

Strand 2: The Historiography of Art Nouveau (looking back on the past)

“Seeking New Sins: The Erotic Deco-Sculptural Work of François-Rupert Carabin”

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In a September 1896 issue of the *New York Daily Tribune*, an anonymous critic reviewed a suite of furniture that had been exhibited by François-Rupert Carabin at the annual salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Constructed of a conglomeration of animals and contorted female forms, the table and chairs were, the reviewer concluded, diabolically disordered, deliberately shocking, and highly unrepresentative of the tastes of the age. The critic judged the execution to be flawless and the forms, “attractive enough,” but derided Carabin’s style on the whole as a “Gothic frenzy....[of] lost soul[s].” If future connoisseurs of nineteenth-century furniture were to encounter these aberrations and analyze them as works representative of the furniture styles admired by the people of nineteenth-century France, the critic predicted, the hapless collector would find himself, “Three hundred thousand miles from the truth.”¹ For many years after his death in 1932, Carabin’s sculptures were all but forgotten, and questions of where his work stood in relation to “truths” of any sort went unconsidered. As the critic from the *New York Daily Tribune* correctly predicted, however, with the passing decades came an increasing interest in collecting and studying the art of the 19th century, and Carabin’s pieces once again entered the forum of public notice. What the critic did not anticipate was a special interest in Carabin’s work precisely because of his atypical combination of the fine art of sculpture with the minor decorative arts of furniture, jewelry, and ceramics. The enthusiasm that spread among collectors, however, has been accompanied by a greater degree of skepticism among scholars of the art of this era. While acknowledging Carabin’s role in dissolving the hierarchical distinction between the fine and decorative arts and his devotion to the

¹ “Carabin’s Carving,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 September 1896, p. 9.

craft of woodworking, both important precursors of the Art Nouveau movement, the provocative use of female forms in Carabin's work has been described as, "powerfully disturbing,"² "offensive by today's standards,"³ and, "the twisted turn-of-the-century dream of masculine mastery which insisted on seeing woman as merely a piece of household furniture."⁴

As I have researched, analyzed, and ultimately narrativized Carabin's work, I have been particularly cognizant not only of the manners in which his œuvre caters to erotic desires but also the manners in which grappling with such pieces is itself continuously conditioned by desire—desires to condemn, to defend, or simply to neutralize. While feminist criticism certainly informs my approach, it seems that given the nature of Carabin's work, it would be particularly ironic to set him up merely as a historical whipping boy. Alternatively, I see little use in attempting to redeem him from charges of misogyny, for, as Lawrence Sutin succinctly observed in writing the biography of the infamous 19th-century sex magician Aleister Crowley, "There is no sense in trying to whitewash [a man's] reputation [...when he has] spent most of his life systematically blackening it."⁵ Rather, in this paper I will examine the manners in which Carabin's work served, and continues to serve, as a powerful provocation to the question of what is allowed to be made visible in society, and how his work effectively probes the rapidity with which moral and ethical judgments conflate when the sexualized body is brought into play.

Although the work for which Carabin has become infamous incorporates overtly sexualized forms, he began his career more modestly by contesting the hierarchal distinctions governing the separation of the fine and decorative arts. As a working-class artist who jealously guarded his independence, Carabin was not able to demonstrate the full extent of his ideas and technical skill until 1889 when, at the age of twenty-seven,

² Ghislaine WOOD and Paul GREENHALGH: "Symbols of the Sacred and Profane," in Paul GREENHALGH (Ed.) *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 2000, p. 84.

³ Stephen ESCRITT, *Art Nouveau*, London, Phaidon, 2000, p. 95.

⁴ Bram DIJKSTRA, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 118.

