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Willibald Sauerländer, *Manet Paints Monet: A Summer in Argenteuil*, tr. David Dollenmayer. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014. 80 pp. 30 color and 8 b/w illustrations, notes. \$19.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-60606-428-3.

Review by Nancy Locke, The Pennsylvania State University.

The relationship of Édouard Manet to the Impressionist movement has always been an alluring one. Although Manet refused to participate in the “Société Anonyme” exhibitions, the first of which was held at the photographer Nadar’s studio in 1874, it has been tempting to draw a line to connect the Parisian painter born in 1832 with the work of artists born about a decade later. It is true that Manet was instrumental to the Impressionists’ focus on modern life subjects, but Manet was never an Impressionist, and judging from his exhibition history, he did not want to be seen as one. The book under consideration, Willibald Sauerländer’s *Manet Paints Monet: A Summer in Argenteuil*, looks hard at the juncture between Manet and Impressionism, and comes down on the side of those who want to see Manet not only as an inspiration to the Impressionist movement, but also as an artist who was drawn in to Impressionism. Although some Manet scholars (and I count myself among them) would see this as a fundamentally flawed premise, there is much to recommend this delightful short book.

Based on a lecture that the preeminent German art historian gave in 2004, and beautifully translated by David Dollenmayer, *Manet Paints Monet* begins with the 38-year-old painter’s joining the National Guard at the start of the disastrous Franco-Prussian War. Having dispatched his wife Suzanne and her son Léon (known publicly as her younger brother) to safety in the French Pyrenees, Manet stayed in the capital and endured the hardships of Paris under siege. Sauerländer draws a vivid sketch of the bleakness and privation of the period. Even more brilliant is his concise account of Manet’s *Interior at Arcachon* of 1871 (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute), a small painting of Suzanne and Léon in their coastal retreat. Musing that the painting “might have been more appropriately titled *Ennui* or *Vacances*,” Sauerländer writes: “The desolate mood that followed the lost war, the discomfort of the rented rooms, the urban visitors’ ambivalent relationship to nature, both nostalgic and inhibited—Manet has drawn together all these aspects in one of the most powerfully expressive yet completely unromantic window paintings of the bourgeois century” (p. 16). In passages like this one, Sauerländer’s attention to questions of the social yields real insight as well as great prose.

If Sauerländer seems to be leaning a bit heavily on the malaise of the war and postwar years in the book’s opening pages, it would be to set the stage for “the liberation—the conversion to light glinting off water and to summer” that the author sees in Manet’s work of 1874 (p. 19). “Conversion” is hardly accurate; there remained plenty of portraits and interiors in the painter’s second decade of work. “Liberation,” too, misleads, as it presumes that Impressionist painting was inherently more freeing than the urban brand of Realism Manet had pioneered. Sauerländer even states that the years 1872 and 1873 were not “among the most brilliant of Manet’s career” (p. 16). Here, Sauerländer’s rhetorical drive to create a binary contrast between the work Manet made in Argenteuil in 1874 and the work that had come before creates a false impression. In January of 1872, Paul Durand-Ruel purchased twenty-four of Manet’s paintings; flush with cash, Manet moved into a spacious studio near the Gare Saint-Lazare. We

may not see the equivalent of *Olympia* in 1872–73, but we do see Manet producing *The Railroad, Masked Ball at the Opera* (both in the National Gallery, Washington), and some of his most candid portraits of Berthe Morisot.

There is more to Sauerländer's choice of the word "liberation" to characterize Manet's *The Boat (Claude Monet in His Floating Studio)* of 1874, the canvas in the Neue Pinakothek, Munich that is the book's main focus. "Now, [Monet] paints nothing but the landscape and its mirrorings and reflections on the water," Sauerländer writes as he equates Impressionist painting with a "liberation" from "the bonds of literary texts that dictated the academic subjects for artists" (p. 61). If Sauerländer reserves some detachment for Manet, whose perspective as a Parisian allows him to paint Monet in Argenteuil with an "outsider's eye," the author nevertheless sees Manet as beguiled by Impressionism. In a number of passages, Sauerländer equates Impressionism with a picture of mobility, pleasure, and hence freedom, and in this sense he follows in the footsteps of Meyer Schapiro. With Manet as his focus, though, he needs to return to the question of what it means to paint Monet's "aquatic, deracinated, free-floating" studio on the Seine, and hence, Impressionism's view of the world (p. 61).

Sauerländer's response to the problem of Manet's vision of Monet is twofold. As he demonstrated in his analysis of *Interior at Arcachon*, he begins with the social: "Thus Manet took an Impressionism that was actually foreign to him and turned it into a socially coded and very specific narrative style—or one could call it an iconographic mode: the 'vacation painting'" (p. 42). The idea that Manet painted ennui is not a new one, but Sauerländer gives it a particular emphasis as he focuses on paintings of figures in and around the boating scenes of the mid-1870s. Sauerländer also weaves in another strand of analysis, however. *The Boat (Claude Monet in His Floating Studio)* does not merely demonstrate Manet's translation of his older figurative mode from *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* to the new suburban setting of Argenteuil. It is also a painting of a studio, and this idea occupies Sauerländer for the last part of the book. "Portraying the painter in his studio was always painting's means of self-reflection—painting reflecting on the mystery of its own mimetic creations" (p. 54). Through a comparison of the painting with other great studio scenes such as Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, Sauerländer arrives at a way of seeing *The Boat* that emphasizes both Manet's own sensibility and his homage to Monet's new painting style.

One of the great pleasures of *Manet Paints Monet* lies in its retention of the feel of the original lecture. Descriptions are vivid, the pace is brisk; the book can easily be read in a sitting. Sauerländer makes some of his best points through comparisons: the relationship between Claude and Camille Monet in the Munich painting can be understood through a long look at an *ébauche* of the same subject in Stuttgart. Sauerländer's perceptive analysis of *Boating* of 1874 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) comes to us through a comparison with *Argenteuil*, an ambitious figure painting from the same year (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai).

Specialists in nineteenth-century French painting will want to argue with Sauerländer's shift from an emphasis on Manet's (and Monet's) socially-coded portraits of modern life to a view of modernism that stresses its autonomy: "what is at stake is the liberation of contemporary, autonomous painting from the excess baggage of a long since moribund iconography" (p. 64). Old tropes about modernism's rejection of iconography rest uneasily with Sauerländer's pointed perceptions of Manet's documenting upper middle-class vacation ennui. But even specialists in modernism will admire the book's structure, its language, its almost loving analysis of individual pictures. Eminently readable, well illustrated, and light on footnotes, it is a book a young scholar could give to her grandmother if the latter asked what art history was. That same young scholar would probably take issue with many points along the way, and rightly so, but would do well to emulate the author's breadth of vision of what modern painting can do.

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