Edgar Degas

WAITING

Richard Thomson

GETTY MUSEUM STUDIES ON ART

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Malibu, California

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© 1995 **The J. Paul Getty Museum**
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Malibu, California 90265-5799

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P.O. Box 2112
Santa Monica, California 90407-2112

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thomson, Richard I.
Edgar Degas : Waiting / [Richard Thomson].
p. cm.
(Getty Museum studies on art)
ISBN 0-89236-285-5
1. Degas, Edgar, 1834-1917. Attente.
2. Degas, Edgar, 1834-1917—Criticism and interpretation.
I. Degas, Edgar, 1834-1917. II. Title.
III. Series.
NC248.D38A63 1995
741'.092-DC20 94-19197
CIP

Cover:
Edgar Degas (French, 1834-1917).
Waiting, circa 1880-82. Pastel (and charcoal?) on buff paper, 48.2 × 61 cm (19 × 24 in.).
Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum and Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum.

Frontispiece:
Edgar Degas, Dieppe, 1885 (Photo Barnes)
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

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Typography by G&S Typesetters, Inc.,
Austin, Texas
Printed by C&C Offset Printing Co., Ltd.,
Hong Kong

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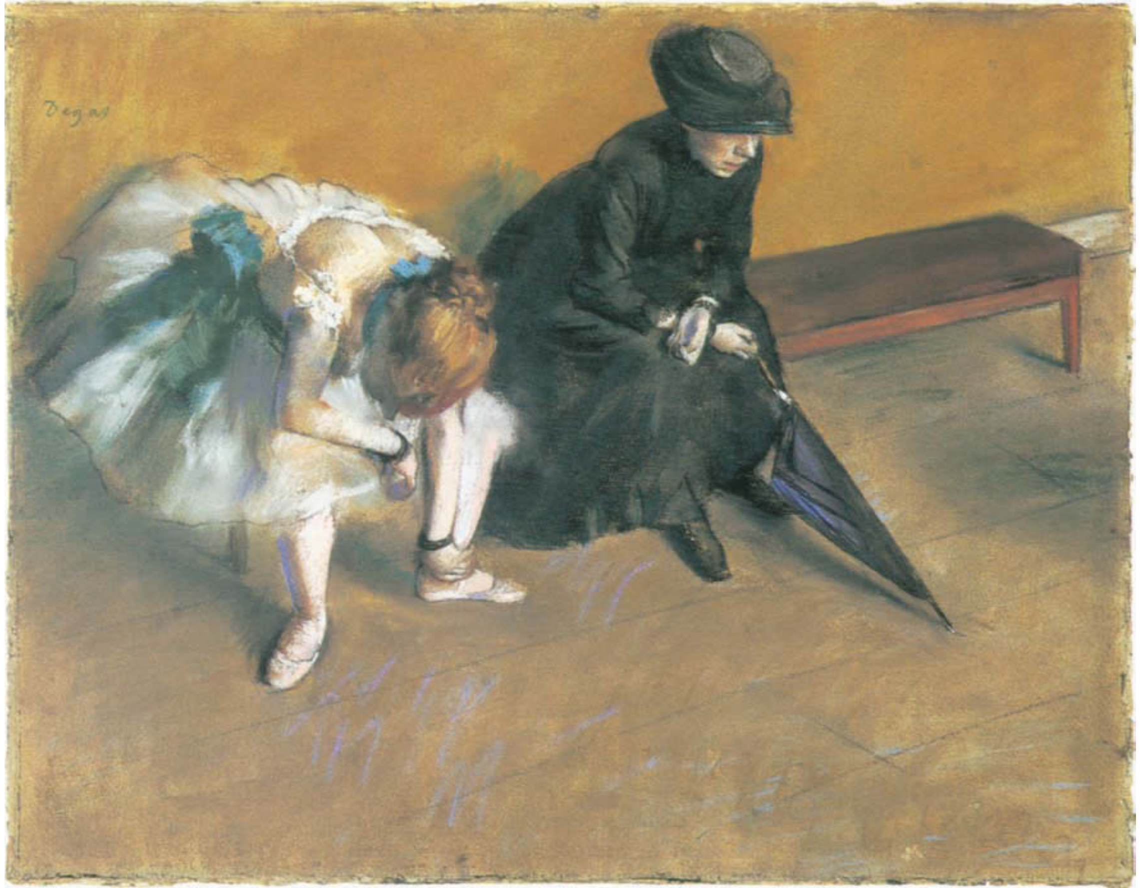
Preface

Degas's pastel *Waiting* (*L'Attente*) [FIGURE 1 *and* FOLDOUT] is a fascinating object for many reasons. First and foremost, it is a piece of extraordinary craftsmanship, remarkable as a drawing for the way in which line defines form with steadiness and assurance. Simultaneously, however, that very characteristic is countered by passages of texture and color which seem to subvert the image's apparent clarity. Its color too is marvelous, for if at first sight the image appears to be the simple juxtaposition of two forms, one white and the other black, in a setting of monochrome ochre and brown, on close inspection it reveals itself as the result of the most subtle alchemy of colors, their application at once apt and daring.

Waiting also swiftly strikes an emotional chord in the spectator. We have an almost visceral response to the body language Degas has represented, for surely most of us have sat in poses similar to those in the pastel and have an instinctive response to the kinds of moods such postures imply. And yet, quite what those moods are, quite how this representation of two seated women might be read, remains uncertain, teasingly unspecific. For *Waiting* is not only a moving motif, it is one which has an aura of ambiguity, even mystery.

Another element of *Waiting's* mystery is that, although it is a work by an artist who had gained a substantial reputation by the 1870s—albeit initially a somewhat controversial one—and whose work throughout the twentieth century has been held in high esteem by fellow artists, collectors, curators, scholars and the general public, this particular pastel has never (one hesitates to say "until now") been closely scrutinized, or its place in Degas's career assessed. The reason for this is straightforward. For almost ninety years *Waiting* was in the private collection of the Havemeyer family of New York, and it has rarely been seen in exhibitions. Although reproduced in books, recognized as an outstanding work, and briefly discussed, *Waiting* has to all intents and purposes remained a quasi-secret picture. Its sale by the Havemeyer family in 1983 and its purchase jointly by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Norton Simon Museum has brought the picture, almost literally, out into the open, and this is the first detailed study of the pastel.

Writing such a study has both its delights and its drawbacks. Delights because the opportunity to look closely at such a comparatively fresh image (a genuine rarity in the hurly-burly of Impressionist studies), to attempt for the first time in any detail to answer such questions as how it was made, what it represents, how it might have been read, is a fascinating and rewarding task. At the same time it is somewhat daunting, not least because such a study of a single work "in focus" might be assumed by the reader to have all the answers. This can never be the case, for works of art will always be the subject of reappraisal by new interpreters with alternative approaches. Indeed, with *Waiting* there are many gaps in our knowledge. We do not know exactly when it was made, but have to date it in relation to other works; we do not know when or how it got its title. My purpose in this short book is to try to push forward study of *Waiting*, and through it study of Degas and his period, by approaching the image from a number of points of view. I will look at how the pastel was made, how it fits into Degas's patterns of studio activity around 1880; at who owned it, and what such images might have meant to the people who first knew them in Paris during the early Third Republic; and at how the picture might have been read, at how its female figures, their roles, and their body language might have registered on the contemporary viewer, and how Degas composed pictures in order to elicit various responses from the spectator. Taking *Waiting* as the lodestone from which I regularly drift but to which I always return for direction, I have tried to write an essay which is historically founded, attempting to recreate some of the ways of representing and seeing more than a hundred years ago, and, within the necessarily circumscribed format of this series, to open up wider speculative questions—even if they cannot be fully resolved here—about interpreting pictures of this period. Above all, I aim to achieve a balance between historical analysis and respect for the beauty and mystery of *Waiting*.


Degas

Degas at Mid-Career

Looking at *Waiting* (*L'Attente*) [FIGURE 1 *and* FOLDOUT], and then trying to write about it, poses a number of problems for the art historian. It is a pastel whose delicacies and audacities immediately strike the viewer, with its somber figure set starkly adjacent to the crisp, bright figure of the dancer, the two of them distinct in the oscillating textures of the ochre backdrop. Its harmony of the subtlest tones and the acid accents of blue and pink, like the opposite results in a litmus test; the assuredness of its drawing and its placement of figures in pictorial space; its use of their postures to evoke mood, to impinge on the terrain of the spectator's emotions, are all immediately affecting. Make no mistake about it, *Waiting* is an image that causes us to feel, to experience both some physical affinity with the dancer and some emotional response both to her and to her companion. How we gauge these responses, how the artist contrived his image to evoke them in us, is more difficult to determine. For *Waiting* is a very simple image—two women seated on a bench in a bare room; what could be more direct?—and yet also an image that, on the close inspection that it demands and merits, conjures up a multiplicity of responses, queries and hunches—different, no doubt, in every viewer—about how it was made and how it reads both as the product of the artist's hand and as a representation of an aspect of his world.

Degas was an artist who preferred to let the objects he made, his "articles" as he called them, speak for themselves. He wrote no manifesto, no long letters discussing his work and its intentions; he never insisted on how it should be understood. However, he evidently gave the processes of making art profound thought and had something of a reputation among his contemporaries as a man who had certain theories and predilections. To his fellow painter Henri Fantin-Latour he was "too much of an instructor," and to the novelist Edmond de Goncourt, "a reasoner about art."[1] This was a reputation made in the middle of his career, during the period between the late 1860s and early 1880s when his work was widely exhibited in Paris, first at the official annual Salons and, after 1874, at the independent exhibitions to which—despite Degas's reluctance to be labelled

Figure 1
Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917). *Waiting*, circa 1880–82. Pastel (and charcoal?) on buff paper, 48.2 × 61 cm (19 × 24 in.). Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum and Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum.

in landscape painter's parlance—the term "impressionist" was applied. Critical opinion was divided; if there were general agreement about his qualities as a draftsman, some writers argued that he abused these gifts with excessive technical experimentation and undignifed subjects taken from less desirable aspects of urban life. Others defended the startling combination of virtuosity and daring which characterized his picture-making and praised his ability to find modern means to represent the modern world.[2] This reputation for making images which were controversial, difficult, brilliant, and modern did not prevent Degas from establishing himself with collectors, and throughout this period his work was increasingly sought after by dealers and private *amateurs* alike.

Waiting was made about 1880 or shortly thereafter, at the highpoint of this period in Degas's long career, and is typical of it in many respects. It is one of a substantial number of works on paper—chiefly pastels, but also gouaches and mixed-media drawings—which Degas was then making for exhibition and sale. It took as its subject the theme with which Degas was most associated—the ballet—and also represented this motif in the medium of pastel and with particular compositional devices such as the sharp perspective and high viewpoint which characterized much of his recent work. Although it does not seem to have been publicly exhibited at the time of its execution, *Waiting* soon found a buyer, who was evidently undeterred either by its subject or its means of representation.

By the time Degas made *Waiting* he was in his late forties. Born in Paris in 1834, he was the eldest son of a banker, Auguste de Gas, and his wife Célestine Musson, a French Creole from New Orleans.[3] Degas's family seems to have been happy for him to pursue a career as an artist. His independent means allowed him to avoid the conventional path through the classes and competitions of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the hope of winning the coveted Prix de Rome. This annually awarded state stipend allowed its winners several years' study in Italy, then still considered the place where the young artist should steep himself in the traditions and techniques of the idealized past of the Antique and the High Renaissance. During the early 1850s Degas worked in Paris, chiefly under the tutelage of Louis Lamothe, a former pupil and collaborator of Hippolyte Flandrin, Ingres's favorite pupil, and he copied extensively in the Louvre and the

print-room of the Bibliothèque Nationale. This life drawing and copying continued during the three years he spent in Italy between 1856 and 1859. However, during the later months of his Italian sojourn, Degas's interests became broader and less conventional, shifting from traditional paradigms such as Raphael to more adventurous stimuli, among them Mantegna and the Venetian colorists, as well as Van Dyck and Velásquez, somewhat unorthodox paragons on an Italian trip. The stimulus for this shift was Degas's encounter with the older and established painter Gustave Moreau, in whose circle Degas continued to move on his return to Paris in 1859 and in subsequent years during which he concentrated on portraiture and on history paintings. He exhibited at the Salon for the first time with one of the latter, *Scene of War in the Middle Ages* (circa 1863–5; Paris, Musée d'Orsay), in 1865. However, by this time his never-absent interest in modern subjects came to the fore, stimulated by fellow painters such as Edouard Manet, James Tissot, the Belgian Alfred Stevens and the writer Edmond Duranty.

In the later 1860s Degas's submissions to the Salon consisted of portraits and modern scenes, among them his first ballet painting, *Mlle. Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"* (1867–8; Brooklyn Museum). By the early 1870s Degas grew increasingly dissatisfied with the Salon, peeved by its unsympathetic hanging of pictures[4] and probably encouraged by the prospects of selling his work independently through dealers. His anti-establishment position was certainly bolstered by his private means and possibly stimulated by the political radicalism in which he had evinced a temporary interest during the time of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune of 1870–1.[5] He began to plan a "realist salon," as he put it to Tissot,[6] which would involve a variety of figure painters whose current work he deemed adventurous, among them Alphonse Legros, Jean-Jacques Henner, Giuseppe de Nittis and Laurens Alma-Tadema. However, expediency led to the alliance with landscape painters such as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley and the series of eight "Impressionist" exhibitions held between 1874 and 1886. Degas was active in the organization and politicking that surrounded these exhibitions, exhibiting at all but the 1882 show. He was never happy, however, with the "impressionist" nomenclature, with its roots in landscape painters' terminology,

and always strove to keep figure painting, and thus—as he saw it—drawing in the forefront. To this end he introduced by the turn of the decade new artists such as Mary Cassatt, Jean-Louis Forain, Federico Zandomeneghi, and Jean-François Raffaëlli and planned to invite others, among them Henri Gervex and Léon Lhermitte.[7] His own new projects, most notably an album of prints called *Le Jour et la Nuit* (which never appeared) and a two-thirds life-sized sculpture, the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* (1879–81; Upperville, Mellon collection), made in wax with real hair and costume and shown in 1881, were insistently figurative and studio-based.[8] By the late seventies the collapse of the family's bank and the subsequent crippling settlement had impoverished Degas and he was increasingly forced to produce works on paper of modest size for the market. It is at this crux in Degas's career that *Waiting (L'Attente)* was made: a period of commercial pressure and technical experimentation, critical renown—albeit not always positive—and collectable status, considerable experience and the reputation as "a reasoner about art."

Little of what Degas was thinking or saying about art at this period has survived, although some comments are recorded in his notebooks. It was in later life, or posthumously, that friends and acquaintances recorded his observations, which we cannot attribute securely to Degas's artistic and intellectual concerns at the time he made *Waiting*. Nevertheless, two may be useful to bear in mind as one approaches this pastel. The English painter Walter Sickert recalled Degas saying of his nudes: "I want to look through the key-hole,"[9] a remark which at very least implies a search for realism, the intention to produce pictures that give a sense of unforced exactitude, but which might also be interpreted as implying an element of voyeurism, of the male artist's imaginative intrusion on a private female world. Degas was a great one for paradox, for covering his tracks and promoting myths about himself and about artistic production,[10] for he delighted in pointing out the illusory nature of art: "Art is the same word as artifice, that's to say it's a deceitful thing. One must contrive to give the impression of nature by false means; yet it is essential that it appears true."[11] It is around these two poles that this essay will be structured: how was this artifice contrived, and what is its place among the other artifices which Degas was devising at mid-career? How "real" and "natural" did he mean *Waiting* to be and how did his contemporaries find it?

Degas Makes a Pastel

Figure 2
Edgar Degas. *Melina Darde*, 1878. Pencil, 31 × 23 cm (12¼ × 9 in.). Paris, Baroness Alain de Gunzberg.

Degas's point of departure for *Waiting* was the seated dancer; it was from that motif, I think it can be proved, that the pastel developed, and in the image itself it is she who provides the other figure with a context and from whom emanates the most immediate emotional charge. Dancers seated had played their roles in Degas's pictures from the outset of his interest in ballet subjects. The genesis of the dancer in *Waiting* can perhaps be most usefully traced back to two drawings made in late 1878, one quite heavily annotated with observations about pose and color and inscribed with the name of the dancer—"Melina Darde/15 ans/danseuse à la Gaïté/Dec. 78" [FIGURE 2]—and the other probably taken from the same model but less resolved.[12] These have all the immediacy of drawings from life, with their *pentimenti* showing how Degas teased out the telling lines, and suggest that he employed dancers—engaged in this instance not by the Opéra but by a

musical theatre—to pose in his studio, where he could study their poses at leisure, as the annotations and repetition of the posture imply. In both of these drawings one looks down on the young dancer, who clutches her ankles and stares at her pointed toes, from a sharp, vertical perspective. At this time Degas was very conscious of the viewpoint from which he drew and from which the spectator is made to look at his motif. The very month after drawing Melina Darde from above he visited the Cirque Fernando to make a series of foreshortened drawings of the mulatto acrobat, Miss Lala, one aspect of whose act was to be pulled up to the roof of the circus holding onto a rope with her teeth, from sharply below.[13] A session leading to two or more drawings could evidently have different levels of success; if one of the Darde sheets is comparatively unfinished and was kept in the studio, Degas released the other for publication, and it was reproduced in the modish new illustrated magazine *La Vie moderne* on 8 May 1879[14] during the run of the fourth Impressionist exhibition. Unlike contemporaries such as Meissonier, who insisted that his preliminary work be hidden in the privacy of his studio,[15] Degas was prepared to show publicly that the processes of studying form by draftsmanship were central to his work.

By 1879–80 the procedure of making a cluster of drawings which were variants on a particular pose became habitual in Degas's studio practice. Such repetition seems restrictive, but it was, in fact, one element in a series of experimental initiatives designed to challenge both his skills as a draftsman and the accepted norms of drawing, to keep draftsmanship challenging, up to the mark, modern. Degas described some of these in a notebook at this time: "Projects for the studio/put up steps all around the room/to get used to drawing things from above and below/Only allow things to be painted which are seen in a mirror to develop disdain for *trompe l'oeil*/For a portrait, pose it on the ground/floor and work on the first, to get used to/retaining forms and expressions and never/draw or paint *immediately*."[16] Not all of these ideas were necessarily seen through, and some need not concern us here, but it is evident that Degas's meditations on making art had culminated in a number of private directives which were simultaneously austere, audacious and carefully pondered; in essence, they diagnose drawing, experiment and the use of memory.

Figure 3
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Seated Massaging Her Ankles*, circa 1876–77. Monotype, 19.5 × 14.7 cm (7⅝ × 12¾ in.). Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst 9157.

