no more entries were being accepted for the Exposition Universelle, he had wrangled an exhibition spot for the firm through one of his friends. Without his intending it, his contributions to the business and his successful publicity efforts had generated a confusion as to who was in charge on the boulevard des Capucines: Nadar, the famous writer and caricaturist whose Panthéon was the talk of the town, or his younger brother, an unknown painter who had begun to sign his photographs “Nadar jeune” (Nadar the younger)?

The confusion grew throughout the year. When Nadar left the atelier, he demanded that Adrien repay his investment and desist from using his name. The younger Tournachon refused. It was under the name “Nadar jeune” that he won a first-class medal at the Exposition Universelle, and (as Nadar would point out) he continued to profit from the critical conflation of his photographs and his brother’s fame. The forever belittled Adrien, enlivened with his first success, now blindly resisted his older brother’s will. In October he accepted the offer of two financial backers to form a new partnership whose assets — purloined! Nadar protested — included the famous moniker. Adding insult to injury, by the end of the year “Tournachon Nadar et Compagnie” had moved into a large atelier at 17, boulevard des Italiens, “the busiest spot in the world,” fumed Nadar. In this exceptionally well placed emporium, the name “Nadar jeune” — with “jeune” abbreviated to “jne” and so small as to be invisible, or else written to mimic the descending streamer of Nadar’s signature — was prominently emblazoned on signs, photographic mounts, and cards.

Nadar packed up his caricature and photography cabinet and moved it back to his home at 113, rue Saint-Lazare. Having broken with his brother, in March he also separated from his mother, whom he retired to an apartment on the rue de Tivoli. With their household consolidated, husband and wife were soon expectant parents: Paul was born February 8, 1856. The following month Nadar gave up on the fruitless year-long arbitrations of friends and filed a
legal suit against Adrien to recover the exclusive use of his pseudonym. "Nadar" was, as he put it, "more him than he himself." Nadar was not Tournachon; he was an orphan born at his father's death, a young man who had struggled through loss and made his way alone in bohemia. The name was the signature of his courage and convictions, his self-respect and artistic identity. This intangible thing, this sign incorporating the history of his striving, was the only thing Nadar owned and could pass on to his son. The suit, however, dragged on.

With his wife's dowry decimated and a family to feed—not to mention the friends who gathered at his table, the baby's nurse, and Ernestine's maid—Nadar had to assume the responsibilities of a paterfamilias. The bills that piled up on his desk included those for his mother's apartment and allowance, for summer trips his wife and son took to the coast of Normandy, for his wife's fashionable wardrobe. Nadar's determination to give Paul the security his own father had been unable to provide for him, Ernestine's expectations of bourgeois comfort, and Adrien's fratricidal competition combined to spur him to unprecedented levels of enterprise.

From 1855 through the end of the decade Nadar was a whirlwind of activity. Drawings and articles poured from his pen intoPhilipon's magazines, two of which he edited. Beyond his weekly production he made hundreds of vignettes spoiling the works in the annual Salons and wrote quarterly and annual roundups of Paris doings. He gathered his earlier stories and a novella and had them published in two volumes, was an active member of the Société des Gens de Lettres and other groups, and all the while was taking the portrait photographs that ultimately would secure his place in history.

Four months at Adrien's studio had shown Nadar the economic potential of portrait photography, and he may also have been urged to persevere in this new field by the insistent Ernestine. But if the promise of financial security was an attraction, it is clear from the way Nadar practiced photography that he also perceived in this medium a field of expressive possibility unlike any other. He could leave aside such tasks as editing and proofing copy, writing captions, and correcting drawings and instead indulge his most basic instinct: to entertain, understand, and connect with others through spirited conversation. The unconscious expressions of self that he had hunted through caricature he could now instantaneously fix. Both his subject and the live current of mutual engagement were captured in the present tense of the photograph, while time, with its perpetual abandonments and dispersals, flowed on.

The portrait sittings took place at 113, rue Saint-Lazare. The ground-floor apartment was modified into a comfortable reception room where Nadar displayed his caricatures, his collection of paintings by Doré, Daumier, Nanteuil, and others, and the grand autograph album whose pages were gradually ornamented with messages, poems, and sketches by the friends who came to pose for his camera. In good weather he entertained his guests and took their portraits in the garden, and in winter they apparently repaired to a glass-roofed attic room.

Utterly unlike the brief routine of posing stiffly in a commercial studio, Nadar's sessions were homey, personal, and designed to put the subject at ease. Of a sitting with Alphonse Crémieux, the minister of justice under the Republic, Nadar wrote, "One sits down, one chats, one laughs, all while readying the lens; and when [he] is in place, well positioned and drawn out for the decisive moment, radiating all his natural benevolence, warmed by all the affection with which he feels himself surrounded"—which included not only Nadar's high esteem for a man of liberal principles but also the warmth of Mme Crémieux, present as well, who was absorbed in her husband's face "as if she were drinking it up"—the shutter could be released, capturing the inner beauty of the man on his face. Thus Nadar encouraged the invisible to reveal itself through the sympathetic quality of his attention—in this case, as he put it, "by the magnetic flow of inspired tenderness."

The prestige of Nadar's public personality and the large scale of his portraits attracted notables and celebrities, who paid as much as 100 francs for the privilege of a sitting. While this promotional traffic was a financial boon, it is doubtful that Nadar, who was capable of refusing the outstretched hand of the emperor, treated all comers with as much care as he had good citizen Crémieux. Indeed, on the evidence of the pictures, only Nadar's friends received the compliment of his best efforts.

Most of the great portraits Nadar made on the rue Saint-Lazare were not commissioned; they were voluntary engagements with a fellow artist who paid substantially less than 100 francs. A session with Gautier or Baudelaire or an actor from the vaudeville stage, someone with whom Nadar had, as he put it, "eaten bread and salt," was an extraordinary experience. Warmed with past memories and mutual
regard, old friends naturally responded to Nadar’s seductive energy, his jokes, his endearing stories, his complete attention. They participated in the performance, returning his concentration and trust. In such encounters with the members of his chosen family, it would not be too much to say that Nadar gave himself over to love.

Imagine the scene with Philipon, for instance (pl. 26). Smoking his cigar, the good-humored boss trades bons mots with his protégé over the relative merits of caricature and photography. Perhaps Philipon is kidding Nadar that he could have sketched several likenesses in the time it takes to adjust the reflectors, when Philipon’s shadow falls across the backdrop. Seizing the serendipity and recalling that La Silhouette was the name Philipon gave to his first satirical paper, Nadar and his mentor improvise a portrait in which the publisher of caricatures seems to draw his own silhouette with nothing but a cigar and the shadow of the sun. The relish with which they concoct this delightful conceit playing on Philipon’s career and the magical power of photography is evident in the mock seriousness, the shadow of a smile of complicity, that hovers over Philipon’s features.

There is, of course, no way of knowing what actually transpired between the photographer and his sitter, except what can be deduced from the portraits that resulted. Did Daumier leave his sketch (fig. 15) in Nadar’s autograph album before or after he was photographed? The drawing, an insider’s joke, shows Henri Monnier, an actor, fellow caricaturist, and friend of both Daumier and Nadar, playing the role of M. Prudhomme, that starched-collar model of the prudent bourgeois (compare fig. 16). His head immobilized in the vise of an “iron maiden,” Prudhomme is frightened by the ordeal of being photographed. In fact, Daumier lent himself with apparent patience to the experience at 113, rue Saint-Lazare, where he was greeted with deference, not ridicule. Wrapping Daumier’s frownsiness in a coat, and carefully minimizing its collar, Nadar proceeded to arrange lighting and pose so that the artist’s heavy features would be energized by his intense gaze, while his lumpish body became a simple sculptural support (pls. 47–50). Thus Nadar presented a fellow artist he greatly admired as a new sort of popular hero: a smart peasant with a gimlet eye, a vigorous, solid nature, and no airs.

The variety of expressions Nadar elicited from his sitters suggests the mobility of his understanding and his deftness at kindling each individual’s distinctive spark. The gentleness of his portrayal of the landscape painter Daubigny, who sits quietly buttoned into his greatcoat (pl. 52), contrasts markedly with the histrionics of the half-draped actor and Fourierist evangelist Journet (pl. 81). Nadar evidently savored (and enhanced) the innumerable differences of gesture and costume as so many distinct accents of individual character. Thus the rumpled Gautier in shirtsleeves and smock reveals his bare wrist above his pants pocket (pl. 42), while an electric, dyspeptic Baudelaire hikes up his tightly tailored waistcoat, giving us a glimpse of its satin lining and of his artful self-consciousness (pl. 33). Although accessories and clothing were improvised as the sessions progressed (compare pls. 41, 42, and 43, 44), these were not cosmetic details; they were expressive turns in the intimate collaborations that made his portraits of trusted friends of the bohème the acme of Nadar’s art.

In his effort to make himself known as the only legitimate Nadar, “le seul Nadar sans succursale” (without branches), Nadar joined the Société Française de Photographie, showing his portraits in Brussels and Paris in its exhibitions of 1856, 1857, and 1859. He advertised his work directly and indirectly, seeing to it that his friends in the press reported
his activities in glowing terms. With Philipon’s help and in his publications, he mounted a parallel campaign to elevate the status of the medium. “Photography today is more than a science: it has risen to the level of art,” he proclaimed in October 1856 (see fig. 20). He further argued for the distinction of his artistry in reference to his ongoing suit against Adrien. This self-generated publicity made Nadar famous in his new field—and perhaps more celebrated for his well-advertised talent than for his products. A mystique grew up around the photographer, but the photographs themselves were a rarity encountered only in the artist’s foyer or in an occasional exhibition. The original salted paper prints were not made in any number and were known to the public mostly through engraved illustrations in the popular press.

In his written suit against his brother, Nadar clarified the position he had been setting forth piecemeal in the press. Photography, he explained, was a two-tiered enterprise. Ordinarily, it was a scientific technique anyone (even Adrien, was the implication) could quickly acquire; much more rarely, it was a subtle and exacting art that could be mastered only intuitively and only by the gifted few:

What can’t be learned, I will tell you: it’s the sense of light, it’s the artistic appreciation of the effects produced by different and combined qualities of light, it’s the applying of this or that effect according to the nature of the face that you have to reproduce as an artist.

What can be learned still less is the moral intelligence of your subject, it’s the swift tact that puts you in communion with the model, makes you size him up, grasp his habits and ideas in accordance with his character, and allows you to render, not an indifferent plastic reproduction that could be made by the lowliest laboratory worker, commonplace and accidental, but the resemblance that is most familiar and most favorable, the intimate resemblance. It’s the psychological side of photography, that word doesn’t seem too ambitious to me.

What also can’t be learned is integrity of work: in a genre as delicate as portraiture, it’s zeal, the search, an indefatigable perseverance in the relentless pursuit of the best; it is, in a word, the commercial honesty which I make bold to say I have inherited from our father.

This famous profession of faith in the art of photography, distinguished from science because it requires instinctive aesthetic choices, an emotional aptitude for communion with the subject, and zealous dedication to ever higher ideals of expression, is the credo of a romantic temperament. Nadar’s battle for the exclusive ownership of his name was a cry for the right to self-expression and fame, an ineffable union of artistic and worldly success—and this glorification of the individual, combined with the selfless dedication that is a proof of his integrity, epitomizes the romantic spirit.

Nadar’s portrayal of himself in figure 1 is accordingly that of an artist born of Romanticism, a sentient man who has met resistance with desire and an indomitable will. An observer keeping his distance, he is also an actor in a concentrated role: the restless, sensitive hand and the powerful wrist emerging from an unbuttoned sleeve coil up to support the jaw in the traditional pose of the thinker. The brow is illuminated, the windswept mane suggests the passion and movement of his thought. The man is a tumult contained, a spring of energy riveted onto the paper by a probing eye.

Not present are the camera or any trappings of the studio that might identify Nadar as a photographer. His interest was not so much in the medium or the role of the photographer as in himself and his own kind. What fasci-
nated Nadar was people; he had spent his life pursuing an understanding of their movements and motives through literature and the theater, through the study of medicine and the mind, through his moralizing biographical stories, caricatures, and portraits-charges. Nadar's self-portrait, indeed all his portraits, spring from that prevailing passion. The camera was only its most perfect tool.

It might seem that Nadar took up photography fortuitously. Scientific advances had only recently replaced the daguerreotype and the paper negative with a more replicable and exploitable product, making portraiture easier; the business was perceived as lucrative and as likely to be well served by connections in the press. It is also true that the venture presented itself just when Nadar was consolidating his family and that his commitment to photography was strengthened by the strenuous competition of his brother.

Yet photography's appeal to Nadar lay deeper. As he himself recognized, the psychological complexity of making a great likeness was a principal attraction. For him the process was one of personal interplay that tapped two linked sets of strengths—observation and performance, receptivity and self-confidence. It also required quickness, tact, and a knack for improvisation that Nadar had displayed from childhood. And it flourished when the artist understood, as Nadar had since youth, that reality and artifice, like free play and control, are necessary and equal partners that must dance together at the moment of the pose.

To Nadar the art of portrait photography was a delicate performance in which the faithful record of a person's features did not count as success; he set the stakes higher, so that the only satisfactory response was the spontaneous invention of new expressions between two attuned sensibilities. That is why the garden apartment on the rue Saint-Lazare was so important a setting. It was not a laboratory or a business emporium, but a private theater of personality where friends could be induced to inhabit the roles that they and their spirited director conspired to present.

Other factors as well made photography the right medium for Nadar. The image that resulted from those collaborations was immediately gratifying. It did not require months of gestation nor subsequent refinement, and so did not tax Nadar's short patience for preparation and follow-through. Photography also provided a much-needed formal concision that countered his tendency to overstatement and elaboration, and at the same time it allowed him to work in brief, concentrated spurts, turning to advantage his journalistic aptitude for the immediate and the fragmentary.

Finally, photography offered Nadar a way of preserving his bonds with the men and women whose ideas gave life its modern face. Although bohemia as a community had dissolved by the mid-1850s, for Nadar its spirit and solidarity were essential. He revived his old allegiances and held them safe in portrait after singular portrait, creating a lasting monument to his youth's enthusiasm in his collective portrait of the true bohème.

The invisible is real. Souls have their world
Where there are gathered impalpable treasures.

Alfred de Vigny

In December 1847 the court ruled that Félix Tournachon was, after all, "the only, the true Nadar." Adrien appealed the ruling, but without his brother's involvement his career had faltered badly, and when he finally lost the case in June 1859 he was no longer even the semblance of a threat. Nadar's star, meanwhile, had reached its apogee. He was a famed journalist, caricaturist, public figure, and now, photographer. The battle was over; the brothers were reconciled at their mother's bedside. Before Thérèse Tournachon died in February 1860, Félix acceded to her last wish, that he look after the hapless Adrien. Four months later he made good on his vow: he paid off a percentage of his bankrupt brother's debts and bought his photographic material—even though he already owned some part of the equipment, having purchased it with Ernestine's dowry six years earlier.

Nadar had been considering leaving the cozy but makeshift accommodations of the rue Saint-Lazare when his brother's exodus from the boulevard brought the issue into focus. Determined to claim his due as first photographer in the realm, Nadar launched the construction of a vast atelier in the building Le Gray had just vacated at 35, boulevard des Capucines. At 30,000 francs a year the rent was astronomical, ten times that at the rue Saint-Lazare; even so, paying it might have been feasible if the construction of the glass atelier and the lavish interior rooms had not been literally ruinous. Adrien begged his brother to reconsider, wisely noting that the fixed expenses of the boulevard were untenable, that many early practitioners had succumbed, notably Le Gray, the Bissons, Disdéri, and himself, and that Nadar's clientele was not infinitely expandable, as his prices were at the very top of the market. "I know very well that you don't admit the possibility of
failure, but still, would you be the first?” He concluded, “Either you will die of overwork, or the leakage that you don’t see will scuttle your establishment.” 106 Nadar naturally took no heed of advice coming from that confirmed “zero.” By the time the establishment opened, six months late, in September 1861, Nadar was in arrears 230,000 francs, a colossal debt that shadowed his subsequent twelve years in the atelier and finally forced his exit from what he came to regard as a penitentiary. However, his expenditures had immediately bought, among other things, the sweet gratification of a gigantic signature spread across the glass facade of his palace. This bravura billboard was reportedly illuminated as well, so that even by night none could ignore the triumph of his name (fig. 17).

Among the stockholders in the company Nadar formed to finance his move was Charles Philipon. An astute judge of popular taste, Philipon urged Nadar to reissue the fine portraits he had amassed, which he called his *Figures contemporaines*, in the inexpensive *carte de visite* format that Disdéri had introduced, and that by 1860 was wildly popular. “You have a fortune in your grasp and you are crazy enough to let it slip away! If you had made the *cartes* that you could have made, you would be rich today, and you still haven’t even begun!” Philipon scolded him in 1861. 107 Nadar did reproduce some of the great rue Saint-Lazare portraits as *cartes*, but his heart was not in the enterprise. Reducing the scale removed all the light, air, and immediacy of the big portraits, while the albumen printing process sealed the little effigies as if in amber. And the notion of selling his art to the anonymous crowd as slick collector’s tokens must have been abhorrent to him.

While bringing his best work down to the lowest common denominator might have been good business, Nadar had never been a good businessman. From the outset he was often absent from the new atelier. “From the boulevard one can see everything that goes on in your studio, and everyone notices that you are never to be seen working. If it goes on much longer, they will end up thinking that you don’t do anything. So hide your nudity,” the exasperated Philipon wryly advised. 108 Ernestine also worried, “Make the photographs yourself, I beg you. That’s where the fortune lies, believe me, don’t look for it elsewhere. What do you care whether a sitter is beautiful or ugly, as long as he pays.” 109 But nothing could have been less interesting to Nadar than the bourgeois clientele of the boulevard. That he left the day-to-day operation to the staff is demonstrated by the ordinariness of most of the portraits bearing the boulevard des Capucines stamp. With rare exceptions, as when George Sand and Sarah Bernhardt came to the studio, Nadar was not present.

![](image)

*Figure 17. Nadar. The atelier at 35, boulevard des Capucines, ca. 1860. Albumen print. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie*

If there was, as Nadar himself admitted, a certain gloating insolence to scrawling his name in gargantuan script above the boulevard, and if he crowned the insolence by deserting the public drawn by his name, that signature also constituted a salutary spur to his zeal, which he now applied to extending the range of photography. Defying the limitations of a medium requiring the sun and the proximity of a darkroom, he began taking photographs without daylight. First he used electric light in portraits of friends and of himself (figs. 39, 74); then he went underground, bringing back from the catacombs and sewers a sequence of unprecedented photographs of those purgatories. Although the newly reconstructed catacombs and the sewers were
modernizations wrought by Baron Haussmann, they were still the lower depths — the bas-fonds — of the city, the archetypal locus of the dreaded, demonic, devalued, and defunct; the repair of Jean Valjean, hero of Les Misérables (1862), and the haunt of every romantic imagination.

Nadar’s series of photographs of the ossuary of six or seven million skeletons is not, however, a poetic descent into Hades, but a harshly lit, peculiarly dispassionate enterprise. The worker (actually a mannequin) who attends the walls of skulls might as well be a mason, a miner, or a gardener, and the caverns in which he works a cave for wine or mushrooms. And in the photographs of the vaulted sewers, which might have conveyed the horrors of Piranesi’s prisons, one sees rational structure and channeled cleanliness, as well as the photographer’s electric batteries, reflectors, and cords, which at times seem the true protagonists. Surely the underground projects were primarily technical challenges for Nadar, feats carried out against odds with subjects chosen for their publicity value, but the mute theatricality of most of the images emphasizes how crucial the interplay of personality was to Nadar’s most authentic art.

In one of the catacomb photographs Nadar himself appears, seated against a wall of bones and surrounded by bottles of photographic chemicals (fig. 18). The image curiously recalls the saturnine mood of the preparatory sketch for the announcement of the Panthéon (fig. 11), except that Nadar, waiting patiently through the long exposure, takes the place of Father Time. A characteristic piece of self-promotion, the self-portrait also presciently intimated the issues of mortality that now confronted Nadar. On January 29, 1862, his avuncular counselor, forgiving benefactor, master, and friend, Charles Philipon, died. The death of this brilliant man and surrogate father very likely recalled the confusion and pain caused in the young Félix by Victor Tournachon’s death twenty-five years before. Concluding his touching obituary, Nadar wrote, “Charles Philipon died of enlargement of the heart. His heart took up too much space, the doctors said. They were right.”

Less than a month after Philipon died, Henri Murger, the man who embodied and chronicled bohemia, who had shared the most fraternal moments of Nadar’s youth, expired in his arms. Murger was only thirty-eight.

During the ensuing six months, Noël, Léioux, and Nadar collected their friend’s letters and wrote Histoire de Murger for Hetzel to publish, an undertaking that plunged them into the past. Nadar’s part of the book, written with his usual brio and wealth of anecdotal detail, is nonetheless a confessional lamentation, and not only for Murger, its ostensible subject. Nadar gathered up his dead friends—Karol, Jules de La Madelène, Antoine Fauchery, and Gérard de Nerval—and wrote a tender tribute to each. Meanwhile, yet another death occurred: Le Théâtre des Funambules, “the true theater of the people,” according to Nadar, was forced to close its doors. On July 15, 1862, Charles Debureau gave a last performance, “Les Mémoires de Pierrot,” a recapitulation of the most famous pantomimes that he and his father, Baptiste, had played on that stage for over forty years. The curtain opened with “Pierrot in mourning . . . weeping on the ruins, seen in perspective, of his dear theater.” Baron Haussmann’s plans called for the demolition of the Funambules and the neighboring vaudeville theaters to make way for the broad new boulevards of empire. “Paris is changing! . . . And my cherished memories are heavier than rocks,” wrote Baudelaire.

In September 1862, Nadar, Banville, Champfleury, Carjat, and other surviving bohemians traveled to Brussels.
to join Victor Hugo and others who had been or still were exiled victims of the Second Empire—Hetzel, Pelletan, Louis Blanc—to celebrate the publication of *Les Misérables*. Hugo’s greatest novel, begun in Paris in 1843–48, put aside during the glory days of the Republic, and finished in exile, recounts the solidarity of the outcasts and little people—the Valjeans and Gavroches—and their heroic struggle to complete the unfinished business of 1789. The dinner in honor of Hugo, the so-called *banquet des Misérables*, was the occasion for many impassioned words about art and politics; but it was in fact the finale, the last major gathering of those faithful to the great romantic mélange of liberal ideals.

Nadar returned to Paris with thirty-eight copies of Hugo’s censored poems, *Châtiments*, and his tract against the emperor, *Napoléon le Petit*, concealed on his person. Delighted with his successful smuggling of contraband ideas, Nadar was also aware that his visit to his exiled friends had been suspiciously watched, earning him another police dossier. The situation was ludicrous and lamentable, like a good political caricature. Nadar was wearing Hugo’s proclamations of artistic and political liberty, but he was enjoying neither at home. Philipon’s death had severed the personal connection between Nadar and his newspapers, and without his doughty publisher, there was no camouflage of the oppressive condition of censorship that was the actual climate of caricature. For Nadar, there was no more joy in it, nor use for it; he stopped drawing. Something similar happened in the photography studio. With neither the tonic interaction of old friends nor the good political fight to galvanize him, the boulevard enterprise was a yoke, a prison—like the starched shirt-cuffs he so hated—of empty conventionality.

He had found a way to escape; not perfect, he admitted, but one that would suffice. Like the republican cause, it engaged his imagination and his generous dreams for mankind; like photography, it built on recent scientific advances. Moreover, it required bravery, and not only the instinctual animal variety, but moral courage in the face of doubt and contrary evidence. For a man who had surmounted much, this imprudent, exaggerated challenge was a necessary last frontier: can man conquer the air?

Nadar had loved balloons since he was a boy, and his enthusiasm for flying always retained something of the purity and magic of a child’s. In 1857 he had made his first ascen-

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...
was to bring together the men with the ideas and raise enough money to fund the construction of their flying machines, envisioned at the time as helicopters. The response to their manifesto, published in La Presse, was hilarity. Even republican sympathizer Henri Rochefort laughed in Nadar’s face.⁹¹⁷

Disbelief only egged him on. True to his traditions, he founded a newspaper, L’Aéronaute, to fan public opinion, and in what might seem a paradoxical move, decided to build a gigantic balloon to use in raising consciousness and money for the propelled machine that would replace it. The Géant, completed in October 1863, was forty-five meters in circumference and could carry over a dozen passengers in its two-tiered basket. Master of publicity if not of economics, Nadar had once again overextended himself, but the five ascensions he made in the big balloon between 1863 and 1867 and the two books he wrote about his experiences, Mémoires du Géant (1864) and Le Droit au vol (1865), made him more famous with a larger public than any of his earlier enterprises. Nadar’s Géant was legendary throughout Europe and even in America.⁹¹⁸

Instead of making money, the Géant sucked up whatever profits the photography studio could churn out. Not surprisingly, the financial “encouragement” to build helicopters never materialized either. While Nadar was convinced that a mechanical solution was the wing of the future, he thrilled to the levitation he could actually experience. It was too easy to abandon the engineer’s job of weighing practicalities, constructing scale models, and conducting flight-simulation tests, in favor of the seduction of donning the circus master’s hat, whipping up the crowd, stepping into the basket of the biggest balloon ever made, and, the center of all attention, rising effortlessly into space. Although Ernestine and many friends begged Nadar to come back to earth, he kept on flying until he had almost lost the studio and had allowed its product to become so debased that even his famous name was beginning to tarnish.⁹¹⁹

Something in Nadar could not resist this attraction. To be airborne was more than exhilarating, it was a release from the bounds and appetites of the social body. It was the romantic dream at its most extreme, perhaps even an experience from which there was no return. Victor Hugo understood it well. In his long, effusive letter supporting Nadar’s venture (January 1864) he wrote of the future of aviation, “It is the abolition of all boundaries. It is the destruction of separation. . . . It is the prodigious peaceful revolution. . . . A magnificent transfiguration . . . to own the ether . . . to possess the planet.”¹⁰⁰

Nadar, ever accountable to his private emotion, did not confuse the cosmic, geopolitical lyricism of the great poet with his own personal quest. The boulevard, the Empire, and to a degree even his marriage, were purgatories of constraint, while flying was the ultimate release. His public ascensions began with much attendant drama, but as the earth and human bonds dropped farther and farther away, the voyages transcended theater. “In this superhuman serenity,” he wrote, “the spasm of ineffable emotion detaches the soul from the material world, which is forgotten as if it no longer existed, vaporized into some purer essence. Everything is far away — cares, remorse, disgust. How easily indifference, contempt, forgetfulness drop away from on high — and forgiveness descends. . . .”¹¹ⁱ

It is difficult not to be moved by so open a desire for grace. Flying lifted Nadar beyond self-consciousness. It liberated his spirit and allowed him the bravest private act, that of self-absolution.

So did the best of the photographic portraits, also public engagements of Nadar’s most concentrated and personal sensibility, untether him from life’s ordinary routine. What they carry — a passionate comprehension of humanity’s
noblility, humor, tenderness, and strength — is nothing
more nor less than the signature of Nadar's soul.

During the siege of Paris by the Prussians in 1870, Nadar
devised his last major public role, the organization and
implementation of reconnaissance and postal service by bal-
loon. Thereafter, his years passed in semiretirement, much
of it at the Hermitage, a house in the forest of Sénart that
he acquired in 1873. His son, Paul, carried on the business,
while Nadar wrote scores of books and articles, millions of
memorializing words that allowed him to resavor the
friends and experiences of earlier days. He helped instigate
and organize exhibitions of the work of Honoré Daumier
(1878) and of Constantin Guys (1895). Quand j'étais pho-
tographe appeared in 1900. Of the many "Cahiers de
Nadar," the autobiographical chapters on which he spent
his last decade, only Charles Baudelaire intime (1911) was
published.

In 1903, after more than a decade in a mental institution,
Adrien Tournachon died. In January 1909 it was Ernestine
Tournachon's turn. In July of the same year, Louis Blériot,
the first man to fly the English Channel, received this
telegram: "Moved by gratitude for the joy with which your
victory has just filled the antediluvian of 'heavier than air'
before his eighty-nine years are underground." On
March 21, 1910, two weeks before his ninetieth birthday,
Nadar died.

This "most astonishing expression of vitality" had out-
lived all his old friends; those who buried Nadar in Père
Lachaise cemetery were an autumnal crop from the second
half of his life. He was legally and commercially survived
by Paul, who continued the studio and tended his father's
flame until his own death in 1939. Paul's daughter, Marthe,
died without offspring; there are no more Nadars.

1. "Nadar, c'est la plus étonnante expression de vitalité." Charles
   Baudelaire, "Mon Coeur mis à nu," xxix, in Baudelaire 1861,
   p. 1289.

2. The biographical information in this essay is drawn from documents
   in the Nadar archives in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
   as well as from two accounts of Nadar's life: Jean Prinet and
   Antoinette Dilasser, Nadar (Paris, 1965), and Roger Greaves, Nadar,
   ou le paradoxe vival (Paris, 1980). Although both books draw from the
   same archives, Greaves's lively narrative is sometimes fanciful and
   often unreferenced. Prinet and Dilasser's more modest but factual
   account is therefore usually the preferred source. Whenever I have
   found an author's facts or documentation incomplete or mistrans-
   scribed from the original papers, I have made corrections. In turn I
   am greatly indebted to André Rouillé for correcting my own errors
   and for the additional data he has provided from his research.

The 1836 date for Victor's return to Lyons is Prinet and Dilasser's
(p. 15), confirmed by Rouillé. It differs with Greaves's date of 1834
(p. 29).

3. (Nadar's papers, housed in the Department of Manuscripts of the
   Bibliothèque Nationale de France, are entered as Nouvelles
   Acquisitions Françaises. The figure before the slash refers to the call
   number and that following the slash to the individual page.) B.N.F.,


7. "Le parterre . . . était plein de pâles adolescents aux longs cheveux,
   croyant fermement qu'il n'y avait d'autre occupation acceptable sur
   ce globe que de faire des vers ou de la peinture . . ." Gautier 1857,

   same letter he asks that Adrien send him his insects, presumably a
   collection of them.

   Augeron: "I was well aware of my exceptional position . . . The ex-
   cellent man who had so charitably replaced my dead father . . ." was
   revised to: "Nevertheless I was to some extent aware of this position,
   especially after the death of my father had made my abandonment
   complete." Nadar's clear recognition that Augeron had played the
   role of surrogate father was thus not included in his discussion of
   Augeron's many kindnesses to him which he published as the intro-
   duction to M. Augeron's L'Etoile au car (Paris, 1894).


11. Unlike the medical school in Paris, the one in Lyons did not require
    the baccalauréat for entry.

    finds no evidence of Nadar's contribution to L'Entret'acte lyonnais.

13. The description of Nadar in this period is by Charles Bataille (1864,
    p. 79). Nadar's impressions of Lyons are extrapolated from selected
    quotations from his theatrical reviews in Greaves 1980, p. 36. It is not
    clear when Thérèse and Adrien Tournachon returned to Paris, but
    according to Rouillé's research (as yet unpublished), it was probably
    by 1845.

14. See Ian R. Dowbiggin, Inheriting Madness: Professionalization and
    Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France (Berkeley,

15. Greaves adopts Hugo's discussion of argot as the natural expression
    of the rebellious spirit, but dispenses with the poet's insistence on its
    shadowy inference of vice. See Greaves 1980, p. 52, and Victor Hugo,

    parts, the last of which is by Nadar. It is unclear when he experienced
    this worst period of deprivation, but it may have been in the winter of
    1836–37, when he left school, or perhaps in the winter of 1838, after
    he returned from Lyons. In his later years Nadar seems to have re-
    garded the 1836–38 period as a muddle, with episodes of acute
dress but without clear chronology.

17. In an undated letter to Asselinou on the letterhead L'Éventail:
    Kapsaka kebdonadaire (ca. 1835?), Nadar wrote, "Afterward we're
    all going together to the vaudeville." B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv.
    Acq. Fr. 24986/7.

19. "... l'on a poussé si loin le culte de l'horrible et du cadavre. Quand M. Millaud arrivait au milieu de ses farouches collaborateurs, il leur faisait toutes sortes de coquetteries maternelles pour les encourager dans leurs recherches cadavériques. 'Il faut que ça grouille! mes fils il faut que ça grouille,' disait en se frottant les mains." Bataille 1864, p. 79.
29. Nadar, Quand j'étais étudiant, 1856, p. 78.
30. "Le tort que l'on se fait à soi-même et seul est le tort que les autres vous pardonnent le plus difficilement." "le monde ne compte pour rien l'intelligence qui comprend, si elle ne se manifeste par l'intelligence qui produit." Ibid., pp. 95, 96.
31. Ibid., p. 135.
32. Musset's words were an "abuse of adjectives," as cited in James Smith Allen, Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the 19th Century (Syracuse, N.Y., 1981), p. 13 and n. 18.
34. Prinet and Dilasser 1966, pp. 22 and n. 35. The B.N.F. manuscript no. 358 to which the book makes reference could not be verified.
35. "La fortune ne lui souriait plus. Il avait... le teint blême, la tête philosophiquement penchée vers la terre, et semblait plongé dans de pénibles méditations... derrière lui suivait pas à pas... un épéguile à longs poils, maigre, allongé comme son maître, portant tête et queue basses." B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24261/446, Charles Barbara à Léon Noël, December 10, 1843.
37. "[Nadar] a vécu avec une femme pendant deux mois, sans sorrit, couché, n'ayant pas de vêtements à se mettre. La femme avait un pantalon et des bottes de cuir jaune, avec lesquels elle allait au bal de l'Opéra. Ils avaient une passion d'huîtres et les coquilles d'huîtres s'entassaient dans la chambre et, à la fin, y faisaient un plancher." Goncourt, E. and J. 1889, vol. 1, pp. 892–93. The journal entry is for November 30, 1862, but Carjat's recollection was much later. I am indebted to André Rouillé for providing the source of this story.
39. According to Rouillé, citing manuscript 3096/93 in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Nadar was offended by an unsigned article appearing in La Silhouette; as a result, de Bragelonne, its editor, and Nadar dueled with pistols on May 31, 1845. Asselineau was one of Nadar's witnesses.
42. "... une des plus séduisantes natures de ce temps. Il est personnel, emporté, plein de spontanéité dans ses haines comme dans ses amitiés, tenace dans ses volontés, mobile comme un thermomètre dans ses impressions. Il vous éblouit à chaque minute, avec les mille reflets de sa parole imagée, turbulente, imprévue, qui donne des terreurs comme les couteaux des jongleurs chinois." Bataille 1856, p. 4. I am indebted to Anne McCauley for bringing this article to my attention.
43. The members were: Léon Noël, president; Henri Murger, secretary; Adrien Lélious; the landscape painter Chintreuil; the painters Tabar and Vastine; the Desbrosses brothers, both artists: Léopold, known as "Le Gothique," and Joseph, known as "Christ"; the Polish writer and draftsman Karol d'Anelle; the sculptors Cabot, Villain, and Guibert.
44. "... a time when, up and down the social ladder, everyone in Paris knew one another." B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25015/71.
45. See, for example, Charles Bataille's marvelous account of his meeting with Nadar in 1849, when "two minutes after we had met, he was stuffing pellets of bread in my ears; after a quarter of an hour he called me Imbecile. ... By the following week we were inseparable" (Après deux minutes d'entrevue, il me fourrait des boulettes de pain dans les oreilles; au bout d'un quart d'heure il m'appelait: imbécile. ... La semaine suivante nous ne nous quittions plus d'un pas). Bataille 1864, p. 79.
46. Nadar, Charles Baudelaire intime, 1911, p. 43.
48. Baudelaire became seriously interested in caricature at this time and announced a forthcoming essay, "De la caricature," on the cover of his Salon de 1855. He worked on the piece, retitled "Physiologie du rire" and then "De l'essence du rire," intermittently for twelve years. Baudelaire 1861, p. 1696, n. 1.
49. Greaves (1980, pp. 98–99) reports that Nadar, his brother, and Fauchery learned to draw while living alongside the Bande à Fontallard. It is impossible to know. From August 1847 until he departed for Poland, Nadar lived at 55, grande rue des Batignolles (today's avenue de Clichy). Gérard Fontallard, a lithographer who worked on Philippe's journals, and his son (or brother) Camille, called Calino, also lived in Batignolles in a pair of single-story ateliers in what was then the nearly rural hutte Monmartre. Rouillé points out that Nadar included Camille Fontallard in his "Lanterne magique," Le Journal pour rire, May 8, 1852, p. 3. In the written biography accompanying the drawing, Nadar mentions caricatures by Gérard and the original spirit and artistic gift of Camille.
50. The "galerie" appeared in the last three issues of the Journal, on August 8, 15, and 22, 1847. It was first identified as the work of Nadar by Loï Chotard. See his admirable essays in Nadar: Caricatures et photographies 1990, pp. 35–38.
51. Jules de la Madeleine collaborated with the socialist writer Pierre Leroux in his newspaper La Revue indépendante. The novella was published in the Bulletin de la Société des gens de lettres in 1848.
52. "Dans cette vie de Bohême que nous menions au jour le jour, toute de divagation, de désœuvrement, ou d'agitation stérale, d'insouciance inouïe... qui ne s'arrêtait ni jour ni nuit, il n'y avait jamais eu, pendant une seconde, place pour la réflexion. Mon état civil..."

53. Nadar, Pierron ministre, 1848.

54. See the account, based on that of Charles Toubin, one of Champfleury’s witnesses, in Greaves 1890, pp. 100–2. Bourlié corrected the date of Nadar’s article in L’Argus.

55. Nadar notes the three professors and the referees in their classes as well as at Karol’s mother’s table in Histoire de Mérige, 1862, p. 219.

56. “Je me suis jeté à corps perdu et de tout coeur, heureux du plus grand bonheur qui soit au monde: celui de se retrouver l’enthousiasme que l’on croyait à jamais perdu avec les années de la première jeunesse . . . Le combat que j’ai eut à soutenir contre moi-même sous toutes les formes que tu sais, avant de prendre ce parti, m’a vivifié. J’ai pu, enfin, trouver l’occasion de m’épurer et d’exprimer l’insouciance, en rapportant ma vie à une idée généreuse, et je suis parti.” B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24088/11, letter dated April 21, 1848.


58. Théodore de Banville describes the return in his introduction to Nadar’s L’Hôtelier de Coquettes, 1880, p. viii.


60. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 245.

61. The drawing appears in La Revue comique à l’usage des gens sérieux, no. 30 (June 2, 1849), p. 67; issues are not clearly dated. The last issue was published in either July or December of 1849.

62. See Prinet and Dilassier 1866, p. 61, and Greaves 1890, p. 137.

63. The ten-page handwritten text was first cited by Judith Wechsler (1982). Although a complete copy of this manual for young artists has yet to be located, excerpts from it are printed in Audebrand 1892, pp. 238–46.

64. In Le Journal pour rire, August 21, 1852.

65. Other names cited by Prinet and Dilassier (1866) are: Riou, Gauzerrer, Marcelin, Comba, V. Foulquier, L. Prévost, and Darjou (pp. 60–62, 76–77).


68. Baudelaire 1861, p. 1289.

69. “You are a charming lad, but one must play close to the vest with you. You don’t cheat, I’m happy to observe, but you know all the tricks that drag the game on interminably.” B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24281/311, Philibon to Nadar, May 25, 1852.

70. Philibon’s philosophy: “Talking seriously bores me, I like to attach a little bell to my idea; the more serious the idea is, the wiser I believe it to be, the more I like to see it run about disguised as lunacy.” Cited in Greaves 1890, p. 118.


72. For example, Benjamin Roubaud’s Panthéon charivarique, which appeared in installments in Le Charivari between 1838 and 1842. For this and other such collections, see Benjamin Roubaud et le Panthéon charivarique (Paris: Maison de Balzac, 1888).

73. The text reads: “To Monsieur whom I most assuredly regret in advance not knowing and who, on the 8th day of the 3rd month of the year 1867 will be running from sale to sale like a lost dog to buy, at the price of gold, this copy which will have become supremely rare, and without which he will not be able to complete his great work on the historical figures of the 19th century. Nadar” (Au Monsieur que je regrette assurément d’avance de ne pas connaître et qui, le 2e jour de la 3e lune de l’an 1867 courra les ventes comme un chien perdu pour acheter à prix d’or cet exemplaire devenu introuvable et dont il ne pourra se passer pour son grand travail sur les figures historiques du XIXe siècle. Nadar).

74. Greaves 1890, p. 147.

75. Prinet and Dilassier 1866, p. 76.


77. Nadar, Revendication, 1857, part 1, p. 5.


80. McCauley (1994, p. 113) notes that in his Nadar jury au Salon de 1853, 1853, Nadar “lambasted Mottez [paintings 81–185] for requiring 100 to 200 sittings to produce a mathematical reproduction that ‘the vulgar daguerreotype would give you in a minute, and the instantaneous process of the Macaire brothers would provide in a thousandth of a second.’” (See fig. 59 in Philippe Négga’s essay.)


82. See a letter from Prosper Valmore to Nadar, April 14, 1844, in which he discusses his wife’s willingness to have her photograph taken. It is quoted in full in Nadar: Caricatures et photographies 1990, p. 150.


85. Ibid., p. 137, for a letter dated March 11, 1853, in which Jules de Goncourt pointedly refuses Nadar’s invitation to be included in the Panthéon.

86. Ibid., p. 80.


90. The bank behind the business was that of Charles Lafitte and Blount.

91. The expenditures for October 16 included “justice de paix (procès Mme Reine) . . . 5 FF.”

92. In the Revendication, 1857, part 1, p. 9, Nadar cites five examples of the confusion of identities. Anne McCauley (1994, p. 118) notes that misapprehension also reigned in the reviews of the first exhibition of the Société Française de Photographie (summer 1853).


94. See McCauley (1994, p. 138) for a listing of the contents of the apartment and studio at 113, rue Saint-Lazare when Nadar vacated it in 1860.

95. I am indebted to Anne McCauley for drawing my attention to the following account. “It is known that in photography Nadar does wonders . . . At Nadar’s, 113, rue Saint-Lazare, on the first floor you cross a sitting room decorated with paintings by Gustave Doré, and you enter a ravishingly beautiful garden; this is Nadar’s laboratory. While the proof is in its bath, you can leaf through an album where all the illustrations are a line or a drawing contributed by someone.” Aubrey 1856, p. 69. Nadar himself discusses the album in “Les Histoires du mois,” Musée français-anglais, no. 23 (November 1856), p. 7.


97. As he is said to have done, some years later.

99. The biography that accompanied Nadar’s caricature of Baudelaire in “La Lanterne magique” (Le Journal pour rire, August 21, 1852) confirms this image. Charles Baudelaire, high-strung young poet, angry, irritable, irritating, and often completely disagreeable in private life. Very much a realist despite his contradictory poses, he has himself all the style and severity of the ancients; and of those few rare souls who today pursue the solitude of the self, he is, I think, the best and the most sure of his course.

100. In a letter from Brussels, probably to Ernestine, dated November 5, 1856, Nadar announced that he would certainly have one of the six medals of honor and that Le Gray also had one. He asked her to stamp and mail an enclosed letter to Le Gray, as well as one to the Société Française de Photographie. To the latter she should add his recent chronicle "Les Histoires du mois" in the Musée françois-anglais, with the part about photography outlined in red (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24986/66, November 5, 1856). Shortly thereafter Nadar also wrote to Jacotat and Bourdict, colleagues in the press: "Would it be indiscreet to ask you to slip this into your paper? Your Nadar. ‘Our great photographer Nadar, who had left for Brussels to make the portrait of King Leopold, is back in his studio on the rue Saint-Laure." The letter is in a private collection, Paris.


102. See McCauley 1994, p. 120.

103. "Ce qui ne s’apprend pas, je vais vous le dire: — c’est le sentiment de la lumière, — c’est l’appréciation artistique des effets produits par les jours divers et combinés, — c’est l’application de tels ou tels de ces effets selon la nature des physionomies qu’artiste vous avez à reproduire.

Ce qui s’apprend encore beaucoup moins, c’est l’intelligence morale de votre sujet, — c’est ce tact rapide qui vous met en communion avec le modèle, vous le fait juger et diriger vers ses habitudes, dans ses idées, selon son caractère, et vous permet de donner, non pas banalement et au hasard, une indifférente reproduction plastique à la portée du dernier servent de laboratoire, mais la ressemblance la plus familière et la plus favorable, la ressemblance intime. — C’est le côté psychologique de la photographie, le mot ne me semble pas trop ambitieux.

Ce qui ne s’apprend pas non plus, c’est la probité dans le travail, c’est, dans un genre aussi délicat que le portrait, le zèle, la recherche, le travail infatigable à la poursuite persévérante, acharnée du mieux; c’est, en un mot, l’honnêteté commerciale que j’ose dire avoir héritée de notre père." Nadar, Revendication, 1857, part 2, pages 0–p.


105. B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25009/73, Nadar to M. Richard, ca. 1860, "... as for the resumption of my brother’s business. The grief and exhaustion that my mother’s illness has caused me and, if it must be said, the regret that I couldn’t decide to put it behind me and not obey her last wish. ...


111. Péricaut 1897, p. 492.


113. Frédéric 1862.


115. It is interesting to note that in Nadar’s project for a “férié” planned with Dumas in the 1850s in which each tableau bore a symbolic meaning—prison, for example, signifying resignation and perseverance—the balloon signified courage. (Nadar’s notes for “Les Dents du peigne,” B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25018/904.)

116. "Libre, calme, comme aspiré par les immensités silencieuses de l’espace hospitalier, bienfaisant, où nulle force humaine, nulle puissance de mal ne peut l’atteindre, il semble que l’homme se sente là vivre réellement pour la première fois, jouissant dans une plénitude jusqu’alors inconnue de tout le bien-être de sa santé d’âme et de corps." Nadar, Quand j’étais photographe, 1900, p. 76.

117. Nadar, "Manifeste de l’autolocomotion aérienne," 1863; Rochefort’s article was published in Le Figaro. This and other mockeries, some caricatural, are cited in Prinet and Dillaster 1966, pp. 146–47.

118. See Prinet and Dillaster 1966, p. 111.

119. For complaints about the quality of the photographs, see McCauley 1994, pp. 144–45.

120. The letter is reproduced in Prinet and Dillaster 1966, pp. 156–61.

121. "En cette sévérité surhumaînne, le spasme de l’inéfable transport dégage l’âme de la manière qui s’oublie comme si elle n’existait plus, volatilisée elle-même en essence plus pure. Tout est loin, soucis, amertumes, dégoûts. Comme tombent bien de là-haut l’indifférence, le dédain, l’oubli,... et aussi le pardon. ..." Nadar, Quand j’étais photographe, 1900, p. 76.

Nadar and the Art of Portrait Photography

FRANÇOISE HEILBRUN

There is no denying that M. Nadar’s portraits are works of art in every sense, in the way he lights his sitters, in the bearing and freedom of movement he allows them, in his absorbed search for the characteristic expression of each one’s nature. All the outstanding figures of our era—literary, artistic, dramatic, political, intellectual—have filed through his studio. The sun is only the practitioner; M. Nadar is the artist who wants to give him some work.

So wrote the critic Philippe Burty in his review of the Photography Salon of 1859, thus making it clear that Félix Nadar’s place was among the artists.

And yet Nadar is a typical example of the paradox encountered among many very great photographers: the period of creativity is short, in this case about six years. Subsequently he produced only a scattering of isolated masterpieces. John Szarkowski has pointed out that with photography, often the artist’s energy is not powerfully engaged for a lifetime. Rosalind Krauss returned to the theme, suggesting that what is produced in photography is more a trace than a body of work. But she also wrote, “The idea of the artist suggests that one passes through a certain number of stages before one can claim to be a creator.” Those words apply indisputably to Nadar. His work as a portrait photographer was prepared for not only by long years of making caricatures and by his well-known interest in mime, but also, as Maria Hambourg acutely notes above, by his curiosity about human beings in general.

Nadar was a media man par excellence, not only by force of will but on account of his true generosity, a quality remarked upon by all his contemporaries. He had a capacity for admiration that allowed him to intuit, as only a few others did, the genius of some exceptional artists he had the good fortune to rub elbows with, including Baudelaire, the poet Nerval, and Daumier. Moreover, his repeated studies of certain individuals, in which he constantly renewed the conception of portraiture bear witness to the depth of his investigations, as he himself declared in his celebrated Revendication of 1857.

Adrien Tournachon’s Role in the Earliest Portraits

Félix Nadar originally offered his younger brother the chance to become known as a photographer in the studio at 11, boulevard des Capucines, which Adrien later claimed to have created (see Maria Hambourg’s essay). Tossed out as soon as Adrien set himself up, Félix then worked alone at 113, rue Saint-Lazare. But when his brother’s business started going downhill, Félix rejoined him from mid-September 1854 to mid-January 1855, probably bringing his equipment and his own files of negatives. In a famous lawsuit that began in 1855, the two brothers clashed over the authorship of their photographs. Félix’s ultimate victory, won with the help of numerous literary and artistic personalities, for a long time eclipsed the figure of Adrien and the role he had played in the brothers’ collaboration.

Since Adrien’s negatives have all been lost and Félix’s negatives from the period 1854–55 have likewise vanished, it is very difficult to separate the work of the two brothers. The first serious modern study of Nadar, published in 1966 by Jean Prinet and Antoinette Dilasser and based on archival documents rather than analyses of the work, did not question the court’s decision.

It was not until the late 1970s that the issue of Adrien’s creativity again arose with the resurfacing of two amazing studies of his own face (pls. 27, 28), which, because of their sensuality and their sense of mimicry, at first sight look very different from Félix’s classical portraits. In their strong lighting and in the technique of their printing, these two portraits seem very close to the series of photos of the mime Charles Debureau as Pierrot (pls. 6–20), all bearing
the signature “Nadar jeune,” and to works done by Adrien for Dr. Duchenne de Boulogne and unearthed by Jean-François Debord around the same time as the two portraits. The result was a partial rehabilitation of Adrien.

Today the situation appears more complex. Not only do the archives reveal that Adrien had no qualms about taking credit, often shamelessly, for works that were partly done by his brother; but a stylistic analysis of this series would induce us to attribute it to Félix. Nevertheless, we have to concede that considerable uncertainty about Adrien’s role remains.

It is clear, however, that Adrien never undertook anything without his brother’s prodding, and that once their collaboration ceased, he produced nothing that was truly interesting. His portraits of artists, like Félix’s, were praised to the skies in journals—but did he create these images alone, or together with his brother?"  

