BEHIND THE BAR AT THE FOLIES-BERGERE

A Thesis

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by
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................ ii

VITA ......................................................... iii

LIST OF PLATES ............................................. v

INTRODUCTION ............................................. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION 55

NOTES 59

PLATES 68

BIBLIOGRAPHY 116
LIST OF PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLATES</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1881-82. Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Aux Folies-Bergère, Jules Cheret, poster, 1875. Musée de la Publicité, Paris.</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Le Jardin des Folies-Bergère, lithograph, 1878. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Folies-Bergère, Jules Cheret, poster, 1879.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Théâtre des Folies-Bergère, Barclay, 1875. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. At the Café, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1878. Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Folies-Bergère -- Miss Leona Dare, Jules Chéret, poster.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Mlle. La La at the Cirque Fernando, Edgar Degas, oil on canvas, 1879. The National Gallery, London.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Jeune femme accoudée, Edouard Manet, pastel, 1881. Hecht Collection, Paris.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. La Jeune fille à la pellerine, Edouard Manet, pastel, 1881. Private collection, Paris.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Corner in a Café-Concert, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1878-79. The National Gallery, London.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. Au Paradis, Edouard Manet, 1880.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
XIII. Quatre spectateurs, Edouard Manet, 1880. Edouard Manet, 1878.


XVII. He Wants to Marry Me ... the Scoundrel! Henry Monnier, lithograph, 1829. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.


XIX. The Street Singer, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, ca. 1862. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.


XXI. Woman with a Parrot, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1866. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

XXII. Before the Mirror, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1876. S. R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.


XXVIII. Nana, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1877. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.


XXX. La Dame de café, lithograph. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.


XXXIV. Spring, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1881. Private collection.

XXXV. Autumn, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1881. Musée des Beaux Arts, Nancy.


XXXVII. Une Marchande de consolation aux Folies-Bergère, Stop, wood engraving, Le Journal Amusant, 27 May 1882.

XXXVIII. Consommateurs de cognac et de fine-champagne, Le Monde Illustré, 29 December, 1877.

XL. Portrait of Zacharie Astruc, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1866. Kunsthalle, Bremen.

XLI. Café-concert, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1878. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

XLII. Las Meninas, Diego Velasquez, oil on canvas, 1656. Prado, Madrid.

XLIII. Self Portrait, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1879. Private collection.

XLIV. Study for A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1881. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

XLV. Le Vieux musicien, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1862. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.


XLVII. The Balcony, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1868. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

XLVIII. The Railroad, Edouard Manet, oil on canvas, 1872-73. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
INTRODUCTION

Edouard Manet's last great painting, Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère, (Plate 1) has, like most of his major works, been subject to a variety of interpretations since the time it was first exhibited, at the Salon of 1882. Interpretations developed thus far have been incomplete, and some are inconsistent with the known facts about the artist, his work, and the world in which he lived. The usual obstacles have stood in the way of a complete and correct comprehension of Manet's art in general. It was too radical to be understood by the critics of the artist's own day, and while subsequent generations of critics have the advantage of the long view of history, they have naturally lost that of a thorough knowledge of the social context in which Manet's art was produced. Fortunately, recent scholarship has restored some of that knowledge to us. This information has helped to bring forth some plausible theses concerning the meaning of the Bar. Thus far, however, interpretations have been limited to one approach or another with none of them taking into account all aspects of the painting in the context of Manet's oeuvre, his life, and his times. The seemingly enigmatic nature of the painting has allowed formalist art historians and critics to
see nothing but formal issues as being addressed by Manet in the Bar. Others have viewed the work strictly from the perspective of social class analysis or as an expression of the universal duality of nature, with virtually no attention to the specific context in which Manet's realist statement of that duality was developed. Still others have suggested potential sources of inspiration for Manet's overt subject matter and imagery in popular illustration of the day, but have not fully analyzed the deeper implications of the painting.¹ Each has made important contributions to unraveling the mystery of the Bar's meaning, yet no single publication to date takes into consideration all aspects of the work's possible meaning in a comprehensive and objective fashion.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the significant contributions of these approaches and to propose a complete, cohesive, and relatively unbiased interpretation of one of Manet's most intriguing paintings.

First, this introduction will characterize the purely formalist reading of Manet's work in general which prevailed for so many years and will demonstrate the inadequacy of it. Building on the premise that the artist's paintings are indeed imbued with significance created through but not limited to their formal qualities, the remaining chapters are devoted to exploration of the precise meaning of the Bar in particular.

That exploration begins with a description of what Manet might have actually seen at the Folies-Bergère in 1881,
when he was formulating his ideas and making his preparatory sketches for the painting. Facts about the location of the scene portrayed, its history, its physical layout and attractions, its habitués and reputation will be presented, and each known character in the painting will be introduced.

The situation of Suzon, the protagonist of the scene, will be examined in the context of nineteenth-century attitudes toward the modern Parisienne, conditioned by and reflected in popular illustration and contemporaneous books and journals. It will be demonstrated that the various types of attractive, elegant, and "available" women, from grisettes to lorettes to demi-mondaines were seen as part of modern Paris's unique identity, symbolic of its attributes. Within that general framework, the stereotype of the women who tended counters in cafés and café-concerts will be defined. Manet's use of these various types of women as symbols will be shown to be highly biographical in nature, based on circumstances of the lives of particular individuals who at the same time represented generic types recognizable to Parisians of his day.

Based on nineteenth-century stereotypes established in the popular press, the story of Manet's barmaid will be seen to be one of prostitution. While this assertion has been made by others, the remainder of my interpretation of the Bar will be, in large part, new. Through examination of works by Manet as well as those of contemporaneous illustrators and
writers, I will support the theory that there is in fact a narrative taking place in the Bar and that the narrative and the formal means used to create it are inseparable. The perspectival inconsistencies of the painting will be shown as not only intentional but absolutely necessary to its meaning. The narrative quality, the subject matter dealt with, and the spatial ambiguities in the painting will be shown to be consistent with Manet's earlier work.

While social history plays a major role in the development of an interpretation, the final authority must rest with the work itself. Manet left us virtually no commentary of his own concerning the meaning of his art, but he did make a statement which has been used as a guiding principle in this study. "I should be seen whole," he said to Antonin Proust, "don't let me go into the public collections piecemeal. I'd be misjudged."\(^2\) In order to avoid misjudgment, the Bar will be considered not only in its social context, but in the context of Manet's oeuvre. As will be shown, this painting is not a radical departure from what came before it, but rather the culmination of the work that led to it. In the Bar, Manet took ideas which he had developed over two decades to a new level of expression through innovative formal means which had also been evolving over the course of his career.
Manet and Formalism

Up until 1937 it was essentially their formal means alone which attracted critical interest in Manet's works. The general consensus was that his interest in painting the Bar as well as the remainder of his work was "pure painting." Manet's friend Emile Zola set the stage for an exclusively formalist reading of Manet's œuvre in 1867, when he made the statement "He became no more than an individual intellect served by specially gifted organs, set down in front of nature, and interpreting it in his own manner." Further, in a long statement on Manet in La Revue du XIX siècle (Jan. 1, 1867), he declared that the artist rejected all reliance on past models and simply translated what he saw before him. According to the article, Manet assembled objects and figures solely according to his desire to create beautiful relationships. The writer rejected the idea then current that Manet was trying to illustrate Baudelaire's writing. Zola went on to warn the public to look for no more than a literal meaning in Manet's painting. Since a number of critics and members of the general public were offended by Manet's subject matter, and by Baudelaire's, it may have seemed best to Zola and others who were favorably disposed toward the artist to avoid the problems of suggested meaning by claiming no meaning existed.

Other critics faulted Manet's figural work for lack of feeling, lack of moral vitality, or lack of imagination in treatment of the subject. His virtuosity in still-life
painting actually seems to have worked against appreciation of his figural works. Pierre Veron, editor of *Le Charivari*, thought Manet "such a clever painter of still life that all his characters look as if they had risen from their graves." Likewise Gonzague Privat believed that "The proof that Manet lacks knowledge is that when he paints a still life, he executes a very beautiful painting, seeing it is less difficult to do a casserole or a lobster than a nude woman." These words were written early in Manet's career. But this emphasis on formalist interpretation had not changed much by the end of it.

George Moore, an acquaintance of Manet, a sitter for one of his portraits, and a member of the Nouvelle-Athènes circle, stated in *Confessions*, published in 1886, three years after the artist's death,

> People talk of Manet's originality: that is just what I can't see. What he has got, and what you can't take away from him is a magnificent execution. A piece of still life by Manet is the most wonderful thing in the world, vividness of color breadth, simplicity, and directness of touch - marvellous!

