and January 1969; I wouldn’t be surprised if the reader came to feel that some of the emotional climate of that devastating year made its way into the writing. Among the debts I acknowledged when “Manet’s Sources” first appeared were to Stanley Cavell (who read and discussed it with me as it was drafted), Wassily Leontief and the Harvard Society of Fellows (I had been a junior fellow between 1964 and 1968), James S. Ackerman, Frederick Deknatel, and Sydney J. Freedberg of the Harvard University Department of Fine Arts, Philip Leider (then editor of *Artforum*), and Marie-Hélène Gold (who helped with translations from the French). I also noted that I owed my first acquaintance with the art of Manet to my parents, who frequently took me to the Metropolitan Museum of Art when I was small. My memories of *Mlle V… in the Costume of an Espada* in particular go far, far back.

“Manet’s Sources” was originally dedicated to Stanley Cavell. However, in 1987 I dedicated my book *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* to Cavell, which leaves me free to assign this one to two particular friends: John Harbison and, in memoriam, Louis Marin.

Buskirk, N.Y.

July 31, 1994

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**Introduction: Manet before Impressionism**

The French painter Édouard Manet, by common agreement the pivotal figure in the modern history of painting, was born January 23, 1832, in Paris to a distinguished high bourgeois family that hoped he would follow the law.¹ But his vocation was undeniable, and in 1850, at the age of eighteen, he entered the studio of Thomas Couture (b. 1815), one of the leading painters of the day and a highly successful teacher. (Couture had been a student of Antoine-Jean Gros, who had studied with Jacques-Louis David; Manet’s artistic lineage, the fact that he was only two generations removed from the founder of the modern French school, is not without significance.) Manet’s first biographer, his boyhood friend Antonin Proust, tells of numerous clashes with Couture,² but Manet remained with his teacher six years, after which he traveled extensively visiting European museums in preparation for embarking on his own independent career. In 1859 *The Absinthe Drinker*, a painting Manet came to regard as too indecent to Couture in its execution, was rejected by the Salon jury. Two years later, however, *Le Guaiterrero* was accepted for the Salon of 1861, where it was praised by Théophile Gautier and where it made a powerful impression on a group of Manet’s painter contemporaries. But it was between 1862 and 1865 that Manet fully broke through to the first phase of his mature accomplishment (I think of those years as his anni mirabiles). In close succession there followed paintings such as *The Old Musician* (1862), *The Street Singer* (1865), *The Gypsies* (1862; subsequently cut down and all but destroyed by Manet himself), *Lola de Valence* (1862), *The Spanish Ballet* (1862). *Music in the Tuileries* (1862), *Mlle V… in the Costume of an Espada* (1862), *Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe* (1862-63), *Olympia* (painted in 1863 but exhibited in the Salon of 1865), *Young Man in the Costume of a Majo* (1863), *Episode in a Bullfight* (1864; afterward cut down to make *The Dead Torero*), *The Angels at the Tomb of Christ* (1864), *View of a Race in the Bois de Boulogne* (1864);
another largely destroyed work), Battle of the Kearsarge and the Alabama (1864), and Christ Mocked (1865)—a remarkable series of highly original works that quickly established Manet’s reputation as the leader of a new generation even as they drew down on him a sustained barrage of critical and journalistic obloquy that continually caught him off guard. The abuse came to a head with the exhibition of Olympia and Christ Mocked in the Salon of 1865. In the late summer of that year Manet made a brief visit to Madrid to look at the Spanish pictures at the Prado; and during the next few years he produced a number of brilliant single-figure paintings, including the Woman with a Parrot and The Balcony (both 1866), manifestly under the inspiration of Velázquez. In 1867, coinciding with the Exposition Universelle, Manet held a one-man show of his work to date, and once again the response was mainly negative. But the years 1866–68 also saw the appearance in print of Manet’s best-known critical champion, the young Émile Zola, whose insistence on the artistic irrelevance of considerations of subject matter and whose praise of Manet’s technique of painting by “colored patches” sketched the terms in which Manet would eventually be assimilated to the history of modern art. Among Manet’s major paintings of the later 1860s are the Mannheim Execution of Maximilian (1868–69); the project for that painting dates to the summer of 1867), Portrait of Émile Zola (1868), Déjeuner (1868, which I will call The Luncheon in the Studio to distinguish it from the Déjeuner sur l’herbe), and The Balcony (1868–69); I see the last two works in particular as marking a return to the more-than-single-figure compositional type of his pre-Madrid oeuvre, and I also see in them a renewed engagement with a set of pictorial issues that the single-figure canvases had placed somewhat in abeyance.

The 1870s began with the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of Napoleon III, the siege of Paris during which Manet served in the forces of defense, followed by the founding of the Third Republic and the bloody suppression of the Commune—events that, taken together, made a violent caesura in French cultural life. Early in the decade Manet enjoyed one of his rare public successes with the exhibition in the Salon of 1872 of Le Bon Bock. (That year too the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel bought more than twenty works by Manet, to widespread astonishment.) But Manet’s more ambitious and challenging new pictures—for instance, Le Chemin de fer (1873), Argenteuil (1874), Le Linge (1875), Nana (1877), At Père Laahulie’s (1879), In the Conservatory (1879), and his culminating masterpiece, A Bar at the Folies-Bergère (1881–82)—continued to meet critical resistance, though he also gradually won over various critics who for years had been hostile, and increasingly writers who were full of reservations about his art conceded that his shrewd painterly skills were not in question and that his influence on contemporary painting was already profound. Among the younger artists Manet was correctly believed to have influenced were Claude Monet, Pierre Renoir, and Berthe Morisot, all of whom belonged to the group known as the Impressionists. In fact their formative exposure to his work took place in the mid- and later 1860s, when they were still in their twenties; by the early 1870s the situation had grown more complex as Manet responded in turn to aspects of their practice, above all to their emphasis on painting out of doors, en plein air, in natural light. Despite his interest in and support for the work of the younger painters, however, Manet declined to participate in any of the group exhibitions that they held independently of the Salon at various intervals starting in 1874; instead he chose to go on striving for recognition within the official Salon, with all the likelihood of disappointment that that entailed. By the late 1870s Manet was suffering from the effects of syphilis; in search of relief, he pursued a dangerous course of treatment—doses of ergot de seigle—that led to circulation problems and finally to gangrene in one leg. Toward the end of April 1883 the leg was amputated, and on April 30, at the age of fifty-one, Manet died in convulsions.

The growth of Manet’s posthumous reputation began with the memorial exhibition of 1884 and continues to this day. Major milestones include the retrospective exhibitions of 1932 and 1983 (the centenaries of his birth and death), and of course he has been the subject of an enormous mass of art-historical scholarship, which has accreted dramatically during the past thirty years. There is no need to summarize that scholarship, or even to invoke its principal themes; suffice it to say that we now possess a vast fund of information about Manet’s life and work. But I shall argue—it is the point of this book to show—that we have yet to grasp the specificity and complexity of his aims during the 1860s and especially during the first half of that decade, the short but absolutely critical span of years which will be my particular focus. I have reason to think that this view will not easily win general acceptance. In March 1969, fresh out of graduate school, I published a monograph, “Manet’s Sources: Aspects of His Art, 1859–1865,” as a special issue of a magazine of contemporary art, Artforum. There I put forward an interpretation of the meaning of one of the most puzzling features of
Manet's paintings of the 1860s: the obviously intended allusions, in many of his most important canvases, to works of earlier art, mainly paintings and engravings after paintings by the Old Masters. Without wishing to rehearse my conclusions here, I will say that I saw Manet's enterprise as aiming to secure, by a strategy of more or less conspicuous allusion to or citation of particular "sources," first, the essential "Frenchness" of his own work, and second, going beyond "Frenchness," what I described as a kind of "universality"—a relation of something like connectedness with the entire history of European painting before his time. I also argued that Manet's conception of "Frenchness" was based on a particular canon of "authentic" French masters, one I associated chiefly with the writings of the eminent art critic and pioneer art historian Théophile Thoré. And I went on to link Manet's concern with nationality with the art and thought of his teacher Couture, and, at a further remove, with the historical and political writings of Jules Michelet. Six months later, also in Artforum, my study was subjected to a raking critique by one of the leading Manet scholars of the generation senior to mine, Professor Theodore Reff of Columbia University, after which both "Manet's Sources" and I were widely regarded as left for dead. In time I managed to resuscitate myself. But with rare exceptions (notably Kermit Champa and T. J. Clark), scholars who have written on Manet and related topics during the past two decades have refused even to consider the possibility that the vision of his art put forward in "Manet's Sources" deserved to be taken seriously—as if the very questions I addressed were so fanciful or misconceived as to lie outside the pale of legitimate art-historical inquiry. One impulse at work in this book is therefore a desire to persuade the reader otherwise, though I hasten to add that I am much less interested in justifying my early monograph, which indeed is flawed, than in correcting, refining, amplifying, and enriching it in ways that were altogether beyond the scope of my understanding twenty-five years ago.

Several further points should be stressed. There are numerous reasons why art historians in the late 1960s found "Manet's Sources" scarcely intelligible, but one nontrivial source of difficulty had to do with its partial dependence upon an account of the evolution of painting in France from Chardin and Greuze through Millot and Courbet (i.e. from the middle of the eighteenth century until the 1860s) that I had not yet written. I already saw Manet's masterworks of the first half of the 1860s as the climactic stage of a long historical development the central issue of which concerned the relation of a painting to its beholders. But I was able only to allude to such a development—which at that time I only partly understood—in several much too condensed and obscure footnotes. In the years that followed I set out to make up for that lack, I began by going back to the mid-eighteenth century and, in Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (1980), interpreting the painting of Chardin, Greuze, Carle Van Loo, Vien, Joseph Vernet, Fragonard, Hubert Robert, early David, and others in the light of the art criticism and theory of the period (and vice versa: the art criticism and theory stood in need of interpretation fully as much as the painting). More recently, in Courbet's Realism (1990), I surveyed the various strategies with respect to the beholder adopted by David, Gros, Géricault, Daumier, Delaroche, Millet, and the photographer Dideron, before going on to explore the structure of beholding in the paintings of Manet's immediate predecessor, the self-proclaimed Realist Gustave Courbet. The last chapter of Courbet's Realism characterizes Manet's art as standing in a relation of dialectical reversal or opposition to Courbet's art as regards the issue of beholding, and although I continue to believe that that view is basically right, one of my aims in this book will be to redescribe that relation in less general, more thickly contextual terms.