The Place of Nadar’s Early Portraits in Photographic Portraiture circa 1854

In his own time, Félix Nadar’s contemporaries viewed him as a photographer who had elevated the portrait to heights previously unknown (see Daumier’s humorous treatment of this theme, fig. 20). The beauty of his images lay not only in their very special lighting (which gave the figure an incomparable presence, as pointed out by Burty) but also in their dimensions. Ernest Lacan spoke about these qualities in a later article summing up the contribution made by Nadar’s portraiture: “His prints, their formats large for that period, had an entirely new look about them. Nadar generally worked in broad sunshine or at least lit his sitter in such a way that one side of the face was very bright and the other very dark. The pictures greatly resembled what are today called ‘portraits à la Rembrandt.’ They were very artistic and enjoyed a great success.”

Nadar’s other major innovation was his idea of offering the public a “pantheon” of great contemporaries, especially writers and artists. The first fruit of this plan was his famous lithographed Panthéon of 1854 (in this area he had precursors, such as Benjamin Roubaud in 1835). But Nadar’s greatest effort was applied to realizing this concept in photography. Hoping to make a fortune after the financial failure but media success of the lithographed Panthéon, he decided to become a photographer in the same genre.

The first portraits by Nadar known to us were made with glass negatives coated with wet collodion, a technique developed in 1851 that was relatively quick and thus ideal for the portrait.

We may ask why Félix, who offered Adrien photography lessons with Gustave Le Gray, did not himself approach this artist, whom he regarded as the head of a school; indeed, he devoted an enthusiastic chapter to him in his late work, Quand j’étais photographe (When I Was a Photographe). Le Gray, a superb technician and printer, was above all a marvelous landscape artist; in the area of the pure portrait, however, he was generally uninspired. No wonder then that in early 1854 Félix turned to Adolphe-Auguste Bertsch, who was known chiefly for his admirable scientific pictures through a microscope but who also had perfected, by September 18, 1852, a collodion process for negative plates that was swifter and more fluid than the original English collodion. The quality of his portraits soon brought Bertsch renown. Almost none of them have survived, but one that has, of Félicité de Lamennais on his deathbed (fig. 21), is a high-quality salted paper print like those of Félix Nadar. Nadar’s interest in technique was evident throughout his life.

In 1853 the first volume appeared of Théophile Silvestre’s Histoire des artistes vivants, français et étrangers: Études d’après nature (History of Living Artists, French and Foreign: Studies from Life). Illustrated with original prints on salted paper taken from paper negatives—done mainly by Victor Laisné, with the collaboration of Émile Defonds and Édouard Baldus—this was the first to offer photographic portraits of artists to the public. All the pictures had been taken during the preceding year.

In his famous *Revendication*, Nadar did not include Laisné in the list of photographers whom he regarded as masters, but he must have known him. Baldus is likewise absent and is also omitted from the late *Quand j’étais photographe*, although he had become known for his brilliant pictures of French landscapes and monuments. Yet this photographer, who subsequently seemed uninterested in portraiture, offers in Silvestre’s panorama a moving effigy of the sculptor Pierre David d’Angers (fig. 22): a small picture with a chiaroscuro modeling that may be called pre-Nadarian. The Laisné and Defonds portraits— for example, that of Delacroix (fig. 23)— were taken with paper negatives, a less rapid technique, but the compositions have the easy quality of snapshots, while the decor is reduced to utmost simplicity, focusing attention on the sitter. All these features Nadar absorbed. But absent from those assembled portraits were a feeling for light and the practice of setting the figure off from the background, so characteristic of Nadar’s art, that gives his sitters their remarkable presence.

Among the photographers whom Nadar cited in the *Revendication* as his mentors working “in the shadow of
the great Daguerre" (who was an exceptional portraitist) are William Fox Talbot, an equally fine artist who perfected the paper negative, thereby making possible the spread of photography; Hippolyte Bayard, the unrecognized French inventor of another photographic process; and Victor Regnault, an extremely important chemist and the maker of the most remarkable French portraits made in 1852–53. Taken on paper negatives, these images are intimate yet highly expressive, with dazzling chiaroscuro and a stunning formal inventiveness (fig. 24).14

Nadar had known the Bisson brothers since his bohemian days and owned a copy of Louis-Auguste Bisson's portrait of Honoré de Balzac — the only known photograph of the great writer, who was one of Nadar's heroes (fig. 25). One can scarcely point to other — foreign, or earlier — photographic influences on Nadar’s portraiture. His culture in this regard was quite recent and essentially French.

**Chronology of the Portraits**

Establishing a chronology of Nadar’s portraits is a complex business,15 since nearly all we have to go by are a few fragmentary accounts from his early days, and these only for the period of his collaboration with Adrien.16 When dating the portraits we must therefore rely on references to them, often succinct, in contemporary catalogues or photography journals, or else on their reproduction perhaps a year or two later in more literary periodicals, such as L'Artiste, which assured publicity for Nadar. (Inclusion in an exhibition could, however, come long after the creation of a work.) We also have letters mentioning appointments. As for the “Livre d’or,” the renowned album of autographs in which sitters wrote poems, did sketch drawings (fig. 15), or penned more or less funny or inspired thoughts, it runs from 1852, when Nadar was doing only caricatures, to 1870, and gives us hardly any specific information about chronology.17 Luckily, a stylistic analysis of the portraits is quite fruitful, and very often a precise date merely confirms a coherent series of linkages.

**Earliest Portraits**

Félix Nadar’s earliest portraits, such as those of Charles Asselineau (pl. 22) and Charles Vincent, are recognizable by the furniture: a sofa and matching armchair of simple shape, covered in silk with a floral pattern that is barely perceptible.18

The enchanting portrait of Ernesta Grisi, the wife of Théophile Gautier, on which Nadar collaborated with Adrien Tournachon (fig. 26), is perhaps, of the first known portraits, the one that most merits attention. It is a small image in which the lighting is still a bit dull despite the chiaroscuro effect. Still close to the art of Laisné and Defonds, it also offers a paler version of Victor Regnault’s portraits. The print, a slightly yellowed brown, is characteristic of the technique that Adrien probably learned from Gustave Le Gray.19 At the least, this picture has an intimacy, a mystery, and a sense of light that are completely absent from several other early portraits — those of Théodore de Banville (fig. 27), Alfred de Vigny,20 and Edmond and Jules de Goncourt (fig. 28). The last two, as the furnishings indicate, were taken in Adrien’s studio.

On the other hand, the image of the poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (the only living woman to whom Baudelaire granted a true poetic talent), which probably dates from about April 1844, must have been taken in Félix’s studio and by him alone (pl. 24). Its format is still restrained, and the light is not yet used fully; but the
psychological intensity of the face is rendered with an overwhelming power. While the decor blurs into the background, certain details of the clothing are accentuated, as if to reinforce the study of the personality.

No less striking is the picture of Gérard de Nerval (pl. 23), one of two done together with Adrien in a single session. This time we have a large format. The poet sits in the famous hobnailed armchair, cigar in hand, his familiar posture caught with perfect immediacy. Yet we are haunted by his desperately staring eyes, which contradict that ordinary naturalness. Today we fully appreciate his expression, which reveals the unfitness for life of this impenitent dreamer, author of El Desdichado (The Wretched One).

Still, we must remember that neither the sitter nor the photographer (Nerval’s friend and collaborator in various newspapers) liked the portrait: “This is a depressing photograph that renders neither the simplicity nor the sensitivity nor the charm of the sitter,” Nadar wrote in 1891 in Paris-Photographe.11

The depth of this psychological study of Nerval can come only from Félix, despite his severe judgment of the picture. Between those two masterpieces of the two poets, the portraits of Asselineau (pl. 22) and the singer Charles Vincent must have been done—both taken by Félix, on the rue Saint-Lazare.12 They are very successful as psychological studies and quite seductive in composition. Unfor-
tunately, their formal originality is accompanied by a certain awkwardness, a treatment of light that is almost nonexistent, and poor printing. These are obviously experiments that have not yet borne fruit. Yet their sense of closeness to the sitter is very engaging.

The Physiognomic Studies and the “Expressive Heads” of Pierrot

These two series of studies, almost contemporaneous, are obviously linked in subject matter. Although not, strictly speaking, portraits, they share some of the concerns of portraiture. Moreover, all questions about the attributions of certain works to either of the Tournachon brothers are tied to these two series, which were both presented as creations of Adrien, under the name “Nadar jeune.”

The photographs taken to illustrate the investigations of Dr. Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne, known as Duchenne de Boulogne (1806–1875), were most likely made shortly before the Pierrot series, even though they were not published until 1862, under the title Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine, ou analyse électro-physiologique de l’expression des passions applicable à la pratique des arts plastiques (Mechanism of Human Physiognomy, or Electro-physiological Analysis of the Expression of the Passions Applicable to the Practice of the Figural Arts). The title sums up the ambitions of this neurologist, who specialized in the electrical stimulation of the muscles—a procedure whose importance the neurologist Jean Charcot subsequently recognized. Dr. Duchenne’s book starts out with a quotation from the comte de Buffon (George-Louis Leclerc), an eighteenth-century naturalist: “When the soul is stirred up, the human face becomes a living tableau where the passions are rendered with both delicacy and energy.” In Duchenne’s view,

The laws governing the expression of the human physiognomy may be investigated through the study of muscular action. This is a problem that I have been
attempting to solve for years by using an electric current to provoke the contraction of the facial muscles. . . In 1852, convinced as I was of the impossibility of popularizing, much less publishing, my research without the help of photography, I began turning to gifted artists. These initial efforts did not succeed, nor could they. . . Art does not lie solely in a manipulatory practice. My research requires a judicious distribution of light in order to emphasize this or that expressive line. But not even the most skillful artist was able to do that. He did not grasp the physiological facts that had to be demonstrated. I therefore had to teach myself the art of photography. I then personally photographed, or presided at the execution of, most of the seventy-two faces making up the scientific portion of this album.\(^\text{13}\)

A footnote adds: "Monsieur Adrien Tournachon, whose skill as a photographer is known to all the world, kindly contributed his talent by shooting a few of the pictures in this scientific portion." Farther on, Duchenne specifies that these images were obtained between 1852 and 1856.\(^\text{14}\)

In a passage reminiscent of Félix Nadar’s statements in his *Revendication*,\(^\text{15}\) the doctor emphasizes the importance of light for rendering expression:

> Moreover, we will notice that in general the distribution of light is in perfect harmony with the passions represented by these expressive lines. Thus, the faces depicting the dark, concentric passions — aggression, wickedness, suffering, pain, dread [pl. 4], torture mixed with fear [pl. 5] — gain an uncommon amount of energy from the impact of chiaroscuro; they recall Rembrandt’s manner. However, other faces shot in full sunshine, with a very brief exposure, offer subtle details and shadows with fine definition. This is still chiaroscuro, but in the style of Ribera. Last, we will find a few very bright photographs with general, undirected illumination; these are chiefly the ones depicting astonishment, admiration, merriment.\(^\text{16}\)

The doctor’s personal album, preserved at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, contains fifty-seven large plates.\(^\text{17}\) Only two of them are signed “Nadar jeune,” but the overall style is perfectly homogeneous. Here we see the physician and his assistant placing the (painless) rheophores on the patient’s face. However, for his book the doctor trimmed the prints in such a way as to focus on the facial expression.

Aside from their chiaroscuro quality, what is striking about some of these large plates is the almost baroque virtuosity of the treatment of space, into which the artist draws us by a choreography of the hands as graceful as a ballet (pls. 2–5). This same compositional dynamism is to be found in the series *Études d’expression de Charles Deburaux en Pierrot (Studies of Expression of Charles Deburaux as Pierrot)*, pls. 6–20. André Jammes was the first to point out the kinship between the pictures of Pierrot and the photographs for Dr. Duchenne.\(^\text{18}\)

Was Nadar at the source of Adrien’s work? We have a nagging sense that this was the case but are unable to provide decisive evidence.\(^\text{19}\) In any event, the Duchenne series served as a field of experimentation that led to the series of Pierrot studies, which were exhibited at the world’s fair held in Paris in 1855.

Visitors to the Exposition Universelle must have been familiar with the mime shows of the Théâtre des Funambules, where in November 1847, at the age of seventeen, Charles Deburaux had successfully taken over the role created by his celebrated father, Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard Deburaux. Thus the pictures in the Pierrot series (which are not specified in the Exposition catalogue)\(^\text{20}\) must have had an immediate significance for the viewers that we cannot fully experience today.

Of all the magazine reviewers, only Ernest Lacan wrote at any length on these works, discussing them in his *Esquisses photographiques (Photographic Sketches)* of 1856, which became a classic in the history of photographic criticism:

> But amidst all these examples, those that have most aroused the interest of the public, those that few viewers have passed without stopping, are the Pierrots, as they are popularly called. Messrs. Tournachon and Co. have put together . . . a suite of diverse expressions, rendering them with great skill. Here, Pierrot is laughing uncontrollably [pl. 13]; his mouth is gaping all the way to his ears, his nose rising all the way to his eyebrows, his tiny black eyes vanishing under the folds of the lids; he is rubbing his hands and arching his back. There, he is stricken with fear, his large white face lengthening [pl. 7], his eyes widening immeasurably. . . . Farther along, Pierrot is listening [pl. 14], and his entire person expresses attention; then we see surprise, then pain. . . . Each of these prints is an admirably rendered study of expression. . . . There are, under the comical exterior of these specimens, great difficulties overcome and beneficial results for art.\(^\text{19}\)
“Tournachon” and then “Nadar jeune.” And in one of the plates Pierrot holds an envelope bearing the name “Ad. Tournachon” (pl. 19). Yet everything prompts us to regard Félix as the initiator of the whole arrangement: his admiration for the art of Baptiste Deburaux, the plays he wrote for him and for Charles, his long practice as a caricaturist, his reflections on the mimicry of body and face, and the wonderful flexibility with which the creator of these images managed to adapt to every new situation.10

Other Early Portraits

Nadar’s earliest portraits, done in 1844 at his rue Saint-Lazare studio, are characterized by strong lighting effects or a spatially dramatic composition or sometimes both elements combined.

It is helpful to look first at a head of Deburaux that was not published and has an unusual format (pl. 6). The photographer has admirably transcribed the ample folds of the costume and also the thickly powdered face in which each feature stands out all the more vigorously because it receives full light, since the hair is concealed by the famous black cap invented by Baptiste Deburaux. The work is stamped “TOURNACHON 11, Boule. des Capucines,” the first signature adopted by Adrien; but in my opinion this does not constitute absolute proof of authorship.33

Now let us tackle the true portraits. The one known as Musette (pl. 32), also called Mariette, was shot in the large format characteristic of Adrien’s plates and signed “Nadar jeune”; it demonstrates great mastery, although the treatment of the light is rather subdued. This time we are struck by the ease and originality of the composition. The sitter, gracefully curled up on what looks like a couch — virtually offered — gazes through half-closed eyes at the viewer above her with the hint of an impudent smile. While the attribution of this portrait to Adrien has never been challenged by me or by others, there can be no doubt that if this is Musette/Mariette (or Amélie, who modeled for the photographer Moulin and for Durieu and Delacroix), then the portrait was done at Félix’s initiative and probably staged by him. In his photograph of Charles Baudelaire in an armchair (pl. 34), whose authorship is beyond challenge, Félix Nadar would again adopt an arrangement that put the spectator in a dominant position. This feeling of nearness to the sitter is likewise suggested, though very differently, in Félix’s superb self-portrait in the J. Paul Getty Museum

What we retain most of all is the remarkably supple and expressive form of the series, something due not entirely to the actor’s talent. Other photographs of Deburaux as Pierrot do not even remotely present the same qualities. The images by Étienne Carjat, done about 1864, are certainly remarkable for their vivacity, for their sense of movement and mimicry (fig. 29). Yet they do not have the quality of light of the Tournachon series, nor its mastery of the very large format (the Carjat photographs are little cartes de visite).

The plates exhibited in 1853 under the name “Nadar jeune,” especially the picture of Pierrot about to spring at the viewer like a jack-in-the-box, recall the ones done for Duchenne: the chiaroscuro and the baroque treatment of space are the same. Can they then be attributed to Adrien? Granted, the format (about 12 by 9½ inches) and the quality of the prints are characteristic of all the works signed

Figure 29. Étienne Carjat. Deburaux, La Paresse (Deburaux, Laziness), 1861–65. Albumen silver print. Private collection, Paris
(fig. 1) and in the portrait of the sculptor Émile Blavier\(^{11}\) (pl. 31), very young at the time, who appears before us in an informal pose, his right hand absentely resting on his bent knee. Yet, like the Musette portrait, this one carries the name “Nadar jen,” and the format, like the printing, points to Adrien. To my mind, however, the picture can essentially be attributed to Félix.

Finally, let us try to solve the enigma of the two portraits of Adrien Tournachon (pls. 27, 28); their reappearance on the market was like a revelation. The sitter wears a straw hat, and his face is partly cut off by the brim. The tactile sensuousness of these studies, their immediacy, the dazzling use of light, the transparency of the shadows—all these features are so different from those traditionally assigned to Félix Nadar that the two pictures were originally attributed to Adrien.\(^{16}\) Other arguments for Adrien’s authorship were based on the quality of their printing: one is in vernis-cuir, the other on salted paper subsequently waxed—two kinds of prints characteristic of works signed “Nadar jeune.”\(^{17}\) On the other hand, their format is that of Félix’s portraits, slightly reduced, and they come from the Nadar collection. They are neither signed nor documented.

In these portraits of Adrien we are struck by the model’s expression of momentary happiness, the splash of light on the nose, the voluptuously swollen lips; he seems simply to be enjoying the sun while the shade cast by the hat protects him from its heat. There is a true complicity in the two images; we forget the ugliness of Adrien, who was short and without his brother’s flamboyant appeal. His idleness, if not laziness, is shown to advantage, giving him a kind of radiant charm. It is easy to imagine Félix viewing his younger brother in this sympathetic light, even though soon thereafter, exasperated by his fickleness, he did not hesitate to take him to court—going against the moral principles and sense of family that he had always proclaimed and defended. Félix was capable of great ferocity, as when later, in one of his numerous autobiographical drafts, he exploded, “My brother, worthless!” (Mon frère, valeure nul!)\(^{18}\) Yet he was also capable of great generosity toward Adrien, continuing throughout his life to try to find work and to pay debts\(^{19}\) for this brother whom he unintentionally crushed with the weight of his own uncommon vitality. Félix’s ambivalence would seem compatible with these images, whereas nothing that we know about Adrien allows us to assume that he viewed himself with such authority and radiance.\(^{20}\)

Admittedly, however, two standing figures of pifferari preserved at the Société Française de Photographie (fig. 30), which were most likely exhibited by Adrien in 1857, show the same sensuality, the same sureness in the treatment of contour and the interplay of full sunlight on the face and hands or feet as the two portraits discussed above.\(^{21}\)

The head shots of Adrien in a straw hat are directly linked to other works of the same character, especially a portrait of the sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet (pl. 30), which bears the signature, largely cut off but still visible, of “Nadar jeune.” This is another print treated in vernis-cuir, but the format is typical of prints by Félix Nadar. The sitter’s face is not remarkable for the inwardness of expression, yet the image is no less fascinating for the vivid gesture of the hand adjusting the tie, accompanied by blinking eyes under characteristic bristling eyebrows and full, pouting lips. The almost clownlike mimicry of the sculptor’s face is further magnified by the blaze of the background, an unfurled sheet swept by a chiaroscuro that makes it well-nigh sumptuous. Since we have never seen a very good portrait emerge from Adrien’s hands, we are

Figure 30. Adrien Tournachon(?). Pifferaro (Italian Musician), ca. 1855. Gelatin-coated salted paper print (vernis-cuir). Société Française de Photographie, Paris
tempted, despite everything, to reassign this portrait to Félix, as Eugenia Janis did in 1978.  

For the sense of mimicry we should look to the charming portrait of the young bride Ernestine (pl. 40), so close to the studies of Pierrot and of Frémiet. This portrait is so intimate that it could have been taken only by Félix. The young woman is anything but pretty in the traditional sense of the word, and we must overlook the mimic’s slight grimace and consider instead the picture’s expressive, even moving character. Finally, there is the highly unconventional posture: the young woman is sitting sideways on her chair.

If we deny Adrien’s authorship of these portraits or if we agree at least to assign Félix a major role in their realization, we still must attribute to Adrien the large-format picture of Champfleury (pl. 29), signed “Nadar jeune,” which demonstrates the same qualities of immediacy and proximity and the same sense of mimicry, showing that the two brothers may have influenced each other considerably. Champfleury was an old friend of Félix’s, even though several people have noted that Nadar never understood or liked this writer.  

There is another portrait of Champfleury, signed “Nadar” and dating from the rue Saint-Lazare, no doubt contemporary, but infinitely less successful. Instead of being relatively relaxed, a cigar in his mouth, the writer, seated and shot from quite a distance, has an almost surly expression. Yet since the original plate was preserved, it is this image of which numerous copies were made.

In challenging the overall attribution of these portraits to Adrien, we are not saying that he had no part in them, but that some of them were taken in collaboration with his brother—as, clearly, the Pierrot series was—and that Félix played the dominant role. Several other portraits signed by Adrien or ascribed to him have come down to us, allowing the formation of a coherent ensemble. Shown here is an image of Horace Vernet with a lovely expression in the eyes; however, covered with decorations and seemingly folded into his armchair, he looks extremely stiff, and there is no sense of light whatever (fig. 31). Other examples are the very commonplace pictures of the composer Rossini and the poet Alfred de Vigny (figs. 32, 33). These rigid images, with their flat, conventional lighting, do not differ from the banal portrait production of the time. Other pieces are complete failures. Eventually Adrien specialized in animal photography, for which he was highly praised at the 1855 Exposition Universelle; he produced very attractive series with an agreeable sense of lighting, but nothing that can measure up to his brother’s vibrant creations.

Let us now compare two works: the picture of Jules
Janin signed by Adrien (fig. 34), certainly one of his best portraits, which he exhibited in Brussels in 1856, and Nadar’s more successful version (pl. 45), which he identified with an “N.” These two portraits look absolutely contemporary. If we consider Adrien’s by itself, the pose appears not without force, and the light striking the face and the nails—a realistic detail—is worthy of being called “Nadarian.” But this impression collapses when we compare the image with the portrait by Félix: here Janin, caught in a three-quarter view with his hands thrust into his pockets, his belly out, a squint in his eyes, has an overwhelming presence—making it apparent how much hesitancy there is in Adrien’s rendering of the facial expression.

Whether or not we regard all the above-cited masterpieces (Fémiet, Musette) for which Adrien claimed authorship as essentially the work of Félix, we must certainly acknowledge as his another group of portraits with baroque oppositions of dark and light, such as those of Charles Philipon (pls. 26, 35) and Gustave Doré (pl. 25). These men too were intimate friends of Félix’s, and Philipon had in a sense trained him.

These portraits, of which there are no extant negatives, probably date from 1854 and were among the first portraits to be taken outdoors, in the garden of the rue Saint-Lazare studio. This was most likely also the case with the portraits of Frémiet and the two pictures of Adrien in a hat. This time the sitters are shot from a distance, and the shadows of their silhouettes on the wall add a quasi-expressionist touch. In the picture of Philipon holding a cigar (pl. 26), the magazine publisher’s wily shrewdness, well documented in his letters to his protégé, is underscored. We are all the more convinced of Félix’s supple artistry when we compare this picture with a later one of the same man (pl. 35)—a simple study of his head that in lighting and composition is less baroque, but subtler and more introspective. Not only do we see the face and hair at a different angle, so that at first glance we might think it a picture of someone else, but the emotions animating his features are very different: this time, homage is paid to the kindness of the man whom Nadar regarded as his spiritual father. The photograph of Doré (pl. 25), one of the least known but not the least successful of the numerous studies Félix made of the painter, is also the most romantic version: the effect of the shadow is reinforced by Doré’s silhouette, draped in an open coat as if it were a cape, while the frowning brows add a dramatic depth to his eyes. By contrast, the two later portraits show another side of the sitter, more whimsical, less serious, but no less insolent (pls. 43, 44).
**Contour, Costume, Pose**

Let us look now at the two famous portraits of Théophile Gautier, which seem contemporary even though the clothes differ. In the photograph of Gautier in a white smock (pl. 42), the garment, despite its untidiness, gives an amplitude to the poet’s rather heavy silhouette, conferring on him a certain nobility, somewhat reminiscent of Rembrandt’s portraits, that strengthens the poignant melancholy of the sitter’s gaze. The Dutch painter has always been cited in discussions of Nadar’s portraits, especially with regard to lighting. Yet his name was never mentioned by Félix, who preferred to assert a debt to Van Dyck—an avowal that seems surprising, for all of the photographer’s sitters, except for dandies like Guys and Baudelaire, sport a slightly provocative, bohemian negligence of dress that is diametrically opposed to the sumptuous elegance of the courtiers painted by Van Dyck. Nadar was really thinking about the Flemish painter’s overall breadth of treatment and his way of playing with the clothing to bring out the silhouette, something the photographer emulated masterfully. A good example is the way he presents himself in his self-portrait in the Musée d’Orsay (pl. 36), a work very different from the direct image at the Getty Museum (fig. 1). The elegant, slightly arched silhouette is seen from a distance, and there is an aura of mystery surrounding the subject. Also reminiscent of Van Dyck is the portrait of Aimé Millet (pl. 57), in which the young man, clad in a voluminous velvet blouse, is caught in contrapposto, the tilt of his head emphasized by the marvelous arabesque of the wide sleeve. The importance that Nadar placed on clothing is borne out by a letter that Jules de Prémay wrote to him before posing: “What do you want me to wear? Describe the outfit you’d like.” (The photographer finally chose a long velvet robe straight out of a seventeenth-century painting, evincing a taste for costume characteristic of the bohemian world depicted by Dumas and Merger.) The second portrait of Gautier, in a damask skullcap (pl. 41), is the visual equivalent of the picturesque description Dumas gives of the poet in his *Nouveaux Mémoires*: “A waistcoat of an intense cerise burst out on his chest; it was buttoned like a doublet under a jacket or frock coat—a bizarre vestment, nameless, fantastically shaped, belonging to no era of the monarchy, the republic, or the empire; trousers in a light color, usually a
greenish or rosy gray, completed this costume, which always sent shudders through the bourgeoisie, exasperating to paralysis the nerves of the traditionalists.”

How strict and discreet, compared with Gautier’s typically Mediterranean haughtiness, is the genuine elegance in other Nadar portraits: of Constantin Guys, the admired draftsman to whom the photographer, toward the end of his life, devoted an entire exhibition (see the essay by Philippe Néagu in this volume); or of Baudelaire, in the Musée d’Orsay portrait, which belonged to the poet himself (pl. 33), and in another version that has just turned up (fig. 35). In these images, whose compositions elongate the silhouette, Nadar focuses attention on Baudelaire’s sorrowful face, stamped with the highest spirituality and, in the second view, a suggestion of his blasphemous character. Another portrait, taken during the same posing session and far more famous because the plate has been preserved, sacrifices a bit of the elegance but reveals the same gripping psychological penetration. Nadar, who understood so well the essential character of the author of Les Fleurs du mal (The Flowers of Evil), rendered a poignant image of his melancholy in the picture of Baudelaire in an easy chair (pl. 34)—a kind of snapshot that shows him sitting, his upper body leaning back, his eyes half-closed as if lost in daydreams. Another portrait from the same period (between January and May 1855), in which the poet seems relaxed and almost smiling (fig. 36), emphasizes the originality of Baudelaire’s wardrobe, something pointed out by all his contemporaries from Monselet to Asselineau, from the Goncourt brothers to Nadar himself; here an exaggeratedly flaring jacket and a checkered shirt in an unusually thick fabric are on display. The pose itself, with the hand slipped inside the jacket, occurs frequently in male portraits, both painted and photographed. Nadar used it again in his picture of Eugène Pelletan (pl. 83), though giving him a very different air, one of concentration: brows knitted, and with the outline of the eyes perhaps accentuated in the print in order to intensify the effect. The body’s slight instability heightens the vitality of the overall image—an insight that had worked well for painters.

The portrait of Berlioz (pl. 72) confirms for us Nadar’s supreme skill at utilizing clothing to express the sitter’s true character. The composer’s head was disproportionately large for his puny body. No other photographer did such a fine job of concealing that defect—not Pierre Petit, nor Mayer & Pierson, nor the plodders who worked for Nadar after 1860 (fig. 37). His solution was brilliant: the hands are crossed in the sleeves like a monk’s, and both hands and body are hidden in a voluminous coat that gives the figure a pyramidal shape of great nobility, in perfect harmony with the expression on the handsome but tormented face of the composer of Les Troyens.

The emphatic gesture of Charles Coudrec, draped in a judge’s robe (pl. 70), or the smarmy air of Jean-François Berthelot disguised as a miller (pl. 69), may strike us as slightly stilted in their eloquence; but, in contrast, how truthful are other portraits of actors: Kopp appraising us a bit mockingly (pl. 78), or François-Louis Lesueur staring at us frankly with malicious eyes, his smile accentuated by a flash of light (pl. 38).

Many of these portraits exist in several variants, taken, as the costume indicates, during a single posing session. We know that Nadar liked to take his time, chatting with his sitter, until he got the right look—an expression revealing the character (see Maria Hambourg’s essay). Sometimes only one of the images is convincing, but frequently there are several compelling views. It is undoubtedly in his portraits of Daumier, a summit of his art, that Nadar most clearly revealed his capacity to see afresh.
With the pictures he took of Daumier about 1846–58 (pls. 47–50), Nadar found the arrangement that became characteristic of his "classical" portraits: the figure seen from a slight distance, standing and shown from the knees up (or, in variants, sitting), made to project subtly from the bare background by the effect of the light.

To define Nadar's art, it is natural to turn to Francis Wey's "Théorie du portrait," published in La Lumière in 1851. This work, well known to photography specialists, deserves a wider audience, since it is one of the best critical studies written on this subject during the nineteenth century. As Nadar later did in his celebrated apologia for the art of photography in the Revendication, Wey emphasizes the "faculty of interpretation" innate in the good practitioner, "the harmony of effects, lighting, physiognomies—qualities inherent in the art." And toward that end, the photographer "cannot do without the theories of painters": among others, Van Dyck, Holbein, Rembrandt. The interest of this text resides in Wey's advice regarding the best way to light the face in order to make it expressive. For a naturally harmonious face he recommends direct, simple lighting. For "faces dominated by the imagination, for pleasing but irregular features," he advocates the opposite method: "Here, the shadows, the reflections that warm them, the skillfully managed bright spots, must combine to produce the impression of movement, expression, and life." The author mentions Rembrandt and Velázquez, who "through the power of contrasts, through the burst of light and the depth of shadow, succeeded in making a face so striking that on seeing it we do not even think of analyzing its features." He dwells on "the theory of sacrifices [sacrificing the complete depiction of details in order to achieve a harmonious whole], so frequently practiced by Van Dyck, Rubens, and Titian," and which must be "even more rigorously understood by the photographic artist. . . . Normally those great painters . . . avoided a dry head-to-toe outline of the human body." Hence "the value of the background" becomes important.

Even more than Wey, Baudelaire played the role of mentor for his friend Nadar concerning the overall conception of the portrait, as Philippe Nahoum reminds us in the following essay. Félix certainly did not give in to the ridiculous fads of the bad photographers who were castigated by Baudelaire for their "hard" images in which "all the defects, all the banalities of a face are made very visible, very exaggerated." This is not to say that in Nadar's portraits of Daumier or Gautier the face is not legible. Nadar himself prefers "the inmost character of the person," and he does not seem to have spared the details. We very clearly see Gautier's greasy hair, the bags beneath his eyes swollen from hashish, liquor, and overwork, the neglected if not disreputable state of his clothes (pl. 42). All this contrasts sharply with Francis Wey's recommendation to above all adjust the light to the facial type, in order to produce a masterpiece even if the sitter is ugly.

In the four Daumier portraits shown here (pls. 47–50), each taken from a different angle, probably in the course of a single session, the photographer does not permit us to overlook anything of the sitter's physical vulgarity: the belly that bulges under the coat, the thick lips, the graceless nose, the tangled hair, the heavy face; we even glimpse the scar across his forehead. And yet the sitter has a formidable presence. This is particularly obvious when an 1852 portrait by Laisné, which was owned by Nadar, is compared: in it Daumier looks embarrassed about himself, and his barely readable face seems stuck in his shoulders.

In his method of constructing the person who is his subject, Nadar reminds us of a writer for whom at the age of nineteen he professed the greatest admiration and whose sole photographic portrait (fig. 25) he owned: Balzac. (The novelist was worshiped at least as much by Baudelaire, even though as writers the two were poles apart.) Rather like Balzac, Nadar builds his portrait as a long description of significant and sometimes contradictory details; these are animated by the skillful play of chiaroscuro as well as by the artist's true visionary talent. The neglected state of Gautier's clothes does not preclude the display of his arrogance. Nadar's lucid, uncompromising, but never harsh analysis of Daumier's pelebean appearance does not in any way tarnish the brilliance of the man's genius, which comes through with force in these photographs. Here again one thinks of certain intimate self-portraits by Rembrandt or Chardin. Daumier's gaze is simultaneously piercing, cunning, uneasy, and good—a mix that perfectly defines his own art.

When Nadar writes in the Revendication that his most successful portraits are those of people whom he cares for or whom appeal to his libertarian imagination, we are struck by the obvious truth of his words. There is real tenderness in his view, not only of Daumier but also of the painter Charles Daubigny (pl. 52) or of that champion of Polish independence, Prince Czartoryski (pl. 74), a haughty old
man with a slightly scornful air and a furrowed face in what looks like a halo of glowing light.

**Portraits of Women**

At the Brussels Photography Exhibition of 1856, Félix Nadar (still known as Nadar aîné [Nadar the elder] because his brother was exhibiting at the same time) was noticed for his “ravishing portraits of women.” Why were these mentioned separately? Because for Nadar they constituted a distinct category, different from the portraits of famous women worthy of figuring in a Panthéon, such as Marceline Desbordes-Valmore or George Sand. Furthermore, except for the marvelous series of the young Sarah Bernhardt, these photographs are never mentioned in the classic works written about Nadar during the 1860s. Only twenty years later were some of these female portraits in which the sitters were studied for their personal charm published. Who are these women? Young or not-so-young actresses, models, occasionally women of respectable society. They are never women of high fashion, since these preferred to be photographed by Mayer & Pierson or Disdéri.

One of Nadar’s most successful female portraits was that of the model Finette (pl. 58), a beautiful dancer at the Bal Mabille during its heyday. The composition is both simple and graceful. Although the subject is a person of very free morals whose makeup is perceptible, there is a certain nobility in the bearing of this young woman wrapped in her cashmere shawl, in the restrained gesture of her hand, in the dreamy expression on her face, with its lowered eyes that do not regard the viewer. Nadar lovingly details the feminine costume without at all slighting the sitter. An artist, he dwells on the marvelous knot of light-colored silk formed by the lace-and-flower-trimmed bonnet strings, making a kind of musical pause in the portrait. The beauty spot and the kiss curls, provocative motifs if ever there were, are exquisitely balanced by the young woman’s serious, almost absentminded expression, devoid of any vulgarity. What a difference between Nadar’s attentiveness to the human being and the cynicism with which the Goncourt brothers write about their dinners with Charles de Villedieu at the famous Bal Mabille: “We’re having a lot of suppers this year, wild suppers . . . with choice trollops picked randomly at the Bal Mabille: occasional prostitutes who jump at these after-theater dinners with a piece of sausage in their teeth. One of them naively exclaimed:

‘Goodness! Four a.m. . . . Mama’s just cleaning the carrots. We get them drunk, we strip the beast of its silk gown.’

Rosine Stoltz (pl. 76), whose portrait must date from the end of 1856, was no longer young or even pretty when Nadar photographed her — perhaps to thank her for securing him a medal at the Brussels Photography Exhibition of 1856. This remarkable singer must have been the Maria Callas of her time. She was famous for the elegance of her figure, her fiery black eyes, and her prima donna temperament, which Nadar rendered perfectly. Like the portrait of Finette, this one of Rosine Stoltz shows her to almost the knees, standing against a bare background, her face bathed in a very soft light. Her figure is draped in a cashmere shawl — her only adornment except for a pearl on her ear and a dark muslin tied in the chignon that leaves her long neck visible. Her expressive face is raised, but her eyes elude the viewer. The great charm of this portrait resides in the subtle twisting of the body, with its crossed arms hidden in the fabric.

More than beauty Nadar is looking for character, as is evident in his portrait of a young model (pl. 60); she must be an actress if she is posing like this with her hair undone.
Her bare shoulders are draped in a dark velvet. Nadar very often utilized this stratagem, an ideal way of masking a thin body (as with Sarah Bernhardt) or setting off round shoulders or a slender neck. But when he photographed Marie Laurent, a homely woman but a remarkable actress, he chose to concentrate on the ravishing nape of her neck, which was exposed by her upswept hairdo (pl. 64).

Nadar’s originality as a portraitist of women is particularly obvious in the extremely modest and natural way he treats the nude. We see this in the two marvelous pictures of a model from the Antilles named Maria (pls. 61, 62), who is also pictured in a later, anonymous photograph (fig. 38). The easy exoticism of the latter emphasizes all the more clearly the artistry, both sensual and intellectual, that Nadar evinced in his early days. In the first version, the model, her bust covered in the usual velvet drapery, shows a grave profile that contrasts charmingly with her strong carnal presence. A decorative role is assigned to the thoroughly Parisian clothing: a flounced dress printed with flowers, on which the photographer enjoys toying with a blurry effect, and a particolored fichu that exposes the forehead. Yet in no way does the costume have the feeling of studio finery as it does in the anonymous print, where the West Indian has been got up in an Algerian blouse and scarf. In the second of Nadar’s images, the half-nude sitter offers us her opulent bosom. The beauty of her expression, her eyes lifted in a melancholy gaze that is admirably brought out by the lighting, makes us realize that we are miles away from the modes of erotic and licentious photography. Yet Nadar’s signature on both prints shows that they were intended for sale.

Another seated nude, “Mimi” (pl. 65), unique so far as we know, once again displays Nadar’s disdain for conventional prejudices. This time we see a very thin woman, such as the era sometimes appreciated. What strikes us in this portrait is the natural way the young woman looks at us, naked as she is, enveloped in a white sheet that exposes her breasts, her head leaning back, her manner intelligent, quite as if she were chatting in someone’s drawing room. We know another version of the same model, shown standing, half concealed by the sheet, her posture still free of the mannerisms that typify the erotic genre (fig. 109).

It is this same directness, completely without sentimentiality, that constitutes the charm and the strength of Nadar’s portraits of children. Only a few examples from this period have come down to us. It is not impossible that the artist exhibited the photograph of Paul Nadar and his nurse (pl. 65) as a “nature study.” The portrait of the son of Auguste Lefranc (pl. 67) is an exemplary image of childhood, with its dreams and, already, its gravity unafectedly expressed. Sitting in a slightly off-balance position that intensifies the sense of life, the boy is not posing; he has been caught, literally snapped, in a very private moment of daydreaming. The tondo portrait of Mme Lefranc and Paul Nadar (pl. 66) has the truth, simplicity, and naturalness of all of Nadar’s photographs, along with references to seventeenth-century Bolognese painting.

**Nadar on the Boulevard: The Late Work**

Long before the establishment of his industrial empire on the boulevard des Capucines, when he was still in his studio on the rue Saint-Lazare, Nadar was forced to moderate his artistic demands and widen his clientele to include the bourgeoisie and politicians, who were of little interest to him. We are familiar with prints of that period, where the background is shaded out to create an oval “vignette” that frames the face or figure, making the photograph look like a miniature. The luminous relationship between figure and background is destroyed, and with it the portrait’s expressive strength. This unfortunate practice was extensively utilized by Le Gray in his portraits; indeed, contemporary criticism informs us that this type of portrait was highly admired. In 1863 Nadar took out a patent for an automatic vignetter. But we know from prints carrying the rue Saint-Lazare signature that Nadar’s studio had been vignetting photographs since at least 1857. In an even more serious deviation from the principles of professional integrity he had asserted in the *Revendication* (1857), Nadar was, he admitted, producing colored prints. Wavering between his own convictions, his need to be competitive, and his taste for technological invention, Nadar took out a patent in 1858, in collaboration with Perrassin, for making color photographs without retouching.

After setting up shop on the boulevard des Capucines, Nadar made even more concessions to public taste. This is manifest in picture stagings that utilize furniture characteristic of the most banal studio photography, the truncated column or the curved pedestal table on which a sitter props an elbow in a gesture as conventional as the furnishings. The treatment of light is flat and formulaic. Even worse, Nadar introduced artificial illumination into his portraits, which set off a great deal of talk in the photography journals in 1859. This procedure (fig. 39) was inconsistent with
the very direct idea of the Nadar portrait, for which only natural light was suitable. In any case, the technique was not then sufficiently perfected for a photographer to draw from it the magical benefit that distinguishes the sophisticated images of Hollywood stars and international beauties immortalized by a Steichen or a Baron de Meyer during the 1920s.

It is clear that Nadar had grown tired of photography. He had no qualms about letting it be known, and in 1862 this text appeared in newspapers:

Now, wait a moment, he’s a photographer like no other! Let the common run of martyrs in this new science lower themselves to doing portraits so as to earn a couple of sous more or less. . . . Ugh! . . . Jack-of-all-trades would die of boredom if he were condemned to practice such a trade for all eternity! . . . True, Jack-of-all-trades sometimes has to do the portraits that present themselves. And he does them better than plenty of other photographers. . . . When he wants to! . . . He who can do the most can do the least! 

The reproaches voiced by Ernestine, who wanted to see Nadar behind his lens more often, simply confirm what the images tell us. The bland portrait of Proudhon (fig. 40)—whom Nadar seems to have liked—was surely taken by an assistant during the master’s absence. A letter from Alfred Darimon to Nadar begins: “I took Proudhon over to your studio today, but you weren’t there! . . . If the plates done in your absence have to be redone, let me know.”

The admirable portraits of George Sand, a group done about 1864 (pl. 85), astonish us with their veracity. Having grown old and abandoned all pretense of coquetry, George Sand, like Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, reveals herself truthfully; she even lends herself good-naturedly to the disguises inflicted by the photographer, donning a Louis XIV wig that he himself had worn to a costume ball (fig. 42).  78

Far more exciting, however, to a lover of photography is the portrait of the poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore on her deathbed (pl. 88). While Nadar practiced mortuary photography for commercial reasons, it is clear that this time he was motivated by his interest in the model. Particular care was expended on the photograph’s printing, and a second version also exists. Although the image may appear macabre, it should be understood as testimony to the intense curiosity that Nadar brought not only to his friendships and admirations but to humankind in general.

Although by the 1860s Nadar was scarcely making any portraits, whenever he was captivated by his subject he not

To this must be added another factor, the mass production of albumenized paper for prints, which began in the 1860s. One can imagine how great were the repercussions on a photography that until then had been distinguished by its hands-on craftsmanship.

Nevertheless, until the end of his life, Nadar created masterpieces whenever a special rapport existed between him and the sitter. This was the case with the very young Sarah Bernhardt (pls. 86, 87), whose powerful charm obviously inspired the photographer in his celebrated series of portraits of her. How fascinating are the images in which the harmonious draperies of dark velvet and of a light-colored cloak wonderfully act as a foil to the actress’s unique face! At this point the future star was still an obscure beginner, as is confirmed by the fact that to date no print contemporary with those two shots has been found. Thus, “Careless,” the author of the article quoted above, was not off the mark in writing, “But what brings true joy to our photographic hero, where he displays an unimaginable ardor, is finding an unknown pasture for his lens.”  77

Nadar’s much-published portrait of Édouard Manet (fig. 41) is vivid and strikingly forthright, although it lacks the heroic atmosphere that permeates the photographs of Daumier.
only produced a remarkable work but sometimes surpassed himself, successfully conveying the strength and character of a sitter whose features he had failed to capture earlier with the same authority. Despite its more velvety printing, the first portrait of Baron Taylor (fig. 69) is nowhere near as beautiful as the second, which was published as a carbon print some twenty years later, circa 1875, for the Galerie contemporaine (fig. 70). Yet this man, like Philipon, played a major role in Nadar’s career. In any portrait there are imponderables, and sometimes it is evident that at the moment of picture taking, the participants’ hearts were not in it. In the earlier of these two portraits, the sitter, oddly enough, lacks any bulk, while in the later one we are overwhelmed by the baron’s enormous mass, with every crease in the flesh and the clothes marvelously accentuated by the light.

Nadar’s last very great portraits, it appears, are a group of intimate studies done about 1890 of his wife, Ernestine, holding a bouquet of violets to her lips (fig. 43). This woman, who had never been pretty, is also marked here by the partial paralysis that had kept her bedridden since 1887. Her hair is neglected, and, as Ulrich Keller justly observes in his essay, we have no truly satisfying print of the portrait.79 Nadar, to whom his redoubtable spouse had devoted every moment of her life, called her “Madame Bonne” (Madame Good)—an affectionate nickname that the newspapers did not fail to repeat later in her obituaries. From these subtly varying images emanates all the mystery of the tenderness that united two such dissimilar people throughout their long life together.

The Place of Nadar’s Portraits in the Photographic Art of His Time

Félix Nadar had the chance to tackle the photographic portrait just before it was seized by that industrial madness so well described by Anne McCauley.80 Our impromptu
photographer enjoyed the additional privilege of years of physiognomical study. In fact, he had all the advantages. From his masters, Le Gray or Bertsch and Arnaud, he learned the craft of making a beautiful salted paper print, something that began to disappear after 1855. He responded to the demands he felt for searching psychological analysis and for inventive artistic layouts, imperatives that had not yet been encroached upon by the desire to please customers. Many other portrait photographers did not have these advantages.

Étienne Carjat (1828–1906), however, was a special case. A friend of Nadar’s, like him a bohemian and a man of humor, he also went through a period as a journalist–caricaturist, and he had the same clientele: literati, artists, and actors like Baudelaire and Daumier, Verlaine and Rimbaud, and Charles Deburau. Carjat was never so fine as when he measured himself against a superb artist whom he also knew personally. His portrait of Baudelaire, first published in the Galerie contemporaine (fig. 44), is one of the most moving—a great portrait every bit as fine as Nadar’s, both in the sitter’s extraordinarily solid presence and in the dramatic chiaroscuro that hollows the features, giving the gaze an almost unendurable intensity.

But Carjat was not a good technician: his silver prints lack the depth and richness of Nadar’s beautiful prints on salted paper. A very sporadic photographer, he never experimented intensively with poses, never did multiple studies (except of Baudelaire), and seldom manipulated the light. Still, with his portrait of Delacroix (fig. 45) Carjat created a magisterial work, surpassing even Nadar. The slender outline of the mouth links the painter to the wild beasts he loved to depict, and the blurriness that the artist deliberately sought in his photographs presages the effigies of Julia Margaret Cameron.

Gustave Le Gray (1820–1882), a marvelous photographer but a poor portraitist, antedated Nadar and acted more or less directly as his mentor in both quality of technique and artistic inspiration. But as a portraitist he followed rather than preceded Nadar, setting up his studio on the boulevard des Capucines in 1856. Initially his portraits were a great social success, although their execution looks perfunctory. However, profoundly bored with running a commercial studio, Le Gray declared bankruptcy in 1860. A completely atypical masterpiece is his portrait of his friend and fellow romantic Alexandre Dumas père in Russian costume (fig. 46). The face, captured in a gentle chiaroscuro, stands out dramatically from a strongly lit back-

Figure 44. Étienne Carjat. Charles Baudelaire, ca. 1862. Carbon print from Galerie contemporaine. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1970

ground, which Le Gray, fortunately, did not vignette. This portrait pays perfect tribute to the novelist’s dashing side as well as to his proverbial generosity. In Nadar’s earlier portrait of Dumas (pl. 46), we feel more strongly the presence of the sitter, who gazes at us with a frank smile, but there is not the refined illumination of Le Gray, which brings out the whiteness of the linen while subtly playing on the facial features. This time Le Gray was following Nadar’s lessons.

Pierre Petit (1832–1909), a successful portraitist, opened his studio in 1859 after working for the society photographer Disdéri. Petit was a direct portraitist in the style of Nadar. Within two years he had produced some fifteen hundred pictures of celebrities. Like Nadar, he published a Galerie contemporaine with biographical write-ups. His pictures of artists, who constituted a part of his clientele, were equal to the finest portraits emerging from the Nadar studio during the 1860s. The viewer’s eye is drawn and held by the slightly unpleasant but intriguing face of Pauline Viardot, a great opera singer and a close friend of Turgenev (fig. 47).

The sculptor Antoine-Samuel Adam-Salomon (1818–1881), after studying with the photographer Franz
Figure 45. Étienne Carjat. Eugène Delacroix, 1862. Albumen print. Musée d’Orsay, Paris

Figure 46. Gustave Le Gray. Alexandre Dumas père, ca. 1859. Albumen print. Musée d’Orsay, Paris

Figure 47. Pierre Petit. Pauline Viardot, ca. 1865. Albumen print. Musée d’Orsay, Paris

Figure 48. Antoine-Samuel Adam-Salomon. Lola Montez, ca. 1860. Albumen print. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie
Hanfstaengl, opened his own photography studio, one that catered to an elite, as had Nadar’s.64 And aside from aristocrats, his sitters were the same as Nadar’s, including, for instance, Janin, Rossini, and Chenavard. Although Adam-Salomon’s taste was at opposite poles from Nadar’s naturalness, he too was a master of the silhouette. An example is his portrait of the dancer Lola Montez (fig. 48), one of Liszt’s numerous mistresses. Her pale face and gracefully disposed hands are set off against the elegantly draped pyramid of the figure. The photographer retouched her face, rounding the curves of her angular cheeks and slightly filling out her thin lips.

There was clearly no lack of talented photographers making portraits in France during this enormously prolific period. Nevertheless, in ways discussed throughout this catalogue, Nadar’s work on the rue Saint-Lazare stood out from the rest, as his name still does today.

