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Fin-de-siècle Frenchness: discontent and *aliénation spécifique* in the case of Edgar Degas (1834-1917).

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Fin-de-siècle Frenchness: discontent and *aliénation spécifique* in the case of Edgar Degas (1834-1917).

In the past forty years, Degas studies in the field of art history have thrived on an overwhelming narrative that rests on, and maintains, the link between the social standing of Degas the Right-wing banking aristocrat and the classicising art of the sadistic and misogynous celibate painter. The firmly established Impressionist canon, furthermore, has effectively claimed Degas as the reactionary French artist, who made all the wrong political choices, anti-Dreyfusardism first and foremost, and who stands in contrast to Camille Pissarro, the progressive artist. These views betray a limited understanding of Degas's changing self-fashioning and paradoxical cultivation of his Frenchness, politically and artistically, within an increasing and widespread discontent with modernity. Degas had lived through the *année terrible* as a convinced republican and remained one all his life, but at the turn of the century subscribed to an un-ideological disappointment with the Third Republic, and its public sphere, and claimed for himself a Northern and Christian French-ness that was anti-Semitic, anti-Protestant, and of the Montmartrois working class. This paper seeks out to discuss Degas's political and artistic stance and his cultural nationalism in the Parisian Belle Epoque, and argues that, despite the weight of the case against him, Degas's reputation should be revised in the interests of historical accuracy.

Key words: Degas; French-ness; Impressionism; canon; fin-de-siècle.

Fin-de-siècle Frenchness: discontent and *aliénation spécifique* in the case of Edgar Degas (1834-1917).

Edgar Degas is certainly one of the most carefully studied artists of the nineteenth century. It has been pointed out that a large part of recent Degas literature seems to have been concerned with the question of whether Degas was a goodie or a baddie.[1] This modality, in art history and theory, is a declension of another, earlier,characterisation of the artist: that of Degas as a wealthy aristocrat and a blind follower of Ingres.[2] Degas scholarssuch as Theodore Reff, Henri Loyrette, and Richard Kendall have refuted the image of Degas the aristocrat.[3]But this is generally still the preferred one, whether by feminist scholars who profit from inscribing Degas's misogyny in a patriarchal vision of the world, or by scholars who see Degas as enigmatic, and consider his wit and snobbery as key features of his personality.[4]Other writers overlook Degas as a human being and approach his works from the point of view of their experimentalism. The complicated effects and technical experiments in Degas's art have always fascinated scholars because of the supposed difficulty in understanding precisely how he manipulated his materials. The art ofDegas is seen as both masterly and experimental. But if his technical experimentalism is clearly characterised by a certain unevenness, in criticism this very experimentalism has often been constructed in ways that round it up with meanings of mastery and fluency in difficulty and complexity.[5]

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[1] Adler, 1990.

[2] See for instance Higonnet, 1990; Nord, 2006; Degas, 1984; Degas, 2012.

[3] See the Reference list for these authors on Degas.

[4] For feminist accounts of Degas see Pollock and Kendall,1992; Callen, 1995; Broude, 1977; Broude, 1988; Broude, 1993, and Lipton, 1986.

[5] See Bomford et al. 2004 for a detailed study of the artist's complex surfaces and manner of handling his media in the catalogue of the 2004-5 exhibition *Art in the Making: Degas (*National Gallery of London; the 2013 exhibition *Degas's Method*(Ny Carlsberg Glypthothek, Copenhagen), and Whitfield, 2013 for a review of the same exhibition.

Others regard Degas as beyond comprehension, thereby perpetuating a romantic and un-historic cult of the artist as genius:a supreme, haughty artist remote from the time in which he lived, the “odd man out.”[6]In a recent psychoanalytical study, Degas’s supposedly sexless life, sourness of moods, self-criticism, and hypochondria are seen as

> symptoms of self-disorder, in which a split-off grandiosity (linked to the loving but lost mother) and a damaged self are precariously maintained. Wholeness and vitality are tenuous. There is instability in mood, uncertain self-esteem and a defensive avoidance of close contact with others.[7]

To summarise, a consensus has been reached: that Degas was a baddie, a mean man, an anti-Semite, and a misogynist who painted horrible working-class women horribly.[8] He was a Right-wing turn-of-the-century reactionary: a protofascist, in other words.

While Degas’s anti-Semitism and anti-Protestantism were fuelled by his life-long financial distress, his increasing discontent with modernity became also a spiritualistic and nostalgic claim for a French-ness that was Northern and Christian.[9] This Degas, whom Pissarro described as being “nearer to the French Gothic,”[10] and who accompanied his friend Albert

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[6] Armstrong, 1991.

[7] Hagman, 2010, p. 43.

[8] See Higonnet, 1990, pp. 46-47.

[9] As Patrice Higonnet points out in *Paris: Capital of the World,* “Although it is accurate to say that the political content of the myth of old Paris shifted very sharply to the right after 1880,” the nostalgia for old Paris was as much a left-wing as a right-wing argument against “Haussmannian liberalism” and “moneyed Paris.” Drumont “admired the immanent morality of the Parisian working class” and Higonnet findsin Léon Daudet’s writings the same reactionary idea, “that Parisian ‘Frenchness’ was essentially working class and would be restored to its Gallic and noble origins if fascism miraculously triumphed,” a conjunction of extremes epitomized by the fact that Daudet’s *Paris vécu* was one of the books favoured by Walter Benjamin, “a German Jewish refugee and self-professed Marxist.”: Higonnet, 2002, pp. 93-4.

[10] In a letter of 6 March 1895 to his son Lucien in London, Pissarro commented about August Strindberg’s dislike of the impressionists which had led him to refuse to write a preface for the catalogue of the auction of works by Gauguin who was

Bartholomé in nostalgic trips through France, reached a peak of intolerance in the late 1890s, during the Dreyfus Affair.

