

The Politics of Vision
*Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art
and Society*

Also by Linda Nochlin
Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays

LINDA NOCHLIN

Icon Editions

HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS, New York
Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco
London, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto

4. T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, London and Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973 and 1982.
5. Linda Nochlin, "Courbet's Real Allegory: Rereading *The Painter's Studio*," in *Courbet Reconsidered*, by Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, The Brooklyn Museum, 1988, pp. 17-42.
6. See Stephen F. Eisenman, "Nonfiction Painting: Mimesis and Modernism in Manet's *Escape of Rochefort*," in *Art Journal* (The Political Unconscious in Nineteenth-Century Art), ed. L. Nochlin, 46, no. 4 (Winter 1987), pp. 278-284.
7. Emma Boehm-Oller, "Francisco Oller: Puerto Rican Impressionist," *Americas*, 19 (September 1967), pp. 24-25.
8. The unfinished and much repainted Courbet work in the Smith College Art Museum is now considered to have been conceived originally as "Funeral Preparations."
9. See Chapter 3, ns. 1 and 2 for a complete reference. This exhibition of Orientalist art was followed by a far more extensive one, accompanied by an impressive catalogue edited by Mary Anne Stevens, *The Orientalists—Delacroix to Matisse: The Allure of North Africa and the Near East*, at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., in 1984.
10. *Studies on Camille Pissarro*, ed. by Christopher Lloyd, London and New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, pp. 1-14.
11. See n. 11, Chapter 4, p. 74.
12. The issue of van Gogh's weavers was later explored more fully and from a different angle by Carol Zemel in "The 'Spook' in the Machine: Van Gogh's Pictures of Weavers in Brabant," *Art Bulletin*, LXVII, no. 1 (March 1985), pp. 123-137. Griselda Pollock has investigated van Gogh's representation of urban work in "Stark Encounters: Modern Life and Urban Work in van Gogh's Drawings of The Hague, 1881-1883," *Art History*, 6, no. 3 (September 1983), pp. 330-338.
13. *The Art Institute of Chicago: Museum Studies* (Special Issue: The *Grande Jatte* at 100), volume 14, no. 2, pp. 133-154.

I

The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France, 1830-1880

"Art changes only through strong convictions, convictions strong enough to change society at the same time." So proclaimed Théophile Thoré, *quarante-buitard* critic, admirer of Théodore Rousseau, Millet, and Courbet, an art historian who discovered Vermeer and one of the spokesmen for a new, more democratic art, in 1855, in exile from Louis Napoleon's imperial France. Whether or not one agrees with Thoré's assertion, it is certainly typical in its equation of revolutionary art and revolutionary politics of progressive thought in the visual arts at the middle of the nineteenth century. Seven years earlier, in the euphoric days following the 1848 Revolution, a new dawn for art had been seriously predicated upon the progressive ideals of the February uprising. At that time the most important art journal of France, *L'Artiste*, in its issue of March 12, 1848, extolled the "genius of liberty" which had revived "the eternal flames of art" (obviously it had been less effective in reviving the rhetorical power of its writers), and the next week, Clément de Ris, writing in the same periodical, while slightly chagrined by the mediocrity of the first "liberated" Salon, nevertheless maintained that "in the realm of art, as in that of morals, social thought and politics, barriers are falling and the horizon expanding." Even Théophile Gautier, certainly not an apostle of radicalism either in art or politics, took the opportunity to sing a hymn of praise to the new era in the pages of the same periodical. The ages of Pericles, Leo X, or Louis XIV were

nothing, he maintained, compared to the present epoch. "Can a great, free people do less for art than an Attic village, a pope or a king?" The question, obviously, is rhetorical.

Delacroix was generally the painter to whom progressive critics looked for a fulfillment of the revolutionary ideals of the 1848 uprising; as early as March, Thoré, in *Le Constitutionnel*, expressed the hope that Delacroix would paint *L'Égalité sur les barricades de février* as a pendant to his allegory of the revolutionary ideals of 1830, *Liberty at the Barricades*, which had been taken out of storage and placed on exhibition following the February uprising. Both Daumier and Millet entered the revolutionary government's contest for a representation of the Republic, while Courbet, who toyed with this idea, also seriously considered taking part in the national competition for a popular song.