 Others, like Georges Bataille, claimed that "What he insisted on was ...painting for its own sake, a song for the eyes of interwoven forms and colors." Bataille goes on to discuss Manet's major works in terms of the "destruction of subject," saying that the subject "...was no more than a pretext for the act - the gamble of painting." Manet himself may have unwittingly contributed to this interpretation when he
declared in a letter to Théodore Duret that his lithograph of The Execution of Maximilien was "un oeuvre absolument artistique." 11 However, these words should not be taken too literally. Manet had been refused permission by the authorities to publish a depiction of such an inflammatory event, and his statement most likely reflects a protest against their censorship based on lack of understanding of his intent. At any rate Duret, another friend and sitter for Manet, perpetuated the idea in his biography of the artist that there was no meaning in the scenes he put on canvas beyond their meaning as art. According to him, Manet's intention was simply to "paint life in all its different aspects and to paint it as truthfully as possible." 12

Despite this consensus of opinion, probably due to misunderstanding or desire to protect Manet from harsh criticism, there is ample evidence that his art was conceived to convey meaning through both choice of subject matter and formal treatment. The unexpected presentation of a nude woman in the company of two clothed men in the forest in Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe (1863), a courtesan staring boldly at the viewer instead of posing demurely in Olympia (1863), and the obvious classical allusions in both cannot help but make the objective viewer ponder the relevance of formalist exclusivity. The studied lack of psychological relationships between figures in Déjeuner sur l'herbe and in Le Vieux musicien (1862) likewise provokes questions and reflection. The Dead Christ
with Angels (1864), with Christ's wound placed or at least intentionally left on the "wrong" side of the body not only draws attention to the subject, but provides concrete evidence of Manet's willingness to deal with traditional overt symbols. 13 Further indication of this interest can be found in Proust's recollection that Manet once said he had always wanted to paint Christ on the cross. He quotes Manet as having said "Christ on the cross, what a symbol! One can search until the end of time, we will not find anything like it. Minerva is good. Venus is good. But the heroic image, the amorous image will never equal the image of suffering. It is the core of humanity, it is its poem." 14

In later works the subject matter was generally less shocking than in Déjeuner sur l'herbe or Olympia or less traditionally symbolic than in The Dead Christ, but the enigmatic compositions and blank stares of the figures in such works as The Balcony (1868-69), The Railroad (1872-73), The Plum (1878) and particularly the Bar, powerfully suggest significance beyond the limitations of the specific situation in which they are depicted. Joséphin Péladan summed up this feeling when, in 1884, he spoke of Manet's "irréalisme." Mauner explains that the word was meant to convey the "mystère en plein jour," that paradox of expressionless figures surrounded by familiar objects that appear in these and other of Manet's works. 15 According to a statement by Manet himself, there was more to his work than met the eye of even those
contemporaries who admired him. One of his earliest biographers, Jacques de Biez quotes the artist as saying "Already many people speak well of me. But I feel they don't understand what there is in me or at least what I try to show..." 16

Manet's interest in meaning beneath the surface is underscored by his painting Les Étudiants de Salamanque (1859-1860). Inspired by Lesage's early 18th-century novel Gil Bias, the picture faithfully illustrates the parable contained in the foreword of that classic, known to every French schoolboy. In that parable, two students discovered a stone partially buried in the ground. The stone bore the inscription "Here lies interred the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias." The first student, who interpreted the inscription literally, sneered at the impossibility of a soul being interred and walked away. His companion, who was wiser, suspected that beneath the stone lay some mystery. Digging up the stone, the wiser student found a purse of leather containing a hundred ducats with a card which read "Whoever thou art who has wit enough to discover the meaning of this inscription, I appoint thee my heir..." Lesage's foreword concludes with the following advice.

Now, my good friend and reader, no matter who you are you must be like one or the other of these two students. If you cast your eye over my adventures without fixing it on the moral concealed under them, you will derive very little benefit from the perusal: but if you read with
attention you will find that mixture of the useful with the agreeable, so successfully prescribed by Horace."

Certainly Manet too was inviting his audience to look not only at but beyond the formal aspect of his paintings to discover the meaning that the sensitive combination of subject matter and technique creates. Emulating the "wise student" depicted by Manet, one is indeed rewarded by the attempt to discover the meaning of *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère.*
CHAPTER I

Through examining contemporaneous descriptions and journal illustrations, we now know a good deal about the setting and types of characters depicted in the painting as they would have appeared to a late-nineteenth century Parisian. Manet tells us in his title that the locus of the scene is a bar at the Folies-Bergère, a fact which would have been obvious to the Salon-going public. Located near the rue Bergère, the establishment owes the first half of its name to the eighteenth-century "folie," an open air place where Parisians could drink or dance while being entertained. While contemporaneous sources do not comment on any further connotations of the nomenclature, it is interesting to note that the words "folies" and "bergère" together literally mean shepherdess's follies or madness. The image of wild abandon conjured up by this expression was probably not lost on Parisians, who have traditionally been fond of such jeux de mots.

The Folies-Bergère was a kind of café-concert, one of a hundred such houses for public entertainment opened in Paris during the Second Empire. By the time Manet painted the Bar, that number had doubled due to the immense popularity
of the establishments, and the Folies-Bergère itself had become quite famous, or notorious, depending on one's point of view. Parisians and even a good number of foreigners were familiar with the Folies through direct experience or through written references to it which appeared in a variety of sources. Baedeker's 1878 guide surveys the cafés-chantants, offering the following description.

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

The Guide secret de l'étranger célibataire à Paris, essentially a list of brothels published in Brussels in 1889, provides another description. "...famous for its promenoirs, its garden, its constantly changing attractions, and its public of pretty women."³ Huysmans calls the Folies, "the only place in Paris that stinks so sweetly of the maquillage of purchased favors and the extremes of jaded corruption.⁴ Guy de Maupassant speaks of "the circular promenade where... a group of women awaited arrivals at one or another of the three bars behind which, heavily made-up and wilting, three vendors of refreshments and love held court."⁵ The November 23, 1877 article by "E.F." in La Revue Parisienne says that the new owners of the Folies-Bergere aim to change the côté moral. "Il tend à donner moins d'importance à ses promenoirs." The writer is confident that this will put an end to such stories as that
entitled "Une Soirée aux Folies- Bergère," published in the same journal, in which a Milord Williams had encountered a variety of filles -- including les dames de comptoir.6 A journalist in La Vie parisienne related that there were everywhere "... counters tended by charming waitresses, whose mischievous eyes and gracious smiles attract a crowd of clients."7

From the numerous accounts extant, it is clear that any Parisian who could read knew of the Folies-Bergère's reputation for pleasure and that the barmaids were seen as part of that pleasure. A wealth of information on its features, minus some of the interpretation, is summed up graphically in Cheret's 1875 poster Aux Folies-Bergère (Plate 2). Chéret shows us the crowds, the entertainments, the dames de comptoir, and the balcony in which one of the infamous promeniers was located.

The Folies-Bergère had evolved out of a department store devoted to bedding, which had opened in 1860. In the rear of the store the owners added a "salle de spectacle" in 1863. By 1869, the spectacles had become so successful that the whole enterprise shifted to variety shows in emulation of London music halls. Then in 1871, a talented entrepreneur, Leon Sari, took over. He remodeled the building inside and out, refurbishing two large spaces. One was the Garden - an impressive hall with balconies, covered by an awning (Plates 3 and 4). The other space, which Chéret shows us, was the
horseshoe-shaped theater with fixed seats in the orchestra and a balcony above, supported by columns. Sari removed the seats from the ground floor under the balcony to make room for tables and chairs, several bars, and a promenoir for walking about. In the balcony, seating was limited to two tiers in front, leaving room for another promenoir furnished with bars behind them.

In Manet's Bar we are in this balcony, facing one of the mirrors lining the perimeter wall, in front of which the barmaid tends her counter. The mirror reflects the balcony and its supporting columns on the opposite side of the room and or the upper left we see the feet of the acrobat swinging from a trapeze as in Chéret's poster. The layout of the theater and its advertised attractions can also be seen in the seating plan shown in Plate 5.

Sari's Folies-Bergère had its own orchestra and dance troupe, but also presented the reigning favorites of the day among vaudeville, circus and other diversions, including the Hanlon-Lees, American trapeze performers whose poster shows in the window of Manet's 1878 painting, At the Café (Plate 6). The trapeze artist partially shown here may be a specific reference to an American performer named Leona Dare or to "la délicieuse Katarina Johns." Dare appears to have been the more famous of the two. La République des lettres (Wednesday, January 14, 1877) notes that "The elephants of the Folies-Bergère did not keep Leona Dare from being a success; and
everyone agrees that they were less graceful and less pretty than she.\textsuperscript{9} Chéret's poster of Miss Dare (Plate 7) indicates that this was undoubtedly true. Mallarmé also indicated in an 1877 letter to Arthur O'Shaughnessy that Dare was an object of public adulation. Another article in \textit{La République des Lettres} (March 28, 1877) announces that she had seriously injured herself while performing in Brussels.\textsuperscript{10} By 1881, Katarina Johns is performing at the Folies according to \textit{La Silhouette}, in which an article described her act, comparing her to Leona Dare.\textsuperscript{11} In the absence of further information, one cannot definitively assign the green-booted feet in Manet's picture to either Dare or Johns, but to date, these are the two most likely candidates for the model.\textsuperscript{12}

The accounts cited here point to a strong interest in acrobats in Paris of the late 1870's and 1880's. Edmond de Goncourt, impressed by the daring, imaginative artistry of the Hanlon-Lees, wrote a psychological study of two acrobat brothers in \textit{Les Frères Zemganno} (1877). The cynicism and violence of the Hanlon-Lees' act inspired Huysmans and Leon Hennique to write the dramatic poem "Pierrot Sceptique" (1881). In 1880, Huysmans published a series of essays under the title \textit{Croquis Parisiens} in which he included a description of the Folies, giving particular attention to the performance of a female acrobat.\textsuperscript{13} Regardless of the precise identity of Manet's trapeze artist, it is clear that he has included a reference to a form of entertainment that was very much in
vogue with the public and very much a part of the exoticism that so delighted the crowds at the Folies-Bergère.