In this paper, however, rather than re-account for the psychobiographical and artistic aberrations one encounters when dealing with Degas the man and the artist, I will try to comprehend the historical context for Degas's peculiar cultivation of his Frenchness in the Parisian fin-de-siècle. I will take my position within the theoretical framework provided by Steven Hewitt's *Fascist Modernism. Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-garde* (1993). In taking this position, I follow Hewitt in two directions: firstly,in seeking "to lay bare the violence that the *postmodern* celebration of heterogeneity does to the concept of modernity."[11]Secondly, I follow Hewitt in his exposition of what he defines as the familiar "reification of modernity," and of modernism, a reification which operates "by attempting to isolate elements within it which could be said to be 'intrinsically' fascistic'."[12] I therefore recognise as mine, too, Hewitt's attempt to trace, as he does in his book on F. T. Marinetti, "a process of accommodation" which refuses the oversimplification of either "attempts to identify fascism with modernism or to differentiate them in a radical sense": as Hewitt proposes, "what we must attempt to uncover are the strategies by which modernists could make a home or niche for themselves within fascism."[13]In dealing with Degas's claim, for himself, and in his art, of a French-ness that was anti-Semitic, anti-Protestant, and of the *Montmartrois* working class, I agree with Hewitt that in examining what he calls Fascist Modernism "we must examine the construction of the aesthetic as a category in order to understand the ideological labor performed by that category in the public sphere."[14]As Hewitt clarifies, "It

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hoping to raise money for his trip to Tahiti. Strindberg, wrote Pissarro, "has a poor opinion of the impressionists, he understands no one but Puvis de Chavannes. That's the thing, it is always the Greek, the Renaissance, against the tradition of the French Gothic! For we are nearer to the French Gothic, especially Degas!": Pissarro, 1943, pp. 262-63.

[11] Hewitt, 1993, p. 3.

[12] Hewitt, 1993, pp. 3-4.

[13] Hewitt, 1993, p. 4.

[14] Hewitt, 1993, p. 5.

is not enough simply to insist that aesthetics and politics are indistinguishable;":

> We must theorize the ways in which the political valency of the aesthetic is constituted precisely by virtue of its tendential exclusion from the realm of bourgeois politics. In other words, we must examine the extent to which the discursive organization of the bourgeois public sphere facilitates the coexistence of reactionary and progressive ideologies by distributing them across distinct files of enunciation (namely, aesthetics and politics). If fascism is to be the aestheticization of political life, and if (as Bürger argues) the avant-garde is to be the reconciliation of art and life, then by what ideological process have these two apparently discrete spheres of art and life ben constructed? Art and life must be examined not as given entities, but as discourses constituted precisely *in* the process of differentiation from each other. [15]

In the 1870s and 1880s Degas had championed group actionboth in the Impressionist exhibitions and in collaborative printmaking work with Pissarro, Cassatt and others.[16]How do we reconcile the pro-communard and anarcho-socialist Degas of the late 1870s and 1880s with the bigot, anti-Semite and anti-Protestant Degas of the late 1890s?Was Degas's republicanism only "transient," was Degas just a patriot? Was he more nationalist than republican, as historian Philip Nord has asked?[17] In the 1890s, in the complex climate of French political life after Sedan, Degas was certainly a nationalist and a disillusioned republican.

However, things could not have changed overnight. Nord himself explains that "the new painters were not detached observers of the history of their times," and that *l'année terrible* had shattered the realist movement. The years of the recovery from the Franco-Prussian war and the establishment of the republic proved difficult for France: Frenchmen had to acknowledge that the Great Nation was not so great, and, in looking for someone to blame for this, all the weight of the coexistence, in the French public conscience, of many and radically opposed political traditions was suddenly felt. The defeat at Sedan and the loss of Alsace-

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[15] Hewitt, 1993, p. 5.

[16] See Crisci-Richardson, 2011. Degas, whom Pissarro had described as "utterly disgusted with youth" as early as 1891, voiced freely his disgust and on one occasion in 1897 he was accused by Fernand Gregh, a young friend of Daniel Halévy, of "abusing the right to be aggressive*by a friend*": Pissarro, 1943, pp. 178-9 and Halévy, 1966, pp. 90-1.

[17] See Nord, 2000, p. 44.

Lorraine catalysed feelings and attitudes of resentful nationalism, the consequences of which would be deeply felt by the world in the decades to come, leading up to the First and Second World Wars, and beyond. In front of the foreign enemy, a cornerstone of the new regime's politics was to prove France's cohesion as a nation. To hasten the evacuation of the German troops occupying the Eastern departments of France, the nation strove to pay the war indemnities by national subscriptions of bonds. In September 1873, France having liquidated its debts, the German soldiers left, a year ahead of schedule. By 1875, France had balanced the budget and brought herself back to the forefront of international politics and economy. Despite the internal political difficulties of the Third Republic, France's recovery from the defeat, her material prosperity and her international position of cultural dominance were celebrated at the 1889 Universal Exhibition, with the unveiling of such an engineering structure as the Eiffel Tower.[18] After 1871, French art was affected by the strong nationalism and by the *revanchisme* brought out by the defeat and loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. Artists had become proudly patriotic.[19] Although Degas's dancers, for instance, are constructions of Parisian-ness, and Cézanne's landscapes with the Mont Sainte-Victoire are constructions of *Provençalisme*, both speak, like Puvis de Chavannes's mural decorations for the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, for a vital identification with France, the motherland.[20]

Before looking at the way in which the art world resented and reacted to humiliating historic circumstances of defeat and loss, it is worth noting that issues of resentful patriotism weighed heavily on the morale of Degas's family and acquaintances. In one of the notebooks of these years, and in his effort to understand the recent events, Degas noted the titles of a few publications on the 1870 war, and on the Paris Commune, which appeared in the 1870s. Among these notes, one finds the following: *Précis Comparé de la guerre franco-allemande* (1872) by Alexandre Lambert; *Guerre des Frontières du Rhin (1870-71)* of 1871, by Wilhelm F. Rüstow; *Paris pendant les deux sièges* (1871), by Louis Veuillot and *La Défense de Belfort* (1871) by Colonel Denfert-Rochereau.[21] We can get closer to an understanding of the ways the defeat was perceived in Degas's social circles through a letter to him from Alfred Niaudet, a friend since the days at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand. Degas kept this piece of correspondence all his life. In the letter, dated 7 March 1871, the feeling of wounded Frenchness and an anti-German attitude of revenge were fully developed. Discussing the sad death of their friend Cuvelier, Niaudet remarked that the dead at least would not feel the shame and grief reserved for the living. He really envied, he wrote, those who would come back from the front with a missing limb, because they would be able to claim that they had really done their duty toward the homeland. These veterans, wrote Niaudet, would carry out the "reparation of our disasters" and "the revenge we have to render our enemies." Thanking Edgar for informing him that Edgar's brother, the marine Achille, "had deliberately returned from America in order to fight for France," Niaudet wrote that "he would not expect anything below that from him," but noted that, unfortunately, in the war, the French marine had been made to play "a miserable part." Niaudet also commented on the beginning of the civil upheavals that would soon lead to the establishment of the Commune. It would have been preferable, he guessed, that people keep quiet. But he rejoiced at the idea that, at the risk of their lives, and without a hope, Parisians would show who they are to the enemy, and what the French would have done if they had not been lead "by some traitors" or "malheureux d'une incapacité sans pareille." As for the Germans, whom he accused of killing innocent peasants by setting their cottages on fire, or assassinating them, Niaudet asked, "what will these monsters called Bismarck, Moltke, William, do? They have endeavoured to spread terror and are the strongest, beyond comparison."