The very term "avant-garde" was first used figuratively to designate radical or advanced activity in both the artistic and social realms. It was in this sense that it was first employed by the French Utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon, in the third decade of the nineteenth century, when he designated artists, scientists, and industrialists as the elite leadership of the new social order:

It is we artists who will serve you as avant-garde [Saint-Simon has his artist proclaim, in an imaginary dialogue between the latter and a scientist] . . . the power of the arts is in fact most immediate and most rapid: when we wish to spread new ideas among men, we inscribe them on marble or on canvas. . . . What a magnificent destiny for the arts is that of exercising a positive power over society, a true priestly function, and of marching forcefully in the van of all the intellectual faculties . . . !¹

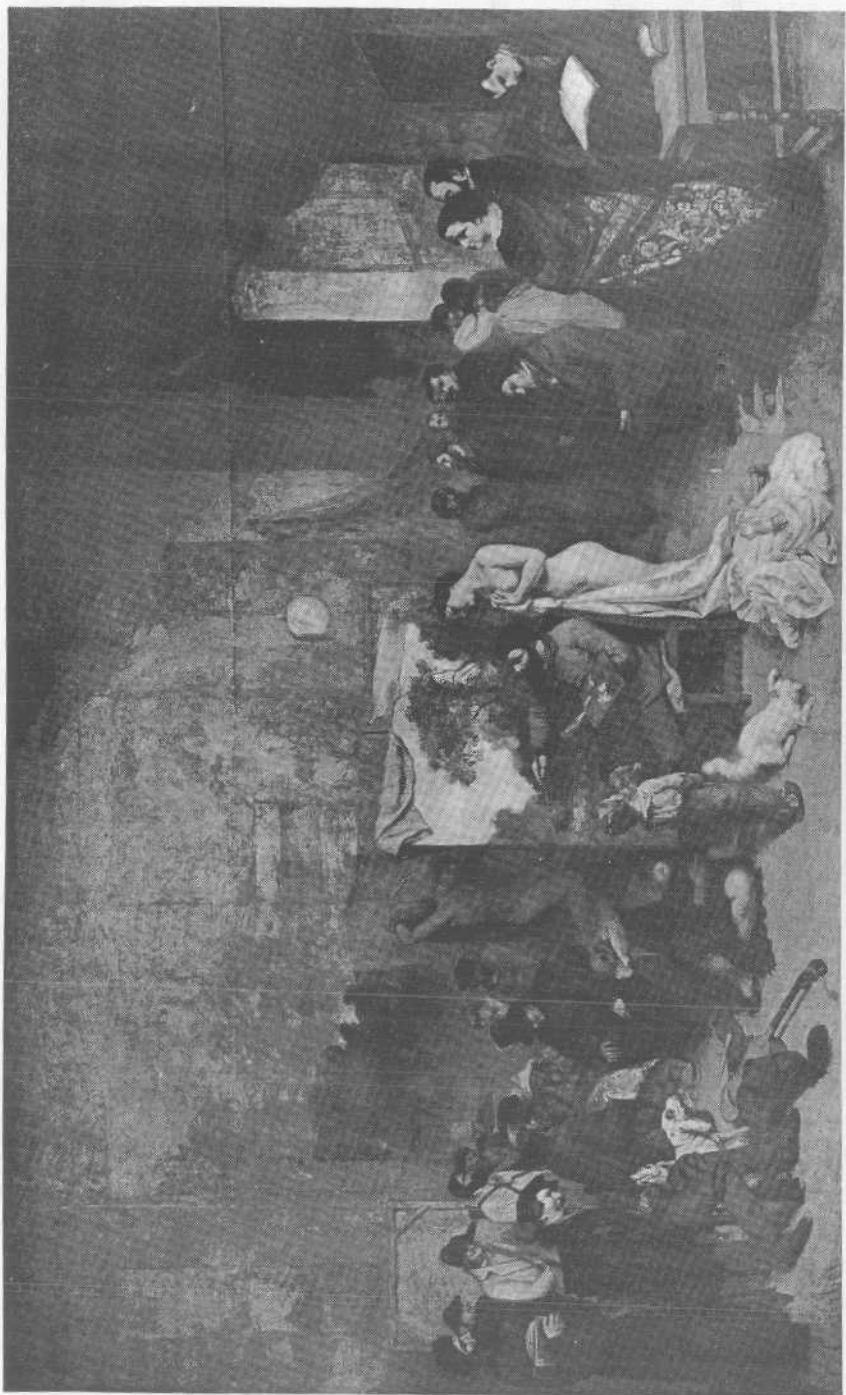
The priority of the radical revolutionary implication of the term "avant-garde" rather than the purely esthetic one more usually applied in the twentieth century, and the relation of this political meaning to the artistic subsidiary one, is again made emphatically clear in this passage by the Fourierist art critic and theorist Laverdant, in his *De la Mission de l'art et du rôle des artistes* of 1845:

Art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies; it is the forerunner and the revealer. Therefore to know whether art worthily fulfills its proper mission as initiator, whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where Humanity is going, know what the destiny of the human race is. . . .²

