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THE PAINTING *of*
MODERN LIFE

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PARIS IN THE ART OF MANET AND HIS FOLLOWERS

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trivial. It was not just that they were one main form in which everyday life was colonized in the later nineteenth century—given over to experts, addicts, entrepreneurs, consumers—but that there was such active disagreement over who had the right to plant the flag in the new territory. The colonies were claimed by various uneasy fractions of the middle class; by those who wished to reaffirm a status which had previously been made in the world of work, but seemed no longer to be available there; and by those who believed they had a right to the same status, even if their conditions of employment still seemed menial in many ways. The world of leisure was thus a great symbolic field in which the battle for bourgeois identity was fought; the essential warring claims were to forms of freedom, accomplishment, naturalness, and individuality which were believed to be the keys to bourgeoisie; actions both rearguard and offensive were mounted, disinformation was much in evidence.

Leisure was a performance, Veblen said, and the thing performed was class; though what is interesting about the acting in the 1870s, say, is its relative incompetence, as in *Argenteuil, les canotiers*.

I think this implication of leisure in class struggle goes some way to explain the series of transformations undergone by the subject in painting from 1860 to 1914. In particular it seems to me to shed light on the painters' changes of mind about how leisure should be depicted: the way, for example, styles of spontaneity are repeatedly displaced by styles of analysis—grandly individualistic modes of handling, that is, abandoned in favour of ones claiming to be anonymous, scientific and even collective. The classic instance is Neo-Impressionism: I do not believe that its vehemence (or its appeal to Pissarro) can be understood unless it is seen as deriving from an altered view of leisure, and of art as part of that leisure—which in turn derived from a new set of class allegiances. But just as interesting is the speed with which the Fauvist style—which had appeared for a moment to open nature again to the free play of fantasy—collapsed into its Cubist opposite. By the time of Fauvism, one could say, the myth of recreation could be stated only in overtly mythical terms: the dream of freedom and self-consciousness, of crepuscular boating and *Bonheur de vivre*, is adjourned to the golden age.

The reader should be warned, finally, that the notion of the “nouvelles couches sociales” being involved in any great revision of class society—any wholesale change in social structure—is controversial. Gambetta, for one, repudiated it. “I said *nouvelles couches* not *classes*,” he said somewhat ruefully in a speech at Auxerre in 1874; “that last is a bad word. I never use.”⁵⁵

A BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGÈRE

*A Mabile, entre deux figures
Un jeune homm' qui s'disait Baron,
M'offre un hôtel et deux voitures
Pour y fair' briller mon bon ton.
En baissant les yeux je m'approche,
Mais en voilà bien du nouveau,
J'vois des ciseaux sortant d'sa poche. . . .
L'Baron n'était qu'un calicot. . . .*

—Café-concert song, 1867.¹

Argument

That the adjective “popular,” applied to persons, manners, or entertainment in the later nineteenth century, came to mean too many, too indefinite things. The word’s elusiveness derived from its being used for ideological purposes, to suggest kinds of identity and contact between the classes—ways they belonged together and had interests in common—which did not exist in their everyday life or organized social practice, but seemed to in the spectacle. There was a sense in which the “nouvelles couches sociales” were nothing in our period, or very little, without the place allotted to them in “popular culture”—which is not to say that they lacked a determinate economic position, only that it was not yet clear, to them or anyone, what it was. Popular culture provided the petit-bourgeois aficionado with two forms of illusory “class”: an identity with those below him, or at least with certain images of their life; and a difference from them which hinged on his skill—his privileged place—as consumer of those same images. Painting was mostly a complaisant spectator of this spectacle, perfecting the petit bourgeois’s view of things and leaving behind the best picture we have of what it amounted to. But there are certain canvases which suggest the unease and duplicity involved in this attaining to a new class; something of the kind is claimed in this chapter for Manet’s last painting, *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère* (Plate XXIV).²

99. Pierre-Georges Jeanniot, *Jupillon et Germinie au café-concert*. Etching for Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's *Germinie Lacerteux*, 1886.



One of the things very often said at the time about Haussmannization was that it had ushered in an amount of make-believe and uncertainty in modern life, especially in matters of social class. It is not entirely clear that the charge was true, and that Paris was any fuller than usual of people pretending to be better or worse off than their incomes allowed. But the business of their doing so was visible and glittering in a new way.

Writers believed that the favourite premises for such behaviour were the glorified beer halls which came to be known as *cafés-concerts* or *cafés-chantants*. A guide to Paris was not complete without a brief description of these institutions, and advice to the traveller to see them and savour their vulgarity. All the best novels had a scene at the *Ambassadeurs* or the *Eldorado* in which the seal was set on a character's ruin; and painters, following suit, were fond of doing studies of the leading performers or the crowd at the tables taking their lukewarm *consommations*. The *cafés-concerts* were thought to be trivial but representative. To call them "institutions" at all, as I have done, is to adopt the commentators' tone, which was a bit sententious and a lot condescending: it was out to let the reader know that this particular Parisian had resisted the *Eldorado's* charm but

had done his duty and looked at the audience—even at the stage—in order to find out what it was that appealed to whom in such places. It seemed important to know, since all Paris was there with the writer, and he could not detect anyone else resisting.

The Goncourts, we have seen in chapter one, were the pioneers of this kind of account. They had ventured into the *Eldorado* rather early, in 1860, four or five years before it was customary for the *grands bourgeois* to do so; and they had taken their evening as a comprehensive sign that things were changing for the worse. To see women and children out at night on their own, or, just as bad, escorted by a proud papa: this struck them as sufficient evidence that one form of life was ending and another being born. The interior was dying, they said, and life henceforth would be lived in public, over the tables at the *Jockey Club* or on top of the *Butte de Chaillot*. They did not want that to happen, and the disdain they felt for the *Eldorado* was intense, almost naïve—or as near to naïveté as these writers were capable of. Their feelings did not soften with time. They went back to the same café in 1865, accompanied now by a good sprinkling of their *semblables*, and wrote the following lines in their journal:

At the *Eldorado* . . . A big circular room with two tiers of boxes, all gilt and painted with false marble; dazzling chandeliers; a *café* inside the room, black with men's hats; bonnets of women from the *barrière*; children in military képis; hats belonging to prostitutes in company with shop assistants, pink ribbons on the women in the boxes; the breath of all this crowd visible, a cloud of dust and tobacco smoke.

Towards the back a theatre stage with footlights; and on it a comic in evening dress. He sang disconnected things, interspersed with chortling and farmyard noises, the sounds of animals in heat, epileptic gesticulations—a *Saint Vitus's* dance of idiocy. The audience went wild with enthusiasm. . . . I may be wrong, but it seems to me we are heading for a revolution. There is a rottenness and stupidity in the public, a laughter so unwholesome that it will take a great upheaval, the spilling of blood, to clear the air and make even comedy sanitary.³

As with the Goncourts' joyless afternoon at *Boulevard* three years before, what is striking in the entries on the *café-concert* is the way they anticipate so much of later, lesser commentary; the way they seem to have happened upon a serviceable *attitude* towards the odd things they portray. "At present we live a great deal out of doors, we are all more less in flight from the interior and the hearth. . . ." ⁴ "To live at home, to think at home, to eat and drink at home, to love at home, to suffer at home, to die at home, we find this boring and inconvenient. We need publicity, daylight, the street, the cabaret, the *café*, the restaurant. . . . We like to *pose*, to make a spectacle of ourselves, to have a public, a *gallery*, witnesses to our life."⁵ "No one

here is at home, alas! The Parisian does not have a home any more. Everyone behaves as if he lived in a cheap hotel. So much so that the interior no longer has any intimacy or comfort, and each of us is disposed to think it disgusting and live out of doors as much as possible."⁶

Even the Goncourts' admixture of fear and hatred, and their transparent delight in both, were not unusual when the subject was the café-concert. The sense of blood and revolution in the background was not normally so explicit, let alone so gloating; but the stress itself was commonplace when journalists turned to Paris by Night. The Eldorado would not have been so appealing if it had not provoked some such *frisson*; its fans and defenders, of whom there were many in 1865, were often inclined to agree with the Goncourts and admit that what they relished in the ambience was idiocy and its attendant risks. Degas's brother René is typical of the mild form of this enthusiasm: writing home to his parents in New Orleans in 1872, he slips straightaway into the prescribed form of words: "After dinner I go with Edgar to the Champs-Élysées, from there to the café-chantant to hear idiotic songs, like the song of the *compagnon maçon* and other absurd nonsense."

"Idiots" . . . "bêtises" . . . "absurdes": the insults are casual and not meant to be wounding. Nonetheless they are insults, and their persistence in other descriptions—their positive urgency on occasions when one would not have expected such a note to be sounded—ought to strike us as odd and in need of explanation. If, for example, the serious Parisian had turned to his *Larousse du dix-neuvième siècle* for guidance on the new phenomenon, he would have found under "café-chantant" a long entry which depended for its tone, and most of its detail, on a citation *in extenso* from Louis Veuillot's *Odeurs de Paris*. The worthy Larousse confessed to detesting Veuillot's (Catholic) opinions in general, but in this case had "nothing to add; the photograph is accurate and exaggerates nothing."⁸ The "photograph"—it is of the Alcazar, and the singer described is the most famous of all, Thérésa, seen at the height of her powers—reads as follows:

Through the smoke we saw two or three empty seats which we reached not without difficulty. What an atmosphere! What a smell of tobacco, spirits, beer, and gas all mixed together! It was my first time in this place, the first time I had seen women in a café with smoking permitted. All around us were not just women, but *Ladies*.

Twenty years ago, you could have sought in vain for such a spectacle in all of Paris. Visibly, these ladies had dragged their defeated husbands here; the vexed and embarrassed air of those unfortunates made that all too clear. But the ladies themselves seemed hardly out of their element. . . . The presence of these "well-bred" women gave the audience a quite particularly slovenly appearance—gave it a kind of social slovenliness!

There was still half an hour to go, and all the places were taken. . . . A baritone came on, to a round of applause. He had a fine voice and the most funereal aspect imaginable. You would have guessed him to have been in bygone days a *représentant du peuple*, a member of the Montagne, a "thinker" who prided himself on his looks; Monsieur de Flotte, for example. [Larousse left out the last sentence, with its twenty-year-old sneers at the politics of 1848; but it is appropriate that the Alcazar should provoke such memories in Veuillot.] If this baritone were to figure in the troubles which await us, I for one would not be surprised. He sang:

*Un nid, c'est un tendre mystère
Un ciel que le printemps bénit.
A l'homme, à l'oiseau sur terre,
Dieu dit tout bas: Faites un nid!*

The crowd of pipesmokers, all far away from their own nests for the moment, and in no hurry to return, listened to the song with softened expressions; the "little women" could hardly restrain their tears; the well-bred ladies signalled their approval in a genteel fashion. . . . SHE was about to appear; a thunderous outbreak of applause announced her entry.

I did not find her so hideous as I had been told she was. She is rather a large girl, quite well built, without any charm besides her fame—which is charm of the first order, I admit. She has, I believe, some hair; her mouth appears to stretch right round her head; she has great fat lips like a Negro; shark's teeth. . . .

She knows how to sing. As for the song itself, it is indescribable, like its subject. You would need to be a Parisian to appreciate its qualities, a refined Frenchman to savour its profound and perfect ineptitude. It has nothing in common with any known language, or art, or truth. It is picked out of the gutter; but even the gutter has its own standards of taste, and one must find in the gutter the product which has the real flavour of the gutter. Parisians themselves are not without skill in seeking out such delicacies. . . .

The music has the same character as the words; they are both vulgar and corrupt caricatures, and moreover cheerless, like the sly face of the guttersnipe. The guttersnipe, the natural Parisian, does not cry, he blubs; he does not laugh, he cackles; he does not joke, he wisecracks; he does not dance, he does the *chahut*; he is not a lover but a libertine. [*Le voyou, le Parisien naturel, ne pleure pas, il pleurniche; il ne rit pas, il ricane; il ne plaisante pas, il blague; il ne danse pas, il chahute; il n'est pas amoureux, il est libertin.*] Art consists in assembling these ingredients in one song, and this the songwriters manage nine times of ten, with the singer's help. Success varies with the strength of the dose.

All of it smells of old pipes, gas leaks, fermenting liquor; and there is sadness at the bottom of it, that flat and eloquent sadness we call ennui. The physiognomy of the audience in general is a kind of troubled torpor. Nowadays these people come alive only as a result of a shock [*Ces gens-là ne vivent plus que de secousses*]; and the chief reason for the success of certain "artists" is that the shock they give is the strongest. It passes quickly, and the habitué falls back into his torpor. The

spectator who is not a habitué makes haste to depart and breathe the pure air of the street.⁹

Veillot in fact draws breath and stumbles on down to the next circle: the reader of *Les Odeurs de Paris* is treated to a further ten pages describing the Café Bataclan. Larousse, we may be thankful, breaks off at about this point (I have actually shortened his indefatigable citation by a good third), and one presumes that the seeker after encyclopaedic knowledge would have known by now what he was supposed to think.

For us, however, the text is obscure, and its length and magniloquence make it only the more elusive. How seriously are we meant to take it, and in particular its sense of impending social doom? It is a performance, no doubt, in the old grand manner, but its tropes are not merely decorative; they were certainly not seen as outlandish or unmotivated at the time (otherwise they would not have found their way into Larousse); and even Veillot's gifts of prophecy were not noticeably inaccurate. There was a revolution round the corner, made by baritones or not. The minister of Public Instruction was quite clear in 1872 that "the orgy of songs produced during that epoch" (he means the Commune) was partly to blame for the Communards' depravity; he made it a reason for reimposing censorship on the café-concert in an effort to prevent such things from occurring again.¹⁰

All the same, the evidence so far is bound to strike the twentieth-century reader as something less than photographic. These writers seem to be making a scapegoat of the Eldorado, and probably for specious reasons—because it was visible, because it was fashionable, because it was easy to deride its repertoire and audience. The reader will have noticed that Veillot and the Goncourts are not at all clear about who made up the normal crowd in the café-concert. Was it comprised of guttersnipes, and whores in cheap hats from the *barrières*? Or was the tone somehow set by respectable women who had dragged their husbands—sometimes even their children—this far down, at least for an evening? The crowd was some kind of *canaille*, for certain, but in it there figured some new recruits: those unhappy families, those ladies with ribbons, and those *putains* brought in on the arms of *commis de magasin*.

I propose to retreat from this uncertainty for a moment and try to establish some obvious things about the cafés-concerts.¹¹ They were cafés, not theatres. The law took the distinction very much to heart, and only reluctantly allowed the performances to consist of more than a singer and a stand-up comic. It took years for the state to agree to costumes and scenery, or to let the *poseuses* behind the singer move. This was partly the reason why places like the Alcazar laid on the scenic effects in the body



100. Edgar Degas, *Le Café concert*, 1882. Pastel.

of the hall: the tiers of boxes, the great candelabra, the sixteen colossal statues of women in the cupola, the ceiling painting of *Candide in Eldorado*, the two fountains, the mouldings by De Bay, the enormous mirror behind the bar:¹² they were there to distract the audience's attention from the strict, bare choreography on the other side of the footlights. Often there was little or no such pretence: a café-concert would declare itself to be a café plus a singer plus a stage. There are pictures by Manet and Degas that seem to indicate just such a lack of pretention, with beer and tables filling the foreground and the spectacle itself half glimpsed in a mirror, or largely left off to one side. Lighting was important in the better class of café-concert—gas at first, and then the famous glare of electricity. (The blankness of the new white light was one of the main effects in Manet's *Bar aux Folies-Bergère*; several critics in 1882 were not sure that Manet had captured its full intensity.) Lights and gilt and ladies on stage in stunning décolletage: the cafés-concerts were meant to be loud, vulgar, and above all modern: it was not for nothing that Haussmann's beloved architect Davioud tried his hand at designing the Ambassadeurs in the Champs-Élysées; or that Pissarro, passing judgement on the new Hôtel de Ville in 1891, should call it "that horrible café-concert" and evidently feel that nothing more need be said.¹³

The cafés-concerts were once again essentially Baron Haussmann's creation. They grew fat in the free market for eating and drinking which boomed on the boulevards in the 1860s. As the journalists never tired of saying, there seemed no end to the Parisian's appetite for public victuals;

customers appeared out of the night with every new establishment, and yet a café's survival depended on its fixing those customers' habits and persuading them to return.¹⁴ Victor Fournel was on the whole admiring of the various bribes and stratagems adopted by the hard-pressed proprietors: the free billiards and resident freaks, the performing monkeys, the *feuilletons* sold with each franc's-worth of beer.¹⁵ The cafés-concerts were one such stratagem, the most ordinary and successful. By the early 1870s there were at least 145 of them, probably many more.¹⁶

People naturally wondered at the time what made for success, and who it was that came back so regularly. Various answers were proposed to the second question, and I shall begin my own by listing some of them and pointing to the main themes and variations. Occasionally a commentator had no doubt about the audience in the Eldorado: it was simply the people of Paris, the "culotteurs de pipe," the "blouses blanches," the "très petits gens."¹⁷ Murray's *Handbook for Visitors to Paris* had the following to say of the cafés-concerts in its 1872 edition—it had a duty that year to advise its readers where not to go, in a city so recently reclaimed for tourism:

There are two or three in the Champs-Élysées, where the spectators sit in the open air and listen to singing and music by performers outrageously overdressed and seated in a brilliantly lighted little theatre. No charge is made for admission, but the spectators are expected to take some refreshments, usually of an inferior quality. The company is not the most select, and the performance tends to the immoral. Respectable people keep aloof.¹⁸

The trouble was that Murray's verdict—the one contained in his last four words—was plainly wrong. Even in 1872 respectable people came down in droves to the Ambassadeurs; it was their presence there that most exasperated Veuillot and the Goncourts. Writers on the whole agreed with Veuillot, as opposed to Murray: the cafés-concerts were characterized by a mingling of the classes, or at least an agreement to listen to the same songs. Of course, agreement did not necessarily mean mingling, and often the writers interested themselves in the manner by which a degree of aloofness—or at any rate separation—was maintained even here. It was effected primarily by money: drinks were dearer at the best-placed tables, the Eldorado had private boxes, and the grander establishments took to charging an entrance fee. (The Folies-Bergère cost two francs for admission in 1882, but drinks in other places could anyway run as high as three francs, and the Eldorado had long ago insisted that its customers "replenish their glasses" at regular intervals.¹⁹) One way or another the *gandins* and their ladies were kept from contact with the poor—though a crowd which presumably qualified as poor was often noted, standing outside the ring

of lights and tables on the Champs-Élysées, hanging on the singer's every word. It was even picturesque, that presence:

The most curious aspect of the picture for the *flâneur* who cares to observe is the audience outside, which gives itself the pleasure, free of charge, of seizing the new songs on the wing; they are Parisians, listening naïvely to the inept refrains they so much want to learn by heart. There is no fear of their interrupting the singers with one of those formidable dances which—following the present fashion—our young men about town like to organize with their lady companions. The naïve listener will have none of it; he grows angry; and the visitor from the provinces beats a retreat.²⁰

Those *gamins* in the darkness, climbing the plane trees for a better view, were supposedly close to the great performers' hearts. In her ghosted *Mémoires* of 1865, Thérèse claimed to be singing with them in view; they were her sounding board, her own people, the audience that understood her best.²¹

Nobody made believe, in other words, that tensions and distinctions ceased to exist in the café-concert, but many were struck (and alarmed) by the sheer fact of contact—the cramming together of classes in one place and the general "social dishevelment."²² "Three thousand people at least were stuffed inside"—this is Victor Fournel at the Alcazar in 1872—"bourgeois, small shopkeepers, a few workers in their Sunday best, entire families out for an outing, provincials, foreigners."²³ Given the right rhyme scheme, the list could be extended indefinitely:

*Le Soir de ce jour mémorable
Il se trouva, bien par hasard,
Dans la salle de l'Alcazar
Plus de monde que de coutume:
Des employés, des gens de plume,
Des étrangers de tous pays,
Des grandes dames, des laïcs,
Des ouvriers, des militaires,
Des princes, des apothicaires,
Des étudiants, des avocats,
Des médecins, des auvergnats. . . .*²⁴

And no doubt the emperor himself in mufti.

