Fig. 337 **Vassilii Vassilievich Vereshchagin**, *The Apotheosis of War*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 50 × 77½". Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

here been joined in what, to modern eyes, may look more like a photographer's trick than an imaginative re-creation of the mythic centaur. In Böcklin's art, as in that of many of his contemporaries who, in the heyday of Realism, clung to timeless, symbolic themes, the sense of observed, palpable facts—studio models, real animals, specific landscape sites—pervades the abstract climate of myth and allegory, often creating an odd clash of old and new worlds.

One of the most bizarre fusions of photographic reportage and high moral outrage about war can be found in the work of the Russian Vassilii Vereshchagin (1842–1904), who studied first in St. Petersburg, and then with Gérôme, whose technique he extended to the domain of journalistic documentation of war. From the Turkestan wars of 1867–70 to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 (during which he died at Port Arthur on a sinking battleship), he was a recorder of international wartime atrocities—both Western and Eastern—which he hoped to protest publicly through his accurate eyewitness depictions. Vereshchagin, an extreme case of that classic psychological syndrome of being morbidly attracted to what one presumes to hate, created his most unforgettable image, *The Apotheosis of War* (fig. 337), in 1871. Like Daumier's vision of that year, it might almost symbolize human barbarism at any time and place. Coincident with the trauma of the Franco-Prussian War, the painting represents, however, not Western brutality, but a grim memento of the Turkestan wars. A pyramid of human skulls, left for crows to feed on in a desolate landscape, remains as a testimony of the victorious army, a tradition that went back to the days of the fourteenth-century Mongol despot Tamerlane. The inscribed dedication on the frame underlines the moralizing message of the title—"To all great conquerors—past, present, and future"—although the painting also exists as a quasi-photographic record of a time-honored sadistic ritual in Central Asia. Vereshchagin's grandly humanitarian message is essentially no different from that of Böcklin's battling centaurs; but Vereshchagin substitutes for the traditional symbols of classical mythology a modern ethnographic document that, especially to Western eyes, expanded knowledge of exotic customs of life and death, and could thus be gruesomely instructive as well as morally uplifting.

1874: The First Impressionist Exhibition

For many French painters of the 1870s, the trauma of war, whether international or civil, was virtually censored out of

their art, though it could not be from their lives. Some decided to flee Paris for the provinces or other countries; others entered military service which, in one case, Bazille's, was fatal. Although Manet recorded poignant or tragic vignettes of the Commune in small prints, most of his younger contemporaries (Degas, Monet, Renoir) who had been pursuing in the late 1860s the goals of truth to rapid, casual perceptions had always tended to avoid problematic subject matter and could hardly have considered grappling with a theme as grave as war. By the end of 1871, they were back in Paris again and, like most people after a war, tried to resume their earlier life and work as quickly and as uninterruptedly as possible, continuing to paint with ever greater refinement the fleeting pleasures and spectacles of city and country.

For these painters, alienation from the official Salon system and the public was rapidly increasing. In 1873, in order to accommodate the growing number of artists whose viewpoint clashed with the conservative Salon juries, a new Salon des Refusés was created, though one that compromised the artists' freedom by imposing another jury to select works from the rejected group. What was needed, Monet and many younger artists felt, was an exhibition space where one did not have to compromise with authority, a place where many kinds of fresh and audacious painting could be shown to the public, work made not by artists who had been voted out of the Salon establishment, but by artists who wished to turn their backs on it entirely. On December 27, 1873, a group of artists drew up a charter, comparable with that of a business corporation, and called itself the "Société Anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc. . . .". Only months later, on April 15, 1874 (two weeks before the official Salon), their first exhibition opened to the public in the vacated studio of the photographer Nadar, on the second floor of a building that faced the Boulevard des Capucines, one of the city's most bustling thoroughfares. Unlike the Salon, where many tiers of paintings on high walls meant that younger and unfavored artists were fated to be "skied," that is, shown at the very top and hence virtually invisible, this democratic group showed paintings in only two rows, the smaller pictures below.

Of the thirty artists who showed one hundred and sixty-five works, most have been forgotten. (Who has ever seen a painting by Pierre Bureau or Émilien Mulot-Durivage?) But a small group of artists attained there a public notoriety that immediately demanded a strong critical response, if only one of outrage and condemnation, as well as a name. In a review that appeared only ten days after the opening, Louis Leroy, a critic known for spoofing, coined the name "Impressionists" to describe the offending artists. Four days later, the new name was reiterated in a more sympathetic account by Jules Castagnary, who had often supported Millet, Courbet, and Manet in the 1860s and who was able, quite correctly, to recognize that the viewpoint of the Impressionists was somehow an extension of the premises of Realism, perceiving that their overt lack of finish had to do with their wish "not to render a landscape but the sensation produced by a landscape."