Another sort of contrast between Courbet and Manet will help clarify my present project: whereas in Courbet's Realism I emphasize Courbet's singularity relative to his contemporaries (within painting, at any rate), in this book I insist on the importance of seeing Manet as belonging to and, up to a point, as representative of a particular generation of painters. There are two main reasons why this basic fact about his life and work has tended to be overlooked. First, Manet's generation visibly cohered as such only for a short span of time. And second, it was immediately followed by the much longer lived and both stylistically and ideologically far more cohesive generation of the Impressionists, whose breathtakingly simplified vision of their art proved remarkably influential not just on other painters but also on critics, amateurs, art historians—on the entire world of painting, including portions of it that were hostile to the new work. Indeed the simplifying import of the Impressionist vision, in combination with Manet's quick response to the younger painters' plein-airisme, tended from the outset to cast Manet in the role of the first Impressionist—some critics described him as the movement's chef de file—which is to say in the role of the first truly radical simplifier. (The designation stuck. Thus we find Henri Matisse saying in 1932: "Manet is the first painter who immediately translated his sensations, thereby liberating his in-
strict. He was the first to act by reflexes and thus simplify the painter's métier." And in general what might be called the formalist-modernist view of Manet follows these lines.] But this also meant that when, on Manet's death in 1883 and on the occasion of the posthumous exhibition of January 1884, a cluster of appreciative articles finally appeared, the works that tended to be singled out for praise were the "impressionist" canvases of the 1870s and 1880s, while the paintings of the 1860s that twentieth-century scholarship has chiefly equated with his modernism, notably the Déjeuner sur l'herbe and Olympia, were often ignored or criticized.13 (Matisse himself felt that the latter was not one of Manet's best works.)14 In other words, the appreciation of Manet's revolutionary achievement—"the appreciation, and perhaps also the constitution, of it as revolutionary"—took place in reverse order, under the sign of Impressionism and the transformation of painting and the seeing of painting that it brought about. "If Manet has suffered for Impressionism," Albert Pinard shrewdly wrote in 1884, "it is by Impressionism that he must triumph."15 Viewed in those terms, it's altogether fitting that the campaign to buy Olympia and present it as a gift to the state so that it could be hung in the Louvre was spearheaded by the foremost Impressionist painter, Monet.16 As the connoisseur and critic (also formerly a close friend of Manet) Théodore Duret wrote to Monet in 1886 apropos that campaign, "What a singular thing! It will be you who will make the gap through which Manet will pass, although it was he who was the precursor. Your work coming later finds the terrain better prepared; then too Manet was a figure painter and there the terrible academic convention and le poncif [the hackneyed treatment of gesture and expression] reign and will always reign supreme."17 In fact I would go further and suggest that the lasting triumph of Impressionism (the most durably successful movement in the history of modern painting) has meant that our usual understanding of Manet's modernism, perhaps of modernist painting generally, is so thoroughly saturated by Impressionist values and assumptions as to confront the art historian who wishes to recover the pictorial meaning of Manet's art before Impressionism—"before" both chronologically and interpretatively—with an especially difficult task. I shall have more to say about the Impressionist vision of Manet (and of painting) later. For the moment let me state that I shall be operating throughout on the belief (I already was operating on it in "Manet's Sources") that our best chance of clarifying the pre-Impressionist meaning of Manet's art is by exploring the larger issues at stake in "advanced" French painting in the 1860s, that is, in the artistic and discursive community to which Manet belonged. This will involve detailed consideration of the work of other members of his generation, and it will also lead me to appeal extensively to the art criticism of the period, which is rich in hints that can be used.18 (My approach will be closer to that of Absorption and Theatricality than to that of Courbet's Realism, in which contemporary criticism plays a minor role.)

Here I need to give Manet's generation a name: I shall call it the generation of 1865, in honor of the occasion of its most visible manifestation, the notorious Salon des Refusés of that year. In addition to Manet (b. 1832), the generation comprised Henri Fantin-Latour (b. 1836), James McNeill Whistler (b. 1834), and Alphonse Legros (b. 1837). (Legros, exceptionally talented and one of the most interesting painters and etchers in France in the late 1850s and early 1860s, has almost disappeared from the history of art; in chapter 3 I shall make a case for his importance.) All four men are represented in the most important surviving pictorial document of their association, Fantin-Latour's group portrait, *Homage to Eugène Delacroix* (1864, pl. 1).19 I shall want to look at this work again, but a preliminary viewing will help get us under way.

In the first place, three of the four artists just mentioned—Whistler (standing to the left of the portrait of Delacroix), Fantin (seated to his left and wearing a white shirt), and Legros (standing behind Fantin)—are grouped together on one side of the canvas while Manet (to the right of the portrait) stands apart from them on the other side. This reflects the fact that Fantin, Whistler, and Legros had been close friends since the late 1840s (Fantin and Legros went back earlier than that), while Manet had come to be seen by them as sharing their vision of painting only in 1861, the year his *Guérinero* was exhibited in the Salon. (Fantin and Legros were the two leaders among the painters who were so impressed by the *Guérinero* that they went as a group to Manet's studio to make his acquaintance.)20 In any case, the compositional distance between Manet and the others is telling, as is Manet's prominence relative to all the other painters except Whistler, whom Fantin admired and whose flamboyant, temperamental personality would have made him a natural rival to Manet had he remained in France. Whistler and Legros moved permanently to London in 1863, however, and although both continued to sub-
mit paintings to the Salon the seeds of dissension had been sown. A few years later Whistler ended his friendship with Legros, and in 1867 in a letter to Fantin he repudiated realism and expressed the wish that he had been a student of Ingres rather than an admirer of Courbet. For his part, Fantin became increasingly reclusive, sending paintings to the Salon but otherwise leaving Manet alone in the public arena. (Note, by the way, that the figure of Fantin in the Homage holds a palette, not a paintbrush, in his right hand. Fantin himself was right-handed, and eventually we shall want to understand the meaning of this seeming lapse.)

Just to the left of Manet and below the portrait of Delacroix sits a somewhat older figure, Champfleury (Jules Husson). Champfleury had been Courbet’s first critical champion in the late 1840s and 1850s; he was also a novelist, journalist, and art historian who had recently published a monograph on the Le Nain brothers, seventeenth-century French realist painters from his native town of Laon. Equally to the point, he had recognized Legros’s abilities as early as 1857, when the latter exhibited his Portrait of the Artist’s Father in the Salon of that year (Legros was then just twenty). As regards the overall symbolism of Fantin’s composition, the presence of Champfleury signals an allegiance to realism, and in fact Manet, Fantin, Whistler, and Legros all thought of themselves as realists and regarded Courbet’s Burial at Ornans (1849–50) and related works as marking an epoch in the history of their art. But none of them was merely a follower of Courbet and the Homage is something more than a tribute to his example. For we find seated at the lower right, just in front and to the side of Manet, another poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire, who by the mid-1850s had come to deplore what seemed to him the positivist and materialist—in his lexicon the anti-imaginative—nature of Courbet’s Realism but who had never ceased to call for painting that would represent modern life, and who in the early 1860s had supported Manet, Whistler, and Legros both privately and in print. (Baudelaire’s friendship with Manet is legendary. By April 1864 he was living in Brussels, where he had moved in a quixotic attempt to escape his Parisian creditors and perhaps recoup his fortunes by arranging for the publication of various works and by giving a series of lectures on contemporary French art and literature. Not surprisingly, his various projects came to nothing. In March 1866, ill with syphilis, he suffered a stroke and several months later was brought back to Paris with diminished faculties. He died there on August 31, 1867.) Even more difficult to square with realism as it was then understood, Fantin’s canvas memorializes the Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix, who had died the year before, and thus asserts a relationship of affiliation between the Romanticism of 1830 and the young realists (for Baudelaire, of course, Delacroix was the great painter of the nineteenth century). This was recognized at the time by a few critics, who were puzzled by the connection. “I don’t believe that Delacroix’s poetic was ever Courbet’s,” Jean Rousseau wrote in L’Univers illustré. “How then has an alliance suddenly been established between these schools that seemed to exclude one another, and which for such a long time have been at war? It must be that realism has singularly modified its program, and we would be curious to learn about the new formula.”

I shall have more to say about the terms of that new formula in chapters 3 and 4. I want to call attention to another aspect of Fantin’s canvas, however: its close relation to, indeed its seeming compositional dependence upon, an earlier painting, also a group portrait, Philippe de Champigne’s The Provoet of the Guilds and the Municipal Magistrates of the City of Paris (1647–49; fig. 1). Champigne’s picture, now in the Louvre, was then in the La Caze Collection in Paris and had been shown in a large and much-discussed exhibition of French paintings from private...
collections which was held in 1860 at Louis Martinet’s gallery at 26 boulevard des Italiens.29 (During the early 1860s Manet, Fantin, Whistler, and Legros all exhibited at Martinet’s, whose new and old works were often shown together; in this and other respects Martinet’s was a central site of the advanced pictorial culture of that moment.) And what I want to emphasize is that Fantin not only made no effort to disguise the relationship between the Homage and Champaigne’s canvas, he seems on the contrary to have wished to declare that relationship in much the same way as his painting declares an allegiance to Delacroix. Put more strongly, the relationship of the later to the earlier work is one not of dependence but rather of allusion or reference: as if one of Fantin’s central aims in the Homage was to assert a connection with the Champaigne and by so doing to encourage educated viewers—painters, critics, and connoisseurs who, like him, were familiar with famous works of previous art—to consider the implications of his own work of source.30

Now, what has never been recognized—what I myself was unaware of when I wrote “Manet’s Sources”—is that this sort of active, explicit engagement with the art of the past was typical (and was seen as typical) of the work of almost all the ambitious young French painters of the late 1850s and early and mid-1860s whose reputations have survived to the present day. So for example Fantin himself, in addition to painting the Homage to Delacroix, made a number of smaller works called fêtes in which a generalized allusiveness to Italian Renaissance painting coexists with a deliberate vagueness of subject and action; Legros was widely seen to have based his art on the work of the so-called primitives and other fifteenth-century Italian and Northern masters; Théodule Ribot, in the eyes of contemporaries another realist (Fantin considered including him in the Homage), was viewed even by his admirers as repeatedly pastiching Ribera (no discussion of his art in the 1860s fails to make this point); James Tissot’s costume pieces set in the sixteenth century were routinely criticized for imitating the older contemporary Belgian painter Baron Leys, who in turn was held to have imitated Dürr and Cranach; Puvis de Chavannes’s decorative canvases were understood, from the moment of the success of his Concordia and Bellum in the Salon of 1861, as attempting to reanimate the look of Italian Renaissance frescoes; no aspect of Gustave Moreau’s paintings starting with Oedipus and the Sphinx in the Salon of 1864 (the same Salon as the Homage to Delacroix) was more widely disputed than their stylistic adherence to the manner of Mantegna, Carpaccio, and other Northern Italians; Edgar Degas’s engage-

ment with the art of the museums, not only with Italian masters of the Renaissance but also with later figures such as Van Dyck and Ingres, has always been recognized;31 Whistler, while not seen as recycling earlier European art, was sometimes described as “pastiching” Chinese painting; and of course Manet himself repeatedly cited earlier painting, most famously in the Déjeuner sur l’herbe (largely based on a figure group in Marcantonio Raimondi’s engraving after Raphaël’s Judgment of Paris), Olympia (based on Titian’s Venus of Urbino), and the Episode in a Bullfight (based on a seventeenth-century painting in the Pourtalès Collection then attributed to Velázquez).32 Such a pattern of active involvement with the art of the past marks a fundamental difference between the practice of the young realists among the group I have just named (with the exception of Whistler, who seems not to have been involved with earlier European painting as the others were) and that of Courbet, whose occasional exploitation of older prototypes had nothing systematic about it. In this respect as in others Courbet remained somewhat traditional, whereas the young painters in question, not just the realists but the others as well, evidently were responding to a new situation, one that called for deliberate allusion to or adaptation of earlier works and styles in order that all meaningful connection with painting’s past—with its canonical achievements—be lost.33 Fascinatingly, critics of every stamp were uncomfortable with this aspect of these artists’ work, though certain of them, notably Legros and Puvis, tended to escape censure, for reasons that are difficult to specify. Indeed those critics who in other respects were
most supportive of Manet and his co-generationists—Baudelaire, Théophile, Zola, and Zacharie Astruc—were downright hostile to the idea of recycling earlier art.

