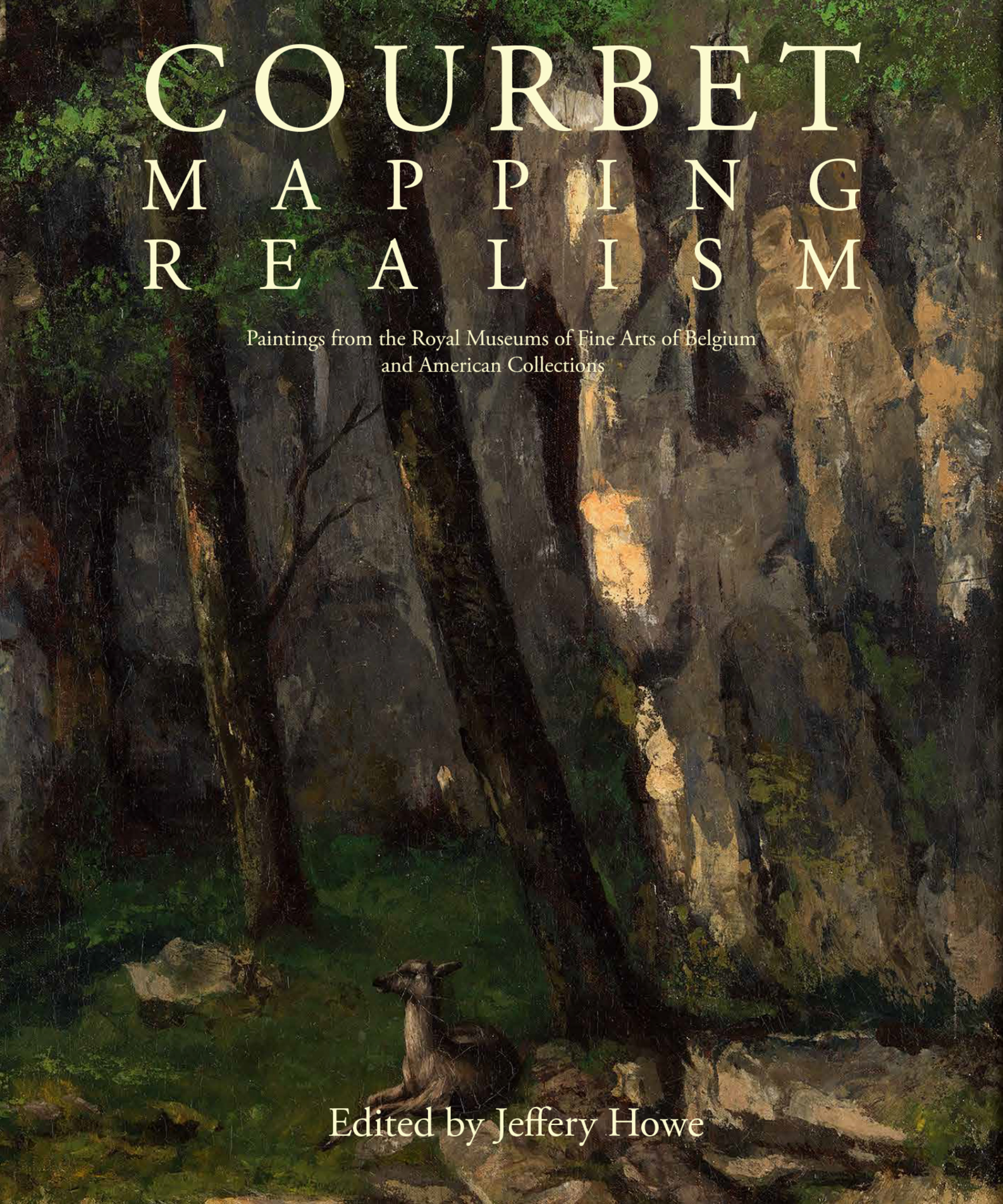

COURBET
MAPPING REALISM

Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium
and American Collections

Edited by Jeffery Howe

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Edited by Jeffery Howe
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College

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This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections* at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, September 1–December 8, 2013.

Organized by the McMullen Museum and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, *Courbet: Mapping Realism* has been curated by Jeffery Howe and Dominique Marechal. The exhibition has been underwritten by Boston College, the Patrons of the McMullen Museum, the Newton College Class of 1968, and the Newton College Class of 1973.

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Preface

Courbet: Mapping Realism brings together important works of the leading French realist painter Gustave Courbet and his contemporaries in Belgium and America. This project builds on a relationship of long standing between a distinguished professor of art history at Boston College, Jeffery Howe, and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, which first bore fruit in a collaboration between that institution and the McMullen Museum in the exhibition *Fernand Khnopff: Inner Visions and Landscapes* in 2004. Dominique Marechal, curator of nineteenth-century art at the Royal Museums, and Jean-Philippe Huys, a researcher at the Centre international pour l'Étude du XIX^{e} siècle in Brussels, consulted with Howe in 2010 and invited him to contribute to the catalogue for the exhibition *Gustave Courbet and Belgium*, which they were organizing for 2013 at the Royal Museums. Because Courbet's paintings were coveted by Boston collectors and influenced many local painters, discussions quickly turned to the exhibition's traveling to the McMullen, where Howe proposed to expand its scope with loans from this side of the Atlantic to "map" Courbet's influence in America. Howe then led a second curatorial initiative that aimed to expand knowledge of Courbet as leader of the realist movement in America. Two art historians at Boston College, professors Claude Cernuschi and Katherine Nahum, joined the team, agreeing to contribute essays in addition to those by Marechal and Huys for the present volume, which examines the relationship between the artist's reception and influence in Belgium and America.

To Jeffery Howe we owe our greatest debt of gratitude for masterminding the McMullen exhibition and its catalogue. We also extend special thanks to Dominique Marechal for serving as the exhibition's co-curator. Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium Director Michel Draguet, Head of Exhibitions Sophie van Vliet, and Registrar Valérie Haerden supported the idea, and contributed valuable expertise as the project progressed. Boston College alumnus William Vareika and his wife Alison, of William Vareika Fine Arts in Newport, Rhode Island, shared their knowledge and helped with securing paintings by Courbet and American artists in private collections.

At the McMullen Museum, Assistant Director Diana Larsen designed the galleries to tell the parallel stories of Courbet's influence in Belgium and America. Assistant Director John McCoy designed this book and the exhibition's graphics to reflect nineteenth-century French bookmaking. Publications and Exhibitions Administrator Kate Shugert organized loans and photography. She copyedited with extraordinary discernment the essays in this publication and, with John McCoy and Annie McEwen, compiled the index. Kerry Burke provided numerous photographs for the catalogue and the exhibition. Interns Francesca Falzone, Nathan Jones, Keith Lebel, and Emilie Sintobin helped with proofreading and loan processing. Anastos Chiavaras and Rose Breen from Boston College's Office of Risk Management provided guidance regarding insurance. We are grateful to the University's Advancement Office—especially James Husson, Thomas Lockerby, Catherine Concannon, Mary Lou Crane, and Kathy Kuy for help with funding.

Much of this exhibition has been drawn from the riches of private collections and institutions in the US. For assistance in identifying and obtaining these loans we thank friends and colleagues: Darcy F. Beyer and John Treacy Beyer; Michael Conforti, Jennifer Harr, Mattie Kelley, Monique Le Blanc, Teresa O'Toole, and Richard Rand (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute); Thomas Colville (Thomas Colville Fine Art); Heather Haskell, Joanna Hanna, and Diane Waterhouse Barbarisi (Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts); Anne Hawley, Elizabeth Reluga, Oliver Tostmann, and Amanda Venezia (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum); Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Mechnig; Thomas P. Campbell, Lisa Cain, Emily Foss, and Susan Stein (Metropolitan Museum of Art); John W. Smith, Tara Emsley, Sionan Guenther, and Maureen O'Brien (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design); Malcolm Rogers, Ronni Baer, Sue Bell, Elliot Bostwick Davis, Marietta Cambareri, Chris Hightower, and Kim Pashko (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); Alison Oscar; Jock Reynolds, L. Lynne Addison, Elizabeth Aldred, Lawrence Kanter, and David Whaples (Yale University Art Gallery).

The McMullen could not have envisioned such a collaboration of international scope were it not for the continued generosity of the administration of Boston College and the McMullen family. We especially thank Jacqueline McMullen; President William P. Leahy, SJ; Former Provost Cutberto Garza; Interim Provost Joseph Quinn; Chancellor J. Donald Monan, SJ; Vice-Provost Patricia DeLeeuw; Dean of Arts and Sciences David Quigley, and Director of the Institute for Liberal Arts Mary Crane. Major support for the exhibition was provided by the Patrons of the McMullen Museum, chaired by C. Michael Daley, the Newton College Class of 1968, and the Newton College Class of 1973. Publication of this volume is underwritten in part by the fund named in memory of our late, and much beloved, docent, Peggy Simons. To all mentioned above, our sincerest thanks.

Nancy Netzer

Director and Professor of Art History

Realist Manifesto

Gustave Courbet

The title of realist was imposed upon me as that of romantic was imposed upon the men of 1830. In no time have titles provided an accurate view of things: if it were otherwise, works of art would be superfluous.

Without expounding on the greater or lesser accuracy of a designation that none are bound, let us hope, to comprehend, I will restrict myself to a few words of elaboration to nip any misunderstandings in the bud.

I have studied, independent of any system or partisan spirit, the art of the ancients and moderns. I sought no more to imitate the one than to copy the other: neither was it my intention, for that matter, to reach the facile goal of "art for art's sake." No! I simply sought to mine from a thorough knowledge of tradition a rational and independent feeling of my own individuality.

What I had in mind was to understand my craft in order to practice it. To be in a position to translate the mores, ideas, the look of my era, according to my own estimation; not to be a painter only, but a man; in a word, to make a living art, that is my goal.

Gustave Courbet, "Manifeste du réalisme," preface to *Exhibition et vente de 40 tableaux et 4 dessins de l'œuvre de M. Gustave Courbet* (Paris: Simon Raçon, 1855), n.p. New translation by Claude Cernuschi and Jeffery Howe.

Courbet: Mapping Realism

Jeffery Howe

Mapmaking is a way of making order out of experience. We draw on paper to make maps of terrain, and create mental maps of our environment. A map is an image based on measurements, memory, and imagination. The overview provided by a map can reveal links between sites of importance and the distance that must be traveled between them. This exhibition expands our knowledge of Gustave Courbet's career by revealing the importance of his frequent travels to Belgium, and the reception of his works in America reflects an expanded sphere of influence. The artworks shown in *Courbet: Mapping Realism* help us chart the legacy of realism in these two countries, and to further understand the nature of that moment in history. The best maps transcend individual viewpoints, which are often limited, by synthesizing the knowledge of many. The collaboration of the contributors to this catalogue constructs a map that is more than the sum of its parts.

1. Gustave Courbet, *The Meeting; or, Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 132 x 150.5 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Pilgrims and Wanderers—Courbet as Missionary

The image of the artist as a pilgrim or wanderer intent on discovering and observing the wonders of nature was a key trope in the romantic era, as seen in Caspar David Friedrich's self-portrait as a *Traveler Overlooking the Sea of Fog* (1818, Hamburger Kunsthalle). Although Gustave Courbet (1819–77) later claimed to have buried romanticism with his great and disturbing painting *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–50, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), many of his early works were quite theatrical and overtly romantic, including dramatic self-portraits and a Faustian scene, *Classical Walpurgis Night* (1847, lost).[1] Even in 1854, he portrayed himself as a pilgrim in search of patrons and natural wonders in the self-portrait *The Meeting* (fig. 1). This is a carefully staged and provocative work. From the beginning, many have noted the inversion of social hierarchies displayed in *The Meeting* as the wealthy patron bows to the master painter.[2] Underscoring the image of the artist as outsider, Courbet based this work in part on popular prints of the mythic Wandering Jew.[3] Claude Cernuschi's essay, "The Self-Portraits of Gustave Courbet," in this volume explores the issues raised by this and other works. Wandering and witnessing were not just metaphors for Courbet; his life and career were marked by explorations throughout France and beyond. In 1850, he wrote to his friend Francis Wey: "Yes, dear friend, even in our so civilized society I must lead the life of a savage. I must break free from its very governments. The people have my sympathy. I must turn to them directly, I must get my knowledge from them, and they must provide me with a living. Therefore I have just embarked on the great wandering and independent life of a bohemian."[4]

2. Gustave Courbet, *The Apostle Jean Journet*, 1850. Lithograph, 37.5 x 27.3 cm (sheet), Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum.

The traveler was a free spirit, neither peasant nor bourgeois, and a kind of evangelist for Courbet's ideas of freedom and a new social order. His 1850 portrayal of Jean Journet in *The Apostle Jean Journet Setting Out for the Conquest of Universal Harmony*, was intended to show the spread of Journet's utopian Fourierist philosophy (fig. 2), and provided the model for Courbet's self-portrait in *The Meeting*.

The Gospel of Realism

Courbet is known as the chief representative of realism in the nineteenth century, although that term needs qualification.[5] Even his self-portraits are frequently performances reflecting a fictitious narrative, as Claude Cernuschi demonstrates. Courbet feigned reluctance to adopt the title in his "Realist Manifesto," published on the occasion of his solo exhibition in competition with the Exposition Universelle in Paris of 1855. He wrote: "The title of realist was imposed upon me as that of romantic was imposed upon the men of 1830." He explained that his goal was simply to create a living, vital art true to his time:

> I have studied, independent of any system or partisan spirit, the art of the ancients and moderns. I sought no more to imitate the one than to copy the other: neither was it my intention, for that matter, to reach the facile goal of "art for art's sake." No! I simply sought to mine from a thorough knowledge of tradition a rational and independent feeling of my own individuality.
>
> What I had in mind was to understand my craft in order to practice it. To be in a position to translate the mores, ideas, the look of my era, according to my own estimation; not to be a painter only, but a man; in a word, to make a living art, that is my goal.[6]

He insisted on authenticity in art and life, but his rejection of classical values led even sensitive critics such as Théophile Gautier to dub him "the Watteau of the Ugly."[7]

Courbet's audacity and uncompromising commitment to material truth were amply shown in *The Bathers* of 1853 (fig. 3). This image of a

large woman seen from the rear as she leaves the water after bathing has attracted controversy ever since it was shown at the Salon of 1853, when the Emperor Napoléon III reportedly struck her on the rear with his riding crop, and the Princess Eugenie compared her bulk to one of Rosa Bonheur's painted Percheron horses.[8] The controversy over Courbet's exhibit added to his notoriety as a rebel. This event also brought him a new patron, Alfred Bruyas of Montpellier, who purchased three works, including *The Bathers*—the first of many acquisitions.

Courbet's image has little to do with the tradition of idealized nymphs bathing in forest scenes, although he may be mocking the fantasies of earlier romantic or rococo art. He is almost certainly not being disrespectful of the female figures; his taste for generously fleshed nudes was well known. The model for the nude bather has been identified as Henriette Bonnion, who may have been one of Courbet's mistresses, and who also posed for similar photographs by Julien Valou de Villeneuve.[9] Courbet was naturally intrigued by the photographic image and its emerging claims for visual truth. Whether he worked from the photographs, or whether they were made after his work, is not known.[10] He often revised and combined earlier concepts as he constructed his paintings. The landscape of *The Bathers* was based on an earlier study that Eugène Delacroix reported seeing in Courbet's studio. Courbet added the figures, thus covering over an alternate unfinished version of *The Man Mad with Fear* (c. 1844–45, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo).[11]

Class divisions and a rage at perceived violations of decorum fueled much of the criticism of Courbet. His earthy bathers with their enigmatic gestures puzzled Delacroix, who wrote in his *Journal* in 1853:

> I was amazed at the strength and relief of his principal picture—but what a picture! What a subject to choose! […] What are the two figures supposed to mean? A fat woman, backview, and completely naked except for a carelessly painted rag over the lower part of the buttocks, is stepping out of a little puddle scarcely deep enough for a foot-bath. She is making some meaningless gesture, and another woman, presumably her maid, is sitting on the ground taking off her shoes and stockings. You see her stockings; one of them, I think, is only half-removed. There seems to be some exchange of thought between the two figures, but it is quite unintelligible.[12]

3. Gustave Courbet, *The Bathers*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 227.6 x 193 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

4. Honoré Daumier, *The Faces that Courbet Fellow Paints Are far too Vulgar. No One's Really that Ugly!, Le Charivari,* June 8, 1855.

5. Cham, caricature of Courbet's *The Spinner*, *Le Charivari*, May 29, 1853.

The gesture of the woman coming out of the water puzzled Delacroix, and it seems to be a kind of inversion of the *noli mi tangere* (do not touch me) gesture of Christ to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, perhaps adding a certain anti-clerical undertone to the image.

The charge of ugliness was frequently hurled at Courbet's paintings of peasants and working class women; contemporary caricatures repeatedly castigate his figures with disparaging terms about their class, hygiene, and even smell (figs. 4, 5).

In a letter addressed to the young artists of Paris in 1861, Courbet elaborated his aesthetic principles, stressing the need to be true to one's own era, and to reject the invention of historic detail:

> Every age should be represented only by its own artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it. I hold that the artists of one century are totally incapable of representing the things of a preceding or subsequent century, in other words, of painting the past or the future. It is in this sense that I deny the possibility of historical art applied to the past. Historical art is by nature contemporary. Every age must have its artists, who give expression to it and reproduce it for the future.[13]

The imagined worlds of academic classicism and romanticism were a sham, according to Courbet. He further insisted that the representation of abstractions and fantasies was beyond the scope of painting:

> I also maintain that painting is an essentially concrete art form and can consist only of the representation of real and existing things. It is an entirely physical language that is composed, by way of words, of all visible objects. An abstract object, not visible, nonexistent, is not within the domain of painting. Imagination in art consists of knowing how to find the most complete expression of an existing thing, but never of inventing or creating the thing itself.

In the name of truth, Courbet rejected the traditional academic hierarchies of art, which elevated historical and religious art above the categories of "mere imitation" such as genre painting and still life. Beauty was to be found in nature, and presented directly and simply as it was found; his letter concludes:

> Beauty is in nature and occurs in reality under the most varied aspects. As soon as one finds it,

> it belongs to art, or rather to the artist who can see it. As soon as beauty is real and visible, it carries its artistic expression within itself. But the artist has no right to amplify that expression.

Courbet was widely seen, and often mocked, as the apostle of realism, garlanded with a halo of his own brushes (fig. 6). In the popular press and in the eyes of his contemporaries, Courbet's messianic pretensions were recognized. Charles Baudelaire used the phrase "Courbet saving the world" as a heading for some proposed notes on realism.[14]

Courbet also worked through parables and extravagant gestures. When pressed to teach he finally agreed, but instead of professional models brought a cow into his studio in Paris so his students would have direct contact with nature (fig. 7). This was yet another example of his challenge to academic art and its teachings.

6. Gilbert Randon, *The Master—Only Truth is Beautiful, Truth Alone is Desirable*, *Le Journal Amusant*, June 15, 1867.

7. A. Prevost, Courbet's studio, *Le Monde Illustré,* Mar. 15, 1862.

Real Allegories—The Path from Realism to Symbolism

Courbet's most complex work is undoubtedly the great canvas that he prepared for his Pavilion of Realism, which he set up as a one-person counter-exhibition opposite the official exhibition at the French Exposition Universelle of 1855. Titled *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (fig. 8), this was as much a manifesto as his "Realist Manifesto," which was issued on the occasion of this show. In this work, Courbet tried to demonstrate that his realist doctrine did not preclude the presentation of ideas, even allegory, as long as the terms were based on his own observed experience. Significantly, he is at the center of the picture, at work painting a landscape while surrounded by figures who either frequented his studio, or whom he had seen at different times. It is not a realistic depiction of a moment in his studio, but a collage of symbolic figures, such as the model who undoubtedly signifies the "naked truth." This work has been much studied and discussed; it is one of the key works of the century.[15] Courbet's letters shed important light on it, including this one written to Champfleury in late 1854 while he was working on the painting:

> It is the moral and physical tale of my atelier. First part: these are the people who serve me, support me in my ideas, and take part in my actions. These are the people who live off of life and off of death; it is society at its highest, its lowest, and its average; in a word, it is how I see society with its concerns and its passions; it is the world that comes to me to be painted.[16]

Those on the right side of the canvas are the ones who thrive on life, while those on the left thrive on death. Courbet finds freedom in the image of the pure landscape, and is flanked by persons who connote truth and innocence. While seeking to bring realism to a new level, Courbet also anticipated important aspects of the later symbolist movement.

Although he was given a room of his own with eleven of his paintings shown in the great exhibition of French art at that time, an honor he shared along with Delacroix and Ingres, Courbet felt slighted. As he boasted to Count de Nieuwerkerke, the organizer of the Exposition Universelle, "Monsieur, I am the proudest and most arrogant man in France."[17] He borrowed money and sold paintings to build his Pavilion of Realism and exhibited another forty paintings there, including his *Burial at Ornans* and *The Painter's Studio*.[18] The exhibition was a financial failure, but he was not deterred, and in 1867 once again opened his own exhibition at the Rond-Point du Pont de l'Alma at the time of the international exposition. His example of challenging the authority of the official art establishment was a major impetus to the impressionists when they mounted their own independent art exhibition in 1874. Before Courbet, independent exhibitions by artists had been rare in France.[19]

Courbet and Belgium

Always ambitious, Courbet was eager to promote his art in other countries. His success and notoriety were carefully orchestrated.[20] Belgium was particularly important for Courbet, who found a warm reception among Belgian artists and patrons. *The Stonebreakers* (1849, formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, presumed destroyed in 1945) galvanized Belgian artists when it was shown in Brussels in 1851. Courbet declared to the Belgian merchant Arthur Stevens (brother of the painters Alfred and Joseph) in 1866: "I consider Belgium my country. I have been going there for twenty-six years and have received all kinds of ovations and tokens of friendship."[21] This letter suggests that he visited Belgium as early as 1840, though his first documented trip was in 1844. Dominique Marechal has thoroughly investigated Courbet's voyages to Belgium in his essay "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet" in this volume. In 1847 Courbet affirmed that Belgium was "a very agreeable country."[22] He wrote to his family that he was being spoiled by his hosts:

> You should have received by Lapoir a letter in which I told you that I was going to Belgium, a very agreeable country, where I have been for a week or ten days. Just imagine it as a veritable Cockaigne. I am received like a prince, which is not surprising for I move among counts, barons, princes, etc. Now we eat, now we go out in an open carriage, or we go horseback riding along the avenues of Ghent. As for the dinners, I hardly dare talk about them, I don't know whether one is away from the table more than four hours a day. I think that if I stayed much longer, I would return as big as a house.[23]

His submissions to the 1851 Salon in Brussels were well received; he

wrote to his family that "at the Brussels exhibition my *Stonebreakers* and my *Cellist* are far greater successes than I expected in Belgium. There is even talk of giving me the gold medal."[24]

He did not win a medal, but had considerable official success in later exhibitions. In 1860, his *Woman with Mirror* (plate 20) was a major success. When the Paris Salon rejected his *Venus and Psyche* (destroyed 1945) in 1864, it was shown at the exhibition of the Cercle artistique et littéraire de Bruxelles. In 1868 Courbet exhibited twelve works at the Ghent Salon and was made an honorary member of the Société libre des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles. Belgium provided an alternative venue for Courbet's art, where he found success even when rejected in France.[25] He wrote to his father from Antwerp in 1861: "Belgium and its artists have brilliantly avenged the stupidities of the French government in my regard."[26] In 1869 he was awarded a medal at the Brussels Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts, where he showed three paintings.

8. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Courbet and America

Besides Belgium, Courbet also frequently traveled and exhibited in Germany as well as Switzerland, which was close to his home in Ornans.[27] He also reportedly traveled to London and documentation has recently been found of a trip to Spain.[28]

Although he never visited America, it was to become an important new market for Courbet. The first painting by Courbet shown in America was *The Grain Sifters* (1855, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes). It was shown at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1859, but did not attract attention.[29] This would change after the Civil War. Americans were building major collections of art and European dealers were eager to capitalize on this new market. So many French works of art came to America so fast that the literary and art critic Emile Durand-Gréville (1838–1914) was commissioned by the French government to investigate the situation in 1885–86.[30] In America, the French invasion was compared to the takeover of Mexico by the French emperor Maximilian in a New York newspaper.[31] American artists such as William Morris Hunt (1824–79) studied in Paris and came back to Boston to share their enthusiasm for the new European styles of painting.[32] Hunt collected Barbizon paintings, and encouraged others in Boston to do the same.[33] Boston took an early lead in collecting Barbizon and impressionist art. William Howe Downes noted in 1888 that "it is a significant fact in the history of art that there was a time when New York dealers who had a good Corot or Courbet were obliged to send it to Boston in order to sell it."

Fiscal caution also played a role. American collectors bought so many fake old masters in the first half of the century that modern art seemed a safer investment.[34] American critics who were uncomfortable with his social themes and nudes hailed Courbet's landscapes as the best examples of his genius.[35] Landscape and nature images had great appeal in the American context that had long identified the source of inspiration and creativity with nature. Courbet's paintings offered a new path to American artists, who were struggling to find a balance between the traditional approach of emulating the old masters of Europe and the direct observation of nature.[36]

The Quarry of 1856–57 (fig. 9) depicts the aftermath of a successful hunt, with a dead deer hanging from a tree and a hunter leaning against another tree, while a young man blows a horn and two hunting dogs sniff at the pooled blood on the ground. The shadowy figure of the man is presumed to be a self-portrait, and the painting evokes a mysterious melancholic mood.[37] The canvas was pieced together out of at least five sections, as the artist revised and expanded his conception of the scene.[38] The image of the artist as hunter, whether for landscape motifs or animals, was an outgrowth of the romantic image of the artist as pilgrim or explorer. *The Quarry*, with its dogs and horn blower, shows the hunter poised between nature and civilization. Courbet explained that "the hunter is a man of independent character who has a free spirit or at least the feeling for liberty. He's a wounded soul, a heart that goes to stir up its languor in the wasteland and the melancholy of woods."[39] He clearly identified with the hunter who sought to find freedom in nature; his outlaw and anti-authoritarian tendencies were acted out in real life when he was fined for hunting out of season.[40] The hunter was also a potent icon in the American ideal of self-sufficiency and rugged individualism. Katherine Nahum's essay in this volume explores the significance of this melancholic and enigmatic painting. Although the hunt was a success, the hunter seems oddly distant and withdrawn.

9. Gustave Courbet, *The Quarry* (*La Curée*), 1856–57. Oil on canvas, 210 x 180 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

This was the first major work by Courbet to be acquired for a public collection in America, and it came by a circuitous route.[41] The Parisian publishers Cadart and Luquet were Courbet's main dealers in the 1860s.[42] To publicize their French Etching Club they organized an exhibition of the works of Courbet and other modern French artists in March 1866 at the Fine Arts Gallery in New York. The exhibit included three works by Courbet, *The Return from the Conference* (1862, destroyed; this work was exhibited in Ghent in 1867), *The Wrestlers* (1852–53, Szépmüvéseti Múzeum, Budapest), and *The Quarry.* This exhibition was also shown in April at Leonard's auction house on Bromfield Street in Boston.[43] The American exhibitions were gratifying to Courbet; he wrote to his friend Urbain Cuénot that "the American exhibition is making a lot of noise. In short, everything is fine so far."[44]

Courbet sold *The Quarry* to the art dealer Van Isacker in Antwerp for 8,000 francs in 1858. In 1862 Van Isacker traded it to the Galerie Cadart et Luquet in Paris. The painting was enlarged sometime after 1862 with

a nineteen-inch strip at the top at the suggestion of Jules Luquet.[45] Cadart and Luquet sold *The Quarry* to the Allston Club for 25,000 francs ($5,000). The Allston Club was a short-lived independent artists' association, with noted painter William Morris Hunt as its president.[46] The Club existed only from 1866 to 1873, and held just two exhibitions, in 1866 and 1867. In late May and June of 1866 an eight-by-six-foot banner hung from rented rooms in the Studio Building announcing the exhibition of *The Quarry*:[47]

ALLSTON CLUB.
ON EXHIBITION
Courbet's Great Painting,
LA CURÉE

The Studio Building housed artists' studios, theater companies, and related businesses. Tenants included William Morris Hunt and the gallery of Seth Morton Vose (fig. 10).

The Allston Club made a commitment that the work would remain forever in Boston, and the painting was reportedly displayed as if in a chapel in red velvet, amid the cheers of the purchasers.[48] According to his friend Amand Gautier, Courbet declared "what care I for the Salon, what care I for honors, when art students of a new and great country know and appreciate and buy my works?"[49]

10. The Horticultural and Studio Buildings, Boston. Corner of Tremont and Bromfield Streets, near the Park Street Church. Built in 1861, the Studio Building burned down in 1906. From stereoscopic photograph by John P. Soule, c. 1880.

The Quarry and an unidentified Ornans landscape were shown at the second Allston Club exhibition in April 1867. Between 1868 and 1872 *The Quarry* was also shown at the annual exhibits of the Boston Athenaeum. Boston's most significant new public institution was the Museum of Fine Arts, which was founded in 1870 and opened in 1877 in a bold High Victorian Gothic building on Copley Square. It was a conspicuous emblem of art and refinement as the genteel tradition began to take hold in America.[50] *The Quarry* was shown there in 1877, the year of the museum's opening and the year of Courbet's death.

When the Allston Club disbanded in 1873, the work passed to Henry Sayles (1834–1918). Sayles loaned *The Quarry* to the Museum of Fine Arts from 1877 until 1889. In 1918 it was purchased from his nephew George Tappan Francis for $75,000. Almost sixty years later, Henry Sayles Francis described his great-uncle as "a very austere old Victorian gentleman" whose house in Boston's Back Bay "was paved with pictures from top to bottom. It was rather gloomy and dark…the most important picture, was the big Courbet…over the sideboard in the dining room…he had other Courbets and he had Barbizon pictures."[51]

11. Léonce Schérer, caricature of Courbet as *The Stonebreaker*, with the destruction of the Vendôme Column behind him, *Souvenirs de la Commune*, Aug. 4, 1871.

Other works by Courbet were exhibited in Boston in following years, many of them with connections to Belgium. *The Young Ladies of the Village* (1851, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which was then owned by the Boston collector Thomas Wigglesworth (1814–1907), was shown at the Boston Athenaeum in 1879. It had been shown in Ghent in 1865. The noted Belgian collector Charles-Leon Cardon (1850–1920) owned a study for this work.[52] In 1881 an unidentified landscape, also owned by Wigglesworth, was exhibited by the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association at Mechanics Hall. In September 1883 three works, *Wreck in a Snowstorm* (now known as *Diligence in the Snow,* 1860, National Gallery, London), *Runaway Horse* (1861, Neue Pinakothek, Munich), and a landscape, *In the Forest of Fontainebleau* (location unknown), were shown at the Foreign Exhibition in Boston, also in Mechanics Hall.[53] In 1876, Courbet exhibited four works at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition.[54]

The most distinguished private collection in Boston belonged to Isabella Stewart Gardner. Housed in her Venetian-style palace built in 1902, it includes a landscape by Courbet, *A View across a River* (c. 1855, plate 34). This work entered her collection very early; she loaned it to the new Museum of Fine Arts from April 26, 1880 to June 3, 1881.[55] This landscape near his home in Ornans was central to Courbet's identity, and this painting is similar to the *Landscape at Ornans* of c. 1855 (plate 1).

The French artist's commitment to nature found many admirers in the United States. The noted American critic James Jackson Jarves compared Courbet to Walt Whitman in 1869:

> He is the strongest the truest and most satisfying of the realists, a Robert Browning of the easel. There are no such local greens, grays, lights and shadows as his; no firmer sense of material forms and uses of things; none more vigorous or more harmonious in his own interpretation of nature. He puts the spectator in absolute, organic relationship to it. Courbet's qualities are great, like those of Walt Whitman, who is an American Courbet in verse; but the best qualities of both are obscured or affrontively obtruded by a sort of Titanesque realism, which affects the gross and material, as it were, to emphasize their introspective view into the primary elements of nature and man. Each sings the Earth earthy, and with such heartiness and comprehension, as to move our imaginations to a muscular grasp of her stores of enjoyment. Courbet at times may be coarse, but his style, compared with the popular pretty, is as the uncut diamond beside the tinsel gem.[56]

Despite being denounced by conservative American critics such as Titus Munson Coan in the *Century Magazine* as a communist for his participation in the Paris Commune of 1871, which briefly ruled Paris after the Franco-Prussian War (fig. 11), Courbet's works continued to sell to sophisticated collectors.[57] Although disastrous for his career in France, and leading to his exile in La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland, Courbet's role in the Commune and the destruction of the Vendôme Column only added

to his notoriety. It was not until after his death that his reputation was fully rehabilitated in France.[58]

Major works by Courbet entered New England collections throughout the twentieth century, including the enigmatic *Toilette of the Dead Girl* (c. 1850, formerly known as *Toilette of the Bride*) acquired by the Smith College Museum of Art in 1929.

Courbet was prominently featured in the growth of major collections in New York. Louisine Havemeyer (née Elder, 1855–1929) built one of the finest collections, and eventually owned forty-four paintings by Courbet. Her friend, the American artist Mary Cassatt, took her to the preview of Courbet's estate sale in Paris in 1881 and told her "someday *you* must have a Courbet."[59] Many of the works she acquired were donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929.[60] The melancholy *Hunter on Horseback*, *Recovering the Trail* (1863–64) was donated to the Yale University Art Gallery in 1942 by Electra Havemeyer (1888–1960, daughter of Louisine), and her husband, Watson Webb.[61]

Mary Cassatt also collected for herself. She owned five of Courbet's works, including the *Woman with a Cat* (1864, Worcester Art Museum), which was later in the Havemeyer collection. Cassatt's first acquisition was *Laundresses at Low Tide, Étretat* (1866–69, Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, MA). By 1911, she also owned portraits of *The Mayor of Ornans (Urbain Cuénot)* (1846) and *Madame Frond* (1866), which were donated to the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia in 1912.[62]

Contemporary collectors still seek out major paintings by Courbet; one astute individual has built a stunning collection of thirteen Courbets, including *Woman with Mirror* and *Winter Landscape* in the present exhibition (plates 20 and 36).

Expatriate Americans such as James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent, and Mary Cassatt knew Courbet's works intimately. Whistler, who was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, admired Courbet in the early 1860s. Whistler's *Harmony in Blue and Silver: Beach at Trouville* (1865, fig. 13) reprises Courbet's *Seaside at Palavas* of 1854 (fig. 12).[63] Courbet's seascape depicted himself on the shore, standing on a rock at the bottom left of the composition, and brashly saluting the ocean. Sky and sea are evenly divided, with the horizon at mid-point. Whistler's composition is very similar, with Courbet placed in almost exactly the same position. His horizon line is higher, however, and his long broad horizontal brushstrokes flatten the space. The overall feeling is lighter than Courbet's painting. The figure of Courbet in Whistler's painting is more subdued, even humble, than the ebullient self-portrait by the French artist. Whistler had already begun to transform the material solidity of Courbet's realism into something more abstract, anticipating his later development of the aesthetic movement.

12. Gustave Courbet, *The Seaside at Palavas,* 1854. Oil on canvas, 27 x 46 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

13. James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Silver: Beach at Trouville*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 49.5 x 75.6 cm, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

14. Gustave Courbet, *The Woman with a Mirror; or, Jo, the Beautiful Irishwoman*, 1865–66. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 66 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Courbet described Whistler inaccurately as an Englishman and his student.[64] Their initially cordial relationship was not to last. The Irish beauty Jo Hiffernan (or Heffernan) was a crucial figure in their split. Jo was Whistler's model for *The White Girl (Symphony in White, No. 1)* (1862, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) and many other paintings in the early 1860s. She was Whistler's mistress, but could not live with him in London due to the objections of his mother. If Jo did not meet Courbet in 1863 when Whistler exhibited *The White Girl* at the Salon des refusés in Paris, she certainly did when they joined Courbet at Trouville during the fall of 1865.

Courbet admired her beauty and her Irish songs, and he made four versions of the painting *Jo, the Beautiful Irishwoman* (1865–66, fig. 14).[65] Jo posed again for the French artist in 1866 when Whistler was away on a seven-month voyage to Valparaiso, Chile. Perhaps inevitably, Jo became Courbet's mistress, which led to an irrevocable split between the two artists. There was little contact between them until Courbet wrote to Whistler on February 14, 1877, just months before his death.[66] Jo posed for Courbet for such sensual paintings as *The Sleepers* (1866, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), a picture with a lesbian theme painted for the Turkish ambassador and collector Khalil Bey.[67] The flagrant sensuality of this work is also displayed in the *Woman with Parrot* (1866, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which was

exhibited in the Salon in Brussels in 1866 and the *Reclining Nude* (1866, Mesdag Museum, The Hague), which was shown at the Brussels Salon in 1869. The recent discovery of what may be the head of Courbet's *Origin of the World* (1866, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) in an antique shop in Paris may settle once and for all whether or not Courbet used Jo as the model for his most sexually explicit painting.[68] In any event, this was too much for the somewhat puritanical Whistler.[69]

The Major Themes

Courbet's primary themes—nudes, landscapes and seascapes, portraits, and scenes of labor—reveal different facets of his art. He could not limit himself to any one genre, even though some of his early supporters such as Champfleury felt that he should have continued to focus on images of social themes as portrayed in *The Stonebreakers* and *After Dinner at Ornans* (1848–49, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille).[70] These large-scale representations of modern life represented what Charles Baudelaire discerned as the "Heroism of Modern Life," poetic even when tragic.[71] Some modern commentators have also criticized Courbet for compromising his principles in search of profit in the marketplace with his later nudes and landscapes.[72] Courbet always considered his career to be a business, and he frequently measured his success by his earnings in letters to his father. Albert Boime notes that in 1855–56 Courbet speculated heavily (and lost) in the stock market.[73] Courbet was both a businessman and socialist.

15. Gustave Courbet, *The Cellist*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 117 x 90 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

16. Emile Wauters, *The Madness of Hugo van der Goes,* 1872. Oil on canvas, 186 x 275 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels.

Nudes were a major part of Courbet's work; his *Reclining Nude* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (c. 1840–41, plate 21) is an important early example. This work, executed at the beginning of his career, still shows characteristics of academic classicism in the pose but also shows the painterly qualities for which he would be known.

The intimacy of Courbet's portraits of Jo with a mirror was anticipated in a work exhibited in Brussels in 1860 to great acclaim, the lovely *Woman with Mirror* (plate 20). The subject of a woman gazing into a mirror is a venerable one in the history of art, with depictions of Venus by Titian and others serving as allegories of sight and beauty. Courbet's self-absorbed figure embodies thoughtful reflection, and its quiet sensuality and psychological depth foreshadow later symbolist images of women and mirrors.[74] Courbet's technique is beautifully demonstrated in the modeling of the figure and the rendering of the diaphanous gown.

Landscape was one of Courbet's most important themes, and will be treated in greater length in a separate essay in this volume. Recent exhibitions have shed new light on Courbet's landscapes, which unite his study of nature and experimental painting techniques.[75]

Portraiture forms a large part of Courbet's oeuvre. As with landscape, it is an art form based on direct observation, and thus corresponds to his realist principles. His best portraits capture both the physiognomy of the sitter and a sense of character. Examples include his portrait of fellow artist Alfred Stevens (c. 1861, plate 6) and *Monsieur Nodler, the Younger* (1865, plate 26). Louis Dubois in Belgium rivaled Courbet's skill in both still life and portraiture in his *Woman with Bouquet* (1854–55, plate 9). Dubois (1830–80) was an energetic supporter of Courbet's art. In 1861 he was probably the "Dubois" registered in Courbet's studio in Paris. He was one of the founders of the independent artist group the Société libre des Beaux-Arts, and a collaborator on their journal, *L'Art Libre*.[76] In America, John La Farge followed Courbet's example with the wonderful portrait of *A Boy and His Dog (Dickey Hunt)* (plate 27).

Melancholia, or artistic depression, was a subject explored by Courbet several times in the 1840s, and surfaces also in his later work. Although his public image was that of a bluff and hearty bon vivant, he privately admitted to depression. He wrote to his patron Alfred Bruyas in 1854, when his career was taking off: "Under the laughing mask which you know me by, I conceal my grief, bitterness and a sadness which clings to the heart like a vampire."[77] This was a central theme for the poet Charles Baudelaire, who defined mourning as a hallmark of modernity, noting that the distinctive black costume of men's fashion signified a culture in mourning.[78] Self-portraits such as *The Desperate Man* (c. 1844–45, private collection), *The Man Mad with Fear* (c. 1844–45, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo), or *The Wounded Man* (c. 1844–54, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) represent a different image of Courbet than the usually confident artist who once called himself the "most arrogant man in France."[79]

Even his self-portrait *The Cellist* (1847, fig. 15) shows a certain vulnerability. The Belgian artist Alfred Stevens echoed this work, which was exhibited in Brussels in 1851, in his painting *The Sick Musician,* 1852 (plate 8). The musician is unable to perform or even show interest in his instrument, and is under the care of a nun as nurse. As an image of artistic despair, this work foreshadows Emile Wauters's portrayal of *The Madness of Hugo van der Goes* (1872, fig. 16), which later haunted Vincent van Gogh as a harbinger of his own breakdown. Vincent wrote to his brother Theo in 1888: "As a matter of fact, I am again pretty nearly reduced to the madness of Hugo van der Goes in Emile Wauters's picture. And if it were not that I have almost a double nature, that of a monk and that of a painter, as it were, I should have been reduced, and that long ago, completely and utterly, to the aforesaid condition."[80] Melancholia continued to be an important theme to such isolated artists as James Ensor and Edvard Munch later in the century.[81]

The melancholy often found at the casino is reflected in the faces of the gamblers in Louis Dubois's painting *Roulette* (1860, plate 14). The nine figures crammed into a small frame show various states of anxiety, concern, and despondency. There seem to be no winners here. The casino as setting is an updated version of the gambling theme depicted by artists

such as Caravaggio in *The Cardsharps* (c. 1595, Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth). The nervous tension and image of figures who are isolated even in the midst of a crowd speak of modernity.

The social conscience of Courbet led him to depict the lives of the working class, especially after 1848. His *Stonebreakers* (1849) is one of the key works of the century in this vein. Poverty and the plight of the lower classes were the focus of many Belgian realists. Joseph Stevens painted a scene of stray dogs fighting over a bone while poor homeless people huddle against a wall and rummage in a trash can for food on a street in Brussels in his large picture *Brussels, Morning* (1848, plate 10). The struggle for existence in the modern city has seldom been more poignantly portrayed. Courbet rejected the established church as another institution of vain authority, and mocked it on several occasions, notably with his large painting of drunken priests in *The Return from the Conference* (1862, destroyed). Belgian artists such as Charles de Groux continued to depict and honor the faith of the lower classes, and Gustave Léonard de Jonghe painted a poignant picture of sick, blind, and crippled pilgrims praying beside a roadside shrine in his *Pilgrims Praying to Our Lady of the Afflicted; or, Our Lady of Mercy* in 1854 (plate 11).

17. Winslow Homer, *Veteran in a New Field*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 61.3 x 96.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Courbet's Legacy

Courbet cannot be said to have introduced realism to Belgium—the home of Jan van Eyck and Peter-Paul Rubens had a long and vital history in art, frequently marked by innovations in depicting visual reality. There were currents of realism in Belgium in the 1830s and 1840s, as Jean-Philippe Huys and Dominique Marechal make clear in their essay "Realism: From *Living Art* to *Free Art*" in this volume. However, his art had a great impact. The landscapes and hunting scenes of Louis Dubois are unthinkable without Courbet's precedent, and his impact on painters such as Alfred Stevens and Charles de Groux is undeniable.

18. Thomas Eakins, *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River,* 1876–77. Oil on canvas, 51.1 x 66.4 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Courbet's art was also a catalyst for art in the United States. Although fidelity to visual appearances and observed detail had long been valued in American art, after the Civil War and the rise of photography there was an increased demand for authenticity in art and a new confidence about aesthetic judgment. Many American artists studied in Europe, or were exposed to Courbet's art through American exhibitions. Those whose work has affinities with Courbet's art include William Morris Hunt (1824–79), Winslow Homer (1836–1910), Eastman Johnson (1824–1906), Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), and John La Farge (1835–1910). Homer was typically uncommunicative about his contacts with French artists, but he was in Paris in 1867 for the exhibition of his work *Prisoners from the Front* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) at the Exposition Universelle and he could have seen the Courbet exhibition at the Rond-Point du Pont de l'Alma in April.

Homer's rugged realism and implicit call for social justice, similar to Courbet's stance, is evident in *Veteran in a New Field* of 1865, which depicts a soldier returning to peaceful pursuits after the Civil War (fig. 17).

Agricultural labor is also the subject of *Winnowing Grain* by Eastman Johnson (c. 1873–79, plate 32). This work recalls Courbet's *Grain Sifters* of 1855 that was exhibited in Brussels in 1857. Rural labor is also the subject of Elihu Vedder's *Peasant Girl Spinning* (c. 1867, plate 31).

Hunting scenes, as depicted in Courbet's *The Quarry*, are paralleled in Winslow Homer's *After the Hunt*, a watercolor of 1892 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) and Thomas Eakins's *Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting for Rail* of 1876 (Yale University Art Gallery). It would be revealing to further compare the culture of hunting in Europe and America at this time. Hunting was a mythic part of American identity, and in Europe it was increasingly the sport of the wealthy and was marked by ritual, as in Courbet's *The Quarry*. With growing urbanization and industrialization, hunting became increasingly a matter of recreation. Some of Courbet's hunting scenes focus on the social aspect of the sport, while others depict only the hunted animal, with whom he could also identify. The Belgian Louis Dubois focused solely on the dead deer alone on the high ground in *The Dead Deer—Solitude* (1863, plate 16). It is as still and elegiac as Courbet's painting *A Dead Doe* (1857, Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

Winslow Homer is well known for his many paintings of the wild Maine coast near Prouts Neck, where he moved in 1883. These can be compared to Courbet's marine paintings, as can John La Farge's *Sea and Rocks near Spouting Horn* of 1859, painted in Newport, Rhode Island (plate 46).

Thomas Eakins explored many aspects of modern realism, including the use of photography and chronophotography. His painting *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River,* with its image of the sculptor and his model, focuses on the artist's studio as the laboratory for testing theories of representation (1876–77, fig. 18). Eakins's painting, which was exhibited at the Boston Art Club in 1878, clearly builds on Courbet's *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (1855, fig. 8) in the attempt to reconcile traditional allegory, which was still central to Beaux-Arts painting and sculpture in America, and the new realism that was central to the emerging modernist culture.[82] Courbet was a pivotal figure between the past and future in art; building on his success in Belgium, he became an important bridge between America and the new directions in European painting.

Through his personal example and through his art, Courbet helped

create the image of the avant-garde artist, who was defined both by his advanced style and by his opposition to prevailing institutions and authorities. His intransigence was equaled by his shrewdness in building his legacy. His dedication to realism and his conviction that one must paint what one can see challenged the academic standards of subject and decorum. His inventive technique stressed the materiality of paint, applied in a spontaneous manner that allowed for accident, but which also skillfully suggested a truthful visual perception.

The textured surface of Courbet's paintings—rough in places, and sleek in others—provides a visible record of his hand movements and artistic decisions. This is itself a kind of map, tracing his interactions with the material dimensions of the work of art. The narratives we construct also provide a temporal map of history, linking events along a pathway. The exhibition *Courbet: Mapping Realism* is one of many possible roads toward understanding Courbet and the art of his era.

1 Courbet declared that he had buried romanticism in 1861, cited in the *Précurseur d'Anvers*, Aug. 22, 1861; see Pierre Courthion, *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1948–50), 1:160. See also: Paul B. Crapo, "Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861," *Art History* 14, no. 1 (Mar. 1991): 67–91. T. J. Clark was exactly right to describe this painting as "strange and disturbing" in *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 11. *Classical Walpurgis Night* was lost when he painted over the canvas with *The Wrestlers* (1853, Szépmüvéseti Múzeum, Budapest). See Sylvain Amic and Florence Hudowicz, "Courbet's *Classical Walpurgis Night*: A Vanished Work Resurfaces," in *Courbet: A Dream of Modern Art*, ed. Klaus Herding and Max Hollein, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 430–51.

2 Ting Chang, "Hats and Hierarchy in Gustave Courbet's *The Meeting*," *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 719–30.

3 Linda Nochlin, "Gustave Courbet's *Meeting*: A Portrait of the Artist as a Wandering Jew," *Art Bulletin* 49, no. 3 (Sept. 1967): 209–22. See also Meyer Schapiro, "Courbet and Popular Imagery: An Essay on Realism and Naïveté," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4, nos. 3–4 (Apr. 1941–July 1942): 164–91.

4 Letter to M. and Mme. Francis Wey, July 31, 1850, in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 50-4/98–99.

5 See Clark, *Image of the People*. Also Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), and Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also Herding and Hollein, *Courbet: A Dream of Modern Art*, and Frédérique Desbuissons, "Courbet's Materialism," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 2 (2008): 251–60. James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) is also useful to understand his social philosophy.

6 Gustave Courbet, "Realist Manifesto," 7 (in this volume).

7 In *La Presse* (July 21, 1853); quoted in Maura Reilly, "Le Vice à la Mode: Gustave Courbet and the Vogue for Lesbianism in Second Empire France" (PhD diss., New York University, 2000), 103.

8 Sylvain Amic, "*The Bathers*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Dominique de Font-Réaulx et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 342–44.