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[18] See Harriss, 1976.

[19] See on this topic Hargrove and McWilliam, eds., 2005.

[20] See Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, 2003 for Cézanne and Shaw, 1997 for Puvis de Chavannes.

[21] Notebook 24, in Reff, 1976 b, I, pp. 119-21.

Though the cultural dominance of France was firmly established on the international plan by 1889, the country was torn by internal struggles. With the establishment of the Third Republic France was facing the question of the troubled heritage of its political past. In the early years of the Third Republic, democracy was restricted by the regime of Moral Order, under Mac-Mahon (1873-77). The reaction of the Republicans brought the election of Léon Gambetta as president of the Chamber of Deputies. But the installation of a truly republican regime was not straightforward. It was, according to historian Michel Winock, "the fruit of a compromise" between Left- and Right-wing parties. In 1875, a few Bonapartist deputies had been elected to the Chamber. As a reaction to the possibility of a restoration of the Empire, the Orleanist deputies agreed to support Gambetta's Republicans, who were otherwise in the minority, and vote for the Republican Constitution at the Assemblée Nationale. In exchange for political support from the Orleanist party, Gambetta instituted the Senate, and a presidency mandate of seven years. The consolidation of the republican regime came in 1877, when Gambetta's Republicans took the absolute majority of seats in the Assemblée Nationale.[22] Gambetta's first informal celebration of the 14 July, in 1879, led to the date becoming the national celebration in 1880. France was given a flag and *La Marseillaise* became its national anthem, while schools were charged with the education of Frenchmen in the cult of the nation that one day would be avenged: "l'armée était populaire, la Revanche était dans les têtes: il fallait, selon Gambetta, n'en parler jamais et y penser toujours." For Gambetta, France could be united only in this association of *esprit civil* and *esprit militaire*, a sacred unity and strength of the nation in the face of the foreign enemy, Germany, as had been in 1870, and as would be in July 1914. Between these dates, French internal politics offered no united front. The more extreme nationalists, both on the Left and on the Right, compared the industrialised and urbanised republican France that had risen from the Franco-Prussian conflict to the Roman Empire in its declining phase. They blamed Jews, Protestants, and Freemasons for what they saw as the immorality and degeneration of the social and economic life of the country.[23] One did not have to be an extreme nationalist to believe in the decadence of France: to return as close as possible to Degas, Pissarro was himself convinced that modern France was sick, as he put it in a letter of January 1886 to his son Lucien:

> On every side I hear the bourgeois, the professors, the artists and the merchants say that France is finished, decadent, that Germany holds the field, that the future belongs to the mechanics and engineers, to the big German and American bankers.- As if we could foresee what is the cause of her sickness?-that's the question! She is sick from constant change, she may die, that is true, her fate depends on the other countries of Europe. If they are moving, even if ever so little, we shall see something new. Evidently things cannot remain as they are![24]

And yet, despite his own discontent with modernity and bourgeois bureaucracy, Pissarro stands in contrast to Degas as the image of the progressive artist to that of the reactionary. The Dreyfus Affair is considered by many a crucial phase in French modern political history: for

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[22] Winock, 1999, p. 85.

[23] See Hause, 1989.

[24] As he put in a letter of January 1886 to his son Lucien: "": Pissarro, 1943, p. 66.

Winock, it was at the end of the 1890s, at the outbreak of the Dreyfus Affair that it became possible to tell the progressive attitude from the reactionary. It was only then that the "good French," who worshipped at the cult of the army and the nation, clearly rose to stand against those whom they considered responsible for the corruption and decadence of the country, the "anti-French," Jews, Protestants and Freemasons.[25] The Dreyfus Affair, however, was only one, albeit significant, aspect of anti-Semitism in France, and it would be both misplaced and anachronistic to attribute to Degas's anti-Dreyfusard ruminations the violence and sadism that characterised contemporary Russian anti-Semitism, or twentieth-century racial anti-Semitism. We know of Degas's resentment of Jewish high finance, which derived loosely from leftist thinkers such as Proudhon, Saint-Simon, and Marx. Degas expressed himself explicitly, for instance, on the subject of Ernest May, or Isaac de Camondo, echoing socialist ideas on the Jewish question.[26] Degas expressed himself also with regard to the Jewish workers from Eastern Europe settling in Paris, especially in Montmartre and in the Marais, in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Elie Halévy noted in his diary a breakfast with Degas and Meilhac, on March 10, 1885:

> Ce matin à déjeuner nous avons eu M. Degas. Il a crié contre l'installation des Delacroix, contre l'invasion des juifs allemands…Meilhac, tout fier de ce petit cercle rouge qui étincelle à sa boutonnière, bien persuadé que son bel habit vert ne vaut pas la rosette.[27]

Nancy Green has written that anti-Semitism, as a defining feature of certain constructions of Christianity, did exist in late nineteenth-century France, and it cannot certainly be restricted to the Dreyfus Affair and to Drumont's *La Libre Parole.* The arrival en masse of Eastern European proletarians, mainly craftsmen in the needle trades, attracted by the abundance of work in the Parisian fashion industry, did generate pessimism in sections of French society, with regard to the threat posed by these new social and political forces flowing westward, in search of work.But France was not perceived as a land of deep-seated anti-Semitism. On the contrary, France appealed to Jews as the country of Jewish emancipation, and for many it became the refuge from Tsarist pogroms and from the struggle for life and work in the Pale of Settlement.[28]

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[25] Winock, 1999, pp. 115-7.

[26] See on the Left and the Jewish question: Jacobs, 1992 and Mendelsohn, ed., 1997.

[27] In Alain, 1958, p. 21.

