

A STUDY IN POSITIVISM AND PHYSIOLOGY:
READINGS OF GUSTAVE COURBET

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Hertfordshire for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The programme of research was carried out in the Department of Art and Arts Therapies,
University of Hertfordshire

May 2007

Acknowledgements

I should like to acknowledge the support and assistance of numerous individuals and institutions without which this thesis could not have been undertaken or completed. The thesis progressed in a programme of research funded by the University of Hertfordshire and I benefited greatly from the financial assistance, project supervision and personal academic development afforded by this programme. The encouragement and advice of Brendan Larvor in the early stages of the project have been much appreciated. The research has benefited from the input and consideration of numerous academic members of staff in seminars and discussions conducted in the Department of Art and Arts Therapies at the University of Hertfordshire and I am grateful for this support. I am also indebted to the Research Committee of the University of Hertfordshire for its patience concerning some unavoidable delays that posed a serious threat to the project for a while. Thanks are also due to various libraries and archives in England and in France for the use of their research facilities. In particular, I should like to thank the staff at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris for helping me locate some elusive sources and Trinity College Cambridge for providing me with a research base in the early stages of the project. The British Library in London has been a mainstay for my research and I have also benefited from the collections held at the History of Art department at the University of Oxford. Some of the ideas within the thesis were tested and rehearsed at a conference held by the Association of Art Historians in Edinburgh in 2000 and I should like to thank all those who contributed ideas and comments, particularly John House, who offered inspiring thoughts and helped direct some important aspects of the thesis. I would like to extend a special note of thanks to the Open University for assisting me with numerous grants from the Crowther Fund and for giving me considerable moral support during the project even though I had not studied with the university for a number of years. Most especially, however, I wish to express my

sincere gratitude to Steven Adams, without whom this thesis certainly could not have been formulated or completed. His incisive critical appraisals and enthusiastic guidance in all aspects of the project have been instrumental in its development, and his continuing belief in the thesis, his patient supervision and his unwavering support, both academic and moral, have enabled the thesis to survive the most difficult of personal setbacks that I encountered whilst engaged in the project. I owe him a considerable personal and academic debt.

Mark E. Souness, May 2007.

Abstract: A Study in Positivism and Physiology: Readings of Gustave Courbet

This thesis explores ways in which the mid-nineteenth-century current of positivist thought impacted upon the work of the French artist Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). Guided by certain methodological imperatives set out in the theories of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra – in particular LaCapra’s identification of the need for historical practice to avoid reductive interpretation of data and to recognise the formulation of concepts through intersecting domains of knowledge and the specificity of their articulation in different primary sources – this thesis focuses upon interpretations of Courbet’s work formulated between 1848 and 1878, examines ideas developed within the intersecting domains of positivism and medical science, and highlights the deployment of these ideas for political leverage across the entire political spectrum. The thesis discovers ways in which positivist interpreters of Courbet’s work, including the artist himself, sought to criticise and resolve the social and political problems of the time by drawing upon theories designed to achieve social harmony through scientific understanding of human nature and its evolution. The thesis demonstrates that numerous social commentators referred to the images of people and social conditions in Courbet’s paintings to express positivist views about social decay, the enduring human potential to reform such decay, and an inevitable achievement of social harmony. I show that positivists interpreted the artist’s work with recourse to disciplines such as biology, physiology and physiognomy, as well as concepts such as ‘the physical and the moral,’ according to which the various physical, mental, emotional and moral dimensions of the human constitution were closely interconnected, evident in physical appearance, and crucially influenced by the changing environmental conditions impacting upon them, including society. I also show that, according to such prescriptions, the physical appearance of ordinary contemporary people represented in Courbet’s paintings indicated their physical and moral state and by extension the social conditions forming this state. Such physiognomical principles were often associated with caricature and portraiture to advance the critical and affective nature of Courbet’s paintings, which were seen as aesthetic stimulants in an evolutionary process of social reform. As the project shows, positivists thought that Courbet’s paintings expressed certain ideal notions of equality and materiality that served the political, ideological and often anti-religious interests of the writers concerned; in these views, all humans fostered the same inherent physiological desire for altruistic existence and shared equal status with animals and organisms as physiological beings conceived and sustained within biological nature.

Contents

List of figures: 7

Introduction: 10

Chapter One: Progress and Order during the Second Republic: Views of the Left and Centre

- I Introduction: 33
- II Pierre Hawke: physical and moral beauty as a means of social reform: 35
- III Revolution, Proudhon and the freedom of the press: the context in which Hawke's views were circulated and consumed: 53
- IV Max Buchon: physiognomical representation as a means of social reform: 61
- V Peaceful and violent socialism: the context in which Buchon's views were circulated and consumed: 78
- VI Francis Wey: physiognomical representation and biological order: 88
- VII Moderate republicanism, nepotism, corruption and social order: the context in which Wey's views were circulated and consumed: 102
- VIII Conclusion: 109

Chapter Two: Progress and Order in the Second Republic: Right-Wing Views

- I Introduction: 111
- II Alfred Dauger: the acceptable limits of 'vulgarity' and the 'poetry of the horrible': 114
- III Bonapartism and social order: the context in which Dauger's views were circulated and consumed: 129
- IV Louis de Geofroy: the unacceptability of 'vulgarity': 142
- V Orleanism and social order: the context in which de Geofroy's views were circulated and consumed: 158

- VI Champfleury: the order of social reform and physiognomical representation as 'history': 166
- VII The Party of Order: the context in which Champfleury's views were circulated and consumed: 183
- VIII Conclusion: 193

Chapter Three: Caricature and Social Evolution during the Second Empire

- I Introduction: 195
- II Caricature, physiognomy and portraiture as physical and moral reform: 199
- III Social leadership through caricature: allegory and history in the *Atelier du peintre*: 218
- IV Social leadership through caricature: antiquity and history in the *Atelier du peintre*: 236
- V Eclecticism: the context in which Champfleury's views were circulated and consumed: 247
- VI Conclusion: 263

Chapter Four: Anti-Idealism and Biology in the Second Empire

- I Introduction: 265
- II Positivism and the 'negation of the ideal': 269
- III Anti-idealism, history, 'synthesis' and the 'concrete': 276
- IV Anti-idealism and biology: 283
- V Anti-idealism, physiognomy and caricature: 302
- VI Orleanism in opposition: the context in which Courbet's views were circulated and consumed: 315
- VII Conclusion: 320

Chapter Five: Positivist Idealism: Social Reform and Universal Materiality

- I Introduction: 322
- II Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: positivist idealism and social reform: 325
- III The *Enterrement à Ornans* and ‘this hideous sore of modern immorality’: 334
- IV History and the ‘shameful destitution’ of *juste milieu* in the *Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*: 339
- V ‘Physiological beauty’ and revolution in the *Fileuse endormie*: 347
- VI The *Curés revenant de la conférence*: no room for the soul in this ‘density of flesh’: 361
- VII Presenting peaceful socialism to middle-class society: the context in which Proudhon’s views were circulated and consumed: 369
- VIII Camille Lemonnier: positivist idealism, universal materiality and Courbet’s failure as a naturalist: 375
- IX The ‘ideal of well-being’ and Courbet’s success as a positivist: 381
- X Biological nature and ‘the universality of things’: 386
- XI Animality, physical appetite and ‘the ideal of stoutness’: 389
- XII The physiology of observation and execution: 395
- XIII The market for luxury books: the context in which Lemonnier’s views were circulated and consumed: 399
- XIV Conclusion: 404

Conclusion: 406

Bibliography: 417

Figures: 435

Figures

- Figure 1. Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier du peintre: allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique*, 1854-55. Oil on canvas, 359 x 598cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
- Figure 2. Gustave Courbet, *Le violoncelliste*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 117 x 89cm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.
- Figure 3. Etienne-Hippolyte Maindron, *Attila et Sainte-Geneviève*, Sculpture (Statue), 1845. Plaster, 250cm H, 130cm L, 285cm P. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers.
- Figure 4. Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres*, 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).
- Figure 5. Gustave Courbet, *Un enterrement à Ornans*, 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 315 x 668cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
- Figure 6. Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).
- Figure 7. Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).
- Figure 8. Gustave Courbet, *Un enterrement à Ornans* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 315 x 668cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
- Figure 9. Jean Léon Gérôme, *Un Intérieur grec*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 155 x 210cm.
- Figure 10. Louis Eugène Gabriel Isabey, *L'Embarquement de Ruyter et William de Witt*, 1850-1. Oil on panel, 124 x 168cm. Musée naval, Toulon.
- Figure 11. Eugène Isabey, *Episode du mariage de Henri IV*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 126 x 95cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- Figure 12. Gustave Courbet, *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*, 1850-55, oil on canvas, 206 x 275cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon.
- Figure 13. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait de l'auteur, L'Homme à la pipe*, c1848-9. Oil on canvas, 45 x 37cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

- Figure 14. Jean-François Millet, *Le Semeur*, 1846-7. Oil on canvas, 74 x 60cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Figure 15. Jean-François Millet, *Les botteleurs de foin*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 56 x 65cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- Figure 16. Joseph Palizzi, *Le Retour de la foire*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 95 x 130cm. Musée Saint-Didier, Langres.
- Figure 17. Nicolas Poussin, *Paysage avec les funérailles de Phocion*, 1648-50. Oil on canvas, 114 x 175cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- Figure 18. Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Antigna, *Les enfants dans les blés*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 55 x 70cm. L'Illustration, 1851.
- Figure 19. Gustave Courbet, *Baigneuses*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 227 x 193cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.
- Figure 20. Titian, *Venus Anadyomene*, c1520-5. Oil on canvas, 75.80 x 57.60cm. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- Figure 21. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Venus Anadyomene*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 163 x 92cm. Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.
- Figure 22. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *La vicomtesse d'Haussonville*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 131.8 x 92cm. Frick Collection, New York.
- Figure 23. Gustave Courbet, *La rencontre ou Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 129 x 149cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.
- Figure 24. 'L'Atelier du peintre,' d'après une fresque de la casa Carolina, à Pompéi.
- Figure 25. 'L'Atelier du peintre,' d'après Guillaume Zahn, d'après une fresque de la casa Carolina, à Pompéi.
- Figure 26. Gustave Courbet, *Le rut du printemps*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 356 x 508cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
- Figure 27. Gustave Courbet, *Le cerf à l'eau, chasse à courre*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 220 x 275cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille.
- Figure 28. Gustave Courbet, *Les curés revenant de la conférence*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 229 x 330cm. Destroyed.

- Figure 29. Gustave Courbet, *Entrée en conférence*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 8.5 x 10.5cm, 1868.
- Figure 30. Gustave Courbet, *Autre mode de retour de la conférence*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 9 x 11cm, 1868.
- Figure 31. Gustave Courbet, *Les coucher des conférenciers*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 9 x 11cm, 1868.
- Figure 32. Gustave Courbet, *La fileuse endormie*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 91 x 116cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.
- Figure 33. Gustave Courbet, *Les curés revenant de la conférence* [detail], 1862. Oil on canvas, 229 x 330cm. Destroyed.
- Figure 34. Gustave Courbet, *Le sommeil*, or *Les Dormeuses*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 135 x 200cm. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris.
- Figure 35. Gustave Courbet, *La remise de chevreuils au ruisseau de Plaisir Fontaine, Doubs*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 174 x 209cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
- Figure 36. Gustave Courbet, *Remise de chevreuils en hiver*, c1866. Oil on canvas, 34 x 72.5cm. Musée de Lyons.
- Figure 37. Gustave Courbet, *La truite*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 87cm. Kunsthaus, Zurich.
- Figure 38. Gustave Courbet, *Après la chasse*, c1859. Oil on canvas, 236.2 x 186.1cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection.
- Figure 39. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Three Graces*, c1636-1638. Oil on canvas, 221 x 181cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.
- Figure 40. Jacob Jordaens, *Allegory of Fertility*, c1623. Oil on canvas, 180 x 241cm. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

Introduction

This thesis explores some of the ways in which the mid-nineteenth-century current of positivist thought impacted upon the work of the French artist Jean-Désiré-Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). More specifically, this thesis poses the following central research question: what was the nature of the relationship between Courbet's work and 'positivisme,' a confederated body of philosophical, medical and sociological ideas taken from the writings of a number of prominent theorists, including Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Isidore Marie Auguste François Xavier Comte (1798-1857), Émile Maximilien Paul Littré (1801-1881), Étienne Vacherot (1809-1897), Jean Gaspard Félix Ravaisson-Mollien (1813-1900) and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). Connections between Courbet's work and positivism have been made since around 1848 and are still referred to as significant aspects of the artist's work. It is my contention, however, that the existing accounts of the subject have been based upon reductive interpretations of the historical data and have insufficiently recognised the complex formulation of positivist concepts through intersecting domains of knowledge such as philosophy, medical science and sociology. Consequently, I argue that the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism needs to be reconstructed using research methods that recognise both the complex genealogy of such concepts and the specificity of their articulation in relevant primary sources.

Pursuing the central research question, the required reconstruction prompts a number of further component questions, foremost amongst which is the following: precisely what positivist ideas and concepts did interpreters of Courbet's work draw upon? By consequence, this line of enquiry raises additional questions of significance for the

subject concerned. What domains of knowledge were called up by these ideas and concepts and how did they serve the political and ideological interests of the interpreters concerned? What aspects of Courbet's work were thought to embody these positivist ideas and concepts and what potential social and political effects were these aspects perceived to have? In what ways did Courbet himself conceive of his work as part of a positivist enterprise and what social and political ends did he seek to serve through such conception? As this thesis demonstrates, the pursuit of these research questions furnishes us with a clearer understanding of the artist's work in three interconnected areas of enquiry: the nature of the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism, the artistic devices and conventions through which this relationship was expressed and communicated, and the social and political contexts within which positivist interpretations of the artist's work were produced, circulated and consumed.

Based upon the research questions outlined above, this thesis examines positivist dimensions of Courbet's work articulated in the historical record over the 30-year period from 1848 to 1878. During this time, numerous commentators drew upon various aspects of the huge pool of positivist knowledge to interpret Courbet's work and support their particular ideological and political views. The examination begins with views articulated shortly after the 1848 Revolution in Paris, which brought about France's Second Republic and which created a revolutionary and liberal climate through which many positivist ideas were germinated, advanced and expressed. Many of the thoroughgoing theories of positivism had already been written and published by that time. The six volumes of Auguste Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* were published in Paris between 1830 and 1842 and his *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme* appeared in the very year that our study begins. Like many positivist theories of the first half of the nineteenth century, these

works expressed a strong desire to resolve the malaise of the era through a complete understanding of human nature and society. They postulated a vast range of ideas, formulated in the ambitious attempt of producing what Comte referred to as a complete philosophical ‘system’ for understanding ‘all human existence’ and demonstrating that man was destined to reach a perfect state of harmonious social existence.¹

Among many other things, the grand positivist schema proposed a model of historical understanding to account for the series of uprisings beginning with the French Revolution of 1789 and continuing into the middle of the nineteenth century. The model often explained this ‘great [revolutionary] crisis’ as a necessary historical force driven by the human species’ inherent need to be periodically renewed and improved until it reached a perfect state of peaceful coexistence.² Yet, whilst positivist theories often portrayed revolutions as necessary setbacks on the great course of human development towards a guaranteed state of social harmony – as catalysts of renewal in a process of weeding out human imperfection according to the positivist benchmark of an altruistic society – many such writings indicated deep concerns about continuing social instability. The theoretical depth and expanse of these works expressed a strong desire to resolve the tensions, conflicts

¹ See Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Première partie, ‘Esprit fondamental du positivisme,’ Paris, 1907, p8: ‘La vraie philosophie se propose a systématiser, autant que possible, toute l’existence humaine, individuelle et surtout collective, contemplée à la fois dans les trois ordres de phénomènes qui la caractérisent, pensées, sentiments, et actes.’ See also *ibid*, p343: ‘C’est ainsi que, dans l’existence positive, le coeur, l’esprit, et le caractère se consolident et se développent mutuellement, d’après la systématisation habituelle de leur propre exercice naturel. Jamais la vie publique et la vie privée n’avaient pu être aussi pleinement liées que par cette égale consécration à une même destination essentielle,’ Comte’s *Discours* was first published separately in 1848 under the title *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme, ou Exposition sommaire de la doctrine philosophique et sociale propre à la grande république occidentale compose des cinq populations avancée, française, italienne, germanique, britannique et espagnole* (Paris, 1848). The second edition was published in 1851 as part of the first volume of the *Système de politique positive*, in which it serves as the introduction.

² See *ibid*, Seconde partie, ‘Destination sociale du positivisme, d’après sa connexité nécessaire avec l’ensemble de la grande révolution occidentale,’ pp63-134. Comte refers to the revolutionary movement as ‘la grande révolution’ and ‘cette crise radicale’; see for example p64.

and anxieties, as well as the sharp social and political divisions, caused by persistent social unrest and successive revolutions. The pioneering French positivist philosophers such as Saint-Simon, Comte and Littré sought an end to the threat of anarchy and aimed to establish a more secure future through a complete understanding of the workings of human life and collective existence. They maintained that this understanding would furnish a more rational and predictable society, a society that could control its own destiny and guarantee its own harmony. In the immediate wake of the 1848 Revolution, Comte summed up this great positivist design of human understanding as a systematic view of human life – a means of diminishing human imperfections through ‘systematic modifications’ and reconciling the revolutionary impulse that ‘has now been agitating Western nations for more than sixty years.’³

Scholars generally accept that it was around this time, in the summer of 1848, that Courbet first met the famous socialist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, whose revolutionary and humanitarian ideas drew heavily upon positivism and impacted decisively upon the artist and his work.⁴ It was also in 1848 that Courbet’s work gained

³ See *ibid*, Première partie, ‘Esprit fondamental du positivisme,’ p8. Comte argues that such ‘modifications’ should be the focus of political determinations and the ‘intervention’ of positivism in social life: ‘les modifications systématiques . . . [et] . . . la réalisation continue de cette indispensable intervention constitue le domaine essentiel de la politique.’ See also *ibid*, Seconde partie, ‘Destination sociale du positivisme, d’après sa connexité nécessaire avec l’ensemble de la grande révolution occidentale,’ p64: ‘Pour la caractériser nettement, il suffit, dans ce Discours, de faire convenablement sentir l’intime connexité de la nouvelle philosophie avec l’ensemble de la grande révolution qui, depuis plus de soixante ans, agite profondément l’élite de l’humanité, . . .’ In this part of the *Discours*, Comte asserts the close relationship between the formulation of positivist philosophy and the working out of the revolutionary movement in its capacities to destroy, regenerate and consolidate society.

⁴ See, for example, Paul Crapo, ‘Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,’ *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p67, and Gerstle Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1951, pp54-55. As Crapo notes, the relationship between the work of Courbet and Proudhon was held in the public eye at least as early as 1851, when the critic Louis Enault wrote in his ‘Salon de 1851’ that ‘M. Courbet est le Proudhon de la peinture . . . M. Proudhon – je voulais dire M. Courbet – fait de la peinture démocratique et sociale . . .’ (Enault, *Chronique de Paris*, 16 February 1851, p120). Examining Proudhon’s nine carnets preserved in the

significant recognition in the Salon exhibiting arena and when a sustained positivist commentary of his exhibits first appeared in the press. As is well-known, the Salon was the annual government-sponsored and juried exhibition of new painting and sculpture that was open to the ticket-bearing public. Originally established in the middle of the seventeenth century by the Académie des Beaux-Arts to display the works of recent graduates of the École des beaux arts, the Salon was for over 200 years thereafter the essential exhibiting arena for any artist hoping to achieve success in France.⁵ Nineteenth-century French critical reviews of the exhibitions were politically charged, none more so than during our particular period of study, when the Salon provided a focus for an ongoing debate over liberty and freedom of expression in politics, society and the arts. As Patricia Mainardi has noted, ‘every political debate of nineteenth-century France found its analogue in the Salon’ since ‘cultural institutions were no less contested than political ones, and usually over the same issues.’⁶ The year of 1848 was a landmark, both for the admittance of works into the Salon and Courbet’s recognition as an artist. Courbet’s success was very limited at the Salon until the 1848 Revolution, after which the jury responsible for the admittance of works into the exhibition was suppressed; consequently, all ten of his submitted works were shown.⁷ This

Bibliothèque nationale de France (Manuscripts, N.a.f.14267-75), Alan Bowness deduces that the artist and philosopher did not meet until 11 April 1851; see Alan Bowness, ‘Courbet’s Proudhon,’ *Burlington Magazine*, No. 120, 1978, p124.

⁵ For a concise history of the Academy and the Salon, see Francis Frascina, Nigel Blake, Briony Fer, Tamar Garb and Charles Harrison, *Modernity and Modernism, French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London in association with The Open University, 1993, pp59-63. For more detailed analyses of the politics surrounding these institutions during the nineteenth century, see Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, the Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, and Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon, Art and the State in the Early Third Republic*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp22-23.

⁶ Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon, Art and the State in the Early Third Republic*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp22-23.

⁷ All of Courbet’s submissions for the Salons of 1841-1843 were rejected. In 1844, one of his three submissions was accepted, a self-portrait with a black dog entitled *Portrait de l’auteur*, which was apparently executed two years previously. For details of Courbet’s Salon submissions throughout his career, see *Gustave Courbet 1819-1877*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978 (catalogue for the

acceptance was instrumental in the germination of the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism. The Second Republic's liberal beginnings were accompanied by a torrent of new radical left-wing journals, including Proudhon's *Le Représentant du peuple*, which presented the first sustained positivist interpretation of Courbet's work. Here, in a series of Salon reviews, the engraver Pierre Hawke associated the artist's paintings with a revolutionary reaction against what was seen by many as the social decay caused by capitalism and bourgeois society.

Yet, the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism was not only cast in a revolutionary light. Despite the controversy surrounding the artist throughout his career and the frequent association of his paintings with radical left-wing politics, we find positivist reviews of his work during our period of study designed to appeal to conservative sectors of society. We find that positivism appealed to both the left and the right. As we move through the period and examine the different dimensions of positivism with which Courbet's work was associated, it becomes clear that the philosophy's theoretical expanse could provide social ideas to support the views of writers across the entire political spectrum. Our examination concludes in 1878, the year after the artist's death, with an examination of the interpretation of his work formulated by the famous writer Camille Lemonnier. As Linda Nochlin has shown, this interpretation was published during France's Third Republic, at a time when the cultural establishment began to dilute Courbet's political image in order to promote him as a national hero within the great republican tradition of French art. This republican reconstruction depended upon an ideological location of his art within the realm

of nature, not politics.⁸ Lemonnier's account corresponded with this 'depoliticisation' of Courbet and presented his art as a positivist expression of the relationship between man and the material world of nature around him. Far removed from the revolutionary Courbet presented by Hawke thirty years earlier, Lemonnier's interpretation was published as a luxury edition destined for the upper-class market of wealthy book collectors.

To date, insufficient scholarly attention has been paid to the ideas constituting the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism, the artistic conventions and means through which these ideas were expressed and communicated, and the social and political contexts within which the primary sources articulating these ideas were produced and consumed. Despite voluminous recent writings on Courbet – some of which clearly indicate the need for a deeper understanding of positivist dimensions of his work – no sustained or thoroughgoing exploration of the subject exists and it is in this field that my main contribution to knowledge on the subject lies. A systematic examination of this hitherto unexplored subject indicates that positivism had a significant impact upon Courbet's work and the critical, social and political templates used to understand and articulate it.

Accounts that touched upon or addressed the subject during the twentieth century provided inadequate explanations and reductive views of positivism that formed mere adjuncts to more sustained studies of the artist's prominent role in the historical movement known as 'realism.'⁹ Despite some warnings discernible in studies of realism produced

⁸ Linda Nochlin, 'The depoliticisation of Gustave Courbet: transformation and rehabilitation under the Third Republic,' in Michael R. Orwicz, ed., *Art criticism and its institutions in nineteenth-century France*, Manchester University Press, 1994, pp109-121.

⁹ Numerous studies touch upon the subject very superficially indeed. In his introduction to Robert Fernier's book on Courbet published in 1969, for example, René Huyghe announces Courbet as 'the

early in the century and in stark contrast to more insightful views developed in histories of positivism *per se* from the middle of the century, these accounts reduced positivism to a series of general scientific attitudes or critical methods adopted in the realist approach to subject matter.¹⁰ Linda Nochlin's well-known study of realism published in 1971 provided a typically expressed view of these attitudes and methods: 'impartiality, impassivity, scrupulous objectivity, rejection of *a priori* metaphysical or epistemological prejudice, the confining of the artist to the accurate observation and notation of empirical phenomena, and the descriptions of how, and not why, things happen.'¹¹ A similar impoverishment of

embodiment of positivism,' without any adequate explanation of the philosophy's ideas, theories or concerns.

¹⁰ In his preface to Émile Bouvier's study of realism entitled *La Bataille réaliste (1844-1857)*, published in 1914, the famous French historian and critic Gustave Lanson praises Bouvier for guarding against the simplistic view that realism emerged from a straightforward cultural development from romantic individualism to positivistic discipline, from the triumph of observation over the imagination: 'Le mouvement du siècle se figurait par une ligne très nette et très simple: à la liberté romantique qui dispensa le sentiment individuel de toute loi, succédait la discipline scientifique qui, sous des noms divers selon les genres, soumettait partout les préférences personnelles à la vérité du fait, et substituait, ou du moins subordonnait, l'imagination à l'observation. Le travail de M. Bouvier nous oblige à reformer cette représentation trop simplifiée et trop abstraite.' See Gustave Lanson, preface to Émile Bouvier, *La Bataille réaliste (1844-1857)*, Paris, 1914, pIII. See also *ibid*, ppII-III, where Lanson warns against simplistic assertions of 'des effets parallèles de l'esprit scientifique, exact, positif, expérimental et objectif.'

¹¹ Linda Nochlin, *Realism*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1971, p43. Histories of positivism and Comte's work itself have understood the reductive nature of this commonly expressed view for some time. W. M. Simon argues that many studies of positivism appearing before 1960 are self-stultifying for asserting precisely this view: 'Comte's own system was anything but abstemiously empiricist,' he points out. Simon criticises D. G. Charlton's *Positivist Thought in France during the Second Empire, 1852-1870*, Oxford, 1959 (referring to pp5-9), Noel Annan, *The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought*, London, 1959, and his own review in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 65, 1959-60 (referring to pp169-170). See W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York and London, 1972, pp3-4. More recently, Mary Pickering's extensive intellectual biography of Comte has demonstrated the richness of the philosopher's ideas, which recognised a philosophical role for the imagination and regularly acknowledged that empiricism without any general laws deprived philosophy of real or practical knowledge. See, for example, Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p694: 'Although [for Comte] observed facts were crucial to the establishment and verification of scientific laws, the accumulation of discrete facts struck him as unsystematic, even anarchical. He believed that empiricists neglected general laws and consequently failed to provide useful or real knowledge.' See further, *ibid*, pp336-337, where Pickering quotes (in English) from Comte's *Appendice général du système de politique positive*, Paris, 1854, p141. The original French is as follows: 'L'homme est incapable par sa nature, non-seulement de combiner des faits et d'en déduire quelques conséquences, mais simplement même de les observer avec attention, et de les retenir avec sûreté, s'il ne les rattache immédiatement à

positivism was effected by James Henry Rubin's exploration of realism and social vision in the work of Courbet and Proudhon, published in 1980, which described Courbet's paintings as the 'physical incarnation' of positivist thought, artistic applications of Comte's method defined as 'the world comprehended by a new concrete consciousness . . . a method of viewing the world based on empirical observation rather than on preconception, that would provide the impetus for the transformation of society.'¹² There were some notable exceptions to this excessive emphasis upon positivist methodology – such as Aaron Sheon's psychoanalytic postulation of Courbet's positivist means of discovering the unconscious through the physiognomical study and representation of his human subjects, Petra Chu's assertion of Courbet's expression of an evolutionary view of nature through an interest in the natural sciences and an awareness of the unique geological and paleontological history of his home region, Michael Fried's association of the artist's work with Ravaisson's 'spiritualist realism or positivism,' and Klaus Herding's conclusion that the artist articulated a positivist vision of 'equality' in his late work – but these studies either speculated on the positivist connection with Courbet's work or stated their case with superficial testimony.¹³

quelque explication. En un mot, il ne peut pas plus y avoir d'observations suivies sans une théorie quelconque, que de théorie positive sans observations suivies.'

¹² James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, 1980, p76. Rubin comments upon the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism more than any study prior to his and recognises the important connection between Proudhon's view of art and Comte's: 'Proudhon was proposing a Comtian view of society in which art would participate' (see Rubin, *ibid*, 1980, p86). However, Rubin's study is undertaken only in relation to Proudhon's views and through a radical ordering of concepts such as positivism, physiognomy and phrenology.

¹³ See Aaron Sheon, 'Courbet, French Realism and the Discovery of the Unconscious,' *Arts Magazine*, February 1981, pp114-138 and 'Courbet, le réalisme français et la découverte de l'inconscient,' in *L'Âme au corps (arts et sciences 1793-1993)*, catalogue de l'exposition présentée au Grand Palais, Paris, Réunion des Musées nationaux, Gallimard, Electa, 1993. Sheon claims that Courbet was one of a small group of artists and writers, including the popular caricaturist and illustrator J. J. Grandville, the novelist Charles Nodier, Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier, who

The twenty first century has seen a great deal of scholarly attention paid to philosophical aspects of Courbet's work, although, again, no sustained study of positivist dimensions has appeared. Noël Barbe's essay in the catalogue for the Courbet exhibition in Besançon in 2000 explored relations between the artist's work and the social sciences but largely ignored the specific concerns of mid-nineteenth-century positivism.¹⁴ Developing themes advanced in the Courbet exhibition in Lausanne and Stockholm in 1999, in particular the expression of a regional identity and a communion with nature in Courbet's

sought to demonstrate through their work an understanding of scientific theories of the unconscious prevalent in the 1840s and 1850s. Concentrating upon Courbet's physiognomical portraits and self-portraits of the 1840s, and paintings by the artist showing sleeping, somnolent, meditative or daydreaming female figures, Sheon's psychoanalytic reading focuses upon Proudhon's view that art should reveal to the people at large their inner selves – their thoughts, tendencies, virtues and vices – as a means of perfecting the human race. Sheon argues that Proudhon formulated this view specifically in relation to attempts by Courbet to reveal through his paintings not only the inner lives of his sitters but also his own moods and thoughts. Through the concept of egocentric introspection, Sheon suggests the possibility that Proudhon formulated his aesthetic theory in accordance with Courbet's thought processes as revealed in these paintings. Based upon a second-hand reading of very limited parts of the philosopher's book *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, published posthumously in 1865 (Sheon refers to statements by Proudhon cited in Linda Nochlin's *Realism and Tradition in Art*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966, p51 and p53), the argument is interesting but highly speculative, undertaking no detailed or in-depth examination of Proudhon's aesthetic theory.

See Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "It Took Millions of Years to Compose That Picture," in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, The Brooklyn Museum, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988, pp55-66. Chu connects Courbet's work only in a general way to philosophical ideas associated with positivism, claiming that the artist drew inspiration from natural sciences rather than religion, and that his work expressed certain philosophies of history and evolution in currency at the time.

See Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1990. Fried connects Courbet's work to Ravaissou's formulation of 'spiritualist realism or positivism,' which combines an idealist view of the 'spirit' with a materialist view of the external world. Fried finds strong parallels between the work of Courbet and Ravaissou and intends to present a view that is 'opposed to the usual notions of his [Courbet's] art as simply positivist or materialist that have prevailed until now,' but admits that he has no firm textual evidence for his argument (Fried, 1990, pp183-184).

See Klaus Herding, *Courbet, To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, p96. Herding finds parallels between the mid-nineteenth-century art-critical link made between painting and the larger social reality and the application of perceptions from natural sciences to social relations by Comte, Taine and Zola. This, he says, 'permits us to conclude that in Courbet's late work, the romantic utopia of a unity between *solitude* and *sociabilité* was fulfilled, and to apply the term *equality* to his late landscapes.'

¹⁴ Noël Barbe, 'Le laboratoire de l'artiste. Courbet et les sciences sociales,' in *Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté*, édité à l'occasion de l'exposition 'Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté,' présentée au Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon du 23 septembre au 31 décembre 2000, Somogy éditions d'art, Paris, 2000; Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon, 2000.

paintings of his homeland in the Franche-Comté, Barbe postulated Courbet's potential as an ethnographer according to his involvement in a network of writers born in and writing about both the artist's homeland and his work.¹⁵ Numerous recent studies have taken up issues raised by Paul Crapo in 1993 concerning the role of idealism in Proudhon's view of art, although, again, none of these studies has paid sufficient attention to the rich vein of positivist ideas informing the philosopher's view.¹⁶ Hence, whilst Dominique Berthet's account published in 2002 charted many of Proudhon's general philosophical tenets – some of which, such as the didactic roles of art and idealism in perfecting human morality, were asserted in positivist theory – it disregarded his argument that Courbet's paintings idealised a central positivist tenet, the existence of an innate human sympathy for others. The same applies to recent studies focusing upon ideas and categories drawn from medical science, ideas and categories that were used in mid-nineteenth-century critiques of Courbet's work and which were of central concern to positivism. These studies – such as Chakè Matossian's examination of the physiological source of the aesthetic articulated in Proudhon's theory of art and Dominique Massonaud's survey of the pejorative use of medical terms in critical reactions to Courbet's means of representing the body – largely ignored the specifically positivist deployment of such disciplines and categories in critiques

¹⁵ Barbe's approach focuses less on the specific concerns of positivism and the social sciences of mid-nineteenth-century France and more on 'les questions que l'on peut poser à Courbet depuis les sciences sociales, et de façon symétrique les questions que Courbet pose aux sciences sociales.' Barbe adopts a sociological methodology described by N. Heinich in *Ce que l'art fait à la sociologie*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1998, and intends to take 'une perspective constructiviste aux opérations des acteurs, prenant leur parole, lorsqu'elle est attachée à des opérations "réalistes," concrètes, au sérieux.' Through this method, he explores relations between Courbet and the social sciences from three viewpoints: 'une exploration des acteurs de l'ethnographie "naissante" en Franche-Comté [Champfleury and Buchon], avec lesquels Gustave Courbet entretient des relations et forme réseau; la relation entre le peintre et ce qu'il peint, entre l'ethnographe et son terrain; la question de l'art populaire.'

¹⁶ See, for example, Dominique Berthet, *Proudhon et l'art: pour Courbet*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2001 and Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx, Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002. The issues raised by Paul Crapo are to be found in 'Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,' *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, pp67-91.

of Courbet's work during the period.¹⁷ More recently still, in May 2007, Petra ten-Doesschate Chu's reappraisal of the artist's work in the context of the nineteenth-century media culture did not take the opportunity to shed light on the subject.¹⁸

Undertaking a required reconstruction of the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism, this thesis involves a number of interrelated practical and philosophical problems that are effectively tackled through a sensitive methodology acknowledging both the limitations and possibilities of historical study. Some specific challenges are immediately apparent. In comparison with the historical record on Courbet, the record on positivism is vast and contains a multifarious range of ideas. The philosophy did not embody a simple or singularly defined concept and attention must be given to the nuances and specificity of primary sources studied. To retain some of the fertility of the subject's taxonomic potential, it is necessary to undertake an exploratory and forensic study of primary sources whilst guarding against a reductive interpretation of data and maintaining a self-conscious awareness of the contingent nature of historical enquiry and representation. Here, recent advances in the philosophy of history are particularly helpful. The

¹⁷ See Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx, Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002 and Dominique Massonau, *Courbet, scandale, mythes de la rupture et modernité*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003. Matossian explicitly denies Proudhon's interest in positivism and certain medical disciplines associated with it, such as phrenology. Among other things, Massonau examines ways in which a number of related terms – 'la chair,' 'l'animalité,' 'l'embonpoint,' 'la défiguration' – were used in art criticism to censure or scandalise certain representations of female bodies by comparing them with the bodies of animals; reviewing the negative critical reaction to Courbet's painting entitled *Baigneuses* in 1853, Massonau explores many of the artistic, literary and historical associations through which these terms operated as critical concepts at the time. Numerous other recent studies provide more general surveys and analyses of the philosophical significance or 'animalistic' expression of Courbet's work but all fail to undertake any detailed research into positivist takes on these subjects from the mid-nineteenth-century perspective. See, for example, Youssef Ishaghpour, *Courbet, le portrait de l'artiste dans son atelier*, L'Échoppe, Paris, 1998; Valérie Bajou-Charpentreau, *Courbet*, Société Nouvelle Adam Biro, Paris, 2003; Henri Raczymow, *Courbet l'outrance*, Stock, Paris, 2004; Michel-Claude Jalard, *Le Tombeau de Gustave Courbet ou l'Enchantment du réel*, Éditions du Rocher, Monaco, 2005.

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

methodology of this thesis is informed by the work of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra, two prominent theorists who have highlighted the literary dimension of social experience and the literary structure of historical writing. White has exposed the error of distinguishing between ‘metahistory’ (history as a kind of speculative philosophy) and ‘history proper’ (history as a kind of craft based upon facts).¹⁹ The former kind has been described as wholly interpretative because it has not operated at the level of specific documentary evidence and the latter has been described as ‘factual’ because its interpretation has supposedly been based upon evidence gleaned through documentary analysis. White shows that historians cannot avoid the imaginative processes inevitably involved in producing any piece of literature. To make sense of the past, the historian must make the unfamiliar texts and documents of the past familiar; to create a coherent argument or narrative in the present, the historian must draw upon the narrative forms and strategies available to him in the present. White has pointed out that the historian both reconstructs and constructs the past because ‘the kinds of questions you ask of the past always have to do with some immediate existential interest of a society in the present.’²⁰ Data must be interpreted by excluding certain facts as irrelevant to the narrative purpose and by including an account of events for which the data that would furnish an explanation are lacking. Yet, by being self-consciously mindful of the issues of interpretation and coherence in historical practice, the historian can avoid the constraints of reductive approaches to the past and recognise narrative potential in the tension that exists between the historical data and the interpretations that the historian attempts to impose upon it. Such potential has been the subject of much of LaCapra’s work, which has criticised the radical reduction of historical

¹⁹ See Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1978.

²⁰ Transcript of discussion that took place on 24 August 2005 between Alan Saunders, presenter, and Hayden White on *The Philosopher’s Zone*, weekly radio programme produced by ABC National Radio, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, p1.

data to forms of order and coherence. Whilst LaCapra has recognised that some concept of order is indispensable in historical writing, he has argued that ‘it must be actively recognised that the past has its own “voices” that must be respected, especially when they resist or qualify the interpretations we would like to place on them.’²¹ Consistent with this approach, this thesis undertakes a critical reappraisal of positivism that is attentive to precisely those hidden voices referred to by LaCapra. Whilst this reappraisal reconstitutes aspects of positivism in an ordered way and according to certain relationships evident through textual analysis, it nevertheless acknowledges the philosophy’s complex genealogy and formulation through intersecting domains of knowledge. This thesis rejects the tendency evident in many previous studies to radically reduce positivism to separate and ordered categories of philosophy, sociology and religion.²²

This sensitive approach to the historical record reveals key ways in which Courbet’s work was connected to positivism and much can be learned by focusing upon ideas developed within the intersecting domains of positivism and medical science.²³ These ideas were formulated into social studies from the perspective of human health and greatly informed the theoretical basis from which many positivists sought to understand human behaviour and its development. The human body was a primary object of study for the practitioners of such theory, who considered that the body was geared towards behaviour, embodied the constitution and adapted to the changing conditions of its social existence. It was argued that the condition of the body revealed what people did, the circumstances in

²¹ Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, Cornell University Press, London, 1983, p64.

²² D. G. Charlton’s *Positivist Thought in France, 1852-1870*, published in 1959, is a good example of such radical ordering of positivism.

²³ Most of the pioneering positivist philosophers, including Saint-Simon, Comte and Littré were trained in medical science and developed their theories of society in terms of the relationship between social conditions and human health.

which they did it, and whether or not it was good for them to do it. The positivist assertion of this close relationship between the body, the constitution and society was crucially bound up with the concept of ‘the physical and the moral,’ the idea developed in medical science that an adequate understanding and treatment of human health could only be achieved by considering the multiplicity of human phenomena, the entire complex of interconnected physical, mental, emotional and moral faculties.²⁴ As Elizabeth Williams has shown, this concept gained currency in medical circles in the eighteenth century, considered the effects of society upon health and treated the human being as both an individual and a ‘type,’ according to the multifarious clinical and social information accumulated in the course of medical investigations.²⁵ The body was seen as the blueprint of all individual and typical aspects of the person and was taken to be an indicator of the effects of social environment upon the health of every physical, mental, emotional and moral faculty. Nineteenth-century postulations of the concept were often made in association with physiognomy and phrenology, theories also developed in the context of medical science that provided ways of ‘reading’ the condition of the various faculties with

²⁴ For a detailed study of the concept of ‘the physical and the moral,’ see Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral, Anthropology, Physiology and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p9. As Williams explains, a decisive connection between medical science and social considerations is discernible from around 1750 in France when ‘la science de l’homme’ began as an intellectual tradition within the school of medical thought known as Montpellier vitalism. This tradition, within which much of Comte’s early training was undertaken at the École de Médecine in Montpellier, continued until around 1850. The interconnected ideas of ‘the physical and the moral’ and ‘la science de l’homme’ provided a focus for the sociological assertions of pioneering positivists such as Saint-Simon and Comte, who worked together for seven years from 1817 to 1824 and who both recognised the profound effects of social phenomena upon the well-being of the mind and body. Both men were influenced by the medical theories of the famous physician Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis (1757-1808), whose seminal work *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme*, published in 1802, proposed the physiological basis of ‘la science de l’homme.’ For a concise study of the seven-year association of Comte and Saint-Simon, see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Chapters 2-5, pp60-244.

²⁵ See Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral, Anthropology, Physiology and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p9.

reference to the outward appearance of the body and its figure.²⁶ All the writings about society examined in this thesis – whether they supported social change through revolution or whether they appealed for the preservation of the existing social order – made their arguments with reference to the state of social or environmental circumstances as reflected in the physical appearance of ordinary contemporary people represented by Courbet.

Numerous critiques of Courbet's work between 1848 and 1878 argued that human beings were innately predisposed to sympathise with each other – that human health ultimately depended upon social harmony and that Courbet's paintings worked towards such harmony either by expressing this sympathetic instinct or exposing society's oppression of it. Indicating a widespread disillusionment with a plethora of inadequate political experiments during the post-revolutionary period, and characteristically skeptical of the religious idea of divine creation, these writings reflected a growing confidence in science as the source of truth and the impetus for change. Many commentators looked to medical science for such confidence, referring to the physiological condition of ordinary people represented by Courbet as evidence of either the social and political malaise of the time or the innate human potential to overcome such malaise. 'Physiology,' the study of the anatomy and organs of the human body in their capacity to function, act and behave, was a keystone for such writings; cerebral physiology, or 'phrenology,' was an important dimension of such study, identifying different organs of the brain with various faculties and behavioural capacities. 'Biology' – the general study of living beings and the influence of

²⁶ For detailed examinations of physiognomy (the theory that there is a direct correspondence between a person's inner being and outer appearance) and phrenology (the theory that the different parts or organs of the brain correspond to different functions and faculties), see the various essays in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile, Lavater's Impact on European Culture*, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2005. See also Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: the Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, and Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982.

milieux upon their physical and moral nature – was particularly important to positivist interpretations of Courbet’s work. Biology occupied a very special place within two interlocking teleological propositions set out in positivism, a philosophy of history and a hierarchy of scientific disciplines.²⁷ The philosophy asserted that the human mind drove historical change and evolved through key phases into the positive stage of the modern scientific era, when the innate human desire for social harmony would be fulfilled. At this stage, truth would be attained through critical methods of enquiry such as empirical observation and science would establish the laws of ‘order’ and ‘progress,’ biological laws governing social organisation, social development and the inevitable attainment of social harmony. Numerous positivists who commented upon Courbet’s work during our period of study believed that they had reached an historical watershed, a watershed representing man’s evolutionary attainment of the knowledge required to guide humanity towards its inevitable realisation of perfect coexistence.²⁸

This thesis follows a broadly chronological trajectory from 1848 to 1878 and each of its five chapters focuses upon a different dimension of positivism. The examination of these dimensions in relation to Courbet’s work furnishes original and significant findings on a number of fronts: the concepts through which his work was understood as a positivist enterprise, the manner in which these concepts were expressed and communicated, and the

²⁷ The positivist philosophy of history and hierarchy or ‘classification’ of sciences have been the subjects of many philosophical studies. For a useful summary of the subject, undertaken in the context of a broad reflective survey of general ideas about social change from the nineteenth-century to the near present, see Piotr Szompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1993; see in particular Part II ‘Three Grand Visions of History,’ pp99-177.

²⁸ This kind of view preceded and differed from Darwin’s biological evolutionism, which focused upon random mutations within the species, the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, and the natural selection of elements of the population that adjusted best to their circumstances of existence. For a concise explanation of the differences between positivism and Darwinism, see Piotr Szompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1993, Part II ‘Three Grand Visions of History,’ pp99-177.

contexts within which positivist interpretations of his work were produced and consumed. The first two chapters focus upon the Second Republic (1848-1852), a period in French history whose extreme social upheaval and violent political conflict impacted directly upon the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism. These chapters critically examine the two key positivist concepts of 'progress' and 'order,' which were articulated in commentaries about Courbet's work across the political spectrum. Shaped by these methodological imperatives, chapter one follows a trajectory from the extreme political left to the moderate centre. The chapter discusses three different views of Courbet's work formulated in the press by the engraver Pierre Hawke, the poet Max Buchon and the novelist Francis Wey. The discussion highlights the distinct character of these views and demonstrates that positivist interpretations of Courbet's work had a rich range of concepts at their disposal, concepts that were articulated differently according to the contrasting social implications they were perceived to have. Hawke and Buchon were left-wing radicals who condemned the prevailing capitalist bourgeois society and who sought to ameliorate the working class. Their revolutionary readings of Courbet's paintings sought critical leverage from the positivist assertion that social progress was driven by a sympathetic instinct inherent in the human physiology. Both readings argued that Courbet's work could help reform society and postulated the aesthetic power of a positivist truth expressed in the artist's paintings. Hawke referred to the artist's inspiring reaffirmation of human sympathy in the face of social decay and Buchon pointed to the artist's emotive exposure of the bourgeois oppression of such sympathy. Representing the political centre, Wey supported the maintenance of social order and postulated a different positivist truth expressed in Courbet's work: the existence of a biological order governing all living beings and physiological organisms, including humans. Wey attributed an underlying and enduring social stability to this order and, reading Courbet's representations of human suffering as

expressions of the primary influence of environment upon all living beings, interpreted the artist's work as a positivist impetus for social reconciliation.

Following chapter one's interrogation of left-wing and centre-left interpretations of Courbet's work, chapter two asks how the political right saw his work and examines conservative anxieties over a perceived threat to social order from positivist representation. Again, we find distinct and even opposing political interpretations that drew variously upon the wide range of concepts furnished by positivism. Again, the methodological stance taken by the thesis leads to the discovery of a range of findings unrecognised in the existing secondary sources. The chapter critically investigates the interpretations of three critics, Alfred Dauterive, Louis de Geofroy and Champfleury, all of whom expressed their opinions in connection with paintings shown at the Salon exhibition of 1850-1. Dauterive and de Geofroy feared Courbet's potential to disrupt or even destroy the existing social order by exposing ill effects of bourgeois society upon many ordinary people. For these two critics, the key issue was the degree to which the physiological condition of commoners represented by the artist reflected badly on the prevailing social climate. Dauterive held an ambivalent view, conceding that the lively and animated physique of some of Courbet's figures indicated that they were thriving. The critic found others threatening, claiming that the dejection or indifference shown in their physiological condition suggested the malaise of bourgeois society. Completely opposing Courbet's work, de Geofroy established a dichotomy between an erudite art promoted by bourgeois conservatives and a debased positivist art supported by socialists and revolutionaries. The former was related to the elevated exercises of the mind and was capable of conserving humanity by raising the spirit above the base level of the earth. The latter related to the base exercise of physical functions and destroyed humanity by lowering mankind to the level of animals. As this

chapter reveals, despite their disapproval of much of Courbet's art, Dauger and de Geofroy acknowledged and reinforced both the positivist status of the artist's work and the social power that this status was perceived to have. Fully supporting the ameliorative capacity of this perceived power, Champfleury sought approval for Courbet's work within a highly conservative readership by arguing that the positivist truth expressed in his paintings had no political association. The writer highlighted the order expressed in the artist's work – the social structure discernible in the physical appearance of the artist's subjects – but illuminated degenerate aspects of that order and presented the need for reform as a natural rather than political necessity.

If positivism provided a wide platform of political opinion through which Courbet's work was interpreted, how did the artist himself view the positivist dimensions of his practice and what sources of philosophical, aesthetic and political sustenance did he find? Posing these questions, chapters three and four examine positivist interpretations of Courbet's work appearing during the Second Empire (1852-1870), a period of French history characterised largely by the strict censorship of images and written publications, enforced social control and imperialistic propaganda. These two chapters highlight the artist's own views, the affiliation of his ideas with those of Proudhon and Champfleury at a particular point in his career, and the manner in which he deployed these ideas to criticise contemporary society and politics. Both chapters also unearth significant findings about the manner in which positivist interpreters of Courbet's work, such as Champfleury and the artist himself, sought to disseminate their ideas and influence society by exploiting the central role of publications and periodicals in debating the burning social, political and artistic issues of the time. Chapter three examines writings connecting Courbet's work to the positivist view that history constituted an evolutionary process of social development, a

teleological process in which mankind evolved towards a guaranteed state of social harmony. The attainment of such harmony relied upon an understanding of social evolution since ancient times, an evolution expressed in the artistic representation of successive generations. The chapter demonstrates that Courbet used artistic conventions associated with caricature to simultaneously express this view of history, criticise the Second Empire regime and declare himself a social visionary capable of saving the world, all without being culpable under the strict censorship laws of the time. Expressed in the *Atelier du peintre* [Figure 1], arguably a signature painting of Courbet's positivism, this ambitious philosophical declaration drew support from three key factors. Firstly, the important didactic role that positivism assigned to art. Secondly, the widely held view of the enduring critical capacity of caricature since ancient times. Thirdly, the close relationship maintained between caricature, physiognomy and portraiture, which enabled Courbet to express his views critically, philosophically and emotively. Caricature held particular interest for positivists as an art form used throughout history to reveal and criticise the state of society. As the chapter reveals, Courbet cashed in on this interest by basing the visual composition of his *Atelier du peintre* upon that of an ancient caricature. In this way, he invested his painting with particularly positivist resonance and impact.

Chapter four looks further at Courbet's views during the Second Empire and focuses upon two important and related positivist assertions made by the artist: a denial of the existence of any phenomena that could not be observed, particularly God and his divine plan, and a rejection of forms of idealism associated with such unobservable phenomena. The chapter questions the exact philosophical nature of these assertions and the links they established between the views of Courbet and Proudhon. In doing so, the chapter illuminates a number of writings articulating the artist's view that life was biologically

conceived, not divinely created, and that the religious threat of damnation was used by the Church and the State to perpetuate the fear of the people and maintain the privileges of controlling social sectors. Through this investigation, which includes an exploration of the impacts that the domains of biology and positivism had on each other, biology emerges as an important conceptual impetus for the positivist and anti-establishment manner in which Courbet opposed religious and mystical ideals. In his writings, the artist attacked such ideals and their oppressive effects by giving human and animal subjects equivalent status as physiological beings and by expressing a biological view of the natural circumstances in which they existed. The chapter also highlights a number of philosophical principles postulated by the artist to advance this view, principles whose positivist character has been almost entirely ignored in the existing literature on the subject: ‘synthesis,’ ‘concretisation,’ the exercise of reason and the biological idea of ‘series.’ According to Courbet’s idea of synthesis, for example, knowledge always served social unity. Synthesis opposed ‘analysis,’ the principle of specialisation characteristic of theological and metaphysical philosophies seen to disunite and divide society. In contention with the majority of existing scholarly opinion on the subject, this chapter also argues that Courbet’s rejection of religious and mystical ideals was not part of an opposition against all forms of idealism. As the thesis reveals, this rejection was entirely consistent with the artist’s overall positivist position, which embraced certain idealist views articulated in Proudhon’s positivist philosophy.

To what extent was Courbet’s stance against particular forms of idealism representative of the relationship between the artist’s work and the positivist treatment of idealism as a whole? Paradoxically, despite the positivist condemnation of religious and mystical idealism, other forms of idealism occupied central roles in positivism. Chapter five

examines these roles in the very different interpretations of Courbet's work formulated by Proudhon and Lemonnier. These interpretations articulated idealist views in ways unexamined by the existing secondary sources and in ways demonstrating the fertility of the conceptual base informing their positivist character. From the vantage point of the Second Empire, Proudhon argued that human beings had an innate 'sociability,' a sympathetic instinct physiologically bound up with the human conscience and certain humanitarian principles fostered by it: right, justice and equality. Creating intensely moving images of this human potential to sympathise with others, and the subjugation of this potential by the individualist motives of capitalist bourgeois society, Courbet's representations of the human figure were seen by Proudhon to generate an aesthetic ideal with revolutionary impetus against the oppression of the working class. From the very different vantage point of the earlier part of the Third Republic (1870-1940), Lemonnier directly challenged Proudhon's account and argued that Courbet's work was incapable of expressing humanitarian principles or changing society. Nevertheless, Lemonnier contended that Courbet expressed a positivist ideal, an ideal supporting the apolitical imperatives of French art promoted by the republican ideology of the time. According to Lemonnier, Courbet's representations of the human body expressed an idealist view of biological nature. In this view – a view presented in an entirely different political context to that in which Proudhon's view was presented – the physiological appetites of flesh and blood gorged upon the earth's bounty and created a paradise of good health drawn from material existence.

Chapter One

Progress and Order during the Second Republic: Views of the Left and Centre

I: Introduction

In this chapter, I examine varying interpretations of Courbet's work published during the Second Republic and formulated by three writers closely associated with positivism, Pierre Hawke, Max Buchon and Francis Wey, who were connected with either the left or centre-left of mid-nineteenth-century French politics. Hawke, on the extreme left, was an advocate of revolutionary reform. Buchon was connected with both violent and more peaceful currents of political reform and Wey was closely connected with the political centre. According to two of these writers, art played an important part in improving society: Hawke claimed that art could incline people to reform society by acting on their sentiment and Buchon saw art as a diagnostic tool for highlighting social ills. By contrast, Wey saw art as a means of reinforcing a system of order governing society. Each of these diverse programmes, promoting either social and artistic reform or the maintenance of a system of social order, was built on positivism in ways unrecognised in the existing scholarship on Courbet. In this chapter, I explain Courbet's work and its positivist characteristics by examining the social programmes of these three writers, the French positivist philosophy of the period from which their ideas derived, and the newspapers in which their respective works on Courbet were published. The 1848 Revolution had a direct impact on positivist interpretations of Courbet's work and led to a dramatic increase in the number of newspapers and journals published between 1848 and 1851. Here, my analysis follows a trajectory from the extreme left to the moderate centre. In each case, I look at the respective critical positions on Courbet taken by the three writers, the roots of these positions within

various strands of positivism, and I conclude by examining the newspapers in which these critical ideas were mediated.

II: Pierre Hawke: physical and moral beauty as a means of social reform

In a number of articles concerning the Salon exhibition of 1848, the engraver and critic Pierre Hawke provides a positivist interpretation of Courbet's work. These articles all appear in the radical left-wing journal *Le Représentant du peuple* and claim that Courbet's work is potentially an important component of social reform. In one such article, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,' published on 1 May that year, the critic identifies Courbet with a young generation of artists who have great faith in the future and who understand that art should serve society.¹ According to Hawke, art's mission of social reform is a divine vocation instituted by God to create an altruistic and unified society.² He argues that art fulfills this social role by expressing physical and moral beauty in representations of people whose physical appearance reveals their social nature – their love for their fellow man and their desire for a society based upon such love.³ Representations of

¹ Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4. Hawke refers to 'une jeune génération pleine de foi dans l'avenir et qui comprend la mission de l'art dans la société.'

² *ibid*, p4: 'Pour eux, l'art, c'est un sacerdoce divin, institué par Dieu même pour élever le peuple à la dignité d'hommes aimans et libres.' As Neil McWilliam informs us, Hawke was a former Saint-Simonian. In an autobiographical letter to Michel Chevalier, the famous Saint-Simonian, engineer, statesman, economist and free-market liberal, dated 21 August 1832, Hawke recalls how Saint-Simon's *Nouveau Christianisme* of 1825 became the fulfillment of his hopes after the false promise of the July Monarchy; see Neil McWilliam, *Dreams of Happiness, Social Art and the French Left 1830-1850*, Princeton University Press, 1993, pp95-97. In *Nouveau Christianisme*, Saint-Simon foregrounds the ethical basis of social relations and advocates a religious and altruistic faith in love and fraternity. In this view of society, an alliance between the artist and the *savant* exists to cultivate moral principles and brotherly love. For Saint-Simon, the artist is an authority on 'sentiment' and a propagandist whose representations of love and fraternity move the people to reform society; see McWilliam, 1993, pp43-44. In his articles on Courbet, Hawke takes a similar view to Saint-Simon and considers that the artist's social role of reforming society through positivist representation has a divine origin.

³ Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4. Hawke's view, like Saint-Simon's, demonstrates the connections between positivism, medical science and physiology and promotes a theory of society based upon knowledge of the relations of 'the physical and the moral.' Such a view is clearly evident in Saint-Simon's *Nouveau Christianisme*, which asserts that religion is duty bound to bring about the swiftest possible amelioration of the physical and moral existence of the poor: 'J'admets que Dieu n'ait donné aux hommes qu'un seul principe; j'admets qu'il leur ait commandé d'organiser leur société de manière à

this kind are able to reform society because they have the capacity to elicit powerful emotional responses from whom Hawke describes as ‘the people,’ ‘the masses’ or ‘the workers.’⁴ The critic describes these emotional responses as ‘love’ or ‘sentiment’ and says that they result directly from the inherent need within people to be social beings that care for their fellow man. In his opinion, physical and moral beauty stimulates this social sentiment within the people, whose innate desire for an ideal altruistic and unified society must be satisfied.⁵ Artists like Courbet harness this collective desire by mirroring the desired ideal society in their representations of physically and morally ‘beautiful’ people. Describing how people are affected by such images of beauty, Hawke states: ‘Firstly, and above all, we attach ourselves with love to works in which we find a profound sentiment of

garantir à la classe la plus pauvre l’amélioration la plus prompte et la plus complète de son existence morale et physique: . . .’ See Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon, *Nouveau Christianisme*, Bossange Père, Paris, 1825, pp3-4. For a concise summary of Saint-Simon’s theory of positivism, and the philosopher’s seven-year collaboration with Auguste Comte from 1817 to 1824, see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp60-245. For a detailed explication of the complex role of medical science in positivism, see Barbara Haines, ‘The Inter-Relations between Social, Biological and Medical Thought, 1750-1850: Saint-Simon and Comte,’ *British Journal for the History of Science*, 11, No. 1, March 1978, pp19-35.

⁴ Hawke uses the terms ‘le peuple,’ ‘le peuple en masse’ and ‘les travailleurs’; see, for example, Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4 and ‘Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4.

⁵ Hawke uses the terms ‘amour’ and ‘sentiment profound’; see Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4. McWilliam discusses Saint-Simon’s promotion of an aesthetic capable of reforming society through its effect upon the sentiment of the people; see Neil McWilliam, *Dreams of Happiness, Social Art and the French Left 1830-1850*, Princeton University Press, 1993, pp31-53. This aesthetic mechanism for rallying society is central to many positivist theories, including Hawke’s. George Boas notes that, in Comte’s positivism, the aim of art, which is to ‘charm and ameliorate humanity,’ is achieved by the action of images of beautiful types upon the emotions; according to Comte, the emotions are a more powerful stimulus to action than ideas. Boas also highlights Comte’s argument that physical appearance must be accentuated or exaggerated in physiognomical representations of moral and immoral types in order that they become effective tools of reform. For Comte, as Boas notes, such exaggeration constitutes an artistic ideal. See George Boas, *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period*, Russell & Russell, New York, 1964, p298.

moral and physical beauty.’⁶ Explaining the artistic expression of this love further, he says that the required elevation of the human soul does not result from any particular aesthetic programme. Rather, profound social sentiments can be expressed in a limitless variety of ways.⁷ The reason for this, he says, is that the essential characteristics of physical and moral beauty are self-sustaining through their divine origins, existing independently of any artistic formula.⁸

Whilst Hawke insists that artistic formulae alone cannot produce physical and moral beauty, he outlines the general artistic principles through which images capable of elevating the soul and hence effecting reform can be represented.⁹ Here, something of an aesthetic agenda begins to emerge. It seems that an art capable of reform requires painting to be made energetically on a large scale, with a direct and unmediated form of execution.¹⁰ This form of execution involves being attentive to the external world and revealing the material means of painting, the part played by drawing and the application of colour and paint upon the surface of the picture.¹¹ In short, Hawke thinks that art should be based upon clear thinking, energy and truth. These principles offer a basic artistic framework through

⁶ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4: ‘En première ligne et au-dessus de tout, nous nous attachons avec amour aux oeuvres dans lesquelles nous trouvons un sentiment profond de beauté morale et physique.’

⁷ *ibid*, p4: ‘Pour nous, qui voulons sincèrement le but de l’art, qui est d’élever l’âme humaine, nous disons que les moyens pour y arriver sont variés à l’infini.’

⁸ *ibid*, p4: ‘Beauté, grâce, harmonie, sont les expressions éternelles de toute élévation de sentiment, mais ces célestes attributs existent par leur propre essence, indépendans de tel ou tel système de dessin ou de couleur.’

⁹ *ibid*, p4: ‘voici nos principes: . . . nous admirons d’une manière large toute oeuvre empreinte d’une pensée nette, énergique et franche. . . nous estimons de toute notre force la manifestation extérieure de l’oeuvre produite par la couleur, le dessin et autres moyens matériels.’

¹⁰ See footnote 9.

¹¹ See footnote 9.

which a beautiful and ideal society can be represented, and he insists that this system of representation opposes the styles of painting given prominence at the Salon. According to Hawke, as Neil McWilliam has noted, the committee responsible for selecting the pictures on show at the Salon upholds the ‘sterile rules of the past’ that corrupt art and help the state maintain an unjust society.¹² In Hawke’s opinion, French art is based purely upon aesthetic conventions when governed by such rules and then becomes the instrument of ruling ideologies, misrepresenting the world to the people and thereby distorting the truth about the corrupt physical and moral state of society. For many critics on the left, academic history painting, genre painting, detailed pictures made for middle-class consumption, and romantic art fuelled by excessive emotion, were often associated with capitalist self-interest and the state’s exercise of its political, cultural or economic power. As we will see in the next chapter of this thesis, many conservative critics fought to maintain academic standards and the ruling ideologies they served, defending aesthetic conventions against the work of positivist artists, whose exposure of physical and moral ‘truth’ was considered subversive or socialist. Hawke criticises the conservative artistic methods associated with these rules and attacks various types of artist whose work is governed purely by aesthetic formulae. First, he criticises the genre painting and artists who laboriously reproduce trivial minute details.¹³ Then, he attacks the romantic artist who senselessly throws brush-loads of oil and red pigment upon the canvas supposedly to create a sense of ‘warmth.’¹⁴ He next attacks the

¹² See Neil Mc William, *Dreams of Happiness, Social Art and the French Left 1830-1850*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p300. Hawke refers to the ‘règles stériles du passé’; see Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre – 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 5 April 1848.

¹³ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4: ‘avec une patience digne du patriarche Job, il copie la nature jusque dans ses détails les plus minutieux; – que ce prétendu artiste s’incline devant le daguerréotype, une machine!’

¹⁴ *ibid*, p4: ‘n’a-t-il pas, avec une atroce fureur, lancé le bitume et le vermillon à pleine brosse sur l’innocente toile? Il appelle cela faire du *chaud*. Du chaud tant que vous voudrez; mais, d’abord, ayez du sens commun!’

artist who tries to reproduce every nuance of shade that can be observed in exotic and expensive fabrics, a feature common in orientalist painting.¹⁵ Finally, he censures the type of artist who represents classical nudes, ‘the sickly languor of . . . masses of obscene flesh that they call *chaste Suzanne*, *Sleeping nymphs* or that they adorn with equally amusing titles.’¹⁶ In Hawke’s opinion, then, the vast swathe of contemporary French painters promotes a purely gratuitous use of aesthetic conventions and has no interest in educating the people about social corruption or reform. Supported by the state and its institutions, these artists, he insists, have had their day.¹⁷

Much of Hawke’s hostility towards the state and its art institutions is fuelled by his hatred of bourgeois values, which he considers to be socially unjust because they promote self-interest and oppress the working class. Bourgeois values, he says, have emerged with the rise of capitalism and have systematically destroyed the social nature of people to create a ‘brutal order’ in which citizens only pursue individual interests.¹⁸ However, he suggests that the corrupt nature of this system has been exposed by the February Revolution and central to the revolutionary impulse of 1848 was social reform, a reform marking the

¹⁵ *ibid*, p4. Here, Hawke criticises the artist who ‘croit avoir atteint les hauteurs du sublime, en exprimant banalement les plis d’une robe, ou les nuances les plus imperceptibles d’une étoffe de satin ou de velours. Mon maître, la chambre noire est votre supérieur.’

¹⁶ *ibid*, p4: ‘D’autres encore vous traitent insolemment d’insensé, si vous n’admirez pas l’énergie farouche de cette expression exagérée, ou la fade langueur de ces masses de chairs impudiques qu’ils nomment *la chaste Suzanne*, *les Nymphes endormies*, ou qu’ils décorent d’autres titres tout aussi amusants.’

¹⁷ *ibid*, p4: ‘Le temps est passé et à jamais passé, pour ces peintres courtisans qui mettaient toute leur gloire à un certain arrangement de dessin et de couleur, – sans avoir aucun souci des intérêts profonds de l’art comme instituteurs du peuple.’

¹⁸ See Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 28 April 1848, p4: ‘L’ordre règne à Varsovie! parole pleine d’un sens profond, aussi vraie pour la France que pour le monde entier. L’ordre règne. . . . Cela veut dire l’ordre brutal, où hommes et choses sont entassés sans aucune pensée sociale . . .’

reversal of this oppressive order possible not only in France but throughout the world.¹⁹ The French State is guilty of having divided society cruelly and unfairly through capitalism and has appropriated art to reflect the bourgeois promotion of individual interests.²⁰ The state's appropriation of institutions such as the Louvre supports individualist rather than social principles, maintaining social divisions and stifling 'fraternité,' the innate 'common sentiment' which binds people together and cultivates their social being.²¹ Hawke insists that the paintings promoted at the Salon are unconcerned with the social imperatives of physical and moral improvement, corrupting and undermining the interests of working people instead. These paintings belong to a 'sickly and useless kind of art which, flattering the depraved taste of men of leisure, plunges them further into a shameful nepotism. The

¹⁹ See footnote 18 and *ibid*, p4: 'Pourtant on devait espérer que la révolution de février, qui s'annonçait comme sociale, aurait introduit quelque changement dans un état aussi déplorable.' See also Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4: 'La révolution de février est une preuve éclatante qu'un sentiment parcourt les rangs du Peuple.'

²⁰ See Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4. Here, Hawke says that, under bourgeois society, artistic realms such as sculpture, painting and music have become separated and that artists concentrate on their individual and personal interests: 'La sculpture, la peinture, la musique s'isolent les unes des autres, et ne constituent plus un tout harmonieux. Chaque artiste travail exclusivement dans son intérêt personnel, et son coeur ne s'adresse plus qu'à l'individu. L'art devient bourgeois!' Hawke also argues that, as society has become bourgeois, socially minded artists are rare: 'Dans notre siècle entaché d'*individualisme*, on est heureux de trouver un artiste, un poète, un homme qui sente, comprenne et traduise le sentiment *commun*. C'est ce sentiment-là qu'en langage à la mode nous appelons *Fraternité!*'; see *ibid*, p4.

Hawke contrasts this situation with that of the Middle Ages when people were profoundly affected by the combined artistic effect of sculpture, painting and music. Such an experience, he says, took place within the moving symbolism of church architecture: 'Au moyen âge il n'en était pas ainsi. Le peuple en masse se précipitait dans l'enceinte de la cathédrale, où l'art lui avait préparé sous la triple face de sculpture, de peinture et de musique, un aliment aux aspirations de son âme. L'art y trônait dans sa splendeur éblouissante, jouissait d'une autorité sacerdotale. La plus haute science se résumait dans une symbolisme profond au sein de l'architecture; . . .'; see *ibid*, p4.

The July Monarchy – the regime that was ended by the February Revolution in the year Hawke was writing – was, as Nigel Blake and Francis Frascina have noted, an explicitly bourgeois regime that promoted capitalism and gave political and cultural power to an increasingly wealthy middle class. See Nigel Blake and Francis Frascina in *Modernity and Modernism, French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, in association with the Open University, 1993, Chapter 1, 'Modern Practices of Art and Modernity,' p62.

²¹ See footnote 20 and Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4.

workers do not want any of it.²² The kind of art connected with the leisured class is symptomatic of this widespread social and political corruption.²³ The remedy is a didactic artform, an artform capable of raising the spirits of the workers with the promise of a society free of privilege and corruption. Among the artists capable of producing such an artform, Hawke mentions Gustave Courbet, Eugène Delacroix, Jean-François Millet, Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, Gabriel Lefébure, Louis Coignard and Tony Johannot, a group of painters whose works were often categorised in the very styles Hawke deprecates.²⁴ He maintains that these artists are capable of winning the favour of the people because they point the way to a better society, a society free of bourgeois depravity.²⁵ Yet, Hawke feels that some of these artists, such as Courbet and Lefébure, are not given prominence at the Salon and their paintings are either hidden in corners or obscured by countless bourgeois works that uphold the corrupt values of the state.²⁶ In the critic's opinion, it is crucial that

²² See Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4: 'Sachez-le bien, le peuple, les travailleurs ne veulent pas de cette espèce d'art doux et nul, qui, flattant le goût dépravé des hommes de loisir, les plonge davantage dans un honteux népotisme. Les travailleurs n'en veulent pas.'

²³ See footnote 22 and Neil Mc William, *Dreams of Happiness, Social Art and the French Left 1830-1850*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p300. In contrast to such 'sterile' art, as both Mc William and Patrick Le Nouène have observed, social and political redemption for Hawke was contingent on the promotion of a revolutionary aesthetic embodied in the works of artists like Courbet; see Neil Mc William, 1993, pp300-301, and Patrick Le Nouène, 'Première réception des tableaux exposés au Salon de 1850-1851 et regroupés par les historiens de l'art sous l'étiquette réaliste,' *Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870*, Chartres, 1983, p58.

²⁴ See Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 28 April 1848, p4.

²⁵ See *ibid*, p4.

²⁶ See *ibid*, p4: 'Si un sentiment et une pensée élevés eussent guidé dans le groupement des tableaux, aurions-nous le chagrin de trouver l'oeuvre d'un homme de génie côte à côte avec celle du crétin le plus avéré? Trouverions-nous des tableaux d'un mérite transcendant relégués dans des coins obscurs? Des bijoux seraient-ils enfouis sous une couche de fumier? Delacroix, Millet, Jeanron, Lefébure, Coignard, Courbet, Johannot, coudoyés par des bourgeois!' Gabriel Lefébure was born in Falaise. He studied under A. Hesse and Court. His painting debut was at the 1846 Salon. His painting entitled *Magdalene Dying* was shown at the 1864 Salon and was acquired by the State. Notable works include *Head of a Saint in Ecstasy* (Bagnères-de-Bigorre), *Tower of the White Queen* (Rouen) and *Magdalene Dying* (Vire). See relevant entry in E. Benezit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs, et graveurs*, 3rd ed., Librairie Grund, Paris, 1976.

the people get to see the work of artists who convey the right social messages. The notion of artistic representation is clearly of paramount importance to him because, in his view, the very act of pictorial representation facilitates social reform.

What, in Hawke's schema, are the qualities an artist needs to show to bring about this reform? It is important to recognise that, in his view, society as a whole has bound up within it an innate desire to be reformed because, by nature, human beings long to live together harmoniously and with mutual regard. This desire is intimately connected to a very particular kind of beauty, a physical and moral beauty whose chief defining characteristic is a love for one's fellow man and the social aspects of human nature. People are inherently social beings, the critic argues, and their longing for this kind of beauty forms part of a teleological process of human advancement or progress. By mirroring such beauty in their work, artists stimulate the social sentiments of the people and thereby accelerate such progress. Whilst the essential characteristics of physical and moral beauty have divine origins and are independent of aesthetic formulae, Hawke prescribes a general aesthetic framework for the right kind of artistic representation to affect this sort of change. As we have already seen, he claims that art should be based upon clear thinking, energy and truth. Also, he says that artists must reach the hearts of the people and effect reform by expressing their passion for physical and moral beauty as strongly as possible in their work, and thereby declaring their disdain for aesthetic conventions that only corrupt society.²⁷ Hawke bitterly resents the state's exclusion of the work of Courbet and certain other artists from the canon of official and bourgeois art; for these artists, he says, 'the doors of the Louvre

²⁷ Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4: 'Artistes, si vous voulez aller au coeur du peuple, ayez vous-mêmes du coeur! Que vos oeuvres soient empreintes de l'amour du beau et du vrai. Le peuple, soyez-en sûrs, s'élèvera à la hauteur de vos sentimens, quelque sublimes qu'ils soient.'

. . . have remained closed.²⁸ He believes that these artists must achieve popularity because they touch the souls of the people and thereby effect social reform for the sake of human progress. He appeals to all ‘noble artists’ – artists like Courbet and Gabriel Lefébure – to promote the artistic principles he advocates, to unite and lead a revolt against what he sees as the despotism reigning over the people and the arts.²⁹

In his articles on the Salon exhibition of 1848, then, Hawke advocates the artistic expression of physical and moral beauty as a revolutionary instrument of artistic, social and political reform and a means to human progress. He associates this characteristically positivist principle with Courbet’s work and the interests of the working class and clearly opposes the artistic and political interests of the state. In one of these articles – an article again entitled ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848’ and published in *Le Représentant du peuple* on 16 April 1848 – Hawke relates his views to specific works by Courbet shown at the exhibition. Here, again, the critic claims that Courbet’s paintings react against the artistic standards of the establishment, standards that reflect an obsession with tradition and the display of gratuitous aesthetic skill, and which result from the self-indulgence and exploitation encouraged by bourgeois society. Referring to four portraits and figure studies – *La jeune fille dormant*, *Le portrait de M. Urbain C.*, *Le violoncelliste* [Figure 2] and *La jeune fille rêvant* – Hawke claims that the physical appearance of Courbet’s subjects projects physical and moral beauty and reveals the human desire for social harmony, a desire shared by the artist and expressed through profound artistic

²⁸ *ibid*, p4: ‘Les portes du Louvre lui [Gabriel Lefébure] sont restées fermées, comme pour les oeuvres de Courbet et de tant d’autres talens ignorés.’

²⁹ *ibid*, p4: ‘C’est pour faire triompher ces principes que nous avons levé l’étendard de la révolte contre un despotisme qui a trop longtemps pesé sur la destinée des arts. Vous tous, jeunes et nobles artistes, vous qui sentez brûler dans votre sein une généreuse ardeur, venez! l’union nous donnera la force, et avec la force nous vaincrons.’

sentiment.³⁰ With the potential to excite the social nature of humanity, this artistic sentiment would be deeply felt by the people if they were only given the chance to see such works. Again, Hawke does not specify the characteristics of this intrinsically social beauty because, for him, reform is not contingent upon a single aesthetic agenda. He clearly considers that these characteristics are divinely inspired and can be readily recognised by the people, who have an innate longing for their social nature to be nurtured. He insists that Courbet's paintings are evidence of the unrelenting force of physical and moral beauty within humanity; they can lift the soul of the people and arouse their love for their fellow man.³¹ The unceasing existence of this force of beauty, and hence the constant promise of a unified society in which people forgo selfish interests for the common good, is for Hawke a motor both of social reform and human progress through art. Courbet's paintings have precisely this reforming effect, working against the bourgeois principle of self-interest that dominates contemporary society.

Neil McWilliam has observed that, in Hawke's view, artistic production has political consequences, not just in terms of any immediate 'truths' being represented or ignored, but more basically in terms of art's inherent character as a medium for conveying meaning.³² Yet, Hawke's claims are much grander. Art could either be appropriated to

³⁰ Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 16 April 1848, p4: 'j'appelle l'attention sur *La jeune fille dormant*, *Le portrait de M. Urbain C.*, *Le violoncelliste*, *La jeune fille rêvant*, etc.'

³¹ *ibid*, p4. For Hawke, Courbet's paintings create 'une harmonie dont peu de peintres aujourd'hui possèdent le secret, par une largeur de pensée qui élève l'âme et nous montre que la beauté idéale ne meurt jamais dans l'humanité.'

³² See Neil Mc William, *Dreams of Happiness, Social Art and the French Left 1830-1850*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p301. McWilliam claims that, for Hawke, 'the artist's encounter with nature was a moment charged with political consequence, not merely in terms of the immediate "truths" he chose to represent or ignore, but more fundamentally in terms of the epistemological resonance of art as a vehicle for meaning.' McWilliam does not explore the positivist significance of Hawke's view that art conveys meaning; instead, he simply identifies Hawke's view with a 'conflation of realism and religion' and with 'the complex genealogy of republican naturalism.'

maintain corrupt and immoral values, or become an instrument of complete and worldwide reform, and what is true for French society, he says, is true for the entire world.³³ Like the rest of the world, contemporary French society is in the grip of a ‘brutal’ order, an essentially bourgeois and capitalist order that treats men as things and is devoid of a ‘social spirit.’³⁴ Works given prominence at the Salon of 1848 are the ‘living image of this order, so precious to those who exploit humanity.’³⁵ By contrast, the February Revolution has resurrected the social nature of people, their ‘new instinct for collective life,’ and is instigating an order based on social rather than individualist values.³⁶ For Hawke, this truly social order is reflected in the physical appearance of the people represented in Courbet’s paintings, which are imbued with the ‘superior social spirit’ and correspond to and encourage the renewed desire for collective life felt by the people.³⁷ Through this correspondence between the artistic expression of social nature and the inherent need in people to cultivate a collective life, artists like Courbet have the potential to harness the sentiment of the people and motivate them to achieve the ideal physical and moral order they desire.

³³ See footnote 18 and Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 28 April 1848, p4.

³⁴ See footnote 18.

³⁵ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 28 April 1848, p4: ‘Allez à l’exposition du Louvre, vous y verrez l’image vivante de cet ordre, si cher aux exploiters de l’humanité.’

³⁶ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4: ‘La révolution de février est une preuve éclatante qu’un sentiment élevé parcourt les rangs du Peuple. Donc, que va faire l’art, maintenant que le Peuple a de nouveau l’instinct de sa vie collective?’

³⁷ See Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 28 April 1848, p4: ‘Les plus chers intérêts de l’art l’exigeaient. On pouvait croire qu’une pensée supérieure allait enfin présider au classement des oeuvres d’art; . . .’

In Hawke's opinion, this process of reform through art has clear political consequences and is closely associated with 'vérité,' a quality of truth driving the revolutionary commitment to expose corruption in the French establishment and throughout the world. As McWilliam has noted, 'vérité' constitutes a direct, powerful and truthful approach to all things and has redemptive powers against the framework of deceit fostering political and social corruption.³⁸ This corrupt framework had been reinforced in France by Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy, the explicitly bourgeois regime ended by the February Revolution of 1848, which was seen to have encouraged capitalist self-interest and gave political and cultural power to an increasingly wealthy middle class.³⁹ In many ways a reaction to this corrupt bourgeois regime, the February Revolution served the interests of the oppressed working class and was supported by numerous political 'clubs' and workers' associations formed to improve the lot of the workers. The press was liberated from all forms of censorship as a result of the revolution and there emerged an outbreak of radical journalistic activity that cried out for social reform, 'vérité' and the exposure of all corruption perpetuating the ignorance and poverty of the workers. Hawke's work constitutes part of this call for reform. He declares that 'there are millions of voices crying in the journals, in the pamphlets, in the clubs, and on the walls to proclaim this *vérité*,' for which 'the world has an inexhaustible thirst.'⁴⁰ Supported by the 'clear thinking,' 'energy' and 'truth' of the work of artists like Courbet, this worldwide movement to expose corruption and reform society is extremely powerful and all representatives of the state should be afraid of it. Hawke announces a clear threat: 'Let it [vérité] sound the solemn

³⁸ See Mc William, 1993, pp300-301.

³⁹ See Nigel Blake and Francis Francina in *Modernity and Modernism, French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, in association with the Open University, 1993, Chapter 1 'Modern Practices of Art and Modernity,' p62.

⁴⁰ Pierre Hawke, 'Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,' *Le Représentant du peuple*, 16 April 1848, p4: 'Pour la proclamer, cette *vérité*, des millions de voix crient dans les

trumpet of the last judgement, let the elected representatives wake up, let the corrupt officials, those who fabricate lies, wither from terror and horror!’⁴¹

How was Courbet imbricated within this movement? Hawke accentuates the political and subversive nature of Courbet’s work and identifies the painter with a struggling group of artists who are generally ignored by the establishment.⁴² He compares the lack of critical attention paid to Courbet with the marginalisation of Gabriel Lefébure, a painter and poet whose work is exemplary because it ‘always addresses the soul,’ but which largely remains ‘hidden in the secrecy of his studio.’⁴³ Hawke feels that the establishment has systematically ignored most artists capable of touching the souls of the people. Besides poets and painters, he identifies sculptors who have never sold out to ‘the golden calf’ of capitalism and whose potential to rouse the people precludes them from official recognition.⁴⁴ Characteristic of this type of art is the work of Etienne-Hippolyte Maindron,

journaux, dans les pamphlets, dans les clubs et sur les murs. Donc, le monde a une soif inextinguible de vérité.’

⁴¹ *ibid*, p4: ‘Vous tous qui l’aimez, élevez une voix haute et audacieuse. Qu’elle sonne la trompette solennelle du jugement dernier, que les élus se réveillent, que les prévaricateurs, les fabricateurs de mensonges, sèchent d’effroi et d’épouvante!’

⁴² *ibid*, p4: ‘ces pauvres et généreux artistes qui souffrent et languissent dans la misère!’

⁴³ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre. 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 1 May 1848, p4: ‘Lefébure nous a prouvé qu’il était l’un et l’autre [peintre et poète] par ses charmantes poésies et par ses tableaux, où se dévoilent les secrets de son âme. Beaucoup sont restés cachés dans les mystères de son atelier, ne pouvant jamais arriver devant le peuple. Les portes du Louvre lui sont restées fermées, comme pour les oeuvres de Courbet et de tant d’autres talents ignorés. Ce que nous regardons surtout comme une qualité précieuse dans les portraits que notre jeune peintre a exposés au Salon, c’est qu’il s’adresse toujours à l’âme.’

⁴⁴ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le salon du Louvre, exposition de 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 29 May 1848, p4: ‘Vous donc, vrais artistes, qui avez le don sacré du génie; vous qui n’avez jamais sacrifié au veau d’or, venez, vous avez toujours été repoussés du sanctuaire, parce que de faux prêtres y prononçaient des sentences despotiques.’

a ‘great sculptor of religious sentiment’ who is ‘l’ARTISTE-PEUPLE par excellence.’⁴⁵ Maindron’s work stimulates the ‘common sentiment’ within ‘the great human family’ and, through its capacity to reform society, can change the course of history in favour of social rather than individualist values. His sculpture is the product of positivism and groups such as the one entitled *Attila et Sainte-Geneviève* [Figure 3] demonstrate for Hawke ‘a complete synthesis of historical and social science.’⁴⁶ In the case of Courbet, another of the ‘sublime proletarians of art,’ Hawke notices an extreme lack of critical attention in the press based on the assumption that critics generally ignore Courbet because his work challenges the establishment and because newspapers seek the favour and financial support of officialdom.⁴⁷ Emphasising Courbet’s perceived radicalism, Hawke highlights the rejection of the artist’s work by Salon judges in the past, arguing that this marginalisation has been so systematic that not even Théophile Thoré, perhaps the best-known radical art critic of the period and staunch supporter of struggling painters like Théodore Rousseau, has written about Courbet.⁴⁸ Furthermore, whilst Hawke considers that Courbet has a strong showing at

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p4: ‘C’est en ceci que Maindron est vraiment incomparable. Toujours il lie le sentiment religieux le plus élevé à la pensée profonde des misères de l’humanité. Aussi Maindron est l’ARTISTE-PEUPLE par excellence; . . .’

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p4: ‘Venez, Maindron, grand sculpteur du sentiment religieux, . . . Nous n’hésitons pas à placer le groupe d’Attila et de Sainte-Geneviève sur la première ligne des sculptures des temps modernes. Ce groupe est non seulement un chef-d’œuvre d’art, mais aussi une admirable concentration, ou plutôt une synthèse complète de science historique et sociale. . . .
‘. . . d’autres peuvent avoir plus d’habileté, plus de pratique du ciseau, plus de savoir-faire traditionnel; nul ne sait exprimer comme lui l’idée collective qui agite les masses et la passion qui fait communier entre eux tous les membres de la grande famille humaine.’

Maindron’s sculpture depicts the virgin Saint Genevieve, who, according to legend, managed to prevent the inhabitants of Paris from panicking and fleeing Paris during the invasion of Attila the Hun. She died, c.500 and her feast day is 3 January.

⁴⁷ Pierre Hawke, ‘Quelques mots sur le Salon de peinture au Louvre, 1848,’ *Le Représentant du peuple*, 16 April 1848, p4: ‘Jamais les pinacques n’en ont dit un mot dans leurs feuilletons grassement salariés. Ils avaient, ma foi, bien d’autres devoirs à remplir. Ne fallait-il pas plaire aux distributeurs des faveurs ministérielles. Qu’y avait-il de commun entre eux et les sublimes prolétaires de l’art, qui tombaient, épuisés sur leur grabat, en étouffant les magiques élans de leur génie, faute d’instruments de travail.’

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p4: ‘Personne plus que moi ne rend hommage à la haute intelligence, à la pureté d’intention, au jugement sain du citoyen énergétique, Thoré; mais une raison bien simple m’explique son silence. C’est que les oeuvres de Courbet n’ont jamais pu arriver devant le peuple, toujours elles ont été

the Salon of 1848, and wonders if the artist will achieve recognition as a result, he does not think that his ten exhibits have been positioned well. He blames the Provisional Government – a government he sees as corrupt and rife with nepotism – for attempting to suppress the public exposure of Courbet’s work and argues that the artist’s immediate reputation will suffer as a result.⁴⁹ The artist’s immediate reputation is extremely important for Hawke. Courbet’s work is about the era in which he lives, and Hawke sees its public reception as instrumental within the teleological process of social reform that is central to the political imperatives of the moment. Courbet’s work should be exhibited now, he argues, even if the philosophical principles driving its inception make certain that its recognition in the future is guaranteed.⁵⁰

Hawke adopts a positivist view of society in which the development of physical and moral nature is considered a teleological process of reform. This view is rooted in the disciplines of biology and physiology in circulation around the first half of the nineteenth century in France, many of which are deployed by positivist philosophers of the time to formulate a science of society and its historical development.⁵¹ Positivists of that period see

impitoyablement rejetées par messieurs les juges du Louvre, et Thoré n’a pas eu le bonheur de découvrir la pauvre mansarde de Courbet, comme il avait fait jadis de celle de Th. Rousseau.’ Comparing Courbet with Rousseau in this way, Hawke indicates his general support for artists who create a humanitarian aesthetic. As Neil Mc Williams notes, Thoré recognised Rousseau’s potential to ‘ally a feeling for nature with an equally strong feeling for the destiny of humanity’; see McWilliam, 1993, p184.

⁴⁹ Hawke, *ibid*, 16 April 1848, p4: ‘Il [Courbet] y est bien représenté par dix tableaux; mais tous sont si mal placés, qu’ils perdent presque toute leur valeur. La commission chargée par le Gouvernement de placer les tableaux n’a pas été bien inspirée: c’est très fâcheux pour la réputation immédiate d’un homme qui mérite d’être connu.’

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p4: ‘Sans doute l’avenir le placera non loin de ces hardis génies devant lesquels toute critique tombe impuissante; mais l’artiste vit dans le présent aussi, et ne demande pas mieux que d’être convenablement présenté au public.’

⁵¹ In positivism, physiology was developed as part of the broader science of biology. In the famous medical dictionary of the well-known Belgian doctor and medical scientist Pierre-Hubert Nysten – later editions of which were rewritten by the positivists Émile Littré and Charles Robin – a lengthy

society as an intrinsically biological phenomenon, a core element of the environment or set of ‘milieux’ within which people exist as living organisms.⁵² Such philosophers assert the importance of the biological conditions of life in understanding the nature, health and development of all living beings or organisms. They argue that the most basic condition of life is a harmony between a living being and the milieu within which it exists, as demonstrated by the fact that a living body dies if its environment is injurious to it. The development, or ‘evolution,’ of living beings is also often regarded by positivists as a

definition of ‘physiologie’ confirms the incorporation of physiology within biology: ‘PHYSIOLOGIE . . . On donne le nom de *physiologie* à cette partie de la biologie qui a pour sujet les corps organisés à l’état dynamique, et pour but ou objet la connaissance des actes ou phénomènes qu’ils manifestent, ainsi que le rapport existant entre ces actes et les parties de l’organisme qui les accomplissent. Outre les actes de même ordre que ceux qui sont présentés par les corps bruts, l’organisme offre une activité spéciale qui, n’appartenant qu’à lui, n’existe pas dans les substances inorganiques. Le nom de *vie*, donné au mode d’activité spécial des corps organisés, fait dire d’eux qu’ils sont *vivants* quand ils montrent cette activité; c’est ce qui les fait appeler *corps organisés vivants*, ou simplement *corps vivants*.’ See Pierre-Hubert Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, des sciences accessoires et de l’art vétérinaire*, dixième édition, entièrement refondue par Émile Littré et Charles Robin, J.-B. Baillière, Paris, 1855, p968. The dictionary was actually first published in 1806 by Joseph Capuron (1767-1850). The 2nd edition was published by Capuron and Nysten in 1810. Nysten published a revised edition alone in 1814. The work was successively updated in the editions of 1824, 1833, 1835, 1839, 1841, and 1845. In 1855, Émile Littré and Charles Robin published a completely revised tenth edition. The last edition, the twelfth, was published in 1865.

⁵² Nysten’s lengthy definition of ‘biologie’ highlights the dependency of ‘living bodies’ upon a suitable environment or ‘milieu’: ‘BIOLOGIE . . . En biologie, on envisage les êtres organisés sous deux faces distinctes: 1^o *statiquement*, c’est-à-dire comme aptes à agir; et 2^o *dynamiquement*, c’est-à-dire comme agissants . . . Toute idée d’être organisé vivant est impossible, si l’on ne prend en considération l’idée d’un *milieu*.’ Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine*, 1855, p157.

Under his definition for ‘positive,’ Nysten refers to Comte’s group of sciences, the highest of which is sociology and which is based upon biology. This definition also refers to: ‘la *sociologie*, ou science sociale, ou histoire, qui dépend de la biologie. Tel est le vaste ensemble trouvé par M. Auguste Comte, ensemble qui, par soi seul, est pour l’esprit l’enseignement le plus fécond et la direction la plus sûre.’ Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine*, 1855, p1013.

The later editions of Nysten’s dictionary rewritten by Littré and Robin foreground the relationship between positivism and medical science and incorporate numerous core positivist concepts. For example, ‘mésologie,’ ‘the science of milieux,’ is included: ‘MÉSOLOGIE . . . Nom donné par Bertillon à la *science des milieux*. La mésologie est la science des rapports qui relient les êtres aux milieux dans lesquels ils sont plongés . . . [le centre d’intérêt de mésologie est] l’importance, signalée par Aug. Comte et par de Blainville, de l’étude spéciale de ce groupe particulier de phénomènes biologiques, de leur sériation, enfin de leur constitution scientifique. Nous avons appelé *mésologie* cette science abstraite des milieux, dont les sciences appliquées corrélatives sont l’hygiène, l’acclimatation, la domestication.’ Pierre-Hubert Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, des sciences accessoires et de l’art vétérinaire*, douzième édition, J.-B. Baillière, Paris, 1865, p932.

biological process in which living beings evolve through time to adapt to the changing conditions of their environment, including society.

Positivist works of that period claim that the condition of society and its attendant political structures have a direct impact upon the physical and moral nature, health and behaviour of people. Here, it is important to recognise that the phrase ‘the physical and the moral’ denotes the physiological constitution of human beings, the relation between a person’s body and inner character – the intellect, emotions, personality and moral traits – which determine how a person acts.⁵³ According to Hawke, the biological relationship between the human constitution and society is set on an evolutionary path towards a state of social perfection embodied in the idea of a wholly just and unified society and driven by the inherent regard of humans for one another. He considers the attainment of this physical and moral perfection to be the basis of all human progress. Social development is an historical process and the biological relationship between the human constitution and its social environment has enormous historical and political significance. In Hawke’s view, capitalist society and its attendant bourgeois culture has caused physical and moral degeneration by promoting individual greed and destroying the inherent social aspects of human nature, aspects that he sees as the bases of any just or unified society. The February Revolution is for him a biological necessity, constituting a reversal of unhealthy bourgeois values and

⁵³ Nysten covers the relevant terms ‘physical’ and ‘moral’ under his definition of ‘physique’: ‘PHYSIQUE . . . On donne le nom de *physique*, tantôt à l’ensemble de l’apparence extérieure du corps, tantôt à l’ensemble des dispositions anatomiques intérieures, par opposition au *moral*, qui exprime l’ensemble des actions du système nerveux, surtout cérébral. Ces deux conditions sont en rapport l’une avec l’autre, comme la forme de l’animal est en rapport avec celle de son système nerveux; et, à leur tour, les qualités spéciales de la sensibilité marquent leur empreinte sur la nature des actes et gestes par lesquels elle se traduit au dehors et sur l’*habitude* extérieure.’ Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine*, 1855, pp969-970.

heralding for the sake of human progress a new social milieu in which physical and moral nature can thrive on its path to perfection.

III: Revolution, Proudhon and the freedom of the press: the context in which Hawke's views were circulated and consumed

Hawke's articles on Courbet appeared in the well-known radical left-wing journal *Le Représentant du peuple*, an anti-capitalist publication dedicated to the establishment of humanitarian values within society and rights for the working class. An examination of the political leanings and readership of this publication provides a valuable insight into the social milieu in which Hawke's views on Courbet were produced, circulated and consumed. Subtitled 'Daily Newspaper of the Workers,' the publication clearly supported the working class. Eugène Hatin's *Histoire du Journal en France* of 1853 – an attempt to document the explosion of publications during this politically tempestuous period – comments upon the journal's widespread support for the views of the socialist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a dedicated defender of workers' rights.⁵⁴ Proudhon's radical views were the ideological backbone of the journal and were an important part of the context in which Hawke's account of Courbet's work was produced and received. The philosopher became one of the journal's chief editors in the same month that Hawke's first article on Courbet was published.⁵⁵ As Hatin notes, *Le Représentant du peuple* represented Proudhon's doctrines and its party line was summed by the widely recognised revolutionary

⁵⁴ Eugène Hatin, *Histoire du journal en France*, Paris, 1853, p231.

⁵⁵ See entry for 'PROUDHON (Pierre-Joseph)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Treizième, 'POUR-R,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1875, p318: 'Au mois d'avril 1848, Proudhon entre au *Représentant du peuple* . . .' Proudhon was actually involved with the journal from the time of its launch on 7 February 1848; see George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1962, p106. Claude Bellanger states that the journal first appeared on 1 April 1848 but this would seem to be incorrect; this date probably indicates the point from which Proudhon became editor; see Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p235. Hippolyte Castille's *Histoire de la Seconde République Française* – an extensive and detailed account of the political events of the period – notes that the journal was founded by Jules Viard and Charles Fauvety but that it soon acquired considerable notoriety in Proudhon's hands: 'Fondée d'abord par MM. Jules Viard et Fauvety, sous le titre du *Représentant du Peuple*, elle acquit bientôt une notoriété considérable entre les mains de M. P.-J. Proudhon.' See Hippolyte Castille, *Histoire de la Seconde République Française*, Vol. 2, Paris, 1855, pp131-132.

legend closely associated with him – “What is the producer? – Nothing. – What should he be? – Everything.” – which was clearly printed as the sub-title for the issues in which Hawke’s articles on Courbet were published.⁵⁶

In his book *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, published in 1980, James Henry Rubin sees the radical slogan as evidence of Proudhon’s hostility towards the capitalist appropriation of work and the alienation of man as producer, key themes in Courbet’s work according to Hawke.⁵⁷ In Proudhon’s concept of work, labour and production were the means through which man maintained his necessary exchange with nature’s materiality.⁵⁸ A process of mediation between the objective and subjective worlds, work was seen by Proudhon as simultaneously manual and noble, private and universally useful, a means for man to infuse nature with himself and appropriate nature to himself through production.⁵⁹ In its capacity to synthesise the subjective and objective realms of existence, this process of production through work was considered by Proudhon to be an essential means to human fulfilment.⁶⁰ Socio-economic systems such as capitalism and communism appropriated work for purposes extrinsic to man, alienating the product from

⁵⁶ Eugène Hatin, *Histoire du journal en France*, Paris, 1853, p231: “Qu’est-ce que le producteur? – Rien. – Que doit-il être? – Tout.”

⁵⁷ See James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, pp31-32. Édouard Dolléans has documented in detail Proudhon’s key involvement in the workers’ movement and his relentless attempts to resolve the plight of the workers. See, for example, Dolléans’ *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier, 1830-1871*, Paris, 1936. On this subject, see also Maria Fitzpatrick, ‘Proudhon and the French Labour Movement: The Problem of Proudhon’s Prominence,’ *European History Quarterly*, 1985, 15, pp407-430. Further useful information is to be found in Édouard Dolléans and J.-L. Puech, *Proudhon et la révolution de 1848*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948. For biographical information, see George Woodcock, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A Biography*, Black Rose, 1996.

⁵⁸ See Rubin, *ibid*, 1980, p31.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p31.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p31.

the producer, who was denied his natural fulfilment and rights.⁶¹ Religious systems were just as culpable as those in the economic sphere, perpetuating the myth that man was condemned to work by the Fall.⁶² Far from being an inherited curse, work was characterised by Proudhon as man's inner necessity and path towards material satisfaction.⁶³ As Hatin states, under Proudhon, *Le Représentant du peuple* advocated social reform and radical doctrines that would subvert the foundations of capitalism and lead to the destruction of property and the rejection of divinity.⁶⁴ The philosopher famously and repeatedly declared that “Property is theft.” – “God is bad.” – “To work is to produce *nothing*.”⁶⁵

Proudhon's radical ideas about work and social reform are evident in the very issues of *Le Représentant du peuple* containing Hawke's articles on Courbet. In the issue dated 16 April 1848, for example, there is a bold advertisement for Proudhon's works situated immediately below the article on Courbet by Hawke. The advert states that Proudhon's writing is of a type dedicated to revolutionary themes and includes the notoriously radical tract *Solution du problème social*, published in 1848, and the positivistically conceived book *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou Principes d'organisation politique*, published in 1843. In *Solution du problème social*, as Rubin has noted, Proudhon attacked what he saw as the hypocrisy and injustice of democratic

⁶¹ *ibid*, p31.

⁶² *ibid*, p31.

⁶³ *ibid*, pp31-32.

⁶⁴ Eugène Hatin, *Histoire du journal en France*, Paris, 1853, p231: ‘*Le Représentant du peuple* représentait, comme on le sait, les doctrines du citoyen Proudhon, c'est-à-dire la destruction de la propriété, la ruine de la famille et la négation de la divinité.’

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p231: “La propriété, c'est le vol.” – “Dieu, c'est le mal.” – “Travailler, c'est produire *de rien*.”

government and proposed a complete reorganisation of the existing credit system.⁶⁶ Here, the philosopher also set out his early deliberations on what became his famous and radical concept of ‘mutualism,’ an economic system designed to guarantee a just society by liberating work from appropriation by any intermediary, including the state.⁶⁷ Mutualism would resolve what he saw as an inherent conflict between the interests of the state and those of the individual, and would end the alienation of man as producer.⁶⁸ The philosopher asserted that each man should be free to fully develop his particular talents and activities and had the right to dispose of his product through exchanges involving no intermediaries whatsoever.⁶⁹ He claimed that, in this way, each producer would realise the full value of his product through a system in which groups and individuals, corporate bodies and persons were all equal before the law.⁷⁰ Radical social theory is also found in *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité*. In this book, Proudhon addressed the exploitation of art and the appropriation of human activity by socio-economic systems. Here, as Rubin points out, the philosopher accused romantic artists of venality and selfishness for their commodification of beauty through art forms that benefited society in no way whatsoever.⁷¹ Proudhon argued that art's mission was to improve society by reforming physical and moral relationships through reason and exact science.⁷² Through such methods, he claimed, history, society,

⁶⁶ See James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p17.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p18.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p18.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p32.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, pp18-19.

⁷¹ *ibid*, pp85-87.

⁷² See Proudhon, *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou Principes d'organisation politique*, Paris, 1843, pp216-217.

customs, beliefs, ideas and passions would become more beautiful as mankind approached a condition of physical and moral purity.⁷³

The political and radical status of *Le Représentant du peuple* is brought into sharper focus when we realise that the press had a pivotal role in the political domain from the very outset of the Second Republic.⁷⁴ The February Revolution, the first radical phase of the workers' uprising in 1848, temporarily allowed the press complete freedom and led to a dramatic increase in the number of journals and newspapers published.⁷⁵ Within a few

⁷³ See *ibid*, pp216-217. Whilst Rubin recognises that there is a relationship between Proudhon's ideas and positivism expressed in *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité*, he misses the significance of physical and moral considerations within the philosopher's argument. For Rubin, Proudhon's adoption of Comtian ideas centres upon the use of 'quasi-mathematical laws' and 'the language of serialism' which highlights 'a method of reasoning that integrated the transcendental and the empirical spheres'; see Rubin, 1980, p86. Yet, Proudhon clearly states that the artist must become 'a man of reason and science' in order that 'physical and moral relationships, passions, ideas,' and hence 'society, history, customs, laws, beliefs,' become more beautiful; see Proudhon, *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou Principes d'organisation politique*, Paris, 1843, pp216-217.

Larousse's *Dictionnaire* confirms that Proudhon's book was directly inspired by Comte; see entry for 'PROUDHON (Pierre-Joseph)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Treizième, 'POUR-R,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1875, p317.

⁷⁴ As Joseph-Pierre Chassan's *Traité des délits et contraventions de la parole de l'écriture et de la presse* of 1851 notes, the Provisional Government's decree of 4-6 March 1848 states that the press is inseparable from politics and is crucial in aiding the establishment of the Republic: 'La presse, cet instrument si puissant de civilisation, de liberté, et dont la voix doit rallier à la République tous les citoyens, la presse ne pouvait rester en dehors de la sollicitude du gouvernement provisoire.' See Joseph-Pierre Chassan, *Traité des délits et contraventions de la parole de l'écriture et de la presse*, 2 tomes, Videcoq fils aîné, Paris, 1851, Tome deuxième, 'Lois sur la presse depuis le 24 février 1848,' p9.

See also Eugène Hatin, *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France*, 8 tomes, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, 1859-61, Tome huitième, 1861, pp619-620, which confirms the same and quotes the same decree.