The accumulation of specific data in sequences of drawings following his prescriptions was not necessarily directed toward a particular project; such drawings were not specifically made as preliminary studies for a substantial project that Degas had in mind—a multi-figure painting, say—in the conventional way that his admired masters such as Raphael and Ingres would have proceeded. The pose explored in the session with Melina Darde, for instance, did not find its way into a finished composition. And, as George Shackelford has pointed out, it is likely that the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* originated in a group of drawings of another young dancer, Marie van Goethem. These explore a single pose from different points around her, which eventually encouraged Degas to recognize its sculptural potential.[17]

Waiting was made in this climate of ideas and practices, and seems to have developed according to a complex and unpredictable pattern, typical of Degas at this stage of his career. One of Degas's earliest treatments of a dancer leaning abruptly forward to reach down to her ankles, seen from above, and set in a sharply perspectival space, occurs in a monotype [FIGURE 3], those hybrid

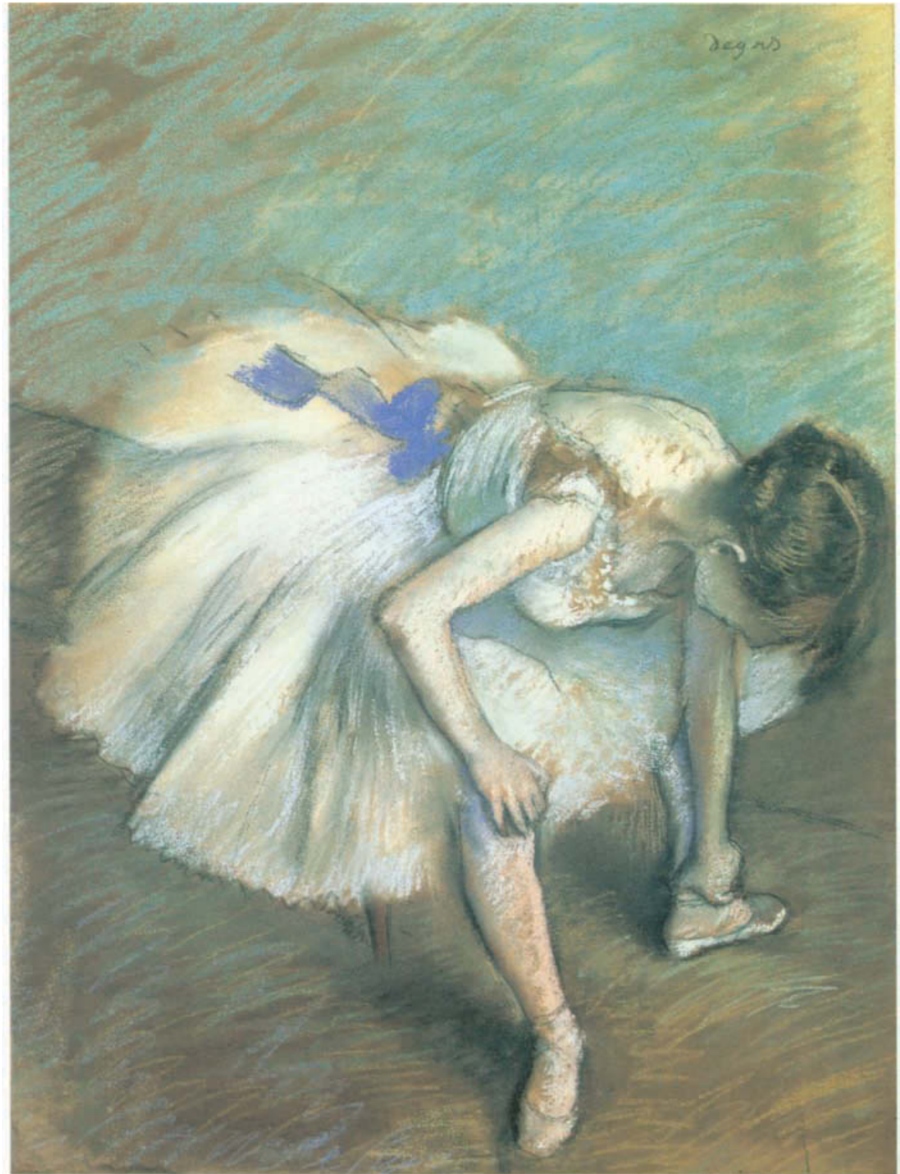


Figure 4
Edgar Degas.
Seated Dancer, circa 1879–81. Pastel on brown paper, 62 × 49 cm (24 × 19 in.). Paris, Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre (Orsay) RF. 22.712.

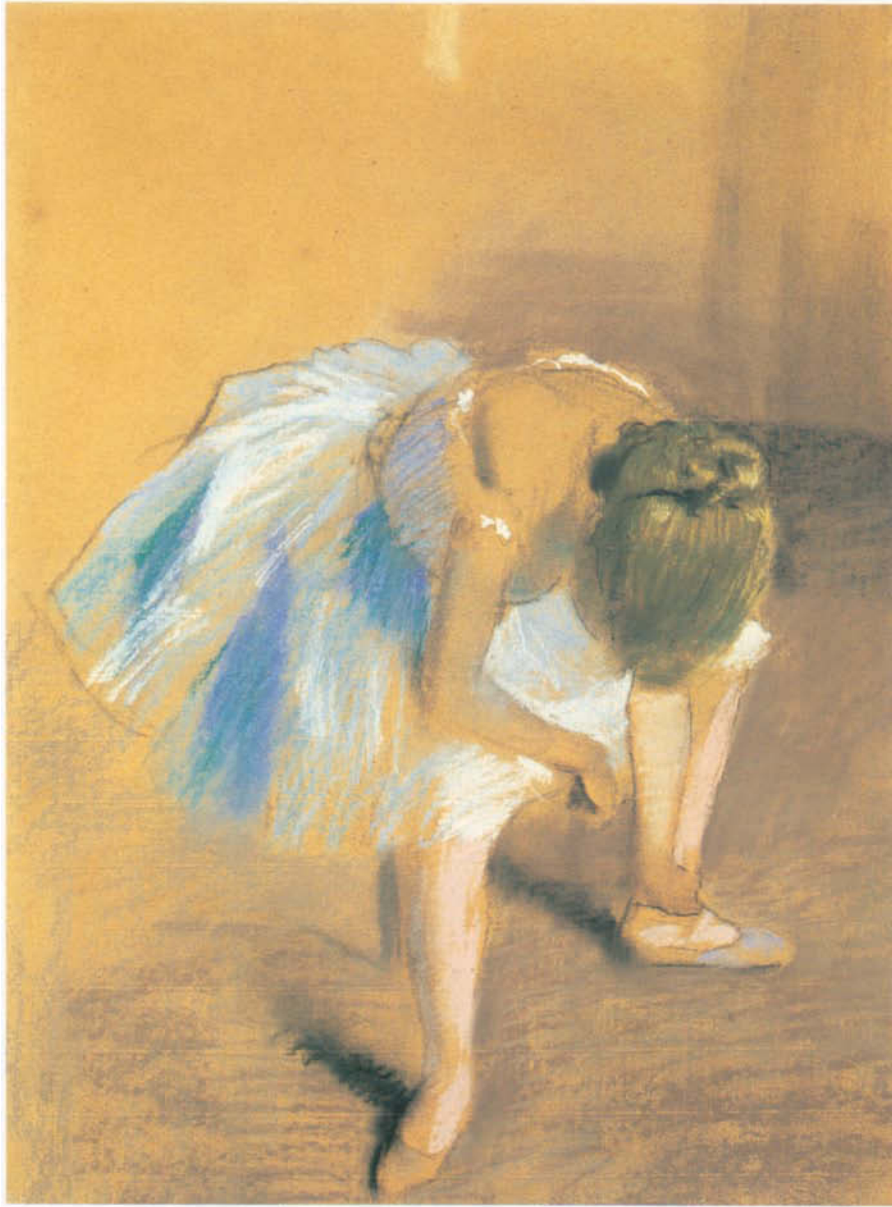


Figure 5
Edgar Degas. *Seated Dancer,* circa 1879–81. Charcoal and pastel on brown (discolored) paper, 60 × 46 cm (23 × 18 in.). Copenhagen, Ordrupgaardsamlingen 33.

images—half print, half drawing—which he began to make in the mid-1870s.[18] The dating of these monotypes remains uncertain, but Michael Pantazzi has recently suggested that many were made in an intense campaign around 1876–77. This possibility is supported by the consistency of the formats Degas employed and the appearance of a number of monotypes—among them images derived from Ludovic Halévy's stories *La Famille Cardinal*—or pastels made over a monotype base at the Impressionist exhibition in 1877.[19] Whether the monotype of the dancer dates from these years or slightly later, it broadly prefigures a pose which Degas took up in another small cluster of drawings, perhaps around 1879. However, unlike the drawings made from Melina Darde or Maria van Goethem, these images of an unknown dancer—who may have been a professional artist's model rather than a genuine *danseuse*—were made as pastels, as sizable colored drawings. Two of these [FIGURES 4,5] have much the same dimensions, roughly 60 × 45 cm (24 × 17¾ in.), and they use a similar coloration: salmon pink tights, the skirt's whitish tonality subdued by mid- and pale blues and greens, and the hair rendered in sandy and olive green streaks. As one would expect in these series of drawings, there are small but significant differences. The pastel now in the Musée d'Orsay [FIGURE 4] views the figure from a slightly sharper angle; her head is more raised, and it is her right hand rather than elbow which rests on her right knee. Nevertheless, these two pastels have a distinct kinship, notably in the way the body seems to be contained within an invisible cuboid space. This gives both images a boxed, rather clumsy identity, and one senses that Degas may not have been entirely happy with them, especially as the Ordrupgaard version [FIGURE 5] is scarcely resolved. Significantly, neither of these found their way onto the market; both entered the collections of fellow exhibitors at the Impressionist exhibitions, the former going to Gustave Caillebotte and the latter to Paul Gauguin, in exchange for a still-life which he exhibited in 1881.[20]

A third drawing [FIGURE 6] belongs within this cluster. Now lost and known only through a reproduction in a catalogue for the posthumous sale of Degas's studio,[21] it is of similar size, though now in horizontal format, to the previous two drawings. It seems, however, to have been left essentially as an outline drawing, with only some heightening in pastel. The dancer's pose corresponds

Figure 6
Edgar Degas. *Seated Dancer*, circa 1879–82. Charcoal and pastel, 46 × 60 cm (18 × 23 in.). Present location unknown. Reproduced from *Vente Edgar Degas*, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, III, 7–9 April 1919, no. 373.

closely to that of the Ordrupgaard sheet and also to the dancer in *Waiting;* her feet are not too far apart, she reaches down with her left arm to rub the corresponding ankle, wrapping her fingers over the arch of her foot, and she rests her right elbow on that knee. The form still seems to fit the imaginary cuboid and the pose within that "box" would be symmetrical but for the different positions of the arms.[22] The lost drawing raises a number of intriguing questions about the genesis of *Waiting*, not least because the poses of the two figures of dancers appear to be almost identical. One might consider it a preliminary study for *Waiting*, in which the artist made final adjustments to a pose already essayed in the two pastel drawings. Per-

haps he allowed himself the leeway to make errors and corrections to troublesome areas, in particular to the feet, prior to starting work on a more considered pastel planned to incorporate two figures. But we have already seen that it is unwise to tie Degas down to such conventional and orderly procedures at this stage of his career, and it is probably judicious to seek other explanations for this interrelationship. The lost drawing might better be considered as another, independent, member of this cluster of drawings, one that was botched in a couple of places and abandoned without being worked up into a pastel. While this may have been the case, however, there is a significant difference between it and the Orsay and Ordrupgaard variants. Whereas their vertical format allows the figure to fill the whole picture space, in the lost drawing Degas rotated the sheet to work in a horizontal format and drew the dancer off-center, leaving a substantial amount of space to the left. We cannot tell whether this was a matter of chance, merely the way he began the drawing, or with the intention of filling that space with one or more other figures. His propensity for late adjustments and insertions,[23] even applying additional strips of paper in order to incorporate extra figures, suggests that the former is more likely. And it may have been that this experiment, albeit flawed, encouraged Degas to pursue the idea of using this pose in an horizontal format with another figure, an idea that would eventually lead to *Waiting*.

Waiting was drawn on a single sheet of heavy buff paper.[24] Degas seems to have worked throughout in pastel, though there may be some charcoal in the underdrawing. This initial delineation of the forms was done in rapid black strokes. The lines which mark the floorboards were drawn freehand, and curve slightly. (Degas once remarked: "Draw a straight line askew, as long as it appears to be straight."[25]) And the preliminary definition of the figures is quite free too, as is evident from the raised hem at the rear of the tutu or the outlining of the somber bonnet. The application of the ochre-orange background, which deepens in tone to the upper right, came early; the illusion of the wall color reflecting on the surface of the dark dress, for instance on the shoulder, or appearing through the thin gauze of the plumped-up tutu is due to the warm tone emerging from below the thin pastel layer used in the costumes. Degas built on these graphic and tonal foundations. Grey seems to have been used before greens and blue-violets, these

latter tones sometimes having been smeared on rather than applied tidily with the pastel stick. This is the case, for instance, with the dancer's bow, created from smudging pale blue, petrol blue, and deep green over the buff paper, which is allowed to come through in places. One can see that there is little or no underdrawing of the dancer's torso. She has no bodily structure drawn between shoulder blades and shins, and her physical shape is only defined by the costume by which it is covered, itself a very approximate assemblage of strokes, rubbings and marks which in places—just to the left of the arm, say—register as activity on the surface rather than the rendering of form.

The representation of the dancer's head flows from the busy streaks of straw and brown, which define the hair, into the almost uniformly grey, flat, and eyeless face. Details of her gestures are picked out in sharp pastel lines used, for instance, to curve the fingers, and applied very late in the making. Degas registered form and the frontiers between form and space with surface marks whose colors appear alien when seen close up, but make sense at a distance. The gash of blue-violet, for example, along the shadowed side of her left leg, a ploy seemingly rash and unequivocal, serves perfectly to site the calf in its spatial relation to the leg of the bench. It was this coloristic, optical daring, using the same "episcopal purple," which Joris-Karl Huysmans had so admired in Degas's portrait of Duranty when he saw it exhibited with the Impressionists in 1880.[26]

The fully clothed figure was not executed in black but in a deep grey laid over a very somber blue and a dark green; this gives the illusion not of density or heaviness but of both reflected light and lightness of weight, an effect enhanced—again—by the subtle extrusion of the paper. Her umbrella was executed in much the same way, its elision of brown, aubergine and blue-violet tones marvelously approximating the material's sheen. This woman's face was rendered in diagonal, short hatchings of pink, dull orange, blue-violet and deep grey, with a fleshy rose for the lips and a touch of yellow in the crease of the chin. As a whole the face is well defined and modelled, with strong cheekbones and a generous nose, but her eyes are completely disguised by the rim of her bonnet, picked out in pale blue.

The floor is lightly, even casually, streaked with almost vertical touches of blue-violet, like the mid-green one of the colors with which Degas accented and thus harmonized *Waiting*. This sense of ensemble is enhanced by the paper's subtle, textural presence both beneath and almost within the pastel surface. The soft textures of paper and pastel, combined with the dexterous levity of Degas's touch, wonderfully evoke the fall of light on the tactile surfaces of skin or fabric. Both figures, nonetheless, have a palpable sense of mass, of physical identity within the artificial space of the picture. This is an extraordinary achievement, not least because Degas seems to have utilized surprisingly few pastel colors, smudging and working them into a remarkable variety of texture and diversity of tone. Indeed, it would seem likely that *Waiting* was quite rapidly executed, given its cursive underdrawing, its passages of approximation (despite moments of great detail such as on the cuffs of the dark dress), and limited selection of pastels. Additional support for this suggestion comes from the formal and spatial interrelationship between the two figures. The dancer seems to be seated slightly but perceptibly higher than the other figure on the bench, and even seems to be perched somewhat precariously upon it.[27] Degas did not elect to continue the skirting board, which makes an important light accent in the upper right-hand corner, behind the dancer. This surely deliberate *non-sequitur* not only reinforces the notion that *Waiting* was swiftly made but also suggests a formal decision, for to have reintroduced the skirting board would have been to draw attention to the spatial ambiguity between the two figures.

Why might such an experienced and adept artist as Degas have made or allowed such a disjunction, however discreet? The answer may be not only in the apparently expeditious execution of this "article" and the instinct not to overweight the left side—note the crucially balanced signature[28]—but also in that while the dancer figure was generated within a cluster of drawings exploring this pose, no preliminary drawing is known for the clothed figure, and she appears nowhere else in Degas's work. This figure may have been drawn from memory—we have already noted his contemporary prescription to pose a sitter on one floor and to work on another—or even from imagination; more likely he drew a model posed

on a bench in his studio, and beside her added a dancer derived from his earlier drawings of this pose. Such a method, juxtaposing a figure drawn from life with a figure drawn from a drawing, may have given rise to the discrepancy one can divine in *Waiting,* the kind of disjunction which can be found elsewhere in his ballet compositions in which he combined figures derived from different sources or media.[29] It was not for nothing that Degas said that "one must contrive to give the impression of nature by false means;" *Waiting* is a remarkable example of this in practice.

Waiting and Manipulations of the Ballet Motif

Waiting was not the only finished pastel to use this particular "cuboid" pose of a dancer. The figure recurs in another composition [FIGURE 7] made around 1880, which—unlike *Waiting*—exists in two variants.[30] In both of these there are no significant differences in the pose, except that the dancer is seen more sharply from above and her bare back is partly covered by a trailing pigtail. The chief distinction between these two pastels and *Waiting,* all three about the same size, is that in the former the pose is incorporated into a crowded scene consisting entirely of dancers in their tutus. One variant places the common figure at the end of a bench and behind her two other seated dancers, one pulling up the leg of her tights and the other hunched forward over crossed arms. The second variant deploys these three basic figures, with minor changes, in what appears to be a multi-figure composition. However, Degas, by the addition in the background only of legs and skirts, contrived to conjure up at least nine additional figures, quadrupling the staffage merely by the inclusion of fragments of bodies.

Around 1880 Degas's analysis of the seated figure of a dancer, hunched forward and reaching toward her foot, went through a number of permutations. It would be imprudent to group these images together under such a reductive rubric, for they were evidently not made from the same model and not necessarily within a relatively short period of time. Nor were they made with a single, or even a specific, goal in mind. To break these down into clusters and to probe their idiosyncracies may seem a trifling matter of connoisseurship, but in fact such a process throws light on the fascinating complexity and contradictions of Degas's use of ballet motifs in this period.