Translated by Joachim Neugroschel

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2. Szarkowski 1966, pp. 6, 10; Szarkowski 1973, pp. 10, 18, 74.
3. Krauss 1990, p. 46: "The concept of artist implies more than the simple authorship of works... the word 'artist' is in some way tied to the notion of vocation."
4. Ibid.
5. Léon Daudet, who was certainly anything but a tender man, wrote of Nadar in his introduction to Quand j’étais photographe (published in 1900): "His friends were and are innumerable, for from this good giant a likeable warmth emanates as from a burning block that will never cool." See Néagu, Poulet-Allamagny, and Bory 1975, vol. 2, p. 970.
6. As many as ten, taken at different times—for instance, of Gustave Doré. His practice with portrait caricatures was similar.
7. Photographs that we attribute to Félix alone, even though he did not do the printing, were often printed in Adrien’s characteristic style.
8. It was precisely after Félix joined his brother to collaborate with him that the following appeared in La Lumière, September 23, 1854, p. 152: "At his studio Adrien is showing lifesize portraits that are incomparably rich and true to life."
11. See La Lumière, September 23, 1852, p. 138 (Krafft 1852), and December 18, 1852, p. 206.
12. See McCauley 1994, pp. 63, 64, n. 18. In 1854 Félix let Adrien take care of the technical side of things, preparing the plate, printing, etc., but the patent he took out under the unequivocal name "Tournacon called Nadard" on February 11, 1854, for a device that would apply collodion to the plate mechanically, shows his own interest in the subject. At a meeting of the journal La Lumière in 1854, Adrien had no compartments about presenting the invention as his own, under the name "Nadar jeune." For Nadar’s interest in techniques, see the essays in this volume by Sylvie Aubenas and André Rouillé.
14. Nadar also cited Becquerel, niece of Saint-Victor, who adapted the English collodion process, Le Gray, of course, Bertsch, and Arnaud, as well as Paul Perier, the collector of Barbizon School paintings (a movement dear to Félix Nadar), who was known at that moment more for his reviews of photography exhibitions than for his work in this area, even though his portraits were being lauded.
15. Previous attempts, after Prinet and Dilasser (1966), have been made by Ulrich Keller (1985) and by Jean Adhémar (1985).
16. Some of his accounts are quoted by Maria Morris Hambourg in her essay. Another very small group is also in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Dép. des Miss, Nouv. Acq. Fr. 15009/82–86.
17. After belonging, curiously enough, to Dr. Edwards Carson, dentist to Empress Eugénie, the album is now preserved in the Van Pelt Library of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
18. This is certainly the furniture Félix had during his early days on the rue Saint-Lazare; it did not appear subsequently. The furnishings at Adrien’s studio were likewise very characteristic: a dark wooden curved armchair, the nails that hold the cloth catching the light, and an armchair upholstered in velvet, its structure not visible, which was used for the portraits of Rossini and Vigny.
19. This portrait was taken in Adrien’s studio—we recognize the hobbennailed armchair. Not only is the image overexposed, but the print must have soaked for too long in hyposulfite of soda, meant to give it a stronger tonality, and has darkened in the course of time. This is a less successful version of the printing technique used by Le Gray in 1851, for example in his series of views of Fontainebleau. These are the conclusions of a study of the prints of various Nadar portraits in Parisian collections, carried out in June 1993 by the three curators of this exhibition together with Anne Cartier-Bresson, Joel Snyder, and André Jammes.

In Le Propagateur of June 13, 1854, we find an ad for Adrien Tournachon’s manual La Photographie artistique, a "pocket dictionary," according to the authors of the piece (see Hardy and Basset 1854). In Le Photographe of November 19, 1857, p. 1, Adrien claims that since September 1853 he has read all the technical works on photography and that he has summed up his reflections in two handbooks, which, however, we have been unable to track down in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France’s record of publications: La Photographie simplifiée et Almanach, manuel du photographe, which La Lumière discussed favorably.

20. This portrait was published by Loïc Chotard in "Sous l’œil de Nadar," Le Bulletin de l’Association des amis d’Alfred de Vigny (1890), pl. 6 and p. 32. The poet is shown full face, seated, with arms crossed. Later Adrien made some portraits of Vigny that were somewhat academic but more successful; see Prinet and Dilasser 1966, p. 120.
21. Quoted in Prinet and Dilasser 1966, pp. 120, 241, n. 189. Nadar here dates the piece to two weeks before the poet’s death.
22. But perhaps printed a little later in Adrien’s studio.
24. Ibid., p. 7.
25. Nadar’s Revendication (1857), seminal for an understanding of Nadar’s art, is quoted at some length by Maria Morris Hambourg in the preceding essay.
27. Duchenne also reproduced the heads from the photographs in life size for demonstration purposes. These medallions, pasted on canvas, are also preserved at the École des Beaux-Arts.
29. We must remember that Félix himself had studied medicine. But there is no evidence of any relationship between him and Dr. Duchenne. If the physician knew Nadar, why is that not mentioned in his text, which was published in 1862? Was the text written long before it came out? The first discussions were printed in special newspapers, belatedly, in 1859 (but see McCauley 1980). They do not essentially differ from the version provided by Duchenne: "The researcher resorted to photographs, all the resources of which were put at his disposal by the younger Monsieur Tournachon" (La Gavrine 1859a, p. 36; Revue photographique, 1859, pp. 165–68). It is possible that the text was completed in 1856, when Duchenne was thinking about using phototechnology for the illustrations in his work. During that period Adrien won the first round of his trial.
31. Lacan 1856a, pp. 120–31. His critique of the Pierrots was printed uncotted in Lacan 1856c, p. 9.
32. In this we concur with André Jammes and Eugenia Janis, while other critics, such as Nigel Gosling, Hughes Autexier, and François Braunschweig (in an oral statement), disagree, putting Adrien’s role first. Cf. L’Art en France sous le second Empire 1979, chapter on photography by Eugenia P. Janis, pp. 312–16. Also see Gosling 1976, p. 30. In 1976 he was the first to publish a study of Deburaus as Pierrot, ascribing the series to Adrien on the strength of the signature.
33. On the subject of these diverse signatures adopted by Adrien, see Nadar, Revendication, 1857, part 1, especially pages 17–19, which discuss "Tournachon" predating the signature "Nadar jeune." It may be simply that the print of the head of Deburaus preceded the printing of the series of standing Pierrots.
34. See L’invention d’un regard 1989, no. 245, ill. p. 117.
35. This sculptor was to provide the three graces for the facade of the studio that Félix opened on the boulevard des Capucines in 1861. See Greaves 1980, p. 227.
36. My colleague Maria Morris Hambourg recently ascribed these two images and the portrait of Frémiet (cited below) to Adrien, in Hambourg 1993, nos. 19, 60, pls. 52, 61, but in this volume she has reattributed them to Félix in collaboration with Adrien. On the other hand, my colleague Philippe Néaga maintains that Adrien is the sole author.
37. The fact that the negatives have vanished, as have those of Adrien’s portraits, might mean that the portraits were done by Félix and Adrien in collaboration and that negatives of collaborative works, kept by Adrien, were lost when his studio failed. This hypothesis was advanced in Keller 1986, p. 145.
38. B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24008/431, manuscript by Félix Nadar meant to serve as a preface to "Cahiers Nadar."
40. In a letter dated December 29, 1875, addressed to a journalist who had written about the trial, Adrien tried to justify his case. His account is not entirely honest, since he conceals a number of facts, and his tone is unconvincing; he lacks Félix’s characteristic mordant touch. (Typed copy of the letter, Musée d’Orsay; part of the Nadar holdings given by André Jammes.)
41. These two large verres-cuir prints, almost 12 by 8½ inches, have the words "Tournachon-Nadar jeune" written on their mountings, apparently in Adrien’s hand, and in another hand the date 1857. They might correspond to those mentioned in the Société’s exhibition catalogue, no. 97–2, under TOURNACHON-NADAR jeune et Cie: "Portraits et études d’après nature." They may not have been taken by Adrien alone.
42. The Second Empire 1978, p. 424.
43. Probably datable to about September 1854.
44. For instance Jules Troubat, obituary for Nadar, Le Grillon, May 1910, p. 4.
45. Taken probably about 1856. In the same year Félix photographed the composer, but Rossini seems to have preferred Adrien’s more formal photographs, several of which are autographed.
46. Other portraits are of Augeron, Charles Deburaus in street clothes, and an unknown man once thought to be Richard Wagner.
48. See Lacan 1856b, p. 185.
49. Doré’s “Jeune France” side: this organization, Young France, was a satirical group of young literati. These photographs can be dated 1874, as Prinet and Dillaser suggest (1966).
50. See McCauley 1994, especially p. 70.
51. McCauley (ibid., p. 71) has done a good job of pointing out how Nadar’s portraits differ from contemporary studio portraits but does not really explore Félix’s innovative structuring of the outline for every portrait.
52. B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24281. This letter is dated September 27, 1857.
54. This second version was finally made public by its owner for the Baudelaire exhibition at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, November 1993, for which it was reproduced on the catalogue cover (see Pichois and Avice 1993). It was also reproduced in drypoint by Roger Favier for Jacques Crépet, to serve as the frontispiece for a new edition of Les Fleurs du mal.
55. I investigated this magnificent portrait at length in Revue du Louvre; see Heilbrun 1992. I would now push the date back to 1856–1857 because of the "classicism" of the composition.
56. Ibid., p. 65.
57. Ibid., p. 71. We can date this work to before March 1855 by comparing it with a portrait of the same print quality of Nadar’s mother, Thérèse Tournachon, sitting in the same armchair.
58. Ibid.
60. Nadar too refers to painters: see the essay by Philippe Néaga.
61. In La Lumière of April 2, 1859, p. 56, Nadar is called the "Titian of the photographic portrait."
64. Félix adopted his slangy trick of ending nouns with “nadar” in 1838. Isn’t it likely that it came straight from Balzac’s Le Père Goriot, in which the inhabitants of the Maison Vauquer play a game of adding the suffix “rama” to all nouns, after the creation and success of Daguerre’s Diorama? Le Père Goriot first appeared in 1834 in La Revue de Paris and in 1835 was published as a book.

65. Cf. Lacan 1856b, p. 1: “Why have we seen many people return several times, as do we, to the section of Nadar the elder? It is because he too is an artist and his portraits have that indefinable charm that art lends to everything it loves. In the exhibition of this witty caricaturist become serious there are ravishing portraits of women . . . . The lens . . . in the hands of the artist is, like the brush or the burin or the scissors, an instrument that yields to his inspiration, his imagination; and should anyone doubt this, he need merely compare the portraits by any photographer, the most consummate practitioner . . . . with those of the two Nadar brothers. The first are nothing but cold and perfectly pure images devoid of color and expression; the others are works full of heat, movement, and life. We have no specific information to help us identify these portraits.

66. Nadar exhibited such portraits in 1859 at the Société Française de Photographie, as well as “portraits of children” or “studies after nature,” under a different number (cat. nos. 922–35). This shows that to him they represented a different theme.

67. The young Sarah Bernhardt was still unknown in 1864. It was only because of the fame she later achieved that her portraits, misunderstood, were included in those studies.


69. As correctly pointed out by McCauley 1994, pp. 72–73.

70. E. and J. Goncourt 1899, vol. 1, p. 59. The Goncourts later describe how the railroad has ruined the profession of “kept woman” by increasing the competition: a girl comes from the provinces, “finds a clothing store that will give her credit. . . . She goes to Mahille, and one more candidate is launched into circulation!” (vol. 2, p. 701, May 26, 1864).

71. See Nadar’s letter to his wife, Ernestine (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24986/28–29), dated The Hague, September 9, 1856: “I’ve had some excellent dealings here, which I’ll tell you about over there; you’ll be flabbergasted when you find out the person’s name. It’s Mme Stoltz, who’s committed herself and who’s gotten M. Tournachon the place in the exhibition and even the medal, according to what I’ve just heard. When she learned of my arrival Mme Stoltz asked me to visit her, which I was unable to do for lack of time.”

72. See Rouillé and Marbot 1866, no. 148, ill. p. 134.

73. “Brevet Tournachon dit Nadar,” no. 592459, dated July 2, 1865, of which a copy is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Yb 12340(9).

74. A copy of this patent, “Tournachon et Perrassin,” no. 38864, October 27, 1858, is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Yb 12340(9). Nadar was a member of the Association des Artistes et des Inventeurs created in 1849 by Baron Taylor.

75. “Touche-à-tout” (Jack-of-All-Trades), Le Sans-gêne, critique théâtrale et littéraire, no. 3 (April 27, 1862), p. 1. The article is signed (in English) “Careless” (apparently Édouard Rod; Nadar, Charles Baudelaire intime, 1911). Even though the piece tries to be nasty about Nadar, it merely repeats his statements, as reported by Jean Sagne (1984, pp. 73–75). See also the essay in this volume by Ulrich Keller.


77. André Rouillé pointed out this letter to me.

78. “Careless” was actually alluding to aerial photography, but the point remains.

79. The salted paper print of a portrait of Nadar disguised as an Indian and wearing the same wig is preserved in the Gilman Collection, New York.

80. All the prints, albumenized and probably poorly fixed, have faded.


82. McCauley 1994, p. 43.

83. Lacan 1839.

84. McCauley 1994, p. 35, n. 74. Like Nadar, he charged 100 francs for a portrait.
Nadar and the Artistic Life of His Time

PHILIPPE NÉAGU

The Critic’s Eye

In Nadar’s many endeavors the visual arts occupied a major place. To the caricature and photography that brought him fame during his lifetime should be added his activity as an art critic, which has gone relatively unnoticed by historians. These critical writings did not make a fundamental contribution to the artistic thought of the second half of the nineteenth century, but they help us apprehend more clearly the tastes of a man immersed in the intellectual life of his time and shed new light on his personality. In particular, views on painted or sculpted portraits presented by Nadar the art critic contribute to a better understanding of Nadar the portrait photographer.¹

Nadar’s activity as an art critic took several forms in the period between 1852 and 1877. In some years he expressed himself by means of caricature and writing (1852, 1853, 1857); in others, exclusively through writing (1855, 1866, 1877); in still others, through caricature alone (1859–61). In addition to these commentaries, which were occasioned by the official Salons, there were a few scattered newspaper articles. Nadar’s correspondence with artists, his activity as a collector, and various contemporary accounts throw further light on his relations with the art of his time.

Nadar’s critical oeuvre was the result not of a vocation but rather of an opportunity, as he explained ingenuously in 1866 in the course of making amends for an earlier judgment on Eugène Delacroix: “I was imprudently entrusted with a pen—that terrible pen that cuts children’s hands more effectively than a knife.” With Nadar there was none of that brilliant development between first and later writings on aesthetics that marks Baudelaire’s career. Yet there was a distinct evolution that led him belatedly to acknowledge the difficulties of art criticism, to realize that painting demands an education—a more or less slow initiation—and that seeing is not a simple matter of emotional response. It is a science, and “every science has to be learned.”

To justify his assuming the role of critic, Nadar could point to a talent for caricature, already evident in 1852, and to some knowledge of old master and modern painting acquired at the Louvre and at foreign museums (he visited a museum in Berlin, for example, during his Polish expedition) as well as at the official Salons beginning at least as early as 1845. He was also acquainted with the criticism of his day, particularly through Théophile Gautier and even more through Charles Baudelaire, whose ardent champion he became from 1853 on.

It was to Gautier (fig. 49), a poet and man of letters, that Nadar dedicated his Nadar Jury au Salon de 1852, a long review illustrated with caricatures. An entire series of Nadar-Jury’s emerged from the critic’s pen: his Salon de 1857 opens with a strange conversation between himself and the poet in which they speculate on whether it serves any purpose for

Figure 49. Théophile Gautier and his cats, 1858. Charcoal with white chalk on brown paper. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie
people to go on painting and are overcome with vertigo thinking of the sheer number of pictures that have been “displayed all over the world” since painting began. This perhaps imaginary conversation hints at the limits of Nadar’s inclination for painting, or rather at his need to strike a balance between the pictorial transcription of nature and the tangible universe; as he admitted, when he had “hisinnards churned up” with all those colors, he wanted “immediately to feel the ground beneath his feet and to rest his eyes . . . on whatever makes life real and brutal.” Although his Salons bear witness to a prior reading of Gautier, Nadar took issue with the theoretician of “art for art’s sake” on many aspects of contemporary art, academicism in particular—to the point of criticizing him in 1857 for being too indulgent and giving him no credit for his combative attitude during the battles of Romanticism.

HOMAGE TO BAUDELAIRE

Nadar seized every opportunity to sing the praises of Baudelaire the art critic, and in this he was certainly a pioneer. What he particularly admired was Baudelaire’s ability to “narrate” (raconter) a picture, to describe it with an “incomparable exactitude of impression and of rendering,” to “paint” it as masterfully as the painter himself. He was enthusiastic, too, over the quality of Baudelaire’s writing and the richness of his thought. Thus, three years after the poet’s death, Nadar evokes “this virile, sublime hand. . . . What a priceless innovator that man was,” and begins to imagine that “the voice of the beloved poet still speaks [to him] today” (Salon de 1860). In his own Salons of 1853 and 1856 he recommends to the reader Baudelaire’s Salon de 1846, “one of the most beautiful books on art ever written,” and twice between 1857 and 1877 he incorporates a long extract from it about Delacroix and color into his writings. Finally, in 1892, in his article on Constantin Guys, Baudelaire becomes “the one who must always be cited.”

These repeated tributes, so rare among writers and artists of that time, should not be interpreted as signs of allegiance, for as an art critic Nadar was no mere disciple of Baudelaire. If the two frequently disagreed—for instance, in their rejection of Courbet’s realism or in their devotion to Guys—this reflects an opinion shared and not the poet’s influence. They diverged often enough in their way of seeing. Their methods, too, were different: Nadar remained loyal to the tradition of reporting events, while Baudelaire’s criticism after 1846 became a kind of treatise on painting, the theoretical and doctrinal viewpoint largely superseding analysis of the works. Nadar—Baudelaire often reproached him for this—was unable to conceptualize his thoughts, especially in aesthetic matters. Finally, the gravity of style that marks Baudelaire’s criticism, born of the depth of his convictions and of the mission he had assigned himself, could not be further removed from the spirit of Nadar’s critical work. In 1853 Nadar almost apologized for presenting “a wretched little book . . . signed by a caricaturist,” and elsewhere he asked whether “a caricaturist may look at a bishop?”

NADAR-JURY

By adopting an original scheme—texts, often extensive, accompanied by caricatures (Salons of 1852, 1853, 1857, and others done collaboratively)—Nadar kept to a light and humorous style that suited his temperament well but that did not prevent him from expressing serious artistic convictions. Detesting as he did “pedantic and dogmatic airs,” he developed a very successful critical approach in a caustic
waged in his era. One of his arguments in defense of this absolute liberty is particularly striking: “the invasion of the nervous system” into every realm of civilization. He pronounced clinically on this “violent crescendo ... from the tranquil sensibility of Greek art up to the anxieties and disruptions of our modern art.” This schematic vision of the history of art, even though it contains a hint of nostalgia, seems prescient if one thinks of the evolution of art and of ways of thinking after the 1870s. It gave rise to Nadar’s rather visionary idea of a “great book [that] should perhaps be done: L’Histoire des tempéraments [The History of Temperaments].” Nowhere else in his art criticism does Nadar give the impression of being so close to modernity.

INGRES AND INGRISM

While certain critics, Diderot among them, reviewed the works exhibited at the Salons by grouping them according to genre, Nadar analyzed them in complete disarray, total désordre, to use a word that he invented. In 1877 he confessed to having visited the Salon at random, heeding no standards beyond his own whim, on the lookout for the personal voice, not hesitating to call attention to “the forgotten, the spurned, the humble.”

Is it likely then that Nadar, nurtured as he was in romantic bohemia, could have felt any attraction to the art of Jean-Dominique Ingres? In visiting the gallery devoted to Ingres’s works at the Exposition Universelle of 1855, he felt as if he were making his way through an “ice house,” passing a “funeral procession” (fig. 52). He rejected Ingres’s concept of drawing, for drawing, according to Nadar, ought not to be the “cold and painful reproduction of inert lines, but [should express] the sense of movement ... and life.” The pictures reviewed were subjected to acerbic criticism: their faults ranged from errors of design, feebleness of composition, colors that were dull and drab — or sometimes too garish — to a failure to understand aerial perspective, the dummylike quality of many of the figures, fundamental bad taste, and so on. Nadar saw some worth in the portraits painted before 1825, but the most recent were thoroughly savaged. He remained indifferent to the atmosphere of sensuality conveyed by Ingres’s paintings of nudes, a domain in which, Baudelaire maintained, the painter’s talent stood out. Espousing this viewpoint put Nadar in line with most contemporary critics; Gautier was the only one who de-
fended the Ingres aesthetic relatively unreservedly. In his *Salon de 1857*, Nadar, looking back on his 1855 article, expressed surprise at the public reaction it had aroused at the time: "It was as if I had just announced the bankruptcy of a solicitor who had never been known to miss Mass." The fact that Ingres’s art was admired in the name of tradition by a reactionary public could only reinforce Nadar in his sweeping condemnation; political sympathies or antipathies were often a component of his aesthetic judgments.

Nadar’s greatest dismay was over Ingres’s widespread influence, which had created "the lamentable school of Ingrists," as he described it in 1857. In 1866 he again asserted the decline of the academic tradition: "The linear school of David, cold to the point of cruelty . . . has engendered Ingres, who has engendered the neo-Greeks and my melancholy." He did in fact acknowledge something of quality in the works of the master’s first pupils, Flandrin, Lehmann, and Amaury-Duval, but with Adolphe Bouguereau and Jean-Léon Gérôme came the flowering of "Etruscan ugliness adapted . . . for people who have no taste" (*Salon de 1857*). In the same *Salon* essay, however, Nadar nuanced his opinion of Gérôme, who was the creator of "very honorable canvases" but whose principal defect was to have been struck by "original Ingrism." He defined his own view on the relation between drawing and color: "In everything in which there is truth, that is to say life, drawing is kin to color," and in analyzing an Orientalist picture by Gérôme he advised the artist to look at the oriental subjects painted by Eugène Fromentin, "brimming with light and good health." Apropos Jean-Louis Hamon, a pupil of Gérôme who was the butt of Nadar’s sarcasm throughout the *Salon de 1857*, the Ingrist school was amiably dubbed "Greco-gracioso-Ingro-Hamonist painting." Théodore Chassériau was one of the few students of Ingres to receive any praise from Nadar, for *Tépidarium* and *L’Étalon arabe* (*The Arab Stallion*), although the latter was pronounced too similar to Delacroix.

**Delacroix**

The artist who found favor with Nadar was Eugène Delacroix. But he was clearly embarrassed to write freely about this "great genius" after the encomiums published previously by Théophile Thoré and above all by Baudelaire (*Salon de 1845*), among the "first pilgrims to have opened up the road." Nadar had a clumsy habit of dwelling on the errors or defects of an artist when critical acclaim pre-

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Figure 52. Ingres at the Exposition Universelle of 1855. One wall of paintings from the Ingres display, and Nadar’s reaction to it in *Le Journal pour rire*, October 13, 1855: "Good God, what’s that? It seems to be a gentleman who froze up in the Ingres room." Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie.
Two characters sit at a table, engaged in conversation. The setting is simple and natural, with a focus on the conversation rather than elaborate decorations.

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**Other Romantics**

Nadar found the same marked individuality in the tempestuous work of Auguste Préault (fig. 54), a sculptor whom he defended with the utmost conviction because his work revealed “the ceaseless study of a thinker.” Sculpture was no more than a mere trade, he maintained, if it did not “come first from the brain” and if the realization of the details was not in complete harmony with the overall impression. Unlike Baudelaire, who thought Préault’s work had an unfinished quality, Nadar was won over by the “knocks and jolts of his disordered, tormented execution.”

In general, artists linked to the Romantic movement who were still exhibiting at the official Salon during the 1830s had Nadar’s approval. They included Louis Boulanger, Victor Hugo’s friend and illustrator, reviewed in Nadar’s *Salon de 1857*, and Jean Gigoux (who married Balzac’s widow, Mme Hanska), in whose large composition *La Veille de la bataille d’Austerlitz* (*The Eve of the Battle of Austerlitz*) Nadar observed a masterly hand, despite his horror of military painting.

The Romantic artist whom Nadar praised with the greatest feeling was Célestin Nanteuil, a painter, graphic artist, and rather melodramatic illustrator, who piled up “the in-calculable treasures of his inexhaustible imagination” and who represented for Nadar the possibly unique instance of a “happily fertile communion between hand and mind.” As was often the case with Nadar, the artist’s human qualities—his modesty, his indifference to official rewards—and a reputation that Nadar regarded as undervalued did much to prompt an admiration that seems excessive today, as it did at the time, for that matter.

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**Figure 53. Eugène Delacroix. Les Pèlerins d’Emmaüs (The Disciples at Emmaus), 1833. Oil on canvas mounted on board. The Brooklyn Museum, 50.106, Gift of Mrs. Watson B. Dickerman**

emptied discussion or struck him as too unanimous. In 1853, for instance, he blamed Delacroix for producing too much, claiming that his recent pictures demonstrated no new use of the artist’s talents. And he commented on “monstrous mistakes” in Delacroix’s submissions to the Salon, with the exception of *Les Pèlerins d’Emmaüs (The Disciples at Emmaus; fig. 53)*, in which he found the “solemnity of a great work.” Writing about Delacroix gave Nadar an opportunity to settle accounts with the “doctrinaires” of the Romantic school, who saw themselves as the protectors of great artists—Balzac among them—and who by their ill-considered praise simply reinforced the painter’s errors. However, Nadar was one of the few to appreciate Delacroix’s special talent for portraiture and to regret that he was no longer active in that genre. By 1857 Nadar had evolved; he declared himself better able to understand Delacroix, having looked at him longer. He was now overwhelmed “by the immensity and depth of this genius” with his “unremitting and absolute originality . . . by this wonderful painting, all impression and feeling.” In Delacroix he saw a “complete and potent individuality,” an artist who would never be the leader of a school because “the sun has no offspring.”

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**Figure 54. Auguste Préault. La Tuerie (The Slaughter), 1834. Bronze. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres**
Nanteuil’s example also gave Nadar an opportunity to express his interest in lithography in a Salon review, albeit very inately: “This other form of art, which relies on industry, is from now on more useful than painting, since it reaches a wider audience and borrows an almost infinite capacity for popularization from the machine.”

Taking a historical perspective, Nadar acknowledged that the Romantic artists had rendered “real” service to art. That generation, “ardent and generous” (two indispensable qualities in Nadar’s eyes), “fed on the marrow of lions,” had played its part in creating the living art of the time, but those days were drawing to a close. Underlying his discussion is the sense that something else is needed, something that, even if it does not further the evolution of art, will at least bring with it new aesthetic solutions.

Landscape

Besides the Romantic movement, Nadar admired plein air landscape as practiced by the school of 1830, which became the Barbizon School. Paintings by these artists had long been rejected by the Salons, whose juries upheld the superiority of historical landscape. The vivid commentaries that Nadar devoted to these works throw into relief a somewhat unexpected aspect of his sensibility. To laud the plein air artists in the 1830s, however, was scarcely avant-garde, even though their reception by critics and the public was still far from enthusiastic or unanimous. Of Théodore Rousseau, one of those particularly badly treated by the Salon juries, Nadar noted simply that “he has long exhausted praise”; of Paul Huet, that “he understands how to see nature”; of Charles-François Daubigny, that “he can make nothing but masterpieces” and “knows how to perfect them” (all, Salon de 1853), and that “it is impossible to see anything more wonderful than his [submissions] this year” (Salon de 1857). He regarded Constant Troyon’s La Vallée normande (Valley in Normandy) as the finest canvas of the 1857 Salon, a work with “the calm of true strength” — an axiom that he advanced on several occasions in his Salons. For Nadar the painting was a source of reverie and deep feeling, while Baudelaire saw in Troyon’s work no more than “aptitude without soul” (Salon de 1859).

Nadar noted the very healthy state of French landscape painting, placing at its head Camille Corot: “Here’s M. Corot! Always and forever the master, because he is a creator” (Salon de 1853). Sometimes he was excessively effusive over minor landscape artists, some of whom were also admired by Baudelaire, such as André Giroux (a painter and photographer of landscapes), Édouard Frère, Camille Flers, Giuseppe Palizzi, Eugène Lavieille, François-Louis Français, and Charles Leroux. From 1853 on, however, Nadar sought out in the Salon the works of Johann Barthold Jongkind — following Baudelaire’s example — and in 1866 he complained of the ignorance that still surrounded the painter’s name. Drawing a surprising parallel between a landscape by Jules Noël, an artist in the Romantic sphere, and Jongkind’s art, he called it strong and interesting, concluding, “I really know no finer praise.”

Concern for the True

In his discussion of landscape, Nadar defined what he held to be the essential qualities of an artist: the ability to look and to see, concern for “the true” above all, then sincerity and a sense of life. Although he could be carried away by the powerful personalities operating in the realm of the imagination — we shall see later that he took an interest in the bizarre and the fantastic — he seems never to have been more convinced than by a painting that bore witness to the truth of nature and that in a sense corroborated his own impressions, observer of all things as he himself was. For example, he assumed Baudelaire’s imperious tone to defend a landscape by the Russian painter Ivan Aivazovski, exhibited in the 1857 Salon, which reminded him of countryside he had seen on his trip to Poland: “Naiveties, crudenesses, and errors of brushwork don’t bother me when a result is achieved, and I am very grateful to M. Aivazovski for having recalled for me, with absolute truth, the steppes at sunset. The view is so wonderfully well seen that it inevitably succeeds in being well rendered, despite . . . .” The reservation deftly expressed by that incomplete sentence did not lessen Nadar’s conviction that a talent for observation takes precedence over the purely pictorial aspects of art — facture, technical mastery, rendering — a remark that must make more than one expert shudder. In a similar vein, Nadar tried at the end of the century to defend the Romantic writer Henri Murger’s literary output, which had been attacked by the critic Georges Rodenbach on grounds of style, by arguing that Murger’s ability to describe truthfully the mores of a social milieu was worth more than style. Nadar expressed this concept infrequently in his art criticism and had some difficulty applying it. Thus in 1857 he
Courbet’s art as by the provocative character of the artist. In his Nadar-Jury of 1853 he acknowledged his previous enthusiasm over the large Ornans paintings, especially (in the Salon de 1849–1850) the remarkable Enterrement à Ornans (Funeral at Ornans), in which Courbet had shown himself to be a psychologist. According to Nadar, although strictly speaking Courbet did not open up a new path (here Nadar invoked the name of Goya, another artist whom he knew about largely through Baudelaire), he “showed that it was necessary to seek . . . beyond contemporary customs.” At the 1851 Salon Nadar was disappointed by Les Demoiselles du village (The Village Maidens), calling it a work of no significance, and he had nothing good to say about Courbet’s submissions to the Salon of 1853. Apropo Les Baigneuses (The Bathers), he was shocked less by the exaggerated forms, something the public accepted in Rubens’s work, than by “this display of indecency [in which] everything is dark and dirty.” He concluded with a more personal reaction to the two women’s gestures, which he found “inane and hackneyed, fit for the corps de ballet of the Funambules” (that is, for chorus dancers on the vaudeville stage). Les Lutteurs (The Wrestlers) and La Fileuse endormie (The Sleeping Spinner) were cut to pieces with strong words, including “coarseness is not power, brutality is not frankness, scandal is not reputation.” Nadar urged Courbet to abandon this direction, not to entertain exaggerated ideas about himself, and to beware of critics who out of affectation covered him with “frantic praise.”

By the time of the 1857 Nadar-Jury, the critic’s opinion had to some extent evolved. He saw in Courbet “a genuine and good painter” who lacked “delicacy and exquisitie” (the barbarism was invented by Nadar to signify a sense of the exquisite, certainly not a quality Courbet ever claimed to possess). In his large paintings, notably in the Demoiselles des bords de la Seine (Young Women on the Banks of the Seine), presented that year, Courbet showed, according to Nadar, that he was neither a history painter nor a figure painter, since he lacked taste and thought, even though he had a strong, vital hand (figs. 55, 56). It was in some of the artist’s landscapes that Nadar saw the best examples of his Realism.

According to Nadar (Nadar-Jury of 1857), Courbet, hoping to make a splash with his one-man show at the Exposition Universelle in 1855, had asked to be criticized especially harshly, on the absurd theory that the artist most attacked by the critics would be the greatest painter. This pursuit of scandal, which Nadar went along with for a time

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**Courbet**

This being the case, wasn’t Nadar likely to become an admirer of Realism, the new aesthetic promulgated by Gustave Courbet beginning with the Salon of 1848?

He believed in it for a moment but quickly changed his mind, prompted as much by his views on the evolution of
in his two papers and then condemned, clashed profoundly with his concept of an artist, repeated over and over: he must remain a man of conscience operating far from the uproar of Parisian fashion. Nadar’s injustice to Courbet went as far as attributing (in his Salon de 1855) the entire course of Courbet’s art, which he preposterously described as “fake oversize Daumiers,” to a desire to attract public attention.

Nadar’s attitude toward Courbet scarcely changed thereafter. In 1866, in his article “Le Réalichme” (the word is another invention), he tells a series of anecdotes ridiculing the artist and describes the critic Castagnary as stricken with “acute Courbetism.” The same year, in his Commentaires (Commentaries) dedicated to Théodore de Banville, he assayed the dubious aphorism “Art has no haughtiness and no prudery, just as it dispenses with Tradition and Respect. It recognizes its own: the stylists in their Uranian halos, and Realism in its cowpats.”

In a letter written later (see entry for pl. 81), Nadar, who had just bought the Courbet painting L’Apôtre Jean Journet parlant (The Apostle Jean Journet Speaking) at public auction on behalf of Journet’s son, described to the younger Journet his feelings about the picture. The document is all the more interesting because it is private and alludes to the objectivity of photography:

It is as unidealized as a Courbet could be, and even more than that, it’s trivialized as only Courbet knew how to do it. Your father had a burning faith that Courbet was unable to see, since he no more desired to believe in apostolates than to understand apostles. He was the least likely man to render the soul that burst forth in this blazing head of Saint Peter.

Before the camera, did my gallant Jean ever look like this furniture mover? It resembles him only in the meanest and least distinguished way.

As a painting it’s altogether Courbet—excellent, perfect even in its craft—not that of a master painter (which he called himself and which he never was) but of a first-class workman painter. It’s admirably “smeared,” but like all of Courbet’s work it’s heavily painted, drab, and dirty.

NADAR AND CARICATURE

After several undeniable successes in caricature on societal subjects (as opposed to artistic ones)—with his invented rascal Monsieur Réac and even more with the Panthéon Nadar of 1854 (fig. 12), which earned him the enthusiastic approval of Théophile Gautier and most other critics and firmly established him in this domain—Nadar rapidly abandoned the activity. The reason was not so much the increasingly large share of his life taken up by photography as the critical eye he cast on his own work as a caricaturist compared with that of other artists of the day. Later, in an obscure periodical, he made honorable amends, something he hardly ever did in fields such as literature.

I once practiced the métier of caricaturist, but in my own specialty, and until the day when I felt I had no elbowroom and perseverance failed me before that last resort to a thousand-and-first drawing of a crinoline, of sea bathing, of the fools ranged along our racetracks, of women rowing. I found in myself neither Daumier’s art, nor Monnier’s powers of observation, nor Cham’s gaiety, nor the unparalleled grace of Gavarni, Marcellin, Grévin, and Hadol, nor Bertall’s shrewdness, nor Randon’s ingenuity, nor the nimble wit of those who called themselves Top, Darjou, Bayard, Gill, Durandieu, Carlo Gripp, Gédéon, Pelcoq, etc.—I wager that I have forgotten the best of that amiable battalion. I practiced the métier in my own way, with all honesty and with all due self-respect, I am entitled to say. Besides, I am quite ready to take up my pencil whenever no one tells me how to sharpen it. In no way do I regard myself as having taken a final leave, since I belong to the reserves. I have always cared about what happens in the camp, and everything that touches the flag touches me. (Moniteur des eaux et des courses, May 12, 1866)

It was 1905 before Nadar “reenlisted,” proposing fifteen designs to be executed by Steinlen and Rouville for an issue of L’Assiette au beurre and to be entitled Misère du cheval (The Horse’s Misery). The drawings, which old age rendered inept (Nadar wondered ingenuously: “What is my Steinlen going to be able to do with these horrors?”), are given over to man’s exploitation of the horse in a variety of ways. In the frontispiece the poor beast engages the reader thus: “Ask your sense of compassion if it knows of any creature in the world more wretched and pitiable than me.” The last drawing shows a beggar contemplating a dead horse by the light of a street lamp; his elliptical question—“That one’s freed! When me?”—evokes Baudelaire’s poem “La Mort des pauvres” (“The Death of the Poor”), which was cer-
tainly in Nadar’s mind. This last contribution to his art, which can be seen as Nadar’s artistic testament, shows the distance traveled between the ambitious caricaturist with an eye to posterity who raised a pantheon of the culture of his time, and the man on the brink of death who has become an apostle of human solidarity.

As a critic Nadar devoted several texts to caricature. Analyzing its mission in 1866, he wrote that caricature should “be free and concerned only with itself and should say only what it thinks, all that it thinks, and in the way that it thinks it.” It had the right to touch on everything, to be impertinent, insolent, or violent while still being amusing and mocking, or it could be serious, severe, or melancholy, “without the need to worry about anyone or its public.” The caricaturist knew that the only limit on this absolute power was its abuse, for that spelled suicide. “The mighty privilege of the image,” Nadar asserted, “is a mnemonic far more effective than twenty books and a hundred articles in the press.”

Nadar gave surprising personal testimony to the power of the image and its impact on the memory in a note, never published, that he sent in 1859 to an autograph collector through an intermediary, Loredan Larchey (after beginning by expressing his astonishment that an autograph should be requested from a “seller of portraits”):

I saw as a child — and I see it still in my mind’s eye — a large colored page, published in the journal La Caricature, about the carnage on the pont d’Arcole in 1832 or 1834. There was a view of the bridge; on the ground some bodies of students and townspeople; policemen wiping their swords. There was no caption below the picture, or I have forgotten it.

But it was so terrible, those bodies were so very dead, the figures of the policemen were so hideous, the blood that they were wiping stood out so red on the white linen, that the image made me shiver plenty of times in my bed and clutch my twelve-year-old fists in impotent rage. Without any doubt, I owe to that lithograph a large part of the horror I feel today at brute force and the sense of indignation roused in me by injustice.

At the age of twelve, then, Nadar was leafing through the caricature magazines, and his imagination was sufficiently developed for him to be fascinated by pictures from which he was able to draw a moral for life. And when his old friend and sponsor in caricature, Charles Philipon, wrote a disillusioned entry in Nadar’s autograph album maintaining that caricature was not capable of “correcting morals with laughter,” Nadar retorted in the same note that Philipon had been guilty of an “error and an act of ingratitude.”

DAUMIER

Nadar several times placed Honoré Daumier and Paul Gavarni at the summit of caricature in his era.

In 1877, Daumier being virtually blind, a committee formed, of which Nadar was a member, to organize a benefit retrospective of the master’s oeuvre. When Daumier died in 1879, Nadar was among the artistic and literary personalities observed by the press in the large crowd that convened for his burial. The speakers paid tribute both to the artist of genius and to the battling republican.

Several important articles on Daumier were written soon thereafter. Edmond Duranty was one of the few to celebrate Daumier the portraitist: “From the beginning, he showed himself as a portraitist. . . . Daumier, with Holbein, Quentin de la Tour, and possibly Gainsborough — these are the men who have best understood and rendered that great thing the human physiognomy, a subject so large that the portrait, far from being a secondary matter, an idea that so many thoughtless people parrot, is the supreme work in art.” The artist’s death elicited no critical text from Nadar, but on another occasion, when a journalist asked what was
to become of Daumier’s portrait busts of parliamentarians (fig. 57), Nadar replied with a belated tribute:

Daumier was inspired by those small plaster caricatures by the younger Dantan, then very much the fashion and displayed in numerous stationery shop windows. But Dantan was no more than a man of quick wit and ready hand, while in Daumier’s small busts there is the breathtaking thumbprint of a Rodin, a Préault, a Puget, a Cellini, and to come right out with the big name, a Michelangelo. Daumier liked to daub the busts in appropriate colors, and this polychromy sharpens more cruelly still the closeness of the likenesses.

Noteworthy is the indirect homage to Rodin, an artist who emerged after Nadar had ceased writing art criticism.

NADAR AND THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS

Nadar’s commentaries on portraits exhibited at the Salons from 1852 to 1877 illuminate quite explicitly a personal conception of the portrait that he sought to realize in his photographic work during the fertile rue Saint-Lazare period.

To begin with, his Nadar-Jury Salon reviews teemed with caricatural send-ups of portraits of the bourgeoisie executed by artists of varying talent and with pointed questions on the significance and utility of such works. Of portrait sculptures, he wrote in the Salon de 1857, “But let us begin with the grotesque procession of a crowd of eccentric heads who have had the disastrous idea of demanding their reproduction in sculpture.” Apropos a painting representing a couple of “retired grocers or wallpaper merchants” that had been sent from Brazil, he joked: “Good God, what are the customs for?” Nadar asked himself what impelled types with no imagination to want themselves portrayed and, inversely, what made artists choose or accept commissions from such people. His caricatures ridiculing this kind of portrait were in his view only slight exaggerations of the originals, intended to demonstrate the already caricatural quality of these mediocre likenesses. Perhaps this tendency of many painters and sculptors to turn the portrait into an unacknowledged caricature of the human face—prompted as much by the nature of the models as by the artists’ lack of artistic certitude—was more easily seen by a critic active in the discipline himself. At any rate, it was when he was working on caricatural portraits for his Panthéon of 1854, even before he undertook his photographic career, that Nadar drew a clear distinction: the “true” portrait, the one that faithfully renders the individual’s personality, emerges from an intellectual and artistic process; without that process, the end result can be caricature.

Nadar’s low opinion of the works of certain painters and sculptors, it should be noted, was not very different from the view numerous critics took of the photographic portrait. Thus, caricaturists echoed the disappointed reactions of sitters contemplating their own likenesses as unflatteringly recorded by photography. Marcelin, a caricaturist for the Journal amusant, ridiculed in his “Fantaisies photographiques” (“Photographic Fancies”)—no doubt with Nadar’s approval—the portraits of Ingres, Delacroix, and Préault taken by Victor Laisné, maintaining that compared with the portraits by great masters of the past, “these photographic specters... [have] simultaneously the immobility of death and the anxiety of life: preoccupied corpses.” Marcelin concluded that photography is a “public disaster” that “shrivels the mind and heart” and takes away “what little remains to us of poetic illusions.” In the Petit Journal pour rire, Marcelin deplored the disparity between the portrait of earlier days (showing a painter in the spirit of the court artist Nattier transforming a generously proportioned matron into a young Diana) and the modern one put forward by photography (caricaturing a group photograph of a family whose faces display a combination of undertaker’s gloom, nasty expressions, and comical grimaces). This was very likely Nadar’s opinion of a number of his colleagues in photography, especially those who had previously been active in daguerreotypy. In any case, in condemning the photographic portrait, which he too associated with caricature, Marcelin took good care to set Nadar apart (“Always excepting Saint Nadar Lazarus!!”). Indeed, one might wonder whether the whole business was not something stirred up by Nadar, a way of publicizing himself in his own journal.

BAUDELAIRE

The self-satisfaction that makes people want to perpetuate their images through painting or sculpture amused Nadar, but it revolted his friend Baudelaire. He established a distinction rather like Nadar’s between the true artist, who chooses his models, and the drudges of portraiture, who practice without discrimination, in his article on Ingres (“Exposition universelle de 1855”): “But he is in no way
one of those painters by the hour, those banal manufacturers of portraits, to whom a common man can go, wallet in hand, to ask for the reproduction of his unseemly person.”

These observations must be seen in the perspective of the satirical tract “Le Public moderne et la photographie” (“The Modern Public and Photography”) of the Salon de 1859, in which the poet condemned photography, lashing out at the vast numbers of people who were going to get their pictures taken in photographic studios, a phenomenon that had further increased production of the kind of portraits previously attacked in painting or sculpture. If one also considers his remarks in a much earlier text, “De l’idéal et du modèle” (“On the Ideal and the Model”; Salon de 1846), such as “There are these wretched painters for whom the slightest wart is a windfall,” it becomes clear that the photographic portrait precise in every detail, which most of the studios favored (though not Nadar’s on the rue Saint-Lazare), ran counter to Baudelaire’s deepest aesthetic convictions. Although Baudelaire and Nadar were thus in agreement in condemning the banal bourgeois portrait, they did not, strictly speaking, give the same definition of the “true portrait”; Nadar the photographer would no doubt have rejected the opinion of the poet, who saw in Ingres “the ideal restoration of individuals” (1855). But the word “ideal” is open here to misunderstanding. In Baudelaire’s “De l’idéal et du modèle,” whose assiduous reading Nadar recommended, is an admirable definition that one would like to think Nadar pondered: “An ideal is the individual rectified by the individual, reconstructed and rendered by the brush or chisel in all the dazzling truth of its native harmony.” Nadar’s genius would be to satisfy this grand aesthetic ambition by means of photography. Later on, the photographer and the poet (who must frequently have exchanged views on portraiture) were still in agreement on the need for “deliberate and sincere study” of the model and for “the profound intuition” of the sitter’s character that the artist must have, all ideas strikingly developed in Baudelaire’s Salon de 1846.

While the two men were generally divided on political matters, the photographer adopting a more democratic point of view than the elitist poet, Nadar did grasp that disastrous consequences for the aesthetic of the portrait followed from societal evolution. Baudelaire illustrated this evolution in a “little prose poem” called “Le Miroir” (“The Mirror”), in which he expresses amazement that an extremely ugly man should look at himself in the mirror; questioned by the poet, the man retorts that in the name of universal human equality, he has the same right as others to contemplate the reflection of his face. And this same principle now confers the right on anyone who has the means to have his appearance reproduced by painting, sculpture, or photography.

Baudelaire’s attempt elsewhere to define beautiful human form — it has less to do with harmony of line than with qualities of whichever of the model’s expressions is most suitably entrusted to the artist’s talent — might have intrigued Nadar, but it finds little echo in his critical writings or in his photographic art.

Figure 8. Nadar, Les Modes renversées — Citè des dames . . . Citè des hommes (Reversed Fashions — For the Women . . . For the Men). Nadar’s wry comment on current fashion trends: the women wear masculine jackets, the men wear shawls (compare pl. 45). Journal amusant, 1846, republished January 1847, no. 15. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie
Modern Dress

Another aspect of Nadar’s critical thought is his attitude toward modern dress, a topic of great importance for a portraitist of any sort. Nadar frequently emphasized that he had no aversion to modern dress (men’s, that is), although it had been the subject of bitter comment since the Romantic period. Thus, in his Nadar-Jury of 1847 he wrote: “Our modern dress does not seem to me to deserve more than any other the excessive vilification that I have so often heard heaped upon it.” This statement perhaps represented a revised opinion or else an intention to contradict all the other art critics, for in 1853 he had written of the caricaturist Traviès, “No one knows better than he how to drape and fold our wretched [chétif] modern dress,” taking up an adjective that was in use at the time in similar contexts, notably by Gérard de Nerval. Nadar was certainly knowledgeable about clothing; among the albums of lithographs and etchings in his collection offered for sale (December 5, 1895, catalogue) were a large number devoted to the study of costume of different countries and epochs, some evidently acquired after the rue Saint-Lazare period.

Here too one can imagine likely conversations between Nadar and Baudelaire and reflections perhaps inspired in the photographer by a reading of the chapter in Salon de 1846 entitled “De l’héroïsme de la vie moderne” (“On the Heroism of Modern Life”), in which the poet defined modern dress as “a uniform livery of desolation [that] bears witness to [universal] equality” but saw in this “undertaker’s” costume necessitated by the age a “mysterious grace” and an “indigenous charm.” Théophile Gautier also offered some thoughts on the subject and came to an identical conclusion in “De la mode” (“On Fashion,” 1858): “Besides, is our dress as ugly as it is made out to be? Does it not have its own significance, unfortunately little understood by artists, who are all imbued with ideas of the antique?” Its simplicity of cut and neutral coloring, he explained, made it easier to bring out what was essential, that is to say, the face and hands. Since the assumption was that beauty and strength no longer characterized contemporary man, there was no longer any need to adorn the body but simply to clothe it without theatricality in more or less uniform attire that, while revealing the body, did not prevent the artist from perceiving the suggested life beneath the prosaic wrapping.

While acknowledging the monotony of masculine clothing, which the artist liberated from the precepts of classicism could, however, use to good effect (he made fun

Figure 59. Victor-Louis Mottez. Le Ministre Guizot (portrait of François Guizot), 1848. Oil on canvas. Private collection, England

Figure 60. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Le Compositeur Cherubini et la muse de la poésie lyrique (The Composer Cherubini and the Muse of Lyric Poetry), 1842. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris
of those artists who claimed that it was modern dress that prevented them from being a Titian, a Van Dyck, or a Velázquez, Gautier had nothing but praise for women’s clothes, the beauties of which only a wrongheaded classical education could prevent one’s seeing. In particular, he thought, the arrangement of women’s hair had never had “more grace, ingenuity, and style.” Although wide skirts supported by crinolines were the object of much sarcasm at the time (Marcelin in his “Fantaisies photographiques” was ironic about a photographer preparing two negatives for a woman’s portrait, one for the dress and the other for the face), Gautier maintained that they made for a pyramidal construction that showed the head and bust to advantage. He concluded that the modern ideal could not be understood by artists who were bogged down in “a preconceived form of beauty.” One supposes that Nadar’s ideas must have corroborated Gautier’s, and one can see in his photographs that for the most part he respected the clothes worn by the sitter, sometimes taking care to arrange them, at other times giving their seeming carelessness a rare accent of freedom, as he did in the admirable portrait of Gautier (pl. 42). In his portraits of women, Nadar was wonderfully able to give life to the attire without losing any of the personality of the person wearing it. These portraits often show more real charm than those of Franz Winterhalter, a rather flattering painter whose works Nadar nevertheless admired for their ravishing figures and purity and sweetness of line (Salon de 1853).

To contribute to the representation of “modern life” means to accept the costume of the day, and only this attitude makes possible a contemporary approach to portraiture. If one compares Nadar’s art with that of Adam-Salomon (fig. 48), it is immediately apparent which photographer opened up a path to the modern portrait and which, still in the academic tradition, lost his way trying to update the formal display portrait, in which costumes, postures, and decor speak the language of the past.