Of what in retrospect seems a very diverse group of paintings, it was this willful sketchiness, this satisfaction with a moment's perception that was the most overtly startling and unifying characteristic. And it was clearly the work of Monet that pushed this intense abbreviation of art and experience to the most radical extremes. For one of the five canvases he showed there, a sunrise at Le Havre painted from a window, he chose the title *Impression, Sunrise*, realizing that to call it a view of Le Havre would arouse expectations of conventional description. He might also have called an "Impression" the now famous *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris* (fig. 338), which he painted in 1873 from the windows of the very studio, Nadar's, on whose walls it now hung for the public and critics to jeer or to wonder at. Like his sketch of *La Grenouillère* of 1869 (see fig. 304), the *Boulevard des Capucines* may at first seem an illegible confusion of blotchy, random movement. Yet again, each brushtroke has a corollary in something observed, whether the dark silhouettes at the extreme right which correspond to top-hatted figures on a balcony looking down, as we do, at the boulevard below; the streaks of white on the leafless trees that suggest a thin coating of the snow that covers the ground; or the almost indecipherable pink blobs at the lower right which describe a cluster of toy balloons freely floating in this pulsating world of perpetual motion. In fact, the sensation of airborne weightlessness, of viewing the familiar trees, buildings, crowds, and carriages as an unfamiliar aesthetic spectacle, could hardly be more appropriate to the locale of the first Impressionist exhibition.

Nadar's studio had become a meeting place for artists and writers who were at odds with the political and artistic establishment. And more to the point, Nadar, the nickname of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820–1910), was not only a successful portraitist who immortalized such famous Parisians as Charles Baudelaire and Sarah Bernhardt, but a pioneer in the domain of aerial photography, ascending the skies over Paris in his own balloon, *Le Géant* (The Giant), and documenting what lay below. Perilously suspended in the balloon's passenger basket, he began in 1858 to invent a wholly new way of seeing in tune with the technological innovations that, like railways, anaesthesia, or photography itself, supported the mid-century's optimistic vision of scientific progress. (It is no surprise that artists who were eager to keep up with Parisian headlines—Daumier, Manet, among others—depicted Nadar's airborne marvel.) And apart from providing the unfamiliar thrill of bird's-eye views from a height that, with the advent of the airplane, would become a commonplace, his aerial

Fig. 338 **Claude Monet**, *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 31¾ × 23½". Nelson Gallery—Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

photographs also made clearly visible the new geometric order of the city as reconstructed during the Second Empire under the direction of Napoleon III's prefect, Baron Haussmann. In one of the most complex of what he called "photographies aérostatiques," taken in July 1868 (fig. 339), we see not one photograph of the new urban axes that radiate from the Arc de Triomphe, but eight of them, a composite of different views that methodically document an orderly sequence of events in time and space. In this, Nadar was not only a pathbreaker in the annals of aerial photography, but a prophet of the goals of many photographers of the 1880s who, like Marey (see fig. 405), tried to depict accurately, as in scientific diagrams, the split-second physiological changes of human and animal bodies in motion.

Monet's *Boulevard des Capucines* belongs to this new concept of discovering the excitement of unfamiliar sights born in a modern world. Many photographers, more earthbound than Nadar, had also been recording overhead views (some stereoscopic) of Paris, and Monet's painted spectacle of one of the city's busy new thoroughfares as seen from a balcony is part of this growingly popular vantage point. In fact, exploring the spectacle of urban theater below as seen from the window or balcony of a private residence, it was