9 Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet: His Life and Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 104 cites Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906) for information that the model, whom he identifies as "Josephine," may have been a mistress of Courbet. For Villeneuve's photographs, see Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet,* 342ff.

10 Courbet's use of photography was noted by Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974).

11 Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 342 and 105–6.

12 Delacroix, quoted in Beatrice Farwell, "Courbet's *Baigneuses* and the Rhetorical Female Image," in *Woman as Sex Object*, ed. Thomas Hess and Linda Nochlin (New York: Newsweek, 1972), 65. See Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Lucy Norton (London: Phaidon, 1995), 181–82.

13 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 61-16/203–5 (Dec. 25, 1861). This letter was published in the *Courier du Dimanche* of Dec. 29, 1861. Chu notes that this letter is widely believed to have been written by Castagnary.

14 Clark, *Image of the People,* 21.

15 The literature on *The Painter's Studio* is vast, but one may note several important studies, such as Benedict Nicholson, *Courbet: "The Studio of the Painter"* (New York: Viking, 1973). Hélène Toussaint made the most complete identification of the figures in this painting in "The Dossier on *The Studio* by Courbet," in *Gustave Courbet, 1819–1877*, ed. Alan Bowness et al., exh.

cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 260–68. Klaus Herding qualified some of these identifications, while endorsing her general thesis on the political significance of the work in his "*The Painter's Studio*: Focus of World Events, Site of Reconciliation," chap. 3 in *Courbet: To Venture Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 45–61.

16 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-8/131–33 (Ornans, Nov.–Dec. 1854, addressed to Champfleury).

17 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 106.

18 Patricia Mainardi, "Courbet's Exhibitionism," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 118 (Dec. 1991): 253–66. See also Jean-Jacques Fernier, "Le peintre et l'architecte," *Ligeia* 41–44 (Oct. 2002–Nov. 2003): 132–47.

19 Jacques-Louis David exhibited his *Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799, Musée du Louvre, Paris) privately, but felt he had to issue an explanation; see Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: A Documentary History of Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1966), 1–11. Théodore Géricault exhibited *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) in London and Dublin, but these were unusual events. See Lee Johnson, "*The Raft of the Medusa* in Great Britain," *Burlington Magazine* 96, no. 617 (Aug. 1954): 249–54.

20 See Mainardi, "Courbet's Exhibitionism." See also Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*.

21 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 66-6/276 (Mar. 22, 1866). Courbet implies here that he first visited Belgium in 1840, but this date is not confirmed by any other source.

22 Ibid., 47-4/73 (Sept. 6, 1847, to his family).

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 51-2/102 (Sept. 9, 1851).

25 In 1858 he had written to his father: "I am in Belgium to try to develop a new line of action. I am working here and carving out a new niche for myself for the future when I may want or need it. The way things are going in France, this is useful, especially for me." Ibid., 58-1/158 (June–July?, 1858).

26 Ibid., 61-14/201.

27 See Werner Hofmann and Klaus Herding, eds., *Courbet und Deutschland*, exh. cat. (Hamburg: Hamburger Kunsthalle; Frankfurt: Städel Museum, 1978). William Hauptman, "La Tour-de-Peilz: Gustave Courbet and Switzerland," *Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 954 (Sept. 1982): 577–85. La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland, where Courbet lived in exile, was only seventy miles from Ornans.

28 Alisa Luxenberg, "Buenos días, Señor Courbet: The Artist's Trip to Spain," *Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1184 (Nov. 2001): 690–93.

29 Laura L. Meixner, *French Realist Painting and the Critique of American Society, 1865–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 143.

30 Alexandra R. Murphy, "French Paintings in Boston," in *Corot to Braque: French Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, ed. Anne L. Poulet and Alexandra R. Murphy, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), xvii.

31 Meixner, *French Realist Painting,* 146.

32 Martha A. S. Shannon, *Boston Days of William Morris Hunt* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923); see also Lois Fink, "American Artists in France, 1850–1870," *American Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (Nov. 1973): 32–49.

33 Erica Hirschler, *Impressionism Abroad: Boston and French Painting* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), 21.

34 William Howe Downes, "Boston Painters and Paintings," *Atlantic Monthly* 62, no. 370 (Oct. 1888): 778.

35 Clara Erskine Clement and Laurence Hutton, *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works: A Handbook Containing Two Thousand and Fifty Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879), 164.

36 Joshua C. Taylor, *The Fine Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 52–88.

37 Sten Åke Nilsson, "Gustave Courbet and the Mirror of Death," *Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Stockholm* 6 (1999): 62–65. Shao-Chien Tseng, "Contested Terrain: Gustave Courbet's Hunting Scenes," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 2 (June 2008): 218–34.

38 William M. Kane, "Courbet's *Chasseur* of 1866–1867," *Yale Art Gallery Bulletin* 25, no. 3 (Mar. 1960): 30–38.

39 Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet: His Life and Art*, 194. Lindsay is quoting from Courthion, *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, 2:39.

40 In 1854 Courbet was fined for hunting in the snow, which was illegal in France. See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-1/120. Further information is given in Herding, *Courbet: To Venture Independence*, 87.

41 "*Hunting the Roebuck in the High Jura: The Quarry*, Gustave Courbet," *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin* 16, no. 98 (Dec. 1918): 83–85. See also Downes, "Boston Painters and Paintings," 503–6. Douglas E. Edelson, "Courbet's Reception in America before 1900," in *Courbet Reconsidered*, ed. Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 69, notes that "it was the club's treasurer, Albion H. Bicknell, who saw *The Quarry* at Cadart's exhibition and, excited by the opportunity to purchase a major work by Courbet, enlisted the aid of Robinson and Hunt to raise the necessary funds."

42 Anne Wagner, "Courbet's Landscapes and Their Market," *Art History* 4, no. 4 (Dec. 1981): 414.

43 Edelson, "Courbet's Reception in America," 67. The Fine Arts Gallery at 625 Broadway in New York was also known as the Derby Gallery. See also *First Exhibition in Boston of Pictures: The Contributions of Artists of the French Etching Club*, exh. cat. (New York: Le Messager Franco-Américain Printing Office, 1866).

44 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet,* 66-7/278 (Apr. 6, 1866).

45 Bruce K. MacDonald, "*The Quarry* by Gustave Courbet," *Bulletin: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 67, no. 348 (1969): 52.

46 Shannon, *Boston Days of William Morris Hunt*, 86–87. Members of the Allston Club included Martin Brimmer (1830–96), collector and one of the founders of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

47 Downes, "Boston Painters and Paintings," 504.

48 René Brunesoeur, *Museum contemporain: Biographies, Gustave Courbet*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Robe, 1867), 22: "Avec l'engagement de la [*la Curée*] conserver toujours à Boston. Le tableau a été installé triomphalement dans une espèce de chapelle en velours rouge, au milieu des hourrahs des acquéreurs."

49 Courbet's words were recorded by Amand Gautier, and quoted by Downes, "Boston Painters and Paintings," 504. Downes (1854–1941) was the art critic for the *Boston Evening Transcript* for over thirty years. Edwina Spencer gives a more detailed account of Courbet's words: "'What care I for the Salon, what care I for honors, when art students of a new country, and a great country, *know* and *appreciate* and *buy* my works?' Climbing upon the omnibus to go home (with the money pinned in his vest) he declared that day to be the proudest of his whole life." Edwina Spencer, "The Story of American Painting: 5. The Development of Landscape and Marine Painting," *Chautauquan* 49 (Feb. 1908): 384. I have not been able to locate the original form of this quote in Gautier's writings.

50 The term "genteel tradition" is originally from George Santayana, "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," in *Winds of Doctrine* (London: Dent, 1913), 186–215. Richard Guy Wilson, "Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past in the American Renaissance," *Winterthur Portfolio* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 69–87, notes that the term "refer[s] to the complex of ideas that placed great emphasis on craftsmanship, a search for the ideal, and a belief in beauty and the ideal of striving to create a high culture that would keep the forces of barbarism at bay," 74.

51 *Oral history interview with Henry Sayles Francis, Mar. 28, 1974–July 11, 1975, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,* http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-henry-sayles-francis-13137. Sayles's collection included *Autumn Landscape* (1866, whereabouts unknown) and *The Glen at Ornans* (1866, plate 40).

52 Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre*, 96.

53 Mechanics Hall was a large exhibition building designed by W. G. Preston that opened in 1881 and was demolished in 1959.

54 None of these works can be securely identified, unfortunately; see Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 76-16/577n4.

55 Alan Chong, ed., *Eye of the Beholder: Masterpieces from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and Beacon Press, 2003), 62.

56 James Jackson Jarves, *Art Thoughts: The Experiences and Observations of an American Amateur in Europe* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1869), 274. The parallels with Whitman have often been noted, including Albert Boime, "Courbet and Whitman," *Mickle Street Review* 12 (1990): 49–73, and in his *Art in an Age of Civil Struggle, 1848–1871* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 220–23.

57 See Titus Munson Coan's "Gustave Courbet, Artist and Communist," *Century Magazine* 27, no. 4 (Feb. 1884): 483–95. This brought a spirited rebuttal: Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer, "Gustave Courbet, the Artist," *Century Magazine* 29, no. 5 (Mar. 1885): 792–94.

58 Ting Chang, "Rewriting Courbet: Silvestre, Courbet, and the Bruyas Collection after the Paris Commune," *Oxford Art Journal* 21, no. 1 (1998): 107–20. See also Alda Cannon and Frank Anderson Trapp, "Castagnary's *A Plea for a Dead Friend* (1882): Gustave Courbet and the Destruction of the Vendôme Column," *Massachusetts Review* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 498–512, and Linda Nochlin, "The De-Politicization of Gustave Courbet: Transformation and Rehabilitation under the Third Republic," *October* 22 (Autumn 1982): 64–78.

59 Louisine W. Havemeyer, *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoirs of a Collector* (New York: Ursus, 1993), 190, 203. See Judith Barter, ed., *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 180.

60 Alicia Faxon, "Painter and Patron: Collaboration of Mary Cassatt and Louisine Havemeyer," *Woman's Art Journal* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 1982–Winter 1983): 15–20. See also Havemeyer, *Sixteen to Sixty.* Works in her collection that were exhibited in Belgium include: *Hunting Dogs with Dead Hare* (1857), shown at the Cercle artistique et littéraire in Brussels in 1878; *Madame de Brayer* (1858), shown at the Salon in Antwerp in 1858, the Cercle artistique et littéraire in Brussels in 1878, and an exhibition, *Portraits du siècle (1789–1889*), in Brussels in 1889; *The Young Bather* (1866), also shown at the Cercle artistique et littéraire in Brussels in 1878; *The Sleepers* of 1866, which was shown at the Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1866 and the Antwerp Salon in 1870; *Jo, the Beautiful Irishwoman* (1866), shown at the Brussels Salon in 1866; the *Woman in the Waves* (1868) exhibited at the Salon de Gand, September 13–November 15, 1868, and the Brussels Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts, August 15–October 15, 1872.

61 Kane, "Courbet's *Chasseur* of 1866–1867," 30–38.

62 Barter, *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*, 179–80.

63 Laurence des Cars, "A Legacy of Truth: The Reference to Courbet from Manet to Cézanne," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 67, and Michel Hilaire, in the same catalogue, 272–73. See also catalogue entry in Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered*. Courbet visited Alfred Bruyas in Montpellier in the summer of 1854 and during his stay went to the seaside town of Palavas. Bruyas donated the painting to the museum in 1868.

64 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 65-16/269 (Nov. 17, 1865).

65 The version now in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm was exhibited in Brussels in 1866.

66 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 77-9/601–2.

67 Dorothy M. Kosinski, "Gustave Courbet's *The Sleepers*: The Lesbian Image in Nineteenth-Century French Art and Literature," *Artibus et Historiae* 9, no. 18 (1988): 187–99.

68 News media reported on February 7, 2013 that a collector had found a painting that may be the head that was removed from the torso sometime before it was sold to Khalil Bey. Although accepted as genuine by Robert Fernier, author of the catalogue raisonné of Courbet's works, curators at the Musée d'Orsay are skeptical. Further research is needed to clarify the issue. Charlotte Pudlowski, "Le visage de *L'Origine du monde*, le doute s'installe," *Slate*, http://www.slate.fr/culture/68065/origine-du-monde-polemique.

69 Some have speculated that she may also have been the model for Courbet's even more explicit *The Origin of the World* (1866), which was also commissioned by Khalil Bey, though the evidence for this is only circumstantial. Ségolène Le Men, *Courbet* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2008), 327. The novel by Christine Orban, *J'étais l'origine du monde* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) presumes Jo was the model for this picture. Also, Francine Prose, "Behind the Green Veil: A Paean to Courbet's *Origin of the World*," *Modern Painters* 20, no. 4 (May 2008): 64–67.

70 Boime, *Art in an Age of Civil Struggle*, 218 notes Champfleury's disappointment with Courbet's concessions to his clients.

71 Charles Baudelaire, "'On the Heroism of Modern Life,' from the Salon of 1846," in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, ed. P. E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 104–7.

72 Even such perspicacious critics as T. J. Clark felt that Courbet's later landscapes were a failure, and "the weakest part of his art," "imprisoned within a formula" (*Image of the People,* 132). Wagner, "Courbet's Landscapes and Their Market," stresses the commercial goals of Courbet's landscape production.

73 Boime, *Art in an Age of Civil Struggle*, 217.

74 Jeffery Howe, "Mirror Symbolism in the Works of Fernand Khnopff," *Arts Magazine* 53, no. 1 (Sept. 1978): 112–18.

75 Mary Morton and Charlotte Eyerman, eds., *Courbet and the Modern Landscape*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006).

76 Robert Hoozee, "Le Réalisme: Courbet en Belgique," in *Paris–Bruxelles, Bruxelles–Paris: Les relations entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Anvers: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 153.

77 Letter to Alfred Bruyas, Nov. 1854, in Pierre Borel, ed., *Lettres de Gustave Courbet à Alfred Bruyas* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1951), 47. Translation mine; original text: "Avec ce masque riant que vous me connaissez, je cache à l'intérieur, le chagrin, l'amertume, et une tristesse qui s'attache au cœur comme un vampire."

78 Baudelaire, "Is it not the necessary garb of our suffering age, which wears the symbol of a perpetual mourning even upon its thin black shoulders? […] We are each of us celebrating some funeral" ("On the Heroism of Modern Life," 105).

79 In a letter to Count Nieuwerkerke in 1855; see Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 106.

80 Vincent van Gogh, "To Theo van Gogh. Arles, Sunday, 21 October, 1888," *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let709/letter.html.

81 For Edvard Munch and melancholy, see Jeffery Howe, "Nocturnes: The Music of Melancholy, and the Mysteries of Love and Death," in *Edvard Munch: Psyche, Symbol, Expression*, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2001), 48–74.

82 Michael Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Realism: From *Living Art* to *Free Art*

Jean-Philippe Huys and Dominique Marechal

Realism

The term "realism" raised various interpretations and questions in the nineteenth century; it covers a controversial and nebulous normative concept.[1]

It naturally means the faithful reproduction of the things of the world, the convincing representation of the appearance of material reality. This illusionist ability has been appreciated in Europe since classical antiquity and, since the Renaissance, the degree of correspondence of an image with reality was considered proportional to the merit of the artist. Realism is not an end in itself but a means to represent the beautiful, the good, and the true, emphasizing the imitation of nature.

Some will go from the reproduction of events to the height of the "real" in painting: genre scenes and landscapes where the interest of accuracy is pushed to the extreme. For nature represented with the fidelity of a daguerreotype, while still subject to choices and arrangements, Adolphe Leleux (1812–91) became the bard. He was regarded as the first artist of the realist school referred to by Théophile Gautier (1810–72) in the 1840s.[2] His peasants depicted in their daily lives and the small scenes from his travels drew the enthusiasm of the Parisian bourgeoisie. But this quest for authenticity remained merely external and superficial because it was often accompanied by an ongoing desire to beautify the models and to ennoble them, however trivial they may be. The resulting images are obviously the result of a compromise between realism and idealism; and they still retain a note of the picturesque and sentimentality inherited from the eighteenth century, most of the time completely "fabricated" and showing attributes of the workshop.

1. Nicolas-François Octave Tassaert, *Abandoned*, 1852. Oil on canvas, 46 x 38 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

2. Gustave Courbet, *After Dinner at Ornans*, 1848–49. Oil on canvas, 195 x 257 cm, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille.

The tension between the ideal and the "trivial" was already apparent at the Paris Salon of 1831 in history paintings depicting contemporary events where the people are the protagonists. And, paradoxically, even the icon of romanticism, *The Twenty-Eighth of July: Liberty Leading the People* (1830, Musée du Louvre, Paris) of Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), carries within it the seeds of a certain realism. But one must wait until 1846 for the call to artists—by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67) in his review of the Paris Salon under the title "On the Heroism of Modern Life"— to paint the ordinary aspects of contemporary life and find qualities of epic "grandeur." The poet asked them to renounce allegory and the classical nude as well as the historical costume, abandoning the past to focus on the present.[3] This exhortation would be followed, above all due to the social, economic, and political context.

Following the deep economic and agricultural crises that struck several countries of Europe, including France and Belgium, as early as 1846, and the effects of the 1848 revolution that toppled Louis-Philippe and established the Second Republic, one sees a growing interest in social issues. Paintings emerged that elevated figures of the sick, the unfortunate, the poor, or the victim, to the level that was traditionally reserved for historical, mythological, or religious heroes. For the first time, the sad life of the peasant and the man in the street were represented seriously, both in the countryside and in the modern city. Particularly poignant images of distress and deplorable living conditions appeared, notably of laborers and peasants who fled to the cities to find work, but found, alas, no choice other than begging.[4] The entire European economy was affected by mass unemployment and famine, aggravated by an outbreak of cholera in the spring of 1849.[5]

Poverty also infiltrated the artists' workshops when the social "safety net," which had a system of incentives and relief for artists introduced by the July monarchy (1830–48), disappeared. The revolution of February 1848 dealt a fatal blow to artists, causing pervasive unemployment. The artists themselves were condemned to poverty.[6] The desperate example of Octave Tassaert (1800–74) in 1849 is revealing: the artist was almost fifty years old and had received nothing from the State since 1842.[7] His paintings with social subjects are even more poignant because they bear the imprint of his personal experiences (figs. 1, 10).

Painters such as Tassaert, Isidore Pils (1813–75), or Alexandre Antigna (1817–78) composed dramas of the life of the poor with exemplary and moral intentions, closer to melodrama than reality. They joined nobility to the truth and gave poverty a dignified modesty that invited compassion and consolation. Early examples of social representations of the same kind exist also in Belgium, such as *The Beggar* of Philip de Witte (1847, Museum Groeningeabdij, Courtrai) or the *Poverty in Flanders*, *Emigration of the Flemish Beggars* (presumed lost) of Leonard van den Kerkhove exhibited at the 1848 Salon in Brussels.[8] "We feel under their rags the

heart and faith that ennoble," "a moral beauty opposed to materialism."[9]

That is why this "official" realism that is not objective and remains sentimental in a persistent romantic spirit is often described by the term *misérabilisme*.[10] To cite two examples among others that perfectly illustrate this realist vein of pathetic appeal: *Abandoned* by Octave Tassaert (fig. 1), which can be compared to *The Paupers' Bench* (1854, plate 12) by the young Charles de Groux (1825–70). Their authors' depictions are similar in presenting a distraught subject who causes a stir inside a church on the sidelines of a celebration, behind a column or pillar.

3. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 165 x 257 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).

The pictorial productions of these "official realists" cited above proved false and conventional in the eyes of an artist as positivistic and materialistic as Gustave Courbet. Indeed, the latter understood realism as a creation that is intended to truthfully render the empirical world by using perception, imagination, and memory all at once—like the invention of a fictive nature emerging outside of any ideal. This is realism according to Courbet: an anti-idealism that eliminates all imaginary worlds, but that does not exclude imagination because it serves him to reach the truth in purifying the sensation. The rejected ideal included mythological, religious, historical, or literary subjects in painting, all opposed to "real" subjects. The word "realism" in this sense comes into use in 1846, following a reflection shared by Courbet, Champfleury,[11] and Max Buchon[12]—and in imitation of Baudelaire. It is doubly a question of freedom for the artist: to find in himself his own resources and rules and to create an art of his time. Nevertheless, so-called traditional critics considered Courbet's truth to be too realistic, since he painted ugly, vulgar, and insignificant people and presented a sordid spectacle in his paintings.[13]

4. Jean-François Millet, *The Winnower*, c. 1848. Oil on canvas, 100.5 x 71 cm, National Gallery, London.

5. Jean-François Millet, *The Haymakers*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 56 x 65 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Living Art

Courbet focuses his attention on the reality that passes before his eyes, the living present. He uses the expression "a living art" in the prologue to the catalogue of his solo exhibition held in conjunction with the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855. This text is commonly referred to as the "Realist Manifesto" because the artist defines here his conception of realism in painting:

> To be in a position to translate the mores, ideas, the look of my era, according to my own estimation; not to be a painter only, but a man; in a word, to make a living art, that is my goal.[14]

"To make a living art" is an idea that drives Courbet for years and that is carried like a torch intended to burn down the enemy academic art, frozen in its shackles. "Living art" is the rejection of "art for art's sake," which promoted the imagination or the search for the beautiful ideal at the expense of objective observation. And in this quest for objective reality, realism according to Courbet is imperatively linked to personal truth, that is, the sincerity of the artist and an attitude of independence from convention. Courbet explains the other point which emerges from this purported manifesto:

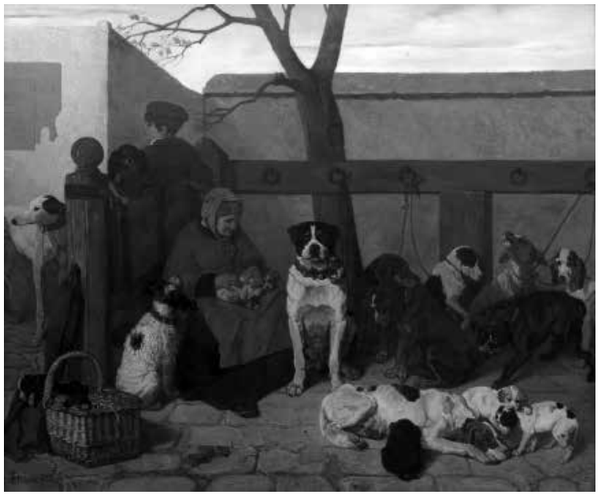
> Neither was it my intention, for that matter, to reach the facile goal of "art for art's sake." No! I simply sought to mine from a thorough knowledge of tradition a rational and independent feeling of my own individuality.[15]

In other words, for Courbet, the realist artist is the one who freely represents reality "as it is" and chooses what he wants to show. Thus the master of Ornans offers snippets of Franc-Comtois life to the Parisian scene, defying taboos by breaking with mythological, historical, and literary genres. *After Dinner at Ornans* (fig. 2) exemplifies his intentions. This large painting exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1849 is an intimate, life-size representation of ordinary people in their daily lives. It is a slice of life in the manner of the masters of the seventeenth-century Dutch school, shown by the choice of a wide composition involving multiple characters, the treatment of a still life on the table, the rendering of the dog's coat, and the subtle play of light. Courbet shows his father and his three close friends from Ornans in a peaceful setting that is closed in itself and independent of both the artist and the viewer.[16] A fresh atmosphere comes from this first masterpiece that the State purchased in the first year of the Second Republic and earned Courbet a gold medal. With this canvas, "which is the first history painting of Courbet," he comes into his own.[17]

Encouraged, Courbet quickly went further by painting *The Stonebreakers* (fig. 3) and *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–50, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), which he exhibited

at the Paris Salon in 1850–51. But the general climate was changing in France: the return of the Empire was already looming on the horizon. The reception of his *Stonebreakers* suffered especially. Indeed, the initial pictorial bravado was overtaken by politics. The word "realism" became synonymous with insult. At first officials feared the democratic trend of an art that they regarded as resulting from the revolution of February 1848. Then many critics were concerned about the evolution of this painterly transgression that despised invention. Finally the public, who moved from hope to uncertainty, was baffled by this new art. Courbet exploited this idea of controversy. Despite the politicization of his work, Courbet remained "above all a realist," even if he accepted the "socialist" designation to which he added, not without provocation, the epithets "democrat" and "republican."[18] By doing so, the artist seems nevertheless to bring a political connotation to his artistic engagement, which can disrupt it because his approach is similarly revolutionary. But it is only retrospectively that Courbet affirms: "Denying the conventional and false ideal, in 1848 I raised the flag of realism, which alone puts art in the service of man."[19] Courbet therefore represents a real break with theatrical and narrative sentimentality, stuffed with the moralizing intentions of the official realists.

6. Gustave Brion, *The Harvest of Potatoes during the Flood of the Rhine in 1852*, 1852. Oil on canvas, 98 x 132 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes.



7. Joseph Stevens, *An Episode at the Dog Market of Paris*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 240 x 290 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. Photo: J. Geleyns/Ro scan.

The impact of *The Stonebreakers* was extraordinary both in France and Belgium in 1851. The Belgian critic Camille Lemonnier reminisced, comparing these workers specifically to rioters: "One seemed to see a vile and callused plebian mob rushing to claim its revolutionary right to art after claiming its right to life on the barricades."[20] Considerations of this nature placed the artist at the head of those who painted the working class. Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet influenced one another. The silhouette of Millet's *The Winnower* (fig. 4), a figure of a peasant painted in the manner of a hero, is obviously repeated in the pose of the young man of *The Stonebreakers*. And these workers by Courbet show obvious affinities in their attitudes with *The Haymakers* by Millet (fig. 5), a canvas also presented at the Paris Salon in 1850–51. These pictures present iconic images of men working in the countryside who were born during the short revolutionary period: a realistic vision of the conditions of the worker or peasant that did not fail to frighten the ruling class, which believed it saw a call to uprising in them.

Courbet and Millet were aware of the social impact of their work and their contribution to the evolution of ideas on art. But the painter of Ornans differs from his colleague in that he elevates labor, making his realism monumental by the large format of his canvases, ignoring the hierarchy of genres. Millet, meanwhile, was more in line with many contemporary genre scenes that certainly focused on the effort of the workers, but where a picturesque aspect gave them an allegorical, and even political meaning. Courbet refused such local color marked by romanticism, which permeates such compositions such as *The Harvest of Potatoes during the Flood of the Rhine* (fig. 6) by Gustave Brion (1824–77). The disaster is a pretext to show the tragedy of humble people who find themselves in great poverty; in this case that of a peasant family scrambling to save the crop that will keep them from starving to death. Such a scene was bound to generate emotion. This sentimentality was annihilated by *The Stonebreakers* and its peers. A difference in spirit that perhaps voluntarily escaped the authors of the *Cosaques*, in their satirical criticism of *The Harvest of Potatoes* at the Brussels exhibition of 1854: "An ill wind, blown by Mr. Courbet, is cause of all the evil."[21]

Painting Manifestos of the First Generation of Belgian Realists

The presence of *The Stonebreakers* at the Brussels Salon in 1851 created a stir but does not constitute the starting point of realism in Belgium. Courbet is not its initiator—realism was practiced in Belgium before that date. It is an indigenous current that reappears in Belgian's art history from the fifteenth-century Flemish primitives, the sixteenth-century dynasty of the Brueghels, and the seventeenth-century Flemish masters. And in the nineteenth century, this fundamental current resurfaces as early as 1848. Only this time the protagonists were of the canine species, though no less real than men of the working class.[22]

Exhibited at the 1848 Salon, *The Beggars; or, Brussels, Morning* (1848, plate 10) of Joseph Stevens (1816–92) shows a sincere realism.[23] It is neither an allegory, nor a fable, nor a parody. The Brussels artist composed a drama played at dawn by mangy vagrants driven by hunger, a drama found in the street staged by proletarian dogs who carry the weight of human distress. This distress is literally represented in the half-light of the background: a bent woman delves into a garbage bin, looking for any scraps, while another poor woman sits with her back to the wall, resigned. The face of the first is not visible, which makes her action impersonal and universal. On the other hand, the dogs carry the imprint of the deepest misery on their faces. One idea traverses the work: the suffering of beings in distress is similar, whether they are dogs or human; as much as the human race, the canine race knows the *struggle for life*.[24] Joseph Stevens does not

seek to captivate through sentimentality or melodrama but strikes and touches the truest reality, a frank and naked reality resulting from a strict adherence to objectivity, allowing him to transcend the story depicted here. The painter also brings his characters to life on a large-format canvas, which are almost in relief from the full impasto of his brush, demonstrating perfect mastery in its technical execution. "*Brussels, Morning* is the only true Flemish canvas and the only one, therefore, which is related to this great and beautiful old Flemish school," his brother Alfred, also a painter, will say. [25] And the art critic Paul Fierens pointed out the novelty of this artwork, writing that "never has Stevens told of a more poignant distress not only of these poor dogs but of the poor world, of a street without joy, without sun. Brussels, smiling city. […] You see here behind the scenes and it is not a romantic fantasy."[26]

This very personal manner of showing the life of his time and the rich materiality presented in the paintings of Joseph Stevens seem to have spoken to Gustave Courbet. *An Episode at the Dog Market of Paris* (fig. 7) "brought joy to Courbet," according to Camille Lemonnier.[27] Joy undoubtedly from seeing a living art through a work of a solid practitioner with firmness of brush, a powerful touch, and impasto. Specially executed for the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855, this large canvas was the subject of good reviews. "This moves, lives and stirs. Mr. Joseph Stevens is, this year, the strongest of the realists. He is a master," wrote Claude Vignon.[28] Edmond About admired "the accurate, learned, honest and unhesitating" drawing and rendering of dogs that "have no other physiognomy than that of their race,"[29] while the daily *L'Écho de Bruxelles* rightly notes that the life-size figures of the old woman sitting with the boy are as perfectly painted as the animals.[30] Joseph Stevens was greeted with acclaim both in Brussels and Paris, because he remained foremost an animal painter, even if a realist: his canine protagonists could not disrupt the academic or political agenda in the way that the characters of Courbet could. The latter only represented dogs as the principle actors on a canvas on two occasions: *The Dog of Ornans* (1856, private collection), which is a replica of the quadruped appearing in the bottom right of *A Burial at Ornans*, and *The Dogs of the Comte de Choiseul* (fig. 8). Interestingly, one can see a link between Stevens and Courbet when comparing the canine silhouette cut by the left edge of *The Episode of the Dog Market* with the white greyhound that flaunts its sleek looks against its brown haired counterpart in *The Dogs of the Comte de Choiseul* where the dogs are represented without their master on a simple blue background.

8. Gustave Courbet, *The Dogs of the Comte de Choiseul*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 89 x 117 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum.

9. Charles de Groux, *The Drunkard*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 68 x 80 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. Photo: J. Geleyns/Ro scan.

In addition to the illustrations of the modern city, life in the Belgian countryside is revealed by Charles de Groux. In this regard it is *The Drunkard* (fig. 9) that marks the advent of social realism in Belgium.[31] The small canvas represents a drama of plebeian misery; its author documents an aspect of the human condition. The work seeks to evoke emotion, to touch the viewer with "the expression of feeling and truth of mimicry," which were the concerns of de Groux according to his first biographer.[32] Surprisingly, two decades later critics evoked affinities with Courbet, but both artists seem to share nothing more than an awareness of the sufferings of the peasant class, having quite different manners of representing observed reality.[33] Indeed de Groux will make a habit of sad subjects, which are confined in a kind of melodramatic painting, far removed from that of Courbet, but close to the masters who merely represent anecdotal scenes of contemporary life. Thus *The Drunkard* seems to echo Tassaert's *An Unfortunate Family* (fig. 10) with the dying mother lying on the bed resembling the battered mother sitting on the chair. Both are placed in the context of a dismal environment, a cottage and a garret, where in one the children appeal for compassion here on earth, and where the pious image hung on the wall calls for consolation from beyond in the other.

Another lesser known milestone of the Belgian realist movement is the painting by Gustave de Jonghe (1829–93) entitled *Pilgrims Praying to Our Lady of the Afflicted; or, Our Lady of Mercy* (1854, plate 11). This large canvas was presented at the Brussels Salon of 1854.[34] Acquired by the P.-L. Everard Gallery of London, it then entered the collection of Dr. Jules Lequime in 1874.[35] This enlightened connoisseur built a collection of paintings almost exclusively by Belgian realist artists. Finally, forced to leave Belgium for health reasons, Lequime offered it as a gift to the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in 1892 on the occasion of the sale of his collection.[36]

In an article in *La Fédération Artistique* dedicated to this remarkable collection at the time of the sale, the accomplishment of the young de Jonghe is presented as an "interesting documentary point of view, not to mention its pictorial qualities that impressed strongly Charles de Groux and Louis Dubois, it so to speak was the flag of the revolt of free art, against the old classics, romantics and academics in Belgium."[37] The journal *L'Art Moderne* writes further that *Pilgrims Praying to Our Lady of the Afflicted* "is considered by the artists as the starting point for realistic developments in Belgium."[38] This painting is thus presented at the beginning of the 1890s as a manifesto of *free art*, in other words, of realism in Belgium. And some noted its resemblance to a de Groux.[39] Right from its appearance in 1854 the criticism was rather flattering toward the paint-

ing, praising the artist's ability of having breathed into it a quality considered to be valuable: "of feeling, without which art is only a pompously adorned corpse."[40] It is also appreciated for its composition,[41] expressive design, vigorous color, and free touch.[42] And the motif that surprises even today—the sky lit only at the horizon line—was interpreted as a reference to landscapes of the old masters, and moreover as the young artist's desire for distinction in his manner of reproducing nature.[43]

If de Jonghe's painting shows affinity in spirit with Charles de Groux's "miserabilistic" work, it is also related to *Misfortune* by the romantic Louis Gallait (1810–87), exhibited in Paris in 1844, which shares its evocative truthfulness as well as the motif of the mother and child kneeling before a font, requesting the Madonna's help (fig. 11). *Pilgrims Praying to Our Lady of the Afflicted* also recalls the post-romantic drama that characterized *The Death of a Sister of Charity* by the French painter Isidore Pils (1850, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, held at the Musée d'Orsay). That said, this "realistic" episode was not repeated in the career of Gustave de Jonghe, who quickly changed to become the author of graceful genre scenes in order to win public favor.

10. Nicolas-François Octave Tassaert, *An Unfortunate Family*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 114 x 78.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

11. Louis Gallait, sketch for *Misfortune*, 1844. Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 17 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. Photo: J. Geleyns/Ro scan.

Free Art

In view of the essentially negative, derogatory use of the word "realism," Belgian admirers and defenders of Gustave Courbet preferred to use the terms "sincerity" and "modernity."[44] These are also guidelines found in *L'Art Libre* (1871–72), the artistic and literary magazine published by the Société libre des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles (1868–75). The foundation of this society is important in the evolution of nineteenth-century Belgian painting, "a declaration of rights made at a timely moment."[45] It is in fact the culmination of several attempts to combat the apathy of the Academy, such as the nearly unionized action against the system of admission and placement in exhibitions.[46] Thus young artists gathered on behalf of artistic freedom. The founding members included Louis Artan, Théodore Baron, Charles de Groux, Constantin Meunier, Félicien Rops, Alfred Verwée, its secretary Camille van Camp, and Louis Dubois who became the true leader and theoretician of the group by writing under the pseudonym *Hout* (*wood* in Dutch) in the periodical that affirmed the principles of the free circle. The artists of the society were mostly related to the French realists; after being contacted, Courbet sent his encouragement and accepted the title of honorary member.[47] Some members had assimilated the lessons of the master of Ornans, whose works were shown in Belgium for almost two decades in the triennial exhibitions. They were able to "digest" his innovative art and internalize it, enabling them to formulate an autochthonous realist art that was evident in portraiture and above all in landscape.

By "free art" one means the renewal of art, the "free and individual interpretation of nature."[48] An art that liberated itself from the hierarchy of genres and from the judgment of official Salon juries. This freedom occurs in the conception, the expression, and the exhibition of any artistic manifestation.[49] It is an art free of academic conventions and the rules of the workshop. It is a "return to the true sense of painting, admired not for the subject but for its rich materiality, like a precious substance and a living organism." In this declaration of Camille Lemonnier, one can easily see the spirit that animated Gustave Courbet.[50]

Translated by Jeffery Howe

1 Herwig Todts, "Le naturalisme: Introduction à l'historiographie et à l'interprétation d'une mode," in *Tranches de vie: Le naturalisme en Europe, 1875–1915*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Ludion; Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 9–31. Roger Bruyeron, forward to *Courbet: Écrits, propos, lettres et témoignages* (Paris: Hermann, 2011), 5–9.

2 Patrick Le Nouëne, Albert Boime, and Sylvie Douce de la Salle, *Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870*, exh. cat. (Chartres: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1983), 9, 14, 35. Around the figure of Leleux critics had grouped a small number of painters such as Hedoin, Fortin, and Luminais. At the same time, comparable works were produced in the school of Düsseldorf, for example by Carl Wilhelm Hübner (1814–79). See Lilian Landes, "'Ein neues Fach des Genres': Das sozialkritische Genrebild der Düsseldorfer Malerschule im internationalen Vergleich," in *Die Düsseldorfer Malerschule und ihre internationale Ausstrahlung, 1819–1918*, ed. Bettina Baumgärtel, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Museum Kunstpalast; Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2011), 210ff.

3 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2012), 265.

4 Jan De Maeyer and Peter Heyrman, eds., *Geuren en kleuren: Een sociale en economische geschiedenis van Vlaams-Brabant, 19de en 20ste eeuw* (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 59.

5 Chantal Georgel, *1848, La République et l'art vivant*, exh. cat. (Paris: Fayard/Éditions de la réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), 131.

6 Ibid., 64, 65, 68, 81, 85, 88; Le Nouëne, Boime, and La Salle, *Exigences de réalisme*, 68.

7 "'Give me what you will,' he exclaimed, 'the most poorly-paid, ingrateful work. It doesn't matter, but at least I can satisfy my basic needs. Without resources and without credit, the idea of throwing myself into the water is unpleasant to one with pride.'" The painter Philippe Auguste Jeanron (1809–77), at that time director of the national museums, wanting to see with his own eyes what Tassaert's true state was, found the painter "in a miserable shed, deprived of the necessities in life and exploited by merchants who buy the charming drawings that he is forced to give up for shameful prices if he does not want to die of hunger" (Georgel, *La République et l'art vivant*, 67, 108n9).

8 David Stark, "Belgische Bilder aus dem Jahr 1848," in *Arbeit und Alltag: Soziale Wirklichkeit in der Belgischen Kunst, 1830–1914*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1979), 196.

9 Le Nouëne, Boime, and La Salle, *Exigences de réalisme*, 60–61.

10 This, as will be seen later, is in opposition to realism—in short—Courbet.

11 Historian, novelist, and critic Jules Husson, known as Champfleury, is the author of the article "Du réalisme, Lettre à Madame Sand," *L'Artiste* 16 (Sept. 2, 1855): 1–5, reprinted in *Le réalisme* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1857), 270–85.

12 Max Buchon published his *Recueil de dissertations sur le réalisme* in Neufchâtel in 1856.

13 Georgel, *La République et l'art vivant*, 143.

14 Gustave Courbet, "Realist Manifesto," 7 (in this volume).

15 Ibid.

16 From left to right, Régis Courbet, the father of the painter; Urbain Cuénot who is the host of the scene; Marlet seen from the back lighting his pipe; and Alphonse Promayet playing the violin.

17 To cite Hélène Toussaint, "*Une après-dinée à Ornans*," in *Gustave Courbet, 1819–1877*, ed. Alan Bowness et al., exh. cat. (Paris: Editions des musées nationaux, 1977), 96.

18 Letter from Courbet to the editor in chief of the *Messager de l'Assemblée*, Ornans, Nov. 19, 1851; Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 51-2/96.

19 "Profession de foi," manuscript of Gustave Courbet addressed to Auguste Vacquerie, editor in chief of *Rappel* (Apr. 15, 1871); Bruyeron, *Courbet: Écrits, propos, lettres et témoignages*, 97–99.

20 Camille Lemonnier, *L'école belge de peinture, 1830–1905*, rev. ed. (1906; Brussels: Éditions labor, 1991), 58.

21 *Les Cosaques: Invasion au salon de 1854* (Brussels: Chez les principaux libraires, 1854), 9, cat. 106 C. Félicien Rops is the author of the thirty-seven lithographic cartoons.

22 Philippe Roberts-Jones, *Du réalisme au surrealism: La peinture en Belgique de Joseph Stevens à Paul Delvaux* (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1994), particularly 11–21.

23 *Album illustré du salon de 1848 publié par une société d'artiste et de gens de lettres* (Brussels: Imprimerie et lithographie des Beaux-Arts, 1848), 45.

24 Term used by Max Sulzberger, "La dynastie des Stevens," *Revue de Belgique* 31 (1885): 9.

25 Extract from a letter by Alfred Stevens to Joseph Stevens, in Camille Lemonnier, "Les artistes belges: Joseph Stevens," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 22 (1880): 360–61.

26 Paul Fierens, *Joseph Stevens* (Brussels: Éditions des cahiers de Belgique, 1931), 9.

27 Lemonnier, *L'école belge de peinture,* 365.

28 Claude Vignon, *Exposition universelle de 1855: Beaux-Arts* (Paris: Auguste Fontaine, 1855), 80.

29 Edmond About, *Voyage à travers l'Exposition des Beaux-Arts (peinture et sculpture)* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1855), 112.

30 "Exposition universelle des Beaux-Arts," *L'Écho de Bruxelles* 14, no. 188 (July 7, 1855): 2.

31 The painting was exhibited in 1853 at one of the Société d'harmonie d'Ixelles's exhibitions and purchased by the animal painter Louis Robbe, who was seduced by the force of its originality.

32 Émile Leclercq, "Charles de Groux," in *L'art & les artistes: Critique, esthétique*, rev. ed. (1871; Brussels: C. Muquardt, 1877), 207.

33 Max Sulzberger, "Le réalisme en France et en Belgique: Courbet et De Groux," *Revue de Belgique* 16 (1874): 384–97.

34 *Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts 1854: Catalogue explicative* (Brussels: G. Stapleaux, 1854), 40, cat. 209.

35 *Catalogue de l'exposition de tableaux de P.-L. Everard & Cie, de Londres* (Brussels: E. Guyot, 1874), cat. 211.

36 *Catalogue de tableaux modernes provenant de la collection du Docteur Jules Lequime mise en vente…4–5 avril, 1892*, lot 31. This collection had no less than seven paintings by Gustave Courbet.

37 Grimm, "La collection du Dr. Jules Lequime," *La Fédération Artistique* (Mar. 13, 1892): 249.

38 "La collection du Docteur Lequime," *L'Art Moderne* 12, no. 13 (Mar. 27, 1892): 101.

39 With "l'art viril, violent, âpre, triste, fortement senti et fortement pensé, fait de larmes et de souffrances, d'angoisses et de désespoirs, de Charles de Groux." Georges de Mons, "La galerie Lequime," *Le National Belge* 3, no. 4 (Jan. 4, 1882): 2.

40 "Une diversité de caractères profondément méditées et heureusement reproduits." "Salon de 1854," *Sancho* 9, no. 409 (Sept. 10, 1854): 2.

41 Camille Berru and De Cauwer, *L'Exposition des Beaux-Arts de 1854* (Brussels: Detrie-Tomson, 1854), 69.

42 R., "Salon de Bruxelles," *L'Étoile Belge* 5, no. 277 (Oct. 1, 1854): 1.

43 "Salon de 1854," 3.

44 Émile Leclercq, "De la sincérité dans les arts: Réflexion à propos de l'exposition de 1860," *Revue Trimestrielle* 8, no. 29 (Jan. 1, 1861): 161–73. Arthur Stevens, *De la modernité dans l'art: Lettre à M. Jean Rousseau* (Brussels: Office de publicité, 1868).

45 "Proclamation de Léon Dommartin," *L'Art Libre* 1 (Dec. 15, 1871).

46 Paul Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830* (Brussels: Éditions des cahiers de Belgique, 1930), 168.

47 *Liste des membres fondateurs, effectifs adhérents, d'honneur et correspondants de la Société libre des Beaux-Arts*, Archives de l'art contemporaine en Belgique, inv. 112200/3. Among the honorary members were artists Corot, Daumier, Millet, and Alfred Stevens as well as the writer William Bürger (pseudonym of Théophile Thoré) and composer Richard Wagner.

48 H. H., in *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature* 11, no. 2 (Jan. 31, 1869): 9, presents the goals of the Société libre des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles.

49 Henri Liesse, "À propos des tableaux modernes de l'hôtel d'Assche," *L'Art Libre* 7 (Mar. 15, 1872): 101.

50 Lemonnier, *L'école belge de peinture,* 124.

Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet

Dominique Marechal

> Holland and Belgium are charming countries, especially for an artist.
>
> —Gustave Courbet[1]

Courbet's Study Trips and the Influence of Northern Art

From early on, the French painter Gustave Courbet was attracted to Northern art, and his trips to Belgium and the Netherlands prove to have been essential for his later development.

In a letter written to his parents from Amsterdam in August 1846, he reported that "my style pleases them,"[2] which sums up perfectly the artist's feeling during one of his first trips to the North. He had just arrived in the Netherlands via a stopover in Belgium. After an excellent welcome in both countries, Courbet felt that he had been understood. His style was appreciated, and he was at ease. Much later, in a letter from 1866, he stated that he regarded Belgium as his home country.[3]

But what exactly was the nature of that bond Courbet felt with Belgium and the Netherlands, the region with which he clicked from the start, and where he apparently found a rich soil for putting down deep roots?[4] In order to formulate an answer to this question, we will try to find out exactly where and when he traveled, what he saw, and what influence this had on the development of his own art.

1. Oscar de Haes, *Portrait of Louis Papeians de Morchoven*, 1849. Lithograph on paper, 47.7 x 31 cm, Ghent University Library Manuscript Collection.

After a first encounter at the Louvre with earlier Northern art, Courbet journeyed to this region three times between 1844 and 1847, traveling twice to Belgium (1844 and 1847) and once to the Netherlands (1846). There he deepened his knowledge of the masters of the golden age, found clients for portraits, and built an informal circle of acquaintances.

As a mature artist he made four or five additional trips to Belgium between 1851 and 1861. He exhibited his major works there, and they resonated powerfully with local artists. In Belgium, he again painted portraits, and to a much lesser extent, landscapes. His participation in the International Congress of Art in Antwerp in 1861 completed his breakthrough. We have also discovered a rare and unexpected source of inspiration for Courbet in his Belgian contemporary Alfred Stevens.

Courbet's Introduction to the Old Masters

Shortly after arriving in Paris from his native region in late 1839, Gustave Courbet met the painter François Bonvin (1817–87) who encouraged him to visit the Louvre. Like all young artists of the time, they made copies there together, although what exactly they copied is not known.[5] Courbet was twenty-one years old, Bonvin two years older. According to the memoirs of the art critic Francis Wey (1812–82), Courbet initially had little interest in the old masters until Bonvin changed his mind.[6] Wey described their museum visits in detail, even if he was not a direct witness:

> After first having shown contempt for the great Italian school, and even the Flemish, but especially for the French, Courbet showed signs of life when his guide gently showed him Rembrandt; Bonvin left his comrade to get acquainted with Rembrandt, having him do some copy work without assimilating his methods…I have privately viewed some of his sketches, imitative at first, then stripping away the Dutch patina and keeping only the somber technique of contrasting light.[7]

During another visit, this time with Wey, the painter remained true to his love of realism: in his eyes only the Spaniards Velázquez and Ribera and the Fleming Jordaens valued truth.[8]

Apparently, Courbet focused on the work of Rembrandt, Hals, Van Dyck, and Velázquez, even though almost none of his copies after them is known.[9] It may be in the context of this visit to the Louvre that the unidentified and undated youthful work *Imaginary Landscape Imitating the Flemish* should be situated.[10]

In his own words, the study of the old masters—including those of the North—helped him discover his own deeper personality. As he clarified in 1855 in his "Realist Manifesto," "I have studied, independent of any system or partisan spirit, the art of the ancients and moderns. [...] I simply sought to mine from a thorough knowledge of tradition a rational and independent feeling of my own individuality."[11]

Travels in Northern Europe: Courbet's Formative Years (1840–50)

In a letter of March 22, 1866 addressed to Arthur Stevens, Courbet wrote that he had been visiting Belgium for twenty-six years.[12] If we are to believe this statement, then his first visit was in 1840. Unfortunately there is no corroborating source for this early—and perhaps all too imaginary—visit. In an earlier letter to his grandparents written from Paris in March 1844, he reports that he has recently painted, among other things, a portrait of a Belgian baron who was a cavalry major, and one of the baron's father. Both were "relatives of Mrs. Blavet, who has been really

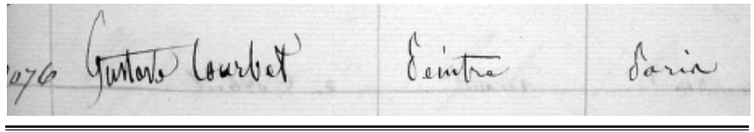
good to him." He does not specify, however, whether he created these portraits in Paris or elsewhere. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu suspects that this nobleman was the Baron Papeians de Morchoven, with whom Courbet would stay two years later in Ghent.[13] This hypothesis is confirmed as we know that Baroness Louis Papeians de Morchoven, born Adèle Damiens, was a daughter of Marie Blavet.[14] There was an earlier attempt to identify the portrait mentioned in the letter with a male portrait in the museum of Vevey.[15] However, if we compare a lithographic portrait of Louis Papeians de Morchoven (fig. 1) that is firmly identified with both an inscription and the family coat of arms to the portrait in Vevey (fig. 2), we find that these are unquestionably two different people.[16]

However, it is impossible that Courbet could have painted the portrait of Jacques Papeians de Morchoven (1753–1804), the father of Louis, because he had died long before 1844. Perhaps the artist confused Louis's father with one of his older brothers, Théodore (1792–1846) or Charles (1799–1848) in this letter of May 1844? Be that as it may, an inquiry to the family about these two portraits turned up nothing.