Who constituted those crowds? People like Manet himself. Those who could pay Sari's prices of two francs for the cheapest seats, five for reserved seats, and drink prices much higher than in ordinary cafes. As T. J. Clark points out, the café-concerts were mixing places for various social classes. The Folies brought together the bourgeoisie, "calicots" (an expanding class of petit bourgeois clerks, cashiers, shop assistants, bank tellers and the like), demi-mondaines, and elegant prostitutes. However, this would have been an expensive place for a calicot to frequent on a regular basis and was dominated by the well-to-do. Habitués included urbane writers, critics, collectors, painters, dandies, and their demi-mondaine friends.

Several of Manet's friends who fall into these categories are identifiable among the audience seated in the balcony reflected in the mirror. The woman in white whose elbows rest on the balustrade was Mery Laurent, an elegant kept woman whose image is taken from an 1881 pastel portrait by Manet (Plate 9). To the right and slightly behind Mery in a yellow dress is Jeanne Demarsy, a young actress also identifiable from an 1881 pastel portrait by the artist (Plate 10). Both were glamorous demi-mondaines who had belonged to Manet's circle of friends since the late 1870s. Just to the right of Jeanne is, according to Ross, the military painter...
Henry Dupray, who had posed as the customer at the bar in the preparatory oil sketch made for the painting. The mustachioed customer talking to the barmaid in the final work is Manet's friend Gaston Latouche, according to his own statement. Latouche, a 28-year old painter, dandy, and aesthete, reported that he also posed for the gallant seated to the left of Mery in the balcony. The barmaid is a woman known to us only as Suzon, who actually was a barmaid at the Folies, and who, according to Courthion, was introduced to Manet by Henry Dupray. The subject of possible relationships between these individuals will be taken up at a later point. For the moment, suffice it to say that in the Bar Manet appears to have chosen for his models the performer and audience, customer and employee that one would be likely to see in this setting.

He had dropped the use of the trained model in stock poses after leaving Thomas Couture's studio in 1856. It was typical of Manet, and part of his realism, to paint subjects doing what they normally did, whether at work like Suzon or the trapeze artist, or at leisure like the audience. This was a working method which emerged early in Manet's career, beginning at least by 1861-62. At that time the artist began using a model named Victorine-Louise Meurent, a woman who appears as a variety of Parisienne "types" in his paintings. The Portrait of Victorine Meurent (ca. 1862) presents the facial features and attire of a grisette, a young
woman of lowly parentage, who made her living by being the mistress and housekeeper of an artist or student. In *The Street Singer* (1862), Victorine is depicted as a popular musician, better dressed than the *grisette*. In the next work, *Mlle. V. in the Costume of an Espada*, Victorine is a bit-part actress and *lorette*, a chic and avaricious type of mistress.

She is portrayed again as a *lorette* in *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), and as a courtesan who is totally in control of the situation, wealthy enough to have a maid who brings tribute from her admirer, in *Olympia* (1863). In *Woman with a Parrot* (1865-66), Victorine is a *soignée lorette* who wears the monocle of an elegant dandy suspended from a cord around her neck.

Her attire in *The Railroad* (1873) places her in the category of middle bourgeoisie. She is seen again in this attire in *The Croquet Party* (1873), which takes place in the garden of Manet's friend, the wealthy and successful painter Alfred Stevers, who also appears in the picture.

By assembling a large body of information about Victorine and her surroundings, Margaret Seibert provides convincing evidence that Manet's paintings of her are highly biographical in nature, chronicling her rise from humble *grisette* to sophisticated and mercenary *lorette*. Victorine was in fact born into a low-class family of the sort which produced *grisettes*. In 1861-62 she lived in a working-class neighborhood near cabarets where musical performances took
place. She may have been the Victorine who was an associate of one of Paris's famous female entertainers.²⁵ Probably a musical entertainer herself, Victorine was depicted as a guitar player in two paintings by Manet, the first being The Street Singer and the second, La joueuse de guitare, of 1867. Certainly she had musical abilities, for she was reported as having given music lessons.²⁶ She was associated with the theater, and was known for her amorous exploits.²⁷ She made a trip to America around 1871, perhaps at the expense of one of her admirers, returning to Paris sometime before the autumn of 1872.²⁸ Finally, she was a model for, neighbor of, and by some accounts intimate friend of Alfred Stevens.²⁹ Knowledge of her story is of crucial importance to the interpretation of the Manet paintings in which she appears.

This kind of realism is evident even in Manet's choices of models used only once or twice. In painting Bal de l'Opéra (1873) for example, Manet asked his friends to come to his studio dressed for the part in dress coat and white tie — which is to say, in their own ball attire. Théodore Duret, who was one of the friends who posed, stated that Manet asked each man to wear his hat as he always wore it.³⁰ Thus, the tilt of hats at all different angles is the result of meticulous observation and an effort to preserve individual character.

In painting Corner in a Café-Concert (1879, Plate 11), the artist went to some length to obtain the true-to-life
quality that he required. According to Duret, Manet had visited a cabaret à chansons on the boulevard Clichy, where beer was served by waitresses. This was a relatively new phenomenon, since before the Second Empire, service at tables had been provided largely by men. The image of a waitress serving beer therefore was a symbol of modernity, typifying the new Paris, and had become a stock figure in cartoons and illustrations of the 1860s. Manet too was interested in this new type of Parisienne as subject matter. He had been particularly struck by the gesture of the waitresses as they put the glasses of bock on the table in front of the customer with one hand while carrying several more glasses with the other hand and never spilling a drop. He was determined to get the waitress herself to pose for him as only a real waitress could effect this gesture precisely.\textsuperscript{31} In order to gain her agreement to come to his studio, Manet had to pay not only the waitress, but a friend, who had to accompany her because her "moral scruples" prevented her from coming to his studio alone. The male friend is included in the picture wearing a blue worker's smock and seated before a glass of wine -- the traditional drink of the Parisian ouvrier. The girl places the bock on the table with her characteristic gesture, as she looks across the room for signals from other clients.

Given Manet's preference for models who really were what he painted them to be, one may assume that his friends who appear in the Bar did indeed frequent such places as the
Folies-Bergère and probably frequented that particular establishment itself. Adolphe Tabarant reports Manet's having gone there on a number of occasions to stroll the promenoirs and to sketch its theater audience and performers. *Au Paradis*, (1878, Plate 12) *Quatre Spectateurs* (1880, Plate 13), and *Chef d'orchestre* (Plate 14) are among the drawings which Tabarant attributed to the inspiration of the Folies. The artist was presumably working in his characteristic manner, observing, sketching, and procuring models from those who participated in the observed scene to come and pose in his studio, where he executed the final work.

In understanding Manet's art it is extremely helpful to know something of the characters he depicts and what element of society they represent. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known of Suzon as an individual. Unlike Victorine Meurent, she was not a known model. Tabarant tells us that she was a barmaid at the Folies-Bergère, who was acquainted with Manet's friend and first biographer Edmond Bazire and with Henry Dupray. She came to Manet's studio to pose for the painting, wearing the house uniform of her place of employment, and returned several times in her street clothes. According to Tabarant, she posed in street clothes for two portraits -- a pastel and an oil. In the pastel, entitled *Le modèle du Bar aux Folies-Bergère* (photographed by Lochard in 1883), Suzon is fashionably dressed and looks quite as glamorous as any of the demi-mondaines painted by the artist (Plate 15).
While further details concerning Suzon herself have not been found, one can find good deal of material on the type of Parisienne who worked as a bartender in late nineteenth-century Paris and how she was perceived by her contemporaries. This background helps to explain the critical reception to be discussed further on, as well as the probable meaning of the painting itself.
CHAPTER II

A wealth of information about modern Parisiennes, including those who tended counters in cafes and cafe-concerts, comes to us from popular illustration, which, it is generally agreed, provided a context of inspiration for Manet and the Impressionists.¹ A variety of Parisian feminine types were depicted in the illustrated journals, each explicitly defined by status or profession, but sharing a similar spirit. This spirit was evoked in the work of Manet and the Impressionists.

French artists who wished to be of their own time naturally found their subject matter in Paris, the center of all new developments in France and a city which itself seemed new due to the architectural changes and attendant social displacements that were a part of Haussmanization. The rapid urban growth in Paris was accompanied by a tremendous increase in the volume of publications between about 1850 and 1880. In the decades from 1860 to 1880, 115 new publications appeared while three earlier journals of major importance — *Le Charivari*, *Le Journal amusant*, and *Le Petit journal pour rire* — continued.² These publications were devoted to current events and satire of politics, manners, and the latest
works shown at the Salons. A modern phenomenon themselves, the topicality of the journals must have held enormous appeal for Realist artists such as Manet. Here one could find precedents for the depiction of modern Parisian life which did not exist in the grand tradition of Salon painting. Here could be found inspiration not only for external appearances but for the character types and situations which were considered typically Parisian.

One of the subjects treated extensively in popular imagery of nineteenth-century Paris and by Manet was that of women and their activities. The development of the Parisienne stereotype in illustration began in the 1830s with the work of Achille Devéria, Henry Monnier, Gavarni and others, who generically depicted a coquettish Parisienne, a decisive alternative to the other-worldly creatures created by the Romantics and Neoclassicists. However, this new ideal of feminine beauty did not find a place in high art for some time. Courbet gave the image of woman a strong, somewhat coarse physical presence, but among fine artists it was Manet who first expressed the tastes and mentality of the Parisian flaneur.

Armand Dayot, Inspecteur des Beaux Arts at the end of the nineteenth century, credited illustrators with contributing significantly to the triumph of naturalism and creating a new ideal of feminine beauty inseparable from their realistic chronicle of modern life. The qualities which
constituted this new ideal and set the modern beauty of the illustrated journal apart from the classic archetype were coquetry and fashionable elegance. Personification of the Parisienne possessing these qualities can be seen as early as 1827 in Henry Monnier's lithographic images of the grisette (Plates 16 and 17).