⁷⁵ See Eugène Hatin, *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France*, 8 tomes, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, 1859-61, Tome huitième, 1861, p619: 'La révolution de Février affranchit de nouveau la presse de toute condition, de toute obligation, de tout frein, et lui assura momentanément la plus complète impunité.' See also *ibid*, p622, which confirms that the February Revolution led to 'une avalanche de journaux' and Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p208, which confirms the same. For a discussion of Courbet's exploitation of the expansion of the French daily press from an elite to a popular medium from around 1836, see Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France, Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2007, Chapter 1, 'Courbet and the Press,' pp5-16.

months of the revolution, there were over 450 new publications, many of which characterised the uprising as a major advance in the fight for proletarian social reform.⁷⁶ The revolution encouraged the radical contingent of anti-capitalists and social reformists promoted by Proudhon and his journal *Le Représentant du peuple*. In fact, this publication was considered a serious threat to social order shortly after it published Hawke's articles on Courbet. By June 1848, another revolution was brewing in Paris and the government was becoming increasingly alarmed by the violence of radical papers.⁷⁷ In April 1848, conservative deputies elected to the National Assembly clearly intended to close the 'national workshops,' the system set up after the February Revolution to guarantee work for the unemployed.⁷⁸ On 21 June, all unemployed men between the ages of 17 and 25 were ordered to join the army or go to the provinces and, as a result, an insurrection of the workers occurred.⁷⁹ Charged with the task of suppressing the revolution, General Cavaignac was given dictatorial powers and, using the National Guard, accomplished his task savagely by killing thousands.⁸⁰ Cavaignac arrested the editors of eleven radical newspapers on 25 June, believing them to be instrumental in inciting the workers to the revolt.⁸¹ In August 1848, he seized *Le Représentant du peuple*, partly for helping the

⁷⁶ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p102. Henri Izambard's *La Presse parisienne: statistique bibliographique et alphabétique de tous les journaux, revues et canards périodique nés, morts, ressuscités ou métamorphosés à Paris depuis le 22 février 1848 jusqu'à l'Empire*, Paris, 1853 lists 383 new journals. Both Collins and Bellanger comment that many of these journals saw the revolution as a major advance in social reform in favour of the workers. See Collins, *ibid*, 1959, p102 and Bellanger, *ibid*, 1969, p210.

⁷⁷ See Collins, *ibid*, 1959, p104.

⁷⁸ See Collins, *ibid*, 1959, p104.

⁷⁹ See J. Hampden Jackson, ed., *A Short History of France to the Present Day*, Cambridge at the University Press, 1961, pp149-50; see also F. W. J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France 1848-1898: Dissidents and Philistines*, B. T. Batsford Ltd, London, 1971, p25.

⁸⁰ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p105.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p105.

families of the 9000 men detained after the June uprising.⁸² Proudhon's dogged determination that his political, economic and social ideas would gain the attention of the government and the public was another reason for this seizure.⁸³ On 8 July 1848, Proudhon published in *Le Représentant du peuple* a decree addressed to the Assembly and petitioned by tenants and farmers. The decree demanded that property owners concede a one-third reduction in rent and farm rent over the following three years. Although Cavaignac immediately suspended the journal, Proudhon transformed the decree into a draft proposal of law extending tax relief to all public and private debt. This proposed bill of law, in which both treasury and debtors were to benefit from the discounts, was presented to the Assembly and referred to the Committee of Finances, which condemned the proposals.⁸⁴ This clearly shows the philosopher's determination and, as Hippolyte Castille remarks in his well-known history of the Second Republic, Proudhon was the only socialist of the time with sufficient knowledge of economics, parliamentary procedures and the dangers of arbitrary regulation, as well as the influence, intelligence and goodwill, to help people.⁸⁵

Cavaignac considered *Le Représentant du peuple* to be a threat after the slaughter of the insurgent workers by the National Guard, and Hatin's *Histoire du Journal en France*

⁸² *ibid*, p105. Collins states that, at this point, the title of the journal is '*le Peuple*,' one of the paper's numerous resurrections following repeated seizures. This seems to be incorrect; it appears that the journal was not revived as *le Peuple* until 2 September, 1848. See footnote 87 and Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p235.

⁸³ See Édouard Dolléans and J.-L. Puech, *Proudhon et la révolution de 1848*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948, which provides numerous examples.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p56.

⁸⁵ Hippolyte Castille, *Histoire de la Seconde République Française*, Vol. 2, Paris, 1855, p133: 'Au total, M. Proudhon était le seul socialiste qui eût de réelles connaissances économiques, le seul qui comprît la vuidité du parlementarisme, le danger d'une réglementation trop arbitraire, et qui possédât quelques notions dont on eût peut-être tiré profit avec beaucoup de pouvoir, d'intelligence et de bonne volonté.'

reveals just how serious he considered that threat to be. As the relevant decree states, the general seized four papers on 21 August 1848 including *Le Représentant du peuple* because they were considered to be instruments of social unrest and civil war. The papers were seen as powerful enemies of the state and its values.⁸⁶ Clearly, Cavaignac and the authorities in 1848 considered *Le Représentant du peuple* to be a serious threat to social order shortly after the newspaper published Hawke's articles on Courbet.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Eugène Hatin, *Histoire du journal en France*, Paris, 1853, pp299-300: ““Considérant, porte le décret, que ces journaux, par les doctrines qu’ils professent contre l’état, la famille et la propriété, par les excitations violentes qu’ils fomentent contre la société, les pouvoirs publics émanés de la souveraineté du peuple, contre l’armée, la garde nationale, et même contre les personnes privées, sont de nature, s’ils étaient tolérés davantage, à faire renaître au sein de la cité l’agitation, le désordre et la guerre; Considérant que ces publications, répandues à profusion, et souvent gratis, dans les rues, sur les places, dans les ateliers et dans l’armée, sont des instruments de guerre civile, et non des instruments de liberté . . .””

Joseph-Pierre Chassan, *Traité des délits et contraventions de la parole de l’écriture et de la presse*, 2 tomes, Videcoq fils aîné, Paris, 1851, Tome deuxième, ‘Lois sur la presse depuis le 24 février 1848,’ p60 confirms the same.

⁸⁷ It is worth noting that *Le Représentant du peuple* was relatively inexpensive and readily available to those with relatively small incomes, costing as little as 1fr 50 per month or 18 fr per annum in Paris and the suburbs, and 2fr 50 per month or 30 fr per annum in the departments. The prices are quoted on the issues of the newspaper containing Hawke's articles on Courbet. There were other subscription options besides monthly and annually: 4 fr 50 for 3 months and 9 fr for six months in Paris and the suburbs, or 7 fr 50 for 3 months and 15 fr for six months in the departments. As a frequent contributor to the paper concerning the philosophy of art, politics and social reform, Hawke's reputation was widening and benefited from Proudhon's numerous attempts to revive *Le Représentant du peuple* after it was seized by Cavaignac in August 1848. Proudhon attempted to revive it shortly after in Lyon but it was seized again. On 2 September 1848, Proudhon attempted to revive the journal under the title *Le Peuple*; as the journal had no official sanction to commence, it was seized the very next day. Another reconstitution occurred on 1 November 1848, under the title *Le Peuple, journal de la République démocratique et sociale*, which lasted until 13 June 1849. From 1 October 1849 until 14 May 1850, the journal became *La Voix du Peuple*; this in turn was replaced by *Le Peuple de 1850*, which ran from 15 June 1850 until 13 October 1850. See Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p235.

IV: Max Buchon: physiognomical representation as a means of social reform

Writing a few years later than Hawke, the poet and translator Max Buchon also provides an essentially positivist interpretation of Courbet's work.⁸⁸ This interpretation is contained in an article advertising two provincial exhibitions of Courbet's paintings, the *Casseurs de pierres* [Figure 4] and the *Enterrement à Ornans* [Figure 5], in 1850.⁸⁹ The article was published on 25 April 1850 in the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, a socialist newspaper advocating peaceful social reform, and reappeared on 7 June 1850 (with some alterations and additions) in *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, a radical newspaper demanding reform and promoting violent socialism to achieve it. After the 1848 Revolution, Buchon became a leading revolutionary and prominent socialist figure in and around the Franche-Comté, the very province in which Courbet's paintings were to be shown.⁹⁰ He was a dedicated defender of the interests of workers and the proletariat and called for the destruction of bourgeois and capitalist values.⁹¹ The first version of Buchon's

⁸⁸ Buchon, a native of the Franche-Comté, was a schoolfriend of Courbet and remained a close friend of the artist throughout his life; see Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet, his life and art*, Adams & Dart, Somerset, 1973, pp1-4 and Gerstle Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1951, pp20-22. As Mack informs us, Buchon and Courbet were distantly related. In the late seventeenth century, one of Buchon's ancestors from Flagey, François Buchon, married a certain Catherine Courbet of the same village. Buchon and Courbet often referred to each other as cousins.

⁸⁹ Courbet arranged these exhibitions because the Salon for that year, due to take place in May, had been postponed. The political situation in Paris was sensitive at that time and the conservative government under Napoleon III was cautious about allowing potentially disruptive crowds to gather in the capital. The paintings were actually exhibited three times: first, in the seminary chapel at Ornans, second, in May, in the market hall in Besançon and third, in July, in a converted café in Dijon, which was a socialist stronghold. See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p85.

⁹⁰ For detailed accounts of Buchon's life and political activities see Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940 and Léon Germain, *Max Buchon, sa vie et son oeuvre*, Montbéliard, S. A. d'imprimerie montbéliardaise, 1936. For a concise summary of Buchon's political activities during the Second Republic, see T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, pp111-114.

⁹¹ See Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, in particular Chapters II, III and VII.

article publicised the exhibition of the paintings in Besançon, the capital of the Franche-Comté, in May 1850.⁹² The amended version advertised their exhibition two months later in Dijon, in a converted café that was known to be a socialist stronghold. In these provincial exhibitions, the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* were being shown to the rural audience from which Courbet had drawn his subjects, the working and bourgeois inhabitants of towns in the Franche-Comté, in particular Flagey, Ornans, Besançon and Maisières. As Jack Lindsay notes, the exhibition in Besançon was a success in that it achieved good attendance levels despite the entrance fee.⁹³ One-man exhibitions of this kind were rare in the province and the novelty of this undoubtedly attracted attention. More importantly, the president Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte had become unpopular with some of the working class people in Besançon.⁹⁴ Many of these people were likely to have read Buchon's article with interest and responded to its revolutionary implications by attending the show. The exhibition in Dijon was not as successful, mainly due it seems to the distractions of the political conflict in the town between violent socialists and conservative ultra-reactionaries.⁹⁵

⁹² The exhibition is clearly referred to in the article itself. T. J. Clark has researched both versions of Buchon's article and the exhibitions to which they refer. See Clark's articles 'A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet I,' *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, April 1969, pp208-213 and 'A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet II,' *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, May 1969, pp286-290. See also Clark's *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973.

⁹³ See Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet, his life and art*, Adams & Dart, Bath, 1973, p70.

⁹⁴ See *ibid*, p70.

⁹⁵ Clark explains that Dijon was in the grip of factional struggle and that the authorities took strong measures to squash any potentially socialist or subversive disturbance. He also notes that, apart from Buchon's left-wing review of the exhibition in Dijon, not one of the town's ten conservative newspapers covered the show, a critical silence that perhaps reveals the hostile reaction to the intended revolutionary meaning of the paintings. See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p123.

The *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* were images of the rural community of the Franche-Comté and, for Buchon, portrayed the physical and moral degeneracy of provincial society, the social injustices perpetrated by the bourgeoisie against the provincial working class at that time. Such subjects had a singular resonance for the local community. In 1850, there was social unrest in the provinces resulting from the hardships suffered by workers at the hands of the bourgeoisie, including usury, unfair taxes, rising rents, loss of income through bad harvests and conscription, the need to sell farm equipment and take jobs like stonebreaking to survive.⁹⁶ Buchon intended to inflame this unrest by highlighting the injustices that he considered were expressed by Courbet's paintings.⁹⁷ Being seen by the very working-class people whose plight was sympathetically portrayed by the artist, the paintings would in Buchon's view become instrumental in bringing about revolution and social reform.⁹⁸

In what capacity does Buchon interpret the paintings as revolutionary? His article is a characteristically positivist critique of bourgeois society and, in this respect, has much in common with that written by Hawke in 1848. Both writers refer to Courbet's paintings as tools for criticising the combined physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of people characterising French customs and social behaviour. However, whereas Hawke sees

⁹⁶ Clark describes in detail the problems suffered by the workers at that time; see T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, pp116-117.

⁹⁷ For concise summaries of the political and social unrest in and around the Franche-Comté at that time, see T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973.

⁹⁸ Clark notes that the conservative critic R. Desbois wrote a full-scale review of the exhibition in the Besançon paper *L'Impartial de 1849* on 17 June 1850. The review criticises the ugliness of the paintings and accuses Courbet of being just as excessive as his enemies. The review also criticises Buchon's 'poetic' and political interpretation of the paintings. See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p122.

in Courbet's work the promise of an ideal society to come, Buchon mainly sees the corruption, oppression and poverty that plague society and which must, in his view, be reformed. The appearance of the figures in the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* indicates a state of physical and moral corruption in France. The poet claims that this diagnostic aspect of Courbet's work focuses upon the effects of social environment upon human life and is an important component of social reform. Writing in 1940, Hugo Frey notes the poet's interest in positivism. Referring to Buchon's *Recueil de dissertations sur le réalisme* – a pamphlet published in 1856 in which Buchon attempts to bring together the main concerns of realism – Frey notes the poet's intention to 'circulate some clearly set out positive truths' by observing society's faults and recognising a need for social justice.⁹⁹ Yet, as Buchon's article on the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* shows, there is a great deal more to the poet's positivism than Frey recognises.¹⁰⁰ Published six years earlier than the pamphlet on realism, the article expresses a series of characteristically positivist ideas used to build a scathing political argument for physical and moral reform.

⁹⁹ Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, p168: 'En outre, la traduction de Buchon nous montre combien il prit au sérieux la question du réalisme. Sans doute, il ne veut pas exposer, dans ces essais critiques, une doctrine complète, ni former des élèves. Il se propose simplement de "mettre en circulation quelques vérités positives nettement formulées," comme il le fait remarquer lui-même, . . .' Frey points out that the brochure is very rare and draws information about it from a detailed analysis of it by E. Duranty in his journal *le Réalisme* in 1856. Frey also points out that there are extracts from the brochure in Charles Léger's article 'Courbet, ses amis et ses élèves,' *Mercur de France*, January-February 1928 and in Pierre Sciobéret, 'Du réalisme, Émulation de Fribourg,' *Revue bibliographique*, April 1856. Courbet clearly approved of the brochure and assumed that Proudhon would be interested in it. In a letter to Buchon dated April 1856, a letter which confirms the very limited print-run of the brochure, Courbet writes: 'Nous avons trouvé ta brochure fort bien à tel point que nous nous enquérons pour la faire rééditer. Tu as eu tort de n'en faire tirer que 100, quoique cela soit mal imprimé. J'ai envie d'y ajouter une lettre d'appréciations et d'observations générales sur le réalisme et les critiques. Nous avons porté à Proudhon celle que tu m'as envoyée dans l'espérance qu'il te réponde une lettre. Si cela pouvait réussir, la fortune de cette brochure serait certaine comme publicité.' Gustave Courbet, letter to Max Buchon, Paris, April 1856, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, pp136-137.

In Buchon's opinion, the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* are representations of typical social life in the Franche-Comté and his analysis of these paintings demonstrates a positivist preoccupation, the effect of the social environment upon the physical condition of people. Considering the ill effects of poverty upon the bodies of the figures in the *Casseurs de pierres*, for example, he notices that the young stonebreaker's shaven head is diseased with ringworm, a disease that is common among young poor people [Figure 6].¹⁰¹ Turning to the image of the elderly stonebreaker's body [Figure 7], he claims that Courbet has not used his imagination in any way and has represented a man 'of flesh and blood' who exists in Ornans 'just as you see him there.'¹⁰² The image of this elderly body, he argues, is an image of hard labour and poverty.¹⁰³ This form of analysis – detecting social ills by studying the physical appearance of people and the diseases of the body – is one way in which Buchon draws upon positivism. Such analysis is also evident in Proudhon's work, which, greatly admired by Buchon, often diagnosed the poor physical health of contemporaries with reference to their oppressive social conditions and demanded a cure through the criticism of such conditions through art. As Frey notes, Buchon was committed to Proudhon's theories of social reform from around 1845 and regularly read the philosopher's writings aloud to large gatherings of republican-socialists in the countryside

¹⁰⁰ Frey argues that Buchon does not intend to formulate a complete philosophical doctrine. Rather, Frey says, Buchon's interest in positivism amounts merely to the adoption of a moderate spirit of observation, a direct approach to nature and society enabling realists to attain the 'just ideas' and active morality believed to form the bedrock of an equitable society. See footnote 99 and Frey, *ibid*, 1940, pp167-168.

¹⁰¹ Max Buchon, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4: 'Un pauvre jeune gars de douze à quinze ans, tête rasée, teigneuse et stupide comme l'affreuse misère en façonne trop souvent aux enfants du pauvre peuple, . . .'

¹⁰² *ibid*, p4: 'Et cependant, cet homme qui n'est pas une imagination du peintre, cet homme qui est bien réellement en chair et en os, à Ornans, tel que vous le voyez là; . . .'

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p4: 'cet homme, avec son âge, avec son rude labeur, avec sa misère et sa douce physionomie de vieillard, . . .'

of the Franche-Comté, particularly around Salins.¹⁰⁴ Like Proudhon, Buchon was a native of the Franche-Comté and shared the philosopher's vision of a society 'of mercy, truth and social justice.'¹⁰⁵ The poet strongly promoted Proudhon's theory that art had ameliorative qualities and should educate the people in order to take them out of their drudgery and improve society.¹⁰⁶ Like both Proudhon and Courbet, the poet believed that art should highlight the social conditions in which people actually existed and 'represent the people, show the peasant and the labourer at work . . . show the appearance of social activity.'¹⁰⁷

Another positivist dimension of Buchon's analysis concerns the use of 'physiognomonie,' the theory that a person's physical appearance or 'physionomie'

¹⁰⁴ Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, p43. Here, Frey refers to Charles Leger, *Gustave Courbet*, Paris, édit. G. Grès, 1929, in-4°, p19: 'Il [Buchon] "convoque à des réunions en pleine campagne, au lieu dit les Engoulirons, entre Salins et Arbois, tous les aspirants républicains-socialistes d'alentour. Il lit et commente des pages de Proudhon ou de Fourier."'

¹⁰⁵ Frey, *ibid*, 1940, p42: 'C'est aussi à cette date que Max Buchon entre en rapport avec la pensée de Proudhon et par la suite avec Proudhon lui-même, avec ce Proudhon dont il disait plus tard: "Si nous avons le malheur de perdre Proudhon, nous sommes perdus" . . . [et] . . . "Proudhon avait les yeux fixés sur l'avenir. Il inventoriait d'avance la cité d'avenir, la cité de joie, de piété, de vérité et de justice sociale.'" Frey quotes firstly from a letter from Courbet to Gustave Chaudey dated 24 January 1865 concerning Proudhon's death (Courbet reports Buchon's words to Chaudey), published by E. Droz in the *Société d'Émulation du Doubs*, 1910, p255 and secondly from G. Kahn, *Les amis de lettres de Gustave Courbet, Max Buchon*, extract from *le Figaro*, reproduced in *le Salinois*, 21 January 1928.

¹⁰⁶ Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, p163: 'Mais ce n'est pas assez de peindre le peuple; il faut l'instruire aussi. L'art a un but, non pas avant tout artistique et littéraire, mais pratique. – C'est apparemment du Proudhon. Ce dernier, en effet, s'exprime ainsi: "L'art doit participer au mouvement de la société, le provoquer et le suivre." "Qu'avait donc l'art à faire de nous autres, misérables humains? . . . se demande-t-il encore. Une chose fort intéressante, la plus glorieuse de toutes: il avait à nous améliorer, à nous aider, à nous sauver.'" Frey quotes firstly from E. Duranty's article *Max Buchon et le Réalisme*, in the journal *le Réalisme*, 15 December 1856 and secondly from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Chapter XXI, 1875 edition.

¹⁰⁷ Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, p161: 'Il faut donc reproduire les choses qui touchent à la vie, représenter le peuple, montrer le paysan et l'ouvrier au travail, en un mot, il faut montrer les manifestations de l'activité sociale.'

discloses his or her personality and inner, moral character.¹⁰⁸ This theory was developed in the eighteenth century by the Swiss physiognomist Johann Caspar Lavater and was later adopted by positivists as a means of observing and interpreting the physical and moral condition of people in society.¹⁰⁹ Martina Lauster has noted that physiognomy was subjected to the principles of physiology by the 1830s and became in the 1830s and 1840s a basis of journalistic sociocultural observation in sketches executed from a perspective analogous to Comte's evolutionary view of society.¹¹⁰ Published in 1855, the tenth edition of Nysten's well-known medical dictionary provides a definition of 'physionomie' that indicates the medical context within which this approach to physical appearance was understood:

PHYSIONOMIE (for PHYSIOGNOMONIE) . . . Particular appearance which for each living being results from the combination of its parts, as much interior as exterior, and, for man, in particular from the features of the face.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed review of physiognomical theory and its relationship with caricature in nineteenth-century Paris, see Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1982. As Wechsler notes, the codification of the assertion that physical appearance corresponds with moral character began with pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomics*, was formed into a practical system for painters in Charles Le Brun's *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, first delivered in 1668, and was developed by Lavater into a theory associating different parts of the body with different moral traits.

¹⁰⁹ Lavater's ideas were hugely influential during the nineteenth century. For an exploration of the broad impact and endurance of Lavater's ideas upon various cultural forms (the novel, the press and periodicals, painting, drawing, photography, caricature, encyclopaedias and medical texts) in Europe, particularly England and France, during the 200 years following his death, see Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005.

¹¹⁰ See Martina Lauster, 'Physiognomy, Zoology, and Physiology as Paradigms in Sociological Sketches of the 1830s and 1840s,' in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005, pp161-179. Examining the sociocultural observation evident in the artistic medium of the journalistic sketch, Lauster highlights the importance of comparative anatomy – a means of exploring the function of organs within the organism – to the biological paradigms of 'zoology' and 'natural history' and the related medical paradigm of 'physiogy.' Comparative anatomy is an important dimension of Comte's positivism and greatly influenced his biological theories of the animal series and the evolution of organisms, which, in turn, informed the basis of his theory of history; see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p622.

¹¹¹ Pierre-Hubert Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, des sciences accessoires et de l'art vétérinaire*, dixième édition, entièrement refondue par Émile Littré et Charles Robin, J.-B. Baillière, Paris, 1855, p968: 'PHYSIONOMIE (pour PHYSIOGNOMONIE) . . . Aspect

Much of the medical science and sociological theory of the period asserts that every living being possesses a ‘physiognomy,’ a particular physical appearance resulting from the connected organisation of its interior anatomy and exterior body parts. Regarding humans, the facial features are taken to be essential and defining aspects of physiognomical appearance. Like many positivists who adopted such views, Buchon considers that the physical and moral condition of people – the particular combination of thoughts, emotions and morals rooted in their physiology, responsible for their behaviour and related to the society in which they live – is evident in their physiognomical appearance.¹¹² In this view, human behaviour results from a series of psycho-physiological processes, which are connected to social existence and which shape the form of the body and its physical appearance. The exterior form and features of the body disclose the particular interior configuration of body parts, which is geared to the particular behaviour required for the body to exist in its social environment. In such physiological theory, ‘physical’ and ‘moral’ aspects of existence are distinct but interrelated. The form of the body (the ‘physical’ aspect of its existence) is thought to express the nature of the nervous system (the ‘moral’ aspect), which is largely cerebral and connected to the mind and emotions. The nervous system – the combination of a person’s thoughts, inclinations, desires, emotions and morals – is formed largely by the social milieu in which the person lives and shapes the form of the

particulier qui, pour chaque être vivant, résulte de l’ensemble de ses parties tant intérieures qu’extérieures, et, pour l’homme en particulier, de celui des traits de la face.’ This definition highlights the correspondence between physiognomy and anatomy – between a focus on the exterior body parts and a focus on the interior – which foster similar goals. Carolina Warman has highlighted the common aim of physiognomy and anatomy to understand the organisation and nature of humanity; see Carolina Warman, ‘What’s Behind a Face? Lavater and the Anatomists,’ in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater’s impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005, pp94-108.

¹¹² John House comments upon the use of physiognomy in certain environmentalist readings of humankind in his essay ‘Toward a “Modern” Lavater? Degas and Manet,’ in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater’s impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005, pp180-197. As House notes, such readings correspond with ‘Hippolyte Taine’s theories of race, milieu, and moment as the determining factors in human experience and behaviour.’

body, as well as the gestures, behaviour and habits for which the body is organised according to its milieu.

Positivism emphasises the effects of social milieux upon the nervous system and thereby expands upon the biological theory of the period, much of which asserts that the fundamental condition of life is a harmony between the living being and the environment within which it exists.¹¹³ In Buchon's view, social environment impacts decisively upon the nervous system of the people who live within it and subsequently finds expression in their physiognomy. The poet finds the artistic representation of physiognomy an effective means of revealing the character of society, the nature of social problems and the causes of physical and moral decay. He commends images that show how things are in society, images that provide social documentary through the appearance of the figures represented in them. There is a good example of this in his description of Courbet's *Casseurs de pierres*, a painting that vividly expresses the attitude and feeling of hopelessness forming the typical physiognomy of working class men. Buchon claims that the appearance of the elderly stonebreaker in the painting effectively conveys the resignation with which the working class typically accepts the enormity of its suffering.¹¹⁴

The use of physiognomy to express the characteristic effects of social environment upon the human constitution is also evident in Buchon's reading of the *Enterrement à Ornans*. Yet, here, the approach is also used to highlight the individual nature of the

¹¹³ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p591 and W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York and London, 1972, pp113-114.

¹¹⁴ Max Buchon, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4: 'Au milieu de tant de luttes et de souffrance, la physionomie est cependant restée calme, sympathique et résignée.'

subjects represented, and, by claiming that Courbet simultaneously portrays these subjects both as social types and individual characters, Buchon brings another characteristically positivist dimension to his argument. He emphasises how well Courbet observes and represents the various social types in their customary dress but also claims that the artist highlights the individuality of each figure: ‘The priest, the mayor, the deputy, nothing is missing. They are there, I say, numbering fifty, all with their own characters, in their traditional dress, with their own personal anxieties.’¹¹⁵ Buchon was closely acquainted with the people seen in the painting and, in his article, maintains that Courbet’s representation of their physical appearance portrays both individual and social aspects of their nature to create exceptionally life-like and familiar images of them.¹¹⁶

Buchon develops his positivist ideas into a political critique of the bourgeois society documented by Courbet and, by extension, bourgeois society as a whole. The impact of the poet’s critique clearly depends upon his positivist view. T. J. Clark acknowledges the political significance of Buchon’s article but fails to pick up on the positivist foundations upon which this significance is built.¹¹⁷ These foundations – the detection of social ills by studying physical appearance and diseases of the body, the use of physiognomy to chart the physical and moral condition of society, and an emphasis upon both the individual and social aspects of human nature – produce the ammunition for

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p4: ‘M. le curé, M. le maire, M. l’adjoint, rien n’y manque. Ils sont là, dis-je, au nombre de cinquante, tous dans leur caractère propre, dans leur tenue traditionnelle, dans leurs préoccupations particulières.’

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p4: ‘Pour qui a comme nous l’honneur de connaître un peu cette bonne population d’Ornans, c’est d’abord une rencontre saisissante et naïve que celle de ce tableau, où se groupent, s’alignent et s’étagent toutes ces figures que vous venez de saluer tout à l’heure dans la rue, et qui ont été réunies là par le pinceau de l’artiste avec tant de naturel, d’intelligence et de bonhomie.’

¹¹⁷ See T. J. Clark, ‘A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet I,’ *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, April 1969, p210. Here, Clark describes Buchon’s interpretation of Courbet’s work as ‘fearlessly and specifically political.’

Buchon's attack upon bourgeois society. Launching this attack, Buchon again emphasises the life-like appearance of the figures in the *Enterrement* by highlighting their combined individual and social character.¹¹⁸ He criticises this life-like image of society, noting that the link between the physical appearance of the figures and the degenerate social conditions bringing about this appearance is further confirmed by the gloomy appearance of the landscape. We have already spoken of a synthesis between the distinct physical and moral dimensions of human existence and the social conditions impacting upon them. For Buchon, however, synthesis could be extended to account for the psychological effects the landscape in the painting has upon the figures, and its combined effects upon the viewer. These effects are very significant since they ultimately motivate the viewer to reform society, to improve the gloomy physical and moral conditions reflected in the appearance of the figures and the landscape in the *Enterrement*. Through the arresting image of the grave – which is physically part of the landscape and into which the corpse descends – Buchon sees the synthesis between the landscape and the physiognomy of the figures as a profound expression of the effects of environment upon human life.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Buchon introduces a sense of foreboding into his critique by relating the figures and the landscape to the grave in this way. This sense of foreboding intensifies his message of reform and is sharpened in the version of his article advertising the exhibition that Courbet held in Dijon. This later article carries a particularly severe warning for the bourgeoisie – the bourgeois figures in Courbet's painting – whose oppression of the working class must be reformed. Here, Buchon poetically uses the image of a streak of lightning to emphasise the incisive and prophetic manner in which Courbet illuminates the physiognomy of the bourgeois

¹¹⁸ Max Buchon, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4. Buchon refers to 'toutes ces physionomies si vigoureusement personnalisées'.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p4: 'je ne sais quelle pensée austère se dégage tout-à-coup de cette fosse béante, passe en quelque sorte sur toutes ces physionomies si vigoureusement personnalisées, et grâce à ces grands lointains de paysages, à ces ciels mornes et grisâtres, et à l'air de recueillement qui plane sur tout, en fait une véritable synthèse de la vie humaine.'

figures, exposing their degeneracy and announcing the demise of the tyrannical social environment they stand for. The poet says that the painting expresses a thought from the grave that ‘flashes like lightning upon these [bourgeois] physiognomies.’¹²⁰

How exactly for Buchon does the *Enterrement* represent and facilitate political and social reform? How do the positivist elements of the painting combine to project a clear political message? To understand this, we need to understand that the gravedigger is according to Buchon the narrative linchpin of the painting.¹²¹ Drawing attention to the image of the gravedigger [figure 8], Buchon ironically inverts the traditional pyramidal structure in Courbet’s composition. He gives the gravedigger a significance that is political and primarily associated with his physical appearance, which identifies him as a vinegrower and the only peasant figure in the painting; all the other figures are bourgeois.¹²² Buchon considers that the physical appearance of the peasant exhibits fine human qualities, qualities that are lacking in the bourgeois figures and which give the gravedigger a special position within the group. He has a ‘robust posture’ and, although kneeling, is the only figure whose physical and moral nature entitles him to ‘swell with pride.’¹²³ Clearly, the funeral, and above all the gravedigger’s position within it, is of central importance to Buchon. He points out that the gravedigger holds a lower social rank than the other figures in the painting but,

¹²⁰ Max Buchon, *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, 7 June 1850: ‘je ne sais quelle pensée austère se dégage tout-à-coup de cette fosse béante, flamboie comme un éclair sur ces physionomies, et, grâce à ces grands lointains de paysage, . . .’

¹²¹ Max Buchon, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4: ‘Et cependant, quand après avoir parcouru l’ensemble de cette vaste composition, les yeux retombent sur le fossoyeur qui est là, genoux en terre, sur le bord de la fosse où il va descendre le cadaver, . . .’

¹²² T. J. Clark, ‘A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet I,’ *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, April 1969, p210.

¹²³ Max Buchon, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4: ‘Au fond, cet homme, le fossoyeur, n’accuse rien de violent dans sa robuste carrure. Lui seul même est à genoux dans cette immense réunion, et cependant, voyez! Lui seul se renforce, lui seul commande.’

on the day of the funeral, he assumes the symbolic and commanding role of ‘the gatekeeper of the next world.’¹²⁴ In this special role, the peasant gravedigger reminds the bourgeoisie that death is the great physical and moral leveller. As we have seen, Buchon’s physiognomical reading of this figure takes a sympathetic view of the peasantry and denigrates the bourgeoisie. This contempt for the bourgeoisie is evident throughout Buchon’s work, ever since his first novel *Le Val d’Héry*, published in 1848, which portrays the bourgeoisie as a corrupt class.¹²⁵ This contempt finds powerful expression in his reading of Courbet’s gravedigger, a figure whose special connection with the grave and the landscape symbolises the profound effects of social environment upon human life.

Buchon illuminates the narrative of the *Enterrement* through the gravedigger rather than through the family members and friends of the supposed deceased. His reading of the painting concentrates upon social relationships rather than personal relationships and seems to draw upon ideas set out in Comte’s ‘Religion of Humanity,’ which was being cultivated around that time and which advocates an annual ‘Commemoration of All the Dead.’ The idea behind this service is to stimulate social solidarity, to establish a means ‘to glorify the different successive phases of the Human evolution’ through ‘a vast system of universal commemoration.’¹²⁶ Comte argues that humanity is a stronger force than God.¹²⁷ The

¹²⁴ *ibid*, p4: ‘Demain, cet homme qui est dans la vigueur de l’âge, retournera tranquillement à sa hutte de vigneron qu’il a quittée hier; aujourd’hui seulement, il se sent le dernier anneau des choses d’ici-bas, le portier de l’autre monde.’

¹²⁵ See Hugo Frey, *Max Buchon et son oeuvre*, PhD Thesis, Besançon, 1940, p159: ‘Dès son premier roman, *Le Val d’Héry*, Buchon professe explicitement cette sympathie pour l’ouvrier oppose au bourgeois corrompu.’

¹²⁶ See Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l’ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Conclusion générale du Discours sur l’ensemble: ‘Religion de l’Humanité,’ Paris, 1907, pp363-369. The service is concisely explained by the English positivist Henry Ellis, who, in an address made at one such commemoration in 1883, describes Comte’s early work on the Religion of Humanity in 1842: ‘As the sole representative of the new Spiritual Power, he [Comte] had been striving, with more and more completeness, to perform what he had specified

philosopher claims that man is an inherently social being and that humanity fosters an evolutionary impulse to attain complete social solidarity.¹²⁸ This evolutionary impulse depends upon biological laws, the most important of which is that ‘the idea of life supposes the mutual relation of two indispensable elements – an organism, and a suitable medium or environment.’¹²⁹ Comte’s view of environment is developed from the definition of life formulated by the famous biologist Henri-Ducrotay de Blainville and considers the ‘total ensemble of all types of external circumstances that are necessary for the existence of each determined organism.’¹³⁰ Such external circumstances include society and Comte’s ‘Commemoration of All the Dead’ celebrates the passing of imperfect social states as humanity evolves towards a state of physical and moral perfection, a state of complete social solidarity. Art plays an important role in celebrating this evolution by enabling people ‘to realise the conception of Humanity with greater clearness and precision.’¹³¹ Comte regards art, especially poetry, as a motor of social reform because for him ‘all

as one of its principal functions – that of instituting, “in judicious imitation of Catholicism, a system of private and public habits intended to stimulate the sense of social solidarity,” and he succeeded finally in providing means “to glorify the different successive phases of the Human evolution” by laying the foundations of “a vast system of universal commemoration.” See Henry Ellis, ‘The Religion of Humanity: The Commemoration of the Dead, a Positivist Address,’ delivered at Newton Hall, Fetter Lane, Sunday 28 Bichat 95 (30 December 1883), Reeves and Turner, London, 1884.

¹²⁷ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p689.

¹²⁸ See *ibid*, pp619-620.

¹²⁹ See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, p301: ‘Nous avons reconnu, en effet, que l’idée de vie suppose constamment la co-relation nécessaire de deux éléments indispensables, un organisme approprié et un milieu convenable.’

¹³⁰ Comte, quoted in Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p591.

¹³¹ See Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l’ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Conclusion générale du Discours sur l’ensemble: ‘Religion de l’Humanité,’ Paris, 1907, p369: ‘Dans cette commune destination esthétique, la peinture et la sculpture utiliseront noblement leur aptitude caractéristique, en nous faisant concevoir le Grand-Être [l’Humanité] avec plus de netteté et de précision que ne l’aura pu la poésie, même assisté de la musique.’

aesthetic study, even if purely imitative, may become a useful moral exercise, calling sympathies and antipathies into play.¹³² Whilst artistic imitation might affect people and improve morality, physiognomical representation boosts this process of social evolution and reform: ‘that portraiture should be exaggerated follows from the definition of Art; it should surpass realities so as to stimulate us to amend them.’¹³³ Comte’s theory of art, just like his theory of society, is an essentially biological theory that asserts the dependency of man upon a suitable environment, especially a suitable social environment. In this theory of art, physiognomical representation reveals the biological effects of society upon behaviour and morality, and facilitates social reform by stimulating ‘moral impressions’ that move people to perform ameliorative acts:

It has been said of Art that its province is to hold a mirror to nature. The saying is usually applied to social life where its truth is most apparent. But it is no less true of every aspect of our existence; for under every aspect it may be a source of Art, and may be represented and modified by it. Turning to Biology for the cause of this sociological relation, we find it in the relation of the muscular and nervous systems. Our motions, involuntary at first, and then voluntary, indicate internal impressions, moral impressions more especially; and as they proceed from them, so they react upon them. Here we find the first germ of a true theory of Art. Throughout the animal kingdom language is simply gesticulation of a more or less expressive kind. And with man esthetic development begins in the same spontaneous way.¹³⁴

¹³² See *ibid*, Cinquième partie, ‘Aptitude esthétique du positivisme,’ p300: ‘Toute culture esthétique, même bornée à la pure imitation, peut donc devenir un utile exercice moral, quand elle stimule dignement nos sympathies et nos antipathies.’

¹³³ *ibid*, p300: ‘Alors l’art s’élève à sa mission caractéristique, la construction des types les mieux animés, dont la contemplation familière peut tant perfectionner nos sentiments et même nos pensées. L’exagération de ces images [l’art du portrait] est une condition nécessaire de leur destination, puisqu’elles doivent dépasser la réalité afin de nous pousser à l’améliorer.’

¹³⁴ *ibid*, pp304-305: ‘Le célèbre adage qui le représente [l’art] comme le reflet naturel de l’humanité ne convient donc pas seulement à la vie publique, qui devait le suggérer, en manifestant mieux sa réalité. Il faut aussi l’étendre à toute notre existence, qu’il retrace et modifie, parce qu’il en émane. En remontant jusqu’à la source biologique de cette harmonie sociologique, on la voit résulter de la liaison nécessaire entre le système musculaire et le système nerveux. Nos mouvements, d’abord involontaires, puis volontaires, traduisent nos impressions intérieures, surtout morales, et réagissent sur elles, parce qu’ils en découlent. Tel est le premier germe de la vraie théorie de l’art. Dans l’ensemble du règne animal, toute la représentation se borne à une mimique plus ou moins expressive, qui constitue aussi, chez l’homme, l’origine spontanée de l’évolution esthétique.’

For Comte, art and physiognomical representation have their source in the biological motor of human evolution and, as a means of advancing this evolution towards a state of physical and moral perfection, are suitable media for celebrating the passing of imperfect social states. Similarly, there is a clear sense in which Buchon's physiognomical reading of the gravedigger portrays the *Enterrement* as a commemoration of the passing of all bourgeois corruption, replaced by evolutionary necessity on the historical path to social perfection. In this sense, of course, the bourgeois figures in the painting mourn their own demise and the demise of their social class as a whole, a reading that accounts for the fact that Courbet did not attribute the funeral to the death of an individual. Furthermore, it is perhaps no strange coincidence that Comte spoke at de Blainville's funeral only twelve days after Buchon's article was first published.¹³⁵ As we have seen, de Blainville's biological theories were central to Comte's view of positivism and social environment. At the funeral, which attracted a great deal of media attention, Comte acknowledged de Blainville's great achievements but claimed that his work could not be fully honoured by prosperity because he held Christian beliefs and because his moral and political views were opposed to the subordination of personal feeling to social interests. In the funeral address, Comte warned all scientists that they ignored the social, political and moral implications of his Religion of Humanity at their own peril. Of course, the second version of Buchon's article, written for the Dijon exhibition of Courbet's work, was published exactly one month after Comte's funeral address, and may well have drawn upon the philosopher's warning. The social, political and moral implications of Buchon's reading become absolutely clear when we refer to this later version of his article, which issues a strong warning of its own. Here, he spells out the threatening nature of the gravedigger's symbolic

¹³⁵ See W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century*, Kennikat Press, 1972, p75. Comte's address was published as an appendix to his *Système de politique positive*, Paris, 1851.

power, the power of the peasantry to liberate the proletariat from bourgeois oppression.¹³⁶

The gravedigger's physical and moral presence symbolises the death of 'all the oppressors of the poor' and 'avenges' the plight of the working class, a plight embodied in the physical appearance of the old stonebreaker in the *Casseurs de pierres*:

Formerly, in the old dances of death, it was Death in person who made kings, popes, emperors, all the great people on the earth, all the oppressors of the poor, pirouette as he liked.

M. Courbet seems to us to have obtained, with his gravedigger, an equally powerful and significant effect.

And yet, must it be said? through the vague oppression thrown at you through his contemplation, one returns consciously, through the idea of compensation no doubt, to our poor stonebreaker, for whom, in the mind of the painter, this gravedigger might well only be the psychological antithesis, the counterpoise; I would almost say the avenger.¹³⁷

There is an historical process at work in Buchon's essentially positivist view of society and its development. This process is based upon a biological and evolutionary necessity for physical and moral improvement and the attainment of a unified society. The poet adopts physiognomical principles to evaluate the effects of contemporary bourgeois society upon physical and moral nature, effects occurring through a biological relationship that has huge political and historical consequences. The social environment created by the bourgeoisie causes physical and moral decay and this degenerative process will be reversed through evolutionary necessity when the peasantry liberates the proletariat from bourgeois oppression.

¹³⁶ See T. J. Clark, 'A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet I,' *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, April 1969, p210. Clark asserts that 'in Buchon's account the peasant liberates the proletarian from the bourgeois; or such is the possibility.'

¹³⁷ Max Buchon, *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, 7 June 1850: 'Autrefois, dans les vieilles danses macabres, c'était la mort en personne qui faisait pirouetter, bon gré malgré, les rois, les papes, les empereurs, tous les grands de la terre, tous les oppresseurs du pauvre monde. M. Courbet nous semble avoir obtenu, avec son fossoyeur, un effet tout aussi énergique et significatif. . .

V: Peaceful and violent socialism: the context in which Buchon's views were circulated and consumed

Again, what of a context for Buchon's critique? What were the political leanings of the two newspapers that published Buchon's article, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* and *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, and in what milieux were these newspapers produced, circulated and consumed? The principles adopted by the editors of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* were published in the newspaper's first issue on 17 January 1850. Here, the editors associate their principles closely with the working-class motives behind the February Revolution, which they see as one stage in a much wider revolutionary impulse that has 'stirred up the world' since 1789 and has yet to reach a definitive conclusion.¹³⁸ This worldwide teleological thrust, as we saw in Hawke's articles on Courbet, was integral to a positivist agenda. The editors of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* relate their political ideas to this teleological drive even more explicitly than Hawke does. Equating the revolution, 'the causes which put humanity in movement,' to a 'physical and moral necessity,' they claim that the latest revolutionary phase is driven by the need to rectify the inequality so patently evident in the physical appearance of workers and their oppressors, an appearance evident in the workers themselves and in many representations of them.¹³⁹ According to the editors, the need for reform is universally felt because humanity is everywhere alike and recognises the same truth: 'no, without doubt, humanity is everywhere alike and the causes which stir it up have even greater force when they weigh

'... Et pourtant, faut-il le dire? à travers l'oppression vague où sa contemplation vous jette, on en revient involontairement, par idée de compensation sans doute, à notre pauvre casseur de pierres, dont ce fossoyeur-ci pourrait bien n'être, dans la pensée du peintre, que l'antithèse psychologique, le contre-poids; je dirais presque le vengeur.'

¹³⁸ The *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 17 January 1850, No. 1, p1: 'La révolution de Février n'est à nos yeux qu'une des étapes de la grande révolution qui agite le monde depuis soixante ans, et dont le peuple français a été à la fois l'initiateur, l'apôtre et le soldat.'

¹³⁹ See footnote 140 and *ibid*, p1.

upon a greater mass. Truth has an even greater strength when it is more universally understood and the moral or physical necessity is unstoppable when it is uniformly felt.¹⁴⁰

T. J. Clark has already established the working-class readership of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*.¹⁴¹ This is confirmed by the editors' declaration of principles, which expresses strong support for the working class and promotes a moderate form of left-wing politics as a means of bringing about social reform. Denouncing the violence that characterised the Jacobin revolutionary government in 1793 and which so scared those who affiliated themselves to the liberal ideals of 1789, the editors argue that physical and moral progress depends upon social changes in favour of the workers and popular interests.¹⁴² Consolidating their affiliation with the workers – an affiliation predicated on liberal rather than overtly Jacobin memories of the Revolution – the editors adopt 'the right to work' and 'the law of equity' as their guiding principles.¹⁴³ According to them, these principles combat ignorance and poverty, the chief causes of physical and moral decay in their era.¹⁴⁴ Demanding a solution to these problems, the editors propose a moderate socialism that

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p1: 'Non, sans doute: l'humanité se ressemble partout; et les causes qui l'agitent ont d'autant plus de force, qu'elles portent sur une plus grande masse; la vérité a une puissance d'autant plus grande, qu'elle est plus universellement comprise, et la nécessité morale ou physique est irrésistible, quand elle est uniformément sentie.'

¹⁴¹ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p109.

¹⁴² *The Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 17 January 1850, No. 1, p2: 'Le *Démocrate franc-comtois* s'est intitulé le *Journal des intérêts populaires*. Ses fondateurs ont la ferme résolution de répondre dignement à ce titre. Toutes les questions pratiques qui intéressent les travailleurs des villes et des campagnes y seront traitées avec soin. Partisans de la légalité, nous voulons des réformes; mais nous les voulons sans violence.'

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p1: 'Le droit au travail, c'est le droit à la vie. Il est parallèle et même antérieur au droit de propriété qui n'en est que le résultat . . . Entre le travail à faire et le capital qui est le travail fait, il faut une répartition conforme à la loi d'équité.'

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p1: 'La cause du mal, c'est surtout et avant tout l'ignorance et la misère. L'instruction gratuite et professionnelle et l'émancipation du travail feront justice des deux dernières tyrannies des sociétés modernes.'

encourages debate and discussion rather than violence. Emphasising the moderate nature of their political stance, they assert the need for peaceful change and reject the claims of ‘reactionaries,’ anti-socialist protestors, that socialism is violent and unreasonable.¹⁴⁵ Insisting further upon the moderation of their political stance, they argue that their views are just and fair. They maintain that they create their own brand of socialism and are not attached to any other socialist group; they extract from other socialist groups only the ideas that they consider to be just and practical.¹⁴⁶ In their opinion, socialism should address social questions more than political ones and the editors attempt to justify their socialism partly by de-politicising it. They claim that political questions should be left to the press of the capital, whilst socialism in the provincial press should be mainly concerned with the pressing questions of reform and the need to cultivate social harmony, ‘the great social family.’¹⁴⁷ The central role of the press, they argue, is to inform citizens about the causes of social decay and provide a forum to discuss reform: ‘to enlighten the people, to discuss and work out the reforms, that is the duty of the press.’¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the editors insist that their newspaper has a crucial role to play in the teleological process of reform of which the February Revolution formed a significant part. This is because the press has such great

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, p2: ‘Un écrivain de la réaction a dit, en parlant du socialisme, que la *faux ne discutait pas avec l’ivraie*; nous arracherons l’*ivraie* qu’on a semée dans nos campagnes, mais nous n’obéirons pas à l’insolent axiome de cet écrivain et nous discuterons avec elle. Oui, nous discuterons avec l’*ivraie* de nos campagnes, avec un journal surtout qui représente parmi nous toutes les audaces, toutes les hypocrisies de la réaction, . . .’

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p2: ‘Dégagés de toute école socialiste, nous ne prendrons dans les théories de chacune que les idées dont la mise en pratique nous paraîtra possible, utile et juste.’

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p2: ‘A notre avis la politique a fait son temps: nous nous en occuperons le moins possible, laissant aux journaux de Paris le soin d’élucider les dernières questions à résoudre: il nous suffira de tenir nos lecteurs au courant de la discussion. Le rôle de la presse départementale, pour être plus modeste n’en est pas moins important. Elle doit s’occuper avant tout des réformes devenues nécessaires, des intérêts matériels, du sort des travailleurs, dont la révolution de Février a consacré les droits dans la grande famille sociale.’

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p1: ‘Eclairer le peuple, discuter et élaborer les réformes, c’est le devoir de la presse.’

communicative power within society. Through the press, they say, ‘ideas spread, propagate, change, refine. Human intelligence expands. Societies progress by being enlightened.’¹⁴⁹

Clearly, the distinctive brand of socialism espoused by the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* – a rather carefully crafted and essentially moderate politics of peaceful revolution and social reform in favour of the workers – shaped Buchon’s interpretation of Courbet’s work. For the editors of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, such an interpretation went hand in hand with the positivist idea that social reform meant a worldwide teleological process of physical and moral reform.

The editors of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* clearly view the press as an active force within society and consider that their newspaper is part of a network of journalistic activity designed to disseminate social and political ideas.¹⁵⁰ They see the human need to communicate as an instrumental part of the teleological process of physical and moral reform because such need encourages common goals, collective action, equality, reason and the use of empirical evidence rather than unbounded revolutionary zeal in understanding

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p1: ‘Ce qui fait donc que dans les temps modernes, le mouvement a été plus rapide, c’est qu’il a été plus général. Or, le puissant moyen à l’aide duquel une plus grande quantité d’intelligences sont pénétrées de la même idée, animées des mêmes désirs, convaincues des mêmes droits et portées alors à la même action, c’est la discussion écrite, c’est la presse. Par elle en effet, les idées s’étendent, se propagent, se modifient, s’épurent. L’intelligence humaine se développe. Les sociétés marchent en s’éclairant.’

¹⁵⁰ Claude Bellanger comments upon this to some extent. He notes how Parisian journals extended beyond the capital, how some journals like *La Liberté* (which ran from 2 March 1848 to 16 June 1850) organised ‘networks’ of circulation across the departments, and how the conservative press joined forces to develop propaganda before the legislative elections in May 1850. See Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: De 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, pp215-216 and p231.

the current era.¹⁵¹ They believe in the strength of this alliance between left-wing politics and positivism in achieving a collective social mission, a mission, they argue, in which much of the press participates. Supporting this view, the editors associate their newspaper with Proudhon's publications, which constituted one of the strongest forces of radicalism and positivism during the Second Republic.¹⁵² There is clear evidence that, like Proudhon's papers, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* was considered by the authorities to be an active force within society and a real threat to order. Earlier in this thesis, we saw that Proudhon's papers were feared as instruments of revolution by the authorities during the Second Republic. The *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* was seen as a serious threat to public order in the same way. As Clark notes, the journal operated for some months as the focus of socialism in the Doubs and one of its editors was imprisoned in the same month that Buchon's article on Courbet was published.¹⁵³ By then, Louis-Napoléon had been installed as President of the Second Republic and the press was subject to strict regulation. One of the most effective ways in which rebellious newspapers like the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* were distributed was through the activity of colporteurs – itinerant distributors of pamphlets, papers, prints and almanacs from village to village. This system was such an effective

¹⁵¹ *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 17 January 1850, No. 1, p1: 'la presse substitue la force collective à l'action privée, elle assimile à la société tout entière le produit intellectuel d'un ou de plusieurs de ses membres, elle agit comme l'association, et elle offre comme elle, deux résultats inestimables pour l'époque où nous sommes, égaliser le plus possible les intelligences, et les entraîner par la conviction, par le raisonnement et par l'évidence, vers un but commun.'

¹⁵² The *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* clearly identifies itself with Proudhon's *Voix du peuple*, which ran from October 1849 to May 1850 in Paris. See issue No. 4, 24 January 1850, p4: 'Le journal le *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* paraît trois fois par semaine, dans le format du journal la *Voix du Peuple*, de Paris.' One of numerous resurrections of the radical newspaper *Le Représentant du peuple*, *La Voix* had already published Pierre Hawke's articles on Courbet. Many subsequent issues of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* contain articles associating themselves with Proudhon's papers. The very issue in which Buchon's article appears contains a 'Protestation' by Proudhon. Here, describing 'social science' as the science of reform and progress, Proudhon provides another instance of the view that reform depends upon the alliance between left-wing politics and positivism. See the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p2: 'La science sociale, selon moi, n'est point la science d'une organisation sans antécédents; c'est la science du développement, du progrès.'

¹⁵³ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p109.

means of distributing subversive publications that a law was passed on 27-29 July 1849 to restrict the activity to those distributors in receipt of special authorisation from the prefects.¹⁵⁴ In fact, Buchon refers precisely to this state of affairs in his article when he remarks how the old stonebreaker in Courbet's *Casseurs de pierres* will be treated as a socialist and a criminal if he is found possessing a 'stray copy of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*':

If the poor devil should decide to turn Red, if one finds for example, in his pocket, some stray copy of the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, he could be resented, denounced, exiled, dismissed. Just ask the prefect . . . of the Jura.¹⁵⁵

Despite these restrictions, there is evidence that the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* achieved a significant print run and distribution during its existence. The very issue containing Buchon's article ran to 1600 copies.¹⁵⁶

What of the political leanings of *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, the newspaper in which, on 7 June 1850, Buchon's second article advertised the exhibition of the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* at Dijon? We saw how Buchon amended his article for the Dijon exhibition, bringing a strong dimension of political vengeance to his physical and moral narrative and that, in this later version of the article, the gravedigger in the *Enterrement à Ornans* exacts final retribution upon the bourgeoisie

¹⁵⁴ 'Loi du 27-29 Juillet 1849,' reproduced in Joseph-Pierre Chassan, *Traité des délits et contraventions de la parole de l'écriture et de la presse*, 2 tomes, Videcoq fils aîné, Paris, 1851, Tome deuxième, 'Lois sur la presse depuis le 24 février 1848,' p95: 'Tous distributeurs ou colporteurs de livres, écrits, brochures, gravures et lithographies devront être pourvus d'une autorisation qui leur sera délivrée, pour le département de la Seine, par le préfet de police, et, pour les autres départements, par les préfets.'

¹⁵⁵ The *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p4: 'Pour peu que le pauvre diable s'avise de tourner au rouge, pour peu qu'on surprenne un jour, dans sa poche, quelque numéro égaré du *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, par exemple, il peut être jaloué, dénoncé, expulsé, destitué. Demandez plutôt à M. le préfet . . . du Jura.'

¹⁵⁶ The number of issue copies is confirmed in the issue itself; see the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois*, 25 April 1850, No. 43, p1.

for the plight suffered by the elderly stonebreaker in the *Casseurs de pierres*. As we shall now see, Buchon enhanced these radical aspects of his article to suit the context of radical socialism within which *Le Peuple* was circulated and consumed. Whereas the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* presented its socialism as a peaceful framework for positivist reform, *Le Peuple* advocated socialism of radical left-wing politics and violence.

Taking over from two previous papers whose editors incurred fines and prison sentences, *Le Peuple* represented the far left in Dijon and was being sent free to innkeepers, farmers and owners of small businesses.¹⁵⁷ The authorities considered *Le Peuple* ‘more violent still’ than its predecessors.¹⁵⁸ Its first issue was seized for violating press laws and the paper’s political line was re-stated in the second issue dated 1 May 1850.¹⁵⁹ Here, the editors declare that they are socialist republicans and that their paper is ‘duty bound’ to replace the political and social programme of *Le Travail*, a newspaper whose political convictions they wholeheartedly support.¹⁶⁰ A republican newspaper supporting democracy and social equality, *Le Travail* fought for workers’ rights and had very recently been forced

¹⁵⁷ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p123. Clark points out the volatility of the political situation in Dijon in 1850, a year in which the town was gripped by factional struggle and acutely sensitive to the slightest disturbance. As he says, Proudhon’s *Voix du peuple*, one of the resurrections of *Le Représentant du peuple*, highlighted Dijon as a stronghold of the ‘European Counter-Revolution.’ Workers and farmers were discontented, there were attempts at forming workers’ associations and there had been recent instances of rioting. Much to the Procurer General’s regret, candidates of extreme socialism triumphed in the town elections of May 1850. See Clark, *ibid*, 1973, pp123-124.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, pp123-124.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, p124. Clark notes that the first issue was seized. He does not refer at all to the journal’s statement of political intentions.

¹⁶⁰ *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, 1 May 1850, No. 2, p1: “‘*Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, est donc fondé aujourd’hui par les républicains socialistes du pays bourguignon . . .” See also footnote 161.

to close by the authorities.¹⁶¹ Jules Viard, the chief editor of *Le Peuple*, had until recently been chief editor of *Le Travail* and had also been director of *Le Représentant du peuple*, the radical newspaper closely associated with Proudhon, which published Pierre Hawke's articles on Courbet and which was seized by Cavaignac in August 1848.¹⁶² Launching *Le Peuple* so quickly after the demise of *Le Travail*, Viard was clearly very determined that the socialist republicans should achieve political success. A very well-known figure in Dijon, he actively sought to convince the townspeople that they should adopt his views. The exhibition of Courbet's paintings at Dijon in June 1850 lasted for three days and, published in *Le Peuple*, Buchon's advertisement for the show presented the artist's work in the context of the socialist views that Viard stood for. We have seen that the advertisement contained a sting of political subversion lacking in the version published in the *Démocrate franc-comtois*, a sting relating directly to the factional struggle ensuing in Dijon. Courbet saw his own work in this violent context and, in May 1850, wrote in a letter to Buchon that he would try to have the 'real text' of the advertisement – the version of Buchon's article that appeared in *Le Peuple* – accepted for publication; the artist evidently succeeded.¹⁶³ Courbet was in Dijon when the *Casseurs de pierres* and the *Enterrement à Ornans* were being exhibited there and was clearly acquainted with Viard. His personal correspondence claims that Viard's fierce commitment made a strong impact upon the political scene in Dijon at that time. In a letter to Francis Wey dated 31 July 1850, the artist explains that he

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p1: “La mort violente du *Travail* laissait, depuis plus de dix jours, dans les rangs de la presse démocratique et sociale, un vide que tous les démocrates socialistes de notre pays tenaient à honneur et à devoir de combler le plus tôt possible.

“*Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, est donc fondé . . . dans le but de remplacer – moralement et d'une manière immédiate – ce vaillant soldat mort au champ d'honneur, criblé des boulets de l'ordre.”

¹⁶² See Patrick Laharie, documentaliste aux Archives nationales, *Contrôle de la presse, de la librairie et du colportage sous le Second Empire 1852-1870*, Paris Archives nationales, p544.

¹⁶³ Gustave Courbet, letter to Max Buchon, Ornans, 1 May 1850, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p91: ‘De Besançon j’irai à Dijon je tâcherai d’y faire parvenir ton article dans le vrai texte ainsi que les comptes rendus des journaux de Besançon.’

was pleased to find Viard, who ‘startles all the Republicans in that town who are not fully committed to the Republican cause.’¹⁶⁴

Le Peuple demonstrates this violent approach to socialism. The newspaper’s editors view the task of improving the lot the workers as a war, describing its predecessor *Le Travail* as a ‘valiant soldier’ that fought for the socialist cause; the paper was ‘killed on the field of honour, riddled with bullets of order,’ the second issue states.¹⁶⁵ The editors of *Le Peuple* are determined to continue fighting for the socialist cause and the rights of workers, and intend to pick up this fight where *Le Travail* left it.¹⁶⁶ Advocating violent means to achieve its aims, *Le Peuple*’s statement of intention is dominated by language suggesting warfare and asks its readers to die for its socialist cause:

CONQUER or DIE for the freedom of EVERYONE and EVERYTHING; for the inalienable SOVEREIGNTY of the PEOPLE; for SOCIAL equality, for the equality of EVERYONE and EVERYTHING in the face of WORK and of CONSUMPTION, there is what must be the thought of every democrat, in this supreme moment.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis and Marie Wey, Dijon, 31 July 1850, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p92: ‘J’ai eu la chance de trouver à Dijon Viard, qui est rédacteur en chef du journal *Le Peuple*, et qui étourdit tous les républicains de cette ville qui ne sont qu’au premier degré du républicanisme.’

¹⁶⁵ *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, 1 May 1850, No. 2, p1: ‘ce vaillant soldat mort au champ d’honneur, criblé des boulets de l’ordre.’

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, p1: “‘Le bon fusil du brave et regretté *Travail* était tombé de ses mains mourantes dans le combat . . .
“*Le Peuple* ramasse aussitôt ce fusil sur le champ de bataille et se met en ligne . . .”

¹⁶⁷ *ibid* p1: “‘VAINCRE ou MOURIR pour la liberté de TOUS et de TOUTES; pour la SOUVERAINETÉ inaliénable du PEUPLE; pour l’égalité SOCIALE, pour l’égalité de TOUS et de TOUTES devant le TRAVAIL et devant la CONSOMMATION, voilà quelle doit être la pensée de tous les démocrates, en ce moment suprême!”

The journal's hostility to all those who reject the Republic is so strong that it urges its readers to take up arms against anyone who does share its views.¹⁶⁸

There is clear evidence of *Le Peuple*'s hefty print run; its second issue states that nine hundred copies of the first issue, dated 3 April 1850, were seized in the post.¹⁶⁹ The journal was relatively inexpensive, costing 5fr for 3 months, 10fr for six months or 20fr for a year.¹⁷⁰ A single issue of the journal could be purchased at its office for 10 centimes. The journal's editors clearly intended for the paper to cultivate a readership beyond its home department, there being an extra 3fr 15c payable for postage to outside areas.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p1: 'Donc, lecteurs et amis, salut! et vive la République! . . . Mais ne perdons pas de temps! . . . En guerre! en guerre! Courons dans la mêlée au fort de la lutte! . . . Allons, brave *Peuple!* en joue! . . . et FEU! sur les ennemis de la République!'

¹⁶⁹ *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*, 1 May 1850, No. 2, p1: 'Dans notre premier numéro du *Peuple* du 3 avril 1850, numéro dont on a arrêté neuf cents exemplaires à la poste . . .'

¹⁷⁰ The prices of the journal over these various periods are clearly marked on its second issue.

VI: Francis Wey: physiognomical representation and biological order

In the writings of Hawke and Buchon, we have seen two distinct but similar approaches to Courbet's work, each of which adopts positivism as the basis of its political programme for social reform. Other positivist approaches to Courbet's work during the Second Republic contrast markedly with those of Hawke and Buchon. One example is the positivist approach articulated in Francis Wey's novel *Biez de Serine, roman rustique*, which was published in 1850 in *Le National*, a national republican newspaper associated with the political centre. As this novel shows, Wey interprets Courbet's painting entitled *Casseurs de pierres* as a powerful expression of the biological order governing life and society, and as a clear portrayal of the primary and systematic influence of environment upon all living beings. Unlike Hawke and Buchon, who emphasise positivism's relationship with revolution and reform, Wey adopts positivism as a means of reinforcing social order. Rather than a motor of social reform, the *Casseurs de pierres* is ultimately for Wey an expression of social stability. Wey's political views were of the centre, like those of the contributors to *Le National* with whom he associated, and he sided firmly with the government during the uprising of June 1848. He considered the insurgents of that uprising to be 'a criminal horde without a flag, without principles, who dare to kill but not to proclaim their aims.'¹⁷¹ He was, like Courbet, Proudhon and Buchon, a native of the Franche-Comté and his novel is an account of contemporary peasant life in the provinces – of daily activity at the farm of Biez de Serine – which involves all the hardships suffered by the peasants and their strained relationships with the bourgeoisie. Yet, whilst *Biez de Serine*

¹⁷¹ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p53 and p69. Wey was a native of the Franche-Comté like Courbet, Proudhon and Buchon, and was a close friend of the artist. Courbet enjoyed long stays at Wey's house in Louveciennes, particularly during the 1850s. See Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p592.

describes the nature of the disputes between the bourgeoisie and peasants around the time it was written, the novel ultimately reconciles those disputes.¹⁷² The novel's main characters are Thomas and Jean Grusse, a peasant farmer and his son who, having suffered unfair taxes and unmanageable debt at the hands of the bourgeoisie, are forced to break stones to survive. These characters are based upon the two workers painted by Courbet in the *Casseurs de pierres*.¹⁷³ In a letter written to Wey in 1849, the artist describes the poor physical condition of the two stonebreakers he observed for the painting. Wey subsequently used Courbet's description, reproducing it almost word for word, in a passage of the novel that portrays Thomas and Jean Grusse breaking stones.¹⁷⁴ This passage was published in the issue of *Le National* dated 21 February 1850 and presents the relationship between the physiognomy of the stonebreakers and their social environment as part of a general system of biological order governing all living beings.

In Courbet's description of the stonebreakers, adopted by Wey, the social factors causing the physical and moral decline of the workers are largely self-evident. For example, the wretched physical appearance of the old worker is attributed to poverty and hard toil, the effects of which are enhanced by his old age:

One, bent by the burden of his age, was a very thin old man, crouched on a pile of stones, lifting his sledgehammer with two hands and bringing it down in turn on the pieces that he breaks up: he accompanied each blow with a dry and short groan. His

¹⁷² Clark recognises this. See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, pp116-117.

¹⁷³ See *ibid*, p116. As Clark says, Wey's novel 'actually incorporated Courbet's stonebreakers into its narrative.'

¹⁷⁴ Again, Clark comments upon this and maintains that 'this was a calculated tribute (which the critics misunderstood, thinking Courbet had based his picture on Wey's story).' In the description of the stonebreakers, Clark says, Courbet uses 'language that Wey, or Champfleury, or Buchon, still struggling in 1849 to adapt older styles of rhetoric to new purposes, could justly envy.' See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, pp30-31.

flesh was suntanned and sweaty; his physiognomy gloomy; the ruins of a stitched straw hat protected his brow; his trousers of rough fabric were all patched; his socks, which had been blue, exposed his heels, badly kept by his cracked cloggs.¹⁷⁵

The description of the young worker is just as heart-rending, expressing the deplorable effects of poverty and slave labour upon his appearance.¹⁷⁶ As the passage taken from Courbet states, the physical appearance of each worker symbolises a landmark in the typical life of a stonebreaker, the start and the finish. These two physiognomical descriptions demonstrate the inevitable physical and moral decline caused by a lifetime of soul-destroying toil; ‘alas! In this work, that is how one begins and that is how one finishes,’ the passage reads.¹⁷⁷ Wey clearly admires Courbet’s physical and moral portrayal of the stonebreakers and immediately after reproducing the artist’s description, declares ‘God! One would search a long time before encountering a more striking picture of wretchedness, a more heart-rending symbol of misfortune.’¹⁷⁸

Wey acknowledges the causes of conflict between the peasants and the bourgeoisie elsewhere in the novel, although he does not develop his reading of the painting in terms of social class. Instead, shifting the focus of the narrative away from class issues, he relates

¹⁷⁵ Francis Wey, ‘Biez de Serine, Roman rustique,’ Feuilleton du National, 19 February 1850, *Le National*, 21 February 1850: ‘L’un, courbé par le faix des ans, était un vieillard très maigre, accroupi sur un tas de pierres, soulevant à deux mains et abattant alternativement sa masse sur les quartiers qu’il divisait: il accompagnait chaque coup d’un gémissement sec et bref. Ses chairs étaient hâlées et ruisselantes; sa physionomie morne; les ruines d’un chapeau de paille cousue protégeaient son front; son pantalon de rude étoffe était tout rapiécé; des bas, qui furent bleus, laissaient voir ses talons, mal garantis par des sabots fêlés.’

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*: ‘L’autre était jeune, avec des yeux bleus dans un visage empourpré, et des cheveux poudreux. Sa chemise dégoûtante et en lambeaux laissait voir sa poitrine au teint bis, ses flancs, ses bras osseux et noirs. Une bretelle en cuir retenait les restes d’un pantalon, et ses souliers couleur de boue riaient tristement de bien des côtés. Debout, derrière son compagnon, le jeune homme porte avec énergie, contre son ventre, un panier de pierres brisées: . . .’

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*: ‘plus débile, le vieillard, infatigable et régulier comme une machine, travaille à genoux: hélas! dans ce métier là, c’est ainsi que l’on commence, c’est ainsi qu’on finit . . .’

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*: ‘Dieu! on chercherait longtemps avant que de rencontrer un tableau plus frappant de la misère, un plus navrant emblème de l’infortune.’

the physiognomy of the stonebreakers primarily to the harsh environment within which they are forced to work, the natural circumstances of season, climate, weather and terrain in the plateaux of the Jura Mountains. In this way, he connects social life to a broader system of 'natural' order and attempts to deflect potentially contentious issues concerning class conflict or the need for social reform away from the narrative. He vividly describes the environment in which the stonebreakers work and relates their physiognomy to a system of 'nature,' a general biological system governing the existence of all living beings. T. J. Clark notes that Wey does not intend for his novel to be revolutionary, that his tale is ultimately one of class reconciliation, but fails to recognise the essentially biological view of nature and order through which this reconciliation is expressed.

The importance of nature in Wey's account of the stonebreakers is, however, recognised in Eugène Mouton's book *La Physionomie comparée, traité de l'expression; dans l'homme, dans la nature et dans l'art*, published in 1885. According to Mouton, Wey's portrayal of the stonebreakers is based upon an essentially biological view of life and society, a view that draws upon both positivism and medical science. Mouton explains the principles of physiognomy used in various theoretical approaches formulated to understand the nature and health of humans, animals and plants, and explores the use of such principles in artistic representation. With regard to humans, Mouton examines the role of physiognomy within medical disciplines such as 'physiology,' 'cranioscopy' and 'phrenology,' which study interconnections between the distinct aspects of the human constitution from the perspective of the subject's health.¹⁷⁹ Mouton explains that all these disciplines use physiognomical principles to investigate the interconnections between the

¹⁷⁹ See Eugène Mouton, *La Physionomie comparée, traité de l'expression; dans l'homme, dans la nature et dans l'art*, Paris, 1885, chapter entitled 'L'Homme,' pp5-214. Mouton refers to the disciplines of 'physiologie,' 'crânioscopie' and 'phrénologie.'

physical and moral dimensions of existence. They all assert the view that different organs of the head and body correspond with particular intellectual, moral and emotional faculties – the faculties of ‘intelligence,’ ‘morality’ and ‘sensibility’ – and claim that these faculties shape the form and appearance of the head and body.¹⁸⁰ Using physiognomical principles, these disciplines study the shape of the various parts of the head and body to evaluate the physical, mental and emotional state of the subject’s health.¹⁸¹

Mouton devotes a full section of the chapter on human beings to the influences of milieu upon the interconnecting realms of the human constitution.¹⁸² He informs us that such influences – the particularities of climate, terrain and season – give rise to ‘certain modifications of the human species,’ certain shifts in ‘the physical and moral aptitudes of man’ that result in particular combinations of intelligence, morality and sensibility.¹⁸³ Once again, he argues that these modifications and combinations can be recognised and categorised by examining them from a physiognomical point of view. It is from this perspective – the effect of milieu upon physical and moral relations – that Mouton examines Wey’s physiognomical account of the stonebreakers in *Biez de Serine*. Mouton discusses Wey’s account in a chapter investigating the ways in which physiognomy is

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*, chapter entitled ‘L’Homme,’ pp5-214. Mouton refers to the faculties of ‘intelligence,’ ‘moralité’ and ‘sensibilité.’

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, chapter entitled ‘L’Homme,’ pp5-214.

¹⁸² *ibid*, pp214-276.

¹⁸³ *ibid*, pp267-268: Mouton argues (p268), for example, that: ‘Le relief et la rudesse des montagnes moulent donc, au pied de la lettre, des corps et des âmes qui leur ressemblent par des qualités analogues, par l’énergie et la rudesse physiques et morales. C’est vrai de l’homme qui vit dans ce milieu fortement caractérisé, c’est vrai des animaux sauvages ou domestiques qui y vivent à côté de lui; la zootechnie, l’anthropologie, s’appuient sur cette vérité pour en tirer, l’une, les principes pratiques du croisement de certaines races d’animaux, l’autre, l’analyse des causes de certaines modifications de l’espèce humaine.’

expressed in artistic representation.¹⁸⁴ He considers that ‘literature is the most complete expression of the human mind’ and that *Biez de Serine*, written by a man whose work demonstrates a keen insight into the influences impacting upon the human constitution, exhibits exceptional skills of physiognomical observation.¹⁸⁵ For Mouton, Wey’s account unfolds in the same way that a painting is created because every descriptive element of the prose develops the drama and poignancy of the scene as a whole.

According to Mouton, Wey’s portrayal of the stonebreakers provides a model physiognomical expression of the effects of season, climate, weather and terrain upon physical and moral relations, a model account of man’s relationship with ‘nature.’ Although the workers suffer, their suffering is perfectly in keeping with the natural environment they are portrayed in. Every aspect of their physiognomy – physical gestures, suggested movement, attitudes, poor physical appearance, costume and tools – relates directly to their natural setting, the conditions of season and terrain in which they live and work. The same is true of the physiognomy of all the other life forms that share the environment in which the men exist. In this respect, the workers are in ‘harmony’ with nature and according to Mouton every element of the scene described by Wey possesses and exhibits physiognomical traits. The combination of all these traits in Wey’s account characterises the order and harmony that exists in man’s relationship with nature:

Then, we have a subject at once descriptive and dramatic, in which two human characters in a play, tormented by suffering and poverty, are in movement in the middle of a natural scene chosen and described with much art and sentiment. Man’s physiognomy, his gestures and attitudes, are painted there with heart-rending traits, and

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, pp277-336.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, p329: ‘La littérature est la plus complète expression de l’esprit humain . . .
 ‘. . . Ce morceau nous présente des conditions d’observation très rares rencontrer pour le sujet qui nous occupe. D’abord il est écrit par un homme que nous avons eu l’honneur d’avoir pour ami, que nous connaissions aussi bien au moral qu’au physique, de sorte que nous sommes en état de faire ressortir, en connaissance de cause, les rapports qui font ressembler ici l’oeuvre à son auteur.’

the details of the theatre of this tragedy, wholly truthful and strictly simple, harmonises naturally, highlighting and increasing the poignant effect of the unfolding scene.

That is not all and, paying attention, one will see that the season, the hour of the day, the brightness and the warmth of the sky, the composition of the ground, the lines of the landscape, the vegetation, the animals, and even the clouds, provide the author with so many traits, of which each is the analysis of a particular effect contributing to the whole effect as in a painting. Likewise, one will notice that, concerning the two characters of the drama, the author describes their costume, their tools, the arrangement of their clothing, and even their poorly nourished state, with so much detail and attention to their face and body.¹⁸⁶

As Mouton says, it is immediately apparent and striking that ‘nature’ has a central role within this scene, a scene in which ‘all the [physiognomical] interest must concentrate upon the two men.’¹⁸⁷ Highlighting an essentially positivist aspect of the author’s work, he notes that Wey gives humans, animals and plants an equivalent status within this essentially biological view of nature. The idea behind this scene, he says, is ‘to show in a general way the primary influence of climate, season and heat on all living beings in nature, including man.’¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, in Wey’s account, nature is as alive as the life forms it sustains. As the source of life for all living beings, and the determining influence upon their state of health, nature is like a living being in itself and exhibits physiognomical characteristics of

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, pp329-330: ‘Ensuite, c’est un sujet à la fois descriptif et dramatique, où deux personnages humains, tourmentés par la douleur et la misère, s’agitent au milieu d’une scène naturelle choisie et décrite avec beaucoup d’art et de sentiment. La physionomie de l’homme, ses gestes, ses attitudes, y sont peints en traits déchirants, et les détails du théâtre de cette tragédie, tout en étant d’une vérité et d’une simplicité rigoureuses, s’accordent naturellement pour faire ressortir et pour augmenter l’effet poignant de la scène qui s’y déroule.

Ce n’est pas tout, et si l’on y veut bien faire attention, on verra que la saison, l’heure du jour, l’éclat et la chaleur du soleil, la composition du sol, les lignes du paysage, les végétaux, les animaux, et jusqu’aux nuages, ont fourni à l’écrivain autant de traits dont chacun est l’analyse d’un des effets particuliers destinés à former le tout ensemble comme dans un tableau. On remarquera de même, en ce qui concerne les deux personnages du drame, que l’auteur décrit leur costume, leurs outils, la disposition de leur attirail, et jusqu’à leur pauvre nourriture, avec autant de détail et de soin que leur visage et que leur corps.’

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p332: ‘Ce qui frappe tout d’abord dans ce morceau, c’est le rôle que l’auteur donne à la nature dans une scène où tout l’intérêt doit se concentrer sur deux hommes.’

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p333: ‘On le voit, l’idée de cette mise en scène est de montrer d’une manière générale l’influence supérieure du climat, de la saison et de la chaleur, sur tous les êtres de la nature, l’homme compris.’

its own. Mouton shows that Wey personifies nature and the seasons by discussing the month of August as though it were ‘an intelligent being’ that is capable of ‘actions’ and by describing nature as though it were a being that can suffer ‘exhaustion’ and ‘death.’¹⁸⁹ In Mouton’s opinion, this aspect of Wey’s work reveals a broad physiognomical view of life and awareness that ‘expressive signs are the same throughout nature, and that physiognomy is a universal language spoken by all living beings.’¹⁹⁰

Clearly, then, Mouton highlights Wey’s articulation of physiognomy as a universal language, a fundamental feature of nature through which all life forms can be analysed and understood. Yet, Mouton does not draw sufficient attention to the positivist significance of this universal language in Wey’s view. Connecting the physiognomy of the stonebreakers and the physiognomy of all life to a universal biological system, Wey creates a basis of order for his physical and moral narrative, a narrative in which he reconciles contentious social and class issues. In his novel, this basis of order becomes a universal and enduring counterpoise for the revolutionary forces of the time. Wey acknowledges the power of these forces although, in his view, they are not as powerful as life’s natural underlying equilibrium, which ultimately stabilises any such revolutionary disturbances. In this way, Wey expresses a view that corresponds to the views of positivists such as Comte, whose

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p333: ‘L’auteur commence par personnifier le mois d’août, ce qui lui permet d’en parler comme d’un être intelligent et de le faire agir; . . .

‘. . . Dans le second paragraphe, l’auteur, faisant un pas de plus pour se rapprocher du sujet principal, décrit et analyse les effets produits par la chaleur du mois d’août. Il personnifie encore, non plus la saison, mais la nature qui en subit l’influence, et il nous la fait voir “harassée,” “mourante,” ne pouvant plus ni agir ni vivre.’

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, p334: ‘Si l’on a bien voulu nous suivre depuis les premières pages de ce livre jusqu’à celle-ci, on se souviendra que nous n’avons cessé de mettre en avant l’idée qui nous a servi de point de départ, savoir que les signes d’expression sont les mêmes dans toute la nature, et que la physiognomie est une langue universelle parlée par tous les êtres. Le passage que nous venons d’analyser nous semble être un des plus brillants témoignages que nous puissions invoquer à l’appui de cette proposition, car plus on l’étudiera de près, plus on verra l’analogie générale qui y revêt d’une teinte uniforme tous les objets coordonnés par l’artiste dans ce tableau de la misère humaine.’

science of society was developed in the wake of revolution during the first half of the nineteenth-century and reflects the desire for social harmony evident in many social theories of the time. In Comte's positivism, or 'social physics,' society is similar to an organism and is subject to laws of biological order and progress.¹⁹¹ Here, biological progress is an evolutionary process driven by man's inherent need to reach a state of physical and moral perfection, which Comte calls man's 'perfectibility.'¹⁹² Comte argues that such progress is driven by revolutions, which are necessary stimulants of social renewal at times when the social environment creates physical and moral decay.¹⁹³ Yet, in Comte's view, order is more important than progress. Without order, he insists, society cannot be maintained and the course of social development towards physical and moral perfection cannot be foreseen.¹⁹⁴ In his opinion, progress must always lead to the 'evident consolidation of [biological] order.'¹⁹⁵

The promotion of such biological order is, as we have seen, at the core of Wey's physical and moral narrative concerning the stonebreakers. Whilst Wey acknowledges that

¹⁹¹ See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, pp10-11: 'Il me suffit, en ce moment, d'indiquer rapidement, à ce sujet, l'aperçu fondamental d'après lequel les notions réelles d'ordre et de progrès doivent être, en physique sociale, aussi rigoureusement indivisibles que le sont, en biologie, les notions d'organisation et de vie, d'où, au yeux de la science, elles dérivent évidemment.' For a discussion of Comte's view of order and progress, see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p606.

¹⁹² See Pickering, *ibid*, 1993, pp595-596.

¹⁹³ *ibid*, pp12-13, p207.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, p684.

¹⁹⁵ See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, p10: 'Aucun ordre réel ne peut plus s'établir, ni surtout durer, s'il n'est pleinement compatible avec le progrès; aucun grand progrès ne saurait effectivement s'accomplir, s'il ne tend finalement à l'évidente consolidation de l'ordre.' See also Pickering, *ibid*, 1993, p606.

social decay and class tensions have arisen, he highlights the existence of a permanent natural order with the power to stabilise society and reconcile class conflict. As is evident in some of his other works published during the Second Republic, Wey was preoccupied with the ideas of social order and stability. In his *Dictionnaire démocratique* of 1848, an attempt to compile and define essential democratic principles, he includes an entry for ‘order,’ which he defines as the guarantee of ‘social equilibrium’ and ‘security in freedom.’¹⁹⁶ Like Comte, Wey considers that reform, although important in the achievement of human progress, must always lead to a consolidation of order. The entry for ‘reform’ in Wey’s *Dictionnaire démocratique* states that ‘reforms are the normal consequences of [the process of] human perfectibility and the ripe fruit of accomplished progress.’ Reform is a process of change that proceeds only at the right time, with ‘caution’ and ‘obedience,’ he insists; this process is born of a ‘healthy appreciation’ of social needs and is guided by ‘consent’ and ‘conclusion’ rather than disruption or ‘prevention’ in its pursuit of human perfectibility.¹⁹⁷

Wey’s view of biological order, clearly foregrounded in his account of the stonebreakers, has great positivist significance and underpins his articulation of an enduring social stability in the face of class tensions and physical and moral decay. Wey also draws upon medical science when expressing such order and stability, consolidating the positivist

¹⁹⁶ Francis Wey, *Manuel des droits et des devoirs, dictionnaire démocratique*, Paris, 1848, p10: Wey defines ‘l’ordre’ as ‘l’équilibre social et la sécurité dans la liberté.’

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, p475 and p477: ‘Les réformes sont les conséquences normales de la perfectibilité humaine et les fruits mûrs des progrès accomplis . . .
 ‘. . . Toutes les réformes possibles étaient contenues dans celle-là, qui est destinée à produire une transformation complète de l’état social. Mais le temps est indispensable à l’accomplissement d’une révolution que la précipitation a déjà plus d’une fois fait avorter. Les réformes doivent se succéder, non s’accumuler; leur mission est d’accorder, de conclure, et non de prévenir; elles sont le produit d’une impulsion générale, qu’elles doivent attendre, apprécier sainement, et suivre avec prudence et docilité.’

and biological character of his concept of nature. As we have seen, Mouton recognises that Wey gives humans, animals and plants equivalent biological status within nature, and that the author ‘personifies’ environmental conditions and the season. Yet, Wey also develops these assertions from the perspective of health or well-being and describes illness in terms of the biological processes that according to him affect all elements of nature in an equivalent way. For example, he sets the scene for his account of the stonebreakers by describing the sickness and exhaustion suffered by men, animals, and the very earth itself, in the Jura Mountains during the harsh conditions of August:

In these conditions, the listless and sick ground spreads feverish miasmas; the birds are silent, the breathless herds avoid the pastures; finally, man, bending his shoulders under the weight of the day, lowers to the bronze ground his eyes which are being devoured by floods of light, and in the unstocked fields he sadly wipes his brow bathed in sweat.¹⁹⁸

He describes nature as though it is a living, feeling, breathing and vocal organism in itself, as though it is dying from a medical condition at that time of year:

At midday especially, during these days of torpor between harvest time and grape harvest, nature appears dead. Crushed by the repeated strokes of the sun, it succumbs to the pain, it ceases to move, to breath, it turns off its noises and its songs; and the earth inflamed from the day hangs over a world plunged into the silence of night.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Francis Wey, ‘Biez de Serine, Roman rustique,’ Feuilleton du National, 19 February 1850, *Le National*, 21 February 1850: ‘Dans ces conditions, la terre languissante et malade répand des miasmes fiévreux; les oiseaux font silence, les troupeaux haletans rebutent les pâturages; l’homme, enfin, courbant les épaules sous le poids du jour, abaisse sur un sol d’airain ses prunelles dévorées par des torrens de lumière, et il essuie tristement dans les champs démeublés son front baigné de sueur.’

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*: ‘C’est à midi surtout, que, durant ces jours de torpeur compris entre la moisson et les vendanges, la nature apparaît mourante. Terrassée par les coups redoublés du soleil, elle succombe à la peine, elle cesse de se mouvoir, de respirer, elle éteint ses bruits et ses chants; et le globe enflammé du jour plane sur un monde plongé dans le silence des nuits.’

Wey points out that it is only the most needy and unfortunate of the labouring class who must work in these harsh summer conditions.²⁰⁰ At this point, he introduces the stonebreakers into the scene, identifying them with the unfortunates who are forced to work in such harsh conditions.²⁰¹ He then reproduces Courbet's physiognomical description of the *Casseurs de pierres* and describes how the young exhausted stonebreaker drops his basket of stones to the ground. A conversation ensues between the two workers and the elderly man explains that their excessive work results from the prefect's exploitation of the system for organising road maintenance. The old man complains that the prefect extracts money from the system, that the profits available for the maintenance are less than they should be, and that the stonebreakers' earnings are consequently reduced.²⁰² Once again, although Wey acknowledges here the social and class issues that contribute to the stonebreakers' plight, he does not explore them as serious causes of their physical and moral decay. The author's overriding message is one of reconciliation and his narrative strongly argues that the disputes between the peasants and bourgeoisie have disastrous consequences for both sides.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ *ibid*: 'Alors, l'habitant des campagnes cherche l'ombre et demande un peu de sommeil à la brise absente. Seuls, parmi les gens laborieux et pauvres, seuls, les plus malheureux, les plus indigents, les plus déshérités, ceux-là seuls font oeuvre de leurs bras, durant les heures les plus impitoyables de la canicule.'

²⁰¹ *ibid*: 'Tel était le sort de deux cantonniers qui cassaient des pierres, à midi, sur une grande route bordée d'un de ces rubans de roches grise; qui servent si fréquemment de contreforts aux plateaux du Jura.'

²⁰² *ibid*: 'Voilà pourquoi, mon gars, tu ne peux ni dormir à midi, ni te reposer plus de cinq minutes, ni manger à ton saoul. Tandis que si l'entreprise ne passait pas par la préfecture, qui cherche, avant tout, un riche pour couvrir la responsabilité de l'administration, l'on soumissionnerait directement à meilleur compte à l'exploitant, l'état ferait une économie; tu gagnerais cinq francs au lieu d'en gagner un et quart, et moi, je gagnerais trois francs au lieu de gagner quinze sous.'

²⁰³ Again, Clark comments upon this. See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p117.

Mouton notes that Wey's physiognomical perspective is reflected in his writing style, which uses an abundance of metaphors. He counts one hundred and three metaphors within seventy lines of Wey's text and suggests that the various images evoked through these metaphors effectively enhance the physiognomical expression of the passage.²⁰⁴ Wey, he says, is a man of 'steady character' and 'positive mind' who fully recognises the expressive capabilities of both physiognomy and metaphor.²⁰⁵ Mouton also notices that Wey's use of metaphor is far greater in the passages describing the natural environment than in those describing the actual physiognomy of the workers.²⁰⁶ In his opinion, this shows that metaphor is more effective in expressing the context within which people exist than in describing the people themselves. This is because, unlike the conditions of their existence, people have a depth of physical and moral character whose physiognomy can only be effectively described with expressive ideas that are more direct than metaphor. This may be the case, but Mouton misses two important points here. Firstly, by concentrating the use of metaphor within his descriptions of natural environment, Wey draws attention and imagination away from the contentious class issues evident in Courbet's more direct physiognomical description of the stonebreakers. Wey's metaphorical expression refers the stonebreakers' physiognomy of suffering to the natural environment in which they exist, to a biological system of nature in which all life forms suffer in the same way. This natural

²⁰⁴ Eugène Mouton, *La Physionomie comparée, traité de l'expression; dans l'homme, dans la nature et dans l'art*, Paris, 1885, p334: 'Une autre observation qui n'a pas moins de prix, c'est de compter les métaphores et d'en remarquer la proportion. Dans ce passage de soixante-seize lignes, il n'y a pas moins de *cent trois* métaphores, dont trente-sept dans le premier paragraphe, trente-deux dans le second, dix-sept dans le troisième, quatre dans le quatrième, six dans le cinquième et sept dans le sixième.'

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, p334: 'Cette abondance d'images dans un style serré, dans l'oeuvre d'un homme à caractère ferme et à esprit positif, montre, comme nous l'avons déjà indiqué plus haut, combien la métaphore est étroitement liée, pour l'esprit humain, à l'idée de l'expression.'

²⁰⁶ *ibid*, pp334-335: 'Enfin la répartition très inégale de ces métaphores est digne d'attention, car elle nous fait voir que plus les idées d'expression sont générales et éloignées de l'homme, plus elles sont métaphoriques; qu'au contraire, à mesure que ces idées d'expression se rapprochent de l'homme, elles sont plus directes. Les quatre derniers paragraphes, en effet, qui s'appliquent aux deux hommes, n'ont que trente-six métaphores; les deux premiers paragraphes en ont soixante-neuf.'

system of biological order becomes the cornerstone of Wey's physiognomical narrative and provides a positivist basis for his message of reconciliation concerning the disputes between peasants and the bourgeoisie. Secondly, Mouton seems unaware that it was basically Courbet, not Wey, who wrote the part of *Biez de Serine* relating directly to the appearance of the stonebreakers. This is very likely to account for the presence of fewer metaphors in this part of the text. For these two reasons, the language used by Wey to describe the natural environment is much more dramatic and poetic than that used to describe the physiognomy of the stonebreakers or their conversations about exploitation.

VII: Moderate republicanism, nepotism, corruption and social order: the context in which Wey's views were circulated and consumed

Once again, what is the context within which we should consider Wey's novel? What was the political line taken by *Le National*, the newspaper in which the novel was published, during the period in which Wey was writing, in what milieu was the paper produced, circulated and consumed and how did the paper's political stance compare with those of the left-wing journals that highlighted revolutionary aspects of Courbet's positivism? The political stance of *Le National* during the Second Republic contrasts markedly with those of the left-wing journals concerned, *Le Représentant du peuple*, the *Démocrate Franc-Comtois* and *Le Peuple, journal de la révolution sociale*. Wey's novel was published in a widely read, national newspaper that represented the political centre during the Second Republic. *Le National* was one of the two main national republican newspapers at the outset of the period, the other being *La Réforme*.²⁰⁷ At that time, the newspaper represented the republican bourgeoisie and adopted a political line mainly determined by Armand Marrast, who had become chief editor in 1841 and who had moderated the radicalism of the newspaper's republican stance from that date.²⁰⁸ Under Marrast, *Le National* advocated a gradual extension of the political franchise and the introduction of moderate legislation in favour of the workers.²⁰⁹ Almost exclusively

²⁰⁷ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, 1959, p100, and Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p208.

²⁰⁸ See Bellanger, *ibid*, 1969, p209. See also entry for 'National (LE)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel Du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Onzième, 'MEMO-O,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1874, p855: 'Devenu rédacteur en chef du journal en 1841, Armand Marrast lui donna une allure plus modérée et plus constitutionnelle, . . .'

²⁰⁹ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire, M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p739.

political in content, the newspaper maintained both a large readership and a high subscription level during both the July Monarchy and the Second Republic.²¹⁰

The view of Courbet's work presented by Wey in *Le National* is highly significant, especially since Marrast and the newspaper's officials held positions of influence within the government at the time. For most of his editorship, which lasted until 1852, Marrast demonstrated a remarkable ability to maintain positions of political influence and privilege, an ability through which he managed to preserve the newspaper's large readership when the French government and constitution changed dramatically as a result of the revolution of 1848.²¹¹ Marrast was clearly a very prominent figure during the July Monarchy and Eugène de Mirecourt, the famous biographer of important contemporary French figures, wrote his biography. Published in 1867 in the series of books entitled *Histoire contemporaine, Portraits et silhouettes au XIX^e siècle*, the biography clearly indicates the editor's powerful and privileged position leading up to the Second Republic. At that time, Marrast was treated as a 'small king' within the republican milieu of *Le National*, which was an 'important political newspaper.'²¹² The editor had become rich, cultivated his aristocratic demeanour within the newspaper's social and political circles, and his powerful and

²¹⁰ *ibid*, p739.

²¹¹ See entry for 'Marrast (Armand)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Dixième, 'L-MEMN,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1873, p1247.

²¹² Eugène de Mirecourt, *Histoire contemporaine, Portraits et silhouettes au XIX^e Siècle, Armand Marrast par Eugène de Mirecourt*, Paris, 1867, p34. As de Mirecourt says, this privileged position was threatened by the February Revolution: 'Il tranchait du grand seigneur; il se donnait des allures princières et faisait crédit au journal de ses appointements de rédacteur en chef. Aussi l'administration reconnaissante lui déléguait une souveraineté absolue. Dans cette boutique républicaine, Marrast était un petit roi. . . .
' . . . Au moment où il usait en véritable épicurien des avantages attachés à l'exploitation d'un journal politique important, le coup de foudre de février lui éclata brusquement aux oreilles.'

privileged position was threatened by the onset of the Second Republic.²¹³ As Claude Bellanger points out, amidst the events of the February Revolution and the rush of radical left-wing journals that followed, much of the established press including *Le National* desperately hoped to weather the storm and preserve their readership.²¹⁴ *Le National* secured ‘important state positions for its editors’ but was ‘execrated by all [other papers]’ for ‘its exclusivity, its dogmatism, its arrogance, its art of pushing its editors into important state positions.’²¹⁵ Irene Collins also comments upon the strategic manner in which Marrast managed to protect his position during the upheaval of the February Revolution and to maintain the influence of his paper when the Provisional Government was set up in 1848.²¹⁶ The editor’s influence was such that he and his supporters could help persuade Lamartine to proclaim a republic and crowds of representatives from *Le National* and *La Réforme* forced the admittance of their respective chief editors, Marrast and Flocon, as members of the Provisional Government.²¹⁷ Along with Louis Blanc and the workman Albert, Flocon

²¹³ See footnote 212 and Eugène de Mirecourt, *ibid*, p34. Marrast achieved his privileged position through cunning political strategy, a skill that was reflected in his artful and witty journalistic style, de Mirecourt says. Marrast’s work was that of a man of wit and ambition rather than a man of convictions: ‘Ce fut alors qu’il écrivit ces articles si fins, si coquets, si vantés, où il prouvait, chaque matin de la façon la plus piquante qu’il avait trop d’esprit pour avoir des convictions.’

²¹⁴ See Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p209: ‘Tandis que la révolution détermine cette floraison de nouveaux journaux, elle éprouve les anciens et marque souvent leur déclin momentané . . . Tout ce qu’essaient ces journaux, c’est de tenir sous l’orage, de conserver leur clientèle.’

²¹⁵ *ibid*, pp209-210: ‘Effectivement *le National*, journal de la bourgeoisie républicaine, paie cher sa victoire. Il est honni de tous; on lui reproche son exclusivisme, son dogmatisme, sa suffisance, son art de pousser ses rédacteurs aux grands postes de l’État.’

²¹⁶ Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, 1959, pp100-101. Collins notes that, whilst Marrast offered no leadership or guidance during the two chaotic days of the revolution, he acted quickly once Louis-Philippe had abdicated. Marrast unintentionally played a part in the events that instigated the February Revolution of 1848. On 21 February, as Collins points out, he published the order of procession for the Reform Banquet demonstration due to take place the next day, portraying the procession as a formidable affair. The government was so disturbed by the prospect of the procession that it banned the entire event and Marrast, having no intention whatsoever of instigating a revolt, agreed with Odilon Barrot and the officials of *La Réforme* that the event should be abandoned.

²¹⁷ *ibid*, p101.

formed the left-wing of the Government. Marrast, however, established himself within the right-wing group and ‘obtained so many official posts for his friends and colleagues that an Englishman in Paris described France as being “absolutely governed by the National.”’²¹⁸

The interpretation of Courbet’s work in Wey’s novel was published in a newspaper that maintained close links to the government during much of the Second Republic and which cultivated an extensive bourgeois readership favouring the political centre and fearful of the left. After the Second Republic had been established, *Le National* actively sought to suppress radical left-wing journals that threatened the Republic and bourgeois society; some such journals had projected Courbet’s work in a revolutionary light. Having secured its influential position in the new constitution, *Le National* acted as the organ of the republican upper bourgeoisie throughout 1848.²¹⁹ Marrast was elected to the National Constituent Assembly by four departments in April 1848 and the paper strongly supported Cavaignac’s suppression of the insurrection of June 1848, an uprising that the editor considered to be a serious threat to the Republic.²²⁰ The National Assembly gave Cavaignac dictatorial powers throughout the summer of 1848 and the general used his powers against newspapers that supported and encouraged the insurgents.²²¹ Many officials of *Le National* held important positions within Cavaignac’s government and supported the general’s

²¹⁸ *ibid*, p101. Referring repeatedly to the success of Marrast’s strategic and ‘cunning’ politics, de Mirecourt also clearly states that the editor secured an influential secretarial position for himself. See Eugène de Mirecourt, *Histoire contemporaine, Portraits et silhouettes au XIX^e siècle, Armand Marrast par Eugène de Mirecourt*, Paris, p35: ‘Mais le rédacteur en chef du *National* avait l’échine souple; il entra au service du Provisoire avec Louis Blanc, Flocon et l’ouvrier Albert, – pour tenir la plume. Notre homme était le plus matois des quatre.’

²¹⁹ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire, M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p740.

²²⁰ See *ibid*, p678 and p740.

²²¹ Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, 1959, p105.

suspension of eleven newspapers on 25 June 1848 and Proudhon's *Le Représentant du peuple* on 21 August 1848. As we have already seen, *Le Représentant du peuple* published Pierre Hawke's radical articles on Courbet in April and May of 1848 and was suspended in the August of that year for helping the families of the 9000 men held after the June uprising.²²²

Despite Marrast's opposition to the June uprising, he advocated a democracy through which moderate social reform could be brought about.²²³ Appointed president of the Assembly on 17 July 1848, he managed to restrain the radical contingent of conservative members and granted a hearing to Proudhon, who demanded that his proposals for social reform be considered.²²⁴ As we saw earlier in this thesis, Proudhon presented to the Assembly a proposed bill of law, extending tax relief to all public and private debt. Referred to the Committee of Finances, the proposed bill was condemned and rejected. Yet, Marrast continued to propound the principle that a democratic state was obliged to consider moderate social reform. When he presented the final draft of the new constitution to the Assembly, he argued that although it contained no formal assurance of a right to work, the state should honour the principle of fraternity by assisting the needy during times of economic crisis.²²⁵

²²² See *ibid*, p105 and p107.

²²³ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire, M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p678.

²²⁴ See *ibid*, p678.

²²⁵ See *ibid*, p678.

Forming the major part of Cavaignac's government in the latter months of 1848, *Le National* provided powerful political and public support for the general's presidential candidature against Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.²²⁶ Cavaignac was unsuccessful, however, and when the Assembly voted its own dissolution on 29 January 1849, Marrast's political career practically ended.²²⁷ Like many other moderate republicans, the editor was not voted to the strongly conservative Legislative Assembly selected in May 1849.²²⁸ As we have already seen, Napoleon's conservative regime subjected the press to strict regulation and enforced policies designed to suppress radical movements and socialism. With legislation passed in July 1849, Louis Napoleon stepped up his campaign against the radical left-wing press and suspended a number of journals, including Proudhon's *Le Peuple*.²²⁹ It was under this atmosphere of strict press regulation that Wey's novel *Biez de Serine* was published in the beginning of the following year. In the same month that the novel was published, the left-wing republican paper *Le Réforme* was forced to close because of bankruptcy and a series of court convictions for its so-called radicalism.²³⁰ With moderate views, *Le National* escaped such a fate, although it was warned that its activities were under police surveillance.²³¹

²²⁶ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, 1959, p107.

²²⁷ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire, M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p678.

²²⁸ *ibid*, p678.

²²⁹ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, 1959, p109.

²³⁰ *ibid*, p113.

²³¹ *ibid*, p109.

Clearly, then, Wey's novel was published in a widely read, national newspaper that represented the political centre during the Second Republic. Whilst the newspaper advocated moderate social reform for workers, it nonetheless played an instrumental role in suppressing uprisings that it considered threatening to the Republic and social order. Emphasising positivism's relationship with order, Wey's novel suited the newspaper's political stance and bourgeois readership. Louis Napoleon's strict conservative regime clearly did not consider the novel to be a significant threat to social order and the publication of the novel had no adverse repercussions for the paper's editorship. As we have also seen, the newspaper enjoyed political influence during much of the Second Republic and was severely criticised by many papers trying to eradicate nepotism and political corruption from the constitution. Contemporary responses show that for much of the Second Republic, the newspaper represented precisely the kind of corruption abhorred by left-wing radicals such as Pierre Hawke, whose demands for reform were expressed through a positivist view of progress that he associated with Courbet's work.²³²

²³² *Le National* was despised by many publications at the outset of the Second Republic for maintaining connections with the government and for cleverly attaining important state positions for its editors. See, for example, Bellanger, 1969, p210. Quoting *L'Événement* of 11 August 1848 and *L'Opinion publique* of 11 September 1848, Bellanger shows that many papers considered that *Le National* was guilty of nepotism and of abusing its privileges in order to maintain a position of influence. According to these papers, *Le National* demonstrated a level of corruption that was unsurpassed at the time and corruption became its trademark. Bellanger states, 'Comme l'écrit *l'Événement* du 11 août 1848, "*le National* a dépassé en trois mois tous les actes de népotisme, de dilapidation et de privilège qu'il avait flétris pendant vingt ans.'" De Mirecourt shows that this nepotistic activity was driven by corrupt motives. Marrast used his early secretarial position only as a platform for further political manoeuvring, a means of securing more power in order to feed his ambition and greed. In a short time, the editor had become mayor of Paris and was managing the city coffers. Particularly at this point in time, his conduct exhibits precisely the kind of corruption, exploitation and abuse that was so abhorred by Pierre Hawke and other radicals. During Marrast's three-month term in office, the city council's register became in debt by more than three million francs. De Mirecourt's account supports Hawke's claim, made in relation to Courbet's work, that there are 'millions de voix crient dans les journaux, dans les pamphlets, dans les clubs et sur les murs' for such corruption to be exposed (see page 46 of this thesis). Whilst Marrast was perpetrating acts of gross misconduct, de Mirecourt says, the Parisian walls were covered with pleas for such acts to be avenged: 'Tandis que ces choses se passaient au premier étage de la nouvelle Commune, on pouvait encore lire dans les rues de la ville, en caractères tracés à la craie sur les murs, cette consigne

VIII: Conclusion

Thus far in this reconfiguration of the positivist conceptual framework through which Courbet's work was interpreted, we have seen that two radical art critics, Hawke and Buchon, saw within the artist's paintings an ideological prompt for social reform and presented their views in a left-wing or revolutionary context. Having closely examined the nature of this reform, we have found a number of hitherto unconsidered critical dimensions of Courbet's work. Firstly, his work was closely associated with the concepts of order and progress deriving from the positivist assumption that society was organised and evolved biologically. Specifically, Hawke and Buchon assumed that society was organised according to the human organism's dependency upon the environment within which it existed and evolved in response to impetuses of change either within the organism or the environment impacting upon it. Both critics located this impetus of change within the physiology of the human organism, saw this impetus revealed in Courbet's paintings, and, centrally important to the argument presented in this thesis, identified the representation of this force of social evolution as the revolutionary character of the artist's work. Despite their similarities, the positivist views of these two critics were distinct: Hawke saw in Courbet's paintings visions of a perfect society that reflected and stimulated the human physiology's inherent need for altruistic existence; Buchon saw in Courbet's paintings an exposure of social ills that reflected and stimulated the human physiology's inherent need

de la victoire populaire: "Mort aux voleurs!" De Mirecourt says that it would be wrong to blame Marrast entirely for this corruption and gross misconduct and explains that 'L'administration des deniers de la ville se trouva livrée sans défense et sans contrôle à une troupe d'émeutiers émérites, qui confondaient volontiers la caisse municipale avec leur bissac.' However, de Mirecourt strongly points out that Marrast did far more than most civil servants to 'depopularise' the new regime. Bellanger points out that the conduct of most of the established papers was questionable through the difficult transition from July Monarchy to Second Republic. The only paper to conduct itself with any kind of honour at this time was the Bonapartist paper *La Presse*, whose chief editor was Émile de Girardin. See Eugène de Mirecourt, *Histoire contemporaine, Portraits et silhouettes au XIX^e siècle*, Armand Marrast par Eugène de Mirecourt, Paris, 1867, pp35-37 and Bellanger, 1969, p210.

to fight for social equality and justice. Wey also insisted that social order was biological but, unlike Hawke and Buchon, suppressed the idea that such order evolved and thereby asserted the enduring force of society's underlying stability. To this end, Wey's essentially moderate form of positivism drew upon Courbet's work in an attempt to reconcile class conflict and maintain social order. It is thus possible to see that even from a local perspective of the political left and centre, we already have three distinct and hitherto largely ignored positivist views of Courbet's work.