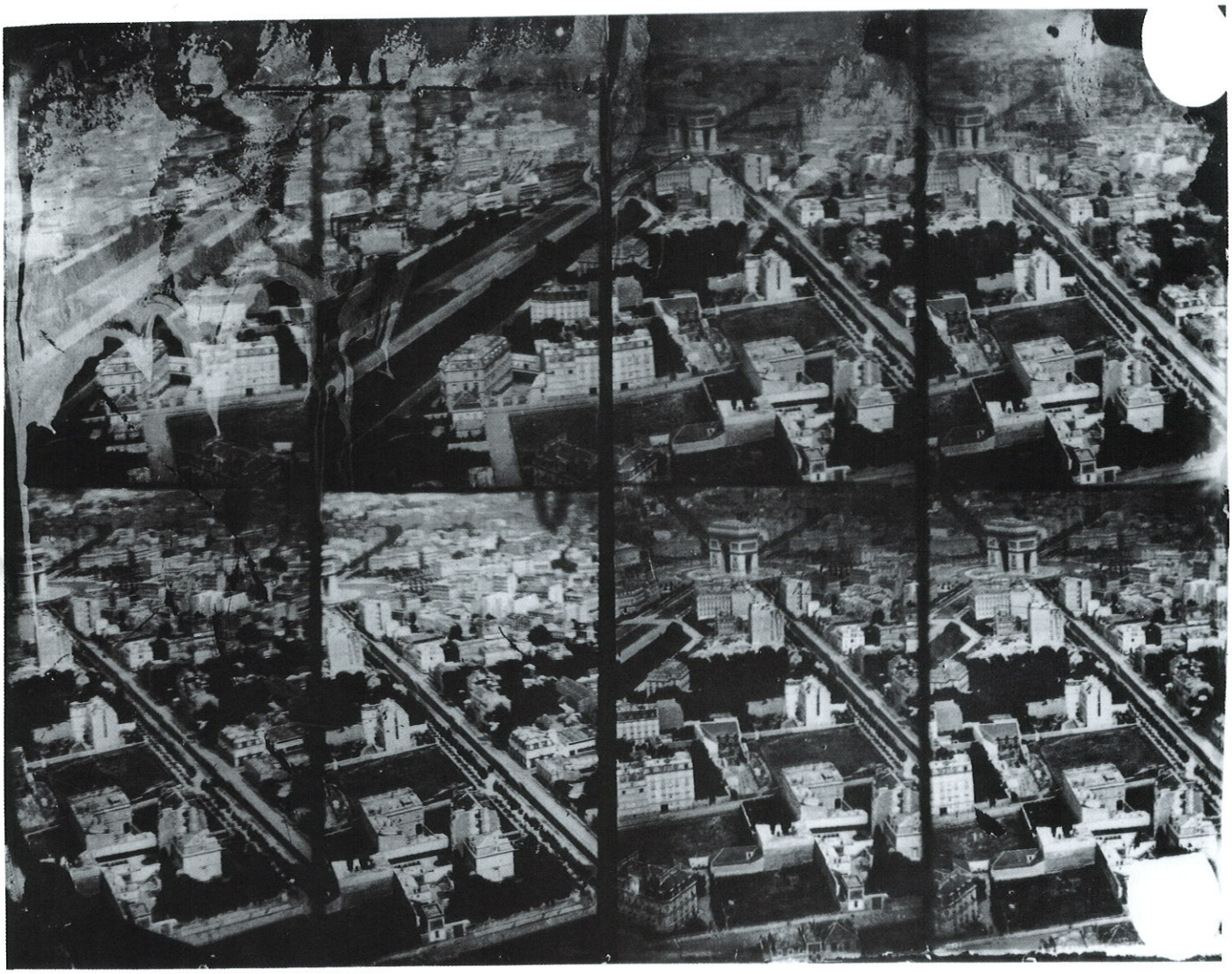

Fig. 339 **Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon)**, *The Arc de Triomphe and the Grand Boulevards, Paris, from a Balloon*, 1868. Modern gelatin silver print from the original negative. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, Paris.

to become a familiar part of the Impressionist repertory. Innovative, too, was Monet's changing attitude toward the role of immediacy and finish. Unlike *La Grenouillère* (see fig. 304), which he conceived as only a rough painted notation for a larger painting to be submitted to the 1870 Salon, the *Boulevard des Capucines* was conceived and exhibited as an end in itself, satisfying to the artist and his colleagues, but clearly an affront to inherited standards of finish. For example, Leroy, who had inadvertently baptized Impressionism, derisively commented on the "black tongue-lickings" in the lower part of the painting, adding what a joke it was that these crude scratches could represent people. Had Menzel's *Departure of Wilhelm I* (see fig. 335) been exhibited there, it probably would not have elicited such scorn, since despite its similarity to the Monet (including the viewers looking over the second-floor balcony and the puffy painting of the trees that line the avenue), the description of the figures in the foreground, if not the background, is precise enough to record details of costume and even of facial expression. But Monet has taken these urban components and dissolved them into a fluid, open world of such constant interchange and blurred movement that the stovepipe hats and black coats of the gentlemen seem indistinguishable in shape and substance from the dark frames of the horse-drawn carriages. The weave of brushwork is now so intricate a mesh of varied, rapid strokes that the substance of things seems totally annihilated. Even the building facades, with their swift, vertical strokes for windows, fuse and evaporate before our eyes.