César Daly, editor of the *Revue générale de l'architecture*, used a similar military term, *éclairateur*, or "scout," in the 1840s, when he said that the journal must "fulfill an active mission of 'scouting the path of the future,' " a mission both socially and artistically advanced.³ Baudelaire, after a brief flirtation with radical politics in 1848—he had actually fought on the barricades and shortly after, in 1851, had written a eulogistic introduction to the collected *Chants et chansons* of the left-wing worker-poet Pierre Dupont, condemning the "puerile utopia of the art-for-art's sake school," praising the "popular convictions" and "love of humanity" expressed in the poet's pastoral, political, and socialistic songs⁴—later mocked the politico-military implications of the term "avant-garde" in *Mon Coeur mis à nu*, written in 1862–64.⁵

Certainly the painter who best embodies the dual implications—both artistically and politically progressive—of the original usage of the term "avant-garde" is Gustave Courbet and his militantly radical Realism. "Realism," Courbet declared flatly, "is democracy in art." He saw his destiny as a continual vanguard action against the forces of academicism in art and conservatism in society. His summarizing masterpiece, *The Painter's Studio* [I], is a crucial statement of the most progressive political views in the most advanced formal and iconographic terms available in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Courbet quite naturally expected the radical artist to be at war with the ruling forces of society and at times quite overtly, belligerently, and with obvious relish challenged the Establishment to a head-on confrontation.⁶ The idea of the artist as an outcast from society, rejected and misunderstood by a philistine, bourgeois social order was of course not a novelty by the middle of the nineteenth century. The advanced, independent artist as a martyr of society was a standard fixture of Romantic hagiography, apotheosized in Vigny's *Chatterton*, and he had been immortalized on canvas by at least two obscure artists by the middle of the nineteenth century; both of these paintings serve to remind us that there is no necessary connection between advanced social or political ideas and pictorial adventurousness. The sculptor Antoine Etex's unfortunate *Death of a Misunderstood Man of Genius* (now in Lyons, one of the many crosses which French provincial museums seem destined to bear) was deservedly castigated by Baudelaire in his *Salon of 1845*, and is an obvious and derivative reference both to Chatterton and the dead Christ or Christian martyr.



1. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio*, 1855, Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Somewhat more successful, because more concrete and straightforward, is an English variation on the theme of the artist as a social martyr, Henry Wallis's *Death of Chatterton*, an overtly sentimental and marvelously detailed costume piece, praised by Ruskin in his 1856 *Academy Notes* as "faultless and wonderful."⁷

It is not until seven years after the 1848 Revolution that the advanced social ideals of the mid-nineteenth century are given expression in appropriately advanced pictorial and iconographic form, in Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*. Its truly innovating qualities are perhaps best revealed by comparison with the "revolutionary" painting of the uprising of 1830, Delacroix's *Liberty at the Barricades*, a work conservative in both the political and the esthetic sense—that is to say, nostalgically Bonapartist in its ideology and heavily dependent upon mythological prototypes by Delacroix's Neoclassical teacher, Guérin, for its iconography and composition.⁸ On the other hand, democratic and humanitarian passions seem to have been no more a guarantee of pictorial originality in the case of the Revolution of 1830 than they were to be in that of 1848. Although Philippe-Auguste Jeanron was far more politically radical than Delacroix, his *The Little Patriots: A Souvenir of July 1830* [2], which appeared in the 1831 Salon, is obviously a watered-down, sugar-coated reworking of Delacroix's romantic, Molochistic allegory *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, which had been exhibited at the Musée Colbert in Paris in 1829 and 1830. Jeanron, a close friend of Thoré, was later named director of the National Museums under the 1848 Revolutionary Government, and he accomplished miracles of reorganization and democratization during his brief incumbency. Yet, as is so often the case, good intentions are no guarantee of innovating, or even memorable, imagery. Despite contemporary and localizing references in *The Little Patriots*, such as the dome of the Panthéon in the background or the paving-stone barricade to the left, the pall of the academic *poncif* hangs heavier over the painting than the smoke of revolutionary fervor; one is made all too aware, in the pose of the little patriot in the center—reminiscent of that of Donatello's *David*, and so appropriate in its iconographic implications—that Jeanron was an art historian as well as an artist.