The listing and naming very soon became formulaic, but the formulas were not necessarily this straightforward. In particular, the roll call of popular and bourgeois types—so eighteenth-century in flavour—was often supplanted by a stress on the audience containing all kinds (specific kinds) of petits bourgeois. These people were regularly held to be the key to the

café-concert's success. They held the institution together, it was claimed, and set its peculiar tone:

Passionate habitués of those establishments in which melody is sold by the pint or the glass, they belong in general to the special caste of *gandins* who are dandies only by night.

Their days are spent at some job or other, bureaucratic or commercial, and their evenings given over entirely to the platonic love they have sworn for Mlle. Pétronille. . . .

For the most part they are worthy fellows, but they have made the mistake, having as they do only the few hours after dinner to take the air and exercise necessary for their health and intelligence, of going instead to brutalize themselves in an atmosphere of tobacco smoke, breathing lungfuls of mephitic air in a narrow room crammed with hundreds of people.—And all this to listen to what, I ask you!²⁵

The Goncourts' shorthand for such people, we have seen, was the dismissive job description "commis de magasin." The term and its cognates are never far away when writers depict the audience at the café-concert. It crops up in Maurice Talmeyr, for example, when he points to the white ties and official faces at the Ambassadeurs, and then notices

alongside them, rubbing shoulders with them, a crowd of little people, shopkeepers, shop assistants, and manservants; and beside them, inevitably, cranks and criminals and thugs. There can be seen here, without any barriers between them, each quite at home with the other, the woman for sale and the society lady, the ex-convict and the magistrate, masters and servants, honest men and thieves.²⁶

It is there in *Le Réveil* in 1886, when the crowd at the Alcazar is summed up as "a wholly Parisian public of toffs, prostitutes, petits bourgeois with their families, and shop assistants" (*de gommeux, de filles, de petits bourgeois en famille et de courtauds de boutiques*).²⁷

The most effective code name for these unfortunates—it appears repeatedly from the 1860s on—was the simple metonymy *calicot*. They were what they sold, the metonymy said, for all their wish to be something better; the word came into widespread use around the time that shopworkers were forming a union and going on strike,²⁸ and its nearest equivalents in English are "draper's assistant" or "counter-jumper"—the latter perhaps to be preferred for its period flavour and less than affectionate snobbery. ("I don't want to see my daughter spinning round a public assembly room in the arms of any counter-jumper," as the dictionary quotes Miss Braddon in 1880.) The *calicots* were supposed in turn to haunt the Alcazar and the Eldorado; if any part of Paris belonged to them it was this one:

There are persons who come each evening to deposit their tribute of flowers at the feet of the open-air prima donna. They can be seen at the tables next to



101. Georges Seurat, *Café concert*, c. 1887. Conté crayon.

the orchestra. These strictly optical devotees are generally *calicots* whose shops close early, notaries' clerks taking the day off, married men—who said they were going to the Club.²⁹

Their pleasures were infinite, unobtrusive, easily described:

*Ils passent tout leur temps à rire, à se pâmer,
Ces bourgeois, calicots, et gommeux très peu dignes
Qui hêlent la chanteuse et l'appellent par signes.
On est heureux, on boit, on chante, on peut fumer,
Et garder son chapeau pour ne pas s'enrhumer.*³⁰

Men with their hats on—a good sign of vulgarity, this—gulping mephitic air; torpid Parisians in search of shocks; children in képis, barons with scissors in their pockets; clerks, employees, little people, “*commis-voyageurs en bordée*.”³¹ The *café-concert*, wrote one Walter Francis Lonnergan in 1880, “is the Elysium of the emancipated *calicot*, or apprentice.”³²

The songs Thérésa sang, and the general run of the entertainments which the *calicot* enjoyed, were often described as “popular.”³³ The best discussion of this word in a comparable context is the one provided by T. S. Eliot in his 1923 obituary of Marie Lloyd:

Marie Lloyd was the greatest music-hall artist of her time in England: she was also the most popular. And popularity in her case was not merely evidence of her accomplishment; it was something more than success. It is evidence of the extent to which she represented and expressed that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest.

Among all of that small number of music-hall performers, whose names are familiar to what is called the lower class, Marie Lloyd had far the strongest hold on popular affection. The attitude of audiences toward Marie Lloyd was different from their attitude toward any other of their favorites of that day, and this difference represents the difference in her art. . . . And the difference is this: that whereas other comedians amuse their audiences as much and sometimes more than Marie Lloyd, no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique, and that made her audiences, even when they joined in the chorus, not so much hilarious as happy. . . .

Marie Lloyd's art will, I hope, be discussed by more competent critics of the theatre than I. My own chief point is that I consider her superiority over other performers to be in a way a moral superiority: it was her understanding of the people and sympathy with them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life, that raised her to the position she occupied at her death. And her death is itself a significant moment in English history. I have called her the expressive figure of

the lower classes. There is no such expressive figure for any other class. The middle classes have no such idol: the middle classes are morally corrupt. That is to say, their own life fails to find a Marie Lloyd to express it; nor have they any independent virtues which might give them as a conscious class any dignity.³⁴

This is not exactly the kind of argument, particularly in its closing stages, that one associates with T. S. Eliot, though the piece was never dropped from the canon of his prose. It is tempting to ask how far the obituary might apply to Thérésa, who was in many ways Marie Lloyd's Parisian counterpart. The question is difficult to answer at all conclusively, however, because so much of the evidence is lacking, and so much that remains is spuriously vivid. The words on the page of Thérésa's sheet music, for example, or the notes of the simple tunes she put to them, seem concrete enough, but they do not come near the heart of her undoubted power. It would be hard to argue, after all, that the lyrics of Marie Lloyd's “One of the Ruins That Cromwell Knocked Abaht a Bit,” or the melody of “My

102. Grob, photograph of Thérésa, 1864.



103. Claude Reutlinger, photograph of Thérésa, c. 1867.



A M. II. DE VILLEMESSANT.
LA FEMME À BARBE

Chantée par M^{lle} **THÉRÈSA** aux Concerts de l'Alcazar.



PAROLES DE M. F. FRÉBAULT. Musique de
PAUL BLAQUIÈRE
 PARIS, Arsène GOUBERT, éditeur à l'ALCAZAR LYRIQUE, 10, Faubourg Poissonnière.

Old Man Said Follow the Van," establish at once what Eliot was on about. It was Marie Lloyd's way with the songs that impressed her—her ability to invest them with detail and pathos, her sense of how they might be made to carry the inflections of genuine stoicism in the one instance, or comic self-knowledge in the other. The claims being made for Thérèse's art are of a similar kind, and will involve us in a certain amount of guesswork and a great deal of reading between the lines.

When we attend, for example, to the lyrics of one of Thérèse's most famous songs, "A bas les pattes s'il vous plaît," and single out the following verses from the rest—

—*Que j'aime à voir votre poitrine blanche
 Dont la blancheur est rivale du lait:*

104. Alfred Grévin, cover illustration for "La Femme à barbe," c. 1864. Lithograph.

non
 13 avr
 1864

UN GRAND CLERC DE NOTAIRE

Balançoire.



Paroles de
ARTHUR FLOQUET PR 250
 Musique de
PAUL BLAQUIÈRE

PARIS, ARSENE GOUBERT, éditeur à l'ALCAZAR LYRIQUE, rue du faubourg Poissonnière, 10.

105. Célestin Nanteuil, cover illustration for "Un Grand Clerc de notaire," c. 1864. Lithograph.

ALCAZAR LYRIQUE

*Son double flot qui se gonfle, s'épanche
Et cherche à fuir les remparts du corset. (bis)
—Cet air m'est connu revenez dimanche
Monsieur, à bas les pattes s'il vous plaît!*

*—De votre écuelle où votre soif s'étanche
Voyez la queue est brisée, on dirait.
Permettez moi de lui remettre un manche:
C'est mon métier je l'ai toujours bien fait. (bis)
—Cet air m'est connu revenez dimanche
Monsieur, à bas les pattes s'il vous plaît!³⁵*

—we are looking essentially for the ways such modest material might have been used, by the right performer, to do something as grand as “giving expression to the life of a class.” And we can sometimes intuit how it was done. There is a framework here in which the singer had room to introduce a wide range of plausible qualities: disabused tolerance, for example, sexual hardheadedness, lack of false modesty, simple high spirits, outright salaciousness. These were attitudes and attributes that supposedly belonged to the lower classes, or so the bourgeoisie believed. The performer’s job was to make them come alive in the course of the song.

Even Veuillot conceded that Thérésa had a fine, powerful voice. “She acts out her song,” he said, “as much as she sings it. She acts with her eyes, her arms, her shoulders, her haunches, unflinchingly.”³⁶ Her act was visual, in other words, and when we try to imagine what it looked like, there are images we can call to our aid. Photographs survive of Thérésa in her heyday, and though the poses are stiff and discreet, enough can be seen of her thickset body and emphatic face to make it clear how she must have exploited them on stage. There are sometimes vignettes on the covers of café-concert sheet music—like the one by Célestin Nanteuil for a song from the early 1860s called “Un Grand Clerc de notaire”—which seem to translate the atmosphere of the lyrics inside quite successfully. Fig leaves were never larger or less concealing than in Nanteuil’s lithograph, fathers more menacing, girls more dreamy and stolid, suitors less to be trusted. (The censor decided that the song itself had better be left out of the Alcazar’s repertoire.³⁷)

What Nanteuil seems to have wished to evoke as characteristic of his song was its raucous good humour, its sentimentality, and the sheer physical presence of its objects, bursting from flowerpots and elbows of suits. These were Thérésa’s qualities too; and they seem to have been what attracted Degas’s attention as he sat with his brother on the Champs-Élysées. Some time towards the middle of the 1870s he did several studies of Thérésa: one in oil and pastel called *Le Chanson du chien* (Plate XXII), another in

106. Edgar Degas, *La Chanteuse au gant*, c. 1878. Pastel and distemper.



pastel and distemper called *La Chanteuse au gant*, and a series of pastels-on-monotype which most probably show Thérésa’s lesser competitors. These pictures treat their common subject in very different ways. In one or two the singer is on her own, facing the audience, her features whitened by the glare of the footlights, her eyes hooded, her arm upraised to clinch a final note. In others the picture is crammed with significant detail, much of it familiar by now: top hats and *chapeaux de putains* in the foreground, dishevelled musicians, batteries of lights and foliage, fidgeting *poseuses*. But the heart of the matter is always Thérésa: the stab of her thumb back towards her body in between the lines of a chorus, the sweep of an arm to include the audience in a song, the piled-up hair, and the pugilist’s face. These were her ways of dominating the distractions all round her and making them part of her act. She floated on top of the lights and profiles



107. Edgar Degas, *Le Café-concert des Ambassadeurs*, c. 1875-77. Pastel on monotype.



108. Edgar Degas, *Cabaret*, c. 1875-77. Pastel on monotype.

and flowery hats, and carved out a space for herself against them. The picture which finds the best form for this relationship, I think, is *Le Chanson du chien*—in some ways the least elaborate and crowded of the series. In it Thérèse is partly detached from her surroundings, her face half flattened against a pillar and a globe of electric light; but the distance established is clearly provisional, and the singer in a sense is placed quite graphically in the middle of things, face to face with her unkempt audience, almost down on its level. The crush of spectators is filled in around and behind the performer as a kind of backdrop, and Thérèse's obliging, sardonic address to her public—her pretending to be a good dog and beg for her supper—therefore makes straightforward comic sense. She is wrapped up in her preposterous song, her eyes almost closed, her body erect and still, her hands weightless; but the song makes no sense without its answering, excluded context—the trees, providing such excellent cover for women doing business in the shadows; the scurrying men in brown suits and bowler hats; the small moustachioed faces looking patiently towards the star.

The relation between art and its circumstances in this picture is a special one, and I think that Degas was aware of its strangeness. If we compare the picture of Thérèse with one of its principal prototypes in Degas's art, *Les Musiciens à l'orchestre* from 1872 (Plate XXIII), it soon becomes clear that *Le Chanson du chien* was built by reversing almost all of its predecessor's main terms. In the earlier picture art is also being made against an active

backdrop, a surface of thickly painted forms—perhaps trees and foliage—and intense affective colour. A dancer at the right comes forward to the footlights and drops a curtsey; she addresses the audience a little naïvely and the viewers are allowed to see, looming formally in the picture's lower half, the machinery which supports the illusion on stage—the attentive musicians, their brisk haircuts and well-starched collars. The painter has chosen a moment in between illusions, so to speak, in which the audience lets off steam and the corps de ballet stands at ease. And certainly there are moments when art is so confident of its effects—so sure of its basic hold on an audience—that it can afford to dispense with continuity and accept applause. Degas often painted such interim states; they allowed him to focus on art as a kind of production, and they gave him space to show off his own artistic means—his dazzling, casual checkerwork of background and foreground, all half-glimpsed shapes and strange connections; the sharp touches of colour he used to establish a fingernail or differentiate a row of faces; and above all the bold, unmotivated marks he allowed himself on the distant scenery.

Thérèse, by contrast, had to be shown in the throes of her art and absorbed by it; but it had to be suggested at the same time that that fact no longer guaranteed the artist a hold on her audience. The audience was there all round her, some of them looking towards the stage and others intent on different business altogether. And in a sense the singer's art was nothing without this public's inattentiveness. For they *were* the illusion, those prostitutes and petits bourgeois in the shadows: they were the matter to be made over into Art, and their very distance from any such thing—but also their willingness to be enlisted by it—was part of the art form's special character. The illusion depended, as Gustave Geffroy was to put it later, on "the tacit complicity of the crowd, of these people so much resembling each other, this gathering of the bored."³⁸ Complicity in such a place could not be assumed or suspended at will, since boredom was always waiting in the wings; it had to be won by shock and interpellation, with the crowd being pulled in and out of the realm of art by the sheer force of the singer's will.³⁹

A great deal of the writing about Thérèse was concerned with that force and the audience's submission to it. Degas himself urged a correspondent to

go quick and hear Thérèse at the Alcazar. . . . She opens her great mouth and out comes the most grossly, delicately, wittily tender voice imaginable. And feeling, and taste, where could one find more? It is admirable.⁴⁰

And Jules Vallès, writing his history of the decade leading up to the Commune, was in no doubt about the politics of the case:

One day there came along a woman with virile voice and gestures, at a time when men all had their mouths tight shut and their arms amputated. She cried out: It is time we gave the people something in return for their money! And the people understood her and applauded, they made the fortune of the singer whose "Sapeur" sapped an empire by holding it up to laughter.⁴¹

Some of the clearest accounts of Thérèse are offered in retrospect or in the period of the singer's long decline, because in describing her failure the writers feel obliged to state explicitly what had previously made for success. This, for example, by an anonymous columnist in 1886:

Once upon a time I had plenty of admiration for Thérèse. It seemed as if, in that huge voice with its low-pitched notes, there vibrated the soul of the people. She stirred me and made me shiver; more than once she brought tears to my eyes. In the last two years I have gone to her comeback performances as if to visit an old friend, searching for that impression of the past which she cannot reawaken. Her fine diction, so strong and clear, is spoilt now by pretentiousness, pomp, and solemnity. No doubt she imagines she is now a social force, and that each word she drops will have repercussions in the world. She adopts without discernment songs which are inept, and tries to colour their empty words with a redundant sentimentality and a false picturesqueness. Instead of the brutal and sincere art which used to delight me, the singer displays a procedure which has grown uniform and a search for violent effects.⁴²

The last two or three sentences in particular are a good definition, in negative, of Thérèse's original strengths.

I think these descriptions are worth reproducing; they often include some not quite standard detail or judgement (it was a matter of dispute, for example, whether Thérèse undermined the empire or was its faithful servant), and they suggest the peculiar weight of significance that soon accrued to her every gesture. And yet of course the claims they make for her performances are essentially modest in comparison with Eliot's for Marie Lloyd. What was the nature of Thérèse's popularity? To what extent did she ever "represent or express that part of the French nation which had perhaps the greatest vitality and interest"? Was she a social force or not? No doubt answers are offered to these questions by Veuillot and Vallès, but the ones they give are too obviously the product of vague enthusiasm or contumely; they lack detail, they do not contain any very impressive discussion of particular cases.

The answer I shall offer is bound to be tentative and ought to be a bit sceptical. By 1865 Thérèse's actual effects were hard to distinguish from the machinery of stardom that surrounded her. She was packaged and cosseted, censored and ghosted, admired by Auber and Rossini, invited to sing for the empress at the Palais des Tuileries.⁴³ She was fast becoming a bore, in short, in the familiar modern manner; and the process provoked



109. Hippolyte Mailly, *Darcier et Thérèse*. Wood engraving in *Le Hanne-ton*, 1867.

an answering agnosticism even at the time. *Le Hanne-ton*, for example, had a cover in 1867 which showed the singer Darcier—the voice of 1848, the favourite of those who still pined for a previous, radical age of popular song—putting a firm hand over Thérèse's outsize mouth. And the socialist paper *La Rive Gauche* (it was published in Brussels to avoid imperial censorship) had this to say on the subject of Thérèse in 1865:

The other day she was the subject of a brawl on the Champs-Élysées between

the police and a crowd of idlers and dandies who had come to hear her sing. It appears that several officers were knocked about and had to draw their swords, but no blood was spilled.

What a great people, which knows how to fight for a brasserie singer but can do nothing to win back its liberty!⁴⁴

I for one find it easy to sympathize with *La Rive Gauche* and *Le Hanne-ton*; but all the same the lines they draw, in their exasperation, are a little too clear-cut. Had not Darcier, after all, possessed his quota of haut-bourgeois admirers? Did not Berlioz write a *feuilleton* in his praise?⁴⁵ And Darcier had written some of Thérèse's first songs. Could not a defender of the Alcazar have argued that the violence on the Champs-Élysées was better—from *La Rive Gauche's* point of view—than no violence at all? For the spectacle of revolution does occasionally lead to revolution proper, and the word "revolutionary" was applied to Thérèse by all kinds of witnesses, many of them not having Vallès's axe to grind. The unctuous Gaston Jollivet, for example, penning his *Souvenirs de la vie de plaisir sous le Second Empire*, produced this memory of the singer in her heyday:

She launched her revolutionary challenge from the depths of her magnificent contralto, to the bosses and exploiters of the poor:

*Nous sommes ici trois cent femelles,
Et la danse (bis) va commencer.*⁴⁶

This is no doubt trivial testimony, but its very lack of seriousness lends it a kind of weight. People believed that Thérèse posed some sort of threat to the propertied order, and certainly the empire appeared to agree with them. It policed her every line and phrase, and its officers made no secret of the fact that they considered the café-concert a public nuisance. Things had evidently gone too far for the new institution to be suppressed outright, but the censor could dream of an Alcazar where torpor was largely untroubled and the bored stayed bored. He drafted memos on how to achieve that desirable state, and he realized it would be a matter of very fine tuning.⁴⁷ Everything depended on his success in permitting a popular edge to the entertainment without having that quality be too emphatic or precise.

The kind of popularity that appealed to the censor, we might guess, is the one exemplified by Paulus's ballad "Le Baptême du petit ébéniste"—the same the cartoonists used in 1865 as mock-heroic point of reference for *Olympia*. In it a proud artisan father is overheard improvising a toast to his newborn son. He gathers about him his audience of carpenters and cabinetmakers, pays preliminary homage to the father of popular song, Pierre-Jean de Béranger, and launches into his favourite themes—the joys of matrimony and the wrongs once done to the great Napoleon:

I: *Là-bas, là-bas, tout au bout de la terre
Là-bas, bien loin tout près du Luxembourg,
Fut un vieillard, chansonnier populaire*
[In a low voice to his neighbour] Béranger
O! celui-là, respectons-le toujours.

Refrain: *Que j'aime à voir
autour de cette table
Des scieurs de long,
des Ebénistes,
Des Entrepreneurs de bâtisses*
Que c'est comme un bouquet de fleurs [in chorus]

II: [addressing the baby]
*Petit Léon, dans le sein de ta mère
Tu n'as jamais connu l'adversité:
Tu n'as pas vu le drapeau de tes pères
Souillé de boue, couvert d'iniquité. . .*

Refrain: *Que j'aime à voir, etc.*

III: *Mais, sans vouloir parler de politique,
Dessus l'ancien versons tousses des pleurs;
L'ennemi l'a plongé dedans une île
Ous' qu'il est mort! ce grand législateur. . .*

Refrain: *Que j'aime à voir, etc.*

V: *Laissons, laissons les débauchés vulgaires
Sercher l'amour dedans la volupté,
Le vrai amour, ah! c'est celui d'un père,
Qui met-z au jour un petit nouveau-né.*

Refrain: *Que j'aime à voir, etc.*

VI: *Pourquoi donc pas nous occuper d'la mère
Qu'à l'heur' qu'il est z-est encore alité,
Elle a bien plus souffrer-re que le père
Qui, lui, a u tout' la félicité.*

Refrain: *Que j'aime à voir, etc.⁴⁸*

And on it goes. Moral, naïve, sentimental, patriotic . . . a dream world of hard work and high emotion.

