

as Ducros observes—we might be in a better position to date this pastel by comparing it with *Midi à Cap Horn* (Noon at Cape Horn), a charcoal drawing which de Salicis, another of Meryon's friends, lent to the Burlington Club's exhibition in 1879: it was dated 1847 in the catalogue. This is however another of Meryon's works which has disappeared.

The coloured reproduction in Geffroy's book shows a ship, sails filled, moving towards the viewer's left. The sky, partly blue but mostly covered with clouds (white, but some are tinged with pink) fills a little over half the picture. Sea birds fly low over the dark blue sea, lightened by patches of foam and spray.

The Cabinet des Estampes of the Bibliothèque Nationale owns a photograph of Meryon's only known oil painting,¹⁷ painted in 1858 during the mental breakdown which led to the artist's first internment at the Charenton asylum. Five years later he wrote of it in these terms to his father:

One of my former friends, a printer with whom I had become very friendly, reasonably well-informed about art, having had the good idea of bringing me a few paints and a small wooden panel, half by chance, half deliberately I used them, yielding to a recollection of regretted dreams, to show, in a very rapid sketch, two skiffs, rigged in a rather strange way, racing on the back of a rough sea. First of all, I used no other instrument than the end of my finger, modelling however the forms of these canoes with sufficient finesse. I have since seen this singular impromptu work; although I do not like going back to that time which was for me one of such a cruel affliction, I was still astonished by this result,—I will say carried out almost in the darkness which surrounded me . . .¹⁸

The work was sold as no. 35 in the sale of paintings from the Giacomelli Collection, April 13-15, 1905. What is presumably the same picture, catalogued as *Bateaux de pêche sous le vent* (Fishing boats before the wind), fetched 4,050 francs at the George Haviland sale on June 2, 1932. More in keeping with Meryon's own description, Ducros calls it *Course de deux esquifs* (Race between two skiffs). Its present whereabouts is unknown.¹⁹

Each of the six works already discussed or referred to has a nautical theme; each dwells on seascape or coastal landscape; when human activity appears it can be readily interpreted in dramatic and heroic terms; to a lesser extent, exoticism inspires *L'Assassinat . . .*, *Midi à Cap Horn* and *La Pêche à la baleine*; the light of the setting sun brings added drama to du Fresne's murder, and perhaps to *La Pêche à la*