Certainly, there had been no dearth of paintings with socially significant, reformist, or even programmatically socialist themes in the years between the Revolution of 1830 and that of 1848. In 1835, Gleyre planned a three-part painting to be titled *The Past, the Present and the Future*,



2. Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, *The Little Patriots: A Souvenir of July 1830, 1830, Caen*, France, Musée de Caen

represented by, respectively, a king and a priest signing a pact of alliance; a bourgeois, idly stretched on a divan, receiving the produce of his fields and his factories; and The People receiving the revenues of all the nation. In the Salon of 1837, Bézard exhibited a social allegory, rather transparently titled *The Race of the Wicked Rules over the Earth*, and in the 1843 Salon, the versatile (or perhaps eclectic) Papety exhibited his controversial *Dream of Happiness* (now in the Musée Vivienel in Compiègne; see Figure 2, Chapter 9). In 1845, Victor Robert exhibited *Religion, Philosophy, the Sciences and the Arts Enlightening Europe*, while in 1846, no less a figure than Baudelaire himself deigned to notice the *Universal Charity* of Laemlein, a bizarre confection representing a personification of Charity holding in her arms three children: "one is of the white race, the other red, the third black; a fourth child, a little Chinese, typifying the yellow race, walks by her side."⁹ Works such as these of course lent themselves perfectly to satire: both Musset and Balzac made fun of the ambitions of the apocalyptic and Fourierist painters, probably basing their caricatures on that learned and mystical pasticheur of universal panaceas, Paul-Joseph Chénard.¹⁰

Yet one of these allegorical, socially progressive artists working prior to 1848 is worth examining more closely, if only to lend higher relief to the truly advanced qualities of Courbet's postrevolutionary *Studio*: this is the little-known Dominique Papety (1815–1849), for a time one of Chénard's assistants, dismissed by Baudelaire in his 1846 *Salon* under the rubric "On Some Doubters," as "serious-minded and full of great goodwill," hence, "deserving of pity."¹¹ What is interesting about Papety is that he was a Fourierist, and Courbet's *Studio* is among other things a Fourierist as well as a Realist allegory. Yet in the difference in conception, composition, and attitude between Papety's allegory and that of Courbet lies the enormous gap between painting which is advanced in subject but conventional in every other way and that which is truly of its time, or even in advance of it (to use the term "avant-garde" in its most literal sense) and hence, a pictorial paradigm of the most adventurous attitudes of its era. Papety's Fourierist convictions were stated in a language so banal that his *Rêve de bonheur*, although Fourierist in inspiration, looks almost exactly like Ingres's apolitical *Golden Age* or Puvis de Chavannes's *Bois sacré*; the elements identifying it with contemporary social thought are completely extraneous to the basic composition. While a critic of 1843 saw "a club, a people's bank or a phalanstery" in "this dream of the gardens of Aca-

deme,” and noted the unusual amalgamation of Horace’s *Odes* and Plato’s *Dialogues* with the steamship and the telegraph, the expendability of these contemporary elements is revealed when *L’Artiste* announces that Papety, on the basis of critical advice, has replaced his steamboat with a Greek temple, “which,” remarks the anonymous critic, with unconscious irony, “is perhaps more ordinary but also more severe than socialism in painting.”¹²

The link—and the gap—between Courbet and Papety is most clearly revealed by comparing the *Studio* with Papety’s ambitious plan for a truly doctrinaire Fourierist painting, *The Last Evening of Slavery*, executed about 1848 for a fellow Harmonian, François Sabatier, of Montpellier, a friend and supporter of Courbet and a close associate of the latter’s patron, Alfred Bruyas, himself an apostle of the New (Fourierist) Harmony. Courbet’s *Studio* may be seen in part as a translation into contemporary, concrete, personal terms of the Fourierist generalizations written in red letters beneath the sketch itself, of Papety’s grandiose but never completed project. Courbet doubtless had become familiar with Papety’s sketch during the course of his visit of 1854 to Bruyas, an eccentric who envisioned himself as a “salesman of the New Harmony” and actually went so far as to publish an abortive Fourierist tract, *Notes d’Harmonie*.¹³ During the summer of 1854 Courbet visited Sabatier on his estate at Tour de Farges near Montpellier, where he drew Sabatier’s portrait in black pencil[3]. Sabatier, while highly appreciative of Papety’s works, had already written a eulogistic account of Courbet’s *Burial at Ornans* and *Peasants of Flagey* in his *Salon* of 1851, praising their truthfulness, dignity, and democratic spirit. Sabatier—poet, linguist, translator, and knowledgeable amateur of music and the theater—was married to Caroline Ungher, one of the great singers of the epoch. A warm friend of the arts, he was also deeply concerned with the lot of the poor and the humble; as a partisan supporter of the 1848 revolution he was forced to flee Paris during the terrible days of June, when the forces of reaction took their revenge. He practiced the doctrines of Fourierist “Association” mainly by his support and encouragement of artists such as Eugène Devéria, Chenavard, Hébert, and, above all, Papety. On his family estate, he cultivated his vineyards or drew up plans for phalansteries. No doubt, the ambitious sketch executed by Papety was at least in part suggested to him by his Harmonian patron, who in turn showed the drawing to Courbet and discussed the ideas