“To make oneself a great man [i.e., a great painter], it’s not absolutely necessary to be inspired by Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, or Velázquez,” Astruc wrote in 1863, naming five artists of particular interest to his friend Manet. But the painters remained impervious to criticism on this score, which suggests just how much was at stake for them—how deeply grounded was the imperative that drove them—in their dealings with the past. That no such programmatic involvement with earlier art was shared by the still younger group of painters who became the Impressionists is a basic difference between Manet’s generation and theirs.

As I have said, “Manet’s Sources” frontally attacked the question of what Manet’s allusions to the art of the museums meant. The question itself had arisen within art history much earlier (in the 1930s and 1940s) and my account of Manet’s enterprise made extensive use of the work of previous scholars who had identified numerous sources for his paintings and prints. But my arguments persuaded almost no one, which may be one reason why in recent scholarship the topic of Manet’s relation to his sources has tended to be brushed aside. A more important reason is that it has seemed to have little place in the revisionist, largely social-historical reading of Manet’s art that, starting in the late 1960s, art historians such as Anne Coffin Hanson, Theodore Reff, T. J. Clark, and Robert L. Herbert have been elaborating. Hanson’s Manet and the Modern Tradition, Reff’s Manet and Modern Paris, Clark’s Painting of Modern Life, and Herbert’s Impressionism (works of unequal merit) typify this state of affairs: in each, Manet’s use of past art is discussed in connection with specific works bearing an obvious relation to famous prototypes, but the larger theme of his possibly strategic engagement with the past is ultimately not addressed. The same situation prevails in François Cachin’s and Charles Moffett’s counterrevisionist catalog for the retrospective exhibition of 1983, which partly in reaction against social-historical readings of his art portrays a normalized “painterly” Manet who takes his place unproblematically in the standard history of nineteenth-century painting, as well as in monographs by Beatrice Farwell, George Mauner, and James H. Rubin. Finally, two recent technical studies by Juliet Wilson-Barreau, The Hidden Face of Manet and Manet: The Execution of Maximilien, underscore an indifference to the question of the overall meaning of Manet’s allusions to the Old Masters by declining even to mention “Manet’s Sources” in their notes or bibliographies. However, once it is recognized that virtually Manet’s entire cohort of advanced painters engaged in some version of citing or conspicuously adapting the art of the past, the question gains immensely in historical resonance. By the same token, the failure to address that question—the almost universal tendency to treat it as of no particular consequence—becomes emblematic of a larger failure to come to grips with a network of issues that I shall try to show were central to French painting at a critical moment in its evolution.

One way of thinking of that network of issues is in relation to a concept that has already been touched on and is invoked in the title of this book: that of Manet’s modernism. Within the past several decades it has become customary for art critics and art historians of widely differing points of view to characterize Manet as the first modernist painter. A classic statement to that effect is by the American “formalist” critic, Clement Greenberg, who in his essay “Modernist Painting” defines modernism (which he spells with a capital M) as a process of immanent self-criticism the aim of which has been to determine the irreducible working essence of the individual arts. Greenberg contends that at a certain point in the nineteenth century, painting and the other arts were faced with the danger of a progressive loss of mission. “Having been denied by the Enlightenment all tasks they could take seriously,” he writes, “[the arts] looked as though they were going to be assimilated to entertainment pure and simple, and entertainment itself looked as though it were going to be assimilated, like religion, to therapy. The arts could save themselves from this levelling down only by demonstrating that the kind of experience they provided was valuable in its own right and not to be obtained from any other kind of activity.” The key passage follows:

Each art, it turned out, had to effect this demonstration on its own account. What had to be exhibited and made explicit was that which was unique and irreplaceable not only in art in general but also in each particular art. Each art had to determine, though the operations peculiar to itself, the effects peculiar and exclusive to itself. By doing this, each art would, to be sure, narrow its area of competence, but at the same time it would make its possession of this area all the more secure. It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other...
art. Thereby each art would be rendered “pure,” and in its “purity” find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. “Purity” meant self-definition, and the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance.

Realistic, illusionist art had assembled the medium, using art to conceal art. Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting—the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment—were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Modernist painting has come to regard these same limitations as positive factors that are to be acknowledged openly. Manet’s paintings became the first Modernist ones by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the surfaces on which they were painted. The Impressionists, in Manet’s wake, abjured underpainting and glazing, to leave the eye under no doubt as to the fact that the colors were made of real paint that came from pots or tubes. Cézanne sacrificed verisimilitude, or correctness, in order to fit drawing and design more explicitly to the rectangular shape of the canvas.

It was the stressing, however, of the ineluctable flatness of the support that remained most fundamental in the process by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism. . . . Flatness, two-dimensionality, was the only condition painting shared with no other art, and so Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as did it to nothing else.38

For all its clarity and power, Greenberg’s account of modernism is open to serious objection (I have taken issue with it more than once, most recently in Courbet’s Realism), but I want to stress, first, its emphasis on flatness as the defining condition of the medium of painting, and second, the implication, which Greenberg elsewhere makes explicit, that the process of self-criticism he describes entails the progressive detachment of the individual arts from all concerns other than strictly or narrowly artistic ones. (Which is to say “esthetic” ones. “Modernism defines itself in the long run not as a ‘movement,’ much less a program, but rather as a kind of bias or tropism: towards esthetic value, esthetic value as such and as an ultimate,” he writes in a later essay. “The specificity of Modernism lies in its being so heightened a tropism in this regard.”) Put slightly differently, the “purity” to which Greenberg refers means not only a relative indifference to considerations of subject matter, which have no place in the later stages of the “reduction” he evokes; once under way the “reduction” itself, although triggered by social developments (specifically the Enlightenment critique of institutions), is conducted in a void.

In contrast, the social historians of art understand the emergence of modernist painting in Paris in the 1860s and 1870s as responding to a distinctive experience of modernity. Baudelaire’s poems, prose poems, and art criticism are read as testifying to the nature of that experience, which has been variously glossed by subsequent commentators: sometimes the emphasis falls on the increasingly dehumanized and dehumanizing aspects of life under commodity capitalism, sometimes on the rise of a “society of spectacle” with its newly developed modes of entertainment, leisure activity, fashion, and display; in both cases, however, an experiencing subject is imagined as standing at a certain virtual distance from his surroundings, and in a sense from himself (hence the pertinence of the Marxist notion of “alienation”). In T. J. Clark’s working definition of modernism in The Painting of Modern Life, that virtual distance is equated with a loss of certainty about the very act of representation. In his words:

“Modernism” . . . is used [in this book] in the customary, somewhat muddled way. Something decisive happened in the history of art around Manet which set painting and the other arts upon a new course. Perhaps the change can be described as a kind of scepticism, or at least unassurc, as to the nature of representation in art. There had been degrees of doubt on this subject before, but they had mostly appeared as aside to the central task of constructing a likeness, and in a sense they had guaranteed that task, making it seem all the more necessary and grand. Certain painters in the seventeenth century, for example, had failed to hide the gaps and perplexities inherent in their own procedure, but those traces of paradox in perception—those markers in the picture of where the illusion almost ended—only served to make the likeness, where it was achieved, the more compelling, because it was seen to exist in the face of its opposite, chaos. There is no doubt that Manet and his friends looked back for instruction to painters of just this kind—to Velázquez and Hals, for example—but what seemed to impress them most was the evidence of palpable and frank inconsistency, and not the fact that the image was somehow preserved in the end from extinction. This shift of attention led, on the one hand, to their putting a stress on the material means by which illusion and likeness were made . . .; on the other, to a new set of proposals as to the form representation should take, insofar as it was still possible at all without bad faith.41

Whereas Greenberg portrays the modernist artist as seeking a narrow certainty, Clark goes so far as to imagine a taste for uncertainty becoming almost an esthetic in its own right.42 But as Clark is aware, his conception of modernism is not simply or wholly opposed to Greenberg’s. He too sees in early modernism “a stress on the material means by which illusions and likenesses were made,” and for him as for Greenberg the norm of flatness plays a crucial role not only in Manet’s art but in subsequent
modernist painting. The difference is that Clark refuses to hyposatize flatness; rather, he insists that it cannot be understood apart from “the particular projects—the specific attempts at meaning”—in which it came to the fore:

Certainly it is true that the two dimensions of the picture surface were time and again recovered as a striking fact by painters after Courbet. But I think the question we should be asking in this case is why that literal presence of surface went on being interesting for art. How could a matter of effect or procedure seemingly stand in for value in this way? What was it that made it vivid?

The details of an answer will of course be open to argument as to emphasis, evidence, and so forth; but surely the answer must take approximately this form. If the fact of flatness was compelling and tractable for art—in the way it was for Manet and Cézanne, for example—that must have been because it was made to stand for something: some particular and substantial set of qualities which took their place in a picture of the world. So that the richness of the avant-garde, conceived as a set of contexts for art in the years between, say, 1860 and 1928, might best be redescribed in terms of its ability to give flatness such complex and compatible values—values which necessarily derived from elsewhere than art. On various occasions, for instance, flatness was imagined to be some kind of analogue of the “Popular” . . . It was therefore made as plain, workmanlike, and emphatic as the painter could manage; loaded brushes and artisans’ combs were held to be appropriate tools; painting was henceforth honest manual labour . . . Or flatness could signify modernity, with the surface meant to conjure up the mere two dimensions of posters, labels, fashion prints, and photographs. There were painters who took those two dimensions, in what might seem a more straightforwardly modernist way, to represent the simple fact of Art, from which other meanings were excluded. But during this period that too was most often an argument about the world and art’s relation to it—a quite complex argument, and stated as such. Painting would replace or displace the Real, accordingly, for reasons having to do with the nature of subjectivity, or city life, or the truths revealed by higher mathematics. And finally, unbrokenness of surface could be seen—by Cézanne par excellence—as standing for the evenness of seeing itself, the actual form of our knowledge of things . . .