**Photographic Realism**

In 1853, when Nadar still had no idea of his future photographic career, and again in 1855, when it had barely been launched, he criticized certain portrait paintings by comparing them with the daguerreotype, a technique to which he had paid far less attention than processes on paper:

“M. Pichon’s portraits have the perception of the daguerre-

type, but they are colder than that and extremely boring” (Salon de 1853). Still, Nadar recognized that this first photographic process, which had spread very widely since 1839 because of its value in making portraits, was changing forever the work of the painter. A “cold, drab” portrait of the former minister and premier François Guizot, painted by Mottez (fig. 59), had, he wrote, required “one hundred to two hundred sittings to arrive at the mathematical reproduction that the ordinary daguerreotype gives you in a minute, and the instantaneous process of the Macaire brothers in a thousandth of a second.”

Observing in 1855 that Ingres had needed ninety sittings to produce an exact physical likeness of the composer Luigi Cherubini (fig. 60), Nadar opined that the artist’s gallery of portraits had become a “martyrology” made up of “maniacal” subjects. Undoubtedly being deliberately provocative, he concluded with a remark that can still be counted on to annoy historians and connoisseurs of art: “For me, the question of the talent displayed by M. Ingres’s portraits was clinched . . . that morning when Daguerré made his wonderful discovery, and today photography gives us a drawing that M. Ingres wouldn’t have delivered in a hundred sittings and a color that he couldn’t give us in a hundred years.”
It is clear enough that in Nadar’s eyes, the physical likeness (“la ressemblance matérielle”) was only a starting point in the art of portraiture. An expression that recurs frequently in his writing, “ressemblance intime” (intimate likeness), retrieves an idea that continued to take shape all during the course of his career as an art critic but that had already been formulated in his mind well before he embarked on his photographic work. In the Nadar Jury of 1853 he pointed out how expressively the figure of a priest had been painted in a picture of Breton royalists by Charles Fortin (1815–1869), Des Chouans (The Chouans, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille): “The man who hit upon that may paint imperfectly, but he is a psychologist—rara avis in pictoribus [a rare bird among painters]—who knows how to read Balzac. [Unpracticed painting] is not at all important; technique will always come along.” As late as his Salon de 1877, in a passage on the portrait of Alexandre Dumas fils by Meissonier (one of his longer treatments), he continued to emphasize that psychological scrutiny is the most important element in the art of portraiture.

Admired Artists

The artists whom Nadar favored at the Salons of 1853 and 1857 were Félix Bracquemond, Alphonse Legros, and Gustave Ricard; names from the past that he cited most frequently were Hans Holbein, Anthony Van Dyck, and Leonardo da Vinci.

Louis-Gustave Ricard (1823–1873), a pupil of Léon Cogniet who studied the old masters for ten years, copying Titian, Correggio, and Van Dyck, had a great success at the Salon beginning in 1850, and his portraiture was praised by Théophile Gautier and Baudelaire. In 1853 Nadar advised aspiring portrait painters to look at Ricard’s works: “There’s a great portraitist.” He offered no reasons, but Camille Mauclaire did in 1902: “With Ricard the model is not seen, he is known, understood, penetrated; in spite of the natural reserve masking the person who poses, his fascinated soul is made to appear.” Nevertheless, a comparison between the portraits of Chenavard by Ricard (fig. 61) and Nadar (pl. 80) shows a more conventional psychological attitude on the part of the painter than the photographer, who knew how to use body posture to communicate the expression of a feeling.

From 1857 on, Nadar regarded Félix Bracquemond (1833–1914) as one of the three or four most interesting artists of the day, and he was undoubtedly one of the first critics to undertake an eloquent defense of this twenty-four-year-old painter and engraver. He admired the sobriety of Bracquemond’s means, his respect for form taken to the point of superstition (what Jean-Paul Bouillon calls absolute realism), his character, “studious, patient,” like “the engravers of the good old days.” For Nadar, Bracquemond was a true portraitist, for he knew how “to get at the deep thoughts and intimate feelings of each of his models. One has the sense that he is in communion with the person he draws, and by his fervent ardor for the truth and the blessed obstinacy with which he pursues it, he makes us dream before the most ordinary nature as if before a Holbein.”

The passage is important because it gives us several keys to the art of the portrait as seen by Nadar: first, the necessary complicity between the artist and his model; then, the nature of the work, which essentially depends not on the sitter’s intrinsic characteristics but on the artist’s ability to re-create them. Nadar was not in favor of idealizing the figure and in 1857 made fun of the sculptor Blavier, who tried, he said, by majestically draping his model, to transform a poor dolt into Marshal Kléber (the Napoleonic hero). While an excellent subject was not the determining factor in arriving at a good portrait, Nadar recognized that one model could be more suitable than another; but then if the sitter was good, the artist was all the more to be blamed if he was unable to make the most of the opportunity.

Hippolyte Flandrin

On his visit to the Salon of 1866, Nadar wrote, it was only with the greatest difficulty that he tore himself away from contemplation of a small picture of “inexpressible charm” by Joseph-Nicolas Jouy, a pupil of Ingres almost unknown today. The painting, a portrait of the artist’s wife, now in a private collection, reminded Nadar of “the best portraits by Lawrence, the portrait of Mme d’Haussonville [by Ingres], Flandrin’s La Jeune Fille à l’oeillet—those masterpieces that come down in a distant but direct line from the marvelous type created by Leonardo da Vinci as an eternal example for all portraitists past, present, and future.” Does this lavish praise mean that Nadar had become reconciled with Ingres and his school, Nadar who in 1861 had criticized unspiringly the portrait of Count Duchâtel by Hippolyte Flandrin?

La Jeune Fille à l’oeillet (The Young Woman with a
Flandrin did indeed borrow from the *Mona Lisa* its principle of composition and the sitter’s general posture, the serenity of the face, the smile (less perceptible than with Leonardo), and a certain air of mystery— noted by Gautier, who went so far as to see something disturbing in her beauty—as well as the shapely hands, here carelessly holding a flower. Are there grounds for seeing some reminiscence of this graceful image in the moving portrait of Ernestine smelling a flower (fig. 43) that Nadar conceived many years later, the artist’s last photographic tribute to the companion of his life? Nothing confirms it, and it is true that a flower had become a commonplace in portraits of women. But had Nadar perhaps retained a memory of the scene Gautier described himself imagining as he looked at Flandrin’s picture, of the sitter inhaling the scent of the carnation before the painter set about portraying her as she now appears?

It is almost incidentally, thanks to this portrait by Flandrin, that Nadar lets us in on his fascination with Leonardo da Vinci; this interest demonstrates, as does his mention of the English portraitist Thomas Lawrence, that after the 1850s his awareness of the culture and painting of the past became more profound. Leonardo’s multifaceted personality, which had led him to work in realms as diverse as painting, caricature, and air navigation, could only have aroused Nadar’s enthusiasm. Baudelaire made rare references to the artist (among them to his caricatures, which the poet saw as portraits of “eccentric ugliness”), but Nadar must especially have known an important article by Gautier that analyzed with insight the multiple aspects of Leonardo’s genius. In particular, it described his designs for flying machines— ancestors of those invented by Ponton d’Améécourt and recorded by the photographer (pls. 96, 97).

In other respects, Nadar’s declaration that the “marvelous type” of portrait created by Leonardo constituted an “eternal example” for all portraitists past, present, and future seems to voice a somewhat belated conviction. As a critic he had often expressed the idea that an artist, no matter how original and inventive, could find in the work of a great predecessor material for study and reflection that would support the flowering of his own artistic personality. In proposing Leonardo as a model, Nadar was little concerned with determining the artist’s actual influence on past and present portraitists; he had simply realized that a greater ideal of perfection in the domain of portraiture had never been found, nor would it ever be found.

Carnation), a portrait of Mlle Mathilde Maison painted by Flandrin in 1858 (fig. 62), was exhibited at the Salons of 1859 and 1865 and was cited admiringly by Nadar both in 1866 and in his *Salon* of 1877. Undoubtedly what touched Nadar in this work, apart from the composition and the execution, which must also have met with his approval, was the delicacy of the sitter, indeed her modesty, translated with simplicity and naturalness by an artist who was able to give it life in an astonishing way. This psychologically subtle image is far from the “pretentious and clumsy affectation [of that] immoderate taste for distinction” that generally tarnished portraits by pupils of Ingres, in Baudelaire’s eyes—a sentiment he expressed in “Du portrait” (“On the Portrait”) in the *Salon de 1846* and one that Nadar seems to have shared. The portrait was a tremendous success with the critics, notably Théophile Gautier, who in 1859 gave it a handsome write-up that Nadar certainly knew and that may have helped strengthen his admiration for it. The idea of a line of descent from Leonardo probably derived less from his own reflections than from reading the critiques of Gautier or of Maurice Aubert, who proposed it explicitly.
The Lesson of Van Dyck

In Nadar’s criticism of portraiture, one of the names most frequently mentioned is that of Anthony Van Dyck. For one thing, he advised artists to study the painter in order to progress in their art, implying that he himself had undertaken such study and had perhaps derived some profit from it. Then again, drawing an analogy between a contemporary painter and the Antwerp master constituted in Nadar’s mind the highest possible praise. Van Dyck’s fame had barely suffered an eclipse since the seventeenth century, and nineteenth-century criticism placed him at the summit of the genre. Still, the frequency of citation — and as early as the Nadar Jury of 1843 — raises the question, what could Nadar have known of the painter’s work? A few portraits, mainly from the royal collections, were in the Louvre during the 1840s, and Nadar could have seen others on his journey to Belgium and Holland in 1857, but there is every reason to think that his principal knowledge was of the Icones Principum . . . (Iconography of Prominent Men), conceived by Van Dyck beginning in 1632. Known as the Iconography, it contained etchings by the artist (fig. 63) and engravings by engravers of his choice, working from his drawings, which were done from life when the sitter was living. Nadar could have known later, eighteenth-century editions that were in public or private French collections, or the new edition produced for artists’ use by the engraving shop of the Louvre soon after its acquisition of the original copperplates in 1851, which enjoyed considerable fame among painters. (Baudelaire knew of the work before the new edition, since he certainly alluded to it in his Salon de 1846 in “Du portrait,” where he cited “the fine engravings made after the portraits of Van Dyck.”) An examination of this collection of 190 plates representing princes, princesses, warriors, political figures, scholars, artists, and actors — the elite of the era, in seventeenth-century eyes — makes quite comprehensible the attraction Van Dyck’s portraiture held for Nadar. Although it would make little sense to trace a relationship between the painter-etcher and the photographer, one may say that Nadar envisaged a photographic approach to the human figure spiritually akin to that sanctioned by Van Dyck two centuries earlier in the art of drawing.

Indeed, numerous plates in the Iconography show extremely sober compositions, often with neutral backgrounds, the skillful use of light to bring out the contours of the face or certain details of the clothing or to enliven the ground, sometimes a striking freedom in the sitter’s pose, and above all a penetrating psychological analysis of these figures drawn from life, who reveal in their physiognomies and gestures the essence of their individuality.

The richness of Van Dyck’s art also allowed Nadar to invoke his name when discussing photographs by the portraitist Adam-Salomon — “as grand as a Van Dyck,” he wrote. But this artist, who came to photography after some years making academic sculpture, had quite another vision of the photographic portrait. Through the teaching of the German Franz Hanfstaengl he had absorbed a very different lesson from Van Dyck, that of the aristocratic portrait, in which opulent settings and accessories, costumes, draperies, and noble attitudes struck by the sitters combined in an aesthetic that destroyed naturalness and psychological expression (although this last was not absent from Van Dyck’s formal portraits). Critics of the period saw in Adam-Salomon’s portraits a magisterial quality that came from a profound study of art, without realizing how much the art had after all been lost sight of — a fact that only reinforced Nadar’s opposing artistic convictions. But Philippe Burty
grasped the difference when in 1859 he recognized in Nadar a genuine artist and deplored the lack of truth in the portraits of Adam-Salomon, whose ambition, imitating Van Dyck and his Iconography, was to create a Galerie de notabilités de l’Europe (Gallery of European Notables).

Nadar expressed his low opinion of decor and accessories in 1859, condemning Ingres’s use of them in his portraits. These elaborate props were generally absent from Nadar’s photographs of the best period, allowing attention to concentrate on the figure. They began to appear in the years around 1860, a turning point, after which their use became more frequent and was subsequently further developed by Nadar’s son, Paul.

NADAR THE PORTRAITIST: THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MEISSONIER

It was not until the Salon of 1877, by which time Nadar had somewhat distanced himself from his photographic activities, that he published an essay describing at any length his conception of the portrait and the process that every portraitist who thought about art should undergo. After the sometimes impulsive texts of the 1850s and the more serious articles beginning in 1866, he demonstrated his caustic humor for one last time in a piece on the portrait of Alexandre Dumas fils by Ernest Meissonier (fig. 64), an artist at the peak of his fame whom Nadar never ceased to battle. At the very beginning, Nadar declared his golden rule: “If I am a painter, a true painter, in order to paint my portrait well, to make a likeness, I must first study and explore the psychology of my model. The physiology will follow.” Nadar then ran through his memories of the younger Dumas, the better to analyze Meissonier’s presentation. There followed a long physiognomical and psychological description, depicting Dumas as he was or at least, Nadar acknowledged, as he saw him. It is not impossible that he painted an especially flattering moral picture, having much loved Dumas père. “Perhaps I take a little too much pleasure in dwelling on the mind and spirit of the original,” he noted, “but otherwise, how shall I be able to execute a good physical copy?” Then, from these “moral premises” (with this subject: an absolute self-certainty, impeccable rectitude, wisdom, absorption in his work, etc.) Nadar deduced a certain number of physical consequences (an easy, free, and graceful bearing, a head held high, etc.). To this appearance of calm and strength was added a native benevolence, “heritage . . . of the father’s irresistible radiance.”

In Nadar’s view, Meissonier, in his work as “translator,” had acted as a “traitor,” for he “presents us with a heavy, overfed lout, slack and sprawled, belly up like a drowned dog.” The poet and thinker were absent, the sitter’s penetrating gaze had been replaced by “lackluster” eyes, “open . . . to see nothing at all.” Nadar was astonished that Meissonier, who was an old friend of Dumas fils, gave the impression of never having looked at him, even for the execution of this portrait. In fact, according to the model, forty sittings were required, and the artist told him that he wanted another twenty because he was not entirely satisfied with the results. One is reminded of the “martyrology” Nadar evoked in connection with the portraits of Ingres. Further sittings would have done nothing more than allow certain physical details to be improved, for Nadar regarded Meissonier as a painter incapable of having a “shadow of an idea” and denied him the talent to convey in his portraits the soul, the character, the moral and spiritual side of anybody.

Figure 64. Ernest Meissonier. Alexandre Dumas fils, 1877. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris
Moreover, he disputed the qualities of draftsmanship that critics customarily saw in the artist and rated him no more than an "inferior photographer," a "suburban photographer," since he perpetrated incoherent deformations, notably in giving the face of a seated person the proportion in relation to the figure that it should have in a standing position. Nadar acknowledged that this elementary norm (that a standing person is seven heads tall) had been judiciously ignored by such artists as Primaticcio and Gavarni (citing Gavarni's statement that to create a sense of elegance and "great style" he drew small heads on long bodies—the reverse of traditional caricature), but these intended and successful instances had nothing to do with Meissonier's errors of visual distortion. Nadar also objected to the setting of the portrait (in fact, the painter's studio), an indeterminate place where the sun never ventured, and to the presence of books on the table, a hackneyed motif in portraits. He pointed out the absence of distance, the sense that there was no air circulating between the sitter and the wall in the background—something that any photographer could have corrected in his own work by retouching the negative.

The portrait of Alexandre Dumas fils excited considerable written acclaim, both in 1877, when it was exhibited at the Salon, and the following year, when it appeared at the Exposition Universelle. The public was honoring and making much of the picture, wrote Armand Silvestre in the military periodical L'Estafette, where he praised it as a sensitive and vigorously rendered portrait that "thinks and makes us think." Edmond Durany, defender of the avant-garde, used it as an example in developing his modernist argument that painters should devote themselves to representing contemporary man. Nadar's criticism, which blended humor and the fruit of genuine experience in the practice of portraiture, clearly ran counter to the writings of the professionals; it went unnoticed and remains so among historians today. As for the sitter, he was quite satisfied with his image, as witness his preface to the exhibition of Meissonier's work at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1893 and his bequest of the picture to the Louvre in 1896.

In concluding, Nadar acknowledged the reason his critique was so ferocious: he was outraged that the public and critics alike had for so long been prejudiced in favor of an inane painter undeserving of high regard while they ignored artists who were creating a different kind of art. The supreme ambition of the meanest stockbroker, he declared bitterly, was to hang a "flea" by Meissonier, immured in an enormous frame, in a position of honor in his drawing room. Nadar had once claimed to be the last of critics to take an interest in a painting's subject, but now he heaped abuse on the artist for the stupidity of his subject matter, taking the opportunity to reiterate his horror of military painting, a specialty of Meissonier's: "This taste for hardware is the surest sign of an empty head." Nadar knew what he was talking about. Unlike Meissonier's, his own photographic portraits are those of a genuine artist and are anything but inane.

Translated by Mary Laing

1. [This essay was not completely finished at the time of the author's death. Ed.]
Sorting Out Nadar

ULRICH KELLER

AN EXAMINATION OF NADAR’S PHOTOGRAPHIC LEGACY

If Nadar’s face were engraved on coins it could not be better known. There is not in France a notoriety greater than his.”1 When he wrote these lines in 1884, Gustave Claudin was thinking primarily of Nadar’s personal charisma, his status as a lion du jour, his invariable presence on every boulevard, in every café, at every social function, and his remarkable capacity for cultivating friendships among the cultural elite of Paris (five thousand friendships, according to Nadar’s own, generous statistics). A century later, Nadar’s social talents have been forgotten, but his photographs continue to make his name famous. Today it is hardly possible to think of Gautier, Baudelaire, Sand, Dumas, Berlioz, Daumier, Delacroix, and their peers without also calling to mind the Nadar photographs that keep their likenesses before our eyes and that are reproduced, it seems, endlessly. In this historically durable symbiosis, Nadar maintains a ubiquitous presence through the portraits of his friends, while their renown continues to be enhanced by his exceptional interpretive skills.

But ubiquity and quality are two different things. Although photographs labeled “Nadar” are everywhere, relatively few of them were made by Nadar. When the family firm ceased operation sometime around 1940 it had accumulated about sixty thousand negatives, a very large majority of them the indifferent products of photographic mass manufacture carried out by anonymous assistants or by Félix’s son, Paul.2 Editors, publishers, and historians have made use of whatever fit their momentary purposes: as long as the signature is there and the sitter has celebrity status, any Nadar photograph seems to be welcome. Thus far no one has made a serious, sustained effort to sift through this enormous heritage to determine which photographs can be accepted as having been taken by Félix Nadar and as conveying his personal vision. A recent upsurge of public interest and of scholarly research in photography has directed some attention toward Nadar’s early period, but critical and historical perspectives on the various types and phases of his portrait oeuvre are just beginning to emerge.3 One such is Nigel Gosling’s informative monograph Nadar (1976), which unfortunately reproduces a number of modern prints from the ruined glass negatives at the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites in Paris, rather than vintage prints housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The difference between the two kinds of prints is immense: compare figures 67 and 68.

Even on chronological questions, the prelogomena to the tracing of an artistic career, there is not much agreement. For example, a handful of recent publications feature a portrait described as that of the mother or wife of the artist, giving dates of 1853 to 1856; the photograph is indeed of Nadar’s wife, Ernestine, but was taken some forty years later and lacks all the characteristics of his early work.4 Another case in point is the photograph of Baron Taylor published in the popular serial work Galerie contemporaine during the 1870s and therefore one of Nadar’s best-known portraits (fig. 70). The late publication date and the use of accessories, typical of Nadar’s rue d’Anjou period, should have made it clear that this is not a product of his early years; however, since Nadar is widely believed to have “taken” Taylor during the 1850s, the portrait has invariably been dated ten or fifteen years too early.5 In fact, the early date belongs to another, unknown portrait of Taylor by Nadar, which exhibits more refined lighting and a less heavy-handed pose and in which the sitter is considerably younger (fig. 69). The failure of historians to arrive at even a rudimentary concept of Nadar’s chronological and stylistic evolution is all the more surprising since some important pioneer work was done in this direction in the 1930s, when Gisèle Freund pointed to Nadar’s switch to mass manufacture as a major turning point in his career. Unfortunately she did not corroborate her findings with concrete examples; nor did the few scholars who later followed up her observation.6 Separating Nadar’s carefully crafted photographs from his factory production thus remains an urgent desideratum in Nadar research.

This need cannot be fully answered within the scope of a
brief essay, but the following pages offer an approximate model of the stylistic evolution of Nadar’s portraiture. Although the notion of a style’s evolution frequently refers to developments in an artist’s career fueled by the dynamics of personal artistic growth, Nadar’s work exhibits a quite different pattern of change. Extended periods of technically and aesthetically uniform output end with the introduction of sudden and incisive modifications, and there follow once again years of consistency. At work is much more an economic than an artistic logic; frequently, change is brought about not by gradual individual growth but by economic necessity and technological innovations which emerge unpredictably, demanding immediate translation into commercially viable studio practice. Following Nadar through these various phases of his photographic work makes it possible to subdivide the great mass of surviving “Nadar” portraits into discrete categories based on chronological, technical, and artistic criteria.

NADAR: STUDIOS AND STYLES

Nadar’s amateur phase, 1854—55 Initially intent only on finding a lucrative career for his brother, Adrien, Nadar soon took photography lessons himself and in 1854 began to pursue photography as an amateur in his apartment at 113, rue Saint-Lazare. His first portraits of celebrated artists and writers date from this period. This work was temporarily interrupted in September, when Adrien, whose studio was floundering, asked Félix to enter into partnership with him. However, in January 1855 a quarrel took place, and Nadar left his brother’s for good and that spring established a commercial studio of his own. The preceding eighteen months constitute Nadar’s earliest period, with the portraits from that time falling into two distinct groups: his own amateur work at rue Saint-Lazare, and his collaborations with Adrien at the commercial studio on the boulevard des Capucines (see Françoise Heilbrun’s essay above). It is important for us to examine Nadar’s independent amateur activities, difficult as they are to trace in the absence of signed and dated prints from that brief period (January 1854 to May 1855).

A close examination of the portrait of Gustave Doré in figure 71 is instructive. Doré appears to be a few years younger here than in the famous portrait of about 1857 (fig. 72), which suggests a date for this print of 1854 or 1855. Nadar employs strong, direct sunlight and dispenses with furniture, in marked contrast to Adrien’s studio output of the same time. Technically the portrait leaves something to be desired: the figure is displaced to the left, leaving an empty space on the right, and the dark areas are undifferentiated, lacking transparency and detail. At the same time, the photograph’s fresh and spontaneous approach has a considerable aesthetic appeal. The avoidance of studio props and filtered light and the informal pose make it clear that this is not a commercial product but an improvised portrait sketch by the amateur Nadar, taken sometime before he opened his own studio and largely unaffected by his brother’s concurrent efforts. A stylistically related portrait of Philion also seems to belong in this category, as do ones of Baudelaire, Ernestine Nadar, and several others (see pls. 26, 34, 40).

With hardly any exceptions, Nadar’s earliest portraits are known in only two forms: unmounted vintage prints on salted paper, usually preserved in just a single specimen, and posthumous copy photographs made from the unique prints. In other words, it appears that during the subsequent years, when Nadar sold numerous copies of his celebrity portraits from the studios on rue Saint-Lazare and on the boulevard des Capucines, the negatives of his early amateur work were not available to him. Possibly he had stored them at his brother’s premises and lost control of them after the quarrel.

Photographie artistique Nadar, 1855—60 Nadar’s decision to become a professional portrait photographer seems to have been taken in the spring of 1855. At that time his first signed and mounted édition portrait—that is, a celebrity portrait issued for sale to the public—appeared, followed by advertisements in Parisian journals. In January 1856 Nadar established a firm, the modestly capitalized Société de Photographie Artistique Nadar et Cie. Since he remained at the same address, ingenious measures had to be taken to accommodate the studio’s space requirements. The old ground-floor apartment was essentially transformed into a reception facility; the garden served as a summer studio where clients posed in the open air, with mobile backdrops and reflectors arranged by assistants according to inconspicuous signals from Nadar; and several skylighted attic rooms provided an alternative salle de pose during the cold season. Little more than an expanded private apartment, this makeshift studio was a far cry from Mayer & Pierson’s sumptuous premises, and could not compare even with Adrien’s atelier, in its fashionable boulevard location.
Beginning in the spring of 1855, Nadar produced signed and mounted salted paper print portraits that were 11 by 8¼ inches (28 by 21 centimeters), a format immediately recognizable as his own. The new technical presentation went hand in hand with a new interpretive ambition. Vying for public attention and patronage, Nadar began to use the camera to present his sitters sumptuously rather than to approach them informally. He dramatized the striking gesture, the bearing, the visible essence of character. Augier's impeccable elegance is answered by Berlioz's proud isolation; the emaciated, obstinate, spirited Cicéri stands against Gautier's massive grandeur; Dör's youthful nonchalance offsets Chenavard's tragic gloom.

Particularly delightful is the broad range of costumes that appear in the rue Saint-Lazare photographs: scarves, cravats, collars, vests, coats are displayed in very personalized combinations. When Nadar turned to the production of portraits in far greater numbers, about 1861, a much blander style of dressing began to prevail in them, although we know of no dramatic change in fashions at that time. Thus it seems that as long as it was economically feasible, Nadar gave his sitters ample time and opportunity to dress distinctively and to carry off their attire in their own particular ways.

Nadar also proved to be a masterly director of the light sources in his studio. Eschewing the fixed and lifeless setups that were standard, he explored with evident delight countless ways of gradating and modulating the flow of light, thereby introducing a dynamic, even metaphoric quality into his portraits. Berlioz (pl. 72) does not simply stand in the light but seems slowly to emerge in it; the light is a full but filtered and softened stream from above that glorifies theleonine head and helps define and isolate the figure into a concentrated, columnar presence.

During this period Nadar’s portrait art relied on a generous allotment of time for each sitting. The resemblance intime at which he aimed depended on his ability to put the model at ease, and this prescribed a leisurely pace for the procedure, which usually began, according to Roger Greaves, with a wide-ranging conversation about topics of the day. The fact that 113, rue Saint-Lazare was as much a private residence as a professional establishment must have helped in this respect too. Once the posing session had begun, Nadar took further time to test a number of angles, draw out different expressions, experiment with various light sources and items of clothing. In short, he worked unhurriedly. With sittings measured in hours rather than minutes, he could observe and alter until the result was right. The variants of the portraits of Dör and Cicéri (pls. 43, 44 and 53, 54) show how in this early period Nadar managed to develop substantially different aspects of a personality in separate poses. In comparison, the variations elicited by Nadar’s later, much rationalized and abbreviated portrait procedure are negligible (see fig. 86).

While many of Nadar’s widely distributed Figures contemporaines (édition portraits) from the rue Saint-Lazare studio have survived, comparatively few portraits made for the private use of customers without celebrity status are known. Extant examples show that clientèle portraits were printed, mounted, and signed in much the same manner as édition portraits, but might also include such additional commercial features as the gradual fading of the print toward the edges (Nadar held a patent for this faddish dégradé process) or heavy retouching on the print by one of the “artists” in the studio. Sophisticated contemporary critics abhorred such tampering with the photographic process, deriding it as a concession to the poor taste of wealthy men and vain women, but the popular passion for doctored photographs increased throughout the 1850s and reduced the “pure” camera product to something of an endangered species (among large-format photographs, that is; carte de visite prints, small in size and price, did not lend themselves to manual “improvements”). Nadar stayed a purist at heart and as a matter of principle drew a sharp line between clientèle and édition portraits. Save for minor corrective measures, then considered a plain necessity, no manual work interfered with the photographic perfection of the latter. In a few exceptional cases vintage prints were later heavily reworked in a blackish watercolor tint, probably in the 1860s or after. Kept in the studio rather than sold, such images probably were used for producing édition prints in desired gradations of tone (fig. 66; compare fig. 19).

Photographic mass production: boulevard des Capucines, 1860–71: The beginning of the end of Nadar’s great period at 113, rue Saint-Lazare came inconspicuously in the autumn of 1859, when a Parisian journal advised its readers of a new fad: sitting for carte de visite portraits. Patented in 1854 by Déséré, the new format caught on five years later when that indefatigable entrepreneur put carte portraits of the imperial family into circulation. Four inches long and mounted on bristol, miniature pictures of this type were not only eminently collectible but also sensationally cheap; the 50 francs paid for a portrait of traditional size would buy
two dozen of Disdéri’s pocket versions. The bargain was hard to resist. Within months the carte de visite photograph established itself as the “social currency” of the time, as Oliver Wendell Holmes put it, and expanded into the somewhat larger cabinet- or album-size card a few years later, went on to dominate the photographic market for the rest of the century. As critics were quick to note, Disdéri had transformed the art of photography into an industry.

His competitors in the marketplace were presented with a painful choice: either switch to this strictly rationalized mass production of pictures offered at bargain prices, or close down. Nadar called the alternatives “se soumettre ou se démettre” (submit or resign); he chose the first.

In the summer of 1860, before the carte de visite rage was a year old and immediately after Disdéri had opened a partial studio eulogized in the press, Nadar abandoned his semi-private premises to embark on the construction of a large new establishment on the fashionable boulevard des Capucines. By the time the building at number 35 was completed fifteen months later, Nadar had expended 230,000 francs, all borrowed. He had created an environment of spectacular luxury, had quadrupled his workforce, and had adopted the carte de visite as a principal product; now he stood poised to challenge Disdéri on the man’s own territory.

Nadar’s changing economic and aesthetic priorities had already become apparent in the year between the closing of his old studio and the inauguration of his new one. In various temporary settings, Nadar launched two short-lived ventures: “photographie électronique” and “photographie hipique.” In the electrically lighted portraits of 1860–61, some of the previously shunned studio paraphernalia (stacks of books, chairs and tables) make their first appearance, coupled with the conventional poses automatically suggested by such props. More importantly, the subtly filtered and channeled sunlight of Nadar’s early portraiture gives way to the harshness of the electrical illumination, which polarizes the image into flat black or white zones with few mediating, modulating tones. The resulting pictures fail by a large margin to match the fine products of the Saint-Lazare studio (compare figs. 72 and 74). Doubtless aware of their shortcomings, Nadar soon returned to natural light.

At his photographie hipique studio in the Bois de Boulogne, studio furniture also sometimes came into use. Lighting and poses seem more refined than in the electrical experiments but still far from the sophistication of the rue Saint-Lazare period. The picture format is often reduced to a size halfway between a carte de visite and a traditional portrait; the printing technique vacillates between salted paper and the newer albumen. Equestrian portraits by Nadar, which, after all, must have been the main specialty of his atelier hipique, seem to be extremely rare (some may have traveled under the name of Delton). At any rate, both the equestrian and the electrical portraits were only passing preludes to a grander commercial venture.

The moment Nadar opened his “crystal palace” on the boulevard des Capucines, the mass production of cartes de visite began. It is difficult to estimate the volume of his business; his private clientele must have at least tripled or quadrupled during the 1860s. With his old specialty, celebrity portraits, Nadar proceeded along two lines. He copied his fine portraits of the 1850s onto small negatives in order to reissue them in the new miniature size. He also launched a fresh portrait campaign and photographed hundreds of famous contemporaries in carte de visite fashion, three or four images per glass plate (fig. 86). From the dated pictures submitted to the Bibliothèque Nationale in fulfillment of the dépôt légal (copyright) requirement, it can be concluded that the very large majority of these celebrity
portraits were taken in 1861–62; in 1863 the number declined markedly, and thereafter it became a mere trickle. After two years of Nadar’s vigorous exertions to set up a well-functioning studio and amass a lucrative stockpile of _édition_ portraits for circulation in both full-size and _carte de visite_ formats, his volatile mind began to be diverted to other subjects—principally aviation, which would become an increasingly absorbing pursuit.

Although Nadar’s embrace of the _carte de visite_ fashion spelled aesthetic decline, his concessions to the economics of mass production and the whims of popular taste were kept to a minimum. While most _carte_ portraits are filled with draperies, columns, balustrades, armchairs, and Sunday-best costumes and often show the figure full length in order to display all that finery, Nadar preferred to rely on plain backdrops and a few pieces of studio furniture (a tasseled chair, a square table, a truncated column) and generally composed the photograph to place greatest emphasis on the sitter’s face. Still, the diminution of artistic quality is unmistakable in Nadar’s card portraits of the 1860s. We need only put a Doré or a Clésinger of the 1860s side by side with earlier photographs of the same subjects to realize that something essential has been lost (compare figs. 72 and 75, 85 and 86). The weaker products of the boulevard des Capucines period can be attributed to studio assistants, of which there were many; Nadar repeatedly found it necessary to advertise after some long absence that he had returned to run his establishment on a “personal and daily” basis. But even in the best work of the period Nadar is not quite himself anymore. Under tremendous pressure to turn out pictures by the thousand and to pay off an enormous debt, he could not help but resort to highly rationalized and routinized operations which left little leeway for artistic experimentation. He began to produce formula portraits, even though his was a plain, purist formula that concentrated on the personality of the sitter and avoided the pomposity of many contemporary portraits.

The studio continued to turn out large-format portraits as well, but it seems that Nadar was rarely involved. For illustrious or otherwise remarkable sitters, however, he was prepared to reactivate his artistry. The portrait of Sarah Bernhardt in figure 82, with its skillfully arranged draperies and pose, is one of Nadar’s most admired photographs. While the _carte_ of the soon-to-be-prominent actress (fig. 83) is conventional and even awkward, in the large photograph, the composition, with light from the side and one arm resting on the column, is a formulaic one that frequently recurs in Nadar portraits.

An important development was Nadar’s shift from salted paper printing to albumen printing. While the superiority of salted paper for delicate tonal modulation remained undisputed, it was nevertheless generally abandoned about 1860 in favor of albumen papers, which produced a sharp picture with clear resolution overall and thus could render the minute detail of _carte de visite_ negatives. Theoretically, the older papers could have remained in use for the printing of large negatives, but practically, this was not feasible; once albumen papers were being factory produced and were available inexpensively, the continued use of individually prepared salted paper sheets became uneconomical. It is a testimony of Nadar’s stubborn artistic inclination that he attempted to revive the salted paper print at later moments in his career, but these remained short-lived, experimental ventures.

Despite Nadar’s entrepreneurial skills, his lavish studio did not fare well, and he barely averted financial collapse in 1865–66. When the Franco-Prussian War ended all regular economic activity, he dissolved the enterprise on the boulevard.

*From Félix to Paul Nadar: the years 1872–95* Nadar borrowed large sums again to open his third studio, in an hôtel privé at 51, rue d’Anjou. This time he adopted a “truly economic” business formula, scaling down the studio’s workforce and space needs while catering to a socially and financially more potent clientele. Success came quickly. By the mid-1870s he had paid off his old debts and could claim to own the “first studio of Paris.”

Yet this is the period when Nadar began to retire from photography. As his wife took charge of the finances and his son became directeur artistique, Félix resumed his literary career, moved into his “hermitage” outside Paris, and was a stranger in his own studio long before he signed it over to Paul in 1895. In fact, the business seems to have thrived as Nadar’s influence diminished, since Ernestine and Paul were not averse to the kind of concessions that he had resisted for decades. Soon artificial backdrops, elaborately carved furniture, and coquetish, theatrical poses rendered “Nadar” photographs all but indistinguishable from conventional studio products (figs. 95, 91).

Nadar did remain personally committed to making celebrity portraits, even though those few pictures became
stylisitcally isolated within the total studio production. His interest was not in rising stage stars or literary newcomers but in the established cultural celebrities already numbered in his gallery, whom he continued to photograph through the late 1880s. A look at figures 87 to 89 demonstrates how little Nadar's spartan portrait approach changed over the thirty years that separate these three photographs of Émile Augier, a popular playwright. Nadar stayed in contact with many of the bohemian companions he had first befriended three or four decades earlier, and it is moving to see this heroic generation of Hugos, Dorés, and Offenbachs advance in age in Nadar's successive exposures until they face his camera for the last time on their deathbeds.

A Typology of Nadar Prints

In the course of his long and productive photographic career, Nadar went through a succession of studios and styles. There can be little doubt that the portraits of the rue Saint-Lazare period, still unaffected by the cruel laws of mass manufacture, represent his finest artistic achievements by a large margin. However, many negatives and prints from the rue Saint-Lazare period have been copied and recopied relentlessly for more than a century, leaving us in many cases with a whole array of prints all going back to the same original exposure. But careful critical examination can separate an original from a print several steps removed and fine craftsmanship from indifferent mass manufacture. Here we will concentrate on a small group of portraits executed within the same period at Nadar's rue Saint-Lazare studio and on the diverse prints based on negatives from them, most conveniently classified by "generation."

First-generation proof prints There also exist a small number of proof prints made from the same negatives as the finished prints.31 These salted paper prints are similar to the finished ones except that they have not been rounded off, mounted, signed, or retouched (thus specks and blemishes are clearly visible) and obviously were not meant for sale. As Nadar recollects in his memoirs, proofs of the photographs taken during a portrait session were routinely presented to the sitter for review and selection of the most appealing pose.32 Examples are figures 79 and 80, two photographs of Cicéri from the same sitting, both loose, unretouched proof prints. The first image was reprinted to become a signed and mounted édition print. The second photograph (also reproduced as pl. 54), apparently not reprinted, is still extremely valuable both because it shows us Nadar exploring different aspects of a model and because it is very likely the unique print of its image. Since the proof prints were never exhibited, they are often fresher and richer in tone than many of the surviving édition prints, and, not being retouched, they have a particular appeal for the modern viewer.

Second-generation prints During the 1860s at his new studio at 35, boulevard des Capucines, Nadar continued to make édition prints from negatives of the preceding decade. These are glossy albumen prints, usually rectangular and mounted on cardboard sheets that sometimes bear a blind
stamp with the new address. The prints are signed “Nadar” in red ink. The albumen prints lack the tonal range and subtlety and the delicate modeling of the earlier salted paper prints. Usually printed by studio assistants, they carry Nadar’s signature. They can be thought of as “second-generation” édition prints.

There are also unfinished “second-generation” prints—unmounted, untrimmed, and in most cases, unsigned. The print of Champfleury in figure 81, for instance, renders the whole surface of the negative, including marginal labels and inscriptions that served internal classification purposes and are never found on proof prints of the 1850s. On the picture are the sitter’s name, written in black ink in Nadar’s handwriting, and pencil lines marking where to crop for the finished édition prints. (Finished and signed Champfleury portraits issued in the 1860s are cropped exactly according to these marks.) It is clear that 1860s proof prints made from 1850s negatives served as a guide for darkroom personnel producing édition prints. Since by the 1860s Nadar was retouching negatives, his proof prints of these years show few specks and blemishes; consequently the édition portraits are rarely retouched on the print itself.

Nadar also reissued many of his rue Saint-Lazare portraits in the tiny carte de visite format by making copy negatives of the original prints. Miniaturization did not enhance the aesthetic quality of these portraits. (In this period Nadar was also arranging sittings with celebrities and making the new photographs which he issued as cartes de visite.)

Third-generation prints This term applies to all copies made from the rue Saint-Lazare portraits under Paul Nadar’s supervision between the 1870s and the 1930s. Over the years many printing techniques were employed. Most prints were made from copy negatives taken of prints rather than from the original glass negatives. Several hundred of these copy negatives had been produced in the 1860s in the carte de visite and carte album (12 by 16 centimeters, about 4½ by 6 inches) formats, and subsequently Paul produced many more (see fig. 73). Although they are frequently used as the basis for reproductions of Nadar’s images, these copy negatives are of dubious quality. Most do reproduce “first-generation” vintage prints of the 1850s (sometimes showing traces of Nadar’s erased signature and address of that period), but the prints from which they were made were often pale, retouched, cropped, or otherwise flawed, and rather careless copying procedures did not improve matters; decidedly, Paul Nadar did not share his father’s concern for impeccable craftsmanship. The portrait of Clésinger seen in figure 81 is a good example. Although the original salted paper print was severely cropped and a crease ran across the face, Paul pinned it on a wooden board for copying. The resulting contretype thus reproduces a damaged fragment of Nadar’s splendid portrait of the 1850s, with the rich tonality of the original leveled to a dull gray. Nevertheless, despite its aesthetic shortcomings, this copy negative has historical value because it records a portrait of which no vintage print is now known.

In many cases, of course, Paul Nadar had the old glass plates of the rue Saint-Lazare studio at his disposal. In addition to marketing the small-format series, he continued to make contact prints or enlargements directly from the original negatives. Since none of the printing papers he used could match the delicate tonality of salted paper and, to a lesser degree, of albumen, these “third-generation” portraits are generally inferior to the earlier prints. Occasionally Paul even altered his father’s negatives, often by blocking out the richly modulated backgrounds.

In a special category are the many Nadar portraits in the serial publication Galerie contemporaine, which was issued in several editions during the 1870s. Issues were printed in large editions by photomechanical processes, carbon printing or Woodburytype. While the prints are tonally fresh even today, these early and rather rudimentary reproductive techniques distorted the Nadar originals to a certain degree, particularly by coagulation effects or by a slick gelatin surface that rendered the face as smooth as porcelain (see fig. 70).

Fourth-generation prints After Paul Nadar’s death in 1939, his vast archive of negatives became the property of the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, in Paris; since then many prints have been made from the negatives by highly qualified individuals, among them Claudine Sudre and Daniel Masclet. While many of these modern prints are superior to Paul’s, they are flawed, essentially for two reasons. First, the century-old negatives are all damaged to some degree, and often there are layers of posthumous retouching (see figs. 67, 68). Second, modern chemicals and modern taste have produced harsh, high-contrast prints that deviate substantially from the original salted paper images with their soft, transparent complexion.11 All told, there is no substitute for a vintage print signed “Nadar 113 St. Lazare.”
A Comparative Picture Portfolio

Nadar's photographic legacy consists of over sixty thousand portraits. The vast majority either were taken by assistants under the more or less remote supervision of Félix Nadar or date from a period when complete control of the studio had passed into the hands of Paul Nadar. Thus the comparatively small number of vintage prints from Nadar's period of highest craftsmanship during the 1850s have almost disappeared under an avalanche of mass-manufactured prints from the 1860s, 1870s, and later decades, which include reprints, copy prints, and other reproductions at second or third remove of Nadar's great portraits of the 1850s. The problems of originality, intelligible categorization, and quality posed by this massive body of works are just beginning to be understood. This print portfolio is designed to clarify the issues and facilitate visual comparison.

Rediscovering the "Real" Nadar

During the past hundred years, Nadar's portrait art has been perceived largely through the distorting lens of two kinds of misleading material: posthumous prints made from original but increasingly ruined negatives, and mass-manufactured photomechanical reproductions (printed, that is, from printing blocks, not negatives) of works from Nadar's late and mostly indifferent "factory" period of the 1870s. Nadar's superbly crafted but very rare vintage prints of the 1850s, by contrast, remained largely unknown or unrecognized and are just beginning to be critically studied. Here, two vintage prints (figs. 67, 69) are compared with a modern print from a severely damaged negative (fig. 68), in which the tonal gradation is much harsher and cruder, and with a carbon print of the 1870s (fig. 70), where studio props are conspicuous and there is no tonal gradation at all in the background.


Nadar's Early Work, Rise, and Decline

The celebrated illustrator Gustave Doré sat frequently for Nadar over the period of a decade, and his portraits allow us to trace the evolution of Nadar's style through the first ten years. Figure 71 is a document from Nadar's amateur period. Placed off center and exposed to direct, unmanipulated sunlight, the sitter presents himself unceremoniously and intimately to the camera of a fellow bohemian and friend. The two poses in figures 72 and 73 summarize Nadar's commercial studio style of the 1850s, which was based on imaginative, eloquent staging designed to satisfy public curiosity. Skillful lighting effects and colorful, self-conscious dressing and posing are very much a part of this style. As Nadar is forced into rapid, high-volume production during the early 1860s, however, a bland, stereotyped portrait approach emerges (figs. 74, 75) which relies on conventional dress and body language, flat lighting, and traditional studio props.

Figure 72. Nadar. Gustave Doré, 1846–48. Salted paper print, mounted and signed; from the rue Saint-Lazare studio. Société Française de Photographie, Paris


Figure 75. Nadar. Gustave Doré. Modern print from a *carte de visite* negative made in the early 1860s at the boulevard des Capucines studio. Caisse Nationale des monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris
Nadar at Rue Saint-Lazare: Creative Variation

Working during the 1850s at his unpretentious rue Saint-Lazare studio, Nadar produced at most a handful of portraits per day. Consequently he could take the time to elicit characteristic poses from his sitters: compare the two striking variants in figures 79 and 80. He was also able to devote himself to skillful darkroom operations, as is evident in the two variant salted paper prints, figures 77 and 78, printed from the same, much lighter negative (see fig. 76) with the intent of casting the sitter in a melancholy mood. While the portraits of Chenavard are commercial prints—finished, signed, and mounted—the Cicéri prints are loose, unfinished proof prints with numerous unretouched specks clearly visible. Because they remained on file in the studio and were never exposed to light, proof prints are often the freshest and richest vintage prints available from a given negative. Figure 81 is an albumen proof print of the early 1860s that does not quite match the fine tonality of the earlier salted paper prints.

Figure 76. Nadar. Paul-Marc Chenavard. Modern print from a negative made 1856–58 at the rue Saint-Lazare studio. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris

Figure 79. Nadar. Charles Cicéri, 1855–59. Salted paper print; unmounted proof print of which mounted (or "published") examples are known. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie

Figure 78. Nadar. Paul-Marc Chenavard, 1836–18. Salted paper print, mounted and signed; a variant of figure 77. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie


When Disdéri introduced mass manufacturing principles into the practice of portrait photography in 1859, Nadar was forced to follow suit in order to survive. In 1861 he opened a sumptuous studio on a fashionable boulevard and proceeded to produce dozens of portraits daily in the span of the same few daylight hours during which he had previously photographed no more than two or three visitors. As his workforce swelled to fifty employees, Nadar’s own involvement shifted from making the portraits to entrepreneurial organization and supervision of business affairs. When a famous patron such as Sarah Bernhardt appeared, Nadar still seems to have conducted the portrait session in person, but even these images incorporate standard stereotyped arrangements (lateral lighting, arm resting on column, etc.). As a result, little distinguishes the portrait of a Sarah Bernhardt from those of less eminent clients (figs. 82–84). In figures 85 and 86 the contrast is dramatically evident between a splendid 1850s portrait of the sculptor Clésinger, distinctive in attitude and attire, and a more routinely manufactured photograph of the same sitter, which demonstrates the bland conventionality of Nadar’s cartes de visite of the 1860s.

Figure 82. Nadar. Sarah Bernhardt. Modern print from a negative of 1864. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris
Figure 83. Nadar. Sarah Bernhardt, 1862. Carte de visite (albumen silver print). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie

Figure 84. Nadar. Jules-Isaac Mirès. Modern print from a negative of the early 1860s. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris


Figure 86. Nadar. Auguste Clésinger. Modern print from a negative of the 1860s for cartes de visite. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris
Nadar at Rue d’Anjou: Keeping the Faith

In 1872 Nadar opened a new studio on the rue d’Anjou, but he soon became a stranger in this smaller, streamlined establishment. As his son, Paul, assumed responsibility, a faddish, decorative portrait style emerged; in return for profitability, everything was abandoned that had rendered Nadar’s portrait art unique and distinctive. However, from time to time Nadar returned to the studio to pay one more photographic homage to an old friend, such as the playwright Émile Augier, and the almost Roman dignity of these occasional renderings (fig. 89; see also fig. 70) makes them easily distinguishable from the indifferent remainder of the studio’s output. The photograph of Augier from the rue Saint-Lazare period (fig. 87) may possess a flair unmatched in later versions (figs. 88, 89); in all, however, these three likenesses taken over a span of three decades amount to an impressive demonstration that Nadar himself would go only so far in making concessions to commercial imperatives. His portraits remained free of frivolous paraphernalia and emerged throughout as concentrated documents of face-to-face encounters.

1. “La figure de Nadar serait gravée sur des pièces de monnaie, qu’elle ne serait pas plus connue. Il n’y a pas en France de notoriété plus grande de la sienne” (Claudin 1884, p. 83). Alfred Delvau (1867) also emphasizes Nadar’s notoriety and unfailing presence at every public occasion: “Qui ne le connaît, à Paris, en France, en Europe?” (p. 219).

2. This number is given in Philippe Néagu, Jean-Jacques Poulet-Allamagny, and Jean-François Bory, Nadar, 2 vols. (Paris, 1979), vol. 1, p. 34, along with the information that 30,000 of these images are part of the série édition, while the rest belong to the historically and aesthetically much less interesting série clientéle. Within the celebrity series, a distinction can be made between the relatively small core of fewer than 7,000 collodion negatives taken before 1880—83 under Félix Nadar’s supervision and the over 25,000 gelatin plates produced after 1880—83 under Paul Nadar’s aegis.

Paul Nadar has never been studied as a photographer in his own right. However, some useful hints can be gleaned from the text and the partially chronological picture presentation in volume 1 of the same source. There is additional information in the later chapters of Roger Greaves, Nadar, ou le paradoxe vital (Paris, 1980). See also Nigel Gosling, Nadar (London, 1976), pp. 186ff.