The grisette, as noted earlier, was a young, unmarried woman of low class, who lived with a student or artist and performed light household tasks for him in exchange for food and lodging. Charming, attractive, and ready to share the pleasures of life and love, she was also described as good, gentle, amusing and faithful in Huart's Physiologie de la grisette of 1841. Common folklore had it that the grisette gave her affections to the student or the artist and enjoyed such pleasures as the outdoor public ball or the theater with him before seeking a respectable marriage with a man of her own class and renouncing this bohemian lifestyle. Monnier saw these girls not only as charming and seductive, but utterly Parisian and lamented the absence of their type in London when sojourning there. Jules Janin, in his chapter on the grisette in Les Français peints par eux-mêmes declared that of all Parisian products, the most Parisian was the grisette.  

Gavarni, who illustrated Huart's text, continued the tradition of depicting the grisette. He however, extended the theme to include her everyday activities unrelated to seduction. Of particular interest is Gavarni's image of the
Grisette Eating Cake in the Paradis (Plate 18). This illustration provides a precedent for Manet's Street Singer (1862, Plate 19), who is also a woman of low class, caught raising her hand to her mouth to stuff in a treat.

In the journals of the 1840s the wholesome grisette began to be superseded by a new breed of Parisian cocotte, the lorette. More greedy, ambitious, and fashionably attired than the grisette, the lorette aspired to the status of grand courtesan, a woman "kept" in grand style. She often claimed noble ancestry and cultivated manners and proper speech, wore fine clothes and exhibited daring equestrian skills. She was described as elegant and pretty. The Goncourts claimed the lorette's international reputation for charming companionship brought "les Messieurs de passage" from all countries to her doorstep. They noted Gavarni's contribution to the lorette's celebrity with the remark "Monsieur Milord has come to the continent to study the drawings of Gavarni in the original." Gavarni indeed played a major role in establishing the lorette as a modern, Parisian phenomenon through his illustrations for Maurice Alhoy's Physiologie de la Lorette, the Goncourt's La Lorette, and Etienne de Neufville's Physiologie de la femme as well as his own lithographic series, Les Lorettes, published in 1841. In a book published in 1854, Charles Rosenberg summed up the illustrator's relationship to the lorette in the
following manner: "Now the lorette belongs, pictorially speaking to Gavarni. Gavarni alone first embodied her."\(^8\)

Neufville, in his *Physiologie de la femme* had described the lorette as a "restless hedonist who would bestow her affections upon a dumb creature if no better amusement was readily available."\(^9\) Gavarni's illustration of this idea, entitled *Lorette in Dressing Gown with a Parrot* (Plate 20) provides a clear precedent for Manet's *Woman with a Parrot* (1866, Plate 21). Likewise a precursor of Manet's *Before the Mirror* (Plate 22) can be found in Gavarni's illustration of a woman struggling to untie her corset (Plate 23).

The lorette's ascendancy as subject matter in popular art accompanied a decline in sentimentality and a more cynical attitude toward women. In 1842, Etienne de Neufville stated that "the only honest woman was a simple woman."\(^10\) The statement reflects a belief shared by others at the time that the Parisian woman was a sort of modern Eve, innately endowed with the guile which captivates and subjugates men. Her sophistication and business-like mind equipped her in a unique way to exercise power over them. If she was identified with the elegance and savoir faire of Paris, she also shared in its reputation for artifice and love of pleasure.

By the mid 1850s, when Manet was beginning his career as an artist, the popular press was depicting la Parisienne more and more with the characteristics of a clandestine prostitute. Prostitution had been legal in France since 1825,
and those who engaged in this business officially were licensed, taxed and subject to health inspections. However, it was estimated by A.J. B. Parent-Duchatelet in *De prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, (1836) that there were thousands of clandestine prostitutes in Paris who, by discretion and cleverness, escaped public notice and police regulation.\textsuperscript{11} F. Carlier, head of the vice department at a Paris prefecture of police from 1860 to 1870 complained in his book, *Les Deux Prostitution*, that by the time of his tenure the clandestine prostitute had become so flagrant in plying her trade that the word "clandestine" no longer had any significance. The word had come to mean simply, "not registered."\textsuperscript{12} While the *grisette* was not to be confused with a prostitute of any sort, the *lorette*, *femme galante*, *biche*, *cocotte*, *cocodette*, *lionne*, or what have you was something much closer in kind.

These women aspired to become demi-mondaines, a social classification portrayed by Dumas fils in 1855 in the drama *Le demi-monde*. The demi-mondaine was the modern equivalent of the grand courtesan of the ancien régime. Dumas depicted her as a refined, spirited, educated, and a shrewd woman who traded sexual favors to get what she wanted -- namely wealth and power. The demi-mondaine was glamorized in the press, and it became très à la mode to be one of her lovers. Some even became famous, such as the actress Cora Pearl, who counted Emperor Napoleon III among her patron/lovers. She and others
like her came to symbolize high living and expensive sin in modern Paris, achieving an almost mythic status. Octave Uzanne, in his book, The Frenchwoman of the Century, published in 1886, described the phenomenon in the following way. The demi-monde was created; the press, encouraged the unclassed, spoke of their beauty, of their charm, of their natural wit, vaunted the good taste and the eccentricity of their toilettes, all the gazettes talked about these queens of the left hand, whose loves were no longer clandestine... The public became interested in these creatures, whom it elevated all of a sudden on a sort of pedestal.

Second Empire illustrators too found endless subject matter in the demi-mondaine, satirizing her open solicitation of dandies and adding to her reputation for charm and deceit. In an example from Gustave Doré’s Menagerie Parisienne, Lionnes, (1854, Plate 24) one can see a haughty new breed of cocotte. The power of these siren-like creatures is underscored by the leering dandies who nearly fall out of their saddles as they strain to get a good look. Likewise in Doré’s Opera (the lion’s den), the men in the balcony swoon as they watch the female entertainer on stage. (Plate 25)

Constantin Guys, the illustrator praised by Baudelaire as the quintessential "painter of modern life," and whose drawings Manet collected, also treated the subject of the cocotte. But it was Alfred Grévin who in the 1860s and 1870s became the most widely distributed illustrator of the feminine delights of Paris. Grévin contributed to a number of popular journals including Le Charivari, Le Journal pour rire and Le Journal amusant. In 1869, he founded his own periodical,
the Almanach des Parisiennes which featured his risqué cartoons and such articles as "Un Manuel du baccalauréat et cocottes." Through the work of Grévin, J. L. Forain, and a host of other talented illustrators, the Parisienne continued as important subject matter in the popular press on into the Third Republic. At the same time, in the 1870s, the nightlife of Paris, its café-concerts, circus performances and theatre spectacles gained greater note in these publications. Forain shows us his view of this nightlife in Aux Folies-Bergère. (Plate 26) Here the dandy asks the name of a fashionable and extremely well-built young lady, who responds "Zoe." The caption at the right informs us that the rest of the conversation is censored. In this way Forain brings together graphically the themes of elegant women, prostitution, and the Folies-Bergère.

A creation of Alfred Grévin was an avaricious type of cocotte sometimes called "Nana." Nana was not actually a demi-mondaine. She lacked the style and presence of a Cora Pearl or other successful actresses. She was only a danseuse or figurante, a stage walk-on or chorus girl. Greedy and cynical, Nana was always shown arranging a transaction or in the aftermath, of exchanging sexual favors for money. In a typical Grévin illustration, a young man steps up to the stage to ask the performer for a bit of information, in response to which the cocotte asks, "Are your hands clean?" Again, at the masked ball, a young lady drops her cloak to reveal her charms as a
pack of top-hatted men inspect the merchandise. "Sold to the highest bidder!" remarks the artist. In an illustration entitled _Andrea I Love You!,_ (Plate 27) Grévin uses cutting dialogue to spice the pictorial cliché of the dressing room-boudoir. The fully clothed male observing the primping, corseted _cocotte_ declares on bended knee that he loves her. His declaration is met with only a cynical retort, "And I flattered myself to think that you were a little less stupid than the others!"

Manet took up the subject of Nana in the boudoir as well. In 1877, he submitted to the Salon a painting of a _cocotte_ dressed in blue satin corset, white chemise, pearly grey stockings, and black patent slippers (Plate 28). She gazes out at the viewer knowingly as the gallant on the sofa behind her stares at her backside. Manet displays the two characters in a setting of gilded, laquered furniture and Japanese wallpaper, thereby providing a record of period furnishings and a popular cliché devoid of sentimentality or moral judgment. Strong parallels between Manet's picture and Grévin's _Andrea_... can be seen in the profile of the tip-toe stance, high buttocks, wasp waist, and protruding stomach. The obvious parallels in iconography and physiognomy between Manet's painting and vulgar popular imagery may have been responsible for the Salon jury's indignant rejection of it.

In any case, it is clear that in _Nana_ Manet was once again portraying a kind of Parisienne in a fashion seen in
journalistic stereotypes. The striking similarities in style and subject matter to popular imagery and the preponderance of Parisian female types in Manet's work beginning in the 1860s provide ample evidence that the artist shared the public's fascination with the modern Parisienne, who had come to symbolize the sophistication, glamour, and in some minds, decadence of their city.