By "popular" in such a case was meant a certain range of reference, a style of delivery, and a claim—mostly implicit, but flaunted on the right occasion—to be addressing one kind of audience and excluding several others (those "débauchés vulgaires," for instance). The songs that Thérésa and Paulus sang were supposed to draw on the concerns and experiences

of the Parisian working class, a fact they signified most effectively by their choice of language and by the way of singing Thérésa made famous: her use of the body to carry a phrase, her fierce low notes, her sudden shifts from stuttering patter to full vibrato, her manner of making the audience part of the song—making them join in, literally or figuratively, with a wave of her hand or an interpolated line of argot.

The café-concert *produced* the popular, and did so in a seemingly incongruous setting. The language of laundresses and *ébénistes* issued from the throats of overdressed contraltos surrounded by mouldings, mirrors, and chandeliers. The songs themselves were sometimes cynical about the whole performance:

*Puis qu'il le faut, et pour vous plaire,
Je parle argot comme un chiffonnier.
J'ai pris la voix d'une écaillère,
Et les allures d'un palefrenier;
Je lev' la jamb' mieux que Clodoche
J'chant' pas si just' qu' la Malibron.
J'suis distingué tout comme Gavroche. . .
Eh! que qu'ça me fait! J'gagne cent mill'francs.⁴⁹*

It may not seem to us a very powerful piece of metalanguage, this, but it was too much for the censor: in 1867 he refused permission for the song, "L'Etoile des concerts," to be performed at the Eldorado.

Perhaps the censor was right to be nervous. For the circuitry of popular art in capitalist society does appear to be delicate, and therefore to stand in need of fairly constant overhaul if it is not to produce undesirable effects. The situation in the Eldorado is typical of many that followed in the later heyday of the industry—from the vogue for flamenco in the 1890s to the first years of rock 'n' roll. On the face of things, it seems that those who control the means of symbolic production in these societies repeatedly have reason to exploit the values and images of the working class and allow them some form of representation. And this cannot simply be a matter of careful, sardonic hegemony over the masses—the provision of bread and circuses—since the bourgeoisie itself is an avid consumer of the representations in question. "That is to say, their own life fails to find a Marie Lloyd to express it; nor have they any independent virtues which might give them as a conscious class any dignity." To put Eliot's verdict in a more limited form: the middle class in the later nineteenth century, and even the early years of the twentieth, had not yet invented an *imagery* of its own fate, though in due course it would do so with deadly effectiveness: the world would be filled with soap operas, situation comedies, and other small dramas involving the magic power of commodities. But for the time

being it was obliged to feed on the values and idioms of those classes it wished to dominate; and doing so involved it in making the idioms part of a further system, in which the popular was expropriated from those who produced it—made over into a separate realm of images which were given back, duly refurbished, to the “people” thus safely defined.

From the start this process was far from trouble-free. The material called popular had to be continually renewed and recast, lest its working-class users find ways of giving it back its original consistency—making it assume, for example, the form called proletarian. In the 1860s the signs of that struggle for possession of the popular were particularly clear in the cafés-concerts. The government regarded them as dangerous, unruly places whose repertoire was prone to two main deviations—politics, which the censor believed he had under control, and obscenity, which he knew he did not.

The extraction of politics from popular song had preoccupied the empire all through the previous decade. Its scribes had drawn up their registers of forbidden ballads year by year: titles like “L’Aumône du pauvre” and “Du Pain pour tous” vying with the new “Crédo républicain,” the various “Chants du prolétaire, des laboureurs, du travailleur,” the cries for “Dieu sur terre” and “Christ au peuple,” the stories of “Misère en Irlande.”⁵⁰ It was excellent to see the lists get shorter and the reports of provincial recrudescence less frequent, but the censor in the 1860s could not rest easy. His spies reeled from the concert halls, their notebooks filled with disarranged clothing, broken cornets-à-pistons,⁵¹ bad smells, and requests not to “fourrer vot-nez là-dedans.” “Do you want to know the titles of a few of the songs which are sung in our cafés-concerts?” asked Marc-Constantin in 1872. “Just listen and judge for yourself:

- Où qu’il est que je lui retire ma casquette.
- Je renfonce mon chapeau.
- J’vous conseille pas d’fourrer vot-nez là-dedans.
- Ça presse.—Balayez-moi ça.
- Soufflez dessus.—Quel barbottage!
- Faut avaler ça, Verpillon.
- Ote donc tes pieds d’là, ça sent la trichine.
- J’ai tapé dans le tas!
- Asseyez-vous dessus!
- Je t’enlève le ballon, etc., etc.”⁵²

Or Victor Fournel, insatiable as ever, describing the Café-Concert de la Pègre:

Nothing in particular to be said about the singers—apart from the fact that they had white gloves and black suits, the poor things—the public likes that—but what suits and what gloves they were!

I memorized the titles of the principal songs:

“*Je n’comprends pas ça*”—“*Je suis tout chose*”—“*Complet partout*”—“*La Vénus au battoir*”—“*Comment qu’ça s’fait?*”—“*La Calotte de velours*”—“*Je n’suis pas préparé.*”

In that last song, as in several others, the tenor did not fail to interpolate a patriotic couplet of monstrous ineptitude [the year is 1872], delivered with ridiculous emphasis and received with thunderous applause. This way of coupling patriotism and obscenity struck me as the most ignoble profanation of them all. For does it need saying that all the songs whose titles I have just transcribed are nothing but a tissue of filthy allusions and *doubles-entendres*, thoroughly worthy of such a public!⁵³

It is hard to decide which is the more tedious, the titles themselves or the journalists’ high moral tone.

One of the things these writers wish to insinuate is in fact confirmed by the other evidence we have: there seems to have been precious little wit or variety to the café-concert’s depiction of sex. Yet however monotonous and niggling these songs may have been, even in Thérésa’s hands, they remained a firm favourite with the audience at the Alcazar.⁵⁴ And the question remains, what could they possibly have *represented* to the *blouses blanches* and *calicots* who gathered there? The answer derives from the general logic of popular art which I outlined previously: like all the other imaginary attributes of working-class life, obscenity was partly a provided imagery and partly an insubordinate one. No doubt the songs on Marc-Constantin’s list did reproduce the relations of the sexes in frozen, preposterous form. No doubt their humour was false-genteel or lavatorial: their subject was often apparently sex disallowed and uncontrollable, but they regularly ended by agreeing with the censor that there did not need to be a language to deal with such things. They were best confined to the margins of discourse, matters one didn’t stick one’s nose into, needs about which the audience was always pretending to be ignorant (*comment*, finally, *que ça se fait?*) but happily knew what there was to know before the singer started.

If this had been all there was to obscenity, the censor need not have worried so much about its social consequences. And in a sense he did not worry; he was almost convinced that obscenity was trivial, a sign of the mental and somatic inferiority by which the working class confirmed its station in life. But what an unfortunate sign it was! It could not be good for a class to *revel* in its own inferiority as the crowd at La Pègre seemed to do; it could not be safe to put such stress on the claims of pleasure and have the body represented each night as a mad categorical imperative—all innocence and cynicism, all itches and flushes and going-too-far. And

110. Edgar Degas, *Le Chanson des ciseaux*, c. 1877–78. Monotype.



did not the stripped-down impersonality of the formulas employed seem to lead the singer on, too often for the censor's liking, towards genuinely dangerous ground? The sign of that last escalation—it is there often enough in the evidence which survives—is violence of an unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated kind; one in which words have become means to eviscerate and abuse, to smear shit on the audience, to have it experience again the nameless fears of childhood. Of course that violence too has its simple phallic sources and sometimes reveals them. There is a chanteuse in a Degas monotype, her mouth wide open and a pair of formidable scissors in her hand, who makes that side of the business clear. Yet once violence takes hold of a set of representations in this way, it is no longer just a sexual matter; or, rather, it is the point at which sexuality is tied back to

other kinds of terror or denial: it is the mode most often and plausibly used to insist that all repressions are the same—sexual, political, religious, economic. That may in itself be an equivalence too easily made, but it is one which has certainly had political, religious, and economic effects.

The censor appears to have feared that it might do so again. Of course his files are not to be trusted if we are trying to arrive at the real extent of the problem, for what were his spies paid for if not to report that the minister's wishes were being flouted each night, that singers were putting back forbidden verses and provoking a glee that was clearly unsafe?⁵⁵ Yet other sources tell roughly the same story. Censorship was a brake on custom: if the proprietor of a café-concert wanted to keep a hold on his audience—an audience whose values and vocabulary were changing fast all through the 1860s—he simply could not afford to obey the ministry's regulations. No doubt the censor was resourceful: he multiplied his army of spies and his books of prohibited gestures. But the sheer pressure of the market defeated him; year after year he wrote his dispirited, hectoring reports to the minister, pointing out the insufficiency of the empire's police: how could it be that the Alcazar was entitled to publish a songbook in 1869 which contained all the words the censor had crossed out? Would it not help if the Paris authorities really investigated a man's moral character before granting him a licence to put a stage at the back of his bar? Might I be permitted respectfully to suggest . . . ? The minister seemed to have more important things on his mind.

The informer went into the smoke-filled café and found the audience singing

a resolutely antisocialist ditty of which I retained the following four lines:

*Puisque tous les hommes sont frères,
J'demand que les ceuss qu'a pas l'sou
Recoiv't des rentes viagères
De ceuss qui couch't dans l'acajou.*

The *blouses blanches* themselves seemed to laugh till their buttons popped, and I got up to leave with an agreeable taste in my mouth.⁵⁶

Of course this is a journalist speaking, not a spy: a spy would not have risked quite this degree of sarcasm in his nightly report, and he would have made it clear that he stayed till the bitter end. Yet Vallès and Veuillot, Degas and Fournel, Nanteuil and Agent X from the Faubourg du Temple have all clearly been listening to the same songs; and they do not essentially disagree with one another about what they meant. The café-concert was the home of disorder: its audience lived for the moment when the band struck up "La Canaille" and the singer invited them to join in the chorus

of "J'en suis! J'en suis!"⁵⁷ A rabble they were, and Thérésa thrived on her ability to give form to the fact.

The reader may reasonably be wondering by now what has happened to the little clerks and respectable *commis de magasins*. It is true that journalists and spies are prone to take for granted that an audience laughing at songs like these must be basically working-class. But I seem to have followed them in assuming that when the subject is disorder, the class that concerns us—concerns the censor—is largely composed of labouring men; and then to have felt free to discard the innuendo, as the journalist often does, when it suited my purpose to stress how low the middle class had come in its entertainments.

Well, yes. There is a kind of shifting going on in my account, and in those of the commentators I am using, but it seems to me appropriate to the odd thing we are concerned with, and in any case unavoidable. It is a shifting induced by the café-concert itself, a set of uncertainties we might almost describe as the Eldorado's best production. To explain what I mean by that verdict I shall first set down again, in summary form, what I take to be the essence of the new entertainment, and then attempt to see it broadly as playing a part in the new relations between the classes. (The part it played was not altogether negligible: that will be my main point.)

Writers who bothered with the café-concert at all tended to agree that its appeal had to do with its popular character. The epithet was applied to the performance on stage but also to the audience—in particular, to the way the audience was included in the spectacle and accepted the identities provided for it there. The café-concert *produced* the popular, which is to say that it put on class as an entertainment. And part of its doing so, the critics thought, was that the customer should entertain himself with the same material, putting on class for the evening, playing at being a baron or a navvy. (The idea that there were places or persons where class was *inessential* seems to have been a great comfort in this society. We have seen it was one of the *courtisane's* tasks to provide a similar reassurance.) There were unmistakably two main types of travesty going on: first, the pretence of the bourgeois to be working-class; but second, mixed in with that general slumming, and making the mixture all the more weird, the pretence of a certain kind of worker to be bourgeois, or something quite like it—the *calicot* sitting at the table next to the *homme d'affaires*, taking care not to spill beer on his best suit or miss the words of Thérésa's latest song.

Calicot, I have said already, was a code word for a whole class of people secreted by capital at a particular stage: the new army of clerks, accoun-

tants, cashiers, brokers, petty bureaucrats, insurance agents, bank tellers, salesmen, and commercial travellers; to be joined before long by stenographers, telegraphists, primary-school teachers, and advertising men—the class which a later historian dubbed, perhaps not even ironically, "low white collar."⁵⁸ There was a "blank in the life of the lodger"—the phrase is from the prospectus of a Methodist social club in the 1890s⁵⁹—and an industry developed to try to fill it. It began with the *feuilleton*, the chromolithograph, and the democratization of sport, and soon proceeded to a tropical diversity of forms: drugstores, news agents and tobacconists, football, museums, movies, cheap romantic fiction, lantern-slide lectures on popular science, records, bicycles, the funny pages, condensed books, sweepstakes, swimming pools, *Action Française*.

It has sometimes been argued that a connection exists between this industry of leisure and the emergence—or at least the self-consciousness—of the "nouvelles couches sociales."⁶⁰ I agree with the argument and would like to put it in stronger form: it seems to me that the two main histories dealt with in this book, the commercialization of leisure and the beginnings of suburbia, are both forms—perhaps pre-eminent ones—in which the "nouvelles couches sociales" were constructed as an entity apart from the proletariat. To phrase things more strictly: the rise of commercialized entertainments in Paris, catering to a mass public and dependent on large injections of capital, cannot be understood apart from the process described in chapter one—the end of the old patterns of urban neighbourhood and the birth of a city organized round separate unities of work, residence, and distraction.

In a sense there was never much mystery to that connection: observers in the 1860s saw quite well that Haussmann's city was nothing if not a pattern of residence plus a pattern of entertainments. But the less obvious thing to be said is this: both of these patterns were forms of class formation and class control. They were what constituted the new working class in white collars, but *as* a form of bourgeoisie—one that was often portrayed as subordinate and comic, but was nonetheless allowed its peculiar access to middle-class identity, and above all confirmed in its difference from the wider proletariat.

Of course, that difference was never cut and dried, and there exists in all contemporary descriptions of the class—whether seen singing in the Alcazar or as part of a crowd cheering General Boulanger—a speculative, anxious undertone, as if the writers were wondering how long the illusion could last. Often these people seemed too bourgeois to be true. They laid claim to a rigid and primitive version of class consciousness, in which the stress on what separated them from the workers struck the real bourgeoisie

as embarrassing; their probity was awful, their gentility insufferable, their snobbery outright comic: they made it too clear what being middle-class amounted to. And at the same time they were *unaccountable* in many ways, unfixed and inauthentic creatures, without so much as songs of their own or their own way of dressing, given to dangerous enthusiasms (particularly political ones) and ideas above or below their station—populism on the one hand and rank social-climbing on the other.

The very word “populism” is a late-nineteenth-century coinage, and it has built into it from the start the suggestion that producing the popular is a risky business. What begins as a process of control and containment is too often liable to end in mob rule. That is the case because the “popular” is not simply a commodity made from dead, obedient materials—here a phrase, there a value—waiting to be worked over and decently represented. It is something done with actual violence to resistant forms of life; and those forms survive in Thérésa’s chorus and the audience she appeals to; they are always capable of recapturing the apparatus of production. In producing the popular, bourgeois society produces its opposite; and for the most part it manages to make that opposite into an image—one withdrawn or provided at opportune moments. Yet the image itself—the main sense of what is pictured—is inimical to everything the bourgeoisie most believes in, and its effects cannot be calculated as accurately as the class would wish. There is always a chance that a line or phrase will be used by the singer to enforce fleetingly the kind of attention—the kind of collective vehemence—that Veullot and the censor fear.⁶¹

It is above all *collectivity* that the popular exists to prevent, and doing so means treading a dangerous line. If the entertainment does not provide a passable facsimile of that other mode of appropriating the world, it will fail altogether to engage its audience; but if it falls short of framing and arresting that facsimile—if it fails to make it a spectacle—then the other mode may take over the song and put it to unpredictable uses. The best effects of popular art are therefore won *against* the standardized melodies, the footling lyrics, the cynical production values, the farrago of violence and souped-up emotion. Those who possess the means of symbolic production in our societies have become expert in outflanking any strategy which seeks to obtain such effects consistently; but they cannot control the detail of performance, and cannot afford to exorcise the ghost of totality once and for all from the popular machine.

Yet none of this exactly addresses the problem we were supposed to be dealing with; in some ways, it seems to make matters worse. For if this

is the nature of popular entertainment—or even the characteristic risk associated with it—then why did it appeal so much to an audience of clerks and shop assistants? How did it fit with their striving to be middle-class? These people were widely believed to be extracting themselves from collectivity and becoming individuals; they wished to be respectable, opinionated and well dressed. Was their going to the Alcazar part of that determination or not?

These questions can only be answered, I think, by looking again at the *calicot*’s place in the late-nineteenth-century class system. It was not, to repeat, that he *had* no place, or even an accidental or peripheral one. As an economic fact he was here to stay, and as a political one he was used to having speeches aimed in his direction. But he found it was possible to be declared an economic and political fact by all and sundry, and still be allotted no stable place in the established system of social identities; and it was this that led to his peculiar, excessive insistence on class—on class as a matter of forms and proprieties. The *calicot* laid claim to membership in the bourgeoisie, but the way that he did so, we have seen, most often embarrassed or amused that class’s spokesmen. And yet it could not be the case, he said, that he belonged anywhere else in the social order, especially not to the proletariat. His “way of life” prevented that; his tastes, beliefs, and aspirations; his cultural skills. He posited his class position—opened a distance between himself and his inferiors—in terms of preferred representations, in terms of sheer style.

That he was obliged to do so at all is evidence of some kind of *unintelligibility* in his relation to the means of production; and that so much of his stress was put on the difference between himself and those below him suggests that the difference was small. His presence in the Alcazar thus bears on the general dilemma of the “nouvelles couches sociales”: it seems that if class identity has to be claimed largely at the level of cultural choices, then the claimants are bound to immerse themselves in those forms and values they wish not to be their own. It is as if the clerks and shop assistants are required to admit their cultural and material links to the working class even as they deny them: they define themselves by their difference from the popular *but also their possession of it*, their inwardness with its every turn of phrase. They are the connoisseurs of popular culture, its experts, its aestheticians; but that expertise is a way of establishing imaginary distance and control. It is the power of the petite bourgeoisie over the proletariat.

The argument so far can now be recapitulated:

The various forms of commercialized leisure which bulked so large in the late-nineteenth-century city were instruments of class formation, and

the class so constructed was the *petite bourgeoisie*. It was defined primarily by its relation to the working class, and by that relation being given spectacular form. Popular culture was produced for an audience of *petit-bourgeois* consumers; a fiction of working-class ways of being was put in place alongside a parody of middle-class style, the one thus being granted imaginary dominion over the other.

Both these fictions were unstable, and realized to be so: the popular was prone to divulge too much of the actual form of working-class collectivity, and the *calicot* to seem merely absurd. (If this happened too often, it was feared he might discover in the popular the grounds of his belonging after all to the proletariat; the appeal of Thérèse was therefore not safe. Remember that the 1860s was the time when Varlin predicted an end to the state of affairs "which up to now had made workers and shop assistants two different classes."⁶²)

The café-concert mitigated these instabilities by making a spectacle of them. It *generalized* the uncertainty of class, and had everyone's be a question of style. It may well have been that this nightly pretence and play-acting only served to confirm class identities for those who possessed them at all securely; but it was not clear whose class *was* secure in the late nineteenth century, at least in cultural terms. For a part of the public, at any rate, it seems most likely that the masquerade had a different effect: it confirmed their sense of class as pure contingency, a matter of endless shifting and exchange; for society was pictured in the café-concert as a series of petty transfiguration scenes, in which everyone suffered the popular sea-change, the "real" bourgeois as much as the false.

It is hard to say anything precise about the psychology deriving from this sort of night out. Observers agreed about the guardedness and anonymity of the crowd in the Alcazar, their troubled torpor, their air of vacancy, the infinite care they took with appearances, their seeming wish to give nothing away.⁶³ These are partly formulas of condescension, but they should not simply be dismissed on that ground. The sneering has something as its object—some noticeable new way of presenting the self in public.