Very likely the baron and his father (?) who sat for portraits by Courbet urged him to visit Belgium during their sittings and may have even invited him to come to their home in Ghent (see below).

2. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of a Man*, c. 1843. Oil on canvas, 194 x 111 cm, Musée Jenisch, Vevey.

Coincidence or not, it was exactly in the same year of 1844 that the first solid evidence of a visit to Belgium is firmly documented.[17] In September 1844 Courbet signed the museum's guest book at St. John's Hospital in Bruges, registering to draw on the same sheet as the painter Joseph Robert-Fleury (1797–1890) and art historian Alfred Michiels (1813–92). He was the 2076th visitor recorded in the registry since September 1843 (fig. 3). During this first visit he must have sketched *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* which then was still considered an authentic painting by Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) (fig. 4).[18]



3. Guest book at St. John's Hospital in Bruges with Gustave Courbet's signature, Sept. 1844. OCMW Archive, Bruges.

4. After Anthony van Dyck, *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, c. 1630. Oil on canvas, 101 x 126.5 cm, chimney piece of the old chapter house, St. John's Hospital, Bruges.

At this time, interest in the Flemish primitives was just beginning to grow, and most tourists visited the museum at St. John's Hospital to see the paintings by Hans Memling (d. 1494). In Courbet's notes there is no mention of his visit, nor any record of a visit to the Museum of the Academy of Fine Arts (now the Groeningemuseum), nor did he sketch any other monument in Bruges. The "realism" of the Flemish primitives apparently left him indifferent; his interest in a baroque painting after Van Dyck is therefore all the more remarkable. One wonders whether he met the aforementioned Robert-Fleury and Michiels in the museum and if they might have played a role in this unusual choice for him.[19]

If all the sketches in Courbet's notebook were drawn in the same period—which is probably but not necessarily so—then it seems that the artist also visited Ostend and Spa on the same trip, as there are drawings of a view of Ostend and a square in Spa.

Courbet's "taste" for the North was further encouraged in 1845 by the Dutch art dealer Hendrik Jan van Wisselingh (1816–84), who visited Courbet in his studio after the artist returned to Paris. Van Wisselingh predicted that Courbet would have a good reception in his homeland, and bought two paintings from him and ordered a third.[20]

In August 1846 Courbet made an important trip to the Netherlands, with a short stopover in Belgium. This journey, undeniably a key event in his career, is likely the result of Van Wisselingh's visit the year before. Courbet's readings of certain texts may also have played a role.[21] Traveling to Ghent, Courbet stayed three or four days with his acquaintances, the Papeians de Morchoven family, who lived then at Rue de la Station 17, the street now known as Zuidstationstraat 25, in Ghent (fig. 5).

While there, they gave him three letters of recommendation intended for Dutch contacts, including one for a court dignitary and for an "antiquaire"(curator?) at the Rijksmuseum. Upon arriving in Amsterdam, he sent an enthusiastic letter to his parents on about August 15, telling them that he had met two or three artists (he does not mention their names), and visited the museum. He does not say exactly what paintings he saw, but the masterpieces of Frans Hals (1582–1666), Rembrandt (1606–69), and Bartholomeus van der Helst (1630–70) were always on view, as well as landscapes by Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/29–82). He was enchanted by all that he saw in Holland because "a trip like this teaches you more than three years of work." He found The Hague charming, and he visited the most beautiful collections. "I do not yet know when I will leave" he writes, "because I might well make a portrait here. I am assured that if I were to stay here two or three months and acquire a reputation, I would be able to earn money. They like my style of painting. I have only a small landscape with me, the style of which pleases them greatly. No one paints that way here."[22]

A few days later, Courbet wrote a cordial thank you letter to Mrs. Papeians de Morchoven. He had painted a portrait in Amsterdam that had a great effect and was met with "an enthusiasm that I did not expect." He was ecstatic about his journey, pleased by both his warm reception and by the knowledge that he imparted. He concluded: "Holland and Belgium are charming countries,

especially for an artist."[23] Courbet did not mention that he took part in the *Exhibition of Living Masters*, showing a *Portrait of a Man*, most probably his 1846 portrait of Hendrik Jan van Wisselingh noted above (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth).

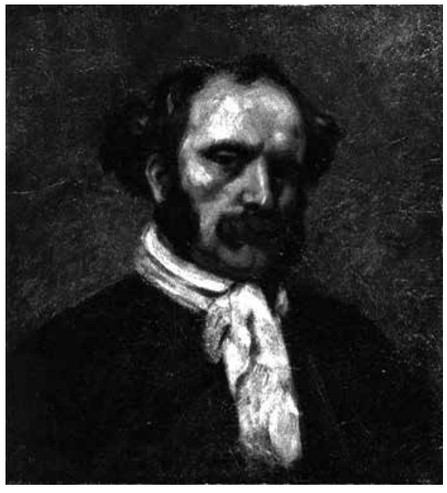
His trips to the North unquestionably had a lasting impact on Courbet. The large-scale format of paintings by Rubens and Rembrandt, among others, left a deep and lasting impression on him. His interest in Rembrandt, "the Luther of painting," would be stressed by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in his *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination social*.[24] Courbet was clearly looking to the traditional realism of the North more than to the art of the idealizing South.[25] His monumental night scene *Firemen Racing to a Fire* (1850–51, Petit Palais, Paris) is an early example that clearly illustrates the influence of Rembrandt's *Night Watch* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), although it also refers to the style of Frans Hals.[26]

From an August 1847 letter to his parents we learn that Courbet intended to return to his home village of Ornans soon but first would make a detour through Belgium to stay in Ghent "with friends" and paint a portrait there.[27] He must be referring to the Papeians de Morchoven family, his regular "base," though they are not mentioned. Nor is it clear whether the portrait is intended for them. He notes that the trip is also a wonderful opportunity for him to study paintings by the great Dutch masters in Belgian collections. It is interesting that Courbet speaks only of Dutch masters, and not of Flemish painters. We can only guess about exactly which works of art he is referring to here.

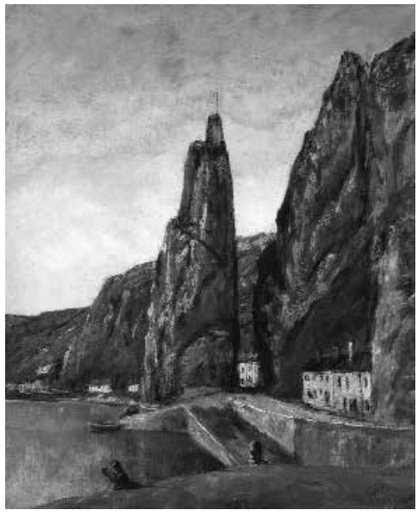
On September 6 Courbet wrote to his parents from Ghent to say that he would stay in Belgium for eight to ten days, this "very agreeable country…a veritable Cockaigne" where he is received "like a Prince." Despite the distraction of frequent and copious dinners with numerous aristocrats, he managed to paint two more portraits. Unfortunately, both are unidentified and lost. He had already been in Brussels, Malines, Antwerp, Termonde, and Ghent and would be going to Bruges and Ostend, before stopping at Louvain and Liège and then returning to Ornans via Cologne.[28]

He spent at least part of the trip with his friend Champfleury (1821–89). The latter described his memories on March 28, 1858: "I am almost certain that Courbet has drowned in a barrel of Faro [ale]. Ten years ago Courbet treated me to a similar trip to Brussels where we were to stay for three days: a month later he still hadn't left the brasseries. A little too much beer and those discussions will spoil his work if he doesn't take care." This might be only malicious gossip, for if we believe the itinerary that the twenty-eight-year-old Courbet described to his parents, he would never have been able to boast of such a "performance" to Champfleury! Or perhaps the parents received only a "sanitized" version of his travels?[29] In any case, Courbet was certainly a "bon vivant" and immersed himself in Belgium.

5. Zuidstationstraat 25 in Ghent, the Papeians de Morchoven family home where Gustave Courbet stayed several times (photo by author).



6. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Monsieur Van Laethem*, c. 1856. Oil on canvas, 53 x 49 cm, private collection.



7. Gustave Courbet, *The Rock of Bayard, Dinant*, c. 1855–56. Oil on canvas, 56 x 47 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Some authors have speculated on the existence of a trip to Belgium in 1849–50, based on the existence of some travel sketches that have been attributed to Courbet and dated to that time. Indeed, a large number of drawings from the foundation of Paul Reverdy, a grandson of Zoé Courbet, the artist's sister, were initially attributed to the artist and led to the suggestion that Courbet had made a trip to Belgium at that time. There are scenes from the region of Spa and sketches of Bruges in this series, including city views and sketches of some paintings in St. John's Hospital where his visit had been recorded in 1844.[30] None of these drawings are signed or monogrammed, however, and stylistically they do not match the oeuvre of the artist.[31] Given that this travel is not documented anywhere in the literature on Courbet, the suspicion is rightly raised that these sketches are more likely by the husband of Zoé Courbet, the artist Jean Baptiste Reverdy (1822–87).

That this alleged trip was never taken is confirmed by his letter of March 19, 1850 to Edouard Reynart of the museum in Lille in which he wrote that he has traveled twice in Belgium and once in Holland for his "education."[32]

Courbet's Trips to Belgium as a Mature Artist (1851–61)

Starting in 1851, at the age of thirty-two, Gustave Courbet began to exhibit in Belgium and to take part in important initiatives there.

He participated in the Salon of Brussels in 1851 and showed his groundbreaking *Stonebreakers* (1849, destroyed during the Second World War), the landmark *par excellence* of realism, which he had exhibited for the first time only the year before in Paris.[33] In the same Salon he also showed the less familiar *Cellist* (1847, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm). This work was painted four years earlier in a style strongly inspired by Rembrandt, revealing immediately the influence of his trips to the North. He received some rave reviews for his entries, but was also panned by the more conservative art critics. His realism was unfavorably compared to, among others, the old Flemish masters Van Eyck and Memling: "Where did Mr.

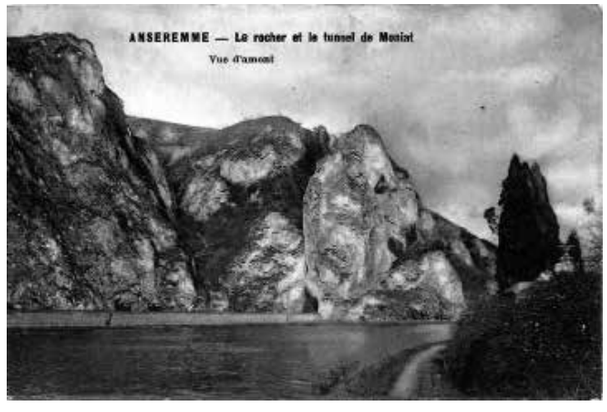
Courbet unearth this rotting nature and living corpses? He has not found but invented them. He tells me nothing but lies. The truth has had its painters, and they studied patiently in conscience, with a scrupulous and loving exactness, to give back their understanding: Jan van Eyck, Memling, Cranach, Holbein, Fra Angelico, Perugino, all those geniuses whose modest body of work hides an immense preparation. Their paintings are amazing in their naïve sincerity. Need one say why those of Mr. Courbet only instill a feeling of repulsion? That's because he has neither considered nor understood anything."[34] According to this art critic, Courbet understood nothing of the Flemish tradition. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

It is known for certain that Courbet came to Brussels on September 5, 1851 at the invitation of the Cercle artistique et littéraire.[35] For this cultural association he painted *Signora Adela Guerrero, Spanish Dancer* (plate 3), a work created for the celebration for King Leopold I to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the throne. Why Courbet was chosen for this offering, and by whom, remains a mystery. During this visit the artist definitely visited the Royal Museum in Brussels (now the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium) and apparently analyzed the *Allegory of Fertility* by Jacob Jordaens with great interest.[36] The naked woman in Jordaens's painting is explicitly echoed in the water nymph of Courbet's *The Source* (1868, Musée d'Orsay, Paris).[37]

Courbet was in Belgium again in 1856, and presumably painted the *Portrait of Monsieur Van Laethem* (fig. 6) at that time. The date is not certain, although it is known that Courbet painted this portrait as a thank you gift for the sitter, an amateur painter who made his studio available to him.[38] Perhaps the man can be identified as J. A. (Jean Alexandre?) Vanlaethem who is mentioned in the *Almanach Royal Officiel* in the years 1855–59 as "receiver of direct contributions and excise taxes for Anderlecht (Anderlecht, Dilbeek and Itterbeek) [suburbs of Brussels]." In the *Almanach du Commerce de Bruxelles* of 1862 the residence of a certain J. Vanlaethem was listed as Boulevard ext. Anderlecht 33; and he turns out to have been an elector for the legislative chambers.[39]

Courbet may have traveled along the Meuse River in the autumn of 1856 before returning along the Rhine to his birthplace, although there is no firm evidence of this.[40] However it is widely believed that two rare undated Meuse landscapes were painted in that period, namely *The Rock of Bayard, Dinant* (fig. 7)[41] and *The Rock of Moniat opposite Anseremme* (fig. 8). Until now, the exact site of this second view along the Meuse near Freyr had not been identified, but thanks to the discovery of a postcard (fig. 9) we now know that it is the Rock of Moniat, which is opposite the old priory of Anseremme, four kilometers upstream of Dinant and slightly closer to Dinant than Freyr.[42] There is no doubt that the painter took advantage of the ever increasing popularity of tourism in the nineteenth century, exploiting an important commercial market for scenic views like this.[43]

8. Gustave Courbet, *The Rock of Moniat opposite Anseremme*, c. 1856. Oil on canvas, 58 x 82 cm, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille.



9. Postcard with a view of the Meuse River and the Rock of Moniat at Anseremme, early twentieth century.

10. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Mlle. Jacquet*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 65.5 cm, private collection.

In the fall of 1857, Courbet reported in a letter to Pierre Fajon that his paintings at the Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels have had a great deal of success and that he will be returning ten days later to the Belgian capital.[44] It has not been established whether this was a short trip, with him returning to Paris before coming back to Brussels for a longer period in late 1857 or 1858, or if, as is often thought, that Courbet spent one long period in Brussels.[45] In any case, during this visit he seems to have painted some interesting portraits of Belgians. First, we may note the portrait of a Mlle. Jacquet (dated 1857) about whom we have no further biographical details, but we know that it was from the outset in the Brussels collection of a Mr. J. (fig. 10).[46] Also traditionally dated to 1856–57 is the *Portrait of Madame Léon Fontaine, née Laure Janné* (plate 4). Despite the stylistic differences with his earlier work, the dark tones and the striking chiaroscuro are particularly interesting features that derive from the Dutch school of painters of the seventeenth century.

In the summer of 1858 Courbet is again reported to have spent several months in Brussels. Perhaps in June or July, he wrote to his father that he is staying in Belgium to keep his options open. "I am working here and carving out a niche for myself for the future when I may want or need it. The way things are going now in France this is useful, especially for me. I have two more portraits to do here and then I leave for Frankfurt, where my paintings are exhibited."[47] In this relatively long period he

was not very active, except for a few portraits. In a letter to Amand Gautier he says that he is even bored in Brussels, since "everything here is portraits and lawsuits." He wants to say "to hell with it all" and leave for Frankfurt.[48] Interestingly, his post address is in care of the photographer G. Radoux, Montagne de la Cour 73 in Brussels.

One of these portraits is that of Madame de Brayer (fig. 11). This sitter was a Polish woman married to a Belgian doctor. When the portrait was exhibited in Antwerp in 1858, it was already listed as being from the collection of *M. le Docteur Breyer* [*sic*] *à Bruxelles*.[49]

In 1861 Courbet traveled to Antwerp to participate in the International Congress of Art on August 19 and 20. The participants in this Congress were divided into several groups where different issues were debated. In group three, the topic for discussion was the influence of the zeitgeist on contemporary art. Of course this led to different responses. Courbet gave an improvised but important speech that is regarded as another manifesto of realism, in which he states that "the basis of realism is the negation of the ideal."[50] At the banquet where he also established solid ties with Belgian artists, he made a toast that illustrates his philosophy in a nutshell: "to liberty in art and all things."[51]

11. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Madame de Brayer (The Polish Exile)*, 1858. Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 72.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

12. Gustave Courbet, *Group of Men and Women Escorted by Four Soldiers*, c. 1871. Pencil, charcoal and black chalk on paper, c. 10 x 14 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris/conserved in the Louvre.

13. Alfred Stevens, *What One Calls Vagabondage; or, The Hunters from Vincennes,* 1854. Oil on canvas, 131 x 165 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Courbet and the Stevens Brothers: Unexpected Inspiration

A last important link between Gustave Courbet and Belgium comes from his relations with the Stevens brothers—Joseph (1816–92) (plate 10), Alfred (1823–1906, plates 7, 8), and Arthur (1825–90)—in Paris and Brussels.[52] The two oldest were painters, the youngest an art dealer.[53] A first record of any contact—and they are unfortunately meager—is in a letter from June–July 1853 by Courbet to Jules Champfleury in which he mentions an unspecified portrait and notes he has had no news from Arthur Stevens.[54] A second letter, this time addressed to Arthur, dates from March 22, 1866. In this often-cited letter, Courbet writes that he regards Belgium as his home country, and asks if Stevens has a client in Brussels who might purchase *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–50, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Courbet reflects that "The painting is too important for me" and he hopes it would get a permanent home in "his" Belgium. This painting with its large format and fifty-two life size figures represents a key statement of the principles of realism. In the letter, the painter also mentions the ovations and the sympathy that he always received in Belgium. He would be happy to see his canvas *Burial at Ornans* end up there, in "the country of painting and literature."[55]

There are no other known letters from Courbet in which the Stevens family is mentioned. It is therefore unclear when and in what circumstances the first meeting between Alfred Stevens and Courbet took place and also when exactly the Frenchman painted the portrait of the Belgian (plate 6). According to some authors, the undated work was made in 1861, but it is not at all clear on what this date is based. Stevens was living in Paris in 1861, and it seems unlikely that Courbet would have made the portrait in Belgium that year. Stylistically the portrait seems more likely to date from about 1855.

However, Alfred Stevens also in turn painted a portrait of Courbet as a posthumous homage. A recognizable image of Courbet is included in the *Panorama of the History of the Nineteenth Century* that he painted in 1889 for the World's Fair in Paris. More precisely, Courbet is at the far right of the section with the most important painters of the Second Empire (Petit Palais, Paris). On the preparatory pencil drawing (plate 7) we note next to the portrait a repetition of the same image of Courbet, but looser and lighter. This "preliminary sketch" of the "preliminary portrait drawing" illustrates the particular importance that Stevens attached to Courbet.

A hitherto unnoticed comparison allows us to conclude that the esteem was mutual. Indeed, we believe a direct borrowing from Stevens can be recognized in Courbet's sketch of a *Group of Men and Women Escorted by Four Soldiers* (fig. 12).[56] This drawing is part of a sketchbook with seven scenes related to the suppression of the Commune—the revolt of 1871 in Paris in which Courbet participated and was imprisoned for his conduct. On closer inspection, this sketch closely resembles Stevens's first masterpiece *What One Calls Vagabondage: or, The Hunters from Vincennes* (fig. 13), which caused a great sensation at the Exposition Universelle of 1855.[57]

This socially engaged depiction of the oppression of the poor by the French State was a jab at the government, and was from the outset associated by some critics with the work of the "kindred spirit" Courbet. The critic Maxime du Camp wondered if "Mr. Alfred Stevens is not too much

impressed by the work of one painter from Franche-Comté [i.e., Gustave Courbet] who uses all possible means to make a bit of noise about his name? It is a bad master to follow, one who cannot lead himself. Mr. Alfred Stevens should be careful, stronger men than he would lose their way on such a dangerous path."[58]

Gustave Courbet: At Home in the North

In conclusion, it can be stated that Gustave Courbet felt right at home immediately in the North. He traveled there several times, staying more often in Belgium than in the Netherlands. He visited numerous museums and studied the great masters of the North, especially those of the seventeenth century. He built an informal social network, met artists, held exhibitions there, made contact with the art trade, and was discussed and both hailed and reviled in the magazines and newspapers. The influence of Dutch painters, particularly Rembrandt, however, was stronger than Flemish. This impact is mainly observable during Courbet's formative years, especially about 1850 when he paints his fundamental monumental canvases. Except for some copies, however, direct stylistic or compositional references to the old masters are rarely seen. The influence of the North appears on a deeper level. It was not the slick realism of the then relatively unknown Flemish primitives which made an impression on him, but rather the naturalism and sensual rendering of seventeenth-century Flemish masters such as Jordaens, primarily in his nudes.

The modernity of Courbet, which perplexed so many at the time, is in fact grounded in numerous aspects of Dutch painting from the golden age, including the use of monumental formats for mundane and contemporary scenes and a neutral view of everyday life that avoided anecdote, moral stance, sentiment, and consolation while remaining objective and distant. The large scale enabled him to break with the all-too-picturesque, narrative, and sentimental images of the "*peinture de la réalité*" by the "official realists" of 1840–50 and to discover his own personal style in an uncompromising realism. One should also note the Rembrandtesque coloring and deep chiaroscuro in his portraits, as well as certain aspects of the Dutch landscape painters that recur in his landscapes.

Both Emile Zola and Vincent van Gogh tried to explain Courbet's connection with the art of the North, each in their own way. In a discussion with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Zola concluded: "My Courbet is simply a personality. The painter began by imitating the Flemings and some masters of the Renaissance. But his nature rebelled and he felt carried away by his 'flesh'—by all his flesh, you understand—to the material world that surrounded him, the fat women and powerful men, the rich countryside, wide and fertile. Solid and strong, he felt a sharp desire to grasp the true nature in his arms. He wanted to paint full-blooded in the open land."[59] Zola used all the clichés that were bestowed on Flemish painting to describe the fundamental characteristics of the style of Courbet.

Vincent van Gogh described it even more succinctly in 1888, even though he may have had earlier Dutch art from his own time in mind: "Well, the Hollanders, we see them painting the things as they are, seemingly without thinking, like Courbet painted his beautiful naked women."[60]

Gustave Courbet and the North…an unexpected and exciting collusion!

Translated by Jeffery Howe

1 From Courbet to Mme. Papeians de Morchoven, c. Aug. 24, 1846. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 46-10/65. For the full citation see note 23.

2 Ibid., 46-9/64–65. See note 22.

3 Ibid., 66-6/246–47. See note 55.

4 Some aspects of this story have already been well studied, such as Courbet's contribution to the Congress of Antwerp in 1861. See Paul B. Crapo, "Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861," *Art History* 14, no. 1 (Mar. 1991): 67–91. For the Ghent Salon of 1868, see Robert Hoozee, "Gustave Courbet op het Gentse Salon van 1868," in *De Wagenmenner en andere verhalen: Album Discipulorum Prof. Dr. M. De Maeyer*, ed. Claire van Damme and Paul van Calster (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit, 1986), 82–89. More generally see Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee, "Le Réalisme: Courbet en Belgique," in *Paris–Bruxelles, Bruxelles–Paris: Les relations entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Anvers: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 152–56.

5 For one example, though after Titian, see Laurence des Cars, "*L'homme à la ceinture de cuir*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Dominique de Font-Réaulx et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 100–101.

6 Wey met Courbet in late 1848 or early 1849; he wrote his memoirs at the end of his life. See *Extrait des mémoires de feu Francis Wey* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France) cited in Anne de Mondenard, "Entre romantisme et réalisme: Francis Wey (1812–1882), critique d'art," in *Études photographiques*, no. 8 (Nov. 2000): 16.

7 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters: The Influence of Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting on the Development of French Painting between 1830 and 1870* (Utrecht: Haentjes Dekker and Gumbert, 1974), 39, 51: "Après avoir salué de ses mépris la fleur des grandes écoles d'Italie, de Flandre même, de la France surtout, devant Rembrandt que son guide lui ménageait. Courbet donne signe de vie; Bonvin…démontra Rembrandt à son camarade, il lui en fit copier quelques pages sans lui permettre de s'en assimiler les procédés. J'ai vu, dissimulées, certaines de ses ébauches, imitées d'abord puis se dépouillant de la patine hollandaise et ne gardant plus que les procédés assombris des lumières arrachées aux contrastes."

8 According to Michèle Haddad, "Courbet et l'art du XVIII[e] siècle: sources, thèmes et séries narratives," in *Courbet à neuf! Actes du colloque international organisé par le musée d'Orsay et le Centre allemande d'histoire de l'art à Paris, les 6 et 7 décembre 2007*, ed. Mathilde Arnoux et al. (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2010), 42.

9 Ségolène Le Men, *Courbet* (Paris: Citadelles and Mazenod, 2007), 52–55. Courbet continued to show interest in the old masters as proved by the copies after Hals, Rembrandt, and Velázquez that he painted in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich in 1869 (see Robert Fernier, *La vie et l'œuvre de Gustave Courbet: catalogue raisonné*, 2 vols. [Geneva: Fondation Wildenstein; Lausanne: Bibliothèque des arts, 1977–78], 2: no. 668, *Portrait de Rembrandt*).

10 Chu, *French Realism,* 28, following Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906), 28.

11 Gustave Courbet, "Realist Manifesto," 7 (in this volume). Original text: "J'ai étudié, en dehors de tout esprit de système et sans parti pris, l'art des anciens et l'art des modernes. Je n'ai pas plus voulu imiter les uns que copier les autres. […] J'ai voulu tout simplement puiser dans l'entière connaissance de la tradition le sentiment raisonné et indépendant de ma propre individualité."

12 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 66-6/246–47, for full citation see note 55.

13 Ibid., 44-3/48–49, letter to his grandparents (Paris, Mar. 1844): "J'ai fait ces jours passés un ou deux portraits: celui d'un baron belge, major de cavalerie, ainsi que celui de son père. Ce sont des parents de Mme Blavet qui est vrai-

ment extrêment bonne pour moi."

14 Baron Louis Marie Ghislain Papeians de Morchoven (1801–63), called Van der Strepen, began his career as a cadet in 1818 at the war college in Delft and is listed as a second lieutenant in the Dutch army in 1822 in the regiment of hussars. A lieutenant in 1830, he left the Dutch army to join the Belgian troops at the time of the war of independence. Captain-commandant of the second hunters on horseback in 1831, he was promoted to major in 1842 and retired in 1847 as an honorary lieutenant-colonel. He remained, however, a colonel of the citizen guard of his hometown. In 1833 he married Adèle Gabrielle Damiens, who was born in Saint Valery sur Somme (France) in September 1799 and died childless in Ghent on November 26, 1859. She was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste and Marie Catherine Blavet. According to their death certificates, they lived at Rue de la Station 17 in Ghent. (With thanks to Mr. Werner Papeians de Morchoven for this genealogical information.)

15 Fernier, *Courbet: catalogue raisonné,* 1:22.

16 See Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 44-3/49; according to Le Men, *Courbet*, 163, it bears a convincing resemblance to Courbet's good friend Max Buchon (1818–69).

17 In previous literature on Courbet his first trip to Belgium is listed as occurring in 1846.

18 The original is found in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich. It was mentioned as early as 1842 in the first edition of St. John's Hospital's collection catalogue. *Notice des tableaux, qui composent le Musée de l'Hôpital Saint Jean à Bruges*, 3rd ed. (Bruges: J. Fockenier, 1850), 51: "Van Dyck, Antoine. […] On conserve d'après ce maître: n°29. *La Ste Vierge et l'enfant Jésus*, peint sur toile Dim. 1m20 de large, sur 1 m 50 c. de haut." Alexandre Couvez, *Inventaires des objets d'art qui ornent les églises et les établissements publics de la Flandre Occidentale* (Bruges: Alphonse Bogaert, 1852), 369: a "charmante copie d'après Van Dyck et probablement par l'un des Van Oost."

19 Alfred Michiels, *L'histoire de la peinture flamande et hollandaise*, 5 vols. (Brussels: A. Vandale, 1845–49).

20 Kathryn Calley Galitz, "*Portrait de H. J. Van Wisselingh*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 144–45, cat. 32.

21 Chu, *French Realism*, see also Wessel Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, ed. Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, and Henk van Veen (Amsterdam: University Press, 2003), 252ff.

22 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 46-9/64–65, letter to his parents, Amsterdam, c. August 15, 1846: "Je suis depuis deux jours à Amsterdam. J'ai déjà fait connaissance avec deux ou trois artistes chez qui j'irai aujourd'hui. J'irai voir aussi le musée qui sera ouvert. Je suis déjà enchanté de tout ce que j'ai vu en Hollande et c'est vraiment indispensable pour un artiste. Un voyage comme cela vous apprend davantage que trois ans de travail. À La Haye qui est une ville charmante j'ai vu les plus belles collections. C'est la résidence du roi. Je ne sais pas encore le jour que je partirai d'ici car je pourrais bien y faire un portrait. On m'assure que si j'y restais deux ou trois mois afin de me faire connaître, je gagnerais de l'argent. Mon genre leur convient. Je n'ai avec moi qu'un petit paysage qui leur plaît beaucoup comme façon. Ici, personne ne fait ainsi. Je suis allé en Belgique chez M. Papeians où j'ai passé 3 ou 4 jours. Ils m'ont offert des recommandations pour le chancelier du roi et pour l'antiquaire des musées du roi, encore un autre personnage, mais je ne sais comment me servir de ces gens-là pour le moment. J'aime mieux les conserver pour plus tard car ils peuvent m'être de la plus grande utilité."

23 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 46-10/65, letter to Mme. Papeians de Morchoven, Amsterdam, c. Aug. 24, 1846: "Ma chère dame, Je me rappelle toujours avec bonheur les jours que j'ai passés avec vous, votre amitié si franche, votre accueil gracieux, et votre compagnie si joyeuse. Aussi un de mes regrets les plus vifs c'est de ne pouvoir vous rendre au moins un peu de ce que vous donnez si bien, c'est de ne pouvoir vous être plus agréable. J'avais promis de vous écrire aussitôt arrivé à Amsterdam, ce que je n'ai pu faire ne sachant pas encore à quoi m'en tenir. Mais aujourd'hui cela devient plus positif. J'ai fait pendant mon séjour à Amsterdam un portrait qui a produit le plus grand effet, un enthousiasme auquel je m'attendais fort peu. J'ai eu une ovation en Hollande si cela continue, car il va être mis à l'exposition d'Amsterdam qui aura lieu dans 15 jours et chacun m'assure que cela fera le plus grand effet et que les journaux en parleront beaucoup. Si toutes ces prévisions se réalisent j'espère que cela ira bien. Ainsi donc si j'osais encore abuser de votre bonté je vous prierais d'en parler aux personnes desquelles nous avons parlé ensemble, car il ne me manque plus maintenant qu'une personne influente qui m'appelle pour faire un portrait et alors il n'y aura plus de raison pour que cela finisse. C'est ainsi que cela se fait en Hollande. Je pars demain mardi pour Cologne, enchanté que je suis de mon voyage, tant pour les réceptions charmantes que l'on m'a faites, que pour l'instruction que j'en ai recueillie. Ensuite, la Hollande et la Belgique sont de charmants pays surtout pour un artiste.
Je vous charge d'exprimer ma plus sincère affection à M. Papeians.
Je vous embrasse tous les deux de cœur.
Gustave Courbet
Mes compliments à Fidèle.

24 Christophe Salaün, ed., *Emile Zola—Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: Controverse sur Courbet et l'utilité sociale de l'art* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2011), 79: "Rembrandt, le Luther de la peinture, fut, au XVIIe siècle, le réformateur de l'art. Tandis que la France, Catholique et royaliste, se refaisait l'esprit, hélas!, dans la frequentation des Grecs et des Latins, la Hollande réformée, républicaine, inaugurait une nouvelle esthétique."

25 Le Men, *Courbet*, 129.

26 Alan Bowness et al., eds., *Gustave Courbet, 1819–1877*, exh. cat. (Paris: Editions des musées nationaux, 1977), 111–12, cat. 27.

27 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 47-3/68–69, letter to his parents, Paris, Aug. 1847: "J'espère partir dans quelques jours mais je passe par la Belgique. Je débarque à Gand chez des personnes qui me forcent d'y aller tant par amitié que par un portrait que je dois y faire. Ce sera pour moi une superbe occasion de visiter la Belgique et d'y voir beaucoup de tableaux de grands maîtres hollandais qui sont très utiles à mon instruction."

28 Ibid., 47-4/69, letter to his parents, Ghent, Sept. 6, 1847: "Vous avez dû recevoir une lettre par Lapoire où je vous disais que j'allais en Belgique, pays fort agréable où je suis depuis huit ou dix jours. Imaginez-vous que c'est un véritable pays de cocagne. Je suis reçu comme un prince, ce qui n'est pas étonnant car je suis dans des comtes, des barons, des princes, etc. Nous sommes tantôt en dîner, tantôt en calèche, ou à cheval dans les promenades de Gand. Pour les dîners je n'ose pas en parler, je ne sais pas si on sort de table quatre heures par jour. Je crois que si j'y restais davantage je m'en retournerais comme une tour. Malgré cela j'ai déjà fait deux portraits bientôt. J'ai déjà vu une partie de la Belgique: j'ai vu Bruxelles, Malines, Anvers, Termonde, Gand où je suis. Je vais à Bruges et à Ostende et dans deux ou trois jours je vais m'en aller par Louvain, Liège, à Cologne. […] Il serait trop long de vous mettre en lettres mes impressions, je vous ménage cela pour mon retour." In a March 19, 1850 letter to Edouard Reynart of the museum at Lille, Courbet writes that he went twice to Belgium and once to Holland for his education. Ibid., 50-3/89: "Toutes mes sympathies sont pour les pays du Nord. J'ai parcouru deux fois la Belgique et une fois la Hollande pour mon instruction, et j'espère y retourner."

29 Bowness et al., *Gustave Courbet,* 26 and 33: "J'étais à peu près certain que Courbet était noyé au fond d'un moos de faro. Il y a dix ans il m'a joué un pareil tour dans le même Bruxelles où nous ne devions rester que trois jours: un mois après il n'avait pas quitté les brasseries. Un peu trop de bierre [*sic*] et de discussions gâteront sa peinture, s'il n'y prend garde." In a letter to Alfred

Verwée Courbet wrote in 1864: "Je compte sur vous, mon cher Verwée, et sur vos compatriotes que j'aime tant, qui me sont si sympathiques, et avec lesquels j'ai déjà tant bu" (Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 64-12/218–19).

30 Klaus Herding and Katharina Schmidt, *Les voyages secrets de Monsieur Courbet: Unbekannte Reiseskizzen aus Baden, Spa und Biarritz,* exh. cat. (Baden-Baden: Staatliche Kunsthalle, 1984), 199–201; Dominique Marechal and Hilde Lobelle, "Hans Memling: Vijf eeuwen werkelijkheid en fictie," in *Memlingiana*, exh. cat. (Bruges: Friends of the City Museums of Bruges, 1995–96), 54, illustrated (still incorrectly attributed to Gustave Courbet).

31 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, review of *Les voyages secrets de Monsieur Courbet: Unbekannte Reiseskizzen aus Baden, Spa und Biarritz*, by Klaus Herding and Katharina Schmidt, *Master Drawings* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 455–61.

32 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 50-3/89: "Toutes mes sympathies sont pour les pays du Nord. J'ai parcouru deux fois la Belgique et une fois la Hollande pour mon instruction, et j'espère y retourner." In short, Courbet was in Belgium in 1844 and 1847, in the Netherlands with a short stopover in Ghent in 1846, and thus not in 1849–50.

33 *Exposition générale des Beaux-Arts, 1851: Catalogue explicatif*, 3rd ed. (Brussels: G. Stapleaux, 1851), 238. *The Stonebreakers* was catalogue number 238 and *The Cellist* 239. The exhibition took place from August 15 to October 31, 1851.

34 J. B. Rousseau, "Revue du Salon: Correspondance particulière du Messager de Gand," *Le Messager de Gand*, Sept. 1, 1851: "Où M. Courbet a-t-il exhumé cette nature en putréfaction et ces cadavres vivants? […] Il ne les a pas trouvées, il les invente. Il ne médit pas, il calomnie. La vérité a eu ses peintres, qui l'étudiaient patiemment pour la reproduire en conscience, qui la reproduisaient avec une scrupuleuse, avec une amoureuse exactitude qui la méditaient, qui la comprenaient, Jean van Eyck, Memling, Kranach, Pérugin, Fra Angelico, Holbein, tous ces génies dont les œuvres modestes cachent des travaux immenses. Leurs tableaux sont admirables dans leur sincérité naïve. Est-il besoin de dire à présent pourquoi ceux de M. Courbet n'inspirent qu'un sentiment de dégoût répulsif ? C'est qu'il n'a rien médité et rien compris."

35 "Sciences et beaux-arts," *L'Observateur Belge*, Sept. 7, 1851: "M. Courbet, l'auteur des *Casseurs de pierres* et du *Joueur de contrebasse*, est depuis deux jours à Bruxelles."

36 Joost van der Auwera, "Jacques Jordaens, Allegorie op de vruchtbaarheid van het land," in *Jordaens en de antieken*, ed. Joost van der Auwera, Irene Schaudies, and Justus Lange, exh. cat. (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2012), 172–75, cat. 64.

37 Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 386–87, cat. 192. This canvas was most likely exhibited in Brussels in 1869.

38 New York, auction at William Doyle Galleries, Nov. 7, 2000, lot 35. Fernier, *Courbet: catalogue raisonné*, 1:122, cat. 20, dated this painting to 1856.

39 Grimm, "La collection du Dr. Jules Lequime," *La Fédération Artistique* (Mar. 13, 1892): 248–50; with special thanks to Jean-Philippe Huys for the biographical data on J. (A.) Vanlaethem.

40 The confusion is mainly caused by the publication of Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre*, 142 who read the dates of the letters of Courbet incorrectly, placing the tour of 1847 in 1856 (see note 28). In transcribing the letter, he added the name of the town of Dinan [*sic*] even though it does not appear in the original (with thanks to Jean-Philippe Huys).

41 Michel Hilaire, "*Le Rocher à Bayard, à Dinant*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 265, cat. 110.

42 My thanks to Jean-Philippe Huys for the identification of this site. *Paysage rocheux environs de Dinant* (New Orleans Museum of Art) mentioned by Fernier, *Courbet: catalogue raisonné*, 1:148, cat. 239, also seems based on the Meuse region.

43 Anne M. Wagner, "Courbet's Landscapes and Their Market," *Art History*, no. 4 (Dec. 1981): 410–31; Klaus Herding, "Equality and Authority in Courbet's Landscape Paintings," chap. 4 in *Courbet: To Venture Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); 62–98. Mary Morton and Charlotte Eyerman, eds., *Courbet and the Modern Landscape*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006); Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "Packaging and Marketing Nature," chap. 6 in *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 138–69.

44 Pierre Borel, ed., *Lettres de Gustave Courbet à Alfred Bruyas* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1951), 100–105, cited in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 33; also Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 57-4/143–44, letter to Auguste Fajon, Paris, Aug. 1857(?).

45 Dominique Lobstein, "Chronologie de Gustave Courbet," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 434.

46 New York, auction at Phillips Gallery, Nov. 5, 2000, lot 4.

47 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 58-1/145–46, letter to his father, Brussels, June–July (?) 1858: "Si je suis en Belgique, c'est pour tâcher de me retourner. J'y travaille et je m'y fais une position pour l'avenir quand je voudrai ou quand j'en aurai besoin. Par le temps qui court en France c'est utile, pour moi surtout. J'ai encore deux portraits à faire." Courbet must have just arrived in Brussels on July 11, 1858, judging by the date of a letter from Amand Gautier to Paul Gachet in which he listed the address of Courbet to Brussels.

48 Ibid., 58-2/146, 590: letter to Amand Gautier, Brussels, July (?) 1858: "S'il y a des lettres chez mon concierge, veuillez en faire un paquet et me les envoyer chez M. Radoux, photographe, Montagne de la Cour, 73, Bruxelles. […] Je mène ici une vie qui m'ennuie; Je suis dans les portraits, dans les procès. Je vais tout envoyer au diable et partir pour Francfort." This is confirmed in an August 10, 1858 letter to Urbain: "l'engourdissement dans lequel celui-ci a vécu à Bruxelles; à Frankfort toute son energie lui est revenue" (Bowness et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 33).

49 *Catalogue des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et dessin, exécutés par des artistes vivants et exposés au Salon d'Anvers* (Anvers: J. P. van Dieren, 1858), 51, cat. 150. Kathryn Calley Galitz, "*Mme de Brayer*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 306–7, cat. 141.

50 Antwerp, AMVC-Letterenhuis, archive CC 394/B2; lecture publicized in the *Précurseur d'Anvers*, Aug. 22, 1861. See Crapo, "Disjuncture on the Left," 67–91; Toos Streng, *"Realisme" in de kunst- en literatuurbeschouwing in Nederland tot 1875* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995). According to Dominique Lobstein, "Chronologie de Gustave Courbet," 435, Courbet returned to France via Ostend, Bruges, and Brussels.

51 Streng, *"Realisme" in de kunst- en literatuurbeschouwing*, 123: "à la liberté dans l'art et dans toutes les choses."

52 See Dominique Marechal et al., *Alfred Stevens (Brussels, 1823–Paris, 1906)*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2009).

53 The relationships between Courbet and other Belgian artists such as Louis Dubois (1830–80), Félicien Rops (1833–98), and Alfred Verwee (1838–95) are discussed in *Gustave Courbet and Belgium*, the catalogue of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium's 2013 Courbet exhibition.

54 Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, 53-4/106, letter to Champfleury (Paris, June–July 1853).

55 Ibid., 66-6/246–47, letter to Arthur Stevens (Paris, March 22, 1866), "Ce tableau est trop important pour moi. […] Je considère la Belgique comme mon pays. Il y a 26 ans que j'y vais et que je reçois des ovations et des sympathies de toutes sortes. Je désirerais que mon *Enterrement* y soit. […] C'est le pays de la peinture et des lettres [luttes?]. Ce tableau de 20 pieds de longueur et 52 personnages grands comme nature, c'est l'exposé des principes du réalisme." In another version of the letter, the word *luttes* (fight) appears instead of *lettres* (literature). There may have been some confusion.

56 See Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 415, cat. 207.

57 Dominique Marechal, "Het vroege sociaal-realisme bij Joseph en Alfred Stevens (1845–1857)," in *Alfred Stevens*, Marechal et al., 119–21.

58 Maxime du Camp, *Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1855: Peinture-Sculpture, France–Angleterre–Belgique–Danemarck–Suède et Norwège-Suisse–Hollande–Allemagne–Italie* (Paris: Librarie Nouvelle, 1855), 321–39, discusses the Belgian contribution in general: "M. Alfred Stevens ne se laisserait pas trop impressionner par les œuvres d'un peintre franc-comtois [Gustave Courbet] qui essaye à faire, par tous les moyens possible, un peu de bruit autour de son nom? C'est un mauvais chef à suivre que celui qui ne sait pas se conduire lui-même. Que M. Alfred Stevens y prenne garde, de plus forts que lui se perdraient dans cette voie funeste." During the Exposition Universelle, Gustave Courbet indeed let himself be heard. In addition to his contribution to the official exhibition, he had erected his own private pavilion on the margin of the exhibition grounds for his first major individual exhibition. On a sign at the pavilion the words "Du Réalisme" were painted. He exhibited forty works here, including his monumental and groundbreaking *The Painter's Studio* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

59 The article by Emile Zola, "Proudhon et Courbet" appeared in the journal *Le Salut Public*, Lyon, July 26–August 31, 1865 and was reprinted the following year in *Mes haines, causeries littéraires et artistiques* (Paris: Achille Faure) and published again in Salaün, *Emile Zola,* 141–42: "Mon Courbet, à moi, est simplement une personnalité. Le peintre a commencé par imiter les Flamands et certains maîtres de la Renaissance. Mais sa nature se révoltait et il se sentait entraîné par toute sa chair—par toute sa chair, entendez-vous—vers le monde materiel qui l'entourait, les femmes grasses et les hommes puissants, les campagnes plantureuses et largement fécondes. Trapu et vigoureux, il avait l'âpre désir de serrer entre ses bras la nature vraie; il voulait peindre en pleine viande et en plein terreau."

60 Vincent van Gogh, "To Emile Bernard. Arles, on or about Sunday, 5 August 1888," *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters,* http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let655/letter.html#translation: "Or les Hollandais, nous les voyons peindre des choses telles quelles, apparemment sans raisonner, comme Courbet peignait ses belles femmes nues."

The Self-Portraits of Gustave Courbet

Claude Cernuschi

> I have done a good many self-portraits in my life as my attitude gradually changed. One could say that I have written my autobiography.
>
> Behind the laughing mask that you are familiar with, I hide, deep down, grief, bitterness, and a sorrow that clings to the heart like a vampire.
>
> —Gustave Courbet[1, 2]

Courbet and the Problem of Realist Self-Portraiture

According to Ségolène Le Men, Gustave Courbet's place in history rests primarily on his "major manifesto paintings, his defense of Realism in the 1850s, and his contribution to the dismantling of the academic system of genres."[3] On all counts, this assessment is sound. One might only add that these facets were as interdependent for the artist as they were critical. Implementing the ideology of realism required an honest and authentic replication of empirical experience, an ambition that, perforce, mandated the rejection of literary or religious subject matter, which, in turn, meant the discarding of aesthetic precedent. Only by conforming to this agenda, Courbet declared in 1851, could an artist become "a sincere friend of the real truth."[4] The redundancy of the expression, "the real truth" (*la vraie vérité*), betrays Courbet's awareness that his truth-claims would trump those of his contemporaries only if a new, bolder aesthetic stratagem were put in place. Like three legs of a tripod, realist paintings, their underlying intellectual justification, and the abolition of convention were interdependent and—rhetorically, at least—mutually reinforcing; if one is removed, the whole structure becomes imperiled.

1. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

For scholars such as Michel Hilaire, Courbet's self-portraits easily align with this agenda. The artist, he writes, recreates his "experience as powerfully as possible for the viewer: his goal is to free himself from the conventions of the times and simply render reality in its most immediate and sensual form."[5] No doubt, Courbet would have relished any evidence that the triadic alliance he had marshaled persuaded his audience that realism's ambitions were indeed realized in his work. Even so, many scholars see no comfortable fit between the self-portraits and his overall production. According to Laurence des Cars, the self-portraits strike a markedly discordant note. Plagued by "unwieldy narcissism," she writes, they are "difficult to reconcile" with the ethos of the realist project.[6] The artist, after all, appears in a multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory) guises, lending the self-portraits a decidedly theatrical rather than empirical feel. Their reliance on a range of literary and artistic precedents also belies the image of the untrained, naïve artist Courbet was at pains to disseminate. For des Cars, Courbet's "successive disguises, from art student to wounded lover to tormented creator, owed a considerable debt to contemporary literary culture." If anything, such "bohemian role-playing" exploits character types already formulated in the writings of Henri Murger and Alfred de Musset.[7] Petra Chu concurs; in her view, Courbet created these images for their "promotional value," for the opportunity they provided to construct "an identity."[8]

Insofar as Courbet's self-portraits are concerned, the scholarly literature is thus sharply divided. The very terms des Cars uses—"pose," "disguise," "role playing"—are patently incompatible with Hilaire's account of Courbet rendering "reality in its most immediate form." Of these two views, des Cars's is admittedly the more persuasive. Art historians have been progressively documenting the extent of Courbet's careful study of art history and popular illustration,[9] borrowings that allow a more nuanced view of the pictures to emerge, at least more nuanced than one of simple adherence to empirical experience. The self-portraits, then, if one pardons the pun, cannot be taken at face value. Their connection to visual precedent, their formal and psychological range, and their marked dramaturgical flavor invite the unexpected conclusion that, for all the artist's protestations, his self-representations fall more comfortably within the compass of romanticism rather than realism. This conclusion is unexpected, because Courbet defined the narrower ambitions of realism in direct opposition to romanticism's broad embrace of the literary, the imaginary, and the subjective. He even considered his path-breaking *Burial at Ornans* to signal the "Burial of Romanticism."[10]

All the same, it cannot be denied, as Petra Chu contends, that Courbet's "interest in dressing up and striking a pose…parallels the histrionic behavior of Romantic authors." "As a group," the self-portraits "form a visual, partly fictional, autobiography."[11] The theatrical tenor of Courbet's self-portraits may be due to their early date, when his work had yet to extricate itself from the grip of romantic formulae. Courbet's defenders—e.g., Théodore Duret—declared that anything that smacked of romanticism would soon be expunged in favor of "direct observation" and "contact with nature."[12] Courbet's art, he continues, will eventually "have nothing that is artificial, nothing that is conventional."[13] Such defensive spin was, of course, typical of Courbet's admirers, but even after Courbet embarked on his mature style and fully embraced the realist mode, it remains unclear whether the later self-portraits managed to shed all traces of romantic overtones. Might not the histrionic behavior Chu mentions

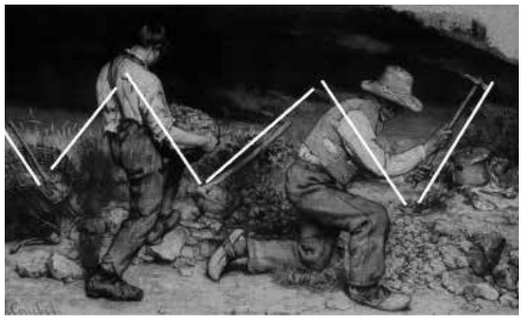
not surreptitiously contaminate, and create tensions within, the realist idiom itself?