Just as writers and illustrators defined the emerging variants of the modern Parisienne, so too did Manet. Over the course of his career, he painted and made pastels of dozens of women -- individuals symbolic of modern Paris. In the Bar, painted four years after Nana, Manet again demonstrated this interest. But if Suzon of the Folies-Bergère was a representative of the modern Parisienne, specifically what variant of this phenomenon was she?
CHAPTER III

In depicting a barmaid, Manet was again building on a tradition established in popular illustration. The character of the dame de comptoir dates back to the early period of journalistic illustration, when popular artists were documenting the definitive professions, classes, and pursuits of Paris. The dame de comptoir, the woman who tends the counter, taking orders and receiving payments, appears in Victor Adam's Intérieur de café (undated, Plate 29) as one of the attractive features of the establishment as she chats with a customer. Huge mirrors, one of the standard features of her milieu, line the walls and globe lights illuminate the room. Her counter bears objects which identify the woman's profession -- a lamp for reading the ledger, liquor and wine bottles in their caddy, and the decorative touch of a vase of flowers. Another image from the period, also possibly by Adam, (Plate 30) focuses exclusively on the profession of the cashier. The elements of the mirrors, the flowers and the conversation with the customer are retained. However, the bottles have been removed from the counter (perhaps for the night), and the gentleman approaches the lady behind the counter. The intimacy of the characters' gestures and their
physical proximity points to the possibility of a prelude to a sexual encounter. Additional images from the 1840s and 1850s show the *dame de comptoir* as the pretty, industrious keeper of the ledger or participant in flirtations—willingly or otherwise. (Plates 31 and 32)

Charles Forster wrote in the 1840s that the *dame de comptoir* was the supreme example of the irony in the Parisian adulation of women. In Forster's view, in the city known as the *paradis des femmes*, women were literally enthroned at the counters of all shops, theaters, cafes, restaurants, and department stores. However, he noted that despite their literal appearance of governing the business and pleasure of Paris, these women, particularly those who worked in cafes, were in fact victims of their elevated position. He described them as women who grew old quickly because they had to suffer not only the fatigue of their employment but also the advances of employer and customer. Forster questions the myth of the pretty woman ruling the counter, but his very questioning of it is a testimony to its pervasiveness. ¹

Hippolyte Taine described the occupation of *dame de comptoir* as the triumph desired by every Parisian woman, explaining that the Parisienne wanted nothing so much as the opportunity to be engaged in smiling and selling, to be able to exercise her special talents for the manipulation of men. Taine likened the position of the woman who presided over a good cafe to that of a grand dame who ruled a fashionable
salon. Taine's comment again reinforces the Second Empire stereotype of Parisian women as shrewd, seductive, and materialistic.

Madame Julie de Margueriettes took a more charitable view of the *dame de comptoir* in her guide book written for American audiences. In it she attributed the superior charm of Paris to the influence of women. Where else, she asked, were women so visible and influential in daily commerce? According to Mme. Margueriettes, it was a positive pleasure to shop in Paris because instead of encountering a surly man, one could deal with a "polite, civil young woman." However, Madame Margueriettes also added that the presence of a pretty female employee no doubt encouraged many a dandy to indulge in unnecessary purchases just for the pleasure of dealing with her.

Huysmans referred to the financially devastating charm of these ladies in religious terms. "The cashiers of cafes sit on their thrones in black, in an incense of tobacco and alcohol, Madonnas of bankruptcy on an altar of rosewood and marble, between two vases in which bloom bouquets of teaspoons." G. Lafosse's cartoon, published in the December 14, 1878 issue of the *Journal Amusant* deals with the *dame de comptoir* and her perceived availability specifically at the Folies-Bergère (Plate 33). The attractive barmaid leans over the bar to ask the client what he would like to have. The client, looking not at the woman's face but at her décolletage,
answers, "I dare not tell you!" While the cartoon may or may not have been a direct source for Manet's Bar, the two works share a number of similarities: the subject matter, the uniform of the barmaid with its fitted bodice, square-cut neckline and flower worn on the left, her locket suspended from a ribbon, the bangle bracelet on her right arm worn halfway between the wrist and elbow, flowers and decanters on the bar, and a top-hatted, mustachioed client. The differences in the works are equally compelling and indicative of the care Manet took to never let his art sink to the banality of illustration. Indeed, Manet's work is far more complex, a fact that was recognized but not understood by the critics.

The figure of Suzon was considered by some of Manet's contemporaries to represent one of the many types of Parisian prostitutes -- a likely conclusion given the prevailing attitude about modern Parisiennes in general and the reputation of the women, including the barmaids, in the Folies-Bergère in particular. Paul Alexis describes her in the following manner:

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

Such will be, for me, the great attraction of the salon, the most exactly modern and the most typical of the works on show...

Others were more direct in stating their belief in Suzon's availability. Ernest Chesneau, for example, declared "It is not possible to be more of a fille than this creature the artist has installed... behind the marble of a bar loaded with fruit and flacons." A writer named Tamerlan believed that he saw hypocrisy revealed in the double image of the barmaid.

A young person in charge of a bar - in French a buffet - puts on the most innocent expression so as to pretend she does not know that her twin sister is being chatted up behind her, by a man of property. - Hypocrisy! cries out Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme. You are found even here, in the very sanctuary of easy pleasures!

Saint Juirs merely states that "... she has behind her a large mirror, which reflects her figure first, then that of the man with whom she flirts ..."

The critics' assessment was not totally unfounded. Many women in such positions had for some time lived "hyphenated lives," as barmaid-prostitute, actress-lorete, laundress-grisette, etc. The possibility of Suzon's being a prostitute was undoubtedly what made her "modern" for Paul Alexis, a pupil of Zola. If the woman is selling herself, she could be construed as part of the Naturalist typology, an elegant variant of Zola's Nana or the writer's own character, Lucie Pellegrin. Alexis had written in an 1881 review of
Zola's *Nana*, that she was "the modern *fille*, product of our advanced civilization, agent of the destruction of the upper classes." Surely this view of the modern woman determined Alexis's attitude toward Manet's picture when he saw it the following year.  

In the *Bar* we are faced with a beautiful barmaid who is also, in all likelihood, a clandestine prostitute or at least is available for romantic liaisons as necessity dictates. This was by 1881 the well established stereotype of the modern Parisienne, the *dame de comptoir*, and the Folies- Bergère. Manet, the consummate observer of Parisian life, would have been keenly aware that he would have to go to some length to avoid that reading of Suzon. His inclusion of the male client engaged in conversation with her indicates that he did not intend to negate that interpretation. Nor did he present the scenario judgmentally or as low comedy in the manner of so many illustrators, but with seriousness and dignity.

Manet's barmaid functions as a symbol of the delights of Paris and an example of one type of elegant and seductive Parisienne, as Victorine Meurent had exemplified other variants of her in the artist's earlier paintings. Other precedents for symbolic depiction of women can be found in Manet's work as well. In his plans for the proposed decoration for the new Hotel de Ville in Paris in 1879, Manet intended to use women in a very obvious symbolic way as allegorical figures. Proust quotes him as saying,
"Allegory first of all, the wines of France, for example. The wine of Bourgogne represented by a brunette, the wine of Bordeaux by a woman with chestnut hair, the wine of Champagne by a blonde." 11

While this plan was not realized, it is indicative of Manet's way of thinking.

In another project, commissioned by Proust, Manet also dealt with allegory. The commission was for a series of four paintings of the seasons of the year, each represented by a woman. Manet completed two of the paintings in 1881, at about the same time he began working on the Bar. Spring, which was submitted to the Salon of 1882 along with the Bar, was represented by the brunette actress Jeanne Demarsy. Autumn was symbolized by the chestnut-haired demi-mondaine Mery Laurent (Plates 34 and 35). While tradition has it that the remainder of the series was never completed due to Manet's failing health, Hanson suggests that an 1882 painting entitled Amazon (Plate 36) was intended as the third in this series of half-length portraits of attractive young women, all of which measured approximately 72 x 51 cm. 12

The painting depicting a dark-haired woman named Henriette Chabot in riding costume, is the most complete of three such studies entitled Amazon painted by the artist in 1882. As the reader will remember, in that year Manet also completed another picture of a woman in riding habit, that woman being Suzon. While the medium in this case is pastel and presents only a bust-length view of the sitter, this work
may have been a study for the third painting in the seasonal cycle, completed before Manet switched to the final model.

If Manet was considering Suzon for one of the seasons, then three of his candidates for the project are brought together in the Bar. Four women in fact stand out among the figures of the composition: Suzon, Méry, Jeanne, and the woman to the right of Jeanne looking through opera glasses. Unfortunately, although this woman is prominently featured, she has never been identified. Pictorially she completes a set of four women, each with different color hair, just as Manet had intended to represent the wines of France by women with brunette, chestnut and blond hair. The four women of the Bar likewise symbolize the delights of modern Paris. At the same time, they may have formed the quartet Manet had in mind to represent the seasons for Proust's commission.

Returning to the pastel, Le modèle du Bar aux Folies-Bergère, one gains insight into the kind of Parisienne who, like the actress and the kept woman, might have embodied a season. The riding habit makes Suzon an amazon, or horsewoman. The amazon costume was considered quite fashionable at the time and had been depicted in fashion plates, in popular illustration by Gavarni and others, and in paintings. While all Frenchwomen rode, Parisian lorettes were particularly known for their daring equestrian skills. This talent was so widely recognized that the word amazon came to refer to a woman of easy virtue.
By representing Suzon in the costume of the amazon, Manet is placing her in the category of the lorette — a woman who has found the means of (male) support to purchase fine riding clothes and become or at least emulate the expert horsewoman. In the Bar, her flirtation with Latouche (or the customer for whom he modeled) could have been the prelude to her attainment of this status. Latouche, a dandy and friend of Manet, was probably of Manet’s social class and would have had the wherewithal to be one of the patrons of a lorette. Tamerlan, as noted above, went so far as to identify the figure of the gentleman in the painting as that of a man of property. Whether Latouche himself actually became Suzon’s patron is not known, but he is at least a representative of the type of Parisian who could have done so.