This is the place to quote the most famous description of analogous states of mind, that given by Georg Simmel in his 1903 essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." It is a theoretical sketch, of course, quite lofty and general in a late-nineteenth-century way, and clearly it describes a limiting case of big-city anomie. Nonetheless, its imagery does seem to apply without too much forcing to the material presented so far:

There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook. . . .

The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions

between things. Not in the sense that they are not perceived, as in the case of mental dullness, but rather that the meaning and the value of the distinctions between things, and therewith of the things themselves, are experienced as meaningless. They appear to the blasé person in a homogeneous, flat and grey colour with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another. This psychic mood is the correct subjective reflection of a complete money economy to the extent that money takes the place of all the manifoldness of things and expresses all qualitative distinctions between them in the distinction of "how much". To the extent that money, with its colourlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values it becomes the frightful leveller—it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair. They all float with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money. They all rest on the same level and are distinguished only by their amounts. . . . The nerves reveal their final possibility of adjusting themselves to the content and the form of metropolitan life by renouncing the response to them.⁶⁴

In 1882 Manet sent two works to the salon, one a picture of a young Parisian woman called *Jeanne* and the other, larger and more elaborately finished, of *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*⁶⁵ (Plate XXIV). The latter had been described to the readers of *Le Réveil* one month before the salon opened, by Paul Alexis, a pupil of Zola:

Standing at her counter, a beautiful girl, truly alive, truly modern, truly "Folies-Bergère" in the expression on her made-up face, plies her small trade. She is seen again from the back, in the glass behind the counter—a glass which reproduces the whole room, with its candelabra, the busy, teeming crowd, and far away in the background a redness which is the red velvet of the boxes; a glass in the corner of which is also seen reflected the whiskered face of a client, an ardent admirer perhaps, who is in intimate conversation with the pretty salesgirl. Finally, in the foreground, on the counter, glitter all sorts of amusing and varied wares: liqueur decanters, bottles of champagne, mandarin oranges in a crystal bowl, flowers in a vase, etc., the whole thing rendered as Manet knows how to render still lifes.

Such will be, for me, the great attraction of the salon, the most exactly modern and the most typical of the works on show. Perhaps, and I do not believe my prediction will turn out to be wrong, Manet will even have a success with the public—as big a one as he had with *Le Bon Bock*.⁶⁶

Alexis's preview set out the main terms in which *Un Bar* would be described by other critics a month or so later, but his prediction did not quite come true. It was only six months since a scandal had been whipped up in the press over Manet's being given the Legion of Honour through the good

offices of his friend Antonin Proust, and in any case the critics had not forgotten or forgiven the outlandish portrait of Pertuiset "assassinating his bedside rug in the desert"⁶⁷ which Manet had shown in the Salon of 1881. They were looking forward to further eccentricities, and *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère* did not fail to provide them. Here is Jules Comte's description, in *L'Illustration*:

A young woman standing at the counter of a bar; in front of her the various decanters and bottles awaiting the customer; behind, a mirror in which the room is reflected, and in the foreground the figure of a habitu  who is seen chatting with the same woman viewed from the back; that is the subject, which we shall take as it is offered, without discussion. But what strikes us first of all is that this famous mirror, indispensable to an understanding of all these reflections and perspectives, does not exist: did Monsieur Manet not know how to do it, or did he find an *impression* of it to be enough? We shall refrain from answering this question; but let us simply note this fact, that all of the picture takes place in a mirror, and there is no mirror. As to the incorrectness of the drawing, as to the absolute inadequacy of the form of the woman, who is, after all, the only person shown, as to the lack of correspondence between the reflected objects and their images, we shall not insist on these things: they are lacunae which are common to these Impressionist gentlemen, who have excellent reasons for treating drawing, modelling, and perspective with disdain. At least, we had always heard that Manet's great merit was to show men and things in their true colours, in the atmosphere which surrounds them; but look how this fine principle is applied here: the bar and the room are lit by two globes of electric light, that white, blinding light we all know; but Monsieur Manet has probably chosen a moment when the lamps were not working properly, for never have we seen light less dazzling; the two globes of polished glass have the look of lanterns glimpsed through a winter's fog.⁶⁸

Jules Comte's criticisms were often repeated in 1882. The woman in Manet's picture was held to be badly drawn and insubstantial; the light was "indecisive,"⁶⁹ "bluish and murky";⁷⁰ the glass and reflection were hopelessly botched. Sometimes the critics were almost kind to this last imperfection, or at least untroubled by it—it was something in the picture that they could test out verbally and declare to be simply, factually *wrong*. "Manet's *Bar* almost makes one want to go there, one of these evenings, in order to understand the truth of the room's reflection in the mirror on the spot, in front of nature."⁷¹ "The effect of the mirror difficult to understand; the woman's head rather agreeable."⁷² "I agree that the effect of the reflection in the glass is not understandable at first sight. But what law in art decrees that effects should be seized and perceived straightaway? I spent three days in Amsterdam without seeing a thing in the *Night Watch*. You can surely grant Manet three minutes."⁷³

EDOUARD MANET.



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UNE MARCHANDE DE CONSOLATION AUX FOLIES-BERGÈRE. — (Son dos se reflète dans une glace; mais, sans doute par suite d'une distraction du peintre, un monsieur avec lequel elle cause et dont on voit l'image dans la glace, n'existe pas dans le tableau. — Nous croyons devoir réparer cette omission.)

III. Stop, Edouard Manet, *Une Marchande de consolation aux Folies-Bergère*. Wood engraving in *Le Journal Amusant*, 27 May 1882.

The mirror on its own did not seem to provoke any great uncertainty in Manet's first public: it was either straightforwardly a failure or sketched in boldly enough for the job it had to do.⁷⁴ The general critical tone was set by the cartoonist Stop in *Le Journal Amusant*, who pretended to offer Manet a helping hand with a minor problem. His caption read:

UNE MARCHANDE DE CONSOLATION AUX FOLIES-BERGÈRE.—(Her back is reflected in a mirror; but, no doubt because the painter was distracted, a gentleman with whom she is chatting and whose image one sees in the glass, does not exist in the picture itself.—We thought we should repair the omission.)⁷⁵

Not all the writing in 1882 was as genial as this, or as much in agreement about what could be seen and how best it could be interpreted. In particular the critics were strikingly lacking in unanimity when it came to saying

something about the pose and expression of the barmaid. Was she beautiful and animated, as Paul Alexis had asserted in passing, or pasty, listless, and inert? And what was it she was selling, after all? Giving answers to either of these questions did not produce any great turbulence in the critics' discourse—the barmaid was not Olympia—but the answers themselves make a strange, contradictory set.

The *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* is interesting and ingenious. The salesgirl is seen head-on, and there can be seen behind her, in the mirror she leans her back against, the whole room with its spectators, the crush and movement on the balconies, the blinding lights. The woman is firmly established, with a natural movement which is a little brutal. The foreground is taken up by still lifes, magisterially handled.⁷⁶

Thus Charles Flor in *Le National de 1869*. Or alternatively this, from Caroline de Beaulieu:

... the chief [of the Impressionist school] has deigned to take up his pencil and draw the accessories of the *Bar aux Folies-Bergères* [sic]; and it is true that Monsieur Manet has painted with a remarkable sureness and truth of tone a number of decanters, arranged very well, and a bowl of mandarin oranges done very effectively; the salesgirl is so surprised at this fact that she is paralyzed in place by it. Next year Monsieur Manet's figures will no doubt possess movement and grace. . . .⁷⁷

Compare the terms of Emile Bergerat's enthusiasm—

Here is something seen, sincere, new, something which shakes us out of our habits! Furthermore, the fine girl in the blue-black dress who stands at the counter is excellently drawn, modelled with a fine sense of local tone, frank in colouring, natural in pose and altogether full of character.⁷⁸

—with those of Maurice Du Seigneur:

I shall not deny that Monsieur Manet has the truth of the matter; the young woman at the counter, with her hair combed down over her forehead, her bored look, the bottles of champagne, the flasks of multicoloured liqueurs, the pile of oranges, the bundles of barley sugar [sic], they are done from life. . . .⁷⁹

Or Le Senne's defence in *Le Télégraphe*—

The salesgirl, her tight-fitting dress which shows off an anatomy which is mediocre and all the more Parisian for that, her low hairdo, the brightness of her gaze, the tension of her arms, all that is profoundly observed and happily rendered.⁸⁰

—with Henri Houssaye's assault in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*:

It seems that this picture represents a *bar* at the Folies-Bergère; that this gaudy blue dress, surmounted by a cardboard head like those one used to see in milliners' shopwindows, represents a woman; that this mannequin of uncertain form whose face is slashed in with three brushstrokes represents a man; and that this stump

which holds a cane represents a hand. It seems also that those vacillating shadows which stir in the background, in front of the new façade of the Opéra, with balloons floating above them, represent, reflected in a mirror, the public of the Folies-Bergère, the stage on which gymnasts are performing, and the globes of electric light. . . . In all good faith, are we supposed to admire the flat and plastered face of the *bar-girl*, her body without modelling, her offensive colour? Should we admit that the painter has succeeded, by means of a little white dust spread over the young woman's back, in giving the illusion of a scene reflected in a mirror? Is this picture true? No. Is it beautiful? No. Is it attractive? No. But what is it, then?⁸¹

It is not just that these descriptions disagree with one another, but that each is produced so casually, as if the meanings and interpretations involved were self-evident. And one can understand the critics' unconscious way of thinking here: it is as if they assume that an image which seems in many ways so plain and straightforward in its arrangement, lining up its objects and persons so that they can be taken in completely at a glance, must also provide an equally uncomplicated set of expressions and exchanges. The critics begin with a visual reading and move quite confidently to an affective one; but that the cues for the latter are fragmentary or opaque is suggested at once by the way both "tête de carton," say, and "toute pleine de caractère" are offered as obvious verdicts on the same face.

The business of interpretation was greatly helped in 1882—or so the writers seemed to believe—by the viewers all knowing, as men of the world, what the woman was up to at her bar in the Folies-Bergère. "It is not possible to be more of a *fille* than this creature the artist has installed . . . behind the marble."⁸² "A young person in charge of a bar—in French a *buffet*—puts on the most innocent expression so as to pretend she does not know that her twin sister is being chatted up behind her, by a man of property.—Hypocrisy! cries out Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme. You are found even here, in the very sanctuary of easy pleasures!"⁸³ The girl who sells, according to the always well informed Philippe Burty, "American and other drinks" is also, we have seen, "une marchande de consolation"; the image in the mirror is of a "monsieur with whom she flirts";⁸⁴ and so on. This possibility—the presence yet again of prostitution, thinly disguised—is something that the critics appear to delight in; it gives their reading added spice, and, looking back at Paul Alexis, one is inclined to believe that it is what makes the barmaid "living" and lends her made-up face whatever expression it has for him. Certainly in Alexis's case it is what makes the barmaid "modern": if what the woman is selling is herself, then she becomes at once a standard figure in the Naturalists' typology of modern life. She could be construed, therefore, as an elegant variant of

Zola's *Nana* or the writer's own Lucie Pellegrin—"the modern *fille*, product of our advanced civilization, agent of the destruction of the upper classes." Those words are Alexis's own, in fact, written the previous year in praise of Zola's great novel of prostitution; and they surely determined his attitude to Manet's picture in April 1882.⁸⁵

The Folies-Bergère was a kind of café-concert. The guidebooks of the time invariably listed it under that rubric, though they warned their readers that it cost money to go in. The entry in Baedeker's 1878 survey of "cafés-chantants" is representative:

The Folies-Bergères [sic], Rue Richer 32, near the Boulevard Montmartre, a very popular resort, belongs to the same category. Visitors take seats where they please, or promenade in the galleries, while musical, dramatic, and conjuring performances are given on stage. Smoking is allowed. Admission 2 fr.⁸⁶

The decor of the Folies was garish, and its entertainments more highfaluting than was usual in the Alcazar—the green shoes and yellow socks of a trapeze artist signal that fact in *Un Bar*'s top left-hand corner—but the tone of the audience was much the same. Or so Guy de Maupassant would have us believe, propelling his hero Forestier along the Folies' galleries in his novel *Bel-Ami*:

... Duroy hardly bothered at all with the spectacle on stage, and, turning his head, he kept his eyes fixed on the great gallery behind him, full of men and prostitutes.

Forestier said to him: Notice the orchestra stalls; nobody there but bourgeois with their wives and children, good stupid souls who come for the show. In the boxes, boulevard types, a few artists, a few women from the *demi-monde*; and, behind us, the most bizarre mixture in all of Paris. Who are these men? Look at them closely. They are of all types, of every profession and caste, but the scum predominates. Look at the clerks, the clerks from the banks, the stores, the ministries, look at the reporters, the pimps, the officers in mufti, the toffs in the evening dress, who have just eaten in some tavern and have slipped out of the Opéra on their way to the Boulevard des Italiens, and then again a whole world of dubious men who defy analysis altogether. And as for the women, there is only one kind: the kind that eats supper at the *Américain*, the forty-franc whore who lies in wait for the foreigner with a hundred francs to spend and tips off her friends when she is free.⁸⁷

This is a piece of fiction, of course, and we should not take its description too much to heart: the loathsome Forestier has to be provided, after all, with appropriate surroundings, in his case those of dissolution and social decay. But it is evidence enough for our purposes that Maupassant saw the Folies-Bergère as the right place for his hero to relax in, and trotted

out the clichés with such gusto. He was not alone in so doing in 1885: the novelist-critic Robert Caze—the same who waxed sarcastic in the last chapter over Blanche's *Les Pivoines*—had a prostitute in a story from his *Paris vivant* come home from the Folies-Bergère in the small hours, remembering how

she plied her trade in the middle of a mob of German whores, croaking away with some Jews and some youngsters, *commis* from the wholesale houses on the Rue Hauteville. They bored her sick, that crowd. She doesn't like Germans. Really! things'll have to be bad before you'll catch her going back to the Folies.⁸⁸

Without a doubt, by the time Manet painted it the Folies-Bergère had become a "permanent fair for prostitutes."⁸⁹ It was already firmly established as such by the middle of the 1870s, and its reputation survived various attempts to clean it up and "give less importance to its *promenoirs*."⁹⁰ The entry in the *Guide secret de l'étranger célibataire à Paris* for 1889 was succinct and unambiguous: "The Folies-Bergère, 32 Rue Richer: famous for its *promenoirs*, its garden, its constantly changing attractions, and its public of pretty women."⁹¹

Prostitution, electric light, general glitter, Jews, Germans, *crapule*, and *commis*: the images are ordinary enough, and choosing to paint the Folies-Bergère presumably meant that Manet did not wish to avoid them completely. At one level, Alexis's confidence was understandable: Manet's picture did seem "the most exactly modern and the most typical" of the works shown in the 1882 Salon. One has only to compare it in passing with some of its competitors for such a title for the point to be clear: with Alfred-Philippe Roll's enormous *Quatorze juillet*, for example, which lorded it over the Salon Carré, or with Ernest-Ange Duez's careful *Autour de la lampe*, or Henri Gervex's mural for the Mairie du Dix-Neuvième entitled *Les Bassins de La Villette*. Modern life for Manet, by contrast, is not greatly animated, not familial, and not proletarian. It lacks the composure of real private life, but equally the energy of a public one. On those occasions when the classes are encouraged to celebrate the same symbols, their unanimity rings hollow; and when one class is extracted from the mix and made into a symbol, it straightaway takes on a doleful solemnity—muscle stevedores replacing downtrodden peasants in the repertoire of official concern for the poor.

Manet's picture of modernity is limited in comparison with those of his rivals: he is less certain of relationship than Duez, less confident than Roll in showing how citizens interact and have emotions, and more opaque about class—its costume and physiognomy—than all the other three. I do



112. Alfred-Philippe Roll, *Le Quatorze juillet*, 1880, 1882.

113. Ernest-Ange Ducz, *Autour de la lampe*, 1882.



114. Henri Gervex, *Les Bassins de La Villette*, 1882.

not want simply to celebrate those limitations and say they are the truth of modernity; for modern life does include relationships of Duez's kind and even of Roll's, and it certainly includes a proletariat. Modern painting suffers, I think, from not having the means or perhaps the occasion to depict them. But the sense of limits in Manet's painting—the sense of distinctions made between those things in modernity which can be represented and those which cannot—seems to be the other face of a massive ambition to be definitive about *something*, and that not unimportant in the Paris of 1881. The picture is almost ostentatiously exact, well adjusted, grand, quiet, and complete. It stakes its claim to classic status; and its tentative, guarded quality seems quite compatible with that claim—indeed, seems to be part of it. I shall therefore cast my own description of the picture initially in negative terms, starting out from its lack of depth, its resistance to interpretation, its impossible mirror and incomprehensible barmaid. To that extent my description will start from those written in 1882, but alter their emphasis; what the critics then took to be oddities or incoherencies, or anyway features which on the whole prevented the picture from making sense, I shall take to be systematic, and supportive of a quite simple meaning for the actions and persons shown.

Un Bar is a painting of surfaces: that verdict applies not just to the things in the world it seizes on as paintable—the gold foil, the girl's makeup, and the shine on the oranges—but to its insistence that *painting* is a surface and should admit the fact. Where solids and volumes are suggested in the picture, as of course they have to be, the business of shading is got over in a few brilliant strokes—a patch of shadow to turn a wrist, black-and-white hatching on a bottle of champagne, abbreviated lines of white on the oranges and glass of flowers. The paint surface itself is mostly dry, with almost a scraped quality, a bit harsh, a bit brittle, on the edge of being flimsy. This has to do, among other things, with the amount of white paint worked dryly across the other colours—the powdery white of the chandeliers and crystal, the white of marble, lace, makeup, rose, and buttons, the smudges of white put everywhere to stand for dazzle and discoloration on the mirror. These marks draw attention to themselves; they make it clear that the picture surface is all one thing. So does Manet's way of drawing here—his arrangement of the edges of his main forms. The barmaid's waist and shoulders, her hands on the counter, the cut glass against her arm, the chandelier just touching her reflection's head: the picture depends on these sharp edges and intersections, in much the same way as *Olympia* had done; it is organized around juxtapositions on the flat.

Thus the inevitable platitude imposes itself, and need not be avoided—

the picture *is* flat, it confesses and savours its own literal two dimensions. It even arranges particular signs of this flatness, offering the viewer those two thick-painted, pasty circles of electric light, each placed conveniently against a distant wall; or the red triangle on the bottle of Bass at right, peeling away from its label onto the picture surface; or the neat parallelogram of the trapeze, just touching the picture's top left corner, its crossbar bisecting a third electric light already bisected by a pillar! These signs all point to the paradoxes of painting, and do so in a knowing way; but they have their effect precisely because they are incidents, and do not dictate the picture's overall idiom. *Un Bar* is a surface and yet it invites the viewer—with plenty of other effective signs—into a series of quite firmly established spaces.

Behind the girl is a mirror. One can make out the yellow moulding of its frame on either side of the barmaid's wrists, and take in the general haze and dazzle on the glass—the illusion being strongest towards the left, where white paint obscures the distant balcony, or over the heads of the crowd at the right. A mirror it palpably is: one has only to notice the edge of the marble counter reflected in it, or the back view of the bottle of pink liqueur, for the illusion to be inescapable. And is there not even the reflection of the central white rose in its wineglass, wedged in between the second barmaid and her client, hard against the picture's right-hand edge?

But as soon as the general grounds for such a reading have been established—and I take it that most viewers discover them fairly soon—the difficulties in sustaining it begin. If that *is* a mirror behind the barmaid, then what exactly is being reflected in it? If it is a mirror, then the second young woman, towards the right, must be the mirror image of the one who looks out towards us. She must be, and she cannot be. There are clearly things about her which are meant to suggest that she is the same person seen from the rear. And yet how could the barmaid's reflection be there, so far towards the right? Does it mean—it must mean—that the mirror's whole surface is somehow arranged at an angle to our vision, quite a sharp angle, in fact, going back from right to left? Again, that could almost be so; and yet one look at the plain straight edge of the mirror's gilt frame, and the line of the counter just above it in the glass, puts paid to the possibility; and this leaves aside the more general problem of how this slanting mirror would fit in with the picture's overall formal logic.