As we have seen, Degas's anti-Semitic outbursts are inexcusable, but, importantly, they often feature within a broader backdrop of utterances proffered against instances of state authority and power in general. The socio-economic character of Jewish immigration to France, and Paris in particular, exerted pressure on the nationalism that had been asserting itself in the country after the Franco-Prussian war. This nationalism could take an anti-Semitic turn when "couched in terms of defense of the French worker or merchant supposedly displaced by these immigrants."[29] The arrival and existence of a Jewish proletariat in France was, for the French socialists, "a crucial argument to help unbalance the former anti-capitalist equals anti-Jewish equation," but for the anti-Semites, "it meant that Jewish capitalists monopolizing the wealth of France were now seconded by Jewish workers taking jobs from French workers."[30] There was also another aspect to the reception of the Jewish proletariat in French society and public opinion: "the vision of Eastern European immigrants as carriers of revolution."[31] Along with clothing artisans, and Russian students, a few political revolutionaries came to Paris, forming revolutionary circles, whether anarchist, anarcho-communist, or, later, Bolshevik, all under police supervision. This is especially true of the decade before 1917, but Peter Lavrov had arrived in Paris in 1876. In the 1880s, he would receive every Thursday, in his apartment in the rue Saint-Jacques, a group of Russian refugees.[32] Famously, Lavrov worried Renoir, though, not

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[28] Green, 1986, p. 29. In the Spring of 1882, with the enactment of the May Laws in Russia under Tsar Alexander III, the Jews of Russia, already confined within the Pale of Settlement since Catherine the Great, were further restricted in their mobility: forced to reside in towns or cities within that territory, and further inhibited in their access to property, education and the practice of business. The 1882 Tsarist anti-Semitic laws forced millions of Jews to leave Russia in search of a better life in the United States, Canada, England and France, which remained the nation that had emancipated the Jews in 1791, "the land of the Revolution, of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity stretching out to the downtrodden.": Green, 1986, p. 29 and see pp. 9-41 on the appeal of France for the Russian Jews escaping the Pale of Settlement.

[29] Green, 1986, p. 49.

[30] Green, 1986, p. 50.

[31] Green, 1986, p. 49.

[32] See on Russian political circles in Paris: Green, 1986, especially pp. 96-100.

Degas.[33] The political ambiguities and contradictions of the *Belle Epoque* are to be seen at work in the lives of French artists. Mary Cullinane, for instance, has described the *fin-de-siècle* dandyism and decadent aestheticism, evident in Symbolist literary circles, and in such intellectuals as Joris-Karl Huysmans, as a pessimistic reaction to modernity and "vulgar democracy." It was, for many intellectuals, a desire "to distance oneself from the common horde," to retreat "from society and its crowds and from all things commonplace," in order to retain a "sense of individuality" and cultivate "a consciousness of their own."[34] Degas was close to literary Symbolist circles, especially critics such as Gustave Geffroy and Octave Mirbeau. Most of all, Degas was among the many disappointed and pessimist artists who wished to distance themselves from the aspects of vulgarisation and materialistic mass culture of French public life.

The year 1886 saw the last Impressionist exhibition, the appearance of neo-Impressionism and Symbolism, and the publication of Drumont's book, *La France Juive.* It all happenedagainst the background of the economic depression that had begun in 1882, and of the political scandals in which many republican leaders of the nation were involved, such as the scandals associated with the dissolution of the Panama Canal Company (1890), or the Dreyfus Affair (1894) which became for Maurice Barrès and Edouard Drumont the opportunities for oppositional socioeconomic and xenophobic narratives of insatiable republican-Jewish greed. In their retreat from public focus, the Impressionists abandoned both the Salon and the boulevard shows to embrace the private spaces of dealer-sponsored ventures, conceived for a small and truly interested public: it was "relocation," to use Martha Ward's term.[35] It was not the end of their avant-gardism, however. Degas, and others retreated to more complex and more remote positions of a no less engaged and oppositional alienation. In the case of writers and artists, there was a peculiar tension in this circumstance. While, as Nicholas Green has written, the Third Republic encouraged artists' individualism,[36] artists felt that they were under siege by a cult of personality manipulated by the Parisian critics. Such cult of the creative personality escaped the control of the artists themselves and had the sole aim of feeding their lives to the odious masses. Charle has written about *fin-de-siècle* Paris as the "temps des hommes doubles." Authors and artists were now aware that their career no longer depended on accessing the public, but on a more important ability to filter their public image through mediators acting between the public and the growing number of works on offer.[37] The proliferation of critics and their growing power are characteristics of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Their influence put in vogue the journalistic practice of "mise en scène de la vie littéraire elle même, comme s'il s'agissait d'un spectacle public," which made of the 1890s the decade of the theatricalisation of Parisian cultural life. It became a "mise en scène permanente de la vie littéraire et intellectuelle," through the diffusion of such journalistic genres as interviews, surveys, and biographical writings. Critics, however, were not the only "hommes doubles," because in a modern society, where social roles and internal distinctions multiply themselves, everyone was a "homme double." Creators were no longer in control of their reputation, and while an intellectual class emerged, they had to choose between "exigences privées" and "contraintes publiques." The "aliénation spécifique" of the end of the nineteenth century derived from the multiplication of roles implied by the presence of "hommes doubles," from whose judgment creators cannot subtract themselves: "Les maudire serait se maudire soi-même. Les repousser serait refuser l'avenir et le voeu secret de tout créateur, la survie *post mortem*." According to Charle, the obsession of certain authors with such themes as prostitution, suicide, or the double, originates in the perception of the "psychologie schizofrénique" imposed by the acceptance of the power of the "double hommes," and in the temptation to double oneself in order to exist.[38]

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[33] Venturi, 1970, vol. 1, p. 122.

[34] Cullinane, 2001.

[35] Ward, 1996, p. 7.

[36] See Green, 1987.