Suzon’s graduation from barmaid to a more promising career would not have been unprecedented. Herbert reports a story of another barmaid who progressed from the Folies-Bergère to the stage. In his 1876 mémoires, Arnold Mortier wrote that one of the new women performing at the Athéée-Comique was a blond with dark eyes who went by the name of Blanche-Rose. She had, according to Mortier, tended a bar at the Folies where English bookmakers gathered every evening. It was for that reason that she smiled at Leon Sari, who was in the audience.14

Given this background, the Bar becomes the chronicle of a barmaid-prostitute who, while Latouche remains in the
balcony with Mery, is lost in her own thoughts, without hope of bettering her station in life. When Latouche becomes a customer, a different Suzon, a Suzon with possibilities, presents herself to him.

The representation of these two opposite aspects of Suzon and the implication of the passage of time from the moment before her encounter with Latouche to the moment of the encounter are made possible by the famous and troublesome mirror. The perspectival inconsistencies of the mirror and the handling of the figures reflected in it must be understood if the painting is to be understood, for the form and content of the work are inseparable.
CHAPTER IV

Manet's technical handling of the mirror has puzzled viewers and critics since the time the Bar was painted. Jules Compte saw the picture as "... only one more defiance of all the laws of common sense and logic." Du Seigneur said that the painting "almost makes one want to go there one of these evenings to understand the truth of the room's reflection in the mirror on the spot, in front of nature." Feir noted "the effect of the mirror difficult to understand..." and E. Bergerat wrote, I agree that the effect of the reflection in the glass is not understandable at first sight. But what law in art decrees that effects should be seized and perceived straightaway? I spent three days in Amsterdam without seeing a thing in the Night Watch. You can surely grant Manet three minutes."

The most interesting contemporaneous comment on the spatial discrepancies of the mirror comes from a cartoon by Stop entitled, Une Marchande de consolation aux Folies-Bergère (Plate 37). In it Stop has supplied the back view of the gentleman at the bar, which Manet left out of the painting. The cartoon bears a parenthetical statement:
Her back is reflected in a mirror; but no doubt because the painter was distracted, a gentleman with whom she is chatting and whose image one sees in the glass, does not exist in the picture itself. We thought we should repair the omission.

The composition of the painting is perplexing, and it is surprising that the reviews in 1882 were not harsher in their criticism given the lack of any attempt to actually try to understand its meaning. Modern scholars on the other hand have written about the problem at length, some with more impressive results than others.

This examination of the perspectival inconsistencies in the Bar and their probable causes and meanings will begin with a review of the inconsistencies themselves. The fact that the scene behind the barmaid is a reflection in a mirror rather than an extended view into deep space is supported by the presence of the yellow moulding of the mirror’s frame on either side of the barmaid’s wrists and the haze and dazzle on the glass. The illusion of the mirror’s surface is strongest at the left, where white paint obscures the balcony, and over the heads of the crowd at the right.

The problems begin when one tries to make sense of the world reflected in the mirror. Clearly the woman reflected in it is supposed to be the back view or the barmaid who faces us. And yet how could the barmaid’s reflection be so far to the right? If she faces us frontally, her body should almost totally block our view of her reflection. The fact that it does not must mean that the mirror is somehow arranged at an angle to our point of view, yet the moulding at the bottom,
parallel to the bar and to the balcony tells us that this is not so. Then there is the problem of the gentleman. The reflection of the barmaid faces him, while the frontal image of the barmaid faces us. Since his image does not intervene between us and the barmaid, we must be standing where the gentleman is. We must be and we cannot be. The equation refuses to be solved. For the final inconsistency, our eye comes to rest on the bottles assembled on the bar at the left side of the picture. This arrangement appears on the side of the bar closest to the barmaid, yet in the reflection it appears on the side furthest away from her. Like Du Seigneur, one wishes to go to see this bar and this mirror to understand the truth of the real thing.

A simulation of the Bar, its mirror, its accoutrements and its characters was set up and photographed by Lynell Morr, a modern scholar, in order to study the problem. The various points of view were documented through photographs revealing that these logical inconsistencies can in fact be explained in the following manner.6

In order to achieve the displacement of reflections seen in the painting, the customer, Gaston Latouche, must be situated not directly in front of Suzon, but a half-step to the right. The viewer must first stand directly in front of the barmaid to perceive the frontal view, then move roughly two or three feet to the right of the barmaid, beside Latouche. This conflation of viewpoints allows Suzon to face Latouche.
without his blocking our view of her or ever appearing at all except as a reflection in the mirror. It also allows the viewer to see Suzon's reflection positioned to the right of her frontal image.

How then is the issue of the displaced bottles resolved? Morr proves through photographs of the simulation that if one stands three feet to the right of the barmaid as described above, one does not see the reflection of the bottles next to the barmaid's arm at all. However one could see the reflection of bottles placed at the extreme left end of the bar, beyond the left side of the picture. What Manet has set up then, is not a set of logical inconsistencies, but a set of new criteria for viewing.

In incorporating two viewpoints in one picture he makes a major contribution to the formal evolution of modernism, anticipating the development of Cubism. At the same time, the technique helps to create the meaning of his painting. The assumption of the peripatetic viewer implies the passage of time, the time needed for Latouche also to change positions from the balcony to the bar. His change in positions brings about the new potential for Suzon, which moves her out of her reverie into a more animated stance, inclined slightly toward him over the bar. Critics have noted that the composition seems to slide to the right because the large reflected images of Suzon and Latouche are not balanced by anything on the left. However, this "slide" to the right is certainly
intentional and is consistent with the movement of both Latouche and the viewer from left to right. The left to right reading is also consistent with a chronological interpretation of Suzon in her present reality as barmaid/prostitute and Suzon anticipating her future reality as Lorette.

The fact that the peculiarities in Manet's composition were entirely intentional and not the result of a faulty understanding of perspective, as some critics have suggested, is supported by an examination of his prior work. Several of his earlier paintings demonstrate his fascination with the potential of mirrors to create spatially ambiguous situations. Mirrors helped Manet to achieve two aims in his art summarized by Anne Coffin Hanson: 1. to capture the activity of the modern world through the activity of normal sight (which is not static) and 2. to signal the tension between the illusion of real depth and the reality of the two dimensional canvas surface.8

An early example of Manet's use of the mirror may be found in the Portrait of Zacharie Astruc (1863-64, Plate 40). The painting is divided into two distinct sections, the darker one on the right, occupied by Astruc, and the lighter one on the left, containing a back view of a woman. The relatively small size of the female figure and the expanse of floor between her and the table next to Astruc indicate that she is seen at some distance from him. The perplexing question is what is that distance? Are we looking through a doorway at a
figure in the room beyond? Or are we not looking at a woman at all, but rather a painting of a woman within the portrait? George Mauner has pointed out that the likelihood of there being a room behind Astruc is small given that the table next to him would block off entry to it. The vertical line just to the left of Astruc would suggest a picture frame, but this would be a very unusual painting, with a deep empty foreground and the figure stuck so far in the distance with her back turned. The placement of a picture at the level of the seated Astruc would also be unusual. The most likely solution is that the frame-like motif next to the sitter is actually the frame of a mirror, and the woman reflected in the mirror is in fact in front of Astruc, in the viewer's space beyond the picture plane. In this manner Manet shows us a view of what is behind Astruc and what is in front of him at the same time.

The artist's interest in spatial ambiguity is demonstrated again in Au Coin du café concert (1878, Plate 41). In this painting, the mirror in the upper left corner behind the top-hatted spectator allows us to see both the spectator himself and the spectacle. We understand that the gentleman is looking ahead at the chanteuse on stage, but we actually see her only as a reflection in the mirror behind him. In this painting and the Portrait of Zacharie Astruc, as well as the Bar aux Folies-Bergère, Manet used the mirror to bring together visually two views which exist separately spatially. In the Bar he has added the element of implied
motion on the part of the viewer, but the earlier works illustrate Manet's long-standing interest in using mirrors to add complexity to the picture.

This interest may have been inspired by Las Meninas (Plate 42), by Velasquez, whom Manet admired passionately as an artist, calling him "the painter of painters" and from whom he had learned by copying his works. Manet had seen Las Meninas in Madrid and mentioned the work in a letter to Fantin-Latour, calling it a "tableau extraordinaire." Mauner believes that Manet's Self Portrait (Plate 43) of 1879 may in fact have been inspired by Velasquez's self portrait which forms a part of Las Meninas. Like Velasquez, Manet has presented himself in the "official" pose of the painter, and clothed in very formal attire. While Manet was known to have been an elegant dresser, the formality of the hat, jacket, and tie with stick pin seems exaggerated for an average day of working in one's studio, but is perhaps a nineteenth-century equivalent of Velasquez's nobleman's costume of court painter. Further similarities can be noted in the in the poses and in the way that both artists blur the hand that holds the brush, so that hand and brush almost become fused. Manet has reversed the pose, placing the brush in the left hand and the palette in the right. This reversal has been attributed to the probability that Manet was working from a mirror image of himself -- another interesting use of mirrors which adds
complexity to the picture through manipulation of the placement of objects.