For that overall logic is strict and emphatic. Every main thing in the picture is presented frontally, face on to the viewer, layer after layer aligned to the lower edge, where the frame itself cuts the marble. And the mirror

is seemingly a main part of that arrangement: it is one more flat surface taking its place among the rest. Are we being invited, then, to insert into this orderly sequence of spaces *another* space altogether, a quite contrary diagonal? We surely cannot do it, by and large—or not in a way we can keep in being, and make part of a reasonably coherent picture; that tilted mirror will not stay in place, it keeps lining up again parallel to the bar and the balcony; the reflection at the right escapes from the person it belongs to.

This last is not simply a matter of inconsistent spaces, I think; it also derives from the painter's rather careful mismatching of the front and back views of his barmaid subject. Looking out at us, the woman is symmetrical, upright, immaculate, composed; looking in at him, the man in the mirror, she seems to lean forward a little too much, too close, while the unbroken oval of her head sprouts stray wisps of hair. She looks a bit plumper than she ought to; the pose she adopts is more stolid and deferential. And thus the critics' descriptions come back to mind: the "jolie vendeuse," the "marchande de consolation," "bien campée dans un mouvement naturel," exchanging clichés with her serious admirer. The critics have a point, of course: the girl in the mirror does seem to be part of some such facile narrative, or could easily be made so. But that cannot be said of the "real" barmaid, who stands at the centre, returning our gaze with such evenness, such seeming lack of emotion or even interest.

And then, of course—final uncertainty—there is the gentleman in the mirror, standing in the top right-hand corner, clutching a gold-knobbed cane, wearing a top hat, a wing collar, and a drooping moustache. Who is this unfortunate, precisely? Where is he? Where does he stand in relation to her, in relation to us?

I wrote just now "looking out at us . . . looking in at him"; but the problem the picture presents is that the barmaid must be doing both at once, that *we* must be where *he* is. But we cannot be; not, anyway, if we are to remain what that easy "we" implies, in the discourse of looking—the single viewer of the painting in question; ourselves, myself; the subject for whom the picture exists and makes sense, who stands and sees a determinate world. "We" are at the centre; he is squeezed out to the edge of things, cut off by the picture frame. His transaction with the barmaid cannot, surely, set the tone for ours.

I suppose most viewers believe that the tone will be set properly, if at all, by the expression on the barmaid's face (Plate XXV). And presumably those viewers do some work to make the face take on an expression that seems plausible given the circumstances, and compatible with the general air of deadpan. (I am leaving aside the inveterate modernist here, who no

doubt sees at once that the face is nothing but that of painting itself, the presence of the signifier, the absence of the signified, etc.) It is perfectly possible, in fact, to imagine the barmaid's face as belonging to a definite state of mind or set of feelings: that of patience perhaps, or boredom and tiredness, or self-containment. We might even have it be "inexpressive," in the sense of the word that implies there is something being deliberately kept back, or that some mistake has been made about how best to signal what one is feeling. But the problem is that all these descriptions fit so easily and so lightly, and none cancels out or dominates the rest; so that I think the viewer ends by accepting—or at least by recognizing—that no one relation with this face and pose and way of looking will ever quite seem the right one. In any case, we resist the suggestion that everything depends on the man with the cane and his ordering the next round. "We" are not looking from where he looks: we do not believe that all we are seeing is the professional impassivity of a barmaid or a prostitute. (It might be possible to dismiss this as a kind of sentimental wish for complexity on our part, were it not for the way the more general perplexities of the picture chime in with the viewer's sense of the face as ambiguous. Or, to put it another way: if this *is* the professional look of a prostitute, then surely the picture divests that look of any simplicity: it suggests that expressions have complex circumstances, and are best understood as constructions—rather fragile constructions—in their own right.)

What I have been describing up to now is a texture of uncertainties. Some of them may have struck the reader as a bit hectic and contrived, and some not; the point in following them thus far is to suggest how easily doubts about looking accumulate in front of *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, doubts of various kinds, all reinforcing one another. What begins as a series of limited questions about relationships in space is likely to end as scepticism about relationship in general. Little by little we lose our imagined location, and because of that—as part of that—our first imaginary exchange of glances with the person in the picture is made to appear the peculiar thing it is. Here too, in the matter of persons and looks, we begin to struggle for a reading, become aware of contradictory cues, and feel obliged to include in the transaction the various things which may or may not be there in the mirror. And we cannot do it: the equation fails to add up. We cannot or will not take the place of the gentleman in the top hat, but there is no other place to occupy, it seems; we are left in a kind of suspended relation—to the barmaid, to ourselves as viewers, to the picture itself as a possible unity.

There seems little doubt that the structure which gives rise to these uncertainties was devised by the artist with conscious care.²² We have an

oil sketch in which Manet put down his first general idea for *Un Bar* (Plate XXVI), and it serves to show how easily things might have been sorted out and put in order if that had been what Manet had wanted. He might have given us, as he did in the sketch, a readable, eye-catching relation between the barmaid and man in the mirror; the more or less blousy *dame de comptoir* dwarfing the eager buyer of drinks. He might have put the barmaid and her reflection together, back to back, with the mirror established between them. He could have pushed the counter back in space and marked out its edges and sides; he could have put the barmaid safely behind it, and taken away her peculiar symmetry and her absolute, outward stare. But of course he did not: he seems to have worked instead to discover and exacerbate inconsistencies in his subject, teasing out the anomalies, letting in the blanks, having them dictate the picture's order.

And so the further question occurs, as to *why* the mirror was treated in this peculiar way. What does the mirror do in Manet's painting? Why is it placed as it is? What is the viewer supposed to make of the distance opened up between the objects and their reflections, and the suggestion that one belongs to the other only incompletely? These are partly questions about Manet's possible working procedures, about how it happened that the glass and reflections took this form in the process of painting. And partly they feel for possible intentions: kinds of matching, most probably sensed by the painter only indirectly, between a formal arrangement of this type and the actual subject, the bar and the barmaid. Both questions are speculative, given the evidence we have, and the answers I offer are therefore meant to be tentative. But at least they proceed from what seems to me the plausible hypothesis (on which this book as a whole is based) that inconsistencies so carefully contrived must have been felt to be somehow appropriate to the social forms the painter had chosen to show.

A mirror is a surface on which a segment of the surrounding world appears, directly it seems, in two dimensions; as such it has often been taken as a good metaphor for painting. Is that perhaps the way it is meant in *Un Bar*? The great room, the lights, the crowd, the trapeze, the elusive atmosphere—the mirror fixes and flattens them all, before the painter begins. There is literally nothing behind the barmaid but glass, on which the world already takes place in miniature, much as it will on canvas. But in order for the mirror to have that connotation—for it to be read as a simple, factual surface calling to mind the plainness with which painting puts down the world of appearance—it would not do for the glass to be pictured at an angle. The mirror must repeat the picture's literal surface: it must be the same surface, only farther back. The thing it must *not* do is act on the matters of visual fact it shows; it must not *do* things to them.

There is a plain fact of vision somewhere, and an equally plain one of painting; the mirror is there to show that each can be true to the other: it guarantees the orderly unfolding of the real world to the eye, band after band—counter, frame, counter, balcony, pillars—until the picture stops.

The mirror must therefore be frontal and plain, and the things that appear in it be laid out in a measured rhythm. And yet it is clear that some of those things will not be allowed to appear too safely attached to the objects and persons whose likenesses they are. I think that this happens, to repeat my previous point, as a result of Manet's attitude towards the Folies-Bergère—towards modern life in Paris, if you like. It seems to me also that a degree of conflict exists between that attitude and the beliefs about painting and vision—the metaphysic of plainness and immediacy—just outlined. That Manet held both sets of beliefs is incontestable, and the tension between them was never more visible than in his last big painting.

It is a picture of a woman in a café-concert, selling drinks and oranges, and most probably for sale herself—or believed to be so by some of her customers. Those customers, we know, were a motley crew, "le plus drôle de mélange qui soit dans Paris,"⁹³ and therefore peculiarly hard to make out. The elements involved in making sense of the situation were as follows: that the entertainments provided were popular, the general decor pretentious and glittering, the women loose, and the men engaged in a quite serious game of class. The face that the barmaid presents to this spectacle is, we might think, the only one possible. It is the face of fashion, first of all, made up to agree with others quite like it, the hair just hiding the eyebrows and leaving the ears free, the cheeks pale with powder, the lips not overdone this season, the pearls the right size.⁹⁴ Fashion is a good and necessary disguise: it is hard to be sure of anything else about the barmaid, in particular what class she might belong to. She does not seem, as the critics hinted in their choice of language in 1882, to be firmly part of the bourgeoisie; and that fact is the key to her modernity, in Alexis's smug sense; it is part of her appeal. The face she wears is the face of the popular, as previously defined, but also of a fierce, imperfect resistance to any such ascription. It is a face whose character derives from its not being bourgeois, and having that fact almost be hidden. For if one could not be bourgeois—if that status was always pushed just a little further out of reach—then at least one could prevent oneself from being anything else: fashion and reserve would keep one's face from *any* identity, from identity in general. The look which results is a special one: public, outward, "blasé" in Simmel's sense, impassive, not bored, not tired, not disdainful, not quite focused on anything. Expression is its enemy, the mistake it concentrates on avoiding at all costs; for to express oneself would be to have one's class be legible.

Un Bar is surely concerned to picture that kind of effacement, but also the actual social circumstances in which it took place and which made it obligatory. The painting delights in flatness in general, wherever it occurs, and no doubt it aims to show us what a face looks like when it too becomes two-dimensional—when that is the way it presents itself to the world. But it offers at the same time a form of explanation for that state of affairs, a form built into the picture's visual structure. The explanation consists, if I can put it this way, in the "actual social circumstances" barely appearing to be any such thing—to be either actual or social—to us or the actors involved in them. A curious balance must thus be struck. The circumstances must all be *there* in the picture, but somehow not quite convincingly. They must be seen to apply to the barmaid, but at one remove, as if they came to her—to us—as things slightly insubstantial, not wholly real.

That is why they are placed in a mirror and only half attached to the figure in front of it. For if the barmaid were *in* the mirror—part of the glamour of lights and performances, directly addressed by the man with the cane—she would be given back the actual social circumstances which are precisely what she does not have. And equally, if the mirror were all paradox and instability, its angle turning the room around and opening it up, then the gap between the woman and her reflection would lack the peculiar tension it has. It is important that even the *Folies-Bergère* appears in the picture as almost real, almost orderly, only just interrupted by the glass. For there is a definite set of class relations here to which the barmaid belongs; it is only her way of belonging to them that is the problem. The world that Manet offers as "modern"—and the same is true of *Olympia* or *Argenteuil, les canotiers*—is not simply made up of edges and uncertainties. It is plain as well as paradoxical, fixed as well as shifting; it lacks an order, as opposed to proclaiming the end of order as the great new thing.

I do not think, in other words, that the barmaid is carried away into the odd spaces and displacements I have spent my time describing; she is not dispersed by them. Even the word "ambiguous" will not quite do if we are aiming to describe her place in the picture and her relation to the life in the mirror. To disagree with Alexis one last time, it does not seem to me that she is animated by her alienation; she is posed and composed and confined by it; it is felt as a kind of fierceness and flawlessness with which she seals herself against her surroundings. She is *detached*: that is the best description. She looks out steadily at something or somebody, the various things which constrain and determine her, and finds that they all float by "with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money." The customer evidently thinks she is one more such object

which money can buy, and in a sense it is part of her duties to maintain the illusion. Doing so is a full-time job.

Let me compare *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, finally, with a painting by Degas done in the later 1870s of two women sitting at a café table, with some kind of foliage behind them: the women seemingly engaged in quizzical conversation, and one of them holding a flower in her fist (Plate XXVII). Degas seems to have believed for a while in the 1870s that modern life would offer the painter of sufficient skill a new set of characteristic physiognomies; he would be able to elaborate a repertoire of types, gestures, and expressions to stand for his century and give the viewer the feel of its life.⁹⁵ The project bore fruit for a time in pictures like this one, or portraits of friends, or the pastels shown in the 1877 Exhibition, or the parallel study of brokers and dealers outside the stock exchange. Nonetheless the project did not continue for long; in the 1880s Degas largely abandoned it in favour of studies of the ballet and the nude. There was to be no physiognomy of modern life, and surely the reasons for Degas's failure to design one have to do with his whole notion of the form in which modernity would show itself. The modern city, Degas thought, would produce "characters"; it would therefore be subject to sharp, ironical notation and equally fine physiognomical encoding. What this confidence amounted to—it was plainer still in the sketches and recipes of Degas's spokesman, Edmond Duranty—was a kind of nostalgia for times when identities had been stamped on a man's skin; and this at a moment when the mapping of the psyche around the polarities of "inside" and "outside" was being displaced by quite other topographies.

These were eventually to issue in a new kind of polarity—that of conscious and unconscious mind—which theorized (among other things) the great fact of character in bourgeois society: that the "inside" *cannot* be read from the "outside," and that the determinant facts of mind need have no visual effects, or may appear at most as interruptions in the flow of public signals. The previous pictorial concept of the psyche had depended on a notion of the self as something acted out, in familiar contexts and informing roles. This chapter has tried to describe the circumstances in which such acting out became rare.

For various reasons Manet seems to have been able to accept the implications of the new situation for painting more readily than Degas, but this is not to say that Degas's effort at modern physiognomy came to nothing. The nature of Degas's achievement in the 1870s is suggested well, I think, by *Au café*, and the artist's seeming admission of defeat in face of

115. Edgar Degas, *A la Bourse*, 1878-79.

his trivial slice of modernity. The picture of the women—talking? dreaming? gloomy? intent on something? exchanging confidences?—left, as it is, half finished, picked out mostly in livid *grisaille*, is a kind of study in the resistance of modern life to physiognomic reading. And so are many others of Degas's pictures at this time: what comes across most strongly is the muffled, secretive, fragmentary, almost catatonic quality of the sitters and their expressions. Behind them all—behind the woman in *L'Absinthe* or the puppets on the Place de la Concorde, behind the snarling brokers, pouting girls, slouching seducers, and barking singers—lies the final lack of animation in the *Portrait de Michel-Lévy* (Plate XXVIII).

There the modern artist stands, in a corner of his studio, surrounded by his props. The walls on either side of him are hung with freshly painted canvases—picnics and landscapes, ladies with parasols, glimpses of riverbank and greenery, absence of restaurants and regattas. The painter is in shirt sleeves, leaning against one of his *Déjeuner sur l'herbes*. His outfit and pose are informal, but somehow uneasily *smart*; he wears a cryptic, acidulous expression, and at his feet is modern woman herself, the lady he chooses (or is able) to represent. She sits on the floor of the studio, a mannequin made up for the countryside, out of joint and overdressed, compliant and

116. Edgar Degas,
L'Absinthe, 1876.

featureless, her minimum physiognomy seeking the studio sun. She is wedged into the same unsatisfactory space as the painter; they are both awkward and impenetrable, both lurking in the "cover of restraints."

What is visible in modern life, in other words, is not character but class. And yet of course the culture presented its own set of obstacles to the recognition of that fact, or to taking it seriously. In the case of the artists who concern us, the obstacle took the form of an ideology: the avant-garde appears to have been persuaded by the view that modernity was no longer characterized by a system of classification and control but, rather, by mixture, transgression, and ambiguity in the general conduct of life. It seems to me that this was to mistake the real and important margin of error in capitalist society for an overall loosening of class ties. (It is true that capitalism by its very nature does not affix and stabilize status in the way of feudalism, say; it does not require its identities to be absolute, so many forms of the Sacred on earth. It is part of the new order that a few should escape it.)

The perfect heroes and heroines of this myth of modernity were the petite bourgeoisie. They appeared in many ways to have no class to speak of, to be excluded from the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and yet to thrive on their lack of belonging. They were the *shifters* of class society, the connoisseurs of its edges and waste lands. And thus they became for a time the alter egos of the avant-garde—ironically treated, of course, laughed at and condescended to, but depended on for a point of insertion into modern life. I believe that sometimes in depicting them the painters discovered the limits and insufficiency of their own ideology, and in some sense described these people's belonging to the class system. That only happened occasionally. In any case, once the "nouvelles couches sociales" were no longer available as heroes of modern life—once they became a banal and established part of the bourgeoisie—description of that life, ideological or otherwise, largely ceased.

CONCLUSION

What I take to be the essential criticism of modernist painting was made at the time by the young writer Camille Lemonnier. In his "Notes on the Universal Exhibition" of 1878, he had this to say of Degas, Manet, Caillebotte, and Forain (I have been literal with his entry's staccato French):

None of them appears to possess *the sense of the picture*. They make fragments; they confine themselves to certain specialities of observation; they have familiarized themselves with only certain corners of humanity, the most striking in their display of corruption. They have above all the sense of the immoral woman. From them one gets frightful gesticulations of *filles perdues*. They deliberately keep company with the demented. Let them beware: this too is a form of virtuosity. The lower depths in which they linger have excessive aspects to them which are easier to do and more accessible than the simple order of bourgeois life, so hard to express because it has no surprises.¹

Lemonnier's first sentence probably strikes us now as excessive; which is to say that these artists and others have so altered our "sense of the picture" that we find it hard to imagine what other sense a good critic could have had. But the charges that follow still have their force. They amount to saying, as this book has done, that modernist painting accepted and reworked a myth of modernity in which the modern equalled the marginal. Shifting and uncertainty were thus taken to be the truth of city life and of perception, the one guaranteeing the other. I have spent my time trying to suggest the strengths and limitations of this belief, and have put more stress than is usual on the latter.

In particular I have argued, as Lemonnier did, that this painting did not find a way to picture class adequately; though adequately here should not be understood to mean simply or unequivocally. It was not able to devise an iconography of modern life, one capable of being sustained and developed by succeeding generations. That failure derives above all, I think, from its mistaken sense of what class was and how it showed itself, its belief that the founding categories of social experience could only appear—or could only be represented—as an absolute presence on the other side of codes and conventions, or as a glimpse, a flickering into visibility, itself part of the general rule of elusiveness. "Content . . . is a glimpse," a later

- lieue nord-ouest, p. 254. The first rubber works was built in 1863.
- 37 Barron, *Les Environs de Paris*, p. 72: "par le chemin d'Argenteuil, on se hâte de fuir le spectacle monotone des carrières exploitées sur le flanc des collines aux larges sections jaunâtres, des plâtrières qui fixent dans la région toute une population d'ouvriers pauvres, des vignes, des interminables carrés de légumes dont la route est bordée." The Joanne guide *Environs de Paris* for 1878 describes the "carrières de plâtre" as employing 6,000 workers (p. 90), though this seems high. But given the itinerant character of this labour force, and of the pleasure seekers, population figures for Argenteuil do not give a good picture of the actual occupation of the land.
- 38 *Le Petit-Journal*, 27 May 1877: "Argenteuil (gare Saint-Lazare).—Continuation de la fête. A 2h.½, course de bicycles, organisée par l'Union vélocipédique avec la musique municipale; costume de rigueur.—A neuf heures, grande retraite aux flambeaux avec la musique et les sapeurs-pompiers."
- 39 Louis Blairet, "Autour de Paris," *L'Opinion*, 8 June 1884: "Quand vient le dimanche, c'est une invasion à la gare Saint-Lazare; il n'y a pas une fruitière de la rue Saint-Denis, pas un ébéniste de la rue de Cléry, pas une chocolatière de la rue Vivienne, qui ne s'abatte sur le bord de la Seine, au pied du moulin d'Orgemont ou dans l'auberge des canotiers. Or, comme dit Amédée Achard, où trotte une Parisienne, passe un Parisien. Une femme représente toujours deux personnes. On chante, on crie, on danse, on court, on tombe, on s'égaré. Tout commence par des entrecôtes au cresson et tout finit par des courbatures. Les bords de la Seine sont tout pleins de mystères ce jour-là, mystères de la vie intime et champêtre.
"On mange des salades de homards sur l'herbe, messieurs!"
- 40 See D. Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: Biographie et catalogue raisonné*, vol. 1, 1840–1881, *Peintures*, nos. 370 and 337; also nos. 334, 336, 338, 368, 369. I notice since writing this that Robert L. Herbert, "Industry in the Changing Landscape," p. 269, proposes Wildenstein no. 227 as the picture on the easel. The relation of the tree and rigging to the picture's upper edge is not quite right, but it does look closer than any other. (I have heard this picture's authenticity
- questioned, incidentally—even the suggestion made that it is a mock-up after the Manet!)
- 41 See Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, nos. 316, 317, 334, 335.
- 42 See Robert L. Herbert, "Method and Meaning in Monet," *Art in America*, September 1979, for extensive discussion of how little spontaneity Monet's technique actually had—which still leaves us with the question of what the *illusion* of spontaneity was for.
- 43 Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, nos. 221, 222, 223, 224.
- 44 *Ibid.*, nos. 219; 327, 249; 314; 251, 354; 453.
- 45 *Ibid.*, nos. 360; 242; 279.
- 46 See Monet's letter to Durand-Ruel, 15 February 1883, discussing a forthcoming exhibition: "If it's not too much trouble, try to see the picture of mine that Monsieur Hayem has, I have a good memory of it and it would strike a different note." In Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, p. 447, *Pièce justificative* 56. Compare Tucker's very similar discussion of this picture, in *Monet and Argenteuil*, pp. 53–56, where the only point I cannot follow is the suggestion of catharsis in the final sentence.
- 47 See, for instance, Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, nos. 271, 272, 201, or the distinctively unpicturesque *Moulin d'Orgemont, neige*, no. 254; the celebrated *Coqueliquots à Argenteuil*, no. 274, and nos. 220, 276, 341, 377, 379. The closest one comes to an exception is *La Plaine de Gennevilliers*, no. 437, looking back towards Argenteuil; in the foreground are piles of fresh-cut logs, and in the distance what appears to be a plough team. Compare my discussion of the related *Gelee blanche au Petit Gennevilliers*, no. 256, pp. 191–93.
- 48 There is disagreement between Wildenstein and Tucker about the precise motif; Tucker's comparison to the houses in Wildenstein no. 278 is surely right.
- 49 There is (understandably) very little literature on Ajalbert. The most useful account is R. Bernier, "Un Poète impressionniste: Jean Ajalbert," *La Revue Moderne* (Marseille), 20 January 1886.
- 50 Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, nos. 348–62 (the most doubtful member of the series is the *Gelee blanche*, no. 361, though it seems thematically connected with the rest).