Along similar lines, Linda Nochlin observed that, "despite its surface immediacy, and its apparent ease of availability," Courbet's work seems "to hide a secret, or produce[s] an…alluring mystery of withheld meaning rather than the clear legibility one might expect from a realist artist."[14] Des Cars agrees. Courbet, she states, had a clear propensity for "mystery" and for introducing "real characters under a fictitious guise."[15] Even the artist's contemporaries—his adversaries in particular—relished the irony of a painter notorious for courting "ugliness"[16] and rejecting the "ideal as false,"[17] nonetheless "idealizing" and "embellishing" his own self-image. For Théophile Gautier, Courbet had "the coquetry, and we congratulate him for it, not to apply his method to himself."[18]

All of which complicates any attempt to interpret the self-portraits. Widely recognized as a key component of Courbet's artistic production, these images and that very same production seem to work at cross-purposes, so much so, that they may legitimately comprise a category apart—even more, perhaps, than the straightforward iconographical designation of "self-portraits" allows. Still, pressing questions remain. Most notably, what is so idiomatic about this select group of images, or the very genre itself, that prompted Courbet to violate his own, most cherished principles? Was the issue one of simple vanity, as Gautier suggests, or, alternatively, is self-portraiture too emotionally charged an idiom for any artist to approach in a disinterested or impartial way? Is there, in other words, a fundamental incompatibility between the ethos of realism and the very genre of self-representation? And was Courbet even cognizant of this incompatibility? Was he even cognizant of having blatantly violated his own principles?

These are difficult questions to answer; not surprisingly, des Cars concludes that art historians "are still struggling to elucidate this aspect of Courbet's work."[19] Endeavoring to contribute to this conversation, this essay will adhere, first and foremost, to the premise that, in some fundamental sense, neither Courbet (nor any other artist, for that matter) could completely fulfill the purported aims of realism. Artists may profess, all in good faith, that they simply paint what they see. But it is patently self-evident that aesthetic media, as limited as they are, cannot replicate the richness and diversity of our empirical experience. And even if they could, that experience itself comprises but an incomplete, fragmentary slice of the physical world. Revealingly, Courbet's work was often berated for its clumsiness and awkwardness, for being populated by static and wooden figures (as many of the caricatures of his paintings attest). "This is especially interesting," George Boas interjected, because "the opponents of realism could oppose it on the ground that it was not realistic enough."[20]

2. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 165 x 257 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).



3. *The Stonebreakers* with superimposed pattern.

4. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreaker*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 45 x 54.5 cm, private collection.

5. Gustave Courbet, *The Meeting; or, Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 132 x 150.5 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

It is also inconceivable for artists—as Courbet's own example testifies—to be entirely objective, to ignore precedents, or to look at the world without a host of preconceived ideas and biases. One way or another, to greater or lesser degrees, all art is artificial, all art is contrived. This is not, of course, to place all art on equal footing and discount all formal and philosophical differences, or to claim that realism indulges an ideal no less than the literary romanticism it hoped to supplant. But it is to submit that, allowances for nuances notwithstanding, no art can fully replicate reality.[21] What is of particular concern to this essay, rather, is the degree to which artists are at pains *to hide or deny* the artifice of their craft just as surely as they are exploiting and manipulating it at every turn. Courbet, for example, counted *The Painter's Studio* (fig. 1) as part of his realist project, although it depicts an impossible scene—as its "summary" of seven years of the artist's life suggests—one whose individual portraits or details may be conceded as empirical, but whose composition is nothing if not deliberately staged, and whose overall effect, to cite Alan Bowness, remains "additive and synthetic."[22] Its very subtitle, *A Real Allegory*, was even dismissed as a blatant contradiction by Champfleury, one of the artist's early admirers: "an *allegory* cannot be *real*, any more than *reality* can become *allegorical*."[23] And, if Hélène Toussaint's interpretation of the painting is right, that the figures on the left side actually stand-in for specific historical figures, then the piece is not a transparent transcription of reality as much as the carefully-crafted product of a highly self-conscious artistic intelligence.

Even *The Stonebreakers* (fig. 2), another of Courbet's signature images, despite recording an event the artist actually witnessed, was rearranged in the studio, where Courbet imposed, upon figures seemingly caught on the fly, a highly regular, predictable geometrical pattern (fig. 3).[24] This careful attention to compositional rhythm contravenes the view that realist art avoids formal structures of all kinds; the way some realist literature allegedly avoids central action and connected narrative.[25] Courbet even reversed the composition from its first inception into its mirror opposite (fig. 4), although the reason for this

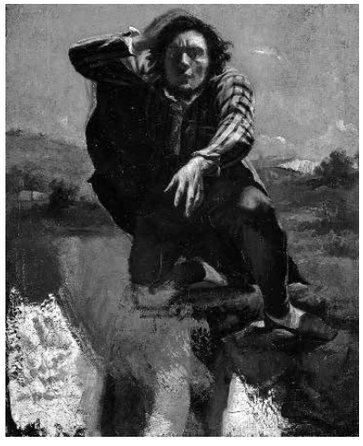
shift is not entirely clear. As for *The Meeting* (fig. 5)—where Courbet encounters his patron, Alfred Bruyas, on the road, as if by accident—Linda Nochlin insists that it is highly unlikely that the "incident actually took place."[26] In fact, Bruyas told an acquaintance that the painting represented "a fictional encounter…an allegory that lacks a date."[27]

Whenever we look at a Courbet, we may be fooled into thinking that we are offered an unedited, transparent view into a natural scene; in actuality, this view is orchestrated at every turn by a person disavowing his role just as surely as he exercises it. Against this background, Courbet's self-portraits, though they define a separate iconographical category, may not differ that markedly from the artist's overall production. They *are* different, arguably, in that they may represent the facet of Courbet's work where the axiom that all art is artificial and contrived is perhaps most conspicuous. The difference, in others words, is not so much in kind as in degree, though the degree will always remain open to interpretation.

6. Gustave Courbet, *The Desperate Man*, 1841. Oil on canvas, 45 x 55 cm, private collection.

Self-Portraiture and Self-Revelation

If we accept the artificiality and contrivance of art as a given—and treat the realist agenda as an epistemological impossibility—Courbet's self-portraits reveal a great deal about the genre in general, and about its place in the context of Courbet's work as a whole. Dismayingly, even des Cars, who stressed the artifice of the artist's "fictitious guises,"[28] nonetheless sees the self-representations as accurate renditions of the artist's *states of mind* at given points in time. She construes *The Desperate Man* (fig. 6), for instance, as a truthful reflection of Courbet's despair during times of professional disappointment. This romantic image, she writes, "coincided with a period of despondency in which Courbet, who had been painting for four years, still had no certitude regarding his participation in the Salon." (Recalling the years without success and the jury's attitude toward him, Courbet later said to Castagnary: "Am I to make others suffer the despair that I did during my youth?"[29]) Implicit in des Cars's position, then, is that Courbet's self-representations transcribe, not some objective, external reality, but a subjective, internal one. Courbet's goal is "to share the intensity of a moment" as he contemplates "his imminent downfall."[30] Courbet, she continues, creates an "emblem on a par with the trauma he experienced."[31] Much the same, she argues, may be said of *The Man Mad with Fear* (fig. 7), a piece also exhibited under the title *The Suicide*.



7. Gustave Courbet, *The Man Mad with Fear; or, The Suicide*, c. 1844–45. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50.5 cm, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo.

On this account, *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear* record Courbet's reactions to the rejections he experienced in his early professional career. Courbet was thus not faithful to some impossible task, e.g., an objective transcription of reality, but to his own subjective self, to the mental states he endured at difficult moments in his life. Several of Courbet's pronouncements reinforce this reading, as do ideas voiced in the "Realist Manifesto." "I have done a good many self-portraits in my life," he wrote to Alfred Bruyas, "as my attitude gradually changed. One could say that I have written my autobiography."[32] In the manifesto, Courbet professed to translate "the mores, ideas, the look of my era, *according to my own estimation* (*selon mon appreciation*)."[33] In conversations with Théophile Silvestre, he claimed to be both objective and subjective,[34] disavowing any ambition to translate reality in a dispassionate, scientific way, and propagating a more subtle, nuanced account of realism, one also proposed by critics such as Champfleury, Fernand Desnoyers, Edmond Duranty, and Jules-Antoine Castagnary. Champfleury, for one, contends that any "reproduction of nature will never become a reproduction or an imitation, but will always be an interpretation… no matter what man does to enslave himself to copying nature, he will always be caused by his particular temperament…to render nature according to the impression he receives."[35]

At first sight, this compromise offers a perfect resolution to the dilemma at hand; the point is not to judge the artist against an objective, independent standard, only against the subjective one he set himself. Never so deluded as to believe in a faithful transcription of reality, Courbet only provides information about his own inner life, his own "understanding" of reality, as it were. ("Beauty," he declared, "like truth is relative to the times in which one lives and to the individual capable of understanding it."[36]) But as convenient as this solution appears, it remains too facile. In some respects, the very phrase—"according to my own estimation"—inoculates Courbet from all criticism. If his interpretations of reality violate aesthetic norms or normative views, the artist could always rejoin: these interpretations simply conform to "my own estimation," and no one would be in a position to contradict him. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein would have objected to this proposition. One can no more be faithful to one's self, he would have argued, than one can invent a private language; the reason being that speaking a language is contingent on following a predetermined set of codified rules, rules that are public and whose appropriate usage can be independently corroborated. Individuals speaking a private language have no such recourse; in other words, they cannot discern the difference between following a rule and only *thinking* they are following a rule. And the same, Wittgenstein would have posited, applies to being faithful to one's self: we simply cannot distinguish *being* faithful to ourselves from only *thinking* we are being faithful to ourselves.

For Wittgenstein, human beings simply do not have enough critical distance to judge themselves impartially, just as they have no appropriate means to transcribe the external world objectively in art. Equally problematic is des Cars's description of the "successive disguises" Courbet's self-portraits employ: "art student," "wounded lover," "tormented creator," etc. Do these actually transcribe the "real" self, as des Cars initially suggests, or do they, conversely, simply repeat literary tropes that Courbet appropriated from contemporary culture? The artist's donning window-pane checkered pants in *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* (fig. 8) and *The Artist at His Easel* (fig. 9) references, as Ségolène Le Men stressed, the male characters in Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie*,

a book Courbet apparently much enjoyed.[37] Along such lines, the sensitive, suicidal soul in *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear* (figs. 6, 7) could easily have been modeled after Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*. These literary references suggest that Courbet's self-portraits were not direct, unmediated glimpses into his inner world as much as roles adapted from character-types populating the literature of the time. Admittedly, this tactic conferred certain advantages: primarily, it allowed Courbet to employ symbols he knew his audience would recognize and play, alternatively, the role of dandy, romantic hero, bohemian, or suicidal outcast.

If so, might Courbet not have visualized his real self, as invented a number of "fictive," "imaginary" selves? Le Men pushed this line of attack even further; Courbet, she writes, deliberately implanted "contradictory readings and fables in the structure of his works."[38] Le Men is clearly on to something. Many scholars, in fact, have persuasively expanded the range of Courbet's self-representations beyond images readily recognizable as such; some claim, with good reason, that he projected his own self onto a number of landscape and animal paintings, and even, metonymically, onto the representation of a pipe. Not surprisingly, Le Men speaks about a "Courbet myth," one that the artist carefully and opportunistically concocted himself.[39]

8. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait with Black Dog*, 1842. Oil on canvas, 44 x 54 cm, Petit Palais, Paris.

9. Gustave Courbet, *The Artist at His Easel*, c. 1847. Charcoal on paper, 45 x 34 cm, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum.

Thus, what appears to solve the interpretive conundrum of Courbet's self-representations from one angle, presents, from another, an equally thorny set of problems. Among the most pressing is whether the remarkable diversity of these images provides legitimate insights into the artist's biography, or a fictitious form of masquerade? From that question, others soon follow: Is the self a cohesive and consistent whole, or does it comprise as many diverse and potentially contradictory facets as Courbet exposes in his images? Can one even make general claims about the human self, claims that transcend specific historical conditions, or is the concept itself historical and pliable, time-bound and culture-specific?

These are not easy questions to answer, the more so as some scholars even dismiss the very idea of a self. The art historian T. J. Clark, for example, declared the self to be a "bourgeois construction," a fiction with little ontological reality.[40] In the field of psychology, Bruce Hood articulated a similar position, even rejecting the idea of a coherent, autonomous self as nothing more than an illusion. The ontological status of the self, to be sure, is a thorny epistemological issue, too thorny, in fact, to be resolved in the following pages—a problem perhaps best left to philosophers, psychologists, or cognitians. That said, human beings do possess single brains contained in, and having agency over, single bodies; this undeniable condition awards the self, even if it represents nothing more than a fictive construction, with a powerful *experiential*, if not ontological, reality. Hood himself concedes that, though the self is an illusion, that illusion appears *real* to us. "It may be an illusion," he asserts, "but it is real as far as the brain is concerned."[41] On these grounds, one might make the case that, no matter how tenuous it may be, a *sense* of self is indispensable to social life. As Mark Leary put it, "We could not consciously and deliberately try to affect others' impressions of us if we did not think about ourselves, specifically about how we were being regarded by other people."[42] In other words, given the considerable amounts of energy individuals spend fretting over and attempting to manipulate how they are perceived—i.e., their image, reputation, physical appearance, etc.—it stands to reason that calculating how to influence the perceptions of others, let alone implementing the appropriate means to do so, requires a tacit, working belief in the existence of a self-governing and autonomous self.

Self-Concept, Self-Presentation, and Self-Symbolization

Unmentioned in the art historical literature on Courbet's self-portraits, moreover, is the growing consensus among many present-day social psychologists that the self does indeed comprise multiple facets. Because of the growing body of experimental evidence adduced to support it, this hypothesis has been gaining increasing authority among students of the mind. It has been found, for instance, that individuals tend to react differently to personal insults than to insults aimed, say, at their race, nationality, gender, ethnic group, or profession,[43] prompting contemporary psychologists to posit, although they disagree as which is most dominant, that these facets should fall under different subheadings: the individual self, the relational self, and the collective self.[44] The individual self crystallizes around the characteristics (or combination of characteristics) we consider unique to us as singular persons—traits we feel markedly differentiate us from other human beings. The relational self, conversely, is established around parents, siblings, colleagues, and peers—individuals with whom we build working relationships and bonds of attachment. The collective self, finally, emerges from our identification with, or sense of belonging to, larger groups (professions, social classes, political parties, nationalities, religions, ethnic groups, etc.), or from our opposition to groups with which we do not identify or to which we do not belong.

All three levels co-exist, interrelate, and sometimes overlap within the same person, though to what degree and in what order of importance (depending on individual predilections and cultural biases) remains a point of contention. Such findings, as already insinuated, were deduced from laboratory experiments and conducted under the most rigorous standards available to contemporary social science. Even so, strong dis-

agreements remain as to the ontological coherence of the self, and as to which of its facets is most controlling. More recently, legitimate questions have also been raised about the rather limited samples—social, economic, cultural, and demographic—from which these studies have been derived.[45] Still, as provisional as they may be, these findings suggest that underappreciated levels of complexity face any art historian attempting to evaluate whether the self-concept visualized in Courbet's self-portraiture (or any form of portraiture, for that matter) is direct or oblique, truthful or performative. They also invite the art historian to foray in the discipline of social psychology. As E. H. Gombrich would have put it, "These are questions which concern the history of art. But their answers cannot be found by [art] historical methods alone."[46]

This essay, then, is an attempt to address some of the issues bedeviling the art historical literature by injecting ideas from social psychology into the conversation on Courbet's polymorphous form of self-portraiture. To this end, des Cars's terms, "disguise" and "role playing," will prove highly relevant, if not to say particularly apt. In his classic sociological study, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman successfully employed dramaturgical metaphors to describe "image management"—the way individuals craft a self-image they hope others will both accept and commit to memory. This is not to say, with all due respect to Shakespeare, that life is simply a theatrical production any more than human beings merely actors on a stage. But it is to say that aspects of social interaction can be usefully compared, albeit by analogy, to dramaturgical presentation. "The issues dealt with by stagecraft and stage management," Goffman writes, "…seem to occur everywhere in social life, providing a clear-cut dimension for formal sociological analysis."[47] A "performance," then, need not involve an actor with make-up on a set decked with props; it involves any activity a participant uses to influence any of the other participants. In art, a portrait satisfies similar purposes: it reveals, to employ T. J. Clark's words, a "sitter's effort to determine the way he is seen."[48] A self-portrait is even less complicated; since the artist and sitter's personalities no longer compete, an artist's performance proceeds unimpeded.

Assuming that (in our culture, at least) individuals think carefully about the impressions they make in social situations—especially when attempting to obtain favors from peers, or advantages over rivals—Goffman's formulation invites the inescapable conclusion that human beings are seldom sincere. No doubt, the images we project will differ depending on our shifting objectives, and on the context in which we find ourselves. They may stray from our every-day behavior and even from the views we have formed of our own selves. Still, this account does not mean that human beings are exclusively obsessed with their public personas, or predominantly compelled by vain and duplicitous motives. Concern over one's reputation also functions as a useful, salutary check on our conduct. If indifferent to the good opinion of others, and oblivious to how important that opinion proves to our ability to cooperate and build alliances, our own personal goals would seldom be met. Sensitivity to the feelings of others, therefore, is not entirely manipulative; it enhances mutual collaboration and induces a host of wider social benefits; it also ensures that we carry on in ways that comply with what our culture deems appropriate and acceptable.[49]

Equally relevant to the construction of identity evidenced in Courbet's self-representations is the theory of symbolic self-completion devised by psychologists Robert Wicklund and Peter Gollwitzer. This theory, it will be claimed here, usefully pertains to Courbet, as well as to many artists who crafted a similar, polyvalent form of self-portraiture. It is Wicklund and Gollwitzer's position that human beings invest an inordinate amount of energy, not only on their self-image, but also in their self-definition. A self-definition can be construed as a kind of ideal self, a model to which an individual aspires personally, or to which the individual is asked (or even pressured) to conform by others in the social group—not one that is impossible to realize. To complicate matters further, it is also conceivable that, for many individuals, approximating this ideal is not as important as persuading others of having achieved it, thus creating interconnections between self-image and self-definition, and complicating, if not impeding, efforts to untangle the disparate and multiple facets of the self from one another.

As some of his letters attest, the self-definition to which Courbet was most committed was becoming an artist of the first rank: "This year," he writes in 1845, "I must do a large painting that will definitely show what I am really worth, for I want all or nothing."[50] "Within five years I must have a reputation in Paris. There is no middle course and I am working towards that end."[51] Success, though not easily attained, was of inordinate importance to him. For those hoping to define themselves as artists, acting as if they were members of this profession, socializing with other artists, or even practicing the art of painting or sculpture, might help establish, yet would not suffice *by themselves* to cement the self-definition. Self-definitions do not emerge in a vacuum; they are conceptualized and forged within specific social contexts, not by individuals living in isolation—a fact of which Courbet was fully aware. "I am about to make it anytime now," he writes in 1848, "for I am surrounded by people who are very influential in the newspapers and the arts and who are very excited about my painting. Indeed, we are about to form a new school, of which I will be the representative in the field of painting."[52] This statement, incidentally, provides a paradigmatic example of how the individual, relational, and collective selves overlap: Courbet was raised in a society that celebrated creativity for millennia, a cultural situation in which his personal self was molded, allowed expression, and acknowledged as communally significant. He must have reasoned that, once obtained, fame would confer (to put it in socio-psychological terms) collective recognition upon the *individual*, and enhance the authority of his *relational*, self. This attitude of wanting "all or nothing," suggests, moreover, that, as individuals go, Courbet was more sensitive than most to his own image, or, as is sometimes said, that he had high public self-consciousness.[53] Writing about himself in the third person, he expressed a desire to spread "his name all over the world. He was talked about in China, Japan, Chile, California, America, etc."[54] His decision to organize traveling shows of his work, including typographic posters announcing its display, clearly bespeaks his showmanship and proclivity for self-promotion.

But cultural situations are never unidimensional. In the nineteenth century, working in the arts frequently met with family disapproval, especially among the middle and upper classes. Like many painters, Courbet followed his vocation over parental objections,[55] placing him, and many would-be artists, in a paradoxical position. The larger culture lionized creative individuals, but, because financial prospects were uncertain, and because artists traditionally came from lower social stations, even art patrons discouraged their kin from following careers in these fields. An ambivalent situation thus emerged wherein aesthetic activities were culturally prized so long as they were not confused with professional goals. To use present-day parlance, these tensions forced the relational and personal selves of aspiring artists into an adversarial relationship. What is more, as already insinuated, practicing a craft does not automatically confer the coveted status of professional artist; that status is contingent on recognition and acknowledgement by the wider community. Even if individuals seek to acquire the symbols of their self-definition on their own, it is the social group, not the individual, that confers them. To be *acknowledged as* an artist, Courbet had to expose his work to the artistic establishment of his time and receive some form of public recognition.

Pondering his submissions to the 1844 Salon, he wrote: "If I am not accepted, it will be a misfortune."[56]

In 1844, Courbet *was* accepted for a self-portrait (fig. 8) perhaps dated two years earlier,[57] and though an absolute priority, that admittance took repeated attempts to secure, postponing Courbet's attempts to acquire the requisite symbols of success, and engendering a life-long antipathy toward the very establishment from which he sought acceptance. Although he craved "*publicité*," he became "scornful."[58] Even after his first acceptances, the resounding success he coveted eluded him. The scandals caused by the *Burial at Ornans* (1849–50) or *The Bathers* (1853) are legendary, triggering the oft-repeated accusation that Courbet glorified vulgarity and ugliness. (Writing in 1849, a critic named Desbois wrote that Courbet "has seen ugliness and he has painted what he saw." But Desbois insists that, in art, this is not enough: "in painting as in poetry it is necessary to discriminate."[59])

For individuals who are highly publicly self-conscious, as Courbet apparently was, criticism is especially difficult to accept,[60] and any failure to obtain the markers of success registers as a serious setback. In consequence, failure can provoke what Wicklund and Gollwitzer call *incompleteness*, a condition, as its term indicates, accompanied by frustration and disappointment. This condition, in turn, triggers a need for compensation, the motivation, in other words, "to pursue further evidence of possessing the self-definitional quality," a pursuit called "self-symbolization [that] appears in the form of positive self-description, attempted influence, and in the use of more permanent visible symbols of the sought-after self-definition."[61] Self-symbolization is obviously related to image-management, but perhaps more acute; a kind of image-management on steroids, as it were. The concept is useful for our purposes because many of Courbet's own contemporaries remarked on the dramatically performative aspects of the artist's everyday behavior. Francis Wey, for example, remembered Courbet often acting as if he were a naïf, simply for "effect."[62] T. J. Clark went so far as to describe him as a *poseur*,[63] and Petra Chu argued that, among Courbet's means of self-promotion was to strike a "pose," to "invent and create a public persona for himself—both through his art, in a series of carefully staged self-portraits, and in real life, by playing up certain physical and psychological characteristics."[64]

The Artist as Martyr

Courbet's frequent tendency to stress (and occasionally exaggerate) the hostility he received at the hands of the public may thus be explainable in self-symbolic terms, and provides a way to interpret early self-portraits such as *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear* (figs. 6, 7). At a certain level, of course, des Cars's reading mentioned above is sound: namely, that these pieces reflect a four year "period of despondency" during which Courbet enjoyed no success at the Salon. By all accounts, this despondency was real and deeply felt. Even so, this essay is devoted to the proposition that these self-portraits reveal an agenda more subtle and complex than the simple cathartic release of pent-up frustration. *The Man Mad with Fear*, tellingly enough, was exhibited under the title *The Suicide*, which, according to des Cars, Courbet deemed significant enough to exhibit, incomplete as it was, without designating it as a "sketch."[65] His willingness to exhibit this piece at all implies that it was destined to play a public role—a role, in other words, from which Courbet thought he could press some kind of advantage since, for him, as T. J. Clark writes, "the public was very much present."[66]

But what kind of advantage? Though running afoul of artistic formula, both *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear* rely upon the famous trope, as Petra Chu observes, of the "mad genius."[67] As such, they provide (or appear to provide) glimpses into the artist's most private, intimate moments, moments one seldom shares even with one's closest friends. This informality, however, is a ruse, and precisely calculated to be disarming. In many cultures, reciprocity governs most social or business relations. As the expression "one good turn deserves another" suggests, our communal interactions are expected to be fair. If we are generous with others, or others with us, those involved will feel obligated to return that generosity. These unwritten rules also extend to the private sphere. When individuals reveal something personal about themselves, Leary contends, we "feel a certain amount of pressure to reciprocate."[68]

In many respects, Courbet's self-representations play a similar role. Even if an intended audience is frequently implied in the majority of artistic or literary works, the audience, for the declamatory images Courbet is constructing, assumes the status of a necessary, even indispensable, ingredient—at least, for the overall purposes of symbolic self-completion. As T. J. Clark aptly puts it, "The public is a prescience or a phantasy within the work and within the process of its production. It is something the artist himself invents, in his solitude."[69] Indeed, Courbet confessed to Théophile Silvestre that though he often fantasized about saving his lover from a fire in front of ten thousand astonished spectators, he would have derived little satisfaction from doing so unseen.[70] By revealing private moments in his art, the artist is also playing to the audience: namely, by assuming the role of a friend sharing a confidence. Such revelations, in turn, are meant to engender the illusion that a close emotional connection exists between him and the observer, primarily because the vulnerability that accompanies any revelation of a private nature presupposes a relationship of trust, a trust, as Leary posits, we feel pressure to return. By providing (or pretending to provide) transparent views into his private life, Courbet ingratiates himself with his public, interacting (or pretending to interact) with his implied audience on the level of intimate relations. Given the personal nature of the confession with which we are entrusted, we will tend, if only subliminally, to consider Courbet honest and trustworthy, and our connection with him as inordinately intimate. We are led to think, in effect, that we are taken backstage, made privy to privileged information normally too confidential to be shared with strangers. "The human personality," Emile Durkheim posited, "is a sacred thing; one does not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time the greatest good is in communion with others."[71]

When artists place the audience in the position of confidants,[72] the rigidity that governs many forms of social interaction relaxes. This sustains a feeling of familiarity, even closeness, encouraging the impression of barriers eroding between the observer and the observed. The audience is gradually coaxed into dropping its guard, tempering its disapproval, and trusting the individual represented. This tactic, arguably, is central to Courbet's intent. If we assume that human beings engineer an image of themselves for the benefit of others, it is a given that the attitudes of these others—i.e., their predisposition to accept or reject the signals they are receiving—will be difficult to control. It is imperative that the person on display employ not only the most effective means to persuade the audience, but also appear genuine and honest. It must seem, in other words, as if the performance is, in fact, no performance at all, only an un-edited glimpse into how the individual acts naturally, without hidden agenda, as if no audience were present. This operation requires a delicate balance: one must appear genuine without *wanting* to appear genuine (if the performance seems too slick or polished, the performer's integrity will be suspect).

But if the artist successfully manipulates the audience into thinking that nothing is concealed, that secrets are made readily accessible, and, most importantly, that the individual exposed is sincere and straightfor-

ward, then the artist's signals will register as intended. In this context, *The Man Mad with Fear* is especially instructive. In art history, representations of suicide are conventionally restricted to historical figures (Socrates, Seneca, Lucretia, Dido, Sappho, Cleopatra), and, though romantic and realist artists expanded depictions of suicides beyond the confines of the literary or historical, self-portraits in the course of committing such an act are rare. This makes Courbet's image both singular and difficult to interpret. Perhaps examples from everyday behavior may provide assistance. It is often said, for instance, that individuals frequently fantasize about attending their own funerals; most likely, because a certain degree of pleasure is derived from imagining others grieving for one's memory. A case could be made that Courbet's depiction of his own demise plays a similar role, permitting a cathartic release of negative feelings as well as allowing the artist to indulge in such a fantasy.

10. Gustave Courbet, *The Man with the Leather Belt*, 1845–46. Oil on canvas, 100 x 82 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

11. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait with Black Dog*, 1842. Oil on canvas, 27 x 23 cm, Musée de Pontarlier.

Significantly, Elliot Aronson has argued that, in certain conditions, human beings appreciate situations for which they "suffer."[73] This may sound counterintuitive, but, on the basis of several experiments, Aronson demonstrated that individuals value membership in a group in proportion to the severity of its initiation process. The reason seems obvious; if we grow disillusioned with an association that proved easy to join, we can remind ourselves that little effort was spent in the process. We have more at stake if we expended greater energy, and strive to persuade ourselves that the task was yet worthwhile—if only to avoid the uncomfortable reminder of having wasted our time. Similarly, a challenging task is far more likely to gain admiration than an undemanding one. This explains why we often praise actions in direct relation to the amount of effort they require, and provides a logical rationale for modern artists' proclivity to stress, even relish, how acutely they are ostracized in modern culture. In 1855, for example, when some of his paintings were rejected from the Exposition Universelle, Courbet wrote to his faithful patron, Alfred Bruyas, that he had been "desperate" for a month. Soliciting his assistance, Courbet reminds Bruyas that he will be "serving a holy and sacred cause, the cause of liberty and independence, a cause to which I, like you, have consecrated my entire life."[74] On this account, the prospect of suffering for high-minded principles such as "art," "liberty," or "truth" must have been intoxicating for Courbet. And showcasing such suffering openly in his early self-portraits helped demonstrate his strength of character, his resolve to be true to his personal vision even in the face of public disapproval. By advertising how protracted and painful his struggle was, the more value he felt could be ascribed to his art. From the perspective of social psychology, the image of a suffering Courbet supplied a public confirmation of his determination to adhere to his self-definition, all the while enhancing the standing of his chosen vocation and mitigating any personal unease over the unpleasant realization that material comforts and public acknowledgement had been relinquished for trivial pursuits.

Meant for public consumption, moreover, the image of Courbet's own suicide was also intended, arguably, to make spectators grieve, and—perhaps more to the point—regret not having prevented the action depicted. The feeling of guilt, presumably, would be the stronger among those made to feel partly responsible for the tragedy unfolding before them. Even if a number of Courbet's self-portraits make direct eye-contact with the spectator, in *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear*, that contact, coupled with the most pained facial expressions Courbet managed to commit to canvas, is pushed to the edge. *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear*, conceivably, are accusations camouflaged under a seemingly genuine *cri de cœur*. Less interested in catharsis, Courbet is blaming his detractors for having treated him unjustly, and warning them as to what might happen, and what would fall upon their conscience, were their own (ostensibly unfair) criticisms of him to continue unchecked.

By posing in the guise of a suffering individual, then, Courbet is not simply fabricating a self-image for the consumption of his audience; he is, if not accusing that audience of injustice, at least coaxing it to act differently toward him. As Goffman writes, "Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way. Connected with this principle is a second, namely that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is. In consequence, when an individual projects a definition…and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind, he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging him to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect."[75] Confronted with the image of a suffering Courbet, the audience is thus invited to recognize that image as accurate, as a transparent reflection of the "real" Courbet, and repent the error of its ways.

Pressure to obtain that repentance could also be exerted, if only partly, by the signals conveyed by Courbet's other self-portraits. *The Man with the Leather Belt* (fig. 10), *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* (fig. 11), and *The Cellist* (fig. 12) all conjure an image of Courbet as an introspective, sensitive, and creative individual, a young man of rare gifts whose obvious talents need to be nurtured and allowed to bear fruit. *The Man with the Leather Belt,* for example, evokes how much premeditation and soul searching is necessary for genuine artistic creation. The attributes commonly found in an artist's studio—pen, paper, and *écorché*—are present but discarded, necessary but insufficient by themselves to produce profound works of art. In the *Self-Portrait with Black Dog*, Courbet employs an animal as a kind of prop, a prop that helps entice a sympathetic response from the public, as animals often do, in the obvious hope that this same sympathetic response will transfer

from the animal to its owner. (On this point, it is intriguing that psychologists have argued that our sense of self is not restricted to our own physical bodies, but can expand to objects we collect or admire and even to pets for which we have affection.[76])

With respect to *The Cellist*, Courbet's biographer, Gerstle Mack, wrote that the artist actually counted himself a musician and "with characteristic vanity regarded himself as a first-rate composer and accomplished performer."[77] Even so, the painting, as Petra Chu remarked, proves unpersuasive, primarily, because of the "absurdity" of the artist's "left-handed approach to the instrument, which makes his already awkward grip of bow and cello look even less veracious. It is obvious that the artist is assuming a pose in which the cello is a mere prop, borrowed from a friend for the occasion."[78] Unpersuasive or not, Courbet's image was meant to convey his sensitivity as an artist, perhaps buttressed by the assumption—current in literary circles—that the art form most conducive to induce emotive responses was music.[79] More persuasive than the physical handling of the cello is Courbet's facial expression; though easily confused with expressions of extreme pain or pleasure, it is an expression frequently made by musicians: concentrated, intense, and evocative.

12. Gustave Courbet, *The Cellist*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 117 x 90 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

To be sure, *The Man with the Leather Belt* and *The Cellist* are consistent with pre-established formulas of romantic portraiture and self-portraiture and nowhere as extreme as *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear*. But they share that same sense of informality, and still endeavor to leave the impression that, as far as Courbet is concerned, perfect harmony exists between inside and outside, style and substance, reality and appearance. As such, they establish a broader frame of reference against which self-portraits such as *The Desperate Man* and *The Man Mad with Fear* will be interpreted—and, for this reason, prove no less manipulative. In this respect, Michael Fried is absolutely correct when he argues that the significance of Courbet's self-portraits "becomes manifest only when a number of them are juxtaposed."[80] This suggests that the self-portraits are relational, their meanings like pieces of a puzzle. Not a puzzle whose configuration provides, once every piece is in place, a picture that corresponds to a predetermined or complete whole; but a puzzle whose configuration itself alters by the progressive incorporation of any single piece. When *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear* are brought into the mix with—i.e., when they are juxtaposed to—*The Man with the Leather Belt*, *Self-Portrait with Black Dog*, and *The Cellist*, they make the injustice of the artist's plight the more conspicuous, and the tone of their accusation sharper. What a loss it would be, we are meant to think, if such an individual were driven to suicide by the prejudice of an insensitive and unreasonable public.

The stratagem was not without success. Even Le Men goes so far as to state that Courbet's discouragement before the acceptance of *After Dinner at Ornans* in 1849 pushed him to brink of suicide.[81] Although Courbet *did* endure moments of anxiety and disappointment, as most creative individuals do during the formative stages of their career, there is no evidence to support this contention. "His Franche-Comté character," the novelist and critic Castagnary declared, "bounced back under the strokes of bad luck. Without transition, without compromise, he began to paint again."[82] Courbet had a defiant streak and was not about to take any criticism lying down. In 1863, he confided to his friend, the anarchist philosopher Proudhon, that a "man who works in the arts must concede nothing to public opinion that is at odds with his own ideas. If he does, his originality does not exist."[83]

As extreme as it appears, *The Man Mad with Fear* is thus less likely to represent a serious contemplation of suicide than an especially dramaturgical form of self-symbolization. As Mack put it, "Even in his calmest moments Courbet never allowed factual precision to hamper his inclination to overstate and dramatize."[84] According to Chu, his letters established a "cleverly constructed and constantly nurtured public persona aimed at maximizing the publicity for his art."[85] The same could be said of the self-portraits. Weaving a rhetorical web around his paintings, Courbet presented them to the public as a sincere reflection of his own character, as subordinate to the higher cause of truth pursued at the cost of his own material comfort. In 1861, he wrote to Francis Wey: "you know better than anyone that I act without calculation, without shame, and that I let the public itself see my shortcomings. That is, perhaps, arrogance, but if so, it is an arrogance that is praiseworthy, for my very integrity deprives me of what my painting could bring me. In my poverty, I have always had the courage to be only what I am…[although] it would have been easy for me to act otherwise."[86] Though these statements were intentionally meant to bolster the same carefully crafted image the artist was disseminating in his self-portraits, Courbet's two-pronged strategy, as clever as it was, should give any would-be interpreter serious pause.

Along similar lines, Laurence des Cars instructively compares *The Wounded Man* to Hippolyte Bayard's 1840 photograph, *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* (fig. 13), where the artist, facing "incomprehension and failure," also transformed intimate moments into "fictitious narratives" by transgressing "the conventions of the self-portrait."[87] Courbet's *Wounded Man* (fig. 14) fits very neatly in such a context; he was also hoping to raise his own position of *artiste maudit* to martyr status, writing to Proudhon, for instance, that "real beauty" can only be found "in suffering and pain." In fact, Courbet played up his personal travails to such a fever pitch that many of his own acquaintances began speaking of his persecution-complex.[88] As late as 1868, during a time of great professional success, it was rumored—falsely—that Courbet offered his candidacy to the highly conservative Académie Française. Desperate to dispel such a rumor, which would have tarnished his image as a rebel, Courbet exclaimed: "How do you expect me to retaliate against the poor martyrs who enter the art world […] ? Am I to make others suffer the despair that I did during my youth? The idea is insane."[89] It is precisely in those terms, it seems, that Courbet wanted to be seen.

The Illusion of Naturalness; The Myth of Persecution

The success of his stratagem, like that of any actor's performance, depended, as insinuated before, on the performance not looking like performance at all, only an un-edited glimpse into how the individual acts naturally, without hidden agenda, as if no audience were present. In

this regard, Michael Fried's contention that, in the self-portraits, Courbet hoped to cancel the distance between "sitter and beholder," "between himself and the representation of himself," is right on the mark.[90] But if Courbet sought this effect, it was to cement his image as an authentic human being whose art, for all of its self-symbolizing meanings, is natural and transparent. If painters endeavor to neutralize the "convention that paintings are meant to be beheld,"[91] it is precisely because effective paintings, though *conforming to this requirement*, should do everything in their power, like good actors, to camouflage that fact. The more conventions are disguised, the more natural works of art appear, and the more persuasive the illusion. This does not mean that conventions can ever be avoided, only that the less conspicuous they are, the more beguiling the result. Just as individuals whose behavior is too calculated and affected make negative impressions—as opposed to those who appear natural and insouciant—paintings that parade their conventions seem artificial, mannered, and win few admirers. Courbet's art, as well as his everyday behavior, were carefully crafted to appear natural and spontaneous—which does not mean, by the same token, that they always succeeded. As Fried concedes, theatricality "is inescapable."[92]

13. Hippolyte Bayard, *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man*, 1840. Direct positive print, Société française de photographie, Paris.

14. Gustave Courbet, *The Wounded Man*, 1844 and repainted 1854. Oil on canvas, 81.5 x 97.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Proudhon, for one, was not beguiled: Courbet, he remembers, tried to "represent himself to me as he thought he was, not quite the same thing as he really was."[93] This is a highly revealing statement, if only for suggesting that strategies for symbolic self-completion are not always successful. Proudhon even told Courbet that he would analyze and judge him, since he knew him better than he knew himself, which, according to Proudhon, frightened the artist.[94] Edmond About was not beguiled either. Courbet, he wrote, "is a peasant of the Doubs the way Metternich is a peasant of the Danube. His naïveté is composed of all the secrets, all the malice, and all the delicacies of art."[95] During any theatrical performance, after all, the audience's willing suspension of disbelief hinges on the force of an actor's skill. At every moment, a slip, loss of concentration, or poor presentation can shatter the illusion and bring the audience back to reality. In everyday situations, those who try too aggressively to impress others—with their knowledge, intelligence, wealth, etc.—are often completely oblivious to the negative impressions they make. The same may be said of Courbet; because of his excessive proclivity to self-aggrandize, his efforts at self-symbolization often backfired. The popular singer Gustave Mathieu wrote:

> Stop, passer-by; here is Courbet
> Courbet whose brow awaits the diadem,
> And do not be surprised if he gazes thus upon you:
> Courbet, gazing upon you, gazes upon himself.[96]

Mathieu hits the nail right on the head. As controversial as he was, and as much as he claimed to struggle against countless conspiracies, Courbet actually received much praise throughout his career. *After Dinner at Ornans* was accepted at the Salon of 1849, netting the artist a medal that allowed him to submit work free of jury disqualification (that is, until this rule was reversed in 1857, when only recipients of decorations, not medals, were so exempt). The painting was also purchased by the State for the sum of 1,500 francs. Gerstle Mack writes that for "the next twenty-five years, Courbet was represented at almost every annual Salon by at least one picture, usually by several."[97] For all of his attempts to portray himself as a martyr, Courbet did quite well under the Second Empire, and was simply dismissed as "rowdy but harmless" by the powers that be.[98] The Regime even courted him, though to use him for its own purposes rather than out of personal regard.

The year 1866 was especially successful: "I am the uncontested great success of the Exhibition," Courbet wrote to his friend Urbain Cuénot, "There is talk of the medal of honor [Légion d'honneur]. […] I told you a long time ago that I would find a way to give them a fist right in the face."[99] In 1870, he was indeed offered the Légion d'honneur, among the most prestigious awards any French citizen may receive, which he refused, out of personal conviction, since he disapproved of the Second Empire and could not accept a medal from a monarchical regime,[100] a *coup de théâtre*, as it were. In fact, Courbet published the letter refusing the medal in many Parisian and provincial newspapers, obviously hoping to present the image of a man loyal to his principles, incorruptible by meaningless honors. The strategy worked. If one can trust his own report, Courbet received far more accolades for refusing than accepting the medal. "I am overwhelmed with compliments," he wrote to his family, "I have received three hundred letters with such compliments as nobody in the world ever received. Everyone agrees that I am the foremost man in France. […] The gesture I have just made is a marvelous stroke…everyone envies me."[101]

In fact, Courbet was a candidate for this distinction some nine years earlier, only to have Napoléon III scratch his name from the list,[102] prompting some to wonder whether Courbet might have accepted the medal the first time around. At that point, he claimed (or, more likely, pretended to claim) being "grateful"[103] to Napoléon for denying him the award: "out of dignity I would not have worn [the cross], for my opinions don't allow it."[104] Whether Napoléon was actually responsible for this rebuff cannot be verified; but it makes for a good story, the moral of which suggests that institutional decorations are bestowed by personal favor and justifies Courbet in refusing them, as they would only soil his reputation. He did, paradoxically, accept being named a chevalier first class of the Order of Merit of St. Michael by another monarch, Lud-

wig II, king of Bavaria in 1869, ostensibly because, according to his own words, that decoration was one of "merit" rather than "honor" and awarded to him, not by royalty, but by the artists of Munich.[105] Shrewdly, Courbet crafted a win-win scenario: if awarded a medal, the honor was well deserved; if not, accepting it would have been against his principles; and if he disapproved of the donor, rejecting it would earn him greater "prestige."

Even when Courbet encountered hostility, he always knew how to turn the situation to his advantage. He invited people to tell him "the cruelest truths,"[106] appearing broad minded and open to criticism, but he called jury members who rejected his work "a set of old idiots who have never been able to do anything in their lives and who are trying to stifle the young people who might overshadow them."[107] Criticism and rejection were thus transformed into unintended compliments and attributed to the inanity of the jury and to the radical originality of his own work: "now that I am myself, I can no longer expect [recognition]."[108] Later, in 1855, for example, when some of his canvases were rejected from the Exposition Universelle—some, no doubt because of their unmanageable scale—Courbet was furious. Soon enough, he found a way to benefit from the adversity. "My enemies," he wrote, "will make my fortune. That [rejection] has given me the courage of my ideas…I am winning my liberty. I am saving the independence of art. They have felt the blow that I have dealt them."[109] Even Delacroix, upon realizing that Courbet's *Studio* was rejected, remarked that Courbet "is too sturdy to be discouraged by so slight a setback."[110] In fact, Courbet, who never missed an opportunity to exaggerate his suffering, used this incident to enhance his own standing vis-à-vis his artistic competition. In a letter to Victor Hugo, of all people, Courbet declared that Delacroix, "never saw soldiers violating his home, erasing his paintings with a bucket of turpentine, by a minister's order; his works were not arbitrarily excluded from the Exhibition…he did not have that pack of mongrels howling at his heels, in the service of their mongrel masters."[111]

15. Gustave Courbet, *Standing Man Opening His Shirt* (self-portrait?), undated. Pencil and charcoal on paper, 26.5 x 16.5 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

16. Gustave Courbet, *The Trout*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 55 x 89 cm, Kunsthaus, Zurich.

17. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait in the Prison of Sainte-Pélagie*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm, Musée Gustave Courbet, Ornans.

The Commune

But there is no evidence of anyone entering Courbet's studio by force or defacing his paintings. Only during the Franco-Prussian War was the studio looted by the Germans; and only after 1871—when he was implicated for his involvement in the Commune and for his alleged participation in the destruction of the Vendôme Column—was he fined, imprisoned, and the contents of his studio seized. At this point, persecution was palpable, not imagined, real, not illusory. It might be useful, therefore, to compare Courbet's early self-portraits with those finished during this later stage of his career, i.e., when the realist ideology had already been fully implemented, and when his self-representations could no longer be said to fall under the romantic rubric.

Intriguingly, Le Men identifies a sketchy prison scene (fig. 15) in this period as having "the resonance of a self-portrait. The sacrificial posture…of a hero, standing erect, offering himself to death by exposing his bare flesh to murderers who are not represented."[112] Le Men's reading is convincing. If Courbet saw his endurance of public criticism as a form of heroic martyrdom, seeing his imprisonment in such terms would have struck him as all the more justifiable. "Everyone," he wrote to his family upon being sentenced, "thought I would be acquitted but I didn't think so because I know them and how offended they are. […] Do not worry. All this business has had no effect on me. I have resigned myself all along to all the nonsense done to me."[113] There is no denying that being incarcerated is an unspeakable ordeal that should not be trivialized; but in comparison to those who were exiled, condemned to forced labor, or shot, Courbet got off lightly: prison for six months, 500 francs in fines, and 6,850 francs in legal fees.[114] Even so, in a letter to his sister Juliette, he took up an even more defiant stance, brushing off the humiliation of being placed with common criminals rather than political prisoners: "I defy them to discredit me. […] I receive congratulatory letters from everywhere, from Germany, from England, from Switzerland. They are all opening their arms to me except the reactionaries and the men in the pay of the government and of Napoléon."[115] (Later, in 1873, after General MacMahon came to power, Courbet was retried, stripped of the contents of his studio, and charged for the re-erection of the Column, to the tune of some 300,000 francs, prompting him, in advance of the verdict, to flee to Switzerland).

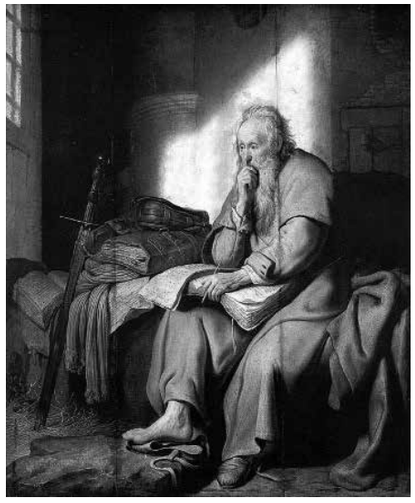
During his incarceration, Courbet's mood fluctuated between "defiance and self-pity."[116] From prison, he described his treatment and the Versailles Government's bloody, indiscriminate reprisals against the Communards: "I have been reviled, heaped with abuse. I have rotted in solitary confinements that drain you of your mental and physical faculties. I have slept amid the rabble on the vermin-infested ground. […] Since the world began, the earth has never seen such a thing. Among no other people, in no other period of history or other era has one seen such a massacre, such vengefulness."[117] Such an attitude could easily have retriggered the martyr imagery

at work in early self-portraits such as *The Desperate Man* or *The Suicide*. Indeed, Le Men connects the above-mentioned prison drawing with the Catholic iconography "of the Sacred Heart, a sign of Christ that symbolizes both divine love and redemptive sacrifice. In a sense, it announces the theme also found in the later self-portrait as a trout."[118] *The Trout* (fig. 16) is one of those animal images onto which Courbet, an avid hunter, projected himself, visualizing his persecution by now identifying not with the hunter but with the hunted ("I shall…put an epitaph on the trout," he wrote to Édouard Pasteur in 1873, "people will see what fun it is to be in prison"[119]).

The range of these meanings and projections are informative because, if the dramaturgical aspects of Courbet's early self-portraits were said to antedate the realist project, i.e., when Courbet had not yet fully escaped the grip of romanticism, the later images support the contrary hypothesis that Courbet's self-portraits actually perform image-management and self-symbolizing functions *throughout* his career, regardless of chronology, and regardless of whether they may qualify as fully realist or not.

Le Men, in fact, attributes the reduced number of self-portraits in Courbet's later years to his changing physical appearance, the increasing effects of age and obesity in particular, thus suggesting that the artist's motivations never strayed too far from self-promotional purposes. The *Self-Portrait in the Prison of Sainte-Pélagie* (fig. 17), however, compensates for the artist's progressively less-than-flattering outward show by referencing heroic figures from history. The pose of quiet, resigned reflection recalls, say, images of St. Paul in prison (fig. 18), lending a religious aura to the piece and a noble bearing to the individual depicted. Images of St. Paul were also likely prototypes for Courbet's early *The Pirate, Prisoner of the Dey d'Alger* of 1844 (fig. 19)—a painting, intriguingly enough, sometimes mislabeled *Job*, ostensibly because of its not-too-subtle religious connotations.