One informal corpus of drawings can be differentiated from the "cuboid" pose we have already studied. Although drawn in similar media of charcoal and pastel, on sheets of approximately 45 × 60 cm (17¾ × 24 in.), these images have distinct characteristics. Above all the dancer is represented as more rhythmic

Figure 7
Edgar Degas. *Dancers in the Green Room*, circa 1880–81. Pastel, 50 × 65 cm (19 11/16 × 25 9/16 in.). Private collection.

and dynamic, with more energy and torsion in the bent, extended back and a more sinuous movement in the limbs, so that the figure seems to break out of the enclosing "box." Another crucial distinction is that these dancers are shown tying the bows of their ballet slippers, whereas the *coryphées* in the pose used in *Waiting* rub their ankles. This distinction is apparent in the drawings, but the extent to which it was conscious in Degas's practice can only be a matter for speculation. One might read the gesture of rubbing the ankle as one of fatigue, and that of tying the slipper as one of preparation; on the other hand, the difference might be merely haphazard. Another area of uncertainty is the dating of these casual clusters of

Figure 8
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper,* circa 1880–85. Pastel on beige paper, 47.5 × 62.5 cm (18⅝ × 24½ in.). Private collection.

drawings. It is tempting to suggest that the stiffer "cuboid" sheets came first and the more fluid, confident and gestural work subsequently. As we shall see, some circumstantial evidence concerning the relationship between some of these drawings and later paintings may prompt this, but it must remain a tentative proposal.

Despite their frequent similarities of size and media the drawings of single dancers tying the laces of their slippers should not be compounded into a single artificial "group." Some are entirely independent sheets which, although sharing similar characteristics, bear no specific relationship either to each other or to multi-figure compositions. Among these are pastels such as the fiercely hatched one [FIGURE 8] first owned by Degas's younger contemporary, the celebrated mural painter and pastellist Albert Besnard, and another owned by the lawyer Jules Strauss, who married the widow of the composer Bizet, all three friends of Degas.[31] By contrast, the forceful drawing [FIGURE 9] bought from the artist by the

Figure 9
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper,* circa 1880–82. Pastel on grey paper, 48.2 × 61 cm (19 × 24 in.). Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Hugo N. Dixon, The Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee 1959.2.

dealer Paul Durand-Ruel and now in Memphis is one of three close variants of an identical pose.[32]

If such drawings, serving as presentation drawings or "articles" for the market, were independent sheets unrelated to other works, the relationships of other pastels are less clear. One drawing [FIGURE 10], bought by the Havemeyers sometime after 1891,[33] is often related to a horizontally orientated painting of a ballet rehearsal room [FIGURE 12], in which a dancer sits on a bench, tying her slipper, a double bass resting alongside her on the floor.[34] This drawing, however, did

Figure 10
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper,* circa 1880–82. Pastel and black chalk on buff paper, 47.3 × 42.9 cm (18⅝ × 16⅞ in.). Private collection.

Figure 11
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Adjusting Her Slipper,* 1887. Pastel on beige paper, 32 × 41 cm (12½ × 16 in.). Photo Routhier—Document Archives Durand-Ruel, Paris.

not serve as an immediate preliminary study for this painting, in which the seated dancer is seen more abruptly from above, her back more wrenched to the right. In fact, there are three pastels in which this specific pose is explored—one of which is dedicated to Charles Durand-Ruel [FIGURE 11]—as well as a delightful study for the bow at the dancer's waist.[35] At some juncture in this quite intense process, Degas made a fifth pastel study of a nude model in this pose, for at this stage in his career he was gradually beginning again to draw the nude from life.[36] The seated dancer in the *Rehearsal Room with Double Bass* was thus based on scrutiny of the whole physical ensemble, unlike her equivalent in *Waiting*, the bulk of whose body we have to take on trust. Another cluster of drawings studied the pose of a dancer in yet another similar position [FIGURE 13], this time seated and leaning to the left, away from the viewer, and reaching her left hand down to the corresponding foot, neither to massage her ankle with her fingers nor to tie her lace, but to rub her foot

Figure 12
Edgar Degas. *Dancers in a Rehearsal Room, with a Double Bass*, circa 1882–85. Oil on canvas, 39 × 89.5 cm (15⅜ × 35¼ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929. The H. O. Havemeyer Collection.

bones.[37] This figure was used in another horizontal painting of a rehearsal room [FIGURE 14] and, with slight variations, in a third.[38] Degas worked in an unpredictable manner in his accumulation of variants on a limited pose, sometimes letting a drawing stand on its own, or exploring a single variant on multiple sheets, and occasionally selecting a pose—at some point during or after the process of refinement by drawing—for incorporation into a painting.

Studying individual drawings and Degas's almost inscrutable draftsmanly procedures not only reveals how highly artificial were the means by which such images were produced but also raises important questions about what were the purposes and possibilities of his ballet subjects at this period. The paintings of rehearsal rooms in a horizontal format, in several of which variants of the seated dancer had their place as salient focus and compositional anchor, were begun about 1879, as we know from a quick jotting in a notebook which outlines a painting now in the Mellon collection that was shown at the 1880 Impressionist exhibition.[39] These paintings—all measuring about 40 × 90 cm (15¾ × 35½ in.) and

Figure 13
Edgar Degas. *Dancer Rubbing Her Foot,* circa 1882–85. Charcoal heightened with white, 30 × 32 cm (11¾ × 12½ in.). Private collection.

Figure 14
Edgar Degas. *Ballet Rehearsal*, circa 1885. Oil on canvas, 38 × 90 cm (14⅞ × 34½ in.). New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, Gift: Duncan Phillips, B.A. 1908.

deploying a shallow diagonal space in one half of the composition, then opening up in the other—preoccupied Degas sporadically throughout the 1880s when he produced and reworked several, and again fifteen or twenty years later, when canvases were repainted and pastels in the same format produced. Some forty designs of this kind testify to their significance.[40] What was their purpose? It seems most likely that they were conceived as decorative schemes. Their use of shallow spaces, subtly echoed poses, uninsistent chromatics, and especially their panel-like format, would have rendered such designs ideal for mural decorations, placed around a room and spaced between doors or windows.[41] At the time the scheme originated, decorative ideas were in Degas's mind and in those of his Impressionist colleagues. At the 1879 exhibition he showed a tempera painting *Essai de décoration,* and two years later a pastel inscribed "Portraits in a frieze for the decoration of an apartment."[42] About 1882 Degas's close colleagues Pissarro and Zandomeneghi were discussing fresco techniques[43]—to take but one example of interest in the

decorative among the Impressionist circle at this juncture—and it would be likely, given Degas's delight in experimentation with media, that he was involved in such discussions. If the horizontal rehearsal rooms were motifs which would have needed considerable enlargement to fulfill a decorative function, this is hardly the case with another painting, the *Frieze of Dancers* [FIGURE 15], made in the mid-1890s and, at two metres' breadth, already almost at mural scale. This grand, ambitious (and, like *Waiting*, somewhat overlooked) canvas no longer reads, as the horizontal rehearsal rooms still do, as the painted illusion of a physical space. Rather, despite its scale and medium, it works like a large drawing, in fact like a quadruple version in oil on canvas of the pastel drawings of single figures already discussed. Indeed, it is scarcely a surprise to discover that the pose of one of those drawings made around 1880[44] was quoted almost directly in the right-hand figure

Figure 15
Edgar Degas. *Frieze of Dancers,* circa 1895. Oil on canvas, 70 × 200.5 cm (27½ × 81⅛ in.). Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., 46.83.

of the painted frieze. As has often been pointed out, the *Frieze of Dancers* takes what is essentially a single pose and inspects it from four viewpoints, seeing it in the round.[45] This was a procedure Degas used in connection with his sculptural projects—as in the case of the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years,* for instance—and one wonders whether, among the neglected wax models found in Degas's studio after his death and too shattered to cast, there were not fragments which had once constituted a sculpture of a seated dancer in the pose of the *Frieze of Dancers.*

Around 1880 Degas made other two-figure images of dancers resting which are of interest here not only because they were generated from a different kind of studio practice but also because they indicate other possibilities for the ballet subject. A drawing in Boston [FIGURE 16] and two variants of a dancer seated sideways on a bench, one with a left-hand figure only discernible by the rim of her

Figure 16
Edgar Degas. *Dancers Resting*, circa 1879. Pastel on paper mounted on cardboard, 50 × 58.5 cm (19⅝ × 23 in.). Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection, courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 36.669.

tutu and the other version in Shelburne [FIGURE 17] in which she appears in her entirety, slumped towards us, represent two dancers together rather than a *danseuse* with a figure in street clothes. These were not extrapolations from the experimental practice of serial drawing. All three were made on more than one piece of paper, a procedure which suggests not cumulative development via making drawings, but rather an additive process to create a single, embellished drawing. The Boston drawing, for instance, would appear to have started with the central figure, but before this was finished Degas added a strip to the left in order to incorporate a second dancer and another on the right to extend the space. Similar decisions were made with the other two sheets which, like the Boston drawing, also used a water-based medium such as gouache or tempera with the pastel.

If in such respects these motifs of dancers resting differ from *Waiting*, in others they are similar, not least in the way the dancers are at once slightly distanced from the spectator and yet close enough to coax a response to their state of apparent fatigue. Like *Waiting*, all three show the dancers in close proximity yet out of contact, both physical and, it seems, emotional. In the Boston picture the bench jutting into the spectator's sphere serves to skew the space and to render it

Figure 17
Edgar Degas. *Two Dancers Seated on a Bench,* circa 1879. Pastel and gouache on grey paper, 46 × 66.7 cm (18⅛ × 26¼ in.). Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont. Photograph by Ken Burris.

Figure 18
Albert Moore (British, 1841–1893). *Beads,* 1875. Oil on canvas, 28.3 × 50.2 cm (12⅛ × 20½ in.). Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland.

visually disconcerting, thus heightening the emotional disjunction both between the figures themselves and between the viewer and the image. The Shelburne motif and its variant operate in a different way. Their figures are placed upon a bench set against a wall, which runs parallel to the picture plane, and, in the Shelburne version in particular, we look across a steeply raked floor to figures spread along a band across the picture space. For all the perceived fatigue of their postures, these figures exude a sense of stability; for all their asymmetrical disposition, they are locked into a pictorial structure that is at once balanced, disciplined and frieze-like.

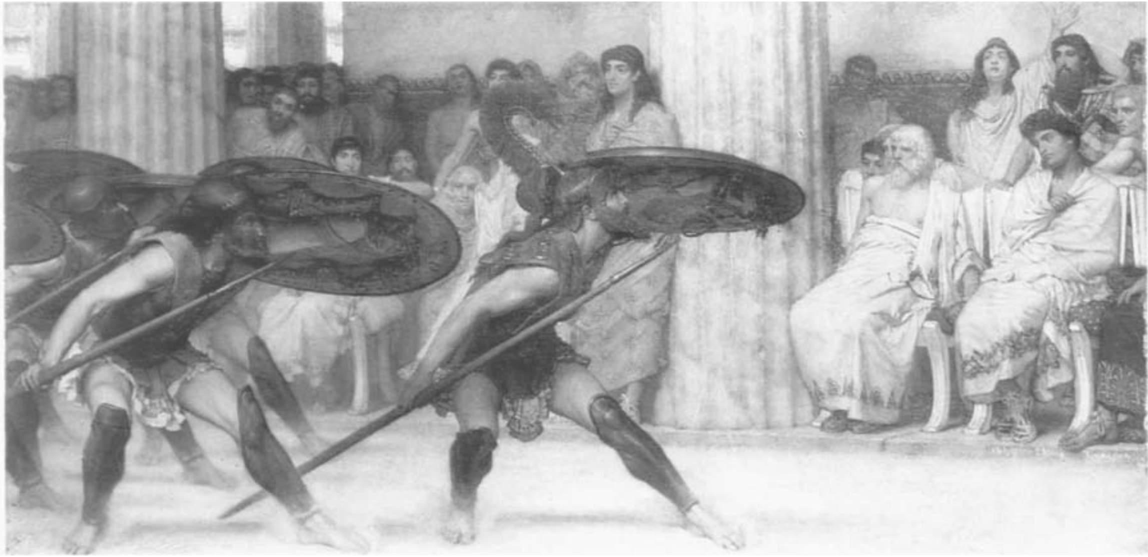


Figure 19
Laurens Alma-Tadema (Dutch, active Britain, 1836–1912). *The Phyrric Dance,* 1869. Oil on panel, 40.6 × 81.2 cm (18⅛ × 31⅞ in.). London, Guildhall Art Gallery.

In the later nineteenth century it was not uncommon to draw parallels between the modern ballet and the classical past, constructing the former as a remnant of a past age of sobriety and beauty. "As we recall the dancing women in the frescoes of Pompeii, or Raphael's *Hours,* or loiter among the Atalantes in the Louvre, a deep sense comes over us of the loss to our civilization of something of wholesome refinement and infinite grace," regretted one cultured Francophile; "In place of all that beautiful world of human motion we merely have the ballet."[46] Degas shared this nostalgia. When asked by Louisine Havemeyer, who owned the Shelburne *Two Dancers,* why he so frequently represented the ballet, he replied: "Because, madame, it is all that is left to us of the combined movements of the Greeks."[47] Although we are used to thinking of Degas's work around 1880 essentially in terms of naturalism, however artificially contrived, rather than in

Figure 20
Edgar Degas. *Dancers Bowing*, circa 1879– 1880. Pastel. © Christie's, New York.

terms of classicism, it is worth momentarily considering the survival, even the willed revival, of a certain "classicism" in his activities at this time. After all, it was at the Impressionist exhibition in 1880 that he planned to exhibit his *Young Spartans* (circa 1860–2 and later: London, National Gallery), a history painting begun twenty years before, classical in subject, frieze-like in design, although it seems that in the end it was entered in the catalogue but not actually shown.[48]

Degas's early training and initial career had been founded on the tenets of classicism—of clarity, discipline and grace derived from the Antique and the High Renaissance. This deep-seated culture may well have been stimulated once again by the Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1878, and particularly by the work of two painters in the British section, Albert Moore and Laurens Alma-Tadema, for whom antiquity had become family, according to Degas's friend Duranty. Moore showed a version of *Beads* [FIGURE 18]. In his review of the foreign pictures at the Universal Exhibition, Duranty compared the two figures to Tanagra figurines: "He casts and coils them up on couches, with precise and very graceful drawing, and envelops them in fine draperies tinted in grey and blue, rolling them and maneuvering them between his fingers with an exquisite lightness, like tiny precious objects which he alone has the secret of modelling."[49] This is a description which might almost apply to the Shelburne *Two Dancers*, and one

wonders whether Moore's subtle colors and balanced asymmetry had not lodged in Degas's pictorial imagination. Duranty's article illustrated *Beads* and also Alma-Tadema's *Phyrric Dance* [FIGURE 19], a painting which particularly impressed him. Alma-Tadema's work, he wrote, resolved a difficult problem, and managed to equate in the same painting "the intense feeling that modern *reality* can give" with "the sense of the Antique, the world least accessible to us."[50] Degas already knew of Alma-Tadema's work, and in the mid-1870s had thought of inviting him to exhibit with the Impressionists.[51] The *Phyrric Dance,* with its repeated figures on the left offset by blank space on the right and silhouetted against the echoing columns and frieze of spectators in the background, appeared a paradigmatic fusion of ancient subject and modern means, combining respect for the ancient world and its aesthetic conventions with a modern sense of the moment. Again, Degas seems to have been impressed, and one can draw parallels between the *Phyrric Dance* and such pastels as *Dancers Bowing* [FIGURE 20], in which a stooping, repeated pose spreads across a foreground plane, and is echoed by another rhythmic, frieze-like grouping behind. Reactionary critics hostile to the Impressionists might condemn them for abandoning French principles of clarity and discipline, for their "fundamental principle [which] is nothing less than the dissolution of ancient classic art."[52] But in Degas's case this would be an unfair judgement. Just as he was able to mold the seated dancer motif to suit his experiments with the decorative or his interest in the sculptural, so he could on occasion bring it into line with his instinct for the classical.

Waiting and the Myths of Backstage

Waiting, however, belongs to none of these three threads—the decorative, the sculptural, the classical—in the fabric of Degas's explorations of the possibilities of the ballet theme. It does not exploit the motif for experiments with form, convention or practice. Rather it reads more immediately, more obviously, more psychologically, more like a slice of life; in other words, like the naturalist genre scene Degas contrived it to be. The images of backstage at the ballet which Degas had begun to produce regularly from about 1871–2 were initially constructed as genre pictures. A painting such as the Burrell Collection's *Rehearsal* [FIGURE 21], finished early in 1874, is a case in point. Despite being pieced together from drawings and even a photograph,[53] it is set up to give an illusion of the real, with its quotidian scene of rehearsal and rest, its sense of the momentary, its inventory of ordinary details such as net curtains and tartan shawls. We the spectator are asked to believe that, if we were there, we would see this. However, as the 1870s wore on, Degas's attitude to the painting of everyday life, and with it his attitude to naturalism, gradually changed. Increasingly he began to pare down detail and incident, to produce sparser, more economical images. *Waiting* is an excellent example of this shift. In essence it is a distillation of an image such as the Burrell *Rehearsal,* made some six or seven years previously, relinquishing staircase and rehearsal, ballet master and subsidiary dancers, to focus on three simple elements from the lower right corner: bench, seated dancer, and woman in street clothes.

We will consider later the motives behind such a shift in Degas's naturalism; here the quintessential question of veracity must be raised. Whether Degas envisaged *Waiting* as a genre scene or not, it registers as one with the spectator, and to Degas's contemporaries—and, I suspect, to us—this brought certain responsibilities, not least that the image should seem an accurate record of something seen. This was a crucial justification for representations of everyday life at this period. Critics would defend sharply focussed images, perhaps of unpalatable subjects, on the grounds that these were records of contemporary society, documentation for

Figure 21
Edgar Degas. *The Rehearsal*, 1873–74. Oil on canvas, 58.4 × 83.8 cm (24½ × 32¾ in.). Glasgow Museums: The Burrell Collection 35/246.

some future archaeology. Degas's own works were read this way, Georges Rivière for one insisting in 1877 that he was "the most valuable historian of contemporary scenes . . . One day it will be from him that one will seek the most impartial and complete documents on everyday life."[54] This insistence on contemporary accuracy for future record was a critical cliché constantly applied, be it to de Nittis in 1878 for pictures which "will be as useful for posterity to consult as are . . . those of Canaletto for us"[55] or to Jean Béraud when he was identified in 1886 as "a collector of human documents."[56] In a cultural climate in which a genre scene was expected to be an historical record, to what extent does *Waiting* qualify as an accurate account of backstage at the ballet?