For shocked viewers in 1874, the most obvious cause of this dematerialized world was the broken, seemingly spontaneous brushstrokes that marked so many Impressionist canvases. They not only upset the sense of a stable, measured order in which near and far, up and down, discrete objects and fixed colors could be counted on, but they also implied an impudent rejection of the officially learned craft

Fig. 340 **Berthe Morisot**, *Hide-and-Seek*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 17¾ × 21¾". Private collection.

of painting, substituting what looked like childishly incompetent daubs of bright colored pigment. Such offences could be found at the Impressionist exhibition even in what seems to us today as innocuous a work as *Hide-and-Seek* of 1873 (fig. 340) by Berthe Morisot (1841–95), an intimate member of Manet's circle, who often posed for him and who, later in 1874, was to marry his brother Eugène. Morisot, who had earlier commented on how successfully Bazille had merged sunlit figure and landscape in his 1868 *View of the Village* (see fig. 299), pushed this fusion even further here. Choosing again the mother-and-child theme that was so often considered appropriate in the nineteenth century to the repertory of women painters, Morisot virtually camouflages the mother, daughter, and parasol in what then seemed a recklessly incompetent tangle of few and ragged brushstrokes. For most viewers, it was almost impossible to sort out grass from dress, hat from distant houses, hiding child from the tree that hides her. As Leroy mockingly put it, "That young lady [Morisot] isn't interested in trifling details. When she has to paint a hand, she makes exactly as many lengthwise brushstrokes as there are fingers, and it's done. Stupid people who are fussy about the drawing of a hand don't understand a thing about Impressionism."

The same kind of response greeted the five works submitted by Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), the senior figure of the Impressionist group. In his long artistic career, Pissarro reflected closely the major changes of approach to landscape and cityscape that marked the evolution of French painting from the 1860s to the end of the century, from the reign of Corot to that of Seurat; and his generous, paternal nature made him the natural protector and tutor of younger artists who, like Cézanne and later Gauguin and Van Gogh, wished to absorb what seemed the most advanced development of contemporary art, Impressionism. Painted in 1873, his seemingly on-the-spot record of, as the title pinpointed it, *Hoarfrost: The Old Road to Ennery, Pontoise* (fig. 341), elicited the usual scorn in Leroy's imaginary dialogue with a traditional landscape painter confronted with these

Fig. 341 **Camille Pissarro**, *Hoarfrost: The Old Road to Ennery, Pontoise*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 25⅝ × 36⅝". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Impressionist heresies. The old master rubs his eyeglasses, thinking them dirty, and comments on how the hoarfrost on the plowed furrows looks like palette scrapings on a dirty canvas, and how the painting as a whole has neither top nor bottom, front nor back. Here, indeed, Pissarro's efforts to record the veiled effect of frost over roughly striated earth produce elusive, blurred patterns that are made even more immaterial as a result of the surprisingly original intrusion of diagonal shadows cast across the earth, from lower right to center, by invisible trees whose actual presence is presumed to be outside the spectator's field of vision. The world, as Leroy's outraged viewer complained, seems unanchored, the high horizon flattening both shadow and substance, earth and filmy frost, into a muffled tapestry of ragged brushstrokes that seem to have far more physical presence than the landscape illusions they presumably create.

Despite all this newness, the critic Castagnary recognized that the motif of the old farmer, with the bundle of faggots on his back, recalled the work of Millet, whose fusion of peasant figures within rugged French landscapes, like this wintry one near Pontoise, where Pissarro spent long periods away from Paris, provided a traditional source for what at first seemed so unconventional an image. Nevertheless, Pissarro was very much a man of the modern, industrial era. He was attracted to such specifically new subjects as the railroads and factories he could see in France, as well as in England at the time he fled the Franco-Prussian War; and, in the 1880s, he was to espouse many of the radical anarchist ideas shared by younger artists like Seurat. Yet this Impressionist painting resonates with an almost Romantic sense of the ancient ties between man and nature, whether in times of summer's bounty or winter's rigor. From the 1870s on, Pissarro's paintings register sensitively the ever-widening contrast between the traditional rhythms of rural life and the new ones of an urban society with bustling pedestrians and with clouds that must now merge with factory smoke.