In this run away from publicity, a double image of the creator was bound to rise. The double image of Degas, in which a good, private Degas fond of his friends and dear to them, is contrasted to the mean, public Degas, a misanthrope, and a misogynist (a double image discussed in the introduction to this study), is explained by the Parisian *fin-de-siècle* alienation, as he, like other artists, retreated into a private world and shunned officialdom. Richard Kendall, in his *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* (1996), wanted to redress "the legend of the ageing artist," his "crusty behaviour and hermit-like withdrawal from society," his "reluctance to exhibit," "terrible decline in eyesight, a violent misogyny and a dislike of all things modern."[39] I argue that this legend does not need redressing. Degas and his contemporaries were fully aware that the private Degas implied, as its paired and opposite term, the public Degas. On the one hand, there was the private Degas who saw his friends as usual, until the Dreyfus Affair led him to review his friendships. On the other hand, there was the public Degas, who disliked the press, or at least a certain section of the press, the gossiping press. Both Degas and the critics who wished to write about him were aware of the tensions created by the Parisian "société du spectacle" in the split image of the artist. Degas needed to control his public image, which he did effectively, as in the case of his relationship with the Irish writer and journalist George Moore, who, in 1890, published "Degas: the Painter of Modern Life" in *The Magazine of Art*. Degas did not like Moore's article: it reported that nearly compromised the painter's long friendship with Whistler.[40] But most of all Moore's article revealed that the financial situation of Degas's family was not so rosy.[41] Offended in his concern not to raise the issue of his social origins, Degas stopped talking to Moore, and the two never saw each other again.[42] Degas preferred to choose his critics in order to better control the reception accorded his name. In doing this, Degas had no misunderstandings with such critics of the Symbolist school as Geffroy, who looked at the only essential reality, the artworks and the "choses de l'esprit."[43]In December 1890, Geffroy published an article titled "Degas" in *L'Art dans les Deux Mondes.* It began with the following words:

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[37] Charle, 1998, pp. 89-90.
[38] Charle, 1998, pp. 93-5.

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[39] Kendall, 1996.

[40] We can relate to this circumstance a draft of letter to Degas of October 1890 in which Whistler wrote: "Voilà ce que c'est, mon cher Degas, que de laisser pénétrer chez nous ces infâmes coureurs d'atelier journalistes!- et celui-ci- ce Moore- est un des plus [ignobles] misérables specimen de ce type ignorant, et immorale.Vivant de ce qu'il peut ramasser en guise d'ami pour servir plus tard à nourrir sa haine d'envieux et son estomac de [incomplete]. Il disperse ce qu'il a cueilli, salie et difforme de mensonge ou bien dans quelque ridicule [brochure] gazette dite «d'Art» ou dans le pot au feu ignoble de son frère- un vrai vase de chantage, [illegible] et diffamation- " : quoted in Macdonald and Newton, 1986.

[41] As Moore wrote: "Of his family history it is difficult to obtain any information. Degas is the last person of whom inquiry could be made, He would at once smell an article, and he nips such projects as a terrier nips rats. The unfortunate interlocutor would meet with this answer, "I didn't know you were a reporter in disguise; if I had, I shouldn't have received you." It is rumoured, however, that he is a man of some private fortune, and that he sacrificed the greater part of his income to save his brother, who had lost everything by imprudent speculation in American securities. But what concerns us is his artistic, not his family history.": Moore, 1890.

[42] As Moore recalled years later in his "Memories of Degas," published in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* of January1918, after Degas' death in September 1917. This article begins by evoking the legendary Degas: "In his lifetime legends began to gather about him, and the legend that has attained the greatest currency is that Degas was an old curmudgeon who hated his kind and

> Degas va encore déclarer qu'on pourrait le laisser tranquille et que ses œuvres peuvent fort bien se passer des commentaires de la critique; alors que ce sont les artistes tels que lui qui ne nous laissent pas tranquilles et qui nous prennent notre temps et notre admiration.

Complying with Degas's wish to look not at the artist's biography, Geffroy declared that:

> On peut commencer par supprimer toute biographie, on peut éviter de rechercher dans les vieux catalogues quelles peintures ont été autrefois reçues aux Salons annuels. Je ne veux retenir de l'œuvre à laquelle je songe en ce moment, que des renseignements d'intellect. Il n'est rien d'intéressant en dehors des choses de l'esprit, des histoires d'idées, des manières d'être cérébrales.

Instead of a biography, Geffroy, for whom Degas was a "cérébral" and a painter of the woman "*qui ne se sait pas regardée,*" provided the reader with an unambiguous portrait of Degas as a "double homme":

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kept his studio door locked." At the time of their friendship, before their quarrel, and despite Degas's reputation of being "harsh and intactable," Moore had found that "He was courteous to all who knew him, entered into conversation with all who asked to be introduced to him, and invited those who seemed interested in his painting to his studio. Why then the legend? Degas put himself forward as an old curmudgeon, and as it is always easier to believe than to observe he became one in popular imagination; and by degrees this very courteous and kind gentleman, loving his kindred and finding happiness in society, became moulded and fashioned by the words he had uttered casually, without foreseeing that sooner or later he would have to live up to them.": Moore, 1918.

[43] As Richard Shiff has written, in the 1890s, "symbolism and impressionism cannot be set in opposition with respect to many of the central critical issues": the relationship between the two consisting in a common ground of the centrality to both movements of the artist's intention to express a subjective experience, or 'impression", and of the search for "the elusive and chimerical *immediat*e," rather than a concern for objective truth : Shiff, 1984, pp. 3-13 (quotes respectively at p. 7 and p. 13), in the context of his discussion of impressionism/modernism as a culture that defined artistic production in terms of originality.

> L'homme est mystérieux et narquois, verrouille sa porte, affiche un dédain absolu pour la discussion publique. Il s'est fait deux existences:- l'une est l'existence d'un passant très fureteur et très gai, circulant avec des sourires qui illusionnent et des mots qui éclatent, au milieu des manifestations sociales et artistiques,- l'autre est l'existence d'un reclus, enfermé avec des modèles et des croquis, s'acharnant aux conjonctions des tons et aux combinaisons imprévues des lignes.[44]

Degas's attempt to control his public image and the reception of his works required just this peculiar attitude towards the press. He proclaimed his hate for medals and other forms of public recognition, as on the occasion of the exhibition of the Caillebotte Bequest (which included seven works by Degas) at the Musée du Luxembourg.[45] Degas's need to manage his own public image and the accessibility of his works also required that he select the venues and modalities for the exhibition of his art. As he wrote to Aglaüs Bouvenne in 1891, "I insist on all occasions to appear, as far as possible, in the form and with the accessories that I like."[46]

