

**Anne Coffin Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977. 222 + xvii pp., 135 illus., \$25.00**

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approximations, du point de vue de l'authenticité, c'est qu'il s'attache avant tout à replacer l'œuvre dans le contexte d'une évolution du message sensible. Avec Arnason, au contraire, il y a distanciation; l'écrivain entend bien ne pas être victime de son enthousiasme et l'effort d'objectivité l'emporte sur tout autre. Cette position s'inscrit parfaitement dans la ligne adoptée par les chercheurs scientifiques travaillant dans le domaine des arts depuis la fin de la dernière guerre. Ce qui compte à présent pour l'analyste de la littérature ou des arts plastiques comme pour le musicologue, c'est de rester imperturbable, de dominer la matière comme le mathématicien ou le géomètre. Ce qui compte, c'est l'esprit scientifique, qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec l'esprit encyclopédique antérieur qui caractérisait encore Réau. Dans ce sens, on peut dire que les deux ouvrages sont complémentaires, révélant non seulement différentes facettes du génie houdonien, mais encore une évolution dans les méthodes et les objectifs des historiens de l'art.

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ANNE COFFIN HANSON *Manet and the Modern Tradition*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977. 222 + xvii pp., 135 illus., \$25.00.

There has been a striking recent intensification in the flow of Manet scholarship: a *catalogue raisonné* and books by Hanson, Mauner, Reff, and Peter Gay have appeared in the past three years alone. This in spite of the facts that Manet's career was quite brief compared with those of his Impressionist associates, and that the bulk of his work consists of still lifes, portraits of women friends and some men, and scenes of Parisian life; all delightful, but scarcely in need of learned explanation or laborious analysis. But, as Anne Hanson writes, although we shall probably not discover many new facts, the seemingly irreconcilable elements in Manet's character embodied in his work continue to perplex us.

Hanson asks whether we should not ascribe these dualities to Man-

et's position between the past and the modern in art, and to his being part of a society in the full flush of the industrial revolution, poised ambivalently between pride in the progress achieved and fear of the future and of the loss of tradition. She presents to us an art world where the rebels are not so clearly differentiated from academic ideas and processes as popular art history would have us believe, where Manet has slowly to disentangle his half-formed vision of the 'modern' both from Realism and from academic genre and history painting.

The book is divided into three parts: the first examines the calls for a new art at mid-century, and attempts to define 'modern life,' the second discusses Manet's subject matter in a series of chapters on each theme, and the third is devoted to compositional and pictorial questions. Hanson has thoroughly explored mid-nineteenth-century writings on art as well as the subsequent flood of Manet criticism and explication, and her work is invaluable for the mass of material that has been assimilated and distilled for the reader. The thousand footnotes are not wearying evidences of pedantic scholarship, but instead form a thorough guide to Manet studies, and they will be much consulted.

The most difficult task for the historian of nineteenth-century art is to grasp and make intelligible the inter-reactions between the artistic and cultural worlds as society changed under the inexorable assault of the industrial revolution. As Hanson points out, we face both a wealth of material and yet a lack of specific evidence. Her attempt to set Manet into his time is diffused by this situation. She gives an excellent picture of the dissensions and opinions within the art world, but the chapters on 'Modern Life' cannot cope adequately with their subject matter within the confines of only a few pages. A general statement such as 'economic changes had brought a new public to the Salons,' which is true, is not made concrete by an analysis of this public. The first chapter moves from quotations illustrating the critical dissatisfaction with the state of art in the 1850s to others on expectations for art that were created by developing beliefs in democracy,

and from the value of everyday life as an artistic subject to evidences of the public interest in science. Here, discussing the 1850s, Hanson does not clarify the rôle of science in forming cultural attitudes with her quotations from the late '70s and '80s.

The difficulties of systematically recreating Manet's context can also be seen in the third chapter on 'Modern Life.' The initial discussion of modern attitudes, modern dress, and the subject of popular imagery drifts into a discussion of the magazine and gallery *La Vie Moderne*. There is a detailed section on Manet's paintings on tambourines and ostrich eggs for an exhibition in 1880 that was designed to bring a fashionable audience into the gallery. This is a trivial aspect of the modern, very far from Baudelaire's 'distillation of the beauty in contemporary life' with which the chapter begins. It was the 1860s that formed the crucible which hatched the painting of modern life, not the ostrich eggs of the '80s. After Hanson's excellent recreation of the 'crisis' of the 1850s, it is the '60s that demand definition.

