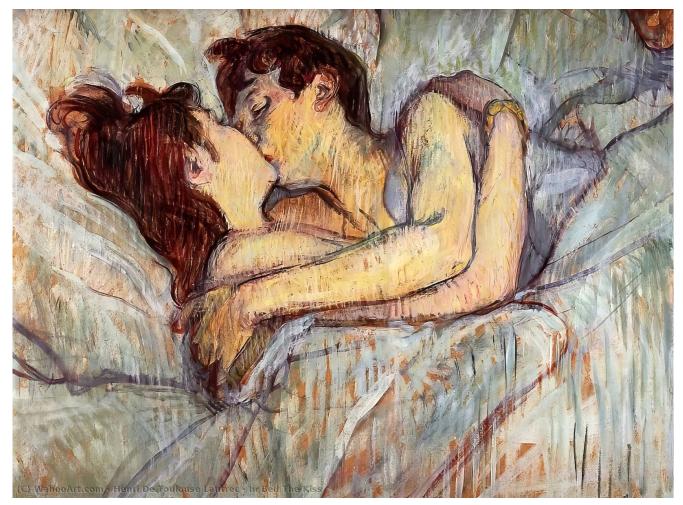
Lesbians (Baudelaire)

by **DJ Tyrer** (November 2023)



In Bed, The Kiss, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1892

Crafting a collection of poetic shockers
Baudelaire reached for a name
Calling his collection 'The Lesbians'
A term loaded doubly with meaning—
One inoffensive, of poetic repute
That excused any and all offence
The other risqué, sexual, sapphic
Poetic only tangentially—
And, boasted of it in print.
But, the Lesbians of Lesbos

That is, the inhabitants of the isle Took offence and wrote to complain Threatened to take Baudelaire to court. One father in an interview Proudly proclaiming publicly "My daughter was born a Lesbian And I pray she'll remain a Lesbian Until her dying day." His daughter smiled a secret smile Glanced coyly at a passing maid And, prayed the same and not the same As her doting father ruffled her hair Not understanding the blazing urges That the poet, Baudelaire, could comprehend And, proceeded with his threats Forcing the collection to be renamed. No longer 'Lesbians,' but blooms 'The Flowers of Evil' taking root Only to take their author to court After all, for their mild obscenity Cementing his reputation down the ages Albeit without homosexual femininity.

Table of Contents

DJ Tyrer is the person behind Atlantean Publishing, editor of View From Atlantis and the 5-7-5 Haiku Journal webzines, and has been published in issues of Genre: Urban Arts, Haiku Journal, Lothlorien Journal, Poetry Quarterly, and Tigershark, and online at A New Ulster, Enchanted Conversation, Library Love Letter, Morphrog, Plato's Caves and Poetry Pacific. DJ Tyrer's website can be seen here.

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