Especially helpful in decoding the kind of image-management that benefits from such connotations is the concept of "spillover effects" currently employed in social psychology: the way a certain set of associations or emotions transfer from one person to another. In this case, what is intended to spillover onto Courbet are the moral characteristics usually ascribed to religious martyrs. By depicting himself in a manner reminiscent of St. Paul, in other words, and by stressing similar life narratives—i.e., that both were imprisoned—Courbet hopes that the defining character of the individual in whose guise he appears will, by association, transfer to his own person. It was thus imperative to choose carefully. Unlike individuals who alter their behavior when threatened with mortal danger, martyrs like St. Paul are deemed exceptional precisely because of their willingness to die for their convictions. Modeling himself after such historical figures, Courbet was banking on his audience reading the image accordingly: "I hope to show France what it means to be a man who has enough sense of honor to do his duty under all circumstances."[120]



18. Rembrandt van Rijn, *St. Paul in Prison*, 1627. Oil on wood, 72.8 x 60.2 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

19. Gustave Courbet, *The Pirate, Prisoner of the Dey d'Alger*, 1844. Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, Musée Gustave Courbet, Ornans.

20. Eugène Delacroix, *Tasso in the Madhouse*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, private collection.

It is ironic, of course, that Courbet, who changed his self-portraits so radically, would then turn around to trumpet his own consistency; but no more ironic than relying on religious narratives to engineer his self-image while being virulently anti-clerical. Apparently, actual belief in the symbols themselves is not required to employ them, only a self-interested belief in their efficacy. It is equally paradoxical that Courbet—who disparaged Delacroix for not seeing soldiers "violate his home," erase his paintings "with turpentine"—modeled his own image of suffering on a visual trend practiced by none other than Delacroix himself: e.g., the *Tasso in the Madhouse* (fig. 20) or *Michelangelo in His Studio* (fig. 21), two depictions of artistic geniuses living a life of solitude, desolation, and neglect—two images, in other words, surprisingly close to Courbet's own picture of himself.

This does not mean, however, that the implications of all these images are identical. The very cause for which Courbet is being "martyred" is not religion or art, but politics. Le Men writes that, in the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie*, Courbet—though at pains to hide the visible effects of old age on his appearance, such as his gray hair—dons the red scarf of the Communards as proudly as he refused the Légion d'honneur.[121] Indeed, in her book, *Red Scarfs: Souvenirs of the Commune*, Louise Lacroix remembered: "There was, at the time of the Commune, in all of Paris, something like a rage with respect to anything red: clothing, flags, ideas, even language. The men who hurried to the Hôtel de Ville, whatever their standing, had a red scarf, belt, or ribbon."[122] The clear implication of the image, then, is not that Courbet is enduring incarceration because of personal self-indulgence, or even because of his radical artistic vision; he is imprisoned, rather, because of the depth and righteousness of his political convictions. Not that the image, for all that, is clear and transparent. Just as Gerstle Mack described Courbet's mood in prison as vacillating between defiance and self-pity, the two self-portraits most closely identified with his incarceration, the Goyesque sketch (fig. 15) and the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* equally vacillate between these two extremes. In one, Courbet marshals his entire moral and physical

strength, as if to convey the impression that all sufferings will be endured and that his righteous cause will prevail. In the other, the mood is quiet and resigned, more in keeping with the spirit of the St. Paul images mentioned above.

Were it not for the red scarf, one might construe the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* (and its attempt to induce sympathy from the public) as contributing to the rehabilitation Courbet himself sought when he denied any responsibility for the destruction of the column at his trial, and insisted that his involvement with the Commune was restricted to protecting works of art from destruction.[123] After his death, his defenders adopted a similar strategy. Courbet would only rise to the pantheon of great French artists, they reasoned, if emphasis were focused exclusively on his art and his political activities, if mentioned at all, were trivialized in the extreme.[124] In many respects, the tempered restraint of the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* might actually be read along these very lines; but the presence of the red scarf, if anything, complicates so simple a view of the picture. Somehow, Courbet is sending mixed signals to his audience. On the one hand, he appears submissive and innocuous; on the other, the red scarf unabashedly declares his political loyalties. One is reminded of a letter where Champfleury wrote that Courbet "wants to flatter popular taste and shock people at the same time."[125]

21. Eugène Delacroix, *Michelangelo in His Studio*, 1849–50. Oil on canvas, 40 x 32 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

As we have seen, multiple and sometimes contradictory intentions often run through the gamut of Courbet's self-portraits, moving as they do from appeals for sympathy to displays of defiance. But the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* is unusual by exercising both options simultaneously. No doubt, it bespeaks the artist's own vacillating attitude toward his incarceration. Yet, in keeping with the argument of this essay—i.e., that his self-representations be read as deliberately crafting an image for the public—it might be beneficial to investigate how sending mixed signals might actually have proven advantageous to him in this particular context. If Courbet channeled all of his energies toward being acquitted of all charges, any image that showed the artist quiet and contrite could improve his chances. In fact, and surprisingly for Courbet, he even mitigated some of the privations he endured. While only a small amount of light actually entered his cell ("I hope," he wrote, "I shall remember what the sun looks like"[126]), the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* depicts a large window with a generous view into the prison courtyard.

But the artist might also have sought to inoculate himself against accusations of betrayal and cowardice, and the prominence of the red scarf was meant, conceivably, to forestall those very suspicions: namely, by showing an unrepentant individual still committed to his cause. The painting, arguably, was left intentionally elastic: for two audiences to read different meanings depending on their own predilections. Those negatively disposed toward Courbet, and who wanted him convicted, might temper their stance if confronted with a man who appears remorseful and unthreatening. Those positively disposed, but apprehensive about the artist losing his nerve, might, from the other side, be reassured by his wearing revolutionary symbols at his most trying moments.

Of course, there is no way to verify whether this was indeed the artist's purpose, or whether the image was successful in satisfying it. Regardless, the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* would not have been Courbet's first attempt to over- or under-estimate his political involvement. When it was advantageous to boost his socialist credentials, he boasted, retrospectively, that only two people were "ready" in 1848: himself and Proudhon—although, in reality, neither men participated in the uprising.[127] No more than a bystander, he had even reassured his anxious parents that he "did not believe in wars fought with guns and cannon…because it runs counter to my principles. For ten years now I have been waging a war of the intellect."[128] When such boasting would have been detrimental, as it was during his trial, Courbet changed the tenor of his statements. Both the untitled prison sketch and the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie*, therefore, should be seen in that light—not as transparent reflections of the artist's mental state, but as calculated attempts to tailor his image according to the shifting demands of the moment.

At times, Courbet was prone to exaggerate his stoicism as much as his suffering. To his father and sisters, he declared: "I did not suffer enormously. I kept my mind active and did not lose my cheerfulness for a moment." Recalling what Egon Schiele would say during his own imprisonment several decades later ("For my loved ones and for my art, I shall endure till the end"), Courbet continued: "I suffered more for you and for my fellow captives than for myself."[129] In the end, all of these strategies proved greatly beneficial because, as he himself admitted, his incarceration enhanced his notoriety and, in turn, the demand for his art: "If the Commune caused me some difficulties, it also increased my sales and my prices by one-half."[130] "My stock is going up thanks to the Commune. I just sold fifty thousand francs' worth of paintings to a Paris dealer who made the trip specially."[131] "The Commune would have me be a millionaire. […] We are earning twenty thousand francs a month."[132]

From both an art historical and socio-psychological perspective, the upshot is that, although the *Self-Portrait in Sainte-Pélagie* belongs to a completely different period in Courbet's life than *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear*, and reflects different circumstances, the work still qualifies as an example of image management and symbolic self-completion.[133] The artist still crafts an image based on recognizable visual, literary, or historical precedents in order to persuade his audience of the injustice of his suffering, and of his possession of certain moral attributes. At this point in time, of course, the struggle he endured on account of his artistic career was behind him, and his position in the art world more secure. His professional standing, irrelevant here, would have been inappropriate, not to mention trite, to showcase in the politically charged context of the Commune. But Courbet still elevated himself to the status of a martyr all the same, and found the same old romantic devices no less effective, even in this newly charged context.

The Malleable Self and Self-Promotion

Courbet's ability to alter, even recalibrate, his self-definition is supported by a growing body of evidence suggesting that self-concepts are not fixed but malleable,[134] changing according to circumstances, context, and negative feedback—of which Courbet, as we have noted, was a fre-

quent recipient. Since criticism impairs self-esteem, we counter its caustic effects by enhancing our self-image, a form of behavior in which Courbet excelled. When he failed to secure acceptance at the Salon, he still defined himself as an artist, but as one who spurned prestige, accolades, or recognition. In order to construct a more flattering self-image, he pretended to shun the very fame he coveted. "It is not that I am so keen on success," he wrote, somewhat disingenuously, to his family, "the people who succeed right away are the people who break down open doors."[135] Unforthcoming, the very rewards previously sought were now recast as markers of compromise and insincerity, and repeated failure as the inevitable consequence of his loyalty to higher principles and unwillingness to cater to a philistine audience.

Negative reactions to his paintings were thus twisted—cleverly—into "confirmations" of his talent, and deliberately exploited, in Le Men's words, "for self-promotion."[136] In 1852, he told his parents: "It is impossible to tell you all the insults my painting of this year has won me, but I don't care, for when I am no longer controversial I will no longer be important."[137] Far from impugning his gifts, "insults" simply corroborated his originality and importance. And when recognition did arrive, Courbet played the same game, except in reverse. After exhibiting the *Self-Portrait with a Pipe* (fig. 22), Courbet allegedly received countless requests for similar images. "If I had done these alone," he remarked, "I would have become rich, but also dishonored."[138] Opportunistically, Courbet again contrived a win-win scenario; whether praised or criticized, he always managed to find a way to place his "integrity" front and center.

22. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait with a Pipe*, 1848–49. Oil on canvas, 45 x 37 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Another way to flaunt that "integrity" was to underscore his personal autonomy and authenticity: "I am the most independent man you could ever meet in your life."[139] On these grounds, his refusal to change course under pressure could be ascribed, not to stubborn obstinacy, but to his unconventionality and self-reliance, two attributes he attached to himself ever since adolescence. Even at boarding school, he warned his parents: "in everything and every place I must always be an exception to the general rule, I shall take steps to follow my own destiny."[140] Looking back upon his many years as an artist in 1870, he reiterated the same sentiments: "If I have proved nothing else, I have at least demonstrated that without privileges, without protection, and without being a Napoléonist, one can have an artistic career, if one has the right temperament."[141] "I hope to live by my art all my life without ever having departed an inch from my principles, without having betrayed my conscience for a moment."[142]

Since Courbet presented any hostility to his art as an underhanded way to exact retribution for his independence, he missed no chance to exaggerate this same hostility. Though no paintings were submitted to the Salon more than once, he claimed that works were rejected on multiple occasions.[143] Even his friends and patrons latched on the rhetorical tactic of turning criticism back on the critics themselves: Bruyas, for one, considered it "a duty" to purchase the controversial *Bathers* because the piece incarnated an "upsetting and inconvenient truth!"[144] And for Proudhon, Courbet's achievement lay in exposing "the cruel truth unmercifully."[145] "It becomes an honor," the artist writes as early as 1846, "to be refused."[146] Rejection, to Courbet's mind, was a clear indication that his art was disturbing—disturbing because it was profound, and profound because it was true. On this basis, his career could be characterized as untainted by materialistic motives or aesthetic compromise. Personal and aesthetic honesty went hand in hand: if the art was faithful to reality, it was because the artist was scrupulous to a fault. And if anyone failed to appreciate either the man or his art, the fault was theirs, not the artist's.

Undeniably, the strategy proved remarkably effective. As to whether it faithfully reflects Courbet's own integrity is another matter. In 1863, he painted a pointedly irreverent painting of inebriated priests returning from a conference. When it was rejected from the official Salon—and even from the Salon des refusés that included Manet's scandalous *Déjeuner sur l'hèrbe*—Courbet wrote to the architect Isabey: "My purpose has been achieved. If the painting of the Priests has aroused as much embarrassment as you have indicated… that painting has been a slap in the face of [Napoléon III]."[147] Perhaps Courbet deliberately wanted to expose the decadence and self-indulgence of the clergy—as Théophile Thoré described it, "anything that will offend sensitive tastes."[148] But in a letter to a friend, he freely admits painting the picture "so that it would be refused. That way it will bring me some money."[149] In fact, he encouraged his friends to "make the biggest possible splash in the newspapers."[150] Courbet wanted to project the image of a man determined to expose the truth, no matter how disturbing it might be. When the artist communicates with his intimates and lets down his guard, however, he admits to different (i.e., pecuniary) motives, although we cannot know whether *even these* were his actual motivations, or whether he was simply stating what he thought his correspondent wanted to hear.

Regardless, it is hardly surprising that someone so adept at self-promotion could so easily alter the tenor of his works or the slant of his self-definition. It also bears mention, if only parenthetically, that the mutable nature and potentially disingenuous character of the self is not an exclusively twentieth- or twenty-first-century construct. One need only think of literary characters from different cultures and time periods as Homer's Odysseus, Machiavelli's Prince, Shakespeare's Iago, Molière's Tartuffe, Jane Austen's Mr. Wickham, Dickens's Pecksniff, Dostoyevsky's Svidrigaïlov, or, more topically, Balzac's Cousine Bette, to find examples of individuals who alter their outward behavior to deceive, manipulate, or simply obtain their objectives. One may also mention the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, an almost exact contemporary of Courbet, who wrote that he had "seen men in real life who so long deceived others that at last their true nature could not reveal itself. […] In every man there is something which to a certain degree prevents him from becoming perfectly transparent to himself; and this may be the case in so high a degree, he may be so inexplicably woven into relationships of life which extend far beyond himself that he almost cannot reveal himself."[151]

Ironically, Courbet claimed truthfulness for his own varied self-representations just as he was himself keenly alert to the way others presented themselves. Experiencing difficulty in committing Baudelaire's likeness to canvas, Courbet exclaimed: "I don't know how to 'bring off'

my portrait of Baudelaire. Every day he changes appearances."[152] According to Champfleury, the artist was not far off the mark: "Baudelaire excelled in the art of changing masks like a convict on the run. Sometimes his hair would hang over his collar in graceful perfumed ringlets; the next day his bare scalp would have a bluish tint owing to the barber's razor. One morning he would appear smiling with a large bouquet in his hand…two days later, with hanging head and bent shoulders, he might have been taken for a Carthusian friar digging his own grave."[153] Apparently, playing roles was not uncommon in Courbet's circle. A political prosecutor said something remarkably similar about one of the artist's childhood friends—Max Buchon—who was arrested in 1849 on account of his radical political activities. Watching a religious procession in the Jura in 1850, the prosecutor writes: "We were extremely surprised to see citizen Max Buchon taking part in this procession, candle in hand, and in a state of perfect composure; he is one of the leaders of the Socialist party, a professed advocate of the doctrine of Proudhon, and apparently his intimate friend. Did his presence at this ceremony indicate, as many have supposed, sincere contrition? I see it rather as one of those eccentricities which we have long since been led to expect from this man, who loves above all to strike a pose and make himself a talking point."[154]

Courbet also loved to strike a pose and make himself a talking point. Renowned for his imitations and mimicry,[155] he wrote the following to his family about an improvised speech he was asked to give at a party: "The furor was all the greater for my having acted so differently from my usual self."[156] One may say, therefore, that Courbet's self-portraits represented a similar form of performance. Wanting to appear sensitive, he painted *The Man with the Leather Belt*, *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* (fig. 11), or *The Cellist*. Wanting spectators to feel remorse over their failure to appreciate his art, he painted *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear*. Wanting to appear bohemian, he painted himself disheveled, working hard at his easel (fig. 23), as if to showcase the arduous nature of his creative work and, in the process, the priority of artistic creativity over superficial concerns such as respectable dress or physical appearance. Wanting to take up a defiant stance, flaunting his self-confidence, he painted the other *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* (fig. 8),[157] or the scene with friends at the Brasserie Andler (fig. 24), a meeting place for bohemians and radical practitioners of the burgeoning realist movement.

23. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, c. 1847. Charcoal on paper, 45 x 34 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

24. Gustave Courbet, *Jean Vallois, Marc Trapadoux, and Gustave Courbet at the Brasserie Andler*, c. 1848. Charcoal on paper, dimensions and location unknown.

25. Gustave Courbet, *The Seaside at Palavas*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 27 x 46 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

A similar diversity is detectable in his letters, a quality attributable, as Petra Chu argues, to Courbet's propensity to change his persona depending on the recipient.[158] Transposing this idea to his paintings, one might conjecture that Courbet envisioned a broad public for his art, but targeted different audiences for select pieces, depending on his shifting predispositions or moods, and tweaked his self-representations accordingly. If the pose of a dandy allowed Courbet to appear in complete control of himself, unfazed by insecurity and criticism, this stance may have struck many as too Parisian, or, to put it differently, too incompatible with the earthy, rural, proletarian image he sometimes hoped to convey. Conversely, if he wanted to appear truer to his geographical origins and at odds with the Parisian art world, then the portraits, again, had to look different. To ask which is the "real" Courbet, therefore, is not the right question. The right question is: What did Courbet hope to achieve in one work as opposed to another?

In light of the assumption that many forms of human behavior are performative, the diversity of Courbet's self-portraits makes perfect sense. In fact, when he wrote to Bruyas—"I have done a good many self-portraits in my life as my attitude gradually changed. One could say that I have written my autobiography"—Courbet readily acknowledged the inconsistency of his personality. What he was less ready to acknowledge was how manipulative this inconsistency could be. In the same letter, for example, Courbet added: "I still have one more [self-portrait] to do—that of the man sure of his principles, a free man."[159] Such a remark, made in 1854, is especially intriguing because it postdates the *Self-Portrait with a Pipe* (fig. 22) and even the *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* (fig. 8), both of which arguably portray him as secure, free, and insouciant (in the latter, the artist, as Alan Bowness writes, eyes the viewer "with an air of supercilious disdain"[160]). After the early introspective and apprehensive self-representations, all of Courbet's self-portraits can be said to depict a man confident in his beliefs. Strangely enough, the artist may not have read them in those terms. He may have felt that confidence and freedom were not absolute but relative, and that, in these two images, he did not look sure or free *enough*. Alternatively, it is also possible that Courbet's own definition of freedom changed, moving, as James Henry Rubin has argued, closer to that endorsed by Proudhon.[161]

Even so, it would be difficult to imagine him freer and more confident than in

his 1854 self-portrait at the seaside at Palavas (fig. 25), the small figure at the bottom of a painting almost exclusively devoted to the Mediterranean. "The sea's voice is tremendous," Courbet wrote to a friend; but, instead of evoking the insignificance of the human being before the immensity of nature, which would have been typical of a romantic artist, man and nature meet here on the same footing.[162] The forces of nature do not intimidate him; he salutes them as an equal. In many respects, this image transcribes Courbet's own response to the seaside, a place where he spent much of his leisure time. But it is also possible that other meanings factored into the equation. When articulating his ideas of an anarchist society where free individuals interact within an economic system based upon mutual exchange rather than exploitation, Proudhon wrote: "In this system, the laborer is no longer a serf of the State, swamped by an ocean of the community. He is a free man, truly his own master, who acts on his own initiative and is personally responsible."[163] Given the closeness between Courbet and Proudhon, and given Courbet's allegorical tendencies in *The Painter's Studio*, the individual's parity with the sea could conceivably be read, metaphorically, as an example of this more intense form of freedom: the individual's ability to act outside of governmental or any other kind of external control. Whether Courbet kept a larger political agenda in mind when satisfying his ambition to depict himself as a "man sure of his principles, a free man" is, of course, impossible to verify. But this much is certain: since Courbet's ego always managed to trump most other considerations—even the political ones—it would not be difficult to construe the image as yet another personal attempt at image management and symbolic self-completion: the sea's voice is "tremendous," Courbet wrote to Jules Vallès, but "not loud enough to drown the voice of Fame, crying my name to the entire world."[164]

It seems that even images of a "free man sure of his principles" can be subject to gradience. In other words, variations and degrees of intensity may be detected *within* the different categories where Courbet's self-portraits may be said to fit. If many self-representations show a confident Courbet, *The Seaside at Palavas* shows Courbet at his *most confident*. And though no less reflective of image management and self-symbolizing than images previously discussed, the image of a confident Courbet no doubt reflects his increasing success and recognition. By the eve of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, nearly all of his reviews were positive, and he sold nearly forty canvases for some 52,000 francs.[165]

Class Identity

Given his republican political loyalties, it stands to reason that Courbet, who made numerous references to monetary success in his private letters, actually downplayed any evidence of that success in his art. In fact, he occasionally presented himself in the guise of a member of the working class, as in the self-portrait in Hartford (fig. 26), or in another charcoal of himself without a hat, bearded, defiantly looking at the spectator, exuding authority and physical strength (fig. 27). Here, Courbet borders on depicting himself as a peasant, perhaps visualizing sentiments he expressed to Francis Wey in 1850: "In our so civilized society, I must lead the life of a savage. […] The people have my sympathy. I must turn to them directly. I must get my knowledge from them, and they must provide me with a living."[166] Apparently, the impression the audience is meant to take away from both pieces is that nothing is hidden except what we see with our own eyes: that the individual depicted is simple and unpretentious, making a modest living, not from scheming and speculation, but from the sweat of his brow and the honesty of his physical labor. For all of Courbet's efforts at persuasion, however, this "picture" does not correspond to reality. Courbet came from a family of wealthy landowners who never worked the land themselves. Jules-Antoine Castagnary called them "rich,"[167] and Théodore Duret even spoke of an aristocratic filiation.[168] When Courbet wrote home to his parents from Paris, he never failed to specify on the envelope: "M. Régis Courbet, proprietor at Flagey."[169]

26. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1849. Black chalk on paper, 28 x 21 cm, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.

27. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait*, 1852. Black chalk and charcoal on paper, 57 x 45 cm, British Museum, London.

28. Gustave Courbet, *The Quarry* (*La Curée*), 1856–57. Oil on canvas, 210 x 180 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Given Courbet's conflicted class identity, it is unsurprising that his self-portraits betray as wide a *social* as an emotional range, sometimes conveying his identification with the proletariat, sometimes with his more comfortable, upper-middle-class background. *The Quarry* (fig. 28) belongs to the latter category, since Courbet depicts himself hunting, one of his favorite pastimes. As such, *The Quarry* makes an instructive contrast to *The Poachers in the Snow* (*Les braconniers*, fig. 29), although some critics think that Courbet meant "*braconnier*" in the older sense of the term: not a poacher but a trainer of dogs such as pointers ("*braques*").[170] Yet it is unclear whether Courbet actually had this meaning in mind, even if it conforms, in some way, to the subject of the piece. Despite the entire population being granted hunting rights after the 1789 Revolution, Le Men reminds us that hunting permits were reissued in 1844, thus distinguishing "poachers, pursued by forest rangers, from legitimate hunters such as Courbet."[171] If Courbet meant the older designation, then no social hierarchical distinctions were intended; but if Le Men is correct, and if Courbet painted both poachers and legitimate hunters such as himself, then these depictions—contrary to his democratic ideals—demarcate his own higher standing from theirs.

This demarcation, moreover, would have been somewhat devious, not just because making it ran afoul of Courbet's professed opinions, but because hunting in the snow is illegal, a transgression of which Courbet was himself found guilty. In which

case, *The Poachers in the Snow* would almost be imputing his own wrongdoing onto others, others of a lower social station.

But Courbet concocted a flattering image of himself not simply by distinguishing social classes.[172] Although hunting scenes abound in his work, the actual meaning of *The Quarry* has remained somewhat nebulous, primarily because the composition was incrementally augmented. At first, the picture simply represented the artist with a dead roe ; later, several patches of canvas were added to include the dogs, the horn player, and additional space above the hunter's head (explaining, perhaps, the composition's somewhat disjointed appearance).[173] Yet the real point of these additions, arguably, was to enhance the function of the piece: advertising Courbet's prowess as a hunter. His prize is prominently displayed in the foreground, while he, pensive and contemplative—like David having just slain Goliath—stands nearby. (Recall that these were the very first elements included in the work before additions were made.) Courbet, in fact, frequently mentioned his kills in his correspondence. In 1850, he wrote to Champfleury: "I killed a wild goose that weighed twelve pounds, earning great admiration from everyone in the area…even now there are those who still can't sleep from envy. The story of the goose…will be told in this part of the world to our children's grand-children, and embroidered."[174] To his sister Juliette, Courbet praised a stag he brought down as "the largest killed in Germany in the last twenty-five years. […] This adventure aroused the envy of all Germany. The grand-duke of Darmstadt said he would give a thousand florins for it not to have happened. A rich industrialist from Frankfurt tried to steal it from me, but I must give credit to the inhabitants of the city of Frankfurt; everyone was on my side. A protocol was drafted by the Hunters' Society [and signed by]… the most important hunters of the country (that means the richest) demanding that the stag be returned to me. A splendid story! The whole city was excited for a month, the newspapers became involved."[175]

Given his pride in these—real, exaggerated, or imagined—events, *The Quarry* could be read in an analogous way. Though Michael Fried's reading of the *piqueur*'s sounding his horn as "expressing the physical effort of [the act] of painting" is slightly dubious, his other suggestion, that the *piqueur* is "summoning an audience of beholders" to the scene seems right on the mark.[176] Just as the allegorical figure of fame blows its trumpet, the *piqueur* draws attention to the achievements of Courbet the hunter, himself leaning calmly on a tree, perusing his trophy in the foreground, his body language apparently saying: "Oh, really, it was nothing." Even the dogs, which normally need to be restrained lest they tear their prey to shreds, move with fear and trepidation, unwilling to approach the magnificent, fear-inducing deer Courbet was brave and skillful enough to slay. All the elements—dogs, prey, *piqueur*, and, of course, hunter—fulfill different functions, but they all reflect positively on the figure of Courbet himself.

29. Gustave Courbet, *The Poachers in the Snow* (*Les braconniers dans la neige*), 1864. Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'archéologie, Besançon.

30. Gustave Courbet, *The Girl with Seagulls*, *Trouville*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, private collection.

31. Alexandre-François Desportes, *The Artist as a Hunter*, c. 1699. Oil on canvas, 163 x 197 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

In that regard, *The Quarry* (and, to a lesser extent, *The Girl with Seagulls*, fig. 30) stands as an early, and more subtle example of the kinds of trophy photographs hunters and fishermen frequently take with their kill. Though certain precedents can be found in the domain of high art (figs. 31, 32),[177] this genre had yet to take off at the time Courbet was painting. (One thinks of the words of Joseph in Marcel Pagnol's autobiographical novel *La gloire de mon père*, when one of his colleagues has his photograph taken with a fish: "That he is happy to have made a good catch, I am glad to concede, but to have himself photographed *with a fish*! How undignified! Of all vices, vanity is decidedly the most ridiculous!"[178]) Not surprisingly, Courbet treaded lightly, donning a reflective pose and relegating himself to the shadowy background, aesthetic decisions that do not reflect the artist's humility as much as his false modesty. Since having the roe deer lie lifeless at his feet was not enough to flaunt Courbet's prowess, the canvas was progressively augmented, much like a self-congratulatory narrative that gets expanded and embellished with every retelling: the dogs were added to acknowledge the magnificence of Courbet's prize, and the *piqueur* to call the absent members of the hunting party to the site of his exploits. At this point, there is nothing left for Courbet to do except enjoy the attention, and enjoy it he can because he is a legitimate hunter, not a poacher.

From the psychological perspective, Courbet's false humility invites additional commentary. In everyday situations, after all, compliments are sometimes difficult to receive. As much as we enjoy hearing them, displaying our enjoyment openly makes us appear proud and narcissistic. Unsure as to how to behave, and wanting to avoid the awkwardness of not responding with due modesty, we sometimes ignore compliments or feign not having heard them (as we also do with hurtful remarks, which are equally difficult to acknowledge, although for opposite reasons). *The Quarry*, therefore, is a subtle piece. On the one hand, Courbet celebrates his social rank and blatantly advertises his hunting skills through the roe deer's prominent position and the dogs' appropriate but deferred excitement. On the other, he skirts the appearance of excessive self-congratulation by letting the *piqueur* trumpet his

achievement in his stead, locating himself in shadow and striking a self-effacing pose, or at least one as self-effacing as was possible for him.

That Courbet, who professed empathy with the working class, would thus differentiate himself from common poachers, and showcase his prowess as a legitimate hunter, again reflects the malleability of his self-image. Like boxers—who are expected to be violent *inside*, but to behave just like everyone else *outside*, the ring—most people are not entirely of a piece, altering their behavior as the context warrants. Courbet was no different; Théodore Duret recalled that: "In [the city of] Saintes, the artist wholly absorbed in his art, immersing himself in nature, [is] a simple jovial fellow, a good comrade with the artists and the people around him; in Paris, the artist complicated by leadership of the realist school, by the politician, by the socialist who, as such, is driven to adopt certain attitudes and to write to speechify for the gallery, great on the terrain of his art and devoid of gifts on the terrain of politics."[179] Appropriately, Fabrice Masanès called Courbet a "homo duplex"[180] (although "homo multiplex" might be even more fitting).

32. Charles Christian Nahl, *Peter Quivey and the Mountain Lion*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 66 x 86.4 cm, De Young Museum, San Francisco.

33. Gustave Courbet, *Country Siesta*, c. 1842. Charcoal and stumping on paper, 26 x 31 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'archéologie, Besançon.

Altered States

Courbet did not simply alter his social behavior and self-portraits; he could also alter *the very same* self-portrait to change its meaning. An x-ray examination of *The Wounded Man* (fig. 14), for example, revealed that the initial layer, recorded in an extant drawing (fig. 33), represented a sleeping couple: most likely Courbet and his mistress at the time, Virginie Binet. As the female figure was obscured, "a pathetic figure," as Le Men describes it, "replaces the original image of a happy couple nestling in the shade of an oak, in reference to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, often represented in popular imagery."[181] Thus, while Courbet originally embraced his lover, the latter was erased from the work after the couple separated a decade later, transforming a lover's tender embrace into an image of pain and abandonment. A foreknowledge of the underpainting now dramatically changes one's interpretation of the piece, which, for most scholars, references the emotional pain Courbet felt when being rejected in love.

Barring this knowledge, we might have interpreted the image along the lines of *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear* (figs. 6, 7), particularly because the strategies governing both pieces—the fabrication of an intimate space, and the attempt to induce empathy from the audience—reappear in *The Wounded Man* as well. The similarities between these three images, as well Courbet's proclivity to visualize his amorous relationships in art, may invite another possible reading of *The Man Mad with Fear.* Although Courbet sought to showcase his exploits to the public (e.g., the fantasy he related to Silvestre of rescuing his beloved from a fire in front of witnesses), he also sought to elicit sympathy from the audience by playing the role of victim. We already read *The Man Mad with Fear* as an example of the latter, a response to the artist's lack of professional success at the Salon. But the way Courbet transformed *The Wounded Man* from an image of amorous bliss to one of bodily injury opens the possibility that *The Man Mad with Fear* went through analogous permutations—though not necessarily in its external appearance as in its potential meanings. In his conversations with Silvestre, for example, Courbet admitted to having acutely suffered from his passions as a youth.[182] He even painted (and later destroyed) a large allegorical painting entitled *Man Delivered from Love by Death* picturing a desperate Courbet attempting to prevent a laughing figure of Death from abducting a woman (obviously, his love interest at the time). Upon reflection, Courbet erased the image—in his own words, because it betrayed his "hatred" of the woman in question.[183] This admission suggests that, while he ostensibly portrayed himself hopelessly seeking to release the female figure from the clutches of death, the piece actually denoted his desire to break *her* emotional hold over *him*. The man would be "delivered" from love, not by his own but by the woman's death.

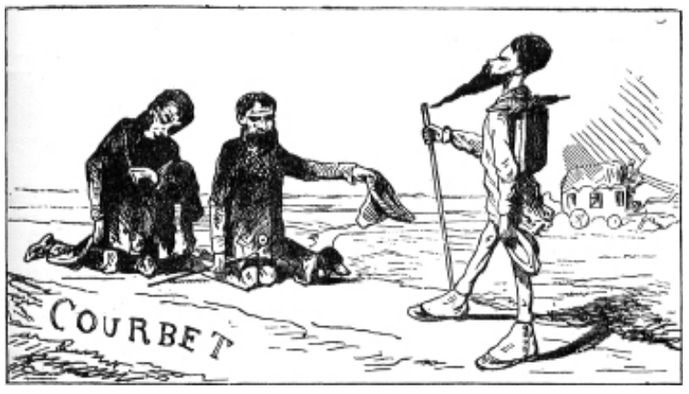
34. Gustave Courbet, *The Lovers in the Country*, 1844. Oil on canvas, 77 x 60 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon.

Courbet destroyed the piece because its vindictiveness may have struck him as excessive. Yet it remains conceivable that the *Man Delivered from Love by Death*, as extreme as it was, was later refashioned into a more "palatable" and "effective" image, an image such as *Man Mad with Fear*: more palatable, because Courbet, not the woman, is now cast as the victim, and more effective, because an image of retribution morphs into a solicitation for sympathy. Just as *The Wounded Man* changed its meaning as the female figure was painted out, the meaning of the *Man Delivered from Love by Death* could have been reconceptualized into something like *The Man Mad with Fear.* Originally transcribing aspects of Courbet's personal life, the earlier versions of *The Wounded Man* and the *Man Delivered from Love by Death* could have been refashioned to play different, i.e.,

more public, roles. Michael Fried's observation cited above, that the significance of Courbet's self-portraits becomes apparent when a number of them are juxtaposed, is therefore no less pertinent here. *The Man Mad with Fear* may mean one thing when juxtaposed to *The Desperate Man* or *The Wounded Man*: namely, as an appeal to sympathy after being mistreated by a hostile public. But, if *The Man Mad with Fear* were juxtaposed to the earlier stage of *The Wounded Man* (fig. 33) or, say, to *The Lovers in the Country* (fig. 34), it might disseminate (or revert to?) another meaning: that Courbet was driven to suicide by a heartless woman who ruined a happiness so poignantly conveyed in the latter two pieces.

All of which reveals how easily Courbet could have tweaked the meanings of his self-portraits, either by reconceptualizing them, altering their physical appearance, or simply changing the context in which they were exhibited. All three options were always available to him.

But however mutable their meanings, all self-portraits have an element in common. Their effectiveness remains contingent upon the artist appearing genuine and trustworthy, and on a feeling of barriers breaking down between the observer and the observed. It is no less clear that, though we are manipulated into thinking that our relationship with the artist is intimate, that relationship is actually unidirectional rather than reciprocal, individual rather than relational. We cannot interact with the figure, nor affect the situation before us. A point Youssef Ishaghpour made about Giorgione's *Venus* may therefore apply most appropriately to *The Wounded Man*: that, though her eyes are closed, her face is turned in the audience's direction, conscious, in her light slumber, of our gaze upon her.[184] Similarly, if changing the meaning of an image from amorous bliss to physical pain required alterations as slight as removing a female figure and adding a sword and a few touches of blood to Courbet's body, one begins to wonder how "deep" is the "wound" in *The Wounded Man*. An awareness of the work's different campaigns—specifically, how little Courbet's pose was altered—not only changes our interpretation; by exposing how malleable that interpretation actually is, the image's persuasive power decreases proportionally. It is almost as if Courbet, despite looking "injured," were now simply peeking through his closed eyes to see, like Ishaghpour's *Venus*, whether or not the audience is falling for his act.



35. Quillenbois, caricature of Courbet's *The Meeting*, *L'Illustration*, July 21, 1855.

Ishaghpour's observation is therefore remarkably suggestive. No matter how skillfully artists fashion signals that conjure the illusion of relating to us on intimate terms, the tactic is a ruse. The signals are never interactive; they originate with, and are controlled by, the artist; any opportunity for interaction, let alone cross-examination, is completely foreclosed. For these reasons, works of art are nearly ideal vehicles for image management and symbolic self-completion; members of the public are made to think that they are the unduly privileged recipients of sensitive information, but, in reality, they simply assume the condition of becoming passive receptors of whatever signals are aimed at them, without the possibility of altering the message or questioning the messenger.

The Static Marker

Admittedly, interpreting a work of art or literature is hardly if ever completely unidirectional; even the simplest utterance requires an extensive amount of background information to be fully intelligible, not to mention a tacit understanding of the context in which the utterance is made. But even as audience participation is necessary to complete the meaning any artist hopes to convey, self-symbolizers endeavor either to limit or prescribe the form that participation will take. In fact, Wicklund and Gollwitzer describe self-symbolizers as fixated almost exclusively on themselves. For self-symbolizers, they write, the ideal "is to be surrounded by others who acknowledge their self-definitions, the essence of these others as human beings with complex qualities becomes irrelevant. The person who is trying to affirm or reaffirm a self-definition needs nothing more than to be surrounded by static social 'markers,' who serve the singular purpose of constituting a reliable social reality. The byproduct, then, is one of depersonalizing the targets of the self-symbolizing—not taking their perspective, not understanding their needs, and not communicating in a responsible manner."[185]

This description fits Courbet like a glove. To say that his opinion of himself was inordinately high would be a colossal understatement; according to Silvestre, "the soul of Narcissus has descended into him in its latest incarnation."[186] Courbet loved to be photographed, called himself "Master of Ornans"[187] (which, to Parisians, seemed more ridiculous than apt), and described realism as the "final form" of art, an idiom, in other words, that could not be improved upon.[188] Not unaware of his own predilections, Courbet defied the French government's fine arts director, the Count de Nieuwerkerke, by saying that he was the proudest and most arrogant man in France.[189] Not surprisingly, some of his self-portraits also reflect this same conceit. *The Meeting* (fig. 5), for instance, an image depicting Courbet encountering his patron, Alfred Bruyas, is quite instructive in light of Wicklund and Gollwitzer's ideas. Instructive, because the role of the "static social marker" is not simply relegated to the audience *outside* the work, that role is also being played by the figure of Bruyas *within* the work. Upon seeing this picture, Edmond About wrote: "Neither master nor servant cast a shadow on the ground, only M. Courbet has a shadow: he alone can interrupt the sun's rays."[190] He was not the only one who detected the agenda underlying the piece; predictably, cartoonists had a field day parodying the egotism of Courbet's conception (fig. 35).

On a more serious note, it is well worth citing Petra Chu's astute observation that Courbet sought publicity, not simply by showcasing his own image, but also by using his art to advertise his personal connections.[191] By painting portraits of important cultural figures such as Champfleury, Baudelaire, Berlioz, or Proudhon, Courbet capitalized on their fame, and, more specifically, hoped that fame would also reflect upon him.

But *The Meeting* goes one step further. By depicting himself and Bruyas in the same space—and by having their interaction and body language betray their relative reputation and status—Courbet's decision to take "center stage," as Klaus Herding put it, elevates "his own existence

…as the embodiment of society's savior."[192] This image, in effect, visualizes Courbet's relational self: the artist, Herding continues, reverses "the relationship between artist and patron to his own advantage, so that he can take his place at the head of society."[193] By having the higher-born individual treat Courbet with such respect, if not to say deference, Courbet's standing rises in equal measure, even surpassing that of Bruyas himself—or, at least, that is the effect Courbet seeks to project. The artist, as a result, fabricates an image of two individuals *inside* to instruct the implied audience *outside* the painting in the appropriate way in which he—Courbet—should be treated. Bruyas just happens to be the example in this case. In our culture, many individuals gravitate toward the rich and famous in the hope that the association will enhance their own prestige (psychologists call this "upward comparison" as when "people bask in the reflected glory of another person's qualities and achievements"[194]). By portraying Bruyas as if it were *he*, rather than the artist, who seeks the benefits obtained from associating with a social superior, Courbet thus overturns the conventional relationship of power between the artist and patron, and makes himself the work's center of gravity.

On this basis, one could make the case that, in *The Meeting*, Bruyas is made to play the role of a static social marker, although, in reality, both men needed one another: Courbet, Bruyas for financial and moral support, and Bruyas, Courbet to cement his own pedagogical role as an enlightened patron of progressive art. Even so, Courbet needed Bruyas more than Bruyas needed him,[195] and that *The Meeting* suggests the exact opposite betrays how egregiously the painting distorts the nature of their relationship. Not that this distortion was necessarily intentional. Fully immersed in an act of symbolic self-completion, it is possible that Courbet may have been oblivious to the lopsided and egocentric effect his *mise-en-scène* was making. From *his* perspective, the painting could simply have represented an honest and accurate record of their friendship. Given his own narcissism, Courbet's distortion of this relationship is almost predictable. Predictable, not simply because art tends to alter, if not misrepresent, the situations it depicts, but also because self-centered individuals are often completely unaware of how patently selfish their behavior appears to others, and even react with indignation if that selfishness were ever pointed out to them. Analogously, Courbet may not have realized how much he marginalized Bruyas in *The Meeting*, and may even have deluded himself into thinking that both were actually portrayed as relatively equal, as forming a bond based on Proudhon's ideas of mutually beneficial reciprocity.[196]

36. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio* (detail, fig. 1).

Still, the image remains a skewed and asymmetrical conception all the same, one within which Bruyas clearly plays the subordinate role of a static social marker—an updated version, as it were, of the patrons that flank holy figures in so many Renaissance altarpieces. Much the same could be said of the figures on the right side of the artist's self-portrait in *The Painter's Studio* (fig. 1), which Courbet himself described as "the people who serve me, support me in my ideas, and take part in my actions."[197] Present but peripheral, they populate a scene whose purpose, first and foremost, is to celebrate Courbet's place at the center of the social fabric. As the median point between those who work with their hands and those who work with their heads, the artist is presented as one of those few personages whose activity bridges rich and poor, thinker and laborer, intellectual and craftsman. Any cultural progress, the painting seems to say, hinges upon *his* unique social vision and, no less importantly, upon his physical ability to realize it.[198]

Given their inability to partake in such an action, the figures on the right of *The Painter's Studio*—Bruyas, Champfleury, Buchon, Proudhon, Baudelaire, etc.—cannot actively contribute to the artist's achievement. They only buttress his independence and obscure their own role in furthering his career. In this respect, Courbet could be seen as a free man, engaged in a form of labor that is not prescribed, mechanized, or alienated, a form of labor in which his own independent worldview refashions nature according to his own perception of reality: faithfully, but not robotically. And by depicting himself actively involved in the physical process of painting, he found a way—conveniently—to sideline, if not exclude, even those who "served" and "supported" him. He is active, they are passive; he produces something, they simply consume it. Not that Courbet was unappreciative of any support and assistance he received from his social and intellectual circle. Only that it was more flattering to his self-esteem and wider reputation if his goals were shown to have been achieved single-handedly, independently of any favors his connections generously bestowed. "I am alone facing…society," he proclaimed, "It is win or die."[199] Predictably, this attitude disillusioned his own champions who grew progressively irritated at how ungrateful, opportunistic, and self-serving Courbet occasionally proved. "As long as his paintings are successful," Champfleury complained, "Courbet has no need for me; the day he gets attacked by idiots, I will be all his."[200]

No less than the other bystanders, the young boy and nude (or, better yet, *naked*) model in *The Studio* (fig. 36) can also be construed as static markers, the two figures that, by virtue of their central location and close proximity to the artist, acquire the greatest importance after Courbet himself. In this respect, these two figures are reminders that one's prestige can be enhanced as much by association with one's social inferiors as with one's social superiors: namely, by disseminating the view that one is not arrogant and proud, and does not shun the society of the poor (psychologists call this "downward comparison," as when adults compete for the attention and affection of children). What is most conspicuous about these two humble figures, however, is that, despite their lack of learning and experience in the arts, they are portrayed as positively enchanted by the canvas before them. It is their very naïve and innocent vision, the painting seems to say, that allows simple folk—unlike hostile critics blinded by biased prejudice—to marvel at the "truth" of Courbet's creations. As in *The Desperate Man* or *The Man Mad with Fear*, an accusatory message is injected in the work; and as in *The Meeting*, the static markers *inside* are coaching the static markers *outside* the painting in the proper way to respond to the literal painting before them.

Relying on feminist theory's gender analyses in terms of oppositions between the bearer versus the object of "the look," the active versus the passive, Michael Fried argues that the female model in *The Painter's Studio* overturns the way women have been depicted under the West's patriarchal regime of representation. "By depicting the model," he writes, "as the bearer rather than merely the object of the look (standing behind

the seated painter she is unavailable to his gaze even while she is exposed to ours), the central group characterizes femininity as implicitly active after all."[201] But such a reading is too reductive. Relying exclusively on such inflexible, binary dichotomies—who is looking versus whom is looked upon—ignores how individual human figures might communicate meaning across a variety of images. Interpreting *The Painter's Studio* along socio-psychological lines, one might propose, conversely, that both the child and the woman, like the figure of Bruyas in *The Meeting*, are significant not in their own right, but insofar as they bolster Courbet's self-symbolizing agenda. Their inner lives and feelings are inconsequential; they are endowed with emotions and with "the look" only to sharpen the image the artist constructs *for himself*.

Women and children, after all, are frequently represented looking at paintings in Honoré Daumier's *Le public du Salon* of 1852, though the purpose is not to empower women and children, but enlist their reactions to poke fun at the works on display. In an especially humorous example *The Danger in Exposing to Children…* (fig. 37), a child, to the consternation of its parents, reacts violently to a given work of art. If it drives a child to tears, Daumier seems to say, the painting is genuinely worthy of censure because children do not react out of prejudice or bias, only to what is intrinsically repulsive. On this account, the child in *The Painter's Studio* is the mirror image of the one in *The Danger in Exposing to Children*; he instinctively responds to the "inherent beauty," while the one in the Daumier to the "inherent ugliness," of the work before him. (Intriguingly, the child in *The Painter's Studio* was not part of the original conception, only added later,[202] as the dogs and *piqueur* were in *The Quarry.*) There is no question, then, of undermining the West's patriarchal regime of representation, or any other power relationship for that matter; the only one wielding power here is Courbet himself.

37. Honoré Daumier, *The Danger in Exposing to Children…, Le Charivari,* Apr. 28, 1852.

Image Management and Contradiction

Champfleury's statement cited above—"As long as his paintings are successful, Courbet has no need for me; the day he gets attacked by idiots, I will be all his"—is worth revisiting, contradicting, as it does, Courbet's professed revulsion at bending to the demands of the audience. (Not surprisingly, the two experienced a falling out, Champfleury going so far as saying that Courbet "has gone astray. He has kept his finger too much on the pulse of public opinion. He wants to please."[203]) The statement also reveals the tensions any self-symbolizer inevitably experiences. Since symbolic self-completion is, for all intents and purposes, a performance, individuals may play so many roles that, no matter how positively they reflect on the performer's image, those roles will work at cross purposes. Even as Courbet sought to project the image of battling the world single-handedly, it must have been very gratifying when important men of letters came to his defense. Speaking on behalf of one's art is effective, yet the words of others are rhetorically more powerful because they appear less partial. Still, as much as Courbet benefited from this form of support, it contradicted the image of autonomy he fought so hard to present.

Courbet also wanted his art and personality to be seen as an integral whole; if one could be trusted, so could the other. Yet the mutability of his self-portraits undermined his credibility as much as his grandiose claims, self-serving behavior, and contradictory statements. When it came to the *Self-Portrait with a Pipe* (fig. 22), Clark remarked that "The critics could accept the self-portrait easily enough: what hurt, what puzzled them, was its relation to the other pictures, to the other allegiances they suggested."[204] Just as artists whose work changes too often lose legitimacy, so do individuals whose behavior is too unpredictable. Of course, as stated above, boxers cannot be expected to behave the same way inside versus outside the ring, and no person's conduct can remain identical irrespective of context or company. But the elasticity of our behavior has limits. The more roles one plays, and the more they depart from reality, the less persuasive they become. Undeterred, Courbet tested his limits to the breaking point; and among the least persuasive roles he played was that of the untrained and untutored artist. "To the world at large," Petra Chu observed, Courbet "played the naïf, the ignorant."[205] Stressing simplicity and artlessness was, admittedly, a seminal ingredient in his overall strategy, reinforcing the view that only by relinquishing formula and tradition could he transcribe empirical experience in an authentic and sincere manner. To that end, he described his working process as natural and instinctive—i.e., unencumbered by artificiality or convention.

Revealingly, Courbet latched onto this attitude as early as he began thinking seriously of art as a career. That he wanted to be an artist was troubling enough for his father, but that he refused to enroll in a conventional academy and insisted on teaching himself was beyond the pale.[206] When the catalogue of the 1850 Salon described him—wrongly—as a pupil of Auguste Hesse, Courbet penned a bitter rebuttal to *La Presse*, forcefully affirming: "I have had only myself as a teacher and my life's most constant effort has been devoted to the preservation of my independence."[207] Courbet even told Francis Wey, upon meeting him for the first time, that he painted "like the Good Lord."[208] The implication, of course, is that his art is pure and natural, untainted by manner and artifice.