Figure 88. Nadar. Émile Augier. Modern print from a negative of the early 1860s. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris

Figure 89. Nadar. Émile Augier, 1885. Albumen print from the rue d’Anjou studio. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie

Figure 90. Nadar Studio. Alice Regnault, ca. 1880. Carte album from the rue d’Anjou studio. Musée Carnavalet, Paris

Figure 91. Nadar Studio. Édouard Detaille. Modern print made from a negative of 1876 from the rue d’Anjou studio. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris
6. Originally published in 1916 under the title La Photographie en France au dix-neuvième siècle: Essai de sociologie et d’esthétique, Gisèle Freund’s book was republished with a few new chapters as Photographie et société (Paris, 1974); see p. 47 for Nadar’s aesthetic decline under Dideri’s influence. This observation has been followed up by McCauley 1980, p. 64, and by Jean Sagne, L’Atelier du photographe (1840–1940) (Paris, 1984), pp. 61ff., 246ff. Most other authors seem simply to assume that Nadar’s art remained stationary for decades. Néagu, Poulet-Allamagny, and Bory (1979) put this assumption in writing by declaring that “practically no evolution took place” in Nadar’s oeuvre between 1854 and 1875 (vol. 1, p. 56).
7. Two excellent biographies provide rich information about Nadar’s life: Jean Prinet and Antoinette Dilasser, Nadar (Paris, 1966) and Greaves 1980. All biographical information in this essay not specifically credited is taken from these volumes. Other important details can be gleaned from Nadar’s own Revendication de la propriété exclusive du pseudonyme Nadar, 1875.
8. Nadar’s earliest signed édition portrait known to me represents Virgile Trelat and is dated May 1851 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu).
10. In his Revendication, 1847 (part 2, page k), Nadar claimed to have a daily influx of twenty clients, but this figure is not reconcilable with his known income and his extensive journalistic pursuits. Greaves 1980 probably comes closer to the truth in asserting that Nadar received four to five visits daily “at most” (p. 181). For resemblance intime: Revendication, part 2, page 0.
11. The important distinction in Nadar’s studio between édition and clientèle portraits has been pointed out in Néagu, Poulet-Allamagny, and Bory 1975, vol. 1, p. 55.
12. During the 1850s, technical shortcomings of the young medium made a certain amount of “remedial” retouching not only legitimate but inevitable. Overt “artistic” retouching or repainting was highly controversial, however. Ernest Lacan blamed this practice on the bad taste of the public; see his exhibition reviews in La Lumière 5 (October 13, 1855), pp. 161–62, and 6 (January 12, 1856), p. 215, and in Revue photographique 1 (September 5, 1856), p. 161. Highly cultivated amateur photographers like Eugène Durieu and Humbert de Molaord shared his views, as discussions in Bulletin de la Société française de photographie, 1855–66, indicate. There can be no doubt that Nadar, as an artist, abhorred excessive retouching; as a businessman, however, he could not avoid practicing it on demand (also see McCauley 1980, pp. 10, 62ff.). The presence of “artists” in his rue Saint-Lazare studio is documented (Greaves 1980, p. 179), and in 1859 Nadar even took out a patent for the production of “photographies colorées sans retouches, dites photographies-Nadar”; see Nadar, exh. cat., Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, 1961), no. 149.
13. They include photographs of Murger, Mornsay, and Meissonier.
16. Nadar, Quand j’étais photographe, 1900, p. 205. On the Bisson brothers, Le Gray, and others who were not flexible enough to meet Disdéri’s challenge, see H. and A. Gernsheim 1969, pp. 301ff.
18. For locations and additional information, see Greaves 1980, pp. 223ff.; Sagne 1984, pp. 81, 147.
20. For the general switch from salted paper to albumenized paper produced in factory style, see H. and A. Gernsheim 1969, pp. 196ff.
21. See the salted paper prints printed from already deteriorated negatives at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the J. Paul Getty Museum.
23. These are preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the J. Paul Getty Museum.
24. Nadar, Quand j’étais photographe, 1900, p. 137. Nadar perfected the viewing of the proof prints into a ritual that took place every day at a fixed hour.
25. For the problem of modern prints from historical negatives, see “Vintage or not vintage, sept points de vue,” in Photographes 1, no. 2 (September 1982), especially Claudine Sudre’s contribution on p. 19. Sudre’s claim that “the majority of 19th-century prints have lost their initial tonal values” and therefore need to be “resurrected” in modern reprints is certainly not true of Nadar’s usually exquisite vintage prints.
Nadar the photographer, whose career had many vicissitudes and only a brief period of true inspiration, was essentially a portraitist. From the studio on the rue Saint-Lazare to the one he opened in Marseilles late in life, his work unfolds like an immense gallery of contemporaries, thousands of faces constituting exceptionally rich material for the study of his art. But some of the works that lie outside this genre are, paradoxically, key to an understanding of the artist’s specific genius.

It is generally agreed that Nadar came to portrait photography by way of caricature and that he stayed with it not only because it suited him but because he found in it an honorable way to support himself, at an age when the pleasures of a rather precarious bohemian existence began to pall, without giving up his social world. At first blush, there is no common ground between the portraits—a Baudelaire or a Daumier—and his other most important images, a heteroclite assortment: nine photographs of a hermaphrodite (autumn 1860), the Main du banquier D*** (Hand of the Banker D***, spring 1861), seventy-three views of the Paris catacombs (1861–62), six images of helicopters invented by the vicomte de Ponton d’Amécourt (summer 1863), twenty-three pictures of the Paris sewers (winter 1864–65), and finally the very much later sequence, an interview with the chemist Chevreul (1886). Such diversity attests to Nadar’s wide-ranging curiosity as well as to his insatiable appetite for the difficult and the novel. Indeed, what connects these pictures, aside from their dates, and constitutes their principal interest is the evidence they provide of investigations undertaken to advance either photography itself, as in the case of shots taken by artificial light, or science more generally. Although attention now centers largely on Nadar the photographer, photography was only one of his pursuits, the one in which he engaged most regularly for economic reasons but not necessarily his favorite.

The atypical images are precious, then, precisely because they occupy the border area between the tirelessly explored field of photography and the rather chaotic, mysterious thicket of his other adventurous enterprises. We can analyze them as photographs and find the portraitist’s characteristic style: the subject captured with sobriety and nuance, a concern with light, the impression that beneath apparent simplicity are hidden the deepest enigmas, and that unique gift for producing an “intimate likeness” of beings and things. We can also search in these pictures for the secret of Nadar’s passion for aerial navigation or his fascination with medicine; when Nadar brought his camera to bear upon
these themes—after trumpeting them in essays, manifestos, spectacular demonstrations, and tall tales—he was all purposeful scrutiny. What a difference between the prints he produced, almost dry in their purity, and the hullabaloo that attended their realization! This was true with his portraiture but even more strikingly with his other photographic work. That so much literature, so much thirst for glory, so much bluster, resulted in a few perfect images is not the least of Nadar’s paradoxes. In his telling, these photographs had all been produced under difficult, even fantastic circumstances; they were the “never-before-seen,” challenges to the impossible. “Bestirring himself, thrashing about, making himself visible to everyone, saying to the public, ‘Look at me closely, at me, the true, the one and only, the unique Nadar!’”¹¹ he focused all the attention on his person, and only now that the tumult has subsided do we have the leisure to rediscover works long overshadowed by the portraits.

**The Hermaphrodite**

Sometime before 1861 Nadar took nine photographs that constitute the portrait of a hermaphrodite (fig. 93, pls. 94, 95).¹ They have recently aroused the interest of historians of photography; published, exhibited, commented upon, they have emerged from the shadows.⁶ Yet everything about them remains unknown, and positioning them within Nadar’s work is not an easy task. They are his only medical photographs.¹² We now know how strongly medicine attracted him: given his imaginary or incipient medical studies at Lyons and Paris in 1837–38—they inspired six short stories published in various journals and republished in 1856 in the very successful *Quand j’étiais étudiant*—and his friendships with many eminent physicians, one can truthfully speak of medicine as a passion that pervaded his life.

Who then is the hermaphrodite? In a modern introduction to Henri Murger’s *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*, Loïc Chotard reports an identification over which we must linger briefly, since it is the only one ever proposed: “Musette . . ., the Mariette whose adventures Champfleury described . . ., would seem to be the strange hermaphrodite who served as a model for some amazing photographs taken by Nadar.”¹⁸ This unexpected connection is apparently a misunderstanding deriving from an English writer’s use of the term “hermaphrodite” when paraphrasing a nineteenth-century French description of Mariette as an “androgyne,” or slender, boyish-looking woman.¹⁹ The description was written about 1840; by 1855, when Nadar photographed Mariette nude, her body had filled out and was unmistakably female (fig. 94).¹¹ This woman, whose grace and beauty were much vaunted, thus has nothing in common with the sad creature photographed by Nadar. We must search elsewhere.

The most plausible theory is that the series was commissioned by a doctor, and a note that accompanies the registration of copyright seems to bear this out: “On the express condition that these plates intended for a purely scientific use not be put on display.”²² An undated letter addressed to Nadar by the celebrated clinician Armand Trouseau becomes pertinent: “My dear friend, you must, I repeat, you must immediately do the photographic portrait of the young woman whom my friend Dr. Dumont-Pallier will bring to you. She suffers from a very strange malady that must be depicted so that in several months we can gauge the results of the treatment. See this young person and photograph her strange infirmity with as much truth and art as

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Figure 93. Nadar. Hermaphrodite, 1861. Albumen print. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie
you can. Many thanks. / A. Trouseau/ The fee is no one’s concern but mine. This young person will leave today at 4 o’clock.”13

How can one be sure that the letter refers to the young hermaphrodite? One can’t, but we know of no other Nadar photographs that would match Trouseau’s request.14 The doctor was an acquaintance of Nadar, who includes him in a list of people he photographed by artificial light: “My friend and neighbor who lives opposite me, Professor Trouseau.”14

Armand Trouseau, an eminence in his profession, occupied the chair of clinical medicine at the Hôtel-Dieu (the municipal hospital) from 1852 to 1864. This unusual personality, described by one contemporary as “the embodiment of a painter’s image of the physician,”16 tall, thin, dazzling his students with his eloquence and culture as he lectured in a light blue flannel jacket that showed his gray side whiskers to advantage, was bound to charm the carrot-topped photographer who worked in a red flannel jacket. He is perfectly summed up in the few lines addressed to Nadar, which express his taste for the “piquant,” his “picturesque diction,” and above all, in his final aesthetic recommendations, his singular conception of medicine as “an art, not a science.”17

Amédée Dumont-Pallier, who became his head surgeon in 1862, had already been working at the Hôtel-Dieu since September 1860.18 Assuming that the letter does concern the hermaphrodite, the photographs must have been made between September 1860 and January 7, 1861 (the date of copyright).19

This letter indicates that the photographs were taken before the treatment commenced. What kind of treatment was it? The only kind possible at that time would have been surgery,20 and the one comparable operation of which a trace emerges from the records was performed at the Hôtel-Dieu in June 1862 by the illustrious surgeon Jules-Germain Maisonneuve, who specialized in, among other things, genital disorders. It was performed on another, older patient.21

But the slightly blurred figure who points out the anomalous genitalia with a clinical gesture in one of Nadar’s nine plates is none other than Dr. Maisonneuve. What could be more natural than to find engaged in this spectacular case—a textbook example of hermaphroditism—two such men as Trouseau, famous for his curiosity and “the boldness of his therapeutic method,” and Maisonneuve, whose shocking derring-do had made him “without doubt the most astonishing surgeon of [his] century”?22

One would have expected Nadar to advertise an episode that flattered his vanity by linking him with scientific celebrities. Why did he remain silent about it, even in his private correspondence? Doubtless for the same reason that constrained the two physicians, who apparently never published either a study or the images.23 Did the “young person” flee, terrified of their rash intentions? Is it not more likely that the operation took place and failed, perhaps even resulting in death? This second scenario could have had legal consequences (see n. 20), which meant that prudence was advisable. At any rate, one can hardly believe that Nadar was indifferent. His lively and enduring interest in hermaphroditism is borne out by the presence of books on the subject in his library;24 by his interest in Saint Wilgeforte, a bearded woman martyr,25 and most tellingly by the deeply personal nature of his response to Trouseau’s commission, with an image of the greatest possible “truth and art.”

The first of the nine images shows the hermaphrodite naked except for shoes and stockings, standing on a low platform covered with a dark cloth (fig. 93).26 The tanned

face and neck bespeak humble origins, which is what one would expect of a patient sent by the Hôtel-Dieu. The pose is awkward, even embarrassed, the thick-featured face is expressionless. This is the only view in which the subject is seen full length. The others are details: the legs, whose powerful musculature is clearly displayed; the male genitalia (pl. 94); and lastly—with the patient lying down and wearing a large white shirt—both female and male genitalia, photographed several times from an increasingly close vantage point (pl. 95). Visible in the background is the hermaphrodite’s face, covered with her hand. The modest gesture was either instinctive or suggested by Nadar, who possibly wanted a faceless portrait, the face being secondary. The model masks herself, leaving it for Nadar to do the revealing. Indeed, it is an inverted portrait: the face veiled, the eyes concealed, and only the unshovable exhibited.

The final mystery is that Nadar, who didn’t trouble to copyright most of his portraits, early in 1861 copyrighted two complete sets of these images, mounted on white b ristol and stamped with the address of his studio, 35, boulevard des Capucines, which confirms that the photographs were taken (or at least mounted) in 1860. Logic suggests that copyright was registered because Nadar or Trouseau planned to disseminate these plates among medical men or even to publish them. Given their content, the censor’s prior authorization would have been indispensable to avoid legal action. It was obtained, as already stated, on the condition that the photographs not be exhibited in public. Despite this authorization, there is no record of their ever having been distributed.8

The Hand of the Banker D****

This dry, hard hand (pl. 89) with a scar across it seems to possess, if not the same grace, at least the same mysterious weight as the mummy’s foot described by Théophile Gautier in 1840 in his short story of that name (“Le Pied de momie”).9 It differs completely from the many other studies of hands done during that period, which, inspired by painting, show the back, never the palm.10 This palm, whose fate lines cross an old wound, certainly drew Nadar’s attention; his gift for eliciting the secrets of those he photographed seized on new material. One would like to think that in this palm, obligingly opened by the banker, he saw his true face. The subtitle of the print, Chirographical Study (study of handwriting; in this case, probably as a clue to character), reinforces this idea, which links it to the “portraits” of the hermaphrodite. And Nadar’s library contained a work by Adolphe Desbarolles entitled Mystères de la main: Révélations complètes (Mysteries of the Hand: A Complete Disclosure), which explained pseudoscientifically how to read character in the lines of the hand.12 If Harpagon, the name of Molière’s miser, means “the tightfisted man,” then here, open for once, is his hand.

The photograph, whose bristol mount bears the handwritten inscription “Image obtained in daylight, printed by artificial light,” was probably taken during the first months of 1861 in order to illustrate a process of “printing photographs by electric or gas light” that Nadar had just patented.13 It was exhibited at the Société Française de Photographie that same year, along with seven other images also taken or printed by electric light, and was offered to the Société on that occasion (see n. 29). The identity of this hand’s owner has not yet been elucidated. Might he have been the financier Benjamin Delessert, an amateur photographer and member of the Société Française de Photographie?

Underground Paris

The hundred or so photographs taken by Nadar in the catacombs and then in the sewers present, first of all, a problem of dating. It has always been thought that they were taken simultaneously to illustrate as dramatically as possible his patented process of photography by electric light. The date given is either 1861 or 1865,14 but the assumption is that they resulted from a single three-month campaign of underground photography. Nadar himself, in his writings, invariably speaks about these two expeditions as if they had occurred conjointly.

His account of “Paris souterrain” was published in his memoirs, Quand j’étais photographe (1900),15 but it had been written much earlier and first appeared in the collective work Paris-Guide, printed in 1867 on the occasion of the Exposition Universelle.16 It had then been cut up into articles for Paris-Photographe, his son Paul’s review, in 1891.17 The form of the narrative, a walk through underground Paris with the narrator leading a pretty tourist first into the catacombs and then into the sewers, maintains the illusion of simultaneity, as does the brief conclusion in which Nadar explains the technical difficulties he faced. Indeed,
one reads, “This nasty ordeal [of photographing] in the sewers and catacombs lasted no fewer than three consecutive months.” In a letter on these same photographs written in 1889, Nadar remained fuzzy: “I obtained ... with great location difficulties, constantly having to improvise installations, the hundred shots of underground Paris (sewers and catacombs).” It seems that the vagueness of dates proposed by scholars apparently derives from these remarks made by Nadar himself, who, we know, often muddied his tracks or gave out contradictory versions of episodes in his life (he even confessed that he couldn’t exactly remember the chronology of his own life). The amalgam, which may well have been a literary artifice intended to serve the purposes of Paris-Guide, ended up in everybody’s mind, including his own perhaps, as an incontrovertible fact.

It seems certain that the photographs of the catacombs were taken during the second half of 1861. Nadar exhibited them at the London International Exhibition in 1862 (at least one print) and again in 1863 at the Société Française de Photographie; doubtless he would have already shown them in the Société’s exhibition of May 1861, along with his other photographs taken by electric light, if they had existed at the time. As for the twenty-three shots of sewers, done with the official support of Eugène Belgrand, engineer in charge of water and sewer service for the City of Paris and director of the project of modernization then under way, the correspondence on this subject allows us to fix the beginning of Nadar’s enterprise in September 1864. In March 1865, when the first results had been obtained and brought out, Paris spoke of nothing else.

Why did Nadar invest so much effort and money in bringing back these images? There are several possible reasons. First is his appetite for spectacular publicity: what more flamboyant way was there to launch his system of photography by electric light than to photograph those mythic places, which were still practically inaccessible but, as we shall see, beginning to become fashionable among upper-crust Parisians? Next is his relentless drive to show what had never before been shown, the adventurous personality that made him a hero straight out of Jules Verne. In this sense, underground Paris was the logical follow-up to aerial Paris.

An article by J. Denizet in the Journal des ébats of September 1863 entitled “La Planète Nadar” (“The Nadar Planet”) already evoked the universality of this character, a combination of Ariel and Belzebub, a genius equally at ease in the catacombs and in the Géant, who left the casual onlooker openmouthed. In March 1865, commentary resumed even more noisily. A caricature by Cham in which a sewer worker shouts to a gentleman straining his eyes upward, “You’re looking for Mr. Nadar? Well, he ain’t up there any more! Now he’s down there!” (fig. 95) illustrates the kind of popular recognition Nadar was acquiring. So does the caricature in La Vie parisienne called Le Dernier Voyage de Nadar (Nadar’s Last Voyage), which has the caption “What a strange idea to go visit the sewers in a balloon!” This notion became a commonplace. In an operetta of 1869, Chez le photographe, when the hero, a photographer named Bouvarel, is caught in a delicate situation as a result of several misunderstandings, he exclaims, “I would willingly give 17 sous to be up in a balloon,” and later, “I would willingly give 19 sous to be in the catacombs.”

To photograph the catacombs was to exploit a fashion. In 1862 Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers made a celebrated descent. Annoyed by the crowds of curious people who streamed underground during the four annual visiting days, the Goncourts described the catacombs as follows: “Bones so tidily stacked that they call to mind the wine cellars of Bercy [the wholesale wine market area of Paris]. There is an administrative orderliness that removes all the drama from this library of skulls. What’s worse, one must put up with all those Parisian jokers who go underground on veritable pleasure parties and amuse themselves by hurling taunts into the mouth of Nothingness; it makes one cringe.” The catacombs of Paris, former quarries refitted to house skeletons from cemeteries that had been emptied for hygienic reasons, certainly lack the grandeur, the mystery, of Rome’s ancient catacombs, and the neat walls of bones.
As for the sewers (pls. 92, 93), they produce the opposite impression: the twenty-three photographs, which despite the full cooperation of authorities proved so difficult to obtain that Nadar almost gave up, show only a part of the network renovated by Belgrand ("our work redounded to his glory," the photographer later said) and nothing of the ancient sewers described by Hugo in *Les Misérables*:

"Tortuous, with cracks and torn-up cobblestones and ruts and strange bends, rising and descending for no obvious reason, fetid, wild, ferocious, sunk in darkness, bearing scars on its paving stones and gashes on its walls, frightful: such, seen in retrospect, was the old sewer of Paris." No doubt Nadar avidly read *Les Misérables*, which appeared in 1862; he often professed boundless admiration for Hugo’s work and political courage, he participated in the famous *banquet des Misérables* held in Brussels in September 1862, and he corresponded with the author at the time of his ascent in the *Géant* in 1863. It is tempting to think that *Les Misérables* inspired him with the idea of photographing the sewers. His disappointment at emerging from this project with nothing but completely unmysterious images of Belgrand’s canalizations was mitigated by the very Hugo-like description he wrote (citing Hugo) in "Paris souterrain." The disparity is striking between this lyrical text and images that celebrate Belgrand’s drainage network.

The technical difficulties, the time, and the large sums invested in the project compelled Nadar to stop shooting before he was really satisfied with the results. These vicissitudes did not prevent him from inviting his friends down to watch him work. The “bizarre fashion” of going for walks through the sewers, as *La Vie parisienne* ironically noted in March 1865, was then in full swing: "There are charming encounters to be had there...I greeted the pretty comtesse de T...more or less alone, I almost saw the marquis D...and I rubbed elbows with Mlle N...of the Variétés theater. When it becomes possible to tour the sewers on horseback, the Bois [de Boulogne] will undoubtedly be deserted." It matters little whether Nadar initiated or followed this craze; rather, let us note a permanent feature of his various enterprises, that they were always intimately connected with topical subjects. Exploiting talk of the town was second nature for him during his glory years. He always remained attached to the memory of this adventure, and the photographs of underground Paris followed him around for quite some time. They were still decorating the walls of his studio after he moved to the rue d’Anjou in 1871.
Ponton d’Amécourt’s Helicopters

We do not propose to retell the eventful tale of Nadar’s passion for aeronautics: it has been sufficiently studied, and the photographs of the prototypes invented by the vicomte de Ponton d’Amécourt, however great their intrinsic beauty, constitute only a minor episode within it (pls. 96, 97). Aerial photography is what led Nadar to this quest, which would obsess him throughout his life and inspire a large collection of books, manuscripts, prints, and objects all bearing upon the conquest of the air. He took out a patent for aerial photography on October 23, 1858, but his trials aboard a captive balloon were slow to bear fruit: “The persistent failure derived from the fact that the neck of the balloon, always left wide open during ascents, allowed hydrosulfuric gas to stream onto my silver baths; I finally realized it, but a little too late, considering the lost time and the state of my wallet.” In the end he obtained an acceptable print, which is of interest only because it was the first of its kind.

These efforts were exactly contemporaneous with Nadar’s first experiments with taking pictures in artificial light (1859). One has the impression that from that time on, portraits and the studio routine no longer sufficed to appease his hunger for activity and that they occupied him only now and then. The relentlessly driven character he had become needed grandiose, dangerous ventures. Thus when in July 1863 a fellow member of the Société des Gens de Lettres, Gabriel de La Landelle, introduced him to the vicomte de Ponton d’Amécourt, the discouraged inventor of a helicopter that was supposed to “rise into the air and navigate there by means of heavier-than-air devices,” Nadar’s imagination immediately caught fire.

A world separated the balloon experiments performed since the end of the eighteenth century and Ponton d’Amécourt’s little propeller system. This naive inventor of a propeller didn’t know that already in 1784 Launoy and Bienvenu had perfected a primitive but effective small helicopter, which they demonstrated (for children, one might suppose) in the Palais-Royal gardens after presenting it to the Académie des Sciences. An apparatus of the same kind had been reinvented in 1796 by Sir George Cayley. But these prototypes had not seen further development. The aeronaut Gaston Tissandier noted, “In bazaars one finds under the name of spiralifers [spiralières] little propellers that lift up into the air through the rotation of a wooden stem that turns when one abruptly unwinds a string wound around it. The spiralifer was preceded by the stropheor [strophéor], which differed only in being of metal and rising much higher and with far greater speed. These constructions had not gone beyond the domain of the toy manufacturer when in 1863 Nadar launched his famous Manifeste de l’autolocomotion aérienne” [“Manuel de Aerial Self-Propulsion”].

Ponton d’Amécourt had imagined three different types of devices: the first moved by a vertical spring, the second by two horizontal springs, and the third by a steam engine with a copper-coil generator. He described his system in a short treatise published in 1863, which he wrote while working on the steam helicopter was still in progress. Its execution had been entrusted to a mechanic and clockmaker from Arras by the name of Joseph, who in April 1862 had built the spring-powered models and who took six months to fashion this new machine. “It is a true marvel of mechanics and precision. The boiler and the framework are made of aluminum, the cylinders of bronze, and the thrust of the pistons is transmitted by gears to two propellers placed one above the other having 264 square centimeters of surface area and turning in opposite directions. Empty, the whole apparatus weighs 2.7 kilograms; the boiler is 8 centimeters in height and 10 in diameter; the total height is 62 centimeters.”

It was finished toward the end of May 1863. Nadar’s six photographs date at the earliest to July of the same year, which was when he met the two inventors for the first time and immediately decided to take up their cause. On July 30 he unveiled the prototypes of the helicopters in his studio and read a manifesto that laid out the theory of aircraft heavier than air, calling for the construction of one such machine on a large scale so that the theory could be verified. This proclamation appeared in La Presse the following day, July 31, under the title “Manifeste de l’autolocomotion aérienne,” and offprints were sent by the thousands to newspapers all over the world. A few days later the academician Jacques Babinet, a partisan from the first, devoted his lecture at the Association Polytechnique to the subject of aerial navigation and demonstrated the little helicopters.

Nadar’s photographs served as a model for engravings illustrating an article on aerial navigation published in March 1864. It is quite likely that Nadar took them in July or August 1863, when he had the “Manifeste” very much on his mind and before he became totally absorbed in that monumental paradox the Géant, a project intended to raise
"... I see on this page the name of M. Pasteur. Below his is where I would put my name. M. Pasteur is one of the greatest geniuses of our time: before him scientists had started from known phenomena to reach the unknown, while he proceeded in the opposite way. I should confess that the scientific school to which I belonged led me to regard this innovation as nonsense..."

"... I will write for you my first philosophical principle. It is not I who formulated it, but Malebranche. I have searched well and found nothing better..."

One should strive mightily for infallibility but not claim to possess it.

(Malebranche)  Paris, August 31, 1886

E. Chevreul

"... I have never drunk anything except water, but nevertheless I am president of the Society of Wines of Anjou—but only honorary president!"

Figure 97. Nadar. Entretien de M. Nadar avec M. Chevreul, le jour de son centenaire (M. Nadar Interviews M. Chevreul on His Hundredth Birthday), 1886. Albumen prints, eight of a series of twenty-seven. Collection of Marie-Thérèse and André Jammes, Paris
"... Notice that I am far from denying what I cannot explain, but I would say that it must be proven to me, that I must see."

"... That's the disadvantage of this philosophy of orators, of fine trivial wits. They content themselves with words and hollow speeches..."

"... Monsieur Hersent [the painter], who was rather excited by my presentation, responded: 'If anyone but Monsieur Chevreul had said that to me I would say that he was lying, but since Monsieur Chevreul says it, I want to see it so I can believe it'. I immediately invited him to come to my Gobelins laboratory, where I would give him proof..."

"... He died twenty years later — without ever coming to see me at Gobelins, as I had begged him to do..."
funds necessary for the construction of the helicopter that brought financial ruin upon its creator instead.

Looking at the series of photographs of helicopters obtained under the circumstances just recounted (see pls. 96, 97), one can easily feel moved by the utopian faith that engendered them; but their strength is such that they need no historical commentary. Very soberly photographed by Nadar, with the same neutral background and subtle use of light found in his portraits, they exercise a special fascination. They have the strangeness of Jules Verne’s visions, where technical progress assumes fantastic forms; 67 the precision of clockworks; and an airy elegance, conferred by the light propellers and the parachute rumpled like a poppy, that calls to mind Calder’s mobiles. Between these marvelous toys and the Géant, the monstrous membrane that swallowed Nadar’s time and fortune, the contrast is almost comical. Nadar continued for a long time to pursue the chimera of balloon flight, quickly forgetting Ponson d’Amécourt’s helicopters. And yet of all that survives of his passion for conquering the air, these half-dozen images are without question the most beautiful.

In this final enterprise combining art and science there is an echo of Nadar’s first experience with the camera, when he advised his brother Adrien on the photographs taken for Duchenne de Boulogne in 1854. From Adrien to Paul, from Duchenne to Chevreul, the story comes full circle, Nadar’s work is complete.

Translated by Frederick Brown

1. This study deals only with the most important series, those included in the exhibition, but there are other nonportrait photographs by Nadar, especially those of the Géant. I thank Françoise Heilbrun and Philippe Néagu for the historical and bibliographical information they generously shared with me.

2. At the exhibitions of the Société Française de Photographie of 1857 and 1859, Nadar showed only portraits; in 1861 he exhibited his experiments with electric light and others with instantaneous photography; in 1865, his views of the catacombs; thereafter, he ceased participating. This history seems to summarize perfectly the evolution of his attitude toward photography. See Catalogues des expositions . . . Société française, vol. 1.

3. See the essay in this volume by André Rouillé, who analyzes Nadar’s faith in technical progress and in the sciences.


5. The date of the copyright is January 7, 1861.


7. For the photographs taken in collaboration with Duchenne de Boulogne and the problem of their attribution, see Françoise Heilbrun’s essay.


9. Jean d’ Orcet, “De l’androgynie dans l’art ancien et moderne,” Revue britannique, 9th ser., vol. 4 (1875), pp. 378–408. The long passage on Mariette-Musette is known especially because it was quoted in its entirety by J. Barbey d’Aurevilly in his Dix Jessica memb., 2 vols. (Paris, 1913), vol. 2, pp. 351–68. D’Orcet calls attention to the fact that she posed for Pradier’s Atalanta, then for Gérôme’s Combat de cors. “She was the most complete and elegant androgynous I have ever encountered. Her features were more delicate than regular, but she had the diabolically enchanting smile of the Mona Lisa and the body of Atalanta . . ., the one on Greek vases, that is hardly distinguishable from a Hermès.”

10. The English writer is Robert Baldick. He writes: “Jean d’Orcet records that at this time — about 1840 — Mariette had the body of a hermaphrodite, but a photograph of her in the nude taken by Nadar in 1855 . . . shows a gauche, heavy-breasted figure” (Baldick 1961, p. 80). Here the English term “hermaphrodite” denotes only what the French call an androgynous, and Jean d’Orcet’s text, where the subject is art, not teratology, proves it.

11. Cf. H. and A. Gernsheim 1955, ill. 228 (subsequently taken up by other authors); Néagu, Poulet-Allamagny, and Bory 1979, vol. 1, p. 184.

12. Archives Nationales, F 10 VI 67, fol. 73. I am grateful to Marc Smith for this information.
14. Of course it is possible that the photographs requested were never taken, or were taken but lost.
   Armand Trouseau lived next door to the Théâtre des Italiens (Opéra-Comique), therefore just a few steps from the boulevard des Capucines.
16. Dr. Bloch, quoted by Dr. Maurice Genty in Les Biographies médicales: 
   cols. 673—74. And cf. Domingo Gomez, Trouseau (1801—1865) (Paris, 1939), p. 88: "Le pire savant est celui qui n’est jamais artiste." The worst scientist is the one who is never an artist.
19. Registered at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (register of the 
   Département des Estampes et de la Photographie) and at the Ministère de 
   l’Intérieur (Archives Nationales, P1 VI 67, fol. 75).
20. During the period that concerns us, cases of hermaphroditism inspired 
   a substantial literature, but it was purely descriptive or typological. 
   No surgical operation was envisaged or mentioned, perhaps because "by 
   law, removal of the genital organs constitutes the crime of castration, 
   punishable by a life sentence of hard labor should all go well, or by 
   death for the surgeon if the patient expires within forty consecutive 
   days of the operation (art. 316 of the Penal Code). The law says noth- 
   ing about cases in which the patient has the genital organs of both 
   sexes." (L. Ombrédanne, Les Hermaphrodites et la chirurgie (Paris, 
   1939), p. 184). The rarity of this kind of surgical procedure may ex-
   plain the enthusiastic tone of Trouseau’s letter and his recourse to 
   a photographer friend on whose discretion he could count.
21. Archives de l’Assistance Publique, 1 Q 249, Register of admissions to 
   l’Hôtel-Dieu (1862), nos. 1525 and 1747; 2d Hôtel-Dieu, Register of 
   major operations (1855—60), no. 1747. Angélique Haquard, wife 
   Kaeuffelin, forty-two years of age, entered Mainsonneuve’s department 
   on June 9, 1861. Operated on two days later, she was transferred on 
   July 25 to the Salpétrière hospital. Mainsonneuve amputated mainly 
   by the method he described in his Mémoire sur la ligature extempor-
   ene (Paris, 1860).
22. Hoefer, ed., see n. 17; Paul Labarthe, Nos médecins contemporains 
23. See especially Titres et travaux scientifiques de M. le docteur J.-G. 
   Mainsonneue . . . (Paris, 1865), a complete bibliography. The later litera-
   ture is also silent on this case, despite its unusual scientific interest.
   The inventory of the library cites three works dealing exclusively or 
   in part with hermaphroditism: Forninuis Licetius, De monstrorum 
   causis, natura, et differenti libri duo . . . (Padua, 1654); idem, De 
   monsiris. Ex recensione Gerardi Blasi . . . iconibus illustrata (Padua, 
   1668); Ambroise Tardieu, Question médico-légale de l’identité dans ses 
   rapports avec les vices de formation des organes sexuels, 2nd ed. 
   (Paris, 1874). Finally, a work not recorded in the inventory contains 
   Nadar’s bookplate: J. Bouillaud, Exposition raisonnée d’un cas de 
   nouvelle et singulière variété d’hermaphroditisme observée chez l’homme 
   (Paris, 1883; private collection).
25. Before 1866 Nadar owned a Chinese sculpture and fruit dish both 
   representing a mysterious crucified androgynie, described in the sale 
   catalogue Catalogue des objets d’art . . . composant la collection of 
   M. Nadar 1866, nos. 258—59. In his papers (B.N.F., Département 
   des Estampes et de la Photographie, Yb 215—19) are clippings: "La 
   Légende de sainte Wilgefortis," La Chronique médicale, vol. 12 (1905), 
   pp. 24—25 and vol. 15 (1908), pp. 665—67; "Une Femme à barbe 
   crucifiée," L’Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux, vol. 55 (1907), 
   cols. 907—9, 909—96 and vol. 57 (1908), cols. 82—85.
26. These white stockings, the rather feminine shoe style, and the hairstyle 
   prove that the person was officially a female, which squares with 
   Trouseau’s letter referring to a young woman.
27. Possible reasons for the model’s white stockings and shirt are both 
   aesthetic and practical. Nadar may have intended with these garments 
   to blunt the clinical impact of the images, to show a woman and not a 
   monster. Also, if the photographs were indeed taken during the winter 
   of 1860, the clothes would have made a long posing session beneath 
   a skylight less uncomfortable.
28. The first example of which I am aware of the dissemination of pho-
   tographs of a hermaphrodite (on commission) was that reported by 
   Delacrcoix on April 5, 1870, in the Bulletin de la Société médicale de 
   Reims 9 (1869—70), p. 53. I owe this information to Françoise Heilbrun.
29. The exact title given to the photograph in 1861 is Épreuve de la main de 
   M. D***, banquier (étude chirurgicale), tirée en une heure à la lumière 
   électrique, in Catalogue de la quatrième exposition de la Société française 
   de photographie 1861 for May 1 to August 31, 1861, p. 41; reprinted in 
30. It appeared in 1840 in Musée des familles and was republished in the 
   collection Romans et contes (Paris, 1881).
31. For example, the Étude de mains of O.-G. Rejlander exhibited in 1847 
   at the Société Française de Photographie, or Louis Ignou’s studies, ex-
   hibited in 1880, which were intended for the use of painters.
32. B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24308/412. I do not know when 
   this work was published, or the date of the edition Nadar owned. If it 
   predates 1861, it could have given him his idea for the shot, in which 
   the hand is positioned just as the engraved hands are in the book. 
   This position differs from the one usually found in such works, where 
   hands appear on a vertical axis with the fingers extended upward.
   Adolphe Desbarolles, a failed painter, knew Nadar slightly (cf. 
   B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24268/5). Even if Nadar ac-
   quired the book after taking the photograph, his doing so at least con-
   firms his lasting interest in the subject.
34. 1861: Le Paris souterrain et de Félix Nadar 1861: 1865: Prinet and Dillas-
   ser, 1866, p. 118.
   principaux écrivains et artistes de la France (Paris, 1867), vol. 2, 
   pp. 1569—91.
   lumières artificielles," Paris-Photographe, no. 8 (August 30, 1861), 
   pp. 347—45.
38. Nadar, Quand j’étais photographe, 1799, p. 158.
40. In the same letter to Davanne: "I’m sorry not to be able to tell you the 
   exact dates, but I have no memory at all for numbers." 
41. Gaudin 1863, p. 38: "M. Nadar has sent a very curious print, developed 
   from a negative taken with the help of electric light; it is a view of the 
   catacombs, consisting of a pyramidal pile of bones and skulls.
42. Catalogue de la cinquième exposition de la Société française de photo-
   graphie 1861, for May 1 to August 31, 1861, p. 35, reprinted in Catalogues 
44. Original drawing in the possession of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie. It appeared in Le Charivari on March 5, 1865.
45. "Drôle d'idée d'aller visiter les égouts en ballon!" "Choses du jour," La Vie parisienne, March 11, 1865, p. 130.
46. Archives Nationales, F 1575: Cher le photographe, a one-act opera, words and music by Edmond Hirschler, August 13, 1869. I thank Marc Smith for calling my attention to this document.
47. E. and J. Goncourt 1869, vol. 1, p. 78.
50. Nadar, Quand j'étais photographe, 1979, p. 129.
52. In his letter to Davanne (see n. 39), Nadar admits: "Between you and me, to complete this little historical account with one personal detail, the expenses of these two efforts [the catacombs and the sewers] cost me about 75,000 francs—equally divided between each project—although at the eleventh hour M. Belgrand glimpsed, or rather guessed, that I was financially desperate and offered me the cooperation of the City, which was just then in the process of taking measures to auction my furniture to pay my delinquent tax bill."
53. B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24269/467, Léon Escudier to Nadar, March 16, 1865: "Oh Great Nadar! Madame Escudier is ill and I'm not feeling very well. I am forced to cancel plans to visit the sewer population. But I hope that you will afford me this pleasure at some later date." I am indebted to André Rouillé for the reference to this letter.
54. La Vie parisienne, March 11, 1865, p. 140. And in Du Camp 1873, pp. 1–34, one reads: "Visiting the sewers has become a pleasurable diversion; every month a public walking tour is offered, and tickets distributed by the administration are highly sought after."
57. Nadar sold this collection to the Musée Carnavalet in 1881.
58. B.N.F., Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Yb 1 2346(9), patent no. 18 509, October 23, 1878: "Un nouveau système de photographie aérostatique."
59. Letter to Davanne (see n. 39) and Nadar, Quand j'étais photographe, 1979, p. 91.
62. In Nadar’s photograph of the steam-driven model (pl. 96) one can make out a little plaque bearing the words “L. Joseph. Paris 1865.”
63. Lecornu 1903, pp. 96–97.
64. See Aix Chevallier in Nadar 1965 (unpaginated).
66. La Landelle 1864, pp. 188–92.
67. The comparison is not gratuitous: let us recall that Jules Verne belonged to the Association pour le Plus Lourd que l’Air (The Association for Heavier-Than-Air Craft), that he wrote an article supporting the helicopter for the Musée des familles ("À propos du Géant," December 1865, pp. 92–93), and above all that he made Nadar—under the name Ardan, a transparent anagram—the hero of his novel De la terre à la lune (From the Earth to the Moon, 1865).
68. I discuss the interview only briefly here because the images and the complete text have been reprinted with an exhaustive introduction in Reynes 1981, pp. 155–84.
When I Was a Photographer: The Anatomy of a Myth

ANDRÉ ROUILLÉ

Nadar was eighty in 1900, the publication year of Quand j’étais photographe (When I Was a Photographer). The title of course echoes that of his first collection, Quand j’étais étudiant (When I Was a Student), published in 1856. While that early work had little to do with student life, the later book touches upon photography in most of its fourteen chapters, although sometimes tenuously.

Quand j’étais photographe is in no way a historical account and disclaims any intention of specifying dates, revealing previously unknown details, or analyzing events. It furnishes precious little information about photography, and most of that is entirely relegated to the chapter “Les Primitifs de la photographie” (“The Early Practitioners of Photography”). Nor is it an album of memories, for whole areas of Nadar’s photographic activity go unmentioned.

If hard information is sparse and the details one might have hoped to find are missing, this is not so much a failing as an indication that the real subject of Quand j’étais photographe is the author, whose personality makes itself felt on every page. “Charles Philipon died of enlargement of the heart. His heart took up too much space, the doctors said,” Nadar wrote gracefully in February 1862, on the death of his old friend. Didn’t Nadar himself also suffer from enlargement—of the ego?

Obviously he meant to cut as favorable a figure as possible in the eyes of posterity, and for that reason he set his hand one last time to what he had never ceased doing in a hundred different ways throughout his long life. Through an endless progression of newspaper articles, books, actions, engravings, letters, and photographs, Nadar had deftly constructed his public image. With consummate skill he had invented and reinvented himself, first as a bad boy, then as a university student, a republican, a bohemian, a liberator of Poland, a secret agent, and so forth.

In essence, Quand j’étais photographe is about photography and balloons during that Second Empire which was
at once the object of Nadar’s most biting criticism and the era of his most ubiquitous socializing. He who mingled with such famous individuals as Balzac, Gautier, Nerval, Marey, Ader, Le Gray, and the Bissons, who played an active part in his century’s seismic upheavals, who gave photography one of its first bodies of work, here assumes the role of sovereign witness. “This task falls to the man who by the modestly enviable virtue of accumulated years finds himself the dean of working photographers, and he acquires himself of it while there is just time enough.”

In this late work of Nadar’s, morality, passion, and the era intertwine. Modernity and tradition are bound together, as are science and art, light and shadow, heights and depths, the purity of air and the foulness of water, progress and magic. Perhaps the book’s greatest merit is its suggestion that photography embraces all these things at once.

THE ERA

Nadar’s most prominent trait was unquestionably his capacity to marvel at the extraordinary changes that transformed his century. In the book’s first pages and repeatedly thereafter he intones a hymn to the limitless, endless progress of science and technology, setting down long lists of the inventions he has witnessed, one more miraculous than the next, and convinced that from now on nothing is impossible. For example, he praises with oddly mystical enthusiasm the use of anesthesia in surgery: “[It] rises, as if by divine aspiration, to the mercy that reprieves humankind from physical pain, which is henceforth abolished” (p. 3). Progress, which tames nature’s “mysterious powers,” is accomplished through a succession of manifestations that dazzle, blind, and disturb us, like the miracles of yore.

In short, Nadar builds a shrine to progress. His lyric fervor leads him to regard the nineteenth century as a series of “almost simultaneous scientific explosions” (p. 4) creating a radical break in the course of human history.

Photography, electricity, and aeronautics, three fields in which he had a personal stake, are for Nadar the supreme emblems of modernity. The “pleiad of inventions” produced by “the greatest scientific century” includes none more “extraordinary” than photography, for photography extends the limits of the possible and accomplishes man’s age-old desire “to make material the impalpable specter that vanishes as soon as it is seen, leaving not even a shadow on the mirror” (pp. 2, 4). Electricity is the expression of domesticated strength, of docile power “submissively awaiting our summons” (p. 23). As for aeronautics, which realizes “an eternal human dream,” it is not surprisingly characterized as a “gigantic revolution . . . beside which all the proud discoveries of humankind will pale” (pp. 38, 41).

Aeronautics may appear to rival photography in the pantheon of modernity; but both, along with electricity, prove that Nadar was a truly modern man, who had practiced all three, separately or together. Celebrated as a photographer, he had harnessed photography first to aeronautics, then to electricity, and had intuited the basic principle of aerial navigation while taking pictures from a balloon gondola (fig. 99). Photography is thus both instigator and accomplice in Nadar’s commitment to the modern movement.

Lastly, for those who might doubt the constancy of his modernist ardor, Nadar shows that at the end of the century a young generation of inventors flock around him because they appreciate his open-mindedness and his exceptional receptivity to the boldest research. He has the supposed discoverer of “variable-focus electric photography” (photographie électrique à toutes distances) say: “It was you, you alone, whom I had to see” (p. 17).

PASSION

Nadar was not just an admirer of his age. He was one of its chief actors, one of its heroes, one of its pioneers. He lived it passionately.

In the chapter “Gazebo vengeance” (“Gazebo Avenged”) he polishes his legend of the pioneer with sometimes unseemly vigor. Through the mouth of a young inventor thrilled and awestruck before so illustrious a veteran, Nadar recalls his initiatives, his exploits, his glorious intuitions; how “thirty years before anyone dreamed of it” he had “predicted, explained, and even baptized the phonograph.” That had been in 1856, in the publication Musée français-anglais. Then, according to the obliging young interlocutor, Nadar had “taken, underground, the first photograph made by artificial light, and also the first photograph from the gondola of an aerostat.” In 1863, the young man continues, he had “deflated the fantasy of guidable balloons” (dirigibles) and proclaimed “the exclusive and now universally accepted principle of machines heavier than air for aerial navigation” (p. 28).

The smart, polite young inventor turns out to be an impostor. But did he ever exist? And isn’t this ending intended
to create a bit of romance and also blur the outline of a character whose genial personality might otherwise have compromised his role as Nadar’s straight man?

The pioneer pictured throughout the work is someone whose passion enabled him to surmount all obstacles—both the precariousness of technical means and the incomprehension of his contemporaries—in the service of an apparently demented enterprise. This theme of unreasonable action dictated by the need to fulfill a dream often recurs. But since the merits of a pioneer are inevitably consigned to oblivion by the very movement of progress, Nadar takes pains to remind readers several times over that today’s facility is nothing but the resolution of yesterday’s difficulties. “Most of these operations that we perform today with perfect ease seemed before the first trial quite impossible, a flaunting of common sense. My attempt at aerostatic photography was loudly opposed and disclaimed by the experts, and likewise I encountered more than one naysayer when I set out to compensate for the deficiencies of daylight with artificial illumination” (p. 112).

Of all his feats balloon flight is the one on which Nadar dwells most insistently, no doubt because it was the domain in which his role as pioneer was largest and because it added to his myth an aura of adventure. While Nadar exploited photography and electricity, he initiated aerial navigation. It was undoubtedly the “great cause” of his life (p. 44). He came upon it by way of photography, which he then more or less abandoned for its sake, throwing himself first into aerostatic photography and afterward into aerial navigation, deaf to counsels of prudence: “Who or what could stop me once I was launched on one of my enthusiasms?” he observes.

Several factors may explain this passion for aeronautics. Not only was it a challenge to be met and a new frontier to be conquered; not only did it allow Nadar to engage as an equal in a dialogue with eminent scientists (“What can you teach me?” he was supposedly asked by Étienne-Jules Marey of the Collège de France); but above all, this “great cause” was carried out in a spectacle thrilling enough to command the attention of all Europe and even the world. From Paris to Brussels, from Lyons to Amsterdam, Nadar, like a tightrope walker on a movable stage, produced ascents of his famous Géant (Giant). In each of these colossal exhibitions he played the lead role, at the controls of his “monster” balloon. And when the “catastrophe” occurred at Hannover—when the balloon crashed, when the gondola and its occupants were dragged along the ground—the actor became a hero, who braves danger and scoffs at death. With aeronautics, Nadar gained distance from photography. He left behind him the private role of pioneer and rediscovered show business, for which he had demonstrated even during his bohemian youth a penchant and a gift.

At the risk of his life, Nadar struggled manfully to win acceptance for the principle of aerial navigation. Against conventional wisdom he loudly proclaimed the path to follow: abandon the balloon, upon which air exerts pressure, in favor of resting upon air, as birds do. In other words, “Be denser—heavier than air—in order to master the air.” As
is often the case for Nadar, a physical law is matched by a moral precept: “In all things be the strongest, so as not to suffer defeat” (p. 40).

**Morality**

Indeed, moral thought pervades the entire work, as if Nadar kept recalling that his fascination with science, progress, and technology had not abolished man and human values. While recounting his conquest of the sky episode by episode, he formulates a veritable balloon ethic according to which success owes nothing to good fortune but rather derives from hard work, intelligence, intuition, energy, audacity.” This bourgeois creed of individual action, effort, and risk — this paean to the self-made man — is supplemented by reflections on human vanity and the century’s wayward drift. Up above, calm and vastness offer Nadar protection against “the forces of evil,” against “this humanity which ends up disappearing from view” as his balloon rises. The altitude that distances him from the earth’s surface “reduces all things to their relative proportions, to the Truth.” Like a moral and spiritual elevation, these ascents take him to heights that foster “superhuman serenity.” Seen from a gondola, the world’s strife, passions, and antagonisms seem trivial: “Everything is far away — cares, remorse, disgust. How easily indifference, contempt, forgetfulness drop away from on high — and forgiveness descends…” (p. 76).8 Altitude favors not only spiritual amplitude but feelings of domination and power. From above, the world is Lilliput and Nadar Gulliver. By baptizing his balloon Geant, did Nadar have in mind only its unusual proportions? Or did the idea of gigantism and superhuman grandeur encompass both the balloon and its bold proprietor in a halo of semidivinity (“gloire de demi-dieu,” p. 41), from which vantage point the greatest accomplishments of human industry appear scarcely more consequential than toys?19

As for photography, it becomes a pretext for moral fables. Because in 1856 he mocked the credulity of a certain Gazebon, who believed that he could photograph himself from afar, Nadar is punished, tricked by an impostor who
claims, some forty years later, that he has brought off the same feat by means of electricity: “I felt as if I were Gazebon, yes, Gazebon himself, Gazebon ‘the Gullible’” (“Le Gobeur,” p. 25). The chapter on “female and male clients,” which oddly enough tells us nothing about photography, consists of on the one hand a series of conventional statements about the narcissism of his subjects and on the other a series of professional recommendations. Speaking as a seasoned veteran, he counsels fellow photographers to “do good work,” to be punctual and fastidious, to prefer honesty above wealth. “Be harsher with yourself than anyone else,” he writes. “Let nothing emerge from your studio that cannot withstand the criticism of a rival. Seeking honor before profit is the surest way of finding profit with honor” (p. 144). When at age eighty Nadar published these lines, had he forgotten that almost forty years earlier, in June 1862, his wife, Ernestine, uneasy over his neglect of photography for balloons, had urged him: “Make the photographs yourself, I beg you. That’s where the fortune lies, believe me, don’t look for it elsewhere... And remember above all that in your firm every effort must be made to satisfy the customer — that is the surest and most honest way to build a good reputation.”

In “Les Primitifs de la photographie” the witness plays moralist, at the expense particularly of the society photographer Disdéri, whom Nadar, always an acerbic caricaturist, denounces for his “obviously humble origins,” his lack of “the most elementary education,” and his “very unattractive, even repellent” personality (p. 209). Self-important, unscrupulous, with no interest in photography beyond its commercial side, Disdéri is granted only two virtues, “practical intelligence” and “business flair” (p. 211). If this impious man succeeded in quickly amassing an enormous fortune — “But that, our fathers taught us, is not how solid firms are built” — he did not long remain exempt from the moral axiom that always triumphs in the end: “He fell as rapidly as he had risen” (p. 212).

Nadar’s diatribe against the parvenu and easy money, his stigmatization of wealth pursued at the expense of art, his disgust with the absence of scruples, culture, and education, together constitute a characteristic nineteenth-century brief for morality, tradition, and art. Writing about Disdéri
enabled him to reexperience the romantic conviction that the true human values have been lost.