One of the most interesting and suggestive individual chapters is 'Costume Pieces.' It begins with a reminiscence by George Moore of Manet persuading him to go dressed as a Paris workman to a party in honor of Zola, because Manet 'enjoyed incongruities.' The various quotations from Irish novelist George Moore are indicative of Hanson's thoroughness. Many historians disregard non-French sources on this period, though Moore was one of the few writers in Manet's circle to provide a description of it. Moore has become so obscure to art historians that Hanson must refer to him as 'George Moore, the Irish poet,' presumably confusing him with Tom Moore, Byron's friend.

This interest in dressing up, and Manet's taste for incongruities, may help to explain some of the puzzles of his work. Like many historians of nineteenth-century art, I have spent much time worrying at *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Fig. 1), and it could be that we have treated it too solemnly. Manet may have enjoyed translating Giorgione's mix of figures both nude and in contemporary dress, because what had





FIGURE 1. Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Hanson, pl. 62.

been rendered respectable by time became a marvellous 'incongruity' when put into Manet's own era. Manet's wit and satiric spirit, referred to by his contemporaries, too rarely come into art historical considerations of his work.

Hanson's discussion of *Le Déjeuner*, in the chapter on the nude, brings out her own original achievements in Manet scholarship, the relating of his paintings to popular prints of the day. Manet consciously related himself to the great tradition in painting through direct derivations and by allusions, but to concentrate too exclusively on this aspect of his work obscures his modernity. Twentieth-century scholarship has tended until recently to ignore the importance of graphic arts and photography in nineteenth-century painting. This was not the case earlier when not only did Baudelaire himself write extensively on caricaturists, but Muther, in his excellent *History of Modern Painting*, gave a large place to the graphic artists as the precursors and creators of modern reality in art.

Hanson shows that many of Manet's motifs can be found in the illustrations of the mid-century, and she reproduces two illustrations from volumes of poetry and songs where dressed men and nude women – main elements in *Le Déjeuner* – appear in a context of water and a boat (see Fig. 2). In each the artist brings out the 'incongruities' of the scene by a juxtaposition of nineteenth-century life with the classical or the primitive, though they are softened by the traditional poses and decoration. As Hanson writes, 'Such sources put us into Manet's own time but leave for him the important jump from their last lingering

references to past ideals to a fully tangible confrontation with the world of his own day.' *Le Déjeuner* forced a comparison with the acceptable Salon nude and with the artificiality of the latter's heritage from Giorgione's and Titan's paintings, while also challenging the hypocritical pruderies of the time by asking the spectator to look a contemporary nude in the face.

A recent reviewer of publications on Manet has complained that American scholars have an obsession with Manet's work of the 1860s, and ignore the later work. Among the reasons for this neglect is certainly the fact that there are fewer problem paintings in the later period. Hanson does pay attention to Manet's work in the '70s, but perhaps does not achieve a balanced view of his whole artistic career. We miss a discussion of the exchange of influences between Manet and Monet, Renoir, and Berthe Morisot, which might throw light on Manet's modernism and his abandonment of contrived subjects and borrowings from past art.

Hanson rounds off her book with an excellent section on Manet's last masterpiece, *The Bar at the Folies Bergère*, which forms a counterpart to his early large painting, *The Old Musician*. She shows how both deal with the theme of alienation in modern life. The earlier painting treats the outcasts of society – the gypsy girl, the absinthe drinker, the wandering Jew – assembled in a no-man's land, yet given dignity, both through the composition and through associations with the 'street philosophers.' *The Bar at the Folies Bergère* is shown as being similarly rich in almost contradictory elements created by the difference between the stiff representation of the barmaid herself and her more relaxed sympathetic reflection. Hanson writes: 'There is a strong contrast between the lonely modern individual isolated by her firm contours and her own reverie from the activity which surrounds her, and her other self, sociably serving a customer. . . . Stasis and action in perpetual balance, Manet has admirably fulfilled Baudelaire's admonition that the modern artist must extract from the ephemeral and transitory the poetic and eternal qualities of his own age.'