In the same vein, he claimed to despise "retouching, and [being] proud of it."[209] Since retouching inevitably denotes calculation and revision, these two aspects of the working process contradict the myth of naturalness Courbet was carefully crafting, a myth the artist's champions reiterated in a surprisingly uncritical manner. According to Castagnary, for instance, Courbet's decision to forgo formal training was "proof of his clear-sightedness."[210] This way, Castagnary repackaged the artist's incapacity to submit to instruction into an index of his superior character and vision, a character and vision that would only suffer from external guidance. For Duret, since Courbet "devoted himself entirely to precise observation and the direct rendition of nature and of life," any kind of formal training was superfluous.[211] Unlike Corot, who added romantic details or imaginary figures to his landscapes, Courbet painted "directly

from nature, rendering forms and aspects sincerely, without pretended embellishment."[212] Again, unlike Corot, who would seek an ideal spot, and occasionally shifted positions before the motif, Courbet abhorred such fussiness: "Where I place myself is all the same to me; any location is as good as long as I have nature before my eyes."[213] He undertook, Duret insists, "to paint the landscape without modifying its real appearance. In proceeding this way, he was acting in the most natural way possible."[214]

Never mind that Courbet probably never completed a landscape painting outdoors in its entirety—as even *The Painter's Studio* attests—such anecdotes, by distinguishing his approach from Corot's, promoted Courbet's reputation for spontaneity and immediacy. It was not simply the political implications—Courbet's quip to Baudelaire that adopting a point of view is "bourgeois"[215]—but the epistemological ones: adopting a point of view is partial and therefore false; it violates the all encompassing spirit of nature. If you find yourself in Franche-Comté, Duret claims, you will look at the landscape and impulsively cry out: "Here is a Courbet!" If you approach art with preconceived ideas, you cannot appreciate the truthfulness of his work.[216] Max Buchon went even further; for him, Courbet "produced his works (so many of which are masterpieces) like an apple tree produces apples."[217]

Process

To reinforce this reading, Courbet flaunted his mode of execution, conveying the view that art should betray the physicality of its process and the muscular effort required to overcome any resistance offered by the medium. Anything pre-calculated and programmatic—now denigrated as artificial and inauthentic—was to be categorically rejected. On this point, Mary Morton wrote informatively of Courbet's wielding of the palette knife, conjuring details hitherto considered too delicate for such an instrument: "His completed pictures were often roughly finished, intentionally defiant of the polished *fini* characteristic of Academic paintings. The self-effacing elimination of all traces of the artist's labor was antithetical to Courbet's project."[218] The palette knife, Morton continues, was traditionally used to mix colors on the palette (hence its name), but Courbet employed it to apply pigment quickly and directly to the canvas itself.[219] Cézanne himself called him "A builder. A rough, wasteful plasterer. A grinder of tones. He built like a Roman mason."[220] Charlotte Eyerman even argued that, if pushed to its logical conclusions, Courbet's physical execution predicts the gestural paintings of American abstract expressionists such as Pollock, de Kooning, and Kline.[221] Clement Greenberg, for one, saw in Courbet an anticipation of the new American painting for which he became such a strong advocate: "we get a vivid impression of mass and volume from Courbet's art; yet he seems to have wanted to render the palpability of substance and texture even more."[222]

Though denigrated as brutal by some, Courbet's mode of execution also contributed to the image of spontaneity he sought to disseminate. As James Rubin put it, his "bold and broad palette-knife work, his massing of paint…are all marks of the artist's physical presence that declare the immediacy of his process in the making of the picture."[223] Along these lines, Courbet might be establishing a kind of iconography, not so much of style but of technique. In socio-psychological terms, the foregrounding of the process could also be construed as a form of performance. The more unrehearsed it appears, the more authentic and unique that performance will seem, and the more privileged the members of its audience will feel. They will think, in other words, they are not witnessing a practiced routine, but a one-of-a-kind presentation enacted for their benefit. The more successful the illusion of spontaneity proves, moreover, the more Courbet's claims to naturalness, to paint like God, will be taken at face value.

But this is an illusion from which we should be immediately disabused. As Charlotte Eyerman observed, sustained analysis "reveals how truly constructed, invented, and imagined [his landscape] paintings are."[224] The myth of naturalness is as much belied, as previously mentioned, by Courbet's astute study and copy of the old masters, as by his tendency, discovered when his works were perused under x-rays, to alter many of his compositions. X-rays, in fact, showed evidence of considerable retouching and even radical changes in numerous works.[225] Figures were taken out and replaced in *The Siesta at Masnières*, the *Peasants from Flagey*, *Returning from the Fair*, the *Portrait of Proudhon*, and, as we have already seen, *The Wounded Man*. *The Painter's Studio* also underwent notable alterations, insofar as figures unmentioned by Courbet in his correspondence were later added to the canvas.

This evidence patently contradicts the idea that Courbet painted "like God," naturally and instinctively, uncontaminated by thoughts and after-thoughts, judgments and counter-judgments. Dismayingly, this never discouraged Courbet's champions from repeating the same, tired clichés. Aware of how blatantly his proclivity to alter his compositions negated the idea of naturalness—an idea to which they were no less committed—they nonetheless contorted themselves into presenting both as consistent. Duret, for example, who never missed an opportunity to stress the immediacy of the painter's process, saw Courbet's revisions as a sign of his humility, of his honest recognition that he had gone wrong.[226] A valiant effort on Duret's part, to be sure, but how one can go wrong while depicting nature with as much fidelity as possible, he did not say.

Also meant to reinforce the myth of naturalness was Courbet's claim that art is unteachable (the flip side, perchance, of his claim to never having been taught). When a group of dissatisfied academy students asked him to open a studio, he replied: "I do not have, I cannot have, students. I, who believe that every artist must be his own master, I cannot imagine setting myself up as a teacher. I cannot teach my art, or the art of any school whatever, because I deny that art can be taught…I maintain that art is entirely individual and is, for each artist, simply the ability that issues from his own inspiration and his own studies of tradition."[227] In the end, he succumbed to the pressure, perhaps because he reasoned that the opportunity to inculcate students with his ideas might win more supporters to his side than would defect if he contradicted himself. In the end, the experiment proved unsuccessful, although whether that failure corroborates Courbet's suspicion that art cannot be taught or reveals the paucity of his pedagogical skills must remain an open question.

Still, the artist's admission that art cannot exist independently of "tradition" at a minimum concedes the importance of precedent, though it runs afoul of his other assertion that he painted like a demiurge (on what tradition would God rely to create the universe?). But even if the myth of naïveté cannot be taken at face value, its propagation by the artist and others should, at the very least, be taken seriously as one of the many forms of self-symbolization the artist practiced, forms that are not exclusively restricted to self-portraiture. As we have seen, even the alleged spontaneity of Courbet's technique was effectively enlisted to satisfy the self-symbolizing purpose of stressing the honesty of the artist's personality and authenticity of his artistic vision. It might also be worth mentioning, if only parenthetically, that this very myth proved immensely useful, as Linda Nochlin has argued, to Courbet's revisionist defenders bent on rehabilitating his reputation after his death. The assertion that Courbet was a naïf, in other words, made it easier for critics to focus on his art and obfuscate his political activities. With this rhetorical spin, it was child's play to downplay the artist's radical ideas on account of his complete ignorance of matters political, and, in the process, absolve him of any

responsibility for actions that, until then, impeded his canonization as one of France's greatest artists.[228]

Self-Portraiture and Diversity

But if Petra Chu was already cited above as saying: "To the world at large," Courbet "played the naïf, the ignorant," she also acknowledged that he "wanted his friends and acquaintances to think of him as an intellectual."[229] Courbet, Théophile Silvestre recalled, "long tried to prove to me that he had made profound studies in literature, history, and philosophy. I have found out, vexing him, that he does not know anything."[230] According to T. J. Clark, Courbet's inconsistency infuriated his critics: he "shifted identities from picture to picture, year to year. Was he peasant or Bohemian? Was there a reason for being both? […] Which picture *was* Courbet?"[231]

38. *The Bourgeois of the City Talking to a Wandering Jew*, early nineteenth century. Engraving, frontispiece to Champfleury's *Histoire de l'imagerie populaire* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1869).

The critics' frustration is comprehensible. Bruce Hood was quoted earlier as saying that, though our sense of self is an illusion, that illusion appears real *to us*. It therefore stands to reason that, persuaded of this reality, we also project it onto others, and assume, perhaps wrongly, that their "selves" are as real and stable as our own. We will assume, moreover, that these selves are honest or dishonest, reliable or unreliable, transparent or opaque. As Goffman claims, implicit in the mutual expectation to be treated appropriately by others is the assumption, shared among those concerned, that individuals are precisely who they say they are. But individuals who perform too many roles undercut confidence in their sincerity, and risk exposing their image-management and self-symbolization for what it is. If persons are not whom they claim to be, or, in Courbet's case, if the analogies between, say, artist and martyr, artist as dandy, artist as bohemian, are artificially concocted, then the self and the image projected will be revealed to have little, if anything, in common. This means that self-symbolization remains a precarious business. Symbolizers use symbols to enhance their standing and project the desired image, but using too many (especially contradictory) symbols, will undermine their effectiveness and the very goals that prompted self-symbolizing in the first place.

39. Gustave Courbet, *The Homecoming*, c. 1854. Oil on canvas, 81 x 64 cm, private collection.

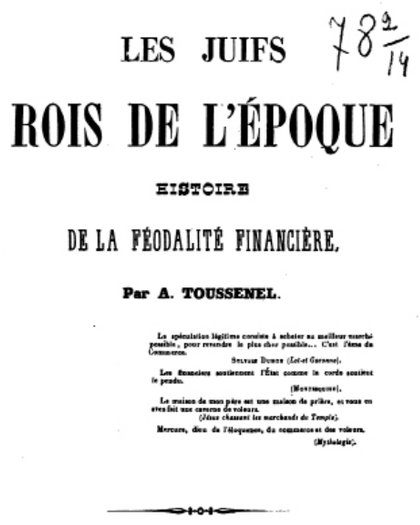
Since the ability to persuade is contingent on one's perceived integrity, then the desire to preserve it (if only in the minds of others) should temper excessive forms of self-symbolization, although where the line stands clearly varies from person to person. For Courbet, the net was obviously cast very wide, and, as a result, the range of his symbols often worked at cross-purposes. An intriguing example that has yet to receive critical attention in the literature pertains to *The Meeting* (fig. 5), which, as Linda Nochlin famously pointed out, is indebted to popular prints depicting the theme of the Wandering Jew (fig. 38). Although this interpretation has been widely accepted, it is worth investigating how *The Meeting* strikes a remarkably different note from *Homecoming* (fig. 39), where the artist, seen from the back, opens his arms, ostensibly, at the longed-for sighting of his native Franche-Comté. Courbet was very attached and proud to come from this part of France, whose scenery he often praised, and whose dialect he deliberately accentuated in conversation. Many of his closest friends, notably Urbain Cuénot, Max Buchon, Francis Wey, and Proudhon, were also Franc-Comtois, and a good number of his landscape paintings bear geographically specific titles particular to that region. In the *Self-Portrait with Black Dog* of 1842 (fig. 8), the rock formation in the immediate background encapsulates and frames Courbet in such a manner as both to protect and lend strength to his figure. Whether the piece actually depicts the artist in his native region cannot be corroborated, but no set of associations, with the exception of those conveyed in *Homecoming*, would be more emblematic of Courbet's feeling toward Franche-Comté.

In this context, the tensions between *The Meeting* and *Homecoming* emerge in sharper relief. In *The Meeting*, the reference to the Wandering Jew connotes the artist's refusal to allow material ties or geographical roots to restrict his independence (one is reminded of Proudhon's dictum that property is theft,[232] or Courbet own pronouncement to Francis Wey: "I have just embarked on the great wandering and independent life of the bohemian"[233]). The artist sought to contrast himself to the aristocracy and foreground his solidarity with the working class: "He himself took pride in being provincial and plebeian: his rustic manners, his large appetite, his hearty handshake, his accentuated *patois*, his pride in his physical strength, and even his technique of painting with his hands."[234]

But if Courbet conveyed his independence by depicting himself as a Wandering Jew, this very same independence functions as a reminder that Jews are aliens, not natives of the nations or cultures into which they moved. Courbet, who relished his position as outsider, may have used the Wandering Jew to reinforce his image of a painter beholden to no one, not even to a kind and generous patron such as Bruyas. Still, the associations attached to Jews were often negative, and used, in much of Europe, to stress their foreign character. Even if the theme of the Wandering Jew was experiencing a revival at the time, Jews frequently served as scapegoats when attention needed to be deflected from national calamities or chauvinists

galvanized to support the powers that be. The very origin of the tale of the Wandering Jew, after all, stems from the legend that Jews were condemned to wander the earth because of their refusal to accept Christ as the Messiah. It is difficult to divine Courbet's own position on these issues, but his description of the very first figure at the extreme left of *The Painter's Studio* in his letter to Champfleury—"a Jew…holding a casket reverently on his right arm, covering it with his left hand, and seemed to be saying 'I've got the best of it'"[235]—suggests that he was not untouched by anti-Semitic sentiment. In her highly original reading of *The Painter's Studio*, moreover, Hélène Toussaint mentions that Courbet was a friend of Alphonse Toussenel, a Fourierist who wrote a violently anti-Semitic pamphlet called *The Jews, Kings of the Times* (*Les Juifs, rois de l'époque*, fig. 40), and notes the profound irony in Courbet's associating Jews with the love of money while ranking his banker friends Bruyas and Mosselman "among the elect on the other side of the picture."[236]

All of which calls Courbet's identification with the Wandering Jew into serious question. This is not to discount *The Meeting*'s debt to the popular print of that theme, or to deny the artist's interest in depicting himself as a bohemian whose talents eclipse the financial power of the upper classes ("Fortune Bowing to Genius," as it was put at the time[237]). Only that Courbet's identification with this specific ethnic group needs serious reconsideration, especially since *Homecoming* strikes such a different note. Here, the artist may be a wanderer, but that wanderer—unlike what was often said of Jews—*has a home*, a home to which he belongs, as much as the hills and the trees, in an almost autochthonous way. By opening his arms—in recognition of the landscape around him, and almost in expectation of having it recognize him in turn—the figure advertises the intimacy of his connection to his native land. When Linda Nochlin described Courbet as taking "pride in being provincial and plebeian: his rustic manners…his accentuated *patois*," these connotations were not simply meant to be generically proletarian, although they were that too; these were meant to be specifically regional, specifically Franc-Comtois. In that case, nothing could be further from the pejorative connotations attached to the figure of the Wandering Jew (fig. 41).


LES JUIFS 78 2/14

ROIS DE L'ÉPOQUE

HISTOIRE

DE LA FÉODALITÉ FINANCIÈRE,

Par A. TOUSSENEL.

40. Alphonse Toussenel, *Les Juifs, rois de l'époque* (Paris: Librairie de l'École sociétaire, 1845).

41. Cham, illustration of Wandering Jew, in Charles Philipon and Louis Huart, *Parodie du Juif errant* (Paris: Aubert, 1844), 33.

The different constituencies for which Courbet was painting may also explain the radical discrepancies between *The Meeting* and *Homecoming*. Clark argues that Courbet's primary audience was the Salon, where he could exploit his exceptional position as outsider, a status reflected in *The Meeting*. For Clark, "The advantage, in one word, was distance—detachment from the stifling, chaotic agreement which prevailed among the members of the Parisian avant-garde; openness to the ideas and experience which were profoundly alien to that world and its coteries. To be in Paris but not of it: that was what Courbet wanted."[238] Clark's reading is not without force. Yet Courbet might have thought of his local compatriots as well, and painted *Homecoming* to celebrate his origins and maintain *their* allegiance. In a wider sense, the different constituencies for which Courbet envisioned himself painting, whether imagined or real, may explain the range of his self-portraits and the different purposes he wanted them to serve. On this account, their diversity, though initially confusing, is actually perfectly logical, reflecting the artist's near-inexhaustible tendency to image-manage and self-symbolize, to recalibrate himself from martyr to master, vulnerable to self-confident, bourgeois to working class, Wandering Jew to native Franc-Comtois.

Self-Portraiture and Cognitive Dissonance

Courbet, of course, was not the first or only artist to self-symbolize. Dürer, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt, to mention only three of the most famous precedents, also stretched the self-symbolizing range of their self-portraits. And Courbet's mutability even anticipates that of another would-be savage, Paul Gauguin, who was no less of a *poseur*. According to Henry Lemasson, "At home [Gauguin] invariably dressed in native fashion, wearing a cotton tunic and a loin-cloth…and always barefooted. But when visiting Papeete he wore European clothes: a high-collared jacket and white, or more often blue, linen trousers of Vichy fabric, white canvas shoes, and a broad-brimmed hat of plaited pandanus leaves."[239]

Gauguin probably also sought the flexibility to project either the image of a savage or a civilized European, depending on which was most advantageous at the moment. But that flexibility compelled him, as it did Courbet, to employ mixed signals, the wide range of which raises another ever-pressing question about the self and its multiple incarnations. If image-management and self-symbolization are common modes of behavior, and if these modes of behavior generate such different forms of conduct, do these (often contradictory) forms actually comprise the real self, or do they simply reveal invented, fictive selves? And which did Courbet represent in his self-portraits?

At the outset of this essay, Ségolène Le Men was cited as saying that Courbet deliberately implanted "contradictory readings and fables in the structure of his works,"[240] and Petra Chu that Courbet's self-portraits "form a visual, partly fictional, autobiography."[241] The implication is that Courbet did not visualize his real self in his art, as much as invented a number of "imaginary" selves. In light of the above discussion, these

statements seem persuasive enough. But does Wicklund and Gollwitzer's theory of symbolic self-completion, not to mention Bruce Hood's more radical claim that the self is nothing but an illusion, now turn Le Men and Chu's arguments about Courbet's self-portraiture being performative and contrived (as well as the basic assumptions under which this essay has been operating) on its head? After all, if the multiple self *is* the real self, would Wicklund and Gollwitzer's theory not contradict any characterization of Courbet's self-portraiture as fictive and artificial?

Not at all. Since symbols can easily be substituted for one another, so long as they are effective for the specific purpose of symbolic self-completion, their conformity to reality is not at issue. Since "there is no single, definitive indicator of having attained the self-defining goal," Wicklund and Gollwitzer explain, "…numerous symbols of possessing the self-defining quality exist, enabling the person to pursue one in lieu of the other."[242] "The self-completion conception," they submit, "is not concerned whether a certain claim about the self is 'true' or 'untrue.' The self-symbolizing person is not in the dilemma of adjusting the self-description…relative to some single, definitive criterion that defines reality. Rather, the condition striven for is delineated for the person by a multiplicity of mutually-substitutable symbols, and it therefore becomes a moot question to concern oneself with whether the self-report is disparate or not from any one of these. The crucial point in dealing with self-descriptions is whether the self-description gains a social reality, for it is the acknowledgement from others that builds the self-definition."[243]

What *is* at issue is that the broader community accepts the artist as having successfully attained the status communicated in any image. Even if the symbols of the dandy and the madman, the worker and the lover, the Wandering Jew and the native Franc-Comtois are contradictory, Courbet (and all artists who portrayed themselves in multiple guises) relied on the audience's foreknowledge of these different types to infer the appropriate message. Since the message cannot be "verified" or "corroborated" in any definitive sense, the veracity of the images is basically irrelevant. What is relevant is their effectiveness—or so the self-symbolizer reasons. The self-symbolizer adapts the role to the situation, confident in the role's appropriateness to the context, perhaps oblivious to the suspicions that arise if the roles differ too drastically from one another. It therefore follows that neither the inconsistency nor illegitimacy of the symbols impedes self-definitional activity. Unlike a goal, which, once attained, suspends all attempts to meet it, a self-definition is never fully reachable, and can instigate a potentially self-perpetuating, interminable self-symbolizing process.

This condition easily applies to Courbet. Despite considerable success in later years, he kept recalling his early setbacks, and behaved as if conspiracies were continuously hatched against him. No less than feelings of incompleteness, negative emotions can fester for considerable lengths of time; as a result, it is difficult to identify a specific point at which the symbols enlisted can be said to have fulfilled their compensatory purpose. It is far more likely that they will be consistently repeated—or, as the case may be, continually varied—to reinforce the self-definition, the only thing in whose stability and permanence the self-symbolizer is fully invested, regardless of context, and despite the paradoxical nature of the symbols employed. Expecting consistency among the plurality of images marshaled for self-completion is unrealistic; as Wicklund and Gollwitzer posit, crafting a flattering self-image easily trumps consistency.

As a result, self-symbolizers easily tolerate what Leon Festinger called "cognitive dissonance." First codified in 1957, the concept postulates that any two ideas (or cognitions) can enter in a relationship of consonance or dissonance. According to Festinger, dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable and individuals instinctively strive to temper the degree of resulting discomfort.[244] In its first incarnation, the concept of cognitive dissonance was largely unrelated to the idea of the self-concept; and Wicklund and Gollwitzer even profess as much, detecting little, if any, overlap between their ideas and Festinger's.[245] Even so, as the theory of cognitive dissonance underwent subtle refinements, psychologists have managed to tie the two notions more intimately. These ties are directly pertinent to the issues at hand, and help explain some of the contradictory aspects of Courbet's visual rhetoric.

Adjusting Festinger's theory, Joel Cooper argues that it is not inconsistency per se that causes the arousal of dissonance, "but rather the result of that inconsistency, the unwanted consequence."[246] This adjustment suggests that as long as we obtain the results we desire, we can tolerate a certain degree of incongruity. On this account, it would not be altogether unwarranted to read Courbet's contradictory symbols in analogous terms. Assuming that multiple symbols can reinforce efforts at symbolic self-completion, then *contradictory* symbols may also be mobilized for the same purpose. In essence, this proposition is simply tantamount to turning Cooper's argument around: if it is not inconsistency itself but its adverse effects that arouse dissonance, then dissonance might be unaffected by inconsistency, so long, of course, as the sought-after salutary effects are realized. Theoretically, those effects might even compensate for any potential dissonance triggered by inconsistency, all the more because, in Elliot Aronson's words, human beings "engage in all kinds of cognitive gymnastics aimed at justifying their own behavior."[247]

Courbet Believer or Courbet Pretender?

In the end, whether individuals engaging in such cognitive gymnastics even recognize the discrepancies among the symbols they employ, or between the symbols and reality, is an intriguing, thorny, and ultimately unanswerable question—in Courbet's case, or in that of any other artist. First, we would need to speculate about another person's state of mind, and, second, the answer would most likely vary from individual to individual, and may even vary at different points in a single individual's lifetime. Courbet may very well have been aware of the contradictory aspects of his own behavior. "Behind the laughing mask that you are familiar with," he wrote to Bruyas, "I hide, deep down, grief, bitterness, and a sorrow that clings to the heart like a vampire."[248] But whether he realized how far he had pushed these contradictions *in his self-representations* is anyone's guess. As Goffman has it, the representation of an activity will differ from the activity itself and "therefore inevitably misrepresent it."[249] It is a given, therefore, that Courbet's self-portraits differ from, and inevitably misrepresent, his self. The crucial question remains: While fully engaged in symbolic self-completion, how aware was he of the discrepancies between his own images and reality, or, conversely, was he taken in by, and completely oblivious to, his own stratagem?

The question is impossible to answer because many psychologists argue that human beings have surprisingly little cognitive access into, or critical distance from, their own mental processes.[250] As a result, they may be the least qualified to evaluate their own behavior. But even if human beings cannot always understand their own motivations, many deliberately disguise their own views in order to secure a social or political advantage. Courbet could easily have done the same. According to Théophile Silvestre, Courbet "lies often." Yet the situation is not so simple. If Courbet lies often, Silvestre continues, he does so "innocently, and ends up by persuading himself that he speaks the truth on all counts, especially when he recounted, in order to give more local color to his story, the conversation he had in England after the February Revolution, with Hogarth, the painter of mores, who died in 1764!"[251]

This anecdote is colorful, but it cannot reveal conclusively whether Courbet actually convinced himself of having had discussions with Hogarth, or whether he sincerely believed there were conspiracies against him, or whether he *deliberately* embellished his victimization, assuming various guises in full cognizance of their discrepancy from reality. On this score, social psychology, unfortunately, provides little assistance. At one extreme, Goffman concedes, "one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality." At the other, "we find that the performer may not be taken in at all by his own routine…since no one is in quite as good an observational position to see through the act as the person who puts it on."[252] To complicate the issue further, the persuasiveness of the performance is by no means contingent on the performer's faith in its legitimacy. "Believers and pretenders," as the philosopher M. R. Haight so correctly observed, "may look exactly alike."[253]

Since another person's cognitive beliefs are beyond our powers to verify, the question as to whether Courbet believed in his own performance cannot be conclusively answered. As already indicated, this essay will not resolve the questions pertaining to the ontological status of the self; and Courbet's self-symbolic strategy was, admittedly, carefully crafted to deflect his audience's attention (and, ultimately, distract it) from even asking such questions; yet, intriguingly, the efforts the artist undertook to persuade others of the legitimacy of the self-image he was projecting were, though not always effective, at least emblematic of an acknowledged proclivity of the self recognized in present-day social psychology. Specifically, that, irrespective of whether we actually possess them or not, we desperately want to enhance our self-image by convincing those around us that we possess certain qualities and attributes. In that sense, perhaps Courbet came closer to the reality of human behavior than even he realized.

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1 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 54-2/122.

2 Ibid., 54-7/128–29.

3 Ségolène Le Men, *Courbet* (New York: Abbeville, 2008), 17.

4 Courbet, letter to an unknown recipient, cited in Gerstle Mack, *Gustave Courbet* (New York: Da Capo, 1951), 53. In her *Letters of Gustave Courbet,* Chu translates *la vraie vérité* as "the honest truth," which might be better English, but does not transcribe the redundancy of the original French (51-3/103).

5 Michel Hilaire, "*Self-Portrait with Pipe*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Dominique de Font-Réaulx et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 116.

6 Laurence des Cars, "Inventing Courbet: The Early Self-Portraits," in ibid., 91.

7 Ibid., 93.

8 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18.

9 See, for example, Meyer Schapiro, "Courbet and Popular Imagery: An Essay on Realism and Naïveté," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4, nos. 3–4 (Apr. 1941–Jul. 1942): 166ff., and Linda Nochlin's "Innovation and Tradition in Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*," and "Gustave Courbet's *Meeting*: A Portrait of the Artist as a Wandering Jew," both reprinted in her *Courbet* (London: Phaidon, 2007), 19ff.

10 Courbet cited in the *Précurseur d'Anvers*, Aug. 22, 1861; see Pierre Courthion, *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1948–50), 1:160.

11 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 19.

12 Théodore Duret, *Courbet* (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1928), 7.

13 Ibid., 14.

14 Nochlin, *Courbet*, 6.

15 Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 96.

16 See Jean-Luc Mayaud, *Courbet: "L'enterrement à Ornans"; Un tombeau pour la république* (Paris: La boutique de l'histoire, 1999), 31.

17 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 71-12/413.

18 Théophile Gautier, *La Presse*, Feb. 15, 1851, reprinted in *Courbet, le Watteau du laid* (Paris: Séguier, 2000), 28.

19 Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 96.

20 George Boas, "Courbet and His Critics," in *Courbet in Perspective*, ed. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977), 12.

21 Ascertaining exactly how near or far an individual work stands from empirical experience is also a problematic proposition, if only because the yardstick against which such judgments are made may shift from chronological period to chronological period, culture to culture, individual to individual.

22 Alan Bowness, "Introduction," in *Gustave Courbet, 1819–1877*, ed. Alan Bowness et al., exh. cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 18.

23 Champfleury, cited in Benedict Nicolson, *Courbet: "The Studio of the Painter"* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 66.

24 See also Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 103.

25 T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 119.
26 Nochlin, *Courbet*, 45.
27 See Philippe Bordes et al., eds., *Courbet à Montpellier*, exh. cat. (Montpellier: Musée Fabre, 1985), 54.
28 Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 96.
29 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 68-23/345; Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 103.
30 Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 104.
31 Ibid.
32 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-2/122.
33 Gustave Courbet, "Realist Manifesto," 7 (in this volume, italics added).
34 Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants* (Paris: E. Blanchard, 1856), 243.
35 Champfleury, "De la réalité dans l'art," *Le Réalisme* (May 1854): 92–93.
36 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 62-1/204.
37 Le Men, *Courbet*, 80.
38 Ibid., 18.
39 Ibid., 17.
40 Discussion following a symposium on the social history of art in honor of Robert Herbert's retirement from Mount Holyoke College, 1997.
41 Bruce Hood, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 294.
42 Mark R. Leary, *Self-Presentation: Impression Management and Interpersonal Behavior* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 158.
43 See Constantine Sedikides and Lowell Gaertner, "A Homecoming to the Individual Self," in *Individual Self, Relational Self, Collective Self,* ed. Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer (Ann Arbor: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 7–23.
44 See Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer, "Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self: Partners, Opponents, or Strangers?," in *Individual Self,* 1–4.
45 See Jonathon D. Brown, *The Self* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1998), 29ff.
46 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 3.
47 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959), 15.
48 Clark, *Image of the People*, 15.
49 Leary, *Self-Presentation*, 2.
50 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 45-3/53.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 48-41/76.
53 Leary, *Self-Presentation*, 51.
54 "Biographie de Courbet par lui-même," in *Courbet*, Courthion, 2:28.
55 See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 14ff; Duret, *Courbet*, 7; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 14ff.
56 Courbet, letter to his family, Feb. 21, 1844, cited in Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 35. Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 44-1/45, translates the sentence as: "If I am not accepted, I am in trouble."
57 Some scholars doubt the veracity of the date and ascribe the painting to 1844. See Hélène Toussaint, "*Self portrait entitled Courbet with a black dog*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 83.
58 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France,* 2.
59 See Clark, *Image of the People*, 122.
60 Leary, *Self-Presentation*, 52.
61 Robert Wicklund and Peter Gollwitzer, *Symbolic Self-Completion* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982), x.
62 Cited in Clark, *Image of the People*, 23.
63 Ibid.
64 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 3.
65 Des Cars, "Inventing Courbet," 104.
66 Clark, *Image of the People*, 15.
67 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 31.
68 Leary, *Self-Presentation*, 71.
69 Clark, *Image of the People*, 15.
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71 Émile Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, trans. D. F. Pocock (London: Cohen and West, 1953), 37.
72 Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, 159.
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75 Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, 13.
76 See Brown, *The Self*, 21–22.
77 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 9.
78 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 26.
79 Ibid., 28.
80 Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 53.
81 Le Men, *Courbet*, 120.
82 Jules-Antoine Castagnary, "A Biography of Courbet," in *Courbet in Perspective*, ed. Chu, 12.
83 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 63-17/230–31.
84 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 52.
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87 Laurence des Cars, "*The Wounded Man*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 113.
88 Charles Léger, *Courbet selon les caricatures et les images* (Paris: Rosenberg, 1920), 30, 32, 35, 38, 40.
89 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 68-23/345; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 228.
90 Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 61, 79.
91 Ibid., 79.
92 Ibid., 180.
93 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale* (Paris: Garnier, 1865), 280.
94 See Youssef Ishaghpour, *Courbet: "Le portrait de l'artiste dans son atelier"* (Paris: Circé, 2011), 110.
95 Edmond About, *Salon de 1866* (Paris: Hachette, 1867), 45.
96 Mathieu, cited in Michel Ragon, *Gustave Courbet, peintre de la liberté* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 208.
97 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 36.
98 See Ragon, *Gustave Courbet, peintre de la liberté,* 74.
99 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 66-7/276; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 207.
100 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 70-19/378.
101 Ibid., 70-21/382–83; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 241.
102 Marie-Thérèse de Forges, "Biography," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 35
103 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 61-15/202.
104 Ibid., 61-11/198.
105 Ibid., 69-8/353; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 230–31.
106 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 50-4/99.
107 Ibid., 46-5/62; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 40.
108 Ibid., 47-2/70; 41.
109 Ibid., 55-5/141; 135.

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111 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 64-18/249; see also Le Men, *Courbet*, 282.
112 Le Men, *Courbet*, 356.
113 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 71-32; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 286.
114 See Frédérique Desbuissons, "Le citoyen Courbet," in *Courbet et la Commune,* ed. Laurence des Cars, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000), 16; see also Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 73-5/475.
115 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 71-38/441; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 288.
116 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 290.
117 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 71-39/443; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 290.
118 Le Men, *Courbet*, 356.
119 See Hélène Toussaint, "*The Trout*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 191.
120 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 71-18/421; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 274.
121 Le Men, *Courbet*, 363.
122 Louise Lacroix, *Les écharpes rouges: Souvenirs de la Commune* (Paris: Laporte, 1872), 8.
123 See Fabrice Masanès, "Les 'mémoires' d'un communard," in des Cars, *Courbet et la Commune*, 57–72.
124 See "The De-Politicization of Gustave Courbet: Transformation and Rehabilitation under the Third Republic," in Nochlin, *Courbet*, 116ff.
125 *Lettres inédites de Champfleury*, cited in Forges, "Biography," 33.
126 Hélène Toussaint, "*Self-portrait at Sainte-Pélagie*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 193.
127 See, for example, Clark, *Image of the People*, 47ff.
128 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 48-4/81; see also Forges, "Biography," 33.
129 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 72-2/449.
130 Ibid., 72-13/462. See also Laurence des Cars, "Le silence de la peinture," in *Courbet et la Commune*, 28–40.
131 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 73-21/490.
132 Ibid., 73-27/496.
133 A not altogether different conclusion was drawn by Fabrice Masanès in "Les 'mémoires' d'un communard," 69.
134 Dianne M. Tice, "Self-Concept Change and Self-Presentation: The Looking Glass Self is also a Magnifying Glass," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 1992): 435–51.
135 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 58-3/162.
136 Le Men, *Courbet*, 120.
137 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 52-53/106.
138 Courbet cited in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 116.
139 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 57-4/157.
140 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 16.
141 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 70-9/369; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 235–36.
142 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-2/122.
143 Marie-Thérèse de Forges, *Autoportraits de Courbet* (Paris: Éditions des musées nationaux, 1973), 4, 9.
144 Alfred Bruyas, *Explication des ouvrages de peintures du cabinet de M. Alfred Bruyas* (Paris: Plon, 1854), 32.
145 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "The Moral of the *Funeral at Ornans*," in *Courbet in Perspective*, ed. Chu, 76.
146 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 46-5/62.
147 Ibid., 63-8/220; see also Forges, "Biography," 37.
148 Théophile Thoré, *Salons de W. Bürger, 1861 à 1868*, vol. 2 (Paris: Veuve Jules Renouard, 1870), 277.
149 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 63-9/221; see also Forges, "Biography," 38.
150 Forges, "Biography," 38.
151 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or,* vol. 2. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 146.
152 Clark, *Image of the People*, 75.
153 Champfleury, *Souvenirs et portraits de jeunesse* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1872), cited in Le Men, *Courbet*, 135.
154 See Clark, *Image of the People*, 17.
155 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, 244.
156 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 41-1/37.
157 Even the dog seems to look down on the public, an impression made more emphatic by the low vantage point from which the audience peruses the scene—although that might be due, as one scholar speculates, to the painting having been originally intended to be placed over a door. Toussaint, "*Self portrait entitled Courbet with a black dog*," 84.
158 See Chu, "Introduction," in *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 4.
159 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-2/122.
160 Bowness, "Introduction," 11.
161 See James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
162 Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 261.
163 Steward Edwards, ed., *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Frazer (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 61.
164 Hélène Toussaint, "*The seaside at Palavas*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 113.
165 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 237.
166 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 50-4/98–99; see also Clark, *Image of the People*, 9.
167 Castagnary, "A Biography of Courbet," 6.
168 Duret, *Courbet*, 3.
169 See Ragon, *Gustave Courbet, peintre de la liberté*, 7.
170 Hélène Toussaint, "*Huntsmen training hounds near Ornans*," 173–74 and "The Dossier on *The Studio* by Courbet," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 257.
171 Le Men, *Courbet*, 25.
172 Hoping to sustain his argument about the anti-theatrical character of Courbet's enterprise, Michael Fried sees the figures in *The Quarry* as absorbed in their respective activities—i.e., absorption as the antipode of theatricality. Fried thus claims "an analogy between the respective conditions of hunter and roe deer, as if the immersion in reverie of the one and the lifeless state of the other could equally be characterized as images of absorption. To this I want to add that the *piqueur* [the individual playing the horn] too appears deeply absorbed in what he is doing—I have implied as much by describing him as putting his whole being into his task—and that, as in the case of the hunter, a shadowing of his features not only confirms our sense of his engrossment and therefore of his obliviousness to his surroundings but also hints at a sinking into or merger with those surroundings." *The Quarry*, Fried continues, thus evokes "an absorptive continuum, a single psychological mood or condition coextensive with the painting and seeming almost to materialize, to find concrete expression, in the figures of hunter, roe deer, and *piqueur*" (Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 180–81). At this point, the reader will likely have anticipated that the interpretation presented here will be quite different. The point of *The Quarry*, arguably, is not to engage an "absorptive continuum," but to advertise Courbet's prowess as a hunter.
173 See Bruce K. MacDonald, "*The Quarry* by Gustave Courbet," *Bulletin: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 67, no. 348 (1969): 52–71.
174 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 50-1/92.
175 Ibid., 59-2/166; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 151–52. In 1861, he wrote to Wey about *Fighting Stags*: "I participated in the German hunts at Frankfurt for six months—an entire winter—till I killed a stag that served [as a

model] for this painting. […] He took my no. 14 bullet below the shoulder (it passed through his lungs and heart), and six buckshot pellets…which did not keep him from going one hundred and fifty meters before he collapsed. That gives you an idea of his power." Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 61-6/192–93; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 151.

176 Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 179.

177 I would like to thank my colleague, Prof. Jeffery Howe, for bringing these images to my attention.

178 Marcel Pagnol, *La gloire de mon père* (Monte Carlo: Pastorelly, 1958), 290.

179 Duret, *Courbet,* 56.

180 Fabrice Masanès, *Courbet* (Cologne: Taschen, 2006), 8.

181 Le Men, *Courbet*, 362.

182 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, 246.

183 Ibid., 253.

184 Ishaghpour, *Courbet: "Le portrait de l'artiste,"* 76.

185 Wicklund and Gollwitzer, *Symbolic Self-Completion*, 36.

186 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants,* 243.

187 Duret, *Courbet*, 3.

188 See Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 89, 110.

189 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 53-6/116.

190 Edmond About, *Voyage à travers l'Exposition des Beaux-Arts (peinture et sculpture)* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1855), 205.

191 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 3.

192 Klaus Herding, "*The Meeting; or, Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*," in *Courbet: A Dream of Modern Art*, ed. Klaus Herding and Max Hollein, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 168.

193 Ibid., 168–69.

194 See Brown, *The Self*, 75.

195 Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision*, 14.

196 Ibid., 18.

197 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-8/131.

198 For an extensive discussion of Courbet and the issue of manual labor, see Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision.*

199 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 53-6/115; see also Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 108.

200 Jules Troubat, *Une amitié à la d'Arthez: Champfleury, Courbet, Max Buchon; Suivi d'une conférence sur Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Duc, 1900), 99.

201 Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, 192.

202 Lola Faillant-Dumas, "Étude radiographique au Laboratoire de recherche des musées de France," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 275–77.

203 Cited in Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906), 143.

204 Clark, *Image of the People*, 34.

205 Chu, "Introduction," in *Courbet in Perspective*, 3.

206 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 28.

207 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 51-1/102.

208 Le Men, *Courbet*, 87, 97.

209 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 50-3/97.

210 Castagnary, "A Biography of Courbet," 11.

211 Duret, *Courbet,* 30.

212 Ibid.*,* 37.

213 Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, 68.

214 Duret, *Courbet,* 38.

215 Ishaghpour, *Courbet: "Le portrait de l'artiste,"* 88.

216 Duret, *Courbet,* 39.

217 Max Buchon, *Noëls et chants populaires de la Franche-Comté* (Salins: Billet et Duvernois, 1863), 3.

218 Mary Morton, "To Create a Living Art: Rethinking Courbet's Landscape Painting," in *Courbet and the Modern Landscape*, ed. Mary Morton and Charlotte Eyerman, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 7.

219 Ibid.

220 Michael Doran, *Conversations avec Cézanne* (Paris: Macula, 1978), 142.

221 Charlotte Eyerman, "Courbet's Legacy in the Twentieth Century," in *Courbet and the Modern Landscape*, Morton and Eyerman, 20–37.

222 Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition by Gustave Courbet," *The Nation* 8 (Jan. 1949), reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 2: Arrogant Purpose, 1945–1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 277.

223 Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision*, 257.

224 Eyerman, "Courbet's Legacy," 25.

225 See, for example, Suzy Delbourgo and Lola Faillant-Dumas, "Étude du Laboratoire de recherche des musées de France," in *Autoportraits de Courbet*, Forges, 17–22, and Bruno Mottin, "A Complex Genesis: Courbet in the Laboratory," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 70–80.

226 Duret, *Courbet,* 73.

227 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 61-16/203.

228 Nochlin, "The De-Politicization of Gustave Courbet," 116ff.

229 Chu, "Introduction," in *Courbet in Perspective*, 3.

230 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, 244.

231 Clark, *Image of the People*, 34.

232 Hélène Toussaint, "*Portrait of P. J. Proudhon, 1853*," in *Gustave Courbet,* ed. Bowness et al., 154.

233 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 50-4/98–99; see also Clark, *Image of the People*, 9.

234 Nochlin, *Courbet*, 45.

235 Courbet, 1854 letter to Champfleury, cited in "Dossier on *The Studio*," Toussaint, 254.

236 Ibid., 255.

237 Hélène Toussaint, "*The meeting or 'Good day Monsieur Courbet*,*"* in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Bowness et al., 112.

238 Clark, *Image of the People*, 31.

239 See Bengt Danielsson, *Gauguin in the South Seas* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 207.

240 Le Men, *Courbet*, 18.

241 Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France*, 19.

242 Wicklund and Gollwitzer, *Symbolic Self-Completion,* 8.

243 Ibid., 116.

244 Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

245 Wicklund and Gollwitzer, *Symbolic Self-Completion*, 219–20.

246 Joel Cooper, "Unwanted Consequences and the Self: In Search of the Motivation for Dissonance Reduction," in *Cognitive Dissonance*, ed. Harmon-Jones and Mills, 151.

247 Aronson, "Dissonance, Hypocrisy, and the Self-Concept," 108.

248 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-7/128–29.

249 Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, 65.

250 Richard E. Nisbett and Timothy DeCamp Wilson, "Telling More than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes," *Psychological Review* 84, no. 3 (May 1977): 231–59.

251 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, 245.

252 Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, 17.

253 Mary Rowland Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 118.

Courbet's Quarry: Paintings of the Hunt

Katherine Nahum

When Gustave Courbet described himself to the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, the superintendent of museums, as "the most arrogant man in France" he was not kidding.[1] One aspect of Courbet's arrogance was his avid promotion of his work. Another was his feeling of freedom to do whatever he wished, to break the rules. He did so in painting by making images that ignored the received ideas of the French Academy, and in hunting by killing game and poaching in the wrong season—the two activities were allied. He wrote to his friend Francis Wey:

> After having begun all those fine things [landscape paintings], I went hunting and beat our mountains for game, up-hill and down dale, in waist-deep snow. We killed quite a few hare and also three wolves. I would have sent you a hare but it isn't worth the trouble, and you wouldn't know what to do with a wolf. We had quite a few hunters' dinners, which are quite pleasant, and I was arrested by the police, which provided me with an opportunity to spend three days in Besançon. My fine cost me one hundred francs [and] lost time but I sold a painting for four hundred francs to M. De St. Jean.[2]

"It [was] the fault of the police" he told his patron Alfred Bruyas. Having completed the landscapes:

> My head was spinning, and I needed to get some exercise. The snow was splendid but happened to be off limits [for hunters]…I had to go to Besançon to hear myself sentenced and to avoid jail. Hurrah for liberty![3]

1. Gustave Courbet, *The Quarry* (*La Curée*), 1856–57. Oil on canvas, 210 x 180 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Courbet's arrogance, humor, resourcefulness, breaking of rules, and his interpretation of events so that he gains—he earned three hundred francs—are in dramatic display. In both letters painting, hunting, and freedom form Courbet's distinctive physical and moral engagement with the world.

Courbet's well-educated and prospering family solidly supported its first-born son. The men saw him as the realization of their dreams and ambitions; his mother and younger sisters joined in this veritable love-cult. A fragmented biography by the critic Jules Castagnary notes that the artist was "raised in Ornans by a grandfather who was mad about him and by a grandmother who always put off punishment to the next day. 'Gustave' did not know what discipline was [and] his youth passed with the games of the village and the liberty of the fields."[4] Poet, friend, and schoolmate Max Buchon described that Courbet stammered,[5] and was "a perfect model of non-discipline. Alert and vigorous, he was the first in all physical games," demonstrating that his physical and material grasp of the world was there at the beginning. Buchon made a distinction: "He did not perform in the same way in Latin and Greek."[6]

Critics found fertile ground in Courbet's flouting the rules, in his character and behavior that had grown from these circumstances of his life in Franche-Comté, and had become expressed in the specific, realist aspects of his art. Writers used Courbet to promote their wishes and articulate their fears about the course of French art and about their own place in it. In turn, the artist was quick to mouth their ideas to garner support.[7] To do so was merely the freewheeling élan that he had always pursued; the artist remained true to himself. Courbet seemed more than comfortable with his own self-assessment and repeated it, slightly modified, to Théophile Silvestre: "above all, I do what I have to do. I'm accused of vanity. I am, indeed, the most free and the most arrogant man on earth."[8]

The interactivity among critics and the artist became a self-perpetuating system that we can see realized in Courbet's *The Quarry* (fig. 1) the first of more than eighty hunting scenes that have little to do with the Boston painting.[9] In broad terms *The Quarry* distills the artist's relation to his painting and the world. More specifically, the artist and his painting—that is, his quarry, the critical response to it, and the dissemination of his fame—are embodied in the hunting scene as an emblem of that relationship. *The Quarry* captures the artist's ruminative and multivalent response to the criticism garnered by *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (fig. 2), itself the *grande machine*, a visual "Realist Manifesto" that also placed Courbet in his social and artistic context.[10]

The Quarry was painted in November and December of 1856, a year after the closing of Courbet's Pavilion of Realism.[11] The physical painting was brought together from five different panels added sequentially,[12] suggesting that Courbet worked out his ideas intuitively, and that these concrete yet allusive ideas expanded and formed meaning as they were joined to other parts of the composition. It was a concrete way of thinking.

The roe deer (a small-size deer) and the figure of the artist were painted first on a canvas that had already been stitched together. The panels containing a *piqueur* blowing his horn and hunting dogs were painted next, and later a vertical strip containing a diminishing perspective of trees was added at the left side. The final panel above the artist's head was added after its exhibition in 1857 and sometime before 1864.

"The physical and formal dissimilarities between the largest segment [representing the roe deer and the artist] and the smaller ones indicate that it is an independent prior concept to which they were added."[13] The link between the roe deer and the artist is the essence; everything else issues from that relationship.

Courbet portrays himself in shadow as he leans against one of a row of pines, also in shadow. Dressed in blacks and browns, arms folded against his chest, the artist looks downward, seemingly at nothing, although it has been asserted that he looks at the hunting hounds in front of him.[14] His body is drawn in on itself contemplatively and is out of scale in relation to the dogs, the roe deer, and the *piqueur* behind him. His body seems to recede and merge with the tree, and constitutes a reaffirmation of Courbet's merger with nature and painting itself,[15] a relationship seen in *The Painter's Studio*.

2. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

The dogs and the *piqueur* appear to be at a more concrete level of existence because their forms are thickly impasted to make their real, physical presence palpable as they stand in the light, or stand as the *piqueur* does, against a lighted row of pine trees. These figures are highly articulated by line and color. The russet-on-white and black-on-white patterns of the dogs' coats are startling. The basset hounds appear to watch one another's next move, maneuvering for the greater portion of the *curée* or entrails. They seem to growl. The black-and-white dog retreats a little in response to the russet hound that has blood at his muzzle and paws: he is the dominant dog. Blood spreads on the ground and extends toward the deer, but does not issue from its body, and the entrails are nowhere in evidence. The flowing lines of the roe deer's form mime the artist's form merged with the tree—with nature.

La curée is the term used for the entrails over which hounds fight after the kill. Since there are no entrails in sight we are led to surmise that painting itself, or some other painting recently exhibited by Courbet, like *The Studio*, might be the object of the dogs' "discussion." The hounds growl at one another as critics argue about the value of paintings that artists present—that this artist presents to the world.

The red vest over the white shirt of the *piqueur* stands out; the shining brass of his hunting horn, a simpler version of a French horn, is a sharp gold element. In this symbolic composition the horn broadcasts Courbet's fame.

Although the spatial relations among the figures appear distorted, distortion is more disguised in the relationship of the roe deer to the artist, a relationship frequently described as confirming the identity of these two figures: hunter and hunted, artist and his painting.[16] The figures exist on the same diagonal plane of darkened pines that connect man and deer. A poetic contemplation seems to join these two as well. Repeating the curve of the artist's body, the roe deer is hung by its right rear leg from a foreground pine in the row of shadowy trees. The deer is held in an inverted balletic position, its free rear leg close to the ground, its head quietly resting there, while the brown fur is marked at the ear, throat, and hind quarters with a soft white, not the grating white describing the dogs and the horn blower's shirt. The roe deer appears an object of beauty, not the mangled and bloody result of the kill. Courbet and the deer exist in their own realm of painter and painting.

Their connection and mood suggests that the artist is responding to the critical reception of *The Painter's Studio*. *The Quarry* distills the criticism to the big painting, his response to it, and, in turn, articulates an implicit recognition of the new direction toward symbolism that his art has taken in both paintings. He never again will make a painting as large and summary, although *The Quarry* is sizable and is as much a "real allegory" as *The Studio*. Both demonstrate Courbet's merger with a nature that is necessary to his freedom to create whatever he wants, to hunt whenever and wherever he can.