- 51 Tucker does not take them as a pair—he does not treat the Kansas City picture—but he and others provide the information which entitles one to do so. See *Monet and Argenteuil*, pp. 42, 47 (on the new house near the station), pp. 50–51 (on the proximity of the Joly ironworks), p. 52 (on the Boston picture of the Boulevard Saint-Denis). For further information, and photographs of Monet's house, see R. Walter, "Les Maisons de Claude Monet à Argenteuil," *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, December 1966, and the expanded version of this essay in Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, p. 58 ff. There is brief mention of the Kansas City picture in Herbert, "Industry in the Changing Landscape," p. 155, again on its own.
- 52 Wildenstein, *Claude Monet*, nos. 281; 280; 282 (cf. the connected series nos. 383–86, 406, 411, 414, 415—the last two the dahlia pictures!); 285; 365. Tucker, *Monet and Argenteuil*, chap. 5, has much fuller discussion, though somewhat different emphases.
- 53 See Compact Edition of Oxford English Dictionary, 1971, 1:2023, "outing."
- 54 See, e.g., M. Marrus, ed., *The Emergence of Leisure*, for a representative selection of articles. E. P. Thompson's "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present*, no. 38 (1967), is the fundamental discussion of the changes brought by capitalism into the ordering of the work day and week, and the separation of activities—kinds of work and recreation—once bound up with each other. There is a growing literature on the organization of leisure in the new cities or the new edges of old ones; see, e.g., P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830–1885*; H. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870–1914*; H. McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City*; R. Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh*.
- 55 Léon Gambetta, *Discours et plaidoyers politiques*, 4:155 (speech at Auxerre, 1 June 1874): "Messieurs, j'ai dit les nouvelles couches, non pas les classes: c'est un mauvais mot que je n'emploie jamais."

Chapter Four: A Bar at the Folies-Bergère.

- 1 Verse 5 of "Ah! J'la Trouv' Trop Forte" ("Paroles et musique de Edouard Doyen. Chantée

dans tous les Cafés Concerts"), preserved in the Archives Nationales (hereafter referred to as AN) F18 1680 (1867): "At the Ball Mabille [one of the leading dance halls of Paris in the period], between two dances, / A young man who said he was a Baron, / Offered me a townhouse and two carriages / As setting for my good taste. / Lowering my eyes, I went towards him, / But here's something new, / I see some scissors sticking out of his pocket. . . . / The Baron was only a shop assistant. . . ."

- 2 From a large and mostly uninformative literature on the painting, I should single out—as having at least provoked real disagreement—R. Mortimer, *Manet's "Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère"*; G. Busch, *Manet—Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*; and André Malraux's typical addition to the *musée imaginaire*, "La Vénus des Folies-Bergère et celle de Titien," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 28 April 1973. My previous discussion of this picture—which the present version largely disagrees with—appeared as T. J. Clark, "The Bar at the Folies-Bergère," in *The Wolf and the Lamb: Popular Culture in France, from the Old Regime to the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. Beauroy et al.
- 3 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, 2:121. The French of the description of the crowd is worth giving: "des bonnets de femmes de la barrière; militaires: des enfants en képi, quelques chapeaux de putains avec des commis de magasins, quelques rubans roses de femmes aux loges. . ." The conjunction of "putain" and "commis" is modernity, we shall see. Compare a line from Ajalbert's "Chromolithographie" which comes just before the lines quoted in the previous chapter (in *Sur le vif: Vers impressionistes*, p. 108) and is the centrepiece of Ajalbert's description of the "cohue hebdomadaire à travers les banlieues"—"Des calicots en fête et des filles de joie." This book could be described as an attempt to explain what was meant by this pairing of terms for the "modern."
- 4 G. Claudin, in *Paris-Guide, par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France*, p. 78: "A présent nous vivons beaucoup au dehors, nous fuions tous plus ou moins l'intérieur et le foyer. . ."
- 5 A. Delvaux, *Les Plaisirs de Paris: Guide pratique*, p. 64: "Vivre chez soi, penser chez soi, boire et manger chez soi, aimer chez soi, souffrir chez soi, mourir chez soi, nous trouvons cela en-

nuyeux et incommode. Il nous faut la publicité, le grand jour, la rue, le cabaret, le café, le restaurant, pour nous témoigner en bien ou en mal. . . . Nous aimons à *poser*, à nous donner en spectacle, à avoir un public, une *galerie*, des témoins de notre vie."

- 6 C. Delon, *Notre Capitale Paris*, p. 371: "Personne n'y est chez soi: hélas! le Parisien n'a plus de chez soi. Tout le monde comme en *hôtel garni*. Si bien que l'intérieur n'ayant plus ni intimité, ni agrément, chacun est tenté de s'en dégoûter et de vivre au dehors le plus possible." (This was part of an attack on Haussmannization—even so late in the day!)
- 7 René Degas, letter of 17 July 1872, cited in *Degas and son oeuvre*, by P. A. Lemoisne, 1:71: "des chansons d'idiots . . . et autres bêtises absurdes."
- 8 Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du dix-neuvième siècle*, 3:62.
- 9 Ibid.; see Louis Veuillot, *Les Odeurs de Paris*, pp. 147–50. The baritone's song goes as follows: "A nest, it's a tender mystery, / A sky which springtime blesses. / To man, to the bird on the earth, / God says quietly: Build a nest!"
- 10 See AN F21 1338, report of November 1872, "Note sur les cafés-concerts," p. 3: "Quant aux chansons mauvaises qui auraient pu se glisser sur les programmes depuis les seize mois que fonctionne l'Inspection des théâtres, il est peut-être juste de faire observer qu'au lendemain de la Commune et de l'orgie de chants qui s'était produite pendant cette époque, il a fallu, pour la préfecture de Police, réorganiser lentement et avec peine un service complètement en désarroi et retrouver des agents suffisamment capables. . . ." For a typical censor's view of the café-concert, see p. 2: "Le nombre des chansons que l'on soumet au visa est incalculable; on ne peut imaginer à quel degré de dévergondage en arrivent les auteurs de ces chansons, à tous les points de vue: morale, politique, religion, question sociale. Un très-grand nombre est refusé absolument; la plus grande partie de celles qui sont autorisées, ne le sont qu'après les plus sérieuses modifications. Quant aux chansons dont la presse s'est emparée dans ces derniers temps [i.e., complaining of Communist leftovers in the café-concert repertoire]: Les têtes de pipe, Les feignants, Les Misérables, etc. etc. . . ., elles n'ont jamais été soumises, et, par conséquent, jamais autorisées."

- 11 By far the best treatment of the café-concert seems to me J. Rancière, "Le Bon Temps ou la barrière des plaisirs," *Les Révoltes Logiques*, Spring-Summer 1978, which uses some of the same archival materials on which I in turn worked. Compare A. Rifkin, "Cultural Movements and the Paris Commune," *Art History*, June 1979; I especially tried to take heed of Rifkin's criticisms of my 1977 essay. The reader will find I disagree both with Rifkin's implacable view of the café-concert as a cog in the machine of social control, and with Rancière's picture of it as the site of real subversion. But I am deeply indebted to both readings. On the look of the places, see also M. Shapiro, "Degas and the Siamese Twins of the Café-Concert: The Ambassadeurs and the Alcazar d'Été," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April 1980; and (mostly dealing with the 1880s and 1890s) *Le Café-concert: Affiches de la Bibliothèque du Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, 1977.
- 12 See, e.g., the description in Victor Fournel's contribution to *Paris dans sa splendeur: Monuments, vues, scènes historiques, descriptions et histoire*, 2:25.
- 13 Camille Pissarro, letter to Octave Mirbeau, 24 November 1891, cited in "Des Lettres inédites de Camille Pissarro à Octave Mirbeau et à Lucien Pissarro," by C. Kunstler, *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne*, March-April 1930, p. 187: "I count myself extremely fortunate not to have competed for the honour of daubing the walls of that edifice; I long ago visited that horrible café-concert!! . . ."
- 14 See, e.g., E. Lemoine, "Courrier de Paris," *L'Indépendance Belge*, 1 May 1865: "The future of Paris lies with the café waiter" . . . Go where you will in this Paris which Monsieur Haussmann puts up with one hand having knocked it down with the other. What is the greatest marvel you see? . . . The most marvellous thing about Paris is that as soon as a new café opens, a public is found to fill it. Houses are built which stay unoccupied, but wherever a café is opened there is an invasion." J. Gaillard points out that one of the reasons for the café boom, at least with the working class, was the increasing overcrowding at home—again helped along by Haussmannization. See Gaillard's intervention in the discussion of "La Commune et le problème de l'état," *Le Mouvement Social*, April-June 1974, p. 190.

- 15 Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, pp. 364–65.
- 16 The official statistic for 1872; see AN F21 1338, 1872. Maxime Du Camp offered the figure of 180 in his *Paris: Ses Organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle*, 6:327 (basing himself, presumably, on the 1872 census). *Le Figaro Illustré* in 1896 gave the number as 274.
- 17 Veuillot, *Les Odeurs de Paris*. Bernadille, *Esquisses et croquis parisiens: Petite Chronique du temps présent*, 1st ser., p. 45, cited in note 23; Maurice Talmeyr, "Cafés-concerts et music-halls," *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 July 1902, p. 178, cited in note 26.
- 18 J. Murray, ed., *A Handbook for Visitors to Paris; containing a description of the most remarkable objects . . .*, p. 32.
- 19 Admission charges are given in Murray and other guides. It seems that the Eldorado first insisted on "la renouvellement des consommations" in 1867, the year when the prefecture relaxed its regulation of the physical detail of the performances.
- 20 E. Drumont, *Mon Vieux Paris*, 2:213: "Le côté le plus curieux du tableau pour le flâneur qui observe, c'est l'assistance extérieure qui se donne le plaisir gratuit de saisir au vol la chanson nouvelle; ceux-là sont des Parisiens écoutant avec naïveté ces ineptes refrains qu'ils ont la prétention de répéter. Pas de risques qu'ils interrompent les chanteurs par un de ces chahuts formidables qu'organisent, c'est la mode, nos jeunes viveurs avec leurs compagnes. L'auditeur naïf ne comprend pas, s'indigne, et le provincial s'enfuit." There is the same kind of contrast pointed out in G. Coquirot, *Dimanches d'été* pp. 1–2.
- 21 *Mémoires de Thérèse écrits par elle-même*, pp. 232–34: "I set great store by the applause of the public in general, but I admit that I have a weakness for the less fortunate [*la partie malheureuse de la population*].
"Is it because I am a woman of the people and have been poor like them?
". . . Thus, to make up for the foreigners who don't understand a thing, in summer I have the *gamins* of Paris, who understand very well!
"There are five or six hundred of them, not inside the café-concert, but outside, gathered

under the clumps of trees which surround us. . . .

". . . Among their number, there is more than one who perhaps has had no dinner.

"If we cannot appreciate him and give him enough to eat, let us give him songs to sing!"

And so on. See discussion by Rifkin, "Cultural Movements," pp. 210–12.

- 22 The last phrase is from L. Veuillot, *Les Odeurs de Paris*.
- 23 Bernadille, *Esquisses et croquis parisiens*, 1st ser., p. 35: "Trois mille personnes au moins étaient entassées là: bourgeois, petits commerçants, quelques ouvriers endimanchés, familles entières en partie de plaisir, provinciaux et étrangers."
- 24 H. Gardejann, *La Thérésiade: Poème en cinq chants, et en vers du huit pattes*, cited in "Cultural Movements," by Rifkin, p. 209. The passage describes Thérèse's debut at the Alcazar.
- 25 A. Sirven, "Les Abrutis. Quelques Types. Piliers de cafés-concert," *Le Hanneton*, 28 May 1865: "Habités folâtres de ces établissements où la mélodie se vend et se mesure à la chope ou au petit verre, ils appartiennent en général à la caste spéciale des gandins qui ne sont gandins que le soir.
"Leur journée est occupée par un travail quelconque, bureaucratique ou commercial, et leur soirée est entièrement consacrée à l'amour platonique qu'ils ont voué à Mlle Pétronille. . . .
"Braves gens en somme pour la plupart, mais qui ont le tort, n'ayant pour humer un peu d'air et prendre la somme d'exercice nécessaire à la santé comme à l'intelligence, que les quelques heures qui suivent leur dîner, d'aller s'abrutir dans une atmosphère de fumée de tabac, aux émanations stupéfiantes de gaz, respirant à pleins poumons l'air méphitique d'une salle étroite où se pressent des centaines d'individus—Et cela pour entendre qui, je vous le demande!"
- 26 Maurice Talmeyr, "Cafés-concerts," p. 178 (the date of the article is very late, of course, but its terms and transitions are those established in discourse on the café-concert from the 1860s onward): "Puis, aux mêmes places, les coudoyant, beaucoup aussi de petites gens, des boutiquiers, des commis, des valets de chambre, et les inévitables têtes bizarres, violentes, patibulaires. On sent là, sans barrière entre eux, dans un sans-gêne commun, la femme tarifée et la

mondaine, le repris de justice et le magistrat, les maîtres et les domestiques, les honnêtes gens et les filous."

- 27 Anon., "Chronique—Le Café-concert," *Le Réveil*, 29 September 1886.
- 28 See chapter one, note 88. For further *calicot* references, see this chapter's epigraph and the line from Ajalbert cited in note 3.
- 29 P. Véron, *Paris s'amuse*, p. 87: "Il y a des gens qui viennent ainsi chaque soir déposer leur tribut floral aux pieds d'une prima donna de plein vent. Ceux-là, vous les remarquerez aux tables près de l'orchestre. Ces adorateurs à vue d'oeil sont en général des *calicots* dont le magasin ferme de bonne heure, des clercs de notaire qui font l'étude buissonnière, des hommes mariés,—qui soit-disant vont au Cercle."
- 30 M. Vaucaire, "Café-chantant: A. J. M. de Hérédia," in *Effets de théâtre*, p. 106: "They spend all their time laughing and clapping./ These bourgeois, counter-jumpers, and dandies, none of them very respectable / Who call out to the singer and beckon her. / Here one is happy, one drinks, one sings, one can smoke / And keep one's hat on so as not to catch cold."
- 31 G. Montorgueil, *Le Café-concert: Lithographies de H.-G. Ibels et de H. de Toulouse-Lautrec*, p. 11, on the Mirliton: "Les commis-voyageurs en bordée et les grandes dames en débauche." Compare Alphonse Daudet, *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné*, p. 368, on the café-concert audience: "des petits commerçants du quartier avec leurs dames et leurs demoiselles" (cited in "Degas," by Shapiro, p. 153).
- 32 Anglo-Parisian, *Paris by Day and Night*, p. 221. Guidebook writers were unable to make up their minds as to a convenient shorthand for the café-concert's public. Baedeker (*Paris and Its Environs: Handbook for Travellers*, p. 17) in 1872 said that the establishments on the Champs-Élysées "afford unbounded delight to the middle and lower classes of Parisians." *Galignani's Illustrated Paris Guide for 1879*, p. 236, avoided the issue: "Cafés-concerts or chantants are the favourite evening lounge of the Parisian bourgeois, who does not object to hearing favourite songs and other music, while regaling himself." Murray retreated from his 1872 verdict to this, in his 1882 *Handbook for Visitors* (p. 109): "Café-Concerts or Chantants. These are all of the 'Music-hall' order, both in the style

of their entertainment and in the class of their frequenters." Parallels between the café-concert and the music hall are real; see G. Stedman Jones, "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900," *Journal of Social History*, Summer 1974, pp. 490-97. The questions raised here about the music hall's place in a complex class culture very much influenced my approach to the French case.

- 33 From the growing literature on "popular culture," the following items were most helpful to my discussion: G. Stedman Jones, "Working-class Culture"; Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture*; Theodor Adorno's various splenetic essays on jazz; Philip Cohen, "Sub-Cultural Conflict and Working Class Community," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, Spring 1972; S. Hall and T. Jefferson, eds., *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*; Roger Taylor's swingeing *Art: An Enemy of the People*, especially chap. four, on jazz; Tom Crow's "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity*, ed. S. Guilbaut and D. Solkin. This is an oddly heterogeneous list, I realize, but that testifies to the healthy state of the subject. It has not yet (not quite) become a "field." A good essay I read after writing this chapter is S. Hall's "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular,'" in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. R. Samuel. There is suggestive material also in R. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, and in some of the items on the petite bourgeoisie recommended in chapter three, notes 14 and 54, especially those by R. Q. Gray.

- 34 T. S. Eliot, "Marie Lloyd," in *Selected Essays*, pp. 456-58.
- 35 "Villanelle de Max Dapreval, Chantée par Mlle Thérèse de l'Alcazar Lyrique." The printed sheet music I used can be found in AN F18 1680 (1865), among other banned material, with the censor's "Non" scrawled across it. This does not mean it was never performed, of course, but is evidence that occasionally the censor was sensitive to its *doubles-entendres*. ("How I love to see your white breast / Whose whiteness rivals that of milk: / Its twin billows that swell and overflow, / And seek to escape from corset's confines. / —I know your refrain, come back on Sunday / Sir, paws down if you please! / —Look at the bowl from which you quench

your thirst, / One would say that its handle was broken. / Permit me to put the handle back on: / It's my trade, I've always been good at it," etc.) Sunday, by the way, turns out to be the day the couple will be married; so the song is "moralized" in the end, in a way that is typical of the official café-concert repertoire.