Surprising as it may seem, Degas did not have official access to the backstage world of the Paris Opéra, hub of the French ballet world, until he had been painting such subjects for a dozen years. In the early 1880s he wrote to his friend and collector Albert Hecht, who was an *abonné* (subscriber) at the Opéra and thus privileged with access to the *foyer de la danse* (green room), *coulisses* (wings) and practice rooms backstage: "Do you have the authority at the Opéra to get me access for the day of the dance examination, which should be on Thursday from what people tell me? I've done so many of these dance classes, without having seen them, that I'm a bit ashamed."[57] As the research of Henri Loyrette has shown, it was not until 1883, via the good offices of Charles Ephrussi, a wealthy art historian and another collector of Degas's work, that the artist was finally able to share an *abonnement* with his fellow painter Jacques-Emile Blanche, and another two years before he had unlimited personal access backstage.[58] In other words, throughout the period Degas was producing apparently naturalistic images—among them *Waiting*—of dancers in the wings, in their dressing rooms, at rehearsal and so on, he had no access backstage at the Opéra.

How then were these images made? Where did he get his information if it was not from observation? There was a long tradition of prints, both documentary and caricatural, of *coulisse* life, images from mid-century, for example, by artists such as Gavarni,[59] with which Degas was no doubt familiar, and in recent years photographs of dancers and the new Opéra building, designed by Charles Garnier and opened in 1875, had become increasingly available.[60] Lacking access

to the Opéra, Degas could work from dancers employed elsewhere, such as young Mélina Darde, either at their theatre or—more likely—in his studio, and we know that he had occasional opportunities to draw star dancers from the Opéra outside their place of work; he was present at the studio of Ludovic Lépic when Guiard drew Maria Sanlaville in the role of Fanella, which was published in *La Vie moderne* in February 1882.[61] And as he later told Georges Jeanniot, whom he had met at that session at Lépic's: "It's very well to copy what one sees; it's much better to draw what one only still sees in one's memory."[62] That vaunting of memory suggests that many of Degas's dancer motifs were made from recollection, sometimes pushed to the point of invention, as well as from direct observation.

In these circumstances, it would be idle to suggest that *Waiting* represents a particular place, or that Degas even dwelled for more than a moment on such a thought. It evidently does not show the *foyer de la danse* at Garnier's Opéra, an extraordinarily luxurious locale, with ornate columns, sculpted stucco ceiling, chandeliers, and around the walls mirrors and painted decorations by Gustave Boulanger, velvet-covered bars and couches upholstered in lilac.[63] By contrast, *Waiting* presents a most spartan environment, one easily invented or set up in the studio and which does not necessarily insist on being read as a scene somewhere in the Opéra; it reads as a generic practice room.

The character of the ballet dancers, the great majority of whom were female at this time, with male roles being taken by women *en travestie,*[64] was conveniently pigeonholed by contemporary culture in two distinct ways. The first of these was the construction of the dancer as a woman of low morality, who used her opportunities to display her body on stage to lure wealthy lovers; indeed, the nicknaming of a young dancer as a "rat"—a nomenclature which persists today, although the association has fallen away—dates from the early nineteenth century and refers to the ballerina's mythical ability to gnaw away at fortunes. This affiliation of the dancer with loose morals, one made more alluring by the public status of the dancer coupled with the quasi-clandestine, élitist life of the *coulisses,* was voiced no more stentoriously than by Frédéric-Thomas Graindorge. A splendid figment of the philospher Hippolyte Taine's imagination, Graindorge—educated at Eton and the University of Jena, expatriate oil and salt-pork magnate who had

made his fortune in Cincinnati—served as a vehicle for ironic observations about Parisian life in the last years of the Second Empire. His "opinions" are intentionally stark clichés, and illuminating for that. On seeing *Alceste* at the Opéra Graindorge fumes: "The ballet is ignoble. It's an exhibition of girls for sale. They have the gestures and vulgar little simperings, the willful voluptuous pallor of the trade. Not a tenth of a ballet is truly beautiful. It's all provocation like on the streets; legs in pink tights shown right up to their haunches . . . [yet these girls] imagine that they represent the noble processions of ancient Greece."[65] This was a topos that had its place both in literature and visual imagery. Ludovic Halévy's linked short stories, *La Famille Cardinal,* written during the 1870s and published together in 1883, for which Degas produced a number of illustrations in monotype which were not used because Halévy apparently disliked them,[66] took as their theme the backstage fortunes of two dancers, Pauline and Virginie, and the machinations of their mother. Undoubtedly some dancers took advantage of their charms in the hothouse of the *foyer de la danse.* Eugénie Fiocre set her sights on an English peer, was pursued by a banker, and by 1880 was able to build herself an impressive house on the smart boulevard de Courcelles.[67] One of the Biot sisters was known as *la Sous-Préfète,* alluding to a liason with Baron Haussmann, former Prefect of the Seine.[68] But these may have been exceptions, and other dancers of Degas's day, Rita Sangalli for one,[69] were singled out for their blameless professionalism. It seems likely that the myth of the promiscuous *coulisses* was exaggerated. The Goncourt brothers recorded a conversation as early as 1861 in which they were told by a senior Opéra employee that scarcely a dozen ballerinas were kept women and that most lived with their mothers or had relationships with men of their own class; they made poor mistresses, apparently, because while they looked glorious in their costumes on stage, they were often ordinary looking off it.[70] And, of course, by no means were all the *abonnés* sexually interested in the dancers. The devotedly married Halévy was dismissive of the men who opportunistically gave cheap ear-rings to young dancers. But if he did not "bother with that kind of thing,"[71] others did, if only at a distance. The elderly composer Auber told him that the *foyer de la danse* was "the only room I love. As many pretty heads, pretty shoulders, pretty legs as one could want. . . ."[72] As it happens, Auber listed precisely the parts of the

dancer's body that Degas represented in *Waiting,* and here we can pose another question about the pastel. Was Degas's representation party to that kind of fetishization of fragments of the female body,[73] the recreation of a titillating glimpse, the enshrinement in pastel powder of the sexual allure of the dancer?

Or did the pastel promote the second cliché about the dancer? This was the demythologization of the *danseuse,* the awareness that all the effortless grace and beauty she displayed in her performance was hard won through years of toil, exercises, and rehearsal. Dancers usually came from lower-class backgrounds, often with theatrical connections, and girls entered the Opéra's dance school as early as age six or seven. They frequently had to leave their far-flung lodgings in outer Paris with their mothers very early to be at the central Opéra for practice at nine o'clock sharp.[74] This would involve such exercises as half-an-hour's excruciating practice at keeping the feet turned out and parallel (*se tourner*) or clasping the ankle of a leg raised straight on a waist-high bar, changing legs on instruction and never ceasing to smile (*se casser*).[75] Exercises might be followed by rehearsals until two in the afternoon, after which the dancer was free until eight in the evening, when preparation for performances would begin. Ballet dancers were rarely home before the small hours. This routine applied not only to the girls undergoing the basic five years' initial training, but also to the *danseuses* who were working their way, through performances, up the ranks of the *corps de ballet.* Degas's treatment of this aspect of the ballet world, of the "intimate miseries of the priestesses of the harmonious art of the dance," as Ephrussi put it in 1880,[76] was another aspect of his responses to contemporary constructions of the dancer. It is often said that he respected these women for their voluntary submission to the painful disciplines of their art, just as the artist learns conventions in pursuit of creativity.[77] One suspects that, more than this, he had a sense of the details of what was involved. A contemporary ballet teacher, insisting on the difficulties of dance, said that "the first requirement for a dancer will be to dance equally on both legs . . . it is very difficult to ensure that one leg gives nothing away to the other in performance."[78] This leads to another question. Is the dancer's rubbing her ankle and upper foot merely a plausible gesture? Or is it an indication that she has not yet achieved exact equality between her legs and that this imbalance has injured her joint?

Another feature of *Waiting* that links it to the sub-culture of the ballet and its mythologies is the presence alongside the dancer of the figure in street clothes. The presence of young dancers' mothers backstage was accepted; at the outset of their daughters' careers they were responsible for conveying their young charges to and from the Opéra, and they no doubt had continuing roles encouraging the girls' progress in their practice and examinations as well as acting as unpaid dressers. Through such practical functions the mothers had their place as an informal but constant constituent of the staffage of the *coulisses*.[79]

The mythology of backstage had it that the mothers' purpose was often more venal, to promote and supervise liaisons with rich *abonnés*. By this token they were procuresses, using their daughters' bodies to support the family's finances. They were thus key players in the eroticization of the *coulisses*, in which the dancer herself was a sexualized pawn in a game played out between upper-class men and lower-class women in a confined space of contrived and transitory intimacy.[80] Mothers and dancers were repetitively constructed in these roles, not least in contemporary literature. Writers vied for appropriate metaphors, mixing them shamelessly. "The battalion of mothers squeeze their unlikely heads between two stage-flats," wrote one; "these scarcely respectable matrons resemble hens who have adopted ducklings: they fuss around the forbidden pond."[81] And in more prurient literature, notably the so-called Decadent poetry that emerged about 1880, the construction of the dancer manipulated by her mother proliferated. As one poem, more or less contemporary with *Waiting*, put it about a young dancer: "your mother, occupied/in arranging your destiny,/doesn't give you dolls;/but gives you to others as a puppet."[82] Most significantly in Degas's case, Halévy's *Famille Cardinal* pivots on Mme. Cardinal's hopes of and anxieties for her daughter's liaisons.

Undoubtedly Degas was aware of the mythology surrounding the mothers, via literature and gossip, too; one *abonné* claimed to be able to tell tales about the mother of Marie van Goethem, model for the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years*, which "would make you blush or weep!"[83] Yet the extent to which Degas subscribed to it remains in question. Mothers, or at least older women who accompany the dancers (Degas's images are often ambiguous and the woman in *Waiting*

Degas

Figure 22
Edgar Degas. *The Ballet Class,* circa 1881. Oil on canvas, 81.6 × 76.5 cm (32⅛ × 30⅛ in.). Philadelphia Museum of Art: The W. P. Wilstach Collection 37-2-1.

Figure 23
Edgar Degas. *Dance Examination,* circa 1879. Pastel and charcoal on grey paper, 63.4 × 48.2 cm (25 × 19 in.). Denver Art Museum 1941.6.

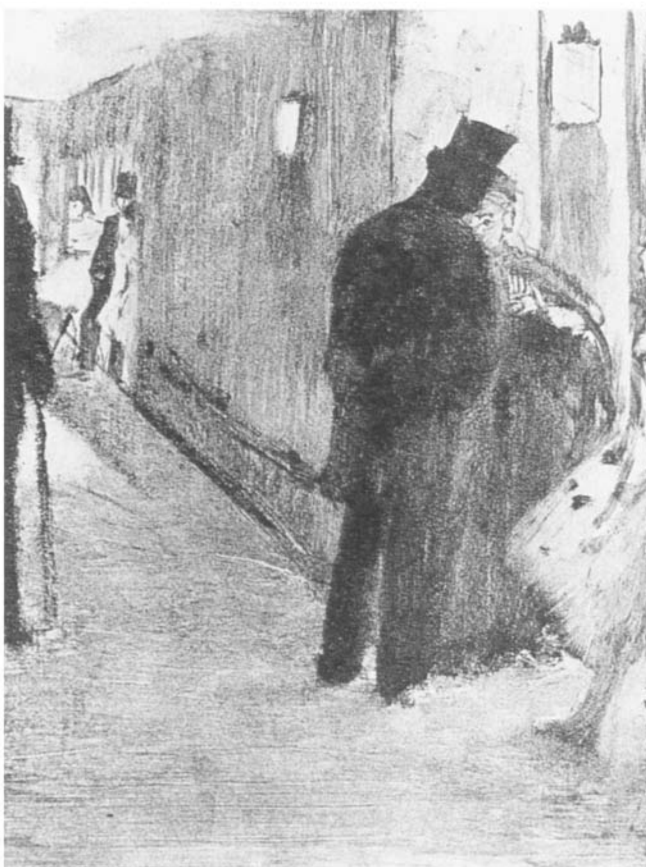


Figure 24
Edgar Degas. *Mme. Cardinal Talking to an "Abonné,"* circa 1876. Monotype, approx. 15.8 × 11.8 cm (6¾₁₆ × 4⅝ in.). Location unknown. Reproduced from E. P. Janis, *Degas Monotypes*, Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum, 1968, no. 200.

looks little older than the dancer), appear in his ballet pictures almost from the outset, for instance in the two major dance-class subjects of the mid-1870s in the Musée d'Orsay and the Metropolitan Museum.[84] But as Jean Sutherland Boggs justly suggests,[85] there seems to be no cynicism or impropriety here; the women merely wait, watching their charges practice. Mothers crop up more frequently in works made around the turn of the decade, both in images of rehearsal spaces and dressing rooms. That they mattered to Degas is indicated not only by their increasing presence but by the fact that pictures were actually reworked to include them. The foreground figure in the painting in the Philadelphia Museum [FIGURE 22]

was originally a dancer, Mary Cassatt remembered,[86] but was changed into a pug-nosed chaperone reading *Le Petit Journal,* while the pastel now in Denver [FIGURE 23] added two onlookers to the ballet scene.[87] In images such as these, as in *Waiting,* the mothers are more to the forefront than in the paintings of the mid seventies; they are made to matter. Yet if they are more insistent than in the earlier paintings, in none of the images made about 1880 do they interact with *abonnés,* as they do in the monotypes made to illustrate *La Famille Cardinal* [FIGURE 24], also from the mid-seventies. Then Degas seems to have divided his representation of the mothers' functions between the almost anonymously practical in the paintings and the suggestively scurillous in the monotypes. By 1880 the mother figures are more significant players in the fictions of his genre scenes, but precisely which parts they play remain unclear. Perhaps their chief purpose now, and the reason why they are brought nearer, is to act as a psychological counterweight to the dancers in Degas's construction of a modern genre subject, rather than to imply any social "documentation" or moral comment.

Waiting on the Market

There is a further dimension which helps site *Waiting* in the complex pattern of Degas's treatment of the ballet subject. An extrapolation from the practice of sequential drawing, a refined modern genre scene, representation of the subculture of the *coulisses,* it was also an "article" made for the market. Degas's financial position was precarious, and sales were essential. By 1880 he had an established reputation for images of the ballet, and pastels of dancers evidently sold, so he produced them steadily. Critics occasionally complained of this repetition[88] and Degas himself moaned to Halévy that these were "the only thing people want from your unfortunate friend."[89] As Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers have shown, the pastels of this period give an informal, almost serial account of the dancer's world: at practice [FIGURE 23], in the dressing room [FIGURE 25], in the wings [FIGURE 26], and on stage [FIGURE 27].[90] In comparison to other contemporary images of ballet subjects with which Degas had to compete on the market, his representations reach neither of the extremes of glamour and ostentation vaunted by Comerre's *Etoile* [FIGURE 28] or pathos and titillation amalgamated by Pelez [FIGURE 29], but they nevertheless fell within market expectations.

Apart from their popular subject—sophisticated, graceful, sensual—the works were made in pastel, a medium just coming back into fashion among artists and collectors.[91] Pastel suited Degas because it allowed rapid work and facilitated changes, easing production of "articles" while permitting experiment and innovation.[92] Many of these pastels are about the same size as *Waiting,* at about 45 × 60 cm (17¾ × 24 in.) at once not too demanding of the artist and of attractive scale, texture, and chic for the medium's increasing number of *amateurs.* More generally, a pastel's appeal lay in its association with the cultivated, aristocratic eighteenth century,[93] though in the hands of contemporary *afficionados* of the medium such as de Nittis, Tissot and Blanche, its spontaneity and friability were considered particularly appropriate to the modern world "where everything is pressurized, in a hurry, where the beginning has no end, where there is no time

to develop an idea."[94] To Edmond de Goncourt pastel was the ideal means to represent the modern female and "all the moral and physical malaise in a woman's physiognomy."[95] This combination of convenient technical adaptability and associations with sophistication and modernity, sensibility and femininity, made pastel the perfect medium for Degas to foster his place on the market.

Who would buy a pastel such as *Waiting,* and why? What might the subject mean to the buyer, and how might it be read? One would expect someone like Halévy to own such a picture, and indeed he had Degas's portrait of him in the *coulisses* [FIGURE 53], but a rehearsal drawing only by the illustrator Paul Renouard.[96] Given that Degas had a significant reputation among collectors by the early 1880s, publicly acknowledged by critics such as Emile Zola and Jules Claretie,[97] it does not seem that the somewhat seedy reputation of the *foyer de la danse* deterred collectors. Indeed, both the Shelburne and the Denver pictures—close to *Waiting* in scale and subject—were lent to the 1880 Impressionist exhibition by private owners.[98] One of them, Ernest May, was an *abonné* and thus a likely patron of such a subject, but female purchasers were not deterred by its *risqué* associations; the previous year a pastel of a dressing room scene and two fans of ballet motifs had been lent by women.[99]

Waiting's first owner was Léon-Marie Clapisson (1837–1894). He was a financier who seems to have been introduced to independent art via a network of men of means and business friends, though we do not know when he began to collect. Probably Renoir's patron Paul Bérard was an early contact, and Clapisson bought pictures from Renoir's recent Algerian trip in May 1882 and that autumn commissioned Renoir to paint a portrait of his wife. Renoir's first effort was rejected as too "impressionist" but the second was accepted (1883; Chicago, Art Institute).[100] From the early 1880s Clapisson temporarily became a significant collector of artists in the Impressionist circle. Although all but one of the paintings he owned by Renoir were figure subjects,[101] he evidently favored landscapes. He owned at least ten by Monet, including such important canvases as *Banks of the Seine, Bennecourt* (1868; Chicago, Art Institute) and *Sunset over the Seine* (1880; Paris, Petit Palais),[102] eight by Sisley,[103] seven by Albert Lebourg,[104] and three by Victor Vignon.[105] Even his two Manets were landscapes.[106] Clapisson's business

Degas

Degas

Figure 25
Edgar Degas. *Before the Entrance Onstage,* circa 1878–80. Pastel, 59.1 × 45.1 cm (23¼ × 17¾ in.). Private collection.

Figure 26
Edgar Degas. *Dancers in the Wings,* circa 1878–80. Pastel and distemper. 66.7 × 47.3 cm. (26¼ × 18⅝ in.) Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum.

Figure 27
Edgar Degas. *L'Etoile,* circa 1876–77. Pastel over monotype, 58 × 42 cm (22⅞ × 16½ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 12258.