The Studio was greeted by wildly diverse definitions of realism—none of which Courbet had been able to achieve—and according to the political, philosophical, or artistic position of the writer. Realism meant ugly, dirty figures of the underclasses that were not worthy of representation in art. Courbet's figure itself at the painting's highly lit center represented, the critics felt, his own apotheosis, or represented Courbet's Parnassus with his muses; it was an outsized self-portrait; it was a Last Judgment with Courbet damning those on the left and elevating the elite on the right. Courbet's arrogance and self-promotion underlay virtually all the criticism of the painting. Consistently there was confusion about the title's oxymoronic juxtaposition of "real" and "allegory." The title outraged the vaunted rationality of the French mind.

Champfleury, the realist author and critic, and an early advocate of Courbet's work, wrote to George Sand to describe the critical reception. Courbet had created an alternative, independent studio "just two steps away from the painting exhibition."[17] The construction, and the paintings contained in it, were audacious, overthrowing "all the jury based institutions; it is a direct appeal to the public; it is freedom, some say."

Others, he told Mme. Sand, called it "a scandal, anarchy; it is art dragged through the mud." The figures on the left represent allegory, Champfleury opined, "that is to say that these members of the lower classes are what the painter likes to paint, taking his inspiration from the misery of the poor." He confessed that he himself was "somewhat critical" of *The Painter's Studio*, although there was real progress in Courbet's style and "it would doubtless benefit from being seen again in quieter circumstances." Champfleury went on to describe the critical uproar that had disturbed his "brain to such a degree that it is difficult to retrieve a thought in its initial purity." Nevertheless, the painting had conviction that would stand the test of time.[18]

Indeed, *The Quarry* responds to Champfleury's point. Like *The Studio* it is a "real allegory" and benefits from being seen in quieter circumstances. *The Quarry* invites the viewer's thoughtful awareness that it depicts more than the conclusion of a hunt, it suggests painting itself and the painter's relation to it. Through composition, mood, and contrasting figural activity it refers back to *The Studio*; and as such, refers to that painting's structure and critical reception. First, and with a sly use of con-

vention, *The Quarry* displays a wooded landscape containing figures; it is not a painting of isolated figures in Courbet's past and current life that frame a landscape of Ornans that is so familiar, so much part of Courbet's life and physical experiences that he can paint it from memory.

Courbet's withdrawn figure, contrasted to the activity of the *piqueur* and the dogs, reverses *The Studio*'s depiction of the artist actively painting. The nude model and the boy, who have been said to represent Truth and fresh, innocent observation free of the burden of past art, are also both alert figures actively looking. Where the flanking figures—exploiters and those whom they exploit, as well as the elite—stand or sit passively in shadow, in *The Quarry* Courbet depicts himself wrapped in quiet contemplation and again allied with nature, while the *piqueur* and the dogs seem materially real and active. Both paintings demonstrate the importance of nature with which the artist is identified and even merged.

Mme. Sand's response to Champfleury was published two years later. "In all the arts," she cautioned, "victory always goes to the privileged few who follow their own paths."[19] Surely that was what Courbet was doing.

Champfleury persisted. He wrote to Buchon and said he did not like the path Courbet was following. He felt realism was a joke, and he no longer believed in it. Champfleury referred to *The Studio* implicitly when he said Courbet went "off the track since the *Burial* and *After Dinner*."[20] Since then he had become "a man gone astray, influenced by public opinion, by criticism, trying to compromise, not succeeding, determined to cause a sensation and no longer faithful to his own temperament."[21]

In making a second allegory in *The Quarry*, Courbet *was* again faithfully asserting his temperament. *The Studio* and *The Quarry* were not realist paintings but elaborate allegories of Courbet's own expansive self within nature, freely hunting game and creating paintings as extensions of that self and that freedom. "As much a hunter as a painter," Castagnary wrote, "he more than once interrupted a half-completed study to seize his gun and go out to shoot some passing game."[22] The comment suggests that Courbet understood painting as the capture of the motif as a predator captures its prey.

Théophile Silvestre's essay on Courbet was contained in his *Histoire des artistes vivants* published in August 1856.[23] Courbet anticipated that the review of his work would be positive because he had "explained" to Silvestre all the paintings "I had done in my life."[24] The artist's verbal statements and a written essay provided to Silvestre in 1852 were quoted in the *Histoire* and had become worked into the artist's own "Realist Manifesto" of 1855. These statements both to Silvestre and to the public may be understood as Courbet's attempts at shaping his own critical reception—something, from our perspective, he felt compelled to do—but Silvestre understood the commentary as sheer arrogance. He quoted Courbet's original essay:

> I am a Courbetist, that is all; my painting is the only true one; I am the first and the unique artist of my time; the others are students or drivellers. Everyone may think whatever he wants, I do not bat an eye [*je m'en bats l'œil*]. I am not only a painter, but also a man; I can put forth my rational opinion on morality, politics and poetry, as well as in painting. I am objective and subjective, I have made my synthesis.[25]

Silvestre pummels his readers with descriptions of Courbet's posturing and the wrong-headedness of realism. He finds that although Courbet's vanity was not a crime, merely naïve and "courageous," he felt that Courbet thought Silvestre himself was ignorant, and so had attempted to demonstrate his own profound study of literature, history, and philosophy.

> I can tell, without contradicting him, that he doesn't understand one word concerning these matters. He is endowed, as women are, with being able to intuit perhaps many things; this he values more than science learned by heart from dusty books. […] One cannot spend five minutes with Courbet that he does not speak of himself and of his paintings.[26]

Intuition *was* guiding him in additively putting together both *The Studio* and *The Quarry*. In the latter, and in emulation of the larger, collaged painting, he materially brought canvas segments together as if piecing together thoughts and associations in his mind. In this working process he tracked down the meaning of what the parts and the whole conveyed. This is what Courbet meant when he spoke so arrogantly of his "rationalism" and stated "I am objective and subjective. I have made my synthesis"—except that Courbet was not precisely "rational." He well understood implicitly how to proceed with painting, how to go about learning and knowing. There was no word to replace "rational"; this was a different making in the moment, a different learning by making, a creation of a truly new, anti-academic approach to painting that followed no rules except intuitive ones. He painted it as he felt and experienced it.

Concluding his tirade, Silvestre avowed that if realism had any meaning at all "and Courbet himself recognizes that it does not," it would represent the negation of imagination. Thus man, stripped of his highest faculty becomes an inferior animal while nature is no more than theatrical staging.[27] It is hard not to see *The Quarry* as Courbet's concrete response to this idea; Silvestre's assessment may have inspired it. Roe deer and artist, allied, are framed in a schematic rendering of nature.

The representation of an ideal of landscape as a personal extension is at the core of *The Studio*, and it expanded as a symbolist allegory of Courbet's own creative processes that naturally issued from his arrogance, his expansive self-concern. In *The Quarry* the roe deer is the motif hunted; Courbet finds it, captures it, kills it; and it is hardly separable from him. The enterprise of painting the motif, its evaluation by critics and the reputation that results—are what he finds worthy as the focus of *The Quarry*.

His friend Max Buchon understood. He affirmed in *Recueil de dissertations sur le réalisme* (1856) that Courbet worked spontaneously; he produced his paintings "as simply as an apple tree its apples." To his spontaneity was added "the subtlety of his moral flair, his capacity to follow and even dominate the movement of healthy ideas in his environment, with the aid only of his enormous powers of intuition." Buchon linked spontaneity and intuition with "an intellectual grasp…this fine intelligence [is] at the service of a great heart."[28]

Two observant critics also had a good sense of what Courbet was after.

Augustin-Joseph du Pays found the consternation over the words of the title a descent into an entangled metaphysics. Undoubtedly aware of the artist's statement that he considered himself the most arrogant man in France, du Pays bemoaned that these days the self (*le moi*) was given too much importance. He recognized that the entourage placed left and right of the artist and the surrounding atmosphere referred to the seven preceding years of Courbet's artistic life, while the central panel showed his current preoccupation, landscape, and landscape would continue to preoccupy him. Courbet was absorbed in making a clear and fresh landscape in which glittered a pure azure sky. "Within the whole of this sad canvas, there is a good painting that presents the painter and the landscape on his easel."[29]

The second astute observer was none other than Eugène Delacroix

—whose evaluation Courbet could not have known:

> Afterwards I went to the Courbet exhibition…I stayed there alone for nearly an hour and discovered a masterpiece in the picture which they rejected; I could scarcely bear to tear myself away. He has made enormous strides, and yet this picture has taught me to appreciate his *Enterrement* [*Burial at Ornans*]. In this picture the figures are all on top of one another and the composition is not well arranged, but some of the details are superb, for instance, the priests, the choirboys, the weeping women, the vessel for holy water, etc. In the later picture [*The Studio*] the planes are well understood, there is atmosphere, and in some passages the execution is really remarkable, especially the thighs and hips of the nude model and the breasts—also the woman in the foreground with the shawl. The only fault is that the picture, as he has painted it, contains an ambiguity. It looks as though there were a *real sky* in the middle of a painting. They have rejected one of the most remarkable works of our time, but Courbet is not the man to be discouraged by a little thing like that.[30]

3. Gustave Courbet, *The Hunt Breakfast*, 1858. Oil on canvas, 207 x 325 cm, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne.

We may not share Delacroix's optimism. *The Quarry* demonstrates how vulnerably Courbet reacted to the criticism of *The Studio*. *The Quarry*, unique among Courbet's paintings of the hunt, an emblem of his reaction to *The Studio*'s critical reception, shows him withdrawn and ruminating. Silvestre's relentlessly negative commentary must have hurt. The artist's dour mood suggests a reflective self-awareness of his difference, of the problems his arrogance has perpetuated.

4. Gustave Courbet, *After the Hunt*, c. 1859. Oil on canvas, 236.2 x 186.1 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The independent exhibition of Courbet's paintings in the Pavilion of Realism had been neither a critical nor a commercial success. Restlessly Courbet traveled between Paris and Montpellier, and in the late summer of 1857 left for Brussels where *The Quarry* and *The Grain Sifters* (1855, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes) were to be exhibited. He may have stayed in Belgium almost a year making portraits and beginning a series of hunting scenes.[31] He knew that the genre of hunting, beyond its personal importance, was appealing to wealthy patrons. Whatever self-awareness he may have gained in painting *The Quarry* would seem to have evaporated—or painfully intensified. Courbet's letters indicate that he fled to Brussels in pursuit of patrons, and he arrived there depressed.[32]

The reason may have been that Champfleury had published an unflattering caricature of Courbet's patron, Alfred Bruyas, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* just after the two men had enjoyed Bruyas's hospitality at his home in Montpellier. The caricature of Bruyas was as much a caricature of Courbet. He had been definitively devalued by his former advocate, Champfleury, whose ambivalence toward Courbet's work was already evident in the correspondence with Mme. Sand and Buchon. Courbet regarded his relationship with Bruyas as probably the most important relationship of his life.[33] *The Meeting* (1854, Musée Fabre, Montpellier) depicted not only a pilgrimage to work with Bruyas, as Jeffery Howe states,[34] but also represented a meeting of minds. Bruyas had been eager to produce the financial independence necessary for Courbet's work.[35] Referring to their relationship, Courbet had once written to his patron, "It was inevitable because it is not we who have encountered each other, but our solutions" ("Ce n'est pas nous qui nous sommes rencontrés, ce sont nos solutions").[36] The statement is curiously distancing. It refers to a relationship in parallel, not in interaction, and with repeated readings it becomes ever more ambiguous. "Fortune bowing before Genius" was the critics' mocking epithet to *The Meeting*. They seem aware that Courbet needed a thoroughgoing responsiveness and commitment from others, and that he desperately sought recognition, commissions, and exhibitions. Now the support of Champfleury was weakening, and the sufficient relationship with Bruyas seemed in jeopardy.

Furthermore, as soon as the artist arrived in Brussels he received from his father a letter in which Régis Courbet wondered why the artist was taking his paintings out of the country. His father implied that the French government must not want them. A hurt and angry Courbet wrote back:

> You reproach me for being in Belgium. I would like to know what the devil you are doing in Lyon and St. Etienne. Urbain tells me that, while you…take pleasure trips, Mother takes care of the farm in Flagey. It is incredible that you insist on driving everyone to despair and on destroying an entire family so that you can boast about your agricultural expertise. I don't know how, at your age, you have not yet been able to attain greater tranquility and a more rational and positive state of mind. You are carried away by your vanity. Try to rent the farm and have done with it. You will kill everyone with your chaotic mind. Our house is hell and Mother is too old to keep up that pace.[37]

In Belgium and Germany Courbet was working hard to establish a cadre of patrons that would serve him in the future, now that his rela-

tionship with Bruyas seemed to be eroding. "The way things are going in France, this is useful, especially for me,"[38] he wrote more calmly to his father, and remarked later to the whole family that "I ramble through foreign countries to find the independence of mind that I need and to let pass this government that does not hold me in honor."[39] "Government" meant any outside force telling him what to do, including rules of the Academy and Nieuwerkerke's attempt to control his freedom to exhibit.

Courbet may have required breaking the bonds of the French academic system, however, to freely produce paintings "as an apple tree its apples." Yet Belgium was something else: Courbet's work was well received there, and the beer was very good.[40] If Jacques Louis David, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, and other French artists and writers had gone to Belgium to be honored, he would follow in their footsteps. Courbet may have stayed in Belgium for as long as a year; yet in that time he spent more time drinking than painting.[41]

The paintings of the hunt, as a whole, can be understood as the primary metaphor of Courbet's fantasied physical and moral freedom to do whatever he wished. The painted subject offered a record of vigorous movement and exercise—freedom—in the open air, in the open landscape. As a group, they were not meditations on painting, the artist's critical reception, and his role in society. They did not rise to the level of quality demonstrated in *The Painter's Studio* and *The Quarry*.

The major hunting scenes discussed below were all constructed to find a market, and they enumerate aspects and matériel of formal hunts, propound Christian themes, and sometimes become contemporary history painting executed exclusively in Courbet's terms.

5. Gustave Courbet, *The German Hunter*, 1859. Oil on canvas, 118 x 174 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lons-le-Saunier.

Since *The Quarry* had been critically successful and had sold quickly, *The Hunt Breakfast* (fig. 3) and *After the Hunt* (fig. 4) would also find buyers and exhibition venues in good time.[42]

In his quest for patrons, *The Hunt Breakfast* brings together formal fashion piece, still life, and landscape in a *tableau vivant*. The figures hold their poses; not even the boy charged with setting out the picnic moves. It is a presentation of hunting practices of the aristocracy and may depict a formal hunt at Rambouillet that Courbet is said to have joined.[43] Word of his participation in a royal hunt and the subject itself would be sure to attract aristocratic buyers. *The Hunt Breakfast* is a demonstration piece that promotes Courbet's facility as landscapist, still-life painter, and painter of fashion.

Courbet gives us a range of objects—live and dead, human, animal, fruit and foodstuffs—that are arranged in an ellipse that stands in the foreground like a theatrical scrim. The *piqueur* seen in *contrapposto* from behind poses with arms akimbo and hunting horn pointing toward us, the spectators. Courbet groups fashionable figures and still lifes in the Spanish and Flemish manners against his background landscape as if to show his own independent study of these old masters, free of the inculcations of the Academy. Suitably he isolates each Spanish still-life object, and in his reworking of the Flemish tradition piles on stags, pheasants, reclining dogs, and a large horn as an excessive memento of hunting.

A figure seated and dressed in the same black as the hunter in *The Quarry*, has been said to represent Courbet,[44] but if there is a self-portrait in the painting it would be the dark, pensive figure standing in the background and predictably at the apex of a pyramid of isolated yet categorized figures and objects so thickly painted and brightly colored.

The relation of colors within the painting is stunning: the red of the jacket leaps out to our eye; so too the *piqueur*'s gold jodhpurs and the gold costume of the kneeling figure nearby—a color that is then muted in the ladies' identical dresses. Behind, the landscape frames them and then moves back convincingly to a distant lake, taken there by the azure blue of the sky. The escarpment that stands behind the group on the right resembles the geological wonders of Ornans. The pensive figure stands closest to this escarpment.

After the Hunt retains the major features of *The Quarry*'s composition, but none of its depth of meaning. A figure, not Courbet but the *piqueur*—leans against one of a line of pine trees in the left ground, and two dogs leap into the air to the right. Courbet adds a variety of game—boar, deer, partridge, and hare that are indecorous and inappropriate. Earlier artists would have combined no more than two kinds of game for a hunt scene.[45] This misstep also appears in *The Hunt Breakfast*, but perhaps rules do not apply to a depiction of figures and objects that are additively composed to display the practices of the aristocracy—in a painting aimed at the aristocracy. Here, the right side of the canvas demonstrates again Courbet's familiarity with Flemish still life, but it is incoherent. The hare and the hounds appear airborne while the *piqueur* dangles more game—a fox—above the dogs, altering the mood to one of sickening jubilance and sadistic teasing. As in *The Hunt Breakfast* the palette is light; bright reds and golds are set against greens.

Courbet memorializes the huge "twelve-pointer…thirteen-year-old stag" that he shot in Germany in *The German Hunter* (fig. 5).[46] This was an exhilarating exercise of his freedom. Courbet was exultant, yet the story ends in pathos when "a rich industrialist from Frankfurt tried to steal it from me." The seemingly noble Hunters' Society drafted a protocol demanding the return of the stag. It was signed by forty of the most significant hunters of the country.

> The whole city was excited for a month, the newspapers became involved. They were unable to give me back the entire stag, it had been eaten and sold unbeknownst to the society, but they returned the teeth and the antlers. […] They also gave me a photograph showing the stag dead, and with my gunshots.[47]

Unbeknownst to Courbet may be more like it, and gunshots are not recorded in his painting. Courbet does not acknowledge to his sister Juliette, and perhaps to himself, that he has been snookered. He wanted

to remain the hero for his favorite sister.

The stag of *The German Hunter* appears with the rigor mortis recorded by the photograph from which Courbet must have worked. The fore and hind legs protrude stiffly into the air. The legs, and the ogling, odd stance and costume of the hunter with his dog—nose pressed to the nose of the deer whose tongue dangles from his open mouth—makes it uncomfortable to laugh, but we do. Nevertheless, Courbet has made a fine composition of curving antlers that form circular patterns with the body of the stag, the hunter's bending stance, and the dog, possibly a dachshund. The taut leash, the belt, and the rifle cross through these curves and link to the raised hind leg of the deer. The body is of the same color and seems the same texture of trees and undergrowth behind. Here the shallow space makes for a strangely geometric and decorative painting.

An identical stag head, turned right side up and raised, can be found in both *The Battle of the Stags; or, Spring Rut* (fig. 6) and *Stag Taking to the Water* (fig. 7). After his return from Germany, the second part of his flight from France, Courbet painted these two large works in his new studio recently constructed near Besançon.

Along with *The German Hunter* these three paintings "form a series for hunters and depict a theme that I am familiar with,"[48] Courbet wrote with some modesty, and as if he were avowing his identity with the suffering animal. They project a new handling and require a new interpretation within Courbet's hunting scenes. They are nothing like *The Quarry*'s visually concise commentary on the criticism of *The Studio*, or *The Hunt Breakfast* that adds up the particulars of a formal, aristocratic hunt. These stags have become by turns animals of massive strength as well as strangely ethereal, otherworldly beings in their last moments. This is affected by the crepuscular light and the antlered, upturned heads, as if the animals sought salvation.

They are calculated to sell, however. Sir Edwin Landseer's *Hunted Stag* (fig. 8) may be the source for all three paintings, and it is certainly the source for *Stag Taking to the Water* since the stag forms a mirror image to Landseer's animal. The flipped image might be explained by Courbet's having seen an engraving after the Landseer painting in *Le Magasin Pittoresque* of 1851. Courbet was also keenly aware that Landseer's work had been widely admired in the Exposition Universelle of 1855 that had excluded his own *The Painter's Studio.*

Courbet confirmed his source for *Stag Taking to the Water*. "The English ought to like the expression on his face, it recalls the feeling of Landseer's animals."[49] The feeling generated by *Stag Taking to the Water* is a desperation that is human. The lighted head turned upward, framed against antlers spreading like a cross, the bulging eyes seeking salvation from the heavens, the ascending form of the animal in the fading light, all make a martyr's death. The painting has nothing to do with realism; it is a symbolist work that refers to those aspects of life and death—like feelings and beliefs—that cannot be visually represented. Courbet's "show me an angel and I'll paint one" is precisely the point. He had never seen an angel but these hunted animals had been seen and were real within his experience. Courbet understood the difference. It explains why he was so concerned to emphasize the authenticity of these three hunting paintings.

6. Gustave Courbet, *The Battle of the Stags; or, Spring Rut*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 355 x 507 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

7. Gustave Courbet, *Stag Taking to the Water*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 280 x 275 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille.

> I am absolutely sure of the action. With those animals none of the muscles show. The battle is cold, the rage deep, the thrusts are terrible and they seem not to touch each other. That is easy to understand when one sees their formidable defense. […] There isn't an ounce of idealism in them. Their values are mathematically precise.[50]

Courbet's letter is a formidable defense. He was referring to the epic *The Battle of the Stags; or, Spring Rut* that depicts stags engaged in internecine battle—in the wrong season because rutting occurs in autumn or winter. Yet the sun slides into the forest horizontally and dead leaves cling to the foreground trees: it appears to be autumn, and must be mistitled.[51] Courbet was not directly recording scenes he witnessed, but constructing pictures from his ongoing hunting experiences that were supplemented by photographs and purchased cadavers. Later he filled in a landscape of his choosing. We might compare *Spring Rut* to a work like Copley's *Death of Major Peirson* (1783, Tate, London), for it is a kind of contemporary history painting—at least in the meaningful dimensions of Courbet's world. "Because their performance was entirely natural, these deer were ideal actors for Courbet. They embodied everything that made history painting exciting—action, passion, violence—without the artist having to invent anything."[52]

Fred Leeman claims later that the theatricality of history painting is avoided. This may be questioned because Courbet's painting is huge and pushes these life-size battling animals into the viewer's space.[53] Courbet uses an ethereal light to pick out the protagonist meeting its end. Since this animal, particularly, is humanized—note the moist brown eye in its socket, the supplicatory head—it seems to enact a powerful if frozen drama that again has elements of a *tableau vivant.*

In August of 1861 after having completed *Stag Taking to the Water* and *Battle of the Stags* in his new studio in Besançon, Courbet joined a congress on the arts in Antwerp where he energetically claimed that his art depended upon the anarchic social philosophy of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Individual liberty was common to the thinking of both men. Proudhon, then in exile in Brussels, had been invited to hear his friend speak, but declined the invitation,[54] because, according to Courbet, "he had pressing work."[55] In an exhibition that was held simultaneously with the congress, Courbet presented *Battle of the Stags*.[56]

During this time Courbet was in contact with the Belgian artist Louis Dubois. According to Castagnary Dubois visited Courbet's new studio at Besançon in 1861. In 1870 Dubois solicited Courbet's help when he was forced to sell two paintings by Frans Hals.[57] Dubois surely was in Antwerp for the elaborate festivities in honor of that city, heard Courbet speak, and inspected *The Battle of the Stags*.

It would be interesting to know what "the most radical of Belgian realists"[58] thought of it, but we have no record. Perhaps his *The Dead Deer—Solitude* (1863, plate 16) records the next moment in Courbet's *Battle*, the death of the stag. Dubois's painting does not have the drama of *Battle of the Stags*, but responds to the suggestive, symbolist aspects of Courbet's hunting scenes. As an articulation of the solitude of death, it can only have reference to human death.

There is no explanation for the fallen deer lying on its side on a ledge above a forest, the sea in the distance. The painting's horizontal format echoes the stretched form of the deer. The mood is poetic. The deer is nearly camouflaged by grasses and by the stony ledge, and yet the deer is compared to it. Does the painting represent the conclusion of a hunting scene, Dubois's first glimpse of his quarry? Did he hunt with Courbet when he was in Belgium?

Dubois was inspired by Courbet's artistic style and adhered to the realist ideas elaborated by Champfleury and Castagnary in Paris and undoubtedly Courbet himself in Antwerp. These ideas shaped the development of the Société libre des Beaux-Arts, founded in 1868. The Brussels society and school formed "an art that liberated itself from the hierarchy of genres and from the judgment of official Salon juries."[59] Dubois, a founding member of the Société libre, also directed *L'Art Libre*, a publication devoted to realist and other progressive art in Belgium. The journal and the society were clear alternatives to the Belgian Salon.

8. Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Hunted Stag*, c. 1832. Oil on canvas on wood panel, 40.5 x 90.8 cm, Tate, London.

9. Gustave Courbet, *The Death of the Hunted Stag*, 1867. Oil on canvas, 355 x 505 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'archéologie, Besançon.

Courbet's *Stream in the Forest* (c. 1862, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), *The Covert of Roe Deer at the Stream of Plaisir-Fontaine* (1866, plate 15), and *Jura Landscape* (1869, plate 39) form a group of poetic landscapes into which figures of deer are injected as staffage for visual interest. They are shown within shelters, camouflaged. They are not hunting scenes, they have similar compositions and they demonstrate the importance of Courbet's work in both Belgium and America.

Typically these paintings depict a shallow stream that emerges from the background and widens as it nears the foreground. Escarpments can be found right and left, but more often they line the right side of the canvas, half hidden by saplings and wiry trees. Courbet often uses the palette knife to create the chalky appearance of limestone, and he may use it in a more judicious manner to suggest branches and leaves projecting outward. Roe deer quietly disappear into the trees or stony shelters as camouflage. There is a consistent delicacy of handling and mood, and anyone who has any feeling for nature and its potential for emotional sustenance loves these paintings. Collectors snapped up landscapes with or without the figures of deer. Napoléon III himself bought one.

Stream in the Forest is distinguished by its vertical format. The artist's viewpoint hovers above the stream where the trees bounding it are reflected in mysterious, angular rows, long before Monet paints his poplar series. In the right middle ground a roe deer looks at us warily.

The Death of the Hunted Stag (fig. 9), is an agglomeration of many aspects of the hunt scenes examined so far, and it includes new elements. Over sixteen feet long, the work forms the epitome of hunting scenes as Courbet's history painting. In these *grandes machines* no invention is necessary because hunting is what Courbet continually sees and knows; hunting represents the experiential truth of the artist's own free, physical being in the world. Being in the world, however, and the arrogance of his fantasy of freedom has increasingly become fraught with treachery. In this painting is denied any fluid rapport of stag and artist. Stag *is* artist, and predator and prey have become one.

The stag brought down onto spotlessly white snow as dogs attack suggests that this is a representation of Courbet himself as the martyred

hero, the artist as the suffering Christ. The stag, nearly black against its snowy background, forms a balletic, linear arabesque that thins out the volume of the animal's body. The stag poses: its head is thrown back, the antlers scrape at the stag's back, a foreleg lifts gracefully while a dog attacks its throat and chest. The recession of the snow-whitened forest behind is more accurate than we have seen previously, but its purity has no place in a true bloody scuffle of the dogs competing for the *curée*. There has been no blood shed here. It is as if Courbet retained the sanctity of the Christianized stag through the purity of the snow.

Courbet had recently become a specialist of snow scenes, such as *Winter Landscape* (plate 36) and hunting scenes in the snow. One of the most striking is *Fox in the Snow* (fig. 10) that demonstrates a masterful rendering of ice caught in bushes and spread over the ground, its palpable depth suggested by blue shadows. Courbet uses a similar whiplash curve or arabesque for the body of the fox as it devours one mouse while adroitly holding down another with its paw.[60] The rich coloration of the fox is believably coordinated with rocks and the leaden sky above the lake beyond. The fox, rendered volumetrically as a healthy body covered with soft, reddish fur, exists within his natural habitat—so that the snow is besmirched below his prey with a small comma of blood. The animal has emerged from his cave-like domain behind and has caught his prey. It is the natural order of things.

10. Gustave Courbet, *Fox in the Snow*, 1860. Oil on canvas, 85.7 x 127.8 cm, Dallas Museum of Art.

11. Gustave Courbet, *The Trout*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 55 x 89 cm, Kunsthaus, Zurich.

Fox in the Snow—the animal seen in its habitat—forms a contrast to *The Death of the Hunted Stag* that does not have a place in the natural setting. As a disguised representation of the artist it gives us some disquiet that the setting no longer supports the animal. Courbet has been characteristically literal here: the stag's cadaver from which he painted the image is still very much in evidence in the final work.[61] As the victim, the stag is isolated from its environment through dark coloration and dramatic pose as the hero that is beset by countless hounds in disarray. The stag is mawkish and the painting as a whole rebuffs our gaze because we cannot watch this symbolic self-destruction. The blunt carnality of the cadaver whose leg has been torn away still sustains repeated lashings. Courbet inflicts pain on himself.

To the right the *piqueur* cracks a whip that is meant to call off the dogs, but the whip seems truly intended for the stag. Further to the right is the hunter on a rearing horse.[62] The horseman has been taken directly from Delacroix's anti-hero, the Turkish rider in *Massacre at Chios* (1824, Musée du Louvre, Paris), a contemporary history painting that Napoléon I's court painter Baron Gros wittily called the "massacre of painting." The Baron's complaint may have referred to the vacuum—and not a pyramidal form—at the very center of Delacroix's composition, a strategy as anti-academic as any for which Courbet may have strived.[63] The stag and dogs seem the compositional equivalent of the massacred Greeks.

Courbet likewise brings together figures in the front plane of the canvas. The equestrian hunter rises above all else and becomes an elegant if scoffing master to the stag in its last throes. One hand casually spans the hunter's hip,[64] a telling gesture, as with the other he controls his rearing horse. At the time Courbet was struggling with Nieuwerkerke—the "government"—over promises to buy paintings; he was suing another patron who had refused to pay him for his work; and he himself was being sued for unpaid bills charged to his account by friends at the Brasserie Andler.[65]

Courbet was feeling hemmed in. He wrote to his lawyer that he was working frantically on this "very special painting," *The Death of the Hunted Stag*, "for [his] reputation's sake." He ended by saying, "Work is killing me."[66]

Although Courbet's *The Trout* (fig. 11) is inscribed "in vinculis faciebat," it is a memory of that incarceration after the Commune and was not painted in prison. Nonetheless *The Trout*, representing a type of hunt, attests to Courbet's experience now of constriction and completes a theme of freedom running headlong into capture. The painting's frame confines the fish in no more than a watery environment of stones and rocks similarly colored; the size of the canvas is only large enough to hold the fish. Many themes are condensed in the image. The fish alludes to Christian sacrifice and suggests Courbet himself. Blood emerges from its gills, but the trout is whole in its delimited pool of water as it cuts diagonally from corner to corner, as well placed in its frame as *Stag Taking to Water*, *Fox in the Snow*, and *The Quarry* where the lithe curves of the deer repeat Courbet's leaning against the tree. The artist has captured the motif as the predator captures its prey, but the work of art is a beginning, not an ending, and outlives even its creator.

Dedicated to the memory of Daniel Stern (1934–2012) and Louis Sander (1918–2012). I am grateful to my colleagues Jeffery Howe and Claude Cernuschi, and to Andrea Frank, Adeane Bregman, and Laurie Mayville, for their immeasurable help.

1 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 53-6/116 (letter to Alfred Bruyas, Oct.[?] 1853). Chu has used the phrase as the title of her 2007 book that addresses Courbet's manipulation of the contemporary press for the promotion of his art.

2 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 53-7/118 (to Francis Wey, Dec. 22? 1853).

3 Ibid., 54-2/120 (to Alfred Bruyas, Jan. 1854).

4 Jules-Antoine Castagnary, "A Biography of Courbet," in *Courbet in Perspective*, ed. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977), 7.

5 His stammer suggests that his personal freedom was not without an uncertainty about his relation to others.

6 Castagnary, "A Biography of Courbet," 8.

7 This was also true of the materialist and social philosophy of Courbet's friend Proudhon and others' political ideas.

8 "Je fais avant tout ce que j'ai à faire. On m'accuse de vanité! Je suis en effet l'homme le plus libre et le plus orgueilleux de la terre." Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants* (Paris: E. Blanchard, 1856), 243 (author's translation).

9 Gilbert Titeux states that Robert Fernier's catalogue shows he produced "130 pictures of this type." *Courbet: A Dream of Modern Art*, ed. Klaus Herding and Max Hollein, exh. cat. (Frankfurt: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 70.

10 It was published in 1855 at the time of Courbet's independent exhibition within the Pavilion of Realism.

11 Chu, "Chronology," in *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 629.

12 Bruce K. MacDonald, "*The Quarry* by Gustave Courbet," *Bulletin: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 67, no. 348 (1969): 58.

13 Ibid.

14 This could be true, given Courbet's abiding interest in how critics, represented by the dogs, respond to his work. Thomas Schlesser analyzes the circular track of the composition from Courbet to the dogs to the roe deer. See *Réceptions de Courbet: Fantasmes réalistes et paradoxes de la démocratie (1848–1871)* (Dijon: Presses du réel, 2007), 47.

15 Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 159–60.

16 The idea of hunting for the motif was taken up by Cézanne who was powerfully influenced by Courbet in his early work. See the figures with guns in hand in his *Marion et Valabrègue partant pour le motif* (1866). John Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne* (New York: Abrams, 1996), no. 99, 32.

17 The Exposition Universelle of 1855 in Paris.

18 Champfleury, "Du réalisme, Lettre à George Sand," *L'Artiste* 16 (Sept. 2, 1855): 1–5, translated and reprinted in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Dominique de Font-Réaulx et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 448–49.

19 George Sand, *Le Courrier de Paris*, Sept. 1857, translated and reprinted in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 449.

20 *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849–50 and *After Dinner at Ornans*, 1848–49.

21 Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906), 142, quoted by Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet: His Life and Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 145–46.

22 Jules-Antoine Castagnary, "Introduction à Exposition de l'école des Beaux-Arts, 1882, quoted in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 389.

23 Chu, "Chronology," 628. When Silvestre's *Histoire des artistes vivants* appeared it had been reduced in size and in the number of artists discussed. See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 111n1.

24 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 52-4/109.

25 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, 243.

26 Ibid., 244.

27 Ibid., 276–77.

28 Max Buchon, "Gustave Courbet jugé par Champfleury et Max Buchon," *Bulletin of the Société des Amis de Gustave Courbet* 12 (1952), quoted by Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet: His Life and Art*, 147.

29 Augustin-Joseph du Pays, *L'Illustration*, July 28, 1855, quoted in René Huyghe, Germain Bazin, and Hélène Adhémar, *Courbet, "L'Atelier du peintre allégorie réele*, *1855*,*"* (Paris: Plon, 1944), 73–74.

30 Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Lucy Norton (London: Phaidon, 1995), Aug. 3, 1855/308–9.

31 See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 159n1.

32 See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 57-4/157–58, 58-1/158–60, 58-2/160, 58-3/161–62. See also Dominique Marechal's "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet" in this volume for a full exploration of Courbet's Belgian travels.

33 Sarah Faunce, "Reconsidering Courbet," in *Courbet Reconsidered*, ed. Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 10.

34 See Jeffery Howe, "Courbet: Mapping Realism," 9 (in this volume).

35 Faunce, "Reconsidering Courbet," 10.

36 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 54-2/122.

37 Ibid., 58-1/159.

38 Ibid., 58-1/158.

39 Ibid., 58-3/162.

40 Faunce, "Reconsidering Courbet," 11.

41 "Although perhaps not a breakdown, it was certainly a significant break in the pattern of a life that had been consistently productive until that time" (ibid.).

42 It was sold to the Belgian art dealer Van Isacker in Antwerp. See Howe, "Courbet: Mapping Realism," 12.

43 James Henry Rubin, *Courbet* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 234.

44 Ibid. The figure wears tan hat and breeches, however, and does not look like Courbet.

45 Faunce, "Reconsidering Courbet," 137.

46 A stag is called "royal" when he has twelve points to his antlers. Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1984), 439.

47 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 59-2/166.

48 Ibid., 61-6/193.

49 Ibid., 61-6/194.

50 Ibid., 61-6/193–94.

51 Laurence des Cars, "*Spring Rut (The Battle of the Stags)*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 396.

52 Fred Leeman, "The Painter as Prey: Courbet's *Hanging Roe Deer* in the Museum Mesdag," in *Van Gogh Museum Journal 1999* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999), 90.

53 The painting is nearly twelve feet tall and sixteen feet wide.

54 Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee, "Le Réalisme: Courbet en Belgique," in *Paris–Bruxelles, Bruxelles–Paris: Les relations entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Anvers: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 153.

55 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 61-14/200.

56 Chu, "Chronology," 630.

57 Pingeot and Hoozee, "Le Réalisme: Courbet en Belgique," 154. They cite a letter of May 15, 1870 in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

58 Ibid., 153.

59 Jean-Philippe Huys and Dominique Marechal, "Realism: From *Living Art*

to *Free Art*," 25 (in this volume).

60 The body of the fox is positioned like that of the cat in *The Studio,* as Dominique de Font-Réaulx, has noted. See Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 406. This small hunter crouches just in front of Courbet's chair in the painting, and so is linked to the artist. The other hunter with his dogs can be found at the left among the exploited and the exploiters.

61 A photograph of Courbet filling in the surrounding landscape has been widely published. See Rubin, *Courbet*, 248.

62 These two men seem to have been identified as Jules Cusenier, a distiller at Ornans, and Félix Gaudy, a landowner and politician with whom Courbet often went hunting. See Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 644 and 648; and in Font-Réaulx et al., *Gustave Courbet*, 400.

63 There are many sources for Courbet's painting: the hunt scenes of Rubens, Frans Snyder, and Delacroix, and specifically Paul de Vos's *Stag Chased by Dogs* (1637, Museo del Prado, Madrid).

64 This is reticently noted by des Cars in "*The Death of the Hunted Stag*," in *Gustave Courbet*, ed. Font-Réaulx et al., 401.

65 Rubin, *Courbet*, 251.

66 Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 67-5/305.

Inside Out: Courbet and the Challenge of Realist Landscape

Jeffery Howe

Sitting indoors at his easel, the artist focuses intently on the landscape he is painting, ignoring the nude woman behind him, the staring child and the playful cat about to pounce on the model's discarded dress. Gustave Courbet is the pivot point at the center of the enormous canvas titled *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (detail, fig. 1). He is flanked by crowds of figures on each side of the nearly twenty-foot-wide canvas. Although Courbet was famous for his casual and social mode of working, this is not a realistic depiction of a moment in his studio. It is a collage of symbolic figures, such as the model who undoubtedly signifies the "naked truth." They are based on real figures from his life, and given the title, we realize that they also have symbolic meaning.[1] They comprise an allegory of artistic life in contemporary France, and an autobiographical statement on his personal and professional development since 1848. The landscape, for which Courbet ignores everything around him, must be important. It is a scene from Franche-Comté, the region of his birth. Painting from memory, he recreates a scene from his youth that symbolized purity and the regenerative force of nature.[2] By showing himself painting the landscape in his studio, he emphasizes that his art was the product of his imagination and skill, not just the transcription of an observed scene.

1. Gustave Courbet, detail of *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 361 x 598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

The Painter's Studio was intended to be the centerpiece of his exhibition in his Pavilion of Realism at the time of the 1855 Exposition Universelle (discussed in the introductory essay of this catalogue). His first idea for the center of the picture was quite different, though; he intended to show himself painting the scene of "an ass driver pinching the butt of a girl he meets, and donkeys loaded with sacks in a landscape with a mill."[3] Wisely, he abandoned this ribald image for one of pure landscape. Landscape painting represented a vision of nature in all its reality and purity, free from the distractions of the studio and society. Amidst the complexity and chaos of Courbet's crowded allegory, his landscape is fresh and direct. So fresh, in fact, that Eugène Delacroix complained in his journal that it was an error to put such a "real sky" in the middle of this painting.[4] This landscape was a kind of *genius loci* for Courbet and represented freedom and authenticity to him.

Throughout his career, Courbet experimented with every kind of landscape: topographical portraits, tourist paintings, and examples of the sublime, beautiful, and picturesque. Landscapes represent two-thirds of his overall production.[5] After 1857, it is the dominant portion of his work.[6] Recent exhibitions have shed new light on Courbet's landscapes, which unite his study of nature and experimental painting techniques.

In contrast to the large figure paintings that made Courbet's reputation, his landscapes seldom tell a story and at times seem almost ordinary. Courbet avoids the mythological accents and dream-like poetry that was often found in the art of Camille Corot (1796–1875). Instead, his landscapes present a materialist, non-narrative scene, painted with a bold lack of finish. The absence of narrative does not mean a lack of imagination, however. The broad brushstrokes and smears of paint from the artist's palette knife invite the viewer's participation to mentally complete the image. This emphasis on "the beholder's share" recalls the poet William Wordsworth's insight that it is up to the viewer to use his or her imagination to comprehend what we see, whether a painting or a natural scene.[7] As the poet observed in "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798), vision is not passive: we must actively interpret "all the mighty world / Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create, / And what perceive."[8] The onus on the viewer to perceive and interpret the marks on a two-dimensional surface was long recognized by artists, and was notably underscored by the inkblot landscapes which Alexander Cozens devised to prompt landscape artists in *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (c. 1785). The rich possibilities of abstract marks used to create the illusion of realistic landscape scenes was carried forward by John Constable and J. M. W. Turner in England, and French romantics such as Eugène Delacroix and Victor Hugo.[9] A new appreciation for the aesthetics of the sketch and the increased stress on the unconscious mental procedures used to interpret an image suggest another aspect to Courbet's fascination with the unconscious mind, which Aaron Sheon has brought to light.[10] His landscape paintings reflect both his subjective vision and his observations of nature. Inside and outside are in balance; they are "a corner of the universe viewed through a temperament," as in Emile Zola's famous definition of a realist work of art.[11]

As with inkblots, there is an element of chance in the elegant streaks and splotches left by Courbet's palette knife. The inchoate nature of Courbet's abstract markings was satirized as a mass of impenetrable inkblots by the caricaturist Henry Somm, who published his drawing in Alfred Le Petit's satirical journal *La Charge* in 1870 (fig. 2). The legend below the drawing puns on *ancre* (anchor) and *encre* (ink): "Courbet. Stormy Sea. Throw the anchor [ink]."

In establishing the tonality of his canvas, Courbet often worked in a traditional manner, beginning with a dark or mid-toned canvas, and adding light tones to build up his subject.[12] Théophile Silvestre recounted Courbet's manner of painting with this anecdote in 1856:[13]

> He pursues harmony by proceeding by degrees from the darkest shadow to the brightest light, and he calls his last touch: "My dominant." Follow, he says, this comparison: "We are

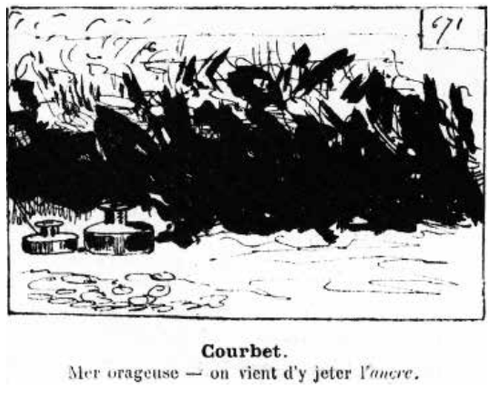
> surrounded by twilight in the morning, before the first light of dawn: objects are barely perceptible in space; the sun rises: their forms are outlined; the sun rises higher: they are illuminated by degrees and emerge finally in all fullness. Well, I proceed in my paintings just as the sun works in nature."

Another contemporary witness recounts watching Courbet at work, and the artist commenting: "It surprises you that my canvas is black. Without the sun, nature is black and dark. I do it as the light, I light up the protruding points and the image is finished."[14] Courbet's images emerged from darkness and chaos, adding to his carefully crafted public persona as an almost messianic artist.

Use of the palette knife became his signature technique, as he rejected the glossy finish favored by many academic artists. His thickly textured surfaces also set his works apart from the smooth surface of photographs. His method did not escape the notice of contemporary cartoonists (fig. 3). The thick layers of flattened impasto remind one of the materiality of the work of art; the surface of paint is tangible and sensuous in itself. This sketchy surface seemed more spontaneous and personal, providing a powerful example for the later impressionists, for whom an original technique became a major signifier of authenticity and originality.[15] For example, *Stream in the Forest* (detail, fig. 4) shows the bold painterly effects Courbet could achieve with the palette knife as he built upon a dark ground. Working in a higher key with the white of snow and ice, *Winter Landscape* (c. 1864–68, plate 36) has many deft passages exemplifying Courbet's skill with the palette knife. The crusty white of the snow and the froth of the rushing stream are skillfully captured with his rapid technique.

Genius Loci—Ornans and the Franche-Comté Landscape

Courbet was quoted in 1867 as saying "To paint a country, you must know it. I know my homeland, so I paint it."[16] He was proud of his origins in the Franche-Comté region of France, which abuts Switzerland. His father Régis Courbet was a prosperous landowner, who owned farmland and vineyards. The distinct geology of the Jura plateau features broad outcroppings of rock that are often featured in his paintings, such as *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–50, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) or the *Young Ladies of the Village* of 1851 (fig. 5).[17] These same cliffs are featured in *A View across a River* (c. 1855, plate 34). The chateau at Ornans was long gone; it was constructed in the thirteenth century, but demolished in the seventeenth century on orders from Count Richelieu.[18]



2. Henry Somm, caricature of Courbet's *The Wave*, *La Charge* (Paris, 1870).

3. Stock, caricature of Courbet's *The Wave*, "Le Salon par Stock," *Album Stock*, Mar. 20, 1870.

4. Gustave Courbet, detail of *Stream in the Forest*, c. 1862. Oil on canvas, 156.8 x 114 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

5. Gustave Courbet, *Young Ladies of the Village*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 194.9 x 261 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The Franche-Comté region had a long and proud history; according to local partisans, it was here that the Gallic tribes under Vercingetorix revolted against the Romans.[19] Although defeated by Julius Caesar, their struggle became legendary. Courbet painted a giant oak tree on his father's farm that he titled *The Oak at Flagey; or, The Oak of Vercingetorix*, linking the area of his own home to the ancient hero (fig. 6). The oak was a remnant of the primeval forest that marked the boundary between the Roman world and the Northern tribes, and a symbol of the archaic state of freedom that prevailed before submission to Roman rule.[20]

The Source

At several locations in this region, streams burst forth from mysterious cave-like openings in stone cliffs. Two of these sites were painted several times by Courbet, as *The Source of the Loue* and *The Source of the Lison*. One striking version of *The Source of the Loue* (1864, plate 2) was exhibited in Ghent in 1868. The fluid, rushing water is contrasted with the imperturbable, seemingly eternal stone cliffs. Different scales of time are inherent in the massive rock wall and the flowing water, a shape formed in geologic time contrasted with the very image of ephemerality. The origin of rivers was a popular theme, depicted in such allegorical paintings such as *The Source* of 1856 by J.-A.-D. Ingres (fig. 7). Courbet reversed Ingres's idealized neoclassical image with his own version, *The Source* (fig. 8). Instead of showing a slender adolescent pouring water from an urn as in Ingres's picture, Courbet shows us a fleshy mature woman seen from the back as she bathes in the stream, leaning into the small waterfall. She is absorbed in the sensuous communion with nature and its regenerative force. The woman's nude figure, which nearly fills the frame of the canvas and our vision, is the lightest area in the composition. The artist fetishizes both the viewer's gaze and the artist's sense of touch with her soft flesh. It is a realist transposition of the classical theme, and may have been a deliberate response to Ingres, whose painting *The Source* was exhibited at the Galerie Martinet in 1861. Both works feature the feminine form linked with nature, thus serving as the

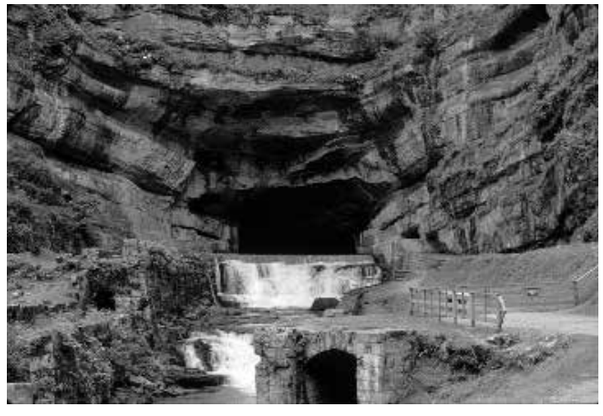
allegorical source of life and fertility. Courbet's sturdy nude literally touches the wellspring of nature, and bathes in it. She seems to actively enjoy the water, while Ingres's young model seems welded to her vase, frozen in eternity like a caryatid.

The Source of the Loue goes further in avoiding all historical or mythic imagery; it is simply the close-cropped image of a natural source of water. Courbet's tight framing and close focus on the void of the cave makes his work more abstract. He ignores the tall cliff and traces of human construction that mark the approach to the source (fig. 9). The parallel strokes of the brush and palette knife almost sculpt the image of the cliff wall. The shadowy tones at the center of the painting evoke Courbet's method of making his images emerge from the dark to the light.

6. Gustave Courbet, *The Oak of Flagey; or, The Oak of Vercingetorix*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 89 x 110 cm, Musée Courbet, Ornans.