- 36 Veillot, *Les Odeurs de Paris*, again quoted in Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire*.
- 37 AN F18 1680 (1864), Alcazar.
- 38 Gustave Geffroy, *Yvette Guilbert*: "Pour les autres [those Parisians who are not content with the interior], l'important, qu'ils l'avouent donc, est de sortir de chez eux où ils s'ennuient, et de s'en aller n'importe où chercher la lumière, le bruit, et la complicité tacite de la foule, des êtres semblables à eux, de la cohue des ennuyés."
- 39 I realize the echoes here of Walter Benjamin's famous description of film: "Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasingly noticeable in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cultic value [of art] recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, pp. 242-43).
- 40 Edgar Degas, letter to Lerolle, in *Lettres de Degas*, ed. M. Guérin, p. 57; cited in "Degas," by M. Shapiro, pp. 158-59. Compare Mallarmé's verdict in his newspaper, *La Dernière Mode*, "Chronique de Paris," 4 October 1874: "tout ce domaine de joie, de belle humeur, de gouaillerie magistrale, qu'installe autour d'elle, mais sans le partager avec aucun, cette femme toujours étonnante, Thérèse!" (Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 751).
- 41 J. Vallès, *Le Tableau de Paris*, p. 200; cited in "Le Bon Temps," by Rancière, p. 52. See Rancière's whole discussion of Thérèse, pp. 51-54.
- 42 Anon., *Le Réveil*, 29 September 1886: "J'ai eu autrefois pour Thérèse beaucoup d'admiration. Il me semblait que dans cette grosse voix aux notes graves vibrerait une âme du peuple. Elle me remuait et me donnait le frisson; plus d'une

fois, elle m'arracha des larmes. Depuis deux ans, je vais à ses rentrées comme vers une ancienne amie, cherchant cette impression passée qu'elle ne réveille plus. Sa belle diction si forte et si nette s'est gâtée par la prétention, la pompe et la solennité. Elle s' imagine sans doute qu'elle est maintenant une force sociale et que chacun des mots tombés de ses lèvres se répercute dans le monde. Elle accueille sans discernement des chansons ineptes et cherche à colorer ces paroles vides d'une sentimentalité redondante et d'un faux pittoresque. Au lieu de l'art brutal et sincère qui m'avait ravi, la chanteuse laisse voir un procédé uniforme et la recherche de l'effet violent." She sang "Le Sapeur," apparently, as if now a mere *gaudiole* was beneath her. The hall's verdict was that "elle pontifiait son sapeur."

- 43 The latter triumph is recounted in Gaston Jolivet, *Souvenirs de la vie de plaisir sous le Second Empire*, p. 252. Khalil-Bey, the Turkish admirer of Courbet's erotic art in the 1860s, was reputed to have given Thérèse two diamonds together worth 10,000 francs. But it would be wrong to paint her success as uncontested: there were plenty of people who followed Veillot and Larousse in finding her "la muse de l'horrible" (L. Ulbach, "Courrier de Paris," *L'Indépendance Belge*, 6 May 1865). She provided a natural term of comparison in 1865 for critics wishing to abuse *Olympia*. Bertall in one cartoon imagined Manet repenting of his picture as follows: "M. Manet nettoie la place de son chat, envoie son bouquet à Thérèse, et sa charbonnière aux Batignolles" (*L'Illustration*, 17 June 1865, p. 389). Compare Olivier Merson's calling *Olympia* "l'enseigne de la Femme à Barbe"—one of the songs that had made Thérèse's name.
- 44 Impavidus, "Correspondance parisienne," *La Rive Gauche*, 18 June 1865: "Dernièrement, une rixe dont elle était le sujet, a eù lieu aux Champs-Élysées entre la police et la foule des badauds et de gandins venus pour l'entendre. Quelques sergents de ville ont reçu des horions, paraît-il, et ont du dégaîner, mais le sang n'a pas été répandu.
- "Quel grand peuple que celui qui sait se battre pour une chanteuse de brasserie, et ne sait rien faire pour conquérir sa liberté!"
- 45 Hector Berlioz, *Le Figaro*, 4 April 1848: "You love music and have no fear of alcohol and the smell of tobacco. Then go to the Passage Jouff-

froy . . . around ten at night, when the crowd is as thick as the pipe smoke, if you manage to find a free seat in the house, you will see a strange man come on stage. . . . It is Darcier. . . . His face already expresses the character of the person whose grim or naïve or lamentable history he is about to sing. . . ."

46 Jollivet, *Souvenirs*, p. 253: "elle jetait, du creux de son magnifique contralto, son défi révolutionnaire aux patrons exploités du 'pauvre peuple.'"

47 The evidence preserved in the Archives Nationales, especially the boxes F18 1338, 1350, 1680, 1681, affords quite a full picture of the censor's activities—the licensing regulations, the regular moves to tighten them, lists of censored songs, the song sheets of songs refused a license for performance at the main cafés-concerts, occasional reports of police spies, the censor's annual statement to the minister, etc. Rancière, "Le Bon Temps," has an incisive discussion, particularly of the political dimension of censorship, on pp. 38–42.

Cafés-concerts were supposed to submit copies of their programme every morning to the bureau, and no substitutions of any kind were permitted. Proprietors were not slow to point out the sheer impracticability of such a system. Nevertheless, it survived with very little modification: a letter of 25 April 1887, signed by the owners of the leading establishments, is still complaining of the old restrictions and inflexibilities (AN F18 1338).

48 Paulus, *Trente Ans de café-concert: Souvenirs recueillis par Octave Pradels*, pp. 70–71 ("Le Baptême du p'tit ébéniste, paroles Emile Durandeu, musique Charles Plantade"): "Over there, over there, at the end of the earth, / Over there, far away, close by the Luxembourg, / Was an old man, a popular songmaker / Béranger / O! that one, let's always hold him in high esteem. / How I love to see around this table / Sawyers, / Cabinetmakers, / Builders, / How like a bunch of flowers it is. / Little Léon, on your mother's breast / You have never known adversity: / You have not seen the flag of your fathers / Sullied with mud, covered with iniquity. . . . / But, without wishing to talk politics, / Let's all shed a tear for him who has gone; / The enemy shut him up on an island / Where he died! that great legislator. . . . Let's leave, let's leave to vulgar debauchees / The search for love in carnal

pleasures, / True love, ah! it's that of a father / Who gives to the world a little newborn child, . . . / And why are we not concerned for the mother / Who even now is still confined to her bed, / She has suffered much more than the father / Who has had all the joy. . . ."

49 AN F18 1680, "L'Etoile des concerts," submitted by the Eldorado and rejected 15 Feb. 1867: "Since it is necessary, and to please you, / I speak in argot like a ragpicker, / I adopt a fishwife's voice, / And the manners of a lackey; / I kick up my legs better than Clodoche, / I don't sing as well as Malibron, / I am as distinguished as Gavroche. . . . / Well, what do I care! I earn a hundred thousand francs."

50 See, e.g., AN F18 1338 (1853) for a "Liste des chansonnettes interdites, qui ne peuvent être chantées ni sur les Théâtres, ni dans les concerts, cafés concerts . . ." from which my titles are drawn. (Among the others is an "Appel au Béranger," which goes to show, quite typically, that even the good Paulus's effects could be turned to bad uses. There is a distinctly Courbetiste flavour to many of the songs, not surprisingly at this date: "L'Aumône du pauvre," "Hymne aux paysans," "Jean raisin," "Le Médecin de campagne," "Le Rentier," "Le Vrai paysan," and even "La Noce de l'enterrement.") AN F18 1681 contains material showing the censor's renewed push against political material in the early 1870s, after the Commune. There are 187 censored songs in October–December 1872 alone, considerably more than in any whole year during the 1860s. Most of the censored songs are obscene or *revanchiste*—there is only a smattering of "social" ballads bewailing the poor worker's fate. But some extraordinary Communal songs do get as far as the censor's office, as Rancière points out in his discussion in "Le Bon Temps," pp. 38–42. (I think Rancière somewhat overestimates the political explosiveness of the café-concert repertoire on the basis of these exceptional post-Commune years; but he could reasonably counter that it is only in such periods that the always present political subtext of the "popular" bubbles up into the censorship records.)

51 See, e.g., AN F18 1338, file on the Café-concert de la Scala, April 1887, a spy's exultant transcription of an interpolated verse in "Le Piston d'Hortense": "Oh! je voudrais être l'étrui / Oû tu sers ce piston, j'te jure. / De cet instrument

si joli / Je voudrais être l'embouchure. . . ." The café was closed for one day for the offence.

52 Marc-Constantin, *Histoire des cafés-concerts et des cafés de Paris*, pp. 93–94.

53 Bernadille (Victor Fournel), "Le Café-concert de La Pègre: 2 Août 1872," in *Esquisses et croquis parisiens*, p. 50: "Rien de particulier à dire des chanteurs,—sinon qu'ils ont des gants blancs et des habits noirs, les malheureux,—cela flatte le public,—mais quels habits et quels gants!

"J'ai retenu les titres des principales chansons: . . .

"Dans cette dernière chanson, comme dans quelques autres, on n'a pas manqué d'intercaler un couplet patriotique, d'une monstrueuse ineptie, que le ténor débite avec une emphase ridicule et qui est accueilli par un tonnerre d'applaudissements. Cette façon d'accoler le patriotisme à l'obscénité fait souffrir comme la plus ignoble des profanations. Car est-il besoin de dire que toutes les chansons dont je viens de transcrire les titres ne sont que des tissus d'allusions et d'équivoques ordurières, bien dignes d'un tel public!"

54 Again, AN F21 1338 and F18 1680 are full of material, including titles of censored songs, for example—"Joli! mais trop p'tit" (4 May 1864, Alcazar), "La Moitié de ça suffit" (3 August 1864), "Tout ça c'est à moi" (16 August 1864, Alcazar), "Comment qu'ça s'fait?" (29 January 1865, by Suzanne Lagier, Eldorado), "Tu peux t'fouiller" (4 May 1865, Bastille), "C'est ma chandelle" (20 April 1866, Alhambra), "La Petite Flûte" (5 November 1866), and a regular diet of songs celebrating prostitution, such as "La Biche au Bois de Boulogne" (6 November 1865, Bastille), "La Ronde des cocottes" (28 December 1865, Dix-Neuvième Siècle), "La Baignollaise" (2 April 1869).

55 This typical note is struck in AN F18 1338 (Alhambra file), report of Philippe de Forges, 4 November 1867: "Samedi dernier, je suis entré au café-concert de l'Alhambra, situé rue du faubourg du Temple.

"J'ai entendu un morceau dont un couplet m'a paru d'une obscénité révoltante et, du reste, le public en a parfaitement saisi le côté dégoûtant.

"J'ai alors demandé au régisseur de me montrer le visa du Ministère. Il ne m'a donné que de très mauvaises raisons et je n'ai pu obtenir que le titre de la chanson.

"Elle est intitulé: *le règne du garçon meunier*; et je l'ai vainement cherchée ce matin sur les registres de la Commission d'Examen. Elle est inconnue."

56 Bernadille, "Les Cafés-concerts," in *Esquisses et croquis parisiens*, p. 45: "La première partie de la soirée s'est terminée par une chanson très résolument anti-socialiste dont j'ai retenu ces quatre vers: [Since all men are brothers, / I demand that those who haven't a sou / Receive a regular income / From those who sleep in luxury.]

"Les blouses blanches elles-mêmes riaient à ventre ébouonné, et je me suis levé alors, pour partir sur la bonne bouche."

57 See Marc-Constantin, *Histoire des cafés-concerts*, p. 98, on the crowd in Le Grand Café Parisien: "Les poings crispés et l'oeil hagard, elle préconisait la *Canaille*, dont le refrain était: J'en suis! J'en suis!"

58 O. Zunz, "The Organization of the American City in the Late 19th Century," *Journal of Urban History*, August 1977, p. 465.

59 Cited in "Religion, Culture and Social Class in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Edinburgh," by R. Q. Gray, in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870–1914*, ed. G. Crossick, p. 143.

60 For example, by Gray, "Religion," pp. 147–51: "Large-scale business investment in leisure and communications media was thus associated with a transformation of popular forms, rendering them more acceptable to respectable audiences. The downward transmission of elements of high culture was another aspect of the same process." Such developments are seen by Gray as part of a complex reorganization of bourgeois hegemony, one in which a crucial separation was effected between the "lower-middle class" and its inferiors; cf. A. Mayer, "The Lower Middle Class," pp. 417–18: "Because of their high literacy, the new-fledged petits bourgeois, together with the traditional Kleinbürger—rather than the less educated industrial workers—became the first avid consumers of commercialized popular culture, made possible and profitable by ongoing advances in the technology of mass communications. Media and audience found each other. The penny press, followed by the illustrated periodical, the six-shilling book, the lantern slide, the radio, then the film, and finally television, catered to a mass audience of literate but essentially uncultivated petits bourgeois."

- 61 For the petit-bourgeois consumer of culture in the twentieth century, the available form of popular art was black American music, and that is where my notion of collective vehemence was picked up—from kinds of blues singing and shouting, from improvised ensemble playing, from Charlie Parker's way with the themes and harmonies of white popular music, from Little Richard and Fats Domino. But this kind of list is more than usually misleading here: the effect we are talking about does not for the most part lead to "masterpieces," and can be found almost anywhere, often surrounded by pure shock.
- 62 See chapter one, note 88. Compare A. Dau-mard, "Progrès et prise de conscience des classes moyennes," in Braudel, p. 777: "Studying the personnel of the Commune in 1871 one is struck by the way in which employees and workers to some extent join forces [*une certaine fonction qui s'opère entre les employés et les ouvriers*]. A phenomenon of crisis, no doubt, the causes of which are complex (economic, but also political and patriotic), but nonetheless one which deserves attention."
- 63 Vuillot and the Goncourts most insistently, but it was a constant theme. Consider, e.g., A. Chadourne, *Les Cafés-Concerts*, p. 7: "Is it having nothing better to do, or ennui, or indifference, or the pleasure of paying three francs for a glass of bad beer which makes people go in crowds to these places?"; T. Natanson, "Autour du café-concert d'été," in *Badauderies parisiennes: Les Rassemblements, physiologies de la rue*, ed. O. Uzanne, p. 143: "These people are too ordinary. Their uniform satisfaction prevents one from noticing anything about them."
- 64 Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, pp. 329–30. Compare Henry James's description of the telegraphist heroine of his "In the Cage," in *Eight Tales from the Major Phase*, p. 177: "The girl was blasée; nothing could belong more, as she perfectly knew, to the intense publicity of her profession; but she had a whimsical mind and wonderful nerves; she was subject, in short, to sudden flickers of antipathy and sympathy, red gleams in the grey, fitful needs to notice and to 'care', odd caprices of curiosity." The story was written in 1898.
- 65 The following list of criticisms is again far from complete. Items with some substantial or inter-esting discussion of *Un Bar* I have marked * (they are few), and I have also mentioned those which ignore Manet altogether.
- Anon., *Le Courrier de l'Art*, 22 June, p. 292; Anon., *La Défense Sociale et Religieuse*, 3 May; Anon. [E. Soldi], *La Nouvelle Revue* 16: 690–91; Anon., *La Paix*, 11 June; Anon., *Le Petit National* (no mention); P. Burty [unsigned], L. Adam, *Le Carillon*, 10 June; *Paul Alexis, "Avant le salon," *Le Réveil*, 1 April (a radical paper, which published on 15 May and 6 June a brilliant attack on the salon, "La Salonnerie," by Jules Vallès); P. André, *Le Petit Caporal* (no mention); Caroline de Beaulieu, *Salon de 1882: Publié dans La Mode Actuelle*, Versailles 1882, pp. 1–2; Emile Bergerat, *Le Voltaire*, 10 May; D. Bernard, *L'Univers Illustré*, 27 May, p. 326; Emile Blémont, *Le Réveil*, 13 May; Bob, *La Vie Parisienne*, 6 May, p. 270 (caricature); P. Brill, *Le Français*, 1 May (duplicate of the unattributed text in *La Défense Sociale et Religieuse*); *La République Française*, 1 May; Carolus, *Le Corsaire*, 4 May; P. de Charry, *Le Pays* (9 long articles, no mention); *Ernest Chesneau, *Annuaire illustré des Beaux-Arts: 1882*, Paris 1882, p. 223; C. Clément, *Le Journal des Débats* (no mention); *Jules Comte, *L'Illustration*, 20 May, p. 335; G. Dargenty, *La Justice* (Clemenceau's paper; no mention in 7 articles); P. Demeny, *La Jeune France*, 1 June, p. 105; Draner, "A Travers les expositions," *L'Univers Illustré*, 27 May, p. 329; E. Drumont, *La Liberté* (no mention); *Dubosc de Pesquidoux, *L'Union*, 15 June; Maurice Du Seigneur, *L'Artiste*, June, pp. 648–49; "F," *La Vie Parisienne*, 13 May, p. 282; C. de Feir, *Guide du Salon de Paris 1882*, Paris 1882, p. 23; Fichtre, "L'Actualité, avant le Salon," *Le Réveil*, 30 April (identifies *Un Bar* as "le portrait d'une des boutiquières des Folies-Bergère, Mlle Valentine"); H. Flamans, *La Vérité*, 9 June; Charles Flor, *Le National de 1869*, 10 May; J. Gautier, *Le Rappel* (no mention); A. Genevay, *Musée des Familles*, July, p. 267; Gros-Gnon, "La Revue," *L'Opinion Publique*, no. 198, May; E. Guillon, *L'Ordre*, 6 May; O. Havard, *Le Contemporain* 39: 1047–75 (no mention); A. Hepp, *Le Voltaire*, 2 May; E. Hoschedé, *Impressions de mon voyage au Salon de 1882*, Paris 1882, pp. 50–51 (pamphlet dedicated to Manet, with excellent colour plate of *Jeanne* on the cover; its entry on *Un Bar* is strikingly flimsy, concentrating on the "marvellous" painting of the fruit, flowers, flasks,

- and champagne); *Henri Houssaye, "Le Salon de 1882," in *L'Art français depuis dix ans*, Paris 1883, pp. 241–42 (originally published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*); A. Hustin, *L'Estafette*, 23 May; R. Kemp, *L'Opinion*, 29 April ("Manet, le Bar au F-B, que tout le monde s'accorde à trouver charmant"); P. Lafargue, "Les Femmes nues du Salon," *Le Citoyen*, 23 May (dazzling article by Marx's son-in-law, in Guesdist paper; no mention of Manet; cf. Vallès's "La Salonnerie"); P. Leroi, *L'Art* (no mention); L. Leroy, "La Révision du Salon de 1882," *Le Charivari*, 9 May; C. Le Senne, *Le Télégraphe*, 28 April and 2 May; Comtesse Louise, *La France Nouvelle*, 20 May; J. Mérimé, *Tableaux et statues (Salon de 1882)*, Paris 1882 (no mention); Gon-zague Privat, *L'Événement*, 30 April; Un Re-fusé, *Le Monde Parisien* (no mention); *Revue du Salon de 1882 par un comité d'artistes*, Paris 1882 (no mention); H. Rondel, *Lettres à une dame sur la peinture au Salon*, Paris 1882 (no men-tion); Saint-Juirs, *Guide critique du Salon de 1882*, Paris 1882, p. 9; A. Silvestre, *La Vie Mod-erne*, 3 June; H. de Sta, *1882 Comic-Salon*, Paris 1882, p. 31; Stop, *Le Journal Amusant*, 27 May, p. 5; Tamerlan, "Le Salon comique," *Le Clai-ron*, 13 May; M. de Thémis, *La Patrie*, 30 April, 9 May (this critic's attack on Manet and Antonin Proust elicits an anonymous letter, to which he duly replies on 15 May); Timoléon, "Notes critiques," in *1882 Comic-Salon*, by H. de Sta, p. 11; Jules Vallès (see Alexis); P. Véron, *Le Journal Amusant*, 6 May, p. 3.
- The reader may notice some rough-and-ready correlation by now between radical political leanings and approval of Manet. It does exist in 1882, though there are notable exceptions: Hoschedé's enthusiasm, though vapid, is genu-ine and untainted by politics; Clemenceau's paper, in which one might have expected to see Geffroy expatiate on Manet's modernity, keeps silence; and so on. Certainly it was com-monplace by now, and probably not mistaken, to regard Manet as a dreadful Gambettist.
- 66 Alexis: "Debout devant son comptoir, une belle fille, bien vivante, bien moderne, bien 'Folies-Bergère' par l'expression de son visage ma-quillé, se livre à son petit commerce. On la revoit de dos, dans la glace qui se trouve der-rière le comptoir; glace qui reproduit toute la salle, avec ses lustres, la foule animée et grouil-lante, et, là-bas, bien au fond, un rougeolement qui est le velours rouge des loges; glace, dans

un coin de laquelle on voit encore reflété, le visage à favoris d'un client, d'un adorateur sé-rieux peut-être, qui parle de près à la jolie vendeuse. Enfin, au premier plan, sur le comp-toir, éclate un amusant et bariolé étalage: fla-cons de liqueurs, bouteilles de champagne, mandarines sur une coupe en cristal, fleurs dans une verre, etc., le tout rendu comme Manet sait rendre les natures-mortes.

"Telle sera, pour moi, la grande curiosité du Salon, la plus exactement moderne et la plus typique des oeuvres exposées. Peut-être, et je ne crois pas me tromper en le lui prédisant, Manet va-t-il obtenir, en outre, un succès de public au moins égal à celui du *Bon Bock*" (the latter had been shown in the 1873 Salon, to a generally favourable reception).