Figure 28
Leon Comerre (French, 1850–1915). *A Star.* Oil on canvas, 75 × 59 cm (29½ × 23¼ in.). Private collection.

relations were not always easy; Pissarro maligned him in 1886 as Durand-Ruel's "man of straw" and Gauguin recognized his wiles.[107] But he continued to collect pictures into the late 1880s, buying one landscape by Monet made at Antibes in 1888 and two of Pont-Aven painted by Gauguin that year.[108]

One can only speculate how *Waiting* fitted into such a landscape-orientated collection. Clapisson did own figure paintings, notably by Renoir. But the majority of his figurative subjects were drawings of one kind or another. The gouache of a harvest scene by Pissarro lent to the 1881 Impressionist exhibition fell into this category, as does the picture of a "suburban character" he lent to Raffaëlli's one-man-show in 1884.[109] Clapisson's collection included a substantial group of works on paper—five Jongkind watercolors, a Harpignies fan, six pen-and-ink drawings by Daumier, two pastels each by Besnard, Serret and Caillebotte and one by Louise Breslau[110]—which suggest that he was consciously building up a drawings collection varied in medium and subject. We do not know precisely when Clapisson purchased *Waiting* or whether he bought it directly from the artist or via a dealer. It may have been at this time, as the "article" left the studio and

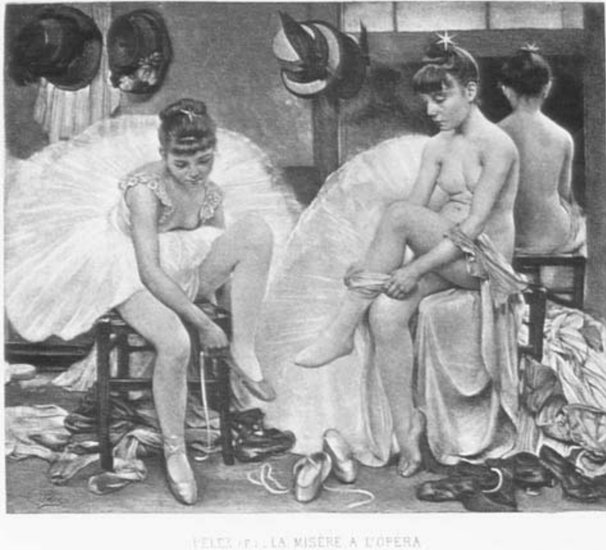


Figure 29
Fernand Pelez (French, 1843–1913). *Misery at the Opéra,* circa 1885. Oil on canvas, dimensions and location unknown. Reproduced from: Henri Havard, *Salon de 1885* (Paris, 1885), pp. 28–9.

entered the market, that *Waiting* got its name, though whether it was given by Degas, Durand-Ruel, Clapisson or some other will probably never be discovered. The pastel must have seemed a curiosity in Clapisson's collection, for it included scarcely any modern figure scenes and no other ballet subjects. Its function as the sole Degas in the collection was probably to ensure that this estimable artist was represented and to enhance Clapisson's holdings of works on paper. Collecting contemporary drawings had become increasingly fashionable about 1880, stimulated by the establishment of specialist exhibiting groups such as the Société des Aquarellistes Français in 1879 and the Société des Pastellistes Français in 1885.[111]

In the early 1890s Clapisson began to dispose of his collection. Again, we do not know why, but given his profession he might have been realizing his speculation, much as the newspaper proprietor Walter intended to do in Maupassant's 1885 novel *Bel-ami,* buying work by "less well known, less rated people . . . waiting for the moment when the artists will be famous."[112] Some pictures Clapisson passed off to dealers, and *Waiting* was bought by Durand-Ruel on 21 April 1892 for 6,000 francs,[113] a not inconsiderable sum given that Degas's larger oil,

Woman Seated beside a Vase of Flowers (1865; New York, Metropolitan Museum) had changed hands for 5,500 francs only three years previously.[114] Most of the remainder of Clapisson's collection was sold anonymously in Paris on 28 April 1894, perhaps following his death.[115]

Durand-Ruel kept *Waiting* for over three years, until he sold it to the Havemeyers.[116] Before her marriage to Henry Osborne Havemeyer (1847–1907) in 1883, Louisine Waldron Elder (1855–1929) had already begun to collect modern pictures. Her first—and very daring—purchase, made in 1877 with the encouragement of Mary Cassatt, was in fact a Degas, a ballet rehearsal in gouache and pastel over monotype.[117] Her husband, an extremely rich sugar magnate, was a less adventurous collector with a taste for old masters, but by the mid-1890s he was coming round to his wife's more modern preferences. During the early months of 1895 they bought a number of important pictures by Manet and the Impressionists in New York, and in June sailed for Europe. Havemeyer was still drawn to art from the past—he was annoyed to miss a Gainsborough in London, and acquired a marble relief by Mina da Fiesole in Paris[118]—but the momentum was towards more recent work. On 19 September they visited Durand-Ruel's gallery and purchased eleven works. The most expensive was Manet's *Boating* at 55,000 francs, followed by a Corot costume piece at 25,000; to these were added a snowscape by Courbet and drawings by Millet and Daumier. This session yielded no less than six pictures by Degas. Two were small—a recent landscape pastel over monotype and a fan of a ballet scene—but the others were all pastels of compact but collectable scale. The smallest and least expensive was a motif of a woman bathing at 600 francs; two images of dancers on stage, both measuring 71 × 38 cm (28 × 15 in.), cost 3,500 and 5,500 francs respectively, while the Havemeyers paid 15,000 francs for the more modestly scaled *Waiting*,[119] a considerable profit for Durand-Ruel on the price he had paid Clapisson. The last three pastels ostensibly came from the dealer's private collection. Was he genuinely loath to part with *Waiting*, or was this just a ploy to push up the price? The answer may lie in the fact that Degas's friend Zandomeneghi made a copy of the pastel [FIGURE 30], exact in size, at about this date,[120] which Durand-Ruel owned. Perhaps the dealer commissioned this copy to replace the original in his collection before it was shipped to the United States.

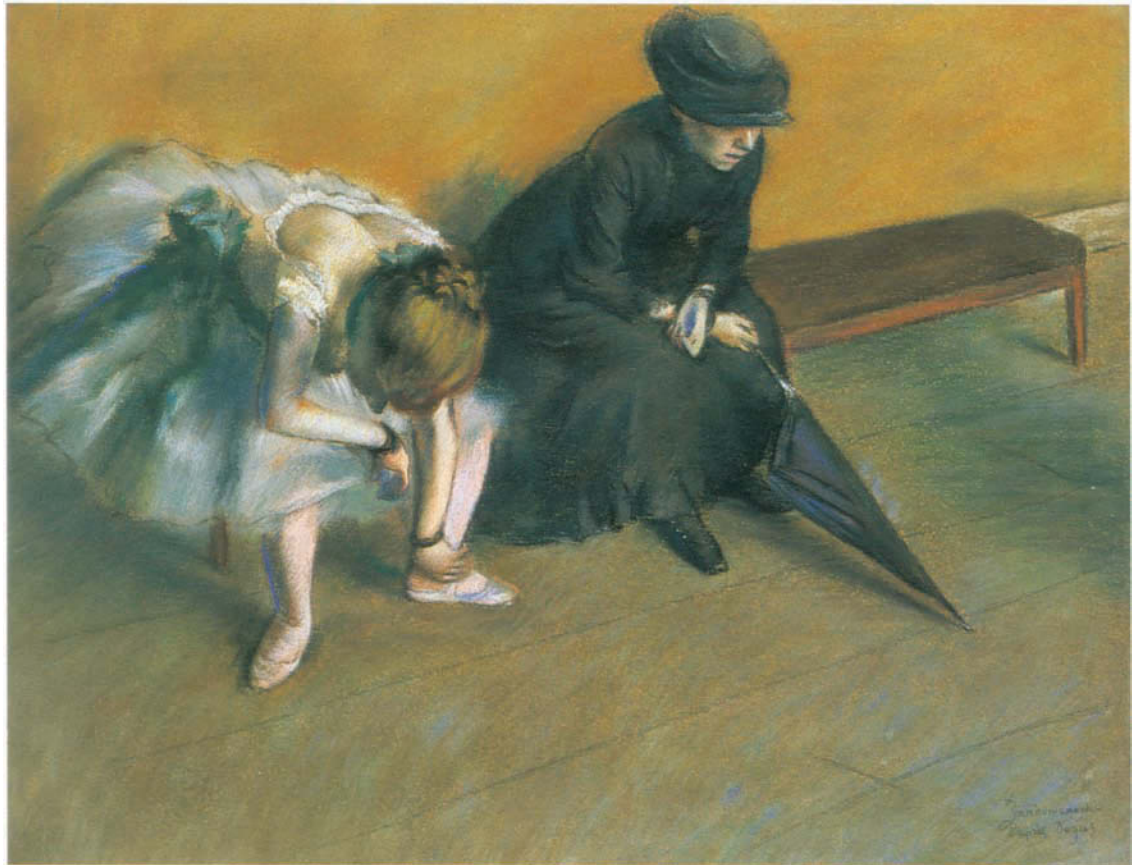


Figure 30
Federico Zandomeneghi (Italian, 1841–1917). *Copy after* "L'Attente, *by Degas*, circa 1895. Pastel, 47 × 59.5 cm (18½ × 23⅜ in.). Photo Routhier—Document Archives Durand-Ruel, Paris.

Ultimately the Havemeyers accrued the greatest collection of Degas's work ever assembled, Gary Tinterow listing "some sixty-four paintings, pastels, drawings and fan-mounts, a complete set of seventy bronzes . . . and a large number of etchings, lithographs and monotypes."[121] They preferred Degas's more naturalistic, mid-career works, from the late 1860s to the early 1890s, and the range they chose was most varied. Over half of their collection consisted of ballet subjects, including a number which we have already discussed in relation to *Waiting* [FIGURES 10, 12, 17]. However, it would be wrong to suggest that the Havemeyers collected such images in any programmatic way. They were restricted by what was available on the market, and while they evidently shared a particular predilection

for Degas's work, it had its place within an enormous collection with other substantial holdings of specific artists, especially Courbet and Manet. The Havemeyers collected to exercise and satisfy their personal tastes, and not for speculation, a gambit their wealth precluded. As devoted New Yorkers, they bequeathed the bulk of their collection to the Metropolitan Museum.

How might *Waiting* have read in the Havemeyer collection? It may simply have been treated as an exquisite drawing. After all, it was to Mrs. Havemeyer that Degas made his comment about "the movements of the Greeks," which endowed the ballet subject with an aura of timeless beauty. But the Havemeyer collection included not only motifs of the mundane dimension of the ballet—exercise, rehearsal, exhaustion—but also images with hovering mothers and one showing a gentleman-protector squeezed into a dressing room with a *danseuse* whose mother restitches her hem [FIGURE 25]. Although the Havemeyers' responses to subjects potentially so *risqué*—especially in New York's respectable Protestant circles—have not come down to us, Louisine Havemeyer wrote, with reference to their voluptuous nudes by Courbet: "Is it our affair if he mixed a little romance with his colors?"[122] And if, as she put it, Degas's *Chanson du chien* (circa 1876–7; private collection) "does not represent perhaps the attractive place we Americans recall on the Champs-Elysées" but "crass banality"[123] instead, the Havemeyers were not deterred from owning it. The distance between transatlantic cultures and a certain élitism of taste—Louisine believed "it takes special brain cells to understand Degas"[124]—prevented images such as the *Chanson du chien*, and perhaps *Waiting* also, from being read as too incisive, too dangerous.

Waiting was made and marketed at a time when French politics, society and culture were in a state of considerable flux. Following the catastrophes of 1870–71, humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the bloodily suppressed class struggle of the Commune, the country sought to settle down, its politicians maneuvering unsteadily between monarchical and republican options. Middle-class Parisians seized on public events which gave evidence of national recovery, the opening of the new Opéra, for instance, or the Universal Exhibition of 1878, which attracted 16 million visitors and demonstrated that the Third Republic had found its feet. This drive to move forward was typical of the professional circles of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in which Degas moved; as Jules Claretie put it in 1876: "Our ideal can be summed up thus, in art as in literature: to lead a proper existence; to be inspired by modern life; to create and not to copy; to study nature breathing, not dead; to be of one's time and not of the past."[125]

This association of art and literature as two art forms which should come to terms with the new pressures of modern urban life was quite commonly articulated at the time. The networking of references was intense. A painter might take a subject from contemporary literature, as Dagnan-Bouveret did from Zola's *L'Assommoir* in 1879;[126] a writer might employ the jargon of the studio, as Huysmans did entitling a volume of prose-poems *Croquis parisiens* (Parisian sketches) in 1880; critics frequently drew parallels between art and literature, such as the comparison of the squalid suburban subjects of Raffaëlli's pictures and François Coppée's poetry.[127] Reviewing the 1880 Impressionist exhibition Huysmans tried this common tactic: "It is difficult with the pen to give even a very vague idea of M. Degas's painting; it can only have its equivalent in literature; if such a comparison between these two arts were possible, I would say that M. Degas's handling reminds me, from many points of view, of the literary manner of the Goncourt brothers."[128] His equivocal tone admitted the difficulties of such parallels, and even hinted at a degree of rivalry.

A work of literature and a visual image are inevitably discrete art forms, with their own multiple conventions and conceptual possibilities. Whereas the picture is fixed in two dimensions, the writer has the time it takes the reader to complete the book to develop character, plot, and narrative. Words can vividly evoke physical senses and emotional states, due to their cumulative effect and the fact that, outside the realm of literature, they are the medium which we use to rationalize senses and emotions. Painters' colors and textures, their representation of forms, figures and emotions to which we are accustomed, can conjure up physical and emotional associations too, but from an unchanging image. The artist can strive against this inherent fixity by using technical devices that make us focus on certain things, or encourage us to see things in a certain order, or the artist can subvert those conventions and destabilize the spectator's expectations.

Around 1880 both French artists and writers—despite the inherent differences of their media—were increasingly aware that they were coming to terms with a constantly changing urban environment with its relentless momentum. Claretie for one expressed anxiety about the "curiosity, anxiety, and fever" he perceived in modern Paris, a *Yankeesme* symptomatic in the new department stores, offices and telegraph wires.[129] Others cast modernity in the same light. Octave Uzanne commented on the "perpetual bustle, excluding intimacy and a thorough knowledge of the things we behold."[130] The question for both artist and writer was how to best represent the rapidly shifting formations of the city's cultures and populations.

Zola, by 1880 the leading naturalist novelist by virtue of his volume of sales and controversial reputation, was in no doubt. His novels were carefully researched "documents" of modern life, ordered around lengthy chapters which were intended by the pounding accumulation of both details and grand effects to summarize a cross-section of the contemporary world. Given this literary technique, it is no surprise that in 1880—the year he published a volume of short stories, *Les Soirées de Médan*, with followers such as Guy de Maupassant, Paul Alexis and Huysmans—he criticized the Impressionists for failing to produce either a master who could set a style or a major masterpiece. "The formula is there, infinitely divided," he complained: "they are too easily satisfied . . . incomplete,

illogical, exaggerated, powerless."[131] The kinds of painters Zola could admire in the 1880s were those who worked on a scale similar to his, artists such as Alfred Roll, renowned in the 1880s for huge multi-figure compositions. Others found the small-scale more appropriate. If we think of French literature of this period solely in terms of the set-piece novels of Zola, Flaubert or Daudet, we neglect the preference for the short story or prose-poem manifested by, among many, Maupassant, Huysmans, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Armand Silvestre, all of whom additionally wrote about contemporary painting. Indeed, even novels customarily appeared serialized in newspapers or magazines, *en feuilleton,* prior to publication in book form, so the reading public was attuned to taking its fiction in gobbets. Poetry was also seen as an effective medium for addressing the modern city; in 1883 Claretie was quick to extol Emile Goudeau, Jean Richepin and Paul Ginisty as poets who could catch Paris in constant transformation.[132] This appetite for the vignette, anecdote or verse was evident again in the territories where art and literature met. The year 1879 saw the launch, by Zola's publisher Charpentier, of a chic illustrated magazine, *La Vie moderne,* which combined short stories, poems, criticism, gossip and drawings, centering on the metropolis and the modern.[133] It set the tone, among many similar publications, of mixing media and favoring the item which was small-scale but incisive. Images such as *Waiting* were thus formed within a culture, and seen and "read" by a public, accustomed to comprehending the modern world, in both image and text, via the pithy fragment, the telling encapsulation.

There was a sensibility attached to this taste, one which perhaps informs *Waiting*. On its publication early in 1882, Edmond de Goncourt's novel about a fading actress, *La Faustin,* was criticized for being merely "a pell-mell of remoldings and rehashes without link or coherence."[134] But to Goncourt's admirer Huysmans it was a new kind of writing, with as much insinuated as described, "which makes all one's nerves vibrate."[135] That emphasis on the nerves seems to have come to the fore around 1880 in critical language which was seeking to characterize a new sensibilty in naturalism, one that went beyond mere description and rendered the contemporary world less as an immediately legible document or spectacle than as a kind of palimpsest in which the image veiled emotion. Per-

haps it was this quality that led Huysmans to link Goncourt and Degas; certainly the poet Emile Verhaeren wrote of Degas as "the painter of nerves."[136] This sensibility was not the sole prerogative of the artist; it was required of reader or viewer. Duranty conveyed this when writing on the German artist Adolph Menzel: "While being in the best of health, he has a *neurosis* about truth. One senses in his work the nervous shock, the frisson which nature makes him feel."[137] It was perhaps to this double sensibility that Mrs. Havemeyer referred when she spoke of the "special brain cells" needed to read Degas's pictures.

Such generalizations, however broadly brushed, are essential to an account of *Waiting* and its reading. The Parisian middle classes of 1880, comprising far wider combinations of interests than the Clapissons, Clareties and Halévys on whom we have touched, were accustomed to *reading* the world around them, whether in literary form—novel, short story, newspaper—or visual form—painting, illustration or photograph. Indeed, sometimes this reading involved both the verbal and the visual simultaneously, as in the two very different media of the theatre and caricature. The abutting and overlapping of such cultural experiences surely garbled the reader/viewer's processes of reading. If reading the modern world was, we gather, getting frenetic—though far less so than in our late twentieth-century culture—it was the primary means of making sense of the world. With naturalism, the frank depiction of the everyday, as the dominant cultural conception, the interchange between what one experienced in life and what one read in art was central. Daily experience fuelled one's reading of text or image; reading cultural constructions helped comprehend the modern world.