Manet's inspiration from *Las Meninas* appears to extend beyond the self portrait that it incorporates. Velasquez's painting wonderfully captures the form and surface of objects and at the same time extends the visual space by means of the famous background mirror. Through it we see not only the space behind the artist as he stands before his easel, but the space in front of him as well. In one view, Velasquez brings together the portrait of himself, his model, his spectators, and the royal couple who stand where we stand, replacing us in the mirror as Latouche seems to replace us in Manet's mirror.

Velasquez's painting poses the problem of the nature of a painted reality, inviting comparisons to the reality of a reflection in a mirror. Manet's *Bar* poses the same problem and in addition, presents two levels of reality related to time. First in her immediate role as a barmaid, she is shown frontally, more solidly constructed, with a more tactile quality than her reflection has. Her reflection, separated from her direct image, is seen from an angle and is rendered in a more painterly fashion. This more ephemeral image is appropriate for the expression of a potential reality that is only beginning to develop when Suzon meets Latouche.

An examination of Manet's working process in creating the painting reveals that he went to great lengths to achieve
this effect. First, in the preparatory oil sketch for the Bar in Amsterdam (Plate 44), Manet used realistic perspective. In the sketch, the direct view of the barmaid is much more closely associated with her reflection than in the final painting. The figure of the barmaid partially blocks our view of her reflection, as would occur if we were standing in front and just to the right of her. The client in this case stands at the end of the bar, out of our sight except as a reflection in the mirror because he is too far to our right to be seen directly. The study is probably very close to what Manet actually saw during his visits to the Folies-Bergère. Lochard's 1883 photograph of it bears a handwritten annotation believed to be by Manet's son Léon Leenhoff. The inscription says "Painted from sketches made at the Folies-Bergère. Henry Dupray (the military painter) chats with the girl at the counter. Painted in the studio on the rue d'Amsterdam."9 Manet had the ability to simply transcribe reality if he so desired. However, that was clearly not his intent in painting the Bar.

X-rays of the final Salon piece show that the evolution of the image continued on the canvas as Manet painted it, corroborating Eugène Manet's comment in a letter to Berthe Morisot that his brother kept redoing the painting.10 The initial compositional lay-in of the forms was similar to that of the finished form of the Amsterdam sketch. From that point, Manet began the transformation to the final image with its
rich diversity of implications. Originally Suzon stood with her left hand resting on her right forearm in a more casual and asymmetrical pose than the final one. When he changed the position of the arms, Manet must have inevitably found it necessary to rework the rest of the figure, for the x-radiograph shows that he broadened the shoulders, redefined the waist with dense, opaque paint and adjusted the contours of the figure. In contrast to the alterations to the rest of the figure, the modeling of Suzon's head appears clear in the x-ray, with no evidence of scraping away. Thus it appears that the idea of Suzon's facing us rather than turning "into the narrative" as she does in the sketch was conceived before the final painting was begun. Likewise the barmaid's figure was always much larger in proportion to the entire painting than it was in the sketch. Both the frontal view of the head and the larger figure serve to close the distance between the viewer and the scene.

As Manet transformed Suzon's pose, so too did he transform her reflection in the mirror, sacrificing accurate perspective as a direct consequence of the "extraordinary psychological and compositional focus" on her. The x-rays show that the reflected image of the barmaid had three positions: the first repeats the Amsterdam sketch, assuming a normal correspondence between the viewpoint for the figure and its reflection. Then Manet began to move the reflection, first to a position midway between the original and final
positions. The final reflection of Suzon's head is very opaque in the x-ray and examination of the paint surface shows it to be one of the most reworked passages in the painting. The congested brushwork is in complete contrast to the man's head, which is painted confidently in a brief, sketchy technique. The difficulty and changes in the positioning of Suzon and her reflection underscore the idea that it was her figure with which Manet was most concerned. The result of the changes is that the final painting stresses the detachment of the solemn, icon-like figure, transforming a casual genre scene into a more ambiguous situation of greater dramatic intensity. The artificial perspective of the background was necessary for this to develop. The x-ray makes clear that Manet did not achieve the full articulation of his idea easily or immediately. "Complexity of meaning is matched by complexity of process." 12

Complexity is a prime factor in differentiating Manet's art from the popular illustrations to which it was often linked thematically. Unlike the popular illustrators, he was not interested in simplistic drawing for the masses. In an 1868 letter to Fantin-Latour, Manet expressed his skepticism about the possibility of creating real art accessible to the lower classes - a view evidently shared by Degas. Writing from Boulogne-sur-Mer, where Manet felt quite isolated, he told Fantin that he envied him for "...being able to discuss with the great esthetician Degas the unlikelihood
of creating an art within the grasp of the poorer classes, (and) that might be offered at the price of 13 centimes..."\(^{13}\) Manet was not attempting to make his art legible to the common man in the manner of illustration. Not only did he exploit spatial ambiguities, but throughout his career he avoided compositions depicting easily readable relationships between figures and presenting clear-cut narratives.

Manet's realism was rooted in the observable facts but he conflated and condensed these facts. Georges Jeanniot, who visited Manet's studio in January 1882, watched the artist as he painted the Bar and described his working method in the following manner.

"Although he worked from the model he did not copy nature at all closely; I noted his masterly simplifications... Everything was abbreviated; the tones were made lighter, the values were more closely related to each other, the tones more contrasting."\(^{14}\)

Manet was manipulating reality to fit his needs, condensing the world of modern Paris, the world of the Folies-Bergere, and the world of Suzon into one scene. He insisted on concision in his art, saying, "The concise man causes reflection. The verbose man bores."\(^{15}\) Manet's concision allows us to see the two realities of Suzon.
CONCLUSION

This understanding of Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère has been formulated based on contemporary scholarship on the social historical context in which the painting was created as well as commentary from Manet's friends and acquaintances and quotations from the artist himself. It has been shown to be consistent with the working methods and formal means Manet used in this and other paintings. In the absence of further more extensive biographical information about the characters in the Bar, consistency is the most reliable test for hypotheses concerning its meaning.

A brief examination of the two most recent interpretive hypotheses reveals their inadequacy in meeting this criterion. T.J. Clark attempts to understand Suzon through analysis of social classes. He sees her expression as one of detachment, purposefully so in order to disguise her social class. According to Clark, she is not quite bourgeois, but her fashionable coiffure and makeup and her blank face prevent the ascription of any other social class to her. She is part of a whole phenomenon which manifested itself at places like the Folies-Bergère, where people of various classes mingled and where many tried to appear to be of a lower or higher social
class than they actually were. Clark believes that Säzon's
detached expression is part of that pretense and that the
reflection in the mirror is necessary to show the milieu which
generated it. This explanation, which Clark himself says is
tentative, is also problematic.

First, there is nothing in Manet's prior work or in any
of the statements recorded by his contemporaries to indicate
that he was interested in this particular type of analysis of
social classes. What these sources do indicate is that he
was interested in Parisian women of various sorts. He painted,
them, became friends with them, wrote letters to them, and
charmed them like the dandy that he was.¹ His paintings and
pastels chronicled what they looked like, how they dressed,
their pastimes, their settings, their careers. He recorded
the new categories of demi-mondaines, actresses, lorettes,
waitresses, and barmaids. There is nothing however, to support
the idea that Manet had any particular interest in analyzing
their relationship to other social classes.

One can find instances of detached stares in subjects
of Manet who could not possibly hope to hide their social
circumstances. It would be ludicrous to claim that the light-
haired boy in Le Vieux Musicien (Plate 45) could disguise his
social class as he stands in rags amidst a tattered band of
characters. And what of Emile Zola in the portrait by Manet
(Plate 46)? Are we really to assume that a well known writer
and friend of Manet was attempting anonymity of social class?
Furthermore, Clark ignores the strength of the tension between Suzon and her reflection and virtually ignores what is known of the rest of the figures in the painting and of Manet's work in general.

Robert Herbert comes somewhat closer to the mark, although his interpretation is not without difficulties. Herbert reads Suzon's look as a representation of "the anonymity and loneliness inherent in the arbitrary encounters of modern life." Yet there is nothing to suggest that the gregarious and socially adept Manet felt this personally even during the illness he suffered while painting the Bar. And again in the artist's prior work, one can find examples of detachment among characters who are not encountering each other in any anonymous or arbitrary fashion, e.g., The Balcony (Plate 47) and The Railroad (Plate 48).

Herbert further postulates that Suzon is a "participant and victim of commercialized leisure." But the notion that her impassive gaze is a defense against the clients who presume her availability is contradicted by her reflection in the mirror. Herbert's explanation is that the Suzon in the mirror is the seductive Parisienne of the customer's fantasy and that the Suzon who faces us is the professional barmaid and barmaid only. This theory, while unsubstantiated, at least does not ignore the issue of two realities.

Clark, Herbert, and others have made important contributions to constructing the general context in which
Manet's last great painting was created. Their documentation on the Folies, its reputation, and that of those who frequented it, as well as the stereotype of the dame de comptoir, provide a firm basis for identification of Suzon as a barmaid-prostitute. Pictorial evidence of Manet's long-standing interest in "cataloguing" the various categories of modern Parisienne, from grisette to Lorette to demi-mondaine and bourgeoisie supports this reading. The biographical nature of his works featuring Victorine Meurent, identified by Seibert, suggests the probability of a biographical treatment of Suzon.