It is now time to discuss in detail the peculiar nationalism attached to the manner in which Degas managed his escape from the public sphere into a private domain, both through a divorce from publicity and spectacle, and through a self-fashioning selection of his own critics. Above all, in his self-fashioning enterprise, Degas was careful to preserve and assert his French-ness. To Octave Maus, who invited him to exhibit at the *Salon de la Libre Esthétique* in Brussels, Degas replied, in December 1888, that he refused, explaining that "I have too many reasons for staying away and I have a fancy that I cannot overcome to confine myself to this country."[47] While externally Degas peremptorily clung to France and to French-ness, internally this notion required a specification as to exactly what French-ness the individual Degas was claiming for himself. In effect, Degas, in Paris, pursued the fame of a private, mysterious artist, secluded in a studio where he worked not for the public but for the circle of amateurs and collectors served by his art dealer Durand-Ruel. Accordingly, Degas did not wish to show in the official venues of nineteenth-century mass culture, such as the 1900 Universal Exhibition.[48] It was in Durand-Ruel's gallery that Degas chose to hold the only one-man shows in his lifetime, in 1892 and in 1894. In both occasions, in accord with his fame as an individualistic artist practising his own Symbolism, and in retreat from public life, Degas exhibited a series of landscapes, works that were truly elusive because they were both a rare theme in his oeuvre and Symbolist in essence. In 1892, the twentysix landscape monotypes, exhibited at Durand-Ruel's, were reviewed in the *Mercure de France* by Rémy de Gourmont, who described them as "sites heureusement chimériques, recomposés d'imagination, un peu à la manière de Corot."[49] In 1894, Degas exhibited another group of landscapes monotypes at Durand-Ruel's, linked by a critic to "the artist's visionary capacities, a typical Symbolist attitude," which in the field of painting was articulated, among others, by Gauguin, Denis, and Redon, and in the literary field by Mallarmé, Octave Mirbeau, Mauclair, Valéry, who were all very close to Degas.[50] This Symbolist and alienated Degas working for a restricted public was more than ever an avant-garde and oppositional figure. According to Malcolm Miles, avant-gardism survived "in more covert ways in some areas of Impressionism." Social criticism continued to be made and took divergent directions: "the alienation in Manet's late work and later in the Symbolist's retreat to a world in which the artist's psyche become art's subject matter," and "the renewal of utopian aspirations in neo-Impressionism." In the first case, "a refusal of everyday life in Symbolism and Decadence is, in its way, a refusal of bourgeois society, though at times given to a regressive aspect, harking back to medievalism and aristocracy," while in Neo-Impressionism a new, forward-looking vision was encountered, as in Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières*.[51] Both were avant-garde positions but while Neo-Impressionism, as Ward has written, required a public and historic space, a few of the Impressionists, and among them Degas, chose the Symbolist way of individualism and private space in a challenge to publicity, mass culture, and commoditisation.[52] Degas's nationalism was not political but cultural, and I rely here on the articulation of the difference between the two as made by John Hutchinson. While political nationalism is generally aggressive and aims "at the establishment of an independent nation state," cultural nationalism is defensive and has intellectual and historicist origins. Its aim is "the formation of national communities," often "a moral community," and can "take the form of ethno-historic 'revivals' that promote a national language, literature and the arts, educational activities and economic self-help." As Hutchinson writes, the primary goal of cultural nationalism is not to seize state power but to "define and revise the content of the nation that the state nominally serves and to rebalance state and community," crystallising "as a reaction against state centralization."[53] Within this definition of cultural nationalism find a place Degas's *Montmartrois* anarchism and anti-capitalism, along with his nostalgia for a lost Christian spiritualism. Indeed, besides the manipulation of notions of French-ness, a second aspect of the cultural nationalism that tinged Degas's *fin de-siècle* retreat into a private world of feminine nature was a nostalgic Christian spiritualism in which Degas's anti-Semitism/anti-Dreyfusardism could easily be assimilated. The mid-1890s were the crucial existential divide in Degas's life: his brother Achille died in 1893, Paul Valpinçon in 1894 and Berthe Morisot in 1895, the year that also took his sister Marguerite. Evariste de Valernes died in 1896, Mallarmé and Moreau in 1898. While death took away his family and friends, the Dreyfus Affair started, leaving a trail of breakups and separations. For thirty years Degas had frequented the house of his friends Louise and Ludovic Halévy, dining every Monday with them, and attending their Thursday evening *salon.*The Halévys were dreyfusards, and their children Daniel and Elie were engaged in petitions and movements in support of Dreyfus. Daniel and Elie's fellow students and friends at the Lycée Condorcet included fellow militant anti-Dreyfusards such as Marcel Proust, Léon Blum, Robert Dreyfus, Xavier Léon, Fernand Gregh andLéon Brunschvicg.[54] But Degas was, as Pissarro had described him as early as 1891, "utterly disgusted with youth,"and to have dinner with them had become unbearable. Degas voiced freely his disgust and on one occasion, in 1897, he was accused by Gregh of "abusing the right to be aggressive *by a friend.*"[55] Degas then simply cut his friendship with the Halévyswith a short written note to Louise, dated December 23, 1897:

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[44] Geffroy, 1890.

[45] See Loyrette, 1991, pp. 589-90.

[46] Degas, 1947, pp. 176-7.

[47] Degas, 1947, p. 129.

[48] Degas, 1947, p. 212 and Halévy, 1966, p. 34 and pp. 62-3.

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[49] Gourmont, 1892.

[50] See Lay, 1978.

[51] Miles, 2001, p. 8 and p. 14.

[52] "Because neo-impressionism claimed as its artistic lineage a tradition that now seemed to be controlled by dealers, in private spaces to which it had no access, the group and its critics assumed a distinctively public and historic profile. The vanguardism of neo-impressionism required a public space, even though favorable critics might dismiss the tastes of the independents' audiences and the painters themselves might desire more dignified venues.": Ward, 1996, p. 56.

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[53] John Hutchinson, "Cultural Nationalism," in Breuilly, ed., 2013, pp. 75-94.

[54] See Silvera, 1996 and Laurent, 2001

[55] Pissarro, 1943, pp. 178-9 and Halévy, 1966, pp. 90-1.