3. Gustave Courbet, *François Sabatier*, 1854, Montpellier, Musée Fabre

embodied in it with him. Courbet himself was certainly a staunch partisan of socialist thought, partly because of his close association with the anarchist revolutionary P.-J. Proudhon, who had been deeply influenced by Fourier as a young man and had supervised the printing of one of Fourier’s books. More specifically, in his fragmentary autobiography of 1866 Courbet notes that by 1840 he had left behind his youthful training in order to follow socialists of all sects, and that “once arrived in Paris, he was a Fourierist.”¹⁴ In 1850, he had represented the Fourierist missionary Jean Journet going off to spread the gospel of Universal Harmony. In a sense, then, one might say that Papety’s mediocre and pedantic drawing offered Courbet a challenge: whether he could translate Papety’s

academic classicism into a pictorial language of his own time derived from his personal experience.

Art historians have always been hard-pressed to explain both the inspiration and specific implications of Courbet's *Studio*. It seems to me that a Fourierist interpretation, in conjunction with Papety's drawing, while it in no sense completely "explains" Courbet's allegory, at least helps to elucidate some of its otherwise inexplicable aspects: for example, just why Courbet chose to include the figures he did in his vast composition. Papety's sketch stipulates the depiction of "Scholars who have made the hour of Harmony [the final stage of Fourierist evolution] advance" and "Artists and poets swept up by enthusiasm [a specifically Fourierist term]"; the entire right-hand side of Courbet's painting consists of artists, critics, and philosophers who, in his opinion, have played an important role in the formulation of the new world. Papety mentions a "great strong man"; Courbet depicts a doughty athlete. Papety specifies a crowd of workers; Courbet, with greater economy, gives us a laborer and his wife. Papety mentions a "sick, worn-out worker"; Courbet has depicted "a poor, weather-beaten old man" in his left-hand group. Papety presents religious figures in a derogatory light; for Courbet, the rabbi and the priest in the *Studio* are personifications of self-satisfaction and hypocrisy. Papety had planned to represent "an aristocratic group surveying the scene"; Courbet placed two elegantly dressed visitors or spectators in the foreground. The Harmonian Leader, who was to have occupied the center of Papety's composition, is of course Courbet himself, the artist, busily engaged in creating a landscape in the center of his painting.

Even aside from the specific analogies between Courbet's canvas and Papety's drawing, further elements link the *Studio* with Fourierist conceptions: for example, the Fourierist ideal of the Association of Capital, of Labor, and of Talent is clearly embodied in Courbet's iconographic scheme. Fourier's system depends on a series of complex correspondences among the natural, the physical, the psychological, and the social realms. For example, the Four Affective Passions, cornerstones of the Fourierist system—Friendship, Love, Ambition, and Family Feeling—correspond to the four ages of life: Childhood, Adolescence, Maturity, and Old Age, all embodied by figures in Courbet's painting. Yet there is actually a fifth stage, to be inserted between that of adolescence (sixteen to thirty-five) and that of maturity (forty-six to sixty-five years), a phase which, according to Fourier, does not count in this system since it is the pivot, and the

pivot never counts in the calculation of movement. That is the phase of virility, from thirty-six to forty-five years, to which correspond the Affective Passions of both Love and Ambition—in other words, the plenitude of life. Now interestingly enough Courbet reached his thirty-sixth birthday in 1855, the year of the Universal Exposition, for which the *Studio* had been planned and in which it was completed; Courbet is indeed, quite literally, the pivot of the painting, the immovable center around which all pictorial activity takes place; in addition he is flanked by an adoring nude muse (Love?) and is looked up to by an equally admiring little boy (Ambition?). The cat, incidentally, was one of Fourier's favorite animals, although the presence of the elegant and eminently paintable animal in the foreground can hardly be accounted for in terms of doctrine.

One of the most puzzling minor sidelights of Courbet's composition is the significance of the little boy scribbling a picture, a later insertion whose presence has been accounted for both as a mere space filler—to balance the still-life objects on the left-hand side—and as a personification of the newly awakened interest in the art of children associated with the Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer.¹⁵ Yet here again a Fourierist interpretation best accounts for this figure. Fourier was extraordinarily interested in the nature and development of children and in formulating an appropriate pedagogical system designed to take advantage of their innate inclinations and at the same time foster the well-being of the phalanstery as a whole. One of the five major dispositions of children observed by Fourier, and one of those most worthy of cultivation in his opinion, was *la singerie*, or "the mania for imitation." Children, according to Fourier, should have their own little tools, their own small-scaled workshops, where, under the tutelage of their elders their natural imitative propensities might best be put to productive ends. Surely the little boy diligently working away on his crude drawing is learning through imitation; initiated by a master painter, he himself will become one of the masters of the future.