Methods of reading, of making sense of urban experience, might be shared by literature and the visual arts. One such was the type, the figure who by his or her costume or accessories epitomized a group, profession or livelihood within the complex class structure of the city.[138] To take but two examples, this stock form of categorization was used to group prose poems by Huysmans in his *Croquis parisiens* and paintings by Raffaëlli in his 1884 one-man-show.[139] Allied to this was the pseudo-science of physiognomy, which claimed to be able to identify the character of an individual by facial characteristics and body language. Degas and certain colleagues had been interested in such ideas for some time,[140] and in

1876 Duranty published *La Nouvelle Peinture* (The New Painting) in which their common ideas were linked to current naturalist picture-making.[141] "A back should reveal temperament, age, and social position, a pair of hands should reveal the magistrate or the merchant, and a gesture should reveal an entire range of feelings," argued Duranty.[142] Such concepts were to the fore when *Waiting* was made, but they were flawed, as Carol Armstrong has made clear. Physiognomy was purportedly an objective method of reading—a scowling man must be an angry man, say—but was inescapably subjective. And in Duranty's hands, far from elucidating, his system dissolved: "When he sets out to read, he writes about *not being able* to read, about an *inability* to classify."[143] The human text refused to be easily interpreted.

Such pressures, expectations, and systems had to be taken into account by artists asking what a modern painting might be, what strategies might be deployed in its composition and execution. One must remember that it is incorrect to think that the painting of modern life was only just becoming commonplace in the 1870s, that Degas and his colleagues were pioneers. The success of Alfred Stevens at the Universal Exhibition of 1855 or of Tissot during the 1860s meant that the emergence of artists such as de Nittis, Gervex and Béraud in the mid-seventies formed at least a third generation of artists prospering on themes drawn from modern Paris. These subjects proliferated; as one critic described the Salon of 1874, "the spectator [is led] from sitting room to studio, from bathroom to kitchen, from dining room to park paths, from boudoir to stable, from primary school to seaside casino, from church to racecourse."[144] Given such mass-production of the modern subject, the question for an artist such as Degas was how to produce images which encapsulated an exclusive, incisive modernity distinct from the common run of the documentary or sentimental, pictures which, as the painter and writer Eugène Fromentin complained in a critical comparison with seventeenth century Dutch genre painting, vaunted subject over execution.[145]

Contemporaries deliberated and disputed how paintings of modern life should read. We have no record of how Degas thought through a composition such as *Waiting* and its potential interpretation as a figure subject, but it is of interest to hear how another artist, Marie Bashkirtseff, set up a picture in 1880. "The

scene is in the carpenter's house . . ." she recorded in her journal; "the woman is trying a chorister's cassock on a boy of ten; the little girl is seated on an old box, looking at her brother with open mouth; the grandmother is near the store in the background, her hands joined, and smiling as she looks at the child. The father, sitting near the bench, is reading *La Lanterne* and looking askance at the red cassock and white surplice. The background is very complicated: a store, some old bottles, tools, and a heap of things rather unfinished, naturally."[146] Bashkirtseff was not merely composing a detailed contemporary scene, she was also plotting a story with a set of interrelationships which could be read with the help of specific details of physiognomy and accessory. It is the women who encourage the boy's commitment to the church; the father, with his anti-clerical newspaper, silently objects. The picture staged the gender-based antagonism within the working-class between those who accepted the reactionary authority of the church and those on the Left who repudiated it: a carefully contrived modern anecdote which Bashkirtseff set up to read in a particular way.

Some critics disliked such specificity. Félix Fénéon ironized that in Raffaëlli's pictures of the suburban poor, "a man is never a mark in a landscape; he's an ex-attorney who is taking the air after nine years, five months and three days of penal shoe-mending."[147] Others disagreed. Two critics in 1881 praised Raffaëlli because he "represents but doesn't recount, the way painters of anecdotes do" and he "invites meditation."[148] Critics, who were often literary men, and should not necessarily be taken to stand for the public as a whole, enjoyed the opportunity to dwell on a picture, to read a plausible account from its open-ended representation. Huysmans, for one, writing about Caillebotte's *Interior, Seated Woman* in 1880, specified the newspapers both figures are reading,[149] and so developed their characterization for his readers, although the painter had left their reading-matter ambiguous. Artists were setting pictures up to be read; critics wanted, even expected, to read them. We should now turn to the reading of *Waiting*.

By 1880 Degas had been developing "modern" compositional and narrative strategies which affected how his pictures read for more than a decade. For all his reputation as an innovator—in *La Nouvelle Peinture* Duranty had referred to him as "the source from which so many painters have drawn their inspi-

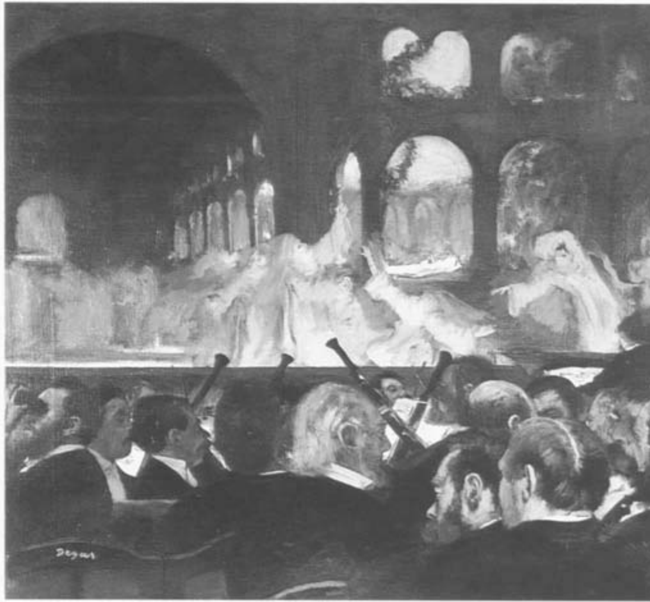


Figure 31
Edgar Degas. *The Ballet from "Robert le Diable,"* 1876. Oil on canvas, 76.6 × 81.3 cm (29¾ × 32 in.). London, Victoria and Albert Museum CI.19.

ration"[150]—these pictorial possibilities had been developed within the broad current of experimentation with the modern genre subject. This theme preoccupied painters from those such as Tissot and de Nittis, whom Degas had sought to recruit for his "realist salon" in 1874, to the artists he introduced to the Impressionist exhibitions at the turn of the decade, among them Cassatt, Raffaëlli and Forain.

A typical example of this coordination of construction and reading is evident in the two versions of the *Ballet from "Robert le Diable"* made in 1871[151] and 1876 [FIGURE 31]. Here we, the spectators, are placed among the gentlemen in the front stalls at the Opéra. Our implied proximity, the lack of any specific focus, and the jumble of heads are all contrived to give us a sense of being present, and our place among the *abonnés* insists on our equivalent sex and status as *haut bourgeois* gentlemen.[152] Degas implied the same in pastels representing a view from a *loge* (box) onto the stage [FIGURE 32]. In such images the viewer looks steeply down, past an elegantly attired, seated woman and over the plush-covered balustrade to

Figure 32
Edgar Degas. *At the Ballet*, circa 1880–1. Pastel, 55 × 48 cm (21⅝ × 18⅞ in.). France, private collection.

Figure 33
Mary Cassatt (American, active France, 1844–1926). *Five O'Clock Tea,* 1880. Oil on canvas, 64.8 × 92.7 cm (25½ × 36½ in.). M. Theresa B. Hopkins Fund; courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 42.178.

Figure 34
Gustave Caillebotte (French, 1848–1894). *The Floor-scrapers,* 1875. Oil on canvas, 100 × 145.4 cm (39⅜ × 57¼ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

the performing dancers below.[153] In the fiction of the picture, our presence in an expensive *loge* and the chic of our companion combine with our implicit position standing behind her again to give the viewer the identity of an upper middle-class man. This implication of class, gender and physical position "within" the genre scene was practiced by women artists too.[154] Mary Cassatt's painting of two women taking tea, shown at the 1880 Impressionist exhibition [FIGURE 33], is suffused with the signs of the *haute bourgeoisie:* the regency-striped wallpaper, the bell-pull for calling servants, the gilt mirror and porcelain, and the silver tea service with the hostess, hatless, seated beside a visitor in street-costume, gloved little finger elegantly raised. The spectator sits at their level, just across the table; the painter expects us to participate, as she did herself, in the visiting rituals of these leisured ladies. If these pictures infiltrate the spectator into the artist's own social rank, the device could be used more ambiguously. This is surely the case with Caillebotte's *Floor-scrapers* [FIGURE 34], which caused a stir at the 1876 exhibition. Both ambiguity and certainty could be imputed to the viewer's role. The spectator could be of the painter's own class, proprietor of this elegant Parisian apartment, or one of these workmen's colleagues. Such images, as one critic put it of Tissot's pictures, make the spectator "a sort of walker-on who, without taking part in the action, is brought close to the actors and perceives himself *part of the play.*"[155]

These were the expectations of a public which wanted to read pictures as they could real life. High praise was to end a descriptive reading of an image—say Alphonse de Neuville's *The Spy,* a Franco-Prussian War scene representing the interrogation by German troops of a French dispatch carrier disguised as a peasant—with: "I am caught, moved as if facing reality itself."[156] A painter failing in this faced censure. Manet's *The Balcony* [FIGURE 35] was taken to task at the Salon of 1869 because it failed to read. Even Castagnary, a critic inclined to support Manet, worried: "On this *Balcony* I see two women, one quite young. Are they sisters? Are they mother and daughter? I don't know. And then one is sitting down apparently intent on enjoying the spectacle of the street; the other is putting her gloves on as if she were going out. This contradictory attitude bewilders me. . . . Like characters in a play, so in a picture each figure must have its place, fulfill its role, and so contribute to the expression of the general idea."[157] Not only did *The*

Figure 35
Edouard Manet (French, 1832–1883). *The Balcony,* 1868–69. Oil on canvas, 170 × 124 cm (67¾ × 49¼ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 2772.

Balcony fail, in contemporary eyes, to read even as an ambiguous narrative; Manet also aborted the placement of the spectator, making us hover over the street. Degas's naturalism was more disciplined.

Waiting reads "real" well enough; we are placed in plausible relation to the two women. Our vantage-point suggests we are standing just across the room, although on the lower steps of a staircase would also be possible. One might expect such a position to read as a male view. It was a topos in contemporary

Figure 36
Pascal-Adolphe Dagnan-Bouveret (French, 1852–1929). *On the Quais, Paris, in Autumn (The Laundress)*, 1880. Oil on canvas, 34 × 52 cm (13½ × 20½ in.). Private collection.

Figure 37
Alfred Grevin (French, 1827–1892). Drawing from A. Huart, *Les Parisiennes* (Paris, 1879), p. 305. London, Victoria and Albert Museum Library.

imagery to juxtapose the standing male against the seated female, implying a position of power over her.[158] In both a painting such as Dagnan-Bouveret's *On the Quais, Autumn* [FIGURE 36] or one of Grévin's caricatures [FIGURE 37]—to take but two examples—we watch two passing men standing over seated women. In Dagnan's work, a tired laundry delivery girl is the target of sexually appropriative gazes,[159] and in Grévin's image, two ladies of the town juxtaposed with the advertised price of beer is an invitation to purchase and consume.[160] It was a topos Degas himself used in several of his monotypes of brothel subjects [FIGURE 38], in which the standing client surveys the sexual merchandise on sofas before him.[161] But whether we can assume he brought such associations into play in *Waiting* is another matter. On the one hand, no male figure is included and nothing in the pastel, unlike in '*Robert le Diable*' or the *loge* motifs, implies a male spectator. On the other, Degas could equally reverse the cliché. In *Women in Front of a Café, Evening* [FIGURE 39] the viewer's position is among the prostitutes waiting for trade, identifying us with them, while the upright male passes in the boulevard

gloom. *Waiting*'s viewer could just as well be another woman—dancer, teacher, mother—for nothing in it makes ours a gendered gaze.

Waiting is structured on a strong diagonal axis, a commonplace composition for a narrative subject, as its momentum maps out how the picture should be read. However, whereas a painter like Gérôme would use it conventionally to encourage the eye from one legible incident to another,[162] Degas and other naturalists experimented with different perspectival and structural possibilities which affect the reading of the image. This was recognized and supported by Duranty, who wrote in *La Nouvelle Peinture:* "Our vantage point is not always located in the center of a room whose two side walls converge toward the back wall; the lines of sight and of cornices do not always join with mathematical regularity and symme-

Figure 38
Edgar Degas. *The Client*, circa 1876–79. Monotype, 21.6 × 15.9 cm (8½ × 6¼ in.). Paris, Musée Picasso. Photo: Musees Nationaux, Paris.

Figure 39
Edgar Degas. *Women in Front of a Café, Evening*, 1877. Pastel over monotype, 41 × 60 cm (16⅛ × 23⅝ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 12257.

Figure 40
Gustave Moreau (French, 1824–1896). *Impressionist Perspective,* circa 1876. Pencil, 13 × 8 cm (5⅛ × 3¼ in.).
Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau. Photo: Musees Nationaux, Paris.

try."[163] A fair point, but it ran against the expected conventions of picture-making. Degas's perspective was sometimes taken to task,[164] although it was the steeply angled floor in Caillebotte's *Floorscrapers* that became a *cause célèbre*. Disdained as "anti-artistic" by Zola[165] and others in 1876, a couple of decades later the neo-impressionist painter Charles Angrand could not understand what the fuss had been about.[166] But such perspectival experiment in the mid-seventies had seemed to subvert the canons of art. About this time Degas's erstwhile mentor Gustave Moreau, whose paintings were typically structured on conventional step-by-step recession parallel to the picture plane, made a drawing [FIGURE 40] of his bedroom with sharp angles and raking perspective, sardonically inscribing it "Perspective des Impressionnistes."[167] If Moreau's criticism remained private, in 1885 Gustave Boulanger, a professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, warned his students in a published lecture against "these new tendencies . . . [to place] disproportionate

figures on the first plane and the horizon so high that the ground seems always to be rising,"[168] defending the very conventions which images such as *Waiting* transgress.

Waiting differs from the conventional structuring of reading by perspectival mapping. In the first place the diagonal is not a single axis moving gently into pictorial space but is given extra force, surprise, even aggression, by being doubled, the raking floor butted sharply against the steeply rising wall. In the second, *Waiting* does not show aspects of a story but only a single incident. In Gérôme's *Duel after a Masked Ball* [FIGURE 41], for instance, a narrative can be read: there has been a quarrel at a masked ball leading to a duel; the *pierrot* has been seriously, perhaps mortally, wounded; his assailant moves off, along a diagonal track. Such a picture could be paralleled in several pages of a novel; it too takes

Figure 41
Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824–1904). *Duel after the Masked Ball*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 50 × 72 cm (19¾ × 28⅜ in.). Chantilly, Musée Condé. Photo: Lauros-Giraudon

Figure 42
Edgar Degas. *In the Corridor,* circa 1876. Monotype, measurements and location unknown. Reproduced from E. P. Janis, *Degas Monotypes,* Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum, 1968, no. 224.

time to read, and we are given a sense of what has taken place and what may happen. Degas was adept at suggesting action over the passage of time without spelling it out as Gérôme did. In one of the *Famille Cardinal* monotypes [FIGURE 42], for instance, there seems to have been an exchange between dancer and *abonné,* which has led to her rushing off leaving him standing perplexed; in another moment, she will have disappeared completely, a temporal progress impelled by the tilting perspective. And in the canvas *Two Dancers* [FIGURE 43] the central figure *en pointe* is in a position she can only hold briefly; whether she is approach-

Figure 43
Edgar Degas. *Two Dancers*, circa 1874.
Oil on canvas, 62 × 46 cm (24½ × 18⅛ in.).
Courtauld Institute Galleries, London.

ing or moving away from the other dancer, whether their gestures denote welcome, farewell, or some such, there is nothing to tell, but their interrelationship insists on a past and a future, despite the viewer's inability to divine it. Although a stationary image, *Waiting* functions in a similar way. We are not told how these figures have come to be seated on the bench, nor can we gauge what will occur next. But the momentum implicit in the perspective prompts a sense of temporal, and thus narrative, continuum in the spectator, however unsatisfied that expectation must be.

Figure 44
James Tissot (French, 1836–1902). *Too Early,* 1873. Oil on canvas, 71.2 × 101.6 cm (28 × 39⅞ in.). London, Guildhall Art Gallery.