**Romanticism**

Nadar’s attitude toward modernity thus seems twofold and contradictory. Although he venerates progress, he deplors the havoc that the industrial age is wreaking upon society and imputes to it the dissolution of traditional moral values, cynicism, the slackening of intimate human bonds, even the ethical vacillation of representatives elected by the people.

This duality expresses itself to perfection in Nadar’s vision of photography. On the one hand, he associates it with electricity and aeronautics and pays eloquent homage to Monckhoven, Vidal, and Marey, who saw it only as a means to scientific ends. On the other hand, he insists upon its shadowy and magical underside. “Everything that unholds the mind was assembled there: water divining, bewitchment, conjury, apparitions. Night, so dear to miracle workers, reigned supreme in the gloomy depths of the darkroom, making it an ideal home for the Prince of Darkness. It would not have taken much to transform our filters into philters” (p. 1).

As if to reinvest photography with something of its original magic by playing down its technical, rational, scientific side and hiding chemistry behind alchemy, Nadar restated Balzac’s famous theory of “specters,” which put photography in the realm of the supernatural. The standard products turned out by Mayer & Pierson’s and Disdéri’s “portrait factories” were anathema to him (p. 198). Still, what Nadar found reprehensible was not the wealth these men acquired but the fact that they behaved like vulgar merchants—which he underscored by comparing them with two great mythic figures, Gustave Le Gray and Camille Silvy (p. 237). A generous artist, Le Gray had decided to abandon photography rather than make the compromises required by the market; this steadfastness to art, Nadar notes, earned him bankruptcy, exile, and death. Silvy, London’s high-society photographer, on the contrary, “collected enormous fees,” but Nadar admired him for his aristocratic demeanor, his elegance, his great distinction, his sumptuous life—for a style, in short, whose splendor and prestige redounded to the advantage of photography.

Art and fine manners thus have the virtue of rescuing photography from the thralldom of merchandise, cold calculation, mindless utility. With magic in the chapter entitled “Balzac et le daguerréotype” (“Balzac and the Daguerreotype”) and with darkness in “Paris souterrain” (“Underground Paris”), Nadar once again forsakes modern values and opens photography to the vast romantic universe. It is no accident that “Paris souterrain” comes right after “La Première Épreuve de photographie aérostatique” (“The First Test of Aerostatic Photography”). Light, infinite space, atmospheric transparency, science, modern challenges; these yield to the romantic night of underground places, the skeletons of the catacombs, the stench of sewers. There is soaring into the firmament of progress, but there is also plummeting into the infernal regions, into the foul and sinister depths of the city, into the “black meeting place of immense nothingness” (p. 122).

**Memory**

Lest anyone still doubt his attachment to Romanticism, Nadar ends his work with a long, nostalgic chapter, “1830 et environs” (“The Years around 1830”). It is devoid of any reference to photography. Here Nadar disgorges his memories pell-mell, without dates or chronological ordering, without any suggestion that one ranks above others in importance, all seemingly noted down the instant free association brought them to mind. This agglomeration is more like an inventory than a private diary or memoir. The events are not connected to any larger picture that would give them meaning.

In fact, this final chapter systematizes Nadar’s attitude, for throughout the book he rejects the role of historian and, rather naively, goes so far as to question the legitimacy of historical writing. “Of all that has been transmitted from centuries past, what can we believe—and what is History worth?” he writes. “While I am still around, at least I can establish the origins of an interesting bit of lore about the siege of Paris and bear witness” (p. 178). Opposing the witness to the historian,11 Nadar takes an ahistorical approach to history. This contradiction leaves him quite free to reshape his life as he wishes. In “La Photographie obsidionale” (“Siege Photography”), for example, he assumes directorship of air-mail service during the siege of Paris, so it seems, immediately (in the “first hours”), spontaneously (“no nomination, no official review of credentials”), without pay (the fact is noted five times), and without recompense of any kind, even food (“we didn’t
dare ask"). His irrefutable heroism of 1870 atones for — and eclipses — his disappearance from the scene during the events of 1848.

The memoirist who explicitly claims the right to forgetfulness is making it clear that his book offers no precise or organized knowledge, no usable documents. Thus warned, the reader is taken for a fanciful stroll through Nadar’s life, stopping here or there as whimsy dictates. Still, the lapses, the recollections, and the idées fixes seem too coherent to be fortuitous or senile. Together they put the finishing touch to Nadar’s own myth, the magnum opus of his long life.

Translated by Frederick Brown

4. "L’anesthésie s’éveille, d’une aspiration comme divine, jusqu’à la miséricorde qui amnistie l’humanité de la douleur physique désormais abolie." The page numbers in parentheses refer to the reprint edition of Quand j’étais photographe (Plan de la Tour, Éditions d’aujourd’hui), 1979.
5. Nadar confesses that he and a friend visiting the electricity exhibition were "completely dazzled, blinded by its miracles, disturbed by this mysterious power that we would thenceforth have at our beck and call" (p. 23).
6. On October 23, 1818, Nadar registered a “fifteen-year patent for a new system of aeronastic photography.”
7. On April 18, 1859, in the quarters of the Cercle de la Presse Scientifique at 21, rue de Richelieu, Nadar gave a demonstration of photography with electric light using Serrin’s apparatus.
10. Nadar writes: "But at that time [1858] electricity was still very far from the practical applications toward which it would soon be making great strides. We didn’t have the invaluable portable storage cells, or Gaudard’s generators, or any other present-day facilities" (p. 113).
11. Nadar also evokes his "first ascent to attempt aerial photography, which was so difficult then and which everyone knows how to do today, now that the road has been cleared" (p. 18).
12. For example, with aeronastic photography: “And without delving any deeper, moving as always from dream to action, I immediately registered my patent” (p. 85).
13. Aeronastics is the principal theme of four of the book’s chapters: "La Première Épreuve de photographie aérostatique," "La Photographie obésionnelle," "Le Nouveau Président de la Société française de photographie" (Étienne-Jules Marey), and above all "L’Aveugle Princesse" ("The Blind Princess"). In this curious narrative, which undoubtedly sprang from his imagination, the photographic portrait of a Hanoverian princess serves as a pretext for writing about balloons.
14. "Mais qui ou quoi pourrait m’arrêter une fois parti dans un de mes emballements?" Nadar describes himself further as "all excited, impelled by my usual lyricism when I climb on a new hobbyhorse" (toute bouillant, avec mon lyrisme habituel quand j’ai enfourché un dada nouveau [p. 91]).
15. Nadar relates: "We were dragged seven leagues [over sixteen miles] in thirty minutes—just about the regulation speed for an express train. Imagine yourself traveling that distance for half an hour, tumbled behind the express train in a basket at the end of a cord, and you’ll see what kind of jig we did" (p. 44).
16. Examples of this penchant were his challenges to duels, his public polemics, the expedition to Poland in 1848, and of course the great "feste champestre" that Nadar organized on November 27, 1840, in his hotel room, which he baptized for the occasion "the drawing rooms of M. le vicomte de La Tour Nadar, man of letters." See Rouillé, Introduction, in Nadar, Correspondance de Nadar, 1820–1851, forthcoming.
17. "There too, it was not enough to discuss. Experiments, no end of experiences, were needed in this science of synthesis, which had to be created from scratch. Money was needed, lots of it. Where could it be acquired? . . . I had no independent fortune. . . . It then dawned upon me that this balloon service that I wanted to set up might provide the requisite funds. At great expense I constructed a balloon of unprecedented dimensions. . . . The ascents of this monster all over the universe were to fill our association’s treasury" (p. 42).
19. "Mere toys, these little houses with red or slate roofs, toys this church, this prison, this citadel, the three structures that sum up our civilization. Even more toylike this little bit of a railroad that sends up its tiny shrill whistle cry" (p. 77).
20. "Treat those who come late without mercy" (p. 143), notes Nadar, whose correspondence gives evidence that "rigorous punctuality" was not his own strong suit.
21. Ever pragmatic, Ernestine came to the point: "What do you care whether a sitter is beautiful or ugly, as long as he pays?" (Que te fait qu’un modèle soit beau ou laid pourvu qu’il rapporte de l’argent) (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24990/32, June 1862).
22. On several occasions Nadar deplores the disappearance of politeness, civility, and good manners (p. 141).
23. As Nadar sees it, electricity can serve to "prevent even our good deputies from rigging their votes, until such time as we invent the blessed machine that will fabricate absolutely honest representatives" (p. 24).
24. See the chapters "Les Primitifs de la photographie" (Léon Vidal), "Le Docteur Van Monckhoven," and "Le Nouveau Président de la Société française de photographie."  
25. "For lack of the full-blown history we can no longer embark upon, we gather anecdotal crumbs, and gather them so zealously that we regard a stamp collector with wide-eyed admiration" (p. 191).
The Nadar Studio, Dispersed and Recovered

ANDRÉ JAMMES

Sustained by its founder’s immense reputation, the Nadar studio survived for a decade or so after the death of Paul Nadar on September 1, 1939. But the war years proved disastrous, and the original Nadarian stock underwent wholesale dispersion. Collectors and institutions were able to acquire large numbers of photographs, which now are precious but at the time were neglected and commercially worthless. Since then, however, collectors, libraries, and museums have succeeded in regrouping what was scattered. With their resources pooled, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Musée d’Orsay, the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, and the J. Paul Getty Museum reconstitute, grosso modo, the “Nadar Studio”: archives, caricatures, library, negatives, prints. There is a vast amount of raw material to be mined here, raising for every scholar the question of how such a studio represents the artist himself. Photographers, like painters, sculptors, and engravers, leave behind in their studios and homes a jumble of hidden treasures and daring experiments from which essential works sometimes emerge.

To make a selection from this miscellany is therefore to venture an interpretation. Moreover, the organizers of the exhibition had three very different aesthetic perspectives to consider. First there is Nadar’s own personal taste, which one would like to grasp at the moment of his highest creativity. Then there is the production of the studio, which for almost a century redirected the master’s fundamental achievement to make it more fashionable. And finally there is the viewpoint of the organizers and the modern public, who reread these images with an eye quickened by contemporary art and photography.

The prints at our disposal are very uneven in quality. If we limit ourselves to the first years of Félix Nadar’s activity, they can more or less be divided into three categories.

First is the large number of unmounted prints on thin salted paper or gelatin-coated paper, almost always annotated. These are marvelous images but difficult to describe: are they proofs for studio or archival use? artist’s proofs? first proofs? To our knowledge Nadar never exhibited them, never mentioned them in his writings, never sold them. But they are almost all identified in his own hand—sometimes inscribed in ink at the moment of execution, more often written in a frequently shaky pencil—the apparent testament of an old man determined, before he died, to rescue his friends and visitors from anonymity.

These images originally served as records of the collodion negatives, which were fragile from the moment of execution and which deteriorated with handling. Raw and unre touched, these prints showed exactly what Nadar had seen through the ground glass of his camera. From them he could make a commercially usable duplicate.

The second group is a series of prints carefully mounted on cardboard, bearing Nadar’s signature in ink and, often, the address of his studio. They are retouched, but only for absolutely essential reasons: to disguise spots, to hide flaws in the collodion. These prints were not only commercial products but also were very likely meant to be exhibition prints, since sometime around 1859 Nadar made a gift to the Société Française de Photographe de a large number of such portraits, several in duplicate, glued onto bristol board and signed with the greatest care. This, then, is the type of image he wanted to show, to sell, and to bequeath to posterity.

Thirdly, a significant number of Nadar portraits were made from touched-up negatives or from copy negatives and were themselves more or less enhanced by touch-up artists working for Paul Nadar, who yielded to the “pictorialist” fashion of his age. Because of these departures from Nadar’s straightforward procedure, such images have not been included in the exhibition.

Most of the prints appearing in this retrospective are from the first group, “artist’s prints.” Following our own taste and at the risk of being more Nadarian than Nadar, we discover in these direct images the very essence of his creative genius. But this choice also reflects certain material
necessities: prints in the second group, the beautiful “commercial prints,” are astonishingly rare.

By definition, the commercial prints did not remain in the studio. The ones that we have obtained found their way into the hands of pioneer collectors, among them Gabriel Cromer (1873–1934), a “rich” connoisseur (said Georges Sirot), whose acquisitions are in Rochester, New York; Victor Barthélémy, who possessed such treasures as Daguerre’s camera; Albert Gilles, whose immense collection of daguerreotypes now belongs to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France; and above all Georges Sirot (1898–1977), a man who throughout his life never let an early Saturday morning go by without a visit to the flea market. These first-generation collectors, who saved some glorious Nadar portraits from the slough into which they had fallen, deserve to be celebrated. For Sirot it was a triumph every time he emerged brandishing a photograph of some famous person bearing the rue Saint-Lazare address. His finds round out the Nadar collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Although exposed to light and roughly treated by the many hands through which they have passed, these mounted prints are generally in good condition. Investigations conducted in preparation for this exhibition showed that several prints are one of a kind and that for most of the others only a very few copies are known.

It is ironic that photography, which has opened the door to infinite reproducibility, has been so parsimonious in bequeathing us its masterworks. In Nadar’s case, it is certain that he deliberately limited his production. During the first period of his activity, which was also the most interesting, he sold his prints at a high price. Moreover, his models, who posed in his studio out of friendship, seldom shared his enthusiasm for the new art, a fact that hardly encouraged wide-scale distribution. And yet, despite the astonishing rarity of Nadar’s original images, his portraits are universally known and profusely reproduced in books and newspapers. But what remains of Nadar in those reproductions derived from reprints and devoid of artistic interest? One of the goals of the exhibition this book accompanies is precisely to show what an abyss separates those modest iconographic documents from their outstanding “incunabula” prototypes.

The history of the Nadar holdings is bound up with the evolution of Nadar research. This field of study was launched during the late 1940s by three gentlemen: on the one hand, two curators at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Jean Adhémar and Jean Prinet, who had the best sources at their disposal but out of rivalry did not exchange information; and on the other hand, Michel-François Braive. Having chosen the arts over a career in industry, against family wishes, Braive threw himself into preparation of a thesis on nineteenth-century portraiture at the École du Louvre. At the urging of his teacher Bernard Dorival he made Nadar the central figure. Braive was enthusiastic, odd, eccentric. He had acquired from Marthe Nadar, the photographer’s granddaughter, a remarkable collection of photographs and documents, and this resource would represent a permanent threat to rival Nadarians. Although he never finished his thesis, the mere announcement of its preparation slowed the progress of competing scholars, whose labors only bore fruit much later.

Three things took place almost simultaneously. In 1965, Jean Adhémar, assisted by Alix Chevallier, organized a Nadar exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale; it was a revelation to the public and even to specialists. In 1966, Jean Prinet and Antoinette Dilasser’s Nadar, which remains an excellent guide, was brought out in the Kiosque series. Between these two events Braive published L’Age de la photographie, using the notes and documents he had gathered for his thesis and reproducing the images in his collection in a jumbled arrangement that is both offhanded and intuitive.

Braive’s collection comprised hundreds of prints that he had acquired directly from the Nadar studio on rue Bassano. He died in the autumn of 1976. During his last years he had let go a great number of art objects and pictures, which is how more than one hundred Nadar portraits entered the Jammes collection (now at the Musée d’Orsay) and how another group (now at the J. Paul Getty Museum) was acquired by Samuel Wagstaff.

Among the documents Braive obtained from the Nadar archives was a list of more than two hundred photographs entitled Photographies de la collection Thuillier, don de Madame Nadar Paul provenant des ateliers Nadar (Photographs from the Thuillier Collection, Madame Paul Nadar’s Gift of Photographs from the Nadar Studios). The Thuillier collection was assembled by Marthe Nadar during the Second World War. Put up for auction at Rouen in the 1960s, it found no bidder; Marie-Thérèse Jammes and I purchased it soon afterward. Together with the original Braive collection, it contributes to the reconstitution of Nadar’s original body of work.
These various holdings supplement those of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, which in 1950 acquired the remaining contents of the studio on the rue Bassano. The 1965 exhibition testified to the richness of this historical treasure trove. Thirty years later, the study of photography having meanwhile made great strides, we have, to quote Jean Adhémar, a “new vision” of Nadar.

*Translated by Frederick Brown*

1. We have examples in the two proofs of portraits of Théophile Gautier and Prince Czartoryski that Nadar sent to Charles Nègre, who made heliogravure reproductions of them. The Nadar prints show not the slightest bit of retouching, no signature, no address; they are not mounted on cardboard. Moreover, a number of negatives in the Nadar holdings preserved by the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites are copy negatives made sometime later from these original prints.

2. At the end of the century, the touch-up artist acquired such importance that his name often figured alongside those of Nadar father and son. In a list of the Thuillier collection are notations like these: “Woman with a shawl, colored by Creder”; “Original of the photograph of Pasteur, signed by Nadar, touched up in charcoal by Creder.”

3. “From every quarter historians surge forward, each believing that he alone has had the miraculous idea. . . . The question of priority will speed matters up. Vanity will play a part. The winner will be whoever can prove he was first” (Grimmer 1916).
PLATES
1. Dr. Duchenne and Adrien Tournachon. Pain, illustration for *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine*, 1864
2. Dr. Duchenne and Adrien Tournachon. Displeasure, illustration for *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine*, 1854
4. Dr. Duchenne and Adrien Tournachon. Fear, illustration for *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine*, 1854
7. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot surprised, 1854-55
8. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot the photographer, 1854-55
12. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot with fruit, 1854-55
15. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot in pain, 1854-55
16. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot with medicine, 1854-55
17. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot the thief, 1854-55
18. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot with coin, 1844-45
20. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Pierrot jumping through a window, 1854-55
22. Nadar. Asselineau, 1854
23. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Gérard de Nerval, 1854-55
24. Nadar. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, 1854
27. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon. Adrien Tournachon, 1854-55
29. Adrien Tournachon. Champfleury, ca. 1856
30. Nadar (and Adrien Tournachon?). Frémiet, 1854-55
31. Nadar (and Adrien Tournachon?). Blavier, 1854-55
32. Nadar (and Adrien Tournachon?). Musette, 1854-55
34. Nadar. Baudelaire, 1855
38. Nadar. Lesueur, 1854
39. Nadar. Molin, 1858
41. Nadar. Gautier, ca. 1856
42. Nadar. Gautier, 1854-55
44. Nadar. Doré, 1856-58
46. Nadar. Dumas père, 1855
50. Nadar. Daumier, 1856-58
51. Nadar. Miller, 1856–58
53. Nadar. Cicéri, 1856-58
55. Nadar. Mme de Basté, ca. 1855
56. Nadar. Chennevières, ca. 1855
57. Nadar. Aimé Millet, 1856-58
59. Nadar. Mme de Sanzillon, 1856–59
60. Nadar. Young model, 1856-59
61. Nadar. Maria, 1856-59
62. Nadar. Maria, 1856-59
65. Nadar. Paul Nadar and his nurse, 1856
67. Nadar. Son of Auguste Lefranc, 1856-59
68. Nadar. Mère Marie Jamet, ca. 1860
70. Nadar. Couderc, 1856-59
73. Nadar. Delacroix, 1858
Nadar. Prince Czartoryski, 1856-59
79. Nadar. Couder, 1855-57
83. Nadar. Eugène Pelletan, 1856-19
84. Nadar. Young woman in profile, ca. 1859
85. Nadar. George Sand, 1864
86. Nadar. Sarah Bernhardt, ca. 1864
88. Nadar. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore on her deathbed, 1859
90. Nadar. The Catacombs, 1861-62
91. Nadar. The Catacombs, 1861-62
92. Nadar. The sewers, 1864-65
93. Nadar. The sewers (sluice system), 1864-65
94. Nadar. Hermaphrodite, 1860
97. Nadar. Helicopter, 1863
98. Nadar. Interior of Le Géant inflating, 1863
CATALOGUE
Catalogue numbers are the plate numbers.

Dates given are those of the negatives. Prints were made at or about the time of the taking of the negatives, unless noted otherwise.

The date 1854–1855 corresponds to the period of collaboration between Nadar and Adrien Tournachon, mid-September 1854 to mid-January 1855.

All the photographs were made on collodion-coated glass negatives.

In citing of dimensions, height precedes width.

Authors of the entries:
SA Sylvie Aubenas
MMH Maria Morris Hambourg
FH Françoise Heilbrun
SR Sophie Rochard

Entries by Sylvie Aubenas, Françoise Heilbrun, and Sophie Rochard were translated by Frederick Brown.
1. Dr. Duchenne and Adrien Tournachon 

**Pain (Douleur), 1854**

Plate 27 of Dr. Duchenne’s album
Gelatin-coated salted paper print (*vernis-cuir*), mounted on bristol
9½ x 6¼ in. (24.2 x 16.8 cm)
École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, Inv. 77—78
Ex coll. Dr. Duchenne

Dr. Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne, called Duchenne de Boulogne (1806–1875), was a physiologist who specialized in the electrical stimulation of muscles. Between 1852 and 1856 he conducted a series of experiments with many subjects, eliciting expressions of the principal emotions—joy, pain, horror—through the electrical stimulation of the facial muscles. He intended to publish a scientific grammar of human emotions for the use of artists, and, wanting the transcription of the expressions to be exact, he decided to enlist a photographer who specialized in portraiture. Through mutual contacts, Dr. Duchenne presumably knew Félix Tournachon, who had studied medicine, but it was his brother, Adrien, a portrait painter before becoming a photographer, who collaborated with the doctor.  

From the negatives they exposed together, Adrien printed the original gelatin-coated salted paper prints (*vernis-cuir*). These Duchenne mounted on alternating pages of a large album (interleaving them with salted paper enlargements of the heads, oval and nearly life size, which he may have printed himself). Plates 1–5 reproduce a selection of Adrien’s original prints from that album. The album served Duchenne as a compendium of visual evidence from which to draw the illustrations for the book he published in Paris in 1862, *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine, ou analyse électro-physiologique de l’expression des passions applicable à la pratique des arts plastiques* (*Mechanism of the Human Physiognomy, or Electrophysiological Analysis of the Expression of Passions Applicable to the Practice of the Figural Arts*). Many of the images contained in the original album were reproduced in the picture portfolio accompanying the first edition of the book as small albumen prints tipped onto bristol. They are cropped tightly or masked to the face and, unlike Adrien’s full-plate prints, show little of the doctor and his assistant or their equipment. Duchenne later donated his original album to the École des Beaux-Arts. In addition to several dozen photographs of a slightly retarded man (pls. 2–5) who was Duchenne’s principal subject for the most agonized expressions, the album contains photographs of one control subject, a handsome young anatomist whose expressions were not electrically stimulated; a few images of a young girl (pl. 1) and of a middle-aged woman; and a handful of photographs reproducing anatomical drawings of the facial muscles and plaster casts of classical statues, such as a Niobe and the Laocoön. On the page preceding plate 28 (pl. 2 in this catalogue), Duchenne wrote, “On the [patient’s] left, a very strong contraction of the superciliary muscle. On the right, features in repose. Note: when the contraction of this muscle is exaggerated, the movement appears spasmodic and does not express suffering. This spasmodic contraction occurs especially when the eye closes because of a very bright light. That is what I depicted on the left side of this face, which was photographed in full daylight.”

Titles given here for the other images are taken from the 1862 publication, which is introduced by the following quotation from Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle*: “Whenever the spirit is moved, the human face becomes a *tableau vivant* [living picture] where the passions are shown with delicacy as well as energy, where each change is expressed as a mark, each action by a character whose swift and lively impression outstrips the will. We betray and expose, through involuntary signals, pictures of our most secret emotions.”

1. We thank Caroline Benazir for research assistance on this subject.
6. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

Pierrot, 1854—55
Gelatin-coated salted paper print (vernis-cuir)
11 3/4 x 8 5/8 in. (30.8 x 21.7 cm)
Stamped bottom left: "Tournaclion/11, Boul' des Capucines"
Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Ph. 9096

Jean-Charles Deburaux (1829—1873)
In the fall or winter of 1854—55, Nadar asked the mime Charles Deburaux, son of Baptiste Deburaux, to pose for a series of photographic têtes d’expression that would serve as publicity for the brothers’ struggling studio (see pp. 22, 41). During the same period Nadar secured a space for the firm to exhibit at the Exposition Universelle of 1855. But after photographing Deburaux the brothers quarreled, and on January 16 they split up. The Deburaux series won a gold medal at the Exposition and became legendary; ironically, the award was made not to Nadar and Adrien but to Adrien alone, who retained the negatives and submitted prints made from them under the name “Nadar jeune.”

The series was a major undertaking. It was designed to take advantage of the very large camera Nadar had just purchased with part of his wife Ernestine’s dowry. Most of the images are full-length photographs of the mime posing as if onstage, but there is also at least one half-length portrait, and this bust; these, more than the standing figures, could properly be called têtes d’expression, studies of physiognomic expression.

Quite the opposite of the exaggerated grimaces recorded by Dr. Duchenne (see pls. 1–9) and presented in the classic treatises of Lavater and Gall is what might seem a curious lack of expression in this image, actually a hallmark of the celebrated style of Baptiste Deburaux and of his son Charles. Baptiste Jean Baptiste-Gaspard Deburaux, 1796–1846), perhaps the greatest mime of all time, became famous in the 1820s and 1830s playing the role of Pierrot at the lowly little Théâtre des Funambules on the boulevard du Temple, popularly known as the "boulevard du Crème." Deburaux transformed the commedia dell’arte character Pierrot: he removed the ruff (which cast shadows upward) and the wide-brimmed white hat, instead adopting a minimal black skullcap to set off his long white face— itself a sort of tabula rasa, neutral and composed, on which the slightest modulations of emotion were easily legible. Amidst the rough-and-tumble chases, pratfalls, and pummelings typical of the antic heroics of pantomime, Baptiste commanded the stage with his sober face, his clean, economical gestures, his calm and grace. Pierrot, the naïve valet of Cassandre— traditionally a clowning underdog, but of blows, gourdman, and thief—gradually turned the tables, giving as many blows as he received. He began to overshadow Harlequin and Columbine. The new Pierrot was no less slippery, flexible, or instinctive than before, but now, in the charged field created by Deburaux’s presence onstage, he appeared more solitary, soulful, androgynous, and many-layered. Deburaux/Pierrot was no longer Cassandre’s man; he had become Everyman.

The force of Deburaux’s character made Pierrot the focus of every production and a natural hero of the niis (street urchins), apprentices, and laundresses who paid four sous to perch in the balcony called “Paradise” at the Funambules. The literary elite soon followed, piloted by Charles Nodier and Jules Janin. Among the critics, poets, playwrights, and journalists who docket the audience regularly were Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Champfleury, Théodore de Banville, and, less frequently, Nadar, Baudelaire, and George Sand, who attended in trousers.

The reasons for Deburaux’s phenomenal success are many and complex, extending beyond his consummate skill as a performer. There was a social relevance to the Pierrot character with its peasant origins and subservient undertone, operating as it did in a mode of buffoonery marked by rampant disorder. As the Revolution and successive challenges to legitimacy made inroads against distinctions of birth and wealth in France, the individual’s authority had grown stronger. In the archetypal struggle between servant and master, Deburaux/Pierrot was thus a new sort of ideal: the valet who gives as good as he gets, who is on no side except his own. Working-class Parisians instantly identified with the quicksilver maneuvering and clever practical jokes of this wily free agent.

The character appealed as well to literati of the romantic generation, but for different reasons. The joyous commedia dell’arte pantomimes, with their vulgar, violent, carnivalesque madness, were a welcome antidote to the serious airs of aristocratic tragedy. Moreover, “fairy pantomimes,” which featured miraculous transformations, rebirths, and supernatural occurrences, had a poetic appeal for romantics seeking escape into reverie and passionate fantasy. The pantomime of Deburaux/Pierrot engaged them most because it mingled art and life. Deburaux did not enact Pierrot, he invented, and became, a new Pierrot—ironic, mocking, detached. He seemed a symbol of the creative artist, an enigmatic, marginal man whose vitality and autonomy prove his superior sensibility. His art fused instinct and control, the actual and the marvelous, inner and outer. “My heart,” Deburaux wrote to George Sand, “is like my face.”

The face in this photograph is a virtual facsimile of Baptiste Deburaux’s. A year after the latter’s death in 1846, the public attended what seemed a magical reincarnation of their hero when eighteen-year-old Charles donned the black skullcap and oversized muslin suit of his father and, issuing from an exploding turnip, took the stage as another—but virtually the same!—Pierrot. Compared with Paul Legrand (pl. 82), who also played the role, Charles was praised for his agility and adresse, or technical finesse, and for the accuracy of his mask, which seemed identical to Baptiste’s. Although the son was never the genius his father had been, his elegant reenactments of the famous pantomimes served to keep Baptiste’s memory, and the symbolic importance of the Funambules, very much alive.

The year before Charles Deburaux came to the studio to pose, Nadar’s close friend Théodore de Banville published a collection of stories and essays, Les Pauvres Saltimbanques, in which he made explicit the analogy between the poor clown and the suffering artist. This was only the most recent statement of an idea that originated in that group. Gautier’s and Nerval’s repeated appreciations of Deburaux/Pierrot in the 1840s implicitly cast him as a romantic artist, each writer bestowing his particular guise: for Gautier he was a mélange of mysteries and ironic opposites, for Nerval a denizen of dreams. The same intuitive identification had in 1840 led Nadar, precociously, to pair himself with Pierrot, making them matched masters of ceremonies for a pantomimic soirée (see pp. 7–8 and fig. 1).

The clown/artist twinning was the natural child of these romantics—patronless literateurs who lived by means of journalism, themselves paid performers entertaining the people in a vulgar idiom everyone could comprehend. They rejected the old political systems and the
classic theater that represented them, delighted in the vital, subversive foolery of pantomime, and adored a clown.

Therefore, when Nadar photographed Charles Deburau, it was not as the man-about-town but as Pierrot, and as his own double. In this portrait he captured the blank anticipation that constituted ground zero of the Deburau interpretation. Yet in this pallid self-containment, without color or mood, there is an inner alertness, a watchful awareness that must be still. It is as if Pierrot were waiting for Nadar, and Nadar for Pierrot, to speak or move. In that taut and wordless consonance, the personability of the actor and the character of his role recede, and the white face seems that of a spirit—the one the Romantic movement had recognized as its own.

1. The camera held glass plates up to 30 x 40 cm. However, no print from those extra-large negatives exists now; the photographs in the series shown here were made on 24 x 30 cm plates.
2. One is owned by Gérard Lévy, Paris; two others, whose attribution is questionable, are reproduced in Wechsler 1982, p. 15.

7. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

Pierrot surprised, 1854–55

Albumen silver print

11⅛ x 8⅜ in. (28.7 x 20.8 cm)

Collection of Suzanne Winsberg, Paris

Some of the pictures in this series are like pages in a glossary of standard expressions. Plates 7 and 9, photographs that are variants of each other, show Deburau in a "take" of surprise, his little mouth forming an O as he whistles in air in a rush of astonishment.

The frontal version, plate 7, illustrates the concept clown as clearly as the joker on a playing card. The hand visible at the upper right, an unintentional inclusion, adds a deliciously dumb accent to this generic presentation of a simpleton.

In plate 9 the same elements are orchestrated slightly differently. Swiveled to the left, the camera counterbalances the sun, which has rotated to the right; this gives the shallow field a slight torque in which Pierrot, now half a step to the left, seems to expand, his smoke flaring like wash on the line. This sense of movement enhances the expression of surprise that has spread through Deburau’s body, bunching his shoulders and raising his eyebrows. The intensity of his shock is so convincingly registered that one automatically looks for the cause.

This confusion of identities was in the best tradition of the commedia dell’arte; the resulting ambiguity of authorship would have delighted the children of Paradise.

9. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

Pierrot surprised, 1854–55

Albumen silver print

11⅛ x 8⅜ in. (28.7 x 20.8 cm)

Musée d’Orsay, Paris, gift of Marie-Thérése and André Jammes, Pho. 1986.74

See entry for plate 7.

10. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

Pierrot running, 1854–55

Albumen silver print

11⅛ x 8⅜ in. (28.7 x 20.8 cm)

Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York, Ph. 83.1102

The Théâtre des Funambules was built about 1816 on the grounds of a wax museum and a small shed where tightrope dancers (funambules) and trained dogs had performed to the tunes of three blind men. Like the neighboring theaters, it was constructed after Napoleon ordered the acts to be staged indoors, in order to control the crowds who flocked to the boulevard du Temple to see acrobats, strolling musicians, and other variety stunts. These lower-class spectacles were kept distinct from serious theater by laws permitting barkers and comic skits (parades) out front and requiring the actors to arrive onstage doing cartwheels and handsprings. Speaking parts were at one time also forbidden, and thus the traditions of the commedia dell’arte survived in pantomime.

Baptiste Deburau was born to a family of acrobats. The cunning rapsacillon he fashioned out of the slow-witted bobby Pierrot would have been unthinkable without his own boneless, long-legged grace. Charles, also remarkably agile, would caper continuously during the two hours of a pantomime through one duel, beheading, or explosion after another, and with the resilient energy and poise that are evident in this photograph. Immobile as a statue, Deburau here simulates the chase, not by adopting a running posture but by miming the race. His reaching hands run forward like horses urged on by the charioteer, who leans into the wind of the breakneck speed described by his flying leg.
11. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot imploring**, 1854–55

Salted paper print

11 3/8 x 8 1/3 in. (28.9 x 20.8 cm)

Stamped bottom right: Nadar jne

Musée d’Orsay, Paris, gift of Marie-Thérèse and André Jammes, Pho. 1991.1 (2)

Almost a century and a half has passed since the suite of photographs of Pierrot was publicly shown. At the 1855 Exposition Universelle they were an eye-catching element of Adrien Tournachon’s exhibit. In the center of an apparently very large frame were several portraits of women and men as well as some animal studies made at the zoo; these were surrounded by the photographs of Pierrot, a running frieze of diverse expressions—surprise, pain, delight, and so forth. All the prints displayed in the frame have since been lost.

The only sequential group of prints from the Pierrot suite to survive are a dozen photographs mounted on sheets about 18 x 14 inches without titles or other commentary. The sequence is indicated by numbers at the upper right of each salted paper print. Originally the prints were bound together in an album of fifteen leaves, which comes down to us with numbers 9, 11, and 13 missing. The album belonged to descendants of the mime Alexandre Guyon, who had played with Charles Debureau and Paul Legrand in *Les Trois Pierrots* (1850).

This photograph bears the number 2 in the upper right corner and was the second in the suite, following the introductory picture of the clown as photographer. In this one he implores, head bowed in mock humility, palm up to receive. The embodiment of the instinctive man, Pierrot is ruled by his appetites, and so this sequence of his escapades starts off with the most natural and open-ended gambit: Pierrot asks to satisfy his desire.

12. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot with fruit**, 1854–55

Gelatin-coated salted paper print (vernis-cuir)

11 7/8 x 8 1/3 in. (28.1 x 20.4 cm)

Stamped (almost imperceptibly) bottom left: Nadar jne

Collection of François Legap, Paris

Anything can happen in the magical world of the fairy pantomime. In answer to Pierrot’s supplication a basket of fruit materializes between his hands, a gift from heaven that strikes him with delight. This anticipation of a feast recalls the longest-running of Baptiste’s early triumphs, *Le Bœuf enragé* (1827), which had a picnic scene that was legendary; however, the appeasement of the glutton’s appetite was a necessary episode whatever the pantomime. Gautier recalled, “We habitually occupied a ground-floor stage box, somewhat like a drawer of a chest, and Pierrot was so accustomed to seeing us that he never sat down to a single banquet on the stage without giving us our portion of it.”

Although Nadar could have provided Debureau with any type of food—sausage, wine, a sumptuous cake—he opted for fruit, the original answer to a primitive man’s appetite. The sensuous luxury of enjoying choice fruits hors saison (out of season) was also a Parisian passion. The wildest desires of the most demanding epicures were satisfied by Couturier, the elegant frutier at 38, boulevard des Italiens, diagonally across the street from Adrien and Nadar’s studio.

The suite of pictures of Pierrot that Nadar devised was intended as a novelty to draw customers from the crowds strolling the boulevard. Had it been displayed, as he planned, in a sidewalk vitrine, this photograph would have charmed the knowing flaneur. Pierrot’s satisfying dream-come-true is no stage artifice but a real-life extravagance from Couturier, who, like the artiste-photographe and the mime, knew the value of a little well-placed publicity. To share in the feast one might visit the emporium across the way, the studio on the roof, or, of course, the Funambules.

13. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot laughing**, 1854–55

Salted paper print

11 1/6 x 8 1/3 in. (28.6 x 21.2 cm)

Stamped bottom right: Nadar jne


Pierrot is feeling devilishly good. Having eaten his fill or perhaps stolen a kiss, he savors his good fortune and laughs at having outsmarted his pals. His levity is hardly the full-bellied guffaw of the bawdy English clown. Indeed, it is not hilarity that Debureau expresses but a wagish Parisian wit, both self-aggrandizing and generous. Here Pierrot is the cunning blagueur (trickster), the scarcely grown gamin who was adulated by the street-smarturchins perched in Paradise.

14. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot listening**, 1854–55

Gelatin-coated salted paper print (vernis-cuir)

11 1/6 x 8 1/3 in. (29.8 x 21.6 cm)

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 98b, petit fol., t. 1

Ex coll. Gabriel Croser

It was said at the Funambules that one listened to the pantomime. The attention demanded of the audience was of course visual, but the quality of the attentiveness seemed somehow aural, perhaps because unnatural suppression of the voice made viewers hanker for it more. The muteness also works another way: because the silent actor must project through his body, he activates the ambient space. Whereas the eye perceives objects but registers space as empty, the ear seems to work the other way around. Its field of apprehension is silence, which is interrupted, articulated, or modulated by sounds. Watching a mime generates an unusual awareness of space, and that receptivity to the void is perhaps more like hearing silence than seeing emptiness.

In this photograph Pierrot listens with every fiber in his body.

15. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot in pain**, 1854–55

Albumen silver print

9 7/8 x 7 1/16 in. (24.3 x 18.6 cm)

Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York, Ph. 82.796

Pierrot aches. Perhaps some horror revolts him and his stomach churns in disgust; but given his simple urges and his frequent overindulgence of them, his pain is less likely to be moral than physical. His gluttony earns distress as surely as that of a kid in a candy store. And when he swells up from sating his untempered cravings—hanging as he does from the slender side of the clown family—he hurts exquisitely.
16. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot with medicine, 1854–55**
Salted paper print
11 5/8 x 8 1/2 in. (29.7 x 21.1 cm)
Stamped bottom left: Nadar n°

Following the picture of stomachache, the sequence continues with its treatment. Pierrot has found a jar of jalap, a well-known and vigorous purgative extracted from the root of a Mexican plant. He lifts the lid gingerly and stands back, as if expecting the bad genie of colic to arise from the open pot.

Debureau’s delicate treatment of the coarse subject is characteristic. Pedrolino, Pierrot’s commedia dell’arte ancestor, would have received a horse’s dose of jalap, and the dramatic and copious outcome would have brought down the house. The vulgar is only suggested here, relegated to the imaginable emanations of the dark medicine jar from which Pierrot, ever pristine and elegant, keeps a wary distance. This discretion reflects not only the gentlemanly style of the Debureau but also the gradual gentrification of low pantomime to suit the larger bourgeois public of the mid-nineteenth century. That same public was the object, of course, of Nadar’s photographic campaign.

17. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot the thief, 1854–55**
Salted paper print
11 5/8 x 8 1/2 in. (29.7 x 21.1 cm)
Stamped bottom right: Nadar n°
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, gift of Marie-Thérèse and André Jammes, Pho. 1991.1 (9)

Pierrot steals. It is the necessary deed for speedy gratification of the nain’s desires. In early pantomimes the things worth stealing were food, tenderness, sometimes respect. But in the nineteenth century, the growth of a money economy and of private wealth shifted the terms to include gold or other currency as the loot to lust for. One of the most famous of Baptiste’s pantomimes was Le Songe d’or, first performed in 1839 and often revived.

Here Pierrot clutches a bag of money labeled “2000.” His stance signifies stealth. Hiding the catch with his body, he tries to stuff it into his pocket while looking back over his shoulder apprehensively and preparing to make his getaway.

18. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot with coin, 1854–55**
Salted paper print
11 5/8 x 8 1/2 in. (29.7 x 21.1 cm)
Stamped bottom right: Nadar n°
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, gift of Marie-Thérèse and André Jammes, Pho. 1991.1 (10)

The photograph is now missing that originally came between plate 17, representing stealth, and this one, portraying foxy superiority. Whatever happened, Pierrot came out on top. He invites our applause: he is still in the money, while the others, he gestures, are not.

19. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot with envelope, 1854–55**
Salted paper print
11 5/8 x 8 1/2 in. (29.7 x 21.1 cm)
Stamped bottom right: Nadar n°

Under the pressure of Debureau’s genius and of the immense social changes in post-revolutionary France, Pierrot lost his obstinacy and gradually got the better of his master, becoming the independent agent of his own self-interest. For example, after arguing in vain for his wages, he is sent to see whether his master’s mail has come. He goes and sees, but he does not bring back the mail. Just that scenario is replayed in this photograph.

Charles Debureau served his own best interests by agreeing to collaborate with Nadar on this sensational publicity stunt. But as Pierrot he characteristically mixes up art and life and cannot help wanting to gain the whip hand over his adversaries, who in this case are the Tournachon brothers. Although the envelope addressed to “M. Ad. Tournachon Nadar jeune / Fondeur de la Maison de Photographie” is not his business, Pierrot of course scoops up the mail and scoops for the reward he knows he deserves. Sucked up by avidity, Pierrot is raised to tiptoe in anticipation. Thus, in the one photograph that directly advertises the business of its makers, the clown mocks the brothers’ prestige by taking their proceeds for his own.

20. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Pierrot jumping through a window, 1854–55**
Salted paper print
11 5/8 x 8 1/2 in. (29.7 x 21.3 cm)
Stamped bottom center: Nadar n°

The thickening plot reaches its finale. Pierrot has been lucky—he has feasted on luscious fruits, stolen a bag of money, duped his photographer friends, and not gotten caught. But now the authorities are on his tail. We must imagine his master Cassandre, the intransigent father figure, old and mean, as the receveur général (tax collector) in hot pursuit of the youthful scoundrel. With bravura the little clown jumps through the window, escaping judgment though defenestration as neatly as his spiritual brothers the bohemians evaded their creditors (see p. 10). In this deus-ex-machina ending, Pierrot gives everyone the ultimate slip.

21. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon

**Vallent, 1854**
Salted paper print
8 3/8 x 6 3/4 in. (21.4 x 16.3 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1991.2 (69)

**Jules Vallent (dates unknown)**

This photograph was very likely taken early in the brothers’ collaboration at the boulevard des Capucines studio, for Vallent’s name appears in the small account book in which Nadar kept track of their enterprise between September 21 and October 16, 1844. The slack focus and blurred background also suggest the trials and errors of novice portraitists.

Their sitter was a well-heeled colleague, the son of a wealthy notary and a student of Charles-Louis Muller and Alexandre-Joseph Oliva, painters and sculptors of academic distinction. Three years after the portrait was made, Vallent was beset by financial difficulties arising from a business failure, the sale of his father’s office, and several lawsuits. He appealed to Nadar repeatedly for assistance and loans: “I am asking you as a last recourse, after the pawnbroker’s.” In 1871 Vallent left Paris for Cracow, where he worked as a tutor and a portraitist to nobility before moving on to the Ukraine in 1876.

The little we know of Vallent’s story corroborates the effect of this portrait, in which
the tentative, shapeless personality evinces less vitality than the luxurious coat. Was it beginner’s luck or some vague intuition that captured the autonomy of this pelt—soon to be liberated by the pawnbroker to sally forth on another, more fortunate back? MMH

2. The letters from Vallent to Nadar are undated; the one quoted is B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 31903/95. I am indebted to André Rouillé for the information in this note.

22. Nadar
Asselineau, 1854
Salted paper print
9 x 7 1/2 in. (24.3 x 18.1 cm)

François-Alexandre-Charles Asselineau
(1820—1874)
This portrait of Nadar's close friend and the great Baudelaire enthusiast Asselineau is compositionally characteristic of Nadar's first photographs. The subject, comfortably seated on a divan covered in silk damask with a floral design, is shot from rather high up, which creates a feeling not only of proximity but, in this case, of total ease. It is a private image, much more expressive than the rather stiff photograph of Asselineau that Nadar was to take during his classic period, in which the lens seems fixed on the subject’s checked waistcoat rather than on his face. Here, however, the introspective melancholy of this erudite bibliophile is very well analyzed, calling to mind Théodore de Banville's poem evoking the group of friends who gathered at the Café du Divan Le Peletier in the early 1850s: "One sees the gentle Asselineau /Near the fierce Baudelaire.""

Obviously the close association of Asselineau and Nadar, which dated back to their adolescence at the Collège Bourbon (the future Lycée Condorcet) in the early 1850s, united two diametrically opposite temperaments. After witnessing his wildest parties and his duels, Asselineau was chosen by the ebullient Nadar to be a witness at his wedding.

Asselineau was above all, along with Banville and Poulet-Malassus, a true friend of Baudelaire, whom he met when both were reviewing the 1845 Salon. Together they frequented the Café Momus, and from 1850 on the bond between them became stronger. In that year Asselineau saw the manuscript of Limbes, the future Fleurs du mal. Much later, after Baudelaire had been tried for obscenity and blasphemy, Asselineau defended the poems in an article published in the Revue française, loyally dismissing accusations of immorality and focusing exclusively on literary originality. Like Nadar, Asselineau was one of the faithful who surrounded the poet during his terrible sickness. And he continued to bring out, with Poulet-Malassus, unpublished works of Baudelaire; a great many appeared in his Charles Baudelaire: Sa Vie et son oeuvre (1869), which was intended to be "the biography of a mind." FH

1. On which Marceline Desbordes-Valmore also sits (pl. 14).
2. In the Musée d’Orsay.
4. In particular a duel in 1845 that pitted Nadar against the journalist Balattherie de Bragelonne, another of Nadar's schoolmates at the Collège Bourbon. I owe this information to André Rouillé.
5. See Asselineau 1913; quoted in Pichois and Ziegler 1987, p. 273.
7. Ibid., p. 185. We know from Asselineau's biography that once a week Nadar fetched Baudelaire at Dr. Duval's boardinghouse, where the poet had entered on July 4, 1866, and brought him home to dine with old friends, in hopes of distracting him. Nadar set another example of generosity in defending his friend Asselineau when after 1870 he was politically attacked for having held a post in the Mazarin Library for fifteen years under the Second Empire; Nadar emphasized that Asselineau was a completely disinterested man preoccupied only with a passion for books (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24460/402, pointed out by André Rouillé).

23. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon
Gérard de Nerval, 1854—55
Waxed-coated salted paper print
t 7/16 x 5 1/2 in. (26.3 x 19 cm)
Inscribed top right in Nadar's hand: Gérard de Nerval Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 908, petit fol., t. 1

Gérard Labrunie, called Gérard de Nerval (1808—1855)
Although Nadar dated this portrait to early January 1855 belatedly (and cannot always be trusted in this kind of detail), the desperate appearance of the model and the shabbiness of his dress suggest that the photograph may indeed have been taken shortly before the bitter cold night of January 25, 1855, when Nerval hanged himself from a gate in a wretchedly poor neighborhood quite near the place du Châtelet. In all events, this photograph must have been taken sometime between mid-September 1854 and January 15, 1855, the period during which the Tournachon brothers collaborated; the furniture indicates, moreover, that it was taken in Adrien's studio.

Nerval's suicide threw the literary world into a state of mournful stupification. And yet when he was eighteen years old, his life had seemed full of glorious promise. The exceptionally handsome young man had just done a translation of Goethe's Faust that Goethe himself admired and that eventually inspired a Berlioz opera; he was beginning to enjoy success in the theater, to which he would always be attracted, writing play after play (one in collaboration with Alexandre Dumas) and authoring innumerable critical reviews. In the 1830s he founded the Petit Cénacle, the "Little Literary Circle" (so named to set it apart from the larger romantic group that crowded around Victor Hugo). For Nerval, who had just inherited some money from an uncle, it was a period of gilded bohemia during which he bought many works of art, including a columned Renaissance bed and paintings attributed to Fragonard.

The excessively sensitive son of a mother who had died young and a military doctor seasoned in Napoleon's campaigns, Nerval never felt that he belonged to this world. Eloquent of this alienation is the title of a work published after his death: Le Rêve et la vie (Dream and Life). His mental disturbance first appeared in 1841 and recurred in 1852.

Nerval's contemporaries, beginning with Théophile Gautier, remembered in particular his sweetness and gentleness. Nadar caricatured him in Le Journal pour rire of April 9, 1852, showing the already balding poet seated on a pile of books and with these accompanying words: "Gérard de Nerval is modest, sweet, naive, benevolent, affectionate, and as transient as the swallow." Alexandre Dumas wrote more perspicaciously:"It's as if he were ashamed of his superiority, which came to light only in discussion and asserted itself only when he felt pressed by his interlocutor."1

Nerval was above all a great poet who, under the influence of German poetry, which he knew thoroughly, or through his rediscovery of the Pléiade poets of the Renaissance, restored musicality to verse, as indeed to prose narrative. Perfect examples are Scènes de la vie orientale (Scenes of Oriental Life, 1848—50), the
work of a dreamer obsessed by the queen of Sheba, and Les Filles du feu (Daughters of Fire, 1854), which conjures up the vanished charms of the Valois countryside where he had spent his childhood. He is regarded as a precursor of the Symbolists and the Surrealists. A tireless worker, Nerval was also a tireless walker, both abroad and in Paris—every nook and cranny of which were familiar to him, as one gathers from reading Les Nuits d'octobre (October Nights).

24. Nadar

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, 1854
Salted paper print
7 3/4 x 7 3/8 in. (19.6 x 14.9 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.416.141
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786–1859)
The portrait, made sometime around April 1854, is Nadar’s first documented photograph and his first great masterpiece of an intimate kind; this is the only existing print of it. The striking image of the poet on her deathbed (pl. 88) is one of Nadar’s last major accomplishments in this domain, a remarkable work in which the poet’s face, so ravaged by illness that it resembles a mummy, is revealed with truthfulness and clarity: an unemotional presentation that stirs the emotions.