Yet still another question remains to be answered about the mysterious and provocative iconography of the *Studio*. If François Sabatier was indeed a crucial figure in the conception of the painting both as a follower of Fourier and as the owner of the Papety sketch which provided at least partial inspiration for Courbet's masterpiece, why is Sabatier not represented in the work itself, as are such other crucial figures in Courbet's career and thought as Champfleury, Bruyas, Baudelaire, and Proudhon? It is my contention that Sabatier is indeed present[3], although only par-

tially; he may well be the half-hidden husband of the elegantly dressed woman in the foreground, the wealthy patron come to survey the scene. Certainly the line of hair and beard and the little tuft of hair that protrudes on the forehead are similar to these features in the black pencil drawing in the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. Further investigation would of course be necessary to establish the identity of the elegant wife in her flowered shawl with Caroline Ungher Sabatier and that of the man who accompanies her with other securely identified portraits of Sabatier. Nevertheless, even without such assurance the identification is a tempting one.

Courbet's painting is "avant-garde" if we understand the expression, in terms of its etymological derivation, as implying a union of the socially and the artistically progressive. Far from being an abstract treatise on the latest social ideas, it is a concrete emblem of what the making of art and the nature of society are to the Realist artist. It is through Courbet, the specific artist, the Harmonian demiurge, that all the figures partake of the life of this pictorial world, and all are related to his direct experience; they are not traditional, juiceless abstractions like Truth or Immortality, nor are they generalized platitudes like the Spirit of Electricity or the Nike of the Telegraph; it is, on the contrary, their concreteness which gives them credibility and conviction as tropes in a "real allegory," as Courbet subtitled the work, and which, in addition, ties them indissolubly to a particular moment in history.

While one might well reply that Ingres's *Apotbeosis of Homer* is as irrevocably bound to the same historical moment as Courbet's *Studio*, even though it attempts to establish universal values and eternal verities, in the case of Ingres's work this is *despite* rather than *because* of the intentions of the artist; one might almost say that as far as Ingres was concerned, to be of one's time was a measure of failure rather than of achievement. By the middle of the nineteenth century the distinction between the contemporary and the avant-garde has already begun to make itself felt. Ingres's painting is, of course, in no sense "advanced"; it merely smells of its epoch to trained art-historical nostrils, as does all art.

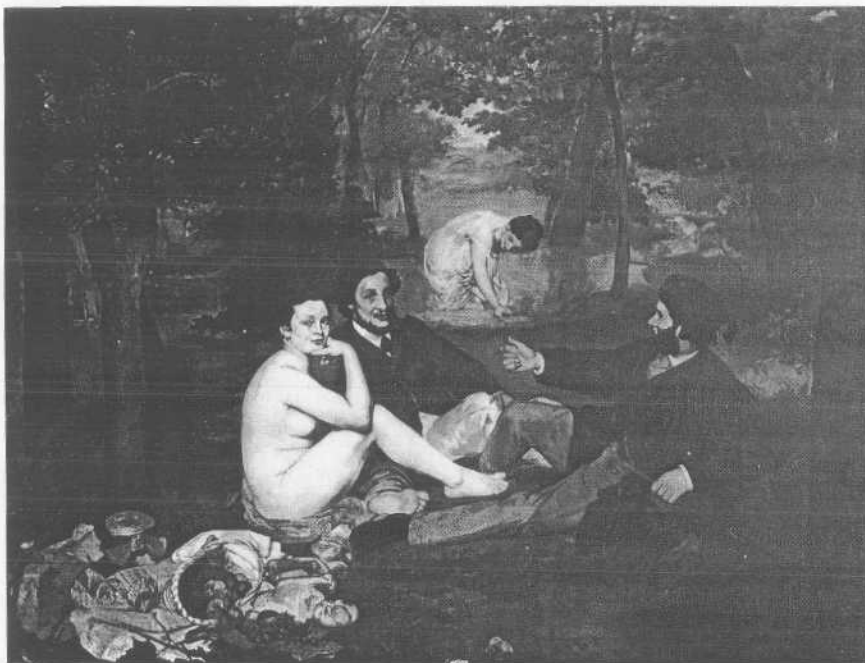
Yet if we take "avant-garde" out of its quotation marks, we must come to the conclusion that what is generally implied by the term begins with Manet rather than Courbet. For implicit—and perhaps even central—to our understanding of avant-gardism is the concept of alienation—psychic, social, ontological—utterly foreign to Courbet's approach to art and to life. While Courbet may have begun his career as a rebel and ended it as

an exile, he was never an alienated man—that is, in conflict with himself internally or distanced from his true social situation externally, as were such near-contemporaries as Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Manet. For them, their very existence as members of the bourgeoisie was problematic, isolating them not merely from existing social and artistic institutions but creating deeply felt internal dichotomies as well.