My point is simply that flatness in its heyday was these various meanings and valuations; they were its substance, they were what it was seen as; their particularity was what made flatness a matter to be painted. Flatness was therefore in play—as an irreducible, technical fact of painting—with all of these totalizations, all of these attempts to make it a metaphor. Of course, in a way it resisted the metaphors, and the painters we most admire insisted also on its being an awkward, empirical quiddity; but “also” is the key word here: there was no fact without the metaphor, no medium without its being the vehicle of some sense or other.43

This is superb in its way and I have no argument with it. Or rather I have no argument with it as it applies to modernist painters after Manet. For it will be one of my procedures in the pages that follow (above all in chapter 4, “Manet in His Generation”) to refrain from appealing to flatness as a basic parameter of his art, on the grounds that the common modernist interpretation of Manet’s paintings of the 1860s as pioneering above all in their assertion of flatness is largely an artifact of Impressionism, or to put this more broadly, that a concern with flatness and related notions such as “decorative” unity, that is, the notion that pictorial unity was essentially a surface affair, did not emerge or did not fully emerge as the defining characteristic of modernist pictorial practice before the articulation of a distinctively Impressionist point of view in the early and mid-1870s.44 Did not fully emerge is perhaps the point. Courbet, for example, is supposed to have said of Manet’s Olympia, “It’s flat, it isn’t modeled; it’s like the Queen of Hearts after a bath,” to which Manet is supposed to have replied, “Courbet bores us in the end with his modeling; his ideal is a billiard ball!”45 (But isn’t there something a little pat about this exchange, which was first reported almost twenty years after it supposedly took place, by a critic ineritably unsympathetic to Manet?) Then, too, critics of the 1860s castigated Manet’s pictures for their occasional failures of perspective, for the harshness with which figures and figure-groups were felt to stand themselves out against their backgrounds, and perhaps most frequently, for their seeming incompleteness, their inexplicable lack of finish—all features of his art that have been associated after the fact with the foregrounding of the literal flatness of the support.46 Zola, for his part, willingly conceded the resemblance between Manet’s paintings and the popular engravings known as gravures d’Épinal as well as Japanese color woodblocks, both notoriously “flat” types of images, but he also insisted that seen from the proper distance Manet’s paintings offered a coherent spatial illusion in which each object occupied its appropriate plane.47 In short, no critic of the 1860s actually spoke of Manet’s paintings as aggressively flat, and I shall offer a fundamentally different interpretation of the tendencies in his work that lent themselves retroactively to being perceived in those terms. Without wishing to get ahead of myself, let me add that issues of facing—as indicated by the second part of the title of this book—will play an equivalent role to that played by the topos of flatness in previous accounts of Manet’s art. (The displacement of issues of flatness by ones of facing is suggested already in “Manet’s Sources” and is underscored in Courbet’s Realism.)48
Greenberg's "Modernist Painting" is pertinent to this discussion in another respect as well: along with his stress on flatness and as it were determined by it is an emphasis on a purely visual or optical mode of illusionism. "With Manet and the Impressionists," he writes, "the question ceased to be defined as one of color versus drawing [a traditional opposition in painting and art theory], and became instead a question of purely optical experience as against optical experience modified or revised by tactile associations. It was in the name of the purely and literally optical, not in that of color, that the Impressionists set themselves to undermining shading and modeling and everything else that seemed to constitute the sculptural."49 This historical claim soon gives way to a theoretical one, when Greenberg links Kantian self-criticism (the model for modernist self-criticism) and science, and goes on to say: "That visual art should confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience, and make no reference to anything given in other orders of experience"—the implicit imperative of all modernist painting, in his view—"is a notion whose only justification lies, notionally, in scientific consistency."

Again, his argument is open to multiple objections, but I want to call attention to his equating of Manet and the Impressionists with respect to visuality and opticality (taking these to be the same): "With Manet and the Impressionists, the question . . . became [one] of purely optical experience, etc."50

As a generalization about Impressionism or rather about the contemporary response to the work of the landscape Impressionists Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley, this is incontestable. As early as 1874 Armand Silvestre, an early advocate, wrote of the Impressionists that the viewer needed "special eyes to be sensitive to that accuracy in the relation of tones that is their honor and their merit,"51 and a less friendly critic, Marc de Montifaud, characterized the new group as "the school of the eyes."52 And as I have already suggested, it was largely on the strength of the triumph of Impressionism that Manet's work began to win acceptance in the 1870s and 1880s. The first stirrings of that process were contemporary with the advent of Impressionist painting in the early and mid-1870s53 but the "impressionist" reading fully came into its own toward the end of the decade and (especially) during the years just before and after Manet's death. So for example Pinard, in a companion article to the one cited earlier, marveled at two "impressionist" works by Manet: "One would hardly believe that the human hand must have been employed to transport to the canvas the image gathered by the artist's eye, one could suppose that his gaze has been the sole agent of both the reception and the reproduction of the image."54 In a less excited register we find Jacques de Brie writing in 1883 that Manet's divinity was the truth of art and light, and asking rhetorically: "Should Manet be blamed for the care he seems to have taken to repudiate in his oeuvre all psychological intention or every philosophical subject? Manet was a painter before everything, and his highest ambition was to remain a painter in the full plastic meaning of the term. Manet was an eye rather than a reasoning."55 A year later Edmond Bazire added: "[Manet's] career can be summed up as a continuous ascension toward light and truth. . . . To paint on the basis of the eyes, not the imagination, was his program."56 Theodore Duret, looking back on Manet's career, maintained that the painter saw differently from other people (a point made earlier by Zola) and that that accounted for both the unconventional appearance of his art and his difficulties with the public.57 And Proust in 1901 not only attributed to Manet "the incessant pursuit of an ideal which he attained in his last productions and which could be defined thus: the realization of optical effects resulting from the movement of the varied colorings that nature offers us," but also quoted Manet himself as saying in conversation the year before he died: "They will be happy, my dear friend, the people who will live a century from now; the organs of their vision will be more developed than ours. They will see better."58

But the notion of opticality, of a mode of painting addressed exclusively to the sense of sight, has only limited and specific application to modernist painting after Impressionism (even as regards Impressionist practice it stands in need of qualification), and whatever its relevance to Manet's later work it is positively misleading as a guide to his canvases of the 1860s.59 Indeed Greenberg's overvaluing of opticality, an attitude he shares with his severest critic, Rosalind Krauss, bears witness to the lasting influence of Impressionism and its criticism on subsequent theorizing about modern art.60 As in the case of flatness, a concern with issues of facing—more broadly, of the relationship between painting and beholder—will open the way to a more historically accurate and theoretically nuanced reading of Manet's achievement.61

In addition to this introduction, the present book comprises five chapters and a coda. Chapter 1 consists of "Manet's Sources" almost exactly as it first appeared in Artforum. Although the temptation to correct
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its most obvious defects has been strong, the arguments for leaving it intact and then proceeding to both criticize it and supplement it in subsequent chapters have proven even stronger. For one thing, the original essay has been largely unavailable for a long time; for another, had I begun to alter it in significant details I would not have known where to stop. Most important, had I changed it substantially the result would have been hybrid in the worst way, representing neither my original thoughts about Manet’s paintings of the first half of the 1860s nor my present rethinking of the larger, generational context to which those paintings belong. Above all, there would have been no way to introduce into the framework of the revised essay the results of my later investigations into what I have described as a central antithetical tradition in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French painting, and in the absence of those results a crucial dimension not just of Manet’s enterprise but also of those of his fellow realists would have remained incomprehensible.

In chapter 2, “Manet’s Sources: Reconsidered,” I criticize my original essay—conceding various points to Reff, highlighting flaws, acknowledging omissions—before going on to amplify its claims and to argue anew, on the grounds of fresh pictorial and textual evidence, for what I continue to believe is the rightness of its core account of Manet’s allusions to the art of the past. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the question of genre as it was posed in the 1860s, a question I see as related to that of nationality in that what was at stake in both cases was a tension between fragmentation and totality. Indeed I suggest that the Déjeuner sur l’herbe (a work I return to repeatedly throughout this book) may be seen as an attempt to combine virtually all the separate pictorial genres in a single composition that would in effect put an end to the fragmentation of painting on a generic level.

In chapter 3, “The Generation of 1863,” focusing primarily on Fantin, Whistler, and Legros and making use of the writings of a broad spectrum

of critics, I trace the lineaments of a fundamental shift in advanced pictorial sensibility by virtue of which certain kinds of excess, which would previously have been viewed as artistically deleterious—specifically, as theatrical—were recuperated as an artistically valid mode of intensity or, a key term, strikingness. More precisely, I discern in a broad range of works by the young realists (other than Manet) a double or divided structure within which an excessive treatment of the very means that in previous French painting had secured compositional closure now facilitated, became the vehicle for, a highly charged mode of address to the beholder which critics who deplored theatricality found not just acceptable but admirable, even exhilarating. I go on to consider other manifestations of such a structure in the painting and criticism of the time, and bring the chapter to a close by examining a network of concepts whose meaning in the art writing of the 1860s and 1870s has never properly been understood.

Chapter 4, “Manet in His Generation,” approaches Manet’s paintings of the 1860s in the light of these and other considerations; in particular I rescribe his handling of the relationship between painting and beholder—a cardinal element in his art—partly on the strength of a comparison with the work of his cogenresimators. The chapter is long and complex and resists summary. Among other points I pay particular attention to the question of the meaning of the widespread concern with the tableau; to Manet’s avoidance or negation of absorptive themes and effects; to what contemporary viewers saw and deplored as his consistent refusal to finish his pictures (this largely via a comparison between the respective critical responses to Manet’s Angels at the Tomb of Christ and Moreau’s Oedipus and the Sphinx); to his pursuit of various modes of instantaneousness, and its bearing on his involvement with photography and Japanese woodblocks; and to the delicate question of the schematization of the relationship between painter and model in his art. Throughout this chapter issues of strikingness emerge as central to our understanding of his work, which is to say that Manet is seen to have shared with his cogenresimators not only a systematic concern with the art of the past but also a drive to establish a new type of connection with the beholder. Once again the writings of numerous art critics are deployed in the service of my analyses, though contrary to the way in which the advent of Impressionism made Manet’s paintings accessible both to contemporary viewers and to later commentators as a first stage in a process of progressive simplification (toward the foregrounding of flatness, the develop-
ment of a sheerly optical illusionism, the pursuit of the impression, I emphasize what all the evidence suggests was a widespread initial conviction of his paintings' essential unintelligibility. (This is an emphasis I share with Clark, for all the divergence in our interests.) Put slightly differently, my approach here as elsewhere in this book is strongly contextual, but my aim in trying to contextualize both Manet's paintings of the 1860s and their initial reception is not only to recover aspects of their original meaning but also to recapture an original resistance to available modes of pictorial understanding. The chapter ends with a discussion of the Mannheim Execution of Maximilian, a work not treated in "Manet's Sources" but that now may be seen virtually as allegorizing many of the issues dealt with in the chapter as a whole.