⁵ Lawrence SUTIN, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 2.

he received what he described as a “dream” commission from a Parisian collector named Henri Montandon. Montandon specified that he desired a bookcase and a desk, but permitted Carabin complete artistic freedom in their design and execution. Finishing the bookcase in time for the 1890 salon of the Société des Artistes Indépendants, Carabin submitted his first large-scale piece for inclusion in the exhibition. As the society, of which Carabin had been a founding member, had agreed to impose no jury requirements for entry to its salons, Carabin expected that he would be afforded the opportunity to show his work. Even at this bastion of independence, however, the organizers were unprepared to budge on the matter of the gaping philosophical void that had served for the past century to separate the fine arts from their diminutive decorative counterparts. If a bookcase were to be admitted on this occasion, the officials reasoned, what would prevent the submission of other furniture, even chamber pots, to subsequent salons? “If it is a beautiful chamber pot,” Carabin countered, in an argument anticipatory of Marcel Duchamp, “where is the evil?”⁶ This irreverence for convention won Carabin many allies among artists and influential critics of the day such as Gustave Geffroy, who valued the potent spaces opened by his symbolist *mélange*. While Carabin was unsuccessful in his confrontation with the Indépendants, the struggle for acknowledgment of the decorative arts as aesthetically valid took a larger political turn with the intervention of the critic, collector, and politician Roger Marx.⁷

For some critics, however, the revolutionary undertones of these “new” ideas, which rejected academic values that placed the fine arts in an elevated, erudite sphere, were a lamentable manifestation of the confused values of modern-day man. Among the most stringent denunciations of the new ideas circulating at the close of the 19th century was that penned by Max Nordau in a lengthy polemic entitled *Degeneration*. In what would become one of the top-ten selling books in Europe in the 1890s,⁸ Nordau described modern art as decadent, moribund, and symptomatic of social malaise, and he singled out Carabin as one of the premiere examples of modern artists and writers to

⁶ Paul GSELL: “Rupert Carabin,” *La Contemporaine*, January 1902. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are by the author.

⁷ P. GSELL: “Rupert Carabin.”

⁸ Hans-Peter SÖDER: “Disease and Health as Contexts of Modernity: Max Nordau as a Critic of Fin-de-Siècle Modernism,” *German Studies Review*, 14.3, October 1991, 473-487: 474.

receive the diagnosis of degeneracy. In alarmist tones Nordau declared in the book's dedication to the famous criminologist Cesare Lombroso that, "Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists."⁹ Nordau went on to warn that these artists and writers who identified themselves as Symbolist and Decadent were ushering in, "the end of an established order, which for thousands of years has satisfied logic, fettered depravity, and in every art matured something of beauty."¹⁰ According to Nordau, Carabin's bookcase grossly violated standards of elevated idealism and reveled in a decaying respect for the line between functional furnishings and artistic fantasy. In creating impure pieces that are at once sculptural and utilitarian, symbolist and sensual, Carabin refused to participate in this governing logic of classification and rank, and his work was in turn dismissed by conservative critics as, "neither very pleasant to look at nor particularly logical."¹¹

The the presence of such critiques, directed toward a suite of furniture that had been classified as essentially merely decorative, however, gives evidence of the disturbing metaphoric spaces Carabin succeeded in opening in his merging of the fine art of sculpture with the craft of furniture design. While both branches of the arts bring about the materialization of a concept, the crafts have not traditionally been acknowledged as inherently fostering aesthetic contemplation—whether transcendent or degenerate. The fact, however, that crafted objects are *used*—sat upon, drunk from, slept in—brought to the realm of symbolism an entirely new method for creating complex, suggestive works of art. Continuing in the vein of literary symbolism, in 1894 Carabin began work on an inkwell (Fig. 1) that, while small, constitutes one of the most complex achievements in his oeuvre. Poised between the functional and the contemplative, the earthenware inkwell takes the form of a woman straddling between her legs the head of an octopus, which she rips open to offer its black ink to the writer. As blood mingles with the ink that spills from the slaughtered head, the woman holds the engorged vaginal cavity open for the possessor to prod with his phallic pen. The

⁹ Max NORDAU, *Degeneration*, London, William Heinemann, 1920 (Berlin, 1892; Paris, 1894), p. 11.