In other words, their birth into the middle class was a source of internal as well as external alienation. Such a situation would have been utterly foreign to Courbet, who proudly accepted and even exaggerated his provincial petty-bourgeois background into something overtly plebeian and rustic, emphasizing his regional *patois* and the simplicity and directness, if not outright coarseness, of his manner.

With Manet, the situation becomes far more complicated. For the first time, we are confronted with an oeuvre which, like the dandy himself (who was originally postulated as the human equivalent of a work of art), lives completely autonomously, as gratuitous and noncommunicative as Baudelaire's frigid incarnation of Beauty. How can one possibly take Manet at his word—and does he, in fact, wish us to?—when, in the catalogue statement for his private exhibition of 1867, he assures us that it is merely the "sincerity" of his works that gives them their "character of protest," or when he pretends to be shocked at the hostility with which the public has greeted them. "Manet has never wished to protest. It is rather against him who did not expect it that people have protested. . . ." These words ring hollow in the face of such outright affronts to public sensibility as *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*[4] or *Olympia*. What has never been sufficiently taken into account by "serious" criticism is the character of these works as monumental and ironic put-ons, *blagues*, a favorite form of destructive wit of the period, inflated to gigantic dimensions—pictorial versions of those endemic pranks which threatened to destroy all serious values, to profane and vulgarize the most sacred verities of the times. Significantly enough Manet, greatly at ease with "popular" turns of phrase, employs the term *blague* at least six times in the course of his (rather brief) recorded pronouncements.¹⁶ The Goncourt brothers devote a rich and rhetorical paragraph in *Manette Salomon* to a discussion of the *blague*:

The farcical *Credo* of scepticism, the Parisian revolt of disillusionment, the light and boyish formula of blasphemy, the great modern form, impious and



4. Edouard Manet, *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863, Paris, Musée d'Orsay

charivaresque, of universal doubt and national pyrrhonism; the *blague* of the nineteenth century, that great destroyer, that great revolutionary, that poisoner of faith, killer of respect . . .¹⁷

No wonder, then, that an outraged critic, no worse than most, exclaimed before *Le Bain*, as the *Déjeuner* was known in 1863: "This is a young man's practical joke." And indeed, the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, with Manet's brother, brother-in-law-to-be, and favorite model, Victorine, staring blandly out of the decor of Giorgione's venerated pastoral idyll, their elegant contemporary costume—or lack of it—making a mockery of the "timeless" Raphaellesque composition, must have seemed as full of protest and constituted as destructive and vicious a gesture as that of Marcel Duchamp when he painted a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

For Manet and for the avant-garde, as opposed to the men of 1848, the relation of the artist to society was a phenomenological rather than a social fact. He was involved in both the society and the political events of his time—his project for the mural decoration of the new Hôtel de Ville in Paris, with its series of compositions representing "Le Ventre de Paris"



5. Edouard Manet, *The Escape of Rochefort*, 1881, Zurich, Kunsthaus

of 1879, his paintings *The Execution of Maximilian* and *The Escape of Rochefort*[5], as well as his activities during the siege of Paris and the Commune, bear witness both to his involvement and to his desire for accuracy of reportage. But Manet's works can hardly be considered direct

statements of a specific viewpoint or position. Quite often they seem more like embodiments of his own essential feeling of alienation from the society of his times, a dandyish coolness toward immediate experience, mitigated either by art or by irony, or his own inimitable combination of both. The most authentic statement of Manet's sense of his situation as a man and as an artist may well be his two versions, painted in 1881, of *The Escape of Rochefort*, in my opinion unconscious or disguised self-images, where the equivocal radical leader, hardly an outright hero by any standards, is represented in complete isolation from nature and his fellow men: he is, in fact, not even recognizably present in one of the paintings of his escape from New Caledonia. It is no longer a question of the Romantic hero in the storm-tossed boat; there is no ideological or physical contrast between controlled serenity and natural passion in Manet's paintings, as there is in their prototype, Delacroix's *Christ on the Sea of Galilee*. And even here, it must be noted, the faintest ghost of *blague* enters into the tone of the painting, with its open, ultra-Impressionist brushwork and vague, Chaplinesque figure at the rudder. The isolation here is built into the imagery,

6. Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1881–82, London, Courtauld Institute Galleries



as it is in Manet's whimsical single stalk of asparagus, his lone rose, his centralized pickle jar: it is not the result of the observation of a specific social situation, it is an artful and pathetic statement of how it is to be an artist, how it is simply to be in the world at all.