As is usually the case when a new and startling kind of art appears as a group phenomenon, the public and the critics tended to lump these diverse artists together in a communal whole. To this day, the word Impressionist conjures up a shared, impersonal style. Obviously, the side-by-side painting campaigns of, say, Monet and Renoir contribute to this idea of artists sacrificing their individuality for some objective goal. Yet what is no less amazing is how, already at the first Imprssionist exhibition of 1874, each major figure also presented distinctively individual contours. For instance, there is no mistaking for a moment the aesthetic and emotional personality of Renoir in his *Loge* (fig. 342). He had also shown a scene of harvesters, a more sunny, loose-jointed version than Pissarro's of a Millet theme, but we immediately feel him more at home in this image of agreeable human relations and activities, here a well-dressed couple in an opera box, posed for by a new model, Nini Lopez, and the artist's brother. On principle, conservative spectators might have scoffed at the smudges of black and white paint that make indeterminate boundaries between the lady's and gentleman's evening attire and the fan that floats in a cottony lap, or at the flecks of pigment that do stenographic service for seven strands of pearls and a corsage. And they might also have found perplexing the odd cropping of elbow and armrest, or the double focus upon first the lady and then the gentleman, whose upraised opera glasses carry us way beyond the constructed field of this small painting. Nevertheless, despite such innovative technical and compositional devices that Renoir shared with Monet, Degas, and Manet, *The Loge* was a popular success, emanating the human warmth and conviviality that came to typify Renoir's art and life. Even the brushstrokes, like the choice of textures, have a pillowy softness that invites rather than wards off the spectator. And we may even note again that this presumably contemporary subject of an elegant modern theater audience carries with it the hedonistic flavor and opalescent tones that Renoir had studied and admired in the paintings of Boucher and Fragonard at the Louvre.

Next to Renoir's couple, enjoying Parisian entertainments, Degas's submissions—ten paintings, drawings, and pastels of dancers, laundresses, and the racetrack—were knotty with the psychological and spatial complexities that had always marked his work. Of these, *A Carriage at the Races* of 1870–72 (fig. 343), which, with other Impressionist works, was first shown in 1872 at the London branch of the Paris dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, is a marvel of intricate plotting, all the more amazing for its small dimensions (less than two feet wide), characteristic of the unpretentious, sketchlike size of most Impressionist paintings. Once more, the public would be bewildered by the very idea of exhibiting this as a finished picture. The carefully tended grass of the racecourse seems a thin sheet of opaque pale green that rises flatly more than it recedes to the distant tents; and the accents of white that stand for a horse's rump, the light on a carriage wheel, or a baby's clothing are so flat and glaring that no detail can be discerned. But, beyond these surface matters, there is Degas's clockwork balancing of shape and narrative, a pictorial juggling act that, for all the effect of instantaneous motion, is locked forever in place. The victoria that weighs down the right foreground and encroaches upon the spectator's space contains, of all unlikely things, a portrait group. Perched on the top of the driver's seat next to his pet pug is Paul Valpinçon, whose family had befriended Degas in his childhood and put him up in their country estate during the worst of the Commune. He looks down momentarily at his infant son, Henri, held in the nursemaid's lap, while his wife also pauses, parasol in hand, to cast an eye on her baby. But this family group, the subject of so many other artists' sentimental variations, is

Fig. 342 **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**, *The Loge*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 31 × 25″. Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.

Fig. 343 **Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas**, *A Carriage at the Races*, 1870–72. Oil on canvas, 14⅛ × 21⅝". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

here caught on the wing, momentarily capturing our attention, but then losing it, as we notice the startling cropping of the paired horses' legs and heads in the right corner, or the completely different spectacle of jockeys running a distant course while spectators on horses and in carriages, their backs in full or three-quarter view, casually observe these maneuvers. Moreover, more than half the little painting is dominated by an overcast, cloudy sky that bathes the entire scene in a grayish, filtered light.

Is this a depiction of the fashionable races outside Paris at Longchamp, is it a family portrait, is it principally a landscape, with people and horses accidentally intruding upon the clean sweep of turf, or is it all of these and more, an artful compilation of the unexpected multiplicity of modern experience in which spectator and spectacle, known people and strangers, the ordered and the random are constantly competing for our attention? Typically, Degas imposes the tyranny of his art upon this slice of elegant life, skewering every horse and rider, wheel and carriage, hat and harness in an invisible network of axial alignments that discipline these ostensibly accidental placements in a system of parallels, perpendiculars, and diagonals as orderly as the spokes on the carriage wheels or the marking posts of the racetrack. And if this incisive, abstract structure distinguishes Degas from his fellow exhibitors, so too does his clean, sharp drawing. The father of the most prominent sitter (if he may be called that) in this portrait was Édouard Valpinçon, the owner of paintings and drawings by Ingres which had constantly inspired Degas. Indeed, in 1855, the elder Valpinçon had arranged a meeting between the twenty-one-year-old Degas and the venerable old master, who advised him to "draw lines, young man, many lines; from memory or from nature; and it is in this way that you will become a good artist." Ingres's advice can still be felt here, in the sharply contoured, but supple silhouettes, even though Ingres himself would have been distressed by the painting's modernity of subject and compositional heresies. It is no surprise that Degas objected to the word Impressionism, which had stuck to this group; for his art is the polar opposite of the informal and the improvised, even though his arrangements of the panoramic theater of modern life he saw around him emphasize the sense of the momentary and the random.