7. J.-A.-D. Ingres, *The Source*, 1856. Oil on canvas, 163 cm x 80 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

8. Gustave Courbet, *The Source*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 120 x 74.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



9. The source of the Loue (photo by author).

Tourist Landscapes

Tourism was one of the markers of modernity in the nineteenth century. As the middle classes gained more leisure, and as roads and railroads improved, travel for the sake of tourism became an important industry.[21] Scholars Klaus Herding, Anne Wagner, and Petra ten-Doesschate Chu have analyzed Courbet's marketing strategy and exploitation of the tourist market in *The Rock of Bayard, Dinant* (figs. 10, 11).[22] This picturesque scene in Dinant represents the meeting of myth and history in the Belgian landscape. Named for the legendary giant horse Bayard who rescued three children from the soldiers of Charlemagne, splitting the rock when he jumped across the river, this dramatic rock formation was actually the result of the troops of Louis XIV blasting a clear road for their army in 1675. Courbet was probably attracted to the tension between the fable and reality as well as the dramatic geology. On one of his trips to Belgium, Courbet also painted a nearby rock formation on the Meuse river near Freyr in the Ardennes (this site has been definitively located by Jean-Philippe Huys). The glassy surface of the river reflects the steep escarpment; this is still a popular locale for recreational rock climbers. These two works are undated, but are generally considered to have been painted sometime between 1856–58. Dominique Marechal has unraveled much of the confusion about Courbet's trips to Belgium in his "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet" in the present volume.

Landscape evoked local identity in the nineteenth century; the physiognomy of a region was thought to reflect its national and cultural identity. The local characteristics of the terroir shape not only vineyards and food crops, but also the people. Klaus Herding notes that Courbet's depiction of scenes from the rural countryside could also be seen as a subtle form of resistance to the dominance of urban Paris.[23]

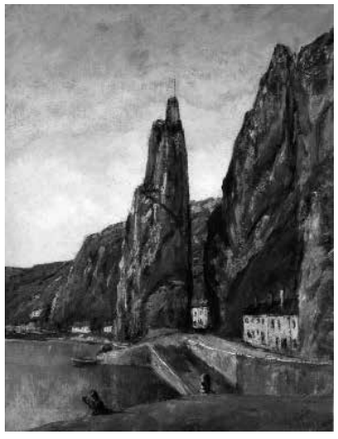
The Normandy coast was among the earliest national tourist sites in France, and fishing villages such as Étretat and Honfleur developed a thriving tourist industry after being popularized by artists and writers. Railroads made it possible for Parisians to come to the coast and enjoy holidays.[24] Courbet came to Étretat in 1869 and made fourteen paintings of the coast as well as dozens of studies of waves. The distinct rock formations are almost architectural, resembling arches or flying buttresses (figs. 12, 13). The sculptural appearance of these cliffs reminds one that Courbet's paintings were themselves carefully constructed.

Geology

Courbet's painting *The Roche-Pourrie,* the image of a collapsed sedimentary bed of rock, was commissioned by Jules Marcou, a leading French geologist (fig. 14).[25] It is a distinctive image of sedimentary rock from the Jurassic era, sheared by the effects of time, gravity, and tectonic forces. This landscape was a local landmark and also represents Courbet's awareness of the deep scale of time that shaped the natural environment. His paintings of Étretat, with their strikingly eroded cliffs, also reflect the powers of nature that sculpted the land over eons. Behind the collapsed rock formation a man-made bridge is visible. The landscape was not static or frozen in Courbet's landscapes, but rather dynamic and evolving. There was a generalized aware-

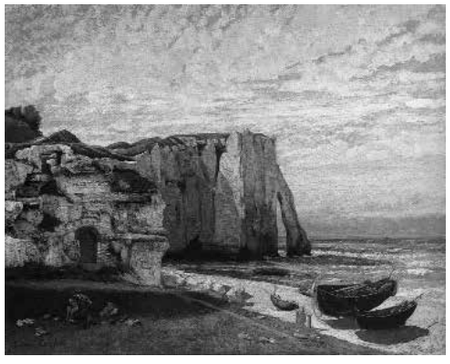
ness of evolutionary forces broadly held in scientific theory even before Darwin, and Courbet showed some knowledge of this, briefly joining a scientific society in his home region of Doubs.[26]

As evocative and realistic as these paintings are, they are not scientific illustrations. The drama suggested in these carefully chosen motifs relates them metaphorically to the human condition. One of the arches in the cliffs at Étretat is known as the Manneport, and the Rock of Bayard is connected to a medieval legend. The collapsed rock of *Roche-Pourrie* suggests an almost human frailty. Courbet stressed that he based his paintings on a clear perception of the purpose of each person and object: "I judge them at their true value; I recognize the real function for every being, and I thus managed to give a proper meaning to each in my paintings; I even make the stones think."[27] This quote from 1856 underscores the role of empathy and intuition that Courbet and his art require.



10. Gustave Courbet, *The Rock of Bayard, Dinant*, c. 1856–58. Oil on canvas, 54.9 x 45.7 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

11. The Rock of Bayard (photo by author).



12. Gustave Courbet, *Cliff at Étretat after a Storm*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 133 x 161.9 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

13. Cliff and Manneporte at Étretat (photo by author).

Waterfalls and Mills—Nature and Power

Many of Courbet's paintings depict landscapes that are shaped by human activity. As with John Constable, he blends an appreciation of the domestic landscape with a realistic view of labor and the human interaction with nature. His *Mill at Longeville* of 1868 is one of several paintings of mill buildings in the vicinity of Ornans (plate 33). His father owned one of these. The water rushing over the falls is not only a natural image, but a source of industrial power. Courbet had no reservations about exploiting natural resources; his scenes of hunting confirm this.

14. Gustave Courbet, *The Roche-Pourrie,* 1864. Oil on canvas, 60 x 73 cm, Musée Max-Claudet, Salins-les-Bains, held at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dole.

15. Gustave Courbet, *The Man Mad with Fear; or, The Suicide*, c. 1844–45. Oil on canvas, 60 x 50.5 cm, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo.

Hunting Scenes

As noted in the introduction and in Katherine Nahum's essay, *The Quarry* with its dogs and horn blower shows the hunter poised between nature and civilization. Courbet explained that "the hunter is a man of independent character who has a free spirit or at least the feeling for liberty. He's a wounded soul, a heart that goes to stir up its languor in the wasteland and the melancholy of woods."[28] His supposed self-portrait in *The Quarry* (1856–57, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) exemplifies his identification with the hunter.

Yet he also identified with the hunted animal; his many pictures of deer at rest in quiet refuges, or pursued by hounds and hunters reflect his sense of persecution, especially after his exile following the episode of the Paris Commune (as discussed in the introductory essay). He even noted that he could identify with *The Trout* he painted in 1872 (Kunsthaus, Zurich), after his shattering experience in St. Pélagie prison. He wrote ironically "I will write the following epitaph on the *Trout*: 'One sees that it is good to be in prison.'"[29] In fact, it is inscribed "in vinculis faciebat" ("made in bondage") and post-dated 1871 by the artist to commemorate his imprisonment.[30]

The Covert of Roe Deer at the Stream of Plaisir-Fontaine (1866, plate 15) is one example of deer at peace in nature. His scene of the *Jura Landscape* of 1869 from the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design is another (plate 39). Deer bring sentience to the forest, populating it with emotional surrogates and adding a graceful presence. Seemingly minor features, they signify purity

and the richness of nature, beautiful in themselves and an elegant bounty for the hunter. Easily overlooked, a deer pauses at the river's edge in *Stream in the Forest* (fig. 4). Although Courbet often depicts the fatal aftermath of the hunt with unflinching realism, he also portrayed the beauty and nobility of animals.

The Sublime

Traditional categories of landscape painting included the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime. Edmund Burke described the sublime in the eighteenth century: "Astonishment…is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect."[31] Immanuel Kant added that "Nature is…sublime in those of its phenomena whose intuition brings with it the idea of its infinity."[32] This would include natural sites such as the vast ocean, the starry sky, and mountains. Vastness and height can also lead to vertigo, a paralyzing fear of falling into the abyss. Courbet portrayed such fear in his self-portrait *The Man Mad with Fear* (fig. 15). The psychological causes for such panic can range from a rational fear of danger on the edge of a great height to a myriad of psychological anxieties.[33]

The polar opposite of this image of panic at the edge of the cliff is found in the self-portrait titled *The Seaside at Palavas* (fig. 16). Courbet brashly doffs his hat and salutes the sea, greeting it as one icon of the sublime to another. This was Courbet's first painting of the sea, created on a visit to the south of France to see his patron Alfred Bruyas. His exuberant pose expresses joy at seeing the Mediterranean first-hand. It was a new experience for the artist born near the Alps, and he greeted it with pleasure.

The waves of the sea are ceaseless, rhythmic, but unpredictable. Wave patterns have been recently studied in terms of chaos theory, but of course that science was not available in the nineteenth century.[34] To use references that were current in Courbet's era, waves could be seen as a symbol of eternity and even fate; in 1857 Victor Hugo drew a large breaking wave that he titled *My Destiny* (Musée Victor Hugo, Paris). Courbet painted a series of wave paintings in 1869 on the Normandy coast. These rolling breakers have been criticized as unrealistic, and while they do owe something to the influence of Hokusai's famous print *The Great Wave* (1832), his close-cropped images exemplify careful observation (fig. 17).[35] The rich impasto of his paint adds a frothy splash of temporality to the frozen curl of water, and

16. Gustave Courbet, *The Seaside at Palavas,* 1854. Oil on canvas, 27 x 46 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

17. Gustave Courbet, *The Wave*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 65.4 x 88.7 cm, Brooklyn Museum.

18. Waves, Plum Island, MA (photo by author).

19. Gustave Courbet, *The Waterspout*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 68.9 x 99.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

the translucency of the green melds the water with light. The ephemeral wave is given a solid form, as if captured in a photographic instant (fig. 18).

Waves were often seen as reflective of human moods and emotion, especially by romantic poets and critics who were unfazed by what would be called the "pathetic fallacy," the impossibility of reading human intentions into natural phenomena. Courbet's seascapes avoid this, and he seldom portrayed the social aspect of the seaside beaches.[36] He did, however, enjoy the spectacle of a dramatic sunset or storm at sea, as in *The Waterspout* of 1870 (fig. 19). The sea is an image of power, implacable and irresistible. Courbet's technique of using the palette knife was well suited to suggest the image of breaking waves and surging waterspouts.

The brave sailors who ventured onto the ocean literally bet their lives on their skill. Long ago, Lorenz Eitner noted that the "storm-tossed" boat was a powerful symbol of the fragility of life.[37] Courbet's painting *The Sailboat (Seascape)* of 1873 (plate 42) exemplifies this. The vagaries of fate may have seemed especially relevant to Courbet at that time, when he had been forced into exile in Switzerland. His several depictions of the *Château de Chillon* (1873, plate 43) in Switzerland combine a castle, which denotes refuge and security, with the awesome splendor of the Alps—another typical image of the sublime.

Landscape had always played a large role in Courbet's art, especially after 1857. During his final exile in Switzerland, he was even less inclined to paint figures. The American Moncure Conway visited Courbet in Switzerland in the winter of 1873 to select a picture for Judge Hoadly, future governor of Ohio, and admired his mountain and lake paintings, but found them "powerful, but with a somber tone." When he requested a picture with a figure in it, Courbet replied that "I cannot insert a figure in the presence of these grand mountains. It would belittle them. And, indeed, since I left Ornans I have had no heart to paint human figures."[38]

Anthropomorphic Landscapes

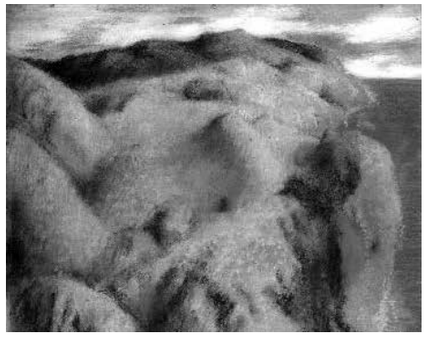
Landscape provided a refuge for Courbet in this late phase of his career. The link between the land and the human form persisted in his art, emerging in surprising ways. Parallels between landscape forms and the human body have long been recognized, and his paintings of the hills and clefts of the landscape at Ornans and the cavern of *The Source*

of the Loue (1864, plate 2) have been seen by some as anthropomorphic images.[39] While the tendency to see faces in rocks, clouds, or paint can be the sign of an overly active imagination, some of Courbet's paintings undeniably reveal concealed human physiognomy. Perhaps the most striking of these is *The Giant of Saillon* (fig. 20). At the left of the canvas one is startled to see the rock formation resolve into the profile of a large human head, facing right and with water flowing from his open mouth. Other faces may lurk in the shadows. This is based on an actual rock formation near the town of Saillon in Switzerland, a country that had long attracted tourists and was particularly popular with the English.[40]

20. Gustave Courbet, *The Giant of Saillon; or, Fantastic Landscape with Anthropomorphic Rocks*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 93.3 x 87 cm, Musée de Picardie, Amiens.

Anthropomorphic images were often found in Renaissance and baroque art, where they reflected contemporary thinking about chance and design. Artists such as Andrea Mantegna and Albrecht Dürer introduced human forms into their landscapes.[41] This tendency to see resemblances between natural forms was noted in antiquity, and even seems to have shaped the creation of some paleolithic cave art. Sometimes it took only a few marks or additional lines to make the resemblance complete. Renaissance art theory explicitly recognized the easy leap from forms created by nature to artistic perception.[42] The Italian artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo made a specialty of such visual puns, and we find many in the works of Pieter Brueghel and Hieronymus Bosch. There are other notable examples in the art of the Netherlands. A pastoral landscape by an unknown painter in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium is a delightful example of this genre, with such witty details as trees and shrubs which form a beard and tousled hair on the human figure (fig. 21). Even such a realist as Edgar Degas turned a seaside landscape into the figure of a nude woman seen from the side as she lies on her back with her hair cascading over the cliff in a late pastel titled *Steep Coast* (fig. 22).[43] Such double images and metamorphoses were to become the particular specialty of Salvador Dali in the twentieth century.

21. Artist unknown, *Anthropomorphic Landscape with the Head of a Man*, c. 1550–1600. Oil on panel, 50.5 x 65.5 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels.



22. Edgar Degas, *Steep Coast*, 1890–92. Pastel, 42 x 55 cm, private collection.

The Legacy of Courbet's Landscapes

Courbet brought a new vitality and fresh approach to landscape painting, with a technique that embodied a fusion of vision and imagination. His many landscapes map his attachment to his native region in France, and provide a record of his travels in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. Each canvas also provides a physical record of his observations and his experiments in how to craft a work of art based on his vision. Realism, in the end, requires abstraction to make a painting.

Belgian artists were quick to emulate Courbet's style; Louis Dubois was particularly skilled. His paintings *The Heights of Beez near Namur* (1861, plate 17) and *The Cloud* (1874, plate 18) depict the Belgian countryside with the solidity and freshness of Courbet's landscapes. This is also seen in Louis Artan de Saint-Martin's coastal scene *Winter in Berck* (1874, plate 19).

Most nineteenth-century American commentators praised Courbet's landscape paintings as his best work.[44] Courbet's paintings inspired American artists, who were struggling to balance emulation of European old masters with direct observation.[45] He inspired them to paint boldly, with more assertive and visible brushstrokes and careful attention to light.

Courbet's landscapes record the places and themes that were professionally and personally important to him; his travels and choice of subjects can be used to map his career in a broad sense. His innovative painting style left visible traces of the physical movements of his brush and palette knife, reflecting the construction of the physical object of the work of art. These marks on the canvas are beautiful in their own right, and also allow the viewer to interpret them as the representation of the artist's subjective view of nature, the "corner of nature viewed through a temperament," in Zola's terms.[46] Courbet's paintings thus can be said to map realism in terms of geography as well as his visual and artistic perceptions. His legacy can be mapped through the works of the artists he influenced. Whether created in the studio or in the open air, Courbet's landscapes simultaneously reflect many dimensions, both inside and out.

1 See "Courbet: Mapping Realism," 11–12 in this volume for more on *The Painter's Studio.*

2 Klaus Herding, *Courbet: To Venture Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 70.

3 Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, Nov.–Dec. 1854, in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 54-8/133.

4 Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Lucy Norton (London: Phaidon, 1995), Aug. 3, 1855/308–9.

5 Mary Morton and Charlotte Eyerman, eds., *Courbet and the Modern Landscape*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 1.

6 Herding, *Courbet: To Venture Independence*, 64.

7 Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 183–91.

8 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Biggs and Cottle for T. N. Longman, 1798), 207.

9 See Andrew Wilton, *The Art of Alexander and John Robert Cozens* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1980). Also, Joshua C. Taylor, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 62–71.

10 Aaron Sheon, "Courbet, French Realism, and the Discovery of the Unconscious," *Arts Magazine* 55, no. 6 (Feb. 1981): 114–28; see also Sheon, "Courbet, le réalisme français et la découverte de l'inconscient," in *L'âme au corps: Arts et sciences, 1793–1993*, ed. Jean Clair, exh. cat. (Paris: Gallimard/Electra, 1993).

11 Emile Zola, Salon Review, 1866: "The definition of a work of art cannot be other than this; a work of art is a corner of the universe viewed through a temperament." Quoted in Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, ed., *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: A Documentary History of Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 387–88.

12 Herding, *Courbet: To Venture Independence*, 114.

13 "II poursuit l'harmonie en marchant par degrés de l'ombre la plus forte à la lumière la plus vive, et il appelle sa dernière touche: *'Ma dominante.'* Suivez, dit-il, cette comparaison: 'Nous sommes enveloppés par le crépuscule du matin, avant les premières lueurs de l'aube: les objets sont à peine perceptibles dans l'espace; le soleil se lève: leurs formes se dessinent sensiblement; le soleil monte: elles s'illuminent par degrés et s'accusent enfin en toute plénitude. Eh bien, je procède dans mes tableaux, comme le soleil agit dans la nature.'" Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants* (Paris: E. Blanchard, 1856), 270 (author's translation).

14 Max Claudet, quoted by Werner Hofmann, "Courbets Wirklichkeiten," in *Courbet und Deutschland*, ed. Werner Hofmann and Klaus Herding, exh. cat. (Hamburg: Hamburger Kunsthalle; Frankfurt: Städel Museum, 1978), 609. Original German text: "Es Sie, daß meine Leinwand schwarz ist. Ohne die Sonne ist die Natur schwarz und dunkel. Ich mache es wie das Licht, ich beleuchte die hervortretenden Punkte und das Bild ist fertig" (author's translation).

15 See Robert Herbert, "Method and Meaning in Monet," *Art in America* 67, no. 5 (Sept. 1979): 90–108, and also Richard Schiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*: *A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

16 Courbet, quoted by Edgar Monteil in Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906), 255. "Pour peindre un pays, il faut le connaître. Moi, je connais mon pays, je le peins."

17 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "It Took Millions of Years to Compose that Picture," in *Courbet Reconsidered*, ed. Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 55–66.

18 Charles Stuckey, "Gustave Courbet's *Château d'Ornans*," *Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin* 60 (1971–73): 26–37, http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/94238/gustave-courbet-s-chateau-d-ornans.

19 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "The Purposeful Sightseer: Courbet and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tourism," in *Papers from the Symposium "Looking at the Landscapes: Courbet and Modernism" Held at the J. Paul Getty Museum on March 18, 2006,* 10, http://www.getty.edu/museum/symposia/courbet_modernism.html.

20 This painting was purchased from the artist's sister Juliette Courbet in 1896 by the American banker Henry C. Gibson, who donated it to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. The Philadelphia institution sold it in 1987, and it was acquired by the Japanese collector Michimasa Murauchi. In 2012, his private museum put it on the market, and after intensive fundraising, it was purchased for the newly expanded Musée Courbet in Ornans.

21 Chu, "The Purposeful Sightseer," 1–16. See also Greg M. Thomas, "The Topographical Aesthetic in French Tourism and Landscape," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 1 (Spring 2002), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring02/198-the-topographical-aesthetic-in-french-tourism-and-landscape.

22 Anne M. Wagner, "Courbet's Landscapes and Their Market," *Art History*, no. 4 (Dec. 1981): 410–31; and Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "Packaging and Marketing Nature," chap. 6 in *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 138–69.

23 Klaus Herding, "Equality and Authority in Courbet's Landscape Paintings," chap. 4 in *Courbet: To Venture Independence,* 62–98.

24 Robert Herbert, *Impressionism, Art, Leisure and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 265–302. See also Robert Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast: Tourism and Painting, 1867–1886* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

25 Chu, "It Took Millions of Years," 58–59.

26 Chu notes that Courbet belonged for one year to a local scientific society, the Société d'émulation du Doubs; ibid., 58.

27 Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants* (Paris: E. Blanchard, 1856), 246. Thanks to Jean-Philippe Huys and Dominique Marechal for their help in translation. The original text: "Moi, je les juge à leur juste valeur; je reconnais à tout être sa fonction réelle, et je suis ainsi arrive à donner une signification juste à chacun dans mes tableaux; je fais même penser les pierres."

28 Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet: His Life and Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 194; Lindsay is quoting from Pierre Courthion, *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1948–50), 2:39.

29 Letter to Edouard Pasteur, Feb. 20, 1873, Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 73-16/486

30 Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet Reconsidered,* 200.

31 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; Basel: J. J. Tourneisen, 1792), 80.

32 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment: Part One*, trans. James Creed Meredith (1790; Stilwell: Digireads, 2005), 59.

33 See Bryan Jay Wolf, "Thomas Cole and the Creation of a Romantic Sublime," chap. 5 in *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 177–236.

34 James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987).

35 Linda Nochlin, "Courbet and His Territory: How Landscape Means," in *Courbet* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 202–3.

36 Dominique de Font-Réaulx, "Parallel Lines: Gustave Courbet's 'Paysages de Mer' and Gustave Le Gray's Seascapes, 1856–70," in *"Looking at the Landscapes*," 42.

37 Lorenz Eitner, "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," *Art Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (Dec. 1955):

281–90.

38 Moncure D. Conway, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure D. Conway*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 276. Also quoted in Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, 73-13/483n2.

39 See Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 209–14, for an overview of the literature on the parallels between Courbet's landscapes and body imagery. Also, Dario Gamboni, "Des grains de beauté: Anthropomorphes bei Courbet," in *Psychische Energien Bildender Kunst: Festschrift Klaus Herding*, ed. Henry Keazor (Cologne: Dumont, 2002), 116–37.

40 Ségolène Le Men, *Courbet* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2008), 254.

41 The classic study is H. W. Janson, "The 'Image Made by Chance' in Renaissance Thought," in *Sixteen Studies* (New York: Abrams, 1973), 55–74.

42 Ibid., 55. In the opening sentences of Leon Battista Alberti's *De Statua* (1436) he wrote: "Those [who were inclined to express and represent… the bodies brought forth by nature] would at times observe in tree trunks, clumps of earth, or other objects of this sort certain outlines (*lineamenta*) which through some slight changes could be made to resemble a natural shape. They thereupon took thought and tried, by adding or taking away here and there, to render the resemblance complete."

43 Richard Kendall, *Degas Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 216–20.

44 Clara Erskine Clement and Laurence Hutton, *Artists of the Nineteenth Century and Their Works: A Handbook Containing Two Thousand and Fifty Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879), 164.

45 Joshua C. Taylor, *The Fine Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 52–88.

46 See note 11.

Plates

All photographs are courtesy of the lenders with additional acknowledgments below.

Michael Agee (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA): 42; Art Resource (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York): 38; Kerry Burke (Boston College): 28, 29, 31, 37, 47; J. Geleyns/Ro scan (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels): 1–11, 14, 15, 17–19; Erik Gould (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence): 39; Grafisch Buro Lefevre, Heule (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels): 16; Photo d'art Speltdoorn & Fils (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels): 12, 13; Sotheby's, Inc.: 33; David Stansbury (Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA): 26, 43; William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI: 23, 25, 30, 48.

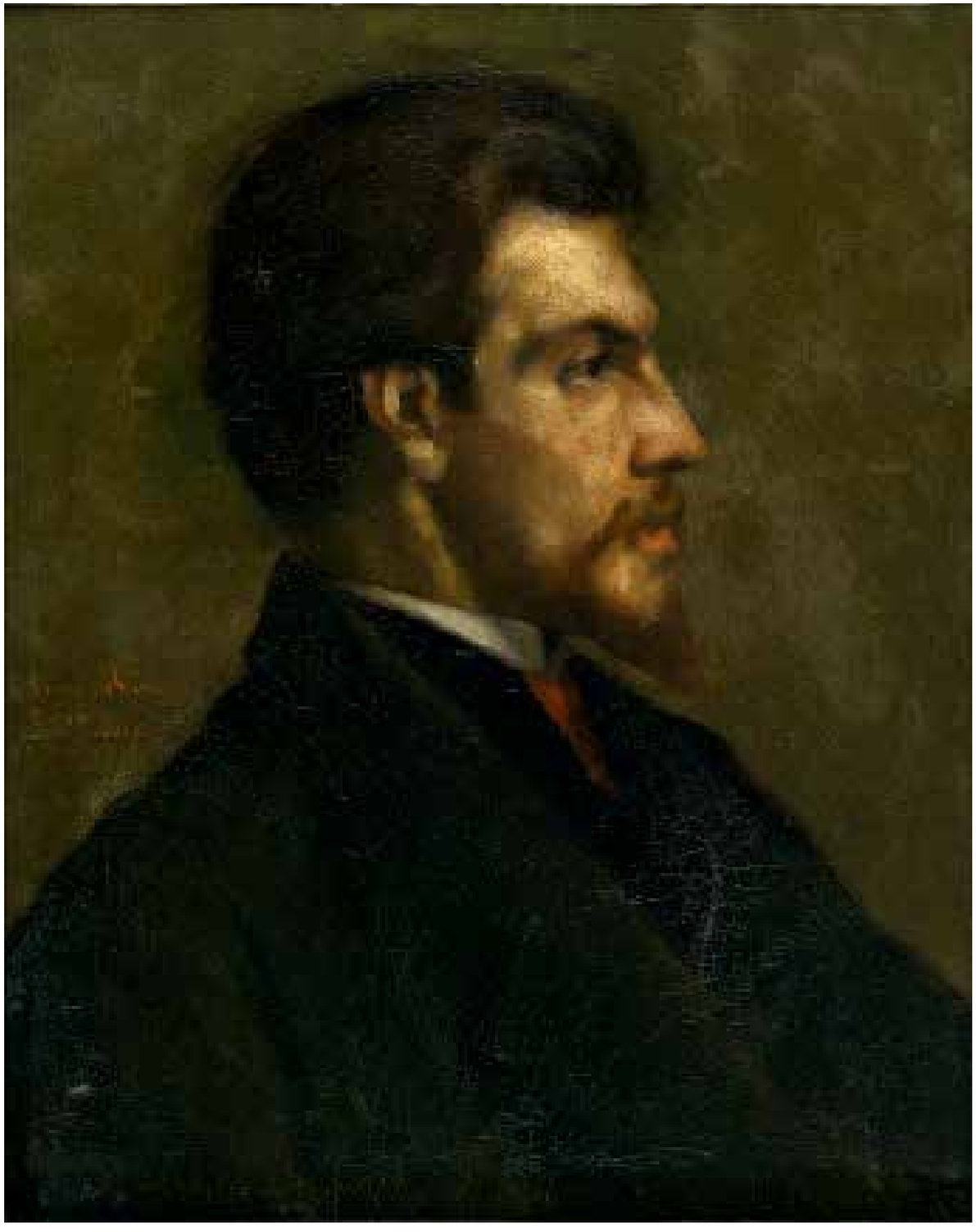
I. Courbet and Belgium

1. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Landscape at Ornans*, c. 1855
Oil on canvas, 42 x 55.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4009)

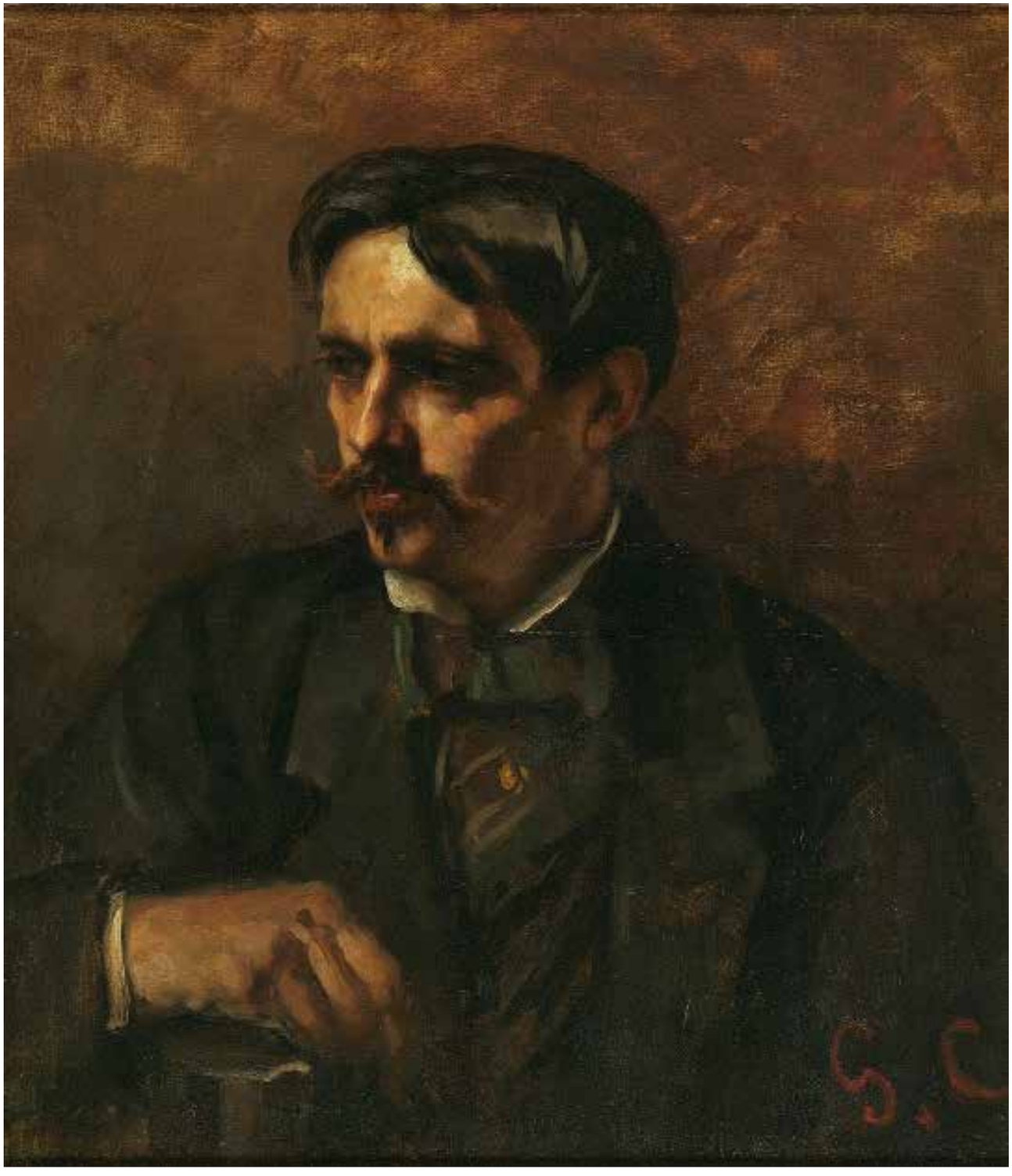
2. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Source of the Loue*, 1864
Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 5030)

3. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Signora Adela Guerrero, Spanish Dancer*, 1851
Oil on canvas, 158 x 158 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 6416)

4. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Portrait of Madame Léon Fontaine, née Laure Janné*, 1856–57
Oil on canvas, 92 x 75.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 3467)



5. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *Portrait of Painter Théodore Baron*, c. 1876–78
Oil on canvas, 57 x 46.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4109)



6. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Portrait of Painter Alfred Stevens*, c. 1861
Oil on canvas, 65 x 57.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 3191)

7. Alfred Stevens (1823–1906), Preparatory drawing for *Panorama of the Century with Artists of the Second Empire. Group with Millet, Daubigny, Corot, Fromentin, Courbet […]*, 1889
Pencil on paper, 50 x 52.3 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 11668)

8. Alfred Stevens (1823–1906), *The Sick Musician*, 1852
Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4305)

9. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *Woman with Bouquet*, 1854–55
Oil on canvas, 131 x 101 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4143)

10. Joseph Stevens (1816–92), *Brussels, Morning*, 1848
Oil on canvas, 139.5 x 190 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 2625)

11. Gustave Léonard de Jonghe (1829–93), *Pilgrims Praying to Our Lady of the Afflicted; or, Our Lady of Mercy*, 1854
Oil on canvas, 199 x 140 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 3228)

12. Charles de Groux (1825–70), *The Paupers' Bench*, 1854
Oil on canvas, 137 x 102 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4843)

13. Charles de Groux (1825–70), *The Parting*, c. 1869
Oil on canvas, 69 x 81 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4297)

14. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *Roulette*, 1860
Oil on canvas, 153 x 124.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 6337)

15. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Covert of Roe Deer at the Stream of Plaisir-Fontaine,* 1866
Oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 6360)

16. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *The Dead Deer—Solitude*, 1863
Oil on canvas, 135 x 248 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 3384)

17. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *The Heights of Beez near Namur*, 1861
Oil on canvas, 91 x 140 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 3772)

18. Louis Dubois (1830–80), *The Cloud*, 1874
Oil on canvas, 38 x 46 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 4200)

19. Louis Artan de Saint-Martin (1837–90), *Winter in Berck*, 1874
Oil on canvas, 38 x 59 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (inv. 6503)

II. Courbet and America

20. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Woman with Mirror*, c. 1860
Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 54 cm
Private collection

21. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Reclining Nude*, c. 1840–41
Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 104.7 x 143.5 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Gift of Mrs. Samuel Parkman Oliver (57.702)

22. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Woman Bending Down Branch (Study for Cornelius Vanderbilt II House, New York)*, c. 1881
Oil on canvas, 54.6 x 27.9 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; William Sturgis Bigelow Collection (26.769)

23. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Female Figure in White. Landscape Background; Mid-Day*, 1863
Oil on panel, 17.1 x 22.9 cm
Private collection, courtesy of William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

24. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Water Lilies in a White Bowl, with Red Table-Cover*, 1859
Oil on board, 24.1 x 31.8 cm
William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

25. Elizabeth Boott Duveneck (1846–88), *Autumn Leaves*, c. 1880–85
Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 53.3 cm
Private collection

26. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Portrait of Monsieur Nodler, the Younger*, 1865
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 72.4 cm
Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA; James Philip Gray Collection (54.03)

27. John La Farge (1835–1910), *A Boy and His Dog (Dickey Hunt)*, 1868–69
Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 86.4 cm
Thomas Colville Fine Art, Guilford, CT

28. William Morris Hunt (1824–79), *The Tragedian*, 1878
Oil on canvas, 66 x 50.1 cm
Private collection, courtesy of William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

29. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Portrait of Margaret Mason Perry La Farge*, c. 1860
Oil on canvas, 40.6 x 33 cm
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College; Gift of William Vareika (2004.4)

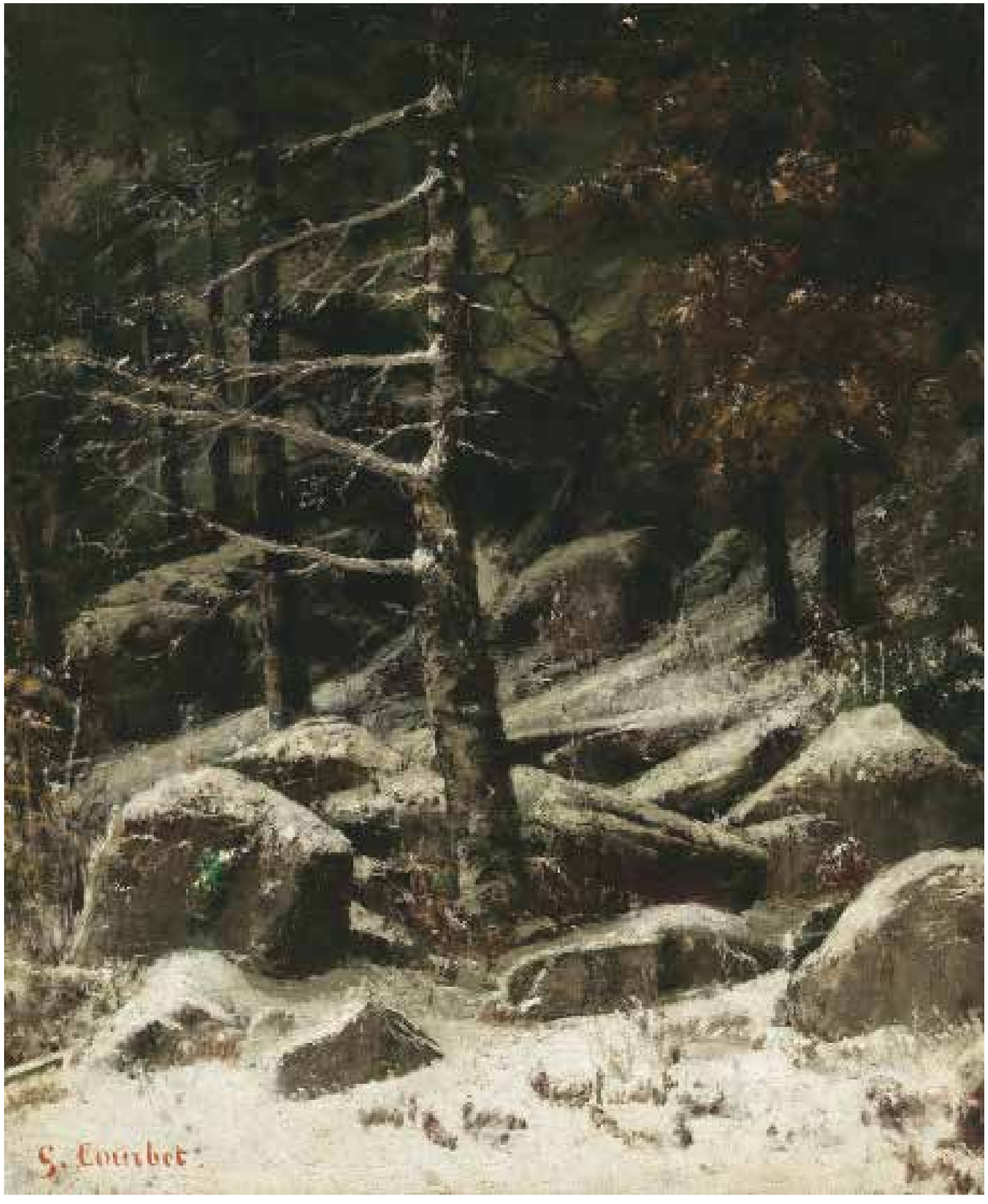
30. William Morris Hunt (1824–79), *Woman Knitting and Cow (Fontainebleau)*, 1860
Oil on panel, 31.2 x 23.6 cm
Private collection, courtesy of William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

31. Elihu Vedder (1836–1923), *Peasant Girl Spinning*, c. 1867
Oil on canvas, 29 x 34.3 cm
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College (1988.83)

32. Eastman Johnson (1824–1906), *Winnowing Grain*, c. 1873–79
Oil on composition board, 39.4 x 33.3 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Bequest of Martha C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815–65 (48.436)

33. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Mill at Longeville*, 1868
Oil on canvas, 80 x 128 cm
Private collection

34. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *A View across a River*, c. 1855
Oil on canvas, 46 x 56 cm
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (P3w16)



35. Workshop of Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Wooded Hillside in Winter*, 1876
Oil on canvas, 54.6 x 45.1 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Seth K. Sweetser Fund (24.454)

36. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Winter Landscape*, c. 1864–68
Oil on canvas, 71.5 x 87 cm
Private collection

37. John Joseph Enneking (1841–1916), *White Mountain Stream*, c. 1871
Oil on canvas, 59.2 x 35.8 cm
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College (1988.66)

38. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Hidden Brook*, 1865
Oil on canvas, 59.4 x 75.6 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Collection of James Stillman, Gift of Dr. Ernest G. Stillman, 1922 (22.16.13)

39. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Jura Landscape*, 1869
Oil on canvas, 59.7 x 73.3 cm
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; Museum Appropriation Fund, by exchange and Walter H. Kimbell Fund (43.571)

40. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Glen at Ornans*, 1866
Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 65.4 cm
Yale University Art Gallery; Gift of Duncan Phillips, BA 1908 (1939.270)

41. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Wooded Interior*, 1864
Oil on panel, 24.8 x 30.5 cm
William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

42. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *The Sailboat (Seascape)*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 64.3 cm
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA (1955.690)

43. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Château de Chillon*, 1873
Oil on canvas, 87 x 114.3 cm
Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA; James Philip Gray Collection (47.10)

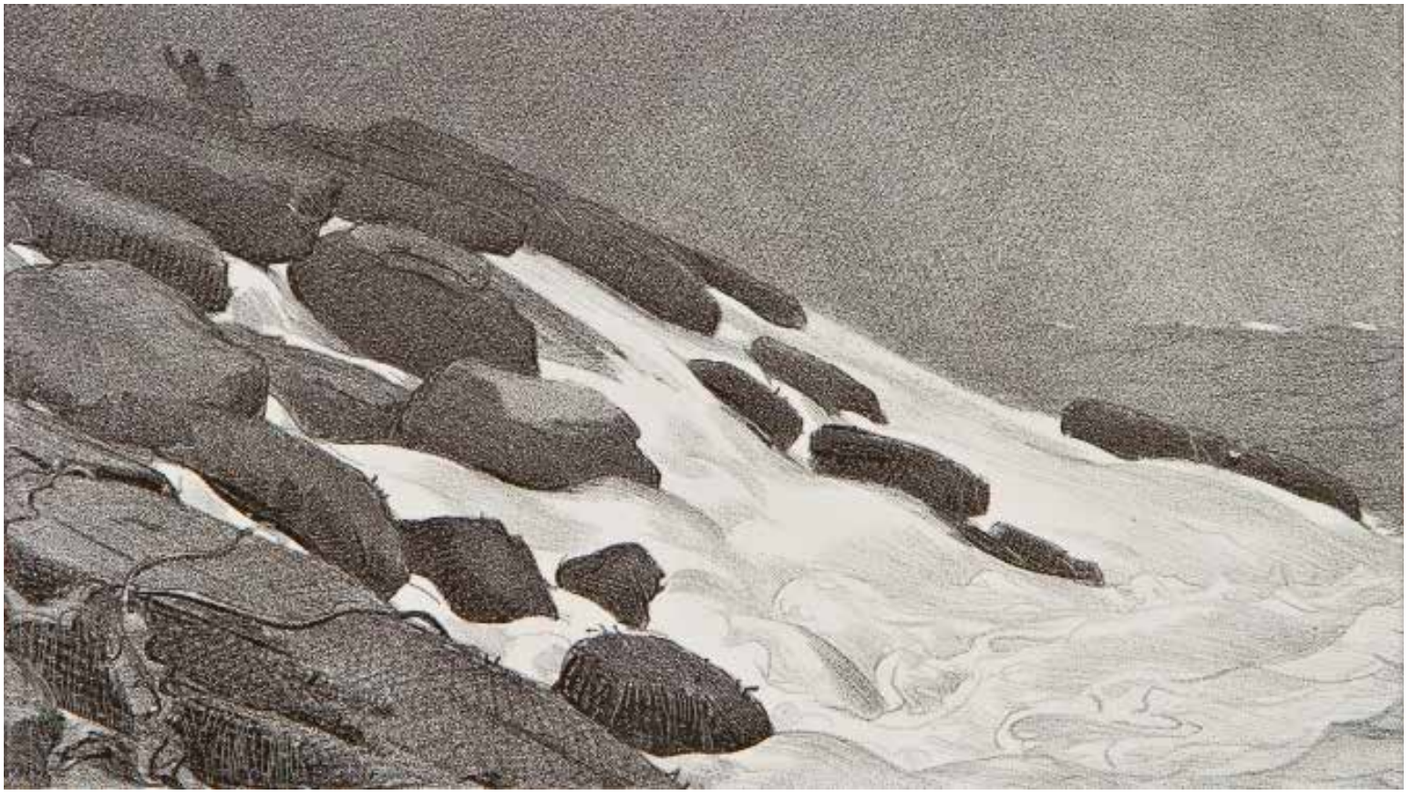
44. Thomas Robinson (1834–88), *Sunset*, c. 1878–79
Oil on canvas, 61.6 x 74.3 cm
William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

45. Martin Johnson Heade (1819–1904), *Coast of Newport*, 1874
Oil on canvas, 129.5 x 182.9 cm
William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

46. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Sea and Rocks near Spouting Horn*, 1859
Oil on panel, 24.1 x 31.8 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Robert Jordan Fund and Gift of Rebekah A. Taube in memory of Moses Alpers (1986.1016)

47. John La Farge (1835–1910), *Rocks—Newport Landscape (Brenton's Cove)*, c. 1866
Oil on board, 22.2 x 30.5 cm
Private collection, courtesy of William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

48. Edward Mitchell Bannister (c. 1828–1901), *The Palmer River*, 1885
Oil on canvas, 61 x 86.4 cm
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Mechnig



49. Winslow Homer (1836–1910), *Sea and Rocks at Prouts Neck*, 1895
Lithograph, 10.2 x 17.8 cm
William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, RI

Contributors

CLAUDE CERNUSCHI is a professor of art history at Boston College. He has authored *Jackson Pollock: "Psychoanalytic" Drawings* (1992); *Jackson Pollock: Meaning and Significance* (1993); *"Not an Illustration but the Equivalent": A Cognitive Approach to Abstract Expressionism* (1997); *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (2002); and *Barnett Newman and Heideggerian Philosophy* (2012). He has contributed essays to *Oskar Kokoschka: Early Portraits from Vienna and Berlin* (2002); *Birth of the Modern: Style and Identity in Vienna 1900* (2011); and the following McMullen Museum publications: *Edvard Munch: Psyche, Symbol and Expression* (2001); *Matta: Making the Invisible Visible* (2004); *Cosmophilia: Islamic Art from the David Collection* (2006); *A New Key: Modern Belgian Art from the Simon Collection* (2007); *Pollock Matters* (2007); *Mystic Masque: Semblance and Reality in Georges Rouault* (2008); and *Paul Klee: Philosophical Vision; From Nature to Art* (2012).

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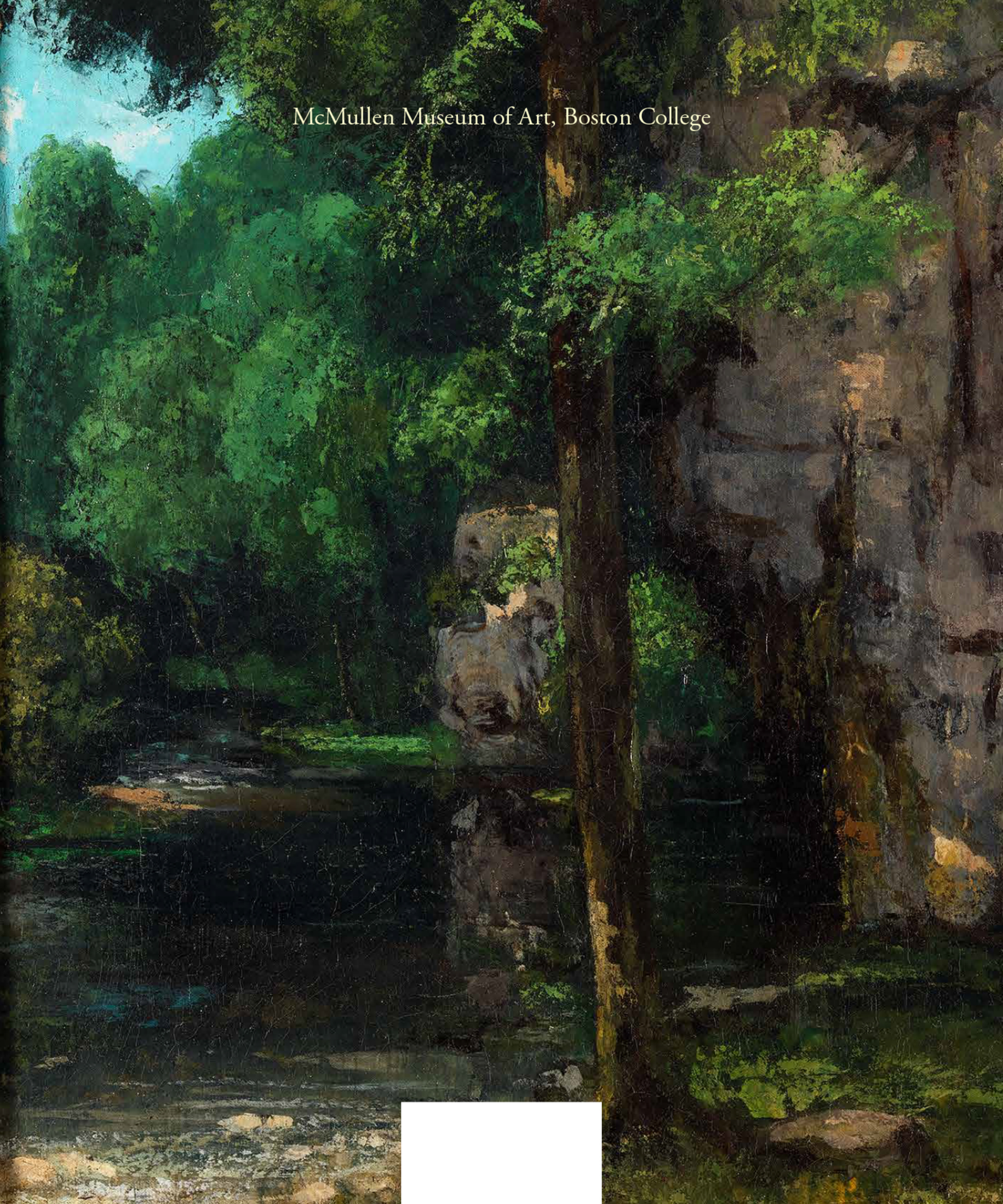

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