This vision of isolation receives its apotheosis in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* [6], perhaps the most poignant image of alienation ever painted, a deadly serious spoof of Watteau's *Gilles* in completely modern "naturalist" terms, the anonymous yet concrete figure trapped between the world of tangible things and that of impalpable reflections, existing only as a way station between life and art. It is upon just such bad faith and alienation and the marvelously inventive, destructive, and self-destructive ways of making art about them that the modern avant-garde has built ever since. This is far indeed from Courbet's unified and unselfconscious vision of art and society—and his own direct and unambiguous relation to both—in the 1855 *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*.

Notes

1. Henri de Saint-Simon, *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles* (Paris, 1825), cited in Donald D. Egbert, "The Idea of 'Avant-garde' in Art and Politics," *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 2 (December 1967): 343.
2. Cited by Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 9.
3. Cited by Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture: 1750–1950* (London, 1965), pp. 261–62.
4. "Pierre Dupont," originally published 1851, Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec and C. Pichois (Paris, 1961), pp. 605, 612, 614.
5. Poggioli, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
6. See, for example, his deliberately provocative behavior toward the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, Director-General of the Imperial Museums, and his activities related to the Vendôme column incident during the Commune.
7. *Collected Works*, ed. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (London, 1902–12), XIV, p. 60. The painting is now in the Tate Gallery.
8. See Pierre Gaudibert's extremely interesting analysis of Delacroix's essential conservatism, "Eugène Delacroix et le romantisme révolutionnaire: A Propos de *La Liberté sur les barricades*," *Europe* 41 (April 1963): 4–21. For Guérin's influence on the *Liberty*, see Sixten Ringbom, "Guérin, Delacroix and 'The Liberty,'" *Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968): 270–74.

9. For the best source of information about these socially conscious painters prior to 1848, see Léon Rosenthal, *Du Romantisme au réalisme*, (Paris, 1914), pp. 345–98. Also, Joseph C. Sloane, *French Painting Between the Past and the Present* (Princeton, N.J., 1951), passim.
10. For a complete account of this fascinating failure, see Joseph C. Sloane, *Paul Marc Joseph Chenavard* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1962).
11. “Salon of 1846,” *Art in Paris: 1845–1862*, ed. and trans. J. Mayne (London, 1965), p. 101.
12. *L'Artiste*, June 2, 1844, p. 80.
13. For information on Brûyas and Sabatier see Montpellier, Musée Fabre, *Dessins de la collection Alfred Bruyas* (1962), introd. Jean Claparède (Inventaire des Collections Publiques Françaises, 6), n.p.
14. “Biographie de Courbet par lui-même,” in *Courbet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, ed. P. Courthion (Geneva, 1950), II, p. 27.
15. Meyer Schapiro was the first to make this connection between Courbet’s little boy and Töpffer’s ideas about the art of children, in “Courbet and Popular Imagery,” *Warburg Journal* 4 (1941): 178 and n. 4.
16. *Manet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, ed. P. Courthion (Geneva, 1945), pp. 27, 28, 30, 162, and passim.
17. Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, preface by Hubert Juin (Paris: Editions 10/18, 1979), pp. 42–43.

2

Courbet, Oller, and a Sense of Place: The Regional, the Provincial, and the Picturesque in 19th-Century Art

The slogan “Il faut être de son temps” has often been cited as central to the conception of nineteenth-century Realism. “One must be of one’s times” was the battle cry of Courbet and his followers: the admonition to reject the atemporal generalization of classical art or the anachronistic historicism of the Romantics and turn instead to the contemporary world in all its detailed concreteness for inspiration. Yet no less crucial to the Realist project, it would seem to me, was another admonition, sometimes related to, sometimes in contradiction with, the concern to be of one’s times: “One must be of one’s place”—that is to say, the injunction to deal with one’s native country, region, or even, at its most extreme, one’s own property (for this, essentially, is what John Constable did, spending his life painting his father’s mill and the river Stour within a two-mile radius of the family lands) in order to grasp the singularity, the concrete veracity of reality, as well as one’s deepest and most authentic relation to it.

This injunction to be of one’s place, in the case of both Gustave Courbet, the Frenchman from Ornans, and the Puerto Rican painter Francisco Oller (1833–1917), is even more central than the admonition to be of one’s times. “Il faut être de son temps” seems somehow more germane to the up-to-date modernity of a basically urban vision like Manet’s. To be of one’s place implies an attachment to more lasting values, to a certain type of natural scene associated with rural life and folk customs. Indeed, one might say of Courbet that for no other painter outside