Another painter who showed at the 1874 exhibition was even more remote from the collective goals of the Impressionist group—Paul Cézanne (1839–1906). A member of the Impressionist generation, five years younger than Degas and only some two years older than Monet and

Renoir, Cézanne had always been and would continue to be something of a misfit and an alien in the Parisian world. A provincial from Aix-en-Provence, he moved to Paris in 1861 to study painting. The butt of jokes by his fellow students at the Atelier Suisse, he was awkward and tormented in life as in art; and the first decade of his work may well be the most crude (if also the most strenuously compelling) of any artist who attained such stature. As if he had been wearing blinders to both the official and the rebellious art of the 1860s, he explored the dark and morbid recesses of his own turbulent psyche, creating brutally clumsy images of violence and sexuality. In *The Murder* (fig. 344), probably completed around 1870, and clearly unexhibitable in even the most tolerant of public or private salons, his imagination plays out a sadistic charade. Probably inspired by some lurid episode in nineteenth-century criminal fact or romantic fiction, the drama—a female victim held down by a heavy-set woman while a man is about to stab her—presents the stuff of yellow journalism, yet the details have all vanished in the coarse modeling of the figures who, with maximum physical stress, enact their crime in the bleakest of landscapes and under the stormiest of skies. As a childhood friend of Cézanne's once commented, "It seemed as if he wished to avenge himself for some secret injury."

But by the early 1870s, these belated eruptions of adolescent turmoil began to be harnessed to the communal goals of other artists, particularly those of the kind and paternal Camille Pissarro, who took Cézanne under his wing and taught him to externalize his art by sketching out-of-doors in the practice that was soon to be dubbed Impressionism. It was Pissarro who insisted that this strange young artist be included with his other friends at the 1874 Impressionist exhibition. In addition to two landscapes executed under Pissarro's tutelage at Auvers, in the environs of Paris, Cézanne showed for him what was a relatively light-spirited painting that, in its subject as in its title, *A Modern Olympia* (fig. 345), alluded to Manet's candid vision of a prostitute in modern Paris. Cézanne's updated version moved from the oppressive darkness of his early work to a lightness of hue and tone not totally out of place with his colleagues' paintings; and the aggressively rapid and broken brushwork, although chaotic by the svelte standards of Monet's waves of pigment, was somewhat at home in Nadar's studio. But the odd charade enacted here was of a complex erotic fantasy totally alien to the empirical orientation of the other artists who espoused the Impressionist variant of the Realist viewpoint. A black servant, the offspring of Olympia's maid, dramatically rips a white sheet off a nude Olympia, who crouches in a coarse, fetal posture before an admiring client. This gentleman, fully clothed, his top hat peculiarly isolated at the right as a black pendant to the pet dog at the foot of Olympia's vast bed, suggests a psychological projection of the artist himself, gazing at an erotic offering which is rendered with an anatomy so faulty that its gross errors of foreshortening and crudely hacked flesh could only be vindicated by an artist who happened to be a genius. Although with hindsight we can recognize here the early manifestations of that genius, it is no surprise

Fig. 344 **Paul Cézanne**, *The Murder*, c. 1867–70. Oil on canvas, 25¾ × 31½". Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