Chapter Two

Progress and Order in the Second Republic: Right-Wing Views

I: Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed the positivist interpretations of Courbet's work formulated by three critics on the left and centre of French politics during the Second Republic. Whilst these critical positions were very different, they all showed evidence of a sustained appreciation of positivism and an awareness that positivism impacted upon Courbet's work. This, however, was not always the case during the Second Republic. In this chapter, I discuss three more interpretations of Courbet's work from the same period that were published in newspapers or journals of the right or far right of French politics. All three of these critical positions – formulated by the critics Alfred Dauterive, Louis de Geofroy and Champfleury – were written in relation to Courbet's exhibits at the Salon of 1850-1, and not all of them supported Courbet's work or positivism. Nevertheless, all three interpretations acknowledged and reinforced the positivist status of Courbet's work. As this chapter shows, each of these conservative critics articulated significant and hitherto unrecognised positivist dimensions of Courbet's work, dimensions that afford us with new insights into the political views associated with his paintings and the contexts within which these views were mediated.

Formulated by Alfred Dauterive, the first interpretation was ambivalent about the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism. For Dauterive, a critic of the right, artists who had an affinity with positivism demonstrated a scrupulous study of the physical

appearance of people, but often used crude techniques and represented contemporary common subjects that were inappropriate for art. Such an approach was considered subversive because its creation of ugliness opposed the artistic values favoured by bourgeois conservatives, the established values of grand historical art such as fine brushwork and the smooth, competent modelling of forms. However, Dauger praised the positivist art produced by artists like Courbet when it rendered common subjects in a dignified manner – when it created images suggesting that common people could maintain dignity despite a life of mundaneness or drudgery. He praised such images because he did not consider them to be censorious of the prevailing bourgeois order. Formulated by Louis de Geofroy, the second interpretation showed indignance about the positivist study of common subjects expressed in Courbet's paintings. A critic of the far right, de Geofroy opposed all aspects of positivist art, which he saw as a socialist attempt to effect large-scale reform and destroy the existing social order. In the third interpretation, Champfleury challenged critics such as de Geofroy and was unreservedly supportive of Courbet's engagement with positivism. As in the case of Dauger and de Geofroy, Champfleury's views were presented to a right-wing readership. Yet, in an attempt to gain acceptance for Courbet's work within this readership, Champfleury dissociated the artist's paintings from any form of politics or subversion and emphasised the relationship of the work with certain forms of order. Describing politically engaged forms of art as fleeting and impotent – he said that political artists 'can stir the passions of the crowd for five minutes but they only represent *passing events*' – he claimed that Courbet's work directly and powerfully reflected the order of social relations and their continuous historical development.¹ For

¹ Champfleury, 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' Feuilleton du *Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 25 February 1851, *Le Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 25 February 1851; reprinted with slight changes in Champfleury, *Grandes figures d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, 1861, (later text cited here), p236: 'Malheur aux artistes qui veulent enseigner par leurs oeuvres, ou s'associer aux actes d'un gouvernement quelconque. Ils peuvent flatter pendant cinq minutes les passions de la foule; mais ils ne rendent que des *actualités*.'

Champfleury, the artist expressed the decay of contemporary society in terms of the intrinsically biological order that existed between people and their environment, an order that underwent periodic degeneration but which recovered in response to a teleological process of physical and moral improvement.

As the art criticism surrounding the Salon of 1850-1 demonstrated, many conservative critics connected positivism to the revolutionary ideas accompanying the onset of the Second Republic and feared the work of artists like Courbet as an engine of socialism and reform. De Geofroy, for example, warned his readers that ‘Mr Courbet has attempted a great reform,’ that the artist produces ‘socialist painting,’ and that ‘the works sum up the proudest and most perfect contempt for everything the world has ever admired.’² Yet, we also find conservative criticism surrounding the same exhibition that held a different view, emphasising the social order expressed through Courbet’s positivist approach to his work. In my investigation of these various conservative positions taken on Courbet and art, I continue the pattern of review I began in the first chapter of this thesis. Following a trajectory from right to far right, I examine articles by Dauger and de Geofroy, writers who partially or fully rejected Courbet’s positivism. Then, I examine an article by Champfleury that fully supported the artist’s positivism. In each case, I look at the respective critical positions taken on the artist’s work, the relationship of these positions within various strands of positivism, and I conclude by examining the newspapers or journals within which these critical ideas were mediated.

² Louis de Geofroy, ‘Le Salon de 1850,’ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p928: ‘les ouvrages [de Courbet] résument le plus orgueilleux et le plus parfait mépris de tout ce que le monde admire depuis qu’il existe. . . . Évidemment, M. Courbet est un homme qui se figure avoir tenté une grande renovation, . . . J’ai entendu dire que c’était là de la peinture socialiste.’

II: Alfred Dauger: the acceptable limits of ‘vulgarity’ and ‘the poetry of the horrible’

In the third instalment of his article ‘Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851,’ published in the conservative newspaper *Le Pays* on 9 February 1851, Alfred Dauger is ambivalent about the relationship between Courbet’s work and positivism. Dauger claims that Courbet scrupulously reproduces every detail of the physical appearance of his subjects. Yet, whilst he admires to some extent this ‘realist’ approach to subject matter, he has reservations about its physiognomical application by positivist artists like Courbet to everyday common subjects. According to Dauger, art should not magnify or foreground ‘vulgarity,’ the base or crude aspects of human nature revealed in the physical appearance of common types such as peasants, labourers and country people. Furthermore, in his estimation, the close observation that such representation demands is only half the talent required in painting.³ Dauger argues that, by concentrating upon such vulgar subjects, positivist artists like Courbet show that they lack ‘inspiration,’ the rare skills of composition and inventiveness needed to choose interestingly elevated subjects and represent them in an appropriately dignified manner.⁴ Constituting an important part of the talent required in painting, these skills and qualities are particularly evident in compositions portraying stately historical scenes and grand events from classical and biblical history.

³ Alfred Dauger, ‘Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),’ *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p1: ‘La vérité dans la vulgarité, ce qu’on appelle le réalisme, le positivisme aujourd’hui, peuvent bien étonner, donner la mesure d’une facilité incontestable et d’études consciencieuses; ce n’est la toutefois qu’une moitié du talent; . . .’

⁴ *ibid*, p1. Dauger argues that ‘inspiration’ is the most important part of artistic talent: ‘l’inspiration est l’autre, la plus rare, la plus difficile.’ He lists the skills and qualities that constitute inspiration: ‘la composition, l’invention, l’intérêt, la pensée qui attache, la poésie, enfin.’

Highlighting a number of examples executed by prominent history painters being exhibited at the Salon of 1850-1, Dauger aims to clarify what is missing in positivist art.⁵ Here, he reveals his admiration for artistic conventions supported by many bourgeois conservatives of the time, conventions associated with academic art, history painting dealing with classical and biblical scenes in the grand manner, and ‘juste milieu,’ an eclectic artistic tendency often treating more accessible subject matter from modern history, whose development coincided with the rise of an increasingly wealthy middle class in the first half of the nineteenth century, and whose popularity was increased by the promotion of bourgeois individualism in regimes such as the July Monarchy.⁶ Dauger clearly shows a preference for the formal elements of history painting in the grand manner, whose academic prescriptions implied erudition and the assimilation of a theoretical body of writing on art, and which had long formed part of the ideological construct of the political right.⁷ He describes Joseph-Nicolas Robert Fleury’s painting entitled *Sénat de Venise* – an example of the artist’s high focus depictions of dramatic historical subjects such as trials, assassinations

⁵ See *ibid*, p1.

⁶ The eclectic tendency of ‘juste milieu’ representation satisfied expectations of competent drawing, high finish and ordered composition of the kind produced in academic painting but forewent classical erudition in favour of more accessible subject matter from modern history and a romantic appeal to the emotions as suggested by rich colour and expressive brushwork. The tendency is closely associated with Louis-Philippe’s explicitly bourgeois regime of the July Monarchy, which demonstrated an institutional commitment to philosophical eclecticism, capitalist industrialisation, technological innovation, trade and commerce. For detailed discussions of ‘juste milieu’ and its political associations, see Léon Rosenthal, *Du Romantisme au Réalisme, Essai sur l’évolution de la peinture en France de 1830 à 1848*, Paris, 1914 and 1987; Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1971; and Albert Boime, ‘Going to Extremes over the Construction of the Juste Milieu,’ in Peta ten-Doesschate Chu and Gabriel P. Weisberg, eds., *The Popularization of Images, Visual Culture under the July Monarchy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, pp213-235.

⁷ For a history of the Academy, its political associations and its artistic prescriptions, see Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1971. For a range of relevant sources on historical representation, see the numerous works by Stephen Bann and Beth Wright, including: Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History*, Twayne, New York, 1995; Stephen Bann, *The Cothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984; Beth Wright, *Painting and History during the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

and stately events – as a work of beautiful and noble inspiration because the painting tells a story and portrays an historical scene that excites great interest.⁸ The critic explains that the compositional order and organisation of this painting have been carefully designed to suit its stately subject: Dauger describes the subject as André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, the French ambassador of Henry IV of Navarre bringing to Venetian doge Pascal Cicogna the sword that he fought with at Ivry in 1590. Also, Dauger says, the paint has been applied to the canvas in a suitably fine and polished manner through a delicate handling of the brush; the work shows both a keen awareness of the importance of reproducing historical details and considerable skill in achieving rich tones.⁹ Whilst he criticises the treatment and distribution of light represented within the image, which radiates an excess of crimson hues, he commends the artist's portrayal of the figures, whose poses, expressions and clothing suitably convey the dignity and stately attitudes befitting their status as important historical characters.¹⁰

According to Dauger, then, art should interest the viewer with its subject matter, most notably grand historical subject matter. In rendering the subject, the artist should include all details that illustrate the narrative, tell the story and convey the nobility of the scene; the artist should arrange these details in a suitably ordered composition and perfect a delicate handling of the brush for a fine finish. The poses, expressions and clothing of the figures should portray their dignity and importance as prominent historical characters.

⁸ Alfred Dauger, 'Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),' *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p1: 'chez lui l'intérêt est réel, le sujet parle, le thème dit toujours quelque chose. Son *Sénat de Venise*, belle et noble inspiration dans un petit cadre, . . .'

⁹ *ibid*, p1: 'Son *Sénat de Venise*, . . . étonne autant par sa majestueuse et grave ordonnance que par la finesse, l'esprit des détails et la richesse des tons.'

¹⁰ *ibid*, p1: 'nous remarquerons le doge, magistralement et curulement assis, le groupe des deux causeurs de gauche d'une vérité rare, l'ambassadeur qui occupe le centre de la composition, les poses, les têtes variées d'expression et d'attitudes des sénateurs sur le côté droit, . . .'

Together, these skills and qualities constitute the artist's 'inspiration' and Dauger regrets that the use of such noble artistic principles has reduced considerably in recent times.¹¹

Promoting what he sees as the virtues of 'inspiration,' the critic provides further examples of academic and historical works, such as Jean-Léon Gérôme's painting entitled *Un Intérieur grec* [Figure 9]. Dauger argues that this painting reveals Gérôme's 'scientific' approach to art, his attempt to reproduce the appearance of a Greek interior by applying classical learning to representation and by focusing upon the details that define the subject's antiquity; upon seeing this image, the critic says, 'one almost smells a scent of Herculaneum and Pompei.'¹² The painting demonstrates the research undertaken by the artist to faithfully reproduce the architectural and decorative details of a Greek interior designed for high-class people, and to portray the figures with expressions, poses and attitudes that are appropriate for their social status. For Dauger, such details are the legitimate subjects of art because they constitute historical 'facts' that define the period to which they belong. They are interesting subjects to study from an historical point of view and enable the artist to fulfill his research through the artistic production of visual information about the past, information that others interested in the past may consult. Dauger intimates that these historical facts are very unlike the physical and moral 'facts' that are often the subject of positivist art.¹³ The positivist approach passes judgement upon contemporary society by

¹¹ *ibid*, p1. Dauger complains that 'Les grandes compositions historiques n'abondent pas maintenant'.

¹² *ibid*, p1: 'Ce qui frappe d'abord ici, c'est la recherche, la science, la saine intelligence de l'antique; expression et attitude des personnages, architecture, décoration, tout y est; on respire là comme un parfum d'Herculaneum et de Pompei.' N.B. Dauger misspells the artist's name, which is 'Gérôme' not 'Géronce' as stated in the article, or the spelling is a misprint; there are a number of spelling errors or misprints in Dauger's article.

¹³ *ibid*, p1: 'Nous n'avons à voir là-dedans que ce qu'il y a pour l'art et pour l'artiste [les détails d'un *intérieur grec*]: le reste est de pure morale, et il ne nous appartient pas d'être plus sévère que messieurs du jury d'examen.'

evaluating its moral condition according to the physical appearance of ordinary, common people. In Gérôme's painting, the poses, expressions and behaviour of the figures may suggest a decadent society, but the artist's task is to recreate the history of the past and not to judge it.¹⁴ In the critic's opinion, Gérôme has completed his task with distinction.

Similarly commended are Louis-Eugène-Gabriel Isabey's more expressive and extravagant portrayals of *L'Embarquement de Ruyter et de William de Witt* [Figure 10] and the *Mariage de Henri IV* [Figure 11], two paintings that further confirm for the critic the importance of including a wealth of salient details to illustrate grand historical events of the past through art.¹⁵ Whilst Dauger criticises somewhat the representation of the sea in the former painting – he finds the water a little too 'heavy' and 'choppy' – he judges that the shadow in the water cast by the main boat and the break in water that opens up before the

¹⁴ *ibid*, p1: 'Mais quel fait? Encore une fois ceci ne nous regarde point: l'art seul ici nous occupe, et il y en a beaucoup; rien n'est négligé, ni la mosaïque, ni les trépièdes, ni aucun des détails de cette architecture si peu connue encore, quoi qu'on ait dit et écrit sur la matière.'

¹⁵ Describing history painting as a form of 'illustration,' Dauger indicates a bourgeois appreciation for the illustrative kind of history painting in 'juste milieu' work. The role of illustration in *juste milieu* images during the July Monarchy is discussed by Léon Rosenthal in his famous book *Du Romantisme au Réalisme, Essai sur l'évolution de la peinture en France de 1830 à 1848*, Paris, 1914 and 1987 (reprint), p204 and pp216-217, and by Michael Marrinan in his essay 'Historical Vision and the Writing of History at Louis-Philippe's Versailles,' in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Gabriel P. Weisberg, eds., *The Popularization of Images, Visual Culture under the July Monarchy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, pp113-143. Rosenthal's modernist bias is critical of *juste milieu* work, which according to him renounced historical representation in the grand manner for a history painting of mere illustration. By contrast, Marrinan argues that illustration is an important part of the achievement of *juste milieu* when considered in its particular situation of production, the July Monarchy.

Dauger also refers to Jean Alaux's historical work entitled *Lecture du testament de Louis XIV* – another painting exhibited at the Salon of 1850-1 – as an 'illustration of French history': 'M. Allaux avait à lutter contre l'immense obstacle d'un sujet froid, où le seul mérite possible était l'exactitude; il s'en est tiré en homme de goût et en homme de conscience. Beaucoup de portraits, beaucoup de vérité et de scrupule historique, une sage distribution, font de la toile de M. Allaux une bonne page, toujours intéressante à consulter dans cette illustration de l'histoire de France.' See Dauger, 'Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),' *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p1. NB: Dauger again misspells the artist's name, which is 'Alaux' not 'Allaux,' or the spelling is a misprint.

spectator possess a ‘dignified truth of great interest.’¹⁶ Overall, the fine details in this painting, the inclusion of a variety of expressive colours, tones and numerous figure groups, demonstrate the ‘treasures of his [Isabey’s] palette’ and distinguish the noble character of his work, this ‘art of sceneries and grand effects.’¹⁷ Dauger finds two aspects of the latter work particularly striking, aspects that again highlight his focus upon the compositional order of the detail represented: ‘the staircase with two arms, covered with onlookers, leading to the stand where the musicians are located and the large procession parading majestically under the antique archways of Notre Dame.’¹⁸ The critic praises very highly indeed the manner in which the artist has organised this ‘movement, colour and extravagant life . . . this profusion of riches.’¹⁹ He argues that ‘the eye does not remain uncertain for a single moment, enabling the viewer to understand the why and how, passing from one group to another without difficulty; then there is the costumery, the science of observation, all that the master improvises with so much pleasure is there!’²⁰

¹⁶ Alfred Dauger, ‘Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),’ *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p1: ‘L’embarquement de *Ruyter et de William de Witt* nous rappelle les meilleurs jours de M. Isabey. Les eaux semblent peut-être quelque peu lourdes et trop pleines d’accidens. On remarque cependant un large effet d’ombre, produit par le canot principal, placé entre les deux vaisseaux, et la percée qui s’ouvre devant le spectateur avec une vérité digne de tout intérêt. Dans ce tableau, comme toujours, M. Isabey a jeté les trésors de sa palette et multiplié les groupes. Son succès, sa force, sont là, il n’aurait garde d’y renoncer.’

¹⁷ See footnote 16 and *ibid*, p1: ‘M. Isabey a surtout l’art des mises en scène et des grands effets’.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p1. Dauger asks ‘qui voudrait nier l’immense habileté de cette pompe éblouissante dans ses compositions? Dans son épisode du *Mariage de Henri IV*, deux choses frappent; l’escalier à deux branches, couvert de spectateurs, conduisant à la tribune où sont placés les musiciens, et le nombreux cortège défilant majestueusement sous les antiques voutes de Notre-Dame.’

¹⁹ *ibid*, p1: ‘Ce qu’il y a là-dedans d’animation, de couleur, de vie prodiguée, en aurait peine à se l’imaginer, et au milieu de cette profusion de richesses, . . .’

²⁰ *ibid*, p1: ‘l’oeil ne demeure point un seul instant indécis, le spectateur comprend de suite le pourquoi et le comment, passe sans peine ni fatigue d’un groupe à un autre; puis les costumes, la science d’observation, tout ce que le maître improvise avec tant de bonheur, s’y retrouve!’

How, in Dauger's view, does Courbet's work compare with that of Robert Fleury, Gérôme, and Isabey, the artists who produce academic and *juste milieu* works favoured by the critic and many other bourgeois conservatives of the time? It is important to emphasise that, in accordance with his conservative outlook, Dauger commends art forms that reinforce rather than undermine the existing social order. Regarding positivist art, he is again looking for works that do not threaten this order. The key issue is the manner in which positivist paintings portray the effects of bourgeois society upon the physical and moral condition of ordinary common types, the state of their mind, emotions, habits and customs as revealed in their physical appearance. In these essentially physiognomical portrayals of common nature, or 'vulgarity,' Dauger is looking for an underlying suggestion of 'dignity.' In both the selection of subjects and the manner in which they are represented, he seeks images showing that ordinary people can lead a life of dignity in the prevailing bourgeois order and are not merely victims of it.

Dauger claims that the positivist school of art led by Courbet is not new in choosing subjects from everyday scenes and peasant life.²¹ Furthermore, such subjects are inoffensive in themselves, he says, because admirable human qualities can be found in everyday life and in people from all social classes.²² However, he objects to forms of representation adopted by Courbet and other artists of the positivist school that completely or exclusively expose the vulgarity of such subjects to highlight their baseness or degeneracy.²³ To illustrate his point, the critic refers to Courbet's exhibits at the Salon that

²¹ *ibid*, p1: 'Une école s'est produite depuis quelque temps qui s'attaque essentiellement aux détails de la vie familière, aux scènes des champs et des grandes routes, aux paysanneries de tout calibre.'

²² *ibid*, p1: 'Le choix du sujet nous importerait peu: la grandeur, la noblesse peuvent trouver place partout; . . .'

²³ *ibid*, p1: 'mais la réalité toute crue et toute nue, telle qu'elle est, sans accidens, sans rien pour la déguiser, pour la faire accepter, nous paraît chose très regrettable chez les hommes d'avenir'

year. He acknowledges Courbet's 'scientific' skill: the artist's ability to closely observe and accurately represent details of anatomy and physical form and thereby indicate the social character and class of the subject in question. Yet, he insists that Courbet is a 'cruel anatomist' and a 'terrible materialist' because he chooses subjects whose physical imperfections are so bad that they convey only the basest aspects of human nature and the worst effects of social environment upon people.²⁴

Once again, Dauger insists that any subject is acceptable in art, although he strongly argues that artists should not pursue vulgarity as though it were the only kind of truth to be sought within a subject.²⁵ As if trying to prove that common people have a reasonable existence in bourgeois society and enough reason to live, he distinguishes sharply between the 'dignity' of common people and their vulgarity. He insists that most common people have 'dignity,' a certain pride in the way they cope with the difficulty of their social circumstances, or a willing energy in realising the necessity to discharge their mundane social duties. In short, 'dignity' defines a worthwhile common life and is the means through which Dauger justifies the negative effects of the prevailing social order he supports upon commoners. In his opinion, artists should always accentuate the dignity evident in the physical appearance of commoners, suppressing any signs of their baseness or the poor social conditions in which they exist. Even if the wretched state of a subject's clothing reveals poor living conditions or oppressive employment, he says, artists have a

principalement, qui doivent chercher dans les arts un autre succès qu'une originalité de mauvais aloi, qu'une manière d'un jour.'

²⁴ *ibid*, p2: 'monsieur Courbet est très assurément un homme de talent, et d'une certaine science, mais un cruel anatomiste; un terrible matérialiste. Il a surtout un cruel choix de sujets.'

²⁵ *ibid*, p2: 'Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas: tout sujet est possible, à cette condition expresse cependant que la vulgarité n'y sera pas la seule et unique vérité cherchée, . . .'

duty to highlight the dignity that is often expressed by the shape of the body beneath.²⁶ The critic sees no value whatsoever in highlighting characteristics of common nature such as ‘commonness,’ ‘heaviness’ and ‘dullness,’ characteristics that suggest lifeless types who are unhappy victims of the system and who simply go through the motions of living. Dauger clearly considers that these characteristics offend the right-minded bourgeois viewer and are therefore unworthy of artistic attention.²⁷

Highlighting the *Enterrement à Ornans*, *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* [Figure 12] and the *Casseurs de pierres* as examples, Dauger complains that much of Courbet’s work portrays vulgarity rather than dignity. In his opinion, the *Enterrement à Ornans* offers a gallery of life-like portraits of people that one would be pleased to meet anywhere except in an art gallery. They are unsuitable for art because they are unremarkable, offering an unrefined and degenerate picture of mundane bourgeois life that is depressing. These portraits are represented ‘in all their ugliness and authentic ungainliness’ and only reveal ‘sad truths’ about the coarseness of common country bourgeois types.²⁸ There is little dignity in the unsightly appearance of these country people, whose gloomy existence is as depressing as the scene portrayed, even though the

²⁶ *ibid*, p2: ‘Prenez un paysan, une grisette, un charretier, un gâcheur de plâtre, qui vous voudrez, mais vous prenez-le digne, ayant encore quelque prestige sous ses habits, si vous prétendez au succès.’

²⁷ *ibid*, p2: ‘Que si au contraire vous affectez de me montrer absolument ce qu’il y a de commun, d’ailourdi, d’engourdi, d’endormi, dans notre nature humaine, je vous demanderai quel intérêt je puis trouver à cela et ce que vous en espérez faire.’

²⁸ *ibid*, p2: ‘C’est la vérité, dit-on; triste vérité! Voici *un Enterrement de campagne à Ornus*, qui m’offre, dans toute leur laideur et lourdeur originelles, la complète galerie de portraits d’une quantité de braves gens que je serai très aise de rencontrer assurément, mais partout ailleurs qu’à l’exposition. Que m’importe cela, et que me dit le tableau? Il faut être exact autant que possible, mais *cru*, non: qui veut trop prouver ne prouve rien.’ ‘Ornans’ clearly seems to have been misspelt here, although a number of critics of the time refer to the painting as the *Enterrement à Ornus*; see, for example, Louis de Geoffroy, ‘Le Salon de 1850,’ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, and Philippe de Chennevières, *Lettres sur l’art français en 1850*, Argentan, Imprimerie de Barbier, 1851.

dark, heavy conditions of atmosphere and landscape lend the scene a certain appropriate solemnity.²⁹

Dauger considers the *Enterrement à Ornans* to be a portrayal of excessive vulgarity but finds that *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* is even worse. In this painting, he says, the appearance and demeanour of the typical female type shown carrying a basket clearly reveals an excessively coarse nature. Yet, her lack of dignity is so apparent that it contradicts the exuberant physical health simultaneously suggested by her physiognomy.³⁰ Clearly, for Dauger, good physical health is a sign of dignity and cannot be associated with vulgarity or the coarseness of common life. Commenting upon the caricatural aspects of the painting, he says that the figures are not caricatural in any sense of satire, fantasy or wild exaggeration. Instead, they are caricatural in a positivist sense because the exaggerated features of their physical appearance portray the ‘facts’ of their physical and moral existence, the crude nature of their physiology, lifestyle, habits and customs.³¹ Dauger has difficulty accepting the caricatural aspects of Courbet’s work and claims they are designed to reveal the world of vulgarity, a world of complete ugliness.³² He maintains that the

²⁹ Dauger, *ibid*, 1851, p2: ‘la scène a une apparence de solennité par elle-même, et les personnages, celui-là surtout au chapeau rabattu, ont une certaine sévérité.’

³⁰ *ibid*, p2: ‘une femme, tête nue, son bonnet à la main, portant un panier, type vulgaire, sans élégance, sans finesse, sans rien qui lui fasse pardonner son exubérance de santé; . . .’

³¹ *ibid*, p2: ‘Et tout cela n’est point satire, exagération, fantaisie, mais vérité, affreuse et désolante vérité. La caricature est dans le fait, ces gens-là, on les a vus cent fois, et c’est assez: . . .’

³² See footnote 33.

artist's talent is misguided, adopting caricatural principles of representation for an unprecedented transformation of ugliness into 'the poetry of the horrible.'³³

In Dauger's reading, the figures in the *Enterrement à Ornans* and *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* are portrayed as ugly products of the prevailing social and political order. Their ugly physical appearance suggests that they belong to a coarse, undignified and undesirable way of life precipitated by bourgeois society, and that the artist's focus upon these subjects constitutes an attempt to undermine the capitalist and conservative values that Dauger supports. In other works by Courbet, however, the critic finds a level of dignity that tempers and legitimates their portrayal of vulgarity. He continues his assessment of Courbet's positivism with a discussion of the *Casseurs de pierres*, about which he is both praiseworthy and censorious. The critic again acknowledges the artist's skill in reproducing the physical features of his subjects.³⁴ However, he sees the physical and moral depiction of the elderly stonebreaker as an exaggeration, a representation of good nature that is overdone.³⁵ Driven to his knees, this figure is portrayed as a lifeless victim of the system and an indictment of the prevailing bourgeois order that Dauger supports. For this reason, the critic finds the image of the elderly stonebreaker offensive. By contrast, the critic admires the physiognomical characteristics of the young stonebreaker, whose physique indicates a fine example of everyday common nature without

³³ *ibid*, p2: 'M. Courbet dépense beaucoup de talent, de force et d'initiative pour nous montrer le monde en laid: il n'est pas le premier qui ait essayé cela; mais il est le premier assurément qui ait trouvé le secret d'enlever à la laideur jusqu'à la poésie de l'horrible, et toute sa verve ne saurait faire accepter l'école qu'il veut fonder.'

³⁴ *ibid*, p2: 'Encore une fois, c'est à désespérer, parce qu'ici le mérite semble incontestable, les études sont très réelles: ainsi dans une autre composition moins remarquée et beaucoup plus remarquable, pensons-nous, dans *les Casseurs de pierres*.'

³⁵ *ibid*, p2: 'M. Courbet a placé au premier plan un vieillard, par trop vrai aussi, par trop bonhomme, ...'

excessive vulgarity.³⁶ Unlike his suffering companion, this figure is a ‘strapping lad.’³⁷ He appears sturdy and strong and his physical demeanour suggests a boy of fine stock whose dignity is an admirable product of contemporary society.³⁸ Continuing in praiseworthy mode, Dauger evaluates Courbet’s self-portrait [Figure 13]. He commends this portrait unreservedly, claiming that its representation of facial features exaggerates nothing. All in all, Dauger is impressed with this portrait, which he considers to be a frank and unpretentious portrayal of the artist’s physical and moral nature.³⁹

Dauger is evidently ambivalent about the positivist nature of Courbet’s work. Whilst he recognises the artist’s skill in representing features of physical appearance and commends dignified portrayals of common nature, he censures the artist’s unreserved and caricatural representations of vulgarity. Clarifying his views still further, he examines the work of other positivist artists exhibiting at the Salon exhibition of that year. He particularly admires the work of François Millet and Joseph Palizzi and shows no ambivalence whatsoever concerning the quality of their paintings. Millet’s work is especially commended and both of his exhibits, *Le Semeur* [Figure 14] and *Les Botteleurs de foin* [Figure 15], are praised very highly indeed. On the evidence of these works, Dauger

³⁶ *ibid*, p2: ‘et à côté de ce vieillard aux mains affaiblies, un gaillard de quinze à seize ans, carrément assis sur ses jambes, à la tête large, aux cheveux bien plantés, robuste, de bon sang, et qui fait grand plaisir; on retrouve là une nature de tous les jours, une nature sans distinction grande certainement, mais tenant bien sa place au moins, et ne visant pas à l’exagération du vulgarisme. Pour cet enfant du casseur de pierres, nous donnerions volontiers tous les personnages du Retour de foire.’

³⁷ See footnote 36.

³⁸ See footnote 36.

³⁹ Alfred Dauger, ‘Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),’ *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p2: ‘M. Courbet se retrouve entièrement dans son portrait; cette large et facile manière, ce sans-façon qui ne s’effraie de rien, pas même de la pipe à la bouche, cette franchise d’allures, ce faire hardi, ne peuvent, grâce au Ciel, rien exagérer ici. Le portrait est le portrait; on n’y saurait changer la nature. En dépit de son laisser-aller, nous aimons cette toile de M. Courbet, nous croyons même qu’elle est la meilleure de toutes celles qu’il a exposées.’

says, Millet is an unpretentious newcomer who could become a brilliant artist.⁴⁰ Dauger particularly admires Millet's *Semeur*, a work he considers to be entirely successful in portraying the common nature of a peasant subject without bringing vulgarity to the fore.⁴¹ T. J. Clark has commented that Dauger admired this figure because it is unmistakably a figure of the countryside, a peasant who will remain in the countryside and whose coarseness has no potential threat in Paris because the peasant will never turn proletarian.⁴² In this way, Clark says, the figure differs from those represented by Courbet, which portray the rural bourgeoisie as a threat to order because they reveal class distinctions and tensions similar to those in the city. Yet, this is not quite the case. As we have seen, Dauger commends Courbet's portrayal of the young stonebreaker in the *Casseurs de pierres*; the critic does not find this figure threatening, even though the worker is oppressed by a system of class distinctions and is subjected to harsh labour. On the contrary, the figure's robust and animated physique suggests to the critic a common nature that is willing and able to thrive in the prevailing social order. Millet's *Semeur* is interpreted in a corresponding manner. The figure in this painting is not considered 'heavy' or 'dull' – the epithets Dauger uses to describe the offensive figures in Courbet's paintings – or simply going through the motions of living. The sower is, by contrast, 'sprightly,' 'vigorous,' 'robust' and suggests lively movement.⁴³ Joseph Palizzi's work comes in for similar treatment. Dauger clearly admires this artist's portrayal of rustic life entitled *Le Retour de la foire* [Figure 16], a work that dignifies common nature in the critic's opinion, unlike the work of the same title by

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p2: 'Nous connaissons dans cette école réaliste un jeune homme de talent et d'avenir, un tout nouveau venu qui procède ainsi sans façons, parfois même sans dessin, et qui n'en est pas moins destiné à faire route brillamment s'il tient ce qu'il promet.'

⁴¹ *ibid*, p2: 'il restera toujours ce qu'il est, campagnard de pied en cap. Eh bien! cette figure sauvage n'a rien de lourd ni d'épais, malgré tout: l'homme est leste, dégagé, vigoureux, bien taillé; on le voit marcher.'

⁴² T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p145.

⁴³ See footnote 41.

Courbet. Palizzi's painting invests its subject with a great enthusiasm for life, Dauger says, a quality that retains the appropriate wildness of the subject without reducing it to crudeness.⁴⁴ In the critic's opinion, this painting elevates rustic life above commonality and 'reveals an artist sure of himself, a master of his talent, liberated from all slavery and from the basic copying of common nature.'⁴⁵

Dauger's benchmark of artistic judgement is the capacity of a work of art to support the existing social order. He clearly considers that Courbet's work has such capacity because he recognises that the artist's paintings reflect the ordered nature of society, the physical and moral nature of people that distinguishes types, class differences, customs and behaviour. In this respect, Dauger acknowledges the biological view of society presented in Courbet's work, the view that social environment shapes the physical and moral condition of people and is revealed in their physical appearance. However, for Dauger, it is crucial that art represents the existing social order in a favourable light because he does not want this order to be disturbed. For this reason, he commends Courbet's representations of commoners when they show 'dignity,' when their physical appearance suggests that they have a worthwhile existence in the existing social order. In Dauger's view, the appearance of these figures reveals an enthusiasm for life and expresses a certain pride in their existence. They look healthy, robust and strong, even when they are subjected to hard labour or merely discharging the mundane social duties demanded of them.

⁴⁴ Alfred Dauger, 'Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),' *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p2: 'Encore un *Retour de foire*, mais il y a de l'élan ici, il y a le coup de fouet qui emporte tout, boeufs, vaches, et moutons, sur cette pente où se groupent si bien les bestiaux. L'âpreté, là n'est pas la crudité; le ciel est vrai, l'horizon large, les plans sont bien compris, bêtes et gens, parfaitement plantés.'

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p2: '[le tableau] révèle un artiste sûr de lui, maître de son talent, affranchi de tout servilisme et de la copie terre à terre d'une commune nature.'

However, Dauger does not support all of Courbet's work. The critic takes issue with many of the common figures represented by the artist because, in his opinion, they lack dignity. Although these representations still express the physical and moral order of society, they portray this order as degenerative; Dauger particularly objects to Courbet's tendency to exaggerate this degenerative order through caricature. The physical appearance of some of Courbet's figures suggests to Dauger that they have no enthusiasm for life and are merely victims of the prevailing social climate. They look ugly and unhealthy and appear simply to be going through the motions of living. Although Dauger still acknowledges the essentially biological basis of Courbet's work – the order expressed in the relationship between the appearance of the figures and the circumstances of their existence – he feels threatened by these figures because their lack of dignity reflects badly upon the bourgeois order he supports. As we saw in the last chapter of this thesis, many positivists considered degenerative social orders to be temporary setbacks in society's progress towards a state of harmony, setbacks that were to be corrected by revolution and reform.

III: Bonapartism and social order: the context in which Dauger's views were circulated and consumed

An examination of the political stance taken by *Le Pays* during the Second Republic provides a valuable insight into the readership and social milieux within which Dauger's views were produced, circulated and consumed. Dauger's concern for the preservation of social order is clearly shared by the newspaper's editors, who declared their conservative views when *Le Pays* was launched on 1 January 1849. The article in which the editors set out their political programme expresses a strong commitment to the maintenance of political and social order.⁴⁶ At its inception, *Le Pays* claimed that social order should be achieved through harmony rather than fear, an appropriate claim for the newspaper's pragmatic republican approach following the disturbing events in February and June of 1848. As Patrick Le Nouène has noted, the newspaper represented an essentially bourgeois section of society that demonstrated a liberal outlook during the July Monarchy of 1830-1848, and which had supported the monarch Louis-Philippe and his cultivation of a capitalist state.⁴⁷ Deeply disturbed by the uprisings of February and June in 1848, many

⁴⁶ See entry for 'Pays (LE)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Douzième, 'P-POUR,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1874, p455: 'Dans l'article programme destiné à faire connaître au public la ligne politique du journal, on lisait: "Il défendra l'ordre, . . ."' In this article, the editors insist that they do not blindly accept the constitution or its enforcement of order through fear and brute force. Rather, they intend to support legislation that will create social harmony that is suitable for the customs and needs of contemporary France: "'Il défendra l'ordre, non pas cet ordre menteur, effet de la crainte, qu'on nomme la tranquillité, lorsque la force réduit au silence; mais cet ordre, harmonie réelle, fruit d'une législation adaptée au temps, aux moeurs et aux instincts.'"

⁴⁷ Patrick Le Nouène, 'Première réception des tableaux exposés au Salon de 1850-51 et regroupés par les historiens de l'art sous l'étiquette réaliste,' *Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870*, Chartres, 1983, p69. Le Nouène distinguishes between the different groups of republican journals at this time and states that *Le Pays* was among a group that supported republicanism for pragmatic reasons. These journals were: 'ceux que l'on peut considérer comme les organes des *républicains du lendemain*, c'est-à-dire de ceux qui, libéraux sous la Monarchie de Juillet avaient soutenu Louis-Philippe et qui, opportunistes, s'étaient trouvés depuis Février, mais plus sûrement depuis Juin 1848, de bonnes raisons pour devenir républicains. Ces républicains se différencient des légitimistes avec lesquels ils s'accordent toutefois sur l'essentiel, et ils s'opposent aux *républicains de la veille* et aux républicains-socialistes. Ils constituent l'armature la plus solide

members of this social group adopted republicanism as a means of securing what they saw as a safe position within the new republic.⁴⁸ Yet, by the time Dauger's article on Courbet was published in February 1851 – after Louis-Napoleon had been president for around twenty six months – the newspaper was less concerned with the pursuit of harmony than with the assurance of order through dictatorial power. By that time, the newspaper's commitment to Louis-Napoleon's political campaign, a campaign that was to result in the coup d'état in December 1851, the dissolution of the Assembly and the prince's dictatorship as emperor from December 1852, is clearly evident.⁴⁹ In the very issue containing Dauger's article on Courbet, there is an article by the chief editor declaring allegiance to the president and expressing deep fears concerning the potential destruction of order by revolutionaries.⁵⁰ Here, the editor argues that the president is the only person who can prevent such destruction and must be given the power to deal with the threat of subversion in whatever manner he sees fit. Louis-Napoleon fostered ambitions to gain

du Parti de l'Ordre. Certains peuvent être orléanistes, comme ceux qui écrivent dans *L'Ordre*, lequel représente, selon *L'Événement*, "une fraction spéciale du parti orléaniste, la coterie Odilon Barrot," ou dans *Le Journal des Débats* qui représentent "Le parti orléaniste et surtout le parti des peureux," d'autres bonapartistes comme ceux du *Constitutionnel* ou du *Pays*, d'autres encore adoptent une attitude plus indécise en ce début de 1851." Le Nouène quotes from *L'Événement*, 3 April 1851, p1.

⁴⁸ See footnote 47 and Le Nouène, *ibid*, 1983, p69.

⁴⁹ See entry for 'Pays (LE)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Douzième, 'P-POUR,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1874, p455, which informs us of the strong Bonapartist loyalties developed and fostered by *Le Pays* during the period leading up to the coup d'État. These loyalties constituted the journal's true political position as evident in statements that it published after the coup d'État: 'Ce n'est, à proprement parler, qu'à partir de cette époque [le Second Empire] que commence à vivre le vrai journal *le Pays*, celui que chacun connaît, sinon pour l'avoir lu, au moins pour avoir entendu parler de sa violence envers tout ce qui n'était pas dévoué au héros du coup d'Etat du 2 décembre. Cette feuille, dont les rédacteurs étaient, au lendemain du coup d'Etat, M. de La Guéronnière, l'ex-républicain choisi par Lamartine, MM. Cassagnac le père, Amédée de Céséna, Auguste Vitu, publiait, au moment où les proscriptions n'étaient point encore terminées, un article dans lequel on lisait: "La faux ne discute pas avec l'ivraie, elle la supprime." La rédaction d'alors regardait comme ivraie tout ce qui ne se courbait pas devant le parjure triomphant, et la faux était la main de cet homme qui, après avoir proscrit ou fusillé trente mille de ses concitoyens pour s'emparer du pouvoir, devait, dix-huit ans plus tard et pour garder son trône escamoté, lancer à la mort plus de deux cent mille Français.'

⁵⁰ De Bouville, 'Plus de Chef de L'État,' *Le Pays*, 9 February, 1851, p1.

dictatorial power and sought to gain leverage in his position relative to the Assembly, a position that remained unclear during his presidency; throughout 1851, there was continuous conflict between the president and the Assembly.⁵¹ In his article, the chief editor of *Le Pays* condemns a report commissioned by the Assembly for recommending measures he claims will undermine the president's rightful position as Head of State.⁵² He insists that France needs a system of government that cultivates rather than compromises power, that the country requires a power of fortitude as much as a power of liberalism, and that the president is the right person to achieve this.⁵³ Furthermore, he argues that the Assembly must accept the president's position and the system of government required to support it because that is the only way to safeguard order, the most important task with which the

⁵¹ On 28 May 1851, the Assembly refused to change the constitution to grant the prince an extension to the term of his presidency, although the request gained much support (448 votes in favour of the request). See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire: A-L*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p614.

⁵² The editor says that the commission report states that the president has a commanding role on behalf of the executive, but does not have dictatorial power as Head of State: '*Plus de chef de l'Etat!* c'est le rapport déposé aujourd'hui par M. Piscatory qui le dit. Nous répétons ses paroles: *Le président*, dit-il, *n'est pas le chef de l'Etat*: il est le chef du pouvoir exécutif.' Insisting that the president should have as much power as possible, the editor claims that the report recalls measures recommended in Assembly meetings in 1790, 1791 and 1792, which gradually stripped the Assembly of its prestige and power, and deprived the Head of State of his rights. Those measures, the editor says, led France into an unstoppable decline towards the Terror of 1793: 'En lisant ces paroles, ne vous revient-il pas à l'esprit le souvenir de quelqu'une de ces séances des assemblées qui, en 1790, 1791, 1792, dépouillant peu à peu l'autorité de son prestige, le pouvoir de ses attributions, le chef de l'Etat de ses droits, ont mené la France, par une pente irrésistible, à la Terreur de 1793?' As far as the editor is concerned, the commission's conclusions are based upon unjust motives – 'La vanité blessée, l'orgueil intolérant, l'ambition déçue telles sont les bases sur lesquelles sont échafaudées les déplorables conclusions de la commission' – and he sincerely hopes that the Assembly will reject them. See De Bouville, 'Plus de Chef de L'État,' *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p1.

⁵³ *ibid*, p1: 'Depuis 1848, la France n'a cessé de demander un pouvoir fort autant que libéral. Nier l'existence de ce pouvoir, lui refuser concours et prétendre le combattre, c'est se mettre en dehors de l'opinion de la France.'

Assembly is charged.⁵⁴ Only in this way, he maintains, can France avoid another Terror like the one that occurred in 1793.⁵⁵

Dauger's ambivalence over Courbet's positivism derived from concerns about social stability that were similar to those expressed by the editors of *Le Pays* and the readership it represented. Fearful of further social upheaval in the wake of successive revolutions, the critic approved of physical and moral representations that reflected social order and rejected those that suggested the need for social change and progress. These concerns were part of a wider conservative anxiety to preserve order during this tempestuous period in French history. There were a number of different political positions supported by conservative newspapers during the Second Republic. Yet, whilst each of these newspapers sought to protect their particular political interests, many of them also made strong appeals for all conservative parties and newspapers to unite in defending political and social order against perceived threats from socialism and revolution. These two aims – to gain specific political advantage and set aside differences to achieve the common conservative goal of order – were prominent characteristics of conservative journalism during the Second Republic and were important elements of the political context within which much art criticism of the period was published. In many ways contradictory, these aims demonstrated the strength of the rivalries, tensions and fears within conservative

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p1: 'Elle [l'Assemblée] ne se trompera pas une fois de plus, nous en conservons l'espoir: et au nom de la France qu'elle représente, au nom de l'ordre qu'elle est appelée à sauvegarder, au nom des principes communs entre elle et nous, et qui nous unissent, au nom de sa propre dignité et du gouvernement représentatif, que nous aimons, et qui serait seul compromis par un succès de coalition, nous lui demandons de repousser les conclusions de la commission.'

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p1: 'La majorité de la commission a rendu hommage au principe d'ordre qui réclame le bon accord entre les pouvoirs. Pourquoi donc donne-t-elle à la France le spectacle d'une hostilité que rien ne justifie, et qui ne peut s'expliquer que par un esprit de parti dont l'anarchie seule profiterait, au profit d'un 1793 nouveau, si ses conclusions devaient obtenir la sanction d'un vote de l'Assemblée ?'

politics of the time, as well as the size of the perceived threat posed by radical left-wing politics.

The press was in many ways a focus of this tension between conservatism and radicalism. As we saw in the last chapter of this thesis, the February Revolution encouraged the radical contingent of anti-capitalists and social reformists promoted by Proudhon and the newspapers associated with him, including *Le Représentant du peuple*. As we also saw, these radical left-wing newspapers published positivist interpretations of Courbet's work to highlight social inequity and what they saw as the need to overthrow the existing political and social order. *Le Pays* was part of a united conservative effort to suppress these newspapers during the Second Republic, publishing art criticism that was clearly designed to shed the prevailing bourgeois system in a favourable light. *Le Pays* represented the most powerful bourgeois section of the 'Party of Order,' the stronghold of various conservative factions that dominated the National Assembly after a huge victory in the elections of May 1849.⁵⁶ Including Legitimists, Bonapartists, Orleanists and moderate republicans, the Party of Order was determined to maintain order and, after the elections of May 1849, joined the president in launching a reactionary campaign against left-wing radicalism.⁵⁷ Even before the elections of May 1849, *Le Pays* played a prominent role within a combined conservative propaganda effort designed to win power for the Party of Order. In the run-up to the elections from April 1849, the newspaper collaborated with various other conservative newspapers in publishing strong warnings about left-wing subversiveness and

⁵⁶ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire: M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, pp779-781. See also Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p109.

⁵⁷ See Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, pp229-231. See also Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p109.

declaring the need to maintain social order at all costs.⁵⁸ This journalistic offensive, which was designed to organise conservative propaganda into an effective social force, helped the Party of Order to win a majority of around two-thirds of the 713 seats in the Assembly, and thereby achieve a decisive shift of power to the right.⁵⁹ Along with most other conservative newspapers, *Le Pays* supported the legislation of 27 July 1849 aimed at suppressing the colporteurs and other left-wing agitators that were considered to be threatening social order at that time.⁶⁰

The way in which the art criticism of *Le Pays* sought to maintain social order around this time has been examined by Patrick Le Nouène in his review of the critical reaction to realist art shown at the Salon of 1850-1. According to Le Nouène, Dauger's ambivalence towards Courbet's representation of figures articulates a desire to preserve order and derives from the political ideology of a particular contingent of the bourgeoisie and the Party of Order.⁶¹ Le Nouène argues that this conservative bourgeois group creates an opposition between two ideological views of 'the people,' one 'good' and one 'bad,' and he explains this by examining political commentary in *Le Pays* around the time of the Salon

⁵⁸ See Bellanger, *ibid*, 1969, p231: 'Les conservateurs n'attendaient pas moins de leur organisation et de leur dialectique pour lutter contre les passions mauvaises. Les efforts d'organisation furent liés à l'approche des élections législatives. Dès avril 1849 divers journaux formèrent un comité de liaison: *l'Assemblée nationale*, *le Constitutionnel*, *le Corsaire*, *le Courrier français*, *le Dix Décembre*, *L'Événement* (qui devait changer d'orientation par la suite), *le Journal des villes et des campagnes*, *le Moniteur du soir*, *le Moniteur de l'armée*, *la Patrie*, *le Pays*, *l'Union*, *l'Univers*.' Bellanger draws his information from *le Dix Décembre*, 21 April 1849.

⁵⁹ See Edgar Leon Newman and Robert Lawrence Simpson, eds., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire: M-Z*, Greenwood Press Inc., Connecticut, 1987, p779.

⁶⁰ See Bellanger, *ibid*, 1969, pp230-231.

⁶¹ See Patrick Le Nouène, 'Première réception des tableaux exposés au Salon de 1850-51 et regroupés par les historiens de l'art sous l'étiquette réaliste,' *Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870*, Chartres, 1983, p74.

exhibition.⁶² In one view, the people support the interests of the bourgeoisie and are praised and, in the other, the people threaten those interests and are condemned.⁶³ The ‘good’ people are mainly those of the oppressed working class who, accepting their poverty, undertake their labour dutifully and are worthy of the philanthropy of the bourgeoisie.⁶⁴ They are committed to maintaining the existing social order and willingly provide much of the economic base upon which bourgeois prosperity relies.⁶⁵ The ‘bad’ people include those of the lower classes who, bitter about their poor social circumstances, turn to crime or try to

⁶² See *ibid*, pp74-75. Le Nouène refers to a number of political commentators writing in *Le Pays* at that time to support his assertion about these opposing ideological views of ‘le peuple.’ Regular contributors Martin Doisy and V. Bonnet, for example, establish an opposition between ‘d’un côté, “des mendiants et des voleurs” et, de l’autre, “le peuple, le peuple souffrant et malheureux, envers l’autre celui qui, résigné et soumis à sa situation mériterait “la philanthropie qui s’inspire du coeur”; . . .’ Here, Le Nouène quotes Martin Doisy, *Le Pays*, 6 January 1851, p3 and V. Bonnet, *Le Pays*, 6 February 1851, p1.

Similarly, Lamartine, another regular contributor to *Le Pays*, claims that industrial workers belong to those of the working-class population who can be rehabilitated: ‘comme l’écrit Lamartine à propos des ouvriers des centres industriels, il existerait d’une part des éléments “de population sains en eux-mêmes, si vous les assainissez par l’ordre, le travail, l’instruction, l’assistance, . . .”’ Lamartine distinguishes this group from another group within the same social sector who are “putrides si vous les laissez fermenter et corrompre par les miasmes de l’indigence et du vice, et enfiévrer par le souffle d’agitateurs sans responsabilité et sans repos!”’ Here, Le Nouène quotes Lamartine, ‘Les Clubs,’ *Le Pays*, 22 June 1851, p1.

According to Le Nouène, the opposition articulated in such discourse reflects the bourgeois imperative of conserving order: ‘Cette opposition qu’établissent des critiques de la bourgeoisie renvoie bien à la nécessaire préservation de l’autorité qu’exerce cette classe afin de conserver son ordre, étant entendu, comme l’écrit un de ses représentants, que “la conservation est l’expression de la garantie pour la propriété acquise.”’ Here, Le Nouène quotes de Bouville, the chief editor of *Le Pays*, *Le Pays*, 20 March 1851, p1.

Deriving in this way from the privileged economic status and aspirations of the bourgeoisie, this ideological opposition fuels middle-class desperation to achieve “la victoire dans cette guerre de l’ordre contre le désordre, de la civilisation contre la barbarie.”’ Here, Le Nouène quotes Charles Poriguet, *Le Pays*, 20 January 1850, p1.

In attempting to achieve this victory, Le Nouène says, the Party of Order relies upon what Lamartine calls: “l’excellente nature de la masse du peuple des villes et des campagnes en France, son instinct honnête, son intelligence confuse, mais intuitive des conditions conservatrices de l’ordre, de la propriété, de la famille, de la nation, sur sa raison, sa modération, sa discipline, son obéissance spontanée à la loi, son élan, son courage . . .”’ Here, Le Nouène quotes Lamartine, ‘Du peuple et du gouvernement,’ *Le Pays*, 28 June 1851, p1.

⁶³ See footnote 62.

⁶⁴ See footnote 62.

⁶⁵ See footnote 62.

overthrow the existing order through revolution.⁶⁶ The category of bad people also includes a certain sector of the bourgeoisie – bourgeois peasants who may cast left-wing votes and threaten the economic base of middle-class dominance and wealth.⁶⁷

Le Nouëne argues that these opposing ideological categories are expressed in the bourgeois art criticism of the time. He claims that critics such as Dauger, who support the Party of Order, interpret representations of some figures as ‘good’ and others as ‘bad’ and that these opposing interpretations relate directly to the contrasting ideological constructions of ‘the people’ found in bourgeois political discourse.⁶⁸ For such critics, images of ‘good’ people are found in the work of François Bonvin and Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Antigna, whose paintings provide sentimental or melodramatic portrayals of labour and the virtues of working-class existence.⁶⁹ Dauger is reassured by such sentimental images of working-class people and their children because such images invoke qualities of goodness, virtue, honesty and dignity. In Dauger’s criticism, Le Nouëne says, these qualities reflect back upon the bourgeois society of which such working-class types are

⁶⁶ See footnote 62.

⁶⁷ See footnote 62

⁶⁸ Patrick Le Nouëne, ‘Première réception des tableaux exposés au Salon de 1850-51 et regroupés par les historiens de l’art sous l’étiquette réaliste,’ *Exigences de réalisme dans la peinture française entre 1830 et 1870*, Chartres, 1983, pp74-75.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p75: ‘Et l’on comprend mieux que ces partisans du Parti de l’Ordre se réjouissent de la représentation de ce *bon peuple* dans certains tableaux de F. Bonvin ou d’A. Antigna qui, imaginent-ils, “se plaît dans les mansardes, dans les chaumières, dans les écoles avec les petits enfants, partout où va le bon peuple qui travaille et qui cependant a froid, a faim, souffre de la misère et ne le dit point” . . . Et l’on s’explique mieux aussi à la lecture de ces quelques citations extraites du discours politique, l’opposition qu’établissent ces partisans du Parti de l’Ordre entre une image acceptable du *peuple* et une autre qui ne le serait pas. L’une est perçue comme sentimentale, mélodramatique. Elle exalte le triomphe du bien et des vertus bourgeoises. Dans certains tableaux ou partie de tableaux, ils reconnaissent leur *bon peuple*, dans la représentation des femmes qui pleurent dans les pittoresques et inoffensifs casseurs de pierres, dans le labeur du semeur, dans les enfants en classe. Le mérite qu’ils leur accordent pour des raisons esthétiques est directement lié au discours moral et politique qu’ils peuvent tenir sur eux.’

products. Conservative critics readily admire these types and are further reassured by the sentimental portrayals of working-class environment in which they are presented, the schoolroom, the cottage, the fields of the countryside or a roadside.⁷⁰ As in the case of their equivalent political discourses, these constructs of ‘good’ people conveyed through art and art criticism enable the bourgeoisie to take a philanthropical view of the working class without undermining the social and economic order upon which bourgeois interests depend.⁷¹ In Le Nouëne’s view, these constructs of good people are merely bourgeois justifications for acquiring money and property, and for maintaining the oppressed labour force upon which such acquisition relies. Some of Courbet’s figures are included within the bourgeois ideological category of ‘good’ people, and Le Nouëne argues that Dauger commends the image of the young stonebreaker in the *Casseurs de pierres* because it is a sentimental image of honest, dignified labour in the face of poverty. By contrast, Dauger rejects the image of the old worker in this painting because it is not sentimentalised in any way.⁷² Portraying only wretchedness and misery, this image may cause the viewer to question the social relations responsible for the worker’s poor circumstances. Le Nouëne notes that the bourgeois construct of ‘bad’ people in art criticism includes representations of bourgeois peasants, such as some of those in Courbet’s *Enterrement à Ornans*. These people are ‘dangerous peasants, that is to say those who through their votes can undermine their [bourgeois] power, every one insubordinate in their image if not their attitude.’⁷³ For Le Nouëne, this ideological construct of ‘bad’ people is directly associated in both

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p75.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p75: ‘Ainsi soumis dans sa misère, ce *peuple* justifie toutes les philanthropies, toutes les charités, et surtout justifie le progressisme du discours de la bourgeoisie sans remettre en cause son ordre, sa propriété et son pouvoir.’

⁷² *ibid*, p74.

⁷³ *ibid*, p75: ‘Dans d’autres ils [les critiques conservateurs] voient, au contraire, des bourgeois en *habit noir*, des paysans dangereux, c’est-à-dire ceux qui par leurs votes risquent de remettre en cause leur pouvoir, tous insoumis dans leur image si ce n’est dans leur attitude. Ils rapprochent ces individus de ceux qui ont menacé leur Ordre en Février ou en Juin 1848.’

bourgeois art criticism and political discourse with all those who threatened order in February and June of 1848.⁷⁴

Le Nouëne's contextualisation of art criticism in *Le Pays* offers an insight into some of the political motives and ideological constructs underpinning bourgeois reviews of the Salon of 1850-1. Yet, his analysis is somewhat over-simplified and misrepresents the ways in which common nature is politicised by critics such as Dauger. In some cases, Dauger's criticism even seems to function in precisely the opposite way to that suggested by Le Nouëne. As we have seen, for example, Dauger condemns the excess of sentimentality or 'good nature' portrayed through the appearance of Courbet's old stonebreaker, but praises the enthusiasm portrayed through the image of the young stonebreaker, which is not so sentimental. Rejecting the old stonebreaker's good nature – his lifetime's resignation to hard labour and poverty – the critic surely rejects what Le Nouëne identifies as a 'good' person, an ideological construct of the bourgeoisie designed to protect its interests.⁷⁵ The key to Dauger's categorisation of 'good' or 'bad' sections of 'the people' in art is not the level of sentimentality with which they are portrayed. Rather, it is the manner in which their physiology is portrayed, the way in which their physical and moral nature, or 'vulgarity,' is presented. Like many bourgeois critics of the time, Dauger relates the physical appearance of common figures in art to the social environment impacting upon their physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution. Such readings acknowledge the prevalence and established nature of positivist, biological and physiological ideas in currency at the time. As we have seen, Dauger is anxious about

⁷⁴ See footnote 73 and Le Nouëne, *ibid*, 1983, p75.

⁷⁵ As we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, numerous contemporary critics including Buchon offered this precise interpretation of the image. Courbet himself took this view of his representation of the old stonebreaker, as is suggested by his letters to Francis Wey dated 26 November 1849 and 1 January 1852.

figures whose physical appearance indicates their poor physical and moral condition, the poor state of their physiology as a result of an oppressive or unhealthy social environment. Such physiology indicates a regressive social order and images of such physiology may incite the viewer to revolution; the physiology appears lifeless, simply going through the motions of living, and Dauger censures Courbet's image of the old stonebreaker precisely for this reason. The stonebreaker may be resigned to oppression but his appearance suggests a physiological regression into lifelessness at the hands of the bourgeoisie, and this may lead the viewer to revolution. By contrast, the critic approves of Courbet's young stonebreaker because, beneath his tattered clothing, the worker's body appears to be physiologically alive and energetic. Rather than a sentimentalised image of working-class dignity, this is an image of common physical and moral dignity: 'one rediscovers there an everyday nature, a nature without great distinction certainly, but at least holding its place well.'⁷⁶

Le Nouëne is also largely mistaken concerning Dauger's critique of the *Enterrement à Ornans*. According to Le Nouëne, bourgeois critics reject the figures in black attire because they represent 'dangerous peasants,' bourgeois peasants who are supposedly likely to cast a left-wing vote and encourage uprisings like those occurring in February and June of 1848. Yet, despite its subversive elements, Ornans was a conservative borough that voted solidly for Louis-Napoleon in December 1848 and for the political right in May 1849.⁷⁷ Upholding mainly Bonapartist and conservative policies during the period in question, voters in Ornans must surely be ideologically categorised as 'good' people by

⁷⁶ Alfred Dauger, 'Beaux Arts: Salon de 1851 (Troisième article),' *Le Pays*, 9 February 1851, p2: 'on retrouve là une nature de tous les jours, une nature sans distinction grande certainement, mais tenant bien sa place au moins, et ne visant pas à l'exagération du vulgarisme.'

⁷⁷ T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p100.

critics like Dauterive, if Le Nouëne's thesis is to hold up. Furthermore, Le Nouëne claims that the crying women in the *Enterrement à Ornans* are seen as 'good' because, unlike the other figures in black dress, they portray a sentimentality that is seen to reinforce the political status quo. Again, it seems unlikely that bourgeois critics would ideologically polarise the funeral gathering into separate sections of 'good' and 'bad' people if all the figures, apart from the gravedigger, represent the same section of the rural bourgeoisie and would probably support the existing social order. Rather, the critical approval of the crying women and the objections to the other figures are made on physical and moral grounds. The women seem touched by the funeral and this casts bourgeois society in a favourable light; the women can still feel and care about life whilst existing in the prevailing order. The other figures seem indifferent to the occasion; their physical appearance indicates the regression of their physiology – they are numb and merely going through the motions of living – and this suggests a regression of social order.

The categories of 'good' and 'bad' people identified by Le Nouëne are oversimplified. Dauterive's criticism operates at a deeper level, making a considered appraisal of the positivist manner in which Courbet represents people in society. The critic acknowledges the biological view presented in Courbet's work – the view that social environment impacts directly upon physical and moral well-being – and judges each painting according to how its representation of this view impacts upon his conservative values. This is the benchmark of Dauterive's ambivalence towards Courbet's portrayal of commoners. The critic praises figures that appear lively, animated and enthusiastic about life because they seem to be thriving in their social climate and endorse the existing bourgeois order. He condemns figures that appear resigned and indifferent to life because

they indicate physical and moral regression at the hands of bourgeois society, potentially leading to revolution and the destruction of the existing social order.

IV: Louis de Geofroy: the unacceptability of vulgarity

The desire to exclude common subjects entirely from art is expressed in numerous right-wing reviews of the Salon of 1850-1, according to the particular political stance of the writer concerned. Such reviews object firmly to Courbet's representations of 'vulgarity,' or 'vulgar nature,' the combined physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of common people that characterises their customs and patterns of behaviour. This right-wing stance against the artistic expression of common nature is exemplified in Louis de Geofroy's article 'Le Salon de 1850,' published in the Orleanist journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* on 1 March 1851. De Geofroy shares some of Dauger's concerns: both critics take exception to Courbet's paintings when they magnify or foreground vulgarity. Yet, whereas Dauger accepts that Courbet's representations of common nature reflect social order and portray some types with dignity, de Geofroy finds very little about the artist's work that is dignified, ordered or acceptable. Wholly committed to the capitalist and bourgeois values cultivated by the July Monarchy (the period of monarchical rule ended by revolution in February 1848), De Geofroy warns his conservative readers that Courbet is a socialist who seeks wholesale reform by representing ordinary types and everyday customs.

De Geofroy is extremely concerned about the state of French art in 1851 and is very pessimistic about its future. He argues that works exhibited at the Salon that year reflect the characteristic tendency of the era to undervalue the past and overestimate the present.⁷⁸ He resents the growing number of artists whose work is born of an evolutionary view of society, a view that contemporary society evolves from all previous societies and

⁷⁸ Louis de Geofroy, 'Le Salon de 1850,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p926: 'jamais on n'est montré moins qu'à présent *laudator temporis acti*.'

always surpasses them.⁷⁹ Led by Courbet, these artists are obsessed with representing the everyday types and ordinary customs of contemporary society, and uphold the strange idea that such representation is part of a process of social advancement. Through such ‘deplorable fantasies’ and ‘sad obsessions,’ the critic says, these artists seek to undermine the artistic values promoted by recent and current bourgeois regimes, the values associated with grand portrayals of scenes from classical and biblical history. The growing prominence of such anti-establishment works year after year gives de Geofroy serious concern for the state of France, its future and its art: ‘seeing these sad obsessions grow year by year and impose themselves tremendously, I think there is cause no longer to be satisfied with the present and to be seriously worried about the future.’⁸⁰

De Geofroy is clear about the artistic qualities he opposes. He is against any art form created purely by the manual skill of an artist because, in his opinion, such skill appeals to the base, physical side of human nature and addresses none of the superior or dignified exercises of the mind. The art of Courbet falls within this category and flaunts the artist’s derision for erudite learning and the inventiveness required for history painting and academic art.⁸¹ The critic laments that this debased kind of work is characteristic of the sea of bad art being shown at the Salon that year and is increasingly swamping the superior art

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p926: ‘Notre âge a de grandes prétentions, il aime surtout à s’entendre dire qu’il résume tous ses devanciers et les surpasse quelque peu.’

⁸⁰ *ibid*, pp926-927: ‘malheureusement ce petit nombre [des peintures remarquables exposées] est noyé dans un torrent d’oeuvres sans nom où les plus déplorables fantaisies se révèlent, et, à voir ces tristes manies grandir d’année en année et s’imposer magistralement, il y a lieu, ce semble, de n’être plus si satisfait du présent et de s’inquiéter sérieusement de l’avenir.’

⁸¹ *ibid*, p927: ‘Abaissement ou absence de pensée, habileté de main, tels sont les caractères généraux qu’on saisit au milieu de ce *tohu bohu* des manières les plus diverses.’

form of history painting, which is diminishing daily.⁸² De Geofroy insists that history painting is a superior art form because it demands the coordination of both mental and physical capabilities. It involves the contemplation of a carefully chosen subject, the considered organisation of line, and the expression of feelings and nobility through skillful drawing.⁸³ This form of painting contrasts starkly with Courbet's work, whose inferior representations of common types and everyday customs involve and demand very little thought. For de Geofroy, the emphasis upon the physical in Courbet's work – the artist's obsession with applying thick blocks and layers of paint to render the ugly physical appearance of ordinary people – highlights only base aspects of humanity. Through this crude technique, Courbet portrays only 'vulgar nature,' the debased physical and moral nature of commoners and their unrefined customs.⁸⁴

In De Geofroy's estimation, the differences between history painting and Courbet's representations of vulgar nature are comparable to the differences between the work of the Dutch or Spanish masters and that of Raphael. In Courbet's representations of vulgar nature, subject matter is considered far less important than the manner in which it is represented, the critic says. In this way, artists like Courbet may be compared to the great Dutch and Spanish masters, who held the means of artistic rendering in high esteem. Whilst de Geofroy acknowledges the merits of the work of masters such as Jacob Jordaens and

⁸² *ibid*, p927: 'La grande peinture s'affaiblit chaque jour davantage, et le succès n'est guère que pour les ouvrages de petite dimension: tableaux de genre, paysages, etc. Est-ce là un progrès?'

⁸³ *ibid*, p927: 'Pour faire un tableau d'histoire, la tête doit être de moitié avec la main; le choix médité d'un sujet, l'ordonnance des lignes, l'expression des sentimens at la noblesse du dessin sont des conditions indispensables.'

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p927. De Geofroy draws a general and sharp contrast between the artistic qualities evident in representations of 'nature vulgaire' and the 'imperious rules' operating in history painting: 'Il est des oeuvres, au contraire, où la nature vulgaire du sujet et l'exiguïté du cadre permettent quelquefois de se soustraire à ces règles impérieuses, disons mieux, de les faire oublier.'

Paul Potter, and praises their expertise in rendering colour and tone, the critic much prefers the beauty created by Raphael through the deep contemplation of elevated subject matter.⁸⁵

De Geofroy's view of art's purpose is abundantly clear: 'The goal of painting and sculpture must be to inspire men to have beautiful thoughts through the sight of beautiful images.'⁸⁶ The argument for relegating the importance of subject matter is, he insists, a mere excuse for the inadequacy of artists like Courbet in meeting the demands of history painting and its standards.⁸⁷ In his opinion, such inadequacies are increasingly prevalent and have resulted in the sad display of work at the Salon and the artistic tendency of the era.⁸⁸ He is gravely concerned that a school of art, led by Courbet, should turn the traits of this tendency into a doctrine, 'keeping to the exact reproduction of forms, without concern for selection [of subject matter] and [considered] expression.'⁸⁹ The critic fears that

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p927: 'Un des plus beaux tableaux de l'école flamande est, sans contredit, *le Jour des Rois* de Jordaens; quelle que soit pourtant la puissance vraiment extraordinaire de couleur qu'on admire dans ces compères en goguette, on nous permettra de garder notre préférence pour telle madone qu'on voudra de Raphaël, bien qu'il n'y en ait aucune qui soit aussi montée de ton.'

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p928: 'Une femme d'esprit a dit néanmoins excellemment: "Le but de la peinture et de la sculpture doit être d'inspirer aux hommes de belles pensées par la vue de belles images." Voilà une noble définition qui peut servir de *criterium* dans l'appréciation des oeuvres d'art.'

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p927: 'Il va sans dire que, si l'on nous donnait des Jordaens ou des Paul Potter, nous ne réclamerions pas; mais soyons francs, et ne prenons ces raisons que pour ce qu'elles valent, pour l'excuse de l'impuissance. Si nous dédaignons la composition, c'est que nous ne voulons pas nous donner la peine d'apprendre à composer; si nous offensoons le dessin, c'est que nous ne savons pas dessiner. "Horace, mon ami, disait le vieux David, d'humeur narquoise, tu fais des épaulettes parce que tu ne sais pas faire des épaules."'

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p927. De Geofroy sees a general decline in artistic standards as revealed in an increasing reluctance on the part of artists to represent the more demanding aspects of subject matter: 'nous faisons des maisons et des arbres, parce que c'est plus facile que de faire des hommes, et quand nous peignons des hommes, nous leur passons un habit ou une blouse, parce que c'est bien plus aisé à tout prendre que de les peindre nus.'

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p927: 'si nous voyons des artistes (et ce n'est encore que demimal) s'en tenir à la reproduction exacte des formes, sans souci du choix et de l'expression, le plus grand nombre d'admet même plus la forme définie par les contours, et se borne à rendre l'apparence des objets au moyen d'un certain ajustement de couleurs plaisant à l'oeil, où la dextérité de la main joue le principal rôle, de compte à demi avec le hasard. Et quand ces pochades informes se produisent prétentieusement, sont applaudies et font école, comment ne pas crier à la décadence? En vérité,

eventually, if this school continues in ascendancy, art will completely discard ideas. The artist's thought processes will degenerate to such a point that the definition of form will no longer be controlled by the considered organisation of line. Instead, artists will only produce what de Geofroy sees as sketches whose definition is achieved through mere adjustments of colour that please the eye but not the mind.⁹⁰ Then, artists will not only rely upon the skill of the hand, but also upon chance, and art 'will be reduced to the expression of ideas no longer, only sensations.'⁹¹

What, in de Geofroy's view, are the social and political implications of Courbet's work? The critic clearly sees Courbet as a significant threat to conservative values and capitalist society. He reveals his anxiety about the subversive effects of certain distinctively positivist aspects of the artist's work and issues a strong warning to his middle- and upper-class readers. He points out that, for Courbet, art should be produced for the whole world, not just for arbiters of taste.⁹² Art should help society favour the populace by developing a worldwide appeal, promoting egalitarianism and condemning the selfish interests of particular social groups. In the critic's opinion, Courbet seeks to improve society by portraying the physical and moral imperatives of contemporary society, imperatives seen from the perspective of the underprivileged and the poor and which work against the interests of the wealthy parties defended by de Geofroy. In this way, for the critic, Courbet's positivist representation supports socialism, creating various artistic qualities that

c'est un devoir, et des plus impérieux, car, pour peu qu'on n'y prenne garde, les arts plastiques en seraient réduits à n'exprimer plus des idées, mais seulement des sensations.'

⁹⁰ See footnote 89.

⁹¹ See footnote 89.

⁹² Louis de Geofroy, 'Le Salon de 1850,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p928: 'M. Courbet s'est dit . . . L'art, étant fait pour tout le monde, doit représenter ce que tout le monde voit.'

are a threat to the status quo. There is first the question of subject matter. Courbet attempts to achieve his aims by painting the everyday, the ordinary and the familiar, subject matter that disturbs De Geofroy because it flouts the conservative artistic values he promotes, the values cultivated by history painting, or ‘grande peinture,’ whose erudite and elevated subjects concern anything but ordinary life and serve to reinforce the social divisions imposed by wealthy sectors of society.⁹³ The critic distinguishes very clearly between what he sees as the noble, elevated subjects of conservative art and the base, subversive subjects of positivist or socialist art. He associates the former with a superior, spiritual realm of the soul and the latter with the base, material world of earthly reality. He supports forms of art that appeal to the mind and the soul and their elevation, rather than those that appeal to the body and its physical sensations. He commends ‘all the noble [artistic] spirits who, from century to century, have maintained in the soul of humanity the feeling of a superior destiny,’ all those artists who enable the right-minded viewer ‘to hide for several hours from oppressive reality.’⁹⁴ By contrast, he derides positivist representations of vulgar nature, which ‘leave us lying face down in this muddy earth’ and, ‘*udam humum*,’ represent the base desires of the crowd.⁹⁵ Despite being rather hackneyed on the surface, de Geofroy’s comments about subject matter are symptomatic of a deep-rooted fear that positivist art is capable of inspiring the violence associated with some forms of socialism and thereby of creating wholesale reform. He complains that ‘they bring us back to the

⁹³ See *ibid*, p927.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p930: ‘C’est grande pitié qu’en l’an 1851 on soit réduit à faire la démonstration des principes les plus élémentaires, à répéter que l’art n’est pas la reproduction indifférente de l’objet le premier passant, mais le choix délicat d’une intelligence raffinée par l’étude, et que sa mission est, au contraire, de hausser sans cesse au-dessus d’elle-même notre nature infirme et disgraciée. Ils se sont donc trompés, – tous les nobles esprits qui, de siècle en siècle, ont entretenu dans l’âme de l’humanité le sentiment d’une destinée supérieure, – et nous aussi qui devant leurs chefs-d’oeuvre nous sentions allégés, heureux de dérober quelques heures à la pesante réalité!’

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p930: ‘Voici venir les coryphées de l’ère nouvelle qui nous rejettent brutalement la face contre cette terre fangeuse, *udam humum*, d’où nous enlevait l’aile de la poésie.’

earth, these so-called liberators, and for my part I cannot imagine a land so barbaric that wouldn't be preferable to a country in which these stupid savages prevail.⁹⁶

There is also the question of the means by which Courbet represents his base subjects. According to de Geofroy, the artist represents vulgarity in scrupulous detail to accentuate the familiarity of his subjects, magnifying the common nature of ordinary types and everyday customs with which the contemporary world is immediately familiar. Yet, according to de Geofroy, Courbet's positivist programme of reform is a sham. Instead of creating a worldwide appeal, the artist's focus upon vulgar nature only glorifies ugliness, provoking 'coarse thoughts' and 'vile feelings.'⁹⁷ The artist is too lazy to research beautiful types because they are rare and extraordinary and he is unwilling to represent anything but the customs of real life, which are easily discovered and reproduced.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Courbet has no interest in learning his craft over many years in the way that history and academic painters do – by developing refined skills of drawing and composition and by learning how to contemplate and select suitably elevated subject matter. Instead, in de

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p930: 'Ils nous ramènent à la glèbe, ces prétendus libérateurs, et, pour ma part, je n'imagine pas de contrée si barbare dont le séjour ne fût préférable à celui d'un pays où ces sauvages bêtises viendraient à prévaloir.'

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p928: 'On peut l'appliquer [la noble définition qui peut servir de *criterium* dans l'appréciation des oeuvres d'art] au salon de 1850, en y ajoutant comme corollaire que toute image qui éveille en l'esprit de celui qui la contemple une pensée vulgaire, un sentiment ignoble, est par cela même mauvaise, ou tout au moins défectueuse, quelle que soit d'ailleurs la vérité avec laquelle elle est rendue. Ceci met mal à l'aise les gens à système, les prôneurs de modes passagères, ceux qui confondent l'agréable avec le beau et ceux qui purement et simplement glorifient le laid.'

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p928: 'M. Courbet s'est dit: A quoi bon se fatiguer à rechercher des types de beauté qui ne sont que des accidens dans la nature et à les reproduire suivant un arrangement qui ne se rencontre pas dans l'habitude de la vie? L'art, étant fait pour tout le monde, doit représenter ce que tout le monde voit; la seule qualité à lui demander, c'est une parfaite exactitude.'

Geogroy's estimation, Courbet represents his subjects through quickly learned crude and elementary artistic techniques of the kind evident in popular prints.⁹⁹

This combination of everyday subject matter and crude techniques is clear evidence of Courbet's socialist attempt to effect some great reform, de Geofroy maintains. Through his prescriptions for art, Courbet intends to make 'great discoveries' about the social ills of contemporary capitalist society and establish 'final improvements' according to some socialist order, the critic says. However, in an attempt to conceal his anxieties about the subversive effects of such prescriptions, the critic argues that there is no impact or order resulting from Courbet's work, only the same socialist 'madness' that has been attempted throughout history.¹⁰⁰ Here, again, we find Courbet's work being discussed in connection with a positivist view of social reform, a view that the illumination of physical and moral nature is a form of social progress in itself, a means to the 'final improvements' of a perfectly unified society. De Geofroy fears such views and whilst he claims that Courbet's project of reform is a fantasy – socialist madness rather than an effective instrument of social improvement – he nevertheless seems deeply concerned about the power and influence that the artist's paintings may have. He is determined to portray Courbet's

⁹⁹ See footnote 100 and de Geofroy, *ibid*, 1851, p928.

¹⁰⁰ Louis de Geofroy, 'Le Salon de 1850,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p928: 'Évidemment, M. Courbet est un homme qui se figure avoir tenté une grande rénovation, et ne s'aperçoit pas qu'il ramène l'art tout simplement à son point de départ, à la grossière industrie des maîtres imagiers. J'ai entendu dire que c'était là de la peinture socialiste. Je n'en serais pas surpris, le propre de ces sortes de doctrines étant, comme on sait, de donner pour grandes découvertes et derniers perfectionnements les procédés les plus élémentaires et toutes les folies qui, depuis le commencement du monde, ont traversé la cervelle de l'humanité. Dans tous les cas, tant pis pour le socialisme! les tableaux de M. Courbet ne sont pas pour le rendre attrayant.'

socialism as a threat to the entire world, and claims that the artist's work opposes everything that the world has ever admired.¹⁰¹

De Geofroy examines Courbet's individual Salon exhibits, identifying the artistic features that convey the artist's socialist attitude. The critic illuminates the positivist aspects of the paintings, the artistic devices used by Courbet in his attempt to effect large-scale and permanent social reform. These devices all relate to the physical appearance of the figures in the paintings and, according to de Geofroy, criticise the status quo. They either relate the physical and moral degeneration of ordinary people to the capitalist order in which they live or promote an equal society based upon baseness, a vulgarity that does not even distinguish people from animals. Discussing the *Casseurs de pierres*, for example, he takes issue with the vulgar nature and poverty-stricken circumstances so patently evident in the physical appearance of the roadmenders. He interprets this image as a fierce socialist indictment of contemporary capitalist society and its supposed victimisation of the working class. Executed life-size, the image is designed to expose the effects of a hard-working existence upon every detail of the workers' physiques and clothing.¹⁰² The critic notes the physiognomical details of the old worker's appearance that express his wretchedness. The figure is seen in profile, resting on one knee to work, and this accentuates his difficulty in coping with the work. His patched clothes clearly suggest a miserable existence.¹⁰³ The

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, p928: 'nous avons cherché à démêler quelle pouvait être la pensée de l'artiste [Courbet] dont les ouvrages résument le plus orgueilleux et le plus parfait mépris de tout ce que le monde admire depuis qu'il existe.'

¹⁰² *ibid*, p929: 'il [Courbet] copie les deux manoeuvres dans toute leur grossièreté et de grandeur naturelle, de peur qu'un seul détail échappe.'

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p929: 'Le vieux, qu'on aperçoit de profil, a un chapeau de paille et un gilet rayé à deux rangs de boutons; il a ôté sa veste et mis un genou en terre pour travailler; sa chemise est de toile très grossière, et son pantalon rapiécé; enfin il porte des sabots, et ses talons malpropres percent à travers des chaussettes de laine usées.'

body of the young worker is seen only from the back and, again, this is simply to show the ragged condition of his clothes and accentuate the signs of his meagre existence.¹⁰⁴

De Geofroy goes on to examine *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* and, here, the critic again takes issue with the high level of physiognomical detail used to portray vulgar nature. He is deeply disturbed by the great lengths to which the artist has gone to pictorially specify the common types and customs in the painting. He strongly objects to this close examination of everyday customs through the physical appearance of commoners, and the importance it accords to their physical and moral world. For de Geofroy, it is of no consequence whatsoever whether or not the figures in this painting can be identified with a particular locality or common way of life.¹⁰⁵ Yet, as he painfully remarks, this trivial kind of physical and moral accuracy is of paramount importance to the artist, who takes great care in representing the figures with clothing that immediately identifies them as inhabitants of Flagey.¹⁰⁶ The critic mentions that one of the figures leads a pig back from the fair, a country custom that he finds completely unworthy as a subject for art.¹⁰⁷ The importance given to the animals in this painting is a very contentious issue for him. The animals are given a social status and de Geofroy sees this as a powerful sign of common life. As the painting shows, animals are a fundamental part of country existence

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p929: ‘Son jeune compagnon charrie les cailloux, et nous ne le voyons que de dos; mais cette partie de son corps n’est pas sans quelques particularités importantes: une bretelle retenue par un seul bouton, une déchirure de la chemise laissant voir le nu de l’épaule, etc.’

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p929: ‘Tandis que M. Courbet dresse ce signalement, passent quelques paysans de retour de la foire de Flagey, où ils ont acheté quelques bestiaux. – Que nous importe, s’il vous plaît, qu’ils viennent de Flagey ou de Pontoise?’

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p929: ‘mais il faut être vrai: c’est bien de Flagey (département du Doubs) qu’ils viennent; l’un a une blouse, l’autre un habit et une casquette de loutre; . . .’

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p929: ‘Dieu me pardonne! J’allais oublier que celui-ci ramène un porc et lui a passé une corde au pied droit de derrière.’

and customs, and form part the fabric of provincial society. Country people live alongside animals for much of the time, and the physiognomical appearance of these people reflects this fact of country life. The painting is a powerful expression of this fact and de Geofroy laments that there is little difference between the physiognomy of the humans and animals in the painting. Again highlighting the distinctively positivist nature of Courbet's work, the critic argues that animals and humans have equal status in the painting. He scornfully remarks that it is difficult to establish which has the most awkward bearing, the men, the cows or the pigs.¹⁰⁸ In de Geofroy's reading of the painting, the figures are as base as the animals and the portrayal of such bestial existence is a measure of the uncultured social equality promoted by the artist and the barbaric means through which he is prepared to achieve it. The critic fears Courbet and other socialists because they are wild and debased, like the animals they live with; they are 'stupid savages' who desire an equal world that is nothing more than a 'barbaric land.'¹⁰⁹

With regard to the *Enterrement à Ornans*, de Geofroy takes issue with Courbet's representation of vulgar nature on a grand scale, which he interprets as an attempt to defy history painting in the grand manner and the system of conservative values that goes with it.¹¹⁰ The painting 'constitutes the major work, Mr Courbet's history painting,' and is an ironic comment upon 'grande peinture' because the commonality of the funeral gathering does not warrant such a grand scale.¹¹¹ The subject of bereavement is suitable for history

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p929: 'On ne sait qui a l'air le plus gauche ici, des hommes, des boeufs ou des porcs.'

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 96 and de Geofroy, *ibid*, 1851, p930.

¹¹⁰ Louis de Geofroy, 'Le Salon de 1850,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p929: 'Voilà une aubaine à défrayer vingt pieds de toile, et c'est pour le coup qu'il faut entonner le mode épique.'

¹¹¹ *ibid*, p929: De Geofroy ironically states that 'L'*Enterrement à Ornans* constitue en effet l'oeuvre capitale, le tableau d'histoire de M. Courbet.' De Geofroy misspells 'Ornans.'

painting but is ill-conceived in this case and the painting exhibits a proliferation of artistic weaknesses that overpower its few strengths.¹¹² The critic maintains that the subject of a peasant funeral can be as touching as a stately one, as in Poussin's painting *Enterrement de Phocion* [Figure 17] on show in the Louvre.¹¹³ Yet, he condemns Courbet's painting because its depiction of vulgar nature and everyday custom overpowers its portrayal of the grief associated with bereavement. He complains that the painting calls attention to common types that evoke feelings of disgust in the right-minded viewer, and whose prominence within the image suppresses the appearance of other figures whose delicate physiognomy convincingly portrays sorrow. These other figures, he notes, could arouse the viewer's sympathy if depicted more prominently within the group and thereby work for the social good without the spectre of socialism. Yet, overbearing common types such as the 'stupid country figure . . . with a ridiculous tricorn' suppress interesting and touching figures, such as 'this group of women . . . who cry with such natural movement.'¹¹⁴

According to de Geofroy, there are other prominent figures in the painting whose appearance indicates that they have some social standing, but which reveals the base sides of their nature. The social status of the figures is another important issue for the critic. He is clearly reassured by figures whose identifiable social positions reflect the order and hierarchy of existing social relations. Yet, whilst a number of such figures are prominent in

¹¹² *ibid*, p929: 'Si M. Courbet avait daigné élaborer sa pensée, ajuster les diverses parties en élaguant ou dissimulant celles qui déplaisent au profit des motifs heureux qui pouvaient se rencontrer, il eût produit un bon tableau.'

¹¹³ *ibid*, p929: 'Le sujet en lui-même s'y prêtait: il n'est pas nécessaire, pour émouvoir, d'aller chercher bien loin; les funérailles d'un paysan ne sont pas pour nous moins touchantes que le convoi de Phocion.'

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p929: 'Il ne s'agissait d'abord que de ne pas localiser le sujet, et ensuite de mettre en lumière les portions intéressantes d'une telle scène, ce groupe de femmes, par exemple, qui pleurent avec un mouvement si naturel, et que vous avez eu l'adroite inspiration d'écraser par une sottise figure de campagnard en habit gris, culottes courtes, bas à côtes, surmonté d'un ridicule tricorne.'

the *Enterrement à Ornans* – two vergers and some local magistrates – Courbet reveals the base sides of their nature through physiognomical representation.¹¹⁵ The vergers, for example, have ‘a drunken expression’ as revealed by their ‘ruddy faces.’¹¹⁶ As de Geoffroy sees it, such vulgar nature disturbs the order suggested by Courbet’s pictorial specification of social types and the relative social positions they hold. There are thus two important and contradictory aspects to Courbet’s use of physiognomy according to de Geoffroy. Firstly, Courbet’s figures reveal a social hierarchy and system of social order. Secondly, they reveal the base aspects of their nature and this disrupts the social order simultaneously conveyed. In de Geoffroy’s opinion, this physiognomical contradiction within the image is deliberate and is intended to be ironic and provoke social change. The image implies that the existing order is inherently contradictory and harmful because it is a degenerative order that precipitates vulgar nature. He suggests that this ironic use of physiognomy reinforces the irony of the painting’s grand scale, which is intended as a criticism of history painting and its attendant conservative values. The critic also points to a number of figures whose ugly and nondescript physiognomy indicates no social position whatsoever, and therefore suggests a complete absence of social order. If these figures are meant to be family portraits, or are only recognisable to people living in Ornans, he says, then they hold absolutely no interest for people who are unfamiliar with that locality.¹¹⁷ The painting is unsuccessful, he concludes, because it fails to express an important universal truth that

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p929: ‘Après le rustre que je viens de dire, les personnages les plus apparens du tableau sont deux bedeaux à l’air aviné, à la trogne rubiconde, vêtus de robes rouges, et qu’au premier abord on prend pour les magistrats de l’endroit venant rendre les derniers devoirs à un confrère; . . .’

¹¹⁶ See footnote 115.

¹¹⁷ Louis de Geoffroy, ‘Le Salon de 1850,’ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, pp929-930: ‘puis vient une file d’hommes et de femmes dont les têtes insignifiantes ou repoussantes n’inspirent pas le plus faible intérêt. Si ce sont des portraits de famille, laissez-les à Ornans. Pour nous, qui ne sommes pas d’Ornus, nous avons besoin de quelque chose de plus qui nous attache.’ De Geoffroy misspells ‘Ornans.’

should be associated with such subject matter.¹¹⁸ The painting fails to express the truth about the deep sadness associated with all funerals and does not arouse an appropriate sympathy within the viewer. Instead, through its ‘grotesque caricatures,’ its ironic exaggeration of vulgar nature through physiognomical representation, the *Enterrement* expresses a trivial truth about the lives and customs of commoners from a particular community, a truth that evokes only feelings of disgust in the right-minded viewer.

What does de Geofroy think of other artists in Courbet’s league? Reviewing further what he calls the ‘section of ugliness’ at the Salon exhibition, the critic examines the work of Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Antigna, an artist known for his portrayals of poverty and the poor. Although Antigna represents common nature, de Geofroy says, his paintings have quite some way to go to be as bad as Courbet’s.¹¹⁹ In fact, the critic sarcastically notes that Antigna’s paintings entitled *Enfans dans les blés* [Figure 18] and *L’Hiver* are even in danger of demonstrating a concern for the problems of composition, a concern that is completely absent in Courbet work.¹²⁰ Also, it is necessary ‘to warn Mr Antigna that the heads of his children are actually not entirely lacking in charm,’ de Geofroy says.¹²¹ The critic mockingly asks if Antigna is about to adopt an academic approach to his work, but then notes that the painting entitled *Sortie de l’École*, which portrays ‘a properly hideous

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, p930: ‘Ce qu’il fallait éveiller chez le spectateur, c’était le sentiment naturel qui accompagne une pareille scène; or, ce n’est pas précisément l’effet obtenu par vos grotesque caricatures. On ne pleure guère devant cet enterrement, et cela prouve bien que la vérité n’est pas toujours vraie.’

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p930: ‘Dans la section du laid, M. Antigna suit M. Courbet, mais de bien loin. Il n’est pas encore de force et a des progrès à faire.’

¹²⁰ *ibid*, pp930-931: ‘Ses *Enfans dans les blés*, ses petites filles ramassant du bois mort dans le tableau de *L’Hiver*, laissent voir un certain arrangement et des velléités de composition inquiétantes; . . .’

¹²¹ *ibid*, p931: ‘il importe aussi d’avertir M. Antigna que les têtes de ses bambins ne sont vraiment pas tout-à-fait dépourvues de charme.’

and unsavoury urchin,' confirms that the artist's true principle is the representation of ugliness.¹²² Even so, the critic notes that in representing this urchin, Antigna uses an effective artistic technique for reducing the shock of the figure's ugliness. The artist tempers this ugliness by presenting the figure in the 'natural' landscape of the countryside rather than in the poor social environment that has shaped his physiognomy. When common figures are shown in the country landscape, de Geofroy maintains, 'the general harmony of nature' softens the shock of 'revolting profiles.'¹²³ The critic takes Courbet to task on this issue because his work never tempers ugliness in this way.¹²⁴ Instead, his positivist schema presents life-size images of the poor in the harsh conditions of their social existence, ensuring that their physiognomical ugliness attracts the viewer's full attention.¹²⁵ In other words, Courbet is determined to demonstrate the intrinsically biological effects of a degenerative social environment upon the physical and moral condition of the human beings subjected to it. From the critic's conservative perspective, this biological relationship is associated with subversion, socialist politics and reform.

¹²² *ibid*, p931: 'Qu'est-ce à dire? M. Antigna serait-il donc près de sacrifier aux graces? Vite, qu'il y mette bon ordre et revienne aux vrais principes. Parlez-nous de la *Sortie de l'École*, voilà un gamin convenablement hideux et malpropre.'

¹²³ *ibid*, p931: 'Pourquoi les prenez-vous rue de l'Oursine? Mieux vaut, croyez-moi, les aller chercher dans les blés, où le soleil dore leurs joues et leurs guenilles; dans la vie rustique, les côtés repoussans sont atténués par le paysage qui sert de cadre, et le contingent de laideur que l'homme y apporte se fond aisément dans l'harmonie générale de la nature.' Located within the infamous area of the quartiers Saint-Jacques and Saint-Marceau, the rue de l'Oursine and its neighbouring streets were notorious among bourgeois opinion for their high concentration of troublesome and scavenging types from the labouring and dangerous classes; see Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes, In Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Routledge, London, 1973, p367.

¹²⁴ Louis de Geofroy, 'Le Salon de 1850,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Year XXI – New Period, Volume IX, 1 March 1851, p931: 'Il faut toute la volonté tenace de M. Courbet pour résister à ce correctif salutaire; . . .'

¹²⁵ *ibid*, p931: 'cela vient de ce que la figure humaine, presque toujours de grandeur naturelle dans ses tableaux, y absorbe exclusivement l'attention, . . .'

According to de Geofroy, the clothing of Courbet's life-size figures is an important part of their physiognomical appearance and enhances their subversive ugliness. We have already seen evidence of this in de Geofroy's analysis of the *Casseurs de pierres*, *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* and the *Enterrement à Ornans*, wherein the critic objects to Courbet's physiognomical representation of clothing as a means of highlighting vulgar nature. De Geofroy goes on to complain that Courbet always presents his peasants in the most revolting rags of the time, and describes these rags pictorially in rich colour tones to focus the viewer's attention upon the poor social environment with which they are associated.¹²⁶ He insists that peasants do not have to be represented in such hideous attire, especially since there are many examples of classic peasant costumery that are very pleasing to the eye. Here, again, we see the critic's anxiety to promote art forms that conceal rather than highlight vulgar nature and the degenerative aspects of society. The costumes of the South of France and Brittany are classic examples, constantly represented and seen time and again with pleasure, de Geofroy observes.¹²⁷ He insists that an artist can represent a favourable peasant group using such model examples and illustrates his point with reference to a 'small pretty composition' entitled *Femmes à la Fontaine*, painted by the well-known painter of peasants Pierre-Edmond-Alexandre Hédouin and exhibited at the Salon that year.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p931: 'et aussi, je crois, [que la physionomie de la nature vulgaire se montre] de ces affreux habits neufs dont il orne presque toujours ses paysans. Les haillons en peinture ont bien leur prix, surtout quand on sait les choisir riches de tons.'

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p931: 'Les costumes du Midi, ceux de la Bretagne, sont en ce genre des modèles classiques sans cesse reproduits, et qu'on revoit avec plaisir.'

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p931: 'il est aisé d'en tirer [de ces exemples modèles] un parti avantageux, comme a fait M. Hédouin dans ses *Femmes à la Fontaine*, jolie petite composition à laquelle il ne manque qu'un dessin plus arrêté.'

V: Orleanism and social order: the context in which de Geoffroy's views were circulated and consumed

An investigation into the political leanings of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* during the Second Republic, and the views of the editorship and writers that contributed to it, provides considerable insight into the social milieu within which de Geoffroy's article on Courbet was produced, circulated and consumed. The political history of the *Revue* has been researched in great depth by Gabriel de Broglie, the well-known biographer and historian of Orleanism, and documented in his book *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, published in 1979. De Broglie's findings demonstrate that de Geoffroy's article was made accessible to a very wide, conservative readership and was supported by a body of editors and contributors who greatly feared socialism as a genuine threat to social order. The *Revue* was an Orleanist journal whose conservative stance during the Second Republic opposed socialism and any attempt to undermine the prevailing social order. During that period, the journal maintained an extensive readership and a powerful commitment to capitalism, a commitment that had been tested by the circumstances that led to the Second Republic.¹²⁹ François Buloz, the chief editor, issued a statement in the journal on 15 March 1848, expressing his determination that the *Revue* would retain political and cultural influence in the new constitution.¹³⁰ The Second Republic turned out to be a period

¹²⁹ Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p63: 'Créée au lendemain d'une révolution, la Revue allait-elle périr par une autre révolution? Les journées de février 1848 bouleversèrent François Buloz et ses collaborateurs. Continuer une Revue profondément attachée à la monarchie constitutionnelle, ralliée depuis dix ans au gouvernement du roi Louis-Philippe, était-ce possible? Quel rôle pouvait-elle jouer dans cette période d'incertitude? Quelle influence pouvait-elle avoir?'

¹³⁰ F. Buloz, 'A nos lecteurs,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 March 1848, quoted in Gabriel de Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, p64. In this statement, Buloz claims that France is undergoing dramatic social and democratic development, and that the role of the *Revue* is to clarify the nature of this development and help guide it: 'Lorsque des événements aussi graves que ceux dont nous sommes témoins viennent changer radicalement la face d'un grand pays, lorsque des complications de plus d'un genre et non moins imprévues peuvent surgir chaque matin, on se demande naturellement quel peut être le rôle d'un recueil sérieux, d'un recueil littéraire et philosophique au milieu de débats aussi brûlants, au milieu de tant de voix confuses qui vont à chaque carrefour crier les nouvelles du

of enormous success for the *Revue*, which achieved unprecedented subscription numbers during that time. Although it maintained monarchist loyalties for most of this period, the *Revue* increased its subscriptions from 3000 in 1848 to 7000 in 1852.¹³¹ This high subscription level secured the *Revue*'s position under the new constitution and the journal attracted an even wider audience than during the July Monarchy, cultivating an increasingly broad readership for its commentators and critics, such as de Geofroy.¹³² The journal was expensive, showing that it was aimed primarily at a middle- and upper-class audience. As far as Buloz was concerned, the journal's high quality – its independent opinion, critical freedom and distinguished content – came at a price.¹³³ The editor fully intended that this quality would serve as a banner for the anti-revolutionary cause for all those who had

moment, ou agiter les questions qu'amènent à chaque heure le flux et le reflux du flot politique. En présence d'une pareille situation, beaucoup d'esprits se laissent aller au découragement . . . et nous repoussons bien loin, et de toutes nos forces, ce pessimisme commode et sans courage qui n'irait à rien moins qu'à se désintéresser de tout dans le grand mouvement de la France démocratique, dans cette grande expérimentation de théories et de systèmes que les coeurs bien placés doivent éclairer, surveiller et féconder de tous leurs moyens. Or, quel lieu est plus propice, mieux disposé que celui-ci pour entreprendre, pour poursuivre une pareille tâche? Nous ne ferons pas défaut à cette grave mission, et nous espérons que tous les esprits d'élite se réuniront pour nous seconder de leurs efforts et de leurs concours.' De Broglie points out that Buloz privately considered the February Revolution and the Second Republic to be serious threats to the journal and the conservative values it upheld. Buloz attempted to sell the *Revue* at a modest price to Armand de Pontmartin, one of his colleagues. Yet, de Pontmartin, besides many other colleagues and contacts of Buloz, shared the chief editor's fears and for this reason the journal was not sold. See Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, pp65-66.

¹³¹ Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, pp65-66: 'A nouveau tout entier consacré à son périodique, Buloz se rendit bien vite compte que dans l'opposition, la Revue ne faisait qu'augmenter le nombre de ses abonnements. Presque toujours le tirage des journaux d'opposition l'a emporté sur celui des organes gouvernementaux. La République que Buloz craignait tant lui apportait un début de richesse. De 3000 abonnés, en 1848, la Revue en comptait 7000 quand l'Empire commença. Or six ou sept mille souscripteurs assuraient à la Revue une "existence propre et indépendante," performance qu'elle n'avait pu atteindre tout au long de la Monarchie de Juillet.'

¹³² *ibid*, pp65-66. As de Broglie also points out, single journal issues reached numerous individuals during the Second Republic, being passed from one person to another and being read in cafés and reading rooms. In this way, the *Revue*, its extensive commentaries and critiques, reached a public that could not afford to subscribe to it; in 1849, the bi-monthly issues cost 4 francs and contained over 330 pages.

¹³³ De Broglie shows that when a reader complained to Buloz that the subscription was too expensive, the editor responded with a long letter, explaining that the journal could not reduce the price of its subscription and retain its quality; see letter in L. M. Ralbert, 6 March 1849, papiers manuscrits de Buloz, bibliothèque Lovenjoul, à Chantilly, quoted in de Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, pp66-67.

supported the fallen monarchy and who sought some form of refuge from ‘the storms and turbulence of political life.’¹³⁴ As de Broglie says, the *Revue*’s shareholders had been notables of the July Monarchy and, eager to support Buloz’s campaign against revolution and social disorder, expressed in chronicles and political articles their support for any measures aimed at suppressing the rise of socialism.¹³⁵ De Geofroy’s attack on Courbet’s work clearly waved the flag for this fight against revolution.

The fear of socialism shown in de Geofroy’s article on Courbet is echoed by the editorship of the *Revue*. Gabriel de Broglie demonstrates the great extent to which the journal feared radical left-wing politics and socialism right from the start of the Second Republic; the journal supported the installation of the provisional government in the hope that moderate politics would establish social order.¹³⁶ Terrified by the events of the June

¹³⁴ See Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p67: ‘Faire de la Revue un porte-drapeau de la cause anti-révolutionnaire, rallier autour d’elle tous les fidèles et les nostalgiques de la monarchie tombée, voilà le but auquel François Buloz s’attachait: “En quel temps d’ailleurs fut-il plus nécessaire d’avoir un Recueil sérieux, où les hommes d’imagination, les hommes de discussion et de savoir, les opinions sincères, les lecteurs éclairés, puissent trouver un refuge et peut-être un appui contre les orages et les agitations de la vie politique?”’ De Broglie quotes from *Revue des Deux Mondes*, ‘Introduction à la collection 1831-1848?’

¹³⁵ Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, pp67-68.