¹⁰ NORDAU, *Degeneration*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Siècle*, 23 May [1891].

inkwell emphatically focuses the eye upon woman's lack, highlighting with red glaze what Freud would describe as the bloody wound of castration. Woman offers the material from which meaning is made, but, lacking the phallic quill, does not enter actively into the process. Yet the mysterious darkness of this opening to the female body simultaneously suggests access to the interior of the womb—the biological site of man's lack, the site of natural reproduction, the site of conception, which male artists attempted to transport to the mind. In contradistinction to his more famous colleague Auguste Rodin, who relied upon professional carvers to execute his maquettes and whose preponderance for marble left Carabin feeling cold, Carabin carved all of his sculptures by hand and achieved their glossy patina by soaking the wood in buckets of linseed oil overnight and then patiently burnishing the surfaces through manual labor.¹² In this regard, Carabin himself invoked an operative metaphor of conception, gestation, nourishment, and birth to characterize his artistic working process. In the short memoir she wrote from her father's notes, Carabin's daughter recalled that in fashioning his forms, he, "Absolutely emptied his forces. He claimed that, for him, to create a statue meant to bring it into the world with all of the physical effort that implies."¹³

In speaking of her father's working method, Carabin's daughter recalled the almost fetishistic devotion that he paid to his craft. "For two hours each day," his daughter recalled, "he massaged the forms, almost in love, giving the naked grain a living skin."¹⁴ It was an effect that led the critic Paul Gsell to characterize Carabin's sculptures as "nocturnal hallucinations enveloped by varnished wood that looks like a cold sweat."¹⁵ The most overtly erotic of these "nocturnal hallucinations" took form in a chair with a back formed by a voluptuous woman (Fig. 2), which was part of a larger suite of furniture destined for the study of the wealthy Parisian banker, Albert Kahn. The exhibition of this piece at the salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, however, marked the beginning of a critical turn in the evaluation of Carabin's work,

¹² Yvonne BRUNHAMMER: "Un oublié de l'Art Nouveau Rupert Carabin," in *L'Œuvre de Rupert Carabin: 1862-1932*, Paris, Galerie du Luxembourg, 1974, p. 9.

¹³ Colette MERKLEN-CARABIN: "Rupert Carabin," in *L'Œuvre de Rupert Carabin: 1862-1932*, Paris, Galerie du Luxembourg, 1974, p. 57.

¹⁴ MERKLEN-CARABIN: "Rupert Carabin," p. 55; 57.

¹⁵ GSELL: "Rupert Carabin," p. 71.

with several French critics discussing his creation in more sober moral tones than had been directed at his earlier work. With arms crossed above her head, hands grasping the ties of a satin headrest, and legs constrained by a band across which Carabin inscribed his signature and the date of creation, the woman forming the back of the chair is contorted into a position that was variously described by Carabin's contemporaries as a crucifixion or a binding for flagellation. In a review of the decorative arts exhibited at the Parisian salons of 1897, Émile Gallé succinctly voiced a criticism that has proven resonant with subsequent critics. Although Gallé collected figurines Carabin fashioned of dancers, he was concerned by the more manifestly misogynistic uses of female form in the provocative furniture for which Carabin had become infamous, questioning: "Is this the type of decorator we like—a cabinetmaker, who makes of the feminine form, the body of sister and wife, the members of a furniture of torture...degraded slaves...crucified on the backs of chairs?"¹⁶ Similarly the critic Paul Rouaix commented, "The ornamentation of his chair marvelously acknowledges some wonderful support of torture, if one adorns sculptures with instruments of torture. Why is there this preparation for whipping? – It's a mystery!"¹⁷ Whatever the specific practice alluded to by the positioning of the woman's body, the figure is certainly suggestive of erotic bondage. In this manner, although it is impossible to determine if this was Carabin's intention, the female form adorning this chair draws into the light the complicated nature of social conceptions of acceptable and aberrant bondage in the nineteenth century. Most prominently as a form of socially acceptable binding of women's bodies was, of course, the pervasive use of the corset. Like Gallé's assessment of Carabin's chair as a "furniture of torture," the corset was commonly referred to by its opponents in similar terms, such as, "an instrument of torture," as it was deemed by Pierre Lrousse in the *Universal Dictionary of the 19th Century*.¹⁸ For other critics, the binding of the corset was tantamount to the enslavement of women, one commentator of the time even reporting that tight-lacers voluntarily referred to themselves as "slaves of

¹⁶ Émile GALLÉ: "Les Salons de 1897: Objets d'art," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 3.18, September 1897: 247.