The uses to which perspectival compositions were put by other naturalist painters help define the functioning of *Waiting.* In Tissot's *Too Early* [FIGURE 44] the perspective leads the eye in two directions: on the left toward the peeking housemaids and the hostess giving instructions to the orchestra, and on the right to the guests mounting the main stairs. Stranded in the space made by this perspectival fork are an elderly father and his three daughters embarrassed by their early arrival, the open expanses around them emphasizing their awkward isolation. Tissot thus cleverly hinged the chief psychological incident on the pictorial structure. *Waiting,* too, uses void for psychological effect, the wedge of foreground space serving to heighten the sense of the figures' quarantine from the rest of the room. The embarrassed mood of Tissot's group, however, is enhanced because it

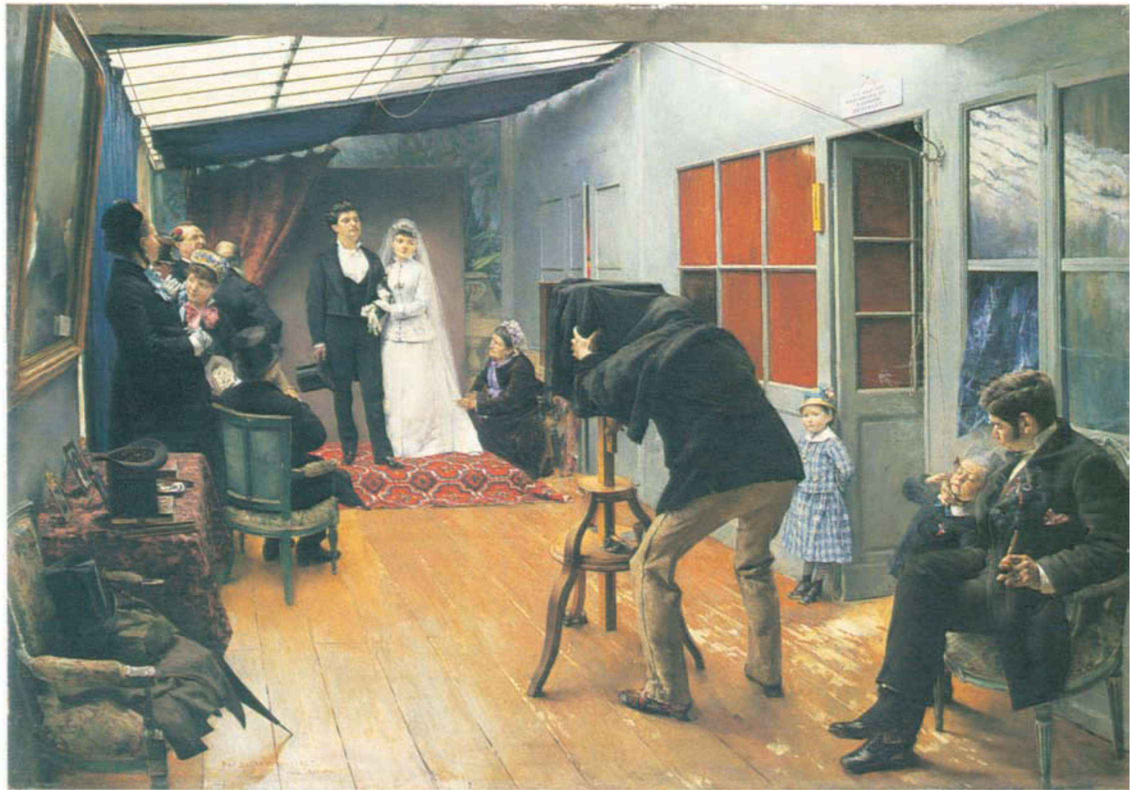


Figure 45
Pascal-Adolphe Dagnan-Bouveret. *A Wedding at the Photographer's*, 1878–79. Oil on canvas, 85 × 122 cm (33½ × 48 in.). Lyon, Musée des beaux-arts H-715.

is placed in relation to other figures, in the defined social context of an *haut bourgeois* ball with its legible assumptions about etiquette and class distinctions. Degas's isolated pair, by contrast, are represented in their own psychological sphere, rendered ambiguous by their lack of defined context, be it exercise, rehearsal, examination or whatever. Dagnan-Bouveret's *Wedding at the Photographer's* [FIGURE 45] also uses perspective, to lead to the bride and groom. However, for all their centrality in the marriage ritual, they hardly play the leading roles in the painting. Dagnan adroitly draws the spectator's attention across and around the angled space, moving the eye restlessly and haphazardly from the family gaggle at the left to the little girl fascinated by the ungainly photographer, from the matron smoothing the bride's skirt to the bully blowing tobacco smoke into the

Figure 46
Edgar Degas, *Portraits at the Stock Exchange,* circa 1878–79. Oil on canvas, 100 × 82 cm (39⅜ × 32¼ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 2444.

boy's face. It is a picture which asks us to remember how democratic vision can be, how nothing has preeminence in the scanning of the everyday gaze. In *Waiting* Degas surely worked in much the same perceptual territory, albeit with more economical means. As we scan up and down his perspectival space, neither one figure nor the other has the reader's priority, not even over the empty seat on the bench.

Degas was also conscious of how picture-making might approximate the ways one sees in the modern city in other pictures he made around 1880. *Portraits at the Stockmarket* [FIGURE 46] represents a gaggle of businessmen. The central trio, including the collector Ernest May, discuss a note one of them proffers. The group is quite broadly painted, but one can make out their interaction. May's

Figure 47
Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). *The Place Clichy,* circa 1880. Oil on canvas, 65 × 54 cm (25½ × 21 in.). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.

face, replete with pince-nez, is the most resolved feature albeit not highly finished. His business colleagues are more sketchily worked, registering as types rather than individuals, while the figure who passes out of the canvas to the right, between us and May's clique, is merely brushed in, at a third and lower level in the hierarchy of finish. The picture area stands for the field of vision, within which certain elements are selected for concentration, necessarily marginalizing others.[169] In such a painting, or in '*Robert le Diable*' [FIGURE 31], which concentrates our gaze on the audience rather than the blurred ballet of the nuns, Degas adapted his handling of paint to accord with the exclusivity of vision. Others made similar experiments. Renoir's *Place Clichy* [FIGURE 47] brings the spectator close to the bonneted young

woman, and the artist sets up the fiction of glanced perception by registering her in more precise focus than the pedestrians and omnibus behind. These too are paintings which may imply the spectator's gender. Renoir's woman comes up to "our" shoulder, perhaps implying a male spectator, and the stockmarket picture—one might say—is taken at the pace and the height of a man. In both paintings the artist represented figures partially, often cropped by the canvas, and combined hasty brushwork with passages of greater precision, thus stimulating the spectator to read the images with the selective gaze that *La Nouvelle Peinture* described.[170]

Degas was aware that he worked at times in what he later called an "impromptu style," regretting that such pictures—among them *L'Etoile* [FIGURE 27]—had been among his first to enter the French national collections.[171] Painterly, non-linear, these are works of a different order than *Waiting*, but both sought to explore and emulate perceptions of the urban dynamic. These researches into "modern" perception were not only concerned with how one sees, or from where one sees, or what one focuses on and what one half ignores; they also tackled what one does not see. Cassatt's tea scene [FIGURE 33] is a case in point. Neither woman speaks, yet both appear to listen. Both look in the same direction, out of the picture to the right, and surely we are led to believe that another person, perhaps a woman, is talking to them from a seat on the other side of the fireplace. Does *Waiting* read in a similar way? To the right a shadow, cropped by the frame, spreads across the floor. Degas may have included it for pictorial gravity, to make weight on that side of the composition. On the other hand, a shadow is the merest sign of a figure. But that figure's identity—woman or man, dancer, teacher, *abonné*—and its actions—standing, sitting, dancing, talking, leaving, approaching, commiserating, reproaching, encouraging—are left entirely anonymous and ambiguous. The shadow opens up a multitude of narrative possibilities but allows none, and one might argue that its purpose is not just compositional but as a perpetual denial of the possibility of reading either the fiction of *Waiting* or even the minds and emotions of other people. That it has to do with reading, however, is implicit in its placement. For one reads the pastel across its surface from left to right, from light to dark to shadow. One reads the page of a book this way, but *Waiting* chooses not to tell its tale.

Contemporaries might have sought to read *Waiting* by physiognomy, but here Degas, interested in that process of decoding as he was, all but annulled the possibility by masking the faces with gloom or brim. However, the figures' body language is telling, and we have seen how Degas paid particular attention to details of pose and gesture as he drew *Waiting*. The pose of the seated figure leaning forward, hands by the knee, had fascinated Degas some years earlier. He used it in the later 1860s both for a portrait of the painter Victorine Dubourg (circa 1868–69; Toledo Museum of Art), a frontal and unusually assertive image of a woman, and for the more diffident *Collector of Prints* [FIGURE 48], in both of which the posture can be read in relation to the face. He revived it for the clothed figure in *Waiting*, but here the personage does not address the spectator. Rather, her compact posture—shoulders taut, back straight, thumb clasped in the palm of her hand, left leg drawn back as if ready to move—powerfully evokes inner agitation.

The dancer's pose corresponds neatly with the physiognomist's definition of "inner fatigue" and "sadness." "The face pales, the movements of heart and thorax slow. . . the body bends and slumps," wrote one; "the facial skin . . . seems to surrender to heaviness."[172] Obvious as this reading of the dancer's bodily attitude may seem, it could be set against a reading of parts of her body. We have discussed her pose as forming a cuboid, and on the front plane of this implicit shape, following the perspective so crucial to reading the image, Degas has gathered exactly those features which excited Auber and occur so insistently in the literature of the *coulisses:* hair, bare arms and shoulders, legs sheathed in tights. In the fiction of the finished picture, the rest of her body is covered; in the making of the pastel, it was undefined and assumed. In our decoding of the dancer's body language, then, fatigue and titillation seem set ironically, one might say cynically, against each other.

The two figures are shown side by side, both posed almost symmetrically; they share the ballet world. There the associations surprisingly stop. No information is given about their relationship—are they mother and daughter, sisters, friends? Are they even together?—or their relationship to what goes on in this fictional room. How unlike this is to other pairs of seated figures in Degas's oeuvre. In *Lorenzo Pagans and Auguste de Gas* [FIGURE 49], for example, one

Figure 48
Edgar Degas. *The Collector of Prints*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 53 × 40 cm (20⅞ × 15¾ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1920. The H. O. Havemeyer Collection.

Figure 49
Edgar Degas. *Lorenzo Pagans and Auguste de Gas*, circa 1871–72. Oil on canvas, 54 × 40 cm (21¼ × 15¾ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 3736.

Figure 50
Henri Gervex (French, 1852–1929). *The Return from the Ball*, 1879
Oil on canvas, dimensions and location unknown. Reproduced from *Nana. Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, Hamburg, Kunsthalle, 1973, no. XIX/4, p. 5.

Figure 51
Jean-François Raffaëlli (French, 1850–1924). *The Déclassés*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 110.2 × 110.2 cm (43⅜ × 43⅜ in.). Private collection.

performs and the other listens. The figures are linked in mood and pastime, if not in action or communicated thought. A decade later *Waiting* dealt with non-communication. In this it was somewhat exceptional, because at about this time Degas was producing pastels which actively use long corseted backs in images of mysterious collusion between women.[173] In *Waiting*, by contrast, the woman's stiff-backed posture makes her read in torpid isolation from the dancer.

The use of body language and gesture to stimulate but not satisfy the appetite for reading was deployed by artists in Degas's circle. Gervex's *Return from the Ball* [FIGURE 50], exhibited at the Salon of 1879, like *Waiting*, juxtaposed two figures who are physically close but psychologically separate. Evidently an image of *haut bourgeois* marital unhappiness, none of the poses, expressions or details elucidate it further. Critics and caricaturists read it variously, perhaps as the aftermath of an argument about the wife's ill-advised flirtations, as the exposure of her adultery, or admitted it was a "conjugal mystery."[174] To Huysmans gesture was crucial. "The man undoes his glove with a nervous gesture. The man's anger is completely encapsulated in that gesture," he wrote.[175] Novelist though he was, he did not try to decode the narrative. Huysmans followed the same tactic

two years later when writing of Raffaëlli's *Déclassés* [FIGURE 51]. "The movement of a skinny fist fiddling with a pinch of tobacco lying in the paper tells a great deal about daily habits, about the endless troubles that crop up in a monotonous life."[176] Again, reading gesture was a way of implying generalities, but not of narrative explanation.

In *Waiting* Degas made little use of costume to signify meaning. The right figure is represented in standard street clothes; her lace cuffs and buttoned boots raise her above the proletariat, perhaps, but there is little here to define her further. Precision about costume may not have concerned Degas; he seems to have been prepared to deceive with the dancer's costume—she would surely not have been wearing ribbons and bows except in performance—for pictorial reasons, to make a pleasing harmony with the ochre wall. Nevertheless, there is one accessory which is salient: the umbrella. For contemporaries the umbrella was a confusing sign; mass-produced, it no longer signifed class,[177] and so is no help in identifying its holder in *Waiting*. It carried associations of the ridiculous; the hit song of 1882 was the inane *Il n'a pas de parapluie,*[178] and "in caricature, in plays, everywhere, it is the obligatory accessory of all the people we want to make grotesque."[179] Degas used it as an accessory in portraits. He represented the dancer Rita Sangalli holding hers in a self-confident manner, while in an unidentified portrait a pert woman, perhaps more stereotypically, clutches hers doggedly.[180]

In *Waiting* Degas crossed the point of the umbrella with the horizontal line of the floorboards, on a line which cuts the image's central axis at right angles and protrudes most assertively from the women's space. Like the shadow, the umbrella contributes crucially to the image's gravity, and its junction with the floorboards is pivotal pictorially. Degas also used umbrellas in pictures other than portraits, notably pastels of women at the Louvre [FIGURE 52], probably posed by Cassatt and her sister Lydia, and of his friends Halévy and Albert Cavé [FIGURE 53]. In both of these the point of the umbrella is critical to the design. In *At the Louvre* it links the women's dark masses across the central void, and in the double portrait acts to balance Halévy's otherwise teetering mass. Each time the umbrella cuts the axial perspective at a juncture peripheral to the main focus but crucial to the picture's balance, much as it does in *Waiting*. This is a point of potential upset; it sets

Figure 52
Edgar Degas. *At the Louvre*, circa 1879. Pastel on seven pieces of paper, 71 × 54 cm (28 × 21¼ in.). Private collection.

Figure 53
Edgar Degas. *Portrait of Friends in the Wings*, 1879. Pastel (and distemper?) on five pieces of tan paper, 79 × 55 cm (31⅛ × 21⅝ in.). Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 31140.

the image on edge. If the perspective counts in the way the picture is read, contradicting it must count too. The floorboards in *At the Louvre* signal Cassatt's momentum away from her sister, and the umbrella's junction with them the last link as the women separate. The dancer's body language and gesture in *Waiting* suggest she is preoccupied with the physical, with fatigue and muscular pain. The clothed woman's hunched shoulders and half-clenched fist suggest tension, a reading echoed by the umbrella's violation of the perspectival axis. That junction of umbrella and floorboard is a point of nervous as much as pictorial equilibrium.

I want to turn finally to more general questions about how pictures were read. Contemporary images of visitors at the Salon show a predominantly middle-class audience, though with lower-class visitors too, and they are often shown both looking at and actively discussing pictures.[181] The evidence here is tenuous, and how contemporaries read pictures has in many respects been lost to us. It does seem, however, that asking questions about an image which were based on narrative assumptions—what has happened, is happening and will happen, what roles the figures have in these actions—was a common practice of a public attuned to the story line.

Praising Eva Gonzalès's *A Box at the Italiens* [FIGURE 54], which the Salon jury had rejected in 1874, Philibert Audebrand posed a series of questions: "What is behind this meeting? A drama? A comedy? The beginning of a novel? Perhaps a bit of each. What one grasps at first glance is that this is an absolutely Parisian theme. [The figures] are both typical of society, high society, bored, blasé, formal, but handsome, representing the suavity and glamour of today. Looking at them one asks oneself: 'How long have they known each other? Do they love each other? Have they loved each other?', and these questions are of the most pressing interest."[182] The language here is frankly literary, as the critic attempts to extract from the image information which a novel or play would eventually have provided. Maupassant used the same device writing of his friend Gervex's provocative *Femme à la masque* [FIGURE 55] at the Salon of 1886. "Is it a model who has posed for this charming and disturbing coquette?" he asked. "Is she a friend of the painter? 'That is the question.' What is she doing? Who is she waiting for? Is she going out or has she come home?"[183] This practice of posing questions was not

Figure 54
Eva Gonzales (French, 1849–1883). *A Box at the Italiens*, 1874. Oil on canvas. Paris, Musée d'Orsay RF. 2643.

Figure 55
Henri Gervex. *Woman in a Mask,* 1886. Oil on canvas, dimensions and location unknown.

confined to literary men writing about Salon pictures. Duranty applied it in decoding gestures in old master paintings in the Louvre. In Metsu's *Vegetable Market in Amsterdam* [FIGURE 56] he found one man's gestures to a woman difficult to make out, so set out the possibilities as questions: "Is he jokingly pretending to beg? Is he faking a polite bow? Is he offering to carry the bucket which, he says, must be tiring her arm? Is he mauling his arm lecherously as if he were fondling hers?"[184] And the practice was likewise one of Duranty's means of reading modern

Figure 56
Gabriel Metsu (Dutch, 1629–1667). *Vegetable Market in Amsterdam,* 1661–62. Oil on canvas, 25 × 82 cm (9⅞ × 32¾ in.). Paris, Musée du Louvre.

pictures. His last published article extolled a gouache by Menzel of a man in eighteenth century costume strolling meditatively along a path: "He goes there to think, every day at the same time, that's for certain, and I ask myself 'Who is he?' as if I saw a living being."[185]

Duranty's remarks are of particular interest because he does not just question the image—and does not necessarily expect to find an answer—as Audebrand and Maupassant did. His response to the Menzel shows how the image's verism stimulated self-consciousness about the processes of reading. And in both cases we catch him filling in what the images do not betray, reading between the lines, as it were. This again was far from uncommon. In 1878 there was an important retrospective of Daumier's work, that introduced to the public his less well-

Figure 57
Honoré Daumier (French, 1808–1879). *The Advocate*, circa 1860. Watercolor, 20.2 × 29.2 cm ($8\frac{1}{16}$ × $11\frac{13}{16}$ in.). Washington, Corcoran Gallery of Art, William A. Clark Collection.

known paintings and drawings, alongside the celebrated lithographic caricatures. An anonymous reviewer was tempted by the theatrical *The Advocate* [FIGURE 57] so far as to script it. "Look . . . at that young woman seated in the defendant's chair and whom her attorney indicates with extravagant gestures and a sort of frenetic admiration. 'How lovely, how touching, how innocent she is!,' he seems to say; 'how could the judges ever think she is at fault?' And the young woman is terrifying; she seems made of wood."[186] As the same reviewer wrote of the Daumier exhibition: "The drawings without captions are more interesting than those with them. They challenge one's wits more and leave greater room to explain to oneself what is happening."[187] This urge to read was culturally ingrained. Contemporaries enjoyed images which required them to look carefully, to perceive slowly, to exercise skills of observation and characterization learned in the real world. This was not just the preserve of the bourgeois mentality which revelled in detailed images of sentimental or titillating anecdotes. The highly regarded critic André Michel, for one, contributor to prestigious establishment publications such as the *Revue des deux-mondes* and *Gazette des beaux-arts*, found Meissonier's costumed genre paintings [FIGURE 58] satisfying because they conveyed "intelligible, *interesting* feelings" and gave "the spectator the pleasure of discovery."[188] In other words, they were not trivially anecdotal but open-ended in their narrative possibilities

Figure 58
Ernest Meissonier
(French, 1815–1891).
The Three Friends, 1847.
Oil on panel, 24.2 × 27 cm
(9½ × 10⅝ in.).
Cincinnati, Taft Museum.

and thus different from novel or play which, their conventions insisted, should provide some resolution or *dénouement*. Perfectly nuanced in its gestures and expressions, teasingly confident in its suggestion of narrative possibilities while refusing to narrate, *Waiting* surely achieves these same sophisticated ends.