The artist's departure from traditional single-point perspective in the Bar allows him to indicate a passage of time linked to a change in Suzon's demeanor. An examination of two of Manet's works from the same period, Le modèle du Bar aux Folies-Bergère and Amazon strongly suggests that the change in Suzon's pensive and detached attitude to one of animation is the prelude to a change in status initiated by her encounter with the client, Gaston Latouche, or a type he represents. Further research on the biographies of the individual characters portrayed in the picture may specifically document the rise of Suzon from barmaid to Lorette.4
NOTES

Introduction

1 These interpretations may be found in Emile Zola, Mes Haines; T. J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers; George Mauner, Manet: Peintre-Philosophe: A Study of the Painter's Themes; and Noveline Ross, Manet's Bar at the Folies-Bergère and the Myths of Popular Illustration.


3 In that year Meyer Schapiro's article, "The Nature of Abstract Art," was published in the Marxist Quarterly, January - March, 1937, p. 83. The article opened the way for re-evaluation of the art of the Impressionists, and by extension, of Manet, by asserting that early Impressionism had a "moral aspect." The article is cited by T. J. Clark in The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) pp. 3-4 as an inspiration for his own analysis of the issue.


5 Some modern art historians believe that this was indeed the case. Françoise Cachin, in Manet: 1832-1883 (New York: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983) notes on p. 180 that it is generally accepted that the figure of Olympia seems to literally illustrate Les Fleurs du mal.


7 George Moore, Confessions (Paris: 1886) p. 85.


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid.

13 Baudelaire suggested in a letter to Manet that he had put the wound on the wrong side and should correct it before sending the work to the Salon. Manet chose to leave the wound as it was.


Chapter I


8 Herbert, p. 79. The author correctly situates Manet’s scene based on Chéret’s poster, an illustrated program and other information. This is an important contribution since art historians have been led to misinterpretations based on attempts to locate the scene elsewhere in the Folies. Noveline Ross, for example, believing that the bar in question was located in the Garden, explains the literally impossible combination of viewpoints as a conflation of views on Manet’s part. Cheret’s poster makes it clear that no such conflation is needed to explain the view of the balcony reflected in the mirror or the feet of the trapeze artist. In this case, Manet was simply representing what was there.

9 Ross, p. 76.

10 Ross, p. 160.

11 Ibid.

12 Ross has reported the information available to date.

13 Degas’s 1879 painting, Mlle La La at the Cirque Fernando (Plate 8) focuses on a similar type of entertainment.

14 Herbert, p. 79.

15 Ross, p. 8. Tabarant states (p. 423) that Dupray and Latouche are visible in the background but does not specify their exact locations. While Ross places Dupray to the right of Jeanne, Pierre Courthion places him at the left of the picture with Latouche. Neither provides an explanation of his or her reasoning.

16 Gaston Latouche’s comment indicating that he posed for the figure at the far left appears in J. P. Bouillon, "Une visite de Felix Braquemond à Gaston Latouche," Gazette des beaux arts, LXXV (March 1970)p. 176. Cited by Ross, p. 8. His statement that he posed for the client appears in


19 Seibert, pp. 89-92.

20 Seibert, pp. 100-105, notes that Lorettes in need of distraction, admirers, or a "legitimate" occupation would persuade their sponsors to rent the Ecole Lyrique theater, where, after the briefest of acting lessons, they would present their stage "debut." Actresses in general were poorly paid and in many cases supplemented their incomes through male patronage. Thus the professions of actress and Lorette went hand in hand.

21 Idem., pp. 133 and 161-178.
22 Idem., pp. 216-221.
23 Idem., pp. 241 and 245-246.
24 Idem., pp. 30-32.
25 Idem., pp. 52-55 and 60-64.
26 Idem., p. 205.
27 Idem., p. 281.
28 Idem., p. 238.
29 Idem. p. 205.
30 Duret, p. 86
31 Idem., p. 88.
32 Ross, p. 2
33 This was the procedure he had used in creating the Bal de l'Opéra, for example.
34 The idea of this being the house uniform of the Folies-Bergere is substantiated by the oil sketch (Plate 44) in which the first model wears the same dress, and by the cartoon (Plate 33) in which another barmaid wears a short-sleeved version of the same costume.

35 Adolphe Tabarant, in Manet et ses oeuvres (Paris, 1947), p.425 describes Suzon in the oil painting as wearing a little straw hat with a blue ribbon and a white feather, a blue ribbon around her neck, with her hair falling in long ringlets on her shoulders. Unfortunately, although the picture was said to have belonged to Edmond Bazire, it is not acknowledged by Jamot and Wildenstein in their catalogue raisonne, and reproductions are not available. Ross, p.144, states that the work is now in a private collection in Paris.

Chapter II

1 Joel Isaacson, "Impressionism and Journalistic Illustration," Arts 56 (June 1982): 95-115, provides numerous examples of striking parallels in form and subject matter between Manet and the Impressionists'paintings and popular illustration. His article builds on extensive work done by Anne Coffin Hanson and Beatrice Farwell, taking up where they left off chronologically and examining works from the 1860s to the 1880s.

2 Circulations varied widely, from that of Le Charivari -- 3000 between 1866 and 1869 to the large illustrated weeklies such as L'Illustration at 27,000 and Le Monde Illustre at 21,000 in 1858.


4 Ross, p. 45.


9 Etienne de Neufville, Physiologie de la femme (Paris: Aubert, 1842), pp. 53-54. Cited by Ross, p. 49.

10 Ibid.


Chapter III


5 Paul Alexis, Le Réveil (1882). Cited by Clark, p. 239. No further details of publication are provided by Clark.


9 Isaacson, p. 110

10 Clark, pp. 243-244.


12 Amazon measures 74 x 52 cm., while Spring and Autumn each measure 72 x 51 cm.

13 Hanson, p. 86.


Chapter IV


3 Feir. Cited by Clark, p. 240.


5 Stop, Le Journal Amusant (27 May 1882). Cited by Clark, p. 241. The term "marchande de consolation" should not be taken as a reference to prostitution, as Clark has taken it. The "consolation" in this context is alcohol, as indicated by the caption "Un petit verre de consolation" in the upper left corner of Plate 38, reproduced from the 29 December 1877 issue of Le Monde Illustré, p. 408.

6 Lynell Morr, "Manet's Bar aux Folies-Bergère: A Study" (Master's paper, The Ohio State University), pp. 16-19.


8 Hanson, p. 200. Had Manet wished to create a simpler, more straightforward view of the bar, he could have found inspiration for his composition in Forain's 1878 gouache, entitled Café Scène, now in the Brooklyn Museum (Plate 39). Forain's picture, inscribed to the enterprising
Folies director Sari, shows the bar with its bottles and compote of fruit, the barmaid and her reflection in the mirror, as well as the theater, its balconies, and its spectators all in realistic perspective.

9 Cachin, p. 483. Tabarant, p. 423, mentions that there was also a preparatory watercolor, but its present location is unknown.


12 Ibid.

13 Isaacson, p. 100. Degas's concern with this issue is implied in an excerpt from his November 27, 1872 letter to Frohlich, written during Degas's sojourn in Louisiana. "It is not good to do Parisian art and Louisiana art indiscriminately: it is likely to turn into Le Monde Illustré."

14 Farr, et al. p. 30


Conclusion

1 Pierre Schneider points out in The World of Manet: 1832-1883 (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968) that Manet "loved the company of women," p. 65. and that "Manet's fondness for attractive ladies was well known, p. 66. Paul Alexis describes Manet at a salon as he lingered to talk to the women when the men had congregated in the smoking room. "The fact is that Edouard Manet is one of the five or six men of present-day Parisian society who still knows how to talk to a woman. The rest of us, feverish analysts, desperately ambitious or dreamily hypochondriacal, are too bitter, too distracted, too deep in our obsessions..." "The elegant creatures surrounding him kindle a brighter flame in his brilliant, deep-set eyes. His mobile and mocking lips assume a graceful shape in addressing these parisiennes..." Cited by Robert Gordon and Andrew Forge, The Last Flowers of Manet (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), p. 18.
2 Herbert, p. 80.

3 Ibid.

4 Examination of the types and possible symbolic significance of the flowers associated with Suzon in the picture may also provide clues to Manet's intended meaning.
Plate II

FOLIES-BERGERE

Tous les soirs à 8 heures
432 Rue Richer

Prix unique 2/F, à toutes places non louées
Plate III

LE JARDIN DES FOLIES-BERGÈRE

22, rue Richer, 22
Plate IV

ANNÉE 1879
LE THÉÂTRE DES
FOLIES-BERGERE
RESTERA OUVERT
TOUT L'ÉTÉ
Plate VII
Plate VIII
Plate IX
Plate XI
Plate XII
Plate XV
Plate XVI
Il neut m'espacer. Le saurons.
Plate XX

[Image of a woman in a long dress, holding a bird, facing away from the viewer]
Plate XXIII
AUX FOLIES-BERGÈRE, par Forain.

— ... Et tu t'appelles ?
— Zed...

(Le reste du dialogue a été supprimé par la censure.)
— Eh bien, oui, là! Andrea, je vous aime!
— Ah! mon pauvre ami!... Et moi qui me plaisais à vous croire un peu moins bête que les autres!!!
Plate XXX
Plate XXXI
Plate XXXIV
Plate XXXVI
UNE MARCHANDE DE CONSOLATION AUX FOLIES-BERGÈRE. — (Son dos se reflète dans une glace; mais, sans doute par suite d’une distraction du peintre, un monsieur avec lequel elle cause et dont on voit l’image dans la glace, n’existe pas dans le tableau. — Nous croyons devoir réparer cette omission.)
Un petit verre de consolation.

Tord-boueux.

Arnache-gueule.

Gros bonnet de la rue du Sautier.

Le petit vicaire.

M. le président.

Le colonel.

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Plate XLIII
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