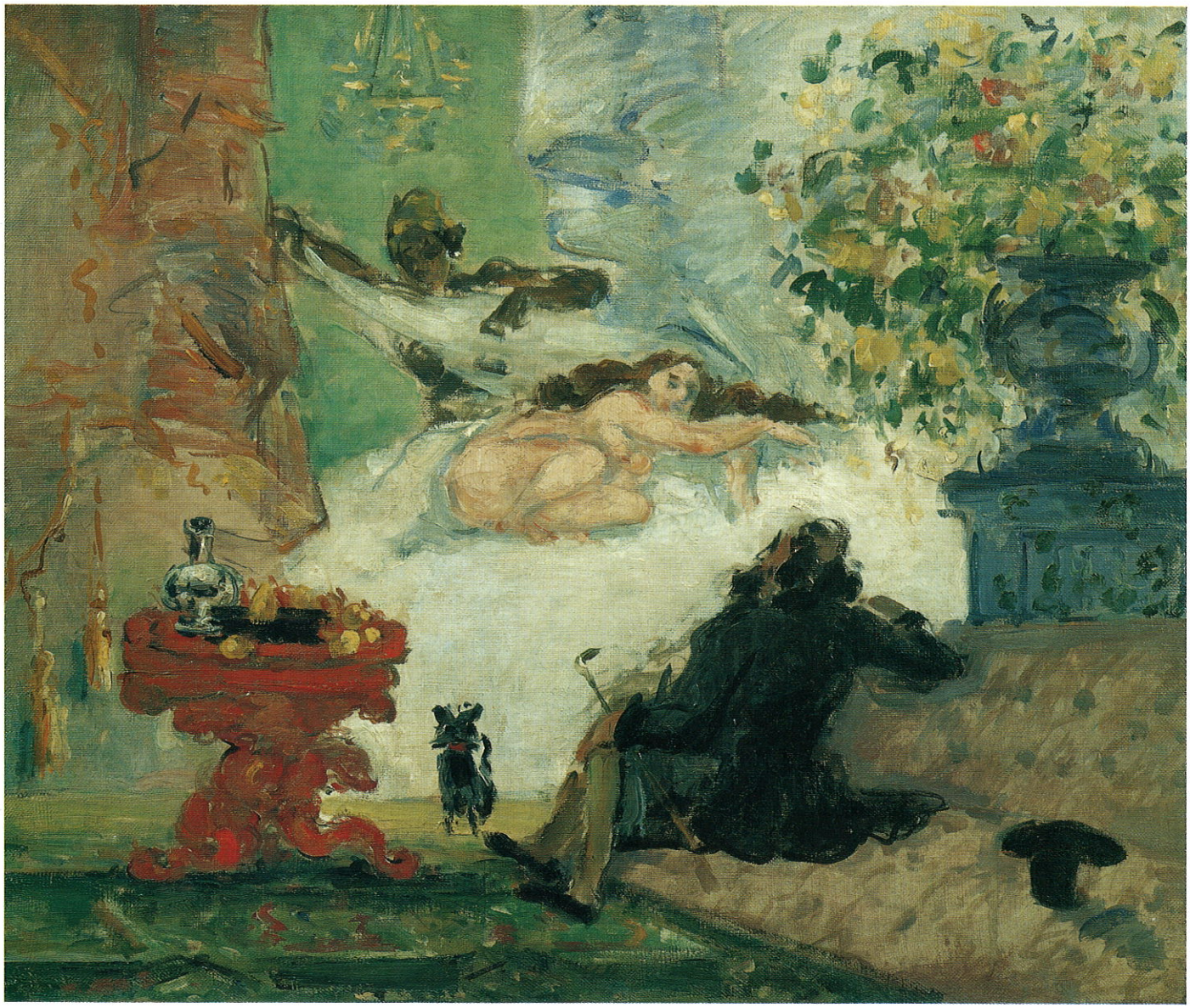

Fig. 345 **Paul Cézanne**, *A Modern Olympia*, 1872–73. Oil on canvas, 18 × 21½". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

that the critics in 1874 found Cézanne "a kind of madman who paints in delirium tremens," and found in this painting "weird shapes generated by hashish, taken from a swarm of lascivious dreams," thereby pinpointing both the near-psychotic fantasy of this work and its reckless adaptation of Impressionist brushstrokes. Even within the rebellious context of the first Impressionist exhibition, Cézanne clearly stood apart, already projecting a pictorial world whose privacy and intensity demand separate treatment (see pages 396–407).

1874: At the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy

In 1874, even at the official Salon, traditional expectations could be assaulted by a painting which looked more like a rapid, sketchy notation of a random image than a stable structure with finished surfaces. Within the ceiling-to-floor confusion of the nearly two thousand paintings shown that year, Manet's *Railroad* (fig. 346) must have been conspicuous as a work that belonged more to the world of Monet, Degas, Morisot, and Pissarro than to a Salon that had been almost entirely depleted of adventurous young painters. Only slightly older than the artists who had exhibited just months before at Nadar's studio, Manet could easily have been included with his Impressionist friends, who had always thought of him as a guiding light. Yet he himself, now in his forties, preferred to remain within the arena of the establishment, where he had battled throughout the 1860s and could now feel the beginnings of his triumph as an older master. In fact, he would even be nominated in 1881 to the Legion of Honor, whose artistic ranks included predominantly those conservative artists, such as Cabanel and Bouguereau, who represented values he had set out to