A fifth chapter, "Between Realisms," begins by analyzing the logic of mirror reversal of left and right in several self-portrait drawings by Fantin-Latour of around 1860 and goes on to apply the results of that analysis to a range of other works by Fantin, Whistler, Legros, Pissarro, Frédéric Bazille, and Manet himself. As those names suggest, "Between Realisms" takes us to the verge of Impressionism; specifically, it proposes a new interpretation of the art of the generation of 1861 as transitional between Courbet's corporeal Realism and the optical or (as I prefer to say) ocular realism of the Impressionists.

Finally, a coda, "Manet's Modernism," gathers together various strands of my argument and considers some of their more important historical and historiographical implications.

I. Manet's Sources, 1859-1869

If a single question is guiding for our understanding of Manet's art during the first half of the 1860s, it is this: What are we to make of the numerous references in his paintings of those years to the work of the great painters of the past? A few of Manet's historically aware contemporaries recognized explicit references to past art in some of his important pictures of that period; and by the time he died his admirers tended to play down the paintings of the first half of the 1860s, if not of the entire decade, largely because of what had come to seem their overall dependence on the Old Masters. But Jacques-Émile Blanche could claim, in a kind of hyperbole, that it was impossible to find two paintings in Manet's oeuvre that had not been inspired by other paintings, old or modern. But it has been chiefly since the retrospective exhibition of 1932 that historians have come to realize concretely the extent to which Manet based his art upon specific paintings, engravings after paintings, and original prints by artists who preceded him. It is now clear, for example, that most of the important pictures of the 1860s depend either wholly or in part on works by Velázquez, Goya, Rubens, Van Dyck, Raphael, Titian, Giorgione, Veronese, Le Nain, Watteau, Chardin, Courbet. . . . This by itself is an extraordinary fact, one that must be accounted for if Manet's enterprise is to be made intelligible. It becomes even more extraordinary in the light of his repeated assertions, the truth of which cannot be doubted, that he had tried to be himself and no one else. His pictures, he wrote in 1867, were above all sincere: "It's the effect of sincerity to give to works a character that makes them appear an act of protest, when the painter has thought only of rendering his impression." This statement and others like it rest on familiar assumptions of midcentury realism. But they raise the further question of how those assumptions can be reconciled with the scope and explicitness of his involvement with the art of the past.
Notes

3. Jacques-Émile Blanche reports that Edgar Degas made this statement on the occasion of Manet's funeral, or at least that he then began to say these words "which finally became irritating because of being repeated when his friend was no longer there to hear them" (Manet (Paris, 1924), p. 57). (Mais il commence de dire son mot qu as fini par devenir irritant à force d'être répété quand son ami n'était pas là pour l'entendre: "Il était plus grand que nous ne pensions.")

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1. The most recent biography, Darragon 1989, is the best, but A. Tabarant, Manet et ses sources (Paris, 1947), remains an invaluable source of information.
2. See Proust 1897, pp. 20–21, 13, 17–18.
3. Relevant letters and other documentation pertaining to Manet's Spanish trip were recently collected by Juliet Wilson-Bareau in Édouard Manet: Voyage en Espagne (Caen, 1988).
4. See the texts collected in Zola, Écrits sur l'art.

7. Reff 1969. Although in chapter 2 of this book I respond vigorously to Reff's critique, I appreciate his taking "Manet's Sources" seriously enough to want to counter it.
8. Throughout this book, Courbet's Realism will be designated with a capital R; in all other instances the word will be a common noun.
9. That is, I compare Courbet's painting with Baudelaire's art criticism, Flaubert's Madame Bovary and letters to Louise Colet, some key passages in Mme. Cornus's Carnets, and the philosopher Félix Ravaisson's treatise De l'habitude (1838).
10. Refer here not to all the painters who took part in the Impressionist exhibitions, but, more importantly, to the landscape Impressionists Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley. For most critics of the 1870s and 1880s, these were the painters who represented a new pictorial esthetic based on the exclusively visual and essentially fleeting or instantaneous "impression" and on a new mode of "decorative" unity. See in connection the early reviews of Impressionist exhibitions by three critics favorably inclined toward the new school, Philippe Burty, Ernest Chesneau, and Armand Silvestre (references in Moffett, The New Painting) as well as two articles by Steven Z. Levine, "Decorative/Decorative:Decoration in Claude Monet's Art," Art Magazine 51 (Feb. 1977): 136–191; and "The 'Instant' of Criticism and Monet's Grain d'Instant," Art Magazine 53 (Mar. 1981): 224–22. See also Levine, Monet and His Critics, Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts (New York and London, 1978), and the individual essays gathered in The New Painting. I briefly discuss Burty's, Chesneau's, and Silvestre's writings on Impressionism in the coda.

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12. Édouard Manet vu par Henri Matisse, interview with E. Tériade, L'Illustration, Jan. 25, 1923. (Manet est le premier peintre qui ait fait la traduction immédiate de ses sensuations en liberté artistique. Il a été le premier à agir par réponse et à simplifier ainsi le métier du peintre.) The interview ends with the following short statement: "A great painter is one who finds personal and durable signs to express in plastic terms the object of his vision. Manet found his. (Un grand peintre est celui qui cherche des signes personnels et durables pour exprimer plastiquement l'objet de sa vision. Manet a trouvé les siens.)"

13. See e.g. Philippe Burty (a long-time supporter and one of Maner's collaborators), who criticized both the Diaporama sur l'Herbe and Olympia and added that "Manet always composed badly when he juxtaposed personages"—his basic approach throughout his career but most obviously in his paintings of the 1860s ("L'Œuvre d'Édouard Manet à l'École des Beaux-Arts," Révue philistique française, Jan. 16, 1884). (Manet compose toujours péniblement dès qu'il juxtapose des personnages.) See also Joseph Paul, whose admiration for Manet was measured to say the least but who greatly preferred the paintings of his second manner to those of his first ("Le Procede de Manet," L'Artiste, Feb. 1884, republished in Manet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis, ed. Pierre Caillet and Pierre Courthion, 2 vols. [Geneva, 1933], 215–85). For Péladon, Olympia in particular was a "model of bad painting," incapable of sustaining "the most cursory examination" (p. 169). (Modèle de mauvaise peinture, l'Olympia ne soutient pas le plus cursif examen.) A major exception to the general preference for Manet's "impressionist" manner is Émile Zola, author of the preface to the catalog of the retrospective exhibition of January 1884. See Zola, "Préface," Écrits sur l'art, pp. 451–58, and the interesting analysis of Zola's views in the context of other articles of that moment in Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Manet 1884: Un bilan critique," in Jean-Paul Bouillon, ed., La Critique d'art en France, 1850–1900, Actes du Colloque de Clermont-Ferrand, May 25–27, 1987 (Saint-Étienne, 1989), pp. 159–75. See also n. 60 below.

14. "The Olympia," Matisse was reported as saying, "belongsTo to Manet's transitional period. If in certain respects that celebrated painting contains indications of the future, it remains very close to the traditional painting of the Old Masters. Besides, it's not, perhaps for that reason, one of his best canvases" ("Édouard Manet vu par Henri Matisse"). (L'Olympia appartient à l'époque de transition de Manet. Si par certains côtés ce tableau contient des indications pour l'avenir, il demeure très rapproché de la peinture traditionnelle des Anciens. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas, peut-être pour cette raison, l'un de ses meilleurs toiles.) For Jacques-Emile Blanche in 1914, however, Olympia was one of the "pearls" of the Louvre, "more serene, more majestic in its living reality than Ingres' Odalysque et Bather of Valpinçon; metamorphosed into a 'masterpiece-type' like Titian's Mistrisses, Olympia begins to lose its 'disquieting' signs that earned it, sixty years ago, the insults of all good people and the cult of some 'unhealthy minds' (Manet [Paris, 1914], p. 34). (Aujourd'hui l'une des perles du Louvre, plus sereine, plus majestueuse dans sa vivante réalité que l'Odalysque et la Baigneuse au foulard d'anges; métamorphosée en "chef-d'oeuvre-type" comme les Mistrisses de Titien, l'Olympia commence à perdre les "signes inquiétants" qui lui valurent, il y a soixante ans, les esclaffements gers, le culte de quelques "esprits malaxés.") Elsewhere in the same text Blanche remarks: "Aren't [Manet's] strongest and most prized works today the ones that he conceived in the contrastive light of an atelier or an apartment, in the manner of Velasquez, of most of the Dutch or Chardin?" (p. 173). (Son oeuvres les plus forts et les plus

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15. Albert Pinard, "L’Exposition Manet," Le Radical, Jan. 10, 1884. (Si Manet a souffert pour l'impressionnisme c'est par l'impressionnisme qu'il doit triompher.) Even Théodore Duret, who in his preface to the catalog for the sale of Feb. 4–5, 1884, would have wanted to avoid seeming to privilege any part of Manet's oeuvre, wrote: "It is he in effect who handled opaque shadows from contemporary painting, and it is in following him that others learned to juxtapose clear and vivid tones on the canvas, to paint in full sunlight" ("Édouard Manet," Critique d'avant-garde [Paris, 1881], p. 123). (C'est lui en effet qui a banni de la peinture contemporaine les ombres opaques, et c'est en le suivant qu'on a appris à juxtaposer sur la toile les tons clairs et tranchés, pour peindre en pleine lumière.) In a recent article on the critical response to the retrospective exhibition, Michael R. Owczarz interprets the tendency of "liberal" Republican writers such as Burty to downplay the Diaporama and Olympia as a strategy designed to purge Manet's oeuvre of its most unsettling elements and thereby secure his biographical and artistic respectability ("Reinventing Édouard Manet: Rewriting the Page of National Art in the Early Third Republic," in Michael R. Owczarz, ed., Art Criticism and Its Institutions in Nineteenth-Century France [Manchester, 1994], pp. 117–12). What this view fails to recognize, however, is the extent to which the "impressionists" reading of Manet's art in 1884 expressed a deeply grounded shift of sensibility, not simply the political-rhetorical needs of the moment. Owczarz is nearly forced to acknowledge as much when toward the end of his article he explains that the "liberal" republican critics credited Manet with "nothing less than the wholesale transformation of modern French painting towards impressionism" (p. 127). Nevertheless, he adds, "they were careful to avoid explicitly naming him as an Impressionist or calling him the chef d'oeuvre des Batignolles. Evading those epithets served their strategy well, since the term 'Impressionism' continued to provoke varying degrees of hostility not only among Manet's academic and conservative critics, but with his more moderate supporters as well" (pp. 137–38). But of course the more avoidance of the term "Impressionist" would hardly have sufficed to deflect the hostility to which Owczarz refers. And besides, as Pinard's remarks show, not all "liberal" critics avoided mentioning Impressionism. In short, Owczarz's article, while interesting and informative, is reductive in granting absolute priority to social-political considerations.