> Jeudi, il va falloir, ma chère Louise, me donner congé ce soir, et j'aime mieux vous dire de suite que je vous le demande aussi pour quelque temps. Vous ne pouviez penser que j'aurais le courage d'être toujours gai, d'amuser le tapis. C'est fini de rire – cette jeunesse, votre bonté pensait m'intercaler. Mais je suis une gêne pour elle, et elle en est une enfin unsupportable pour moi. Laissez-moi dans mon coin. Je m'y plairai. Il y a de bons moments à se rappeler. Notre affection, qui date de votre enfance, si je laissais tirer plus longtemps dessus, elle casserait.
> Votre vieil ami,
> Degas. [56]

Ludovic, not a Jew but a dreyfusard, suffered psychologically from the effects the Dreyfus Affair had on the country as a whole, and on his life. Nevertheless, Degas ignored this, and didn't see him again until 1906, two years before Halévy's death.[57] Degas also stopped seeing Halévy's cousin, Geneviève Straus. The widow of Georges Bizet, Geneviève had married Emile Straus, and artists, writers, actors, singers, poets, aristocrats, and musicians frequented her salons in the boulevard Haussmann, in the 1880s and 1890s, described by Daniel Halévy.[58] Geneviève was a cultivated, witty, and cosmopolitan *salonarde*, whose charm in part derived from a life-long melancholy that run in the family, and formed the basis for the Halévys' association with the two doctors Blanche, father and son, who treated them in their sanatorium at Passy. Geneviève was revered by her guests and acquaintances. She posed for painters, and inspired Marcel Proust's for the character of the duchesse de Guermantes in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Degas had asked her permission to watch her let down her long hair, and she asked him to accompany her to a fashionable dressmaker for the fitting of an outfit, as he recounted in a letter to a friend.[59] In the 1880s Degas had been especially close to the Halévys and to Geneviève Straus, but through Geneviève, he also kept company with Mme Howland, and with such *fin-de-siècle* aesthetes and society figures as Charles Haas, Charles Ephrussi, Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, and Albert Boulanger-Cavé, who mixed with writers such as

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[56] See Halévy, 1966, pp. 97-102 and Braud, 1993.

[57] See Halévy, 1960; Hansen, 1987, and Balard, 2002, p. 16.

[58] See Daniel Halévy, *Notes sur les salons de ma tante Geneviève*, in Balard, 2002, p. 398-401.

[59] Degas, 1947, p. 142.

Huysmans and painters such as Whistler, Sickert, and Moreau. At the moment of the Dreyfus Affair, Geneviève's salon broke off, and Degas severed relationships with any dreyfusard he knew. The refined environment and the friendships evoked by Degas in his 1885 pastel portrait of his *Six Friends at Dieppe* were thus shattered.[60] Forain and Degas, to Mme Straus's grief, left her.[61] Degas's behaviour in this circumstance was not more eccentric than that of others: during the Dreyfus Affair, France was torn apart: families, friendships, relationships, careers were destroyed for or against Dreyfus.[62]It was the time of a collective rethinking of themselves for the French, forced to review their personal, social, political, moral allegiances, an identitary conflict that bred in the proliferation of Leagues, such as the dreyfusard Ligue des Droits de l'Homme which stood against the anti-dreyfusard Ligue des Patriotes. Founded by Paul Déroulède,its members strongly supported Boulanger, now named *Général Revanche*, and the deliverance of Alsace-Lorraine. Like Renoir, Forain, Jules Verne, and many others, Degas was a member of the Ligue de la Patrie Française, among whose founding members was the journalist and playwright Jules Lemaître, and which was presided for a short time until 1901 by Maurice Barrès. In the last decade of the century, and before the Dreyfus Affair, Degas expressed his particular brand of patriotism by being photographed while reading Drumont's newspaper, *La Libre Parole*. However, Degas also expressed his patriotism in the form of nostalgic trips through France, in particular with his friend Albert Bartholomé, a painter whom the death of his wife in the late 1880s had turned into a sculptor of funerary monuments. Linked to the cult of the dead, Bartholomé's art was, according to Léonce Bénédite, "une oeuvre toute spiritualiste de consolation et de réconfort." Through its archaism and its "naturalisme délicat et expressif," Bartholomé's art sought to express the same mysticism of the "maîtres primitifs des pays du Nord." Bartholomé traveled extensively to museums and cathedrals in search of the sources for a renewal of French sculpture in its "traditions ethniques, traditions septentrionales et chrétiennes."[63] Pissarro, who abhorred mysticism, praised this kind of realism of Bartholomé's works, which he related to Degas's teachings. Having seen an exhibition of sculptures by Bartholomé and Rodin at Durand Ruel's gallery in December 1890, Pissarro wrote about them to Lucien:

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[60] In the portrait appear Ludovic and Daniel Halévy, Boulanger-Cavé, Jacques-Emile Blanche, Henri Gervex, and Sickert, at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

[61] See Martin-Fugier, 2003, p. 304-11 and 314-7; Degas, 1947; Jullian, 1971; Wright, 1973; Kolb and Adhémar, 1984.

[62] The Dreyfus Affair lasted from late 1894 until 1906, when Alfred Dreyfus was rehabilitated and reintegrated in the army.

[63] As Bénédite wrote in 1899, Bartholomé's art stood against the "éternel dilettantisme mythologique," the narrowness of the "inspiration anthromorphique

> The figures by Bartholomé are first rate, among these there is a wax bust which is at once extremely modern and very primitive; it has great nobleness, one feels that the artist is a pupil of Degas. Very remarkable, too, is a large piece which seems to be for a tomb: a young man, a young woman and a dead child; it is truly poignant…

As Pissarro added, he found Bartholomé's figures to be "far stronger than anything by Rodin, whose works become petty and facile beside it."[64] Modern and primitive at once, as Pissarro aptly described it, was the sensibility that permeated Degas and Bartholomé's quest for the roots of French art in an anti-classical, non-Latin, but Christian and Northern spiritualism, of which they were the modern exponents. In their search for a Northern and Christian France, in October 1890, Degas and Bartholomé went on a trip to Burgundy. They planned to reach in a horse-drawn carriage their friends the Jeanniots, living at Diénay in the Côte d'Or. Their friend Michel Manzi met them at Melun in a coupé, and Forain met them, a bit further away, on a tricycle. Along the way, Degas and Bartholomé stopped at country inns to sleep, and ate the food of deep France, reporting their experiences in daily letters to the Halévys in Paris. It was a political statement to travel pulled by a white horse in the era of automobiles. The trip lasted two weeks and the two made numerous stops. But how should we consider the fact that Plumaire, the horse, had been stripe-painted in black and white? Degas said that they wanted to startle the peasants.[65] This desire to add a touch of magic to the business of their journey through old France is a sign of the two travellers' pursuit of

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et païenne" and the "obsession des conventions pédagogiques, des traditions latines implantées par les grands décorateurs italiens du XVIe siècle." According to Bénédite, such renewal of French sculpture in the name of a nationalism and a spiritualism of Northern and Christian essence was also pursued by other sculptors: Dalou and Meunier, expressing their "idéal démocratique et social," Auguste Rodin expressed "un verbe plus humain, plus passionné, plus expressif.": Bénédite, 1899.