- 67 Gon-zague Privat's unkind description of the Pertuiset picture, which showed the hunter with the carcass of a lion: "Le Bar des Folies-Bergère, de Manet, est autrement intéressant. Quelle re-vanche du Pertuiset assasinant sa descende de lit au désert." (This is Privat's only mention of Manet in a series of twenty-five articles!) Sev-eral others critics in 1882 made jokes about the Pertuiset portrait and Proust's efforts for his friend; see, e.g., de Thémis, Timoléon, Ge-nevay. On the Pertuiset picture, see E. Dar-ragon, "Manet et la mort foudroyante," *Avant-Guerre*, no. 2 (1981). (My thanks to Theodore Reff for this reference.)
- 68 Comte: "Une jeune femme debout au comptoir d'un bar; devant elle les divers flacons et bou-telles qui attendent le consommateur; derrière, une glace dans laquelle se reflète la salle, et au premier plan, la figure d'un habitué qu'on aper-çoit causant avec la même femme vue de dos, voilà le sujet, que nous prenons tel qu'il nous est donné, sans le discuter. Mais ce qui nous frappe tout d'abord, c'est que cette fameuse glace, indispensable à l'intelligence de tous ces reflets et de toutes ces perspectives, n'existe pas: M. Manet n'a-t-il pas su la faire, ou bien a-t-il trouvé que l'impression était suffisante? Nous n'aurons garde de répondre à cette question; nous notons seulement ce fait, que tout le ta-bleau se passe dans une glace, et qu'il n'y a pas de glace. Quant aux incorrections de dessin, quant à l'insuffisance absolue de la figure de la femme qui est, en somme, le seul personnage, quant au manque de correspondance entre les objets reflétés et leur image, nous n'insisterons pas; ce sont lacunes familières à MM. les im-

pressionnistes, qui ont d'excellentes raisons pour traiter de haut le dessin, le modelé et la perspective. Du moins, nous avions toujours entendu raconter que le premier mérite de M. Manet avait été de montrer les hommes et les choses avec leur couleur vraie, dans l'atmosphère qui les environne; voyons comment ce beau principe est appliqué ici: le bar et la salle sont éclairés par deux globes de lumière électrique, de cette lumière blanche et aveuglante qu'on sait; or M. Manet a probablement choisi le moment où les appareils ne fonctionnaient pas, car jamais on ne vit lumière moins éclatante, les deux globes de verre dépoli ont l'air de lanternes aperçues au travers d'un brouillard d'hiver." Comte stresses that he has deliberately restricted himself to observations "qui portent sur des faits, non sur des appréciations"—see my discussion in the text.

69 Dubosc de Pesquidoux (this entry is worth quoting as a whole, coming as it does from an intelligent Catholic critic who had had his say in 1865): "M. Manet, qui a fondé sa réputation en renchérissant sur Courbet, se distingue dans le débordement actuel du réalisme, non par la supériorité du sujet, mais par l'excentricité de la facture et les bizarreries de l'exécution. Sa dame de comptoir au *Bar des Folies-Bergère* est une de ces amusantes fantaisies ou gageures dont l'auteur a le monopole. Vêtue d'un corsage bleu, faisant face aux chalands, elle se reflète dans la glace posée derrière son dos et cause avec un interlocuteur qu'on ne voit, lui, que dans le miroir. On juge de l'effet de ce trio d'images ainsi groupé. Rondement bossée, d'un cachet local irréprochable, cette dame de comptoir arrête tout le monde. Debout, ses cheveux blonds coupés ras sur le front, les mains appuyées contre la table, au milieu de bocaux, de bouteilles et de coupes remplies d'oranges, elle ressort sur le fourmillement des spectateurs. La lumière toutefois est tellement indécise qu'il est difficile de distinguer si elle est produite par le jour ou des flambeaux. Mais la réalité est pour ainsi dire palpable.

"La foule du fond, assise dans les galeries, ébauchées à la façon des tauromachies de Goya, s'agit et revit avec une étonnante intensité. En somme, le tableau, qui est une espèce de fantasmagorie picturale, obtient un joli succès de curiosité, et le mérite." The persistence of terms in the discourse on Manet is striking (Realism, Goya, "fantaisie," irreproachable grasp of par-

ticular tones and local colours), as is the modification of their overall meaning. The conjunction of "palpable reality" and "pictorial phantasmagoria" would have pleased Walter Benjamin.

70 Le Senne, 2 May: "Les mêmes Philistins se sont livrés hier à des plaisanteries d'un goût douteux devant les *Folies-Bergère* de M. Manet, mais l'impression générale a été excellente.

"La marchande, sa toilette collante faisant ressortir une anatomie médiocre et d'autant plus parisienne, sa coiffure basse, le miroitement du regard, la tension des bras, tout cela est d'une observation profonde et d'un heureux rendu. Ce qui reste condamnable et surtout regrettable, c'est la tonalité bleuâtre et trouble. La lumière de l'école Manet est une bulle d'eau de savon tamisant un rayon de lumière électrique."

71 Du Seigneur (follows a description of Ernest Duez's picture *Autour de la lampe*): "Ce tranquille intérieur bourgeois inspirera plus d'un François Coppée; la famille c'est excellent, mais on n'est pendu pour aller recueillir quelques documents humains ou féminins aux *Folies-Bergère*—*Le Bar* par M. Manet nous donne presque envie d'y aller, un de ces soirs, pour comprendre, sur nature, la vérité du reflet de la salle, dans la glace. Je ne nierai pas que M. Manet ne soit dans le vrai; la demoiselle de comptoir, avec ses cheveux coupés sur le front, son air embêté, les fioles de Champagne, les bouteilles de liqueurs multicolores, les oranges en pile, les sucres de pommes en faisceau, sont pris sur nature... mais ce diable de reflet nous donne à réfléchir—"C'est crânement peint tout de même! N'est-ce pas?"

72 Feir: "Manet: Effet de glace difficile à comprendre; la tête de la femme assez-agréable."

73 E. Bergerat: "Voilà une chose vue, sincère, nouvelle et qui secoue nos routines! D'ailleurs la belle fille en robe noire-bleue qui tient le comptoir est excellentement dessinée, modelée sur un beau ton local, franche de coloris, naturelle de pose et tout pleine de caractère. Que vous faut-il donc? La plantation du tableau? Je n'en sais pas de plus spirituelle. J'accorde que l'effet de reflet dans la glace ne se comprend pas du premier coup. Mais quelle loi en art décriée que les effets doivent être saisis et perçus dès l'abord? Je suis demeuré trois jours à Amsterdam sans rien voir à la *Ronde de nuit*. Vous

peuvez bien donner trois minutes à Manet."

74 See Le Senne, 28 April: "La composition est originale et le rendu charmant. Une femme devant un comptoir; et, dans une glace, le théâtre venant se peindre tout entier. . . ." The blithe tone was widespread in 1882.

75 Stop: "(Son dos se reflète dans une glace; mais, sans doute par suite d'une distraction du peintre, un monsieur avec lequel elle cause et dont on voit l'image dans la glace, n'existe pas dans le tableau—Nous croyons devoir réparer cette omission.)"

76 Flor: "*Le Bar aux Folies-Bergère* est intéressant et ingénieux. La marchande est vue de face, et l'on aperçoit derrière elle, dans la glace à laquelle elle est adossée, toute la salle avec ses spectateurs, son mouvement pressé des poutours, ses lumières aveuglantes. La femme est bien campée, dans un mouvement naturel un peu brutal. Les premiers plans sont tenus par des natures mortes magistralement traitées."

77 Beaulieu: "En France ce qui est ridicule ne dure pas. Aussi est-on frappé du petit nombre des toiles amidonnées de l'école impressionniste, dont le chef a daigné prendre le crayon et dessiner les accessoires du *Bar aux Folies-Bergères* [sic]; M. Manet lui-même a vraiment peint avec une sûreté et une vérité de ton remarquables, de nombreuses fioles fort bien distribuées, et une corbeille de mandarines très réussie; la marchande en est tellement surprise qu'elle en est paralysée sur place. L'an prochain, les figures de M. Manet auront le mouvement et la grâce, croyez bien que cet artiste peindra comme l'*École*, maintenant qu'il est décoré."

78 Bergerat; see note 73 above.

79 Du Seigneur; see note 71 above.

80 Le Senne; see note 70 above.

81 Houssaye: "Il paraît que ce tableau représente un *bar* des *Folies-Bergère*; que cette robe bleu criard [sic], surmontée d'une tête de carton comme on en voyait jadis aux vitrines des modistes, représente une femme; que ce mannequin aux formes indécises et à la face sabrée de trois coups de brosse représente un homme, et que ce moignon qui tient une canne représente une main. Il paraît encore que les ombres vacillantes qui s'agitent dans le fond, devant la façade du nouvel Opéra, avec des ballons flottant au-dessus d'eux, représentent, réfléchis par une glace, le public des *Folies-Bergère*, la scène

où s'exercent les gymnastes et les globes de lumière électrique. Nous serions bien tenté de feindre la foi du charbonnier et de passer tout de suite à une autre toile. Mais on nous dirait que notre critique n'est pas sérieuse. Comme si la peinture de M. Manet était sérieuse. De bonne foi, faut-il admirer la face plate et plâtreuse de la *bar-girl*, son corsage sans relief, sa couleur offensante? Faut-il admettre que le peintre a réussi, au moyen d'un peu de poussière blanche épanchée sur le dos de la jeune femme, à donner l'illusion d'une scène réfléchie dans une glace? Ce tableau est-il vrai? Non. Est-il beau? Non. Est-il séduisant? Non. Mais alors qu'est-il?"

82 Chesneau (again worth quoting in full: the comparison with 1865 is interesting; by now a reading of Manet's art as essentially concerned not with "subject" but "vision" has been confidently stabilized, and it allows Chesneau to be quite pleased—as pleased as he is brief—about the former): "Ceux qui redoutent comme nous les niaiseries et les fadeurs où mène infailliblement la recherche des 'sujets distingués' en peinture, sont servis à souhait en ce dernier tableau de M. Manet. Il n'est pas permis d'être plus 'fille' que la créature installée par l'artiste derrière le marbre du bar chargé de fruit et de fiocons. Ce n'est pas en quoi nous voyons l'essentiel mérite de son oeuvre. Ce mérite est dans la juste vision des choses, de leur coloration, de leur vibration lumineuse, de leur apparence ondoyante et passante si fugitive, si rapide. Là est le triomphe de M. Manet; il n'immobilise pas les formes, comme le fait M. Béraud en des sujets analogues, il les surprend en leur effective mobilité, et l'on ne garde pas de ses tableaux une impression plus arrêtée, plus nette que de la réalité en mouvement. C'est une formule d'art très neuve, très personnelle, très piquante, conquête directe de l'artiste sur le monde des phénomènes extérieurs et qui ne sera point perdue pour l'avenir. . . ." Modernist discourse has arrived: the stab at prophecy in the last sentence sounds the distinctive note.

83 Tamerlan: "Une jeune personne préposée au bar—en français buffet—prend une figure des plus innocentes pour faire croire qu'elle ne sait pas que sa soeur jumelle s'en fait conter derrière elle, par un monsieur calé.—Hypocrisie! Tu te glisse donc jusque dans le sanctuaire des plaisirs faciles! s'écrie M. Joseph Prudhomme."

84 Saint-Juirs: "La jeune personne qui tient ga-

lamment ce bar, fait face au public. Elle a derrière elle une grande glace, où se reflète sa personne d'abord, puis celle du monsieur avec lequel elle flirte; puis, enfin, toutes les premières galeries, et la base du lustre. Tout cela vibre et tremble dans la glace." Compare Alexis's similar tone. Even Emile Blémont's description of the woman as "la fille de comptoir" probably was meant to carry some such message; see note 90 below for the "dame de comptoir's" reputation.

85 Paul Alexis, *Le Figaro*, 12 March 1881; cited in *Nana*, by Emile Zola, p. 439: "Avec *Nana*, l'auteur des Rougon-Macquart se retrouvait dans son élément: en plein casse-coul Camper debout la 'fille' moderne, produit de notre civilisation avancée, agent destructeur des hautes classes; écrire une page de l'histoire éternellement humaine de la courtisane; montrer, dans une sorte de chapelle ardente, au fond d'un tabernacle, le sexe de la femme et autour, un peuple d'hommes, prosternés, ruinés, vidés ou abêtis: tel était son sujet." It is worth pointing out that Zola's fiction is one of the few things we know Manet read. H. Mitterand notes an unpublished letter from him to Zola in early August 1876, saying he is reading *L'Assommoir* in *La République des Lettres* and finds it "épantant." See Emile Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, 2:1663. Apart from *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, the only other book I am aware Manet mentioned is another detective story, Pierre-Alexis Ponson du Terrail's *Exploits de Rocambole*, which he declared "extraordinaire" in a letter to Mallarmé, 1882 (in *Vie de Mallarmé*, by H. Mondor, p. 422). Mallarmé in turn mentions that Manet read Rousseau's *Confessions* (Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 2:231).

86 Baedeker, *Paris and Its Environs*, p. 56.

87 Guy de Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*, p. 16. The list of types should be given in French: "Il y a de tout, de toutes les professions et de toutes les castes, mais la crapule domine. Voici des employés, employés de banque, de magasin, de ministère, des reporters, des souteneurs, des officiers en bourgeois, des goumeux en habit. . ."

88 Robert Caze, "Dame du Matin," in *Paris Vivant*, pp. 153-54: "Maintenant qu'elle est dans la rue sale et toute grise de brouillard, elle se remémore un à un les incidents de la soirée passée, la veille, aux Folies-Bergères [sic] où elle a fait son petit persil au milieu d'un tas de

grues allemandes qui hachent de la paille avec des juifs et des jeunes gens, commis dans les maisons de gros de la rue Hauteville. Ça l'a bassinée, ce monde-là. Elle ne les aime pas les Allemands. Vrai! il fera chaud quand on la repincera aux Folies."

89 C. Virmaître, *Trottoirs et lupanars*, p. 115; cited in *Les Filles de noce*, by A. Corbin, p. 209: "le promenoir du bas, autrement dit le Marché aux Veaux, est une foire permanente de putains."

90 For instance, in 1877; an article by "E. F." in *La Revue Parisienne*, 23 November 1877, says that the new owners of the establishment aim to change the *côté moral*: "il tend à donner moins d'importance à ses promenades." The writer is confident that this will soon render outdated a story entitled "Une Soirée aux Folies-Bergère," published in the same journal, in which a Milord Williams had encountered a variety of *filles*—including "les dames de comptoir." There is no evidence that the new proprietors were successful.

91 *Guide secrets de l'étranger célibataire à Paris*, p. 4: "célèbre par ses promenades, son jardin, ses attractions toujours nouvelles et son public de jolies femmes." This guide, published in Brussels, is essentially a list of brothels.

92 Eugène Manet records his brother's workings and reworkings in a letter to Berthe Morisot in April 1882 (in *Correspondance de Berthe Morisot avec sa famille et ses amis*, ed. D. Rouart, p. 107): "Il se prépare un four pénible à l'Exposition. Il refait toujours le même tableau: une femme dans un café. . ."

93 Maupassant, *Bel-Ami*, p. 16.

94 See the critics' insistence on such facts: Du Seigneur, Alexis, Houssaye, Le Senne.

95 On Degas's interest in physiognomy, see Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind*, pp. 217-20; Theodore Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas*, 1:117 (notebook 23, p. 44, on Lavater), 1:139-40, and 2: notebook 33, head of criminal, caricatures, etc. Compare Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture: A propos du groupe d'artistes qui expose dans la Galerie Durand-Ruel*, and M. Crouzet, *Un Méconnu du réalisme: Duranty (1833-1880), L'Homme—Le Critique—Le Romancier*, pp. 331-44, on relations between Degas and Duranty in 1876; pp. 248-49 and 456-57 on Duranty's 1867 article "Sur la physiognomie." As late as the sixth Impressionist ex-

hibition, in 1881, Degas showed two "physiognomic" studies of criminals.

Conclusion

1 Camille Lemonnier, *Les Peintres de la vie*, p. 211: "Aucun d'eux ne paraît posséder le sens du tableau. Ils font des fragments; ils s'en tiennent à des certaines spécialités d'observation; ils ne sont familiarisés qu'avec de certains coins de l'humanité, les plus saillants par leur corruption étalée. Ils ont surtout la sensation de la femme malsaine. Il y a d'eux d'effroyables gesticulations de filles perdues. Ils hantent volontiers les exaspérés. Qu'ils prennent garde: ceci encore est une des formes de la virtuosité. Les fonds troubles auxquels ils s'attardent ont des côtés excessifs plus faciles à faire et d'un effet plus accessible que la simple ordonnance de la vie bourgeoise, si ardue à exprimer par cela qu'elle est sans surprises."

2 Willem de Kooning, "Content Is a Glimpse," *Location*, Spring 1963, pp. 45-48: "Content, if you want to say, is a glimpse of something, an encounter, you know, like a flash. It's very tiny—very tiny, content."

3 See Harrison and Cynthia White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, chap. 5.

4 Louis Barron, *Les Environs de Paris*, p. 30: "L'île de la Grande-Jatte, sans être un Eden champêtre, offre à la jeunesse parisienne des charmes que celle-ci est loin de dédaigner. Les jours fériés, les dimanches, un bal, dont la splendeur rivalise avec le luxe de l'Elysée-Montmartre, y retentit d'accords interminables, on y fait sur le sol dénudé des repas que l'on croit manger sur l'herbe, et de quilles fleurissent à la place des arbres absents."

5 *L'Illustration*, 15 June 1878, pp. 390-91: "C'est dans l'île de la Grande-Jatte, entre Neuilly et Asnières, que M. Jourdain est allé comparer les promeneurs du dimanche et ceux du lundi, nous apercevons les premiers, nombreux et endimanchés, qui circulent le long de la berge, tandis que dans l'île les favorisés de la fortune ont trouvé plus d'ombre et de solitude. Le gracieux canot d'acajou a été tiré sur l'herbe; on en a enlevé les coussins pour asseoir les dames qui redoutaient l'humidité pour leurs robes neuves; puis on a sorti les provisions, on a étalé

une grande nappe sur l'herbe verte, on a ouvert le pâté réglementaire et décoiffé les bouteilles cachetées.

"On venait de loin, l'appétit était vif; on a fait honneur au déjeuner. . . Mais le dessert a ses surprises: voici l'un des canotiers qui revient du bateau portant triomphalement deux bouteilles de champagne; on a encore le droit d'avoir soif. . ."

"Employés et commis sont rentrés au bureau et au magasin: nous sommes au jour de l'ouvrier. Le champagne de la veille a fait place au petit vin d'Argenteuil; on ne s'étend plus follement sur l'herbe, on se groupe devant de mauvaises tables, sur les bancs du cabaret.

"Les gens de la veille se sentaient le droit de s'amuser; les amateurs du lundi sont soucieux; le souvenir de l'atelier hante leur esprit; les reproches qui les attendent gênent la franchise de leur bonne humeur; il faudra vider plusieurs litres encore pour éloigner ces fantômes fâcheux."

The caption writer ends, incidentally, by describing the pictures' success in the salon, and claiming they are "appréciées par ceux du dimanche et par ceux du lundi." I owe this reference to Joan Weinstein, who presented pictures and caption in a paper to a graduate seminar at UCLA in 1975. The pictures, minus captions, were later reproduced in J. House's "Meaning in Seurat's Figure Painting," *Art History*, September 1980.

6 See the discussion of *saint lundi* in M. Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève: France 1871-1890*, 2:225-29.

7 P. Lelièvre, *Les Ateliers de Paris*, 1865, p. 35, cited in Perrot, *Les Ouvriers*, 2:226. (Lelièvre was a carpenter.)

8 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

9 Of the criticisms I cite, one (Christophe) is not included in the valuable bibliography and collection of extracts in Henri Dorra and John Rewald, *Seurat: L'Oeuvre peint, biographie et catalogue critique*; two others (Ajalbert and Adam) are included but not cited. To this extent Dorra and Rewald's treatment somewhat underestimates the critics' interest in 1886 in the social detail of Seurat's painting, though it is clear that by this date a deliberate overlooking or downplaying of such detail is an established avant-garde critical strategy. Félix Fénelon and Emile Verhaeren employ it, but not Christophe and Ajalbert.