¹³⁶ See *ibid*, pp69-70. Once the February Revolution had occurred, de Broglie says, the journal’s editorship supported any measure that it thought would guarantee some social order: ‘Ils [les éditeurs] applaudirent au maintien des trois couleurs ayant craint la bannière rouge, à l’abolition de la peine de mort qui éloignait le spectre de la terreur de 1793, à l’installation d’un gouvernement tout provisoire qu’il fût, garant d’un certain ordre.’ Even though it held the republican system in low esteem, the *Revue* realised that every form of regency would be socially divisive at that time and accepted that a return to a monarchy was impossible. The journal thus decided to support the installation of a provisional government which, with Lamartine’s influence, promised to bring order and stability through moderate politics. In this way, the journal adopted a short-term political strategy of pragmatism, demonstrating support for republicanism at a time when it considered itself threatened. As we have already seen, and as Patrick Le Nouène has pointed out, this strategy was adopted by Orleanists and Bonapartists alike, when the Second Republic brought an end to what was seen by many as the bourgeois corruption and exploitation cultivated by the July Monarchy. Fearing a repetition of the vengeful reprisals that characterised the terror of 1793, the *Revue* also supported Lamartine’s successful attempt to abolish the death penalty. Yet, as de Broglie explains, the journal

Days, however, the *Revue* published numerous articles condemning the government as chaotic and accusing the new regime of a gross inability to contain its socialist and anarchist factions. In one such article, Eugène Forcade, who in 1851 became chief editor of the ultra-conservative journal entitled *Messager de l'Assemblée*, renounced the revolution of 1848 and declared that 'our new political constitution is in chaos.'¹³⁷ The journal dismissed the possibility advanced by left-wing newspapers that the uprising arose from working-class discontent and desperation, brought on by increasing poverty and the closure of the national workshops.¹³⁸ The *Revue* strongly suspected that the uprising resulted from a plot within the government to shift political power in favour of its revolutionary elements.¹³⁹ The journal gave its full support to the violent and merciless repression of the insurgents carried out by General Cavaignac, and boldly stated its opinion that social order should be securely reinstated using every measure necessary.¹⁴⁰ In September 1848, Albert de Broglie, the famous liberal statesman and spokesman for the *Revue*, commented: 'The public demands repression more than anything else now.'¹⁴¹ The *Revue* remained fearful of what it saw as a powerful socialist threat throughout this period and, like numerous

was soon critical of the new regime, even though the editorship did not publicise its views until after the uprising of June 1848.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, pp70-71: 'Les journées de juin 1848 marquèrent un tournant décisif dans la critique de la République par la Revue, comme elles furent capitales pour le développement du régime naissant. Dans un long article paru en 1849, Eugène Forcade, condamnait directement la révolution de 1848 et le 1^{er} janvier 1849 faisant le bilan de l'année écoulée, la Revue écrivait: "Notre forme politique nouvelle est un chaos, et nous ne savons d'où doit venir le souffle qui va se mouvoir à sa surface.'" De Broglie refers to E. Forcade, 'L'Historien et le Héros de la Révolution de février,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 July 1849, and *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 January 1849, Introduction à la nouvelle période de la Revue, 1 January 1849.

¹³⁸ Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p72.

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p71.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p72.

¹⁴¹ Albert de Broglie, 'De la constitution de 1848 au point de vue de la situation politique,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 September 1848, quoted in Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p72: 'C'est la répression avant tout que le public demande aujourd'hui.'

conservative royalist journals, urged all monarchist parties to put aside their differences and stand united against the revolutionary cause.¹⁴² As revealed in de Geoffroy's article on Courbet, the fear of revolution and socialism characterised much of the conservative pessimism expressed in such journals during the period. The elections for the presidency of the republic took place on 10 and 11 December 1848 and the *Revue* supported Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's candidature, which it hoped would bring 'a condemnation of what was created since 24 February and the dawn of a better future.'¹⁴³ Like Adolphe Thiers and many other prominent monarchists who attempted to pool conservative opinion and influence at that time, Buloz thought that Louis-Napoleon could instil the required social and political order but could be easily manipulated.¹⁴⁴ Numerous chronicles in the *Revue* explained that what the men of the journal saw in Louis-Napoleon was not the heir of an heroic name but a 'symbol of authority.'¹⁴⁵ They feared socialism to such an extent that,

¹⁴² Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, pp74-77. See also *ibid*, p80.

¹⁴³ See *ibid*, p81: "une condamnation de ce qui s'était fait depuis le 24 février et l'aurore d'un meilleur avenir."

¹⁴⁴ See *ibid*, pp81-82.

¹⁴⁵ See *ibid*, p83. See also *ibid*, pp73-74, where de Broglie explains that the *Revue*, which during the last days of the July Monarchy had declared the merits of the strict censorship laws of 1835, supported many of the strict regulations introduced and re-introduced under the presidency. The journal approved of the restrictions imposed on certain essential liberties, as well as the steps taken to squash the political clubs, which the editors considered to be mainly responsible for the violence and chaos of the insurrectional days. The journal also approved of the reinstatement of the legislation that put an end to the complete liberty of the press. Whilst it fully acknowledged that the press should have political influence, the *Revue* claimed that complete press liberty threatened the security and basic freedom of citizens. Buloz, who was only too aware of the growing power of the press in political matters, hoped that such legal restrictions would lead to the demise of left-wing periodicals. De Broglie quotes Buloz, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Chronique, 1 October 1851: 'Cette époque s'est faite, nous le disons sans amertume, mais sans vanité, par la presse et avec la presse: nous n'avons pas les yeux fermés sur les fâcheuses conséquences qu'il est possible d'attribuer au libre emploi de ce puissant instrument de la pensée moderne; nous croyons pourtant que le mal est ici presque inséparable du bien, comme il l'est dans mille autres endroits de la vie humaine et de la vie sociale, et nous n'hésitons pas à maintenir que la somme du bien dépasse celle du mal. C'est pourquoi nous regardons la liberté de la presse comme l'une des institutions essentielles de ce temps-ci, et nous ne lui souhaitons de limites que parce qu'on a trop éprouvé qu'au règne de la liberté illimitée succédait infailliblement et plus tôt que plus tard l'abolition plus ou moins complète de la liberté régulière.'

after Louis-Napoleon's election to the presidency, they were adamant that amnesty should not be granted to the prisoners convicted for their participation in the June Days.¹⁴⁶

The editorship of the *Revue* thus shared the fear of left-wing agitation expressed in de Geoffroy's article on Courbet. Like de Geoffroy, the journal supported the capitalist and bourgeois values condemned by socialism, values thought by many conservatives to be under threat from the numerous social theories and initiatives advanced by the February Revolution. As Gabriel de Broglie notes, 'the *Revue* feared the rise of socialism even more than the Republic'; it was 'the defender of businessmen, the bourgeoisie and the wealthy' and denounced social theories that its editorship believed were behind the socialist and revolutionary tendencies of the time.¹⁴⁷ The journal published a great number of articles on this subject between 1848 and 1851, claiming that many social theories were a threat to society and order.¹⁴⁸ Some articles blamed the provisional government for having encouraged socialist 'experiments' such as the national workshops, which completely failed to ameliorate the working class and simply provided guinea pigs for the experiments of

¹⁴⁶ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Chronique, 1 January 1848, quoted in Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p73: "Accorder l'amnistie dans les circonstances où nous sommes, ce serait vouloir célébrer l'installation de la présidence par une largesse dont la société honnête et tranquille paierait tous les frais."

¹⁴⁷ See Gabriel de Broglie, *Histoire politique de la Revue des Deux Mondes de 1829 à 1979*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1979, p74: 'Plus encore que la République, la Revue s'effrayait de la montée du socialisme. Devenue le défenseur des hommes d'affaires, des bourgeois et des possédants, elle prenait à coeur leurs intérêts et dénonçait "les théories sociales" qu'elle qualifiait de "rêveries vieilles comme le monde." Les très nombreux articles parus dans la Revue entre 1848 et 1851 sur ce sujet témoignent de l'intérêt qu'elle portait à ces questions et de la crainte qui l'envahissait devant les aspirations encore confuses du mouvement socialiste.'

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid*, p74. Here, de Broglie refers to numerous issues of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in particular the chronicles of March, May and June of 1848, the chronicles between 15 February 1849 and 1 June 1849, and the chronicles of 15 January 1850, 1 September 1850 and 1 July 1851.

schemers.¹⁴⁹ De Broglie refers to J.-J. Baude's articles on the 'Ouvriers et les Ateliers Nationaux,' published on 1 May and 1 July 1848, and Michel Chevalier's study on the 'Question des Travailleurs,' published on 15 March 1848, as examples of anti-socialist articles accurately reflecting the journal's view.¹⁵⁰ Yet, two sensational articles written by the eminent statesman Thomas Robert Bugeaud particularly characterise the opinions of the *Revue*'s editorship. These articles, published on 1 June and 15 July 1848, directly challenge and condemn the socialist views of those like Proudhon, 'who have the unbelievable audacity to declare that property is theft.'¹⁵¹ At that time, various different strands of socialism argued that the state should adopt the communist principle of equal distribution when managing every aspect of the country's resources and production. Like all those associated with the *Revue*, Bugeaud strongly opposed such communist ideas which, he insisted, would lead only to chaos and bloodshed.¹⁵² Yet, whilst the *Revue* opposed what it saw as the subversive and selfish appropriation of social theories by socialism and communism, the journal nevertheless claimed to be in favour of theories that genuinely sought to help the working class. The journal claimed to have been the organ of various

¹⁴⁹ De Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, p75: 'Elle [la Revue] condamnait leurs expériences: les ateliers nationaux étaient pour elle un retour aux jurandes et aux corporations du Moyen Age abolies par la révolution de 1789. Ils n'apportaient aucune amélioration aux conditions de vie de la classe ouvrière, instrument docile aux mains d'intrigants.' De Broglie refers to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, chronicles of 1 May and 1 July 1848.

¹⁵⁰ See De Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, p75.

¹⁵¹ Maréchal Bugeaud, 'Les Socialistes et le travail en commun,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 July 1848, quoted in Gabriel de Broglie, 1979, pp75-76: 'Je demanderai aux hommes qui ont l'incroyable audace de proclamer que la propriété est un vol, si le prix de la semaine ou du mois du simple ouvrier n'est pas quelque chose de sacré? Ils me répondront certainement qu'il n'y a rien de plus sacré au monde. Eh bien! Le travail des mois, des années, des siècles, qui a constitué la propriété ce qu'elle est, n'est-il pas aussi respectable que le travail d'une semaine ou d'un mois? Cessez donc vos blasphèmes contre la propriété; au lieu de dire que le premier qui a clos un champ et l'a défriché était un fou ou un scélérat, bénissez-le, honorez-le, respectez son oeuvre; car, sans cela, l'espèce humaine aurait péri, ou clairsemée sur le sol, elle serait plongée dans la plus profonde misère.'

¹⁵² Maréchal Bugeaud, 'Les Socialistes et le travail en commun,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 July 1848, quoted in Gabriel de Broglie, 1979, p76: "'Le communisme pourra bien faire verser des torrents de sang, il ne s'établira jamais''"; "'c'est le délire absolu de l'esprit et du coeur, c'est le chaos, c'est la mort.'"

social theories well before the February Revolution, publishing what it considered to be profound and sincere studies concerning the progress of society and humanity. Refusing to grant socialism a monopoly on the problem of the workers, the journal declared: ‘The *Revue* is concerned with the progress of the human mind, the development of industry and the amelioration of the working classes.’¹⁵³ The editors insisted that the journal could not be blamed for the dangerous and destructive motives behind social theories it had previously published, and whose lyrical expressions of apparently serious studies turned out to be empty and impractical panacea.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nouvelle période, 1831-48, quoted in de Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, p77: “‘La *Revue* s’est préoccupée des progrès de l’esprit humain, du développement de l’industrie et de l’amélioration des classes laborieuses.’”

¹⁵⁴ See de Broglie, *ibid*, 1979, p77, which quotes the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nouvelle période, 1831-48. On this point, it is interesting to note that the *Revue*, which had published articles on positivism during the July Monarchy, published an article by the famous positivist Émile Littré in 1849. Clearly, the journal viewed Littré’s positivism very differently to Courbet’s. Whereas the *Revue* connected Courbet’s work with socialism and subversiveness, the journal associated Littré’s work with conservation and order. When we examine Littré’s article, we can see that it strongly promotes the biological basis of order in positivism. Entitled ‘Du développement historique de la logique,’ the article presents a positivist view of historical development, stating that ‘L’hérédité physiologique . . . est une des causes de l’histoire’; see Émile Littré, ‘Du développement historique de la logique,’ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 April 1849, p100. Littré argues that ‘il restait à transformer en science les connaissances historiques,’ which become positive through the application of biological order in Comte’s theories of history and social science; see Littré, *ibid*, 1849, pp93-94. Littré insists that: ‘la science sociale s’unit profondément avec biologie, à savoir le développement des aptitudes humaines par voie d’hérédité’; see Littré, *ibid*, 1849, p100.

VI: Champfleury: the order of social reform and physiognomical representation as 'history'

When it comes to Courbet's portrayal of common life, customs and social environment, not all criticism surrounding the Salon of 1850-1 is as damning as de Geoffroy's. One critique written that year which fully supports these aspects of the artist's work is Champfleury's article 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' published in the conservative newspaper, the *Messenger de l'Assemblée*, on 25 and 26 February 1851. In this article, Champfleury commends the representation of common nature in Courbet's painting entitled *Enterrement à Ornans* on the basis that such representation is 'historical.' By 'historical,' he means that the painting accurately portrays contemporary society as the historical present, the current stage reached by society on its evolutionary path of progress through history.¹⁵⁵ This process of historical development is for Champfleury a continuous process of physical and moral improvement, a process in which the physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of people evolves with the changing conditions of society. In Champfleury's view, the *Enterrement* accurately depicts the physical and moral condition of contemporary society, the common nature and customs shaped by the prevailing social conditions. The painting offers an honest depiction of the times through the physiognomical representation of common types and illuminates both laudable and degenerative effects of the social climate for all to see. Champfleury responds to the charges made by those such as

¹⁵⁵ Champfleury's view of history is discussed by Amal Asfour in her book *Champfleury, Meaning in the Popular Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2001. Asfour locates the writer's view of history only in the context of popular art, not positivism: 'If contemporary painting can deal seriously with the themes of everyday reality, making use of the principles of popular art, then it can become history painting . . . Essentially, Champfleury advocates for modern painting a contemporaneity that follows the example of traditional forms of expression.' Asfour also notes that, for Champfleury, popular art had strong communicative power and a didactic role in spreading literacy and knowledge. Again, however, whilst Asfour comments upon the moral basis of this didactic role assigned to art by Champfleury, she does not explore its philosophical basis in positivism. See Asfour, *ibid*, 2001, p162.

de Geofroy and categorically denies that Courbet's painting is socialist. Yet, whilst it dissociates Courbet's work from any political programme of reform, Champfleury's carefully crafted argument connects the historical nature of the artist's work to a positivist process of reform. As we shall now see, this positivist reform is considered far more effective and enduring than socialism, whose practical social effects are seen by the critic to be fleeting and rapidly on the decline.

Champfleury's article points out that numerous well-known critics of differing political interests have, like a coalition of parties, rallied against Courbet and the principles he adopts in his work.¹⁵⁶ The exhibition of the *Enterrement* at the Salon of 1850-1 is causing much controversy, the writer says, particularly among critics and spectators who fear that such works are a threat to conservative artistic and political values.¹⁵⁷ Courbet has been accused of various artistic and political transgressions that, according to the artist's enemies, are clearly evident in the painting. In Champfleury's opinion, these transgressions are merely superficial symptoms of a deeper complaint. He explains that some critics disapprove of the large scale of the image, complaining that the genre subject should not be

¹⁵⁶ Champfleury, 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' *Le Messager de l'Assemblée*, 25 February 1851; reprinted with slight changes in Champfleury, *Grandes figures d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, 1861, (later text cited here), p231: 'J'ai écouté les propos de la foule devant le tableau de l'*Enterrement à Ornans*, j'ai eu le courage de lire les niaiseries qu'on a imprimées à propos de cette peinture, j'ai écrit cet article. De même qu'en politique on voit d'étrange associations de partis opposés se réunissant pour combattre un ennemi commun, de même les critiques réputés les plus audacieux sont entrés dans les rangs des sots et ont tiré sur la réalité.'

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, pp232-233: '*La patrie est en danger!* s'écrie le *Constitutionnel* à propos du tableau de M. Courbet. Aussitôt tous les curieux de Paris courent au danger, qui est l'*Enterrement à Ornans*; ils reviennent du Salon et content le scandale à tous ceux qui veulent l'entendre. "Les Barbares sont entrés dans l'exposition." Ils s'écrient que M. Courbet est le fils de la République démocratique de 1848; ils voudraient mettre un crêpe sur l'Apollon du Belvédère; ils proposent de fermer la salle des antiques. Si on les écoutait, les membres de l'Institut devraient s'asseoir sur leurs fauteuils, comme autrefois les sénateurs sur leurs chaises curules, et mourir fièrement, frappés par les sabots boueux des sauvages réalistes.'

accorded such importance.¹⁵⁸ Others, he says, object to the appearance of the bourgeois figures of Ornans, who appear inelegant and resemble the caricatures of Daumier.¹⁵⁹ Some romantics ridiculously find the image dispiriting, lamenting that Courbet has chosen subjects who are ugly and ‘simple ignoramus.’¹⁶⁰ Some fear that Courbet’s work threatens art’s traditional indulgence in the finery and ostentatious decoration associated with images of eighteenth-century romantic customs.¹⁶¹ For others again, Courbet’s ugly and caricatural manner of representing people is clear evidence of the artist’s socialist activity.¹⁶²

Champfleury indicates that there is one core complaint underlying all these objections. He reveals that all the objections to the *Enterrement* made by the critical community surrounding the Salon of 1850-1 concern the positivist manner in which the artist represents common nature. The Salon critics disapprove of the way in which Courbet presents contemporary bourgeois society as a degenerative environment in which to live, an environment that damages the physical and moral health of ordinary people. The artist presents this social decay using physiognomical representation, revealing the effects of the prevailing social conditions upon the physical, mental and moral constitution of commoners, as well as the customs through which their constitution is expressed in

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, p231: ‘Les uns l’ont trouvé trop grand et ont envoyé le peintre à l’école des pattes-de-mouche de M. Meissonnier.’

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, p231: ‘D’autres se sont plaint que les bourgeois d’Ornans manquaient d’élégance et ressemblaient aux caricatures de Daumier.’

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p232: ‘Quelques romantiques refroidis ont déclamé contre le laid comme de simples rienologues.’

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p232: ‘Les amateurs de rubans passés et de fard ranci qui chantent les exploits des filles du dix-huitième siècle, tremblent devant les habits noirs, et s’écrient: “Le monde est perdu, il n’y a plus ni pompons, ni mouches, ni faveurs roses.”’

¹⁶² *ibid*, p232: ‘Quelques-uns affirment que le peintre est un chef de bandes socialistes.’

behaviour. In short, the *Enterrement* offends much of the critical community because it is an honest depiction of the ill effects of contemporary bourgeois society.

In the eyes of the Salon critics, Champfleury remarks, the *Enterrement* reveals only ‘base truths’ about human nature.¹⁶³ He provides a quotation that, according to him, was well-known during the Empire and which epitomised academic hostility towards the art of the Dutch and Flemish masters, artists who also represented the base truths of the physical and moral nature of commoners and their customs. Champfleury despairs at the stagnancy of the academic view expressed in this quotation, which suggests to him that art criticism has not changed in forty years. Although referring to the work of the Dutch and Flemish artists in 1810, this quotation contains the same criticism of common nature being hailed upon Courbet’s work forty years later. In 1851, as in 1810, the quotation reads, “‘all one sees in these paintings is of such bad taste that one recognises in them only nature in its degradation. The male figures are ugly and badly done, their suits are gross, their houses tacky. One only finds in them a base truth.’”¹⁶⁴

Here, then, Champfleury identifies the representation of degenerative common nature as the central cause of the hostility towards Courbet’s work shown by Salon critics in 1850-1. The writer says that the hostile reaction to the *Enterrement* in the press has also caused Courbet’s subjects, the ordinary bourgeois inhabitants of Ornans, to become anxious

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p232.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p232: ‘Enfin, l’opinion des badauds peut se résumer dans cette phrase connue qui florissait sous l’Empire: “Tout ce qu’on voit dans ces peintures est d’un si mauvais choix qu’on n’y reconnaît la nature que dans sa dégradation. Les figures d’hommes sont laides et mal faites, leurs habits grossiers, leurs maisons mesquines. On n’y trouve qu’une vérité basse.” L’académicien qui parlait ainsi en 1810 entendait désigner Teniers, Ostade et Brawer. Les critiques de 1850 n’ont rien changé aux arguments de l’académicien. O misères!’

over their agreement to appear in the picture. Champfleury conveys this anxiety through detailed physical and moral descriptions of the figures in the painting, illuminating their individual and social characters, their role within the community life of Ornans and the particular ways in which they each show their anxiety. He uses considerable literary skill to bring Ornans and the anxiety of its people to life in a critical, interesting but comic way. At the same time, he conveys the strength with which the artist has captured community life in the *Enterrement* through the depth of his physical and moral insight. This insight has been acquired through the artist's physiognomical understanding of the figures, which 'have lent, for a moment, their bodies and their clothes to his brushes':

The inhabitants of Ornans tremble on reading in the newspapers that they could be later suspected of complicity with the monster, for having lent for a moment their bodies and clothes to his brushes. . . .

Father Cardet, who was at the funeral in a brown suit, short pants and blue stockings, runs around to find his colleague Secrètan, who lives in the Rue de la Peteuse. These two decent vinegrowers detached from the affairs of this world, who do not read the papers, are amazed that people make so much noise about the cocked hat of one and the grey suit of the other. . . .

The parish priest, Mr Bonnet, is displeased that one should make fun of his vergers like that, because they are associated with the Church, and it is never right to ridicule things connected to the clergy. Why have the newspapers not mentioned Cauchi, the sexton, or Colart, the vinegrower and crossbearer? It is because they are not at all ridiculous, whereas the red nose of Pierre Clément reveals prolonged conversations with the bottle. His Reverence thinks that the big hats on rent from the hatter Cuenot for funerals are the reason that no one points out Etienne Nodier, who carries the corpse with father Crevot.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, pp233-235: 'Les habitants d'Ornans frémissent en lisant dans les gazettes qu'ils peuvent être plus tard soupçonnés de complicité avec le *monstre*, pour avoir prêté un moment leur figure et leurs habits à ses pinceaux. . . .

' . . . Le père Cardet, qui était à l'enterrement en habit marron, en culottes courtes et en bas bleus, court trouver son confrère Secrètan, qui demeure dans la rue de la Peteuse, et ces deux braves vigneron, revenus des affaires de ce monde, qui ne lisent pas les journaux, s'étonnent qu'on fasse tant de bruit à propos du chapeau à cornes de l'un et de l'habit gris de l'autre. . . .

' . . . Le curé de la paroisse, M. Bonnet, n'aime pas qu'on se moque ainsi de ses bedeaux, car ils appartiennent un peu à l'Eglise, et il ne faut jamais donner à rire de ce qui touche au clergé. Pourquoi les journaux n'ont-ils pas fait mention de Cauchi le sacristain, ni du vigneron Colart, le porte-croix? Parce qu'ils n'ont rien de ridicule, tandis que le nez rouge de Pierre Clément indique de trop longues conversations avec la bouteille. M. le curé pense que les grands chapeaux, que loue le chapelier Cuenot pour les enterrements, sont cause qu'on ne s'occupe pas d'Etienne Nodier, qui porte le corps avec le père Crevot.'

The above quotation is only a small part of Champfleury's lengthy description of the reaction of the people of Ornans to the scandal caused by the *Enterrement*. The description is based upon a very vivid impression of town life that the writer has gleaned from Courbet's representation of the physical appearance of those attending the funeral. The writer defends Courbet's work by trying to demonstrate the power of the artist's physiognomical insight into ordinary social life. He has already noted that many critics object to the physical and moral representation of the figures, on the grounds that such representation is socialist. Yet, for Champfleury, the figures in the painting reveal the order of community life and customs, and this proves that the artist is not a socialist. In the writer's opinion, the physiognomy of the figures reveals their relative social positions and individual characters, as well as the pattern of life resulting from the social structure they constitute. The painting signifies order rather than disorder or subversion and this order is so strongly portrayed by Courbet that Champfleury gleans from it the characteristic 'small town talk' generated by the reaction of the various figures to the scandal. The writer is extremely concerned to convey this sense of physical and moral order expressed in the painting because it is important for him to prove that the artist is not a socialist. Champfleury explains that he has 'tried to paint a picture of the small-town talk caused by the figures in the *Enterrement*. It was more important than one might think, in order to establish the position of the types in the painting of Mr Courbet, whom everybody absolutely wants to baptise *socialist*.'¹⁶⁶

Champfleury proceeds to launch his positivist defense of Courbet's work and completely denies that the artist's work is political in any way. He acknowledges that there

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp235-236: 'J'ai essayé de peindre les propos de petite ville à l'occasion des personnages de l'*Enterrement à Ornans*. Il était plus important qu'on ne le pense d'établir la position des types du tableau de M. Courbet, qu'on veut absolument sacrer *socialiste*.'

is a widespread fear of socialism, communism, Saint-Simonianism and egalitarian principles, but categorically repudiates claims that the *Enterrement* demonstrates the artist's socialist intent.¹⁶⁷ The *Casseurs de pierres* has created similar fears, although the mere representation of stonebreakers does not indicate a desire to improve working-class life.¹⁶⁸ Champfleury clearly wishes to dissociate Courbet's work from radical left-wing politics to persuade his conservative readers that the artist does not threaten social order, and he rejects the 'dangerous fantasies' of critics who try to reduce art to a political tool.¹⁶⁹ Yet, in order to make a credible case for the non-political status of Courbet's work, the writer also needs to shift, or clarify, the artist's position within a radical brand of positivist art criticism that had developed over the previous three years, the start of which coincided with the rush of journalistic activity following the February Revolution in 1848. This brand of art criticism is evident in the articles of Pierre Hawke and Max Buchon, left-wing radicals for whom Courbet's paintings signalled the need for revolution and the destruction of the existing social order. These articles represent precisely the kind of criticism that portrays the artist as a socialist subversive, a political activist, and are partly responsible for the fear of his work expressed by conservatives, many of whom belong to Champfleury's readership. Champfleury's task is to emphasise the relationship between Courbet's paintings and positivism, to cast these images in a different critical light without reducing their impact, and to present social reform as a 'natural,' inevitable and non-political process of physical and moral development. In short, Champfleury needs to convincingly connect Courbet's paintings to a peaceful and enduring process of positivist reform.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p236: 'Aujourd'hui il est convenu de rechercher si la plume du romancier est entachée de communisme, si la mélodie est saint-simonienne, si le pinceau est égalitaire. Il n'y a pas l'ombre de socialisme dans l'*Enterrement à Ornans*; . . .'

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p236: 'il ne suffit pas de peindre des *casseurs de pierres* pour me montrer un vif désir d'améliorer le sort des classes ouvrières.'

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p236: 'Ces fantaisies dangereuses tendraient à classer les artistes par partis et à les faire réclamer tantôt par celui-ci tantôt par celui-là.'

When Champfleury denies that Courbet is a socialist, he specifically dissociates the artist's work from 'political' forms of socialism or from any other violent, radical or subversive form of left-wing politics. He insists that artists do not benefit from being political because their works, like the political doctrines they stand for, very often have no lasting impact upon society. Such artists, he says, quickly become outdated because they only represent passing events. If Courbet were a socialist painter, his work 'would pass as quickly as the name of the doctrine itself, which is already much less resounding than in the first two years of the Revolution.'¹⁷⁰ Carefully developing his argument, Champfleury insists that Courbet's work is completely apolitical, dissociated from all political parties, but that, in order to understand his work, it is necessary to re-examine the social ideas with which many Salon critics associate his paintings – the ideas that suggest his socialist connections.¹⁷¹ The writer warns his conservative readers that he is about to consider Courbet's work in connection with social ideas connected to some forms of socialism, but still asserts the non-political status the artist's paintings. Here, Champfleury's position is very similar to that of the editors of the *Démocrate franc-comtois* who, a few years previously, advocated a non-political form of socialism to redress what they saw as the physical and moral decay of the time. As we saw in the last chapter of this thesis, the *Démocrate franc-comtois* argued that its social goals would not be realised through politics, but through a teleological process of reform driven by society's inherent need for physical and moral improvement. Similarly, Champfleury argues that Courbet's work is far more effective than political art and that the *Enterrement* will have an enduring effect upon

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, p236: 'Malheur aux artistes qui veulent enseigner par leurs oeuvres, ou s'associer aux actes d'un gouvernement quelconque. Ils peuvent flatter pendant cinq minutes les passions de la foule; mais ils ne rendent que des *actualités*. Si le socialisme n'était au fond qu'une nouvelle forme de libéralisme, c'est-à-dire une sorte d'*opposition* avec d'autres habits, quelles chances aurait un peintre socialiste? Son oeuvre passerait aussi vite que l'appellation elle-même de la doctrine, déjà moins bruyante que dans les deux premières années de la Révolution.'

society because its expression of common nature is a response to society's inherent need for physical and moral improvement.

How exactly does Champfleury present the positivist nature of Courbet's work? He claims that the *Enterrement* facilitates reform because it is an 'historical' a form of representation, a physiognomical means of recording the physical and moral condition of contemporary society, which constitutes the current stage in a process of historical development. The painting is nothing more than an 'historical painting,' he says, a record of the funeral custom in Ornans: 'it is simply, as I have seen it printed on the posters, when Mr. Courbet exhibited his paintings in Besançon and Dijon, the HISTORICAL Painting of a funeral at Ornans.'¹⁷² The writer maintains that all contemporary types are historically significant and worthy of representation, and he whole-heartedly endorses the depiction of commoners.¹⁷³ He also denies the claims, made by critics such as Dauger and de Geofroy, that Courbet glorifies ugliness for the sake of it. In Champfleury's opinion, the ugliness depicted in the painting has not been glorified or exaggerated in any way.¹⁷⁴ The *Enterrement* is historical rather than ugly because it accurately documents important features of contemporary society. Courbet closely observes his subjects and uses

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p236: 'Cependant, je veux rentrer dans ce puits d'où ne peut sortir la vérité, pour montrer que M. Courbet n'est pas si socialiste qu'on veut le dire. Non pas que je pense le rattacher à un autre parti, ce qui serait aussi fatal au peintre et à ses oeuvres futures.'

¹⁷² *ibid*, p237: 'C'est simplement, comme je l'ai vu imprimé sur des affiches, quand M. Courbet exposait ses tableaux à Besançon et à Dijon, le *Tableau HISTORIQUE d'un enterrement à Ornans*.'

¹⁷³ Champfleury, 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' *Le Messager de l'Assemblée*, 26 February 1851: 'On dira encore que les bourgeois et les échevins sont des gens importants et distingués; mais le maire d'Ornans, l'adjoint d'Ornans, le substitut du juge de paix d'Ornans, le curé d'Ornans, le chien d'un riche rentier d'Ornans, n'ont-ils pas l'importance historique des bourgeois et des échevins?'

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*: 'Quant à la laideur prétendue des bourgeois d'Ornans, elle n'a rien d'exagéré, rien de faux, elle est vraie, elle est simple. C'est la laideur de la province qu'il importe de distinguer de la laideur de Paris.'

physiognomy to reveal the physical and moral condition of contemporary social types, such as the vergers in the painting, who have developed red noses through their habitual wine drinking. This, Champfleury insists, is a physiognomical fact of this particular social type; it is ‘the decoration of drunkards’ and reveals the vergers’ joyous and healthy lifestyle.¹⁷⁵ Courbet merely represents this fact and is not attempting to portray vergers as disgusting or make them the subject of scandal.¹⁷⁶ The vergers are not ugly because their appearance is pleasing, amusing and even uplifting.¹⁷⁷ Champfleury claims that many critics, confusing the vergers with magistrates, are outraged to see magistrates depicted as drunkards. The confusion, he says, arises because Courbet represents the vergers in costume resembling that of magistrates [see Figure 8].¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he insists that only someone with a poor working knowledge of physiognomy could mistake a verger for a magistrate, and Courbet does not make such errors.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*: ‘Tout le monde s’écrie que les bedeaux sont ignobles. Parce qu’il y a un peu de vin dans leurs trognes . . . Voyez la belle affaire! Le vin, c’est la joie, c’est la vie, c’est la santé; le vin aime à donner un brevet de capacité à ceux qui l’aiment, et il colore d’un rouge puissant le nez des buveurs; c’est la décoration des ivrognes.’

¹⁷⁶ See footnote 175.

¹⁷⁷ Champfleury, ‘L’Enterrement d’Ormans,’ *Le Messager de l’Assemblée*, 26 February 1851: ‘Jamais un nez rouge n’a été un objet de tristesse: au contraire, il inspire la joie; ceux-là qui ont le nez rouge ne baissent pas la tête en signe de honte, mais ils la relèvent plutôt, convaincus qu’ils inspirent de la joie à leurs concitoyens. . . .
‘. . . Ces bedeaux m’amusent singulièrement, ils me réjouissent, donc ils ne sont pas laids. Non, tu n’es pas laid, Pierre Clément, avec ton nez plus rouge que ta robe; console-toi, Jean-Baptiste Muselier, de ce que disent des folliculaires pinacarques; entre au cabaret et bois une bouteille de plus!’

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*: ‘Ces bedeaux sont vêtus de robes rouges et de toques comme des présidents de la cour de cassation; et c’est là ce qui a indigné quelques gens sérieux, qui, dans leur erreur, s’indignaient de voir des nez aussi bibassiers à des *magistrats*.’

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*: ‘Mais on ne se trompe pas de la sorte: les juges en France, quoi qu’en dehors des tribunaux, ils ne soient point plaisans, n’offrent pas de ces figures vineuses où l’oeil et l’oreille ne paraissent pas s’occuper des choses extérieures, mais semblent prêter grande attention à des fumées intérieures. Chaque profession a son nez; et il faut être bien pauvre d’idées physiognomoniques pour donner le nez d’un bedeau à un magistrat.’

Champfleury begins to present the *Enterrement* as a form of social critique rather than a mere historical record. This critique is inherent in the positivist nature of the painting, which records physical and moral decay for the sake of social reform. The painting is interpreted as being severely critical of the business community within the bourgeoisie and, to add weight to this, Champfleury likens the painting to the earlier work of Balzac. This comparison with Balzac's work is an important part of Champfleury's interpretation of the *Enterrement* because it develops our understanding of the positivist and medical scientific ideas behind the critic's approach to Courbet's work. Champfleury explains that Balzac closely observed and represented contemporary social types, exposing the typically 'vicious' nature of businessmen: 'if the vicious people outnumbered the virtuous, it was society's fault, not his, and, as he claimed to depict real society, he was not permitted to change businessmen into shepherds.'¹⁸⁰ Courbet's work is similar, representing the bourgeois in the particular circumstances of their social existence and exposing the greedy, selfish nature of businessmen, which is evident in their 'ugly' appearance.¹⁸¹

Comparing Courbet's work with Balzac's, Champfleury highlights the artist's use of widely understood physiognomical codes to portray and criticise the physical and moral nature of bourgeois types. Courbet draws upon conventions of social classification that had developed for centuries, and which Balzac used so powerfully to classify and criticise certain Parisian types of his time. Judith Wechsler has noted that Balzac, in his *Physiologie du mariage*, explicitly acknowledged his debt to the famous Swiss physiognomer Johann

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*: 'si les vicieux étaient supérieurs en nombre aux vertueux, c'était plutôt la faute de la société que la sienne; que, comme il avait la prétention de peindre la société réelle, il ne lui était pas permis de changer les hommes d'affaires en porteurs de houlettes.'

¹⁸¹ *ibid*. Champfleury criticises the physical and moral nature indicated by 'la laideur de l'homme d'affaires' in Courbet's painting.

Caspar Lavater.¹⁸² Balzac used and referred to Moreau de la Sarthe's edition of Lavater's work (either the 1806 or 1820 edition), which, as Caroline Warman has clearly shown, developed the physiognomer's work in a medical context.¹⁸³ Wechsler points out that Moreau extended Lavater's ideas about the relationship between physiognomy and professions or métiers; whereas Lavater had been mainly concerned with inborn characteristics, Moreau developed the study of those that were acquired.¹⁸⁴ This was particularly useful for Balzac who believed that physiognomy provided insight into 'the destined course of [a person's] life.'¹⁸⁵ Balzac considered that social position shaped a large part of a person's physical and moral nature, that the moral or immoral motives behind professional activity largely determined the course of a person's life or 'destiny,' and that such destiny was revealed in a person's physical appearance.¹⁸⁶ As we have already seen, this view of a socially determined course of life was taken up systematically by leading positivists such as Comte and Saint-Simon, who saw society and its development as

¹⁸² See Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, p26. Wechsler notes that, according to Balzac, 'Lavater's Physiognomy has created real science, which has taken its place at last among human knowledge.'

¹⁸³ Caroline Warman, 'What's Behind a Face? Lavater and the Anatomists,' in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005, pp94-108.

¹⁸⁴ See Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, p25. Wechsler refers to Moreau de la Sarthe's chapter 'Observations sur les signes physiologiques des professions': 'Each métier, each profession, should in general be regarded as a particular education, continued through life, which develops, exercises, strengthens certain organs, and establishes a specific relationship between the individual and his environment. In general, the different professions announce themselves, either by the condition of the forehead and eye, or the state and configuration of the wings of the nose and mouth, according to whether, in the exercise of those professions, exalted meditation, observation, profound and lasting feelings predominate, or the superficial attention, quick perceptions and small passions of worldly people.'

¹⁸⁵ Wechsler, *ibid*, 1982, p26. Wechsler refers to Balzac, *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*, as cited in Fernand Baldensperger, 'Les Théories de Lavater dans la littérature Française'; *Etudes d'histoire littéraire*, Paris, 1910, p77: 'The laws of physiognomy are exact, not only as they apply to character, but also as they apply to the destined course of life.'

¹⁸⁶ Wechsler, *ibid*, 1982, p26.

predictable evolutionary processes. A number of commentators have noted the strong connections between Balzac's ideas and those of both Comte and Saint-Simon.¹⁸⁷

Champfleury highlights the physiognomical and positivist aspects of the *Enterrement* and compares the conception of the painting to the conception of Balzac's work, which was informed by ideas developed within medical science. Balzac drew upon the work of Moreau de la Sarthe and asserted that the physiognomical appearance of social types indicated the condition of their physiology, which was governed by the circumstances of their social existence. As Wechsler notes, Balzac was mainly interested in bourgeois types and was fascinated by the effect of professions and customs upon physiology and physiognomy. He described the numerous strata of the bourgeoisie in great detail, providing a report on the physiology, habits and inclinations of the genus.¹⁸⁸ His social observations were made from the perspective of medical science and he frequently related physiognomical appearance to phrenology, anatomy and physiology. As described by him, the physiology of people was inseparable from their social behaviour and customs, which were governed by the social environment in which they lived, including the very material structures of the cities that contained social life. Wechsler points out that, in Balzac's view, the physiology of people was so closely connected to society that it even found expression in the buildings, houses and streets of the cities. Michael Gamper has also commented upon this aspect of Balzac's work, which effects a conversion of physiognomy into 'the art of

¹⁸⁷ See Walter M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, An Essay in Intellectual History*, Kennikat Press, 1972 p162. As Simon notes, the eminent literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière discerned in Balzac's work ideas comparable to Comte's 'scientific' analysis of life; see Ferdinand Brunetière, *Honoré de Balzac*, Philadelphia and London, 1906, p164 and pp197-199. The critic Philippe Bertault suggests that Comte's early essays are a source for Balzac's ideas about society, reform and religion; see Philippe Bertault, *Balzac et la religion*, Paris, 1942, p409, p410, pp412-416, p419.

¹⁸⁸ Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, p29.

reading the appearance of the city.¹⁸⁹ In this sense, for Balzac, the city was itself alive and physiological; Paris was a living being whose buildings and streets pulsated like cells and tissue, forming an organism that lives, thinks and feels:

Paris is a sentient being, every individual, every bit of a house is a lobe in the cellular tissue of that great harlot whose head, heart and unpredictable behaviour are perfectly familiar to them.¹⁹⁰

According to Balzac, as Wechsler also shows, the city was imbued with such human qualities and exhibited its own physiognomical appearance, the appearance of society and the destined course of social life: ‘the streets of Paris have human qualities, and such a physiognomy as leaves us with impressions against which we can put up no resistance.’¹⁹¹

In Balzac’s opinion, the working and professional life of the bourgeoisie characterised the physical and moral character of Parisian society, the physiology of the city, and was evident in the physiognomy of bourgeois types. Wechsler informs us that with regard to one stratum of the bourgeoisie – the one consisting of ‘the business men, lawyers, barristers, bankers, traders on a grand scale and doctors’ – Balzac ‘agreed with Moreau’s clues to physical, moral and aesthetic consequences of certain professions.’¹⁹² As we can see from Balzac’s *La Fille aux yeux d’or* in the *Comédie Humaine*, the writer had a particularly low opinion of this section of the bourgeoisie:

¹⁸⁹ See Michael Gamper, “‘Er lasst sich nicht lessen’: Physiognomy and the City,’ in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater’s impact on European Culture*, The University of Delaware Press, 2005, pp150-160.

¹⁹⁰ Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, p26. Wechsler refers to Balzac, *History of the Thirteen*, as translated and introduced by Herbert J. Hunt, London, 1978, pp317-318 (first published as *Histoire des treize*, 1831).

¹⁹¹ Wechsler, *ibid*, 1982, p28. Wechsler refers to Balzac, *Ferragus*, as translated by Herbert J. Hunt, London, 1978, p31.

¹⁹² Wechsler, *ibid*, 1982, p29.

What countenance can retain its beauty in the debasing exercise of a profession which compels a man to bear the burden of public miseries, to analyse them, weigh them, appraise them, batten on them? . . . they no longer feel, they merely apply rules which are stultified by particular cases . . . And so their faces present the raw pallor, the unnatural colouring, the lack-lustre eyes with rings round them, the sensual, babbling mouths by which an observant person recognises the symptoms of the deterioration of thought, and its rotation within a narrow circle of ideas calculated to destroy the faculties of the brain and the gift for seeing things broadly, for generalizing and drawing inferences.¹⁹³

This is precisely the kind of analysis that Champfleury provides in his article on the *Enterrement*, when he argues that there is one striking image of physical and moral ugliness in the painting, the image of the businessman. Through his analysis of this image, the writer presents the painting as a form of social critique rather than a mere historical record. In doing so, he connects the painting to a positivist process of social reform, a process that he clearly sees as far more enduring than any political programme. Having denied Courbet's association with political attempts to reform society, attempts that he sees as fleeting and ineffective, Champfleury now presents the *Enterrement* as a powerful and lasting expression of disgust with certain elements of contemporary bourgeois society. He points out with sharp irony that, whilst Courbet's critics find many of the figures in the painting ugly, they overlook the ugliness of the businessman. Yet, the physiognomy of this figure is the result of deplorable values born of the selfish material interests of the bourgeoisie. The businessman is 'so well represented by this figure with a pallid expression, lips as tight as his heart, a dry and cold neatness that indicates meanness in life. There is the portrait of an ugly man, thrifty and prudent, orderly and virtuous. There is ugliness.'¹⁹⁴ This is no exaggeration of ugliness, Champfleury insists, and if the bourgeoisie harbours corruption, it

¹⁹³ Wechsler, *ibid*, 1982, p29. Wechsler refers to Balzac, *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, as translated by Herbert J. Hunt, London, 1978, p310. The *Comédie Humaine* is a collection of around 100 linked stories and novels placed in various settings in which characters reappear.

¹⁹⁴ Champfleury, 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' *Le Messager de l'Assemblée*, 26 February 1851: 'Chose étrange, on dit le plus grand mal de ces bedeaux à la mine réjouissante, et personne n'a songé à entamer la question de la laideur de l'homme d'affaires, si bien représentée par ce personnage à la mine blême, les lèvres serrées comme le coeur, d'une propreté sèche et froide qui indique les

is not the artist's fault. The writer asks his readers, 'is it the painter's fault if material interests, small-town life, sordid egoism and provincial meanness leave an imprint of their claws upon the face, dim the eyes, knit the brow, stupefy the mouth? The bourgeois are like that; Mr. Courbet has painted the bourgeois.'¹⁹⁵ In Champfleury's opinion, this portrayal of bourgeois ugliness is made even more powerful by the artist's inclusion of images of physical and moral beauty, which contrast sharply with the image of the businessman. In particular, the writer associates the physiognomy of the gravedigger with 'the type of the man of the people in his robust beauty.'¹⁹⁶ The gravedigger is a beautiful and robust type because he is completely reconciled with the unaffected nature of his job, his social existence. He 'focuses upon nature' and draws strength from his affinity with death and the insight it affords him into the superficiality and insignificance of wealth and the anxieties about loss that result from it.¹⁹⁷

How, in Champfleury's schema, does Courbet's work actually effect reform?

Champfleury explains that the *Enterrement* has a strong impact upon the feelings of the viewer and captivates its audience by portraying its subject with seriousness and

mesquineries de la vie. Voilà un portrait d'homme laid, économe et prudent, rangé et *vetueux*. Voilà la laideur!

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*: 'M. Courbet peut citer hardiment trois têtes de femmes, ses enfans, le fossoyeur, et bien d'autres figures dans l'enterrement, que les deux bedeaux emporteront la balance et feront déclarer l'enterrement le chef-d'oeuvre du laid. Est-ce la faute du peintre si les intérêts matériels, si la vie de petite ville, si des égoïsmes sordides, si la mesquinerie de province clouent leurs griffes sur la figure, éleignent les yeux, plissent le front, hébètent la bouche. Les bourgeois sont ainsi; M. Courbet a peint des bourgeois.'

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*: 'Le fossoyeur est superbe: un genou en terre, plein de fierté; sa besogne est à moitié faite, il attend la fin des prières du curé. Il n'est ni triste ni gai, cela ne le regarde pas, il ne connaît pas le mort, il connaît le trou. Son regard court à l'horizon du cimetière et s'inquiète de la nature; le fossoyeur a une santé robuste: toujours travaillant à la mort, jamais il n'a pensé à la mort. C'est le type de l'homme du peuple dans sa beauté robuste.'

¹⁹⁷ See footnote 196.

conviction.¹⁹⁸ This seriousness and conviction are directly related to the painting's historical qualities, its physiognomical ability to reveal the physical and moral nature of society in the course of its historical development. Courbet expresses history completely because his physiognomical insight is thorough. The artist is, for example, wholly aware that contemporary costume is in harmony with modern physiognomy and modern beauty, Champfleury says.¹⁹⁹ The impact of these historical qualities upon the viewer constitutes for the critic a process of reform because these qualities create a simple, direct and powerful expression of society that cannot be ignored.²⁰⁰ This impact is augmented by the artist's simple and naïve mode of representation, which startles the viewer. All in all, for Champfleury, the *Enterrement* is a complete and affecting expression of the bourgeoisie at a particular moment in time. He declares that 'the appearance is as captivating as the painting of a great master. The simplicity of the black costumes is like the grandeur of parliaments in red robes by Largillière. It isn't austerity; it is the modern bourgeoisie, full-length, with all its ridiculousness, its ugliness and its beauty.'²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Champfleury, 'L'Enterrement d'Ornans,' *Le Messager de l'Assemblée*, 26 February 1851: 'le réalisme apparaît sérieux et convaincu, ironique et brutal, sincère et plein de poésie. Le livre qui mettra à nu toutes ces friperies orgueilleuses ne tardera pas à paraître: les esprits se remuent de toutes parts.'

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*: 'le costume moderne est en harmonie avec la beauté moderne.'

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *ibid.*: 'De loin, en entrant, l'*Enterrement* vous apparaît comme encadré par une porte; vous êtes surpris comme à la vue de ces naïves images sur bois, taillées par un couteau maladroit, qui se trouvent en tête des assassinats imprimés by Chassignon, rue Git-le-Coeur. L'effet est le même, parce que l'exécution est aussi simple. L'aspect est saisissant comme un tableau de grand maître. La simplicité des costumes noirs a la grandeur des parlements en robes rouges peints par Largillière. Ce n'est pas de l'austérité, c'est la bourgeoisie moderne, en pied, avec ses ridicules, ses laideurs et ses beautés.'

VII: The Party of Order: the context in which Champfleury's views were circulated and consumed

Champfleury's article on Courbet was published on 25 and 26 February 1851 in the *Messenger de l'Assemblée*, a conservative newspaper whose readership was drawn largely from bourgeois sectors of society, the very sectors criticised by the writer in his appraisal of the *Enterrement à Ornans*. As we have seen, this critique was presented as a positivist view of the need to reverse physical and moral decay, to adjust the historical order governing society, rather than a socialist or subversive call for the destruction of the existing social order. Examining the political leanings of the *Messenger* and its editors, we can see why it was so important for Champfleury to present reform as an historical adjustment to social order, as an inevitable adjustment arising from the evolutionary nature of society, rather than the destruction of order itself.²⁰²

²⁰² Champfleury's association of physiognomical order with social stability is not unusual in 1851. He suggests the same in another article published in only the fifth issue of the *Messenger*. In this article, published on 20 February 1851, he reviews 'l'exposition de l'Odéon' on show at the time. Of the works exhibited, the writer pays most attention to those by Mr Corrèard, a relatively new artistic figure at that time. In particular, Champfleury describes the merits of Corrèard's caricatural works, 'les scènes comiques et populaires que M. Corrèard a rendues avec beaucoup de verve dans cinq grands cadres.' Among these five works, there is one that Champfleury finds particularly amusing and praise-worthy, 'Une autre scène peut-être la plus comique, est celle qui représente la confession du tambour-major.' In his opinion, it is the physiognomical aspects of this image that make it successful: 'Il faut voir l'effroi du gros curé qui lève les mains en l'air et écarquillé les yeux en écoutant cette confession de caserne.' Whilst the image caricatures a religious and serious subject, its comical expression of physiognomical order is for Champfleury capable of soothing anxieties that his readership – the conservative readers of the *Messenger* – may have over the considerable political tensions of the Second Republic: 'je viens de voir ces peintures comiques habilement lithographiées, et bien d'autres sujets de M. Corrèard, que je n'ai pas décrits, forment une collection divertissante qui déridera les esprits les plus soucieux de ce temps-ci.' See Champfleury, 'l'exposition de l'Odéon,' *Le Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 20 February 1851. It is interesting to note that, even within the conservative milieu of the *Messenger*, it is not considered controversial or threatening to caricature a representative of the Church, whose exercise of authority over many social customs was usually associated with the maintenance of social order. Whilst it seems that, in this caricature, the priest is not treated with particular malice, it should also be noted that the priest as a social type was often ridiculed and satirised, particularly in the cynical proverbs and tales of the religious peasantry, whose folklore (even in a Catholic country like France), seems without exception to have treated the

The newspaper's declaration of principles was published in its first issue on 16 February 1851 and clearly indicates the editors' allegiance to the Party of Order, their conservative stance against revolution and their commitment to upholding social order.²⁰³ As the declaration also states, the paper's title and the well-known established views of its editors sum up its political line.²⁰⁴ The principal editors were E. Forcade and F. Solar, both of whom held very strong conservative opinions.²⁰⁵ These two men defended the interests of the very bourgeois conservatives that Champfleury criticised in his article on Courbet. Leading up to the Second Republic, for example, Solar had been a constant defender of the ultra-conservative politics of Guizot's ministry, which cultivated the bourgeois values that Champfleury claimed to deplore.²⁰⁶ Guizot had been head of Louis-Philippe's government from 1840 to 1848, ruling according to conservative policies through an oligarchic parliamentary system.²⁰⁷ An advocate of the bourgeois political and artistic philosophy of

clergy with malice. See Meyer Schapiro, 'Courbet and Popular Imagery, An Essay on Realism and Naïveté,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1941, 4: pp164-191, p169.

²⁰³ *Le Messager de l'Assemblée*, 16 February 1851, No.1, p1: 'Nous avons toujours été d'obscurs mais de déterminés soldats du parti de l'ordre; nous ne sortirons pas de la voie où nous avons toujours marché. L'ordre implique le respect de la liberté comme le respect du pouvoir: un pouvoir contenu, une liberté limitée, sont les plus fortes barrières à opposer aux révolutions. Nous soutiendrons le pouvoir légal, et nous défendrons la liberté légale.'

²⁰⁴ *ibid*, p1: 'Nous ne croyons pas nécessaire d'entrer dans beaucoup d'explications sur la ligne politique que suivra le *Messager de l'Assemblée*; cette ligne est suffisamment indiquée par le titre du journal et par les précédents de ses rédacteurs.'

²⁰⁵ Eugène Hatin, *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France*, 8 tomes, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, 1859-61, Tome huitième, 1861, p625.

²⁰⁶ See entry for 'Solar (Félix)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Quatorzième, 'S-TESTA,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1875, p825: 'Après avoir été attaché à la rédaction de la *Presse*, du *Courrier français* et du *Globe*, il [Solar] devint, en 1845, un des fondateurs et des principaux rédacteurs du journal l'*Epoque*, dans lequel il fut, en compagnie de M. Granier de Cassagnac, un constant défenseur de la politique ultra-conservatrice et du ministère Guizot.'

²⁰⁷ See Herbert Butterfield, D. W. Brogan, H. C. Darby, J. Hampden Jackson, *A Short History of France From Early Times to 1958*, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p149. Guizot's strong conservative views concerning the press were evident as early as 1819, when he introduced the system of 'cautionnement,' according to which anyone who wanted to start a newspaper was required to deposit a sum of money with the Treasury. He introduced this system nominally as a measure of security against fines that the courts may impose upon newspapers, but actually to ensure

juste milieu, Guizot was impervious to the devastating poverty of the majority of the population during the July Monarchy.²⁰⁸ He famously rubbed salt in the wounds of the suffering working class by claiming that the people should ‘get rich’ if they wanted to vote and change things.²⁰⁹ Adolphe Thiers, the famous statesman who had also been a member of Louis-Philippe’s conservative government, was a regular contributor to the *Messenger* during the Second Republic. Like Guizot, Thiers strongly advocated the philosophy of *juste milieu* and supported bourgeois values; he had conducted the merciless suppressions of anti-government rebellions in 1832 and 1835, and fully supported the strict press censorship laws of 1835. Similarly, during the Second Republic, the editors of the *Messenger* repeatedly declared their support for bourgeois values and their defense of conservatism and order in France. In the issue dated 21 February 1851, for example, chief editor F. Solar insisted that he was ‘devoted to the defense of conservative principles and the Conservative Party,’ and that he stood for ‘order, peace, material interests.’²¹⁰ Supporting middle-class wealth, material interests and the kind of social order needed to achieve them, the editors clearly sympathised with the very social sector that Champfleury criticised in his article on Courbet, the bourgeois business community. For this reason, it was clearly crucial for the writer to promote Courbet’s work on the basis that his paintings were clear and powerful illustrations of a permanent order controlling society and its development, albeit an order subject to change and progress as history weeded out the causes of physical and moral decay.

that the press would reflect the views of conservatives and the wealthy. See F. W. J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France 1848-1898: Dissidents and Philistines*, B. T. Batsford, London, 1971, p53.

²⁰⁸ See Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio and London, England, 1989, p120.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*, p120.

²¹⁰ See F. Solar, ‘Le Parti conservateur,’ *Le Messenger de l’Assemblée*, 21 February 1851, p1.

But, why did Champfleury attempt to gain acceptance of the artist's work within this conservative sector of society, especially since, as we have seen, many bourgeois conservatives were immediately hostile to positivism and perceived the philosophy as an attempt to illuminate ill effects of the bourgeois order and propose radical changes to it? One important reason was the need for positivists to disseminate their ideas in order to achieve their goal of a perfect society. Although the attainment of such social perfection was thought by positivists to be guaranteed, such attainment depended upon a process in which people were made aware of social aspects that needed to be reformed. A prerequisite of establishing an ideal society was a consensus of opinion about the physical and moral nature of the ideal society to be established. Again, whilst consensus was thought to be guaranteed – because the requirements of social perfection were innately registered in the human physiology – people needed their realisation of these requirements to be awakened and honed. Positivists needed to mobilise people to establish the required perfect society by showing them what they were already aware of at a deeper, physiological level – to give them a clear and affecting picture of the physical and moral damage caused by contemporary society. In his article on Courbet, Champfleury was attempting to do precisely this. The writer was attempting to stimulate a physiological process of reform within the conservative community and, to achieve this, he needed to avoid resistance by taking the perceived politics out of Courbet's work and emphasising its relationship with order.

This task may not have been as onerous as might at first be thought. Despite the association of many positivist ideas with radical left-wing politics and subversion, substantial elements of positivist philosophy appealed to conservatives, particularly those elements asserting the existence of a biological and physiological order governing society

and its development.²¹¹ It should be noted that Comte, probably the most famous positivist philosopher of them all, became politically ultra-conservative and exhibited strong authoritarian tendencies in his views. He even supported Louis Napoleon's coup d'état and a number of his disciples were politically sympathetic. Whilst this support for such an authoritarian regime created a rift between Comte and many of his followers, including Littré, large-scale positivist theory was designed to appeal to the right as well as the left. Comte, Littré and other major positivists preached the need for reform but emphasised that this reform depended upon a particular kind of social order, an intrinsically biological order whose susceptibility to evolution and change was always underpinned by a return to stability. For this reason, it is not unusual to find positivist writings in publications whose readerships were decidedly conservative, even when the writings concerned dealt with issues of reform. As examples, we need only refer to Littré's half a dozen articles published in the conservative journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1846 and 1859, including his 'Du développement historique de la logique' and 'Du progrès dans les sociétés et dans l'état.'²¹²

²¹¹ The conservative appeal of certain aspects of positivism is widely recognised in histories and analyses of the philosophy. Mary Pickering clearly points out the conservative nature of many of Comte's ideas, noting that the philosopher opposed socialism and communism as well as the condemnation of private property and capitalism that these theories promoted. See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, p609. W. M. Simon also comments upon the conservative nature of many aspects of Comte's positivism: 'Comte himself became ultraconservative in politics and had always, of course, had strong authoritarian tendencies, and some of the orthodox, especially the most orthodox, disciples followed him here.' These tendencies, Simon informs us, are the reason for Comte's support of Louis Napoleon's coup d'état in 1851. Littré, a republican before 1848, had come to regard Comte as 'an infallible master' but broke with Comte as a result of his approval of the coup d'état. See W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, An Essay in Intellectual History*, Kennikat Press, New York and London, 1972, p153 and pp15-16.

²¹² 'Du développement historique de la logique,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, n.s.II, 1849, pp79-101; 'Du progrès dans les sociétés et dans l'état,' *Revue des Deux Mondes*, n.s.XX, 1859, pp796-823.

Champfleury was himself associated with rival political camps, left and right, a position characterised by T. J. Clark as one that demonstrates the writer's anxiety over the dangers of associating with the left and a preference for the security of the right. The writer's insecure stance, Clark says, shows 'flirtation with the Left, blushes, withdrawal to the right. (*Le Salut public* in February, *Le Bonhomme Richard* in June; he wrote for Proudhon and the *Revue des deux mondes* concurrently.)'²¹³ Yet, Champfleury's political position, like his philosophical position, was more contrived than Clark reveals. The writer's article on Courbet represented an attempt to expand the field of distribution through which his positivist ideas could be diffused in society. Champfleury was 'preaching' positivism to the conservative community to win them over, and the *Messenger* suited his purposes very well. With a wide readership and influential contributors, the newspaper offered a potentially large field of positivist distribution. Furthermore, when the article was published, the paper was potentially the gateway to an especially large field of distribution of ideas because of its particular political designs. At that time, the *Messenger* made strong appeals for every brand of conservatism to help secure social order by demanding a coalition government. The newspaper's calls for a united conservative front reflect strong fears of potential disorder and reveal a deep unease over the power struggle between the Assembly and the president in 1851. In his article 'Légitimité et Nécessité des Coalitions,' published in the same issue in which Champfleury's article on Courbet was published, editor F. Solar argues that a coalition alone can maintain order in France. This is because a coalition is 'the source of majorities' and 'the unique force capable of resisting despotism and anarchy.'²¹⁴ On the one hand, Solar fears the looming despotism of Louis-

²¹³ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p67.

²¹⁴ F. Solar, 'Légitimité et Nécessité des Coalitions,' *Le Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 26 February 1851, p1: 'Les coalitions expriment la résultante des intérêts et des idées. Les coalitions sont la source des majorités, et les majorités sont le procédé des gouvernemens parlementaires. . . . Non seulement les coalitions sont de droit parlementaire, non seulement on peut les souhaiter, les faciliter, mais elles

Napoleon and, on the other, the threat posed by subversive left-wing radicals. He announces that ‘we have the profound conviction, and we declare it openly, that today a coalition alone can save the country.’²¹⁵ To thwart despotism and anarchy, both of which ‘strive for social dissolution and not conservatism,’ Solar implores all Legitimists, Orleanists and moderate republicans to concentrate upon their common views and interests, and the threats they all face.²¹⁶ He maintains that all three parties have important common ground and that, in their support for General Cavaignac’s suppression of the uprising in June 1848, they have already shown that they can unite.²¹⁷ Despite their rivalries, Republicans, Legitimists and Orleanists fought together at the barricades against socialism in June 1848.²¹⁸ Solar reminds them that they have many other common political interests and that imperialism and socialism threaten them all. A united conservative effort saved the

sont une nécessité et un devoir, lorsqu’elles constituent l’unique force capable de résister au despotisme ou à l’anarchie.’

²¹⁵ *ibid*, p1: ‘Nous avons la conviction profonde, et nous l’exprimons hautement, qu’aujourd’hui une coalition seule peut sauver le pays; et pour notre faible part, nous ne repoussons pas, mais nous ambitionnons l’épithète de coalise.’

²¹⁶ *ibid*, p1: ‘Dans tous les partis qui partagent le pays et l’Assemblée, exception faite de l’impérialisme et de l’anarchie, qui, tous les deux, tendent non à la conservation, mais à la dissolution sociale, dans tous les partis politiques enfin, il y a aujourd’hui des idées et des intérêts suffisamment identiques pour légitimer une coalition.’

²¹⁷ *ibid*, p1: ‘Les légitimistes, les orléanistes, les républicains modérés acceptent: 1^o, le suffrage universel; 2^o, le régime des assemblées; 3^o, l’unité du pouvoir. Oubliez un instant les personnes, et prenez le pouvoir que les républicains modérés ont donné au général Cavaignac lorsqu’il l’a fallu, et vous verrez que le monarchiste, qui veut le suffrage universel et le régime parlementaire, est bien près du démocrate qui accepte le pouvoir exécutif du 23 juin.’

²¹⁸ *ibid*, p1: ‘Déjà contre l’un de ces ennemis, le socialisme, la coalition ne s’est-elle pas réalisée? N’avons-nous pas vu, légitimistes et orléanistes, combattre aux barricades de juin, sous les ordres d’un général républicain? Qui donc alors la trouvait mauvaise et impie?’

country from the threat of socialism in 1848, and a similar effort can save the country again in 1851, this time from the looming dangers of despotism.²¹⁹

Aiming to connect with all these conservative parties and sectors of society, the *Messenger* became for Champfleury a potential conduit through which the positivist ideas he invested in Courbet's work could be disseminated on a broad scale. The writer's success here clearly depended upon the reader's identification of the artist's work with a safe political ground. Champfleury needed to dissociate the paintings from socialism and emphasise their expression of physical and moral order. The *Messenger* is particularly interesting in this respect because, in 1851, the newspaper became a site through which opposing political interpretations of the artist's work were contested. At that time, a debate ensued between those who interpreted the artist's Salon submissions as socialist and those who did not. Champfleury's article appeared in the newspaper on 25 and 26 February 1851, denying the socialism in Courbet's work. Later that year, on 15 November 1851, the *Messenger* published an article by its frequent contributor Mr Garcin, the newspaper's editorial secretary, accusing Courbet of having attended a reunion of the 'Amis de la Constitution' at the Salle Saint-Spire on the tenth day of that month.²²⁰ Delegates of this radical left-wing meeting included two editors of Proudhon's radical paper *Le Peuple*, who also happened to be close friends of the socialist philosopher, as well as the socialist

²¹⁹ *ibid*, p1: 'Coalisés des barricades, qui avez sauvé la patrie, vous êtes les mêmes qui pouvez la sauver encore en vous coalisant contre votre autre ennemi, le despotisme.'

²²⁰ M. Garcin, *Le Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 15 November 1851, p2: 'Parmi les délégués, on remarquait David (d'Angers), le célèbre sculpteur; Courbet, le peintre socialiste, auteur des Casseurs de pierres, tableau reçu à la dernière exposition de Paris; Pierre Dupont, le chansonnier démocrate; Faure et Wasbenter, anciens éditeurs du *Peuple* et amis de Proud'hon.' This article is referred to by Jack Lindsay in his book *Gustave Courbet, His Life and Art*, Adams & Dart, Bath, 1973, p83, and by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu in her edition entitled *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p96. As Chu points out, M. Garcin is probably Eugène-André Garcin, b.1831. Neither Lindsay nor Chu discusses this letter in relation to Champfleury's view of the artist's work.

songwriter Pierre Dupont.²²¹ Garcin's article, however, was quickly followed by a correction, published in the *Messenger* on 19 November 1851, retracting the previous accusation and restating the non-political status of the artist's work.²²² This correction effectively reaffirmed Champfleury's earlier de-politicising interpretation of Courbet's work and testifies to a measure of success the writer had in making his case within such a conservative context. The article reads: 'it is by mistake that the name of the painter Gustave Courbet has been associated with the democratic delegates who were reunited on 10 December at the Saint-Spire hall. . . . Art is a neutral terrain, and painting has no political opinion.'²²³

Courbet, who was himself involved in the debate over whether or not his work was political, clearly wished to project himself as a socialist. He wrote to the *Messenger* on the same day that it published its correction, confirming the error with regard to his attendance at the socialist meeting, but sarcastically thanking Garcin for having associated him with the prominent figures who attended. Whereas Champfleury's article had carefully qualified the social theories reflected in the artist's work, presenting them as non-political, Courbet's letter boldly declares their socialist nature: 'M.Garcin calls me the socialist painter. I accept

²²¹ See footnote 220.

²²² *Le Messenger de l'Assemblée*, 19 November 1851, p1: 'C'est par erreur que le nom du peintre Gustave Courbet a été associé à ceux des délégués démocratiques qui se sont réunis le 10 décembre à la salle Saint-Spire. Absent de Paris depuis plus de cinq mois, M. Courbet après avoir parcouru la Belgique et l'Allemagne est en ce moment auprès de sa famille en Franche-Comté, où il ébauche quelque'une de ces scènes villageoises qui l'ont fait qualifier de peintre socialiste, fort mal à propos, suivant nous. L'art est un terrain neutre, et la peinture n'a pas d'opinion politique.'

²²³ See footnote 222.

this title with pleasure; I am not only a socialist, but a democrat and a republican as well, in a word a partisan of the whole revolution and above all a realist.²²⁴

²²⁴ Gustave Courbet, letter to the chief editor of the *Messageur de l'Assemblée*, Ornans, 19 November 1851, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, pp96-97: 'M. Garcin me nomme le peintre socialiste. J'accepte bien volontiers cette dénomination; je suis non seulement socialiste, mais bien encore démocrate et républicain, en un mot partisan de toute la révolution, et par-dessus tout réaliste.' As Chu notes, the *Messageur's* corrective statement was probably published in response to a letter from Francis Wey to the newspaper complaining that Garcin had mistakenly labelled Courbet a socialist. Here, again, Wey seems concerned to dissociate Courbet's work from politics. Although this letter has not survived, Courbet makes reference to it in his correspondence to the writer dated 1 January 1852. Judging by Courbet's comments in this correspondence, he disapproved of Wey's intervention in the dispute and the result that the *Messageur* retracted its claims that he was a socialist: 'La génération à laquelle vous appartenez n'a ni foi ni croyances, tandis que moi j'ai travaillé toute ma vie pour avoir une raison d'être, unique, autant que possible, et c'est à quoi tendent tous les actes de ma vie. Vous, vous suivez les fluctuations, moi je reste dans mon principe, voilà la différence qui existe entre nous. . . . Je fais des *Casseurs de pierres*, . . . Je suis un socialiste . . . ' . . . Contre votre habitude, vous avez eu une petite négligence (que vous me retournez très habilement). Vous auriez dû m'envoyer la réponse que vous aviez faite au *Messageur*.' Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, Ornans, 1 January 1852, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, pp98-99.

VIII: Conclusion

Continuing this re-evaluation of the positivist conceptual framework through which Courbet's work was interpreted, this thesis has presented a number of further distinctive and original findings. We have seen that the artist's paintings exhibited at the Salon exhibition of 1850-1 were variously received by critics writing in a politically conservative context. This reception has remained largely unexplored in the existing scholarship on Courbet. Despite their differences, all three of the critics featured here affirmed both the positivist character of the artist's work and the potentially huge social and political power this character was perceived to have. Dauger and de Geofroy reinforced the positivist status of Courbet's work even though they largely or wholly opposed it. Both critics associated the artist's paintings with positivist concepts but showed considerable anxiety about the potential of this artistic and philosophical alliance to alter or destroy the existing bourgeois order. Dauger expressed ambivalence about these aspects of Courbet's work, objecting firmly to what he saw as some excessive portrayals of 'vulgarity,' the dehumanised and torpid physiology of many commoners that indicated the oppressiveness of the bourgeois society impacting upon them. However, Dauger admired Courbet's representations of commoners whose lively and animated physiology indicated that bourgeois society successfully sustained them even if it imposed hardship upon them. Deeply concerned about the subversive power of Courbet's engagement with positivism, de Geofroy warned his middle- and upper-class readers of the socially destructive nature of the artist's paintings. The critic claimed that the paintings resulted from irrationality, appealed merely to the material aspects of life, and placed humanity on the same base level as animals. Unequivocally supporting the perceived positivist potential of Courbet's work to reform society, Champfleury sought to realise this potential by gaining acceptance of the artist's

work throughout large conservative social sectors. Largely unrecognised in the existing accounts of Courbet's work, the possibilities for this broad dissemination of positivist ideas associated with his paintings were created by the conservative appeal of positivism's assertion of a permanent biological order governing society. Asserting the non-political and prominent expression of this order in Courbet's paintings, Champfleury nevertheless claimed that the artist highlighted degenerative aspects of bourgeois society, whose reform was guaranteed by the biological rather than political forces of social evolution.

Chaper Three

Caricature and Social Evolution during the Second Empire

I: Introduction

As the first two chapters of this thesis have shown, numerous mid-nineteenth-century French writers connected Courbet's work to a positivist view of contemporary society, which was seen as the physical and moral constitution of collective human life formed by a biological relationship between human organisms – people – and the social milieu within which they existed. Here, the phrase 'physical and moral' designated the combined physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of people that was evident in their physical appearance and expressed in their typical behaviour and customs. Yet, whilst the present was of central concern to positivist investigation, the past was also important. Positivists such as Courbet, Proudhon and Champfleury considered that the past had a direct impact upon the present because, according to them, society was governed by a biological process of evolution that created an historical succession of social eras in which each era evolved into the next. The physical appearance of people evolved along with society because such appearance was shaped by the social milieu in which people existed. Evident in the artistic representation produced by past and present successive eras, such appearance revealed the course of social development and enabled predictions to be made about development in the future. This evolutionary process was considered teleological, an historical course of human development towards a guaranteed state of social harmony. The process was not unwavering and periods of degeneration could be readily discerned in the physical appearance of people from certain eras. Yet, the very attainment of an understanding of this process in conjunction with a perceived underlying trend of

improvement was thought to be evidence of the primary and constant impetus of historical change: the human race's innate desire to evolve into a wholly unified and harmonious form of collective life.

This perceived insight into past social eras had an important bearing upon positivist views about reform in the present because, in light of an understanding of the course of human evolution, it was thought that aspects of contemporary society working against the attainment of harmony could be identified and reformed. This perceived insight was partly acquired by studying caricature, a form of artistic representation linked to the criticism of social morality since ancient times, whose capacity to highlight the physical and moral degeneration of an era and rally the people to react against such degeneration was widely considered in mid-nineteenth-century France to be an important instrument of reform. Champfleury, a widely regarded expert in the history of caricature, considered the art form to be 'the cry of the citizens.'¹

In this chapter, I examine the role of caricature in the positivist interpretations of Courbet's work formulated by Champfleury and the artist himself. The ideas expounded by Champfleury and Courbet concerning caricature and its relation to both the past and present were dispersed across a number of different but related texts. Here, I examine three key texts that appeared during the Second Empire and which furnish previously undiscovered insights into Courbet's work on three fronts: the positivist concepts through which his work was interpreted, the artistic devices and conventions through which these concepts were

¹ See entry for 'Caricature' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Troisième, 'C-CHEM,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1867, p394.

expressed, and the social and political contexts within which these concepts were mediated. Firstly, I examine an article on Courbet by Champfleury published in the prestigious art journal *L'Artiste* on 2 September 1855. Secondly, a letter from Courbet to Champfleury written around November-December 1854 explaining the conception behind his famous painting entitled the *Atelier du peintre* and, thirdly, a book by Champfleury on the history of caricature published ten years later. Considered together, these texts clearly show that Champfleury and Courbet saw caricature as a key component in a process of social reform. In their opinion, this essentially physiognomical art form revealed the physical and moral condition of the era in which it was produced and facilitated reform through its critical impact. Courbet adopted conventions of caricature in his work to criticise the social and political policies of his time, demonstrate his knowledge of past and present societies and thereby present himself as a leading guide in social reform. These conventions played important roles in his conception of the *Atelier du peintre*, a painting whose expression of 'a physical and moral history' of the world was arguably a signature representation of his positivism.

The views of caricature in the social programmes of both Courbet and Champfleury were based upon the ideas of leading positivists, philosophers like Proudhon, Comte and Littré. In this chapter, I explain these views, the French positivist philosophy from which they derived and the political contexts within which their deliberations on the artist's work were produced, circulated and consumed. The Second Empire was largely a period of strict press censorship, enforced social control and imperialistic propaganda, and the politics of the period had a direct impact upon positivist interpretations of Courbet's work. Here, I examine this impact upon the critical positions on Courbet taken by Champfleury and the

artist himself, the roots of these positions within various strands of positivism and the contexts within which their ideas were mediated.

II: Caricature, physiognomy and portraiture as physical and moral reform

In the last chapter of this thesis, we saw that Champfleury wrote a spirited defense of the *Enterrement à Ornans* in response to some scathing criticism of the painting when it was shown at the Salon exhibition of 1850-1. Adopting a positivist stance, the writer defended the painting by claiming that it was ‘historical.’ As we have seen, Champfleury referred to ‘history’ as a process of social evolution, the physical and moral development of collective human life, and argued that the *Enterrement* was historical because it indicated the stage of evolution reached by contemporary bourgeois society. The writer considered that the painting was an active force within this evolutionary process and was capable of bringing about reform through its physiognomical qualities, which documented bourgeois degeneracy and inclined the viewer to redress it. Courbet’s expression of reform could not be classed as sedition, the writer maintained, because the painting merely reflected the natural order of historical change and social development. Such expression was distinct from politically motivated forms of artistic expression, whose practical effects were considered fleeting.²

Champfleury developed his view of Courbet’s work four years later in an article entitled ‘Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,’ which was published in the prestigious and moderately conservative art journal *L’Artiste* on 2 September 1855. This article was written ostensibly as an open letter to the writer George Sand who, in 1854, had been questioning the concept of realism.³ Another spirited defense of Courbet’s work, Champfleury’s article

² See Champfleury, ‘L’Enterrement d’Ornans,’ *Le Messager de l’Assemblée*, 25-26 February 1851.

³ See David A. Flanary, *Champfleury, The Realist Writer as Art Critic*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, 1980, 1978, p37.

responded to criticism in the press concerning the artist's independent exhibition of 1855, which was mounted as a gesture of defiance against the Universal Exposition held in the same year by the emperor to assert the political and cultural superiority of France over the other European nations.⁴ Despite much negative criticism, numerous critics supported Courbet's independent exhibition.⁵ Champfleury's article is the most extensive of these supportive commentaries and its critique is based upon the writer's positivist understanding of the artist's work as a form of caricature. To advance this understanding of caricature, Champfleury rejects the term 'realism' because he considers it distracting and grossly inadequate when it comes to explaining Courbet's work. The writer denigrates most contemporary Parisian critics for using the term without understanding it.⁶ They are simply

⁴ The circumstances surrounding this gesture have been well documented; see, for example, Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, the Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, pp57-61, which describes the circumstances in detail. In 1854, the artist had refused to rally to the Empire whilst insisting that the Exposition should include a major retrospective exhibition of his work. The government had agreed to include such exhibitions for a number of established artists committed to the regime – Ingres, Vernet, Delacroix and Decamps – but would not accommodate Courbet in the same way. Courbet rejected an attempt by the superintendant of the government's Fine Arts Administration, Alfred-Emilien, le comte de Nieuwerkerke, to gain his loyalty by offering him the opportunity to produce a painting commissioned expressly for the Exposition; the superintendent invited Courbet to lunch in 1854 to propose the commission. The conversation that apparently ensued, including Courbet's arrogant and spirited denial of the government, was afterwards immortalised by the artist in a letter to his friend and patron Alfred Bruyas. Despite this rebuke by the artist, Courbet sent in the autumn of 1854 a list of paintings to the Imperial Commission to be considered for inclusion in the Exposition. When the Commission rejected three of the fourteen paintings submitted, including the *Atelier du peintre*, the artist finally decided to mount his own exhibition (the idea for which he had actually been discussing with Bruyas for some time). As Mainardi points out, although, according to his own version of events, Courbet was generally castigated in the press for holding his private exhibition, this is largely fabrication. All the professional art journals – *La Revue universelle des arts*, *La Revue des beaux-arts*, *La Journal des arts* and *L'Artiste* – defended Courbet for arranging his show. See Mainardi, *ibid*, 1987, pp92-96.

⁵ See footnote 4. For a concise review of this criticism, see Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, the Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, pp92-96. Particularly harsh criticism came from the literary critic Augustin-Joseph Du Pays. Writing in *L'Illustration*, with its wealthy and conservative readership, Du Pays, like numerous other conservative critics with similar readerships, used Courbet's work to attack the bourgeoisie and its rise in society as a class threatening and undermining the aristocracy.

⁶ Champfleury, 'Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,' *L'Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p2. This vast body of criticism, Champfleury says, is written by 'ces malheureux vivant des gazettes . . . cette tourbe de gens inutiles qui juge, raisonne, applaudit, contredit, loue, flatte, critique sans conviction, qui n'est pas la foule et qui se dit la foule.'

obsessed with grouping and labeling new and similar theoretical trends found in various disciplines.⁷ In the arts, Champfleury remarks, critics ambiguously attach the term ‘realism’ to any work whatsoever that ‘has observed and described with exactitude’ contemporary customs or ordinary social types.⁸ As far as realism is concerned, Champfleury cannot provide a definition and has no wish to do so.⁹ He does not want to be labeled a realist by the critics, or to be associated with any ‘school’ of art, and argues that Courbet is of the same opinion.¹⁰ He points out the similarity between his own ideas and those of Courbet by referring to the manifesto written by the artist to accompany his independent exhibition in 1855. Courbet defies the critical process through which artists and their work are grouped

⁷ *ibid*, p2: ‘Tous ceux qui apportent quelques aspirations nouvelles sont dits *réalistes*. On verra certainement des médecins réalistes, des chimistes réalistes, des manufacturiers réalistes, des historiens réalistes. M. Courbet est un réaliste, je suis un réaliste: puisque les critiques le disent, je les laisse dire.’

⁸ *ibid*, p2. Champfleury argues that, according to this ambiguous definition, Homer may be considered a realist: ‘Homère serait un *réaliste*, puisqu’il a observé et décrit avec exactitude les mœurs de son époque. Homère, on ne le sait pas assez, fut violemment insulté comme un réaliste dangereux. “A la vérité, dit *Cicéron* en parlant d’Homère, toutes ces choses sont de pures inventions de ce poète, qui s’est plu à *rabaisser* les dieux jusqu’à la condition des hommes; il eût été mieux d’*élever* les hommes jusqu’à celle des dieux.” Que dit-on tous les jours dans les journaux?’ Using contemporary examples, Champfleury points out that Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) and Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780-1857) are equally accused of producing realist works. The former was an eccentric avant-garde poet and novelist who committed suicide following madness; the latter wrote popular, sentimental and patriotic songs, often with left-wing undercurrents: ‘On y verra, entre autres, que ce pauvre Gérard de Nerval a été conduit à une mort tragique par le *réalisme*. C’est un gentilhomme amateur qui écrit de pareilles misères; vos drames de campagne sont entachés de réalisme. Ils renferment des *paysans*. Là est le crime. Dans ces derniers temps, Béranger a été accusé de réalisme. Combien les mots peuvent entraîner les hommes!’ See Champfleury, *ibid*, 1855, p2.

⁹ *ibid*, p2. ‘Je ne vous définirai pas, madame, le *réalisme*; je ne sais d’où il vient, où il va, ce qu’il est.’

¹⁰ *ibid*, p2: ‘Le nom me fait horreur par sa terminaison pédantesque; je crains les écoles comme le choléra, et ma plus grande joie est de rencontrer des individualités nettement tranchées. Voilà pourquoi M. Courbet est, à mes yeux, un homme nouveau.’

and labeled, insisting that titles misrepresent and distort the meaning of works of art, whose effects and meanings function independently of labels.¹¹

Having rejected ‘realism’ for its inadequacy as a defining term, Champfleury proceeds to assert and clarify some of the philosophical ideas behind Courbet’s work, ideas that are both formulated and expressed through a positivist view of caricature. To explain these ideas, the writer refers to Proudhon’s book *Philosophie du progrès* of 1853, which proposes a positivist theory of art and Courbet’s work. Champfleury argues that the artist’s caricatural expression in painting – his particularly intense manner of capturing the physical and moral condition of contemporary aristocratic and bourgeois types – is based upon Proudhon’s idea that the physical and moral nature of people is expressed in their physical appearance and that the representation of such appearance is simultaneously didactic and affecting because it teaches people about the virtues and vices of their society and inclines them to necessary reform. According to Champfleury, this idea is the philosophical basis of Courbet’s *Baigneuses* [Figure 19], a painting first exhibited at the Salon of 1853 and whose figures, admired by Proudhon for their didactic qualities, were scorned by many critics because of their fat, fleshy appearance. The painting is considered by Champfleury to be well painted, even though it offends the conventional critics who prefer to see classical figures such as Venus Anadyomene rising from the sea, a subject treated by artists such as Titian and Ingres [Figure 20 & Figure 21].¹² Champfleury endorses Proudhon’s

¹¹ *ibid*, p2: ‘Le peintre lui-même, dans son manifeste, a dit quelque mots excellents: “Le titre de réaliste m’a été *imposé* comme on a imposé aux hommes de 1830 le titre de romantiques. *Les titres, en aucun temps, n’ont donné une idée juste des choses: s’il en était autrement, les oeuvres seraient superflues.*”’

¹² *ibid*, p3: ‘J’ai retrouvé, à l’avenue Montaigne, ces fameuses baigneuses, plus grosses de scandales que de chairs. Voilà deux ans que ce fameux tapage est éteint, je ne vois plus aujourd’hui qu’une créature peinte solidement qui a le grand tort, pour les amis du convenu, de ne pas rappeler les Vénus anadyomènes de l’antiquité.’

interpretation of Courbet's *Baigneuses*, according to which the ugliness of the figures shows 'how much moral aspects of existence impact upon physical ones.'¹³ The fat, ugly appearance of the figures has as much didactic value as any figure of 'beauty.' The physiological condition of the bathers – their obscene looking bodies – signifies for Proudhon the 'parasitism, insolence and corruption' of the aristocracy, the typically degenerative aristocratic traits that are captured permanently by Courbet for the scrutiny and judgement of generations to come.¹⁴ The figures are didactic and moving because they teach the people to be ashamed of their cowardice and poverty and to despise the physical and moral ugliness of the tyrants causing their destitution, and because the figures cause an emotional reaction that leads to reform.¹⁵ In Proudhon's view, this emotional reaction is a physiological response to the inherent human desire for a unified and harmonious society, constitutes a powerful impetus of physical and moral reform, and delivers its own punishment: "may the aristocracy, exposed in its fat and obscene nakedness, receive, on each of its muscles, the flagellation of its parasitism, its insolence, and its corruption."¹⁶

¹³ *ibid*, p5: 'Cette question de la *laideur* à propos des *Baigneuses*, le philosophe la traitait de haut. Il sait combien le moral a de poids sur le physique.'

¹⁴ *ibid*, p3: 'M. Proudhon, dans la *Philosophie du progrès* (1853), jugeait sérieusement les *Baigneuses*: "L'image du vice comme de la vertu est aussi bien du domaine de la peinture que de la poésie: suivant la leçon que l'artiste veut donner, toute figure, belle ou laide, peut remplir le but de l'art." *Toute figure belle ou laide peut remplir le but de l'art!* Et le philosophe continue: "Que le peuple, se reconnaissant à sa misère, apprenne à rougir de sa lâcheté et à détester ses tyrans; que l'aristocratie, exposée dans sa grasse et obscène nudité, reçoive, sur chacun de ses muscles, la flagellation de son parasitisme, de son insolence et de sa corruption." Je passe quelques lignes et j'arrive à la conclusion: "Et que chaque génération, déposant ainsi sur la toile et le marbre le secret de son génie, arrive à la postérité sans autre blâme ni apologie que les oeuvres de ses artistes."

¹⁵ See footnote 14 and Champfleury, *ibid*, 1855, p3.

¹⁶ See footnote 14 and Champfleury, *ibid*, 1855, p3. The aristocracy is not Proudhon's and Champfleury's primary target and the writer is quite specific about the social class most in need of reform. He believes that the bourgeoisie has been vilified too much and instead condemns the 'sons of the bourgeoisie,' a parasitic and decadent class that has exploited the wealth of its parents – the professional and business class of doctors, lawyers, merchants, etc. This parasitic class possesses much of the depravity of the aristocracy of old, but none of its laudable qualities: 'une classe plus

Champfleury maintains that the intimate relations between physical and moral aspects of existence are expressed in Courbet's work partly through caricature, an art form that highlights and criticises social aspects of human character. The artist exaggerates distinctive physical features of his subjects, features shaped by the social milieu in which they live and the customary behaviour associated with their social position. These exaggerations portray social character so strongly that it becomes enshrined in caricature as a permanent visual record of the essential 'facts' of social existence. Champfleury explains this by comparing Courbet's work to Daumier's. The writer notes how the famous caricaturist uses precisely this kind of artistic exaggeration to reveal the 'fact of the grotesque profile,' permanently defining, or 'immortalising,' the ugly nature of contemporary bourgeois types.¹⁷ Daumier produces a record of society in decline, a permanent register of certain degenerative behaviour and customs evident in the physical appearance of bourgeois types. He expresses such behaviour and customs so strongly that their defining characteristics become enshrined in caricature to create 'eternal' or 'immortal' images of the bourgeoisie for all to see. This enshrinement of social character is didactic, Champfleury maintains, because it teaches present and future generations about regressive customs and offers them the chance to reform them. As the writer says, the legacy of the artist, is that 'the eternal bourgeois whom he [Daumier] has immortalised with his pencil . . . will live through the centuries in all their modern ugliness.'¹⁸ Courbet's

intelligente, qui a tous les vices de l'ancienne aristocratie sans en avoir les qualités . . . une race qui a profité de la fortune de médecins, d'avocats, de négociants, qui n'a rien fait, rien appris, qui s'est jetée dans les clubs de jeux, qui a la manie des chevaux, de l'élégance, qui touche à tout, même à l'écritoire, qui achète même une maîtresse et un quart de journal, qui veut commander aux femmes et aux écrivains, . . .' See Champfleury, *ibid*, 1855, p5.

¹⁷ Champfleury, 'Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,' *L'Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p5: 'Le caricaturiste Daumier voyait le fait du côté grotesque. Les éternels bourgeois qu'il a immortalisés de son crayon et qui vivront à travers les siècles dans toute leur laideur moderne s'écrient en regardant un tableau de M. Courbet: "Est-il possible de peindre des gens si affreux?"'

¹⁸ See footnote 17.

paintings achieve a similar effect, exposing and immortalising ‘hideous [bourgeois] people.’¹⁹

Using terms such as ‘eternal’ and ‘immortal’ to describe the process through which caricature enshrines customs and behaviour, Champfleury imbues his theory of history and social evolution with a strong sense of teleology. In his schema, social evolution is bound up with an unremitting process of reform. Such teleological assertions characterise the philosophy of leading positivists such as Comte, whose work informed the theories of Proudhon that Champfleury draws upon so heavily. An examination of Comte’s view of art’s role in social evolution sheds further light upon Champfleury’s view of the operation of caricature in Courbet’s work. Comte argues that social evolution is the process through which humanity becomes perfectly unified, a process so important that it is worthy of worship. By the time Champfleury had written his article on Courbet, Comte had articulated his philosophy as a ‘Religion of Humanity,’ a programme for worshipping and encouraging what he saw as the unifying character of humanity.²⁰ According to the philosopher, humanity, the mass of the human species, is essentially characterised by ‘continuity’ and ‘solidarity.’²¹ Continuity exists from each generation to the next as the human species evolves in accordance with its inherent desire to become increasingly unified. Solidarity exists within each generation because all humans are innately predisposed to care for each other and form bonds with one another. Continuous and

¹⁹ See footnote 17.

²⁰ For a detailed exposition of the ‘Religion of Humanity’ see Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l’ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Paris, 1907, Conclusion générale du Discours sur l’ensemble: ‘Religion de l’Humanité,’ pp340-424.

²¹ See, for example, Comte, *ibid*, 1907, pp391-392. For discussions of these twin concepts of ‘continuity’ and ‘solidarity’ and the idea of humanity as ‘the mass of the human species,’ see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp285-286, pp619-620, pp621-623.

ultimately consolidating, the human species constitutes for Comte ‘an immense and eternal social unity.’²²

Every generation in history contributes to the evolutionary process through which perfect social unity is ultimately attained and, for Comte, the positivist artist enables people to comprehend the truly unifying nature of humanity and its progress more clearly.²³ Through physiognomical representation, the positivist artist is capable of revealing decline and progress, as well as both the solidarity that exists within a particular generation and the continuity that exists from one generation to the next. Such representation is a didactic medium through which people are made familiar with the moral condition of their society, the stage of historical development that their society constitutes, and the teleological forces that unite them with their fellow man in the past, present and future. Comte insists that art is an essential element of the positivist educational system, whose ‘principal feature is a theory of history which enables us to appreciate and become familiar with every mode in which human society has formed itself.’²⁴ Artists must represent society in a manner that makes this process of historical development familiar to everyone. This is how artistic representation becomes ‘eternal’ and makes the unremitting force of social unity moving, an object of worship. Always relative to the positivist mode of understanding history, positivist art may be applied to all phases of the past. As Comte says, ‘by rendering it more easy to comprehend and to glorify the Past in all its phases, [the new art] will form an

²² See Pickering, *ibid*, 1993, p285.

²³ See Chapter I of this thesis, footnote 131, and Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Paris, 1907, Conclusion générale du Discours sur l'ensemble: ‘Religion de l'Humanité,’ p369.

²⁴ See Comte, *ibid*, 1907, Cinquième partie: ‘Aptitude esthétique du positivisme,’ p323: ‘le positivisme, toujours relative, est principalement caractérisé par une théorie historique qui rendra familière l'intime contemplation de tous les modes propres à l'existence humaine.’

essential element, on the one hand, of our educational system, and on the other, of the worship of Humanity.’²⁵

Champfleury’s view of the historical process and art’s role within this process is similar to Comte’s. In his examination of Courbet’s work, Champfleury insists that ‘eternal’ or ‘immortal’ representation is operative through the exaggerations of caricature, which simultaneously criticise the physical and moral condition of contemporary society and make the unifying process of history familiar and moving to the viewer. The writer argues that the *Enterrement* is another example of such representation, a grotesque but admirable immortalisation of bourgeois traits in need of reform, such as egotism and indifference.²⁶ As Champfleury explains, the caricatural aspects of the painting’s numerous figures enshrine the character of a typical social community and its customs for all to see. Whilst the painting represents a small-town funeral, he says, it represents *all* small-town funerals.²⁷ Yet, the image is also invested with a striking familiarity that draws the viewer towards its didactic and emotive purpose. This familiarity derives from a combination of conventions associated with caricature and portraiture, conventions that all have their basis in physiognomical approaches to representation and which have the capacity to exaggerate both the social and personal aspects of the subject. All the human subjects in Courbet’s

²⁵ See Comte, *ibid*, 1907, Cinquième partie: ‘Aptitude esthétique du positivisme,’ p324: ‘L’art nouveau se trouvera donc appelé à faire dignement revivre tous les âges antérieurs, dont quelques-uns seulement sont déjà assez idéalisés, . . . Cette suite presque inépuisable d’heureuses créations, épiques ou dramatiques, se liera profondément, d’une part, à l’ensemble de l’éducation positive, d’une autre part, au culte systématique de l’Humanité, pour faciliter l’appréciation et seconder la glorification de toutes les phases sociales.’

²⁶ Champfleury, ‘Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,’ *L’Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p4: ‘Or, de tous ces scandales, je préfère l’*Enterrement* à toutes les autres toiles, à cause de la pensée qui y est enfermée, à cause du drame complet et humain où le grotesque, les larmes, l’égoïsme, l’indifférence, sont traités en grand maître.’

²⁷ See *ibid*, p4.

painting are observed closely and represented as portraits that convey both their social characters and individual personalities, enabling everyone to recognise them as typical of people they actually know.²⁸ It is this familiar quality of the figures – their recognisable individual and social character encapsulated by the artist’s caricatural portraiture – that leaves such a powerful impression on people, moving and touching them, making them smile and think.²⁹ Champfleury says that ‘the idea of the *Enterrement* is seizing, clear to everyone; it represents a funeral in a small town and yet reproduces *the* funerals of *all* small towns. The triumph of the artist who paints individual personalities is to respond to the intimate observations of each, to choose a type in such a way that everyone believes that he has known him and can exclaim: “That one is real, I have seen him!”³⁰

In Champfleury’s view, the familiarity of a represented figure depends as much upon the portrayal of its individual character as it does upon the portrayal of its social character, an artistic skill that necessitates the simultaneous deployment of conventions of caricature and portraiture and their mutual basis in physiognomy. The physiognomical expression of individual character in both the portraiture and caricature of nineteenth-century France has been examined by Michael Tilby in his essay “‘Telle main veut tel pied’: Balzac, Ingres and the art of portraiture,’ published in 1994.³¹ Tilby argues that, in

²⁸ See *ibid*, p4.

²⁹ *ibid*, p4: ‘L’*Enterrement* possède ces facultés au plus haut degré: il émeut, attendrit, fait sourire, donne à penser et laisse dans l’esprit, malgré la fosse entr’ouverte, cette suprême tranquillité que partage le fossoyeur, un type grandiose et philosophique que le peintre a su reproduire dans toute sa beauté d’homme du peuple.’

³⁰ *ibid*, p4: ‘je dois dire que la pensée de l’*Enterrement* est saisissante, claire pour tous, qu’elle est la représentation d’un enterrement dans une petite ville, et qu’elle reproduit cependant *les* enterrements de *toutes* les petites villes. Le triomphe de l’artiste qui peint des individualités est de répondre aux observations intimes de chacun, de choisir, de telle sorte, un type que chacun croie l’avoir connu et puisse s’écrier: “Celui-là est vrai, je l’ai vu!”’

³¹ Michael Tilby, “‘Telle main veut tel pied’: Balzac, Ingres and the art of portraiture,’ in Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge, eds., *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-*

nineteenth-century France, literary portraiture and portrait painting were based upon the same Lavaterian principles of physiognomy, and that these principles – upon which many of the conventions of contemporary caricature were also based – developed from having an eye for the unique personal characteristic. Although he does not discuss Courbet, Tilby explains how physiognomy underpins the approaches of Balzac and Daumier, approaches that are both likened by Champfleury to Courbet’s approach and which operate simultaneously as portraiture and caricature. As we have seen, Champfleury relates Courbet’s style of representation to that of both Balzac and Daumier in order to demonstrate how paintings such as the *Enterrement* and the *Baigneuses* express the artist’s positivist vision of society. Tilby’s account gives us further insight into Champfleury’s interpretation of Courbet’s work, enabling us to see how the shared physiognomical basis of portraiture and caricature offered a powerful tool for the artist to illuminate the individual nature of his subjects as much as the social.

Tilby argues that Lavater’s principles profoundly influenced nineteenth-century approaches to the representation of the human figure in portraiture and caricature, and that this influence is readily discernible in the literature, painting and criticism of the era.³² He compares the literary portraiture of Balzac with the portrait painting of Ingres, arguing that

Century France, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994. A useful overview of the relationship between physiognomy and portraiture in mid- to late-nineteenth-century France is to be found in John House’s essay entitled ‘Impressionism and the Modern Portrait,’ introduction to the catalogue produced for the exhibition *Faces of Impressionism, Portraits from American Collections*, organised by Sona Johnston, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Before 1900, The Baltimore Museum of Art, and circulated by the Museum. The catalogue was first published in the United States of America in 1999 by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York; the exhibition was held at The Baltimore Museum of Art, 10 October 1999 - 30 January 2000, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 25 March - 7 May 2000, and The Cleveland Museum of Art, 28 May - 30 July 2000.

³² Michael Tilby, “‘Telle main veut tel pied’: Balzac, Ingres and the art of portraiture,” in Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge, eds., *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994, pp111-129.

Lavater's principles largely characterise the theoretical and critical context within which both men were working.³³ This, he says, is distinctly discernible in Saint-Beuve's critical concept of the 'portrait littéraire,' which sought to illuminate 'the relation of the work to the person himself, to his character, to his particular circumstances.'³⁴ Tilby notes that Saint-Beuve shared Balzac's belief that a species should be understood through a close examination of its individual members.³⁵ Despite Saint-Beuve's antipathy towards Balzac, both writers shared Lavater's contempt for impersonal idealisation and purely generalised traits. Saint Beuve reveals his method in relation to his literary portrait of Diderot, Tilby says, in a passage that explains how portraiture avoids mere 'analysis' to bring a subject to life: portraiture must capture 'the familiar tic, the revealing smile, the indefinable cleft, the intimate and painful wrinkle hidden in vain under balding hair.'³⁶ According to Tilby, this focus upon the individual in literary portraiture had its parallel in contemporary portrait painting and its related criticism, particularly regarding the work of Ingres.³⁷ Despite contrasting opinions concerning Ingres's ability to successfully individualise his portraits, all critical responses seem to have demanded the same Lavaterian quality of individuality from the work. Hence, 'Gautier was one critic who was particularly alive to Ingres's ability

³³ See *ibid*, p113.

³⁴ *ibid*, p113. Saint-Beuve describes the 'portrait littéraire' which sought to illuminate 'le rapport de l'oeuvre à la personne même, au caractère, aux circonstances particulières.' Tilby quotes from Saint-Beuve, *Oeuvres*, ed. Maxime Leroy, 2 vols., Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1956-60, I, p649.

³⁵ *ibid*, pp113-114. Tilby makes this point with particular reference to Saint-Beuve's *Port-Royal*: "Un individu bien observé," he [Saint-Beuve] maintained at one point in his *Port-Royal*, "se rapporte vite à l'espèce qu'on n'a vue que de loin et l'éclaire." Tilby quotes from Saint-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, ed. Maxime Leroy, 3 vols., Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1953-5, I, p130.

³⁶ *ibid*, p114. Tilby quotes from Saint-Beuve, *Oeuvres*, ed. Maxime Leroy, 2 vols., Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1956-60, I, p867: 'le tic familier, le sourire révélateur, la gerçure indéfinissable, la ride intime et douloureuse qui se cache en vain sous les cheveux déjà clair-semés.'

³⁷ Tilby insists that 'Although certain of Ingres's contemporaries complained that his classicism interfered with the truthfulness of his portraits, and although the painter turned to ancient classical models as well as to Raphael for the poses he gave to such contemporary figures as Madame Moitessier and Madame d'Haussonville, his concern with the individual in his contemporary context remained supreme.' See Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, pp114-115.

to convey an impression of uniqueness of personality,' whilst 'it was explicitly on Lavaterian grounds that he [Baudelaire] castigated Ingres's art for its allegedly idealizing tendencies.'³⁸

Tilby argues that the caricature of nineteenth-century France owes even more to the Lavaterian tradition than portraiture does, and that there is a continuum between these two forms of physiognomical expression, as is clearly evident in the caricatural work of Balzac and Daumier.³⁹ Because of this continuum, he says, some representations of the period operate simultaneously as portraiture and caricature. In the case of Balzac, Tilby demonstrates this continuum with reference to the writer's extensive description of the character Nathan in *Une Fille d'Ève*, from the *Comédie Humaine*. Although closely modelled on Théophile Gautier's caricature of the fictional painter Onuphrius, a character whose story is told among others in *Les Jeunes-France* – a satire of romanticism published in 1833 – Balzac's Nathan is much more than a caricature.⁴⁰ Gautier's character Onuphrius straightforwardly caricatures a typical member of the self-consciously eccentric young

³⁸ Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p117. Tilby says, 'Commenting on the effect of Ingres's portrait of Madame Rothschild, he [Gautier] enthused: "l'oeil brille, éclairé par une repartie prête à jaillir de ses lèvres. C'est une conversation spirituelle, commencée dans la salle de bal ou au souper, qui se continue; on entendrait presque ce que dit l'interlocuteur hors du cadre.'" Here, Tilby quotes from Théophile Gautier, *Fusains et Eaux-Fortes*, Fasquelle, 1907, pp248-249; the article originally appeared in *L'Événement*, 1848. Tilby also says (*ibid*, 1994, pp117-118): 'It was Ingres's invariable deference to the example of Raphael that was seen by Baudelaire as the cause of his failure to respect the syntax of authentic portraiture. In short, he was charged by him with imposing on his sitters "un perfectionnement plus ou moins complet, emprunté au répertoire des idées classiques.'" Here, Tilby quotes from Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, in *Critique d'art*, edited by Claude Pichois with an introduction by Claire Brunet, Collection Folio/Essais, Gallimard, 1992, p356.

³⁹ Michael Tilby, "'Telle main veut tel pied': Balzac, Ingres and the art of portraiture,' in Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge, eds., *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994, p127.

⁴⁰ See *ibid*, pp125-7. For a discussion of Balzac in the context of 'bohemia' in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Malcolm Easton, *Artists and Writers in Paris: The Bohemia Idea 1803-1867*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1964.

romantic section of French society.⁴¹ The character is a simple generalisation of the traits of this type and is taken to be either ‘un fou’ or ‘un original’ by the conventional onlooker.⁴² Unlike Gautier’s Onuphrius, however, Balzac’s Nathan is a developed Lavaterian portrait and reveals a much more complex combination of individual traits and idiosyncrasies. For example, Balzac emphasises the character’s individuality by providing an anecdote of his unkempt fingernails.⁴³ The writer extends this portrayal of individuality by describing the physiognomical harmony between the peculiarities of the character’s body and clothing, a harmony in overall physical appearance that also projects the character as a social type.⁴⁴ The character’s gait and conversation augment this harmony because they imitate the allure of his physical appearance.⁴⁵ Balzac’s description of Nathan also contains numerous caricatural observations that highlight more general traits of the type; for example, the character is described as having heron’s legs and crab’s pincers.⁴⁶ The writer’s combined use of portraiture and caricature portrays the distinctive individual and social dimensions of the character, creating what Tilby calls ‘an amalgam, a constant shift from one to the other [portraiture and caricature], just as there is a continual hesitancy between an impression of

⁴¹ Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p125.

⁴² Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p125.

⁴³ Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p126.

⁴⁴ See Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p126. Balzac writes (*Une Fille d’Eve*, from the *Comédie Humaine*): ‘Ses vêtements semblent toujours avoir été tordus, fripés, recroquevillés exprès pour s’harmonier à sa physionomie.’

⁴⁵ See Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p126. Balzac writes (*Une Fille d’Eve*, from the *Comédie Humaine*): ‘sa conversation . . . imite l’allure de son corps.’