17. See Geoffroy, Monet, p. 41, cited by Darragon 1989, p. 418. (Choix singularité! ce sera vous qui ferez le trop ou pas ferez Manet, quoi qu'il ait été le précurseur. Votre œuvre venant puis tard, trouvez le terrain mieux prêté, puis Manet était un peintre de figures et à la terrible convention académique le pinceaux aiguent et régneront toujours en maîtres.)

18. The first art historian to insist on the distinctive character of the 1860s as a period was Nils Götts Sandblad, to whose pioneering book I am deeply indebted; see Sandblad 1914, pp. 1–115. However, his exclusive focus on Manet (appropriate at that stage of Manet studies) meant that he had little to say about the other artists of the same generation who figure importantly in the present book. The other major art historian who published an important study of the painter in 1914, George Heard Hamilton, believed that it was between 1871 and 1888 that Manet "made his enduring contribution to modern art,
modern both in relation to the progressive painting of his own day and in the sense of providing a body of work to which future painters would look for guidance. It is true that problems in discovering a truly modern expression" (Manet and His Critics [New Haven, 1944], p. 18).

Also, at the very moment the completed manuscript of this book was sent to the publisher, a large exhibition devoted to the "New Painting" of the 1860s opened at the Grand Palais in Paris and then traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The exhibition, organized by Gary Tierney and Henri Loyrette, was called "Origins of Impressionism" and was accompanied by an ambitious catalog of the same title. This is not the place for a detailed critique of the intellectual premises of the exhibition and catalog, but it should at least be said that by conceiving of the 1860s teleologically—as leading to Impressionism—the organizers did nothing to challenge prevailing views of the period. The catalog essays by Tierney and Loyrette may therefore usefully be read in counterpoint to my argument in the chapters that follow: where we disagree is not only with respect to the pictorial issues in question but also as regards our respective approaches to historical understanding. For example, although they quote extensively from contemporary art criticism, they invariably do so to illustrate a general point they have already made; they never begin by analyzing a passage in order to discover something they did not know beforehand. Although they aren't unaware that Manet himself belonged to a generation distinct from that of the Impressionists, the entire thrust of their account prevents them from focusing on that prior generation so as to illuminate its particular situation and aspirations. And their decision to organize both the catalog and the exhibition according to types of paintings (History Painting, The Realist Landscape, The Nude, Figures in a Landscape, Still Life, Portraits and Figures, The Impressionist Landscape, and Modern Life) imposes a largely arbitrary grid on the pictorial production they survey.

On another front, I might add that my insistence on seeing Manet's paintings in the context of the work of artists with whom he had most in common is at the farthest pole from John House's ostensibly contextual but in fact a priori and ahistorical view that Manet in his art deliberately sought to subvert "academic conventions" or the norms of "Salon painting" ("Manet's Naivété," in Wilson-Bareau 1986, pp. 1–15; and "Manet's Maximilien: History Painting, Censorship and Ambiguity," in Wilson-Bareau 1991, pp. 88–113). Certainly Manet's art differed radically from what House means by académie or Salon painting; no doubt Manet held the bulk of such painting in low esteem; but precisely because he did, he would not have felt it a worthy ambition (it would not have imposed itself) to seek to overthrow its norms, in which any case House understands in the most general terms. A version of the same cliché is operative in Seymour Howard, "Early Manet and Artful Error: Foundations of Anti-Illusion in Modern Painting, and Marthe Ward, A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Second Empire Paris (Cambridge, 1986). See also La Promenade du critique influent: Anthologie de la critique d'art de 1850 à 1890, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon, Nicole Dubreuil-Blandin, Antoinette Brachet et Constance Neuber-Risler (Paris, 1990).


19. In the early 1870s Fantin and Legros had been students together under the unconventional teacher Léocadie Boitslaudran; others in their circle included Charles Cassien, Leon Liane, Guillaume Régamay (the future painter of military subjects), and Louis-Marc Selon. In October 1878 Fantin met Whistler at the Louvre, and shortly afterward they and Legros formed the Société des Trois, the nucleus of the larger gathering in the Homage. Fantin and Manet are said to have first met at the Louvre in 1875, but their friendship seems to date from the visit to Manet's studio in 1880. According to Fernand Desnoyers, the visitors included Fantin, Legros, Carolus Duran, and Bracquemond. See chap. 1, n. 67.


23. Antoine Prout quotes the young Manet as saying: "Yes, it's very good, the Burial. It can't be said too much that it's very good because it's better than everything. But, between you and me, it's still not it. It's too black." (Prout 1875, p. 213). (Oui, c'est très bien, l'enterrement. On ne saurait dire assez que c'est très bien parce que c'est mieux que tout. Mais entre nous, ce n'est pas encore ça.) A similar ambiguity marks Fantin's correspondence of 1858–59 with the German painter Otto Scholderer, whose studio in Frankfurt was across from Courbet's and whose admiration for the master of Orsay was unqualified (Beaune and Lorenzoce archives, Paris).

25. Baudelaire's critique of Courbet is found in his "Exposition Universelle de 1855" (Caricaturest esthétiques, pp. 235–36) and "Poisson vérité il y a, notes for an article never completed (pp. 823–25). Legros's Angèlès, En-Vaxo, and Vocation de St. Francis are praised in his "Salon de 1859" (The Angèlès, pp. 331–34) and "L'exposition de la Galerie Martiner en 1861" (the other two, p. 402, and Legros, Manet, and Whistler are praised for both etchings and paintings in "L'Eau-forte est à la mode" (pp. 405–6) and "Peintures et aquatintes" (pp. 410–11). See also various letters and references to all three artists in Charles Baudelaire, Correspondence, ed. Claude Pichois and Jean Ziegler, 3 vols. (Paris, 1973).


27. Jean Rousseau, "Salon de 1864," L'Univers illustré, June 1, 1864. [Je ne crois pas que la politique de Delacroix ait jamais été celle de M. Courbet. Comment donc une alliance d'elie-nous substantiellement établir entre ces écoles qui semblent s'encore, et qui se sont si longtemps fait la guerre? Il faut que le réalisme ait singulièrement modifié son programme, et nous serions curieux d'en connaître la nouvelle formule.] Earlier in that "Salon" Rousseau wrote: "(Pfantin's painting of this year is somewhat to glorify realism, whose principal apostles are shown grouped, in a touching reunion, around their lord and
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master Champfleury. But, for the love of heaven and the truth, what is the portrait of Delacroix, placed behind them, doing there? Does the realist school claim to be aligned with the greatest fantaisiste of modern times? It would be very curious to see their genealogical tree" (May 14, 1864). [On tableau de cette année est un peu à la gloire du réalisme dont il nous montre les principaux spôtes groupés, dans une touchante union, autour de leur maître et seigneur M. Champfleury. Mais, pour l'amour du ciel et de la vérité, qui fait le tableau de Delacroix, placé derrière eux? L'école réaliste prétendait en effet s'attacher au plus grand fantasiste des temps modernes? Je serais bien curieux de voir son arbre généalogique.] And in a second "Salon" of that year he identified Fantin as representing contemporary painting, Baudelaire the romanticism of 1830, and Champfleury the realism of recent years ("Salon de 1864." Le Figaro, May 21, 1864, p. 214; Voilà M. Fantin qui représente la peinture actuelle. M. Baudelaire qui représente le romantisme de 1830, M. Champfleury qui représente le réalisme de ces dernières années.)

28. The connection was first noted by Douglas Druck in Fantin-Latour 1882-83, p. 174.

29. For more on that exhibition see chap. 1.

30. Actually, the situation is more complex than I have indicated. For a second source has been associated with the Homage—an unspecified group portrait by Frans Hals, possibly the Banquet of the Officers of the St. Hadrian's Civic Guard Company (1627) a copy of which is supposed to have been instrumental in leading Fantin to imagine his composition in ostensibly realist, not openly allegorical, terms (see Fantin-Latour 1882-83, p. 174, where the Hals is reproduced). There is no reason to doubt the validity of such a connection, but it should be noted that it is much less evident in the final painting than the Champaigne.


32. More precisely, they were responding to a new stage in a development the origins of which went back at least to the early 19th century. Rousselair's attack on "eclecticism" in his "Salon de 1846" may be taken as emblematic of a decisive moment in that development; for Baudelaire the rise of eclecticism was correlated with the erosion of tradition in the face of the modern malady of doubt (Caricatures esthétiques, esp. pp. 168-70, 175-77, 191-94). For a reading of that "Salon" which focuses on the question of the relation of new art to that of the Old Masters see Fried 1984 and chapter 2 in the present book.

On the general topic of present-past relations in French painting of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Norman Bryson, Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix (Cambridge, 1984), which applies to the painting of David and Ingres certain ideas concerning the conflicted nature of artistic inheritance developed by the literary critic and theorist Harold Bloom. Bryson's chapters on David strike me as arbitrary and anachronistic, but those on Ingres make a valuable contribution.

33. Zacharie Astruc, Le Salon, no. 9 (May 10-12, 1865), (Pour se formuler grand homme, il est point absolument nécessaire de s'inspirer de Raphael, de Titien, de Rembrandt, de Rubens ou de Velasquez.) Or to quote a critic less sympathetic to the young realism, Jean Rousseau; after discussing the way in which Manet, Ribot, and Legros all invoked earlier masters, Rousseau asked rhetorically, "[H]ow is it that several of [the realities]—who make a profession of sincerity—counterfeit someone else instead of being themselves?" (Salon de 1865, L'Univers illustré, June 6, 1865). [Comment se fait-il que plusieurs de ces artistes—qui font de la sincérité une profession—contrefassent quelqu'un au lieu d'être eux-mêmes?]

34. See Jean-Collins Hanson, Manet and the Modern Tradition (New Haven and London, 1977); Reff 1982-83; Clark 1985; and Robert L. Herbert, Impressionsism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society (New Haven and London, 1988). Among these books, Clark's is by far the most distinguished, giving an interpretive, imaginative, and nuanced treatment of the question of modernism making it one of the most compelling works in the entire body of Manet scholarship. Its influence on recent Manet studies has been great, and it is an basic reference throughout the present work. Herbert's book also makes a significant contribution, though to my mind its weakest pages are those on Manet; in particular Herbert's decision to treat Manet as an Impressionist is a mistake. I discuss Reff's Manet and Modern Paris toward the end of chapter 2. Hanson's book, though not devoid of useful observations, is best left to itself.