¹⁷ Paul ROUAIX: *Revue des jeunes filles*, 5 June [1896].

¹⁸ Paul LAROUSSE, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*. Translation from Valerie STEELE, *The Corset: A Cultural History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 1.

the stay lace.”¹⁹ For advocates of the corset, however, the undergarment was romanticized as an expression of women’s artistry, a means of literally sculpting the body. One such advertisement of the time (Fig. 3) explicitly appeals to this notion, depicting a woman in an artist’s smock putting the finishing touches on a sculpture of a corseted Diana. Opponents of such views, however, were quick to point out the stark difference between the artistry of man in molding external media and the presumed province of woman’s artistry as the modeling of her own body with the ultimate goal of pleasing male vision. While Carabin drew criticism for depicting a woman bound for torture in the chair he exhibited in 1896, a smaller piece that he crafted for his friend and defender, Roger Marx, offers an interesting comparison. A receptacle for the contents of Marx’s pockets, the small dish featured as its figurehead the famous performer Polaire, who was an instantly recognizable symbol of the fetish for extremely small waists. Entitled *La Gloire*, Polaire is represented as the subject of modern celebrity adulation, rising from a sea of admirers, one of whom kisses her hand. Although depicted *au naturel*, she draws the other hand to her waist, emphasizing the physical feature for which she was most famous, reputed in promotional materials to measure a mere fourteen inches in circumference.²⁰

In contrast to the visible presence of socially acceptable bondage in the form of the corset, the illicit photography of the painter Charles-François Jeandel gives us insight into practices of “perverse” bondage in the late nineteenth century. Although Jeandel spent much of his adult life in the provinces, he lived during the 1890s in Paris, where he and Carabin could have easily met. During his time in Paris, Jeandel composed a private series of dozens of photographs of models in various stages of erotic bondage, which include depictions of sexualized bondage that are more immediately unsettling than Carabin’s deco-sculptural fantasies. In one such photograph, Jeandel positions a naked woman with her ankles bound and her knees pressed down upon a coil of rope. Her mouth is covered with a white cloth and her hand are bound with rope that is attached to the wooden frame in which she is positioned, as

¹⁹ STEELE, *The Corset*, p. 93.

²⁰ David KUNZLE, *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture in the West*, Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982, p. 322-323.

though strung up for the lash. In a second photograph, Jeandel binds the body of his model tightly over a pair of sawhorses. Her hands bound behind her back, her body constrained by ties that appear to immobilize her in the position in which she has been pulled forward, and her legs spread apart, the woman appears trussed for penetration.

The debate over whether or not there were unacceptable erotic connotations in Carabin's art surprisingly did not take hold until near the end of his career when, in 1913, he sent a free-standing sculpture of two cats for exhibition at the annual salon. Carabin's submission of this piece, entitled *Nocturne*, created the largest outcry since his violation of the distinction between the fine and decorative arts in the first piece he exhibited more than twenty years prior. The Enlightenment distinction Carabin violated on this occasion, however, was not between the fine and decorative arts but rather between the tasteful and the distasteful, the cultured and the vulgar. Although the carefully observed musculature and sleek patina of the cats emphasized Carabin's skill as a sculptor, the strain of the dominant cat's muscles as it sinks its teeth into its mate, who clenches its front paws, was deemed by the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts to be a depiction of carnality unsuitable for public display. Added to this was the suspicion that the two phallic tails seen in this piece symbolized a homosexual encounter between the two cats. The critic Forthuny specifically characterized the controversy in these terms, conjuring the following image for his readers: "Imagine two cats—two tomcats—in an attitude that is a little lascivious...Presented thus, such an escapade was thought plausible, and the prudes passed condemnation on the piece, criticizing the quality of the artistry, the distinction of the artist, and simply his discretion."²¹ The official excuse made by the secretary general of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts when the sculpture was returned to Carabin prior to the opening of the Salon was that it was, "a bit too realistic."²² Carabin perceived, however, that the charge was not one of realism but rather one of obscenity. Having received the Légion d'honneur in 1903, he responded with the full weight of his official title in the form of a self-published pamphlet entitled "Une Pornographie!!!" Within the pages of the pamphlet, Carabin

²¹ FORTHUNY, *Cahiers de l'art moderne* 2 ([1913]).