Marceline Desbordes was the daughter of a painter specializing in coats of arms and church ornaments who was ruined by the Revolution. When the child was fourteen, her mother set off with her to join a cousin in Guadeloupe, hoping to recover the family fortune. During the transatlantic voyage her mother died. When Marceline returned to France, to earn a living she became an actress and music-hall singer, making her debut in Rouen and then attracting attention at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. After an unhappy love affair which affected her health, compelling this extremely sensitive woman to give up music, she married the actor François Prosper Valmore in 1817. Feelings of melancholy never left her, and these she expressed with great musicality in a verse collection that appeared the following year, Elégies et romances. She continued to publish until 1843 and spent the last two bedridden years of her life reworking poems that appeared in posthumous volumes: Jours d’Orient, La Couronne effeuillée, Les Roses de Saadi (Orient Days, The Wreath Shorn of Petals, The Roses of Saadi).

The name Marceline Desbordes-Valmore is not well known today, but during her lifetime, in the small world of Parisian letters where women often received harsh treatment, she was approved by the most fastidious judges: Hugo, Baudelaire, Lamartine, Michelet (who declared that “the sublime [was her] very nature”), Vigny, who saw in her “the greatest feminine mind of her age.” Sainte-Beuve described her as “A poet so instinctive, so tender . . . that it is impossible in her case not to consider poetry as independent of all purpose, as a simple gift for weeping, for crying out, for complaining, for enveloping her anguish in melody.” Desbordes-Valmore’s uneven verse lines and other innovations in prosody were particularly admired by Théodore de Banville and by the Symbolist poets Rimbaud and Verlaine, who owe much to her; Verlaine maintained that she was at the heart of his Poètes maudits (Accursed Poets, 1888).

25. Nadar

Doré, 1854
Salted paper print
8 x 6 3/4 in. (21.3 x 16.9 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 11, fol. I, t. 6

Gustave Doré (1832–1883)
Gustave Doré was a contributor to Charles Philipon’s Le Journal pour rire, where he had been hired to work in 1847 at the age of fifteen. It was there that he met Nadar, with whom he was to enjoy a strong and lasting friendship. Of the portrait made in 1854, this print was printed by Nadar and another by Adrien, who stamped it “Nadar je ne.” This duality brings up once again the vexed question of collabora-

26. Nadar

Philipon, 1854
Salted paper print
9 3/7 x 7 3/7 in. (24.1 x 18 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1993-1 (36)

Claude-Guillaume-Charles Philipon (1800–1862)
Godfather of political caricature in France and surrogate father to Nadar, Philipon was one of the seminal talents of his epoch. He founded the comic newspapers La Caricature and Le Charivari in 1831 and 1832 and published innumerable physiologies, almanacs, albums, and collections of drawings as well as Le Journal pour rire, Petit Journal pour rire, Musée français-anglais, and other satirical papers on which Nadar worked. Philipon was an indefatigable champion of political liberty, a defator of
conventional wisdom, and a keen observer of modern life. An agent provocateur who acted as director, collaborator, and paymaster for Daumier, Gavarni, Grandville, Doré, and the other geniuses he encouraged and published, Philipon is now shockingly unknown, largely because he did not sign his work. He was the catalyst, vehicle, spur, and script, the inspirer of the graphic artists who themselves became famous for their brilliant drawings of social and political subjects during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Philipon nurtured Nadar, and their relationship was abiding. From 1849, when he hired Nadar to work on Le Journal pour rire, until his death in early 1862, Philipon supported, prodded, and dotted upon his younger colleague, whose energies and aptitudes were similar to his own. The eighty-one letters from Philipon among Nadar’s papers at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France attest to his wit, impatient common sense, forbearance, and avuncular love for his protégé.1

Nadar, for his part, readily recognized Philipon as “maître et ami.”2 In addition to making three sensitive portraits of him,3 Nadar further expressed his appreciation of the older man in the moving obituary he wrote the night of his death. To focus his thoughts Nadar evidently turned to his own portraits of Philipon.

Endowed with a unique flair in this special art of aptitudes, as with aprodigious lucidity in practical matters, he was an inexhaustibly fertile source of both methods and ideas. Without equal at intuizing the thing to do or deriving benefit from the thing done, of peerless clarity of vision and rapid execution, he astonished and discontented even the youngest and the most ardent. . . . So pronounced and energetic a personality could not help but be uncompromising and even overbearing, something that even the touchiest person would have forgotten because of the attractive, persuasive charm of Philipon’s face and speech. I would say that he was sometimes too much of his own opinion, if we didn’t live in an era when so many are not enough of theirs.4

This is the quick, sharp, sure intellect Nadar depicted about 1854 (pl. 26). Standing tall in the full sun, his cigar poised like a lithographer’s crayon, Philipon emerges from the forceful shadow he casts and that he seems responsible for drawing. It is a witty homage, at once a photographic portrait of the successful publisher of graphic arts and a punning reference to the first of his many caricature reviews, La Silhouette.

Toward the end of the obituary Nadar muses on the sweet goodness of the man in his declining years, portrayed in another, later photograph (pl. 1): “. . . the most expressive, the most likable face. In his youth Philipon’s beauty had been remarked upon, and in his last years passers-by stopped to look at this tall, slightly stooped old man with long white hair, whose face was open and benevolent and at the same time full of mocking refinement, recalling in its general contours the mask of Voltaire, minus the sentimentality. They gazed after him, this man who, with one pleasantrity, in bygone days had shaken a throne. . . .”5

Nadar concluded his encomium with a literal analogy, the sort of twist he had learned from his mentor, past master of the piercing truth: “Charles Philipon died of hypertrrophy of the heart. His heart took up too much space, the doctors said. They were right.”6

Alban-Adrien Tournachon (1825–1902)

From his letters and other documents in the Nadar archives it is clear that Adrien ravenously envied the success of his charismatic older brother. He himself was apparently slack, unstable, and manipulative as well as querulous and boastful—thus, hardly equipped to match Nadar. But despite his unfortunate character, he was likely neither as dumb nor as dull as the exasperated Nadar maintained.

These two photographs show Adrien at about age thirty, when he was collaborating, and secretly competing, with Nadar. The person represented is sensitive and curiously shy, a poseur in an artist’s sketching hat and smock. Disarming in their casualness, the portraits are also very seductive, perhaps because the unforthcoming sitter is enigmatic and sensual—a perfect repository for viewers’ daydreams.

In 1845, when the photograph in the Gilman Paper Company Collection (pl. 27) was first published, it was attributed to Louis Robert.7 The brilliant Parisian photography dealers Hughes Autexier and François Braunschweig reattributed the portrait to Adrien Tournachon in the early 1980s. Their delighted puncturing of Nadar’s fame with this (presumed) demonstration of his brother’s talent was based on the evidence of the printing technique (see entry for pl. 30), and that attribution was sustained by this writer.8 In this volume Françoise Heilbrun reattribution the portraits to Nadar, working for the moment in complicity with his sitter, charge, and near-nemesis (see p. 43).

27. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon
Adrien Tournachon, 1854—55
Gelatin-coated salted paper print (verso-cuir)
9 ½ x 7 ½ in. (24.8 x 18.1 cm)
Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York, Ph. 82.836
Ex coll. Jean Dieterle

28. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon
Adrien Tournachon, 1854—55
Wax-coated salted paper print
8 ¾ x 6 ¾ in. (22.3 x 17 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 99B, petit fol., t. 1
Ex coll. Gabriel Cramer

Alban-Adrien Tournachon, Champsleyre, ca. 1836

Albumen silver print, corners rounded, mounted on bristol
11 x 8 ¾ in. (27.9 x 21 cm)
Stamped bottom left: Nadar J’ et Cie/17, Boul’ des Italiens
Dry stamp on the mounting: Tournachon Nadar Jeune
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1983.220
Ex coll. Textbraun

Jules-François Huxson, called Champsleyre
(1822—1889)

Nadar had much in common with the critic Champsleyre, including the fact that both took

2 In September 1851 Nadar gave Philipon a print (today in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) of his famous portrait of Dumas (pl. 46). On the mount he wrote, “À mon maître et ami Ch. Philipon, Nadar (espace unique) (To my teacher and friend Ch. Philipon, Nadar [one of a kind]).
3 An engraving after the third photograph is reproduced in Champsleyre, Histoire de la caricature moderne, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1871) as an illustration for his reprinting (pp. 271–81) of Nadar’s obituary of Philipon (see n. 4).
4 Nadar in Journal amusant (February 1, 1862), reprinted in Champsleyre, Histoire de la caricature, p. 276.
5 Ibid., p. 279.
6 Ibid., p. 281.
pseudonyms. They belonged to the same generation, had similar provincial origins in modest, cultivated milieu, and both made a start in Parisian bohemia (Champfleury establishing himself in the capital in 1845) and in the world of journalism (they both wrote for Le Cenacle-Satan and L’Artiste). Further, both respected popular art, which in those days was of interest only to a handful of aesthetes. They especially valued Daumier’s caricatures (Champfleury collected them and prepared the first catalogue raisonné of the artist’s engravings and lithographs) and the art of pantomime. Champfleury wrote several pantomimes between 1846 and 1850, and he became director of the Théâtre des Funambules in 1862. They had many of the same friends: Nerval, Gautier, Janin, George Sand, and above all Baudelaire, who played a key role in orienting the tastes of both; Fantin-Latour’s Hommage à Delacroix (1864) pictures Champfleury beside Baudelaire and Nadar far from another friend he shared with Nadar, Manet.

There the resemblance ends. While Nadar was a photographer of genius, he was a weak, albeit prolific, writer, and a poor critic of art. His intuitions about most of the fine young or unrecognized artists with whom he mingled hit the mark, but, unlike Champfleury, he couldn’t formulate a coherent art criticism. Among Champfleury’s notable works of criticism are Le Réalisme (1857), which is devoted to Courbet; the articles he wrote for L’Artiste on Chardin and the Le Nain brothers (fellow natives of Laon, whom he helped to rediscover); and writings on faience, popular prints, and Japanese art. His works of fiction include Chien-cailleau (1847).

Nadar underestimated Champfleury (whom the critic Félix Fénéon would later give his due). Is it because Champfleury was a critic, an art historian, and not a creator? Was Nadar’s irritability toward him, which finally vented itself in a duel, attributable to rivalry and the unconscious envy of a failed writer? Or were there more superficial reasons? Nadar reproached Champfleury for his ugliness and even his dirtiness, and cannot be said to have flattered him in his Panthéon. Champfleury himself was conscious of his ugliness, as we see in a letter he wrote to a friend about Courbet’s masterpiece L’Atelier (The Artist’s Studio), in which artistic and literary figures are shown gathered around Courbet as he paints: “I dare not voice an opinion of L’Atelier, for I was horror-struck when I saw my own image—it makes me look like the general of the Jesuits. . . . The thought crossed my mind, I confess, that if the painting was turned down [by the Salon jury], I would be saved.”

The superb image seen here gives Champfleury no quarter, seizing him in his tic-ridden vivacity. (In my view it is more effective than Nadar’s portrait of him, which was very likely contemporary; see fig. 81). Here the art of the two brothers seems very close, especially when a comparison is made with Félix’s photograph of Ernestine (pl. 40), probably taken a year earlier. If not for the velvet armchair, on which Rossini also posed, and the stamp naming 17, boulevard des Italiens, where Adrien set up shop during the lawsuit between the two brothers, this photograph could easily be attributed to Nadar.

The negative of this portrait is lost.

30. Nadar (and Adrien Tournachon?)
Frémiet, 1854–55
Gelatin-coated salted paper print (vernis-cuir) 9 ⅝ x 6 ⅞ in. (24.4 x 17.1 cm)
Inscribed at right and on the back, in Nadar’s hand:
Frémiet
Stamped bottom left: Nadar Jnc
Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York, Ph. 80.670

Emmanuel Frémiet (1824–1910)
This print by Adrien Tournachon is in a technique known as vernis-cuir, in which a paper print is coated with layers of gelatin and tannin, giving it a heavy gloss like that of varnished leather. Adrien often used the process (cf. pls. 6, 8, 12, 14), and he stamped this print in the lower left corner with his mark, “Nadar Jnc.” That stamp has been all but trimmed off, however, and the sitter’s name is written on the print, recto and verso, in Nadar’s handwriting. Therefore we surmise that the image was a disputed product of the brothers’ collaboration. The negative to this unique print is lost.

Frémiet was a sculptor whose acute observation of anatomical structure, sometimes carried out at the morgue, and dexterous modeling of minute physiological details made him famous in an age that valued naturalistic representation. Had the sitter remained anonymous, we might guess from the picture—which highlights the sensitive hand, fastidious gesture, and level, clear-eyed regard—that the subject practiced some aesthetic calling akin to surgery.

Emile Blavier (active 1850–76)
There seems little reason to doubt this wonderfully live image, almost baroque in its arrangement and its sense of chiaroscuro (it calls to mind those portraits of artists by French imitators of Caravaggio that are so striking in their “instantaneity”), was taken by Félix and Adrien in collaboration; that is, between September 1854 and January 15, 1855. This attribution is not disproved by the presence of a stamp of the studio Adrien opened after the two brothers split up. Adrien’s partners were Jules Lefort and Léfebvre-Vély, and the new studio opened in the fall of 1855 on one of the fashionable thoroughfares of mid-century Paris.

Blavier, a young sculptor born in Crespin in northern France and educated in Douai before coming to Paris to study, had just made a name for himself at the Salon of 1852. Not much can be said about this competent artist except that he offered the city of Douai a plaster statuary group showing Napoleon at the bridge of Arcole, which he exhibited at the Salon up to 1876, and that he decorated the studio opened by Nadar on the boulevard des Capucines. The sculptor Louis Piotre reproduced his handsome bohemian head in a bronze medalion that is almost contemporary with Nadar’s photograph.

31. Nadar (and Adrien Tournachon?)
Blavier, 1854–55
Wax-coated salted paper print, mounted on bristol 12 x 9 ⅝ in. (30.5 x 23.5 cm)
Stamped bottom left: Nadar J et Cie/17, Boul’ des Italiens
32. Nadar and Adrien Tournachon
Musette, 1854–55
Slate paper print
10% x 8% in. (25.7 x 20.9 cm)
Stamped bottom right: Nadar Jne
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 958, petit f°., t. i

There is reason to believe that this photograph, taken about 1855, portrays Marie Roux—Murger's Musette and Champfleury's Mariette—a young woman who was certainly known to Nadar and who spent much time with his little bohemian band.

This hypothesis may be confirmed by the fact that the same woman appears in a photograph from the album compiled by Eugène Durieu for Eugène Delacroix in 1854 and served as a model for Delacroix's 1857 painting Femme d'Alger dans son intérieur (Algerian Woman in Her Apartment).

It is also the case that Champfleury and Delacroix were among the founding members of the Société Héliographique in 1851; that the same young woman, this time under the name Amélie, posed for Études photographiques, a set of nudes or exotic genre scenes intended for painters or connoisseurs taken by the photographer Jacques-Antoine Moulin and registered for copyright in 1852 and 1853; and that Musette also worked as an artist's model (she is specifically reported to have posed for Gérôme's Combats de coqs [Cockfights] in 1846 and Pradier's Atlasante in 1847, as well as for Ingres). Thus it is quite possible that the young woman whom Adrien Tournachon (aided or not by his brother) portrayed in a photograph full of sweetness and poetry is also the muse and companion of bohemia, the Musette whose "adventurous journey" ended in 1865 between Algiers and Marseilles in the wreck of the Atlas.

The style of the dress worn by the young woman, with its bodice open to white linen crossed by three bands of fabric, is the same as that worn by Nadar's wife, Ernestine, in the photographs he took of her in 1854 and 1855 (pl. 40); it also appears in Courbet's Portrait d'une dame espagnole (Portrait of a Spanish Lady), painted in 1845 and presented at the Exposition Universelle in Paris that same year. Assuming that these women hewed faithfully to fashion, one can assign the same date of 1855 to the portrait of Musette.

33. Nadar
Baudelaire, 1856–58
Slate paper print
9% x 6% in. (24 x 17 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1988.30
Ex coll. Charles Baudelaire, Auguste Poulet-Malassis
(1835–1878), Eugène Crépey (1837–1892), Jean-René Aubert, Jules Coutineau, Jacques Crépey (d. 1911), Armand Godoy (1880–1964). Acquired with the participation of the Société des Amis du Musée d'Orsay

34. Nadar
Baudelaire, 1855
Slate paper print
8% x 6% in. (21 x 16.1 cm)
Signed top left in pencil, in Nadar's late handwriting: Nadar
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1991.2 (1)

Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867)

Nadar counted the great poet among his close friends. Baudelaire produced essays, art criticism, and a novel, but is best known for his volume of poems, Les Fleurs du mal (Flowers of Evil).

The classically composed but lively portrait in which Baudelaire is seen standing (pl. 33), with a slightly unfocused effect that the poet undoubtedly found agreeable, must have been taken around 1856, during the same session as a recently discovered photograph of which the negative is lost (fig. 3). The image of Baudelaire seated in an armchair (pl. 34), one of the most moving portraits of the poet despite its technical imperfections, can be dated with certainty; the chair belonged to Mme Tournachon, Nadar's mother, who left her son's apartment after a quarrel, taking her furniture with her, on March 23, 1855 (having previously been photographed by her son seated in the same armchair). The photographs reproduced on plates 33 and 34 are unique prints, and the negatives of both are lost.

A third, more "traditional" pose, whose composition is less successful because the poet does not appear so elegant but whose psychological depth is great, has long been one of the most famous portraits of Baudelaire; its plate is preserved, and several prints of the period have resurfaced. Toward 1862 Nadar took another series of shots of his friend, this time in a carte de visite format (fig. 104), and several years later Manet based drawings and an etching on one of these.

His meeting with Baudelaire was of decisive importance for Nadar and inspired his finest book, Charles Baudelaire intime (The Private

Figure 104. Nadar. Charles Baudelaire, 1862.
Carte de visite, albumen silver print.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie

Baudelaire), curiously subtitled Le Poète vierge
(The Virgin Poet). It contains a rich description, captured by Nadar's great eye, of his first encounter with the poet at the Luxembourg Gardens, about 1842. Nadar's small band of friends were seated on their favorite bench, not far from the Théâtre de l’Odéon, when Baudelaire appeared in pink gloves and an oxblood tie, walking with a jerky gait. The group were admirers of his verse and readily followed him into his lair on the île Saint-Louis, which was heavy with musk perfume and cluttered with art objects. Nadar and the future author of Les Fleurs du mal became inseparable friends, remaining so despite quarrels, and Nadar was tender in his attentions to the poet during the two years of his terrible illness (Baudelaire ultimately died of venerable disease). As Jacques Crépey explains, this companionship united two beings whom everything seemed to separate, above all joining a "great heart to a great genius perpetually in search of a listener." "My friends," said Nadar at the end of his life, "were the honor of my life." Ignorant of Baudelaire's book, one will find a precise appraisal of Baudelaire's contribution to the literature of his time, but there are many apt and valuable observations about Baudelaire's entourage, who were united in their admiration for Gautier; with some digs along the
way at the Goncourt for their snugginess, at Maxime Du Camp for his dryness, and of course at Baudelaire himself for that affection that had become second nature to him and that some tried in vain to imitate. While reporting the provocations of the poet, who liked to scandalize, Nadar gives many examples of Baudelaire’s profound human generosity, which is palpable in his poetry. He recalls what he owes to his friend, especially Baudelaire’s having taught him to love the work of the printmaker Charles Méryon and of Manet. Finally, there is this moving passage: “And the last time I saw him at the Maison Duval, we had an argument about the immorality of the soul. I say we, because I read into his eyes as clearly as if he could speak. Come now, I repeated, how can you believe in God? Baudelaire stepped away from the window rail against which we were leaning and showed me the sky. In front of us, above us, was the splendid pomp of the setting sun, encircling the Arc de Triomphe with gold and fire.”

2. Ibid., p. 66, fig. 1.
4. Ibid., p. 49.

35. Nadar
Philipon, 1856–58
Salted paper print
8⅛ x 6⅛ in. (21.3 x 16.3 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1911.2 (26)
See entry for plate 26.

36. Nadar
Self-portrait, 1856–58
Salted paper print
9⅜ x 7⅛ in. (23.6 x 18.7 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1911.2 (59)

Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, called Nadar (1820–1910)

Public figure, master publicist, passionate observer and collector of personalities, physiognomies, and psychologies, Nadar naturally volunteered to be a subject of his own scrutiny, over and over again. In his early self-portraits he lampooned his long, thin legs, wild hair, and electric eyes; later, in his photogaphic self-portraits from the 1860s on, he often posed as the family man with wife and child or as the comfortable artist, “embourgeoisé” with slippers, monocle, and perhaps a quill pen or a handful of grapes. In those depictions Nadar scarcely grappled with his identity; he just presented it in the version of the moment.

In between, during the rue Saint-Lazare period when he was inventing a syntax of photographic portraiture, Nadar made several studies that reveal him in the role of troubled romantic artist. In a seated version (fig. 1) the photographer might seem to search himself as in a mirror, but he is actually gazing over the camera at something that interrupts his private reverie. The invisible presence can only be the viewer. (That photograph, a salted paper print of about 1855 measuring 8⅛ by 6⅛ inches [20.5 by 17 centimeters], is in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, X.37.1946.2, Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.)

In this standing portrait, too, Nadar was preoccupied with his public. He staked his act on neither physical beauty nor splendid attire, but, dressed comfortably in his customary fashion, on the figure he cut as a modern artist. While he later disparaged the affectation of the pose, “a word become so indispensable among us that we had hastily to invent it,” he was a great stylist and director who devised poses that summarized the sitter’s hidden character. Here he strikes the pose of the modern individual: a tower of contained power and consequence who is not, however, allowed a peaceful detachment. Looking back over his shoulder with apprehension, sleeves folded like the flowing base of a baroque bust, Nadar maintains his integrity at a price. Watchful and diverted, his soul is prey to his own consciousness; he is isolated, yet assailed by an invisible flux which, once it becomes visible, is history.

37. Nadar
Préault, ca. 1855
Salted paper print
9⅛ x 6⅛ in. (23.5 x 17.4 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1911.2 (77)

Antoine-Auguste Préault (1809–1879)
Born in the Marais and apprenticed to an ornamental craftsman in that quartier of Paris, Préault was awakened to the art of his time by Delacroix’s Massacre of Chios (1824). He came of age with Romanticism and never gave up championing the cause. The medallion he made after Delacroix’s death carried a punning motto that suggests the passion of Préault’s advocacy as well as a sense of Delacroix’s art and of the entire movement: “Je ne suis pas pour le fini, je suis pour l’infini.” (I am not for the finish [the finite]. I am for the infinite.)

In his “Lanterne magique,” Nadar characterized Préault’s contribution as follows: “It is Préault’s merit to understand the complete history of temperaments and the preeminence of the nervous system in our present era. Once he had grasped that, his work broke loose from the artistic tradition that makes men with nothing but muscles.”

Préault’s belligerent nature and strongly populist sentiments earned him the hostility of the Academy, but his wild side, in both art and life, brought him the appreciation of his fellows. In his Salon de 1859 Baudelaire wrote that Préault had “this instinctive taste that leaps upon the beautiful like a stalking animal on its natural prey.” Some five years earlier, Nadar paid homage to just that untamed quality when he made this portrait of his firebrand friend.

An engraving of this photograph accompanied Théophile Silvestre’s written portrait of the artist. “Hair that is sparse but full of life, tousled, swirling on his big head like the briers of a ravaged land . . . nervously inscribed creases lift his eyebrows and plague his forehead, which is ample and charged with anxiety.” Silvestre went on to describe a scowling, skeptical porcupine, a bohemian of robust body and careless dress whose volatile spirit leapt and flickered like flambéed liquor. Préault’s mobile mind, incessant activity, thirst for fame, and sarcastic nervous energy were, thought Silvestre, characteristically “modern.”

3. “Ce goût instinctif qui se jette sur le beau comme l’animal chasseur sur sa proie naturelle.” Ibid.
Charles Albert called Molin to Turin, and he became court painter to the House of Savoy, also executing portraits of the royal families of Italy and Portugal and their entourages. He returned to Chambéry sometime before Savoy was annexed by France in 1860, and there served as professor of drawing and painting and curator of the local museum.

Independent, solitary, and reserved, Molin shared with Nadar rather less of temperament than of aesthetic ideas. In painting portraits he excluded decor and fussy details in his search to limn his subject’s mental life; Nadar similarly dispensed with studio paraphernalia in his pursuit of the projection of inner character.

The sitting for this portrait took place in December 1858, at just the moment that Molin had modestly refused nomination to the Academy of Savoy. Wrapped in his elegant tasseled cape, this painter of royalty gives Nadar only a little of himself. The photographer has nonetheless seized him — imposing, introverted, observant, simultaneously worldly and wild. The echoes of Van Dyck, Velázquez, and Bernini that Nadar brought into play suggest Molin’s stature at the time, but the equivocating melancholy in his eyes reveals a soul in retreat — at heart, a montagnard who belongs at home.

1. I thank François Lepage for his research on Molin.

**Ernestine, 1854 — 55**
Salated paper print
9 3/4 x 6 9/16 in. (24.7 x 17.3 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436.3
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.

Ernestine-Constance Lefèvre Tournachon (1836 — 1909)
Ernestine was the eighteen-year-old daughter of Amélie and Édouard Lefèvre when she met Nadar in 1854. Lefèvre’s carriage agency was on the rue Basse-du-Rempart, the tree-lined north side of the boulevard des Capucines, until 1858. Just across the boulevard from Lefèvre’s establishment was the atelier Nadar had encouraged his brother, Adrien, to take for his photography studio. Presumably Ernestine encountered Nadar when he came to rent a carriage from her father.

When the portrait was made, Ernestine was either engaged to marry or had recently married the man behind the camera, a famous caricaturist twice her age. The sitting was evidently a lovers’ contest, the outcome of which was surely a draw. Self-protective and skeptical, Ernestine accepts Nadar’s bluff and meets his challenge, while Nadar returns the volley with an unglamorous appraisal of the young bourgeoisie.

Ernestine provided Nadar with a stable home where she raised their son, Paul; affectionate lifelong companionship; and the benefit of her good business sense. She contributed her dowry to Nadar’s photography business, and in the mid-1860s she took over the accounting and helped with the management. As Nadar devoted less and less time to the studio, Ernestine and Paul played increasingly important roles. Incapacitated by a stroke when traveling in Italy in 1887, Ernestine was devotedly tended by Nadar until her death in 1909.

**MHH**

41. Nadar
Gautier, ca. 1856
Salated paper print, domed top, mounted on bristol
10 ½ x 7 ⅜ in. (26.6 x 19.6 cm)
Signed bottom right: Nadar/113 rue St. Lazare
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436.127
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.

**MHH**

42. Nadar
Gautier, 1854 — 55
Albumen salated paper print, corners rounded, mounted on bristol
9 ½ x 7 ¼ in. (23.6 x 18.6 cm)
Signed bottom right: Nadar/113 rue Saint-Lazare
Dry stamp of the rue Saint-Lazare studio on the mount
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1993.3 (74)

**Théophile Gautier (1811 — 1872)**
After giving up ambitions to be a painter, Théophile Gautier turned about 1830 to poetry and literature, influenced by Sainte-Beuve and above all by Victor Hugo. Hugo’s play Hernani, a veritable manifesto of the Romantic, anticlassical aesthetic, created an enormous uproar when it premiered in 1830; Gautier was one of its most vociferous champions.

A much less inspired poet than either Hugo or Baudelaire, Gautier was nonetheless a beacon and mentor for the young poets who were the heirs to Romanticism. It was he who, extrapolating from the work done in his circle of writers and artists, defined the influential theory of art for art’s sake — art pursued for its own intrinsic perfection. Later Gautier relaxed the elitist, self-reflexive parameters he had con-
structed around art. In 1836, when he became editor of the journal L’Artiste, he wrote, advocating if not a populist art at least a Catholic receptivity: “Smitten in my youngest years with painting and sculpture, I became a delirious lover of art. . . . To be an oed, and still ove, the happiest moments of my life. . . . L’Artiste is a vast and complex title that embraces the whole world of intelligence: poetry and prose alike, books and theater, music and dance, the statue and the palace, painting and prints, the jewel and the medal, archeology and curio collecting. . . .” In addition to poems, novels, and art criticism, this indefatigable writer produced a regular theater chronicle for La Presse.

Baudelaire dedicated his Fleurs du mal (1857) to Gautier, and his words give the measure of his debt: “To the impeccable poet, to the perfect magician of French letters, to my very dear and very much venerated master and friend Théophile Gautier, with feelings of the deepest humility I dedicate these sickly flowers. C. B.”

Gautier was a faithful friend to Nadar and helped promote his photographs by publishing them in L’Artiste. Nadar called Gautier “Le Théos,” punning on the poet’s first name and the Greek word for god. Gautier’s intellectual latitude is exemplified in the stern letter he wrote to Nadar defending, of all people, Courbet, whom Nadar had attacked in the Nadar-Jury of the 1847 Salon: “It hurts to see you treat so shabbily young artists who are striving to make their way against all odds, and many of them impoverished into the bargain. . . .”

The photograph of Gautier in a damask cap (pl. 41) was engraved by Félix Bracquemond and reproduced in L’Artiste on March 13, 1859.

2. Quoted in Greaves 1985, p. 205.

44. Nadar
Doré, 1836–58
Salted paper print
9¼ x 7½ in. (23.5 x 18.9 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436.98
See entry for plate 25.

45. Nadar
Janin, ca. 1856
Salted paper print
9¼ x 7½ in. (23.6 x 18.1 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/1856 St. Lazare
Inscribed in the negative: 155
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 7

Jules-Gabriel Janin (1804–1874)
The well-educated son of an attorney, Janin studied law, perhaps thus acquiring his ability to juggle opposing views with ease. A renowned theater critic at the Journal des débats for four decades, Janin amused himself and his regular Monday readers with his capacious imagination, dexterous prose, capricious humor, and remarkably mobile opinion. Unsure, impressionable, and consequently uneffacing in his passions, this patronizing, plagiarizing man made enemies as easily as Nadar made friends. His self-indulgent, unscrupulous critique of Dumas is characteristic: “This mind clever at learning everything, at forgetting everything, at understanding everything, at neglecting everything; rare mind, rare attention, subtle mind and coarse talent, adroit intelligence, execution more or less satisfactory; an artisan more than an artist, a very skillful blacksmith, a mediocre carver; a frightful cyclops in his glowing forge . . . a paradox, a chasm, a pygmy, a giant.”

Janin’s fecund and vagabond imagination produced digression upon digression; on good days his bubbly, informal observations captured the essence of the ephemeral metropolis.

Janin was a friend of Nadar’s early on, when the two collaborated on Le Journal pour rire, especially in 1848–49. Later came a rancorous falling-out, although they must have made it up enough to allow this picture to be taken. Nadar’s opinion of the self-satisfied epicure is plain. The well-padded, proud, expansive little man rises in the picture space like a hot-air balloon — a dreamy, inflated self with a great, hollow interior.

46. Nadar
Dumas père, ca. 1835
Salted paper print
9¼ x 7½ in. (23.8 x 18.5 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/1853 St. Lazare
Inscribed in the negative: 155
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 6

Alexandre Dumas, known as Dumas père (1802–1870)
Born to a revolutionary general and Marie Cosette Dumas, a black woman widowed when the boy was four, Dumas received only a summary education. He came to Paris from the provinces in 1821; working as a clerk in the offices of the duc d'Orléans, he educated himself in the history of France and wrote his earliest plays. Henri III et sa cour (1829) was the first in a prodigious line of hugely successful romantic dramas, tragic love stories, and gothic tales, among them Richard Darlington and Kean (1836), which were major vehicles for Frédéric Lemaître. These were followed by scores of volumes of travel writing, historical works, and swashbuckling novels, notably Les Trois Mousetaures (The Three Musketeers, 1844) and Le Comte de Monte Cristo (1846). Even though much was penned collaboratively, the vast size of his production was incredible, and the man’s flamboyant prodigality in his life as in his art fed a gigantic legend.

Nadar had admired Dumas from childhood; his father had published the young author’s first novel and first play, and when the sixteen-year-old Nadar saw his own first article in print, his thoughts naturally turned to this example, whose portrait hung in his pension. Later, in 1845/46, Nadar and Dumas agreed to collaborate on a féerie, or theatrical spectacle, but Les Dents du pêche (The Teeth of the Comb), also referred to as L’Elixir de la vie (The Elixir of Life), was never staged.

The outcome of the tentative relationship was rather this famous portrait. Although simply posed astride a chair in the studio, Dumas would seem mounted upon a steed, his physical vitality and utter self-confidence palpable as d’Artagnan’s.

symbol of the Bonapartist agitator, or the bas-relief Émigrants. Again for Philippot he created what became his most famous series, “Robert Macaire,” the hustler with a thousand faces, published in Le Charivari (1836–38).

Nothing human was foreign to Daumier, who by virtue of the life he led rubbed shoulders with people of every description (he spent six months in jail in 1832, after being censored). He drew collectors, bourgeois, legal types, acrobats, laundresses; there were also emblematic figures, such as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, whom he preferred to render in paint (Nadar owned one of the Quixote paintings). Daumier’s life, like his appearance, may seem very ordinary; he never sought success through the Salon and could never bring himself to complete a large-scale work. Nevertheless he dominated the 1848 competition for a representation of the Republic with his unforgettable painting, monumental despite its small format, showing Mother France suckling her two children.

Both Baudelaire and Delacroix were great admirers of Daumier. He was a friend of the painters Corot, Daubigny, Rousseau, Dupré, and of the writers Théodore de Banville and Théophile Gautier. Not until 1878, a year before his death, after ten years of almost total blindness spent at Valmondois, was Daumier granted a large solo exhibition, at the Durand-Ruel gallery.

But the stature of the man did not go unremarked. “Like Balzac he made a whole world live and move, like Saint-Simon he chronicled a whole era,” wrote Jules Claretie. “Bring all Daumier’s caricatures together and you have the history of an epoch.” “No one has penetrated and rendered with such clarity the physiognomy of clothes, the expressive language of a waistcoat . . . or a hat, the revelations that spring from objects intimately bound up with the person,” noted Durancy. One can understand why Nadar would have loved such a man.
portrait of Daubigny’s older daughter, Cécile, probably dates to the same year.¹

A master of plein air painting, Daubigny was among the first to convey the fleetingness of the moment by means of light, rapid strokes. In 1861 Théophile Gautier applied to his work the word “impression” — which would later become the name of a revolutionary artistic movement — reproaching the painter for “making do with a first impression and neglecting details.”¹ This precursor of Impressionism was so fascinated by the interplay of water and light that he got as close to the river as possible, painting in a famous boat studio called Boinot. Daubigny devoted his entire life to translating onto canvas his calm, serene view of nature. “He is the painter par excellence of direct impressions,” wrote Zacharie Astruc. “He is tender, gentle, seductive. . . . Moreover, he is a man of delicious naivete, as unaffected as a child before his subject.”¹ The candor and humility aptly described by the critic are equally apparent in this photograph of Daubigny enveloped in a thick overcoat that seems too big for him.

1. According to Daubigny’s account book, fol. 21, reproductions of Robert Hellebrann, Charles-François Daubigny, 1827—1878 (Morges, Switzerland, 1976), p. 335. After 1859 Daubigny painted many pictures of the Île de Vaux, but one that bears the same title, signed and dated 1859 and today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Bordeaux, corresponds well to one of the two little sketches that Daubigny drew in his account book of the painting sold to Nadar for 5,000 francs.

2. This photograph, in a private collection, is reproduced in Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort and Janine Bailly-Herzberg, Daubigny (Paris, 1975), p. 78.


Pierré-Luc-Charles Cicipéi (1782—1808)

Although he had a beautiful tenor voice and attended the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique at age seventeen, an accident that left him with a permanent limp turned Cicipéi away from performance to the study of presentation and staging. After first apprenticing at the workshops of the Opéra, he became the décoreur en chef, and was responsible for more than four hundred theatrical decors in a career that extended from the Restoration through the Second Empire. Also known as a master water-colorist, Cicipéi painted decorative views of Italy and Switzerland that were shown in the Salons, and his views of the French provinces were published in Baron Taylor’s famous compendium of romantic travel imagery, the Voyages pittoresques. Plate 53 is a finished portrait, the image that was chosen by the sitter, the photographer, or both. Cicipéi’s bright eyes and breadth of hair have been lightly retouched with brush and ink (as have his sleeve and the chair covering) and he appears spry, debonair, and strong. His erect bearing contrasts with the pose in the un-retouched proof print (pl. 54), where the scrappy neck, sunken jaw, and sloping shoulders denote frailness. Grasping his cane like a songbird on a perch, his head cocked attentively, Cicipéi is here acute and pert; in its liveliness this portrait is remarkable, but the fleeting expression and twisted body suggest an infirmity probably deemed unsuitable for immortality.

56. Nadar

Chenêvières, ca. 1865

Salted paper print, domed top, mounted on burlon
8% x 6 in. (21.6 x 15.3 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/113 St. Lazare

Philippe de Chenêvières-Poincel (1820—1890)

What a difference between this thin young man with ardent eyes, for whom sartorial elegance counts little,’ and the mature director of Beaux-Arts, beard well trimmed and white tie knotted with studious casualness, whom Nadar photographed in 1874! Still, the transformation did not go deep. Despite a splendid career in museum administration that began in 1846, the marquis de Chenêvières was never a society figure but rather a scholar, praised for his modesty by Baudelaire, who knew him well. One feels that this is the image of a tireless worker. Chenêvières, whom Nadar included in his Panthéon of 1854 and then of 1858, did much to preserve the national patrimony, as founder, in 1851, of the Archives de l’Art Français, in which Champfleury (pl. 29) collaborated, and as inspector, in 1852, of provincial museums. Although Chenêvières commissioned Puviz de Chavannes to decorate the Pantheon in 1874 and owned a painting by Manet, this great collector of drawings was above all a “discoverer” of French art of the past.

The bond between Nadar, a showman and a dabbler of genius, and this great civil servant, who was even more effective and
infinitely more discreet, is explained for us by Chennevières in his Souvenirs d’un directeur des Beaux-Arts (Recollections of a Director of Fine Arts), published serially between 1883 and 1899 in the review L’Artiste. An exact contemporary of Nadar, Chennevières had like Nadar been a part of "that vast swarming marsh of Parisian bohemia which encompassed the whole literate world... between 1840 and 1855. To some degree we were all bohemians, in spirit or in our material existence." He also shared humanistic ideals with the photographer: "Why shouldn’t I admit that I loved the Republic of 1848 during its first months: it was generous, selfless, sincere, heroic, gentle to the weak and poor, full of dreams of universal well-being, quasi-mystical. Naïve soul that I was, I watched with tearful eyes as Nadar marched off beneath the terraces of the Tuileries, in a kind of green uniform, amidst a group of Poles who, after they had been given blessings at the Hôtel de Ville, set out to liberate their homeland...").

1. Nadar brightened the shirt front by masking it while making the print.
3. Chennevières-Pointel 1979, part 1, p. 96.
4. Ibid., part 3, p. 73.

58. Nadar

*Finette*, 1856–58
Salted paper print
8 1/4 x 6 1/4 in. (22.3 x 15.9 cm)
Inscribed on the back: Finette (Mabile)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436.496

The troubling portrait identified as "Finette (Mabile)," a luxurious butterfly pinned to the grayish-brown canvas of the studio, calls up certain types depicted by Boucher or Watteau: a loose woman, flashily elegant. She wears the lace bonnet with a large silk bow that contemporary lithographs show was common headgear among dancers at the dance hall known as the Bal Mabile. It is easy to imagine her visiting Nadar’s studio in one of her provocative low-cut ball gowns; the subtle photographer prefers to drape her in her cashmere shawl, with nothing revealed but the beginning of the wrist, which a heavy bracelet and a light-colored glove accentuate. Despite her made-up face, her powdered hair, and the ostentation of her attire, this "public-garden dancer" as assumes, by the grace of Nadar, the air of a dreamy young girl.

59. Nadar

*Mlle de Sanzillon*, 1856–59
Salted paper print
8 3/4 x 6 1/4 in. (22.2 x 15.7 cm)

This is one of the rare portraits of a socially proper woman made by Nadar before 1860. Few women frequented the studio on the rue Saint-Lazare, and they were mostly actresses, women of letters, models. The rich bourgeois and Second-Empire nobility did not inspire the photographer, and it was only later, driven by financial necessity, that Nadar decided to record their likenesses. But Mlle de Sanzillon, wearing her light-colored afternoon dress adorned with lace and puffs of silk, seems to have escaped from a salon rather than the stage of a popular theater. Her serious expression, sober hairdo, and discreet earrings guarantee her perfect respectability. By having her assume a three-quarters pose, Nadar manages to impart a graceful movement to her silhouette, recalling the fashion engravings in the Journal des demoiselles, where models strike this pose the better to exhibit all the refined details of the garments on display.

60. Nadar

*Young model*, 1856–59
Coated salted paper print
9 1/4 x 7 1/2 in. (23.9 x 19.1 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 11

The identity of the sitter is unknown, but Nadar’s inscription on the verso of the print records that she was "amenée par Lherminier" (brought by Lherminier). Born in Guadeloupe in 1813, Louis (or Loyo) Lherminier was a journalist, wit, and bon vivant who moved in the same circles as Nadar. His reputed diplomatic activity in Spain was as mythical as Nadar’s liberation of Poland (see p. 11); and the review he founded in 1846, Portefeuille, revue diplomatique, was as ephemeral as many another journal of the day. Alexandre Schanne (the Schauard of Murger’s Scènes de la vie de Bohème) recalled that Lherminier, like Nadar, hung out at the café La Rochefoucauld. Hippolyte Castille reported: "M. Lherminier was one of the most amiable Creoles one could possibly meet on
the boulevard des Italiens after leaving the Opera. Full of spirit but idle and pleasure-seeking, he loved the joys of life too much to choose anything over them.”

Imagine the scene in Nadar’s garden or studio: the two waggish journalists cutting up like kids out of school and flirting with Lherminier’s girl, who has undone her hair and perhaps much else. Slightly bemused, slightly indifferent, she looks back at the men ambiguously with a reserve halfway between patience and postprandial vacancy, and the shadow of a smile.

61. Nadar

Maria, 1836–59
Salted paper print, corners rounded
9¾ x 6¾ in. (24.9 x 16 cm)
Signed at right: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1981.36

62. Nadar

Maria, 1836–59
Salted paper print, corners rounded
9¾ x 7½ in. (24.9 x 18.9 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1981.37

Nothing is known of this woman, traditionally called “L’Antillaise,” except that she modeled for Nadar more than once, as François Heilbrun discusses in her essay (p. 50, and see fig. 38).

Any two photographs from the same setting allow us to watch Nadar at work, which is always instructive. If the marvelous photograph of Maria with her opulent breasts exposed did not exist, we should be rather less interested in the covered variant, but as a pair the pictures are fascinating. In the clothed version Maria faces away from the light, which falls across the shawl she pulls around herself. Clasping this cover across her chest and rotated away from the viewer, she is a closed book. To pass to the other image is to open the book. Turning toward the light, Maria displays a bosom that Nadar unwrapped on the diagonal. He repeats the angle in both the glance and the arm and even in the signature scrawled on the handy cascade of white cloth.

63. Nadar

“Mimi,” 1836–59
Salted paper print
4⅞ x 4⅞ in. (12.2 x 10.4 cm)
Signed bottom right: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York, Ph. 82.668

This photograph has traditionally been associated with Scènes de la vie de Bohème, Henri Murger’s charming accounts of bohemian life published in Le Corsaire-Satan between 1845 and 1849. Théodore Barrière assisted Murger in turning the stories into a musical, La Vie de Bohème (1849), which had quite a success (see the entry for pl. 78), and in 1851 the episodes were gathered and published as a book. Murger’s stories are better known today from the opera based upon them, Puccini’s La Bohème (1896).

In his stories Murger drew from lovers and friends to create the characters of Mimi and Musette, fictional composites who represent the girls of easy virtue of the period, the so-called grisiets and lorettes. Musette was modeled to some degree on the mistress of the critic Champfleury, whom he called Mariette (see entry for pl. 32). The character Mimi (the name was a term of endearment Murger applied to his successive loves) evidently owed much to a certain Lucille, who bequeathed her loose morals and pulmonary weakness to her literary counterpart before actually dying of consumption.

Murger’s beloved was described by Théodore de Banville as “one of those sickly Parisian flowers who were born and grew up in the shade . . . very white, of a dull pallor, with sweet lips, hair like bleached chestnut, and gray-blue eyes; one could see that she had suffered . . . small, delicate, fragile . . . her face seemed like the sketch of an aristocratic visage. . . .” Alexandre Schanne, the Schaunard of Murger’s stories, further elaborated, “this was indeed an unhealthy plant . . . and if at certain moments the expression on her face was angelic, she was nonetheless devoid of any moral sense. A little wanton.”

Nadar, a faithful friend of Murger’s, doubtless knew Lucille and her successors. At least one of whom was also tubercular. Although it cannot be ascertained whether this unique print portrays one of Murger’s loves or some similar artist’s model, the easy attitude of the woman’s pale, thin body and her beguiling regard confirm her membership in the eternal sorority of Mimi’s.

Figure 105. Nadar. Draped standing nude, 1856–19. Salted paper print. Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York

An unsigned photograph, evidently of the same woman, has been identified by Pierre Apraxine and attributed to Nadar (fig. 105). Besides these two images, Nadar is known to have photographed only one other nude, the one traditionally, if equally tenuously, identified as Musette or Mariette (fig. 94 and discussion, p. 96).

64. Nadar

Marie Laurent, ca. 1856
Salted paper print, trimmed to an oval, mounted on bristol
7⅞ x 6⅞ in. (20 x 16.2 cm)
Inscribed on the back: Mme Marie Laurent

Marie-Thérèse Désirée Laguet (1826–1904)
Marie Luguet was born in Tulle (Corrèze region) into a theatrical family. “She went on the stage as soon as she could walk and talk” is how chroniclers of the period liked to put it. Before acquiring Parisian renown, she toured the provinces: Rouen, Toulouse, Amiens, Dunkirk. Hired by the Théâtre de Bruxelles in 1846, in the same year she married Pierre-
Marie Laurent, a baritone at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. She followed him to Marseilles and then to Paris, where she made her début as Marie Laurent at the Théâtre de l'Odéon. In 1849 she first enjoyed an unqualified success, in François le champi, and an even greater one followed in La Poisardière at the Porte-Saint-Martin in 1851. Thenceforth, her reputation was established; she played by turns at the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Ambigu-Comique, and the Châtelet.

Often portrayed and caricatured in the press, Marie Laurent's face was thick, harsh, and a bit surly. In this singular photograph taken from the back, Nadar accomplishes a miracle of sensuality. The immaculate nape emerges from the dark drapery and supports an ample chignon held in place by a comb. The entire study is a subtle play of curves: the hairdo, the curls on the nape, the shoulders, the drapery; even the oval of the print accentuates this effect.¹

66. Nadar

**Mme Lefranc and Paul Nadar, 1858–59**
Salted paper print, trimmed to a circle
Diam. 7.5 in. (19.1 cm)
Signed at right: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
Collection of Gérard Lévy, Paris

This marvelous image of maternity shows not a mother and child but Paul Nadar (1856–1939), who seems here about two years old, held by the wife of one of his father's best friends, Pierre-Auguste Lefranc (1814–1878). A friend of Nadar from bohemian days who was part of the program for his spectacular party (see p. 7), Lefranc was among those responsible for giving our artist his cherished pseudonym in 1857–58, when they both lived in the Latin Quarter.¹ Lefranc worked with Nadar on various reviews during the 1850s, but his major claim to fame (as it were, for who remembers the name Lefranc?) was his collaboration with the comic playwright Eugène Labiche. Together they wrote a modest play entitled L’Avocat Loubet (Lawyer Loubet), which provided Baudelaire’s mistresse Jeanne Duval with a vehicle for entering the Théâtre du Panthéon, and also the celebrated play Le Chapeau de paille d’Italie (The Italian Straw Hat). Lefranc was the cousin of a truly successful playwright, Eugène Scribe. What made Lefranc unusual as a dramatist, however, is that he was also a banker. His marriage in 1847 to Blanche Cournot, whom we see in this photograph, apparently put him in charge of a large fortune; he returned to the Journal du Crédit public¹ and soon afterward bought up the Banque du Crédit Public. This influence enabled him to become a stockholder (along with the chairman, Philibert) in the Société Photographique Nadar on boulevard des Capucines, which was founded on July 12, 1860. The Goncourt brothers met Lefranc and reported the event with their usual superciliousness: “Nadar introduced us to an insignificant fellow, on whom he imposes silence whenever he ventures to utter a word about literature: ‘Shut up, you’re only a financier!’ This financier is Lefranc, one of the two authors of the immortal Chapeau de paille d’Italie. It seems that he’s an associate of [the financier Jules] Mîres. . . . Times are strange: you’re introduced to a businessman, and he turns out to be a vaudevillian. Professions and social states are in an unbelievable muddle.”¹

Lefranc apparently attempted to mediate a reconciliation between Nadar and his brother, Adrien, during their mother’s illness.

This photograph, presented as an idealized vision of mother and child, acknowledges its pictorial heritage without violating the medium into which that heritage has been translated. The picture is cut into a toondo that perfectly frames its contents. Even the way the child’s eyes are tightly closed evokes certain seventeenth-century paintings from Bologna, especially those of Guido Reni. There is realism but also a stylization of forms achieved through light, especially observable in the almost cubist treatment of Mme Lefranc’s face.

2. I owe this information to André Rouillé, who is editing Nadar’s correspondence.

67. Nadar

**Son of Auguste Lefranc, 1856–59**
Salted paper print
7½ x 5½ in. (19.1 x 13.7 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM. 436.18
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.

This boy’s father, a friend of Nadar from youth, is described in the entry for plate 66. There is no doubt that what we have here is an artist’s proof, unsigned and perhaps never exhibited because of its technical flaws—bits of the collodion layer torn away from the negative plate. These do not, however, detract from the freshness and honest simplicity that give this image its seductiveness. The velvety quality of the salted paper printing is also characteristic of the Nadar studio’s period of highest craftsmanship. The slightly unstable composition adds to the photograph’s sense of life.