⁴⁶ Tilby, *ibid*, 1994, p126.

the character as an individual and an appreciation of him as a representative of the Jeunes-France and of his profession.⁴⁷

This physiognomical continuum between portraiture and caricature is integral to the positivist quality of familiarity that Champfleury finds represented in the figures of the *Enterrement* and the *Baigneuses*. We have seen that the writer compares Courbet's work to that of both Balzac and Daumier, referring precisely to their expression of qualities of individuality and social type to assert the depth and affectivity of Courbet's insight into contemporary society and its place in history. As is clear from his article addressed to Sand, Champfleury considers that costume is an important aspect of the physiognomical continuum between portraiture and caricature, expressing both the individual and social character of the person who wears it.⁴⁸ Here, the writer demonstrates a Lavaterian treatment of costume, which, as Tilby has shown, was widespread in nineteenth-century French art and art criticism.⁴⁹ Tilby again refers to the work of Ingres and Balzac as good examples of such treatment of costume. With regard to Ingres' portrait of Madame d'Haussonville, for example [Figure 22], the visual relationship between the clothing and the objects on the table helps to complete a harmonious image of the sitter's personality, Tilby says.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁷ See Tilby, *ibid.*, 1994, pp126-127.

⁴⁸ The importance of clothing and accessories in Courbet's painting as an expanded means of signification – a means to connote and signify class, submission and sovereignty through their association with expressions, proverbs, puns and jokes – has been discussed by Ting Chang in her article 'Hats and hierarchy in Gustave Courbet's *The Meeting*,' *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 86, (4), pp719-730. Petra Chu addresses similar issues in the context of allegory and the 'pose' in Courbet's work; see Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France, Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2007 (see, in particular Chapter 2, 'Posing,' pp17-44 and Chapter 4, 'Salon Rhetoric,' pp75-113).

⁴⁹ Michael Tilby, "'Telle main veut tel pied': Balzac, Ingres and the art of portraiture," in Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge, eds., *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994, p117.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p117.

viewer immediately senses that the clothes belong to the sitter and expresses the body beneath them. Heterogeneous and randomly displayed, the objects on the table behind her are undoubtedly her possessions, and the rich chromatic echoes between these objects and the sitter's costume reinforce the physiognomical harmony of the image.⁵¹ In Champfleury's case, costume has a particularly positivist significance because it becomes another expressive aspect of the stage of historical development reached by contemporary society. Costume assimilates the physiognomy of the body that wears it, reflecting both the individuality and typicality of the subject concerned. It is 'historical,' Champfleury says, and artists should always represent contemporary subjects in the costume of their period, not in the attire of past ages or past civilisations.⁵² The writer maintains that Courbet's work offers model examples because the artist knows that costume, like the human body itself, is subject to the historical force of social evolution, 'hygienic laws' that increasingly purify society. Here, again, Champfleury's views may be compared to the corresponding ideas of Proudhon and Comte, according to which humanity is destined to reach a state of perfection as positivist art exposes the social impurities that cause physical and moral degeneration.⁵³ Society is continuously reformed in this way and becomes an increasingly hygienic environment in which to live. For Champfleury, as for Proudhon and Comte, physiognomical representation is a key component in this hygienic process of social filtration and costume is an important part of the human physiognomy. As Champfleury

⁵¹ See *ibid*, p117. As Tilby says, these effects create 'a harmonious whole that gives us the impression of a tangible yet indefinable personality revealed with great immediacy.' According to Tilby, Balzac is another artist whose physiognomical use of clothing belongs to a broadly Lavaterian tradition. In this case, costume is often seen to function as a language, as is explicitly expressed by Balzac in the context of a description of Marie de Vandenesse in *Une Fille d'Eve*. In this description, the writer comments that 'la toilette' is said to be 'une manifestation constante de la pensée intime, un langage, un symbole.' See *ibid*, p121; Tilby quotes from the Pléiade edition of *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols., Gallimard, 1976-81, II, p328.

⁵² Champfleury, 'Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,' *L'Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p2.

⁵³ For further discussion on the idea of 'hygiene' in the work of Comte and Proudhon, see Chapter 5 of this thesis, 'Positivist Idealism: Social Reform and Universal Materiality.'

notes, ‘the costume of each epoch is governed by unknown, hygienic laws that penetrate fashion without being realised. Every fifty years, costumes are transformed in France; like physiognomies, they become historical and as interesting to study, as peculiar to look at, like the clothes of a savage people.’⁵⁴

Clearly, Champfleury’s positivist view of Courbet’s work is based largely upon Proudhon’s theories and foregrounds the role of caricature in creating ‘eternal’ or ‘immortal’ representations of contemporary society. In the writer’s view, the *Enterrement* and the *Baigneuses* are fine examples of such representation. In his article addressed to George Sand, Champfleury also briefly discusses the *Atelier du peintre* [see Figure 1], a painting about which he has certain misgivings but which he thinks has powerful physiognomical and caricatural qualities. He does not give a detailed explanation of the role of caricature in this painting. However, he points to some physiognomical elements whose positivist nature is illuminated in light of two other related texts, a letter from Courbet to Champfleury written just before the painting was completed in 1854, and a book by Champfleury on the history of caricature published ten years later. Considered together, these texts reveal that Courbet intended the *Atelier du peintre* to be a signature painting of his positivism, a caricatural demonstration of his physical and moral insight, and an expression of his privileged understanding of social evolution and reform. We shall turn to

⁵⁴ Champfleury, ‘Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,’ *L’Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p2: ‘Le costume de chaque époque est régi par des lois inconnues, hygiéniques, qui se glissent dans la mode, sans que celle-ci s’en rende compte. Tous les cinquante ans, les costumes sont bouleversés en France; comme les physionomies, ils deviennent *historiques* et aussi curieux à étudier, aussi singuliers à regarder, que les vêtements d’une peuplade de sauvages. Les portraits de Gérard, de 1800, qui ont pu sembler vulgaires dans le principe, prennent plus tard une tournure, une physionomie singulière. Ce que les artistes appellent *costume*, c’est-à-dire, mille brimborions (des plumes, des mouches, des aigrettes, etc.), peut amuser un moment les esprits frivoles; mais la représentation sérieuse de la personnalité actuelle, les chapeaux ronds, les habits noirs, les souliers vernis ou les sabots de paysans, est bien autrement intéressante.’

these two texts shortly. Firstly, however, we need to consider the physiognomical elements of the *Atelier du peintre* highlighted in Champfleury's article addressed to Sand.

What aspects of the *Atelier du peintre* does Champfleury identify as significant in his article addressed to George Sand? The critic is certainly somewhat concerned about the idea of a 'real allegory,' an idea put forward by the artist in the full title of the painting: *L'Atelier du peintre, allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique*. The term 'real allegory' contains opposing theoretical principles, Champfleury insists, because 'an "allegory" cannot be "real" any more than a "reality" can be "allegorical."' ⁵⁵ Yet, despite these misgivings, he considers that the painting advances Courbet's artistic programme and shows potential as an historical work whose aesthetic impact will stand the test of time. ⁵⁶ In this respect, he again draws attention to the physiognomical aspects of the work, highlighting the compositional arrangement of the figures into three distinct groups, like a triptych: a central group including the artist, a right-hand group standing for 'reality' and a left-hand group 'representing the allegory.' ⁵⁷ Although he does not undertake a detailed philosophical discussion here, and does not explain the ideas of 'reality' and 'allegory,' the writer highlights certain prominent caricatural and physiognomical aspects in each group. Describing the central group, which includes the artist at his easel, a nude model and a young boy standing beside the easel, he

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p3: 'Une *allégorie* ne saurait être *réelle*, pas plus qu'une *réalité* ne peut devenir *allégorique*'.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p4: 'J'ai un peu critiqué l'*Atelier du peintre*, quoiqu'il y ait un progrès réel dans la manière de M.Courbet: il gagnera sans doute à être revu plus tranquillement dans d'autres moments. Ma première impression a été telle, et je crois généralement à ma première impression. Les bavardages, les commentaires, les critiques de journaux, les amis et les ennemis, viennent ensuite troubler le cerveau à tel point, qu'il est difficile de retrouver la pensée dans sa pureté première: mais au-dessus de l'impression, je mets les travaux mystérieux du *temps*, qui démolit une oeuvre ou la restaure. Chaque oeuvre pleine de conviction est traitée avec amour par le temps, qui ne passe son éponge que sur les inutilités de la mode, les *jolies* imitations du passé et les oeuvres de convention.'

⁵⁷ See *ibid*, pp3-4.

notes that Courbet has represented himself in ‘a victorious and triumphant pose.’⁵⁸ Within this group, the writer also highlights the figure of the young boy who turns his back on the viewer, a figure whose pantomimic physiognomy is so expressive that Champfleury considers it the best in the painting.⁵⁹ The writer says that the right-hand group of figures expresses the artist’s philosophical outlook, and includes ‘poets, musicians, philosophers, lovers, each occupied in his own way while the artist works.’⁶⁰ In this group, he highlights two figures whose physiognomy clearly suggests to him that they are art lovers who have come to the studio to admire the artist’s work.⁶¹ The left-hand group represents the allegory and is made up of the lower classes of people ‘that the artist likes to paint, drawing his inspiration from poverty and poor folk.’⁶² Of the figures within this group, Champfleury draws particular attention ‘a poacher looking with contempt at a plumed hat, a dagger, etc (cast-offs of romanticism no doubt).’⁶³ The critic provides no further analysis of the *Atelier du peintre* in his article. However, the characteristics of the painting that he highlights, and the essentially positivist and caricatural ideas through which he interprets them, can be understood further if we examine Courbet’s personal correspondence around the time that the *Atelier du peintre* was painted.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p3: ‘Le peintre est au milieu de son atelier, près de son chevalet, occupé à peindre un paysage, se reculant de sa toile dans une pose victorieuse et triomphante. Une femme nue est debout près du chevalet.’

⁵⁹ *ibid*, pp3-4: ‘A deux pas du peintre est un petit paysan qui tourne le dos au public, dont on ne voit pas la figure et dont la pantomime est si expressive, qu’on devine ses yeux, sa bouche. Ce petit paysan est la meilleure figure du tableau.’

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p4: ‘A droit . . . Des poètes, des musiciens, des philosophes, des amoureux, s’occupent chacun à sa manière pendant le travail de l’artiste. Voilà pour la réalité.’

⁶¹ *ibid*, p4: ‘A droit, une femme du monde donnant le bras à son mari vient visiter l’atelier, . . .’

⁶² *ibid*, p4: ‘A gauche, des mendiants, des juifs, des femmes allaitant des enfants, des croque-morts, des paillasses, un braconnier regardant avec mépris un chapeau à plummet, un poignard, etc. (défroques du romantisme sans doute), représentent l’allégorie, c’est-à-dire que tous ces personnages des basses classes sont ceux que l’artiste aime à peindre, en s’inspirant de la misère des misérables.’

⁶³ *ibid*, p4. See footnote 62.

III: Social leadership through caricature: allegory and history in the *Atelier du peintre*

In a letter to Champfleury written in November-December 1854, Courbet gave a detailed explanation of the *Atelier du peintre* before the painting was completed. In this letter, the artist reveals his positivist view of the painting, a view he claims to share with both Champfleury and Proudhon.⁶⁴ He says that the painting represents ‘the moral and physical history’ of the world as seen through the work he produces in his studio, the history of the combined physical, mental, moral and emotional constitution of people that translates into social behaviour and development.⁶⁵ Overall, Courbet describes this representation of society in much the same way as Champfleury describes it in his article addressed to George Sand, which was published around ten months later. Besides the central group of himself and his model, the artist identifies two other main groups. Firstly, the left-hand group of social types, a record of various levels of contemporary society constituting the ‘world of trivial life, the people, wretchedness, poverty, wealth, the exploited, the exploiters, the people who live off death.’⁶⁶ Secondly, the right-hand group, the contemporary individuals described by the artist as ‘the shareholders, that is to say

⁶⁴ Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, Ornans, November-December 1854, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p122: ‘je voudrais bien avoir aussi ce philosophe Proudhon qui est de notre manière de voir, s’il voulait poser j’en serais content; si vous le voyez, demandez-lui si je peux compter sur lui.’

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p121: ‘C’est l’histoire morale et physique de mon atelier . . . ce sont les gens qui me servent, me soutiennent dans mon idée et participent à mon action. Ce sont les gens qui vivent de la vie, qui vivent de la mort. C’est la société dans son haut, dans son bas, dans son milieu. En un mot, c’est ma manière de voir la société dans ses intérêts et ses passions. C’est le monde qui vient se faire peindre chez moi.’

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p121: ‘À gauche, l’autre monde de la vie triviale, le peuple, la misère, la pauvreté, la richesse, les exploités, les exploiters, les gens qui vivent de la mort.’ Courbet’s interpretation of the left-hand group is broader than Champfleury’s; the writer saw this group merely as an allegory of poor folk whereas the artist saw it as a representational cross-section of society.

friends, workers, art lovers.⁶⁷ Together, these three groups express Courbet's positivist view of society and the world and, as an examination of the artist's letter reveals, this view is communicated through caricature and physiognomy.

How exactly do the figures and their compositional arrangement reveal the artist's positivist view of history and how does their caricatural and physiognomical representation express this view? It is important to realise that there are two historical aspects to Courbet's view of history, the past and present, and that the present includes the recent past. Both aspects are expressed in the painting through caricature and physiognomy and both aspects underpin a critique of contemporary French politics. To understand how caricature and physiognomy convey these two historical aspects and support a political critique, it is important to recognise that Courbet intended his painting to be an 'allegorical' image. This is made clear in the painting's full title: *L'Atelier du Peintre, allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique*. For the artist, allegory was a powerful means of accentuating the painting's political critique, a critique that was ultimately based upon a positivist view of history and social evolution.

Allegory was an established form of caricature and satire in mid-nineteenth-century France and a suitable means for Courbet to convey the political critique embodied in the *Atelier du peintre*. As Judith Wechsler has shown, allegorical caricature conveyed political criticism in a very particular way. It was one of the main forms of caricature functioning in

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p121: 'À droite sont les actionnaires, c'est à dire les amis, les travailleurs, les amateurs du monde de l'art.' James Henry Rubin has noted that 'actionnaires,' or 'shareholders,' is an economic term implying that each figure had invested in Courbet's artistic project or at least contributed to it in some way, although Rubin says that the nature of this investment or contribution is not clear; see James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p44.

mid-nineteenth-century France and produced allegorical interpretations of public events in which nations and factions, or concepts such as Peace or Diplomacy, were symbolised by single figures.⁶⁸ Such caricature transposed the public situation and criticised it, and this critical potential offered Courbet the opportunity to challenge the Universal Exposition and its embodiment of Second Empire politics in a necessarily covert but decipherable way. Allegorical caricature made social and political comment through physiognomical associations and exaggerations, silent codes, riddles and puns, which the viewer had to decipher in order to understand their critique.⁶⁹ This was a particularly useful mode of critique for anti-establishment caricaturists during times of strict censorship. Between 1830 and 1835, for example, political caricature operated increasingly on the basis of puns, emblems, allegories and typifications.⁷⁰ During this period of censorship, the famous caricaturist Charles Philipon sustained an effective critique of the monarch Louis-Philippe and his regime through the symbol of the ‘pear,’ which became a visual constant during the July Monarchy.⁷¹

The Second Empire, the period in which the *Atelier du peintre* was conceived and produced, was another period of strict censorship in French history. Robert J. Goldstein, the well-known historian of caricature censorship in nineteenth-century France, makes this abundantly clear. He points out that, just like those who governed the French regimes of

⁶⁸ Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1982, p14.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p14.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p71.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p71. Based upon a physiognomical analogy – Louis-Philippe’s body was paunchy – this emblematic critique operated on various levels. In slang, for example, ‘poire’ meant ‘fat-headed.’ The emblem also came to represent the many predatory money-grubbers and speculators who profited from what many saw as the sordid capitalist regime of the July Monarchy.

1822-30 and 1835-48, Napoleon III feared images even more than words.⁷² Courbet invested his painting with conventions of allegory to convey its political critique in a manner that negotiated these circumstances of strict censorship. Numerous scholars have recognised the allegorical nature of the painting and have sought to explain its political critique, but they have all failed sufficiently to uncover the positivist view through which this critique is expressed. René Huyghe, Werner Hoffman, Benedict Nicolson, Alan Bowness, Linda Nochlin and James Henry Rubin have all interpreted the *Atelier du peintre* and its allegorical meaning according to the social and political significance of the contemporary types represented on the left-hand side of the painting. As Linda Nochlin acknowledges, all of these interpretations, including her own, are inadequate because they accept the identity of the figures at face value.⁷³ By contrast, H  l  ne Toussaint demonstrates an interpretative breakthrough concerning the political and social significance of these contemporary types represented in the painting.⁷⁴ Guided by Courbet’s description

⁷² Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio and London, England, 1989, p179. Goldstein informs us that, on 17 February 1852, having overthrown the French constitutional regime, President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte issued a press decree to re-establish prior censorship of images. The decree ‘quoted almost verbatim from the caricature censorship portions of the September Laws [of 1835]’ and, ‘as in 1835, strict enforcement of the decree was demanded with regard to mass-circulated “engravings, lithographs, emblems or illustrations reproduced by printing” that had a “dangerous character.”’ For the government, images of ‘dangerous character’ were those considered as “provocations to vice, to disorder, to debauchery.”’ In addition, a new measure of control was introduced some time after the 1852 decree – an administrative requirement that prior written consent was obtained from the subjects of all published caricatures. See Goldstein, *ibid*, 1989, pp179-180.

⁷³ See Linda Nochlin, ‘Courbet’s Real Allegory: Rereading “The Painter’s Studio,”’ in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London (copyright 1988 by The Brooklyn Museum, catalogue for the exhibition of Courbet’s work at the Brooklyn Museum, 4 November 1988 - 16 January 1989, and at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 18 February 1989 - 30 April 1989), p18.

⁷⁴ See H  l  ne Toussaint, ‘The dossier on “The Studio” by Courbet,’ in *Gustave Courbet 1819-1877*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978 (catalogue for the exhibition celebrating the centenary of Courbet’s death held at the Royal Academy of Arts 19 January - 19 March 1978). The exhibition was organised by the R  union des mus  es nationaux and first held in the Galeries nationales d’exposition du Grand Palais, Paris from 1 October 1977 to 2 January 1978. It was later held at the Royal Academy of Arts from 19 January 1978 to 19 March 1978. Prior to Toussaint’s breakthrough, Courbet scholars took the figures in the left-hand group to be allegorical only in a very simply way – the figures represented various levels of the social order as seen by Courbet and contrasted with the

of the figures in his letter, she compares the physical appearance of the types painted in the left-hand group with the appearance of certain political and historical figures that actually existed around the time the painting was completed, or recently before. Toussaint convincingly argues that each figure on the left of the painting is either a concealed reference to an individual in contemporary politics or public affairs, or a symbol of a country with whom France had relations or conflict at that time or recently before.⁷⁵ This includes Napoleon III and members of his entourage, as indicated by the particular physiognomical features or associations that symbolised them at the time. Following contemporary cartoonists, for example, Courbet indicates that his ‘poacher’ is Napoleon III by portraying him with very distinctive thigh-boots. Contemporary cartoonists were forbidden to illustrate any imperial person directly and often satirised the emperor in representations of figures wearing jack-boots.⁷⁶ The jack-boot became such a widely

artist’s friends, the ‘concrete portraits’ on the right. Linda Nochlin points out the importance of Toussaint’s breakthrough; see Nochlin, ‘Courbet’s Real Allegory: Rereading “The Painter’s Studio,”’ in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988, pp18-20.

⁷⁵ See Hélène Toussaint, ‘The dossier on “The Studio” by Courbet,’ in *Gustave Courbet 1819-1877*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978 (catalogue for the exhibition celebrating the centenary of Courbet’s death held at the Royal Academy of Arts 19 January - 19 March, 1978), pp260-268. According to Toussaint, the Jew represents Napoleon III’s Finance Minister, Achille Fould. The ‘curé’ is Louis Veuillot, the conservative reactionary Catholic journalist, and the ‘weather-beaten old man’ is Carnot Lazare, a professional soldier and man of science who was once a member of the Convention. The ‘undertaker’s mute’ is the editor Émile de Girardin, and the ‘old-clothes man’ is Napoleon III’s Minister of the Interior, Persigny. The ‘braconnier,’ who is not actually mentioned in Courbet’s letter to Champfleury, is Napoleon III himself. In Toussaint’s interpretation, other figures symbolise countries: the strong man is a symbol of Turkey, with whom France was allied in the Crimean War; the huntsman, or ‘chasseur,’ is the Italian Risorgimento represented by Garibaldi; the man in the cap is the Hungarian leader Kossuth, representing insurgent Hungary; the scytheman, personified in the figure of Kosciuszko, is a symbol of insurgent Poland; and the labourer – the man with folded arms, turning away from his neighbours – is the Russian revolutionary Alexander Herzen, representing Russian socialism.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p266.

recognised symbol for lampooning the emperor that he was sometimes represented by nothing more than the image of a boot.⁷⁷

Despite her incisive reading of the identity of these figures, Toussaint, like many other scholars, fails to draw any conclusions concerning the underlying meaning of the *Atelier du peintre*. Even Klaus Herding – whose seemingly exhaustive study shows that the painting is intended to be a lesson in rulership for Napoleon III – misses the positivist nature of that lesson.⁷⁸ The painting's caricatural critique of the emperor and contemporary politics and its presentation of the artist as a figure with special insight into social development are ultimately based upon the positivist view of history expressed in the painting. Crucially, the enormous claims implied by Courbet in what amounts to a lesson to the emperor concerning social leadership gains credibility through his demonstration of deep insight into the workings of physical and moral history, the evolution of society from

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p266. For an example of the emperor being represented by a boot alone, see the caricature by Gill in *L'Eclipse*, 26 December 1869.

⁷⁸ Herding undertakes research to test Toussaint's identification of the figures on the left of the painting. He categorically confirms some of the hidden identities she proposes, particularly those of Napoleon III, Carnot, Fould and Garibaldi, but has doubts about some of the others. Nevertheless, whilst he questions some of the specific identities proposed by Toussaint – those of Persigny, Girardin, Kossuth, Kosciuszko and Herzen – he sees no reason to doubt the general allegorical significance of the painting she proposes. In Herding's view, the crucial aspects of the *Atelier du peintre* are that the artist encounters the emperor in the image and that some of the Bonapartist entourage are present, accompanied by representatives from other countries. He also points out that Courbet, in representing a landscape at the centre of the painting, creates an important symbol of nature. Taking all these considerations into account, Herding argues that the painting presents a huge didactic panorama in which opposing classes and nations coexist in peace and harmony, the fulcrum for which is the redemptive and productive power that Courbet derives from landscape, a symbol of unspoiled nature. For Herding, the allegorical meaning of the painting amounts to a lesson in rulership for Napoleon III, on the very occasion that the emperor aimed to show the success of his own rulership, the World Fair of 1855. As Herding says, Courbet inverts the age-old theme of a meeting between artist and ruler because the ruler's visit is not a confirmation of the artist's work. Rather, the ruler's visit demonstrates the artist's power to solve and cure temporal problems. Also, following the example of Chenavard's conception for murals in the Panthéon, Courbet expands the meeting to a universal gathering of figures for the sake of human understanding and peaceful coexistence.

See Klaus Herding, *Courbet, To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, Chapter 3, 'The Painter's Studio: Focus of World Events, Site of Reconciliation,' pp45-61.

ancient times. Through this intended demonstration of special insight, Courbet seeks the guarantee of credibility as a leading guide in social reform – a visionary whose understanding of social development can save the world – and expresses his physical and moral history of the world in three parts within the painting. On the left-hand side of the painting, he expresses the historical present by representing different types from various sectors of contemporary society. Simultaneously, these types are allegorical caricatures of political figures from the present or the recent past. On the right, he represents people who are important to his work, indicating the positivist conception of his painting by including Proudhon and Champfleury, the two men with whom he claims to share his social and historical views. In the central part, Courbet offers a symbol of his positivist view of the past, an image expressing his insight into the physical and moral workings of history. The artist refers to the distant past by representing himself with the physiognomy of an ancient Assyrian king. Shown at his easel painting a landscape, the artist is the central, most important figure in the painting, and, as the artist himself points out, the physiognomical profile of this figure makes immediate reference to images found in ancient art. In his letter to Champfleury, the artist describes his figure in the painting as ‘myself painting, with the Assyrian profile of my head.’⁷⁹

How precisely does this image of Courbet present a positivist view of the past and how did it help the artist criticise the politics of his time? To answer these questions, we need to recognise Courbet’s keen interest in ancient Assyrian sculpture, as well as the huge interest in ancient art shown in France generally at that time. As numerous mid-nineteenth-century French commentators have noted, Courbet was obsessed with the idea that his

⁷⁹ Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, Ornans, November-December 1854, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p122.

physiognomy resembled that of an ancient Assyrian king.⁸⁰ Attempting to maintain this supposed resemblance, the artist shaped his beard to look like those of the royalty represented on ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs and friezes, and even attempted to adopt the typical posture or pose of such ancient royalty. Recalling his bohemian youth in his book *Les Souvenirs de Schaunard*, Alexandre Schanne, the famous writer, musician, industrialist and friend of Courbet, refers to one occasion when the artist ‘stroked his beard cut to the Assyrian shape, and assumed one of the customary postures by resting on his left leg.’⁸¹ Robert L. Alexander has examined Courbet’s fascination with ancient Assyrian sculpture in his article ‘Courbet and Assyrian Sculpture,’ published in 1965. Here, Alexander shows that the artist drew substantially upon the motifs and techniques found in such sculpture, as is evident in a number of his paintings.⁸² In *La rencontre ou Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* [Figure 23], for example, the artist used a motif commonly found in Assyrian reliefs: the emperor Sargon II receiving his vizier, adapted by Courbet for his portrayal of an exchange of courtesies with his patron Alfred Bruyas.⁸³ Here, as in the *Atelier du peintre*, the artist is represented with the profile of an Assyrian king, as is immediately indicated by his posture and the shape of his beard. Also, in *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*, the procession of people and animals creates an illusion of movement through the image, an illusion that is very reminiscent of the kind found in Assyrian bas-reliefs, particularly their

⁸⁰ See, for example, Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, Paris, 1857, reproduced in Pierre Courthion, ed., *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis, I*, Geneva, 1948-50, p27: ‘Courbet est un beau et grand jeune homme. Sa figure tient du type assyrien . . . Il n’a de violent que l’amour-propre: l’âme de Narcisse s’est arrêtée en lui dans sa dernière migration.’ See also footnote 81.

⁸¹ See Alexandre Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, Charpentier, Paris, 1866, p289: ‘Alors son oeil d’antilope s’alluma, il caressa sa barbe taillée à l’assyrienne, et pris une des postures qui était habituelle en se campant sur la jambe gauche, et en posant sa main inoccupée sur sa hanche; . . .’

⁸² Robert L Alexander, ‘Courbet and Assyrian Sculpture,’ *Art Bulletin*, 47, (4) 1965, pp447-452; see in particular p448. Alexander comments that these ancient motifs and techniques ‘apparently had a profound effect on Courbet’s conceptual processes, showing him ways to attain both a powerful, dramatic effect and a sense of concrete, material existence in his paintings of contemporary life.’

⁸³ *ibid*, p448.

processional pairing of oxen.⁸⁴ And the frieze-like appearance of the *Enterrement*, with its monumentalising juxtaposition of figures and Jura hills, seems based upon the depiction of figures against wall remnants found in Assyrian relief friezes, which create similar pictorial effects.⁸⁵

Like ancient art generally, Assyrian sculpture was the subject of great interest in mid-nineteenth-century France, and Courbet's references to it in his work would have been readily and widely recognised.⁸⁶ Aside from being aware of the large volumes of literature on the subject, Courbet would almost certainly have seen the substantial amount of sculpture that was brought back to Paris and exhibited at the Louvre in 1847.⁸⁷ Literature on the subject was extremely popular and consumed by an extensive, varied readership. The 'sciences' of Egyptology and Assyrology flourished during this period as a result of numerous excavations, which resulted in copious amounts of archaeological discoveries and the publications that illustrated, described and examined them. When Courbet referred to ancient Assyrian sculpture in his work, then, he clearly drew upon a subject of enormous interest during the period and used motifs and techniques that would be widely recognised.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, pp448-449.

⁸⁵ See *ibid*, p450. As Alexander notes, *La rencontre* and *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* seem not to have been compared either to a frieze or bas-relief by writers of the period although, from 1857, the *Enterrement* was.

⁸⁶ See *ibid*, p447. Early in 1843, the excavator Paul-Émile Botta was working in northern Mesopotamia and uncovered a small part of the fortress-city-palace of Sargon II. With the aid of draftsman Eugène-Napoléon Flandin, drawings of the finds were being engraved by 1846 and were published soon after. Then, in 1849-50, the five huge volumes of *Monument de Ninive* were published, the first two volumes of which were subtitled 'Architecture et sculpture' and included 165 large plates of general views and detailed plates of every relief. In 1850, an English edition with 49 selected plates was published and, after the English excavator Austen H. Layard had discovered the actual Nineveh in 1846, numerous further English publications appeared on the subject between 1848 and 1853. The French were so enthusiastic about the discoveries that they sent another excavator, Victor Place, to Assyria for another three years from 1852 to 1854. The results of the work were published in *Ninive et l'Assyrie*, 3 vols., Paris, 1867-70.

⁸⁷ See Robert L. Alexander, 'Courbet and Assyrian Sculpture,' *Art Bulletin*, 47, (4) 1965, pp447-448.

Most importantly, however, Courbet's treatment of ancient art in the *Atelier du peintre* – the physiognomical identification of himself with an Assyrian king at the centre of a didactic painting designed to express the physical and moral history of the world – derives mainly from the treatment of ancient art in positivism. Once again, this treatment concerns the roles of caricature and physiognomy in positivist views of history and, once again, as indicated by his letter to Champfleury, the artist's views on these matters were informed by Proudhon's ideas. Here, however, it is also important to recognise that Proudhon's ideas concerning history drew upon the positivist theories of Comte, theories that Proudhon discussed with Courbet in the years just prior to the completion of the painting.⁸⁸

As was recognised in mid-nineteenth-century France, Proudhon's view of history adapts Comte's famous 'Law of Three Stages,' which seeks to explain the evolution of the human mind into the positive state, the 'scientific' mode of thought that is the key to mankind's attainment of physical and moral perfection.⁸⁹ This evolution occurs through

⁸⁸ In his memoirs, Saint-Beuve's secretary Jules Troubat notes that Proudhon, Courbet and Champfleury visited the painter Paul Chenavard in 1852 and discussed his famous paintings for the Panthéon. Troubat (who also notes that Proudhon and Champfleury had 'des préoccupations identiques de certaines questions sociales' around this time) quotes a letter written by Saint-Beuve that informs us that Proudhon admired Chenavard's work and positivism: 'Nous avons passé, il y a quelques jours, une journée avec Proudhon et Courbet . . . Proudhon a les idées naïves encore et je me suis donné une comédie en l'emmenant voir les peintures symboliques de Chenavard que la réaction a chassées du Panthéon . . .'. . . Proudhon a été enchanté. Il a trouvé de la peinture historique et philosophique, qui lui permettait de discuter avec un homme appuyé sur le système de M. Auguste Comte (le positivisme).' See Jules Troubat, *Une amitié à la d'Arthez: Champfleury, Courbet, Max Buchon*, L. Duc, Paris, 1900, pp125-126.

The art historian Klaus Herding has noted that Courbet met Chenavard a number of times in the early 1850s, and that the Panthéon murals may well have been an important source for the universal gathering represented in the *Atelier du peintre*. In 1855, Chenavard had developed, in his cartoon for *The Philosophy of History*, a universal scheme of redemption (whose connection with the World Fair has been pointed out by Werner Hofmann); see Klaus Herding, *Courbet, To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, p58. Herding seems, however, unaware that Proudhon discussed his philosophical view of these murals around Courbet in the early 1850's, and that the philosopher interpreted them specifically as an expression of Comte's positivism.

⁸⁹ The view of history propounded in Proudhon's *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité*, published in 1843, is clearly based upon this positivist theory of history; see entry for 'Proudhon

three great epochs that Comte calls the theological or fictitious stage of history, the metaphysical or abstract stage, and the positive or scientific stage; in Proudhon's schema, the three stages are called religious, philosophical and scientific.⁹⁰ In the first two stages, the human mind is dominated either by imagination or faith and conceives of the origin and destination of the universe in terms of supernatural beings or abstract forces. In the positive stage, the mind relinquishes its vain search for absolutes and applies itself to understanding the laws of the universe, an understanding achieved through a combination of observation and reason. Furnished with knowledge of these laws, mankind is poised to acquire a complete understanding of the workings of social evolution, predict the future course of social development, and thereby achieve social perfection.

For Comte, any effective political policy relies upon this complete understanding of social evolution. Exploring this view further, we can see that the lesson of the *Atelier du peintre* – a lesson addressed to Napoleon III and the Second Empire regime on the very occasion of the World Fair of 1855, the event designed to glorify the policies of that regime – is the essentially Comtian one that social leadership depends upon the demonstration of complete knowledge of social evolution since ancient times. Comte argues that, in order to understand the revolutionary period stemming from the French Revolution, and to formulate policy to deal with it, politicians must understand the evolution of society throughout the history of humanity, ‘the necessary influence of diverse human generations

(Pierre-Joseph)’ in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Treizième, ‘POUR-R,’ Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1875, p317.

⁹⁰ For concise explications of Comte's ‘Law of Three Stages,’ see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp201-203 and pp335-337, and Piotr Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, pp101-102.

upon the generations that follow.’⁹¹ Only through a complete understanding of the workings of this historical process can the social development of the future be predicted and the destined course of society maintained. ‘We must have learned to predict the past, so to speak, before we can predict the future,’ Comte says.⁹² The philosopher insists that the politicians of his era are grossly inadequate because they ignore this historical view. Whilst they understand the importance of observing historical facts, they only look to the present or the very recent past to explain the revolutionary nature of their era. They are unable to understand the condition of their society and its future needs because they have no understanding of ‘the growth of each disposition, physical, intellectual, moral, or political.’⁹³

⁹¹ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, p450: ‘cette influence nécessaire des diverses générations humaines sur les generations suivantes, . . .’

⁹² *ibid*, pp460-461: ‘Pour se familiariser convenablement avec cette méthode historique, de manière à bien saisir et à développer judicieusement son véritable esprit, il est indispensable de l’appliquer d’abord au passé, en cherchant à déduire chaque situation historique bien connue de l’ensemble de ses antécédents graduels, pourvu qu’on se prémunisse suffisamment contre le perspective empirique d’un résultat préexistant. Quelque singulière que semble d’abord une telle marche, il est néanmoins certain que, dans une science quelconque, on n’apprend à prédire rationnellement l’avenir qu’après avoir en quelque sorte prédit le passé, puisque tel est, au fond, le premier usage nécessaire des relations observées entre des faits accomplis, dont la succession antérieure fait découvrir la succession future.’

⁹³ See *ibid*, pp461-463: ‘Parvenu à l’examen de l’époque actuelle, avec l’autorité intellectuelle nécessairement procurée par cette coordination graduelle de toutes les époques précédentes, la méthode historique pourra seule permettre d’en opérer avec succès une exacte analyse fondamentale, où chaque élément soit vraiment apprécié comme il doit l’être, d’après la série sociologique dont il fait partie. Vainement les hommes d’état insistent-ils sur la nécessité des observations politiques: comme ils n’observent essentiellement que le présent, et tout au plus un passé très récent, leur maxime avorte nécessairement dans l’application. . . . Il est évident, par la nature du sujet, que la comparaison approfondie du présent au passé constitue le principal moyen d’exploration propre à prévenir ou à corriger ces inconvénients capitaux. Or, cette comparaison ne peut être pleinement lumineuse et décisive qu’autant qu’elle embrasse essentiellement l’ensemble du passé, graduellement apprécié: elle expose à des erreurs d’autant plus graves qu’on l’arrête à une époque plus rapprochée. Aujourd’hui surtout, où le mélange des divers éléments sociaux, les uns prêts à triompher, les autres sur le point de s’éteindre, doit d’abord paraître si profondément confus, on peut dire spécialement que la plupart des fausses appréciations politiques tiennent principalement à ce que les spéculations habituelles n’embrassent point un passé assez étendu, presque tous nos hommes d’état, dans les divers partis actuels, ne remontant guère au-delà du siècle dernier, sauf les plus

Comte advocates positivism as the effective alternative to the inadequate political systems and policies of his time. Positivism holds the key to achieving social unity because it furnishes an understanding of social development in the past and future. Artists have a very important role to play in attaining and communicating this understanding. They are especially suited to the encouragement of human unity because they have insight into physical and moral nature and its development. Positivist artists understand the importance of history, the trends in the development of human nature through the ages. They are aware that positivism's 'principal feature is a theory of history which enables us to appreciate and become familiar with every mode in which human society has formed itself.'⁹⁴ This special insight into history is not detached from society in any way; artistic representation is instrumental in social development.⁹⁵ The artist's historical insight is combined with a special aesthetic capability to capture the imagination of the people and stir their emotions. Consequently, the positivist artist, 'accustomed to look upon all past historical stages in their proper filiation, will be able so thoroughly to identify himself with all, as to awaken our sympathies for them, and revive the traces which each individual may recognise of corresponding phases in his own history.'⁹⁶

abstraites d'entre eux qui se hasardent quelquefois jusqu'au siècle précédent, et les philosophes eux-mêmes osant à peine dépasser rarement le seizième siècle: en sorte que l'ensemble de l'époque révolutionnaire n'est pas même ordinairement conçu par ceux qui en recherchent si vainement la terminaison, quoiqu'un tel ensemble ne corresponde, au fond, qu'à une simple phase transitoire du mouvement fondamental.'

⁹⁴ See footnote 24.

⁹⁵ See Auguste Comte, *Discours sur l'ensemble du positivisme*, Édition du cinquantenaire, Société positiviste internationale, Cinquième partie: 'Aptitude esthétique du positivisme,' Paris, 1907, pp299-339.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, pp323-324: '[L]artiste positiviste], habitué à la filiation de tous les états antérieures, peut s'identifier avec un âge quelconque, au point de réveiller nos sympathies pour une phase dont chacun de nous doit retrouver en lui-même l'équivalent spontané.' For Comte, the 'poète positiviste' is the artist *par excellence*.

Because of these special aesthetic powers, artists constitute for Comte the cornerstone of the positivist educational system; in education, he insists, art is even more important than science.⁹⁷ This is because ‘our aesthetic faculties are better adapted than the scientific, both to the nature and range of our understanding, and also to that which is the object of all intellectual effort, the organisation of human unity.’⁹⁸ In Comte’s theory, artists would become increasingly independent and powerful as art’s educational role became necessarily more indispensable to society.⁹⁹ The assertion that this physical and moral effect of art upon people is didactic is based upon the core positivist assumptions that the aesthetic faculty is physiological and that the human physiology exists in a biological relationship with the social conditions of its existence. For Comte, the human physiology – the physical and moral character of human existence – evolves biologically according to the changing conditions of society. He argues that ‘the whole social evolution of the race must proceed in entire accord with biological laws; and social phenomena must always be founded on the necessary invariableness of the human organism, the characteristics of which, physical, intellectual, and moral, are always found to be essentially the same, and related in the same manner, at every degree of the social scale.’¹⁰⁰ Rooted in the human

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p319; ‘D’après les indications de la troisième partie, le lecteur sait déjà que cette éducation [positiviste] sera plus esthétique que scientifique, comme l’exige la vraie théorie de l’évolution humaine.’

⁹⁸ *ibid*, pp337-338: ‘Mais, ainsi constituées, les fonctions esthétiques conviennent mieux que les fonctions scientifiques, soit à la nature et à la portée de notre intelligence, soit surtout à sa destination essentielle, l’organisation de l’unité humaine; . . .’

⁹⁹ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p658.

¹⁰⁰ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, pp479-480: ‘Quand le développement social est devenu trop prononcé pour qu’une pareille déduction continue à rester possible, comme je l’expliquerai ci-dessous, alors commence, sous le second point de vue, une invariable participation sociologique, toutefois moins directe et moins spéciale, de la théorie biologique de l’homme, à laquelle l’évolution de l’humanité doit, évidemment, se montrer toujours conforme. Il en résulte, dans le système entier des études sociologiques, soit statiques, soit dynamiques, de précieuses vérifications continues, et quelquefois même d’heureuses indications générales, ainsi que je l’ai déjà indiqué à la fin de la leçon précédente. Ces vérifications

physiology, the aesthetic faculty is inseparable from social evolution and the changing biological conditions of human existence.

The positivist views of history expounded by Proudhon and Comte seem to have informed the conception of *the Atelier du peintre* in important ways. Proudhon later set out his social theory of art in *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, a book published posthumously in 1865, which offers a positivist view of the evolution of art since ancient times. Here, the philosopher argues that ancient Assyrian art is the very first of six 'schools' of art in the evolution of art through history.¹⁰¹ It is an art that reproduces 'human types, racial types, caste and other such classifications.'¹⁰² Along with ancient Egyptian art, Assyrian art constitutes the 'typical school,' an artistic culture that focuses upon the physiognomical characteristics of race and which have proved to be invaluable to modern ethnographical study.¹⁰³ The evolution of art culminates in the 'critical school,' the art of Courbet and positivism, whose purpose is to observe, criticise and improve mankind by

et ces indications sont immédiatement fondées, avec une irrésistible rationalité, sur l'invariabilité nécessaire de l'organisme humain, dont les diverses dispositions caractéristiques soit physiques, soit morales, soit intellectuelles, doivent se retrouver essentiellement les mêmes à tous les degrés de l'échelle sociale, et toujours identiquement coordonnées entre elles, le développement plus ou moins étendu que l'état social leur procure ne pouvant jamais altérer aucunement leur nature, ni, par conséquent, créer ou détruire des facultés quelconques, ou seulement même intervertir leur mutuelle pondération primitive.'

¹⁰¹ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, pp291-295.

¹⁰² *ibid*, p291: 'Nous avons donc, comme premier degré de l'art, l'école *typique*, dont le genre consiste à reproduire les types humains, types de race, de caste ou autres, comme faisaient les anciens Égyptiens et Assyriens.'

¹⁰³ *ibid*, pp291-292: 'Dédaignée aujourd'hui, – nous ne faisons plus que des portraits individus, – l'école typique aurait à faire le portrait de race: travail immense et très-utile pour l'ethnographie.'

representing the physical and moral condition of contemporary society, portraying the current stage of social evolution in operation since ancient times.¹⁰⁴

The *Atelier du peintre* is a clear example of this positivist school of art and, as the centrepiece of Courbet's independent exhibition challenging the Universal Exposition, the painting criticised the ruling regime and the customs associated with it. The painting symbolised the attainment of positivist understanding in history and the full spectrum of artistic evolution from Assyrian to positivist representation. It expressed Courbet's understanding of physical and moral history and declared his independent right to lead society. Of course, the right to such leadership was also clearly implied by Courbet's physiognomical association with an ancient Assyrian king, an association that simultaneously signified knowledge of the ancients and independent leadership. As is well-known, the importance of such independence to Courbet was clearly indicated in his manifesto of realism, which articulated the ideas behind his independent exhibition of 1855 and of the *Atelier du peintre* as its centrepiece: 'I simply wanted to draw forth from a complete acquaintance with tradition the reasoned and independent consciousness of my own individuality.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p294: 'La sixième et dernière école, celle qui indique le degré le plus élevé de l'idéalisme, est l'école *critique*. Art raisonneur, art penseur, art réfléchi: il a compris qu'il doit exister une harmonie entre la nature et la pensée; – art d'observation: il étudie, dans l'expression des traits, les pensées et les caractères; – art essentiellement moralisateur et révolutionnaire: il fait, par les moyens qui lui sont propres, la critique des moeurs.'

¹⁰⁵ Courbet, 'Réalisme,' introduction to the catalogue of the artist's independent exhibition of 1855, reproduced in Pierre Courthion, ed., *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis, II*, Geneva, 1948-50, pp60-61: 'J'ai voulu tout simplement puiser dans l'entière connaissance de la tradition le sentiment raisonné et indépendant de ma propre individualité.'

We can now see that there was a firm positivist basis to the didactic allegory of the *Atelier du peintre*. Comte's view of history – a view largely taken up by Proudhon and shared with Courbet – provided a powerful philosophical basis for the artist's conception of the painting as a 'physical and moral history' of the world. This view of history was propounded by famous and influential philosophers such as Comte and Proudhon, and the importance it attached to artists gave credibility to the grand claims Courbet made through the painting. For Courbet, the painting was an allegorical lesson in rulership for the emperor. Through this allegory, Courbet, like Comte, criticised contemporary leadership for looking only to the present and recent past to formulate political and social policy. By contrast, the artist, with a special understanding of the historical development of society since ancient times, claimed he could cure society of its problems and save the world. It is well documented that, in the mid 1850s, Courbet thought that he occupied a very special position in relation to the rest of the world, and made many claims to uniqueness. In a famous letter to Bruyas in 1853, the artist recounted his luncheon with Count Alfred-Emilien de Nieuwerkerke, claiming 'that I alone, of all the French artists of my time, had the power to represent and translate in an original way both my personality and society.'¹⁰⁶ In 1854, the artist described the *Atelier du peintre* to Champfleury and talked of 'the whole world coming to me to be painted.'¹⁰⁷ Around that time, others were ready to see the artist in the role of saviour. In 1855, for example, Baudelaire spoke of Courbet as 'saving the

¹⁰⁶ Gustave Courbet, letter to Alfred Bruyas, Ornans, possibly October 1853, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p108: 'Je [Courbet] continuai en lui disant [à M. Nieuwerkerke] . . . que moi seul, de tous les artistes français mes contemporains, avais la puissance de rendre et traduire d'une façon originale et ma personnalité et ma société.'

¹⁰⁷ See Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, Ornans, November-December 1854, reproduced in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p121: 'C'est [L'*Atelier du peintre*] le monde qui vient se faire peindre chez moi.'

world.’¹⁰⁸ Courbet did not see these claims as far-fetched or overblown because he based his conception of the *Atelier du peintre* upon teleological theories of history and art set out in positivism; Comte similarly saw himself as the saviour of humanity and the human species.¹⁰⁹ Courbet simply adopted the role of physical and moral reformer assigned to artists by positivism, and considered that he was at the centre of a universal force destined to cure all social ills. Representing himself ‘caricaturally’ as an Assyrian King, the artist intended to demonstrate the power of his physiognomical capabilities and his knowledge of social evolution from ancient times, forms of knowledge that he clearly pointed to in his manifesto of realism: ‘I have studied outside of any system and without prejudice the art of the ancients and moderns . . . To know in order to be able to create, that was my idea, to be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch.’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ See Klaus Herding, *Courbet. To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, p57. Herding quotes from Charles Baudelaire, “Puisque réalisme il y a” (1855), in *Oeuvres complètes*, Claude Pichois, ed., Paris, 1976, Vol. 2, p59.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p5.

¹¹⁰ Courbet, ‘Réalisme,’ introduction to the catalogue of the artist’s independent exhibition of 1855, reproduced in Pierre Courthion, ed., *Courbet, raconté par lui-même et par ses amis, II*, Geneva, 1948-50, pp60-61: ‘J’ai étudié, en dehors de tout système et sans parti pris, l’art des anciens et l’art des modernes . . . Savoir pour pouvoir, telle fut ma pensée. Etre à même de traduire les moeurs, les idées, l’aspect de mon époque, selon mon appréciation; être non seulement un peintre, mais encore un homme; en un mot, faire de l’art vivant, tel est mon but.’

IV: Social leadership through caricature: antiquity and history in the *Atelier du peintre*

The expression of Courbet's positivist view of the past in the *Atelier du peintre* can be understood further if we examine Champfleury's book *Histoire de la caricature antique*, published in 1865. In this book, the first in a series of works by the writer on the history of caricature from ancient to modern times, Champfleury studies certain ancient images and sculptures discovered through archaeology, relics that he considers to be caricatures.¹¹¹ One chapter in the book is devoted to a particular caricatural image called 'L'Atelier du peintre' [Figure 24 & Figure 25] which, discovered in the ruins of Pompeii, exemplifies for Champfleury 'a significant type of caricature in antiquity.'¹¹² Examining the appearance of this image, we can see that Courbet used it as a visual template for his painting of the same name. Examining Champfleury's interpretation of this image, we can see why positivist views of the caricature provided a suitable conceptual framework through which the artist could express his lesson in rulership to Napoleon III.

The visual similarities between Courbet's painting and the caricature are largely self-evident.¹¹³ Champfleury's description of the caricature further demonstrates that

¹¹¹ See entry for 'Caricature' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Troisième, 'C-CHEM,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1867, which covers ancient caricature and quotes Champfleury as an authority on the subject.

¹¹² Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature antique*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1865, p43: 'un type significatif de la caricature dans l'antiquité.' For a discussion of Champfleury's huge interest in all kinds of popular art forms, including caricature, imagery, songs, ceramics, and pantomime, see Amal Asfour, *Champfleury, Meaning in the Popular Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2001.

¹¹³ Two versions of the caricatural image are supplied by Champfleury; both versions are also supplied in *Ruines de Pompéi*, the book by the famous archaeologist François Mazois, published 1824-1838, in which they first appeared. The first image is taken from Mazois' reproduction of the caricature (presumably as a relief) from the original fresco. This image, however, is incomplete; it

Courbet used its composition and the basic physiognomical appearance of some of its figures as a visual template for his painting. We have seen that, in his article addressed to George Sand in 1855, Champfleury describes Courbet's painting in much the same way as the artist describes it in a letter to the writer around the same time, both men pointing out the same compositional and physiognomical elements. They each highlight the compositional arrangement into three main figure groups, the importance of the figures of the artist, his model and the young boy in the central group, and the two 'art lovers' represented on the right. In his book *Histoire de la caricature antique*, Champfleury highlights elements in the ancient caricature that correspond directly with those he highlighted in Courbet's *Atelier du peintre* ten years earlier. The writer again identifies three main figure groups, two groups divided by a central group that includes an artist painting the physiognomical features of his model.¹¹⁴ This central group is considered very important by the writer and clearly corresponds with the central group in Courbet's painting.¹¹⁵ In the right-hand group, Champfleury highlights an art student, who is drawing and showing great curiosity for everything going on around him.¹¹⁶ This figure corresponds with the young boy in Courbet's painting whose back is turned to the viewer and whom

seems that the fresco was partly destroyed by rain when Mazois came to copy it (see Champfleury, *ibid*, 1865, p46). The second, and complete, image is by Guillaume Zahn, who had produced a copy (presumably a drawing because it is the compositional reverse of Mazois' image and shows the figures slightly differently) before Mazois arrived in Pompeii. Courbet's painting follows the format seen in Mazois' reproduction, although, in describing the position of the figure groups, etc, Champfleury follows the other version. Hence, whereas, for example, Champfleury describes (in his letter to George Sand in 1855) the two art lovers on the right of Courbet's painting, he locates the equivalent figures on the left of the ancient caricature when discussing it in his *Histoire de la caricature antique*.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p43: 'Un peintre est occupé devant un chevalet à retracer sur une toile les traits de son modèle; . . .'

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p43: 'le groupe du peintre et de son modèle qui occupent une place importante au centre de la composition, . . .'

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p43: 'à droite dessine un petit élève dont la figure est complètement retournée vers le dos, comme si on avait voulu marquer, par cette représentation forcée, la curiosité d'un rapin qui regarde ce qui se passe dans l'atelier au lieu d'étudier?'

Champfleury took so much notice of in 1855. Champfleury also highlights a pair of figures on the left who observe and discuss the artist's work.¹¹⁷ These two figures correspond directly with the two art lovers on the right of Courbet's painting. Although not highlighted by Champfleury in 1855, other figures in Courbet's painting correspond with figures in the ancient caricature. The cat alongside the boy in the central group of Courbet's painting corresponds with the dog seen playing with a boy in the caricature. Also, the seated 'poacher' on the left-hand side of Courbet's painting, identified by Toussaint as a representation of Napoleon III, corresponds with the seated model in the caricature.

Judging by its appearance and Champfleury's description of its figures, the ancient image provided a visual template for Courbet's *Atelier du peintre*. But, why did Courbet consider the image to be a suitable visual framework for his nineteenth-century positivist lesson in rulership, and why was it a suitable means for him to demonstrate his physical and moral insight into social evolution? Champfleury's *Histoire de la caricature antique* provides the answers to these questions because it reveals the positivist significance of the ancient image and its figures. Although published ten years after Courbet's *Atelier du peintre* was painted, the positivist ideas in Champfleury's book are fully compatible with those expressed by the writer in 1855 in connection with Courbet's painting. In the book, Champfleury clearly takes a positivist view of the ancient caricature. The image is, he says, of the kind described by Pliny the Elder and intelligently interpreted as a 'grotesque' by the famous positivist philosopher Émile Littré, who studied and translated the ancient encyclopaedist's celebrated work *Histoire Naturelle*.¹¹⁸ In this ancient work, Pliny states

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p43: 'Après le groupe du peintre et de son modèle . . . se voient à gauche deux petits hommes dont l'un, dressant le bras vers le chevalet du peintre, semble communiquer ses observations à son compagnon.'

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, pp42-43: 'Le savant M. Littré a fait preuve d'une vive intelligence en donnant l'interprétation de *grotesques* à ces "peintures plus courtes et ramassées" dont parle Pline . . . Ceux

that an artist from the fifth century BC, Philoxenus of Eretria, and his master Nicomachus, invented grotesque representation.¹¹⁹ Some of Philoxenus' work was reproduced three centuries later in Pompeii, during the second century BC, in reliefs that demonstrate a mastery of foreshortening and modelling, as well as a physiognomical ability to portray emotions in the faces of figures represented.¹²⁰ Discovered in Pompeii around 1800 by the famous archaeologist François Mazois, the caricature entitled 'L'Atelier du peintre' exemplifies the grotesque type of ancient representation identified by Littré.¹²¹ Champfleury advances a similar argument to the one he asserted in 1855, in connection with Courbet's painting of the name title, and emphasises the ancient caricature's strengths as an historical form of representation. He argues that the caricature records 'the intimate details of [social] life' through its physiognomical representation and offers a useful historical insight into the customs of antiquity.¹²² This, he insists, is 'the useful aspect of

mêmes qui se sont médiocrement occupés de l'art antique connaissent le dessin d'une peinture de Pompéi, vulgarisée par les Magazines, l'*Atelier du peintre*. Elle offre le spécimen le plus exact de ces figures plus courtes et ramassées de Plin, de ces grotesques suivant M. Littré.'

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p42: 'Une dernière citation de Plin conduit enfin dans le domaine de la caricature: "Philoxène a peint aussi une bambochade dans laquelle trois Silènes font la débauche à table. Imitant la célérité de son maître (Nicomachus), il inventa même un certain genre de peintures plus courtes et ramassées (des grotesques)."'

¹²⁰ John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, Oswyn Murray, eds., *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1992, p511.

¹²¹ See footnote 118 and Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature antique*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1865, p43.

¹²² Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature antique*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1865, p46: 'Par cette fresque nous pénétrons dans l'atelier d'un peintre de l'antiquité, comme les curieux étudient les moeurs du temps de Louis XIII dans l'oeuvre d'un Abraham Bosse. Et c'est là l'utile côté de la caricature, que de rendre des détails intimes auxquels se refuse le grand art; par ses indications précises ou symboliques, en leur enlevant la carapace satirique qui les recouvre, la caricature devient historique pour ainsi dire.'

caricature . . . through its precise or symbolic information, in looking past the satirical shell that covers such information, the caricature becomes historical one might say.¹²³

Clearly, then, ancient caricatures such as ‘L’Atelier du peintre’ were of great interest to positivists such as Champfleury and Littré, who saw such images as indications of social customs. Such images were thought to reveal the physical and moral nature of past societies and, by adopting the caricature as a visual template for his painting of the same name, Courbet expressed the positivist intention of his work. This intention, and its political implications, would have been readily understood since caricature was a well-established positivist and political tool in mid-nineteenth-century France. Champfleury was considered a leading expert in the art of caricature, and his essentially positivist views on the subject feature prominently in Larousse’s *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXme Siècle*, a major encyclopaedia and dictionary of the period. Here, we find a detailed review of the history of caricature, as well as an outline of its various forms, functions and development in the history of various cultures. This review clearly indicates the closeness of the connections between caricature, politics and positivism in mid-nineteenth-century France. The *Dictionnaire* refers largely to the views of Champfleury, who explains that caricature is a powerful political tool and that, along with the press, is ‘the cry of the citizens’; caricature conveys the feelings of the people and is one of the most effective instruments of revolution and reform.¹²⁴ Yet, the review also points out that ‘perhaps it isn’t fair to say that it

¹²³ See footnote 122.

¹²⁴ See entry for ‘Caricature’ in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Troisième, ‘C-CHEM,’ Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1867, p394: ‘nous terminerons cette apologie de la *caricature* par le passage suivant emprunté à M. Champfleury: “La *caricature* est, avec le journal, le cri des citoyens. Ce que ceux-ci ne peuvent exprimer est traduit par des hommes dont la mission consiste à mettre en lumière les sentiments intimes du peuple. Quelques-uns trouvent la *caricature* violente, injuste, taquine, turbulente, passionnée, menaçante, cruelle, impitoyable. Elle représente la foule. Et comme la

[caricature] is only important in times of exploding crisis; its most formidable role is not so much in reflecting revolutions as in preparing them.¹²⁵ Here, echoing Champfleury's positivist view that caricature is an effective instrument of reform at all times, the *Dictionnaire* presents an argument that political caricature is not the only kind of caricature and that there is another variation of the art form, one that is continuously and persistently effective. There exists another kind, the 'caricature of customs,' which takes effect in times other than periods of revolution and oppressive political regimes. Prominent throughout the ages since ancient times, the caricature of customs is 'of all times' and 'of all regimes,' and is no less powerful or useful than political caricature.¹²⁶ It effects change continuously because people respond to its repeated physiognomical portrayals of the virtues and defects of successive societies and their customs. The ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans produced such caricature of customs and recognised its influence upon society. In

caricature n'est significative qu'aux époques de révolte et d'insurrection, s'imagine-t-on dans ces moments une foule tranquille, raisonnable, juste, équitable, modérée, douce et froide?"

The *Dictionnaire* draws upon the views of Champfleury and other famous and respected writers of the time. Referring to a contemporary article in *le Siècle* by Pierre Véron, the well-known republican and admirer of Daumier, the *Dictionnaire* highlights the importance of caricature as an instrument for achieving social justice: 'Et M. Véron ajoute: "Repassez l'histoire contemporaine; partout vous trouverez la *caricature* dessinée stigmatisant les abus ou les infamies, les ridicules ou les dépravations. Politique ou non, elle a tout enregistré sur ses tablettes, avec des annotations d'une ligne qui en disent souvent plus que des commentaires d'un volume. Parfois la pointe d'un crayon a tenu plus sûrement un coupable en respect que le canon d'un fusil qui l'aurait couché en joue. Voilà pourquoi on ne saurait laisser tomber des anathèmes puérils sans les relever; voilà pourquoi il importait de rétablir la vérité, et de rendre justice à la *charge* qui a tant de fois été pour le mal une charge à mitraille.'" Interestingly, Véron's defense of caricature responded to vicious condemnation of the art form by Louis Veillot, the conservative Catholic journalist who was allegorically 'caricatured' by Courbet in his painting *L'Atelier du peintre*. On Veillot's condemnation of caricature, see Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Caricature,' Tome Troisième, 'C-CHEM,' 1867, p394. See also Robert J. Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio and London, England, 1989, p199.

¹²⁵ See entry for 'Caricature' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Troisième, 'C-CHEM,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1867, p394: 'La *caricature* n'est, en effet, violente et désordonnée qu'aux époques d'effervescence sociale; mais il n'est peut-être pas juste de dire qu'elle n'a de signification qu'aux heures où la crise éclate; son rôle le plus redoutable est moins de refléter les révolutions que de les préparer.'

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p394: 'D'ailleurs, à côté de la *caricature* politique, dont il s'agit ici, il y a la *caricature* des moeurs, qui est de tous les temps, de tous les régimes, et qui n'est ni moins puissante ni moins utile.'

their work, Aristotle and Pliny the Elder discuss the powerful moral and immoral effects that artistic exaggerations of the human form can have upon society.¹²⁷ Again, like Champfleury, the *Dictionnaire* highlights the skill of the ancients in creating this ‘caricature of customs’:

Caricature [of customs] has been used since the height of antiquity to castigate vices and ridicule them. The Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Greeks have cultivated this branch of art, so multiple in its manifestations, and they have shown an eloquence and causticity whose force is doubled by its crude expression. In particular, the Greeks pushed this genre of satire so far that they didn’t even spare their Gods.¹²⁸

As the *Dictionnaire* explains, caricature has not changed so very much and some ancient Greek caricatures have been likened to certain satirical paintings of the nineteenth century that exaggerate bodily defects so much that they appear malignant.¹²⁹ For some modern critics, these representations have undesirable effects upon society because they misappropriate human traits in gross distortions of the mind and body.¹³⁰ For the expert

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p394. In his *Traité de la politique*, for example, Aristotle recognises three related art forms, ‘l’exagération en bien,’ ‘la fidélité,’ and ‘l’exagération en mal,’ each of which has a different kind of moral effect. He illustrates these three art forms with reference to three artists of his time, Polygnotus, Pozon and Dionysus. “‘Parmi les peintres, Polygnotte représente les hommes plus accomplis que nature, Pozon plus imparfaits et Dionysius tels qu’ils sont,’” Aristotle says. Consequently, “‘Ce qui veut dire clairement que Polygnotte peignait l’idéal, Pozon la *caricature* et Dionysius la nature telle qu’elle est.”” Aristotle has concerns about the effects of such exaggerations upon people; idealist representations have good effects and caricature bad. He insists that young people should be shown the work of Polygnotus and the other ‘peintres moraux’ at every opportunity, but not the work of Pozon. Despite these reservations, as the *Dictionnaire* points out, Aristotle considers Pozon to be a great master.

¹²⁸ Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, ‘Caricature,’ Tome Troisième, ‘C-CHEM,’ 1867, p394: ‘La caricature a été employée, dès la plus haut antiquité, pour flageller les vices et les ridicules. Les Assyriens, les Egyptiens, les Grecs ont cultivé avec succès cette branche de l’art, si multiple dans ses manifestations, et ils y ont déployé une verve et une causticité qui empruntaient une force double à la crudité de l’expression. Les Grecs, en particulier, poussèrent si loin ce genre de satire, qu’ils n’épargnèrent pas même leurs divinités.’

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p394: ‘Selon de Paw, la manière de Pozon se rapprochait de ces peintures satiriques où les défauts du corps et l’esprit sont exagérés par des traits violents qui divertissent un instant la malignité, mais que le bon goût réprouve.’

¹³⁰ See footnote 129.

conclusion on these matters, the *Dictionnaire* refers to the views of Champfleury, who insists that there are two aspects to caricature, ‘physical’ and ‘moral,’ and condemns artists who pay scrupulous attention to physical defects and exaggerate them simply for the sake of it.¹³¹ These artists seek out deformities of the human form and pay microscopic attention to ‘accidents of the skin, wrinkles, rough patches and warts’; such defects are rendered ridiculous and grotesque and the figures they characterise are like insects or monstrosities seen under a microscope.¹³² Yet, as Champfleury points out, this is merely the material side of caricature and, although necessary, is pointless unless it makes a moral point: ‘must not the caricaturist reach and show us the moral through the physical?’¹³³

Caricature was clearly regarded as a very powerful political and social tool in mid-nineteenth-century France and Champfleury’s positivist articulation of the enduring nature of this power since ancient times significantly informed the prevalent views. Courbet shared these views and would have seen the benefits of basing his *Atelier du peintre* upon a caricatural image from the ancient past. The image chosen by the artist exemplified an art form that was seen to have lasting moral influence, an art form that still wielded power in the nineteenth century. There are more reasons why this particular caricature suited Courbet’s purposes. Firstly, as Champfleury informs us, the image was extremely popular and well-known at the time and many people would have recognised Courbet’s reference to

¹³¹ Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, ‘Caricature,’ Tome Troisième, ‘C-CHEM,’ 1867, p394: ‘M. Champfleury a dit avec raison: “Les caricaturistes dérivent des maîtres exacts, de ceux qui peignent les accidents de la peau, les rides, les rugosités et les verrues; ils exagèrent, rendent ridicule et grotesque ce qui est vrai; mais ceci est le côté purement matériel de la *caricature*; si elle grossit seulement quelques détails à la loupe, comme il est arrivé quelquefois de nos jours, la *caricature* devient une monstruosité, une bête vue au microscope. Le caricaturiste ne doit-il pas atteindre et montrer le moral à travers le physique?”’

¹³² See footnote 131.

¹³³ See footnote 131.

it. We have seen that archaeological discoveries attracted huge interest in early to mid-nineteenth-century France; they received much publicity and were widely exhibited. Champfleury confirms that the ancient caricature entitled ‘L’Atelier du peintre’ was itself extremely well-known. The image first appeared in Mazois’ famous work *Les Ruines de Pompéi*, published from 1824 to 1838 and was, according to Champfleury, the subject of many articles and reviews. He says that illustrations of it appeared in various magazines concerned with archaeological discovery and that the image was so famous that ‘even those with only a small interest in antique art know the drawing by a painter from Pompeii, popularised by the magazines, l’Atelier du peintre.’¹³⁴

Examining Champfleury’s *Histoire de la caricature antique* further, we find even more close pictorial connections between the ancient caricature and Courbet’s *Atelier du peintre*, connections that further reveal the caricature’s suitability as a visual template through which Courbet could express his positivist lesson in rulership. According to Champfleury, teaching and learning are important themes in the caricature and are expressed through the physiognomy of prominent figures in the image, such as the artist, the artist’s model, the art student and the pair of ‘art lovers.’ Champfleury sees a direct and powerful connection between the artist and his model, between the two figures corresponding with Courbet and Napoleon III in Courbet’s *Atelier du peintre*. As the writer says, the model figure depicted in a sitting position in the caricature (just like the ‘poacher’ in Courbet’s painting) marvels at the artist’s ability to render physiognomical detail. The model is an ‘onlooker,’ ‘rubberneck’ or ‘flâneur’ – Champfleury refers to him as a ‘badaud’

¹³⁴ Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature antique*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1865, pp42-43: ‘Ceux mêmes qui se sont médiocrement occupés de l’art antique connaissent le dessin d’une peinture de Pompéi, vulgarisée par les Magazines, l’*Atelier du peintre*.’ Mazois’ work presents an extremely detailed account of Pompeii’s architecture and planning in four parts. The first part deals with road systems, tombs, gates and walls, and the second with streets, fountains and houses. The third part deals with public buildings, and the fourth with temples, theatres and town planning.

– and is astonished by the artist’s ability to observe and portray his bourgeois social class. The artist’s tight-lipped expression indicates his ability to render such observations, an ability the model clearly lacks, and indicates both his fierce determination in revealing such social aspects of human nature and his conceit in knowing he can do so:

The man who poses is a badaud, astonished by the artist for whom each brushstroke creates a beam of resemblance; in a moment he will make some bourgeois observations that seem foretold by the tight-lipped mouth of the conceited painter, sat in front of his easel with the concentration of a general preparing himself for battle.¹³⁵

The image of this relationship between these two figures offered Courbet a suitable visual template for representing his challenge to Napoleon III, the authoritarian politics of the Second Empire and the bourgeois values encouraged by this regime. Champfleury describes the artist in the ancient image as a figure with special physiognomical insight into the physical and moral world. This insight gives the artist moral influence and causes the model to observe the artist’s work with astonishment – the model will learn from the artist. The themes of teaching and learning signified by other figures, such as the art student and the ‘art lovers,’ who also appreciate the artist’s physiognomical capability, reinforce this positivist idea of the artist’s influence upon society.

According to Champfleury, artistic freedom is another important theme expressed in the caricature, as indicated by the presence of the animals. The bird walking into the artist’s studio symbolises the artist’s independent personality, his desire to abandon the confines of commissioned work for the freedom to express himself as he wishes.¹³⁶ The

¹³⁵ Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature antique*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1865, pp44-45: ‘L’homme qui pose est un badaud, plein d’étonnement pour un artiste dont chaque coup de pinceau amène un trait de ressemblance; il fera tout à l’heure quelques observations bourgeoises que semble annoncer la bouche pincée du peintre vaniteux, assis devant son chevalet avec le recueillement d’un général se préparant à la bataille.’

¹³⁶ *ibid*, pp43-44: ‘Cet oiseau qui se promène dans l’atelier, me fait penser au caractère des peintres à qui il a toujours fallu quelque bizarrerie tapageuse: des singes, des hiboux, de grand chiens. L’artiste, aimant la liberté, se plaît avec les animaux libres. L’oie mal élevée qui pousse des cris dans l’atelier

theme of independent freedom was crucial to Courbet's positivist and political expression in the *Atelier du peintre*, the creation of which was also associated with a rejection of commissioned work. As we have already seen, the painting was the centrepiece for the artist's independent exhibition of 1855, arranged as a gesture of defiance against the Universal Exposition and its glorification of the Second Empire. The artist refused to rally to the Empire and rejected the government's offer of a commissioned work to be painted expressly for the Exposition.

V: Eclecticism: the context in which Champfleury's views were circulated and consumed

What are the contexts within which we should consider the texts discussed in this chapter? In what political context were they presented and in what social milieux were they circulated and consumed? As a piece of unpublished personal correspondence, Courbet's letter addressed to Champfleury written in 1854 held a different status to the other texts examined in this thesis, all of which were published. Yet, we have seen that this was no ordinary personal letter since it presented carefully considered and significant information about the artist's positivist conception of one of his most important paintings, the *Atelier du peintre*. It is important to recognise that the letter was addressed to a prominent writer of the time. The ideas articulated within the letter could potentially have been filtered into extensive readerships through the writer's own publications and contacts in the literary world. In this respect, we should note that Champfleury's descriptions of the painting resembled in many ways those of the artist. The contexts within which the other texts discussed in this chapter were produced and consumed – Champfleury's article ostensibly addressed to George Sand and his book about ancient caricature – tell us a great deal more. These contexts reveal that Champfleury's positivist view of Courbet's work and ancient caricature was consumed within a varied, extensive and generally middle-class readership drawn largely from conservative sectors of society. We also discover that Champfleury's defense of Courbet's work in 1855 was part of a wider political debate arising from the government's encouragement of a policy of eclecticism in both politics and art, a policy advocated by Napoleon III in his attempt to reconcile the persistent conflict of post-revolutionary France.

Champfleury's article *Du Réalisme*, ostensibly addressed to George Sand, appeared in 1855 in *L'Artiste*, the most prestigious art journal of the time.¹³⁷ Through this journal, the article was circulated and consumed within a very large, middle-class and generally conservative readership, a readership cultivated by the journal since the July Monarchy. *L'Artiste* underwent a revival in the early 1840s under the new editorship of Arsène Houssaye, who changed the political allegiances fostered by the journal under its founder, Achille Ricourt. Before Houssaye's editorship, the journal sought to cultivate French democracy, uphold the idea that art belonged to everyone regardless of social status and satirise what Ricourt saw as the complacent, greedy bourgeoisie.¹³⁸ Ricourt tried to give direction to young and impoverished revolutionary writers and painters but, by 1842, his programme was faltering badly as much of the artistic talent associated with it dispersed.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ The cultural influence of *L'Artiste* during the period has been widely recognised by art historians. See, for example, Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, p93.

¹³⁸ See David A. Flanary, *Champfleury, The Realist Writer as Art Critic*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, 1980, 1978, p21. Flanary notes that Arsène Houssaye, who was to become the journal's new editor in 1839 and who wrote a short history of the journal, summed up the project of artistic union envisaged for *L'Artiste* by Ricourt: 'Quel était le projet de l'Artiste? Ce projet était tout simple: il s'agissait de proclamer dans l'art les mêmes vérités qui venaient d'être proclamées dans la presse périodique, dans la littérature, dans la poésie'; Flanary quotes Arsène Houssaye, 'Une Histoire de l'Artiste,' 2nd ser., 1, 1839, p2. These 'truths' concerned the democratisation of French society, the concept that art was for everyone regardless of social station, and a mission to satirise the complacent greedy bourgeois. For a concise history of the journal, see entry for 'Artiste (L')' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Premier, 'A,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1866, pp732-733. In the 1830's, Ricourt was 'très-épris du beau style [artistique] et de la belle peinture.' He founded the journal in February 1831 and his aim was to give direction to struggling but inspired young artists of the time who were frantically trying to cultivate new and revolutionary art forms. In Ricourt's view, this burgeoning artistic movement crucially involved the collaboration of the different art forms. The first edition of the journal carried 'pour frontispice la fameuse vignette de Tony Johannot, qui a été pieusement conservée par les propriétaires successif, et qui représente les quatre arts réunis: un poète écrivant ses vers, un sculpteur ébauchant sa statue, un peintre cherchant le monde sur le chaos de sa palette, un musicien chantant l'amour.' See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Artiste (L),' Tome Premier, 'A,' 1866, p732 and p733.

¹³⁹ For a year, the journal struggled to attract sufficient contributions for its bimonthly issue and, in 1843, was bought by one of Houssaye's friends. Houssaye was entrusted with its editorship and was supported by a host of talented writers and artists, including Gérard de Nerval, Alphonse Esquiros, Théophile Gautier, Édouard Ourliac, Albéric Second, Eugène Delacroix, Diaz, Henri Lehmann, James Pradier and Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier. See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Artiste (L),' Tome Premier, 'A,' 1866, p733.

In many ways, the conservative artistic and political values upheld by *L'Artiste* under Houssaye were maintained by the journal into the Second Empire, when Champfleury wrote his article on Courbet.¹⁴⁰ Artistically, those who supported Houssaye's project 'professed an art more private, more picturesque, more impulsive; they declared beauty, but most especially elegance and the ideal.'¹⁴¹ They extolled the work of artists who were well established in the annals of official greatness, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Prudhon, Watteau, Pradier and Gavarni.¹⁴² *L'Artiste* flourished during this period and, despite its interest in new and innovative talent, promoted ideals conforming mainly to those cultivated by the French artistic establishment. Whilst the journal sometimes poked fun at the academies, 'because one always poked fun at them,' it was 'moderate like the times' and its contributors often commended painters held in high esteem by the academies, such as Ingres.¹⁴³ Houssaye secured his reputation as a leading publisher in the artistic domain and reinforced the influence of *L'Artiste* in artistic matters. Relinquishing his editorship in 1849, he remained influentially attached to the journal

¹⁴⁰ Houssaye remained editor until 1849, although he contributed to the journal thereafter as director of the Théâtre-Française and became editor of the journal again in 1860; see Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Artiste (L)', Tome Premier, 'A,' 1866, p733. See also entry for 'Houssaye (Arsène HOUSSET, dit)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Neuvième, 'H-K,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1873, p419.

¹⁴¹ See entry for 'Artiste (L)', in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Premier, 'A,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1866, p733: 'on professa un art plus intime, plus pittoresque, plus primesautier; on proclama le beau, mais surtout la grâce et l'idéal.'

¹⁴² *ibid*, p733.

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p733: 'C'était toute une efflorescence de jeunesse; mais comme les temps s'étaient adoucis, on n'avait plus de haine; on se moquait bien encore des académies, car on s'en moquera toujours, mais on saluait M. Ingres à certains jours.' As the *Dictionnaire* states, a glittering array of talented writers made their debut in *L'Artiste* around this time: Henry Murger, Champfleury, Charles Monselet, Mare Fournier, Clément de Ris, Baudelaire, Paul Mantz. Similarly, the journal introduced to the public many talented painters and sculptors, such as Gérôme, Vidal, Couture, Clésinger, Chassériau and Hédouin, who were well received in French officialdom.

through his appointment as director of the Théâtre-Française by the new republican government of the Second Republic.¹⁴⁴

Under Houssaye, then, *L'Artiste* discarded its image as a journal for the people and promoted in many ways the conservative artistic ideals supported by the French establishment.¹⁴⁵ His editorship ended in 1849, after which the journal passed between the hands of Edouard Houssaye and Xavier Aubryet, with Théophile Gautier as chief editor.¹⁴⁶ Gautier readily took up the project envisaged for *L'Artiste* by Houssaye and promoted ideal beauty and the artistic values favoured by the establishment.¹⁴⁷ He rallied completely to the Second Empire under Napoleon III and, as the most important contributor to the government journal *Le Moniteur universel*, was the official spokesman for the Universal Exposition of 1855. Whilst art was a political tool throughout the Second Empire, it was especially so around the time of the Exposition, which marshalled the French press, art journals and criticism to its nationalistic and imperialistic cause. As Klaus Herding has

¹⁴⁴ See entry for 'Houssaye (Arsène HOUSSSET, dit)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Neuvième, 'H-K,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1873, p419.

¹⁴⁵ Politically, Houssaye seems generally to have conformed to the conservative demands of the July Monarchy and, eager to ensure that he maintained his influential social position after the 1848 Revolution, temporarily became more liberal to suit the democratic demands of the Second Republic. The editor's fickle views are hardly surprising and typical of many influential publishers whose social position and lifestyle were threatened by the huge social and political upheaval that occurred in 1848. After the coup d'État in 1851, as the *Dictionnaire* points out, he revealed his true colours: 'Nous avons passé sous silence une tentative faite par lui [Houssaye], en 1848, dans le domaine politique; il avait coiffé le bonnet phrygien et s'était présenté à la députation, dans son département; les électeurs le renvoyèrent à ses moutons. Au coup d'État de 1851, le fougueux démocrate vira de bord et composa la fameuse cantate: *l'Empire c'est la paix!* qui fut chantée, à grand orchestre, au Théâtre-Français.' See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Houssaye (Arsène HOUSSSET, dit),' Tome Neuvième, 'H-K,' 1873, p419.

¹⁴⁶ Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Artiste (L'),' Tome Premier, 'A,' 1866, p733.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p733. Examples of Gautier's views, including his embracement of the official line of philosophical eclecticism during the Second Empire, are provided by Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987; see, for example, p28 and pp69-70.

noted, while Courbet was painting the *Atelier du peintre* between October 1854 and April 1855, all of the French art journals were publishing countless articles anticipating the glorious World Fair.¹⁴⁸ *L'Artiste* published more than any other and its editions throughout 1854 are full of articles praising the great preparatory work being carried out in the studios of Paris.¹⁴⁹ These reports are accompanied by others in *L'Artiste* celebrating improvements in Paris, the expansive urban planning projects in areas such as l'Etoile, the Champs-Élysées and the Place Louis XV.¹⁵⁰ These reports clearly show that Ingres and Delacroix represented the greatest challenge for other artists, and that their work was viewed from the perspective of political utility.¹⁵¹ In its edition for 1 March 1854, for example, *L'Artiste* described a visit to Ingres' atelier by the emperor and empress, who examined the artist's new work for the Paris City Hall ceiling.¹⁵² Six weeks later, an article by Gautier was published in *L'Artiste* on Delacroix's *Salon de la paix*, a political allegory promoting the Empire.¹⁵³

In many ways, *L'Artiste* promoted the political utility of art and advertised the work of artists supporting the political values of the Second Empire and the Universal Exposition of 1855. But, how exactly were these artistic and political values related, and what exactly was the line taken by the government in showing the world its politics and art? More importantly, why did *L'Artiste* publish Champfleury's article on Courbet, which

¹⁴⁸ Klaus Herding, *Courbet, To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, p55.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p55.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, p55.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p55.

¹⁵² *ibid*, p55. See also *L'Artiste*, 1 March 1854, p16.

¹⁵³ *ibid*, p55. See also *L'Artiste*, 15 April 1854, pp81-82.

supported an artist who challenged both the Second Empire regime and the Exposition by arranging his own independent exhibition showcased by the *Atelier du peintre*? As Patricia Mainardi has shown, the official line was based upon eclecticism, a philosophy deriving essentially from the attempt of the famous philosopher Victor Cousin to reconcile the conflicts and contradictions of post-revolutionary France. Eclecticism characterised much of the French politics of the first half of the nineteenth century and promised Utopia in the wake of revolution. It was a philosophy designed to ‘unite all minds and hearts in the intelligence and love of this constitution which includes at the same time the throne and country, monarchy and democracy, order and liberty, aristocracy and equality, all the elements of history, of thought and of things.’¹⁵⁴ Neither Charles X nor Louis-Philippe managed to apply this philosophy to their politics successfully. Napoleon III sought to resolve the same inherent contradictions through eclecticism and, to this end, encouraged notables of every political line to rally to the Empire.¹⁵⁵ He also attempted to rally the different and contradictory positions taken on art by arranging the Universal Exposition of 1855, an exhibition encompassing all the different French schools of art.¹⁵⁶ Around this time, eclecticism became the national character, the defining basis of democratic sentiment, and provided the basis for distinguishing French art among other national styles within the exhibition.¹⁵⁷ Time and again the critics of the exhibition, including those of *L’Artiste*,

¹⁵⁴ See Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, p69. Mainardi takes the quote from Victor Cousin, ‘Cours de l’histoire de la philosophie,’ 1828, in *Oeuvres de Victor Cousin*, 3 vols. Bruxelles, 1840-41, p108.

¹⁵⁵ See Mainardi, *ibid*, 1987, p69.

¹⁵⁶ See Mainardi, *ibid*, 1987, p69.

¹⁵⁷ See Mainardi, *ibid*, 1987, p70. As Mainardi says, Gautier proposed ‘England as the representative of Individuality, Belgium of Facility (*savoir-faire*), Germany of Intellectualism and France of Eclecticism.’

argued that eclecticism gave rise to universality and superiority, proclaiming France as the artistic capital of the world.¹⁵⁸

In this spirit of appreciating diverse and contradictory forms of art, the government had attempted to persuade Courbet to rally to the Empire. The artist refused, having been denied the retrospective exhibitions within the Exposition promised to Ingres, Delacroix, Decamps and Vernet, and he protested by arranging his independent rival exhibition. Despite this antagonism between Courbet and the government, *L'Artiste*, with its official stance and government subsidy, published Champfleury's article addressed to George Sand, which defended the artist and his work. In spite of its support for the regime and those artists and critics who rallied to it, the journal maintained the official line of eclecticism by giving a hearing to criticism that defended an artist in conflict with the government. Yet, the political tensions that lay beneath conflicting views about art during this period of French history revealed themselves clearly in the same journal six weeks later, when *L'Artiste* published Charles Perrier's article 'Du Réalisme, Lettre à M. Le Directeur de *L'Artiste*.' Here, Perrier, a regular conservative contributor to the journal, directly challenges Champfleury's article and condemns Courbet's work as revolutionary and subversive. Consequently, in *L'Artiste* at this time, we find a similar situation to the one in 1851, when the conservative newspaper the *Messenger de l'Assemblée* published opposing interpretations of Courbet's work in quick succession. In 1851, as we saw in the last chapter of this thesis, a debate ensued in the *Messenger* between those who associated Courbet's Salon exhibits with socialist politics and those such as Champfleury who did not. In *L'Artiste*, in 1855, we again find Champfleury trying to argue the case for Courbet's work

¹⁵⁸ See Mainardi, *ibid*, 1987, p70. Mainardi refers to Charles Perrier, 'Exposition Universelle des Beaux-Arts,' *L'Artiste*, 4 November 1855, p127, and Augustin-Joseph Du Pays, 'Beaux-arts. Exposition Universelle,' *L'Illustration*, 2 June 1855, p350.

on positivist rather than political grounds and, again, his argument is quickly challenged, this time by Perrier, a conservative critic who sees nothing but left-wing politics expressed in the artist's work. In 1855, the official promotion of eclecticism in both politics and art enabled the debate between Champfleury and Perrier – the debate between those advocating reform and those advocating conservatism – to take place in the same journal, the leading art journal of the day. Through eclecticism, the political tensions of the Second Empire manifested themselves in the foremost art criticism of the period and, as a brief examination of Perrier's article reveals, these tensions were sometimes expressed in debates over positivist ideas, which constituted an important part of the context within which Champfleury was working.

Although Perrier challenges Champfleury on artistic grounds, he clearly has a political agenda. His argument responds to what he perceives as a threat to conservative values whilst simultaneously maintaining the eclectic values of the regime. To achieve this, the critic takes an ambivalent position on realism, commending certain manifestations of the realist tendency for direct or 'sincere' expression and deprecating others. The issue for him is the manner in which realism draws upon positivism to portray the physical and moral nature of people and he points out that realism comes in an infinite variety of forms.¹⁵⁹ Stark differences are evident in the work of Courbet and Champfleury, for example, as can be seen in their contrasting representations of people. Perrier is decidedly at odds with Courbet politically and philosophically and attacks what he sees as the subversive manner in which 'the revolutionary from Ornans' portrays physical and moral

¹⁵⁹ Charles Perrier, 'Du Réalisme, Lettre à M. Le Directeur de *L'Artiste*,' *L'Artiste*, 14 October 1855, p85: 'Je savais fort bien que M. Champfleury avait, lui aussi, reçu, sinon accepté le titre de *réaliste*; mais ce mot n'établissait dans ma pensée aucune solidarité entre l'écrivain et le peintre [Courbet], car vous n'ignorez pas qu'il y a réaliste et réaliste, comme il y a fagot et fagot. Le même mot a souvent plus d'une acception, et le sens en peut varier à l'infini, suivant les applications qu'on en fait.'

nature in his paintings.¹⁶⁰ For Perrier, Courbet focuses almost entirely upon the material nature of existence, superficially rendering the human body and paying little attention to the human character within. The artist highlights the ‘physical’ aspects of human nature at the expense of the ‘moral’ aspects, ignoring those human qualities that raise man above the level of baseness and crudity. Courbet, Perrier insists, exaggerates matter at the expense of the mind.¹⁶¹

Why does Courbet adhere to this ‘crude and debased materialism,’ closely observing and reproducing the ugliest aspects of human nature?¹⁶² For Perrier, there is only one reason and that reason is political. Courbet wishes to reform society on a huge scale through positivist representation, illuminating only the ugliness of the era in which he lives, the ugliness of debased common types and customs. Yet, for the critic, this attempt at reform is vain, destructive and unwarranted, and Courbet grossly exaggerates the ugliness of the century and its customs: ‘My God! The century is ugly, it is possible; but nevertheless, in all conscience, not as ugly as that!’¹⁶³ He categorically denies Champfleury’s claim that the artist has been accused of sedition simply because he represents common people life-size. On the contrary, Perrier argues, Courbet is seditious

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p87: ‘Tout le monde a vu, placardée aux murs de Paris en compagnie des saltimbanques et de tous les marchands d’orviétan et écrite en caractères gigantesques, l’affiche de M. Courbet, apôtre du réalisme, invitant le public à aller déposer la somme de un franc à l’exhibition de quarante tableaux de *son oeuvre*. Ceux que cette perspective a séduits ont sans doute lu le manifeste *bref mais énergique* qui sert d’introduction à l’oeuvre du révolutionnaire d’Ornans.’

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p85: ‘Le réalisme (selon M. Courbet) est un système de peinture qui consiste à exalter et à outrer un des côtés *réels* de la nature, je parle de la matière, au détriment d’un autre non moins réel, qui est l’esprit.’

¹⁶² See *ibid*, p88. For Perrier, Courbet’s work expresses ‘un matérialisme grossier et avilissant’.

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p87: ‘Une des idées les plus plaisantes qui y [exhibition de Courbet] sont exprimées est que M. Courbet veut être le peintre du siècle. “Les moeurs, les idées, l’aspect de notre époque,” voilà ce qu’il a voulu traduire pour la plus grande gloire de son pays et l’édification de la postérité . . . Mon Dieu! le siècle est laid, c’est possible; mais pourtant, en conscience, pas si laid que cela!’

because he portrays human nature itself as repugnant.¹⁶⁴ This form of representation is considered by Perrier to be an evil, inhuman and subversive force and he accuses Courbet of being both ‘the apostle of ugliness’ and ‘the Antichrist of physical and moral beauty.’¹⁶⁵ By contrast, Perrier commends Champfleury’s own work because, even though it often deals with common subjects, these subjects are rendered with substantial inner character. He says, ‘I have seen there [in Champfleury’s work] the sincere expression of nature, and it seemed to me that his portraits were semblances, as much morally as physically.’¹⁶⁶ In Perrier’s opinion, the writer portrays moral aspects of existence as much as physical ones, illuminates the depth of inner character and human qualities possessed by his subjects, and demonstrates that not all commoners are debased and ugly. Champfleury invests his ‘vulgar observations’ with ‘grace and beauty, mind and sentiment,’ and thereby provides a much more ‘realistic’ vision of society than Courbet does.¹⁶⁷ Whilst the artist uses positivism to

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p88: ‘C’est là que M. Champfleury tombe de bonne foi dans une grossière erreur. Ce n’est point, comme il l’affirme, parce qu’il a peint des bourgeois et des paysans que M. Courbet est traité de factieux, mais parce qu’il les a présentés sous un aspect auquel la nature humain répugne.’

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid*, p86: ‘Depuis qu’amis et ennemis ont fait à M. Courbet je ne sais quelle renommée hybride, ce peintre est, de l’aveu de tout le monde, l’apôtre du laid. C’est l’Antechrist de la beauté physique et morale, et, depuis six ou sept ans qu’il fait de la propagande, jamais son zèle ne s’est ralenti.’

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, p85: ‘Le réalisme de M. Champfleury m’a toujours paru très-acceptable, parce que j’y ai vu l’expression sincère de la nature, et qu’il m’a semblé que ses portraits étaient ressemblants, tant au moral qu’au physique.’

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p85: ‘J’ai trouvé, dans l’auteur de *Chien-Caillou*, de la grâce, de la beauté, de l’esprit et du sentiment, et ces qualités m’ont tout autant séduit, je vous assure, que ce qu’il peut y avoir dans ses écrits d’observation vulgaire, ou, si l’on veut, de réalisme.’ For Perrier, ‘the idealisation of objects’ – the investment into an image of qualities beyond mere imitation or copying – is the means through which an artist conveys human virtues beyond the physical: individual character, inner self and emotion. Whilst this involves ‘cheating pure reality a little,’ such idealism is indispensable in art because ‘there are things in nature other than what the artist has copied.’ See Perrier, *ibid*, 1855, p86: ‘Certes, messieurs les réalistes, la nature se suffit à elle-même, parce que la nature vit d’une vie réelle; mais cette vie qui nous intéresse n’existe plus évidemment dans la reproduction matérielle des objets. Un homme très-exactement imité par la peinture n’est, en résumé, que le cadavre d’un homme. L’art ainsi entendu est un miroir grossier, et l’image qu’il présente, mille autres pourraient la reproduire avec autant de fidélité et aussi peu d’intérêt. Ce qui manque à toute oeuvre obtenue de la sorte, c’est le style, qui est l’homme. Ce qui lui manque encore, c’est l’idéalisation des objets, qui a plus d’un lieu commun avec le style, car tous deux ne sauraient être qu’individuels. Or ces deux éléments sont indispensables à l’art, car ils suppléent à ce manque de vie dont nous avons parlé par une vie factice, la seule dont l’artiste dispose. Ce n’est qu’avec leur secours que l’imitation peut

portray contemporary society as degenerate and in need of reform, Champfleury reveals the depth of human character, beauty and emotion that exists even among commoners. This latter form of positivist expression is for Perrier the more realistic of the two, the more accurate reflection of the prevailing social conditions and the class system operating within them.

We have seen then that, in the Second Empire, Champfleury's positivist interpretation of Courbet's work was accessible through *L'Artiste* to a broad, generally conservative readership. Yet, a broader and even more extensive readership was reached by his similar interpretation of the ancient caricature upon which Courbet's painting entitled *L'Atelier du peintre* was based. This interpretation appeared in the writer's book *Histoire de la caricature antique*, originally published in 1865. Here, Champfleury did not address Courbet's painting directly. However, as we have seen, the writer presented a positivist view of an ancient image of the same name, 'L'Atelier du peintre,' an image transposed by Courbet to express the positivist conception of his own painting. In this way, the ancient image and Courbet's painting were subject to a visual and interpretative conflation by both Champfleury and Courbet and, for this reason, it is useful to briefly examine the context within which the writer's positivist view of history and the ancient caricature was produced, circulated and consumed.

plaire; en voulez-vous la preuve? Prenez le morceau le mieux imité de M. Courbet. C'est un fac-simile de la nature, soit; mais cela vous donne-t-il la millième partie de l'émotion que produit sur vous le spectacle de la nature? Non, sans doute. Que devons-nous en conclure, sinon qu'il y a dans la nature autre chose que ce que l'artiste a copié, et que c'était justement là ce qu'il importait de rendre si son but était de nous émouvoir? Ce quelque chose, nous ne pouvons l'obtenir, il faut bien le reconnaître, qu'en trichant un peu la réalité pure. Cette innocente tricherie a été mise en oeuvre par les plus grands artistes, parce qu'elle a pour résultat d'être plus vraie que la vérité. C'est ce qu'on nomme l'idéal.'

Histoire de la caricature antique was published in 1865 by the Dentu publishing house, which was at that time under the direction of Édouard-Henri-Justin Dentu, who inherited the publishing company shortly after the crisis of 1848 and remained director until his death in 1884.¹⁶⁸ Through this company, Champfleury's ideas on ancient caricature were made accessible to a very extensive audience drawn from various literate and knowledgeable communities of people. The prominence, fame and worldwide success of the publishing company under the direction of Édouard Dentu is made clear in the book *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, published in 1884, which is a compilation of tributes paid to the publisher shortly after his death by newspapers of Paris, the departments and abroad. The large number of newspapers paying tribute in this book indicates just how well-known and successful the Dentu publishing company was during the Second Empire.¹⁶⁹ Set up in 1794 at the Palais-Royal, the Dentu publishing house became one of the leading establishments of its kind in the world, cultivating a large and varied readership.¹⁷⁰ The company was at its height of success in the Second Empire and Champfleury's book on ancient caricature would have benefited from a wide field of distribution. Dentu became known throughout the world as a company that energetically promoted all aspects of French culture. It was

¹⁶⁸ In addition to a brief section on the Dentu publishers, a separate biography of Édouard-Henri-Justin Dentu is to be found in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Sixième, 'D,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1870, p460. See also *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, Imprimerie de Noisette, Paris, 1884, p22, p55, p57.

¹⁶⁹ Tributes are included from twenty six leading Parisian newspapers, including *Le Charivari*, *L'Événement*, *Le Figaro*, *La France*, *L'Illustration*, *La Nation*, *La Patrie* and *Le Papillon*. There are tributes from journals of five different French departments and the four foreign tributes, including one from Great Britain's *Daily Telegraph*, are from German, Belgian, Spanish and British newspapers. In addition, the book contains two special tributes – the transcripts of two funeral addresses made at Dentu's funeral at the cemetery of Père Lachaise. There were three such funeral speeches, two of which are included in the book; see *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p97. One of these transcripts is by the famous writer, theatre director and previous editor of *L'Artiste*, Arsène Houssaye, who was president of the Société des gens de lettres at that time. Dentu, who had been a member of this Society, had in 1860 become its honorary editor, an achievement that again demonstrates the prominence of the Dentu business during the period; see *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, pp95-96.

¹⁷⁰ See tribute by Parisis (Émile Blavet) of *Le Figaro*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p21. The company was established in 1794 by Jean-Gabriel Dentu, Édouard's grandfather.

‘intimately connected with the scientific, political and literary movement in France’ and produced thousands of books and brochures distributed worldwide.¹⁷¹ The company was considered by its counterparts to have contributed to the advance of human knowledge and civilisation because it produced so many different kinds of books written by the most famous and talented authors.¹⁷² The same diversity is evident in the political material published by the company. The Dentu publishers had an early and fervent political allegiance to Legitimism, although Édouard Dentu did not continue the political fanaticism of his ancestors Jean-Gabriel and Gabriel-André into the Second Empire.¹⁷³ Édouard was more commercially minded than his predecessors and sought to capture as wide a readership as possible, publishing material that expressed contrasting opinions from across the political spectrum.¹⁷⁴ He published no less than 5800 political brochures between 1850 and 1860 and some of these, such *Le Pape et le Congrès*, ran to 500,000 copies.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷¹ See tribute by Olympe Audouard of *Le Papillon*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p53: ‘Le nom de Dentu, depuis quatre-vingt-sept ans, est connu du monde entier; il se trouve intimement lié au mouvement scientifique, politique et littéraire de la France. C’est de cette modeste petite boutique, située galerie d’Orléans, au Palais-Royal, que sortent, depuis 1794, ces milliers de livres et de brochures qui vont se répandre dans l’univers. Chacun de ces écrits contient une parcelle plus ou moins grande du savoir humain; il contribue donc à l’oeuvre de progrès, et l’on peut dire que les Dentu ont puissamment contribué au grand mouvement progressiste et civilisateur.’

¹⁷² See footnote 171 and *ibid*, p53.

¹⁷³ Jean-Gabriel was a committed royalist and a co-founder of the militant journal *Drapeau Blanc*, to which influential writers such as Lammenais and Charles Nodier were regular contributors. As Parisis explains, this Legitimist conviction was carried even further when Gabriel-André Dentu, Jean-Gabriel’s son, inherited the publishing company. See tribute by Parisis (Émile Blavet) of *Le Figaro*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, pp21-22: ‘Royaliste fervent, Dentu 1^{er} (Jean-Gabriel) fut, avec Martainville, le fondateur du *Drapeau blanc*, ce journal alerte, spirituel, d’allure si française, – arme de combat, toujours coupante, jamais ébréchée, – qui compta tant de collaborateurs illustres, entre autres Lamennais et Charles Nodier. Dentu II^e (Gabriel-André) exagéra, s’il était possible, les convictions légitimistes de son père. Il avait trouvé, bien avant Gambetta, le mot d’“irréconciliable” et ce ne fut pas un vain mot: l’Empire et la Restauration de Juillet en savent quelque chose. Il fit à ces deux régimes une opposition acharnée, payant de sa bourse et de sa personne, entassant amendes sur amendes, mois de prison sur mois de prison.’

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*, p22. Inheriting the company in 1849, and directing the company after its offices had moved to the galerie d’Orléans, the new journalistic centre of Paris, Édouard ‘eut le bon sens de comprendre, lorsqu’il hérita de la maison dans les circonstances les plus critiques, au lendemain de 1848, qu’on ne fait pas du bon commerce avec du parti pris.’

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*, p22.

content of these brochures was very eclectic and, as the tribute from the *Daily Telegraph* notes, they often discussed ‘the principal political questions of the day, such as the Italian question, the Polish question and other topical themes of the time.’¹⁷⁶ The range of political material published by the Dentu publishing company during the Second Empire was vast. The company published brochures by Frédéric de Falloux, for example, the conservative politician who had proposed the liquidation of the National Workshops in 1848.¹⁷⁷ The company also published brochures by Persigny, Louis Napoleon’s close associate, who was one of the chief agents of the coup d’état of 1851 and who became Minister of the Interior in the Second Empire.¹⁷⁸ Material by Émile de Girardin, the chief editor of *La Presse*, was also published.¹⁷⁹ De Girardin was a man of malleable politics who generally adopted moderate republicanism.¹⁸⁰ His own national newspaper followed a mainly independent line during the Second Empire, although it had been a propaganda organ for the Bonapartist cause during the Second Republic.¹⁸¹ By contrast, other Dentu publications include brochures by the Catholic politician Charles-Forbes-René, Comte de Montalembert, who

¹⁷⁶ See tribute by the *Daily Telegraph*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p95: ‘Il [Édouard Dentu] commença par publier un grand nombre de brochures sur les principales questions politiques du jour, telles que la question italienne, la situation de la Pologne et autres thèmes à discussion de ce temps-là.’

¹⁷⁷ See tribute by Parisis (Émile Blavet) of *Le Figaro*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, pp22-23. See also, F. W. J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France 1848-1898, Dissidents and Philistines*, B. T. Batsford Ltd, London, p26.

¹⁷⁸ See Parisis, *ibid*, pp22-23. See also Hélène Toussaint, ‘The dossier on “The Studio” by Courbet,’ in *Gustave Courbet 1819-1877*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978 (catalogue for the exhibition celebrating the centenary of Courbet’s death held at the Royal Academy of Arts 19 January - 19 March 1978), p262.

¹⁷⁹ See Parisis, *ibid*, pp22-23.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, 1989, p230.

¹⁸¹ F. W. J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France 1848-1898, Dissidents and Philistines*, B. T. Batsford Ltd, London, p27 and p54.

fought hard for political liberty during the Second Empire.¹⁸² In 1855, Montalembert took over management of the *Le Correspondant*, making this review an organ of the opposition and incurring a prison sentence for his conflict with the imperial government.¹⁸³

We can see, then, that Champfleury's positivist views of history and ancient caricature were made accessible to a politically diverse and extremely extensive readership through the Dentu publishing house. This readership must be considered all the more far-reaching given that Dentu's market extended beyond France. Despite the political nature of much of its published material, the company's approach to publication was primarily motivated by literary considerations, and this extended the Dentu field of distribution across Europe.¹⁸⁴ The tribute paid by the *Daily Telegraph* to Édouard Dentu following his death outlines the scope and success of the company's production of literary works. These works include titles by Proudhon, Le Play, Michelet, Quinet, Louis Blanc, Barbier, Daudet, Houssaye 'and a great number of historians, novelists and famous critics' who had acquired 'a European reputation.'¹⁸⁵ The publisher's own literary interests had clearly extended

¹⁸² See Parisis, *ibid*, pp22-23. See also entry for Montalembert in *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X*, written by Georges Goyau, and transcribed by Stefan Gigacz, copyright 1911 by Robert Appleton Company, Online Edition, Copyright 2003 by K. Knight.

¹⁸³ See entry for Montalembert in *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X*, written by Georges Goyau, and transcribed by Stefan Gigacz, copyright 1911 by Robert Appleton Company, Online Edition, Copyright 2003 by K. Knight.

¹⁸⁴ See tribute by Parisis (Émile Blavet) of *Le Figaro*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p23: 'Dans son [Édouard Dentu] existence d'éditeur, la politique ne joua qu'un rôle accessoire; c'est de la littérature surtout qu'il a bien mérité.'

¹⁸⁵ See tribute by the *Daily Telegraph*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p95. See also tribute by Olympe Audouard of *Le Papillon*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p56, which confirms the glittering array of literary talent attracted to the publishing company: 'Le succès de la brochure épuisé, Édouard Dentu a su attirer à lui une pléiade de bons écrivains; il a édité la *Sorcière*, de Michelet, l'*Esprit nouveau*, d'Edgar Quinet, les *Questions d'aujourd'hui et de demain*, de Louis Blanc, les *Iambes*, de Barbier, les oeuvres d'Arsène Houssaye, d'Henri de Bornier, de Féval, de Daudet, de Gonzalès, de Ponson du Terrail, de Victor Tissot, de Belot, de Malot, de Claretie et de bien d'autres encore.' Having inherited the publishing establishment before the age of twenty, Édouard Dentu became friendly with a large number of writers. He knew certain authors particularly well. He was very

beyond France; he was the owner and director of the *Revue européenne* from 1859 to 1862.¹⁸⁶

friendly with Proudhon, for example, and published the philosopher's later works. See tribute by Parisis (Émile Blavet) of *Le Figaro*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p23. See also tribute by Fulbert-Dumonteil of *La France*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p27.

The publisher lived for many years in the same neighbourhood as Proudhon, along with the critic Jules Janin, the musician Gioacchino Rossini, and Lamartine. The tribute paid to Dentu by the newspaper *La France* remarks upon the familiarity between the publisher and these famous men, and the ideas and views they imparted to him: 'Proudhon, Jules Janin, Rossini, Lamartine, tels étaient les voisins et les amis de Dentu . . .