²² Letter from V. Raguet to François-Rupert Carabin, 12 April 1913, in François-Rupert CARABIN, "Une Pornographie!!!", n.p.

reproduced copies of the official correspondence between himself and the Society, accompanied by four photographs of the sculpture, encouraging the viewer literally to consider from all sides the work he incredulously labeled “L'Œuvre pornographique!!” Even more valuable, however, is the very rare statement of artistic intent that Carabin articulated in his defense. Under the title, “Art is the Materialization of the Ideal,” he stated explicitly: “Here are the reasons why I designed my work. The modern social state and the positivistic sciences have destroyed the idealism that one could formerly draw from various religions. Yet certain mysteries of nature have not yet been penetrated by the sciences that endeavor to explain them by establishing hypotheses that are often quickly refuted.” Turning more specifically to the subject in question, Carabin continued: “One of the most marvelous manifestations of nature is the act of procreating and perpetuating the species. This act, ugly in the majority of mammals, takes a real aesthetic beauty with the feline and is accompanied by cries that one cannot decide are the product of extreme joy or extreme pain.”²³

In 1919, several years after the debacle with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts concerning the exhibition of *Nocturne*, Carabin sent to the same Salon an elaborately carved trunk, bearing on its front the figure of an octopus whose tentacles surround a clitoral head. Carved into the lid of the trunk was the inscription in foreboding gothic script: “If you regard your chastity, leave me shut.” Predicting that the public would be overcome with curiosity, Carabin secured the trunk with a weak lock. The public, of course, could not resist this Pandorian box, and once the trunk was opened, Carabin’s deeper designs as a provocateur were revealed. Hidden inside the box was a freestanding sculpture of two women, explicitly engaged in an act of Sapphic pleasure (Fig. 4). No less horrified, the Salon’s officials again demanded the removal of the offensive sculpture, but, reveling in the uproar, Carabin asserted his right to exhibit a closed box and insisted instead that two guards be posted to assure that the public’s artifice was not again threatened. Carabin’s trunk and lock in this manner is also suggestive of the presence of so-called “Secret Museums,” which cropped up throughout Europe during the 19th century. In fact Carabin had specifically marshaled

²³ CARABIN, “Une Pornographie!!!”, n.p.

one such museum—the Gabinetto Segreto founded in Naples in 1819, which contained sexually explicit objects from the excavations at Pompei—to his defense when challenging in 1913 his right to exhibit art that could be deemed “pornographic.” In Paris the Bibliothèque Nationale de France infamously held the forbidden *Enfer* collection. In London, there were restricted collections held at both the South Kensington Museum and the British Museum, containing sexually explicit art from India and Japan in addition to examples from classical antiquity, the latter holed away in a department provocatively named the Museum Secretum. Secret museums were justified in existence by the presumption that men of a certain class and education could study with clinical objectivity works of art that had been deemed pornographic, something akin to the use of Latin by sexologists of the period. For example, in the first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1886, Richard von Krafft-Ebing chose to relate in Latin the details of case studies in which the bodies of women were defiled, a strategy that he stated in the introduction to his study was intentionally meant to frustrate the curiosity of those readers who were not members of the educated elite. Krafft-Ebing wrote, “A scientific title has been chosen, and technical terms are used throughout the book in order to exclude the lay reader. For the same reason certain portions are written in Latin.”²⁴ Krafft-Ebing found in the prolific responses he received as a result of the publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, however, that such readers were by no means immune to the base and perverse feelings that it was supposed a man of learning could set aside. In the preface to the tenth edition of the study, published in 1901, Kraft-Ebbing noted that, “The host of letters that have reached the author from all parts of the world substantiate this assumption. Compassion and sympathy are strongly elicited by the perusal of these letters, which are written chiefly by men of refined thought and of high social and scientific standing. They reveal sufferings of the soul in comparison to which all the other afflictions dealt out by Fate appear as trifles.” In light of the response he had received, Krafft-Ebing shifted somewhat his desire for the purposes of the study as one that would clinically document and scientifically

²⁴ Richard von KRAFFT-EBING, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 10th ed., translated by F. J. Rebman, Chicago, W. T. Keener & Co., 1901, p. vii.