It is Manet's search for modernity that Hanson pursues through

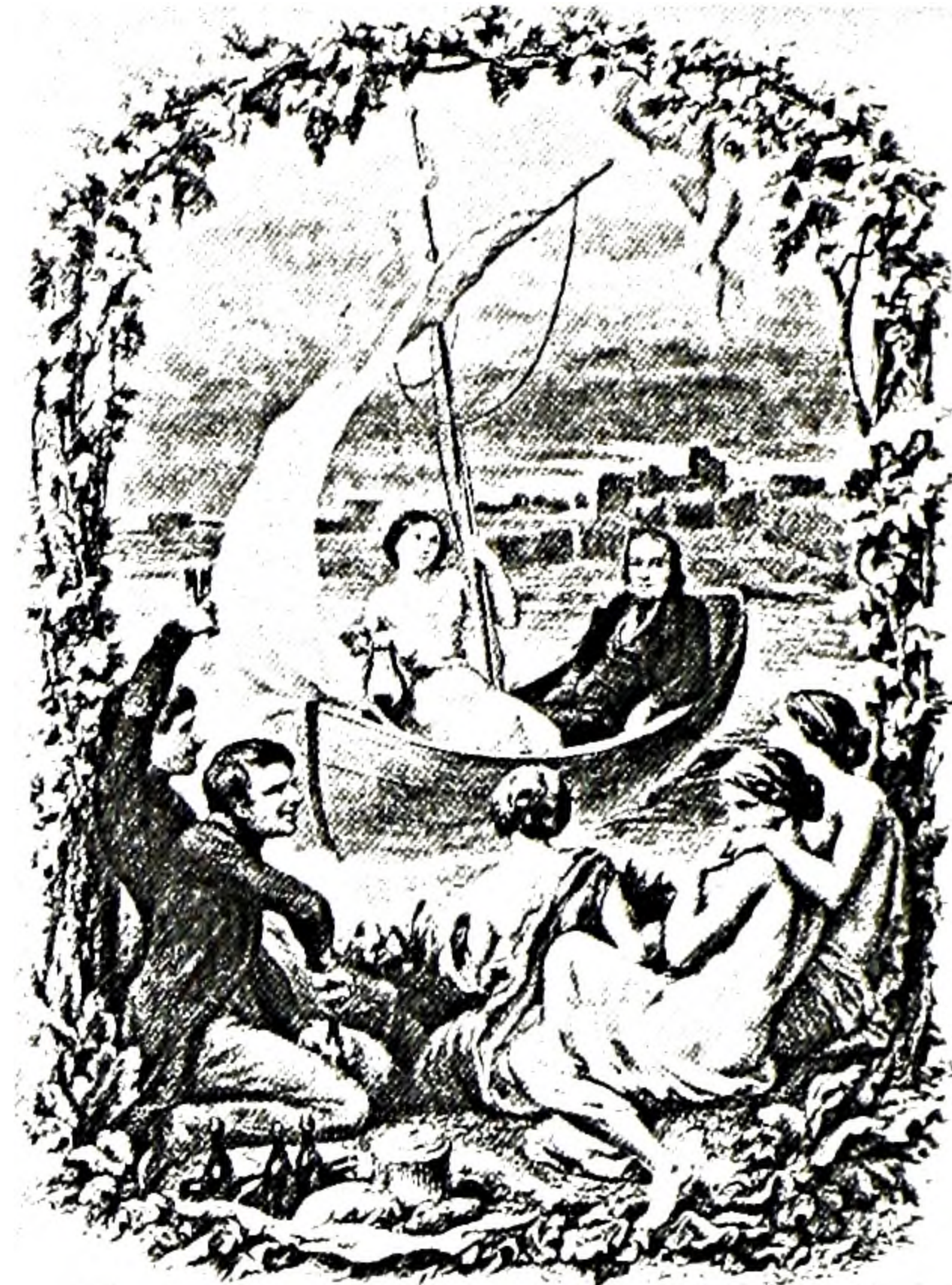


FIGURE 2. *La Rivière*, from Pierre Dupont, *Chants et chansons*, 1855. Hanson, pl. 64.

the convolutions and contradictions of his career, and which provides a splendid conclusion to one of the best books on Manet.

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CLAIRE JONES, ROBERT GORDON, JEAN-MARIE TOULGOUAT et ANDREW FORGE *Monet at Giverny*. Londres, Matthews Miller Dunbar, 1975. 144 pp., illus.

Livre d'étrennes, de vacances, livre d'images pour les admirateurs de Monet, images qui affoleront les nostalgiques des jardins à l'ancienne, associant dans une même passion la poésie des noms de fleurs au Giverny du peintre et au Saint-Sauveur de Sido. En effet, 99 des 144 pages sont consacrées aux illustrations, 24 à des reproductions en couleurs des tableaux de nature peints à Giverny, les autres donnant à voir des photographies pour la plupart empruntées aux collections Toulgouat, Piguët et Truffaut qui ont le charme du jamais vu car les multiples albums publiés sur Monet et l'impressionnisme en général semblent souvent se répéter, tant sur le plan de l'iconographie que sur celui du texte, histoire et analyse critique.