35. Here, for example, is how Cachin characterizes the unprecedentedness of Manet's procedures: "To paint openly from paintings, almost to the point of parody, taking painting itself as the object of its own attention: this response, which throws down a challenge to the masters in contemporary terms" (Manet 1983, p. 18). She also says that Picasso's variations on the Désirer or l'orbe "do unto Manet as he had done unto the Italian Renaissance painters" (p. 172), a perfect example of the sort of historical leveling I seek to counterfeit. The limits of Beatrice Fawell's engagement with the question may be gauged from the following summary remarks on the Désirer ou l'orbe: "Why did [Manet] need Raphael? Like those complexities in Bach's cantatas that were inaudible in the acoustics of the Thomas-Kirche though the composer knew they were there, the presence of Raphael in the poses of Manet's figures was there, whether recognised or not, to represent 'the ideal.' It is this and not 'weakness of imagination' that behind Manet's quotations from the old masters. By the time of Désirer ou l'orbe it was done with the wry humor of pernicious, while it contributed as well an ingredient of
monumentality. Thus it made of the composition a marvellously artificial set piece, like that moment in the film M.A.S.H., in which a team of American military medics in Korea seem to fall inadvertently into the composition of Leonardo’s Last Supper. The intentions are roughly equivalent, except that Manet’s prototype was less obvious” (Farwell 1981, p. 453).

George Mauner’s Manet Peintre-Philosophe: A Study of the Painter’s Themes (University Park, Pa., and London, 1975) discusses the relation of a number of paintings by Manet to their respective sources, but interprets all of Manet’s art in terms of a conscious iconological program thematizing the duality of spirit and matter (impersuasively, in my view). Finally, James H. Rubin explains Manet’s allusions to earlier art in his paintings of the 1860s in terms of “Manet’s theme of the classics renewed through contact with reality” (“Manet’s Silence and the Poetics of Bouquet” [London, 1994], p. 59).

36. See Wilson-Bareau 1986 and 1992. The omission of any reference to “Manet’s Sources” is especially pointed in the case of her eponymous essay in The Hidden Face of Manet, which deals at length with Manet’s allusions to earlier pictures.


40. Greenberg, “Necesidad de Formalismo,” New Literary History 3 (summer 1972): 271 (quoted by Thierry de Duve, “The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,” p. 531). See also Greenberg, “Beginnings of Modernism,” Arts Magazine 57 (Apr. 1983): 77–78, where he again identifies Manet as the first Modernist painter by virtue of the “shrewd handling of his medium”; observes that “[i]t’s the renovation of the medium, of the immediate phenomenal substance, that has largely made Modernism the aesthetic quality by which it justifies itself. Away from such renovation Modernism evaporates: what happens becomes something else—not necessary something less, by no means less, but still no longer or not yet Modernism” (p. 78); and explains that the Modernist renovation of the medium of painting in the interests of sustaining aesthetic quality took the form of a “creative devotion” toward flatness, which he compares and contrasts with the transformation of Greco-Roman pictorial art into Byzantine art that took place between the fourth and sixth centuries of the modern era (p. 79). And cf. Walter Darby Bannard: “Modernism is a frame of mind or working attitude toward both the making and taking in of art which embodies two primary principles. One, art in the making is self-critical, turning naturally to the best art of the past to emulate the highest standards for the present, bringing to itself whatever changes seem necessary to maintain those standards. Two, art objects are relatively good or not so good, and that [sic] this goodness or quality must be taken in through feeling and intuition above and beyond the sum of describable parts. The driving force of Modernism is self-improvement, esthetic betterment” (“Jules Olinsky at the New Gallery,” exhib. cat. [Miami, Fla.: The New Gallery, University of Miami, Feb. 25–Mar. 23, 1994], n.p.). I shall have more to say about the issue of "aesthetic quality" in the coda.


42. Ibid., p. 12.

43. Ibid., pp. 12–13.

44. The idea that the Impressionists were in pursuit of a new, “decorative” mode of unity that stressed the relations of tones and colors on a flat surface was first put forward by the critic Armand Silvestre (in 1874 and 1876) and Philippe Burty (in 1874, 1875, and 1877). See Armand Silvestre, “L’Exposition des révélations” and “Exposition de la rue Le Peletier,” L’Opinion nationale, Apr. 3, 1874, and Apr. 2, 1876; Philippe Burty, “The Paris Exhibitions,” The Academy, May 30, 1874, idem, “The Exhibition of the ‘Intransigents,’” The Academy, Apr. 15, 1876; and idem, “Exposition des impressionnistes,” La République française, Apr. 25, 1877. In the decades that followed the concept of the decorative underwent considerable development, largely though by no means exclusively in connection with the art of Claude Monet. The best discussions of this topic remain Levine’s in “Decor/Décorat/Décoration,” and Monet and His Critics. See also the coda.

45. The exchange is cited by Albert Wolff, Édouard Manet, Le Figaro, May 1, 1881.

Courtier lui-même en voyant paraître, en 1864, au Salon, l’Olympia de Manet, ne put s’accommoder de cet art moderne et véniaire: — C’est plat, ce n’est pas modèle; on dirait une femme de papier d’un jeu de cartes sortant du bain.

Ce qui Manet, toujours prêt à la riposte, répondit: — Courtier nous embête à la fin avec ses modèles; son idéal à lui c’est une bille de billard?

See the discussion of these criticisms in chapter 4.

47. Zola, “Édouard Manet, étude biographique et critique,” Ecrits sur l’art, p. 152. Zola goes on to compare Olympia to a grasse d’Epinay (p. 160) and the Fifer to “une enseigne de consommateur” (p. 161). The nearest approach to a reading of some of Manet’s paintings as flat is found in E. Spuller’s highly interesting account of Manet’s one-man exhibition of 1867 ("M. Édouard Manet & sa peinture," Le Nain jaune, June 9, 1867). Spuller criticizes Manet for his belief that painting was meant to be seen not up close but only at a distance. When Manet’s paintings are viewed from far back, Spuller wrote, “the patches of color disappear into the ensemble, the desired effect is obtained, one has before one a relief; the object is surrounded by air, by reality, the aim of painting is achieved.” But Spuller added that in the exhibition none of Manet’s nude figures actually achieved
that effect, because they couldn't be seen from far enough away.

"There is no modelling," he complained, "no chiaroscuro, all the artifices of ordinary painting are suppressed, none is forced, despite the opposite desire that one would have, to find these nude figures of a desperate flappiness, not to mention their other faults."

Pour bien voir les tableaux de M. Manet, il faut le voir à une grande distance, se reculer le plus possible. Les taches disparaissent alors dans l'ensemble; on obtient l'effet voilé, on a devant soi un relief: l'objet est dans l'air, dans la réalité, le bur de la peinture est atteint.

S'est-il un système comme un autre, moins commun cependant que ceux qui éloignent des apparences inutiles pour recevoir des tableaux comme des miroirs de poche. Mais admettons l'œil de M. Manet. En bien, il est venu à son défaut, mais en se défaut dans son salon de l'avenue de l'Alma, aucune des figures nues qu'il exposait se perdait de relief, car on ne peut pas les voir assez loin. Il n'y a point de modèle, point de clair obscur, tous les artifices de la peinture ordinaire sont supprimés; on est bien servi, malgré le désir contraint qu'on pourrait avoir de trouver ces figures nues d'une merveilleuse imagerie, sans peur de leurs autres détails.

But Spoller complains of the flappiness only of the nude figures, not of the Déjeuner et Olympia in their entirety. Indeed earlier in his article Spoller comments that Manet's method isn't really new, that many artists were familiar with it before Manet but refrained from practicing it "because it is defective and in the end inevitably leads the painter who resorts to it to produce only works of trompe-l'œil, which is the coldest and most irritating thing in the world that one can imagine."

"In other words, in Spoller's view the inherent senility of Manet's method was toward untrammeled illusionism."

"I t'ajoute que cette méthode n'a rien de bien neuf, que bien des gens la connaissent avant M. Manet, mais ne la pratiquent point parce qu'elle est déficiteuse et qu'enfin elle doit forcément amener le peintre qui s'en sert à ne plus produire que des tableaux en trompe-l'œil, c'est-à-dire la chose la plus froide et la plus aigüe qui se puisse concevoir au monde."

In any case, Spoller's criticism of the apparent flappiness of Manet's nudes at the avenue de l'Alma is not the note of most Manet commentary from the 1860s.

48. See chap. 1, n. 96 and 97 for an extended discussion of that painting and the impact of Manet's art on contemporary culture. See also n. 96 for a brief discussion of Olympia in The Painting of Modern Life. Clark considers various intentionally problematic or disparate features of that painting and goes on to say: "To call these disparities 'flappiness' or 'flattening' does not seem to me a good reason for suggesting that Manet's art is a more complex than a physical state, or at any rate the state of a medium. They put in question how the world might appear in a picture if its constituents were conceived—i.e., they seem to me to be that which the passage is trying to insist on something more.


50. Ibid., p. 74.

51. In an important article Yve-Alain Bois calls attention to a sweeping change in Greenberg's point of view that took place in the mid-1920s ("Greenberg's Amendments," Kunst und Museum, n.s., no. 1 (1933): 1–9). Briefly, by comparing a number of essays by Greenberg as originally published and as revised and republished in Art and Culture (1961), Bois shows how a prior emphasis on materiality became increasingly displaced by one on opticality, as exemplified, finally, in the art of Morris Louis and the color-field painters. Bois cites approvingly John O'Brian's account of a slightly earlier shift in Greenberg's political views, from what T. J. Clark has called his "Eliptic Tendency" to "Kantian Anti-Communism" (see O'Brian, Introduzione, Clement Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism, 3, Affirmations and Refusals, 1915–1926 (Chicago and London, 1993), pp. xx–xxxii), and suggests that the new emphasis on opticality is consistent with that development. "Such an ideological conversion," Bois writes, "finds as its counterpart in the realm of esthetics (with a small time-lag, a deferment of a few years, and in a slightly different fashion) from the materialism of 'positive facts' to the transcendence of the mirage, from tactility to opticality, and so forth" (p. 6). (Bois also suggests a biographical explanation, tied to Greenberg's love affair starting in 1950 with Helen Frankenthaler, "whose 'Mountains and Sea,' dating from 1952, will become a key element of Greenberg's new reading of Pollock and of Abstract Expressionism as a whole" (ibid.). Whatever the reasons for Greenberg's change of mind, his later position, which Bois characterizes as an "idealism" (p. 8), has the crucial consequence of elucidating Manet and the Impressionists under the dual sign of flappiness and opticality. See also Bois's discussion of that change of mind in "The Limit of Almost," in Ad Reinhardt, exhib. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, May 30–Sept. 2, 1991; Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Oct. 13, 1991–Jan. 6, 1992, pp. 14–17.

52. Armand Silvestre, "Chronique des Beaux-ARTS," L'Opinion nationale, Apr. 12, 1874. (Il faut, en effet, des yeux spéciaux pour être sensibles à cette justesse dans les relations des tons qui faisoient leur honnête et leur même.)

53. Marc de Montfaud (Marie-Amélie Chatroule de Montfaud), "Exposition du tout-juste-à-la-Capucines," L'Artiste, May 1, 1874, pp. 307–13. (Si ce petit groupe pouvoit constituer une école, on devrait l'appeler "l'École des yeux.")