' . . . Proudhon lui expliquait ses théories révolutionnaires et ses systèmes financiers; Janin lui lisait une ode d'Horace; Lamartine lui confiait d'une voix harmonieuse ses embarras d'argent, et Rossini lui détaillait avec enthousiasme la recette savante de ce macaroni fameux auquel il a donné son nom.' See tribute by Fulbert-Dumonteil of *La France*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, pp26-28.

¹⁸⁶ See tribute by the *Daily Telegraph*, in *E. Dentu 1830-1884*, p95.

VI: Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis has provided a number of original insights into the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism. As we have seen, Proudhon's positivist ideas crucially informed the views of both Courbet and Champfleury, a philosophical influence that is indispensable for an understanding of the artist's positivist enterprise. Numerous secondary sources have identified an impact of Proudhon's ideas upon Courbet's work, but the specifically positivist nature of this impact has been insufficiently recognised. The philosopher's ideas informed the conception of one of Courbet's most important works, the *Atelier du peintre*, which was intended to function as a fierce indictment of the social and political regime of Napoleon III's Second Empire. Adopting Proudhon's ideas, Courbet expressed through this painting his ability as a positivist artist to expose the degenerate values of the Second Empire and save the world. This chapter of the thesis has also shown that the conventions of caricature and physiognomy provided Courbet with the means to express his positivist views distinctively and with critical weight. Here, as we have seen, it is important to recognise the importance to the artist's work of caricature and physiognomy as interconnected modes of expression already established within the intersecting domains of knowledge informing the conceptual basis of positivism, domains such as medical science and sociology. These domains developed caricature and physiognomy into ways of 'reading' and criticising the physical and moral condition of the individual and society with reference to the appearance of the human physiology. The role of caricature in Courbet's work is an important original discovery made through this thesis. An art form associated with social, political and moral criticism since ancient times, caricature furnished Courbet with a suitable medium for alluding to the didactic role of social leadership assigned to artists in positivism, criticising

the Second Empire regime, and negotiating the strict censorship laws of the time. With such enduring social, political and moral power, caricature enabled the artist to develop the *Atelier du peintre* into a signature painting of his positivism. Seen in this new light, the painting formed a complete expression of the positivist view of history and social evolution through which Courbet laid claim to special social insight. Having recognised the hitherto unexplored importance of the artist's use of caricature, this thesis has furnished the discovery of a pictorial source for the *Atelier du peintre* that has remained completely unidentified in the existing scholarship on the artist. An ancient caricature also entitled 'L' Atelier du peintre,' this source was important to Courbet for the combined historical, philosophical and sociological significance attached to it at the time, a significance that provided him with a suitable conceptual framework through which to express his positivist aims. Examining the contexts within which these interpretations of Courbet's work were mediated, we have seen that the artist articulated his positivist views in personal correspondence to Champfleury, who shared similar views and whose status as a major writer gave him the potential to filter the artist's ideas into extensive and varied readerships. We have also seen that Champfleury's similar but distinctive positivist interpretation of Courbet's work was made accessible to an extensive, broad and generally conservative readership through its publication in *L'Artiste*, the foremost art journal of the day and staunch supporter of the Second Empire regime. Importantly, as this thesis has revealed, this publication of the writer's contentious positivist support for an anti-establishment artist was facilitated by the official line of eclecticism in politics and the arts promoted by the Second Empire. This philosophical approach to policy brought forth within a major periodical of the time some contrasting views about Courbet's engagement with positivism and its political associations.

Chapter Four

Anti-Idealism and Biology in the Second Empire

I: Introduction

The last chapter of this thesis has shown that Courbet shared Proudhon's view of contemporary society as the current stage in the historical development of the human constitution – the combined physical, mental, emotional and moral faculties expressed in behaviour and customs. In this chapter, we find that Courbet's views concerning society and its historical development denied the existence of phenomena that could not be observed, including God and his divine plan, and rejected forms of idealism based upon such unobservable phenomena. The prominent aesthetic creeds of the time fostered such idealism and, according to Courbet, supported a corruption of society by the Church and the State. In his opinion, religion regulated much of society, dominated many social customs and maintained privileges by exploiting the people, who were kept in ignorance and fear through the perpetuation of mystical beliefs, the false promise of an afterlife, and the threat of damnation for not conforming. This system of social control was reinforced by the prevailing ethos of 'art for art's sake,' the kind of classicism promulgated by the Academy and the interest in the spiritual dimension of medieval Catholicism cultivated in romanticism; the ideals of these aesthetic creeds were drawn from mystical realms beyond man and his everyday life. Standing against this range of approaches to art, Courbet stood against practically every aesthetic position on offer to mid-nineteenth-century painters. Revealing once again his affinity with the work of Proudhon, Courbet argued that art should reject spirituality by appealing primarily to the human faculty of reason. The artist insisted that art's purpose was to educate the people by exposing the corruption and

hypocrisy of controlling interests and to guide the way for a better, enlightened future. In opposition to this prevailing system of religious beliefs, social regulation and mystical ideals, Courbet asserted the biological nature of life, society and art. Strongly denying the possibility of a divine plan, his view of society and its evolution was based upon certain biological principles set out in positivist theory. He characterised people as organisms, whose anatomy, physiology and behaviour depended upon the biological circumstances of their existence, including society. Working according to such prescriptions, the artist gave all living beings an equivalent status within nature and claimed to observe humans, animals and plants in the same way.

Courbet's views concerning biology and idealism were dispersed across a number of diverse but related texts. Here, I examine four key texts that appeared in the Second Empire, highlighting the particularly positivist manner in which Courbet articulated his biological stance against mystical forms of idealism. In doing so, I reveal a number of principles adopted by Courbet to reinforce this stance – ‘synthesis,’ ‘concretisation,’ the exercise of reason and the biological idea of ‘series’ – whose positivist articulation by the artist has largely escaped the attention of existing secondary sources. Firstly, I examine Courbet's speech at the Antwerp Congress of 1861, a conference designed to discuss the relationship between art and philosophy. This speech was delivered on 20 August 1861 and its transcript was first published on 22 August 1861 in Antwerp's *Précurseur*. It was published shortly afterwards on 1 September 1861 in Paris' *Courrier du dimanche*, an oppositional newspaper with an extensive and popular readership. Secondly, I examine an open letter from Courbet to his students that explained his philosophical views and which was also published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, only four months after the conference

speech.¹ Thirdly, I analyse a personal letter from the artist to the writer Francis Wey dated 20 April 1861, which described how the artist's hunting experiences and observations of animal behaviour informed his biological conception of three paintings, *Le rut du printemps* or *Combat de cerfs* [Figure 26], *Le cerf à l'eau* or *Chasse à courre* or *Le cerf forcé* [Figure 27] and *Le piqueur*. Finally, I analyse an anti-clerical tract entitled *Curés en goguette* that was published anonymously in Brussels in 1868 and for which Courbet produced a series of illustrations.

The biological views and philosophical principles attached to Courbet's social programme were based upon the ideas of leading positivists such as Proudhon and Comte, the latter of whom developed the specialist study of environmental circumstances in association with the famous biologist Henri Ducrotay de Blainville. In this chapter, I explain these biological views, the French positivist philosophy with which they were associated, and the contexts within which their links with Courbet's work were produced, circulated and consumed. As discussed in the last chapter, the Second Empire enforced a strict policy of censorship during the 1850s and Courbet's artistic critique of this authoritarian regime sought to by-pass censorship through allegorical means. The political situation changed somewhat in the following decade. As Patricia Mainardi has shown, although censorship and its debilitating effects upon the press continued into the 1860s, mounting pressure for liberty resulted in a relaxation of the regime's political authoritarianism and a reduction in the cultural power of the Academy.² These changes had

¹ The letter was published in *Le Courrier du dimanche* on 29 December 1861.

² For a concise comparison of the power and influence of the Academy, the government art administration and the independent artists in the 1850s and 1860s, see Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire, The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987, Chapter 13, pp123-127. As Mainardi explains, the Academy rallied to the Empire in the 1850s and was rewarded with the same privileged position it held during the Restoration. However, the government promoted eclecticism to encourage every division of the

a discernible impact upon Courbet's work and enabled him to produce a number of paintings that criticised many of the ideals upheld by the Church and the State in a more direct way.

political and artistic spectrum to rally to the Empire, and this badly damaged the Academy's cultural prestige. In reaction, after the liberal Salon of 1857, the Academy tried to restore some of this prestige by exercising more exclusivity concerning works being admitted into Salon exhibitions. As a result, from 1859, artists began to complain vehemently that decisions to admit and reject works were being made unfairly. In 1860, the relationship between the Academy and the government became very problematic; the former complained that the latter's direction of restorations in the Louvre was incompetent. In the summer of 1861, the constitution of the Fine Arts Admissions Jury was significantly changed by being divided into constituencies: three contemporary art collectors, three members of the arts administration, four Academy members, and five artists elected from all those submitting works. This was the start of the Liberal Empire in the French art world. Problems continued, however, and in 1863 there was more outcry as the Admissions Jury rejected seventy per cent of all submissions. Always acutely aware of majority opinion, Napoleon III sought to settle matters by establishing the 'Salon des refusées,' the admitted works for which were to be shown in a particular space in the Palais de l'Industrie. Both the Jury of Academicians and the Fine Arts Administration under Nieuwerkerke saw this as a public rebuke. The Salon was reformed, however: control was taken away from the Academy and future Salon exhibitions would have a jury elected three-quarters by artists who were previous medal winners, and one quarter appointed by the administration. The Academy's prestige was damaged even further in 1863 when it lost control of the École des Beaux Arts to the government.

II: Positivism and ‘the negation of the ideal’

Published in the latter part of 1861 in the liberal and Orleanist newspaper entitled *Courrier du dimanche*, two closely related texts reveal that Courbet’s positivist view of society denies the existence of any phenomena that cannot be observed, including God and his divine plan, and rejects forms of idealism based upon such unobservable phenomena. These two texts are the transcript of Courbet’s speech at the Antwerp Congress held in 1861 and an open letter from the artist to his students in response to requests for him to establish a school of painting. Entitled ‘Profession of faith’ and published on 1 September 1861, the artist’s conference speech at Antwerp was the first of these texts to appear.³ Paul Crapo has examined the circumstances surrounding this three-day conference and informs us that it was organised by the city’s ‘Cercle artistique, littéraire et scientifique’ in association with various other civic organisations within the city and was attended by leading philosophers, critics and artists.⁴ The delegates were charged with addressing philosophical issues impacting upon contemporary art and the conference was the centrepiece of a series of events held in honour of the great city of Jordaens and Rubens.⁵

³ The transcript of the conference speech was first published in the *Précurseur* of Antwerp on 22 August 1861 and then in the *Courrier du dimanche* of Paris on 1 September 1861. Contemporary reviews of the conference and its exhibitions included Paul Mantz, ‘L’Exposition et les fêtes d’Anvers,’ *Gazette des beaux-arts*, September 1861, pp279-284 and an unsigned article entitled ‘Ville d’Anvers . . . Congrès artistique,’ *Revue universelle des arts*, vol. XIII, April-September 1861, pp127-134. A series of accounts of the conference was published in the *Précurseur* of Antwerp on each day between 20 and 23 August, 1861, inclusive. See Paul Crapo, ‘Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,’ *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p87, endnote 12.

⁴ See Paul Crapo, ‘Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,’ *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p70.

⁵ See *ibid*, p70. Crapo comments that both practical and theoretical questions were addressed in the conference. From a practical viewpoint, the conference explored ways in which artists could be protected against fraudulent duplication of their works. From a theoretical viewpoint, the conference addressed questions concerning the relationship between art and philosophy.

Among these events was an exhibition of contemporary art that included Courbet's famous painting *Le rut du printemps*, also known as *Combat de cerfs*.⁶

Courbet delivered his speech on 20 August 1861, the second day of the conference, in a session debating the impact of modern philosophy upon contemporary art.⁷ Here, he argues that society should be guided by Proudhon's ideas and claims that his paintings constitute the counterpart of these ideas in modern art; 'here, philosophy and art meet,' he says.⁸ Reaffirming the view articulated in his manifesto of realism – the philosophical statement produced in 1855 to accompany his independent exhibition showcased by the *Atelier du peintre* – Courbet claims that his art is unique. This uniqueness consists in his 'negation of the ideal' as demanded by the final, positivist phase of philosophical understanding in mankind's historical development towards social harmony, his singular capacity to express Proudhon's philosophy and marshal reason against the enslavement of sentiment by the mystical ideals of 'art for art's sake.'⁹ Cultivated by academic classicism

⁶ *ibid*, p70. As Crapo mentions, the jury of the 1861 Parisian Salon exhibition had not been kind to Courbet. Despite the fine quality of his submissions, which included the *Combat de cerfs*, the artist was only awarded a second-class medal. By contrast, the painting was greatly admired in the Antwerp exhibition. Paul Mantz, exhibition commentator for the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, noted that Courbet and Constant Troyon, the famous Barbizon School painter, attracted more attention than any of the other contributing French artists. See Mantz, 'L'Exposition et les fêtes d'Anvers,' *Gazette des beaux-arts*, September 1861, pp283-284.

⁷ See Crapo, 1991, p72.

⁸ Gustave Courbet, 'Profession de foi,' Antwerp Congress, published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, 1 September 1861: 'Je regrette que mon ami Proudhon, avec lequel je m'entends si bien, quoique arrivé à des conclusions semblables par des voies différentes, ne soit pas ici pour venir soutenir ma thèse avec l'autorité de son talent et de sa haute raison. Je ne suis pas orateur; j'exprime mes idées avec mon pinceau; mais ici la philosophie et l'art se rencontrent et c'est une preuve de plus pour la bonté de mon coeur.'

⁹ *ibid*: 'Le fond du réalisme c'est la négation de l'idéal, à laquelle j'ai été amené depuis quinze ans par mes études et qu'aucun artiste n'avait jamais jusqu'à ce jour, osé affirmer catégoriquement . . . ' . . . L'art romantique comme l'école classique était l'art pour l'art. Aujourd'hui d'après la dernière expression de la philosophie on est obligé de raisonner même dans l'art et de ne jamais laisser vaincre la logique par le sentiment.'

and the romantic interest in medieval Catholic spirituality, these outmoded ideals maintain what Courbet and Proudhon see as the corrupt privileges of controlling interests, which perpetuate ignorance and subjugate both individuality and democracy.

What exactly is the nature of the idealism rejected by Courbet and Proudhon?

Addressing this question, Paul Crapo finds discrepancies between the views of the artist and the philosopher. He acknowledges that Courbet's conference speech accurately summarises Proudhon's ideas concerning liberty and reason.¹⁰ Yet, Crapo maintains that the speech misrepresents Proudhon's ideas because it rejects idealism completely and does not recognise that the philosopher uses the term 'idealism' in two different ways.¹¹ In one way, Crapo says, to idealise is for Proudhon to express the defining characteristics of the society in which one lives and, in this respect, the philosopher opposes the idealism of certain past societies. For example, he opposes ancient Greek art and medieval Christian art which, despite their differences, were both inspired by divine sources and religious

¹⁰ Paul Crapo, 'Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,' *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p73: 'a well-read congress delegate would have found such notions [articulated by Courbet] expressed in the pages of [Proudhon's] *De la création de l'ordre*, *Les Contradictions économiques*, *Philosophie du progrès* and *De la justice*, and might easily have profited from his understanding of these Proudhonian volumes in interpreting Courbet's congress speech.'

¹¹ See *ibid*, p73. Crapo states that, in one Proudhonian sense, 'To idealise . . . involves the creation of an artistic form more perfect than the subject as it exists in nature or the combination of traits of numerous "real" models into a figure which subsumes them all and surpasses them in perfection.' In the second sense, 'to idealise is to express the general spirit of the society in which one lives – an undertaking which Proudhon also found incumbent upon all *bona fide* artists.' Crapo says that, in this second sense, Proudhon opposes the idealisms of certain past societies: he opposes, for example, the 'idéalisme idolâtrique' of the ancient Greeks, who tried to project all human qualities onto their gods and then slavishly worshipped them. Greek artists promoted this cult of the divine by distinguishing the most admirable physical features of their contemporaries, and by applying those features to representations of their deities. Proudhon also opposes the idealism of Medieval Christian art which, reacting somewhat against the Greek ideal of physical perfection, aimed to represent the beauty of the soul rather than that of the body. Through this 'idéalisme ascétique,' as Proudhon calls it, artists of the Middle Ages expressed the spirituality of their subjects and attempted to glorify the Christian faith in painting and architecture.

absolutes: pagan deities and the Judeo-Christian God respectively.¹² Both art forms cultivated immutable, spiritual values and enslaved human sentiment in the service of their respective theocratic societies, which perpetuated inequality and oppressed their people.¹³ As Crapo says, the philosopher argues that artists should combat such oppression by appealing to reason rather than religious sentiment in their work. Crapo also points out that, in his appraisal of modern art, Proudhon criticises classicism and romanticism, art forms whose appeal to the senses neglects reason altogether. Classicism cultivates the formal beauty of ancient Greek art and romanticism revives the spiritual beauty pursued in Medieval Catholicism.¹⁴ Neither art form has an interest in social utility and cannot therefore serve the interests of ordinary citizens in the industrial age of the nineteenth century. Proudhon insists that contemporary artists should pursue an ideal that creates a just society for everyone. They should use reason to teach lessons about society and universalise the need for humanitarian principles like justice, truth and morality.¹⁵

Crapo points out that, whilst Proudhon rejects these idealisms of the past, he fully supports the idealism cultivated by seventeenth-century Dutch artists, who discarded the world of abstract divinities and religious absolutes for the world of man and his ordinary social existence.¹⁶ These artists represented a man-centred order of morality and social utility instead of a God-centred order of sterility and oppression. They represented common people in the activity of their daily lives and cultivated an ideal based upon the human

¹² *ibid*, pp73-74.

¹³ *ibid*, p74.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p75.

¹⁵ See *ibid*, pp74-75.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p74.

condition.¹⁷ For Proudhon, the egalitarian and humanitarian ideals of seventeenth-century Dutch art laid important foundations for the events of 1789 and he urges nineteenth-century artists to follow in this idealist tradition to advance what he calls the ‘Democratic and Social Revolution.’¹⁸ Given that Proudhon supports this man-centred idealism, Crapo argues, Courbet’s complete rejection of idealism misrepresents Proudhon’s philosophy and the artist’s supposedly close relationship with the philosopher ‘was marked by discrepancies in principle, conflicting interests and an overall lack of true intimacy.’¹⁹ Whilst the artist meets the challenge of realism in depicting his contemporaries – an accomplishment commended by Proudhon – he fails to educate and uplift his contemporaries through the reasoned expression of an appropriate ideal as Proudhon demands.²⁰

Crapo deals with only a limited part of the picture concerning Courbet’s philosophy of art and glosses over its history before the Antwerp Congress. This history shows that it is highly unlikely that the artist would have misinterpreted Proudhon’s theories to such an extent. Courbet had known Proudhon for thirteen years at the time of the Antwerp Congress and critics saw similarities in their work at least as far back as 1851.²¹ More importantly, as

¹⁷ *ibid*, p74.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p74: Proudhon argues that artists should serve the ‘Révolution démocratique et sociale’.

¹⁹ *ibid*, pp81-82.

²⁰ *ibid*, pp82-83. According to Crapo, this is probably due either to Courbet’s inability to understand the complexity of Proudhon’s theories or to the artist’s attempt to conceal aspects of the philosopher’s ideas because their ultimate social purpose would deny him what he valued most – his independent, creative drive.

²¹ Crapo himself acknowledges this. The relationship between the work of Courbet and Proudhon was held in the public eye at least as early as 1851, when the critic Louis Enault wrote in his ‘Salon de 1851’ that ‘M. Courbet est le *Proudhon* de la peinture . . . M. Proudhon – je voulais dire M. Courbet – fait de la peinture démocratique et sociale’; see Enault, *Chronique de Paris*, 16 February 1851, p120. See also Crapo, 1991, p67.

revealed in the last chapter of this thesis, the grand philosophical statement of the *Atelier du peintre* was conceived by Courbet in the early to mid-1850s in connection with the positivist views of both Proudhon and Champfleury. At that time – precisely at a time when Courbet was in regular contact with Champfleury – the writer explicitly interpreted the artist’s work in terms of the idealism supported by Proudhon. Quoting the reading of Courbet’s work advanced in Proudhon’s famous book *Philosophie du progress* of 1853, Champfleury’s famous article addressed to George Sand states:

Proudhon concluded his remarks on Courbet: “Let the magistrate, the soldier, the merchant, the peasant, let all orders of society, seeing themselves both in the idealism of their dignity and lowness, learn, through glory and shame, to rectify their ideas, to correct their customs, and to perfect their institutions.”²²

Given the close connections between the views of Proudhon, Champfleury and Courbet in the mid-1850s, and the artist’s declaration of allegiance to the philosopher at the Antwerp conference, it is not surprising to find that Courbet’s correspondence to the philosopher shortly after the conference explicitly supports the kind of idealism prescribed by Proudhon. In particular, a long letter from Courbet to Proudhon in 1863 – which lists a host of aphorisms on art, politics and morality that were intended to help the philosopher with the famous treatise on art he was writing – insists that ‘sentiment, imagination, intelligence and the ideal should serve reason.’²³ Furthermore, in later years, the artist retrospectively referred to his work as idealist on more than one occasion (a fact acknowledged by Crapo

²² Champfleury, ‘Du Réalisme. Lettre à Madame Sand,’ *L’Artiste*, 2 September 1855, p5: ‘le philosophe Proudhon terminait ses appréciations sur M. Courbet: “Que le magistrat, le militaire, le marchand, le paysan, que toutes les conditions de la société, se voyant tour à tour dans l’idéalisme de leur dignité et de leur bassesse, apprennent, par la gloire et par la honte, à rectifier leurs idées, à corriger leurs moeurs et à perfectionner leurs institutions.”’

²³ See Gustave Courbet, letter to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Paris, July-August 1863, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p206: ‘Mettre le sentiment, l’imagination, l’esprit et l’idéal au service de la raison.’ Proudhon and Courbet were corresponding and exchanging ideas for the benefit of the philosopher’s famous treatise *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, which was dedicated largely to Courbet’s work and which was published posthumously in 1865.

himself).²⁴ In his speech at the conference, Courbet did not intend to reject idealism altogether. Rather, he was debating a very particular issue and addressed the specific forms of idealism that he and Proudhon firmly rejected. After all, the session in which Courbet spoke was dominated by traditionalists who fiercely defended 'the idea of God' as the basis of all types of artistic inspiration.²⁵ These traditionalists rejected realism and Courbet's work in no uncertain terms and did so apparently without realising that the artist was present.²⁶ Inflamed by their comments, the artist delivered his speech and attacked the specifically religious forms of idealism they upheld.

²⁴ See Paul Crapo, 'Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,' *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p80. Crapo sees this as the artist's attempt to reframe his work in idealist terms once he had come to understand Proudhon's philosophy more.

²⁵ Again, Crapo acknowledges this. See Crapo, *ibid*, 1991, p72.

²⁶ Proudhon's close friend and journalist Gustave Chaudey, who attended the Antwerp Congress, spoke at the conference and wrote accounts of the proceedings, which were published in the *Courrier du dimanche*; these accounts reported that those who attacked realism did so without knowing that Courbet was present. See Gustave Chaudey, 'Le Congrès d'Anvers,' *Courrier du dimanche*, 1 September 1861.

III: Anti-idealism, history, ‘synthesis’ and the ‘concrete’

As in Proudhon’s case, Courbet’s rejection of certain types of idealism supports his positivist view of history. The artist reveals this in an open letter to his students published in the *Courrier du dimanche* on 29 December 1861, only four months after the Antwerp conference speech.²⁷ In this letter, written in response to requests for him to form a school of painting, Courbet expands upon the anti-idealist position he asserted at the conference; ‘I must explain to you what I recently had the opportunity to say at the Antwerp conference,’ he says.²⁸ His stance against idealism supports the positivist view of history and social evolution he expounded in 1855, the view he expressed in his painting entitled *Atelier du peintre*. He claims in the letter that the purpose of art is to facilitate social improvement in the future by expressing the essential characteristics of the current epoch: ‘every age must have its artists, who give expression to it and reproduce it for the future.’²⁹ He insists that ‘art is by nature contemporary’ because it reflects the current stage in a continuous process of social evolution: ‘the true artists are those who pick up their age exactly at the point to

²⁷ Gustave Courbet, ‘To the Young Artists of Paris,’ dated 25 December 1861, published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, 29 December 1861. A number of Courbet scholars, including Petra Chu, Jack Lindsay and Gerstle Mack have commented that Courbet’s letter to his students was either composed or rewritten by Jules-Antoine Castagnary, whom the artist had met the year before. See *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p183. As Chu notes, the only known manuscript copy of the letter is in Castagnary’s handwriting but contains Courbet’s signature. See also Jack Lindsay, *Gustave Courbet, his Life and Art*, Adams & Dart, Somerset, 1973, p171, and Gerstle Mack, *Gustave Courbet*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1951, p162. Castagnary shared many of Courbet’s philosophical ideas and may well have helped the artist formulate his ideas in writing. Besides being a lawyer and politician, Castagnary was one of the foremost French art critics of the 1860’s, an advocate of Proudhon’s philosophy and provided enduring support for the artist.

²⁸ Gustave Courbet, ‘To the young artists of Paris,’ dated 25 December 1861, published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, 29 December 1861: ‘Je dois vous rappeler ce que j’ai eu récemment l’occasion de dire au congrès d’Anvers.’

²⁹ *ibid*: ‘L’art historique est par essence contemporain. Chaque époque doit avoir ses artistes qui l’expriment et la reproduisent pour l’avenir. Une époque qui n’a pas su s’exprimer par ses propres artistes, n’a pas droit à être exprimée par des artistes ultérieures. Ce serait la falsification de l’histoire.’

which it has been brought by previous times.³⁰ The evolutionary nature of contemporary society is evident in its customs, which constitute its ‘history’ and which can only be accurately portrayed by artists from that society, ‘that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it.’³¹ Courbet maintains that it is futile to attempt to represent previous or future eras because ‘the artists of one century are completely incapable of representing the things of a preceding or subsequent century, in other words, of painting the past or the future.’³² This is the mistake of classical and romantic artists, whose misrepresentations of the past teach society nothing and produce ‘the most useless compilations.’³³

To recognise this historical process of social evolution, and the need for artistic representation to reflect it, is for Courbet to adopt the principle of ‘synthesis,’ according to which contemporary society constitutes a summation or conclusion of all previous societies. This characteristically positivist principle asserts that history and social evolution correspond with the evolution of the human mind:

The history of an era finishes with the era itself and with those of its representatives who have expressed it. It is not for later times to add something to the expression of previous times, to aggrandise or embellish the past. What has been has been. The human mind has a duty always to work anew, always in the present, building upon established results. We must never start all over again, but always proceed from synthesis to synthesis.³⁴

³⁰ *ibid*: ‘Les vrais artistes sont ceux qui prennent l’époque juste au point où elle a été amenée par les temps antérieurs.’

³¹ *ibid*: ‘Aucune époque ne saurait être reproduite que par ses propres artistes, je veux dire que par les artistes qui ont vécu en elle.’

³² *ibid*: ‘Je tiens les artistes d’un siècle pour radicalement incompetents à reproduire les choses d’un siècle précédent ou futur, autrement à peindre le passé ou l’avenir.’

³³ *ibid*: ‘Rétrograder, c’est ne rien faire, c’est agir en pure perte, c’est n’avoir ni compris, ni mis à profit l’enseignement du passé. Ainsi s’explique que les écoles archaïques de toutes sortes se réduisent toujours aux plus inutiles compilations.’

³⁴ *ibid*: ‘L’histoire d’une époque finit avec cette époque même et avec ceux de ses représentants qui l’ont exprimée. Il n’est pas donné aux temps nouveaux d’ajouter quelque chose à l’expression des temps anciens, d’agrandir ou d’embellir le passé. Ce qui a été a été. L’esprit humain a le devoir de travailler toujours à nouveau, toujours dans le présent, en partant des résultats acquis. Il ne faut

Here, Courbet expresses views comparable to those of the pioneering positivists such as Saint-Simon and Comte, for whom synthesis cultivates ‘the spirit of the whole’ – a tendency towards generalisation, coordination and unity through which all forms of knowledge serve humanity and society rather than specialist interests.³⁵ As Mary Pickering has explained, synthesis encourages social unity because it promotes an understanding of the human species as a single mass or complete living organism, a developing social unity in which all members are involved.³⁶ According to such understanding, no aspect of society or its development can be usefully analysed apart from the whole.³⁷ Synthesis opposes the principle of ‘analysis,’ which, by contrast, asserts the ‘the spirit of detail’ – a tendency towards specialisation and division through which particulars gain more importance than the whole.³⁸ Analysis encourages research for its own sake and denies the need for

jamais rien recommencer, mais marcher toujours de synthèse en synthèse, de conclusion en conclusion.’

³⁵ Saint-Simon and Comte argued that analysis and synthesis characterised two distinct mindsets that constituted historical forces, and which alternately dominated the mind according to the demands of the era. Each approach was important to the history of scientific speculation. Analysis first dominated in the sixteenth century and reached its peak during the subsequent two centuries. For Comte, however, analysis was far too prevalent in the nineteenth century, the needs of which demanded that the spirit of generality superceded the spirit of specialisation. He severely criticised scientists that hung on to specialisation because they denied the need for science to serve social and moral phenomena through positivism and synthesis. He accused them of upholding old theological and metaphysical philosophies which, according to him, encouraged division and disunity. In the early 1840s, he especially castigated mathematicians who sought to extend their specialist research to the analysis of all phenomena. However, Comte praised biologists because their increasingly synthetic approach was suitable for the advancement of positivism, which depended heavily upon a biological view of society. In particular, he praised Henri Ducrotay de Blainville for his broad knowledge of both the sciences and the arts, and for his systematic and synthetic approach in linking details and subordinating them to the whole. He claimed that Blainville’s mind was the ‘most coordinating’ since Aristotle. Like Comte, Blainville argued against the overuse of mathematics, asserting that the complexity, diversity and variability of biological phenomena, and more especially social phenomena, rendered their expression in mathematical equations impracticable. See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p363, p502, pp666-667, p679 and p696.

³⁶ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p622.

³⁷ See *ibid*, p502 and p666.

³⁸ See *ibid*, p502 and p666.

knowledge to serve society.³⁹ Characteristic of the theological and metaphysical philosophies of the past, analysis serves special interests and leads to disunity and social divisions.⁴⁰ Comte acknowledges the importance of analytical research and the need for analysis to have dominated certain societies of the past; this was part of the evolutionary development of the human mind, knowledge and society.⁴¹ However, as the age of positivism, the nineteenth century requires that all research, scientific investigation and philosophy should serve the ultimate goal and human destiny of social unity.⁴² Comte criticises many of the scientists and specialists of his time for their unwillingness to extend their research to social and moral phenomena, and for preferring the theological and metaphysical philosophies of the past, which preserved the superior status of scientists.⁴³ Courbet opposes analysis for similar reasons. As he states in the open letter to his students, he is against the idea of artistic schools because they concern themselves with the specialist development of aesthetic formulae. Like the aesthetic creeds of classicism and romanticism, which are associated with art for art's sake and the divisive philosophies supported by controlling interests, all schools are at risk of ignoring the moral imperatives of the time. Art, Courbet insists, is the business of the painter, not the school:

There can be no schools, there are only painters. Schools serve only to explore the analytical processes of art. No school could alone lead to synthesis. Painting cannot, without falling into abstraction, allow one incomplete aspect of art to dominate, whether

³⁹ See *ibid*, pp666-667.

⁴⁰ See *ibid*, pp666-667.

⁴¹ See *ibid*, pp666-667.

⁴² See *ibid*, pp666-667.

⁴³ See *ibid*, pp666-667.

it be drawing, colour, composition, or any other of the so multiple means that only in combination make up this art.⁴⁴

Courbet advocates other principles advanced in the positivist philosophy of those such as Saint-Simon and Comte against ideals associated with supra-terrestrial realms and specialisation. For example, the artist maintains that ‘painting is an essentially concrete art form,’ by which he means that paintings should only refer to terrestrial nature, the real, the visible and the useful.⁴⁵ Art is a ‘completely physical language,’ he says, a practice concerned with ‘all visible objects’ and ‘the representation of real and existing things.’⁴⁶ As a concrete practice, art resists ‘abstraction,’ a tendency towards the supra-terrestrial, the invisible, the unreal and the impractical; ‘an object that is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting,’ Courbet argues.⁴⁷ A similar position is expressed by Comte, whose support for ‘concrete’ faculties takes up Saint-Simon’s promotion of utility and the realm of material nature; here, again, the concrete opposes ‘abstraction,’ a focus upon the supra-terrestrial, specialist interests and pure theorisation. As Mary Pickering has noted, Comte argues that abstraction encourages man’s egotism and develops contempt for material nature, utility and the concrete, the very realms that cultivate the well-being of the

⁴⁴ Gustave Courbet, ‘To the young artists of Paris,’ dated 25 December 1861, published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, 29 December 1861: ‘Il ne peut pas y avoir d’écoles, il n’y a que des peintres. Les écoles ne servent qu’à rechercher les procédés analytiques de l’art. Aucune école ne saurait conduire isolément à la synthèse. La peinture ne peut sans tomber dans l’abstraction laisser dominer un côté partiel de l’art, soit le dessin, soit la couleur, soit la composition, soit tout autre des moyens si multiples dont l’ensemble seul constitue cet art.’

⁴⁵ *ibid.*: ‘Je tiens aussi que la peinture est un art essentiellement concret et ne peut consister que dans la représentation des choses réelles et existantes. C’est une langue toute physique, qui se compose, pour mots, de tous les objets visibles. Un objet abstrait, non visible, non existant, n’est pas du domaine de la peinture.’

⁴⁶ See footnote 45.

⁴⁷ See footnote 45.

individual and the species.⁴⁸ The philosopher declares: ‘It is time to take a more reasonable course, to admire, to esteem, [and] to pay for only what is useful, and which can contribute to the well-being of the individual and the species. . . . let us return to nature, never to leave it again. May the faculty of abstraction be employed only to facilitate the combination of concrete ideas; in short, may it no longer be the abstract which dominates, but the positive.’⁴⁹ This idea of the concrete also informs Courbet’s concept of ‘beauty,’ which he defines as a complete expression of the concrete essence of an existing thing.⁵⁰ He argues that, to achieve beauty, artists must only apply their imagination to such expression and never distort the nature of a thing through invention or design.⁵¹ Beauty exists only in material nature and artists have a special ability to perceive such beauty, he continues.⁵² Yet, the artist must never amplify this expression through artifice for risk of distorting its nature and weakening its beauty.⁵³ Courbet claims that natural beauty is a kind of truth that

⁴⁸ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p108.

⁴⁹ See *ibid*, p108. Pickering quotes [translating into English] from Comte, *Ecrits de jeunesse, 1816-1828: Suivis du Mémoire sur la cosmologie de Laplace, 1835*, edited by Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro and Pierre Arnaud, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, 1970, p61.

⁵⁰ Gustave Courbet, ‘To the young artists of Paris,’ dated 25 December 1861, published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, 29 December 1861.

⁵¹ *ibid*: ‘L’imagination dans l’art consiste à savoir trouver l’expression la plus complète d’une chose existante, mais jamais à supposer ou à créer cette chose même.’

⁵² *ibid*: ‘Le beau est dans la nature, et se rencontre dans la réalité sous les formes les plus diverses. Dès qu’on l’y trouve, il appartient à l’art, ou plutôt à l’artiste qui sait l’y voir.’

⁵³ *ibid*: ‘Dès que le beau est réel et visible, il a en lui-même son expression artistique. Mais l’artiste n’a pas le droit d’amplifier cette expression. Il ne peut y toucher qu’en risquant de la dénaturer, et par suite de l’affaiblir. . . . L’expression du beau est en raison directe de la puissance de perception acquise par l’artiste.’

must be reflected in representation; such beauty supersedes all artistic conventions, is relative to the times and corresponds to the artist's natural perception of it.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *ibid*: 'Le beau donné par la nature est supérieur à toutes les conventions de l'artiste. Le beau, comme la vérité, est une chose relative au temps où l'on vit et à l'individu apte à le concevoir.'

IV: Anti-idealism and biology

As is clear from another text produced in 1861 – a letter from the artist to the writer Francis Wey dated 20 April 1861 – Courbet's positivist stance against religion and specialisation is underpinned by a broad and essentially biological view of nature, a view that all living beings and their collective behaviour are inextricably linked to the environmental conditions in which they exist.⁵⁵ In this letter, Courbet describes the anatomy, physiology and social behaviour of stags he observed in the German reserve parks of Homburg and Weisbaden, and his experiences of hunting in and around Frankfurt. He explains that these observations and experiences led to the execution of three paintings, *Le rut du printemps* or *Combat de cerfs* [Figure 26], *Le cerf à l'eau* or *Chasse à courre* or *Le cerf forcé* [Figure 27] and *Le piqueur*, which were conceived through his view that the anatomy, physiology and behaviour of all living organisms can only be fully understood in relation to the conditions of their existence.⁵⁶ Clearly indicating that these paintings support his anti-religious philosophical position, Courbet states that 'there is not an ounce of idealism in them.'⁵⁷

Courbet's biological view is distinctly at work in his explanation of *Le rut du printemps* or *Combat de cerfs*, a painting that represents the periodic stag fights arising

⁵⁵ Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, Ornans, 20 April 1861, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, pp174-177.

⁵⁶ In the letter, Courbet sets out to explain the ideas behind the execution of these paintings. See Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, *ibid*, p174: 'permettez-moi de vous expliquer leur sens dans mon idée.'

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p175: 'Ils n'ont pas pour un liard d'idéal.'

from the sexual excitement of these animals each spring. Courbet closely observed the anatomy and physical capability of the stags in relation to the particular environmental conditions within which the rut took place. As he explains in the letter, biological processes generated each spring arouse the sexual excitement of the stags and lead to the behaviour of the rut. Just as sap rises within trees and new plants grow, the stags are biologically driven to sexual stimulation and the creation of new life. The animals fight for mating rights and their anatomy and physiology are specifically organised for this purpose. Courbet explains that the action depicted in the painting could only occur within the particular kind of landscape and environmental conditions created at springtime:

The landscape of the three stags is a landscape of the beginning of spring; it is the moment when that which is next to the ground (as in this moment) is already green, when the sap is rising into the big trees, and only the oaks, which are the most delayed, still have their winter leaves. The action of the painting required that moment of the year.⁵⁸

The landscape and environment are similarly important for the action represented in the other two animal paintings in this series, *Le cerf forcé* and *Le piqueur*. In the former case, Courbet says, it was necessary to capture the conditions at the close of day because that is the time when such action typically occurs. He explains that he modelled the animal's bodily form and represented its fleeting action using colour tones that suggest the shadow and light seen at that particular time of day and during that particular season.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p175: 'Le paysage des trois cerfs est un paysage du commencement du printemps. C'est le moment où ce qui est près de terre (comme à ce moment-ci) est déjà vert, quand la sève monte au-dessus des grands arbres, et que les chênes seuls, qui sont les plus retardés, ont encore leurs feuilles d'hiver. L'action de ce tableau commandait ce moment-là de l'année, . . .'

⁵⁹ *ibid*, pp175-176: 'Quant au paysage du *Cerf forcé*, il est du même moment que celui du *Piqueur*, seulement c'est le soir, car ce n'est qu'au bout de six heures de chasse qu'on peut forcer un cerf. Le jour est à son déclin, les derniers rayons du soleil rasent la campagne et les moindres objets projettent une ombre très étendue. La manière dont ce cerf est éclairé augmente sa vitesse et l'impression du tableau. Son corps est entièrement dans l'ombre et modelé pourtant, le rayon de lumière qui le frappe suffit pour déterminer sa forme. Il semble passer comme un trait, comme un rêve.'

In Courbet's view, the anatomy and physiology of the animals he represents are inextricably linked to the conditions of their existence. Their bodies are specifically designed for behaviour, which inescapably involves interacting with and responding to the environment and seasons that constitute their habitat. Again, the artist explains this in connection with the stags represented in *Le rut du printemps*. He says that the animals' physiology – their physical capacity to function and behave – responds to the biological processes generated at springtime and performs the social rituals and sexual acts required for reproduction and the continuance of their species. To appreciate the power of the stags' sexual arousal in spring – a power expressed ritualistically in the physical challenge of fighting for mating rights – he watched the behaviour of the animals over a period of time in the reserve parks, killing a stag for a closer study of its anatomy.⁶⁰ He examined this dead animal and others as specimens of anatomical organisation and physical capability and applied this basic physiological study to his observations of the animals' behaviour in the habitat of the parks.⁶¹ Describing these observations to Wey, he focuses upon the body parts

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p174: 'Ce *Rut de Printemps* ou *Combat de Cerfs* est une chose que je suis allé étudier en Allemagne. J'ai vu ces combats dans les parcs réservés de Hombourg et de Wiesbaden. J'ai suivi les chasses allemandes à Francfort, six mois, tout un hiver, jusqu'à ce que j'ai tué un cerf qui m'a servi pour ce tableau, ainsi que ceux que mes amis tuaient. Je suis exactement sûr de cette action.' It is worth noting that Courbet mixed with doctors and surgeons through his association with the realist movement and held light-hearted entertainment on surgical themes in his studio. Recalling his bohemian youth, the writer and Courbet's friend Alexandre Schanne remarks that the realists, a group in which Courbet was one of the 'grands chefs,' attracted people from all walks of life to their regular table in the Brasserie Andler during the late 1840s and 1850s, including doctors and surgeons. Present when such people attended, Schanne comments that: 'Il est bien entendu que je compte comme camarades, et non comme intrus plusieurs étudiants en médecine, qui, à leur manière, sont devenus des réalistes en se faisant chirurgiens. Pour la plupart ils ont aujourd'hui un nom dans la science; ce sont les docteurs: Reliquet, lithotricien; Frison, professeur à la faculté d'Alger; de Barrel de Pontevés, dont la remarquable thèse, *Des Nerfs vaso-moteurs et de la circulation capillaire* a été médaillée; Meynier agrégé ès-science (tué par le froid en Sibérie où l'avait appelé des recherches anthropologiques); etc. . . .' See Alexandre Schanne, *Souvenirs de Schaunard*, Charpentier, Paris, 1886, p297. Schanne also notes that, during this time, 'Plusieurs fêtes joyeuses' were held at Courbet's studio on the rue Hautefeuille near the École de médecine. One of these occasions in 1859 took the form of several acts for which a programme was printed. One amusing act was to be held at midnight: "A minuit, expériences de dissection sur une personne de bonne volonté; le futur docteur Nicol démontrera l'utilité du foie." See Schanne, 1886, pp293-294.

⁶¹ Biology and its sub-discipline physiology were developed in the context of medical science in mid-nineteenth-century France. Major advances were made in physiology through the exploratory surgical procedures developed by prominent physiologists and doctors such as Claude Bernard. See

in operation when the stags fight in the rut and the physical power they demonstrate when running and moving generally within their habitat. He observes the ferocious action of muscles and antlers in the fights, which causes dreadful wounds and spilt blood and enables Courbet to appreciate the stimulative power of the season in driving the animals instinctively to mate and continue their species. Driven by the instinct to create new life, the stags fight ferociously and strike each other with savage blows. 'The battle is cold, the rage profound, the blows are terrible and they seem hardly to touch each other, which is easy to understand when one sees their formidable armour,' Courbet says.⁶² The artist observes that all the activities and movements of the animals demonstrate great physical power. When running and leaping, for example, they have the muscular strength to clear thirty feet in one effortless bound; 'I saw it with my own eyes,' he declares.⁶³ He also closely observes the stags' physical capabilities when he hunts them, appreciating the urgent operation of their physiology as they expend all their energy in trying to escape death. He evaluates the effects of his bullets upon these capabilities, noting in one case that the bullet passed through the animal's lungs, heart and crural bone, 'which did not keep it from going one

Histoire de France contemporaine: depuis la Révolution jusqu'à la Paix de 1919, 10 tomes, Hachette, Paris, 1920-1922, tome 6, 1921: 'La Révolution de 1848, Le Second Empire 1848-1859,' p419: 'Les recherches biologiques restent étroitement liées à la médecine. Un professeur de l'École de pharmacie venu de Lyon, Claude Bernard, révolutionne la physiologie générale en appliquant la vivisection à l'étude des fonctions vitales. Il utilise les effets produits par le curare (1850) pour observer le fonctionnement du système musculaire.' Bernard is a hugely important figure in the history of medicine and physiology. Historians of positivism generally agree that his seminal work entitled *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*, published in 1865, is a model example of positivist methodology. See, for example, D. G. Charlton, *Positivist Thought In France During The Second Empire, 1852-1870*, Oxford University Press, 1959, Chapter V, pp72-85, and W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York and London, 1972, pp114-116.

⁶² Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, Ornans, 20 April 1861, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p174: 'Le combat est froid, la rage profonde, les coups sont terribles et ils n'ont pas l'air d'y toucher. Ça se conçoit facilement quand on voit leur armure formidable.'

⁶³ *ibid*, p175: 'et leur force musculaire fait qu'ils franchissent trente pieds d'un saut, sans effort, ce que j'ai vu de mes yeux.'

hundred and fifty meters before collapsing. That gives you an idea of its power.’⁶⁴ The artist also shows an appreciation of variations within the stag species, classifying the animals according to their anatomical and physiological differences. He explains to Wey that ‘with these animals, none of the muscles are visible’ and that ‘the one I killed had twelve tines (thirteen years old, of the German kind; in France, this age creates ten tines.)’⁶⁵

Courbet’s appreciation of anatomy and physiology is also evident in his description of *Le piqueur*, a description that focuses mainly upon the physical power of the huntsman’s horse represented by the artist. Again, in this painting, the landscape, season and time of day are specifically relevant to the action represented. Courbet insists that the viewer should pay close attention to the realistic way he has captured the anatomy, movement and energy of the huntsman’s horse; he has taken great care to represent the animal just as he observed it, to demonstrate the graceful power of its body in pursuit of its quarry. He says that the horse is very unlike those painted by the artist Horace Vernet, whose battle scenes offer unnatural and exaggerated portrayals of a horse’s form, ‘with its rippling muscles and fiery eyes and nostrils.’⁶⁶ By contrast, Courbet maintains that the horse in his painting is conceived without such imaginative excess, appearing to move as it would in reality, effortlessly and without muscular or respiratory strain; it is ‘a trained horse that does a kilometer in two minutes without seeming to touch the ground,’ and whose galloping gait

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p175: ‘Il reçut ma balle n° 14 au-dessous de l’épaule (elle lui traversa les poumons et le coeur) et six chevrotines, du second coup, sur l’os crural, ce qui ne l’empêcha pas d’aller tomber à cent cinquante mètres. Jugez de sa puissance.’

⁶⁵ *ibid*, pp174-175: ‘Chez ces animaux il n’y a aucun muscle apparent. . . . Celui que j’ai tué avait douze cors (treize ans, style allemand; en France, vieux dix cors).’

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p175: ‘Méfiez-vous de ce que vous appelez le mouvement, l’énergie. Nous ne sommes plus ici dans le cheval d’Horace Vernet, où tous les muscles ressortent, où le feu sort des yeux et des naseaux.’

easily matches that of a racing horse.⁶⁷ The animal remains calm and possesses a ‘serenity of power that seems appropriate to the animal it pursues.’⁶⁸ As in *Le rut du printemps*, Courbet is keen to classify the subject he observes by species or type; the horse is ‘a cross between a barb and an Arab thoroughbred.’⁶⁹

In his letter to Wey, Courbet describes the animals and their behaviour using terms drawn from medical science, terms that specify the physiological manner in which he observes his subjects. For example, he regularly uses the word ‘action’ to describe animal behaviour. Defined in Nysten’s famous medical dictionary, published in 1810 and revised by the positivist Émile Littré in 1855 in collaboration with the biologist Charles Robin, ‘action’ refers to the reflexes of activity intrinsic to anatomical parts, innervations and muscle groups through which the distinct functions of particular living beings and organisms operate; here, ‘function’ refers to combinations of actions generated by an organism’s impulse to act or behave.⁷⁰ Courbet seems to have been particularly interested in the ‘action’ of animals in the early 1860s. He uses this specific term on a number of occasions to describe the depiction of animal behaviour in his work. In the same year that he wrote his letter to Wey, the artist apparently submitted proposals to the well-known

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p175: ‘Celui-ci est un cheval entraîné qui, sans avoir l’air d’y toucher, fait le kilomètre en deux minutes à la voiture et qui prend l’allure de galop comme au Champ-de-Mars en trois, sans se gêner.’

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p175: ‘C’est celui-là qui jouit du calme et de la sérénité de la puissance, il me semble approprié à l’animal qu’il chasse.’

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p175: ‘J’ai fait ce cheval et cet homme sur deux modèles: l’un était le cheval de Gaudy, cheval barbe croisé arabe double, représentant le poney anglais, cheval de chasse.’

⁷⁰ Pierre-Hubert Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, des sciences accessoires et de l’art vétérinaire*, dixième édition, entièrement refondue par Émile Littré et Charles Robin, J.-B. Baillière, Paris, 1855, p28: ‘ACTION . . . Manière dont une cause agit. D’après cette définition, *action* et *acte* diffèrent essentiellement: l’*acte* est le produit ou le résultat de l’*action*. . . . les *actions physiologiques*, qui se passent dans les êtres organisés, et caractérisent la vie, comme l’action des muscles, celle de l’estomac, etc. Lorsque plusieurs actions combinées concourent au même but, elles prennent le nom de *fonctions*.’

publishing house of Furne for an extended article, or series of articles, on hunting. In a letter to Max Buchon written early in 1861, Courbet notes that the article was to be illustrated with ‘figures in action’ – the behaviour of the deer and greyhounds he planned to paint.⁷¹

‘Series’ is another term drawn from medical science that Courbet uses in his letter to Wey. The concept of ‘series’ in Courbet’s work has been discussed by James Henry Rubin, who notes the philosophical reference of the term to a principle of organisation adopted by a number of mid-nineteenth-century French utopian socialists, especially Charles Fourier.⁷² Originating from the work of Pythagoras, this principle asserts the transcendental character of particular kinds of numerical understanding and is adapted in certain mid-nineteenth-century French theories of social organisation seeking to establish universal harmony.⁷³ Rubin points out that the principle gained some favour with Proudhon, whose philosophy expresses it in more empirical terms and adapts it to his socio-economic theory and views on art.⁷⁴ In the philosopher’s schema, art has an important role to play in achieving social harmony and should be treated like an ‘exact science’ or ‘the integration of

⁷¹ See Gustave Courbet, letter to Max Buchon, Ornans, written early in 1861 [probably in January 1861 according to Chu], reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p171: ‘Je viens de recevoir de M. Furne, une lettre et les petits bois pour illustration de l’article sur la chasse qu’il me demande . . . ‘. . . Voici ce qu’il me dit: j’accepte complètement votre programme, de la chasse au chevreuil à lévrier avec toute la réalité que vous voudrez y mettre, vos personnages en action, . . .’ Furne junior was probably the son of the more famous publisher Charles Furne (1794-1859). The son continued the father’s business following the father’s death. Whilst it seems that Courbet’s article was never completed, a substantial amount of thought and preparation had obviously gone into it.

⁷² See James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, pp61-63.

⁷³ See *ibid*, p62.

⁷⁴ See *ibid*, p62.

a mathematical curve,' in order to achieve this goal.⁷⁵ Here, according to Rubin, Proudhon proposes a positivist and specifically Comtian approach to social organisation and Courbet follows suit: 'Courbet . . . also used the notion of series to emphasise his scientific approach.'⁷⁶ Pointing out that Courbet describes a number of his paintings or groups of paintings in terms of series, Rubin argues that the concept is applied differently by the artist in each case; the *Atelier du peintre*, for example, 'constituted a different mode from the works in Courbet's other series.'⁷⁷

Rubin's explanation of Courbet's use of the concept of series is plausible; certainly, in his letter to Wey dated 20 April 1861, the artist describes the three animal paintings as a series and claims that they have 'mathematical precision.'⁷⁸ Yet, there is the possibility of a general concept of series underlying all these particular sequential works as indicated by the biological view of existence articulated in Courbet's explanations of paintings such as the *Atelier du peintre* and *Le rut du printemps*.⁷⁹ As we have already seen, the *Atelier du*

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, pp62-63 and p85.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, pp85-86.

⁷⁷ See James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p63. In a letter to his patron Alfred Bruyas written in November-December 1854, the artist refers to the *Atelier du peintre* as 'première série'; in a letter to Champfleury written around the same time, the artist states: 'J'ai un tableau de moeurs de campagne qui est fait, des *Cribleuses de blé*, qui rentre dans la série des *Demoiselles de village*, tableau étrange aussi.' See Gustave Courbet, letter to Alfred Bruyas, Ornans, November-December 1854, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p119. See also Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, Ornans, November-December 1854, reproduced in Chu, *ibid.*, 1996, p123.

⁷⁸ Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, Ornans, 20 April 1861, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p175: 'Dans leur valeur, ils sont exacts comme des mathématiques.'

⁷⁹ Whilst Rubin notes the possibility that the *Atelier du peintre* 'could in fact stand not only as a "series" on its own, but as the "first" or highest of such series, since it made a complete disclosure of the principle from which the rest of his art, hence other series, had been generated,' he fails to pick up on the term's potential biological significance; see Rubin, *ibid.*, 1980, p61. The idea of 'series' in relation to Courbet's work is also discussed by Chu in 'Courbet's Unpainted Pictures,' *Arts*

peintre was conceived largely through a positivist view of history and social evolution developed largely from biological principles. In his letter to Wey, Courbet describes the three animal paintings as a series whilst focusing upon the relationship between the physiology of the animals he represents and the environmental conditions within which they exist and behave. In this way, he alludes to the idea of the ‘animal series’ in biology, a method of species classification that is also important to the positivist understanding of history and social evolution. Drawing upon this idea, Courbet simultaneously reinforces his positivist view of history – a view that the physiological nature of humans, like that of animals, develops in an evolutionary manner in relation to environmental conditions – and buttresses his stance against religion.

In Courbet’s schema, humans are living beings just like animals and have no special status above other creatures or life forms. As Klaus Herding has noted, the artist held this view at least as far back as 1854, a year in which, in a letter to his patron Alfred Bruyas, Courbet describes the equivalent manner in which he observes ‘all natural objects,’ including humans, animals and plants.⁸⁰ Herding also notices the basically positivist character of this affirmation of ‘objective neutrality’ on Courbet’s part, but fails to explore the deeper philosophical implications of such neutrality.⁸¹ It is important to realise that the equivalent status accorded to humans and animals in positivist philosophy is often

Magazine, Vol. 55, September 1980, pp134-141; see in particular p134. Here, again, however, the biological or medical scientific basis of the concept of series is not explored.

⁸⁰ Klaus Herding, *Courbet, To Venture Independence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1991, p160. See also Gustave Courbet, letter to Alfred Bruyas, Ornans, 3 May 1854, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p114: ‘Pour moi, je vous avoue que je considère un homme avec curiosité, comme je considère un cheval, un arbre, un objet quelconque de la nature, voilà tout.’

⁸¹ See Herding, *ibid*, 1991, p160.

considered highly anti-religious, as is the idea that the historical development of man's physical and moral dispositions can be traced through a biological system of classification and comparison, or 'series,' applied to humans, animals and plants. The anti-religious character of such methods is spelled out by Comte, whose work, as we have seen, Proudhon discussed with Courbet since at least the mid-1850s. In Comte's opinion, theology and metaphysics are guilty of an 'extremely irrational disdain which makes us object to the scientific comparison of human society with any other kind of animal society.'⁸² Human life, Comte insists, is subject to the same biological laws that animal life is subject to, and a study of animal behaviour is important for an understanding of human behaviour.⁸³ From the viewpoint of organisation, animal societies are like human societies in the early stages of their development, offering an extremely useful insight into 'the most elementary laws of basic [social] solidarity'; they are imperfect and unsophisticated, presenting 'the clearest evidence of the completely natural character of the chief social relations' applicable to all kinds of society, animal and human.⁸⁴ Whilst theology and metaphysics mistakenly regard

⁸² Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, p436: 'Toutefois, je suis convaincu que la prépondérance trop prolongée de la philosophie théologico-métaphysique dans un tel ordre d'idées inspire aujourd'hui un dédain fort irrationnel contre tout rapprochement scientifique de la société humaine avec aucune autre société animale.'

⁸³ Comte's biological view of society drew upon the ideas of the famous biologist Henri Ducrotay de Blainville. For an understanding of social behaviour, the philosopher advocated the observation and comparison of all 'organised' living beings, i.e. all organisms whose anatomical structure was organised for the specific purposes of acting, functioning and behaving. For Comte, as for Blainville, there was no life without such organisation, as could be seen in the differences between living organisms and inorganic bodies. The chemical transformations in living organisms differed from those in inorganic bodies by their continuity and dependence upon anatomical organisation. Biology was the primary basis of Comte's synthetic theories concerning living organisms and, like Blainville, he argued that the science should combine various forms of study to understand organised life. He argued that biology should combine the study of humans and animals in the 'static' state, i.e. from the anatomical point of view, and in the 'dynamic' state, i.e. from the physiological point of view. Only in this way could the interdependence between anatomy and physiological function be understood because, according to Comte and Blainville, there was no organ without a function and no function without an organ; here, 'function' designated the 'action' of an organism in relation to its environmental circumstances. See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p592.

⁸⁴ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, p438:

humans as beings that are superior to animals, Comte points out that characteristics of human behaviour also exist ‘among the animals, and more conspicuously, the nearer the organism approaches the human type.’⁸⁵ Vegetable life must also be included in this biological system of classification and comparison because ‘the elementary and general laws of nutrition, which are of the highest importance, are best disclosed by the vegetable organism.’⁸⁶

As Mary Pickering has explained, according to Comte, an organism always acts in a determined manner when placed within a given environment.⁸⁷ Because of this determinism between the organism and its environment, social behaviour is not only organised biologically, but develops biologically as well. In accordance with their anatomy and physiology, the social behaviour of organisms changes through time according to the changing conditions of their social existence. Such determinism is for Comte an historical motor and fulfills the primary aim of all positivist inquiry, i.e. social prediction.⁸⁸ Once the

‘Mais réduite à la statique sociale, l’utilité scientifique d’une telle comparaison me semble vraiment incontestable, pour y mieux caractériser les lois les plus élémentaires de la solidarité fondamentale, en manifestant directement, avec une évidence irrésistible, leur vérification spontanée dans l’état de société le plus imparfait, de manière à pouvoir même quelquefois inspirer, en outre, d’utiles inductions sur la société humaine. Rien n’est plus propre surtout à faire ressortir combien sont pleinement naturelles les principales relations sociales, que tant d’esprits sophistiqués croient encore aujourd’hui pouvoir transformer au gré de leurs vaines prétentions: ils cesseront, sans doute, de regarder comme factices et arbitraires les liens fondamentaux de la famille humaine, en les retrouvant, avec le même caractère essentiel, chez les animaux, et d’une manière d’autant plus prononcée que l’organisme y devient plus élevé, plus rapproché de l’organisme humain.’

⁸⁵ See footnote 84.

⁸⁶ See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, p368: ‘Ainsi, l’organisme végétal est réellement le plus propre à nous dévoiler les véritables lois élémentaires et générales de la nutrition, qui doivent y exercer une influence à la fois plus simple et plus intense.’

⁸⁷ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p592.

⁸⁸ See *ibid*, pp592-593.

pattern of social development is identified – by recognising determined developments in behaviour according to changes in social environment – the course of society through history can be predicted and guided on its evolutionary path to a perfect state. Based largely on the example of the animal series in biology, history establishes for Comte the social series – the continued growth of every physical and moral disposition or faculty – and advances social sentiments by demonstrating the effects of previous generations upon the present.⁸⁹ Human unity is reinforced and perfected through generations as much as through individuals and peoples, as social solidarity is forged by physical and moral heredity.⁹⁰ In this way, positivism links anatomy, physiology and behaviour directly to history and opposes theology and metaphysics, whose philosophies include no appreciation of the past and assert man's special creation and existence in isolation from nature.⁹¹

As we have seen, Courbet intended to express a similarly positivist view of history in 1855 in the *Atelier du peintre*, a view that he reinforced in 1861 in his speech at the Antwerp conference and in the open letter to his students. Described in his letter to Wey in 1861, Courbet's painting entitled *Le rut du printemps* was exhibited in the art exhibition accompanying the conference and was clearly intended to express the same anti-idealist and anti-religious views articulated in the speech. Giving humans, animals and plants equivalent status as biological forms of life and alluding to the biological idea of animal series, these views expressed in the painting attacked the religious idea that man's origin was divine and that human existence was consequently superior to that of other life forms. In the letter to Wey, Courbet informs the writer that he considers *Le rut du printemps* to be a major work,

⁸⁹ See *ibid*, pp622-623.

⁹⁰ See *ibid*, p622.

⁹¹ See *ibid*, p622.

a painting that 'ought to have the same impact as the *Enterrement*, although in a different sense.'⁹² The artist does not specify his reasons for this comparison, although its positivist significance is readily understood when we recognise the biological basis of his work. Courbet gives humans and animals equivalent status as living beings within nature and, just like the stags in *Le rut du printemps*, the people in the *Enterrement* are represented as organisms whose physiology is inextricably linked to the natural and social environment within which they exist. The composition of the *Enterrement* supports this: the grave is situated at the bottom centre of the image and the whole figure group appears to be at its edge because the bottom horizontal edge of the picture levels off the grave in line with the group. Literally part of the landscape and nature, the grave is the compositional and philosophical key to the whole painting and its importance is signaled by the prominent peasant gravedigger kneeling at the graveside. The landscape and its dynamic interrelation with the figures through the grave resolve the various visual and conceptual elements of the work to create an expression of biological life similar to that in *Le rut du printemps*.

Mary Pickering points out that, in Comte's positivism, life is a dualism between an organism and its milieu and there is no living being without physiological 'organisation' – a system of body parts arranged to exist and behave within a given milieu.⁹³ Comte opposes the view of the leading biologist Marie-François-Xavier Bichat, prominent at the time, that life is the sum of functions working in opposition to death.⁹⁴ Informed by the views of the

⁹² Gustave Courbet, letter to Francis Wey, Ornans, 20 April 1861, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p174. Courbet refers to 'ces tableaux auxquels j'attache la plus grande importance, car, non seulement de mon avis mais encore de l'avis des peintres et amateurs, le *Combat de Cerfs* doit avoir, dans un sens différent, l'importance de l'*Enterrement*.'

⁹³ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p592.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p591.

famous physiologist Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis and the well-known biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, but most especially by the ideas of Blainville, Comte argues that there is no inevitable contradiction between ‘living nature’ and ‘dead nature’ because, as shown by the influence of milieux upon organisms, living bodies cannot exist if their environment is inclined to destroy them.⁹⁵ Life depends upon matter and its basic condition is a ‘harmony between the living being and the corresponding milieu.’⁹⁶ Incorporated within his social theory, the idea of milieu is extended by Comte to include the ‘total ensemble of all types of external circumstances that are necessary for the existence of each determined organism.’⁹⁷ His definition of life incorporates Blainville’s influential notion of the ‘double internal movement, both general and continuous, of composition and decomposition’ and is extended to include the crucial influence of milieu.⁹⁸ Through their biological expression of the relationship between the organism and its environment, Courbet’s paintings entitled *Le rut du printemps* and *Enterrement à Ornans* seem to express this ‘double internal movement,’ although each painting represents a different part of the process. Representing the action of the rut, the former painting expresses the composition of life. Representing the act of burial, the latter expresses the decomposition of life, or death. In each case, the landscape is part of the biological system of nature, the crucial medium through which composition and decomposition occurs.

Courbet’s positivist articulation of biological concerns reflects the close connections between positivism, biology and medical science in mid-nineteenth-century

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p591.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p591.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p591.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, pp591-592.

France. W. M. Simon, the well-known historian of positivism, has demonstrated the powerful impact that positivism had upon the discipline of biology in France at that time.⁹⁹ Whilst leading positivists sought to influence all occupational groups within society, they addressed their theories to scientists first and foremost, and biologists above all.¹⁰⁰ This mainly took place through the ‘Biological Society,’ which was founded in 1848 by the two prominent positivists Louis Auguste Segond and Charles Robin.¹⁰¹ The latter became one of the Society’s vice-presidents and promoted such positivist principles as the classification of the sciences, the dependence of anatomy upon physiology, and an emphasis of synthesis rather than analysis.¹⁰² Comte’s idea that biology should determine some general laws concerning the relationship between the organism and its environment made a particularly strong impact within the biological domain and, as Simon demonstrates, this idea was widely accepted within and through the Biological Society.¹⁰³ In 1855, Robin revised Pierre-Hubert Nysten’s medical dictionary and produced numerous further editions with the famous positivist Émile Littré. From thenceforth, the ideas of Comte and Blainville featured highly within the dictionary, which remained a standard French medical reference throughout the nineteenth century and expanded the stronghold of positivist ideas within the medical domain.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ See W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, An Essay in Intellectual History*, Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York and London, 1972, pp113-118.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid*, p113.

¹⁰¹ See *ibid*, p113.

¹⁰² See *ibid*, p113.

¹⁰³ See *ibid*, pp113-114.

¹⁰⁴ For example, the entry for ‘biology’ within the dictionary highlights the importance of ‘mésologie,’ ‘the science of milieux,’ which was developed by both Comte and Blainville. Refer to Chapter One of this thesis, footnote 52, for examples of positivist aspects highlighted within the dictionary.

Courbet was aware of Comte's work through his contact with Proudhon and there is further evidence suggesting that the artist was made indirectly aware of Comtian and Blainvillian ideas. George Riat's study of Courbet reveals that the artist attended botanical field trips and that at least one of these was conducted under the guidance of the well-known botanist Gaspard-Adolphe Chatin, whose work was greatly influenced by Blainville's ideas.¹⁰⁵ Also, in the early 1840's, Courbet had some contact with the Academy of Sciences, of which Blainville was a prominent and influential member since the early 1830's.¹⁰⁶ Petra Chu has noted that, in a letter to his family dated 24 December 1842, Courbet writes: 'tell the man from Eternoz – for I don't know whether the Academy has already had his water analysed – to send a bottle if that has not already been done, for I can't do anything without it.'¹⁰⁷ The artist was apparently trying to act as an agent between a man from Eternoz and the Academy regarding the chemical structure of some water sample, probably from the Eternoz area.¹⁰⁸ This kind of investigation into the chemical

¹⁰⁵ See Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre*, H. Floury, Paris, 1906, p159 for confirmation that Courbet attended Chatin's botanical trip. See also, a *Notice sur les travaux scientifique* dated 1852, which contains a summary of Chatin's career up to that point. Here, the 'Mémoires' section summarising Chatin's main works refers to an essay appearing in 1840 in which the botanist pays tribute to Blainville's ideas on zootomy. As Chatin states: 'Ce Mémoire, premier essai dans un ordre de recherches qui ont leur point de départ dans les beaux travaux zootomiques de M. de Blainville.' The Notice contains extensive commentary regarding Chatin's work and shows that his scientific observations applied to humans, animals and plants in equivalent contexts of medical and biological research. See *Notice sur Les Travaux Scientifique*, 'Mémoires de Botanique,' 'Anatomie comparée végétale appliquée à la classification – Traduction de l'organisation intérieure des végétaux par les organes placés à leur surface, 1840,' Imprimerie de Bachelier, Paris, 1852, p2.

¹⁰⁶ Blainville had become a close friend of Comte by the 1830s. Comte had been desperate for a post at the Academy for some time and, in 1832, asked Blainville to recommend him for the position of permanent secretary. See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p444. Although unsuccessful, Comte later achieved a more subordinate position and continued to have a close if often turbulent relationship with the Academy. As Pickering shows, Comte battled with the Academy regularly on various issues; see, for example, Pickering, *ibid*, 1993, p438, pp463-464, pp498-499, pp502-503, p560, p645, p701.

¹⁰⁷ Gustave Courbet, letter to his family, Paris, 24 December 1842, reproduced in *Correspondance de Courbet*, Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, p44: 'Dites aussi à l'homme d'Eternoz, car je ne sais pas si l'Académie a déjà vu son eau analysée, d'en envoyer une bouteille si cela n'est déjà fait, car on ne peut rien faire sans cela.'

¹⁰⁸ See Gustave Courbet, letter to his family, Paris, 24 December 1842, reproduced in, Chu, *ibid*, 1996, p44.

composition of the water, air and other elements in various parts of France and beyond was commonplace. Such study aimed to determine the effect of chemicals upon organic materials and upon the physical condition of animals and humans, their respiratory systems and bodily functions.¹⁰⁹ Chatin conducted a great deal of this work through the Academy of Sciences and Courbet would have been familiar with such investigations through his contact with the botanist and other scientists.¹¹⁰ Courbet may well have encountered Blainvillian ideas through the Academy, either through Chatin or through other scientists in the Academy circle. The artist could even have come across Comte's ideas in this way.

Courbet's general interest in the natural sciences is well documented and has been sketched by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu in her essay 'It Took Millions of Years to Compose That Picture,' published in 1988, which examines ways in which the artist's experience of landscape influenced his landscape paintings.¹¹¹ Here, Chu points to the artist's general interest in zoology, botany, geology, and the anatomy and physiology of wild animals as a factor informing the artist's choice of landscape subject and mode of representation. She notes Courbet's contact with the botanist Chatin, the artist's interest in planting trees to help with his landscape painting and suggests that a number of his paintings were influenced by geology, in particular a work commissioned by the prominent French geopaleontologist Jules Marcou.¹¹² With regard to anatomy and physiology, Chu notes that a contemporary description of the artist's studio on the route to Besançon mentions that jars containing

¹⁰⁹ See *Notice sur Les Travaux Scientifiques*, 1852, pp1-19.

¹¹⁰ See *Notice sur Les Travaux Scientifiques*, 1852, pp1-19.

¹¹¹ Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "'It Took Millions of Years to Compose That Picture,'" in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, The Brooklyn Museum, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988, pp55-66.

¹¹² See *ibid*, pp58-59.

preserved reptiles lined the shelves along the walls; this, Chu says, indicates the artist's 'systematic interest in zoology.'¹¹³ She also notes Courbet's interest from an early age in the application of science to agriculture.¹¹⁴ The *Sociétés d'émulation* of the Doubs, Jura and Haute-Saône departments of the Franche-Comté published various articles on scientific subjects aimed at improving local economy and farming methods and Courbet is recorded as a member of the Doubs society in 1853.¹¹⁵ According to Chu, many of the articles published by these societies articulate a 'dynamic idea of landscape . . . closely related to an idea of nature that may be called evolutionary.'¹¹⁶ This idea, she says, was rooted in the work of authors such as Georges Buffon, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Erasmus Darwin, authors whose work was in turn 'inspired by the historical studies of Turgot and Voltaire, who recognised that progress – in the sense of change, process and revolution – is central to historical thought.'¹¹⁷ Chu argues that, although Courbet was a member of the *Société d'émulation du Doubs* for only one year and probably read few of its articles, he shared this evolutionary view of nature.¹¹⁸ As evidence of this, she refers to his general interest in the natural sciences and his awareness of the unique geological and paleontological history of his home region expressed in his landscape paintings, which suggest 'a concept of landscape as a continuously changing presence subject to the evolutionary processes of

¹¹³ See *ibid*, p58. See also Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre*, H. Floury, Paris, 1906, p217, which notes that when the sculptor Max Claudet visited Courbet's studio near Besançon, he encountered, amongst various curious items, 'bocaux remplis de reptiles sur des rayons.'

¹¹⁴ See Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "It Took Millions of Years to Compose That Picture," in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, The Brooklyn Museum, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988, pp56-58.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p57.

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p58.

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p58.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, p58.

nature and the progressive history of mankind.’¹¹⁹ Yet, whilst Chu highlights some ways that Courbet drew inspiration from natural science rather than religion – she draws, for example, visual contrasts between the religious contemplation supposedly evident in Rousseau’s landscape painting and the organic evolution supposedly evident in Courbet’s – she fails to undertake any incisive textual analysis that might consolidate her thesis.¹²⁰ For this reason, she connects Courbet’s work only in a very general way to philosophies of history and evolution in currency at the time, and misses the positivist significance of his interest in the natural sciences; positivism is mentioned only as a vague reference point for the artist’s insistence that he was ‘an apprentice of nature.’¹²¹

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p61.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, pp62-64.

¹²¹ *ibid*, p62.

V: Anti-idealism, physiognomy and caricature

We have seen that, in the early 1860s, Courbet's biological view of nature opposed religion and the ideals associated with it. A similar opposition is evident in two anti-clerical tracts that were published anonymously in Brussels in 1868 and illustrated with engravings of pictures executed by Courbet.¹²² One of these engravings, an image of the artist's representation entitled *La Mort de Jeannot: Les Frais du culte*, served as the frontispiece for one of the tracts, also entitled *La Mort de Jeannot*. Another engraving, an image of Courbet's notorious painting of drunken priests entitled *Les Curés revenant de la conférence* or *Le Retour de la conférence* [Figure 28], served as the frontispiece for the other tract, entitled *Les Curés en goguette*. Describing what the author saw as the corrupt and degenerate effects of religion and its dogma upon contemporary French society, both tracts were strongly anti-clerical and corresponded with the anti-idealist views expressed in Courbet's work.

Examining the tract entitled *Les Curés en goguette*, we can see that the author's critique is based upon a number of positivist ideas expressed through physiognomical and caricatural descriptions of religious types. This critique is reinforced by the physiognomical and caricatural character of the images, which portray some of the scenes and represent some of the types contained in the text. The writer perceives and fiercely objects to a system of social control being exercised by Catholicism in France, takes issue with the unsavoury behaviour apparently demonstrated by many of its representatives, and seeks

¹²² Chu has discussed the illustrative qualities of Courbet's work in relation to the anti-clerical pamphlets; see Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, 'Gustave Courbet: Illustrator,' in *Drawing 2*, November-December 1980, pp78-85.

reform by exposing the corruption of this situation and by offering a radical solution based upon the principle of freedom of conscience for everyone. The writer describes an all-powerful system of religious control and points out that there are two great centres of Catholic propaganda in France, Lyon and Besançon, which issue instructions to all the ecclesiastical authorities within the French religious network.¹²³ The archbishop of each centre has absolute command over his diocese.¹²⁴ The priests of the cantons receive direct orders and convey them to the parish priests, ensuring that all ecclesiastical directives are followed.¹²⁵ In turn, the parish priests supervise the local communities, aiming to ensure that all behaviour conforms to the so-called moral demands of the Church.¹²⁶ These priests usually come from large, relatively poor families, and are forced into the priesthood by their fathers, who seek in this way to fulfill their own small-minded ambitions for influence within the locality.¹²⁷ The parish priests have an easy life because members of the public, ‘devoted creatures,’ keep the priests posted with all that goes on in the community.¹²⁸

The writer expresses similar views to those expressed by Courbet in the early 1860s, claiming that the Church maintains its privileges by enslaving sentiment in the

¹²³ *Les Curés en goguette*, Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., Brussels, 1868, p3: ‘Pour éclairer le public sur cette matière, il est nécessaire de dire ici que les grands centres de la propagande catholique en France se trouvent à Lyon et à Besançon. De ces deux points partent toutes les instructions destinées à transmettre le mot d’ordre aux autorités ecclésiastiques.’

¹²⁴ *ibid*, p3: ‘Comme chacun le sait, l’archevêque est indépendant du pape et commande d’une manière absolue dans toute l’étendue de son diocèse.’

¹²⁵ *ibid*, p3: ‘Le curé de canton reçoit directement ses ordres et les transmet aux curés de paroisse, sur lesquels il exerce une autorité spéciale.’

¹²⁶ *ibid*, pp3-4: ‘A leur tour, ces derniers se surveillent entre eux, et, le cas échéant, ils sont tenus de révéler à leurs supérieurs tous les actes de nature à attirer leur attention.’

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p7: ‘Le curé sort ordinairement d’une famille nombreuse, dont le chef croit ainsi donner satisfaction à ses étroites idées de domination et d’ambition locale.’

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p4: ‘Dans sa paroisse, le curé se ménage, parmi certains éléments de la population, des créatures dévouées qui le tiennent au courant de tout ce qui s’y passe.’

service of religion and thereby perpetuating the ignorance and poverty of the people.¹²⁹ The Church's key placatory measure is to convince people that their poverty and suffering will be relieved in the afterlife and that resignation to the necessary toil of life on earth is the only guarantee of this relief.¹³⁰ The Church condemns lay teachers and parents who do not conform to the status quo and seeks to replace them at every opportunity with conformers.¹³¹ This religious network of moral control permeates so much of society and its institutions that the government often becomes the executive power of the Church, sometimes wittingly, sometimes not.¹³² As the author says, this ingenious system of control is reinforced when the priests reunite at periodic conferences and report to their superiors the state of affairs in the various parishes.¹³³ All in all, the religious network operating in society is an 'orthodox police,' and 'Roman Christians are caught in the web of Catholicism

¹²⁹ *ibid*, pp6-7: 'Dans beaucoup de pays, sept à huit paroisses forment une circonscription dans laquelle il se fait une conférence par semaine. Ces réunions ont lieu alternativement dans chacun des presbytères de la circonscription.

Elles sont en général le prétexte de repas copieux qui durent une partie de la journée. Outre cette distraction pantagruélique, le curé assiste fort souvent aux noces, baptêmes et fêtes de famille célébrées dans la paroisse. Il jouit aussi presque toujours du privilège de s'asseoir une fois par semaine à la table de la marquise de Carabas du lieu, qui lui fait une rude concurrence en prosélytisme.

Cette bonne dame se donne la pénible mission d'expliquer aux rustres vivant sur ses domaines, et aux pauvres diables recueillant parfois les miettes de ses festins, qu'une ignorance complète est cent fois préférable à une demi-instruction; car, leur dit-elle, des connaissances insuffisantes ne sont bonnes qu'à engendrer l'envie et à détruire la *résignation*.

Elle n'oublie pas de bien leur faire comprendre que le royaume des pauvres n'est pas de ce monde. La marquise de Carabas se donne en outre la tâche spéciale de discréditer les instituteurs laïques auprès des parents, et elle ne prend aucun repos jusqu'au jour où elle est parvenue à les faire remplacer par les *ignorantins*.'

¹³⁰ See footnote 129.

¹³¹ See footnote 129.

¹³² *ibid*, p4: 'Pas plus que les peuples, les gouvernements n'échappent à cette réglementation théocratique, dont ils sont, à leur insu, la force exécutive.'

¹³³ *ibid*, p4: 'Puis, afin de compléter cet ingénieux système de contrôle, lorsqu'ils sont réunis en conférence, ils s'entendent pour porter à la connaissance de l'archevêque les actions du curé de canton lui-même.'

like fish in a net.¹³⁴ Through this network, the Church aims to achieve ‘universal domination’ and protect the interests of religious personnel, who revel in an existence of idleness, gluttony, corruption and privilege.¹³⁵

The writer criticises this state of affairs from a distinctively positivist standpoint, relating the physical appearance of individuals directly to their physical and moral constitution and, in turn, to the society that shapes such constitution. The critique is expressed through a combination of physiognomy and caricature, which highlight the irony of the degenerate behaviour of religious personnel at the periodic religious conferences: drunkenness, gluttony, violent argument, brawling, gossip and bawdiness. Describing a typical conference from start to finish, the writer sets out to undermine the authority and moral credibility of the Church by concentrating the irony of this behaviour. The account presents each stage in the proceedings as a comic scene in a farce and makes a laughing stock of these proceedings. Physiognomical descriptions of the priests’ immoral character are woven into caricatural sketches of the unfolding events of the conference and the roles played by the priests within them. Investing literary conventions of comedy and drama with the critical power of caricature, the irony of the writer’s farce is simultaneously hilarious and damning. The satire is reinforced by the images supplied by Courbet, which illustrate the unfolding scenes and whose caricatural and physiognomical codes present a pictorial irony that corresponds with the writer’s literary form. The importance of irony in Courbet’s work has been highlighted by Petra Chu, who notes the artist’s use of this artistic device in both direct and indirect ways, in drawing upon ‘the powerful rhetorical device of left-wing antiestablishment journalists of the Second Empire’ for some works and ‘German Romantic

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p4: ‘Si l’on ajoute la confession à cette police orthodoxe, on reconnaîtra que le chrétien romain est pris dans les mailles de la catholicité comme un poisson dans un épervier.’

¹³⁵ *ibid*, pp4-5: ‘Sentinelle avancée d’une armée occulte, qui vise à la domination universelle, . . .’

irony’ – a ‘visual rhetoric [that] allowed him to make powerful, even controversial, visual statements in indirect and ambiguous ways’ – for others.¹³⁶ Chu argues that Courbet’s *Le Retour de la conference* is a pictorial expression of the former, direct form of irony and that the painting ‘gave the impression of a blown-up anticlerical caricature of the kind that appeared during the July Monarchy.’¹³⁷ Yet, Chu does not detect that, in this painting, Courbet expresses irony through physiognomy for positivist effect, as a means of criticising the degenerate physical and moral condition of religious belief and custom in society for the sake of reform. This is revealed in the narrative irony of the anonymous anti-clerical tract, which corresponds with Courbet’s positivist use of irony. In the tract, irony is designed to make a strong impression upon the reader and help reform society through its aesthetic and emotive impact.

The farce of the tract is introduced with a number of tongue-in-cheek remarks about the temptations that often present themselves to priests, who, as the writer wryly remarks, deserve great respect for their heroic attempts not to succumb: ‘you need to have a strong character to remain abstemious before an abundantly filled table and to stay well-behaved around a young girl revealing in a thrilling emotional voice the most mysterious secrets of her heart.’¹³⁸ The experience of poverty or deprivation in the early part of a

¹³⁶ Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France, Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2007; see p76 and pp77-78). Chu argues that Courbet’s use of romantic irony relates to the fascination with irony in the Parisian bohemia of the 1840s, which resulted directly from an interest in German philosophy, especially that of Friedrich Schlegel. She argues that Courbet adopted this form of irony mainly between 1848 and 1855 in works that ‘had been open to multiple readings ranging from naive and innocuous to sophisticated and subversive.’ In this way, she suggests, the artist gained ‘enormous visibility’ as well as critical impact. Chu admits that, in her approach, it is difficult to explain the change in Courbet’s artistic course in the late 1850s and early 1860s when he produced fierce and directly ironic anti-establishment works; see Chu, *ibid*, 2007, p108 and p113.

¹³⁷ Chu, *ibid*, 2007, p111.

¹³⁸ *Les Curés en goguette*, Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., Brussels, 1868, p5: ‘Il faut, en effet, avoir un caractère bien énergique pour rester sobre devant un table plantureusement servie, et sage

priest's life, and the repression caused by the strict moral codes and ideals imposed by his vocation, are often catalysts for intemperance and gluttony when temptation presents itself.¹³⁹ The priests encounter such temptations at their weekly conferences, the unfolding events of which are portrayed by the writer as scenes in a play. An early scene lampoons the priests' actions when they arrive at the conference, which is held at the home of one of the delegates. The satire turns on the ironic behaviour of the priests, who preach temperance and abstinence but cannot control their appetites and commit every sin of the flesh. Taking a positivist view of the priests' physiology – the form of their bodies is seen as a physical manifestation of their immoral constitution and an indicator of the behaviour for which such constitution is organised – the writer uses physiognomy and caricature to portray their greed and undermine the credibility of their privileged social status. Again, the irony of greedy behaviour among the clergy, and the writer's reference to physiological evidence to portray this irony, are devices that serve a dual purpose: they demonstrate that people with faith are misguided and recommend physiology as the source of truth and knowledge.

Having already described the banquet of food and alcoholic drink being prepared for the occasion, the writer ridicules the priests' lust and gluttony as indicated by their behaviour around the female servants and their eager anticipation of the feast of food. The first priest to enter approaches the host's sister, praising her brother's skills of organisation and 'paying her some Rabelaisian compliments on her marvellously preserved beauty.'¹⁴⁰ A

en face d'une jeune fille découvrant d'une voix palpitante d'émotion les plus mystérieux secrets de son coeur.'

¹³⁹ See *ibid*, 1868, pp3-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Les Curés en goguette*, Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., Brussels, 1868, p10: 'Le curé de X... entre le premier. Il s'avance auprès de la soeur de son confrère et lui fait quelques compliments

servant who has ‘the eye of a basilisk’ closely follows him.¹⁴¹ Here, the writer makes a physiognomical comparison of the servant with a basilisk to portray his evil and lecherous character. The basilisk is a fabulous reptile, hatched by a serpent from a cock’s egg, and has a lethal breath and look. The servant, who looks at one of the female cooks with indecent intent, is ‘a dirty-minded accomplice who seems very interested in the development of the forms of a certain cook.’¹⁴² Having expressed his appreciation for her breasts, he then quickly turns on his heels to inspect the bottles arranged on the credence.¹⁴³ He examines each bottle until he is satisfied that their vintages are authentic, thanking the Lord that the wine is decent: ‘Praise the Lord, he says closing his eyes sanctimoniously, I see that Mr Priest does not intend to give us a foretaste of purgatory today.’¹⁴⁴ This parody of the prayer of grace and thanksgiving is particularly effective in satirising the hypocrisy and gluttony of the clergy as the writer sees it, and is augmented by the physiognomical profile of the servant’s lecherous character. Courbet’s caricatural depiction of the scene [Figure 29] adds a concrete, visual dimension to the image already evoked in the reader’s imagination by the writer’s physiognomical descriptions. The artist’s illustration shows the greed of the priests and the servant before the meal: two characters inspect the bottles of wine, one smells some food cooking on the stove, another turns the spit-roast, and two others flirt with the cooks.

rabelaisiens sur sa merveilleuse conservation, sur sa beauté hors ligne et sur l’excellente tenue de la cure.’

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p10: ‘Le desservant de Y . . . le suit de près. Celui-ci est un compère égrillard qui paraît s’intéresser beaucoup au développement des formes de certaine cuisinière à l’oeil de basilic.’

¹⁴² See footnote 141.

¹⁴³ *ibid*, pp10-11: ‘Après avoir poussé une reconnaissance *très avancée* dans la poitrine de cette Gertrude au petit pied, il tourne vivement sur ses talons et va inspecter les bouteilles rangées sur la crédence.’

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p11: ‘Il les prend une à une, les examine avec amour et ne les quitte qu’après s’être assuré de l’authenticité des crûs. – Dieu soit béni! dit-il en fermant benoîtement les yeux, je vois que M. le curé ne songe pas encore aujourd’hui à nous donner un avant-goût du purgatoire.’

Greed features very highly as a typical trait of religious personnel and the writer employs various physiognomical devices to portray it. In doing so, he continues to assert the physiological nature of human beings, denying the idea of divine creation and insisting upon the degeneracy of the body and the constitution under the influence of religious ideals and dogma. For example, when the master of the house first appears, he is ‘sweating and breathless.’¹⁴⁵ His gluttony has made him grossly unfit and he struggles with an enormous basket of bottles intended to extinguish the initial blaze of the priests’ appetite and lust.¹⁴⁶ The writer begins to portray the event as a party or feast rather than a conference and refers to the priests as ‘guests’ with a ‘host,’ not delegates; when the guests follow their host into the dining room, ‘flashes of greed pass across their eyes, and a proud eagerness can be read on their features.’¹⁴⁷ The guests are far more occupied with the business of consumption than with the business of religion and the regular feast is one of the most important events in their lives.¹⁴⁸ The author further asserts the physiological nature of human life and denies divine creation by evoking images and sounds in the reader’s mind that highlight the animalistic character of the priests’ intemperance. The priests look and sound like animals; the writer talks of the champing of the priests’ jaws and their sighs of gratification as they demolish the food and drink on the table before them.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, p12: ‘Tout à coup le maître du logis surgit de la trappe de la cave et apparaît, suant et soufflant, chargé d’un énorme panier de bouteilles destinées à éteindre le premier feu.’

¹⁴⁶ See footnote 145.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p12: ‘Des éclairs de convoitise passent dans leurs regards, et une noble ardeur se lit sur leurs traits.’

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p12: ‘On comprend que ces gens-là vont s’occuper d’une des plus importantes affaires de leur vie.’

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p13: ‘L’attaque commence alors sur toute la ligne; et quelle attaque! On n’entend d’abord que le bruit des mâchoires et les soupirs de satisfaction des *perpétrants*. Mais bientôt le silence est rompu par la première rasade, – le coup du médecin; – alors la gaîté fait invasion autour de la table.’

The conference discussions begin after the first onslaught upon the food and wine, and the writer recounts the typical agenda and talking points. Here, again, criticism is conveyed through a combination of farce, caricature and sharp irony that effectively condemns what the writer sees as the hypocrisy, corruption and unjust moral authority of the Church. Initially, the priests relay to their colleagues the scandal and gossip of their respective localities, denouncing all those who have acted with impiety. Then, the priests condemn any municipal officials who have had the audacity to oppose the usury proposals formulated by their pastors, ‘the scoundrels!’¹⁵⁰ Next, they condemn everyone objecting to the erection of edifying religious monuments and idols in prominent places, such as hilltops or at points of access to roads. At this point, the writer interjects sharply with his own views, protesting that such objects strengthen the Church’s exploitative grip on people by plunging them into the depths of ignorance, fanaticism and barbarism.¹⁵¹ The priests then discuss the parishioners’ confessions. Maintaining the themes of physiological consumption and greed, the writer states that this part of the conference is ‘the most pungent hors-d’oeuvre of the conference.’¹⁵² He plays up the theme of consumption even further by noting how the priests lap up the lurid details of the confessions, listening and watching so attentively with ‘shiny eyes.’¹⁵³ He sends up the smutty, comic, facetious and animated

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, p13: ‘et on cite les conseillers municipaux qui ont eu l’audace de s’opposer aux demandes de crédit formulées par leurs pasteurs . . . les misérables! . . .’

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p14: ‘Ces monuments, dorés et argentés comme les idoles du paganisme, rappellent tout à la fois les moeurs de l’Inde et les plus sauvages époques du moyen âge. Leurs défenseurs naturels sont donc ceux qui s’efforcent de replonger l’homme, à peine sorti des langes de l’ignorance, dans toutes les sinistres horreurs du fanatisme et de la barbarie.’

¹⁵² *ibid*, p14: ‘C’est le plus piquant hors-d’oeuvre de la conférence ; . . .’

¹⁵³ *ibid*, pp14-15: ‘La confession a ensuite son tour. C’est le plus piquant hors-d’oeuvre de la conférence; aussi faut-il voir comme les yeux brillent et comme chacun prête l’oreille lorsque le petit curé de D . . . raconte les faits et gestes de la grande Claudine M., une créature endiablée, qui a damné plus de vicaires depuis cinq ans que l’évêque de *** n’a eu de maîtresses. L’un répète d’une petite voix imitative les confidences bouffonnes de la femme de Jean, qui se plaint de ceci, de cela, et surtout des procédés conjugaux de son mari. Un autre raconte l’histoire ingénue d’une jeune fille qui lui a demandé la canonisation par anticipation, sous le fallacieux prétexte qu’elle doit bientôt donner un ange de plus à la catholicité.

manner in which the confessions are relayed and received. For example, ‘one [priest] recounts in a small imitative voice the farcical confidences of the wife of Jean, who pleases herself with this and that, and especially the conjugal techniques of her husband.’¹⁵⁴

The relaying of confessions is followed by a session on politics, by which time the priests are becoming quite intoxicated. Quarrels begin, and the priests are soon brawling.¹⁵⁵ Even after this blaze of fury has burnt out and the priests are returning home, the drunken spectacle continues. As the writer informs us, the priests fall into a ditch on the side of the road and their vain attempts to hoist themselves out are witnessed by a peasant and a traveller. At the very bottom of the ditch, there is an enormous priest buried under a donkey that is bucking violently at several ecclesiastics trying desperately to relieve the man and the beast. The drunken swaying of the priest has proven to be too much for the animal, which has veered to the side of the road. Conveyed through physiognomical devices, the satire of the scene is again based upon a number of characteristically positivist ideas. By placing the donkey at the centre of the action, for example, the writer is able simultaneously to comment upon the ridiculousness of the religious group and give humans and animals the same status as physiological beings. In accordance with the physiognomical conventions in currency at the time, the mere presence of the donkey symbolises the boorish and stupid nature of the priests. Furthermore, the donkey is a character in its own

Le curé de X. explique jusqu’où va le crétinisme de ses paroissiens, en répétant la confession d’un grand dadais, désireux d’avoir une instruction orthodoxe sur la manière d’exercer ses fonctions maritales.’

¹⁵⁴ See footnote 153.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, pp18-19. The brawl reaches such a pitch, that ‘Les plats, les assiettes, les bouteilles et les verres voltigent de tous côtés en menus fragments. Un convive a le front fendu, un autre a l’épaule meurtrie et un troisième crie à tue-tête qu’on lui a cassé le bras!!!’ The situation becomes completely chaotic, bodies are thrown through the windows and the brawling continues in the orchard outside: ‘Rien n’est plus grotesque que les cabrioles exécutées par ces messieurs dans leur route aérienne; ils ressemblent à des hirondelles de clocher auxquelles on aurait coupé les ailes.’

right, a member of the group and demonstrates almost human qualities. The writer says that the animal must have ‘a truly philosophical, placid nature’ because it readily accepts the huge burden of a priest weighing around 140 kilogrammes.¹⁵⁶ All the characters including the donkey are referred to as ‘creatures’ and it is a comment upon the gross stupidity of the priests that the donkey is ‘the only creature of composure,’ and has ‘the honour of leaving first from the prison of mud.’¹⁵⁷ The animal’s involvement in the action also advances the cartoon aspects of the scene, which are important for conveying the underlying satire. The priests and the donkey make similarly ridiculous noises, for example; just like the donkey, the priests bray like asses because of their predicament.¹⁵⁸

The drunken display continues even when the convoy of priests and donkey is back on its course. At that point, the writer describes a scene corresponding with that depicted in Courbet’s painting, *Le Retour de la conference*, of which there are two versions [Figure 28 and Figure 30].¹⁵⁹ Here, once again, the juxtaposition of religious symbolism and intemperate behaviour is deeply ironic. As in the painting, the action takes place beneath a large tree in which a niche has been dug to hold a religious idol. Again, the writer

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, p21: ‘L’un d’eux, énorme gaillard pesant près de 140 kil., s’était hissé sur un petit âne d’une placidité vraiment philosophique.’

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, p22: ‘Comme l’âne était en somme la seule créature de sang-froid, il eut l’honneur de sortir le premier de sa prison de boue.’

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, p22: ‘Les cris, les plaintes et les menaces des curés, coupés par les braiments lamentables du baudet, formaient une cacophonie de nature à faire mourir de jalousie tous les musiciens d’un orchestre chinois!!!’

¹⁵⁹ The anonymous writer’s description of characters in relation to this painting is very similar to that provided in Proudhon’s famous treatise on art entitled *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, published three years earlier in 1865 by Garnier frères. The drunken priest with a cane, for example, is referred to by the anonymous writer as a corrupt horse dealer who wages war against all heretics: ‘A chaque chute, cette espèce de maquignon, – il vendait du bois et même des chevaux à ses paroissiens, – ce maquignon, dis-je, proférait d’épouvantables imprécations contre les ennemis de la religion, et frappait avec fureur le sol avec sa canne à pomme d’ivoire.’ See *Les Curés en goguette*, Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., Brussels, 1868, p24. This description corresponds almost exactly to Proudhon’s interpretation of the character.

complains such idols are used by the Church to stake out its territory of influence, remind the people of their moral duty to God and ensure that religious codes of conduct are met. Many sanctimonious people believe that the appearance of a drunkard can draw tears forth from such idols and, given the extreme drunkenness of the conference delegates, the writer wryly notes that this idol ‘had every possible reason to pour torrents on this day.’¹⁶⁰ The spectacle is equally shocking when the priests finally reach their lodgings [Figure 31]; one priest is violently sick and another passes out, ‘falling like a sack of lead on the flagstones,’ the writer says.¹⁶¹ The theme of gluttony features yet again as the writer draws upon the work of the medieval French author Rabelais and his character Gargantua, a giant with a huge appetite. The priests are referred to as ‘disciples of Gargantua’ who will eat anything available at the time; the rate at which they consume more alcohol reveals ‘the [huge] capacity of ecclesiastical stomachs.’¹⁶² Here, yet again, the writer is deeply ironic and advances a positivist approach by focusing upon the physiology of the priests to portray them as beings of flesh and blood, whose claims to spirituality are undermined by their own bodies and their continuous falls from grace. The writer also strengthens the anti-religious nature of this approach by referring to the work of Rabelais, which was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church for its derision of many religious practices.

¹⁶⁰ *Les Curés en goguette*, Lacroix, Verboeckhoven and Company, Brussels, 1868, p25: ‘Comme bon nombre de dévots sont convaincus que l’aspect d’un ivrogne arrache des larmes de douleur à la sainte Vierge, le voyageur, qui croyait naïvement que Notre-Dame avait toutes les raisons possibles pour en verser à torrents ce jour-là, l’examina avec attention. Mais les miracles ne sont pas faits pour les impies: la petite statuette était sèche comme le lit du Manzanarès au mois de juillet.’

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p27: ‘Il étend les bras en avant, oscille, chancelle et finit par tomber comme un sac de plomb sur les dalles.’

¹⁶² *ibid*, p28: ‘La soupe au fromage réveille l’appétit de ces disciples de Gargantua, et ils attaquent ensuite vigoureusement un saucisson, un jambon ou tout autre hors-d’oeuvre disponible. Alors la bouteille entre de nouveau en lice, et les rasades se succèdent avec une promptitude qui donne la plus haute idée de la capacité des estomacs ecclésiastiques.’

Through the pamphlet and the caricatural images contained within it, the writer seeks to raise public awareness about the physical and moral corruption caused by the Church and the immoral nature of the power it wields over society. His account of a typical conference, and the caricatural images that illustrate it, are intended to reveal for everyone the social degeneracy caused by the Church. He offers a radical and deliberately controversial solution to the religious corruption that grips society. His main argument is that humanity should foster complete liberty of conscience and that man's spiritual interests should not be shaped and governed by a particular social group with selfish interests. He demands to know why fathers, whose ideas may be diametrically opposed to those of priests, and who wish to educate their children as they see fit, are forced to conform and have to pay for such religious saturnalia through taxes. He insists that the only remedy is to allow each individual to be the 'supreme arbiter of his spiritual interests' by proclaiming the absolute liberty of cults and allowing believers of all communions the right to remunerate their own representatives.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p32: 'Donc, le seul remède à apporter à cet ordre de choses est de proclamer la liberté absolue des cultes et de laisser aux croyants de toutes les communions le soin de rétribuer leurs ministres.

Les églises et les maisons conventuelles pourraient alors être louées aux prêtres qui voudraient courir les chances d'une entreprise religieuse.

De cette façon la dignité de l'homme serait sauvegardée, et chacun serait l'arbitre suprême de ses intérêts spirituels.'

The writer clearly opposed what he saw as the corrupt enforcement of religious faith and ideals by Roman Catholicism. However, the writer's promotion of complete freedom of conscience and cults was somewhat at odds with the views of positivists such as Comte, who held an ambivalent view on the subject. Despite regularly expressing support for the preservation of freedom of thought, and often showing concern for his own liberty, Comte tended to think that unlimited freedom of conscience would lead to instability; if belief was left entirely to the discretion of the individual, he argued, a uniformity in faith and morality could be lost. Comte advocated a new secular morality based upon positivist principles derived from observation. It should be noted, however, that his views were not popular with positivists such as Saint-Simon. See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp122-3 and pp171-2.

VI: Orleanism in opposition: the context in which Courbet's views were circulated and consumed

In what political contexts were Courbet's positivist views produced, circulated and consumed? What kinds of readership were cultivated by the publications in which the artist's statements were read? Clearly, as a piece of personal correspondence, the artist's unpublished letter to Francis Wey dated 20 April 1861 held a different status to the other texts examined in this chapter, all of which were published. Nevertheless, the letter offered carefully considered and crucial information concerning Courbet's own conception of his hunting paintings and, as such, constituted no ordinary piece of personal correspondence. Addressed to Francis Wey, a prominent writer of the time, the letter and this important information could potentially have been filtered into extensive readerships through Wey's own publications and contacts within the literary world (it is worth reminding ourselves that, in his novel *Biez de Serine*, Wey reproduced Courbet's description of the *Casseurs de pierres* almost word for word). The anonymous anti-religious tract illustrated by images of Courbet's work was initially published outside of France – the pamphlet was published in Brussels by the Belgian company A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie. on the occasion of the Ghent Salon of 1868, at which Courbet exhibited *Les Curés revenant de la conférence* and *La Mort de Jeannot: Les Frais du culte* – and, in terms of context, is not our primary concern here.¹⁶⁴ Yet, the artist's speech at the Antwerp Congress and the open letter to his students constitute two of the artist's most important philosophical statements and were both published in Paris in 1861, at a time when the artist clearly made a concerted self-conscious effort to explain, formulate and publicise his positivist views.

¹⁶⁴ A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie. was renowned for publishing ant-clerical works. On the Ghent Salon exhibition, see R. Hoozee, 'Gustave Courbet op het Gentse Salon van 1868,' *De wagenmenner en andere verhalen. Mélanges offerts à M.De Maeyer*, C. Van Damme and P. Van Calster, eds., Gand, 1986, pp82-89.

The transcript for the speech and the open letter were both published in the *Courrier du dimanche*, a Parisian newspaper that demonstrated a clear opposition to the Second Empire and its regime in the early 1860s. Examining the circumstances under which the *Courrier du dimanche* was founded and the political leanings of its editors and contributors in the early 1860s, we can see that the newspaper provided Courbet with a suitable vantage point from which to maintain his stance against Napoleon III and the Second Empire regime, and to cast his philosophical views in this anti-establishment light. The newspaper was originally founded on 5 July 1857 by the journalist Amédée de Césana, under the title *Semaine politique*.¹⁶⁵ On 2 May 1858, however, the journal was re-established as a newspaper under the title *Courrier du dimanche* in an attempt to avoid confusion with another paper carrying a similar title and to re-focus the newspaper according to a political agenda.¹⁶⁶ Given the strict censorship of the press at the time, this was not a straightforward matter. Under article I of the crippling regulations set out in the decree of 1852, all founders and publishers of journals and newspapers were required to seek authorisation from the government and any changes in personnel had to be likewise officially approved.¹⁶⁷ Ganesco sought and was granted permission to establish the *Courrier du dimanche* because he was a relatively unknown Italian adventurer at the time,

¹⁶⁵ See entry for ‘*Courrier du dimanche* (LE)’ in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Cinquième, ‘CONT-CZYZ,’ Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1869, pp367-368. At that time, the publication took the form of a weekly political journal and was modeled on English and American weeklies that achieved enormous success in trying to appeal to extensive and varied readerships by covering diverse issues. The first French publication to attempt to create such universal journalistic appeal, the *Semaine politique* published a diverse range of commentaries of the kinds distributed separately as specialties in the other weekly publications; articles covered commercial, industrial and business issues, as well as matters concerning agriculture, science, public welfare and health, although they often constituted what was seen as a disparate collection of aimless ideas.

¹⁶⁶ The *Semaine politique* was concerned that it was being confused with the similarly titled *Semaine financière*. See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, ‘*Courrier du dimanche* (LE),’ Tome Cinquième, ‘CONT-CZYZ,’ 1869, p367.