undermine. As a statement of modernity and freedom, Manet's *Railroad* could hardly oppose more freshly and youthfully the standards of the venerable jury which surprisingly permitted it to hang on the Salon walls. Following the lead of Monet's *Women in the Garden* of 1866–67 (see fig. 298), Manet executed most of this large figure painting out-of-doors, in a friend's garden, from which could be seen the new railway cut leading into the Gare St.-Lazare as well as, on the right, a glimpse of the Pont de l'Europe, the pedestrian bridge that crosses the tracks. Yet despite such topographical exactitude, the painting offers what seems the most arbitrary confusion of sunlit glare, of a mix of people, things, and events accidentally observed during a leisure moment of a blue-skied Paris day. The spatial structure is no less disconcerting than the narrative structure. The plane of the picture is defined with almost geometric insistence by the parallels and perpendiculars of an iron grating, the kind of grid whose potentially decorative, flattening character was explored in the bamboo window screens depicted in many Japanese prints known to Manet; but what we are to look at is a pair of bewildering fragments located both in front of and behind this rigid barrier. If the foreground scene is considered a portrait of a chicly dressed woman (mother, nurse, or stranger?) and child, why should we be deprived of the daughter's face? If our interest, like the child's, lies on the other side of the grating, then what we are to look at has already disappeared, the railroad engine having left as a trace only a cloud of white smoke that momentarily prevents our seeing the details of the urban background of new apartment houses, tracks, and railroad signals. Such an ephemeral spectacle is supported, in turn, by the dashing swiftness of Manet's brushwork which can even camouflage, for the moment, such foreground objects as the bunch of grapes on the bench at the right, or the snoozing puppy whose white fur almost disappears in the starchy white ambience of the pages of a paperback book and the pleats of two elaborate cuffs. Such ostensibly slapdash brushmarks were inevitably considered by critics and the general audience gross technical defects, defying standards of finish. Similarly, the modeling of the two figures appeared so inadequate that the crisp silhouettes of dark on dark and white on white could be described by an American reviewer as "cut out of sheet-tin." Probably most disconcerting, however, was the way in which the figures seemed excluded, as if behind bars, from the painting itself, intruding instead both psychologically and physically (down to the imagined extension of their cropped legs) upon the space of the viewer's real world. The offensive apsects of *The Railroad*—whether the minimal modeling, the maximal whiteness, the multiplicity of narrative focus, or the illegible brushwork—could all be duplicated in most of the works officially designated Impressionist in 1874; but Manet's own personality emanates no less strongly from this canvas than Degas's and Monet's do from

Fig. 346 **Édouard Manet**, *The Railroad*, 1873 (Salon of 1874). Oil on canvas, 36¾ × 45⅛″. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 347 **Jan Matejko**, *Stephen Báthory after the Battle of Pskov*, 1872 (Salon of 1874). Oil on canvas, 10′ 9″ × 8′ 2″. Muzeum Narodowe, Warsaw.

theirs. It is not only a question again of elegantly irregular silhouettes, the sensibility to the coolest extremes of dark and light, the polarization of what appears to be a totally controlled aesthetic choice with a totally random and fragmentary inventory of urban events, people, and objects; but also of the aloof and enigmatic emotional tone, which is here concentrated in the recognizable stare of Manet's model, Victorine Meurent, who, perpetuating her role some ten years earlier in the *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* and *Olympia* (see figs. 273 and 278), ruptures the pictorial illusion by seeming to have looked up from her books in order to establish a steady eye contact with the viewer. Such an extraordinary fusion of two worlds—that of the painting and that of the spectator—was to reach, as we shall see, an even richer complexity in Manet's last masterpiece, *The Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (see fig. 364).

Especially in the context of officially lauded and prize-winning Salon painting, it is easy to think of *The Railroad* as a renegade voice of modernity in a wilderness of moribund traditions. To enforce this black-and-white polarity, one need only look at the entry for the 1874 Salon from a painter of Manet's generation, the Polish nationalist Jan Matejko (1838–93), who had won a medal in Paris at the 1867 Exposition Universelle and had been elected to the Legion of Honor in 1870. This time, he sent from his native Cracow, whose academy he directed, a gigantic painting of 1872, *Stephen Báthory after the Battle of Pskov* (fig. 347), which depicted a triumphant episode in Polish history that might inspire fervent nineteenth-century Polish patriots to continue their struggles against the domination of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. The year is 1582, and we see the final victory of the Polish king over his enemy Ivan the Terrible, whose envoys, bearing the symbolic bread and salt of submission, bring with them the papal ambassador, Antonio Possevini, sent by the Russian czar as a symbol of his willingness to embrace, with his people, the Catholic faith. This retrospective vision of the fusion of the power of the international church with the power of a nation freed from an invader's shackles is presented by Matejko as a Slavic operatic spectacle like Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (1868–72), displayed behind the imaginary proscenium of the picture frame. Victor and vanquished, major and minor characters, historical costumes and historical props are all spelled out in a pictorial language that translates the poetry of Rubens's grandly turbulent and sumptuous style (deemed appropriate to a late sixteenth-century subject of triumphant church and state) to the earthbound prose of an unusually congested theatrical reconstruction. It is hard to believe that Manet's *Railroad* hung on the same walls.

Yet other admired historical paintings from the 1874 Salon introduce shades of gray in a blindingly black-and-white comparison. Consider a submission from Gérôme, the master whose *Death of Caesar* (see fig. 253) had already proposed startlingly modern narrative constructions that