“enlighten” to one that he hoped would, “continue to convey solace and social elevation to its readers.”²⁵

The trunk Carabin exhibited in 1919 similarly proves useful as a historiographical metaphor for the brevity of contextual and critical engagement with his work. Erotically explicit and often overtly misogynist, Carabin's sculptures have seemed capable of supporting little more than the most polarized polemics—be they feminist or misogynist. One might argue that the debased and degraded female forms in Carabin's work serve merely as a proxy for the sensual body. Discomfort (or desire) arises most acutely when we make the assumptive leap that this representation is indexical for the position of living woman, and the corollary is rarely that simple. Yet, as numerous feminists and critical theorists have argued, our very conception of biological woman is inextricably entangled in cultural images and social norms that are continuously mapped onto the human body. “Flesh comes to us out of history,” Angela Carter succinctly observed in *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*. “[S]o does the repression and taboo that governs our experience of flesh.”²⁶ The history to which Carter alludes is one not only of physical realities of pleasure and suffering, power inequalities and political struggles, but also a history shaped by, and continuously re-imagined through, the representational sphere and its interpretations. This sphere, which affects physical realities but is typically not directly constituted by them, presents an ethical juggernaut to the artist and observer, the critic and the censor. Must we rigorously police and critically denounce representations of oppression with the same tone and vigor with which we would protest the oppression of bodies we have endowed with human rights? What allowances do we make in the artistic sphere for fantasy, satire, the frank presentation of discomforting desires? As Simone de Beauvoir pithily queries in the title of her book-length study: “*Must we Burn Sade?*”

In examining Carabin's oeuvre it is apparent that his work readily appeals to human (and in the nineteenth century, de facto, masculinized) desires to possess, touch, and master. The female forms are, in turn, passive, sensual, and inviting, characteristics

²⁵ KRAFFT-EBING, p. viii.

²⁶ Angela CARTER, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 11.

that were, not coincidentally, ascribed to the female sex in general in the 19th century. While these gender valences of Carabin's work are indeed troubling to me, I am less interested in pursuing the impossible task of evaluating Carabin as a moral being than I am in pressing upon the manner in which his unsettling incarnations of feminized form have assured the continuous position of his œuvre as a goad in the side of aesthetic and ethical judgments. It is in the indeterminate spaces Carabin's works occupy, at the pivot of dichotomies between good and evil, play and assault, fantasy and action, ideology and subversion, mind and body, history and interpretation, that I believe his art is at its most potent. In striving to resist the impulse to neutralize this inherently unnerving aspect of Carabin's work, I have returned many times to the fundamentally modern philosophical question posed by Friedrich Nietzsche in the pages of *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "Under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? *And what values do they themselves possess?*"²⁷ Like the blatantly unapologetic philosophy of Nietzsche, Carabin's work forces us to take a position in response to a direct provocation. Yet with the rejection of divine moral authority and the acknowledgment of the impossibility of grounding universal moral laws in reason alone, this response is inevitably largely governed by personal desires and convictions. For who can counter purely with logic the assertion that it is perfectly rational for the strongest individual to pursue exclusively his own self-interest? As writers such as the Marquis de Sade realized, the sexualized body is at the center of this conundrum, for it represents human aspirations to freedom and pleasure but simultaneously reveals the fundamental vulnerability of the individual. In Carabin's deco-sculptural furnishings we see a relentless translation of this notion into the physically tangible realm of the visual arts and are invited not merely to contemplate disinterestedly but to enter into a visceral, embodied exchange with the work of art. While the critic who reviewed Carabin's furniture for the *New York Daily Tribune* had predicted that any examination of Carabin's work by future generations would only result in their landing "Three hundred thousand miles from the [historical] truth," the consideration of the anarchistic artistic

²⁷ Friedrich NIETZSCHE: *On the Genealogy of Morals* in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, The Modern Library, 2000, p. 453.

and erotic dynamics of Carabin's work provides us insight not only into discourses defining modern sexuality and artistic obscenity but also into the genealogy of our own aesthetic and ethical values.