¹⁶⁷ See Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p118.

whose journalistic interests seemed purely financial and unlikely to result in political agitation.¹⁶⁸ Yet, as Irene Collins has noted, it was unfortunate for the government that Ganesco discovered he could make most financial gain through the mix of liberal and monarchist sentiments that characterised Orleanism at the time.¹⁶⁹ The famous journalist A. Leymarie was appointed the new director and chief editor of the newspaper; the sympathies of the editors became more focused and the newspaper became decidedly more political.¹⁷⁰ In contrast to the various publications devoted to regime, including the Catholic press, the *Courrier du dimanche* emerged as one of a number of Orleanist, Legitimist and moderately republican publications increasingly demonstrating a modest but clear opposition.¹⁷¹ Despite the rigid enforcement of the decree of 1852 – under which journals could be quickly suspended or withdrawn by prefects and ministers for offending the regime – the *Courrier* began to include controversial material and, within the first 15 months of his new directorship, Leymarie had received a warning for his criticism of French foreign policy.¹⁷² Thereafter, the newspaper was subject to a long history of sentences, fines and impositions, some of the most significant of which occurred in the very year that Courbet's speech and open letter to his students were published. For example, on Persigny's orders, Ganesco was expelled from French territory on 29 January 1861 following the newspaper's publication

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p119.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p119.

¹⁷⁰ See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Courrier du dimanche (LE),' Tome Cinquième, 'CONT-CZYZ,' 1869, p367. The newspaper became the main critical platform for the prominent journalism of Prevost-Paradol, the moderate liberal who opposed the Second Empire regime and whose work gained worldwide renown from 1860 onwards.

¹⁷¹ See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Courrier du dimanche (LE),' Tome Cinquième, 'CONT-CZYZ,' 1869, pp367-368. See also Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, pp258-260.

¹⁷² See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'Courrier du dimanche (LE),' Tome Cinquième, 'CONT-CZYZ,' 1869, p367. See also Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France 1814-1881*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p118.

of a political article by him found to be injurious to the regime.¹⁷³ On 2 December 1861, the newspaper incurred fines and prison sentences for the publication of an article entitled ‘La liberté comme en Autriche’ by Eugène Pellatan, the famous republican, political writer, Saint-Simonian, positivist and contributor to the newspaper; the newspaper was accused of showing ‘hate and contempt for the government.’¹⁷⁴

The *Courrier du dimanche* clearly provided Courbet with a suitably oppositional platform from which to espouse his philosophical views and set them against the social and political values cultivated by the Second Empire. As Petra Chu has pointed out, the open letter to Courbet’s students may be considered one of the artist’s most complete statements about art and art education, and it was uncommon for artists of the time to publicise theories in this way.¹⁷⁵ Yet, given the level of publicity to be attained through the media, this was an astute move on the part of the artist. Furthermore, the *Courrier du dimanche* accessed an extensive and popular readership. Despite the constraints imposed upon political statements in the press, many oppositional publications reached a large audience and, in some cases, their print runs matched or even outstripped those of the imperialist newspapers and journals. In July 1858, for example, the print runs of the two strongest imperialist papers, *Le Constitutionnel* and *La Patrie*, were 26,530 per day and 24,500 per

¹⁷³ See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, ‘Courrier du dimanche (LE),’ Tome Cinquième, ‘CONT-CZYZ,’ 1869, p367.

¹⁷⁴ See Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, ‘Courrier du dimanche (LE),’ Tome Cinquième, ‘CONT-CZYZ,’ 1869, p367. Pellatan himself was sentenced to three months in prison and fined 2,000 francs, the newspaper’s manager was sentenced to two months in prison and fined 1,000 francs, and the printer was sentenced to a month in prison and fined 500 francs.

¹⁷⁵ Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *The Most Arrogant Man in France, Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2007, p15.

day respectively.¹⁷⁶ By August 1861, these print runs had reduced to 19,448 per day and 22,904 per day respectively.¹⁷⁷ Some papers of the opposition, however, increased in popularity over the same period. By far the most successful was the republican paper *Le Siècle*, whose impressive daily print run increased from 36,886 in July 1858 to 52,300 in August 1861.¹⁷⁸ Although not in the same league, the daily print run of the *Courrier du dimanche* increased from 1,800 in July 1858 when it was in its infancy, to 5,039 in August 1861, when Courbet's philosophical statements appeared.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Claude Bellanger, *Histoire générale de la presse française 2: de 1815 à 1871*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1969, p259.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*, p259.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*, p259.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, pp259-260.

VII: Conclusion

Having further extended this reconstruction of the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism to account more for the artist's own views, we have seen that his 'negation of the ideal' was a key component of his positivist conception of history and social evolution, a conception through which he expressed his critiques of society, religion and contemporary politics. We have also highlighted a number of key concepts and principles whose biological and positivist derivation have remained largely unrecognised in the existing scholarship on Courbet but which clearly reinforced the artist's stance against certain forms of idealism: 'synthesis,' 'concretisation,' the exercise of reason and the biological idea of 'series.' Expressed in some of Courbet's texts and paintings appearing in the early 1860s, and drawn substantially from Proudhon's views, these concepts and principles attacked the idealisms cultivated by the Church, the State and the aesthetic creeds of the time. Through these concepts and principles, Courbet pitched what he saw as the socially unifying nature of his work against the divisive, exploitative and unjust stronghold of religious customs, cultural institutions and political values established within capitalist bourgeois society. To this end, as this thesis has revealed, Courbet's work also articulated a broad biological view of nature in which humans and animals shared equal status as physiological organisms, a view that firmly rejected the idea of divine creation. As this thesis has also revealed, this rejection was further supported by the caricatural and physiognomical techniques Courbet had already established in the critical and expressive aspects of his positivist enterprise. Concerning the contexts within which the artist's own positivist views were mediated, we have seen that the artist again chose to articulate some of his views in personal correspondence to a writer – this time Francis Wey – whose prominent status in the literary world gave him the potential to filter the artist's ideas into

extensive readerships. We have also seen that the *Courrier du dimanche*, a prominent newspaper of the time that published some of Courbet's views, provided the artist with a suitably oppositional vantage point from which to exert his stance against the Second Empire regime and cast his philosophical ideas in this anti-establishment light.

Chapter Five

Positivist Idealism: Social Reform and Universal Materiality

I: Introduction

The last chapter of this thesis examined ways in which Courbet's work opposed idealisms associated with religious absolutes and mystical beliefs, idealisms upheld by aesthetic creeds thought by Courbet and Proudhon to be instruments of oppression wielded by those in control of society, the Church and the State. Yet, whilst Courbet's work was often pitched against the idealist expression of such unobservable phenomena, his paintings were nevertheless associated with idealism. Numerous writers – often the very writers who asserted the artist's stance against the absolutist philosophy behind aesthetic creeds – argued that the positivist aspects of Courbet's work engendered a powerful idealism of their own. Claiming that life was biologically conceived, not divinely created, these writers argued that human beings were organisms whose existence and behaviour were inextricably linked to the environment within which they existed and whose evolution was governed by an innate desire for harmonious co-existence. They presented Courbet's work as an idealist expression of the materiality of such biological existence or as an idealist expression of this innate desire for social harmony.

In this chapter, I examine two accounts of Courbet's work based upon different formulations of positivist idealism: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's book *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, published posthumously in 1865, and Camille Lemonnier's book *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, published in 1878. This examination reveals another wholly

unexplored critical dimension to Courbet's work: the very different kinds of idealism that his engagement with positivism was seen to express. Proudhon, for example, interpreted Courbet's work in terms of a positivist idealism that buttressed his own socio-political and humanitarian principles: the defense of workers' rights, the elimination of property ownership and the condemnation of the capitalist misappropriation of work. Here, as I argue, Courbet's work operated as an impetus for social reform and a means to attain social harmony through the principles prescribed by Proudhon. The artist's idealism consisted in an intense physiognomical expression of the physical and moral condition of contemporary society, a striking and critical portrayal of the effects of social environment upon the human organism. This expression was considered to be capable of reforming society because it had the potential to affect the viewer, who, like all human beings, had an innate desire for the society prescribed by Proudhon to be realised. Lemonnier, on the other hand, directly challenged Proudhon's interpretation and argued that Courbet was not capable of effecting either physical and moral expression or social impact. Lemonnier insisted that Courbet portrayed the materiality of the body but failed to reveal the inner character, personality and social existence of his human subjects. The writer considered the figures in Courbet's paintings to be bodies of flesh and blood without thought or feeling. Their character was more like that of an animal than a social type and they seemed to exist only in relation to the material world of 'nature' around them – the elements of earth, sky, atmosphere, light and water whose biological relationship with the physical landscape produced the food that nourished all organisms. Despite these reservations, Lemonnier considered that Courbet's expression of materiality was so strong that it constituted a kind of idealism in its own right. This positivist idealism derived ultimately from the artist's own insatiable physical appetites and his direct contact with the material world of nature, through which these appetites were satisfied.

This chapter explores further a central theme raised throughout this thesis: the contrasting political vantage points from which Courbet's work was understood as a positivist enterprise. Here, I demonstrate that the contrasting idealist views of Proudhon and Lemonnier served very different ideological and political interests and were produced, circulated and consumed within very different social contexts. Proudhon's *Du principe de l'art* was published during the Second Empire by Garnier frères, a publishing company that encouraged social reform in favour of the working class and cultivated a broad, liberal and middle-class readership receptive to wide-ranging literary subject matter. Lemonnier's *G. Courbet et son oeuvre* was published during the Third Republic, when, as Linda Nochlin has shown, the cultural establishment sought to promote Courbet as a national hero within a great republican tradition in French art by associating his work with nature rather than politics. Corresponding with this 'depoliticisation' of Courbet's image, Lemonnier's book was published by Alphonse Lemerre, a publisher dedicated to the production of fine, luxury edition books intended for the market of conservative, wealthy and upper-class collectors.

II: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: positivist idealism and social reform

In his book *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, published in 1865, Proudhon claims that his socio-political ideas have informed Courbet's work and that, in order to express these ideas, the artist draws upon certain positivist theories and medical disciplines associated with them.¹ The philosopher highlights the relationship between Courbet's work and the positivist theories of Auguste Comte and Étienne Vacherot, the physiognomical theory of Johann Caspar Lavater and the phrenological theories of Franz-Joseph Gall and Johann Spurzheim.² Proudhon's radical socio-political ideas are by now well-known and numerous art historians, including George Boas, James Henry Rubin, Paul Crapo, Dominique Berthet and Chakè Matossian have explained ways in which many of them relate to Courbet's work.³ Yet, the positivist idealism that underpins these ideas, and

¹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p287: 'En résumé, Courbet, peintre critique, analytique, synthétique, humanitaire, est une expression du temps. Son oeuvre coïncide avec la *Philosophie positive* d'Auguste Comte, la *Métaphysique positive* de Vacherot, le *Droit humain*, ou *Justice immanente* de moi; le droit au travail et le droit du travailleur, annonçant la fin du capitalisme et la souveraineté des producteurs; la phrénologie de Gall et de Spurzheim; la physiognomonie de Lavater.'

² Like positivism, phrenology and physiognomy were developed largely within the context of medical science. The eighteenth-century physiognomist Johann-Caspar Lavater conceived of physiognomy in relation to medical disciplines such as physiology and anatomy. Lavater's work informed the nineteenth-century phrenological theories of Doctor Franz-Joseph Gall and Doctor Johann Spurzheim, theories that were closely related to the physiognomical thinking of the time and which were also developed within the medical context of physiology. Phrenology was concerned with the functions of the cerebral nervous system and identified particular organs of the brain with particular intellectual or affective faculties. The theory drew upon physiognomy by arguing that if an individual exhibited strength in a particular faculty, the shape of the brain and the cranium would be accentuated in the location of the corresponding or controlling organ. For a concise explanation of physiognomy and phrenology, see Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p20 and p46. Comte's positivism incorporated Gall's theory, which the philosopher described as 'phrenological physiology.' Comte claimed that phrenology was an important key to understanding 'physical and moral' nature, the combined physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of humans and animals that translated into social behaviour. See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, pp794-807.

³ See George Boas, 'Courbet and his Critics,' in George Boas, ed., *Courbet and the Naturalistic Movement, Essays read at the Baltimore Museum of Art, May 16, 17, 18, 1938*, Russell & Russell, 1967, pp47-57; James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980; Paul Crapo, 'Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon,

the medical theories such as physiology, phrenology and physiognomy through which this idealism is expressed, have remained largely unexplored.

To understand Proudhon's view of artistic idealism, we need to understand the practical role he assigns to art. He charges art with the mission of helping the human species to reach a state of physical and moral perfection. Once reached, this perfect physical, mental, emotional and moral constitution of people will reflect a wholly just and egalitarian society, a society free from bourgeois corruption and the capitalist exploitation of the working class. In Proudhon's view, art plays an active role in the attainment of such perfection because it is capable of social reform. Courbet's work is particularly effective in this respect: whilst contemporary society suffers from physical and moral degeneration at the hands of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, the artist's paintings facilitate reform because they criticise social conditions through a particular form of idealist expression. In the philosopher's view, Courbet's work manifests the idea that 'art is an idealist representation of nature and ourselves, in view of the physical and moral perfection of our species.'⁴

Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,' *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, pp67-91; Dominique Berthet, *Proudhon et l'art: pour Courbet*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2001; and Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002.

⁴ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p198: 'Qu'est-ce que l'art et quelle est sa destination sociale? Nous l'avons dit, l'ART est une représentation idéaliste de la nature et de nous-mêmes, en vue du perfectionnement physique et moral de notre espèce' Here, Proudhon refers to the 'physical and moral' condition of the human species – the condition of the intimate relations between distinct physical, mental, emotional and moral realms of human experience. The existence of these relations was proposed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century schools of medical philosophy such as 'la science de l'homme,' whose physiological approach argued that an understanding of the well-being of the human species demanded a comprehensive approach to human health. Elizabeth Williams, the leading historian of medical discourses, has noted that medical scientists associated with these schools of medical thought referred to these relations as physical and moral 'rappports': "'Rapport" meant . . . not control or determination of mind by body or vice versa but linkage, interrelation, reciprocity.' Eighteenth-century physicians referred to these relations as 'the physical, the mental and the passionate'; later,

In what way does Proudhon consider Courbet's work to be 'idealist' and how exactly does this idealism reform society? In Proudhon's schema, reform arises from the aesthetic impact of an artistic ideal upon the conscience of people, upon the humanitarian character of the ideas, emotions and morality innately registered in their physiology. The art historian Chakè Matossian has highlighted the physiological source of the aesthetic faculty in Proudhon's theory of art but has failed to pick up the philosopher's positivist characterisation of the social role of this faculty.⁵ Proudhon emphasises that, although people are corrupted or oppressed by the capitalist imperatives of bourgeois society, they are physiologically predisposed to care for each other. In his opinion, all humans foster an innate desire for a just, egalitarian and harmonious social existence. Bound up with their conscience and physiology, their aesthetic faculty responds with sympathy or antipathy to images that highlight society's support for or ruin of these humanitarian values. As the human physiology is geared towards behaviour and exists in a dynamic and intrinsically biological relationship with its social environment, such responses result in actions that change society in favour of the values prescribed by Proudhon. In order to make the necessary impression upon the conscience and provoke an ameliorative reaction, however, these images must portray society in a very particular way. They must represent the good or bad effects of society upon the constitution and behaviour of people and intensify, exaggerate or 'idealise' these effects so that the viewer is encouraged or shocked into the desired response.

physicians of the post-revolutionary age simply referred to them as 'the physical and the moral.' See Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral, Anthropology, Physiology and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p9.

⁵ See Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002, pp69-79.

What are the means through which Courbet achieves and conveys this artistic idealism? As Proudhon explains, the artist observes, portrays and idealises the effects of social environment upon the human physiology by applying a combination of physiognomy and phrenology to his artistic practice. James Henry Rubin and Chakè Matossian have recognised Proudhon's association of Courbet's paintings with physiognomical principles but, again, have not adequately explored the positivist significance of this aspect of the artist's work. Rubin has identified a relationship between the ideal and physiognomy in Proudhon's theory of art but has reduced this ideal to 'simply a physiognomical or other characteristic type derived from experience.'⁶ Matossian has undertaken a detailed analysis of the ideal and certain applications of physiognomy in Proudhon's theory but has argued that the philosopher finds little scientific value in either positivism or phrenology and has reservations about the benefits of physiognomy.⁷ Yet, writing in support of his own views, Proudhon clearly asserts the physiognomical and phrenological application of Courbet's artistic practice and explains the positivist benefits that the artist derives from these disciplines as instruments for reading and idealising the physiological condition of his subjects. Adopting such approaches, Courbet accentuates particular features of the face, the head, the body and the bearing to produce a painting that resembles a 'psychograph' of his subjects, Proudhon claims.⁸ Through his phrenological insight, the artist seems to see the

⁶ James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p88.

⁷ See Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002, pp104-109. Among a number of pieces of Proudhon's correspondence, Matossian highlights a letter to Félix Delhasse dated 15 August 1861: 'Je ne suis pas naturaliste, je n'ai jamais manié le scalpel, je crois avec une grande modération aux découvertes de la cranioscopie et de la physiognomonie.' Matossian quotes from *Correspondance de P.-J. Proudhon*, A. Lacroix et Cie., Paris, 1875, t. 11, pp175-176.

⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p286: 'Courbet, en effet, saisissant les rapports de la figure corporelle et des affections et facultés de l'âme, de ses habitudes et de ses passions, s'est dit: Ce que l'homme est dans sa pensée, son âme, sa conscience, son intelligence, son esprit, il le montre sur son visage et dans tout son être; pour le révéler à lui-même, je n'ai besoin que de le peindre. Le corps est une expression; par

organs of the brain in operation as they control and coordinate the physiology of the bodies he represents. The brain and its connected physiology are directly influenced by social environment and this influence is clearly apparent in Courbet's work, according to Proudhon. Crucially, such insight enables the artist to create images that are strikingly familiar to the viewer by revealing both the individual and social nature of his subjects – their customary behaviour, personal ambitions, innermost desires, even their very soul, the philosopher says.⁹ The artist understands the expressive qualities of the face, the head and the body, features that disclose the defining character of the subject's physiology and its relationship with society, the typicality of social nature and the individuality of personality, the combined state of someone's conscience, intelligence, mind and emotions.¹⁰

According to Proudhon, such combined phrenological and physiognomical representation has a didactic function, producing images that enable society to recognise its shortfalls and creating an aesthetic that facilitates the amendment of them. Yet, such representation must be suitably idealised to create the aesthetic qualities necessary for social reform. The viewer must see a reflection of society in such representation, but a reflection that is intensified in such a way that it becomes moving. This intensification is the artistic idealism promoted by Proudhon and relies upon the very close observation of social types who actually exist, not upon any *a priori* conception of them. The viewer is only moved by images that convincingly resemble people they know, people just like themselves. Proudhon says that art fulfills its didactic function through the production of such images: 'our idealism, to us, consists in teaching us about ourselves, in improving us

conséquent la peinture qui le représente et l'interprète est un langage. Un philosophe ferait une psychographie; je ferai un tableau. . . . la représentation du dehors pour nous montrer le dedans.'

⁹ See footnote 8.

¹⁰ See footnote 8.

day by day, not from types conceived *a priori* and more or less ingeniously imagined, but from facts that quickly supply philosophical experience and observation.¹¹ Furthermore, all sectors of society must come under scrutiny for the sake of human progress towards a perfectly harmonious society.¹² This characteristically positivist aim – the attainment of social harmony in the future by revealing the social conditions of the present – is for Proudhon the true aim of art. With this aim, art fulfills its ‘social destination’ and becomes instrumental in mankind’s realisation of physical and moral perfection.¹³

Proudhon goes on to argue that art’s social mission is ‘hygienic,’ by which he means that art facilitates a process in which society is increasingly purified towards a state of physical and moral perfection.¹⁴ Here, Proudhon takes a similar view to Comte, who promoted the practice of ‘cerebral hygiene,’ the practice of subjecting the brain’s physiology only to ideas endorsed in positivism, ideas that encourage ‘purer and more impartial sentiments’ and which cultivate ‘homogeneity’ and ‘consistency’ in doctrines.¹⁵

¹¹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, pp199-200: ‘Notre idéalisme, à nous, consiste à nous apprendre nous-mêmes, à nous amender jour par jour, non d’après des types conçus *a priori* et plus ou moins ingénieusement figurés, mais d’après les données que fournissent incessamment l’expérience et l’observation philosophique.’

¹² *ibid*, p200: ‘Dans ces conditions, l’oeuvre de l’artiste ne peut, sous prétexte de noblesse ou de grossièreté, rien exclure; elle embrasse dans son cadre, illimité comme le progrès lui-même, toute la vie humaine, heureuse et malheureuse, tous les sentiments, toutes les pensées de l’humanité.’

¹³ See footnote 4 and *ibid*, p198.

¹⁴ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p199. Proudhon describes art’s social role as a ‘mission hautement morale et hygiénique’.

¹⁵ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp485-486. Pickering refers to correspondence from Comte to John Stuart Mill dated 20 November 1841 reproduced in *Auguste Comte: Correspondance générale et confessions*, edited by Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro, Pierre Arnaud, Paul Arbousse-Bastide, and Angèle Kremer-Marietti, 8 vols., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1973-90, Paris, 2:20, and also to *Physique sociale: Cours de philosophie positive, leçons 46 à 60*, ed., Jean-Paul Enthoven, Hermann, Paris, 1975, p479. See also, entry for ‘Hygiène cérébrale’ in Pierre-Hubert Nysten, *Dictionnaire de médecine, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, des sciences accessoires et de l’art vétérinaire de P.-H.*

In Proudhon's view, as positivist art reveals the degenerative aspects or impurities of society, and the viewer responds with ameliorative actions, so society becomes an increasingly hygienic environment in which to live. This process of social filtration depends upon art's didactic capacity. Art highlights social impurities but unless people clearly understand the causes of those impurities, society will not be purified. For Proudhon, this is where artistic idealism comes in. By idealising physical and moral nature – by creating intensified images of immorality and corruption as evident in the physiognomical appearance of contemporary subjects – positivist art such as Courbet's shocks the viewer into an understanding of what must be changed. The key is to capture on canvas the essential character of ordinary social activity, to surprise people in their daily lives in order to reveal the true condition of contemporary society. Proudhon emphasises that the purpose of such idealisation is not to mock the appearance and lifestyle of certain people or social groups, but to produce an 'aesthetic warning' for the sake of general education and social improvement:

To paint men in the sincerity of their nature and habits, in their work, in the fulfillment of their civic and domestic duties, with their actual physiognomy, especially without pose; to surprise them, so to speak, in the revealing of their consciences, not simply for the pleasure of mocking, but for general education and by way of aesthetic warning: such appears to me to be the true starting point of modern art.¹⁶

Proudhon has no doubt that once the masses understand art's social mission – once they have been 'initiated in the superior thinking of the new school led by Courbet and

Nysten, douzième édition, entièrement refondue par Émile Littré et Charles Robin, J.-B. Baillière, Paris, 1865, p750: 'Hygiène cérébrale. Nom donné par Auguste Comte à l'habitude de ne troubler ses méditations philosophiques par aucune lecture, et dont l'on peut modifier et étendre le sens en disant qu'elle est le régime à suivre dans les lectures, les méditations et les genres de travaux, pour entretenir les facultés intellectuelles dans le meilleur état.'

¹⁶ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p203: 'Peindre les hommes dans la sincérité de leur nature et de leurs habitudes, dans leurs travaux, dans l'accomplissement de leurs fonctions civiques et domestiques, avec leur physionomie actuelle, surtout sans pose; les surprendre, pour ainsi dire, dans le déshabillé de leurs consciences, non simplement pour le plaisir de railler, mais comme but d'éducation générale et à titre d'avertissement esthétique: tel me paraît être, à moi, le vrai point de départ de l'art moderne.'

understand how to become interested in it' – they will respond to this idealism.¹⁷

Thenceforth, he says, 'art will recover its ascending march, and its influence on the public spirit will be incalculable.'¹⁸

Proudhon declares that the positivist idealism exemplified by Courbet's work is opposed to romantic and classical ideals of beauty, elegance and nobility, which invest the human body with an ethereal beauty that bears no resemblance to the natural or social significance of real life. Such art portrays 'beautiful bodies,' 'sanctified souls' and 'vain personifications' that have no useful or moral purpose whatsoever.¹⁹ The idealised figure produced by the romantic or classical artist lacks authentic human form and possesses an empty, dried up soul.²⁰ Proudhon firmly rejects the pursuit of perfect form when it discards genuine human character in favour of what he sees as mere fancy: 'this research of perfection is from now on to be considered by us as fanciful, useless, a departure contrary to the practical reason and goal of art.'²¹ Romantic and classical artists are blind to the human qualities of people around them and are only interested in types belonging to fantasy worlds, 'heros of the theatre, characters from novels, maidens of paradise, or what amounts

¹⁷ *ibid*, p204. 'Poursuivons donc notre revue, et ne doutons pas que le jour où le public, initié à la pensée supérieure de la nouvelle école, saura s'y intéresser, le jour où le bon sens des masses aura remporté sur le mauvais goût traditionnel cette grande victoire, l'art reprendra sa marche ascensionnelle, et son influence sur l'esprit public sera incalculable.'

¹⁸ See footnote 17.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p199. Proudhon argues that these ideals are based upon 'la beauté du corps' and 'la sainteté de l'âme' and represent figures merely as 'vaines personifications'.

²⁰ *ibid*, p201: 'Savez-vous l'idée que vous me faites venir avec votre prétendu idéal? C'est que vous n'avez point d'idéal du tout, que votre âme est à sec, que vous n'êtes propres qu'à faire des pantins, des poupées, des mannequins, des charges pour le *Charivari* ou des figurines pour le journal des modes. De la forme! nous en avons de reste; . . .'

²¹ *ibid*, p199: 'cette recherche de la perfection est désormais considérée par nous comme chimérique, inutile, partant contraire à la raison pratique et au but de l'art.'

to the same thing, historical names.²² These artists deny the behaviour, passions, interests and ideas of actual living human beings and the social groups to which they belong.

Proudhon insists that a worthwhile idealism can only derive from the genuine lives of real people and he protests against all romantics and classicists: ‘You have men in front of you, your compatriots, your contemporaries, your brothers, beings that think, act, suffer, love, which have passions, interests, ideas, wherein the ideal breathes at last, and your brush, classical or romantic, elegant and noble, scorns them! You pretend not to see them at all! You would not know to which group they belong!’²³

²² *ibid*, p201: ‘des héros de théâtre, des personnages de romans, des vierges du paradis, ou, ce qui revient à peu près au même pour nous autres, des noms historiques . . .’

²³ *ibid*, pp200-201: ‘Comment! vous avez devant vous des hommes, vos compatriotes, vos contemporains, vos frères, des êtres qui pensent, qui agissent, qui souffrent, qui aiment, qui ont des passions, des intérêts, des idées, où l’idéal respire enfin, et votre pinceau, classique ou romantique, élégant et noble, les dédaigne! vous affectez de ne les point apercevoir! vous ne sauriez quel parti en tirer!’

III: The *Enterrement à Ornans* and ‘this hideous sore of modern immorality’

According to Proudhon, Courbet’s genuine insight into and idealisation of the lives of real people is clearly evident in the *Enterrement à Ornans*, a painting that represents the immorality and hypocrisy of religious custom in the artist’s native land of Ornans. The depth and directness of Courbet’s experience of his homeland – the immediacy of his contact with the landscape of Ornans and the intimacy of his understanding of the town’s customs – have been seen by many art historians, including Jean-Jacques Fernier, Jean-Luc Mayaud, Patrick Le Nouène, Jean-Roger Soubiran, Noël Barbe and Petra Chu as hugely influential factors in the artist’s working practice.²⁴ The influence of these factors in the creation of the *Enterrement à Ornans* has been discussed at great length by Jean-Luc Mayaud, who has researched in scrupulous detail the history and customs of the Franche-Comté in relation to Courbet’s work. Yet, despite this focus upon Courbet’s intimate connections with Ornans and the Franche-Comté, the positivist manner in which he expresses this relationship has been largely overlooked. This relationship is at the heart of Proudhon’s idealist reading of the *Enterrement à Ornans*, the positivist qualities of which expand the painting’s physical and moral understanding of Ornans into a critique of French society as a whole.

²⁴ See, for example, ‘Liaison dangereuse,’ by Jean-Jacques Fernier, ‘Courbet à découvert,’ by Jean-Luc Mayaud and ‘Le malentendu Courbet,’ by Patrick Le Nouène, in *Courbet et Ornans*, Éditions Herscher, Paris, 1989. See also, ‘Ornans et ses environs, espace de pouvoir et support d’une nouvelle conception du paysage, dans l’oeuvre de Courbet,’ by Jean-Roger Soubiran, ‘Une “peinture d’histoire,” Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire,’ by Jean-Luc Mayaud, and ‘Le laboratoire de l’artiste. Courbet et les sciences sociales,’ by Noël Barbe, in *Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté*, édité à l’occasion de l’exposition ‘Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté,’ présentée au Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie de Besançon du 23 septembre au 31 décembre 2000, Somogy Éditions d’Art, Paris, 2000; Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie, Besançon, 2000. See also, “‘It Took Millions of Years to Compose That Picture,’” by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds., *Courbet Reconsidered*, The Brooklyn Museum, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988.

Proudhon alludes to Courbet's physiological insight into the scene by claiming that the physical appearance of the figures in the *Enterrement à Ornans* indicates a severely diseased society: 'It is this hideous sore of modern immorality that Courbet has dared to show naked.'²⁵ This disease is symptomatic of a general degeneracy of religious attitudes, beliefs and customs in France and the image points directly to the lack of respect for the dead shown throughout modern society.²⁶ It is an image of typical physical and moral decay, showing that people have lost faith in prayer and make fun of the afterlife; it is a painful reminder that religious ceremonies have become symbols of hypocrisy. As Proudhon argues, despite the ceremoniousness of the religious funeral, society respects the corpse no more than it would respect the body of a dead animal: 'the death of man today, in universal thought, is like that of the animal . . . despite the catafalque, the churchbells, the church and all its *decorum*, we treat the remains of one like those of the other.'²⁷ He scornfully remarks that the funeral ceremony could be dispensed with and the corpse simply disposed of at Montfaucon, the city dump north of Paris where bodies had been dumped with the garbage up until the eighteenth century, including the bodies of people beheaded during the Revolution. He asks, 'Why funerals? Why tombs? What does this marble signify, these crosses, these inscriptions, these crowns of immortality? Is it not sufficient for you to have a dumptruck, by order of the police, pick up the corpse and drive it . . . to Montfaucon?'²⁸ In Proudhon's opinion, this state of physical and moral decay –

²⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p210: 'C'est cette plaie hideuse de l'immoralité moderne que Courbet a osé montrer à nu; . . .'

²⁶ *ibid*, p210: 'En quel siècle vivons-nous? demanderai-je aux hypocrites qui l'accusent. N'avez-vous jamais assisté à une cérémonie funèbre, et n'avez-vous pas observé ce qui s'y passe? Nous avons perdu la religion des morts; . . .'

²⁷ *ibid*, p210: 'La mort de l'homme aujourd'hui, dans la pensée universelle, est comme celle de la bête: . . . malgré le catafalque, malgré les cloches, malgré l'église et tout son *decorum*, nous traitons les restes de l'un comme ceux de l'autre.'

²⁸ *ibid*, p210: 'Pourquoi des funérailles? Pourquoi des sépulcres? Que signifient ces marbres, ces croix, ces inscriptions, ces couronnes d'immortelles? Ne vous suffit-il pas du tombereau qui, sur l'ordre de la police, prendra le corps et le conduira . . . à Montfaucon?'

this general degeneracy in the essentially biological relationship between the human physiology and its social environment – is revealed in the facial features and physical appearance of the figures in the painting. Courbet uses physiognomical techniques to positivist effect, idealising and criticising what people have become – the brutish character of the gravedigger, the non-devout nature of the choirboys, and the sickening indifference of the beadles who ‘gallop with a distracted air through the indispensable *De profundis*: what a sad and pathetic spectacle!’²⁹ Some of the figures seem genuinely touched by the occasion, Proudhon says, but the typically cold appearance of most of the figures testifies to the great extent of moral indifference throughout society.³⁰

According to Proudhon, the *Enterrement à Ornans* is the most daring manifestation of Courbet’s ideas.³¹ He claims that the painting shockingly portrays the violent contrast between the grotesque physiognomical appearance of the figures and the pious occasion that brings them together.³² He notes that Théophile Sylvestre, the author who included Courbet in a series of studies on living artists, finds this physiognomical representation caricatural, and Proudhon is keen to promote the caricatural nature of the scene.³³ Yet, this

²⁹ *ibid*, p209: ‘Regardez ce fossoyeur au visage épaté, à la face de brute; ces enfants de chœurs indévots et polissons; ces bedeaux au nez bourgeonné, qui, pour quelques sous, ont quitté leurs vignes et sont venus figurer au drame funèbre; ces prêtres blasés sur les enterrements comme sur les baptêmes, galopant d’un air distrait l’indispensable *De profundis*: quel triste et affligeant spectacle!’

³⁰ *ibid*, pp209-210: ‘Sans doute il y a là-bas, de l’autre côté de la fosse, des figures de femmes bien touchantes, avec lesquelles vous êtes presque tenté de pleurer; mais ces spectateurs froids, ce monsieur ennuyé, vieille connaissance de la famille, qui n’a pu se dispenser d’assister aux obsèques d’un ami, d’un protégé défunt: tout cela n’indique-t-il pas une préméditation sacrilège? Où trouver là le but, la pensée morale de l’art? . . .’

³¹ *ibid*, p207: ‘C’est surtout dans l’*Enterrement* que la pensée de Courbet s’est révélée avec le plus d’audace: . . .’

³² *ibid*, p208: ‘le contraste entre les figures et le motif pieux qui les réunit est d’une telle violence. . .’

³³ *ibid*, p208: ‘L’auteur des *Artistes français étudiés d’après nature*, M. Th. Sylvestre, a fait de l’*Enterrement* une description qui est une caricature.’

is no ordinary form of caricature, the philosopher maintains, and Courbet has not intended to mock the society he portrays. Instead, this grotesque caricature of the funeral custom in Ornans is intended to idealise a general state of social decay and, through aesthetic warning, alarm the viewer into taking ameliorative action.

Although Proudhon is doing his utmost to explain the warnings expressed by this new critical form of art, he accepts that the masses will need time to understand the moral lessons conveyed by it.³⁴ The moral of the *Enterrement* is particularly important in Proudhon's eyes because, throughout history, all societies and peoples have looked upon death as a deeply sacred event; artists have treated death in the same way and have always tried to provoke feelings of deep sympathy or majesty through their representations of funerals.³⁵ The attitudes surrounding funerary custom offer a clear indication of a society's moral state and the indifferent attitudes portrayed in the *Enterrement* point directly to a general state of decay. Proudhon claims that the painting is so successful precisely because, although it deals with the subject that lends itself least to irony, it violently disturbs the solemn subject with grotesque physiognomical representation. Proudhon claims that no artist has created this kind of disturbance before and Courbet is bound to provoke a reaction. The artist has rejected the blind respect of funerary custom shown by all other

³⁴ *ibid.*, p208: 'que je ne pense pas, quoi que nous puissions dire, nous autres hérauts et vulgarisateurs de l'idée nouvelle, que de longtemps le public puisse comprendre et supporter une pareille leçon, ni l'artiste compter, pour de tels essais, sur le suffrage des masses.'

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp208-209: 'De tous les actes de la vie, le plus grave, celui qui prête le moins à l'ironie est celui qui la termine, c'est la mort. Si quelque chose doit rester sacré, aussi bien pour le croyant que pour l'incrédule, ce sont les derniers instants, le testament, les adieux solennels, les funérailles, la tombe. Tous les peuples ont senti la majesté de ces scènes; tous les ont entourées de religion. Le même sentiment a de tout temps inspiré les artistes qui, dans ce cas, peut-être le seul, ont su tout à la fois obéir à l'idéal de leur époque et rester dans la vérité éternelle de leur mission. Il semble qu'en effet aucune aberration de l'art ne soit possible dans cette solennité déchirante, où une famille, entourée des amis et des proches, assistée du clergé, va mettre le sceau à la grande séparation, en rendant à la terre le cadavre d'un époux, d'un père.'

artists of the past and present, and has dared to expose the hypocrisy of funerary custom in mid-nineteenth-century France. The grotesque physiognomy of the figures in the painting is all the more shocking given that the scene takes place in the particular social environment of Ornans, a small town of the Franche-Comté in which religion and faith are not yet completely dead.³⁶ If the physical and moral state of the people in Ornans is this bad, Proudhon asks, what can be said of the rest of French society? In his view, the artist's intimate understanding of the customs of his homeland is the catalyst for his positivist idealism, his comment upon modern society as a whole. This shocking but didactic comment is capable of a healthy regeneration because it 'calls you back to your dignity.'³⁷ Proudhon insists that Courbet is a 'profound moralist' who creates 'healthy' art.³⁸

³⁶ *ibid*, p209: 'Remarquez que la scène se passe à Ornans, une bourgade de Franche-Comté, entre simples paysans, dans un milieu où il reste de la religion, où la foi n'est pas entièrement morte: ce qui rend l'idée de l'artiste plus inconcevable encore et en fait presque un sacrilège.'

³⁷ *ibid*, p211: 'Courbet s'est donc montré, dans le tableau de l'*Enterrement*, aussi profond moraliste que profond artiste; il vous a donné la vérité sanglante, impitoyable; en révoltant en vous l'idéal, il vous rappelle à votre dignité; et s'il n'a pas fait une oeuvre sans défaut, il en a fait une incontestablement salutaire et originale, que nous eussions jugée prodigieuse s'il nous restait le moindre sentiment de l'art, si notre âme, notre raison, notre intelligence, notre conscience n'étaient, pour ainsi dire, frappées d'anesthésie.'

³⁸ See footnote 37.

IV: History and the ‘shameful destitution’ of *juste milieu* in the *Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*

The painting entitled *Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire* – often referred to by Proudhon as the ‘*Retour de la foire*’ – is a typical scene of near contemporary provincial French society that further convinces the philosopher that Courbet adheres to positivist idealism and thereby produces didactic art.³⁹ The figures in the painting reveal the condition of society at a particular moment in history, around 1830 in Proudhon’s opinion. Jean-Luc Mayaud has claimed that Proudhon’s approach to the rural and historical specificity of this scene is nostalgic, tending to cast the figures within a lineage of fine French stock threatened by ‘the maggot of modern corruption’ and seeking to draw broad conclusions about the development of society as a whole.⁴⁰ Mayaud has acknowledged the ‘universal scope’ of interpretation afforded by the painting but has preferred to read the image as a ‘dense guide of Comtoise agriculture in the middle of the last [nineteenth] century,’ a representation of ‘the artist’s relationship with “his country.”’⁴¹ Yet, according to Proudhon, it is precisely the painting’s denseness as an authentic sign of provincial life – Courbet’s frank and direct portrayal of the rural life and customs he knows so well – that supports its broader critique and positivist idealism, which are far from nostalgic. The philosopher specifically interprets the painting as an ‘historical’ form of representation, by

³⁹ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p195. Here, with regard to the *Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*, Proudhon says: ‘En même temps que nous demandons, dans l’intérêt supérieure de l’éducation sociale, de fidèles représentations de nous-mêmes, nous tenons à ce que ces mêmes représentations deviennent pour la postérité des constatations historiques.’

⁴⁰ See Jean-Luc Mayaud, ‘Une “peinture d’histoire,” Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire,’ in *Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté*, édité à l’occasion de l’exposition ‘Gustave Courbet et la Franche-Comté,’ présentée au Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie de Besançon du 23 septembre au 31 décembre 2000, Somogy Éditions d’Art, Paris, 2000; Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie, Besançon, 2000, p57.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp56-57.

which he means that it reveals the state of provincial French society at a particular juncture in its historical evolution, in the ever-changing fabric of customs and ideas.⁴² Proudhon deduces that ‘the scene takes place around 1830, a little before, a little after, under the Constitutional Charter, at least thirty years after the first Revolution.’⁴³ Under these circumstances, the figures are either products or victims of ‘juste milieu,’ the system of capitalist and industrial values being cultivated by an increasingly wealthy French middle class at that time.⁴⁴ Proudhon complains that *juste milieu* has created a France of ‘shameful destitution,’ the defining characteristics of which are the impatient demands of industrial progress and an avaricious appetite for illegal speculations.⁴⁵ The price of the capitalist motives behind *juste milieu* is the decline of what he calls ‘French gallantry,’ certain laudable customs whose basis are ‘the sanctity of families, strength of character’ and which have their roots in provincial society.⁴⁶ He likens the rise of *juste milieu* within society to

⁴² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p195. Proudhon argues that ‘cette transformation incessante des moeurs et des idées est justement la condition principale et, par suite, le gage de la perpétuité de l’art nouveau.’

⁴³ *ibid*, p189: ‘La scène se passe vers 1830, peu avant, peu après, sous la charte constitutionnelle, trente ans au moins après la première Révolution.’

⁴⁴ See pp343-346 of this thesis (especially p346 and footnote 64) and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, pp192-195.

⁴⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, pp194-195: ‘Notre juste milieu politique a abouti à une honteuse destitution. Cette estime de la médiocrité qui distinguait nos pères a fait place aux impatiences de l’industrialisme, aux convoitises de l’agiotage; nous avons dépouillé, pour une phraséologie prétentieuse et pleine de sophismes, notre bons sens gaulois, et l’excentricité des jouissances nous fait trouver insipide la modestie des vieilles moeurs.’

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p195: ‘La galanterie française, autrefois si vantée, était une forme d’urbanité sous laquelle se cachait une raison, maîtresse de l’amour, et de laquelle naissait, avec la sainteté des familles, la force des caractères. Maintenant nous avons contracté d’autres habitudes: la galanterie chez les messieurs n’est pas pour rire, et la coquetterie chez les dames a sa signification. Le paysan, comme le citadin, poursuit avant tout, en mariage, l’argent, et cherche des dédommagements à sa passion dans la corruption des servantes et des filles du peuple. La lâcheté des consciences est le fruit de la lâcheté des amours.’

the contraction of a disease, a disease that is clearly evident in the physical appearance of the figures in the *Retour de la foire*.⁴⁷

Proudhon emphasises the importance of the figures in the painting over the composition. He clearly distinguishes the painting from academic and romantic art, which, as he points out, show great concern for the elaboration of trivial scenic details. In contrast to the vast swathe of contemporary representations of religious subject matter, ancient history, Shakespearean drama and Greek mythology, the *Retour de la foire* is not concerned with the particular way in which figures and animals are arranged or the minute details of objects and costumery. These aspects of the painting are rendered matter of fact and everyday, so much so that the painting looks like an inn sign or a painting destined for the market.⁴⁸ However, Proudhon argues that the composition is not the point of the painting and should be ignored. Instead, the importance of the *Retour de la foire* lies in the positivist portrayal of its figures, which is very unlike the idealisation of figures in academic art; the figures in Courbet's painting are not posed and do not flatter their subjects with refined features.⁴⁹ Because of this, Proudhon says, it may seem that Courbet is uninventive and has

⁴⁷ See footnote 46 and *ibid*, p195.

⁴⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p189: 'je néglige ces détails. Tout cela n'a rien de fort intéressant, et, avec nos habitudes de tableaux d'église, d'histoire ancienne, de drame shakespearien ou de mythologie grecque, on se demande si c'est une enseigne d'auberge qu'on a devant les yeux, ou un tableau destiné à la halle.' Likening some of Courbet's paintings to inn signs and paintings found in markets, Proudhon here highlights the quality of 'naïveté' that the artist's work was often seen to express, a quality of primitiveness that numerous critics of the time also associated with popular imagery. On the relationship between Courbet's work and popular imagery, see Meyer Schapiro, 'Courbet and Popular Imagery, An Essay on Realism and Naïveté,' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 4, 1941, pp164-191.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p188. Proudhon argues that the figures in Courbet's painting are not idealised in the fanciful manner of idealised figures in other art forms, particularly those in academic art: 'Ici [le *Retour de la foire*] nulle pose, nulle flatterie; pas le plus léger soupçon d'une figure idéale.'

produced something more like a photograph than a work of art.⁵⁰ However, he urges the viewer to look more closely at the painting. He claims that the artist has achieved a profound level of observation in an authentic representation of ‘vulgar appearances,’ the physiognomy of ordinary common types that indicates the nature of their physiology and its embodiment of social existence and customs.⁵¹ The figures have been ‘idealised,’ he insists, but in a very different way to the academic idealisation of figures. James Henry Rubin has claimed that, in Proudhon’s interpretation, the physiognomies of the figures in this painting express an ideal way of life or environment, ‘the ideal of that particular milieu, even if it was an ideal of mediocrity’ as revealed through Courbet’s portrayal of ‘the inner mind of unaffected, natural man.’⁵² Yet, whilst Proudhon detects in the appearance of the figures in the *Retour de la foire* the signs of a better milieu existing in the past, he argues that Courbet idealises the figures precisely by revealing in a moving way the damage that history has done to them and their way of life. In Proudhon’s reading, the figures are far from unaffected. Instead, their closely observed physical appearance specifies a period of physical and moral decay within a process of social evolution, the effects of history upon their rustic integrity, communal ways and moderate opinions. The painting presents a kind of close-up of physiognomical features that enshrines a moment in history for all to see. This enshrinement is their idealisation and is created partly by the artist’s simultaneous depiction of the figures as individuals and social types. Proudhon observes that the figures capture the combined truth of individual and social existence and, in a very different way to

⁵⁰ *ibid*, pp188-189: ‘la scène enfin, dans son ensemble et ses détails, d’une vérité, d’une naïveté telle, que vous êtes tenté d’accuser le peintre d’avoir totalement manqué d’invention et de vous avoir donné un daguerréotype pour une oeuvre d’art.’

⁵¹ *ibid*, p189: ‘Mais arrêtez-vous un instant sur ce *réalisme* aux apparences vulgaires, et vous sentirez bientôt que sous cette vulgarité se cache une profondeur d’observation qui est, selon moi, le vrai point de l’art.’

⁵² James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p92.

conventional portraits, represent characters that are immediately familiar to the viewer: ‘all is true, seized from nature; not that I want to say the figures are portraits; but they are such that you believe you have encountered them everywhere.’⁵³ In fact, he claims that the artist’s observation of human nature is so insightful that the figures reveal their thoughts and maybe even their conversation: ‘we are able, through their physiognomies, to make out if not what they are saying, at least what they are thinking.’⁵⁴

Proudhon supports his interpretation of the *Retour de la foire* with detailed readings of the individual figures and emphasises the intensity of their physiognomical idealisation. He links their physical appearance directly to history, noting the effects of historical events and political regimes upon the character of the people represented. He views the figures as complex types whose physical and moral character, already fashioned by such things as living environment, social position and provincial ways, is crucially affected by the wider events of politics and history. These various layers of character formation are clearly evident in Proudhon’s description of the old soldier, ‘the man with the pig.’ Here, the philosopher first provides a physiognomical profile of the figure according to a typical lifestyle fashioned by the local economy: ‘the man with the pig distinguishes himself through his dress. He is a minor rustic landlord who, since springtime, thinks about his winter provisions.’⁵⁵ Yet, on another level, this man’s character has been shaped by his previous life as a soldier, the political events that led to the conflicts he has been involved

⁵³ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p188: ‘Tout est vrai, saisi sur nature; non que je veuille dire que les figures soient des portraits; mais elles sont telles que vous croyez les avoir rencontrées partout; . . .’

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p190: ‘nous pouvons, à leurs physionomies, deviner sinon ce qu’ils disent, au moins ce qu’ils pensent.’

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p190: ‘L’homme au cochon se définit de lui-même par son accoutrement. C’est un petit propriétaire villageois qui, dès le printemps, songe à ses provisions d’hiver.’

in, and the kind of society that has developed since. The soldier ‘formed part of the requisition from eighteen to twenty five, in 1793, and he has seen [conflict in] the Rhine: it is from there that he would have picked up the smoking habit.’⁵⁶ He went to the fair (at Bésançon) first to purchase a weaner, then to cash the quarterly payment due of a small pension earned in the war against the *émigrés*.⁵⁷ Having ‘returned from his campaigns, he has gone back to the rustic life, and you can hardly make out in him a hero of the republic. His expression has nothing at all of the military.’⁵⁸ Yet, despite having returned home, despite his good-nature and his dread of revolution, he has developed a decidedly political character and stubbornness since 1789. As Proudhon says, ‘if the *tremors* of the Revolution are little to his taste, he reserves even more malice for the *ancien régime* and, come the days of July 1830, he will be one of the first to rally to the French flag against the priests and nobles.’⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p190: ‘Il a fait partie de la réquisition de dix-huit à vingt-cinq, en 1793, et il a vu le Rhin: c’est de là qu’il aura rapporté l’habitude de fumer.’ Here, Proudhon refers to the *Levée en Masse* proclaimed in August 1793 during the period leading to the ‘First Terror’ in France. This declaration was the first attempt at full national mobilisation in modern history, placing all French citizens in permanent requisition for army service. Unmarried men from the age of eighteen to twenty five were called to arms, representatives on mission were sent to all departments to requisition supplies and control recruitment, tax arrears were collected immediately, and experts such as scientists were forced into industrial service. See Ernest John Knapton, *Europe, 1450-1815*, John Murray, London, 1959, p613.

⁵⁷ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p190. ‘Il est allé à la foire (à Besançon) d’abord pour faire emplette d’un nourrisson, puis pour toucher le quartier échu d’une petite pension qu’il a gagnée à la guerre contre les émigrés.’ The ‘émigrés’ were the French refugees, many aristocratic, who fled the French Revolution and its aftermath. For a concise account of this period of French history see, John Knapton, *Europe, 1450-1815*, John Murray, London, 1959, Part IV, ‘The Age of Revolution, 1750-1815.’

⁵⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p190: ‘Revenu de ses campagnes, il a repris la vie rustique, et vous ne devineriez guère en lui un héros de la république. Son air n’a rien du tout de martial: . . .’

⁵⁹ *ibid*, pp190-191: ‘Cependant, ne vous y trompez pas, tel que vous le voyez, occupé de son cochon, serrant sa pipe entre ses dents, le bonhomme a des opinions arrêtées: c’est un défaut qu’il s’est inoculé en 89; il est tétu: si le *tremblement* de la Révolution est peu de son goût, il garde encore plus rancune à l’ancien régime, et viennent les journées de juillet 1830, il sera des premiers à se rallier au drapeau tricolore contre les prêtres et contre les nobles.’

The most prominent figure on horseback is the mayor of his district and ‘head of a large commercial enterprise,’ whose physiognomy reveals the political moderation and discretion typically exercised by rich country officials concerned with protecting their position and wary of being outspoken.⁶⁰ His face suggests a conservative type, Proudhon says, ‘a tax paying voter who judges it beneath his dignity to raise objections.’⁶¹ The mayor’s position and wealth clearly depend upon his allegiance to governing bodies and the maintenance of social order. The second man on horseback in the painting is the mayor’s son who ‘exchanges a smile with the peasant woman on foot.’⁶² Proudhon detects a sexual attraction between these two figures and describes a complex personal relationship that is also a typical social one. By examining the facial profiles and physical gestures of these characters, he unravels the complexity of their attitudes and behaviour towards one another, which results from the constraints and limitations imposed upon their relationship by the difference in their social positions.⁶³

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p191: ‘L’homme d’âge mûr, qui revient à cheval, est le paysan riche, maire de sa commune, à la tête d’une exploitation importante. C’est un personnage officiel, et qui, sous la blouse, sait garder son rang, parlant peu et avec discrétion, d’opinions modérées, aimant du reste à couvrir sa responsabilité sous une autorité supérieure.’

⁶¹ *ibid*, p191: ‘La figure grave et réservée de notre maire trahit à merveille l’esprit positif de ce satisfait rustique, homme d’ordre, fier de la beauté de ses chevaux, qui sait le proverbe: Tant vaut la bête, tant vaut l’homme; et qui, électeur censitaire, jugeant au-dessous de sa dignité de faire de l’opposition, vote pour le candidat ministériel.’

⁶² *ibid*, p191: ‘Celui-ci [le fils du maire], du haut de sa monture, échange un sourire avec la paysanne à pied.’

⁶³ *ibid*, pp191-192: ‘Est-ce sa fiancée? Non: la fiancée du fils de M. le maire ne voyagerait pas seule, à pied, perdue dans la foule. Est-ce sa maîtresse? Pas davantage. En fait de mariage, le paysan franc-comtois ne va qu’à pas comptés; la mésalliance lui est aussi antipathique qu’au bourgeois et au noble. Quant aux amours libres, il y regarde à deux fois; il en redoute le scandale et les inconvénients; surtout il ne les affiche pas, et tant que vous le voyez galant, tenez pour sûr qu’il n’y a rien. De son côté, la jeune fille, tout en souriant à un témoignage qui l’honore, sait imposer silence à son coeur: elle ne croit guère à un mariage aussi disproportionné, et pour qu’elle s’engage dans des relations d’une autre espèce, il faudrait qu’elle eût déjà fait bien du chemin!’

Proudhon then builds his reading of the figures in the *Retour de la foire* into an overall physical and moral profile of the people of the Franche Comté. This assessment – which portrays rustic, unambitious people with moderate opinions, whose sympathetic disposition has been ‘spoiled’ by ‘the fit of anger of the century’ and the corruptive influence of *juste milieu* – asserts Courbet’s skill in capturing and idealising provincial society at a particular moment in its history and in relation to the wider impact of history upon France as a whole:

There is the peasant of the Franche-Comté; let us say on the whole: there is the French peasant, in the sincerity of his nature, thirty or forty years from the Revolution, in one of the thousand scenes of provincial life. There is the rustic French, with its indecisive humour and its positive spirit, its simple language, its mild passions, its style without affectation, its mind nearer to the ground than to the heavens, its customs equally remote from democracy and from demagogy, its preference resolved towards communal ways, remote from all idealistic exaltation, happy when it can preserve its honest mediocrity under a moderate authority, in this *juste milieu* to the good people so dear, and which, alas! constantly betrays them. In effect, what characterises our people, what you will find in all classes of French society, without distinction of wealth, age or sex, before the fit of anger of the century spoiled disposition, is a moderate temperament, a close-knit character of equal customs, no ambition to command, less disposition still to revolution, and the most profound antipathy for all that departs from the ordinary way. In the *Paysans de Flagey*, the whole world, from its viewpoint, in the circle of its ideas and interests, can claim to be in favour of *juste milieu*: the mayor, in the exercise of his authority, is a product of *juste milieu*, the old soldier, in his judgement of successive government since 89, criticising and blaming in turn the Republic, the Emperor, the Bourbons, sceptical, suspicious, not knowing who to express his opinions to, is also of the *juste milieu*; finally, the young man and the young girl, at the moment when their hearts seem to leap at each other, on the flame of their glances, remaining in the milieu that their feeling, more prudent than passionate, assigns to them.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *ibid*, pp192-193: ‘Voilà le paysan de Franche-Comté; disons plutôt: voilà le paysan français, dans la sincérité de sa nature, à trente ou quarante années de la Révolution, dans une des mille scènes de la vie provinciale. Voilà la France rustique, avec son humeur indécise et son esprit positif, sa langue simple, ses passions douces, son style sans emphase, sa pensée plus près de terre que des nues, ses moeurs également éloignées de la démocratie et de la démagogie, sa préférence décidée pour les façons communes, éloignée de toute exaltation idéaliste, heureuse quand elle peut conserver sa médiocrité honnête sous une autorité tempérée, dans ce juste milieu aux bonnes gens si cher, et qui, hélas! constamment les trahit. Ce qui caractérise en effet notre peuple; ce que vous retrouverez dans toutes les classes de la société française, sans distinction de fortune, d’âge ni de sexe, avant que l’emportement du siècle en ait altéré le naturel, c’est un tempérament modéré, un caractère uni, des moeurs égales, nulle ambition du commandement, moins de disposition encore à la révolte, et la plus profonde antipathie pour tout ce qui s’écarte de la route vulgaire. Dans les *Paysans de Flagey*, tout le

V: 'Physiological beauty' and revolution in the *Fileuse endormie*

Proudhon considers Courbet's painting entitled *Fileuse endormie* [Figure 32] to be equivalent to the *Retour de la foire* in its expression of positivist idealism.⁶⁵ Yet, whereas the *Retour de la foire* idealises the corruptive and divisive influence of *juste milieu*, the *Fileuse endormie* idealises for Proudhon the inherently altruistic aspects of human nature. According to the philosopher, the spinner in Courbet's painting embodies an ideal beauty, the 'physiological beauty' of human nature in its own right, liberated from the oppressive and debilitating constraints of religious faith or capitalist society.⁶⁶ It is a beauty that is simultaneously sexual and socially binding, a clear expression of the innate human sympathy and regard for others. This beauty stimulates two kinds of physiological attraction that constitute the viewer's aesthetic experience as Proudhon characterises it. The first is a sexual attraction, aroused by the candour of Courbet's representation; the frank portrayal of the spinner's partly exposed flesh combined with the expression of abandon in her sleeping body sets a precedent for the unashamed grace in human sexuality.⁶⁷ The second is an attraction to her inherent regard for others, which is expressed by her

monde, à son point de vue, dans le cercle de ses idées et de ses intérêts, peut se dire partisan du juste milieu: le maire, dans l'exercice de son autorité, est un juste milieu; le vieux soldat, dans son appréciation des gouvernements qui se sont succédé depuis 89, critiquant, blâmant tour à tour la république, l'empereur, les Bourbons, sceptique, méfiant, ne sachant pour qui se prononcer, est aussi du juste milieu; le jeune homme et la jeune fille, enfin, au moment où leurs coeurs semblent s'élancer l'un vers l'autre, sur la flamme de leurs regards, restent dans le milieu que leur sentiment, plus prudent que passionné, leur assigne.'

⁶⁵ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p205: 'Aux Paysans qui reviennent de la foire se rattache, par l'analogie de l'idée, la *Fileuse endormie*, excellente peinture où Courbet a de nouveau montré comment, dans les scènes de la vie populaire, il entend le but et la dignité de l'art.'

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p206: 'Courbet, qui n'a pas vu les dieux, qui ne connaît que les hommes, excelle à rendre la beauté physiologique, au sang riche, à la vie puissante et calme; . . .'

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p205: 'Il n'oubliera pas non plus de soulever un peu la jupe, d'écartier la cuisse, de découvrir la gorge, enfin de donner à l'abandon de la dormeuse toute la grâce possible . . . Ne faut-il pas d'ailleurs que l'artiste vous *émoustille*, qu'il éveille en vous un certain idéal?'

physiological appearance and its indication of the domestic work to which she is accustomed; serving family life through her labour, she escapes the misappropriation of both work and sexuality by capitalist bourgeois society. As James Henry Rubin has noted, Proudhon claims that Napoleon III secured despotic power through the capitalist enslavement of labour and by distracting the masses with material and sensual pleasures.⁶⁸ The philosopher argues that all women who do not support the family are effectively prostitutes because they reject the true domestic basis of society and encourage the pleasure and consumption driven society of the Second Empire.⁶⁹ In Proudhon's reading, the image of the spinner's physiology is revolutionary because it embodies the antithesis of the capitalist society cultivated by the Second Empire and constitutes a triumph of the sympathetic instinct over divisive individualism. Opposing the subjugation of humanity by such individualist values, the spinner's domestic labour encourages the instinctive human regard for others. As this instinct is inseparable from the sexual instinct, the spinner's sexual attractiveness draws the viewer inevitably to the social sympathies inherent in her physiology and thereby arouses the viewer's own social sympathies. In this way, in Proudhon's argument, the unashamed sexual attractiveness of the spinner's physiological beauty promotes altruism and serves the good of humanity.

The revolutionary roles of sexuality and physiology in Proudhon's idealist view of art have been examined by Chakè Matossian in her book *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, published in 2002. Matossian shows that, in Proudhon's theory, the aesthetic faculty is physiologically bound up with the principle of human 'right' or 'justice,' which relates to all forms of production and underpins many of the philosopher's

⁶⁸ See James Henry Rubin, *Courbet*, Phaidon Press Limited, London, 1997, p196.

⁶⁹ See *ibid*, p196. As Rubin states, Proudhon argues this in his work *Pornocratie, ou les femmes dans les temps modernes*, published in 1865.

humanitarian ideas about labour.⁷⁰ The maintenance of this principle arises from a particular form of analysis, the observation of an object in itself rather than in light of some other theory, in order to understand the object's own internal logic.⁷¹ Such internal logic is for Proudhon the only guarantee of an object's value and it is through this principle that production becomes revolutionary, cultivating a 'scientific' value system entirely different from and opposed to capitalism.⁷² This principle gives the producer absolute right to his own product and guarantees liberty by freeing objects from the enslavement of capitalist interests, which misappropriate all production in the service of sordid material wealth and consequent social inequality.⁷³ In Proudhon's theory, Matossian notes, artistic production is subject to this principle and impacts upon society like all other forms of production.⁷⁴ Matossian also states that art makes no sense to Proudhon unless it conforms to an 'idea,' which makes art 'idealist' rather than 'mimetic,' and that the required idea is that of the perfection of the human species.⁷⁵ The achievement of idealism involves generalising forms

⁷⁰ This principle is articulated in Proudhon's works *Droit humain* or *Justice immanente*, works with which the philosopher compares Courbet's work. See Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p287.

⁷¹ Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002, p18: 'Le principe résulte de l'analyse qui consiste à regarder son objet d'étude en soi, à l'intérieur, et non sous l'éclairage d'une autre théorie, car seule la "logique" interne d'un système peut en garantir la valeur. C'est par le principe que l'art rencontre la révolution.' Matossian refers to Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, 1865, p198.

⁷² See footnote 71 and *ibid*, p18.

⁷³ Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l'art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002, p18: 'Le droit que Proudhon associe à la science, garantit la liberté et nous garde de ce qui ressemble à la liberté mais n'est que de l'asservissement toujours activé par la valorisation des affects.' Matossian refers to Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, 1865, pp356-357.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p18: 'L'art se trouve par conséquent soumis au droit qui est le cadre général de tout ce qui a trait à la société, c'est-à-dire de toute production qu'elle soit artistique ou industrielle. La voie du droit – et du redressement nécessaire de l'instinct – apparaît comme la seule permettant d'accorder une place aux artistes dans la société et de leur conférer le statut de citoyens. Elle constitue un cadre général que Proudhon applique à la religion, à la politique, à l'économie sociale, à la justice, à la morale, à la littérature et à l'art.'

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p16: 'Il reste que, pour Proudhon, l'art a une "destination sociale" incarnée par le réalisme défini comme représentation non pas mimétique mais idéaliste – c'est-à-dire soumise à l'idée – de la nature et de nous-mêmes, en vue du "perfectionnement physique et moral de notre espèce."' For

from their materiality, highlighting the elements that make them ‘typical, specific, generic.’⁷⁶ Here, Matossian says, the ideal is the opposite of the real, the contrary to the observable individual, and constitutes the perfect forms discernible in every real object through the aesthetic faculty, which derives physiologically from feeling.⁷⁷ This faculty is powerful because it is essentially sexual or erogenous and enables the achievement of human perfection because it is inseparable from the principle of ‘right’ or ‘justice,’ which is the basis of the value system and society desired by the philosopher.⁷⁸

Matossian argues that, in Proudhon’s reading of the *Fileuse endormie*, these ideas and principles are played out through certain mythical associations pertaining to the spinner

Matossian, Proudhon here addresses a similar question to the one raised by Kant, i.e. ‘la question du perfectionnement de l’espèce et les jalons pour y parvenir.’

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p20: ‘Qu’est-ce que l’“idéal” selon Proudhon? Il en donne la définition suivante: “idéal, *idealis*, adjective dérivé de *idea*, idée, est ce qui est conforme à l’idée ou qui y a rapport.” Il faut dès lors poser la question “qu’est-ce que l’idée elle-même?,” à laquelle répond Proudhon en affirmant qu’il s’agit de la notion typique, spécifique, générique que l’esprit se forme d’une chose, abstraction faite de toute matérialité. Ainsi, l’“Idéal” indique-t-il la généralisation et non une réalité, le contraire de l’individu observable, et surgit-il comme “l’antithèse du réel,” comme la forme parfaite qui se révèle à nous en tout objet, et dont cet objet n’est qu’une réalisation plus ou moins approchée.’ Matossian quotes from Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, 1865, p33 and p35.

⁷⁷ See footnote 76. See also *ibid*, p20. Matossian refers to two quotations from *Du principe de l’art* in which Proudhon provides elementary definitions of the aesthetic: “J’appelle donc esthétique la faculté que l’homme a en propre d’apercevoir ou découvrir le beau et le laid, l’agréable et le disgracieux, le sublime et le trivial, en sa personne et dans les choses, et de se faire de cette perception un nouveau moyen de jouissance, un raffinement de volupté.” Il complète ensuite la définition: “c’est ce qu’indique le mot esthétique, du grec *aisthesis*, féminin, qui veut dire sensibilité ou sentiment. La faculté de sentir donc [. . .] de saisir une pensée, un sentiment dans une forme, d’être joyeux ou triste sans cause réelle, à la simple vue d’une image, voilà quel est en nous le principe ou la cause première de l’art.” Matossian quotes from Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, 1865, p17 and p19.

⁷⁸ See Chakè Matossian, *Saturne et le Sphinx; Proudhon, Courbet et l’art justicier*, Droz, Geneva, 2002, pp69-70: ‘Proudhon rattache la faculté esthétique à la sexualité dont il élimine toute connotation libertine en l’analysant sous l’angle de la médecine. Dans son examen de la faculté esthétique, il revendique la création du néologisme “esthésie” qu’il importe du champ médical et qui lui sert de fondement à l’analyse des tableaux et au glissement moral de son jugement. L’esthésie constitue la base médicale, le masque scientifique qui lui permettra de fonder l’existence d’un lien étroit entre certaines oeuvres et la prostitution ou la pornocratie, entre l’art et le pouvoir.’

in legend and artistic representation, and to other myths alluding to the power of imagery and perception.⁷⁹ These associations and myths are supposedly implied in Proudhon's comments about the lurid attitude through which representations of spinners are conventionally interpreted and consumed by the nineteenth-century male bourgeois viewer. According to Matossian, Proudhon's reading simultaneously invokes the myth of Arachne and the legend of the abduction of Europa by Zeus, demonstrating that the corrupt bourgeois attitude to sexuality and representation obstructs the true social role of art.⁸⁰ The figure in the *Fileuse endormie* is a member of an inferior social class – a 'cowgirl,' in Courbet's words, or an 'honest peasant,' in Proudhon's – who is transformed into a spinner, a mere object of sexual desire for the conventional bourgeois viewer.⁸¹ This transformation is the counterpart of the legendary metamorphosis of Zeus into a bull in the abduction of Europa.⁸² According to the legend, Zeus transforms himself into a placid bull to seduce and abduct Europa. Just as Europa falls into the trap and mounts the bull, the male bourgeois viewer is seduced by the image of the spinner, who, according to the conventions of production, representation and consumption in capitalist bourgeois society, is available for

⁷⁹ See *ibid*, pp163-177.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p164: 'Le thème de la fileuse, très courant en peinture, nous renvoie à la fois aux Parques, aux Erinyes (dont Tisiphone, sur laquelle nous reviendrons) et au myth d'Arachné dans lequel se joue le rapport essentiel entre l'image du pouvoir et le pouvoir de l'image se fondant sur une base physiologique, le *raptus*. D'où l'importance de ce mythe pour les peintres qui ont pu y trouver, de surcroît, la figure de leur lutte pour une valorisation sociale et intellectuelle de l'activité artistique. A l'instar d'Arachné, humble et sans condition ni nom, la *Fileuse* de Courbet appartient à une classe sociale inférieure, elle est, selon le mot du peintre, une "vachère" en laquelle Proudhon voit une "franche paysanne" typique d'une scène "de la vie populaire." La vachère ferait pendant à la métamorphose de Zeus en taureau dans le rapt d'Europe que représente, en trompe l'oeil, Arachné. Transformée en fileuse, la paysanne ressortit au trompe l'oeil dans lequel tombe le spectateur bourgeois désirant monter sur elle, comme Europe sur le dos du taureau. Cette interprétation nous apparaît en filigrane dans l'image que Proudhon donne du spectateur habituel de ce genre de tableau, spectateur pervers du XIX^e siècle pornocrate attendant du peintre qu'il le flatte par des détails érotiques. Proudhon retire la *Fileuse* du champ de l'esthésie naturelle pour mieux montrer combien le spectateur du XIX^e siècle y est encore assujéti, ne cherchant dans le tableau que la simple attraction physique. Le regard dépendant de l'esthésie dont la *Fileuse* figure le piège n'a rien à voir avec le jugement esthétique et entrave le rôle de l'art dans la société, son rôle "justicier."'

⁸¹ See footnote 80.

⁸² See footnote 80.

him to ‘mount.’⁸³ The idea of this entrapment is crystallised further by the image’s association with the myth of Arachne, which, according to Matossian, powerfully evokes both the image of power and the power of the image.⁸⁴ Like Courbet’s humble cowgirl or spinner, Arachne is a member of an inferior social class who, famed for her skill in weaving, challenges Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and patron of spinners and weavers, to a contest. Arachne weaves a cloth portraying the loves of the gods of Olympus and this enrages Minerva so much that she tears it to shreds. Arachne is devastated and hangs herself but escapes death because Minerva transforms her into a spider dangling from a thread. By association, Courbet’s painting is a revolutionary web of entrapment for the male bourgeois viewer, whose debased perception of sexuality and prostitution in the painting will be torn to shreds. Matossian’s essential argument here is that, in Proudhon’s reading, the *Fileuse endormie* seduces the male bourgeois viewer and traps him into exposing the corrupt manner in which art and sexuality are misappropriated and consumed in capitalist bourgeois society. The painting expresses the aesthetic of right or justice set out by Proudhon, an aesthetic that is simultaneously physiological, sexual and revolutionary because it works towards the perfect society envisioned by the philosopher.

Whilst Matossian highlights various components of Proudhon’s idealist interpretation of Courbet’s work, identifies key social and economic ideas operating within this interpretation, and points to numerous plausible mythical and artistic associations through which these ideas are mediated, she does not explore the positivist basis of Proudhon’s idealism. In fact, Matossian denies this aspect of the philosopher’s work: she claims that whilst Courbet himself registers his pictorial research in the positivism of

⁸³ See footnote 80.

⁸⁴ See footnote 80.

Comte and the phrenology of Gall, Proudhon finds these theories ‘magical’ or ‘feeble.’⁸⁵

Yet, as we have seen, Proudhon includes these theories in a list of key influences impacting directly upon Courbet’s work – a list that includes Proudhon’s own theories – and proceeds to explain these influences in detail.⁸⁶ Regarding the *Fileuse endormie*, Proudhon’s assertion of the spinner’s physiological beauty is based upon his positivist view of her inherent regard for others, which is central to the revolutionary status of the painting in his eyes. Yet, what is the exact nature of this regard for others, this inherent social sympathy? The articulation of such sympathy is found in theories concerning the human impulse to form societies and, here, again, we can recognise similarities between the views of Comte and Proudhon. Comte articulates two key concepts of social formation that are relevant to Proudhon’s view of social sympathy: the individual and the family. As Mary Pickering has shown, Comte’s understanding of the individual derives largely from the phrenological ideas of Gall.⁸⁷ According to Comte, individuals have an inherent ‘sociability,’ which means that people did not originally form societies because they recognised that group

⁸⁵ *ibid*, pp104-109. Matossian argues (p104) that: ‘Ainsi qu’il [Proudhon] l’affirm, l’art de Courbet coïncide avec le positivisme de Comte, la métaphysique positive de Vacherot, sa propre “*Justice immanente*,” la phrénologie de Gall et Spurzheim, et la physiognomonie de Lavater. La coïncidence de l’art de Courbet avec ces différentes théories ne signifie nullement que ces dernières se correspondent. Loin d’y souscrire, Proudhon se démarque clairement de cet assemblage hétéroclite et signale, du même coup, la confusion ou la faiblesse intellectuelle de Courbet, la distance qui sépare l’artiste du philosophe.’

⁸⁶ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p287. It seems extremely unlikely that Proudhon would include his own theories within this list of works if, as Matossian suggests, he wished to firmly dissociate his work from most of them. As Rubin points out, whilst neither Proudhon nor Courbet adopted Comte’s ideas wholesale, both men admired Comtian positivism and strongly expressed Comtian views; see James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p76-79. It should also be noted that, whilst Comte greatly admired Gall’s work and adopted many of his phrenological ideas, the philosopher did not accept the phrenologist’s ideas wholesale; see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp304-305.

⁸⁷ See Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p625.

action enabled them to fulfill their individual needs.⁸⁸ Instead, social existence arises from two prominent aspects of individual nature. The first is the power exerted by human feelings over human intelligence and reason, where ‘reason’ is the intellectual capacity to modify one’s conduct according to particular circumstances.⁸⁹ It is to be noted that reason is not an exclusively human capacity ‘since no animal, especially in the higher parts of the zoological scale, could live without being to a certain extent reasonable, in proportion to the complexity of its organism.’⁹⁰ For Comte, feelings exert an important influence over intelligence and reason, which would stagnate through laziness if not receptive to emotional stimuli.⁹¹ Although reason is considered the primary human faculty and the motor of social development, feelings are more energetic and help to direct the intellect by grounding it in

⁸⁸ See *ibid*, p625. See also Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome quatrième, Contenant la philosophie sociale et les conclusions générales, Première partie*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1839, p541: ‘La sociabilité essentiellement spontanée de l’espèce humaine, en vertu d’un penchant instinctif à la vie commune, indépendamment de tout calcul personnel, et souvent malgré les intérêts individuels les plus énergiques, ne saurait donc être désormais aucunement contestée, en principe, par ceux-là même qui ne prendraient point en suffisante considération les lumières indispensables que fournit maintenant, à ce sujet, la saine théorie biologique de notre nature intellectuelle et morale.’

⁸⁹ See *ibid*, p543: ‘Il faut, à cet effet, considérer d’abord cette énergique prépondérance des facultés affectives sur les facultés intellectuelles, qui, moins prononcée chez l’homme qu’en aucun autre animal, détermine cependant, avec tant d’évidence, la première notion essentielle sur notre véritable nature, aujourd’hui si heureusement représentée, à cet égard, par l’ensemble de la physiologie cérébrale, ainsi que nous l’avons reconnu à la fin du volume précédent.’

See also Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, p784: ‘En caractérisant, d’une autre part, l’intelligence d’après l’aptitude à modifier sa conduite conformément aux circonstances de chaque cas, ce qui constitue, en effet, le principal attribut pratique de la *raison* proprement dit, . . .’

⁹⁰ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, pp784-785: ‘il est encore évident que, sous ce rapport, pas plus que sous le précédent, il n’y a lieu d’établir réellement, entre l’humanité et l’animalité, aucune autre différence essentielle que celle du degré plus ou moins prononcé que peut comporter le développement d’une faculté, nécessairement commune, par sa nature, à toute vie animale, et sans laquelle on ne saurait même en concevoir l’existence: en sorte que la fameuse définition scolastique de l’homme comme *animal raisonnable* présente un véritable non-sens, puisque aucun animal, surtout dans la partie supérieure de l’échelle zoologique, ne pourrait vivre sans être, jusqu’à un certain point, raisonnable, proportionnellement à la complication effective de son organisme.’

⁹¹ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p625.

the real lives of people.⁹² In this way, the influence of feeling over intelligence is necessary for a sane and productive existence.⁹³ The second aspect of individual nature related to sociability also concerns the realm of feelings and, curiously, is the dominance of the self-regarding instincts over the nobler social ones.⁹⁴ Such self-regarding instincts give a purpose to actions and, ironically, form the moral basis of sociability because they enable people to wish for others what they would wish for themselves.⁹⁵ Again, it should be noted that morality, although in Comte's view largely unexplored among animals, is not an exclusively human capacity.⁹⁶ If personal interests are completely disregarded, Comte argues, sympathy or charity becomes vague and sterile; in this respect, he adopts the Christian maxim 'love thy neighbour as thyself.'⁹⁷

The second concept at the heart of Comte's theory of social formation is the family, which, according to the philosopher, comprises at least one married couple. Marriage

⁹² *ibid*, p625. As Pickering notes, Comte points to the example of mystics, whose attempts to achieve pure intellectuality rendered them in a state of 'transcendental idiocy' and 'eternally absorbed by an essentially futile and almost stupid contemplation of the divine majesty.'

⁹³ *ibid*, p625.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, pp625-626.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p626.

⁹⁶ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive, Tome troisième, Contenant la philosophie chimique et la philosophie biologique*, Bachelier, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris, 1838, pp785-786: 'Quoique la nature morale des animaux ait été jusqu'ici bien peu et bien mal explorée, on peut néanmoins reconnaître, sans la moindre incertitude, principalement chez ceux qui vivent avec nous en état de familiarité plus ou moins complète, et par les mêmes moyens généraux d'observation qu'on emploierait à l'égard d'hommes dont la langue et les moeurs nous seraient préalablement inconnues, que non-seulement ils appliquent, essentiellement de la même manière que l'homme, leur intelligence à la satisfaction de leurs divers besoins organiques, en s'aidant, aussi, lorsque le cas l'exige, d'un certain degré de langage correspondant à la nature et à l'étendue de leurs relations; mais, en outre, qu'ils sont pareillement susceptibles d'un ordre de besoins plus désintéressé, consistant dans l'exercice direct des facultés animales, par cela seul qu'elles existent, et pour l'unique plaisir de les exercer; . . .'

⁹⁷ Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte, An Intellectual Biography, Volume I*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p626.

satisfies and contains the sexual instinct, which, like that of the animal, is the ‘most energetic instinct of our animality.’⁹⁸ The family is the primary social unit since the individual must learn to live with at least one other person.⁹⁹ Domestic life prepares a person for society because it creates the first stimulation of an individual’s social sympathies or regard for others.¹⁰⁰ In Comte’s concept of the family, the woman is naturally subordinate to the man.¹⁰¹ Yet, whilst women are intellectually inferior to men, their social sympathies are superior – they have a naturally stronger ‘sociability,’ or regard for others.¹⁰² Their social function therefore lies in stimulating this sociability, encouraging man’s application of intellect and reason to the unification of society, which is crucial for the achievement of physical and moral perfection.¹⁰³

Although specifically designed to serve his particular humanitarian and economic ends, Proudhon’s assertions concerning the formation of a unified society are similar to those of Comte. Like Comte, Proudhon sees social formation in terms of both the individual and the family. As numerous commentators have noted, Proudhon values the human faculty of reason more highly than sentiment within the individual since, for him, the exercise of reason creates the just and humanitarian society he desires.¹⁰⁴ He recommends the cultivation of reason in preference to sentiment because feelings are

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p626.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p626.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, p626.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, p627.

¹⁰² *ibid*, p627.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, pp627-628.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Paul Crapo, ‘Disjuncture on the Left: Proudhon, Courbet and the Antwerp Congress of 1861,’ *Art History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1991, p75.

susceptible to corruptive influences.¹⁰⁵ He holds capitalism responsible for a prevalent anti-social enslavement of human feeling in the service of escalating individual property ownership, profit and material greed. Yet, despite its susceptibility to misappropriation, sentiment remains for Proudhon an important human faculty because it is intimately bound up with the aesthetic faculty, whose capacity to reform society relies upon its impact upon both the emotions and the conscience of the viewer. Furthermore, like Comte, Proudhon argues that humans are born social beings and that this instinctive feeling of ‘sociability’ leads to communication and co-existence between individuals. Explained in his controversial work *Qu’est-ce que la propriété*, published in 1840, Proudhon’s concept of ‘sociability’ is inextricably linked to his socio-economic and humanitarian principles concerning labour and property ownership. In its assertion of the animalistic dimensions to human nature, the concept is very much like Comte’s: ‘the social instinct and the moral sense he [man] shares with the brutes; and when he thinks to become godlike by a few acts of charity, justice and devotion, he does not perceive that in so acting he simply obeys an instinct wholly animal in its nature.’¹⁰⁶ There are three degrees of sociability according to Proudhon, beginning with the human sympathetic attraction to others, a kind of ‘magnetism’ awakened by the contemplation of another person or similar being, which takes the form of love, benevolence, pity or sympathy.¹⁰⁷ Proudhon explains that ‘man is

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid*, p75. Courbet followed Proudhon by declaring at the Antwerp Congress of 1861 that ‘one is obliged to reason even in art and never to allow sentiment to overcome reason.’

¹⁰⁶ *Qu’est-ce que la propriété, ou recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement. Premier mémoire*, in *Oeuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon, Tome I*, Nouvelle édition, A. Lacroix, Paris, 1873 (originally published in 1840). See Chapitre V: ‘Exposition psychologique de l’idée de juste et d’injuste, et détermination du principe du gouvernement et du droit,’ Première partie, Première article, ‘Du sens moral dans l’homme et dans les animaux,’ p179: ‘l’instinct de société, le sens moral, lui est commun avec la brute; et quand il s’imagine, pour quelques oeuvres de charité, de justice et de dévouement, devenir semblable à Dieu, il ne s’aperçoit pas qu’il n’a fait qu’obéir à une impulsion tout animale.’

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Deuxième article: ‘Du premier et du second degré de la sociabilité,’ p180: ‘La sociabilité, à ce degré, est une sorte de magnétisme que la contemplation d’un être semblable à nous réveille, mais dont le flux ne sort jamais de celui qui l’éprouve; qui peut être

moved by an internal attraction towards his fellow, by a secret sympathy which causes him to love, congratulate and condole; so that, to resist this attraction, his will must struggle against his nature.¹⁰⁸ He insists that ‘in these respects there is no decided difference between man and the animals.’¹⁰⁹ The second degree of sociability is ‘justice,’ which Proudhon defines as the recognition of the equality between another’s personality and one’s own.¹¹⁰ Justice adds thought and knowledge to the basic feeling of sympathy and again, ‘the sentiment of justice we share with the animals.’¹¹¹ However, in Proudhon’s view, only humans can reason to form an exact idea of justice within a general concept of understanding – the concept of ‘equality,’ the idea that everybody should share wealth equally on the proviso of equal labour.¹¹² ‘Right’ is the sum of the principles governing human society – the equal right of everyone to both occupancy and labour upon the earth – and ‘justice’ is the respect and observation of those principles.¹¹³ The third level of

réciproque, non communiqué: amour, bienveillance, pitié, sympathie, qu’on le nomme comme on voudra, il n’a rien qui mérite l’estime, rien qui élève l’homme au-dessus de l’animal.’

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Première article, ‘Du sens moral dans l’homme et dans les animaux,’ p178: ‘Dans tous ces cas, l’homme est mû par un attrait intérieur pour son semblable, par une secrète sympathie, qui le fait aimer, conjouir et condouloir: en sorte que, pour résister à cet attrait, il faut un effort de la volonté contre la nature.’

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p178: ‘Mais tout cela n’établit aucune différence tranchée entre l’homme et les animaux.’

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Deuxième article, ‘Du premier et du second degré de la sociabilité,’ pp180-181: ‘Le second degré de la sociabilité est la justice, que l’on peut définir, *reconnaissance en autrui d’une personnalité égale à la nôtre*. Elle nous est commune avec les animaux, quant aux sentiment; quant à la connaissance, nous seuls pouvons nous faire une idée complète du *juste*, ce qui, comme je le disais tout à l’heure, ne change pas l’essence de la moralité.’

¹¹¹ See footnote 110 and *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Deuxième article, ‘Du premier et du second degré de la sociabilité,’ p183: ‘La sociabilité est comme l’attraction des êtres sensibles; la justice est cette même attraction, accompagnée de réflexion et de connaissance.’

¹¹² *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Deuxième article, ‘Du premier et du second degré de la sociabilité,’ p183: ‘Mais sous quelle idée générale, sous quelle catégorie de l’entendement percevons-nous la justice? sous la catégorie des quantités égales. De là l’ancienne définition de la justice: *Justum oequale est, injustum inoequale*. Qu’est-ce que donc que pratiquer la justice? c’est faire à chacun part égale des biens, sous la condition égale du travail; c’est agir sociétairement. Notre égoïsme a beau murmurer; il n’y a point de subterfuge contre l’évidence et la nécessité.’

¹¹³ *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Première article, ‘Du sens moral dans l’homme et dans les animaux,’ p177: ‘Le *droit* est l’ensemble des principes qui régissent la société; la justice, dans

sociability is ‘équité,’ which is absent among animals and which involves the capacity to judge, a capacity that finds expression through the faculties of taste and esteem and enables people to idealise.¹¹⁴ This level of sociability is expressed in qualities such as generosity, admiration and politeness, which cherish the idea of equality.¹¹⁵

Sociability is central to Proudhon’s theory of work. He claims that sex and work are rooted in the same physical desire to possess the object of one’s passions or the product of one’s labour and argues that the influence of reason transforms such desire into sociability if such desire is not misappropriated by a corrupt economic system. The sexual drive leads to the formation of the family, through which sociability is expressed in honest domestic labour; like Comte, Proudhon considers that women are inferior to men, but that they fulfill a valuable role in encouraging sociability in both the family and society. This is the role that Proudhon assigns to the figure in Courbet’s painting entitled *Fileuse endormie*: the physiology of the spinner expresses honest domestic labour and attracts the viewer, both sexually and socially. She escapes the misappropriation of work by capitalist motives and her innocent, well-nourished and robust features reveal the noble way in which she

l’homme, est le respect et l’observation de ces principes. Pratiquer la justice, c’est obéir à l’instinct social; faire acte de justice, c’est faire un acte de société.’

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, Chapitre V, Première partie, Troisième article: ‘Du troisième degré de la sociabilité,’ p189: ‘L’équité est la sociabilité élevée par la raison et la justice jusqu’à l’idéal; son caractère le plus ordinaire est l’*urbanité* ou la *politesse*, qui, chez certains peuples, résume à elle seule presque tous les devoirs de société. Or, ce sentiment est inconnu des bêtes, qui aiment, s’attachent et témoignent quelques préférences, mais qui ne comprennent pas l’estime, et dans lesquelles on ne remarque ni générosité, ni admiration, ni cérémonial. Ce sentiment ne vient pas de l’intelligence, qui par elle-même calcule, suppute, balance, mais n’aime point; qui voit et ne sent pas. Comme la justice est un produit mixte de l’instinct social et de la réflexion, de même l’équité est un produit mixte de la justice et du goût, je veux dire de notre faculté d’apprécier et d’idéaler.’

¹¹⁵ See footnote 114.

undertakes her arduous tasks.¹¹⁶ The slow breathing suggested by her appearance convinces the viewer that she is committed to and fulfilled by her work. She has drifted into sleep whilst spinning: ‘the thread has fallen from her hand; you believe that you can hear her breathing above the humming of the spinning wheel.’¹¹⁷ Her tiredness and slumber result from incessant and difficult work but the abandon of her sleep is beautiful because it expresses the physiological fulfillment afforded by honest domestic labour and sociability.¹¹⁸ In Proudhon’s opinion, this positivist idealisation of the spinner justifies Courbet’s choice of a common subject with sexual attractiveness. Matossian has noted that the subject of the spinner in nineteenth-century painting is conventionally portrayed as a sex object, a subject to leer at rather than admire. In Proudhon’s reading, Courbet’s spinner attacks this convention and the capitalist bourgeois society supporting it: ‘Do you understand now why Courbet has made his spinner a candid peasant? Otherwise she would be a misinterpretation; I say more, she would fall into indecency.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p207: ‘La fileuse de Courbet est brune, bien assise, bien colletée; elle a la taille puissante, les bras robustes, les doigts nourris, la figure candide; . . .’

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p206: ‘Le fil est tombé de sa main; on croit entendre sa respiration lente à la place du bourdonnement du rouet.’

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, p206: ‘Tous les jours elle se lève de grand matin; elle se couche la dernière; ses fonctions sont multipliées, son action incessante, pénible: c’est aux instants *perdus* qu’elle prend sa quenouille, travail minuscule dont la ténuité et le petit bruit ne sauraient tenir éveillée la robuste campagnarde.’

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p206: ‘Comprenez-vous maintenant pourquoi Courbet a fait de sa fileuse une franche paysanne? Sans cela elle serait à contre-sens; je dis plus, elle tomberait dans l’indécence.’

VI: The *Curés revenant de la conférence*: no room for the soul in this ‘density of flesh’

Proudhon’s account continues with an examination of the *Curés revenant de la conférence*, Courbet’s notorious painting of drunken provincial priests returning from a religious conference that was rejected from the Salon exhibition of 1863. According to Proudhon, this painting portrays the moral degeneracy caused by religious discipline and the radical impotence of religious faith in helping mankind achieve a state of physical and moral perfection. He insists that religious ideals repress human nature and lead to inevitable outbursts of uncontrollable and immoral behaviour and that many people devoted to the Church are sinners like the priests depicted in Courbet’s painting, although they are all victims of their faith rather than hypocrites or turncoats.¹²⁰ They are merely slaves to the idea of a divine force beyond the realm of mankind, a force that leaves them with no control whatsoever over their destiny. Classical and romantic artists pursue mystical and spiritual forms of idealism in a similar way, becoming slaves to their artistic ideas rather than producers of them.¹²¹ Proudhon argues that their ideas have no moral basis because they relate to fantasy worlds rather than mankind; just as priests deny man’s ability to exercise his conscience without divine guidance, classical and romantic artists avoid the

¹²⁰ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p266: ‘Ce qu’a voulu montrer Courbet, à la façon des vrais artistes, c’est l’impuissance radicale de la discipline religieuse, – ce qui revient à dire de la pensée idéaliste, – à soutenir dans le prêtre la vertu sévère qu’on exige de lui; c’est que la perfection morale cherchée par la foi, par les oeuvres de dévotion, par la contemplation d’un idéal mystique, se réduit à de lourdes chutes, et que le prêtre qui pêche est victime de sa profession, bien plus qu’hypocrite et apostat.’

¹²¹ *ibid*, p267: ‘Le prêtre, pour son malheur, est, comme l’artiste romantique et classique, adorateur de l’idéal et de l’absolu; il n’en est pas le metteur en oeuvre; il n’est pas le maître de son idée, pas plus que de ses impressions; il en est l’esclave; c’est ce qui fait sa misère morale, et tôt ou tard amène une chute honteuse.’

benefits of self-reflexive or scientific thought and rely solely upon inspiration for their work.¹²²

The positivist criticism of religion and its outmoded absolute ideals – the criticism that religion mistakenly rejects the idea of man as a virtuous and productive being in his own right – is for Proudhon the conceptual basis of the *Curés*. In his opinion, this painting reflects the clash between two forms of idealism, the man-centred positivist idealism that he supports and the absolutist religious idealism that he rejects, and Courbet uses the former to criticise the latter. Once again, this criticism is conveyed largely through physiognomical principles, which illuminate the supposedly degenerate effects of religion upon people and society. The painting depicts a customary scene of social life in the Jura region of the Franche-Comté.¹²³ Everyone knows that the rural clergy conduct monthly conferences for theological training, Proudhon says, and that these pious reunions are followed by a fraternal banquet involving great merry-making.¹²⁴ Courbet's painting shows

¹²² *ibid*, p267: 'Son dogme [le dogme du prêtre] consiste à nier la vertu de l'homme et l'efficacité de sa conscience, absolument comme l'artiste classique en nie la beauté; à mettre toute sa confiance dans la grâce divine, qui seule peut le préserver de la tentation; semblable encore en cela à l'artiste qui fuit le secours de la réflexion et de la science, et ne compte que sur l'inspiration.'

¹²³ See pp269-270: 'Chacun sait que le clergé rural est astreint par ses règlements à des conférences mensuelles ayant pour objet d'entretenir l'esprit de corps parmi les ecclésiastiques d'un même canton et de les exercer à la discussion des questions théologiques. Ces réunions pieuses, qui ont lieu tantôt chez l'un, tantôt chez l'autre, sont naturellement suivies d'un banquet confraternel, espèce de pique-nique, où les épanchements de l'amitié succèdent aux ardeurs de la controverse. Dans ces rapprochements, qui forment certainement le meilleur de la vie sacerdotale dans les campagnes, les esprits s'animent, les coeurs se dilatent, tout se réunit pour donner au repas son plus grand entrain. . . . La scène se passe en Franche-Comté, dans la plus belle vallée du Jura, la vallée de la Loue.'

¹²⁴ See footnote 123.

the priests' typical drunkenness and loss of self-control as they return to their districts after indulging in one of these events.¹²⁵

Proudhon finds a broad range of physiognomical devices at work in the painting, techniques that serve the artist's positivist and idealist critique. One technique involves the simultaneous deployment of physiognomy and caricature, which is seen as particularly effective in achieving criticism through ironic representations of the body. This device operates in the figure of the drunken dean, for example, a character whose body has grown to excessive proportions through over-eating. This is deeply ironic, the philosopher argues, because the priesthood upholds abstinence and temperance as virtues of conduct that supposedly cleanse the soul; referring to the dean's fat body, Proudhon argues that 'one truly does not know where the soul can exist in this density of flesh.'¹²⁶ The philosopher's point is that, as Courbet's painting demonstrates, the physiological nature of human existence cannot be denied and any attempt to starve the body of its physical needs only results in over-indulgence and the so-called sins of the flesh. Proudhon finds this irony aptly portrayed in the caricatural representation of the dean's body, which is 'incapable of dragging his vast stoutness' and 'has been hoisted up on a donkey which bends under the burden.'¹²⁷ The philosopher is keen to point out that such caricatural representation is not intended to defame the characters represented or the social group to which they belong. The artist simply invests his work with the communicative and expressive power of physiognomy and caricature to create the idealisation needed for positivist critique, the

¹²⁵ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p270.

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p270: 'On ne sait vraiment où peut se tenir l'âme dans cette épaisseur de chair.'

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p270. Proudhon says that the dean, 'incapable de traîner sa vaste corpulence, a été hissé sur un âne, qui plie sous le faix.'

intense portrayal of physical and moral degeneration for the sake of social reform. In the case of the dean, Courbet's caricatural typification idealises a basically congenial and likeable type who is merely a victim of the sensual distractions arising through his profession.¹²⁸

Analysing the figure of the parish priest in the painting, Proudhon highlights another physiognomical device deployed by Courbet – the portrayal of character traits through the comparison of human physical features with those of animals. Comparing the figure's appearance with a stone marten, the philosopher indicates the typically artful and greedy character of parish priests. As Judith Wechsler points out, Charles Le Brun's *Conférence de M. Le Brun sur l'expression générale et particulière des passions* of 1698 – a seminal text of physiognomical theory regarded highly in mid-nineteenth-century France – associates the stone marten with greed and cunning.¹²⁹ Proudhon uses the analogy to convey the priest's covetousness and prudence, his concern to preserve the integrity and privileges of his position.¹³⁰ The priest is anxious that his colleagues' drunken behaviour

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p270: 'il [le doyen] compte quarante années de services; depuis longtemps il a passé l'âge de ferveur; son front insoucieux, ses lèvres lippues, son oeil en ce moment quelque peu lubrique, son port de Silène décèlent un joyeux convive parvenu, dans cette existence somnolente, idéaliste et sensualiste tout à la fois du curé de campagne, à un haut degré de matérialisation. . . . Excellent homme au fond, qui ne compte pas un ennemi parmi ses paroissiens.'

¹²⁹ Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy, Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris*, London, 1982, p161.

¹³⁰ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p271: 'A droite est un curé d'âge mûr, mais vif et vert, à lunettes bleues, au teint bilieux, figure de fouine ou de diplomate, Talleyrand rustique, qui retient par le bras le Silène chancelant. Prudent et expérimenté, il comprend les inconvénients du scandale, et voudrait sauver au moins les apparences.'

will have repercussions – a scandal could damage the Church’s image and reputation and deprive him of the advantages afforded by his position.¹³¹

If the innocence of religious ideals is most evident in the physiognomy of a young seminarist ‘who dreams of martyrdom,’ their corruption is most apparent in the physiognomy of the figure on the far right of the canvas.¹³² The philosopher sees in this figure the worst effects upon human character of a life in the priesthood. The priest’s terrible features show that he is a particularly nasty and sacrilegious type who exploits his community. Completely corrupt, with no redeeming qualities whatsoever, he trades in all kinds of commodities, including wood, grains, cash and horses; course peasants admire his harsh looks and vulgar behaviour when they see him drinking, smoking and swearing.¹³³ Proudhon advances the hereditarian approach associated with positivism by claiming that the kind of physiological constitution shown by the priest can be traced back to the twelfth century. The priest’s rabid physical appearance indicates the character and behaviour of several religious figures of the past, including Saint Dominick, who was known as the ‘guard dog’ of God and the Church in the fight against heresy. Such a character, Proudhon says, ‘will march at the head of the army of crusaders against the heretics, ordering the massacre of the rebel populations irrespective of age or sex. At the top of his voice he was

¹³¹ See footnote 130.

¹³² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p272: ‘Derrière ce groupe marche un séminariste, à la figure candide, plein d’une ferveur juvénile, et dont l’ambition secrète, que jusqu’à présent il n’a confiée qu’à Dieu et à son confesseur, est de se consacrer aux missions lointaines, et qui rêve le martyr.’ Proudhon portrays the corrupt figure as a particularly immoral character, ‘un curé d’un type à part.’

¹³³ *ibid*, p272: ‘c’est le prêtre herculéen, taillé à angle droit, terrible de visage, admiré des paysans pour la rudesse de ses allures, buvant, fumant et jurant, exerçant sur ses paroissiens un ascendant irrésistible par son énergique vulgarité. Les fonctions de sa modeste cure, l’administration de sa fabrique ne suffisent pas à sa puissante activité. Il a fait irruption dans le temporel; il s’est jeté dans les oeuvres profanes; il plante, il cultive, il exploite, il entreprend, il trafique, il spécule, il soumissionne; il est marchand de bois, de grains, de liquides, de chevaux.’

fulminating the anathema, *no salvation outside the Church! - Kill everyone: God recognises his!*¹³⁴

According to Proudhon, the *Curés* also shows how the immoral behaviour of religious personnel infects the lay people around them. This, he says, is clearly evident in the servant figure in the painting, whose unsightly appearance and dubious character are ‘only found in the world of the [religious] ideal.’¹³⁵ As Proudhon explains, she is ‘neither concubine nor wife, but more than a domestic; unsightly, enraptured, with a questionable walk, shady-eyed, who has her share of influence in the spiritual government of the flock, sorry associate of this sorry shepherd of men.’¹³⁶ Yet, the painting also portrays social types unaffected by such corruption, such as the peasant figure and his wife, who are distracted from their work by the drunken spectacle.¹³⁷ In Proudhon’s interpretation, Courbet’s positivist idealisation of the peasant figure constitutes the antithesis of religious idealism, an exemplary ‘expression of morality.’¹³⁸ No less a typical product of his era than the

¹³⁴ *ibid*, pp272-273: ‘Transportez par la pensée cette vigoureuse et inflexible nature au douzième siècle: ce sera, pour peu que les circonstances le favorisent, un Pierre de Castelnau, un saint Dominique, un Amaury. Il sera fondateur de l’inquisition, il marchera à la tête de l’armée croisée contre les hérétiques, ordonnera le massacre des populations insurgées, sans distinction d’âge ni de sexe. De quelle voix il eût fulminé l’anathème: *Hors de l’Église point de salut! – Tuez tout: Dieu reconnaîtra les siens!* . . . Il a plu à la Providence de le faire naître au dix-neuvième siècle, après Voltaire et la Révolution, quand la philosophie et le droit de l’homme ont établi partout leur prépondérance: ce n’est qu’un pauvre curé de campagne dont la fougue s’exhale dans des affaires de maquignonnage ou d’insipides conférences, *inter pocula.*’

¹³⁵ *ibid*, pp273-274: ‘La servante du prêtre est un de ces êtres indéfinissables qu’on ne rencontre que dans le monde de l’idéal: ni concubine ni épouse, mais plus que domestique; disgracieuse, béate, à la démarche équivoque, à l’oeil louche, qui a sa part d’influence dans le gouvernement spirituel du troupeau, triste associée de ce triste berger d’hommes.’

¹³⁶ See footnote 135.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p274. Proudhon says that these figures are ‘distracts un moment de leur travail par le spectacle auquel ils assistant.’

¹³⁸ *ibid*, p274. Proudhon says: ‘Tout à fait à gauche du tableau, et comme pour en exprimer la moralité, se trouvent un paysan et sa femme, . . .’

corrupt priests, the peasant is coarse and illiterate but symbolises ‘the positive and practical spirit’ because his life revolves around terrestrial nature, the immediate world around him.¹³⁹ His loss of faith releases him from the dangers of religious absolutism: ‘he has lost faith in heaven and respect for the clergy. He doesn’t risk losing his way in the reveries of pietism and the sublimities of the [religious] ideal.’¹⁴⁰ The image of this laughing peasant symbolises flesh and blood, the physiological fact of material existence and its inherent denial of religion: ‘he goes straight to the fact and to the thing; he is realism made flesh.’¹⁴¹

Drawing attention to the peasant’s laugh [Figure 33], Proudhon again emphasises the importance of caricature in Courbet’s idealist criticism. The grotesqueness of this laugh is the positivist linchpin of the image and its aesthetic power, investing the scene with a critique that is unavoidable for the viewer. The viewer is powerfully drawn to and deeply affected by this laugh through an aesthetic experience impacting upon the conscience and leading to ameliorative action. The laugh’s grotesqueness reflects the jarring insanity of the contradiction between religious piety and the immoral behaviour of the priests, but also clashes with the admirable physical and moral character of the peasant. These contradictions simultaneously stir up feelings of admiration and disgust in the viewer, who is left in no doubt of the need to reform society when it is in the grip of such corruptive religious influence. The laugh intensifies the positivist idealism of the image through an ironic and caricatural comedy. It is as though Proudhon sees the peasant as Courbet

¹³⁹ See *ibid*, pp274-275: ‘Le paysan, grossier, illettré, n’en est pas moins de son époque. . . . Esprit positif et pratique, comme le Martin de *Candide*, il a perdu la foi au ciel et l’estime du clergé. Ce n’est pas lui qui risque de s’égayer dans les rêveries du piétisme et les sublimités de l’idéal; . . .’

¹⁴⁰ See footnote 139.

¹⁴¹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale*, Garnier frères, Paris, 1865, p275: ‘il va droit au fait et à la chose; c’est le réalisme fait chair.’

himself, a symbol of the positivist artist whose laughter echoes the insanity of the scene and resounds in the ears of the viewer until society is reformed:

In view of the merry saintly men, in front of this striking contrast between the minister of the altar's presumptuous spirituality and the bacchic reality of his existence, it is taken as an insane laughter. And this laughter, which strikes you with a relentless rusticity, is no less powerful. It is impossible, after some minutes of examination, to avoid it.¹⁴²

There are a number of other important visual contrasts operating in the painting, which help to communicate and idealise the insanity, absurdity and contradictions of religious faith as Proudhon sees it. The philosopher points to 'the vulgarity of the scene contrasting with the beauty of the landscape, the comedy of the situation with the gravity of the profession, the superstition of the peasantwoman with the impiety of her husband, the donkey with the one who mounts it.'¹⁴³ Most importantly, however, there is the physiological contrast between the peasant and the priests. The peasant is of this earth. He is 'thick-set,' 'bony' and his flesh is literally 'the colour of the earth.'¹⁴⁴ As such, he emerges as a symbol of positivist morality in contrast to the degenerate religious morality of the priests as symbolised by their 'over-fed, plump bodies and flushed cheeks.'¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *ibid*, p275: 'A la vue des saints hommes en goguette, devant ce foudroyant contraste entre la spiritualité présomptueuse du ministre de l'autel et la réalité bachique de son existence, il est pris d'un rire fou; et ce rire, dont l'implacable rusticité vous choque, n'en est pas moins communicatif; impossible, après quelques minutes d'examen, de s'y soustraire.'