Historians of late nineteenth-century art still often insist on seeing work by independent artists, the "avant-garde," as operating in distinctly differ-

Figure 59
Charles Bargue (French, circa 1825–1883).
Footman Sleeping, 1871.
Oil on panel, 34.9 × 26 cm (13¾ × 10¼ in.).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

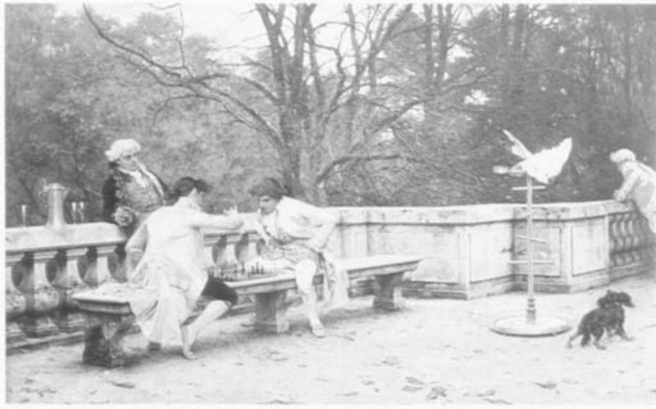


Figure 60
Charles Bargue. *Playing Chess on the Terrace,* 1883. Oil on panel, 28.6 × 43.8 cm (11¼ × 17¼ in.). Sordini Family Collection.

ent ways to that exhibited at the Salon. This is despite a phase of revisionist studies which have served at very least to demonstrate how diverse were the kinds of pictures made and marketed at this period. We are still led to understand that the productions of the Impressionists—to use that facile term which disguises so many complications and contradictions—subverted the conventional rules of picture-making, introduced radical ways of seeing, developed challenging new concepts of modernity. I have tried to argue, using *Waiting* as my central piece of evidence, for a subtler, less manichaen account, which probes differences and similarities between images within the cultural contexts which produced, purchased and read them.

I would like to conclude by placing *Waiting* not alongside Manet or Cassatt but rather Charles Bargue, a successful genre painter celebrated for his draftsmanship,[189] providing an unusual but apt analogy with Degas. Bargue's *Footman Sleeping* [FIGURE 59] also uses perspective opening from left to right to structure our reading. The footman's outdoor garments, hat, and gloves are to the left, and the umbrella beside him; does one assume that the door where he greets visitors is out of the picture to the left? Books and papers—his master's, one assumes—are to the right, thus towards the interior. Both invisible sides of the picture imply activities, responsibilities, a social beyond, and the figure on whom we focus denies these things, by sleeping. *Waiting* leaves out Bargue's defining

clutter, but it too suggests yet does not specify activity beyond the image. A later costume piece, *Playing Chess on the Terrace* [FIGURE 60], as Eric Zafran has pointed out,[190] shows suspended action: the chess move, the agitated animals. This encourages the spectator to "read" the future, perhaps the imminent outcome of the game. Through the figure of the footman looking over the terrace, *Playing Chess* also implies what is going on outside the painting's fiction. He attends to one thing; the gentlemen to the game; all ignore the animals; only we take in every aspect. This too is not dissimilar to *Waiting,* in which the two figures attend to their own concerns, one of which—the sore ankle, like the chess game—is more legible than the other.The clothed woman, like the footman, is lost in pictorially unrealizable thoughts.

If genre painters such as Meissonier, Degas and Bargue shared certain key devices—the telling use of physiognomy and gesture, the fine observation of body language—one should also register differences in Degas's practices. Degas deployed far fewer accessories, elected not to inventory every crease in the trousers and wrinkle on the face. This was no doubt partly a function of the market; Meissonier's and Bargue's patrons paid very highly for painstaking exactitude; Degas's were content with a sufficient precision married to more cursive passages, a more "modern" mode. That modernity drew its identity from very distinct factors, among them the need to produce work expeditiously for the market, the qualities of the pastel medium, the notion that the metropolis garbled and diffused perception. At this period Degas shifted the balance between the gestural and the precise, the glimpsed and the read, from image to image; therein lies the difference between *Waiting* and, say, *Portraits at the Stockmarket* [FIGURE 46] or *L'Etoile* [FIGURE 27]. An allied distinction lies in Degas's use of accessories. The umbrella in Bargue's *Sleeping Footman* is clumsily placed with handle to the floor, temporarily as useless as the servant. The umbrella in *Waiting* also informs us about its owner, but not just as an adjunct, a simulacrum. Its contribution to our reading of the figure is inextricable from its critical significance within the pictorial architecture. In the end, Degas's work is not always as far as we think from the open-ended narrative physiognomics of Meissonier, Bargue or Raffaëlli. While it shared perspectival experiments with Caillebotte or Dagnan-Bouveret and inven-

tive integration of the spectator with Renoir or Cassatt, an image like *Waiting* draws its authority from the superlative economy and equipoise of Degas's picture-making. As he said: "Aren't all beautiful things made by renunciation?"[191]

Having looked hard at *Waiting*, one realizes that much of its fascination lies in what has been renounced, what one might expect of the image but which it never quite yields. It cannot be reduced to a naturalist "document" of the ballet under the Third Republic; it does not read as an image of the eroticized *coulisses*, the dancer as sexual prey or raptor. By refusing to imply the sex of the spectator, it does not register as a representation of male power over women. Nor does it show a particular occurrence; we are unsure whether we are meant to be looking at the moment before or after an event such as a rehearsal or examination, or whether this trivial moment is the event. Quite what psychological states are implied here remains a mystery; the two women are in their own world, together and separately. Even the title, *L'Attente* (Waiting), with which the pastel has come to live, lacks certainty if not plausibility. It might just as well be known as *La Fatigue*, *La Tension*, or *L'Echec* (Failure).

Waiting is never quite any of these things. It constantly unsettles us. This is partly because it has the immediate presence of a legible genre painting but

Figure 61
Photograph of *L'Attente* under the hammer at the Havemeyer sale, Sotheby's, New York, 18 May 1983 © 1983 Sotheby's, Inc.

Figure 62
James Gray and John F. O'Reilly (American, active 1930s–1940s). *Waiting (after Degas)*, circa 1936–1949. Gelatin silver developed-out print, 25.1 × 31.6 cm (9⅞ × 12⁷⁄₁₆ in.). Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum.

remains finally elusive and uninterpretable. Subject, though, is far from everything here, and *Waiting*'s mystery, as well as its arresting visual authority, is due to its truculent perspective, its play of points of pictorial tension and detail against zones of void, its fastidious drawing and sensuous surface, its ironic concentration of the liveliest colors on the most subdued figure. It is an image which, by the way it was made and made to read, perfectly encapsulates a modern sensibility typical of Paris in 1880: a satisfaction, or at least a making do, with the fragmentary and allusive, the registering of urban life on the senses, yes, but also on the nerves. *Waiting* has fascinated many—from its first owner Clapisson to those who handled it as a blue-chip object on the art market in 1983 [FIGURE 61], from Zandomeneghi, who copied it faithfully in pastel, to Gray and O'Reilly, who mocked it up in a photograph [FIGURE 62]—and it will surely continue to exercise that power.

NOTES

The following abbreviations have been used:

L: P.-A. Lemoisne, *Degas et son oeuvre,* 4 vols. (Paris,1946–49).

L. Suppl: P. Brame/T. Reff, *Degas et son oeuvre. A Supplement,* (New York/London, 1984).

Nb: T. Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas,* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1976).

Vente: *Vente Atelier Degas. Catalogue des tableaux, pastels, et dessins par Edgar Degas et provenant de son atelier* (Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, I, 6–8 May 1918; II, 11–13 December 1918; III, 7–9 April 1919; IV, 2–4 July 1919).

1 W. Sickert, "Degas," *Burlington Magazine* (December 1917); quoted in *A Free House: The Writings of Walter Richard Sickert,* ed. O. Sitwell (London, 1947), p. 146; E. & J. de Goncourt, *Journal. Mémoires de la vie littéraire,* ed. R. Ricatte (Monaco, 1956), vol. XII (3 May 1882), p.171.

2 For Degas's submissions to the Impressionist exhibitions see G. Tinterow and A. Norton, "Degas aux expositions impressionnistes," in H. Loyrette (ed.), *Degas inédit* (Paris, 1989), pp. 289–351 and his critical response in C. Moffett et al., *The New Painting. Impressionism 1874–1886,* exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington and M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, 1986), passim.

3 The primary biography of Degas is H. Loyrette, *Degas* (Paris, 1991); see also R. Mc Mullen, *Degas: His Life, Times, and Work* (Boston, 1984).

4 T. Reff, "Some Unpublished Letters of Degas," *Art Bulletin,* L, no. 1 (1968), pp. 87–8.

5 R. Thomson, "The Degas Exhibition at the Grand Palais," *Burlington Magazine,* CXXX, no. 1021 (1988), p. 299.

6 Letter of March 1874; "Chronology II: 1873–1881," in *Degas,* exh. cat. (Paris, Grand Palais and other institutions, February 1988–January 1989), p. 212.

7 T. Reff, *The Notebooks of Edgar Degas* (Oxford, 1976), Notebook 29, p. 99; Notebook 31, pp. 92–3.

8 For *Le Jour et la Nuit* see *inter alia* D. Druick and P. Zegers, "Degas and the Printed Image, 1856–1914," in S. Welsh Reed and B. Shapiro, *Edgar Degas: The Painter as Printmaker,* exh. cat. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and other institutions, November 1984–July 1985), pp.xxxix–li, and the *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years inter alia* in G. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers,* exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art,Washington, D.C., November 1984–January 1985), pp.65–83; R. Thomson, *The Private Degas,* exh. cat. (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, March–June 1987), pp. 80–6, and A. Callen, "Anatomy and Physiognomy: Degas's *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years,*" in R. Kendall, *Degas Images of Women,* exh. cat. (Tate Gallery, Liverpool and Burrell Collection, Glasgow, 1989–90), pp. 10–17.

9 W. Sickert, "Degas," *Burlington Magazine* (December 1917); quoted in *A Free House! The Writings of Walter Richard Sickert,* ed. O. Sitwell (London, 1947), p. 147.

10 See most recently C. Armstrong, *Odd Man Out. Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas* (California, 1991), chap. 5.

11 H. Hertz, *Degas* (Paris, 1920), p. 20.

12 Vente II, no. 230 (1); Vente III, no. 133 (3) (Paris, Musée d'Orsay: RF 4643).

13 The dated drawings are L.525, 19 January 1879 (Louisville, J. B. Speed Art Museum); L.524, 21 January; L.523, 24 January (Tate Gallery, London); Vente IV, no. 255 a, 25 January; see *Degas* (Paris et al.,1988–9), p. 217.

14 *La Vie moderne* (8 May 1879), p. 71.

15 V. Gréard, *Meissonier: His Life and His Art*, London, 1897, p. 189.

16 T. Reff, *Notebooks* (1976), Nb. 30, p. 210.

17 G. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (1984–5), pp. 73–6.

18 J.20. For the monotypes see E.P. Janis, *Degas Monotypes*, exh. cat. (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass, April–June 1968); J. Adhémar/F. Cachin, *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs, and Monotypes* (London, 1974); M. Pantazzi, "The First Monotypes," in *Degas* (Paris et al., 1988–9), pp. 257–60. A drawing in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, 47.3 × 30.5 cm. (18⅝ × 12⅛ in.) is related to J. 20 (inv. no. 42160)

19 M. Pantazzi, "The First Monotypes" and "Degas, Halévy, and the Cardinals," in *Degas* (Paris et al., 1988–9), pp. 257–60, 280–4.

20 G. Monnier, *Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins. Musée d'Orsay. Pastels du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1985), no. 68; M. Bodelsen, "Gauguin the Collector," *Burlington Magazine*, CXII, no. 810 (1970), p. 607.

21 Vente III, no. 373. The relation of this sheet to *L'Attente* is implicit in the juxtaposition in L. Browse, *Degas Dancers* (London, 1949), pls. 71–2.

22 For Degas's fascination with symmetrical poses see Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), pp. 105, 108–11.

23 The Denver pastel [FIGURE 23] had one figure erased and two others introduced; see *Degas*, (Paris et al., 1988–9), no. 220, p. 339.

24 I am grateful to Sarah Campbell and Gloria Williams of the Norton Simon Museum, who arranged for me to see *Waiting* unframed on 20 July 1993, and to Nancy Yocco and Dawson Carr of the J. Paul Getty Museum and to Belinda Thomson, with all of whom I inspected and discussed the pastel.

25 H. Hertz, *Degas* (1920), p. 20.

26 J.-K. Huysmans, "L'Exposition des Indépendants en 1880," in J.-K. Huysmans, *L'Art moderne. Certains*, ed. H. Juin (Paris, 1975), p. 131.

27 I am grateful to Sarah Campbell for this latter observation.

28 I was reminded of the important placement of the signature by Rupert Thomson.

29 For example, the *Rehearsal* [FIGURE 21]; see R. Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), pp. 52–3, 56.

30 L.531, 45 × 61 cm., Mellon collection; L.530, 50 × 65 cm (19½ × 25½ in.), private collection. Two studies of the seated pose seem to be related to these pastels: see *Degas: The Dancers* (Washington, D.C., Nov.1984–Mar.1985), nos. 38, 46.

31 L. Suppl. 125, 47.5 × 62.5 cm (18¾ × 24½ in.); L.600, 46.5 × 61.3 cm (18½ × 24 in.); see also L.1069, 49 × 62 cm (19¼ ×24 in.).

32 The related drawings are Vente II, no. 226, 47 × 36 cm (18½ × 14⅛ in.); Vente IV, no.139a, 28 × 21 cm (11 × 8¼ in.).

33 *Splendid Legacy. The Havemeyer Collection*, exh. cat. (Metropolitan Museum, New York, March–June 1993), no. A.233.

34 G. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (1984–5), p. 93.

35 L. 908, 32 × 41 cm (12½ × 16 in.); L.907, 50 × 63 cm (19¾ × 24¾ in.) (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne), (not in L.), 48.2 × 61.6 cm (19 × 24¼ in.). The bow is L.908bis, 23.5 × 30 cm (9¼ × 11¾ in.), *Degas* (Paris et al., 1988–9), no. 240.

36 L.906, 30 × 30 cm (11¾ × 11¾ in.). See R. Thomson, *Degas: The Nudes* (London, 1988), pp. 121, 124.

37 Repr. R.Gordon/A.Forge, *Degas* (New York, 1984), pp. 184, 185; Vente II, no. 217a.

38 L.1107, 38 × 90 cm (15 × 35½ in.), Yale University Art Gallery; L. 941, 40 × 89 cm (15¾ × 35 in.), National Gallery, Washington, D. C.

39 Nb. 31, p. 70. G. Tinterow/A. Norton, "Degas aux expositions impressionnistes," in H. Loyrette (ed.), *Degas inédit* (Paris, 1989), p. 332.

40 G. Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (1984–5), pp. 85–107; Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), pp.86–9; *Degas* (Paris et al., 1988–9), no. 239.

41 R. Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), p.89. For a contrasting view see Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (1984–5), p.106.

42 G. Tinterow/A. Norton, "Degas aux expositions impressionnistes," in H. Loyrette (ed.), *Degas inédit* (Paris, 1989), pp. 321, 340.

43 Unpublished letters from Federico Zandomeneghi to Lucien Pissarro, 16 April 1894, 29 July 1912 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Pissarro Archive).

44 Vente IV, no. 153.

45 C. Stuckey, "Degas as an Artist: Revised and Still Unfinished," in *Degas: Form and Space* (Centre Culturel du Marais, Paris, 1984), p. 52; Shackelford, *Degas: The Dancers* (1984–5), p.103–7; Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), p. 86.

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47 L. Havemeyer, *Sixteen to Sixty. Memoirs of a Collector* (New York, 1961), p. 256.

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51 T. Reff, "Some Unpublished Letters of Degas," *Art Bulletin*, 50, no.1 (1968), p. 89.

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53 R. Thomson, *The Private Degas* (1987), pp. 52–3, 56.

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57 M. Guerin (ed.), *Lettres de Degas* (Paris, 1945), XXXIV, p. 63.

58 H. Loyrette, ed., "Degas à l'Opéra," in *Degas inédit* (Paris, 1989), pp. 50–1.

59 See for example Gavarni, *Backstage at the Opéra* (1846), in R. Thomson, *The Private Degas*, 1987, p. 67.

60 See *inter alia* B. Foucart/M. Kahane, *L'Opéra de Paris* (Paris, 1985).

61 *La Vie moderne* (4 February 1882), p. 73; G. Jeanniot, "Souvenirs sur Degas," *Revue universelle*, LV, no.14 (1933), pp. 152–3.

62 G. Jeanniot, "Souvenirs sur Degas," *Revue universelle*, LV, no.14 (1933), p. 158.

63 See M. Kahane, *Le Foyer de la danse*, Les Dossiers du Musée d'Orsay no. 22 (Paris, 1988), cat.10, repr. p. 6; S. Henry, *Paris Days and Evenings* (London, 1894), p. 269.

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88 E.g. Burty in 1880; see D. Druick/P. Zegers, "Scientific Realism: 1873–1881," in *Degas* (Paris et al., 1988–89), p. 207.

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115 See n. 104 above.

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132 J. Claretie, *La Vie à Paris, 1883* (Paris, 1884), pp. 510–14.

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139 J.-K. Huysmans, *Croquis parisiens* (Paris, 1880), trans. R. Griffiths (London, 1960), pp. 38–48; *Catalogue de oeuvres de J.-F.Raffaëlli* (Paris, 1884), nos. 1–23, 54–7.

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Foldout
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Degas

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a great privilege to be offered the chance to write at length about a single outstanding work of art, and such a bonus to have been able to do so in ideal conditions. Andrea Belloli kindly suggested some years ago that I take on the mesmerizing and inscrutable *Waiting*. Thanks to Laurie Fusco, Administrator of the Scholar Programs in the Department of Education and Academic Affairs at the J. Paul Getty Museum, and George Goldner, then Curator of Paintings and Drawings at the Museum, I was invited to take up a Guest Scholarship at Malibu during the summer months of 1993. It proved the perfect moment to pull my researches into written shape. Sarah Campbell and Gloria Williams of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, kindly enabled me to study the pastel unframed, in the company of Nancy Yocco and Dawson Carr of the Getty Museum. My Malibu colleagues were unfailingly charming and helpful, and I would like to thank them all, especially in this context my contacts in the Publications Department, Mark Greenberg and John Harris, and Louise Mandell, who found all the illustrations. Most of my work was done in the Library of the Getty Center at Santa Monica, the delightful and efficient staff of which have my deepest thanks.

No scholar works alone, and I acknowledge with respect the work of my many colleagues in Degas studies, among them Carol Armstrong, Douglas Druick, Henri Loyrette, Richard Kendall, Michael Pantazzi, Theodore Reff, George Shackelford, Barbara Shapiro, and Gary Tinterow. Caroline Durand-Ruel Godfroy helped track down the Zandomeneghi, and Geneviève Lacambre and I puzzled over Gustave Moreau's parquet. My wife, Belinda, was typically unstinting with stimulus and support as we swapped ideas on Bonnard and Degas. Our surf-struck sons, Rupert and George, kept me going by dragging me from the laptop to the boogie-board. This book is for them. —R.T.

Edgar Degas

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ISBN 0-89236-285-5

Printed in Hong Kong