68. Nadar

**Mère Marie Jamet, ca. 1860**
Albumen print
8¼ x 5½ in. (21.1 x 13 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436.487
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.
Marie Jamet, Mother Superior of the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres (1820—1833)

The handwritten inscription on the back of the print identifies the model as the mother superior of the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres (Little Sisters of the Poor). This portrait was therefore thought to be of Mère Jugan (1792—1875), the founder of that religious congregation, which was devoted to the cause of elderly paupers. However, we now know from hagiographical sources that Jeanne Jugan was divested of her functions and removed from her charity. The association was founded in 1819 at Saint-Servan, but an ambitious priest, Auguste Le Pailleur, falsified documents in order to substitute himself for Jeanne Jugan as founder of the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres, and in 1843 imposed as mother superior Marie Jamet, his spiritual daughter, whom he had designated the first Petite Soeur. In 1852 the association was officially approved by the bishop of Rennes and was granted the title "congregation." Threatened by the prestige of Jeanne Jugan, which continued to grow, the abbé Le Pailleur recalled her definitively to her parent congregation, where she was reduced to the rank of simple nun.1

Clearly the age of this sitter does not tally with that of Jeanne Jugan, who in 1860 was sixty-eight. Moreover, both the only known painted portrait of Jeanne Jugan and descriptions by contemporaries cannot be reconciled with this image.2 On all the evidence, the plump young woman pictured here is not Jeanne Jugan. She is, however, dressed as a Petite Soeur. Enveloped in a voluminous cloak with a wide cowl, she wears a round white bonnet attached by a ribbon beneath the chin. This attire, inspired by that of Saint-Servan peasants, became the uniform of the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres.

One may logically assume that this is a portrait of Marie Jamet, who was mother superior of the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres for almost fifty years. While managing a small shop in Saint-Servan with her mother, she had become a friend of Jeanne Jugan and had joined her in her charitable work. She admitted in her last confession that she had not been the first Petite Soeur.3

69. Nadar
Bertheleil, 1836—59
Salted paper print, trimmed to an oval
9¼ x 7¾ in. (24.1 x 19.8 cm)
Signed bottom right: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 84.XM.436-49
Ex coll. Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr.

Jean-François-Philibert Bertheleil (1830—1888)
A singer and actor of natural talent, Bertheleil received his training in the popular cafés-concerts of Paris rather than the Conservatoire (to which he was refused entry in 1841). He became famous in 1855 during the Exposition Universelle, when Offenbach's jewel-box theater, the Bouffes Parisiens, opened on the Champs-Élysées, with Bertheleil cast as Girafier in Les Deux Aveugles (The Two Blind Men). His delightful renditions of "Pile ou face," "Chanson de Fortunia," "Docteur Puff," "Miss Sensitive," and some two hundred other chanstonnéttes made him all the rage in the salons and concert halls of the Empire.

The demeanor of this early "pop star," who charmed audiences with his pluck, his refined comic delivery, and a certain naïveté, is expressed in his carefully considered pose. One of two similar negatives, this portrait works beautifully within its oval, whose shape is repeated in the rounded cap and ovoid sleeves. The turn of the body is drawn by the diagonal cord of the shoulder bag, and the tassel of the cap, the knotted cravat, and the loose pleats of the homespun shirt lead down to the hands, which grasp a second hat—a surprise held, like the bashful averted gaze, in a tension as visually delicate as a singer's momentary pause that allows us to catch up and get the joke.

70. Nadar
Coudec, 1856—59
Salted paper print, corners rounded
9¾ x 7¾ in. (25.3 x 19.8 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/113 St. Lazare [address crossed out]
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 4

Joseph-Antoine-Charles Coudec (1810—1875)
The son of a merchant from Toulouse, Coudec went to Paris to attend the Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique. On graduation he was engaged at the Opéra-Comique, making his debut in 1834 in Le Petit Chapéron rouge (Little Red Riding Hood). With his handsome physique and fine voice, he played the principal tenor roles to acclaim until he left in 1842 to tour in province, in Brussels, and in London. Coudec returned to the Opéra-Comique in 1850 and began a second career as a baritone, his voice having weakened in the interim. Forced to rely less on his singing than on his dramatic characterizations, he became a first-rank actor whose genuine, original talent was said to be worthy of the serious stage.

Coudec was most famous for his performances in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, staged in 1850, and in the title role of Capitaine Henriot. For his portrait by Nadar he donned the powdered wig and robes of a lawyer, suggesting that he was appearing in La Force de maître Pierre Pathelin at the time. To convey the authority and intelligence of Coudec's stage presence, Nadar created an aureole of soft light to bathe the actor's brow and mantle his shoulder. At the same time he raised the voltage on the sitter's traditional posture of rhetorical eloquence: Nadar's vantage point makes Coudec's nose and finger stand up like lightning rods whose charge is traced in the slash of white linen and the excited line of the sleeve.

71. Nadar
Michelet, 1816—59
Salted paper print
10 x 8⅛ in. (25.5 x 22.4 cm)
Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Ph. 0019

Jules Michelet (1798—1874)
After witnessing the revolution of 1830, Michelet became an impassioned historian of his nation. In his seventeen-volume Histoire de France (1833—67) he merged glowing patriotism with an ardent defense of justice and brotherly love. The vividly portrayed hero of his long account is "the people"—a vital, organic body whose experience and feelings Michelet seemed privileged to know. As head of the historical division of the Archives Nationales, Michelet indeed had direct access to myriad firsthand accounts on which he drew for his imaginative retelling of the past.
His intensity, his lyrical prose, and his championing of the liberal cause naturally made Michelet a sympathetic character to Nadar. This son of a Parisian printer and fervent republican was, moreover, a martyr: he had been stripped of his prestigious chair at the Collège de France and of his post at the Archives for refusing allegiance to the emperor.

Nadar’s admiration is palpable. He lowered his camera so that the historian gazes out as from a prominence, and arranged the reflectors so that the blooming light seems to usher the great man forth. Michelet assumes the standing pose with hand tucked in coat that in Nadar’s vocabulary is as clear a sign of political heroism as the tricolor held aloft.

72. Nadar
Berlioz, 1856—57
Coated salted paper print, corners rounded
9% x 7% in. (21.6 x 18.7 cm)
Signed bottom left: Nadar/113 St. Lazare
Société Française de Photographie, Paris, 307-3

Hector Berlioz (1803—1869)
The Romantic composer Hector Berlioz was not one of Nadar’s intimate friends, despite his great admiration for Nadar’s friend Gérard de Nerval, whose translation of Goethe’s Faust inspired the composition of La Damnation de Faust. It is logical to conclude that this photograph was taken on January 13, 1857, the date on which Berlioz inscribed a short piece of music in the “Livre d’or,” Nadar’s visitors’ album. On the other hand, like the print of Daumier (pl. 48), this must be one made by Charles Pratetorius for the exhibition of the Société Française de Photographie organized in 1859. Previously, Nadar had caricatured Berlioz for his series “La lanterne magique” in Philpou’s Le Journal pour rire of September 18, 1852. An engraving from the photograph appeared in L’Artiste on December 6, 1857, accompanying an article on Berlioz written by the composer Ernest Reyas.

Despite the important contributions to musical orchestration made by Berlioz, his richly colored music is performed with only moderate frequency today. During the artist’s lifetime, Delacroix, who loved music, couldn’t stand Berlioz’s work. The portrait by Nadar—who himself preferred the music of Offenbach—pays homage to the somber and dramatic side of this composer, author of the monumental opera Les Troyens (which he never had the satisfaction of seeing performed in its entirety), the Symphonie fantastique, and the opera Roméo et Juliette. But Berlioz had a sarcastic streak, and mocked himself as well as others. Les Soirées de l’orchestre, which presents a lively picture of contemporary musical life with its many foibles, and another flavorsome autobiographical composition, Le Voyage en Italie, combine tragic gravity and buffoonery. A similar melange is found in the opera Benvenuto Cellini.

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2. Exhibited as number 912. See entry for plate 48.
3. I owe this information to André Boullet.

73. Nadar
Delacroix, 1858
Coated salted paper print
9% x 7% in. (24.1 x 18 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 10, fol., t. 5

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863)
One may well wonder why Nadar, who admired this great Romantic painter and was encouraged in his admiration by Baudelaire, waited so long before making his portrait. But although Baudelaire first praised the painter in his Salon de 1845, his longer, more laudatory articles came considerably later than Delacroix’s first great works, which were produced in the late 1820s. This was undoubtedly the painter who “had made Painting his only Muse, his only mistress, his one source of sensual pleasure” and who kept his distance from people; at any rate he had no connection with the bohemian world so familiar to Nadar. Philippe Néagu plausibly suggests that it was Delacroix who first solicited this portrait, to illustrate an article on his work. Apparently the posing session took place when the painter was sick, and he was dissatisfied with this official portrait with its stilted posture, even insisting that Nadar destroy the negative. One can only wonder what a meeting between these two great talents, in whom “Imagination . . . queen of the faculties” held sway, and the master of photography might have yielded, had it occurred under better conditions. This is even more the case because Delacroix, an extraordinarily speculative spirit, was one of the few artists of his time who demonstrated real curiosity about photography and spoke about it intelligently, with no prejudice whatever. He even practiced it for a time, about 1853, with his friend Eugène Durieu. Delacroix had already served in 1851 as one of the founding members of the Société Héliographique, forerunner of the Société Française de Photographie. In the fall of 1855 he joined Baron Taylor, Gavarni, Diaz, Dauzats, Troyon, Nanteuil, and the marquis de Chennevières in agreeing to support a Société Générale de Photographie that Nadar wanted to create on the roof of the Grand-Hôtel du Louvre, on the rue de Rivoli—a project that came to nothing.

FH

1. See the essay by Philippe Néagu, p. 62.
2. Beginning with the review of the Salon of 1859 and continuing with “L’Oeuvre et la vie d’Eugène Delacroix,” which appeared the year of the painter’s death in L’Opinion nationale (September—November, 1866).
5. Nadar refused, since it was his only shot of the artist.
6. See the entry for plate 32 in which Sylvie Aubenas convincingly suggests a connection between the young model Musette and the one who was photographed by Delacroix and Durieu and upon whom the painter’s depiction of an Algerian woman was modeled.

74. Nadar
Prince Czartoryski, 1856—59
Salted paper print
11% x 8% in. (29.1 x 22.6 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1981.19
Ex coll. Charles Nègre

Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770—1861)
Ever since they became princes of the Holy Roman Empire in 1623, the Czartoryskis had engaged in an endless struggle to liberate Poland. First there was Michal Frydryk (1690—1771), who looked to Russia for help in lifting up his country. Next came Adam Kazimierz (1734—1823), his nephew, who also became a partisan of Russia and thanks to this alliance enjoyed a brilliant political career. In 1813 he withdrew to his Pulawy estate and became a collector and patron of art. His son Adam Jerzy, despite the friendship of Czar Alexander I, lost faith in the idea of an independent Poland protected by Russia. He resigned from the presidency of the Polish
national government and enlisted as an ordinary soldier under the command of General Ramorino. After Ramorino’s defeat, Czarotyński’s possessions were confiscated. Condemned to death, he fled to Paris, where he became leader of the Polish aristocratic party.

In the eyes of this illustrious émigré, Nadar, who volunteered to fight for the liberation of Poland in 1848, was an ally and comrade. In Nadar’s visitors’ album the Polish prince recorded his gratitude “to a soldier who sought to fight for the independence of a country abandoned by all.”

Nadar’s portrait of Czarotyński was exhibited at the Société Française de Photographie in 1859. This unorthodox proof was entrusted to Charles Nègre for the purpose of making a heliogravure. Another print from the negative is in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

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1. See the essay by Maria Morris Hambourg, p. 11.

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75. Nadar

Rossini, 1856

Salted paper print
9 9/16 x 7 in. (24.3 x 17.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,

 Gioachino Antonio Rossini (1792–1868)

Italian composer and prolific master of light-hearted opera buffa, including Il barbiere di Siviglia (The Barber of Seville, 1816), Rossini became the director of the Théâtre-Italien in Paris in 1824. He ceased composing after writing Guillaume Tell (William Tell, 1829) and returned to Italy, where his nerves and health deteriorated. But on moving back to Paris in 1855, the famous gourmand recovered his spirits and became a beloved fixture of Parisian society, although he rarely went out. Instead he gathered distinguished friends on Saturday evenings at home.

“I come from Rossini’s,” Léon Escudier wrote Nadar on March 5, 1856. “He will be free tomorrow from one-thirty to two. Do your utmost to make certain that we shall be alone. I have assured him that you will make a portrait worthy of him. Accordingly, prepare everything so that he won’t have to wait.” Nadar exposed two plates. On one he caught only a vacancy, the trace of years of lethargy, but on the other, identical in pose, it is as if a cloud had lifted, revealing the puckish wit that had survived.

Although this expression more satisfyingly embodies the master of comic musical characterization and fine irony, Nadar was unable to make much use of the portrait, for the collocation on the bottom quarter of the plate was flawed. The portrait is known today in this unique proof print. (Additionally, a photolithograph was made by Alphonse Poitevin, and modern reproductions have been made from the negative.) In it we see the “shining eye, subtle, intelligent smile, prominent, domed forehead” that the famous phrenologist Gall noticed when he saw the young composer in Milan. Legend has it that without knowing the man to be Rossini, Gall quickly deduced his “inspiration, creative genius, energy, grace, fertility, suppleness.”

76. Nadar

Rosine Stoltz, 1856–58

Salted paper print
9 9/16 x 6 5/8 in. (24.3 x 16 cm)


Rosine Stoltz (1815–1903)

“Honnête soit qui mal y voit” (Evil to him who evil sees) is the witty phrase that this Second-Empire Maria Callas inscribed in Nadar’s visitors’ album.1 The photographer did not need this warning: his picture of the opera singer, who would have been considered on in years, is one of his most inspired female portraits.2 Much ink has been spilled about Rosine Stoltz, a woman full of fire and character, whose so- prano voice was as expressive as it was wide-ranging. A daughter of concierges, a protégée of the duchesse de Berry, she is thought to have spent her childhood at the Benedictine convent on the rue du Regard in Paris. After the musical director Alexandre Choron discovered her, she apparently made her debut at Brussels in 1854 and conquered the public in The Hague and Amsterdam, singing in Rossini’s operas. The great tenor Adolphe Nourrit brought her back to Paris and looked out for her for some years, arranging her debut in Halévy’s La Juive in 1837. She enjoyed great success in Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots and subsequently triumphed in the title role of Donizetti’s La Favorite, her first great characterization, then created with equal success the role of Odette in Halévy’s Charles VI.3 In 1847, after being hissed in a performance, she left Paris, continuing her brilliant career outside France, but she returned to the Paris Opéra in 1854.

Rosine Stoltz was rumored to have had a love affair with the mime Charles Deburaux.4 But the best story about her is in a volume of tales by Théodore de Banville. A poet who must be Baudelaire occupies the salon of a great opera singer during her absence and composes “a sinister ode” in which a woman is knifed in the midst of the refined, carefully arranged decor. The ode must be the voluptuous poem in Les Fleurs du mal entitled “Une martyre. Dessin d’un maître inconnu,” which corresponds perfectly to Banville’s description. This episode is lampooned in Le Figaro: Baudelaire, who was said to be in love with Rosine Stoltz, occupied her premises, smoked six cigars while writing a poem, and when the mistress of the household returned, shouted “Can’t one work in peace in one’s own house any more?”

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77. Nadar

Pierre-Alfred Ravel, 1854–55

Salted paper print
9 9/16 x 6 in. (24.3 x 15.7 cm)

Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1991-2 (95)

Pierre-Alfred Ravel (1817–1887)

A vaudevilliste who dominated the stage at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal from 1841 until 1865,
Ravel was a tart, twitchy comic whose energy and infectious good humor raised rashes of giggles among Parisians. Through the delicious idiocies of *Omelette fantastique* (a parody of *Hamlet*), *Parapluie de Damoclès* (*Umbrella of Damocles*), and dozens of other inane creations, Ravel became a public addiction and a genre unto himself. For him, authors wrote "Ravels"—plays that inevitably contained a long dramatic monologue, a form at which he was the master. He made the audience laugh and cry with him, interrogating spectators and implicating them in his play-act and with mounting urgency carrying them on gags and puns to ever higher stages of the absurd. His greatest success was the role of Fadinard in Labiche and Lefranc's splendid farce, *Le Chapeau de paille d'Italie* (1851).

When Ravel sat for Nadar, each man had before him a master conversationalist at the height of his powers. Mirror images of comic dash and wit, the two jokers obviously had a fine time trading *bons mots*, their self-enjoyment mingling with appreciation.

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78. Nadar

**Kopp, 1855–18**

Salted paper print

8 ½ x 6 ½ in. (21.5 x 17.6 cm)

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1991.2 (36)

**Kopp (d. 1872)**

Child of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, Kopp grew up in the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, a home for the blind just off the place de la Bastille (Kopp, however, was not blind). A jack of all small trades well known in the quarter, he was successively a woodworker, newsboy, sideshow hawkaw, clown, itinerant actor, and toymaker. Following a stint as utility man at the Théâtre de Belleville, he had a success as a comic actor at the Théâtre Saint-Marcel before moving to the Variétés. His roles included that of Baptiste in *La Vie de Bohème*; in *Le Lion empaillé* (*The Stuffed Lion*) he created his most memorable character, a typically insolent servant. The rolled sleeves, cocky stance, set jaw, and impertinent gaze seen in Nadar's portrait suggest that Kopp was in this role for the picture.

Kopp put an end to the jokes with a bullet to the head in 1872; insanity was suggested.

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80. Nadar

**Chenavard, 1816–1858**

Salted paper print, corners rounded

9 ½ x 7 ½ in. (24.7 x 18.8 cm)

Signed bottom left: Nadar/113 St. Lazare

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 4

**Paul-Marc-Joseph Chenavard (1807–1855)**

In this portrait the intensity of the glance, anxious and heavy with melancholy, captures our attention and makes us want to know the subject. The name Chenavard means nothing to most people today, but during his lifetime his company was sought after. It was for his paradoxical conversation, his culture, and his moral ambitions that this painter with a decided intellectual and philosophical bent was in such demand; of his actual projects, few were completed.

Arriving in Paris from Lyons in 1825, Chenavard worked for a time with Herrratt, Ingres, and Delacroix, then went off to live in Italy, where he was deeply marked by the ideas of Edgar Quinet, the atheistic liberal historian who had just translated Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Outlines of the Philosophy of Man*. This text was to inspire the principal paintings of Chenavard. Back in Paris during the 1830s, he spent much time with the followers of Saint-Simon and Fourier.1 After the revolution of 1848, this republican painter, whose close friend was then in charge of fine arts at the Ministry of the Interior, received the paramount commission of his life: decorating the Pantheon, which had been given over once again to the commemoration of great men. Chenavard planned a cycle of paintings in grisaille depicting nothing less than *Le Corrège de l'humanité traversant les ages* (*The Procession of Humanity through the Ages*), from Moses and Zoroaster to Confucius and Lao-tzu, from Pythagoras to Christ and Muhammad, right up to Napoleon I. The better to express the moral evolution of creation through the various beliefs, the grisailles were to be surmounted at the transept crossing by a mosaic in color, which the artist entitled *Palingénesis universelle* (*Universal Palingenesia* or *Regeneration*). A phoenix, the symbol of rebirth, hovered over the composition; for Chenavard, rebirth could come through any belief, not necessarily Christianity.

The artist spent three years on this project, which was debated at great length in the press by such authors as Théophile Silvestre and

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Gautier. After the coup d’état of December 1811, when the Panthéon once again became a Catholic church, Chenavard’s commission was canceled. But when his grisaille cartoons for the painting cycle were shown in Paris at the Exposition Universelle of 1855, the artist was decked with medals.

Chenavard, sincere utopian and virtuoso talker, typified those nineteenth-century artists who gathered in Parisian cafés to remake the world. In 1841 he attended meetings of the “hachischins” (hashish smokers) at the Hôtel Pimodan, along with Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Honoré Daumier, Alphonse Karr, and Henri Monnier. In 1850 he frequented the Brasserie Andler with Corot, Champfleury, Courbet, and was also one of the regulars at the Divan Le Peletier. During the same period he founded the “Friday Club” (over which he presided) with Courbet, Daumier, Daubigny, Barye, Asselineau, and Eugène Fromentin. He was a friend of Delacroix, who mentions him frequently in his Journal; also of Rossini, Nerval, Berlioz, and David d’Angers. Thus he has full title to his place in Nadar’s photographic Panthéon.

Chenavard is reported to have had a conversation with the already Alfred de Musset in 1854 that could have served as his own epiphany, in the course of which both agreed that a man’s superiority should be measured by the impression he makes, not the quality of his works.1

Jean Journa (1790–1860)
After reading the works of the utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837), Jean Journa left his pharmacy at Limoux in the Aude region and made himself what he liked to call the “apostle” of Fourierist doctrine, which advocates individual liberty and complete gratification of the passions. Shut out of the phalansterial communitarian school formed by Victor Considerant at the death of the master, Journa set out, alone and against everyone, to convince his contemporaries of the validity of Fourierism. For more than twenty years, “walking all day long with a knapsack and dressed in the simple garb of an ancient philosopher,” he pursued a constant goal: to found a phalanstery, a cooperative community where members would group themselves by “passionate affinities.”

This stubborn visionary, when he did succeed in winning people over, did so more with his likable personality than with his long speeches. Champfleury gave him a prime place in his gallery of Excentriques: Nadar expressed his admiration, indeed affection, for this man who wanted to “change the world,” and wrote, “I persisted in liking and admiring Jean Journa despite his flaws, because I knew that his whole life has been utterly unselfish.” In the group of portraits he made, Nadar conveys an inspired image of this apostle of modern times, an image reminiscent of some saint Ribera painted conversing with the Almighty or lost in ecstatic reflection. He fulminated against Courbet’s 1850 portrait of the Fourierist: “It’s as de-idealized and, worse still, as trivialized as a Courbet can be. Journa possessed a flame of faith that Courbet couldn’t see.” Far from the realist vision of Courbet, Nadar’s Journa—head thrown backward, eyes rolled upward, naked torso wrapped in a monk’s habit—is much in the spirit of seventeenth-century religious painting.

81. Nadar
Journa, 1856–59
Salted paper print
10 ¼ x 8 ¼ in. (26.4 x 20.9 cm)
Inscribed on the back: Jean Journa Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Est. Eo 11, fol., t. 7

82. Nadar
Legrand, 1835–59
Salted paper print
10 ¼ x 8 ¼ in. (26.4 x 20.8 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1991.2 (64)

Charles-Dominique-Martin Legrand, called Paul (1816–1858)
The son of a grocer, Legrand was one of theurchins in the balcony at the Théâtre des Funambules who was smitten by the performances of Baptiste Deburaus as Pierrot. Himself engaged at the Funambules in 1839, Legrand became Deburaus’s understudy and increasingly appeared on stage when the great mime’s health declined. From Baptiste’s death in 1846 until 1848 when Legrand left for London, he was the Pierrot playing to “Paradise.” Charles Deburaus then took over the role. Although the two mimes played together in Deux Pierrots (1849), their relationship was generally one of friendly rivalry.

Charles described Legrand as short and thickset, with small arms and a flat round face, to which Nadar’s portrait testifies. Playing often in Champfleury’s realist pantomimes, Legrand developed a Pierrot who expressed feelings with a caricatural definiteness, as Gautier remarked. More a mute vaudevillian actor than a mime, Legrand was noted for his sentiment and especially for his tears. After 1853 he deserted the Funambules for the stage of Théodore de Banville’s Folies-Nouvelles, which was newly redecorated with rococo cupids, trelies, and flowers à la Wateau. Thus the sad Pierrot became associated with Wateau’s lovesick Gilles. Reclaiming the neck ruff, the melancholy Legrand commingled those two commedia dell’arte stock characters, and thanks to both a Second Empire vogue for the eighteenth century and the poetic power of his confilation, Pierrot and Gilles are thoroughly confused in the public mind to this day.
83. Nadar
Eugène Pelletan, 1855–59
Salted paper print
9¾ x 6¾ in. (24.3 x 17.6 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Purchased, The Howard Gilman Foundation Gift and

Pierre-Clément-Eugène Pelletan (1813–1884)
Son of a Protestant minister and father of the
brilliant liberal politician Camille Pelletan,
Eugène studied at the Sorbonne (with
Michelet, among others) and came under
the influence of Saint-Simon. By nature passionate
and mystical, Pelletan attached himself to
Lamartine and George Sand and wrote en
flamed socialist critiques detailing the misguidedness
of modern civilization, signed “un
inconnu” (an unknown). His fiery, exalted eloquence
and his combative temperament made him
a singularly moving orator and, in the
1860s and 70s, an effective politician in opposition
to the status quo.

For Nadar, Pelletan was the very image
of the romantic hero. In an installment of the
“Lanterne magique,” Nadar had written his
composer biography: “The number one
French critic . . . who is at the same time a
poet, a man of style, and a man with heart. . . .
I have read critical articles by M. Pelletan . . .
that moved me as much as a passage from Sand
and interested me as much as a novel by
Balzac.” He was not just a writer and journalist
in possession of a teeming poetic imagination
but an effective political activist who
served his beliefs with undeviating ardor.
Nadar surely saw the government’s persecution
of this polemicist as a badge of courage, a conviction
he so effectively conveys that we
are at first surprised to find no medal on the
man’s breast. The only decorations Nadar
recognized being those worn by the soul, he had
to find a way to express the inner nobility of
his subject; the resulting lionizing portrait
showing Pelletan with fiery eyes, lowered
brow, and Napoleonic stance seems almost
to call forth a thunderous applause.

84. Nadar
George Sand, ca. 1865
Albumen silver print
7½ x 6¼ in. (19.0 x 15.9 cm)
Collection of Manfred Heiting, Amsterdam

Amandine-Aurore-Lucile Dudevant, née Dupin,
called George Sand (1804–1876)
Raised in Nohant in Berry by her grandmother,
aurore grew up running free in the
countryside and unconstrained as well in her
enormous consumption of books, primarily
ones on religion and philosophy. Chateaubriand
(Le Génie du christianisme) and Rousseau
were her greatest passions, until she discovered
love. Although married in 1822, she led an
independent life and had numerous liaisons, with,
among others, Jules Sandieu (with whom she
wrote under the name J. Sand), Alfred de
Musset, and Frédéric Chopin. She believed in
the full rights of women, and in their palmy
days with the romantic youths of Paris — when
she wore trousers and smoked cigars — she
was said to be petite and irresistibly seductive.
(Unfortunately, Nadar did not photograph
her then.) Sand’s friendships with Félicité
de Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, and other
Saint-Simonians broadened her idea of the
public good, and in her scores of idealistic
novels, which enjoyed great popularity, peasants
and humble folk frequently play the role of
hero.

Nadar’s first contact with Sand was in 1853,
when he asked her to come sit for a portrait
drawing to be included in his Panthéon. Sand
deprecated it, and the portrait, drawn as a bust at
the head of the parade (see fig. 12), was done
after a painting by Couture. Nadar dedicated
to her his first collection of stories, Quand
j’étais étu dian, in 1866; she returned the compli-
ment with an introduction to his Droit au vol
(1869). By that time Sand had sat for Nadar’s
camera because she wanted a new portrait to
supplant the dreadful one (by Richebourg?)
rumored to be circulating. He made several
portraits of her during the 1860s, and in the
process she became a good friend of the
family. Nadar revered Sand as a mentor and
mother figure and here depicted her as a
mountain—a stable, unassailable feature of
his landscape.

85. Nadar
Sarah Bernhardt, ca. 1864
Albumen silver print
9 x 6¾ in. (22.7 x 17.6 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 11

Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923)
These two photographs of Sarah Bernhardt,
made about 1864 when the actress was twenty
or so, are among Nadar’s most inspired works.
Of the portraits made after 1860, the year he
established himself on the boulevard des
Capucines and transformed his studio into an
industrial enterprise, few can match the quality
of his earlier production, as this one can.

1. B.N.F., Dép. des Ms., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 24857/9113,
George Sand to Nadar, September 18, 1865, and
9113, Sand to Nadar, March 24, 1864.
Obviously moved by the beauty of the young woman, Nadar took, in one posing session, a whole series of photographs, two of which are presented here.

The stripped-down decor—a neutral background and a column that proclaims itself a photographer’s prop—in no way distracts attention from the magnificent face. Draped in black velvet for one of the images and for the other in an immense white burqa whose folds ideally amplify her slender form, the beginning actress, still unknown, seems to shine with the radiance of destined greatness, answering Baudelaire’s dictum that every good portrait should be “like a dramatized biography.” With beauty unadorned except for a cameo earring that echoes her profile, this portrait contrasts tellingly with the ones of her in costume that Paul Nadar made in the 1850s, when she was aging, supremely famous, and dripped with gemstones.

88. Nadar
Marceline Desbordes-Valmore on her deathbed, 1859
Albumen print, trimmed to an oval
8¼ x 11¼ in. (21.3 x 29 cm)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris,
Département des Estampes et de la Photographie,
Est. Eo 15, fol., t. 5

See entry for plate 24.

89. Nadar
Banker’s hand, 1861
Albumen print, masked to an oval
5⅞ x 7½ in. (14.9 x 19 cm)
Signed top right: Nadar
Société Française de Photographie, Paris, 307–29

This photograph was described as La Main du banquier D*** (étude chirurgicale), tirée en une heure à la lumière électrique (The Hand of the Banker D*** [Chirographical Study], Printed in One Hour with Electric Light) in the catalogue of the fourth exhibition of the Société Française de Photographie, which took place in Paris during the spring and summer of 1861. It is an unusual image in several ways: it bears witness to the research undertaken by Nadar beginning in 1858 into taking and printing pictures with electric light; it reveals his momentary interest in the study of the lines of the hand (chirography is handwriting, but here it probably refers to the hand as a key to character); and lastly, it is one of the most original studies of a hand in the annals of photography.

Indeed, being informed that this open, boldly revealed hand with a scar across the palm belongs to a banker—a detail worthy of some August Sander-like typology, which one doesn’t quite know how to interpret—arouses in the spectator a curiosity tinged with discomfort. It is not at all the reaction elicited by the aestheticizing studies of hands done by Mayer & Pierson (La Castellane), Ignat, or Rejlander. More generally, studies of parts of the body had already preoccupied photographers, following those of painters and draftsmen, but Nadar addressed this subject in his own inimitable way. We have only one such image by him, and again we are astounded by his ability to renew a genre by scarcely brushing against it.

90. Nadar
The catacombs, 1861–62
Albumen silver print
10⅞ x 8⅜ in. (27 x 21 cm)
Collection of Michael Mattis and Judith Hochberg,
Los Alamos, New Mexico

The photographs of catacombs are of two kinds: one in which the artist focuses on bones for the dramatic effects they can provide, and the other in which crosses, steles, and sarcophagi carrying quotations from the Bible remind us of the brevity of human life. This well that descends to an underground spring, framed by two obelisks and seen at the end of a narrow corridor, is one such memento mori: our days flow past, as fleeting as water. Good for giving gooseflesh to thrill-seekers, these tokens of religious contemplation were sprinkled here and there by an administration intent above all on ridding the capital of its ancient cemeteries. Nadar used them to set a scene: the strong lighting in back, contrasting with the shadowy foreground, gives the image its depth. The obelisks, the edge of the well, and the plaque with the quotation, all very white, frame the dark rectangle in the center of the image, which becomes a kind of symbol of the nothingness of our ultimate end. The photograph is composed to draw the eye toward this abyss. (The ensemble also bears a certain resemblance to the sliding fitments of darkrooms of that era.)

91. Nadar
The sewers, 1864–65
Modern print from a glass negative
10⅞ x 8⅜ in. (27 x 21 cm)
Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, France

This section of tunnel, powerfully lit in the center but enveloped in shadow in the foreground, far end, and upper reaches, looks almost like an abstraction. There are no machines or people to distract the eye, and one has the impression that to either side of the reassuring light, dark conduits spread out ad infinitum. In the center, a few details bespeak a human presence, planks of wood and iron balustrades for keeping clear of the sewage channel. One detail is particularly striking: a flaw in the negative etches an entanglement on the white middle ground, echoing the kilometers of wire that Nadar unrolled to bring light
into these remote quarters. This is one of the barest images in the series of sewer pictures. Must one not admire the cleanliness and nudity of places in which "each duct is an arcade," where "the classical rectilinear alexandrine...seems mingled with all the stones of this long, gloomy, whitish vault," to quote from Hugo's Les Misérables? Let us admire Nadar as the first to offer us a totally artificial image. Not only is the medium, photography, new, but the world it opens up for us is fabricated: the light, the decor, all things issue from the most recent technological innovations. Nothing connects this document to the old world.

93. Nadar
The sewers (sluice system), 1864–65
Modern print from a glass negative
10½ x 8½ in. (27 x 21 cm)
Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris

In the photographs he took of the catacombs in 1861–62 and of the sewers in 1864–65, Nadar made use of mannequins to populate certain scenes, since the exposure time of eighteen minutes necessitated by the weak light was much too long for human models. Here, a mannequin got up to look like a sewer worker starts an impressive machine, symbolizing the modernization of the sewers undertaken by the engineer Eugène Belgrand. Unlike many of his confrères, Nadar did not touch up his portraits, but the imperfect results caused by technical difficulties compelled him to use subterfuge in this case in order to accentuate shadows and set in relief certain details, such as the name of the street (written on the trunk supporting the pipe). Often the silver salts paled, but not the white or black ink of the touch-ups, and these ameliorations, originally invisible, now reveal themselves, showing us in unforeseen ways how the final image was fabricated in the studio.

The subtle arrangement of this scene on three planes traversed by an enormous duct and with a central figure, the way the chains, pipes, and machinery are brought out by the light, and all obtained in extremely arduous conditions—these constitute a tour de force. The nineteenth century’s faith in progress is epitomized here, along with its naïvetés: photography, electricity, machines, and, at the center, a little man, stiff and proud, the symbol of a new humanity.

1. However, the photographer himself appears in one carefully posed image; see figure 18.

94. Nadar
Hermaphrodite, 1860
Albumen silver print
9½ x 7½ in. (24.5 x 19.8 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1987-15

95. Nadar
Hermaphrodite, 1860
Albumen silver print
9¼ x 7¾ in. (23.5 x 19.6 cm)
Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Pho. 1987-16

These two photographs belong to a series of nine taken by Nadar, probably toward the end of 1860, at the behest of Dr. Armand Trouseau and in collaboration with the surgeon Jules-Germain Maisonneuve, who appears in one image. This young patient, apparently discovered by Trouseau and perhaps operated on by Maisonneuve, inspired remarkable photographs by Nadar, who found in them an occasion to bring together his former ambition to practice medicine, his insatiable curiosity about the human species, and his talent as portraitist. These images, which constitute one of the first applications of photography to medical science, could have been banal and even sordid record shots, but thanks to Nadar they become a beautiful and moving document.

Many medical practitioners resorted to photography a few years later: just one example is the well-known Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière (Photographic Iconography of the Salpétrière Hospital), published from 1876 to 1880 by collaborators of Professor Jean-Martin Charcot. However, the present series remains unique among the works of Nadar, who after this master stroke abandoned medical photography.

These images were not circulated during Nadar’s lifetime and he mentioned them only once, late in life, in a note to himself. We may see them today because he took care to copy-right them in January 1861, something he never otherwise did.


96. Nadar
Helicopter, 1863
Albumen silver print
11¼ x 9½ in. (29.5 x 23.1 cm)
Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Ph. 2046

97. Nadar
Helicopter, 1863
Albumen silver print
12 x 9½ in. (30.5 x 24.2 cm)
Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Ph. 1972

Nadar’s “beloved propeller,” which was perfected by the viscomte de Ponton d’Amécourt and models of which were finished in 1863 by a watchmaker, was supposed to solve the problem of how to accomplish aerial navigation. The guiding principle was indeed correct, but the impossibility of equipping the device with an adequate motor would prevent the idea from being exploited for many years to come. The helicopters were able to fly for only a few seconds. Still, these little machines (about two feet high) were what launched Nadar on his adventure with the Géant, and he photographed the three different prototypes at the beginning of the summer of 1863, when he issued his "Manifeste de l’autolocomotion aérienne.”

The series is of six photographs showing the prototypes of helicopters: two were spring-loaded, one steam driven. The intent was to make them look airborne, the better to underline the hopes vested in them. In reality, very thin cords held them in this artificial position; to photograph them during their laborious flight of a few seconds was technically impossible, the more so because the rotation of the propellers would have blurred the image. The trick shot has the advantage of showing the prototypes in great detail without making a photograph that is flat and cold. From these pictures emanates a particular charm, characteristic of Nadar’s best works.

98. Nadar
Interior of the Géant inflating, 1863
Gelatin silver print
4 x 3 in. (10.2 x 7.7 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago, Wirt D. Walker Endowment Collection, 1989.186

Between July 1863, when Nadar took up the cause of aerial navigation in craft “heavier than air,” and his first flight aboard the Géant on October 4, only a few months elapsed.
During this brief interval, the idea had come to him of raising funds for Ponton d’Amécourt’s helicopters by fabricating the most monumental balloon ever conceived: “I shall make a balloon—the Ultimate Balloon—of extraordinarily gigantic proportions, twenty times bigger than the biggest,” he wrote in *L’Aéronaute* shortly before the first attempt at flight. Mostly at Nadar’s expense, the brothers Godard manufactured this huge airship.

Newspapers of the period, especially *Le Monde illustré*, showed the photographer in the midst of hundreds of seamstresses sewing the “20,000 meters [12½ miles] of silk, at 7.25 francs a meter” needed to make the two envelopes of this balloon, which when inflated attained a height of 45 meters, almost 150 feet. There exist several shots of the gondola along with this image, which takes us inside the half-raised sphere. Aeronautics led Nadar away from photography; still, the sight of the huge balloon stirred the photographer in him. Did he wish to dramatize the immensity of his endeavor or to amuse himself by capturing this new toy from an unexpected angle? Did he really seek the aesthetic effect that strikes us, despite the mediocrity of the print? Waves of silk beneath a sewn sky, seascapes of taffeta: this abstraction is a cousin to Christo’s wrappings.
Chronology

1739
Ignace Tournachon born in Lyons.

1770
Ignace, now married to Jeanne-Marie Molin, daughter of the bookseller Alexis Molin, launches the Tournachon-Molin Press in Lyons.

1771

1793
Victor begins practicing as a printer.

1812
Death of Ignace Tournachon.

1817
Victor takes over the name “Tournachon-Molin” and joins forces with Hippolyte Seguin in Paris. They publish Félicité de Lamennais’s Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion.

1820

1822
Nicéphore Niepce begins his experiments with photography.

1824

1825
Victor Tournachon’s press continues active but is running a deficit.


1826

1830
The press has financial difficulties.

1831–32
Félix is enrolled at the Pension Hubert in Versailles.

1833
Ruined by the high cost of publishing the Dictionnaire universel de droit français, Victor is forced to close his press.

1833–36
Félix studies at the Collège Bourbon and lives at the pension owned by M. Augeron.

1836
Victor Tournachon, ill, retires to Lyons with his family.

Félix leaves the Collège Bourbon.

Ernestine Lefèvre (future wife of Félix) is born to Édouard Lefèvre and Amélie-Elisabeth Planques at Épinay.

1837
Death of Victor Tournachon.

1837–38
Félix begins the study of medicine in Lyons.

He contributes to L’Extrait lyonnais and Fanal du commerce.

1838
Félix returns to Paris and audits courses in medicine at the Hôtel-Dieu and Bicêtre.

He works as a pasteup artist at the Journal des dames et des modes.

He also writes for Auguste Lireux’s Revue et gazette des théâtres.

1838
Félix takes “Nadar” (sometimes, “Nadard”) as his nom de plume.

1839
Félix meets Karol d’Anelle. With Polydore Millaud he founds Le Négociateur, then L’Audience. With Léon Noël and Alfred Francey he launches the Livre d’or.

August. The Académie des Sciences makes public Daguerre’s invention of the daguerreotype, a photographic image made directly on a metal plate.

1840
November 27. Félix holds a “Feste champestre” at the “Nadard Paradise.”

1841–42
Félix frequents the “Society of Water-Drinkers,” Henri Murger’s band of artists. He signs himself “Nadard” in Les Puppillotes.
1842
Nadar contributes to Millaud’s L’Age d’or, publishing one of his early novels there. His first sketches are published by Martinet.
1842–43
Nadar meets Charles Baudelaire through his friend Théodore de Banville.
1843–45
Nadar works at the republican daily Le Commerce. His actions are watched by the police (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/37, June 15, 1843).
1844–45
Nadar publishes La Robe de Déjanire, “L’Indienne bleue,” and “La Vie et la mort de Lequeux.”
The first installments of Murger’s Scènes de la vie de Bohème appear in Le Corseau–Satan.
1846
Nadar begins in earnest his career as a caricaturist; he works for the satirical journals Le Corseau–Satan and La Silhouette.
1847
Nadar creates his “Galerie des gens de lettres” for the Journal du dimanche.
1847–48
Niece de Saint-Victor develops a method for making photographic negatives on glass coated with albumen, soon replaced by wet collodion.
1848
Nadar contributes to the Voleur and to Charles Philipon’s Charivari.
Pierrot minstre, a pantomime written by Nadar, is performed at the Théâtre des Funambules.
Champlain and Nadar argue and nearly fight a duel.
March 30. Nadar and Adrien join a volunteer military expedition to win independence for Poland (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/54–93 and 128–34); are arrested, imprisoned at Eisleben in Prussia, then released, and return to Paris June 1.
Nadar is sent by Jules Hetzel on a “secret mission” to Prussia.
1849
Nadar writes and draws for Hetzel’s Revue comique à l’usage des gens sérieux.
May. Nadar does his first work for Philipon’s Journal pour rire, and a long friendship begins.
September–November. Nadar is in London.

1849–62
Nadar collaborates closely with Philipon. The drawings from his atelier are widely published, especially in Philipon’s Journal pour rire and the Petit Journal pour rire and also in Auguste Commerson’s Tintamarre.
1850
August. Nadar is imprisoned in Clichy, for debts.
1851
He meets Constantin Guys, who becomes a friend.
Nadar begins planning a Panthéon of outstanding contemporaries.
1852
January. Nadar’s “Lanterne magique” (caricatures, or portraits-charges, of celebrated men) begins appearing in Le Journal pour rire.
Nadar builds up the store of portraits-charges he will use for his Panthéon.
The first Nadar Jury, caricaturing the Salon, published in L’Eclair; it will become a tradition, with installments published in years to come in Le Tintamarre, Le Rabelais, and Journal amusant.
1852–55
Henri Giffard attempts to fly a dirigible.
1853
June. Nadar moves with his mother to 113, rue Saint-Lazare.
1854
Nadar finances Adrien’s photography lessons from Gustave Le Gray and arranges the financial backing for Adrien’s studio at 11, boulevard des Capucines. Nadar himself learns the technique from Adolphe Bertsch and Camille d’Arnaud and sets up a studio in his home at 113, rue Saint-Lazare.
March. Nadar publishes the Panthéon Nadar.
He brings out more portraits-charges in Binettes contemporaines.
April. Nadar begins to photograph members of his family, friends, and colleagues.
Nadar’s pantomimes, Pierrot bourgeo and Pierrot minstre, are performed at the Théâtre des Funambules by his friend Charles Deburaus and at the Folies–Newelles.
1854–55
Adrien’s studio is on the brink of financial ruin. From mid-September 1854 to mid-January 1855, Nadar collaborates with him to help save it. The mime Deburaus is photographed there. Nadar arranges for the firm to exhibit at the Exposition Universelle of 1855.
1855
January 16. Adrien asks Félix to leave and to relinquish his share in the studio.
Adrien wins a gold medal for the *Pierrot* photographs, exhibited under the name “Nadar jeune.”

Adrien moves his studio to 17, boulevard des Italiens.

Nadar returns to 113, rue Saint-Lazare.

Thérèse Tournachon moves to the rue de Tivoli.

Félix starts legal proceedings against Adrien to force him to stop using the name “Nadar jeune.”

Adrien becomes a member of the Société Française de Photographie.

1856

January. Philipon creates the *Journal amusant* and soon afterward the *Petit Journal pour rire*, of which Nadar becomes editor in chief.

Nadar publishes a collection of his stories, *Quand j’étais étudiant*.

February 8. Paul Nadar is born to Félix and Ernestine.

Adrien wins the first round of the lawsuit filed against him by Félix.

Nadar wins a gold medal at the Exposition Photographique in Brussels.

Nadar becomes a member of the Société Française de Photographie.

1856—59

Nadar produces reams of caricatures and articles for Philipon’s journals. He photographs his friends and eminent figures in literature and the arts; also actresses and singers.

1857

Nadar travels to Brussels, where he exhibits his portraits and wins a medal.

December 12. The lawsuit against Adrien is concluded: the judge rules that Félix is “the only, the true Nadar.”

1858

February. The *Petit Journal pour rire* ceases publication.

April 25. Adrien’s boulevard des Italiens studio is declared bankrupt.

Nadar takes the first aerial photograph.

October 23. Nadar files a patent for aerial photography.

He takes his first photographs by artificial light.

He publishes a revised *Panthéon Nadar* in the supplement to *Le Figaro*.

1859

March. Nadar is editor of *Journal amusant*.

Nadar exhibits a large group of portraits from the *Figures contemporaines* at the Salon of the Société Française de Photographie.

June 10. Adrien appeals the decision of December 1857; his appeal is rejected.

1860

February 21. Death of Thérèse Tournachon.


July 12. Nadar establishes the Société Générale de Photographie to provide financial backing for a new studio at 35, boulevard des Capucines; Philipon is president (B.N.F., Yb’ 2340).

1861

February 4. Nadar files a patent for photography by artificial light.

April. He tries equestrian photography on the Champs-Élysées.

September. Nadar’s studio on the boulevard des Capucines opens.

1861—62

Nadar takes photographs in the catacombs.

1862

Death of Henri Murger.

Death of Charles Philipon.

September 16. *Banquet des Misérables* in honor of Victor Hugo held in Brussels.

1863—64

Adrien sets up a new photographic studio with J.-P. Johannes at 124, avenue des Champs-Élysées; they make equestrian portraits and animal pictures.

1863

Nadar meets Ponton d’Amécourt.

July 6. The two men form the Société d’Encouragement pour la Locomotion Aérienne au Moyen d’Appareils Plus Lourds que l’Air.

July 31. Nadar’s “Manifeste de l’autolocomotion aérienne” appears in *La Presse*.


October 4. First ascension of the *Géant* at the Champ-de-Mars. Built by Louis and Jules Godard, the balloon can carry twenty-four passengers in its two-story gondola.

October 18. On its second ascension, the *Géant* crashes at Hannover; Félix and Ernestine are injured (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/154).


1864

Nadar publishes *Mémoires du Géant*.

1864—65

Nadar photographs George Sand and Sarah Bernhardt.

He photographs the sewers of Paris.

1865

Nadar exhibits his photographs in Berlin, Saint Petersburg, New Orleans, and Amsterdam.
He publishes *Le Droit au vol*, with a preface by George Sand.

He ascends in the *Géant* at Lyons (July 2) and at Amsterdam (September 11).

1867

June 23. Nadar makes his final ascension in the *Géant*, then sells the balloon.

August 31. Death of Baudelaire.

1869

April 13. Adrien creates a firm to make photographic enamels; it will fail in 1872 (Archives Nationales, Minuit central AS.D 31 U 3282 and AS.D 11 U 15415).

1870—71

The Franco-Prussian War and the siege of Paris give Nadar a final opportunity for aeronautics. He creates a military company of balloonists (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/185) and makes numerous ascensions for observation.

The beginning of aerial postal service.

1871

Paris Commune.

Nadar has difficulties with his health and with his business. He leaves the boulevard des Capucines for the rue d’Anjou (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25087/302).

1873

Nadar and Ernestine retire to the Hermitage in the forest of Sénart.

1874

April 15. The first Impressionist Salon opens in the rooms Nadar still holds on the boulevard des Capucines; exhibitors include Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Renoir, Guillaumin, Cézanne, and Degas.

1877

Nadar publishes the *Histoires buissonnières*.

1878

Nadar helps organize an exhibition of Daumier’s works.


1879

Death of Daumier. He is buried in Père-Lachaise cemetery.

1880

Nadar publishes *L’Hôtellerie des Coqucigrues*, filled with remembrances of friends and with a preface by Charles Bataille.

1882

Nadar publishes *Sous l’incendie*, on the war of 1870—71.

1884


1886

Nadar and Ernestine travel in Italy.

May 18. Nadar is a member of the jury for the first Exhibition of Photography in Florence (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/223).


Paul Nadar, who has worked with his father for years, is now virtually directing the studio.

1887

Ernestine suffers a stroke.

Nadar writes for *Le Temps* and *La Question sociale*.

1889

Photographs by the Nadar Studio (father and son) are shown at the Exposition Universelle and win a grand prize (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25007/5, 25008/88).

1891

Paul Nadar founds the journal *Paris-Photographe*.

1893

Adrien lives at the retirement home at Sainte-Perrine, then at the pension Galignani at Neuilly (B.N.F., Dép. des Mss., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 25009/233 bis).

1894

January 17. Nadar is made an honorary member of the Société Aérophile de France.


Félix Nadar’s financial situation is not good.

1895


June. Nadar travels to Marseilles and decides to make a new beginning there.

December 5. A sale of lithographs and watercolors from the Nadar collection is held at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris.

1896

Nadar takes part in the publication of the *Tombeau de Baudelaire*, organized by Mallarmé.


1897

September. Nadar establishes a new photography studio in Marseilles.

He writes for the *Petit Provençal*. 

254
His collection of balloon-related objects is bought by the City of Paris and placed in the Musée Carnavalet.

1899
Nadar sells his studio in Marseilles.

1900
The Exposition Universelle includes a retrospective of Nadar’s work.
Nadar publishes Quand j’étais photographe.
June. Nadar again undergoes surgery.

1903
January 24. Adrien dies, after ten years in a mental hospital.
December 17. Wilbur and Orville Wright make four brief airplane flights at Kitty Hawk.

1906
Nadar’s health deteriorates: he suffers from congestion of the lungs, recurrences of his asthma, and kidney stones.

1909
January 3. Death of Ernestine.

July 25, Louis Blériot flies across the English Channel in a monoplane. Nadar’s telegram to him is published in La Presse.

1910
March 20. Death of Félix Nadar. He is buried in Père-Lachaise cemetery.

1911
Nadar’s Baudelaire intime is published.

1939
September 1. Death of Paul Nadar. The studio, which passes to his daughter Marthe, survives only a few years longer.

1950
January. The Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites acquires from Anne Nadar, Paul’s second wife, some 60,000 negatives from the Nadar Studio. The Bibliothèque Nationale acquires the prints (both original and modern), the archives, and the documents pertaining to Félix and Paul Nadar.
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