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p276: 'Remarquez les oppositions que l'artiste, sans les chercher, a répandues dans son oeuvre: la vulgarité de la scène contrastant avec la beauté du paysage; le comique de la situation avec la gravité de la profession; la superstition de la paysanne avec l'indévoction de son mari; l'âne avec celui qui le monte, etc.'

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p276: 'Le paysan, trapu, osseux, couleur de terre, ajoute, par son hilarité triviale, au scandale donné par les hommes d'église, aux corps bien nourris, aux joues potelées et relevées de vermillon.'

¹⁴⁵ See footnote 144 and *ibid*, p277. Once again, despite the apparently satirical implications of these associations and contrasts, Proudhon is keen to maintain his positivist interpretation of the painting. He emphasises that the caricatural aspects of the painting are not intended to defame and ridicule the priests as a class of citizens. These aspects are simply meant to show that priests are victims of their faith, that religion only leads to degenerate customs and ridiculous behaviour: 'Mais ce que nous ne devons pas oublier, à peine de perdre le sens du tableau et d'en fausser complètement l'effet aussi

VII: Presenting peaceful socialism to middle-class society: the context in which Proudhon's views were circulated and consumed

Examining the context within which Proudhon's book *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale* was produced, circulated and consumed, we can see that the philosopher's interpretation of Courbet's work was made accessible to a broad and liberal middle-class readership and that it was produced as part of the publisher's wider support for the amelioration of the working class through peaceful socialism. The book was published in 1865 by Garnier frères, a company that featured prominently in the dissemination of literary works during the Second Empire.¹⁴⁶ The company was well-known for its commitment to the publication of Proudhon's work, whose criticism of bourgeois society on humanitarian and economic grounds was seen as subversive by many conservatives supporting the authoritarian regime of the Second Empire.¹⁴⁷ After publishing

bien que l'intention, c'est que ces prêtres sont tous sincères dans leur religion. Ils ont la foi de Jésus-Christ, ne vous y trompez pas; à part le doyen et son neveu, signalés comme douteux, les autres sont de vrais et zélés croyants.'

¹⁴⁶ See entry for 'GARNIER (Auguste et Hippolyte)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Seizième, Supplément, Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1877, p871. The publishing company was 'bien connus sous le nom de **Garnier frères**'; 'MM. Garnier ont publié depuis [1858] un grand nombre d'ouvrages importants'; 'Quelques-unes de leurs publications atteignirent à un chiffre d'exemplaires jusqu'alors inconnu dans le commerce de la librairie.'

¹⁴⁷ See the detailed history of French publishing and editors compiled by Henri-Jean Martinet and Roger Chartier from 1983 to 1986, *L'Histoire de l'édition française*, 4 tomes, Promodis, Paris, tome 3, 'Le monde des éditeurs,' p169. This volume clearly states that the Garnier frères company sustained a strong interest in Proudhon's work during the Second Empire. Although the company's trade during this period generally demonstrated a shift towards officially accepted material, the publication of Proudhon's work remained 'their top priority': 'La police, toujours vigilante, précise à cette occasion que les frères Garnier ont abandonné tout trafic illicite. Devenus riches et désormais respectés, ils lancent alors des dictionnaires portatifs, éditent la *Correspondance* de Grimm, créent la série des Chefs-d'oeuvre de la littérature qui consacre désormais leur réputation et s'appliquent à développer leur réseau de distribution. Mais ces *self-made men* ne renient pas pour autant ce qui semblable avoir été leurs convictions premières: ils publient aussi des oeuvres de Proudhon, et en particulier *De la justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* (1868), ce qui les fait condamner à 1000 francs d'amende et à trois ans de prison, portés en appel à 4000 francs et à quatre mois de prison.' This book by Proudhon was actually first published in 1858. It appears that *L'Histoire de l'édition française* quotes the wrong publication date; Larousse's *Dictionnaire* confirms that Garnier frères published the work in 1858; see footnote 148.

the philosopher's notorious work *De la justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* in 1858, a work considered by the authorities to be offensive to the regime, the company received a prison sentence and fine.¹⁴⁸ Yet, despite this experience of a severe reprimand and the potential repercussions of producing such material in contravention of the strict publishing regulations of the time, Garnier frères continued to promote Proudhon's work and published *Du principe de l'art*.

Why was Garnier frères so committed to the publication of *Du principe de l'art*? Certainly, there is clear evidence that the company sympathised with the humanitarian ideas espoused in the book. Despite its embracement of capitalist values and the financial success of its business, the publishing house demonstrated a general affinity with the humanitarian principles espoused by Proudhon and other writers of the time, and actively sought to market their works.¹⁴⁹ Examples produced around the same time as *Du principe*

¹⁴⁸ See footnote 147. See also Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'GARNIER (Auguste et Hippolyte),' Tome Seizième, Supplément, 1877, p871: 'C'est par leurs soins que fut édité, en 1858, le dernier livre de Proudhon, ce qui leur valut une condamnation à l'amende et à la prison.' Other publications of Proudhon's works by the Garnier frères include: *Manuel de spéculateur à la bourse* (1857), *Les confessions d'un révolutionnaire, pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de février* (1851), *De la célébration dimanche, considérée sous les rapports de l'hygiène publique, de la morale, des relations de famille et de cité . . .* (1850), *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou principes d'organisation politique* (1849), *Idée générale de la révolution au XIX siècle, (choix d'études sur pratique révolutionnaire et industrielle)* (1851), *Qu'est-ce que la propriété ? : deuxième mémoire; Lettre à M. Blanqui sur la propriété* (1848), *Des réformes à operer dans l'exploitation des chemins de fer* (1855), *La révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 décembre* (1852); *Le droit au travail et le droit de propriété* (1848). Information obtained from 'French Bibliography, 15th Century to 1997,' *National Bibliographies*, CD Rom, British Library, London.

¹⁴⁹ An early twentieth-century view of the Garnier frères is offered by H. Champion's *Portraits de libraires, les frères Garnier*, which appeared in 1913 and which shows that the publishers' attitudes to work were broadly consistent with socialist ideas. In 1913, Champion was 'Libraire-expert au Tribunal de la Seine.' He explains that despite the fortune and business acumen developed by the Garnier frères, they nevertheless belonged to 'la vieille école.' For Champion, this meant that they maintained a strong work ethic and considered the right to work to be the cornerstone of a healthy society. They never exploited people in poverty or unfortunate circumstances, upheld the principle that people should have the right to work, and were always fair in their dealings with authors: 'Mais les Garnier appartenait à la vieille école, peu leur importait: le métier bien appris, toutes les connaissances qui en découlent, étaient les conditions les premières qui attireraient aide et protection de leur part. Leur fortune, ils ne voulaient pas la connaître. En tous cas, il est impossible de les accuser d'avoir exploité les droits d'auteurs: ils ne les avaient jamais acquis dans des conditions

de l'art include two works by Pierre Dupont: *Muse populaire: chants et poésies*, published in 1862, and *Muse juvénile: Études littéraires, vers et prose*, published in 1859.¹⁵⁰ Dupont's songs and poems about the suffering and destitution of working-class life brought him fame from around the time of the 1848 Revolution, when he composed political songs for the left-wing press. More specifically, the publication of *Du principe de l'art* was part of the publisher's ongoing support for the protection of workers' rights and the amelioration of the working class through peaceful socialist reform. Garnier frères seems to have been particularly attracted to socialist commentaries concerning the plight of the workers and the reform of their working environment, themes specifically and repeatedly addressed in Proudhon's book.¹⁵¹ This interest is evident as early as 1850, when the company published a compilation of 'Lettres sur les Réunions Électorales du Parti Socialiste' under the title *Le Socialism en 1850*. This publication extolled the virtues of peaceful socialism in securing reform for the workers. According to the publishers, 'the elections of 10 March 1850 will stand out in the annals of the Revolution of 1848' and constituted 'a partial victory for

léonines pour les familles . . . Personne plus qu'eux n'eut le respect dû au malheur; fidèles à l'esprit de la vieille France, leur devise fut: "Vive labeur." See H. Champion, *Portraits de libraires, les frères Garnier*, 1913, p4 and p6. Champion also confirms that the brothers owed much of their success to inspired marketing skills, which they developed since the 1840's when operating at the Palais Royale; see *ibid*, p3 and p5. Champion's study of the Garnier frères was compiled from official records, documents given up by the Garnier family, and from discussions with people able to convey first-hand memories of working with the brothers. It can therefore be taken as a reliable source of information offering both official and personal perspectives on the publishing company's views and activities.

¹⁵⁰ Information obtained from 'French Bibliography, 15th Century to 1997,' *National Bibliographies*, CD Rom, British Library, London. See also entry for 'DUPONT (Pierre)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Sixième, 'D,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1870, p1413. The entry confirms the socialist nature of Dupont's work: 'Dupont est un poète humanitaire, socialiste. Ses chansons sur la vie des ouvriers sont de véritables cris de douleur.'

¹⁵¹ Dupont's work focuses upon similar issues; according to Larousse's *Dictionnaire*, the poet 'retraça les physionomies diverses des métiers, leurs joies, leurs douleurs, leurs dangers particuliers'; see Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'DUPONT (Pierre),' Tome Sixième, 'D,' 1870, p1413. Courbet painted Dupont in 1868.

socialism.¹⁵² This, they argued, was because the results of the elections demonstrated a shift within the socialist party towards non-violent forms of socialism, a shift that would greatly serve the interests of the workers by enabling the party to exercise the same level of control and discipline over its policies and actions as its enemies.¹⁵³ As stated in the publication, whilst this new call for peaceful reform resulted in some member losses from the party, it also attracted many new members.¹⁵⁴ Most importantly for the publishers, following this victory for peaceful socialism, the party could serve the workers in the name of justice and right and redeem its previous promotion of violence and disorder, which only plunged the workers deeper into destitution.¹⁵⁵

We can see, then, that *Du principe de l'art* had the firm backing of a publishing company that sympathised greatly with the ideas expressed in the book. But, to what extent and in what social milieux was the book circulated and consumed? When considering the potential breadth and size of the book's readership, it is important to recognise that Garnier frères published much material besides that with a socialist theme. This is confirmed by the *Catalogue de la librairie de Garnier frères* of April 1865, one of the catalogues of works produced in the year that *Du principe de l'art* was published. The catalogue generally indicates popular works intended for an educated middle-class readership and an attempt to

¹⁵² Garnier frères, *Le Socialism en 1850*, Paris 1850, p1: 'Les élections du 10 mars 1850 marqueront dans les annales de la Révolution de 1848'; this represents 'une victoire partielle au socialisme'.

¹⁵³ *ibid*, p2. The Garnier frères argued that the socialist party 'a su égaliser la discipline de ses ennemis.'

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, p2: 'S'il doit regretter des défections, il peut s'enorgueillir de conquêtes nouvelles.'

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, p2: 'Les ouvriers qui se sont ralliés aux idées raisonnables peuvent voir maintenant, par la diminution des travaux dans les ateliers et par l'accroissement de la misère publique, qu'ils avaient sainement entendu l'intérêt véritable du pays.'

cater for a wide variety of markets and social sectors.¹⁵⁶ Although not listed in this particular catalogue, Proudhon's book is likely to have been presented under either of the following categories: 'Choix d'ouvrages à 3.50 francs le volume; format grand in-18 jésus' (*Du principe de l'art* was produced in this precise format) or 'Pédagogie, Livres de lecture, écriture' (whose works deal with similar themes addressed by Proudhon).¹⁵⁷ The works in this latter category were available at reasonably inexpensive prices and as low as 1 franc in some cases. Most of their titles, such as *Leçons choisies d'instruction morale et religieuse* and *Livre d'instruction morale et religieuse*, indicate the generally mainstream and officially accepted nature of much of this material. Other sections show the wide variety of readerships and markets that the publishing company sought to appeal to generally. There is a section of classical language and grammar dictionaries, priced from 1 franc to 10 francs, and one of popular works entitled 'Petits dictionnaires en deux langues,' useful for young boys and girls, high school and college students, and practically anybody studying foreign languages; these were priced from 4.50 francs to 7 francs. Then there are the 'Bibliothèque Latine-Française' works, priced at 4.50 francs or 3.50 francs, and the 'Bibliothèque Polytechnique' works, costing 1.25 francs to 14 francs. In addition, Garnier frères secured its reputation through its extensive production of classics and masterpieces of literature. The company aimed to popularise all the works it produced within the mainstream market, developing its promotional skills to maintain its market share during the difficult political circumstances of the Second Empire.¹⁵⁸ Highly successful in business, Garnier frères

¹⁵⁶ *Catalogue de la librairie de Garnier frères*, April 1865.

¹⁵⁷ The *Bibliographie de la France* for 1865 confirms that the format of *Du principe de l'art* is precisely the same as those in the catalogue's 'Choix d'ouvrages à 3.50 francs.' See *Journal de la librairie, Deuxième série 9, 1865*, Section 'Bibliographie,' Janvier-Août, p275: 'PROUDHON - Oeuvres posthumes. *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale; par P.J. Proudhon. In-18 jésus, vii-384p. Paris, impr. Blot; libr. Garnier frères. 3fr.50cent.*' This section of the catalogue offers books such as *Oeuvres complètes de Molière*, *Oeuvres de Boileau* and *Oeuvres complètes du comte Xavier de Maistre*.

¹⁵⁸ The brothers cultivated an expansive field of distribution and readership during the Second Empire by appealing to the popular market and publishing mainstream material. See footnote 147

remained committed to the production of Proudhon's works, making *Du principe de l'art* available to a very broad cross-section of the middle-class market it had cultivated for many years.

and the detailed history of French publishing and editors compiled by Henri-Jean Martinet and Roger Chartier from 1983 to 1986, *L'Histoire de l'édition française*, 4 tomes, Promodis, Paris, tome 3, 'Le monde des éditeurs,' p169. See also entry for 'GARNIER (Auguste et Hippolyte),' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Seizième, Supplément, Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1877, p871, which states that the publishers achieved popularity by 'exploitèrent surtout les actualités et la littérature légère, au moyen de formats nouveaux et de collections à bon marché.'

VIII: Camille Lemonnier: positivist idealism, universal materiality and Courbet's failure as a naturalist

In his book *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, published in 1878, Camille Lemonnier formulates an interpretation of Courbet's work premised upon a positivist form of idealism. Appearing thirteen years after *Du principe de l'art*, Lemonnier's interpretation directly challenges Proudhon's account by claiming that Courbet's painting is completely incapable of effecting democratic and social reform.¹⁵⁹ According to Lemonnier, Courbet makes little impact upon society and his caricatural style of representation achieves malicious satire rather than democracy.¹⁶⁰ Essentially, the writer does not consider that Courbet's work is capable of 'naturalism,' the profound philosophical expression upon which he claims Proudhon's idealist view of art is based.¹⁶¹ Lemonnier argues that naturalism in art is the accomplishment of the generation of artists following Courbet's and is philosophically profound because it furnishes a deep insight into the relationships between human character, the human condition and life as a whole.¹⁶² Naturalism discovers and expresses

¹⁵⁹ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p42: 'J'ai admiré plus que personne le pamphlet étincelant où Proudhon esquisse à sa manière l'art du peintre d'Ornans . . . Mais Proudhon était un juge détestable en matière de tableaux; il se trompe du tout au tout sur Courbet, qui n'a que des tendances, au lieu de cette philosophie que lui prête son critique.' See also, *ibid*, p23, where Lemonnier argues that Courbet 'manquait de fanatisme' of the kind attributed to him by Proudhon.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p43: 'Courbet ne révolutionna en réalité, que la badauderie. Ses ambitions d'agitateur laissèrent le monde tel qu'il était; s'il démocratisa la peinture, ce fut en peignant des dondons pansues et des curés rebindains, avec des malices de satire. Je ne crois pas que cela influa beaucoup sur la démocratie.'

¹⁶¹ For a wide-ranging series of discussions on naturalism as a general movement and its relation to Courbet's work, see George Boas, ed., *Courbet and the Naturalistic Movement, Essays read at the Baltimore Museum of Art, May 16, 17, 18, 1938*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1938.

¹⁶² Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p37: In Lemonnier's estimation, 'Le naturalisme en art est la recherche du caractère par le style, de la condition par le caractère, de la vie entière par la condition; . . .'

the type within the individual and the collective existence within the singular existence.¹⁶³

The naturalist artist is ‘the painter of modern life,’ who must be able to translate his own experience and knowledge of the contemporary epoch into the figures he represents, portraying people in such a way that each one expresses the entire modern era: ‘in a single countenance he [the artist] must be able to encapsulate the entire modern world.’¹⁶⁴ To achieve this, the artist must be acutely aware of the peculiar characteristics of his own era – the codes, customs and values of the society in which he lives – and transfer his own experience of these characteristics into the very materiality of the paint he applies to the canvas. This, Lemonnier says, is nothing less than a ‘profound science’:

Each era has its characteristic; the modern painter must be imbued with it even to the extent of allowing it to break through into the material conditions of his art. It is not enough that the subject is modern; the drawing, the colour, the mode of conception must also bear the mark of the times that inspires them. That doesn’t occur without a profound science.¹⁶⁵

As Lemonnier explains, such ‘profound science’ is connected to a number of interrelated disciplines: biology, geology, anthropology, the exact sciences and the social sciences.¹⁶⁶ These disciplines furnish the painter of modern life with the philosophical insight needed to achieve naturalism in his work, to express the distinctive character of contemporary society. The artist first gains an insight into the material conditions of

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p37: ‘il procède de l’individu au type et de l’unité à la collectivité.’

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p37: ‘Or, je ne puis comprendre le peintre de la vie moderne sans ces hautes visées; celui-là mérite vraiment ce nom qui sait buriner la société au milieu de laquelle il vit, à l’effigie de son cœur et de son esprit. Il faut qu’il lui donne l’atmosphère d’idées, de sentiments et d’aspirations qui est comme son air respirable; il faut qu’il lui communique sa propre expérience des hommes et des choses; il faut que dans une seule figure il puisse enfermer le monde moderne tout entier.’

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p37: ‘Chaque époque a sa caractéristique; le peintre moderne doit en être empreint au point de la laisser percer dans les conditions matérielles mêmes de son art. Il ne suffit pas que le sujet soit moderne; le dessin, la couleur, le mode de conception doivent porter également la marque du temps qui les inspire. Cela ne va pas sans une science profonde.’

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp36-37: ‘Le naturalisme suppose une philosophie que n’avait pas le réalisme, et en effet c’est toute une philosophie qui par ses bouts tient à la biologie, à la géologie, à l’anthropologie, aux sciences exactes et aux sciences sociales.’

existence and then learns how to appreciate and express the nature of the life within. He must attend to ‘the materiality of things before expressing the spirit of them’; he must apply himself to the body before can apply himself to the mind.¹⁶⁷ In Lemonnier’s estimation, Courbet has only achieved the initial stage of naturalist expression. His work demonstrates a deep insight into materiality but shows no appreciation of the inner life of people and things; he has mastered the representation of flesh and blood but has not learned how to represent the mind and emotions within. Whilst Courbet’s work is worthy of great admiration for its achievements, Lemonnier says, it is only a precursor of naturalism.¹⁶⁸ The artist has even developed this focus upon materiality into ‘an absolute doctrine,’ but this is still only the starting point for ‘the more humane and higher doctrine’ of naturalism.¹⁶⁹ Consequently, according to the writer, Courbet’s figures do not express either the dimension of existence common to all humanity or the physical and moral evolution evident in the physical appearance of real people living in the modern world.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the bodies of the figures he represents are impersonal because they do not capture the individuality recognisable in the appearance of actual living human beings.¹⁷¹ Lemonnier argues that much of the fault lies with Courbet’s indecisive drawing, which is ‘vague,

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p36: ‘On commença par s’attacher à la matérialité des choses avant d’en exprimer l’esprit et le métier prépara la voie à la pensée.’

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p36: ‘Il doit être considéré comme un précurseur par la génération qui le suit. C’est lui, en effet, qui a jeté dans le vent la graine d’où sort à cette heure le naturalisme.’

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p36: ‘Ce qu’il avait pris pour une doctrine absolue n’était que le germe d’une doctrine plus humaine et plus haute.’

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, pp37-38: ‘Il n’a pas su enfermer dans la silhouette de ses personnages la portion d’humanité ni l’espèce d’évolution que ces personnages pouvaient avoir dans la vie réelle.’

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p38: ‘Le personnage, en un mot, n’a pas chez lui le côté fatidique qui fait qu’on ne pourrait le remplacer par un autre; il constitue seulement une partie de ses tableaux, sans être assez puissant pour devenir le tableau tout entier, et finalement, il demeure à l’état d’être impersonnel, noyé dans le roulis des cohues.’

extravagant, thick, vigorous without strength, bold with vulgarity.¹⁷² This weakness results from the artist's penchant for the base, vulgar aspects of human nature and prevents him from finding a mature expression of physical and moral relations, 'a formula to characterise the modern world.'¹⁷³ The writer insists that Courbet is incapable of reaching 'the interior life' in any substantial capacity.¹⁷⁴

Lemonnier argues his case from a physiological perspective, criticising Courbet's lack of success in representing human beings as organisms with a nervous system, as living beings with mental and emotional capacities expressed in particular kinds of behaviour. The writer's central question is this: how far do Courbet's representations of flesh, blood and body parts express the character of the human condition, the nature of man's thoughts, feelings and experience? Lemonnier concludes that Courbet's representations of the body accentuate materiality to such a degree that thoughts and feelings become lost. In the artist's figure studies, the head appears as a morsel of matter, not the nerve centre of a living, thinking and feeling being.¹⁷⁵ Again, the writer argues that Courbet's mode of execution is largely responsible for this accentuation of matter. Although the artist should be commended for the freedom of his execution, his free hand does not capture the fine variations and subtleties of the human condition. His painting is comparable in some ways

¹⁷² *ibid*, p38: 'Courbet manquait d'une formule pour caractériser le monde moderne; son dessin était vague, outré, gros, vigoureux sans puissance, hardi avec vulgarité; il n'exprimait qu'à demi la vie intérieure; comme un vêtement lâche, il flottait sur la silhouette, et le côté expressif de la figure humaine se noyait dans son indécision.'

¹⁷³ See footnote 172.

¹⁷⁴ See footnote 172.

¹⁷⁵ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p38: 'Courbet était un paysagiste de l'humanité. Une tête était pour lui un morceau de la matière; ce n'était pas le centre nerveux d'un être organisé pour sentir et penser. Il faisait de l'homme un accessoire de l'énorme nature morte qui est le fond de son oeuvre.'

to that of the old masters, alongside which it ‘will hold its own by the sincerity of the execution, but will certainly not indicate sensitive variations in the conditions of humanity.’¹⁷⁶ In Lemonnier’s opinion, Courbet’s representations of body parts such as hands would not be out of place in a painting by Rubens or Jordaens, even though Courbet is painting people of the modern epoch: ‘the hands of his characters . . . describe neither the pain nor the haste of the men of our days. It is fine living flesh, minus the characteristic that the epoch puts there.’¹⁷⁷

Lemonnier admits that Courbet’s free style of execution is not without its virtues but claims that, whilst the artist’s sketchy application creates a universal expression of the exterior world, it invests its subjects with no character. The writer argues that ‘Courbet has been the universal painter of the exterior world. He painted flesh, skin, the revealed appearance; he did not descend into the depths of life.’¹⁷⁸ Such complete expression of the exterior world leaves no room for the historical dimension of existence, Lemonnier says, no room to portray the effects of time upon the physical and moral nature of actual living people. He maintains that Courbet’s figures do not reveal the thoughts, feelings and attitudes formed by the history of a person’s personal and social life and, consequently, the artist ‘has not written the history of a single existence; he has painted neither a head that

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*, p38: ‘Mettez n’importe laquelle de ses toiles dans un musée d’anciens; elle tiendra par la franchise de l’exécution, mais à coup sûr elle n’indiquera pas une variation sensible dans les conditions de l’humanité.’

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*, pp38-39: ‘Les mains de ses personnages pourraient appartenir tout aussi bien aux créatures de Rubens et de Jordaens; elles ne racontent ni la douleur ni la hâtivité des hommes de nos jours. C’est de la belle chair vivante, moins l’estampille qu’y met l’époque.’

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*, p41: ‘Courbet a été le peintre universel du monde extérieur. Il a peint la pulpe, l’épiderme, l’aspect étalé; il n’est pas descendu dans les profondeurs de la vie.’

thinks nor a soul that suffers.¹⁷⁹ Lemonnier refers to the *Casseurs de pierres* as an example, a painting that he suggests might be the artist's masterpiece. He considers that the painting is not lacking in beauty, but it is a particular kind of beauty. The painting has only the 'unfailing beauty of still life' because, although the bodies of the figures are alive with flesh and blood, they are dead in character. Consequently, in Lemonnier's opinion, the painting is 'a superb page of painting' but not 'a page of history.'¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, p41: 'Il n'a pas écrit l'histoire d'une seule existence; il n'a peint ni une tête qui pense ni une âme qui souffre.'

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*, p41: 'Le tableau qui est peut-être son chef-d'oeuvre, les *Casseurs de pierres*, ont une beauté inaltérable de nature morte, avec des êtres sommeillants, pris aux limites de l'intelligence. C'est une superbe page de peinture; ce n'est pas une page d'histoire.'

IX: The ‘ideal of well-being’ and Courbet’s success as a positivist

Having refuted Proudhon’s view of Courbet’s work by establishing the artist’s limitations concerning naturalism, Lemonnier focuses upon what he sees as the essential characteristics of the artist’s work. Here, he looks further into Courbet’s affinity with materiality and finds that there is much to admire, arguing that Courbet’s focus upon the material world expresses a positivist ideal. This ideal is associated with flesh and blood, the very matter of living bodies and the landscape, soil, crops and water that sustain them. He maintains that the ultimate source of this ideal is Courbet’s own excessive physical appetite, his ‘love of the rich life, in his gluttonous appetites, in his sensualities of fat living. A feast produced the basis of his art.’¹⁸¹ The writer asserts a very powerful relationship between Courbet’s representations of physical form and his own physical desires. The artist’s soul may be empty, Lemonnier says, but his body feasts upon life. Rather than an unhealthy state of affairs, this translation of voracious appetite into art creates according to the writer a ‘paradise of deep joys,’ an ‘ideal of well-being’ that shines through his work.¹⁸²

Lemonnier argues that this ideal can only be appreciated through an understanding of Courbet’s physiological nature, which is imbued in his work and clearly evident in his own physiognomical appearance. Referring to the shape of Courbet’s head and skull, the

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, p47: ‘On a reproché à Courbet de n’avoir pas d’ idéal. Cela est faux. Il a un idéal très-persistant, mais il faut le chercher où il est, dans son amour de la vie grasse, dans ses appétits de gourmandise, dans ses sensualités de gros viveur. Une bombance fait le fond de son art.’

¹⁸² *ibid*, pp47-48: ‘Il s’est formé un paradis de joies épaisses qui chatouillent son rêve de bien-être, à travers un engourdissement de son âme.’

writer evaluates the artist's cerebral physiology as the essential source of his creativity.¹⁸³ Courbet's forehead is 'round, well-modelled and common,' Lemonnier says, and this suggests a strong, sensitive and intuitive nature.¹⁸⁴ The writer concludes that Courbet's brain is like that of a docile animal, operating on instinct rather than reflection, assimilating and classifying impressions of the world around him through a methodical but semi-drowsy process of rumination.¹⁸⁵ The shape of his skull clearly indicates this limited kind of intelligence, which is suited to positivist work because it is inclined to the synthesis rather than the analysis of information; it is at once a country and bourgeois intelligence, tailor made for 'positivist applications.'¹⁸⁶ Lemonnier continues that this suitability for positivist expression is evident in the physiognomical appearance of Courbet's entire body, which indicates a healthy and finely balanced organism, 'a fine whole animal rich in life':

Also Courbet's strength was not exclusively locked away in his forehead; it was prevalent in his entire organism, in his eye enlarged, in the balance of his limbs, in the well-being of his flesh, in his elegant and sensitive hands, in this fine whole animal of rich life, happy, blooming. The painting of Courbet is the painting of a man in good health.¹⁸⁷

The writer insists that Courbet's physical health shines throughout his work, which consequently achieves a kind of healing effect: 'Courbet was for art a kind of doctor, who

¹⁸³ *ibid*, p26: 'Ce cerveau de Courbet est une des choses qu'il faut étudier pour bien comprendre sa peinture.'

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p26: 'Il est fortement constitué, sensible, ouvert à l'intuition, dans un front de bon garçon, rond, bien modelé et vulgaire.'

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, p26: 'Son cerveau avait des facultés de ruminant; il s'assimilait les choses à travers une demi-somnolence, et méthodiquement, par une opération de l'instinct, les impressions y descendaient, s'y classaient, prenaient une sérénité que n'altérait aucun trouble.'

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, p26: 'On devine sous le crâne une intelligence courte, mais d'aplomb, synthétique plutôt qu'analytique, intelligence paysanne et bourgeoise, sans hautes envolées, faite pour les applications positives.'

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, pp26-27: 'Aussi la puissance de Courbet n'était-elle pas renfermée dans son front exclusivement; elle était répandue dans son organisme tout entier, dans son oeil étalé, dans la pondération de ses membres, dans la santé de sa chair, dans ses mains élégantes et sensibles, dans ce bel ensemble animal d'une vie riche, heureuse, épanouie. La peinture de Courbet est de la peinture d'homme bien portant.'

brought good-health with him.’¹⁸⁸ This healing effect, this richness of healthy life radiating from the canvas, is achieved through the artist’s intimate knowledge of the materiality of his own body, a knowledge he invests in all of his work. In this way, the writer says, all of Courbet’s paintings become in a sense paintings of his body. The materiality of the work is a direct extension of the materiality of the man and the paintings are representations of ‘the kind of humanity that he received through his own birth.’¹⁸⁹

Lemonnier’s concern with physiology and materiality has been commented upon by numerous writers, including Louis Delmer, Frederick Russell Pope, Maurice Gauchez, Hia Landau and Léon Bazalgette, although these writers have not adequately addressed the positivist or idealist framework within which Lemonnier locates these medical and philosophical categories.¹⁹⁰ Interestingly, Bazalgette’s study of Lemonnier and his work published in 1904 adopts a physiological approach that is very similar to the one adopted by Lemonnier himself, in his study of Courbet. Claiming that ‘it is impossible to appear more completely the man of his work than Lemonnier does,’ Bazalgette argues that

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p23: ‘Courbet fut pour l’art une sorte de médecin, qui apportait la santé avec lui.’

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p25: ‘Par un coup de génie, il se conforme à son tempérament, il se fait l’artiste de l’espèce d’humanité qu’il a reçue en naissant, il devient le peintre de son corps, et cette faculté allant toujours s’élargissant, il se prépare à ce don merveilleux d’exprimer la matérialité qui est sa marque distinctive.’

¹⁹⁰ See Louis Delmer, *L’art en cours d’assises, étude sur l’oeuvre littéraire et sociale de Camille Lemonnier*, Nouvelle librairie Parisienne, Albert Savine, éditeur, 1893, ‘Sa philosophie,’ p53: ‘Sa philosophie n’est pas de celles qui flottent dans l’éther! Elle n’entend point pactiser avec les frustratoires spéculations d’une métaphysique rétrograde et démodée; elle est sociale, soucieuse, avant tout, de l’étude des actions humaines et de leurs mobiles.’ See Frederick Russell Pope, *Nature in the work of Camille Lemonnier*, Columbia University, New York, 1933, pp31-32: ‘Lemonnier’s characters suffer, but, in the last analysis, it is bodily suffering, not of the soul.’ See Hia Landau, *Camille Lemonnier, essai d’une interprétation de l’homme*, Paris, Librairie E. Droz, 1936, Part 2, Chapter III, pp200-234. See Maurice Gauchez, *Camille Lemonnier*, Collection nationale, Office de publicité, Bruxelles, 1943, p22: ‘ses tendances correspondaient avec celles de ces jeunes artistes: faire de la peinture forte, saine, revenir au vrai sens de l’art, travailler, non point pour le sujet, l’anecdote, mais pour une matérialité plus riche, une substance plus précieuse, un organisme plus vivant.’ See Léon Bazalgette, *Camille Lemonnier*, E. Sansot, Paris, 1904.

Lemonnier's writing directly expresses his physical nature as an organism, his blooming physical health and animality.¹⁹¹ Bazalgette studies Lemonnier's physiognomical appearance to ascertain the character of the man and his work, describing the writer as an organism whose work is a direct extension of his healthy physiology: 'the novel is the vertebral column of his work' and 'copious health emanates from this organism wherein nature shows itself to be prodigious.'¹⁹² In this way, Bazalgette describes Lemonnier just as Lemonnier describes Courbet: 'he [Lemonnier] is therefore, from the corporeal point of view, an elite organism . . . Consider now the work. Above all, it is overabundant with life, heavy with vigour and nature, dense, overflowing, excessive; marked by an instinctive and savagely violent temperament that ignores customary spiritualisms.'¹⁹³ The force of Lemonnier's physiological health is evident in his art criticism, Bazalgette says, and reveals his positivist approach: he 'is an expert in the materialities and techniques of art. His criticism is based upon a positive science, directed in every sense.'¹⁹⁴ According to Bazalgette, Lemonnier's study of Courbet's work is the writer's best piece of art criticism, a commentary that appropriately and evocatively describes the relationship between the materiality of art and nature, and that demonstrates the 'perfect analogy of feeling' that

¹⁹¹ See Léon Bazalgette, *Camille Lemonnier*, E. Sansot, Paris, 1904, p1: 'Il est impossible d'apparaître plus intégralement l'homme de son oeuvre que ne l'est Camille Lemonnier. Regardez l'homme. De stature imposante, largement râblé, de puissante encolure, l'être physique tout entier respire la force et la sensualité. Une santé copieuse émane de cet organisme où la nature s'est montrée prodigue. Le visage est surtout révélateur. La tête est massive, la chevelure d'un blond ardent, la carnation révélatrice d'un sang riche, les sourcils épais. Le cou, le front, les narines – point caractéristique de son visage, mobiles, sans cesse éveillées, aspirantes, avides – et les yeux, surtout en un certain roulement des prunelles qui lui est familier, concourent à déterminer l'expression de grande animalité humaine de sa physionomie.'

¹⁹² See footnote 191, and *ibid*, p13: 'Le roman est la colonne vertébrale de son art.'

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p6: 'Il est donc, au point de vue corporel, un organisme d'élite, . . .
' . . . Considérez l'oeuvre maintenant. Elle est avant tout surabondante de vie, lourde de sève et de nature, touffue, débordante, excessive. Un tempérament d'une violence instinctive et sauvage, ignorant des spiritualismes coutumiers, s'y dénonce.'

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, p39: 'également il connaît à fond les matérialités et les techniques de l'art. Sa critique est basée sur une science positive, dirigée en tous sens.'

exists between the critic and the artists he judges.¹⁹⁵ Yet, despite his recognition of the importance of physiology, materiality and nature in Lemonnier's study, Bazalgette fails adequately to explore or explain the ideal with which the writer associates Courbet's work. Bazalgette tends to conflate the concepts of 'realism,' 'positivism' and 'materialism' in Lemonnier's critique and consequently misses the positivist character of the writer's idealist interpretation, which, as the next section of our study reveals, crucially relies upon a biological view of nature.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, pp39-40: 'Mais ce qui lui communique cette originalité et ce caractère adéquat qui la

X: Biological nature and ‘the universality of things’

At the heart of Lemonnier’s positivist view of Courbet’s idealism is a biological conception of material nature, according to which landscape is part of a system of milieux that sustains and nourishes living beings and organisms. The writer compares Courbet’s own material existence – the physical dependence of his body upon the material world around him – with the biological relationship between living beings and nature represented in his work. Lemonnier sees a direct relationship between the artist’s physical experience of nature and the way he represents landscape, claiming that he experiences nature in the same way as a countryman working in the field.¹⁹⁶ The experience is direct and savage, resulting from an aggressive desire to dominate the landscape.¹⁹⁷ The artist soaks up the elements of nature around him in an unmediated way – ‘he assimilates the rocks, the moors, the woods, the waters’ – and this physiological absorption of nature is transferred into his working practice.¹⁹⁸ Put simply, Courbet experiences and expresses nature from an agricultural perspective and Lemonnier likens the artist’s treatment of landscape to the tilling action of a plough that revitalises chapped land by furrowing through it:

distingue, c’est qu’étant lui-même un peintre se servant de mots en place de touches, que sa matière littéraire étant en grande partie de la matière picturale, il y a entre lui et les artistes qu’il juge une parfaite analogie de sentiment. C’est d’un oeil fraternel qu’il les considère. C’est presque en confrère qu’il nous parle d’eux, tant il s’en éprouve instinctivement proche, ce peintre-né.’

¹⁹⁶ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p51: ‘Il garde, en présence de la nature, une robustesse inattendue de paysan travaillant à son champ.’

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, p51: ‘Il est sauvage, bourru, plein de résolution et ne connaît pas la timidité. Il n’entend pas être vaincu par la nature, et tandis que son pinceau lustre les bleus du ciel ou brouille les verdure, il s’admire, avec des aises profondes.’

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, p51: ‘Il s’assimile les rocs, les landes, les bois, les eaux, . . .’ See also *ibid*, p23: ‘Il faisait son art en paysan, avec une belle entente de la terre.’

He treats the landscape as a man of practice treats it rather than as a poet treats it; he is neither a bucolic nor an elegiac; he describes the earth without passion. It is like a plough tilling with blows of ploughshare the field chapped by the frost and the sun.¹⁹⁹

Developing this analogy between Courbet's work and agricultural processes, the writer claims that the artist strongly portrays the material capacity of landscape to sustain living beings. Courbet metaphorically ploughs fields through his art and seems to transform the landscape into the compost that produces the food that nourishes living beings.²⁰⁰

Lemonnier sees a totalising concept of material nature expressed in the artist's paintings, a concept expressed as much by the appearance of Courbet's figures as his landscapes. As the writer says, these figures appear to be firmly rooted to the landscape, so much so that it is almost possible to smell the compost emanating from their flesh after it has been absorbed into their bodies from the ground beneath them.²⁰¹

Courbet is described by Lemonnier as an almost exclusively physical organism. Connected directly to the material world of nature around him, and finding expression in his paintings, the artist's physical appetites characterise his whole being. Courbet is 'uncultured,' Lemonnier says, and engages with the world purely through his five physical senses. The artist does not possess a 'literary mind,' a learned mind capable of reflective,

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, p51: 'Il traite le paysage en homme de procédé plutôt qu'en poète; il n'est ni un bucolique ni un élégiaque; il raconte la terre sans passion. C'est un manieur de charrue labourant à coups de soc la glèbe gercée par le givre et le soleil.'

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, pp53-54: 'C'est le terreau qu'il peint avec son rapport végétal, sa santé puissante, les pour cent qu'il donne en cultures. Les obscurités de la genèse ne le touchent pas; il a une certaine sérénité vierge qui n'est pas entamée par le mystère tellurgique. Il laboure son champ, la pipe à la bouche, content, l'esprit plein de chansons. Ceci est pour la pomme de terre, ceci pour la betterave, ceci pour le froment, et les bêtes se vautreront dans le reste à pleins fanons. Ses légumes font sur la tache de l'air des masses solides, pareilles à des incrustations, et le long du pré une herbe drue moutonne, tout d'un ton, dans une lueur vert-sombre; mais il n'y a place dans ces beaux étés, ni pour une aspiration ni pour un regret.'

²⁰¹ *ibid*, p23: 'Il [Courbet] faisait son art en paysan, avec une belle entente de la terre. Il se moquait de l'élégance, de la dignité, de la gravité; une odeur de terreau montait de ses personnages, indiquant la forte adhésion de leur semelle au sol. Ce plébéien cracha sur les Olympes.'

imaginative and philosophical thought; the qualities of such a mind are the defining characteristic of ‘culture,’ Lemonnier insists. Such qualities develop a kind of vision or acute perception – what the writer calls a ‘sixth sense’ – and are evident in the work of artists such as Delacroix, Rousseau and Corot. Delacroix, for example, ‘was a great literary mind, deeply cultured, searching within himself, in his rich imagination, feeding on unceasing readings, not only for his subjects, but for their form and mode of expression also.’²⁰² Courbet’s talents lie elsewhere, Lemonnier argues; the artist ‘was a man of instinct, without culture, but wonderfully suited for communicating with nature.’²⁰³ Incapable of contemplative or imaginative thought, Courbet possesses only an ‘immediate comprehension of what is before the eyes.’²⁰⁴ Yet, Lemonnier insists that Courbet takes this comprehension to profound levels. The artist’s connection with the material world is so strong that his paintings capture the very essence of all material existence, ‘the universality of things.’²⁰⁵

²⁰² *ibid*, pp15-16: ‘Celui-ci [Delacroix] était un grand esprit littéraire, profondément cultivé, cherchant au dedans de lui-même, dans sa riche imagination, nourrie d’incessantes lectures, non-seulement ses sujets, mais leur plastique et leur mode d’expression. . . .
‘. . . Alors que Delacroix regarde devant lui avec ce sixième sens, qui chez lui semble concentrer les cinq autres, Courbet paraît avoir été mis au monde pour prouver qu’un peintre vraiment humain n’a besoin que de ces derniers, pour saisir l’universalité des choses.’

²⁰³ *ibid*, p15: ‘Courbet, au contraire, était un homme d’instinct, sans culture, mais merveilleusement apte à communiquer avec la nature.’

²⁰⁴ *ibid*, p16: ‘La contemplation intérieure est remplacée chez lui [Courbet] par la compréhension immédiate de ce qu’il a sous les yeux.’

²⁰⁵ See footnote 202.

XI: Animality, physical appetite and ‘the ideal of stoutness’

As Lemonnier sees it, Courbet’s expression of material nature is directly linked to his insatiable physical appetites and constitutes a kind of research into animalistic nature or ‘animality.’ The concept of ‘animality’ in relation to Courbet’s work has been discussed by Dominique Massonnaud in her review of the negative critical reaction to the artist’s painting entitled *Baigneuses* in 1853.²⁰⁶ Massonnaud examines ways in which a number of related terms – ‘flesh,’ ‘animality,’ ‘stoutness,’ ‘deformity’ – are used in this art criticism to censure or scandalise representations of women whose portrayals of the female body are taken to be offensive to womanhood and femininity. Massonnaud illuminates many of the artistic, literary and historical associations through which these terms operate as critical concepts in mid-nineteenth-century France, but does not explore their philosophical implications or positivist significance and consequently misses potential commendatory connotations of these terms. This positivist significance is readily apparent in Lemonnier’s criticism, which uses such terms to praise rather than censure Courbet’s expression of animality. According to Lemonnier, Courbet’s immediate and uncultured contact with nature is driven by his need to satisfy his physical appetites. Such appetites drive the physiological systems of all animals and are the motive force behind their survival, behaviour, nourishment and reproduction. Lemonnier likens Courbet’s physiology to an animal’s; the artist’s desires for food and sex are part of the same appetite system and are expressed in his work. In Courbet’s paintings, flesh, the object of sexual desire, is accentuated with excessive food consumption. As the flesh grows, so does the sexual desire, and this indulgence in flesh is so strong that it expresses a physiological ideal, an

²⁰⁶ Dominique Massonnaud, *Courbet Scandale, Mythes de la rupture et Modernité*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2003.

‘ideal of stoutness.’²⁰⁷ This ideal derives from Courbet’s great physical need to satisfy his hunger for food and women. His obsession with painting healthy, growing flesh becomes a form of research into ‘gross animality,’ an exploration into the complete indulgence and satisfaction of physical desire. Lemonnier argues that such representation is the only means for the artist to satisfy his appetites:

He is *par excellence* the painter of a healthy creation to the point of excess, and who dissolves in the very molten fat of his own good health. His researches into gross animality satisfy his appetites for food and women, and he paints through temperament the fertile redundancy of matronly women swollen to the point of bursting, the fat moist flesh of the daughters of love, the paraded nakedness of bathing women.²⁰⁸

Courbet’s paintings *Baigneuses* of 1853 and *Dormeuses* of 1866 [Figure 34] are good examples of this expression of animality, according to Lemonnier: ‘He painted the nude with the passions of a virginal man feverish with eroticism. A constant satyriasis kept him aroused in front of flesh . . . The painter satisfied himself in these streaks of nakedness; he displayed them to satiety in his *Baigneuses* and *Dormeuses*.’²⁰⁹

Animality is a particularly strong feature of Courbet’s work, so much so that Lemonnier describes the artist as ‘the virtuoso of bestiality.’²¹⁰ Henri Raczymow has noted that Lemonnier uses this description to praise Courbet’s work, but that very similar descriptions are advanced by Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly, the famous novelist and influential

²⁰⁷ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p43. Lemonnier refers to Courbet’s ‘idéal d’embonpoint’.

²⁰⁸ *ibid*, p33: ‘Il est par excellence le peintre d’une création saine jusqu’à l’outrance, et qui se dissout dans le gras-fondu de sa santé même. Ses recherches de gross animalité satisfont ses appétits de cuisine et de femme, et il peint par tempérament la plantureuse redondance des matrones enflées jusqu’à crever, les grasses chairs moites des filles d’amour, le dépoitraillement étalé des femmes au bain.’

²⁰⁹ *ibid*, p48: ‘Il a peint le nu avec des emportements d’homme vierge enfiévré d’érotisme. Un satyriasis permanent le tient allumé devant la chair. . . . Le peintre se satisfaisait dans ces coulées de nu; il les étalait à satiété dans ses *Baigneuses* et ses *Dormeuses*, et une lumière d’or, très-fine, tombant sur la peau, semblait donner aux roses du sang la fraîcheur des roses naturelles.’

²¹⁰ *ibid*, p44: ‘Courbet, lui, est le virtuose de la bestialité.’

critic of the period, to censure Courbet's paintings. Commenting that Lemonnier and Barbey d'Aurevilly are opposites 'in their moral values, instinctive tastes and their aesthetic and political judgements,' Raczymow highlights the manner in which the same concept of animality simultaneously supports and discredits Courbet's work, depending upon the critic's views.²¹¹ Raczymow notes that Barbey d'Aurevilly himself caustically and amusingly declares that 'One has to ask, a strange thing! Who dishonours Courbet the most, Lemonnier's admiration or my scorn, when they both say the same thing.'²¹² Yet, whilst he illuminates how the same artistic quality of animality acquires polarised meanings in this critical discourse, Raczymow fails to explore the underlying philosophical reasons for this polarisation. In particular, he fails to recognise the biological framework of understanding within which Lemonnier locates the idea of animality, a framework whose positivist and anti-religious connotations would clearly have offended a strict Catholic such as Barbey d'Aurevilly, whose own work articulates tales of reverie intended as a shelter from the uncongeniality of the everyday.²¹³ For Lemonnier, Courbet's animality is an expression of the biological conditions within which all organisms are conceived and sustained, an expression that asserts the physiological nature of existence in opposition to divine creation. The writer emphasises that Courbet's expression of animality is dissociated from any kind of spirituality and that, in Courbet's paintings, humans and animals are all 'creatures' of flesh and blood that are devoid of a spiritual life.²¹⁴ Buried under 'a mountain

²¹¹ See Henri Raczymow, *Courbet, l'outrance*, Stock, Paris, 2004, pp8-10. Raczymow states (p8): 'Ainsi, c'était prévisible, Barbey et Lemonnier ne sont d'accord sur rien. Tous les oppose. Leurs valeurs morales, leurs goûts spontanés, leurs jugements esthétiques *et* politiques (cela marche plutôt bien ensemble) . . .'

²¹² *ibid*, p10: "'C'est à se demander, chose étrange! qui déshonore le plus Courbet, ou de l'admiration de M. Lemonnier ou de mon mépris, quand ils disent tous deux la même chose.'"

²¹³ As a novelist and short story writer, Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808-1889) specialised in a form of mysterious tale whose explorations of hidden motivation and evil border on the supernatural.

²¹⁴ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p32: 'Une épaisse croûte de limon mure la vie spirituelle chez ses créatures; . . .'

of flesh,' they are creatures of digestion rather than creatures of redemption and digestion is the process through which Courbet feeds his ideal.²¹⁵ Lemonnier insists that this ideal of appetite and digestion is inextricably linked to the earth, whose biological expression in Courbet's work stands firmly against the idea of spiritual existence. In Courbet's paintings, flesh is like a 'thick crust of mud' that 'blocks off the spiritual life from his creatures,' the writer says.²¹⁶ This biological view of animality is further evident in Lemonnier's treatment of Courbet's representations of animals within landscape. Here, noting the artist's meticulous observation of animal subjects, the writer argues that Courbet invests his representations of animality with the 'energy' or 'essence' of nature: 'I have seen his roe deer, his hares, his dogs and I have retained the memory of an animality meticulously studied with energies that had the essence of nature.'²¹⁷ As examples of this, Lemonnier refers to paintings such as *La remise de chevreuils au ruisseau de Plaisir Fontaine, Doubs* [Figure 35] and *Remise de chevreuils en hiver* [Figure 36].²¹⁸ In these paintings, he says, Courbet represents animals as though they were inseparable from the energy of the earth and the materiality of the landscape; animals and landscape are always shown together, 'associating them with the same life, and in effect the animal [in Courbet's work] is no other than the incarnation of the earth's energies.'²¹⁹

²¹⁵ *ibid*, p32: 'il les [ses créatures] étouffe sous une montagne de chair, les endort dans un engourdissement de bien-être, et cette matière épaisse ronfle, digère, sans être troublée par la pensée d'une rédemption.'

²¹⁶ See footnote 214.

²¹⁷ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p55: 'J'ai vu ses chevreuils, ses lièvres, ses chiens et j'ai conservé le souvenir d'une animalité très-étudiée avec des énergies qui avaient le nerf de la nature.'

²¹⁸ *ibid*, p55.

²¹⁹ *ibid*, pp55-56: 'L'accord de la bête et du paysage est une preuve de plus de ce bon sens de Courbet dont il a été parlé. Il les faisait rarement l'un sans l'autre, les associant ainsi à une même vie, et en effet l'animal n'est pas autre chose que l'incarnation des énergies de la terre.'

Courbet's ideal – his biological expression of animality, physical appetites and flesh – evokes for Lemmonier an image of Gargantua, the character of the giant in Rabelais' literature. Again, the artist's huge appetites are considered inseparable from the landscape and the earth since the artist is like 'a Gargantua with enormous appetites sprawled in the lap of the nourishing earth.'²²⁰ Lemmonier uses this comparison to reinforce his positivist view of the physiological manner in which Courbet observes his subjects. He says that the artist's gigantic stomach is physiologically inseparable from his eyes, whose observations are responses to appetite: 'He [Courbet] has the dual view of the stomach; his eye sets the healthy beauty of things that are eaten with the eagerness of a vulture.'²²¹ The physiological nature of this observation is readily discernible in the paintings themselves, which make the viewer hungry because their subject matter appears so appetising. When the eyes gaze upon Courbet's paintings of fish, oysters and lemons [Figure 37], the lips moisten.²²² The same is true of Courbet's representations of newly killed game [Figure 38], Lemmonier insists. These pictures activate the viewer's appetite because they conjure up the smells, sights and sounds with which the cooking of game is associated; the 'strips of fur,

²²⁰ *ibid*, pp45-46: 'Ce que cet homme a amoncelé de vie grasse sur ses toiles, ce qu'il a jeté d'animalité dans le creuset de son art, les charretées de gourmandises qu'il a étalées les brassées de saveurs, d'odeurs, de pénétrantes sensations qu'il a remuées, sont chose incroyable. On dirait un Gargantua aux appétits énormes, vautre dans le giron de la terre nourricière.' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is a series of five sixteenth-century novels written by François Rabelais. The novels tell the story of the adventures of two giants, a father named Gargantua and his son named Pantagruel, and are written in a witty, extravagant and satirical style. They contain much crudity, scatological humour and violent behaviour.

²²¹ Camille Lemmonier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p46: 'Il a la double vue de l'estomac; son oeil fixe la beauté saine des choses qui se mangent, avec des ardeurs lubrifiées de moine.'

²²² *ibid*, 46: 'Il triomphe dans les déjeuners où il peint des poissons, des huîtres, des citrons, sur une nappe de grosse toile bise. Une moiteur saline emperle l'écaille des carpes, des tanches et des cabillauds, attache des irisations de prisme à la bordure des squammes, pose sur la croupe entière une transparence d'eau; et la lèvre se mouille à contempler cette fraîcheur de marée, tombée là des paniers du pêcheur. Qu'importe que la nappe soit de grosse toile!'

ruffles of feathers and streaks of brown flesh' are 'made for the marinade or the oven.'²²³ The roe deer in his paintings appear 'flexible like a spring' and their outline, illuminated in a velvety silver light, tantalises the taste buds as 'an aroma seems to waft around their closed haunches.'²²⁴ These paintings portray 'a tragedy that ends suddenly in the sizzling of sauces, under the merry tickling of forks,' and Courbet's broad brushstrokes 'give the unction of life to these fine foods.'²²⁵ In this way, the viewer shares the artist's ideal of blooming physiological life by being drawn into a paradise of nourishment. Through Courbet's work, Lemonnier insists, the viewer 'lives off the fat of the land.'²²⁶

²²³ *ibid*, p47: 'D'autres fois, c'est une promesse friande de gibier nouvellement tué, avec ses ébarbements de poils, ses chiffonnements de plumes, ses échappées de chair brune faite pour la marinade ou le brasier. Le chevreuil pose au milieu son corps brun, souple comme un ressort; il baigne dans une lumière veloutée, qui argente son contour; un fumet semble planer autour de ses cuissons fermes. C'est un drame qui va s'achever tout à l'heure dans le grésillement des sauces, sous le picotement hilare des fourchettes. Drame aussi le beau canard bedonnant, aux cuisses trouées de fossettes, qui s'arrondit dans sa plume grasse et lisse, sur le bord de la table. Quelquefois un ventre nu de gallinacé s'écarquille avec sa peau grenue, le croupion béant, et donne le désir de toucher à ses potelés, à ses tremblotements de crème figée. Une couleur simple, largement étalée, communique à ces belles nourritures l'onction de la vie.'

²²⁴ See footnote 223.

²²⁵ See footnote 223.

²²⁶ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p23: 'Mais Courbet créa une sensation: celle de la vie dans sa matérialité. Il donnait le goût d'une certaine existence cossue, passée à se dilater dans l'épanouissement des choses. On vivait grasement dans ses oeuvres.'

XII: The physiology of observation and execution

Lemonnier identifies two distinct stages in Courbet's working process: observation and execution, both of which are physiological in character. To explain these two stages, the writer refers to comments he made about the artist's paintings exhibited at the Salon of 1870. With regard to observation, he describes a physiological process in which the artist interacts with and absorbs nature. Courbet's sight, for example, is a sense that must be fed and nourished with light: 'He opens onto the tangible world large ecstatic eyes that absorb the contours and drink the light.'²²⁷ The artist's eyes do not conduct passive or considered observations of nature from a detached viewpoint. Rather, his eyes experience nature directly, 'seizing' their surroundings so that they are 'drowned' with nature's spectacle, prismatically organising the myriad gradations of light, colour and tone:

But what magics the light must lay upon this sensitive retina! In what stream of paradisaical pleasures nature must drown these large pupils, so prodigiously organised for seizing the most fleeting changes of tone in the shade and the light! Courbet's eye, in shutting upon the day, slid under his eyelid like an enormous shimmering prism.²²⁸

According to Lemonnier, Courbet's artistic execution becomes an extension of his physiological means of observation, transferring onto the canvas his immediate contact with nature. When rendering the bodies of figures, for example, Courbet's execution creates the qualities of density, rawness and expanse that can be observed in the actual flesh he paints. In this respect, the writer says, his work resembles that of the old masters: 'the stomachs and backs of his women are large, as with Rubens and Jordaens' [Figure 39 and

²²⁷ *ibid*, pp15-16: 'Il ouvre sur le monde tangible de grands yeux extasiés, qui absorbent les contours et boivent la lumière.'

²²⁸ *ibid*, p52: 'Mais quelles magies la lumière devait poser sur cette rétine sensible! De quel flot de voluptés emparadisées la nature devait noyer ces larges prunelles, si prodigieusement organisées pour saisir les plus fugitives dégradations du ton dans l'ombre et la clarté! L'oeil de Courbet, en se fermant au jour, a dû sentir glisser sous sa paupière comme un énorme chatouillement de prisme.'

Figure 40].²²⁹ The dense materiality of the paint that Courbet applies to the canvas corresponds to the dense materiality of the flesh of the women he represents. As the paint is carved out, so is the flesh. The women ‘seem carved in blocks of matter with the savage appearance of butcher’s slaughter,’ Lemonnier says.²³⁰ The paint is so thick that it greatly pronounces the materiality of muscle and flesh under the subject’s fat skin, rendering muliebrity almost masculine: ‘with so much thickness, it is a muliebrity that is almost masculine; and one sees the muscles stand out under their fat skin, painted in pastes which have the porosity and the texture of a living model.’²³¹

Lemonnier also lends a physiological aspect to the system of light and colour created by the blocks and smears of paint on Courbet’s canvases. The reliefs created by the blocks of paint resemble cameos because they create layers of colour. Corresponding directly to the living energy of the flesh or landscape they represent, these thick layers of colour seem to form a physiological system. Lemonnier suggests that these layers appear to contain a heart that transfuses light into meandering channels, forming veins of colour. Yellows, greens and blues become ‘blood-stained’ with carmins and these veins of colour run into each other, creating mixtures of light and colours that radiate through the paint:

In his splendid blocks wherein meander in transfused lights the spangles which gleam at the heart of his cameos, velvet greens mix through adorable transitions with fluorite yellows, crystallized orpiments freeze iridescences, under greens of torrential poudings,

²²⁹ *ibid*, p48: ‘Ses femmes ont une ampleur dodue de ventres et de dos, comme chez Rubens et Jordaens. Le sang leur met à fleur de peau des bouillons rosés, une bruine qui s’exude en moiteur chaude. Elles semblent taillées dans des blocs de matière, avec des airs féroces de boucherie. C’est une muliébrité presque masculine à force d’épaisseur, et l’on voit les muscles saillir sous leur épiderme gras, peint dans des pâtes qui ont la porosité et le grain du modèle vivant.’

²³⁰ See footnote 229.

²³¹ See footnote 229.

lazurite blues are blood-stained with the reflections of the carmines of hepatitis, the feldspars flake away under the distinctive marks of arsenious copper.²³²

Although struck by the intensity of Courbet's animality and the consequent strength of materiality expressed in his work, Lemonnier does not ultimately view the artist's mode of execution favourably. Involving the use of a knife, Courbet's application of paint is inferior to the delicate rendering of a brush. A knife is unable 'to paint the detail of forms with all their complexity,' the writer says.²³³ He associates the knife with coarse materiality, animality and flesh because its effect is 'to materialise all that it touches.'²³⁴ He insists that the knife is the 'simple tool of the manual operator,' creating shimmering surfaces that can only satisfy the eyes and affording an ephemeral satisfaction that is unsuitable for any kind of transcendent expression.²³⁵ The knife cannot create a painting that touches the conscience or the soul.²³⁶ By contrast, Lemonnier claims that 'a brush is

²³² Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, pp59-60: 'Dans ses splendides blocs où serpentent en lumières transfusées les paillettes qui flamboient au coeur des camées, les verts de velours se mêlent par d'adorables transitions aux jaunes des fluorines, les orpiments cristallisés se glacent d'irisations, sous les verts des poudings diluviens, les bleus lazurite s'ensanglantent aux reflets des carmines de l'hépatite, les feldspaths s'écaillent sous la griffe des cuivres arséniatés.'

²³³ *ibid*, pp60-61. Lemonnier claims that 'Le couteau est un outil inférieur et l'on ne peut méconnaître que Courbet en a répandu l'usage parmi les peintres de ce temps. Il est le créateur de cette mauvaise habitude; il a importé un vice nouveau dans l'art, et ce vice a mis la peinture contemporaine à un doigt de sa perte. Peindre au couteau permet de ne pas savoir sa grammaire. C'est un tour de gobelet au moyen duquel on escamote les difficultés de l'art. Il est en effet, bien plus aisé d'étaler de la couleur que de peindre le détail des formes, avec leur complexité.'

²³⁴ *ibid*, p62: 'Un pinceau, c'est de la cervelle. Au contraire, le couteau est l'instrument bête du manouvrier; il est inconscient, irresponsable, mécanique. Il dirige la main, il collabore avec le hasard; même manié par un virtuose, il garde sa souillure héréditaire, qui est de matérialiser tout ce qu'il touché.'

²³⁵ See footnote 234 and *ibid*, p62: 'Le couteau donne une satisfaction éphémère, mais n'a pas la continuité des douceurs que donne la brosse. Il est artificiel et joue à l'exécution, avec grâce souvent, jamais avec gravité. Il convient au miroitement des surfaces; il ne saurait convenir à peindre en profondeur. Il satisfait les yeux; il ne satisfait pas la conscience. Il n'y a pas d'exemple d'une belle tête peinte au couteau; ce n'est pas avec de telles armes qu'on apprivoise les âmes.'

²³⁶ See footnote 235.

from the brain.²³⁷ He maintains that artists are fully aware of the advantages of using a brush, which ‘thrills, rings out, enrages, moves, engages the sensations and sustains the magnetism of the spirit.’²³⁸ Only the subtle renderings of brushstrokes can capture the ‘genesis’ of nature, the fine gradations of history and evolution needed to form a landscape:

The landscapes of the Good Lord have taken a hundred years, a thousand years to mature; they have germinated log by log, during the centuries, before spreading out in their glorious completion. Likewise, the landscapes of the true lovers of the earth have a slow genesis, which starts again with each blade of grass.²³⁹

²³⁷ See footnote 234.

²³⁸ Camille Lemonnier, *G. Courbet et son oeuvre*, Alphonse Lemerre, Paris, 1878, p62: ‘Le couteau, enfin, écrase ce qui est souple sous la brosse, met l’uniformité à la place de la variété, glace les moiteurs de la pâte, substitue à la porosité de la vie la dureté des marbres et des métaux. Que les artistes sachent bien ceci: rien ne prévaut sur le pinceau; celui-ci vibre, résonne, s’encolère, s’attendrit, participe aux sensations, subit le magnétisme de l’esprit.’

²³⁹ *ibid*, p61: ‘Les paysages du Bon Dieu ont mis cent ans, mille ans à se faire; ils ont germé grume par grume, pendant des siècles, avant de s’étaler dans leur parachèvement radieux. De même, les paysages des vrais amoureux de la terre ont une genèse lente, qui recommence à chaque brin d’herbe.’

XIII: The market for luxury books: the context in which Lemonnier's views were circulated and consumed

In what social and political contexts was Lemonnier's book on Courbet produced, circulated and consumed and how did the readership of this positivist interpretation of the artist's work compare with that of Proudhon's very different positivist interpretation published thirteen years earlier? Lemonnier's book was published in 1878, during the Third Republic, a very different vantage point from that which Proudhon's account of the artist was presented. Linda Nochlin has already shed some light on the political context in which Lemonnier's book appeared. As she has shown, its publication coincided with a burgeoning reconstruction of Courbet's image by the cultural establishment, which sought to incorporate his work within what was being portrayed as a great republican tradition of French art.²⁴⁰ This reconstruction involved a 'depoliticisation' of the artist, the detachment of his image from his known involvement in the Commune and the destruction of the Vendôme Column, activities that sat very uneasily with republican officialdom at that time.²⁴¹ Also, in line with the dominant republican ideology, Courbet's artistic creativity and production had to be firmly rooted in the realm of nature and its invocation of universality, a strategising association through which the artist's character and artistic expression could be simultaneously polarised with political forms of expression and

²⁴⁰ See Linda Nochlin, 'The depoliticisation of Gustave Courbet: transformation and rehabilitation under the Third Republic,' in Michael R. Orwicz, ed., *Art criticism and its institutions in nineteenth-century France*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1994, pp108-121. As Nochlin points out, the artist had official greatness conferred on him within this tradition in 1889, when eleven of his paintings were shown at the Great Centennial Exhibition of One Hundred Years of French Art at the Paris World Fair of 1889, which celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution.

²⁴¹ See *ibid*, pp109-110. Nochlin points out that Courbet's participation in the Commune was a severe thorn in the side of the supporters of the Republic of the Opportunists. As she also notes, the artist's interest in peasant and popular subject matter was not seen as political in the same way; this interest sat very easily with the dominant republican ideology of the time.

commodified as a heroic element within a great tradition of French art glorifying the republic.

As we have seen, the views in Lemonnier's book corresponded closely with these strategising tactics: his account denied the political effectiveness of Courbet's painting and exalted its biological expression of nature and universal materiality. Yet, given this growing image of an instinctive, non-political Courbet – a Courbet whose real talent derived from his own biological existence and whose political involvement simply marked where this talent was lead astray – what kind of readership was Lemonnier's book aimed at? Looking more closely at the particular circumstances of its publication, we discover that the book and its positivist idealisation of both Courbet and his work was aimed directly at the market for luxury books, the highly conservative market for fine and expensive editions purchased by wealthy collectors. The book was produced by the well-known publisher Alphonse Lemerre, who, like many conservative publishers in mid-nineteenth-century France, aimed to counteract the growing market shift towards inexpensive popular books, a shift that had been encouraged during the Second Empire by companies such as Garnier frères, which published Proudhon's *Du principe de l'art*. Lemerre approached the problem by producing only elegant and tasteful material in a beautiful typographical format, 'only publications remarkable for the sharpness of the typography, the beauty of the print and paper.'²⁴² His fine books were to be found in the libraries of gentlemen of taste and connoisseurs, were often produced as limited editions and objects of beauty in their own

²⁴² See entry for 'LEMERRE (Alphonse)' in Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, 1866-1890, 17 Tomes, in-fol, Tome Dixième, 'L-MEMN,' Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Paris, 1873, p351: 'M. Lemerre n'a point hésité, en un temps où la plupart des éditeurs se sont attachés à résoudre le difficile problème de la librairie à bon marché, à réagir contre le courant et à ne donner que des éditions remarquables par la netteté de la typographie, la beauté des caractères et du papier.'

right, and collected as much for the attractive and luxurious quality of the materials with which they were made as for their literary content.²⁴³

Examining Lemonnier's *G. Courbet et son oeuvre* itself, we can see that the book was clearly produced as a fine and specialised edition for the market of wealthy book collectors and connoisseurs. Produced *in quarto* with luxury grade paper and fine quality print, the book contained five etchings, each beautifully presented and preserved by a leaf of protective paper. The etchings and protective leaves were treated and presented in precisely the same way as those in Lemerre's landmark luxury edition of 1869 entitled *Sonnets et Eaux-fortes; un très-beau volume In-4^o, imprimé sur papier vergé des vosges*, priced at 50 or 60 francs. As Steven Adams has shown, the medium of etchings had been revived in the early 1860s and was used in luxury editions for its supposedly unique capacity to encapsulate the physical person and psyche of the painter. In this form of artistic production, Adams notes, 'the intra-textual exchange between the various signifying layers – the narrative, the illustrations, the signature beside the numbered edition etc – was

²⁴³ Pierre Larousse, *Dictionnaire*, 'LEMERRE (Alphonse),' Tome Dixième, 'L-MEMN,' 1873, p351: 'Ses livres ont pris place dans la bibliothèque des amateurs de beaux livres, des gens de goût, et plusieurs de ses éditions sont déjà épuisées.' Around the time Lemonnier's book was published, the editions produced by the company were divided into four categories. The first was the 'Classiques français,' which included 'tous les chefs-d'oeuvre incontesté de notre littérature,' such as the works of Rabelais and Montaigne. The *Dictionnaire* notes that the works of Molière and Pascal were soon to be included in this category. The second category, the 'Petite Bibliothèque Littéraire,' was in elzevir print and was produced to the same degree of luxury and typographical correctness as the first category. Works in this second category included 'Manon Lescaut, Daphnis et Chloé, Paul et Virginie, la Princesse de Clèves, Don Quichotte, Molière, Beaumarchais.' Apart from another category entitled 'Bibliothèque d'un curieux' – 'contient des ouvrages qui, sans être universellement admirés, offrent une lecture piquante et instructive' – Lemerre produced a category known as the 'Bibliothèque contemporaine,' which included the work of Théodore de Banville, André Lemoyne, Joséphin Soulay, Sully Prudhomme and Coppée. The Bibliothèque contemporaine constituted 'une spécialité à part et a rendu de véritables services aux lettres contemporaines en mettant en pleine lumière les jeunes poètes du temps, notamment ceux qu'on appelle les *parnassiens*, et en publiant leurs poésies dans des livres d'une remarquable beauté typographique faits pour la séduction des yeux.'

also in step with the ways in which the book was consumed.²⁴⁴ Such material considerations were particularly appropriate in the case of Lemonnier's book on Courbet which, as we have seen, asserted a direct relationship between the materiality of the artist's own body and the materiality of the nature he represented. The etchings in the book extended and reinforced the author's interpretation of Courbet's work as a positivist expression of material nature, an interpretation that was consolidated even further by the sumptuous material quality of the paper upon which the images were printed, the superior quality of the entire edition and the refined context in which the book was consumed. In this way, the very materiality of the book can be seen to have signified the effectiveness of the strategising ideological imperatives of the republican cultural establishment, whose incorporation of Courbet within the great tradition of French depended upon the circulation and consumption of a 'rehabilitation' of the artist via the realm of nature.

The attachment of the Lemerre publishing house to the luxury market is confirmed by the history of French publishing and editors entitled *L'Histoire de l'édition française* compiled from 1983 to 1986. This volume describes the factors determining the choice of a publisher or author towards the end of the nineteenth century. Produced in the last quarter of the century, Lemonnier's book was published at the start of an era when an author would choose a publisher according to 'its developing literary strategy.'²⁴⁵ Likewise, a publisher 'could select his authors according to literary or ideological criteria, that is to say according to his own publishing strategy or the brand image that he intends to give to his publishing

²⁴⁴ Steven Adams, 'Signs of recovery: landscape painting and masculinity in nineteenth-century France,' in Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner, eds., *Gendering Landscape*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p21.

²⁴⁵ See the detailed history of French publishing and editors compiled by Henri-Jean Martinet and Roger Chartier from 1983 to 1986, *L'Histoire de l'édition française*, 4 tomes, Promodis, Paris, tome 3, 'Le monde des éditeurs,' p140, which refers to a 'stratégie littéraire ultérieure'.

house.²⁴⁶ In this respect, as *L'Histoire de l'édition française* shows, Lemerre was polarised with the publishing company of Vanier, who famously published the work of the poet Paul Verlaine.²⁴⁷ Verlaine's chosen life of poverty became a symbolic stance against the capitalist era in which he lived whereas Lemerre's publications were associated with wealthy social sectors and a literary image that was 'more classical . . . more traditional . . . more high society.'²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ See *ibid*, p140. A publisher 'peut trier ses auteurs en fonction de critères littéraires ou idéologiques, c'est-à-dire en fonction de sa propre stratégie d'édition ou de l'image de marque qu'il entend donner à sa maison.'

²⁴⁷ See *ibid*, pp140-142.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*, p140: 'plus classique . . . plus traditionnel . . . plus mondain.'

XIV: Conclusion

This final chapter has highlighted further highly significant aspects of Courbet's work, aspects again largely ignored in the existing secondary sources. Importantly shaping our understanding of his work as a positivist undertaking, these aspects concern the formulation and support of varying kinds of idealism and the starkly contrasting social and political contexts within which such idealisms were produced and consumed. The findings of this part of the research demonstrate the very different ways in which the aesthetic character of Courbet's work was thought to have social power and the capacity to convey the truth of society's biological nature. On the one hand, the artist's paintings were seen as instruments in the attainment of the perfect society prescribed by positivism, a harmonious society nurturing altruism. On the other, they were thought to embody the positivist assertion that all life was by nature biological and material. Proudhon's interpretation was addressed to a broad, liberal and generally middle-class readership during the Second Empire and presented two forms of idealism expressed in Courbet's work. The first consisted in an intense and moving expression of 'sociability,' the human physiological instinct to attain a right, just and egalitarian society. The second was an equally intense expression of the degenerative forces seeking to suppress sociability and maintain the privileges of controlling social groups. In each case, the idealisation was seen to stimulate the sociability in others – to stimulate admiration or disgust – and thereby instigate actions leading to social reform. Lemonnier's interpretation is evidence that Courbet's engagement with positivism could be seen very differently. In stark contrast to Proudhon's view, Lemonnier's reading argued that the artist was incapable of expressing humanitarian principles or changing society. Instead, consistent with the apolitical imperatives of French art promoted by the republican ideology of the Third Republic, the

writer contended that the positivist idealism created by Courbet consisted in the expression of a universal truth: the truth of the materiality of all life and the biological processes that sustain it. Far removed from the revolutionary Courbet presented by Proudhon, Lemonnier's view of the artist's positivist enterprise was produced and consumed within a context rarely seen in connection with the artist's work. Lemonnier's interpretation was so different from Proudhon's that it was accepted for publication as an expensive luxury edition book by Alphonse Lemerre, the well-known conservative publisher renowned for producing deluxe limited-editions for the upper-class market. It is thus a clear measure of the importance of positivism to Courbet's work that the philosophy formed the basis of critical evaluations of his paintings within such contrasting political contexts.

Conclusion

How has this thesis enabled us to reconstruct the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism and what are the key original findings arising from the research undertaken here? In order to gauge the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis, it is worth briefly drawing attention again to the inadequacies of the existing scholarship on the subject and highlighting again the research methods used here to redress them. Firstly, it is important to note that no thoroughgoing study of the subject has hitherto appeared; whilst secondary sources have demonstrated a recognition that positivism impacted significantly upon Courbet's work, they have shown a lack of understanding concerning the nature of that significance. To the limited extent that the subject has been addressed, the conceptual nature of mid-nineteenth-century positivism has been radically simplified and a number of the philosophy's central concerns overlooked. Twentieth-century accounts have provided inadequate explanations and reductive views that generally cast the positivist aspects of Courbet's work in a supporting role within the artist's involvement with the movement known as realism. This role has generally been portrayed as one of methodological import: the principle of empirical observation provided the artist with the means to view the world around him without preconception and thereby to represent nature in a manner consistent with certain scientific 'truths.' Whilst twenty-first-century accounts have not demonstrated the same level of self-stultifying emphasis upon positivist methodology, they have been unsustainable and insufficiently concerned with either the complex conceptual genealogy of positivism in its nineteenth-century context or the specificity of its articulation in the relevant primary sources. As a result, these accounts have all failed sufficiently to recognise the broad range of ideas informing positivism and the distinctive manner in which these ideas were articulated in interpretations of Courbet's work.

This thesis has sought to redress these shortfalls using a methodological approach that recognises in general terms the limitations and possibilities of historical study and in specific terms the difficulties and taxonomic potential of an historical study of the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism. Given that positivism constituted such an extensive, fragmented and complex body of ideas informed by various intersecting domains of knowledge, this thesis has examined the positivist dimensions of Courbet's work with acute methodological sensitivity. This examination has proceeded through awareness of the resistance of historical data to the imposition of conceptual order and the inevitable role of interpretation in the formulation of historical narrative. This examination has also recognised that a self-conscious and forensic investigation of the ideas articulated within historical texts reveals their conceptual fertility and specificity. The contribution to knowledge made by this thesis has been afforded precisely through such methodological imperatives: the theories of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra have furnished a singularly appropriate method for the required micro-analytical re-interrogation of positivist texts clustering around Courbet's work. As we have seen, this method has brought forth an extended range of material from various intersecting domains of knowledge, has scoured up the views of numerous art critics previously ignored in accounts of Courbet's positivist associations, and has guided the re-interrogation according to three key interconnected and hitherto unexplored research questions: what aspects of positivism were used as critical tools for interpreting Courbet's work between 1848 and 1878, a significant period in the artist's career in terms of artistic conception, production and consumption, what are the artistic conventions and devices through which these tools were seen to operate, and in what social and political contexts did these tools function?

Pursuing these three interconnected lines of enquiry, this thesis has provided a number of significant original research findings that constitute a contribution to knowledge. Firstly, we have seen that the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism between 1848 and 1878 had implications for social ideas expressed right across the political spectrum, an insight missing from the existing accounts of Courbet's work. A multi-dimensional, fragmented and rich body of knowledge, positivism contained conceptual elements that appealed variously to the left, centre and right of mid-nineteenth-century French politics, vantage points that reframed positivism in ways that served different political and ideological interests. This thesis has shown that each of these vantage points provided a platform from which Courbet's work was understood as a positivist enterprise and that this broad spectrum of positivist opinion about the artist's work derived from the philosophy's attempts to convince all social sectors of its power both to facilitate social progress and establish social order, simultaneously to champion reform and harmony. These broad social concerns of positivism found expression in much of the period's art criticism, the judgements, debates and conflicts of which reflected the ideological and political struggles of the time. Courbet's work was an important focus and site of tension within this criticism. The artist produced images of people and society that provoked positivist commentaries from all sides of the political spectrum about the burning social and political issues of the time.

Secondly, this thesis has shown that the concept of 'sociability' – an innate physiological need for humans to attain altruistic coexistence – is singularly absent from the existing scholarship on Courbet but is particularly important to our understanding of his work as a positivist enterprise. As we have seen, views concerning Courbet's expression of sociability operated within social and political debates articulating the positivist laws of

‘order’ and ‘progress’ – the biological manner in which society was perceived to be organised and evolving according to the physiological dependency of the human organism upon the milieu in which it existed. These views distinctly and variously passed judgement upon the social conditions or development represented by Courbet in order to support the particular political and ideological positions of prominent critics and commentators. Courbet’s work was variously presented either as a revolutionary instrument of support for sociability in the fight against social inequity, or as a powerful affirmation of the status quo despite society’s maintenance of class divisions and privilege. Furthermore, we have discovered that all the interpretations examined in this thesis engendered both the positivist laws of order and progress although, in most cases, one law was emphasised. Revolutionary readings assumed that society was biologically ordered but portrayed the current state of that order as degenerative. Conservative readings acknowledged social development but emphasised the natural order governing any such change. This is highly significant for our study, demonstrating again the key role of positivism in expressing the wide-ranging shades of political argument debated within the art criticism of the time, as well as the philosophy’s conceptual adaptability in serving the distinct, contrasting and even opposing political interests supported by Courbet’s interpreters. It is some measure of the importance of the philosophy to Courbet’s work that his paintings were the subject of positivist evaluation within the extremes of these political contexts.

Another key insight afforded by this thesis – an insight that is again singularly absent from the existing scholarship on Courbet – concerns the teleological nature of sociability as an historical force impacting upon social development since ancient times. We have seen that the postulation of this teleological force was linked to certain positivist assertions. Firstly, that the human mind evolved inevitably in stages through history and,

secondly, that the nature of social development could only be understood in the nineteenth century, once the positivist mode of understanding had been reached. The key consequence of these assertions for this study of Courbet's work was that contemporary nineteenth-century society could only be understood when placed within the wider historical context of a complete reconstruction of the past. Courbet asserted the benefits of precisely this kind of reconstruction when conceiving of one of his most important paintings, the *Atelier du peintre*, which was intended as a unique declaration of his ability to understand the past, predict the course of social evolution and guide humanity into an harmonious future. In this painting, the criticism that the politics and social values of the Second Empire regime were narrow-minded was expressed through the artist's own claims to knowledge of social development since ancient times: Napoleon III would lead society to destruction; Courbet would save the world. Despite the grandiosity of these claims, Courbet simply adopted the leading social role assigned to artists in positivism in order to invest his work with social, philosophical and political credibility. Considering these aspects of Courbet's work in this new light, this thesis has furnished the discovery of a hitherto unrecognised pictorial source for the *Atelier du peintre*, an ancient caricature also entitled 'L'Atelier du peintre.' The philosophical and historical interest of this caricature to positivists such as Émile Littré and Champfleury, as well as to the educated public at large, made it a suitable visual template through which the artist could express his positivist views and criticise the Second Empire regime.

Next, we have seen that the relationship between Courbet's work and positivism was articulated through analyses of Courbet's representations of the physical appearance of ordinary people and animals in their daily activity. Many of these analyses were expressed through the concept of 'the physical and the moral,' the physiological assumption that

human health was connected to the entire complex of interconnected human phenomena. There were two benchmarks of health in positivist adaptations of this idea discernible in interpretations of Courbet's work: an ideal physiological condition to be attained through altruism or an ideal physiological condition to be attained through nourishing biological existence. Effectively ignored in the existing scholarship on Courbet, each of these two ideals engendered a certain notion of equality that was central to the unifying imperatives of the altruistic or anti-religious stance taken by critics examined in this thesis. In the former instance, people were considered equal in the sense that they all fostered an inherent physiological need to care for each other and live together harmoniously. In the latter, humans were thought to share equal status with animals and organisms as physiological beings governed by nature's biological systems.

Two further key research findings emerging from this thesis concern the established conventions of communication, expression and understanding through which Courbet's work was seen by his contemporaries to convey positivist ideas. This is another area of enquiry receiving scant attention in the existing secondary sources. These two findings are highly significant since they testify to the effectiveness with which Courbet's work was seen to convey positivist ideas and potentially to influence society. Firstly, as evident in the interpretations of Courbet's work examined here, positivist postulations of the concept of the physical and the moral and their associated ideals were often made in association with physiognomy and phrenology. These means of 'reading' the physiological condition of people were applied in positivist interpretations of Courbet's work according to the ideals already mentioned, either to judge the state of the contemporary society represented or to highlight the biological nature of it. Courbet's paintings of animals were similarly taken to be demonstrations of biological existence, the animal's body and activity

being 'read' as products of their natural environment. Even when it came to positivist interpretations of Courbet's pure landscape paintings – paintings without human or animal subjects – the landscape was often viewed according to its potential to sustain the physiology of living beings.

Secondly, the positivist character of Courbet's representations of ordinary, contemporary people was expressed, communicated and given critical leverage through the interrelated conventions of physiognomy, portraiture and caricature. This thesis has shown that these conventions provided Courbet with the means to express, commentators with the means to articulate, and the viewer with the means to perceive forms of social documentary and criticism based upon the assumptions that human physiology was closely related to its social environment and that this relationship was discernible in bodily appearance. It is well-known that physiognomical principles were widely understood and commonly applied during the period in question. However, the particularly positivist engagement with these principles evident in interpretations of Courbet's work has hitherto remained largely unexplored. Combined with conventions of portraiture and caricature in commentaries about Courbet's work, these principles were thought to constitute particularly insightful and easily recognised forms of social documentary and criticism. An expression of the body beneath, clothing was considered an extension of a person's physiognomy and thus an important consideration when expressing such social documentary and criticism.

The next key research finding concerns the power that the positivist images created by Courbet were perceived to have, another significant area insufficiently addressed in the existing Courbet scholarship. 'Idealised' through physiognomy, portraiture and caricature, the aesthetic qualities of these images were thought to have the power to teach and

influence people according to the two central positivist ideals: the attainment of an altruistic society or the recognition of the biological nature of human existence. The power of these images depended upon a number of pictorial devices whose positivist application by Courbet has hitherto remained largely unrecognised. Firstly, the image had to be strikingly familiar in the viewer's eyes: the subject had to be immediately recognisable as a person of a kind that the viewer may know. Secondly, the subject had to be portrayed both as an individual and a social type: the subject's character had to be revealed in all its dimensions, according to both personal attributes and typical traits. Thirdly, the image had to be critical: the subject's represented character had to form a physical and moral critique of the social conditions indicated by it. With widely recognised satirical, ironic and allegorical potential, caricature was particularly important in this respect. The key role of caricature in positivist interpretations of Courbet's work has remained unexplored in the existing secondary sources. Yet, this thesis has shown that Courbet's positivist interpreters considered caricature's enduring critical capacity since ancient times to be an instrument of social evolution, and that they considered his caricatural technique to have a particularly positivist resonance and sharp social impact. This is another aspect of Courbet's work that has revealed his use of an ancient caricature as a compositional template for the *Atelier du peintre*, a painting designed specifically to wield social, moral and political power.

The research undertaken here has also shown that the idea of artistic idealism articulated in some critiques of Courbet's work was connected to positivist views about the physiological nature of the human aesthetic faculty. Related again to the assumption that human beings had an innate sympathy for others, or 'sociability,' this important aspect of Courbet's work has hitherto received insufficient attention in its positivist context. For some interpreters of Courbet's work, the creation and experience of the aesthetic both had

their source in the human physiology and were connected either to social utility or the communication of an understanding about human existence. All cases related to the positivist entrustment in medical science to reveal the truth of the biological nature of life and in no case was aesthetic experience considered to be disinterested. With regard to social utility, the aesthetic experience stimulated by Courbet's paintings was considered part of the mechanics of social evolution towards altruism. The creation of the aesthetic relied upon the artist's physiological capacity to represent the truth of the biological nature of sociability and social existence. The experience of the aesthetic relied upon the viewer's physiological capacity to respond to the truth represented and was considered a stimulus both to emotion and action in the service of sociability. In such views, the aesthetic faculty, like the human physiology generally, remained inextricably linked to society – the primary biological condition of human life. In other positivist interpretations of Courbet's work, the primary purpose of the aesthetic was the communication of these biological truths. Seen to have social consequences, such communication again lent itself to the support of either of two extreme positions: a reinforcement of the existing social order or an anti-religious rejection of the idea of divine creation and its attendant regressive social values.

Finally, Courbet himself emerges from the reconstruction in this thesis in a somewhat different light to that cast upon him in art historical accounts to date. In particular, this thesis has revealed the much neglected richness and substantiveness of his philosophical views in relation to his working practice and the political context of his time. The artist's views were not set out or elucidated in a single text and were not programmatically formulated in the way that some prominent thinkers of the time formulated their philosophical systems. Yet, whilst Courbet articulated the different dimensions of his views in different texts, the interconnections of these disparate statements

in relation to his artistic practice are clearly evident upon close examination. In this way, his statements combined to form a rich and coherent positivist philosophy operating through such key concepts as ‘the physical and the moral,’ ‘synthesis’ and ‘series.’ His philosophy was importantly informed by the views of some prominent contemporary figures including Proudhon and Champfleury. However, Courbet invested his work with distinctive ideas formulated through his own intimate knowledge of his working practice and the expressive means available to him. In particular, the *Atelier du peintre* – arguably the signature painting of his positivism – was a successful pictorial expression and resolution of various key positivist assertions concerning history and social evolution. In this painting, the artist uniquely marshalled these assertions to the tasks of criticising the dominant social and political values of the time and offering solutions based upon some highly significant philosophical theories of the period. Rather than a mere reflection of the artist’s extravagance and arrogance, the grandiose claims expressed in the painting reflected the grandiose nature of positivism itself, the philosophy’s ambitious and evidently unsuccessful attempt to finally resolve all human conflict and establish everlasting social harmony. As this thesis has shown, Courbet deployed positivism in a distinctive and powerful way through his work. He skilfully exploited the codes and conventions at his disposal to convey his views with impact whilst negotiating the constraints imposed upon artistic expression at the time. In this sense, he may be seen to have understood the practical aim of positivism more fully than many of his like-minded contemporaries.

Courbet was a major artist of the nineteenth century and the importance and complexity of his work has gained increasing recognition in the huge amount of art historical attention paid to it in recent years. This thesis has shown that positivism was a highly significant aspect of both Courbet’s work and the manner in which social and

political ideas were expressed, debated and designed for impact within the art criticism of the period. Clearly, in view of the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis, the existing view of Courbet's place in the history art needs to be revised.

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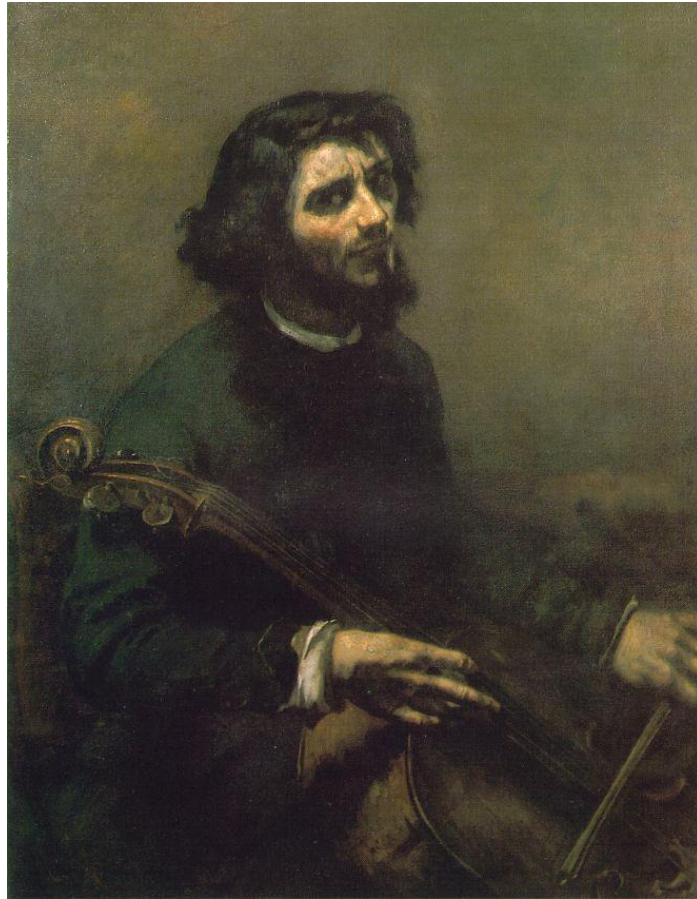
Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet! The Bruyas Collection from the Musée Fabre Montpellier, catalogue of exhibition organised by the Musée Fabre, Montpellier, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, with the Dallas Museum of Art and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco under the auspices of FRAME (French Regional and American Museum Exchange), Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, and Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, 2004. Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

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Figure 1



Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier du peintre: allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique*, 1854-55. Oil on canvas, 359 x 598cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 2

Gustave Courbet, *Le violoncelliste*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 117 x 89cm.
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Figure 3

Etienne-Hippolyte Maindron, *Attila et Sainte-Geneviève*, 1845. Plaster, 250cm H, 130cm L, 285cm P. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers.

Figure 4



Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres*, 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).

Figure 5



Gustave Courbet, *Un enterrement à Ornans*, 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 315 x 668cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 6



Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).

Figure 7

Gustave Courbet, *Casseurs de pierres* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 190 x 300cm. Formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (destroyed).

Figure 8

Gustave Courbet, *Un enterrement à Ornans* (detail), 1849-50. Oil on canvas, 315 x 668cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 9



Jean Léon Gérôme, *Un Intérieur grec*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 155 x 210cm.

Figure 10



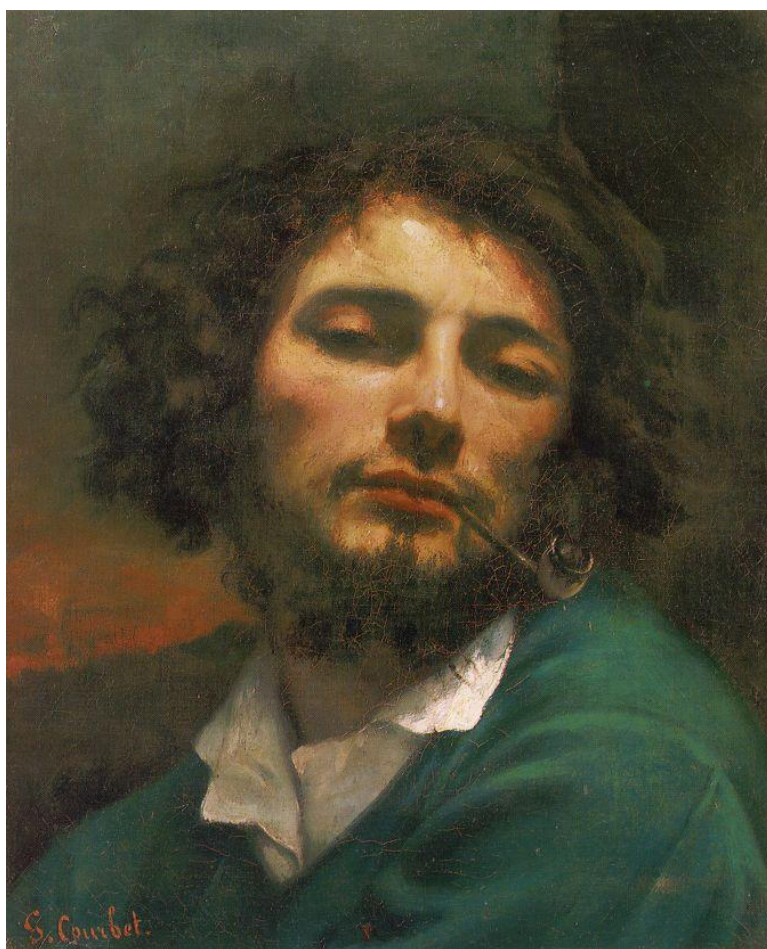
Louis Eugène Gabriel Isabey, *L'Embarquement de Ruyter et William de Witt*, 1850-1. Oil on panel, 124cm x 168cm. Musée naval, Toulon.

Figure 11

Eugène Isabey, *Episode du mariage de Henri IV*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 126cm x 95cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 12

Gustave Courbet, *Les Paysans de Flagey revenant de la foire*, 1850-55, oil on canvas, 206 x 275 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon.

Figure 13

Gustave Courbet, *Portrait de l'auteur, L'Homme à la pipe*, c1848-9. Oil on canvas, 45 x 37cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Figure 14

Jean-François Millet, *Le Semeur*, 1846-7. Oil on canvas, 74 x 60cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts.

Figure 15

Jean-François Millet, *Les botteleurs de foin*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 56 x 65cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 16



Joseph Palizzi, *Le Retour de la foire*, 1849. Oil on canvas, 95 x 130cm. Musée Saint-Didier, Langres.

Figure 17

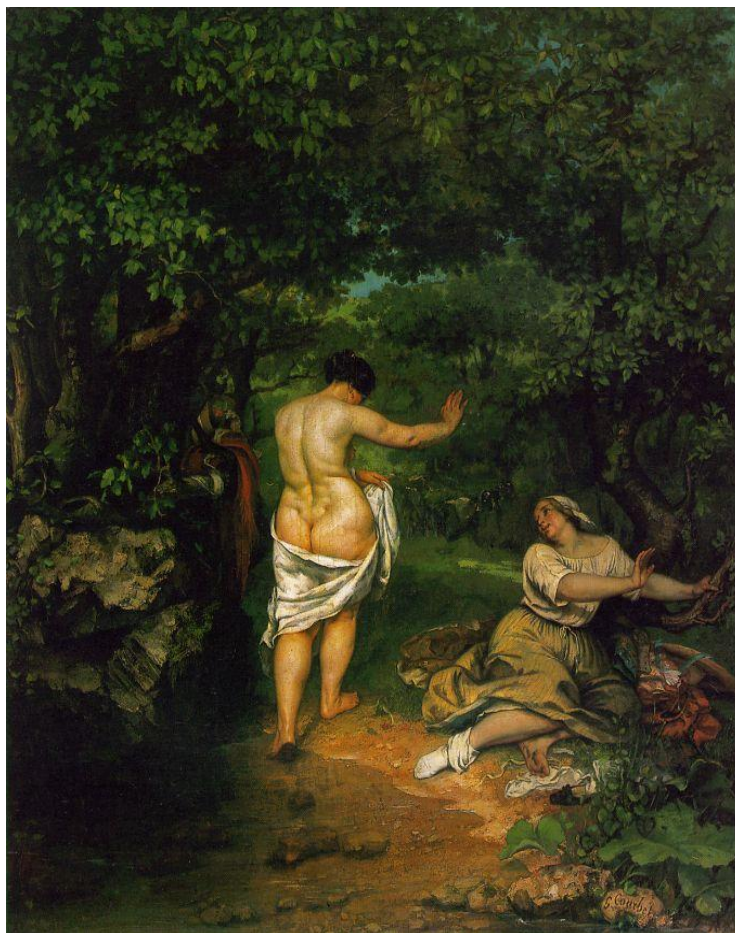


Nicolas Poussin, *Paysage avec les funérailles de Phocion*, 1648-50. Oil on canvas, 114 x 175cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 18



Jean-Pierre-Alexandre Antigna, *Les enfants dans les blés*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 55cm x 70cm. L'Illustration, 1851.

Figure 19

Gustave Courbet, *Baigneuses*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 227 x 193cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Figure 20

Titian, *Venus Anadyomene*, c1520-5. Oil on canvas, 75.80 x 57.60cm. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Figure 21



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Venus Anadyomene*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 163 x 92cm. Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

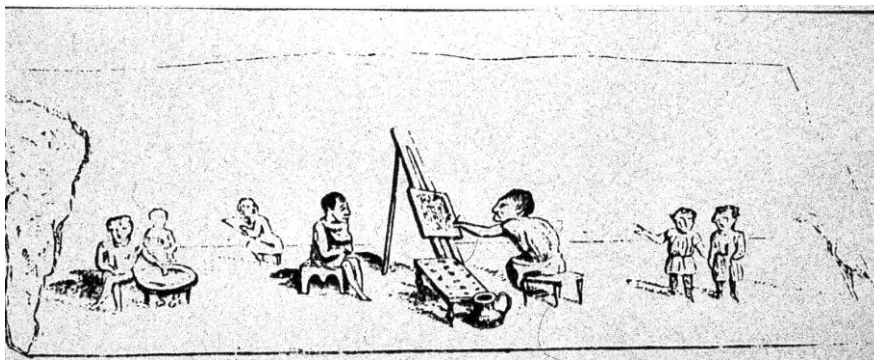
Figure 22

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *La vicomtesse d'Haussonville*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 131.8 x 92cm. Frick Collection, New York.

Figure 23

Gustave Courbet, *La rencontre ou Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*, 1854. Oil on canvas, 129 x 149cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Figure 24



'L'Atelier du peintre,' d'après une fresque de la casa Carolina, à Pompéi.

Figure 25



'L'Atelier du peintre,' d'après Guillaume Zahn, d'après une fresque de la casa Carolina, à Pompéi.

Figure 26

Gustave Courbet, *Le rut du printemps*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 356 x 508cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 27

Gustave Courbet, *Le cerf à l'eau, chasse à courre*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 220 x 275cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille.

Figure 28



Gustave Courbet, *Les curés revenant de la conférence*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 229 x 330cm. Destroyed.

Figure 29



Gustave Courbet, *Entrée en conférence*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 8.5 x 10.5cm, 1868.

Figure 30

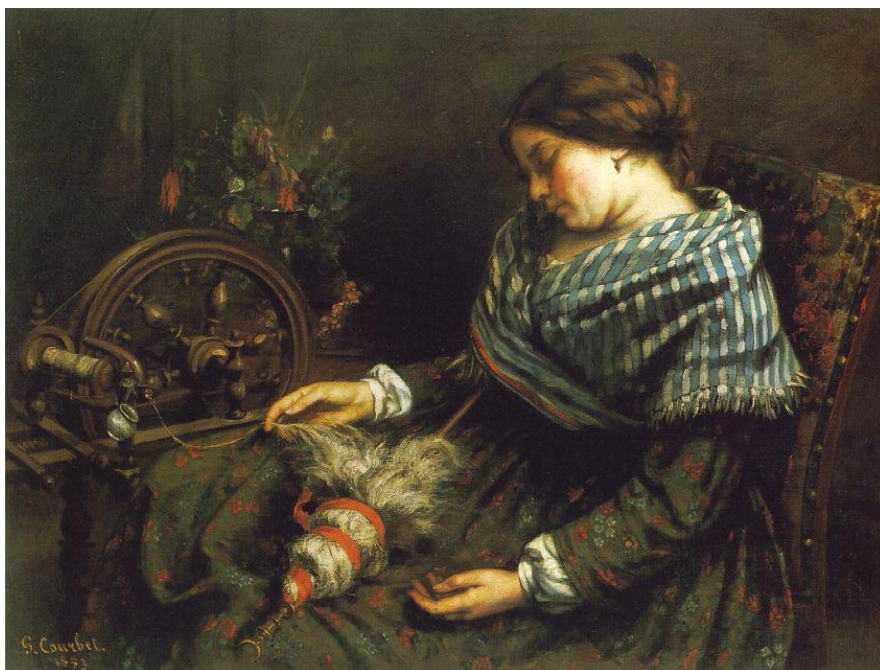


Gustave Courbet, *Autre mode de retour de la conférence*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 9 x 11cm, 1868.

Figure 31



Gustave Courbet, *Les coucher des conférenciers*, illustration for anonymous tract, *Les Curés en goguette*, 9 x 11cm, 1868.

Figure 32

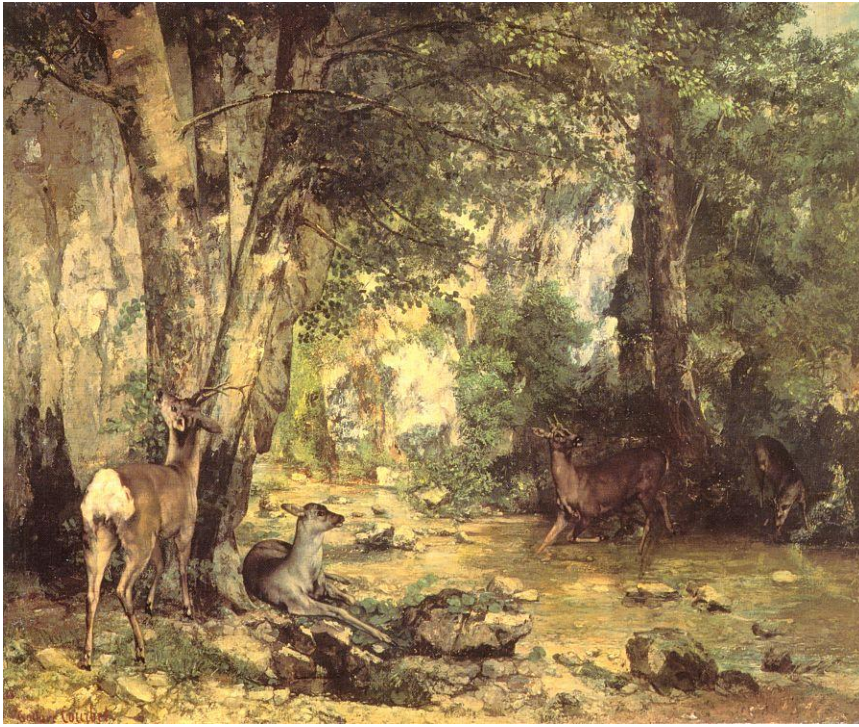
Gustave Courbet, *La fileuse endormie*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 91 x 116cm. Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

Figure 33

Gustave Courbet, *Les curés revenant de la conférence* [detail], 1862. Oil on canvas, 229 x 330cm. Destroyed.

Figure 34

Gustave Courbet, *Le sommeil*, or *Les Dormeuses*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 135 x 200cm. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris.

Figure 35

Gustave Courbet, *La remise de chevreuils au ruisseau de Plaisir Fontaine, Doubs*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 174 x 209cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 36

Gustave Courbet, *Remise de chevreuils en hiver*, c1866. Oil on canvas, 34 x 72.5cm. Musée de Lyons.

Figure 37

Gustave Courbet, *La truite*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 87cm. Kunsthaus, Zurich.

Figure 38

Gustave Courbet, *Après la chasse*, c.1859. Oil on canvas, 236.2 x 186.1cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection.

Figure 39

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Three Graces*, c1636-1638. Oil on canvas, 221 x 181 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Figure 40

Jacob Jordaens, *Allegory of Fertility*, c1623. Oil on canvas, 180 x241 cm. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.