55. Pinard, "L'Exposition Manet," Le Radical (Jan. 9, 1884). (Là prenait Saanti o sa main humaine a d‘être employée pour transporter sur la toile l‘image recueillie par l‘œil de l‘artiste, on pourrait supposer que son regard a été le seul agent de réception et de reproduction de l‘image.) Pinard also said that he regarded those two works as the most useful for understanding Manet's art: "Si je m‘attache particulièrelement à ces deux œuvres, c‘est qu‘elles me paraissent les plus proches à faire comprendre le peintre." (Pinard, "L‘Exposition Manet," Le Voltaire, May 3, 1883. (Manet doit-il lâcher du soin qu‘il a pris pour ravir de sa œuvre toute intention psychologique ou tout sujet philosophique? Manet fut un peintre avant tout, et son ambition la plus haute était de rester peintre dans la pleine acception plastique du terme. Manet fut un œil plutôt qu‘un raisonnement.

56. Edmond Balsire, Manet (Paris, 1874), p. 535. (Sa carrière se résume en une ascension continue vers la lumière et la vérité, et présente cette extraordinaire particularité que chaque manifestation du peintre est un acheminement, une transition, pour ainsi dire, vers une expression nouvelle de sa conception intérieure...


58. Théodore Duret, Histoire de Édouard Manet et de son œuvre (1823–1903; Paris, 1920), pp. 163–65. In his words:

"Vrai de l‘œuvre n‘aime personne avec plus sincérité et, en part, avec moins naïveté que Manet; jamais personne, brush in hand, absorbed by the subject, sought to render it more..."
faithfully. The disaccord between the public and him stems therefore from a difference of vision, Manet and others didn’t see in the same way. . . .

His taste of seeing in a particular manner was not the result of a reasoned act, or an effort of the will, or of work. It came from nature. It was the gift . . . He saw things in a daze the light that the others didn’t discover, he fixed on the canvas the sensations that struck his eye. In so doing, he acted unconsciously, in that what he saw derived from his nervous and sensory organization. Nothing was more false than to accuse him of pursuing so-called pérsonal hatred, deliberately and out of a pure desire to attract attention.

Jamais en effet personne n’a peint avec plus de sincérité et, pour une part, avec plus de naïveté que Manet; jamais personne n’a, le pinceau à la main, absorbé par le sujet, cherché le rendu plus fidèlement. Le dessinent souvent entre le public et lui poussait donc d’une différence de visions, Manet et les autres ne voyaient pas de la même manière . . .

Sa faculté de voir d’une façon particulière ne venait ni d’un acte raisonné, ni d’un effort de volonté, ni du travail. Elle venait de la nature. Elle était le don . . . Il voyait les choses dans un éclat de lumière que les autres n’y découvraient pas, il fixait sur la toile les sensations qui lui étaient frappés son œil. En le lançant, il agissait inconsciemment, puisque ce qu’il voyait lui venait de son organisation. Rien n’était plus faux que de l’accuser de s’adonner à la soi-disant peinture bartabac, de propos délibérément, et pur pur désir d’atteindre l’attention.

19. Antonin Proust, “L’Art d’Edouard Manet,” Le Studio 21 (Jan. 13, 1901): 76, see chap. 1, no. 29, for more on that article, which is reproduced in its entirety along with an English translation in appendix 1. Near the beginning of that article Proust refers to Manet as the “leader of the Impressionist school.”

60. This despite Zola’s proto-Impressionist insistence that the distinction of Manet’s art lay in the simplicity and directness (also the subtext, the finesse) with which the painter transcribed the scene before him into a tonally coherent whole. “What first strikes me in his paintings is the extremely delicate accuracy of the relations among tones,” he wrote in 1867 (“Edouard Manet,” Écrits sur l’art, p. 150). And: “The artist’s whole personality consists in the manner in which he organizes: he sees blond, and he sees by masses” (ibid., p. 151). And: “Don’t ask him for anything other than a literally accurate translation (of nature). He doesn’t know to sing or philosophize. He knows how paint and that’s all: he has the gift, and therein lies his distinctive temperament, to seize the dominant tones in all their delicacy and to thus be able to model in broad planes both things and beings” (ibid., p. 153). (Ce qui me frappe d’abord dans ces tableaux, c’est une justesse très délicate dans les rapports des tons entre eux, . . . Toute la personnalité de l’artiste consiste dans la manière dont son œil est organisé: il voit blond, et il voit par masses, . . . Ni lui demandez rien autre chose qu’une traduction d’une justesse linéaire. Il ne saurait ni chanter ni philosophiser. Il sait peindre, et voilà tout: il a le don, et c’est là son tempérament propre, de saisir dans leur délicatesse les tons dominants et de pouvoir ainsi modeler à grands plans les choses et les êtres.)

I discuss Zola’s idiosyncratic critical perspective in chapters 3 and 4 of this book; here I will simply remark that his writings on Manet of 1866–88 anticipate Impressionism’s simplicifcational view of Manet’s achievement. As he says: “I can’t repeat too often that it’s necessary to forget a thousand things to understand and appreciate this talent” (ibid., I nous faut, je ne saurais trop le répéter, oublier mille choses pour comprendre et goûter ce talent). What’s curious, of course, is that Zola finally was ambivalent about Impressionism itself, in part because of his continued allegiance to the human figure, in part because he never became fully reconciled to Impressionist technique. In 1879, for example, he wrote of Manet, whom he called the leader of the Impressionists: “His long struggle against the incomprehension of the public is explained by the difficulty he finds in executing, which is to say that his hand isn’t the equal of his eye . . . If his technique equaled the
alienation from that event. Moreover, in paintings like the Déjeuner and the Olympia, for example, the inhibiting, estranging quality of self-awareness is literally depicted in the painting itself. In the Déjeuner, by the unrelenting gesture of the man on the right and the bird frozen in flight at the top of the painting; in the Olympia, above all in the hostile, almost schematic centaur, and in both the disorienting slant of Vorticist Munere.

But Manet’s desire to make the estranging quality of self-awareness an essential part of the content of his work—a desire which, as we have seen, is at bottom realistic—has an important consequence: namely, that self-awareness in this particular situation necessarily entails the awareness that one is looking at it, after all, merely a painting. And this awareness too must be made an essential part of the work itself. That is, there must be no question but that the painter intended it to be felt; and if necessary the spectator must be compelled to feel it. Otherwise the self-awareness (and the alienation) Manet after all would remain incomplete and equivocal.

For this reason Manet emphasizes certain characteristics which have nothing to do with verism but which assert that the painting in question is exactly that: a painting. For example, Manet emphasizes the flatness of the picture surface by emphasizing modeling and (as in the case of the Déjeuner) refusing to depict depth convincingly, calls attention to the limits of the canvas by truncating extended forms with the framing edge, and underscores the rectangular shape of the picture support by aligning with it, more or less conspicuously, various elements within the painting. (The notions of emphasis and assertion are important here. David and Ingres rely on rectangular composition far more than Manet; and some of Ingres’s forms have as little modeling as Manet’s. But David and Ingres are not concerned to emphasize the rectangularity or the flatness of the canvas, but rather they make use of these to ensure the stability of their compositions and the rigidity of their drawing.)

No wonder Manet’s art has always been open to contradictory interpretations: the contradictions reside in the conflict between his ambitions and his actual situation. (What one takes to be the salient features of his situation is open to argument; an uncharacteristically sable Marxist could, I think, make a good case for focusing on the economic and political situation in France after 1848. In this note, however, I have stressed Manet’s recognition of consciousness as a problem for art, as well as the estranging quality of his own consciousness of himself.) Manet’s art represents the last attempt in Western painting to achieve a full equivalent to the great realistic paintings of the past: an attempt which led, in quick inexorable steps, to the founding of modernism through the emphasis on pictorial qualities and problems in their own right. This is why Manet’s was so easily thrown off stride by the advent of Impressionism around 1870; because his pictorial and formal innovations of the preceding decade had not been made for their own sake but rather for the service of a phenomenon that had already been worked out in philosophy, and had been objectified in some poetry (e.g., Baudelaire), but which had not yet made itself felt in the visual arts. It was only at the end of his life that Manet at last succeeded in using what he had learned from the Impressionists to objectify his own much more profound phenomenon, in the Bar at the Folies-Bergère. (pp. 49-50)

There is much that might be said about this (and much that’s wrong with it), but let me make just three points: (1) Already in 1861 Manet should be seen as a realist and that his endeavor in his paintings of the 1860s differed fundamentally from that of the Impressionists. (2) My emphasis on Manet’s schematization of consciousness and alienation, though crude and unattainable as it stands, is not without a certain relation to the social-historical notion of the “self-distanced” or “alienated” subject of modernism mentioned above. (3) My claim that the schematization of consciousness and alienation in this particular situation entails calling attention to the painting in question being merely that, a painting, also might be linked with the passage from Clark cited above. But there is a sharp difference between Clark’s emphasis on the first modernist painters’ skepticism and unassuredness about the nature of pictorial representation and what I imply was Manet’s deliberate strategy of underscoring the “paintingness” of his pictures of the 1860s, and of course nothing could be more “impressionist” in the sense that I have been using the term than my Greenbergian stress on the flatness and rectangularity of the picture plane. Similarly, the phrase “problematic intrinsic to self and picture qualities and ‘universal qualities of the picture’ in the Déjeuner” by the unrelenting gesture of the man on the right and the bird frozen in flight at the top of the painting; in the Olympia above all by the hostile, almost schematic centaur, and in both by the distancing slant of Vorticist Munere.

1. Manet’s Sources, 1859–1869
2. Ernest Chesneau and Théophile Thoré. Their observations are discussed in the last section of this chapter.
3. For example, Edmond Bazire, Edouard Manet (Paris, 1884); Jacques de Riez, Edouard Manet (Paris, 1884); Louis Gomes, "Manet," GBA, 2d ser., 29 (Feb. 1, 1884): 133–139. Gomes is not exactly an admirer of Manet’s work but argues that its importance is incalculable.
5. I discuss the articles and books that most importantly contributed to this realization below. I might remark, however, that Manet’s use of the art of the past began to be a historical problem shortly before the exhibition of 1832. See Paul Janot, "Études sur Manet," GBA, 4th ser., 15 (Jan. 1927): 37–50.
7. L’art ne dit pas aujourd’hui, vœux des œuvres sans défauts, mais vœux des œuvres sincères. C’est l’effet de la sincérité de donner aux œuvres un caractère qui les fait ressembler à une protection, alors que le peintre n’a songé qu’à rendre son impression.
11. Bazin, Huygeb, and Florisouone are among those who have expressed this view. See also John Richardson, Manet (1968); London and New York, 1967); Alain Bovassès in "A Note on Manet’s Compositional Difficulties," Burlington Magazine 103 (June 1961): 276–77; takes issue with Richardson.
13. I hope that something of what it means to say this will become clear by the end of the present study (i.e., chapter 1). I am not suggesting that the history of the concept of composition in the nineteenth century should be investigated apart from the history of