[64] Pissarro, 1943, p. 142.

[65] See Blanche, 1930; Jeanniot, 1933 and Burollet, 1967. Also see Loyrette, 1991, pp. 555-62.

something that was at once serious and playful, a modern performance that is almost unthinkable outside the Paris culture of the *cabarets artistiques.* Bartholomé and Degas went together on two other nostalgic trips: they went to the pilgrimage site of Lourdes, and in 1898 they went to Montauban to visit the Musée Ingres. Degas and Bartholomé shared a taste for the supposed spirituality and pureness of the Primitives, a denomination that now included the Flemish and Florentine artists of before the Renaissance, as well as Ingres.[66] Their visit to Montauban, the birthplace of Ingres, must be viewed in the context of their turn-of-the-century *ingrisme,* a primitivist revival that affected Degas and Bartholomé. The two friends also jointly bought artworks by Ingres at auctions.[67] Degas's nostalgic longing for a primitive style with spiritual connotations extended beyond the borders of France. In 1889, Degas went to Spain with the Italian painter Giovanni Boldini. Degas was hoping to visit a brothel in Andalusia, though the trip was motivated by a search for aesthetic spiritualism in the art of a country which, in the theory and history of art of Georges Sorel and his followers, was then associated with a fervent Catholicism, apparent, for instance, in the works of El Greco.[68] Degas's trip to Spain and his contemporary interest in El Greco's artworks, some of which he acquired for his planned museum, must be seen as another instance of Degas's nostalgic aesthetic spiritualism of the 1890s. It is in Valéry's *Degas Dance Dessin* that we find a description of both Degas's anarchistic dislike for rationality, and of his kind of resistance to a certain modernity. Degas hated bourgeois professionals, thinkers, "Les réformateurs, les rationalistes, les hommes «de justice et de vérité», les abstracteurs, les critiquent d'art…," and architects :

> Il attribuait aux penseurs et aux architectes la plupart des maux dont l'époque est atteinte. On vit d'ailleurs en ce temps-là (vers 1890), se prononcer chez quelques esprits distingués un sentiment de réaction contre le moderne et ses théoricien, Un positivisme empirique parut, qui, loin de partir comme l'autre, d'une *table rase,* invoqua l'expérience, non celle des laboratoires, mais, plus simplement et tout bonnement, celle des siècles. La somme des siècles répond ce que l'on veut. On s'éprit de l'artisan du moyen âge, et quelques peintres ou sculpteurs se costumèrent comme lui. Le nom de *tradition* fut prononcé. Certains furent conduits par leur zèle pour le passé jusqu'au pied des autels qu'ils avaient fort négligé depuis l'enfance; plusieurs jusque dans le cloître. D'autres

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[66] See Alazard, 1936.

[67] Lapauze, 1918.

[68] Antliff, 1997.

> demeurèrent païens, ne prenant dans la tradition que ce qui leur plaisait. Divers que j'ai connus, d'âme toute anarchiste, plaçaient Louis XIV au-dessus de tout.[69]

A reminder of the difficulty and doubt that could affect a nineteenth-century observer's perception and understanding of the peculiarities of French history is clearly viewed in the intellectual journey of one of Degas's best friends, Ludovic Halévy, an Orleanist who served in the administration of the Second Empire and who, while being thoroughly hostile to universal suffrage, accepted the Third Republic by default, as a "républicain de résignation."[70] In truth, there are no ambiguities in Degas's position: knowing that anarchism is a variety of nineteenth-century socialism, but not an ideology, Degas's political ideas, against the backcloth of nineteenth-century French political history, stop appearing illogical and disparate. In the same way, Pissarro's taste for things English and England in general does not make him a monarchist with a predilection for privilege and aristocratic family lines, or a counter-revolutionary. Indeed, Pissarro the anarchist regarded Britain with sympathy both for the British application of liberalism and individualism, and for the sense of Old World culture that emanated from the Kingdom. This appealed to his ethic and lifestyle as a craftsman, which implied, as in Degas's case, a disdain for mass society and a certain modern industrial world. Indeed, Degas did not dislike the work ethic and philosophy of communal work and manual artistic work that Pissarro espoused for himself and in the education of his children. In the context of his political engagement, this elitist and moralistic outlook, or ethos of craftsmanship, does not make of Pissarro a reactionary, neither do anti-Dreyfusardism and traditionalism in the case of Degas. These various aspects of seemingly conservative and un-ideological outlook that marked the work ethic of the *Montmartrois* artisan and anarchist at the turn of the century tie in well with Degas's dislike of professional bureaucratic elites, lawyers, engineers, politicians, who put their skills at the disposal of the power and authority of the bourgeois state, the Third Republic.[71]

Despite the availability of the terms for a revision of Degas's reputation, the reductive cliché image of Degas as a Right-wing anti-Semite reactionaryremains in place, first and foremost because it is a key element of what James Cutting has defined as the canon of French Impressionism.Canons are the backbones of cultural and political identity, the bread and butter of what is taught in the humanities, and cultural constructs created through mere exposure. Within that canon, the large and superficial image of Degas the protofascist is moulded in a problematic social type in French constructions of identity and nationhood, that of the intellectual, who "symbolizes the intersection and inseparability of the political and cultural life of the nation."[72]As Timothy Baycroft has written, in the modern post-revolutionary French nation-building process, Frenchness has been constructed in social types that have "found a mythical place within the national story as particularly representative of the French nation, or at least of one element of it": the peasant, the worker, the bourgeois, and the intellectual are embodiments of modern Frenchness.[73]But more than being just a problematic intellectual, representations of Degas the protofascist are moulded in the shadow of the Vichy syndrome, the intense preoccupation, of the French themselves and of scholars of France, with "the dark years" of the Second World War and the Occupation as a collective trauma and "place of active unease and disquiet."[74] Degas will forever embody unresolved Frenchness, if the canon of French Impessionism is maintained by art historians and a sustaining public whose opinions, in Cutting's words, "drag heavily against systematic change."[75]

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[69] Valéry, 1965, pp. 221-22.
[70] See Hansen, 1987.
[71] Valéry, 1965.

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[72] Baycroft, 2008, p. 104.

[73] Baycroft, 2008, p. 85.

[74] Vichy has been characterised as a national French syndrome by historian Henry Rousso in his book of 1991, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*: Baycroft, 2008, p. 45.

[75] Cutting, 2006.

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