GEORGES SEURAT: UNE BAINADE A ASNIERES

by

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Since its completion in 1884, Georges-Pierre Seurat's *Une Baignade à Asnières* has been regarded in formal terms. The work has been seen as an important formal study, which is an only partially successful synthesis of his artistic antecedents: the subject matter, and to a considerable extent the style of the impressionists, modified by the artist's study of Delacroix's use of colour, the theory of Ogden Rood, and Ingrist and Puvean classicism.

It is the contention of this writer that this approach, which ignores such factors as the class of the figures and the location of the scene - or in short, the subject matter - in fact misses the main thesis of the work. By examining Seurat's career before the *Baignade*, and the circumstances of its creation, we hope to suggest that far from being devoid of meaningful content, the work is to be seen as an ironic and critical social comment. The workingmen are here at leisure, and yet far from being free and happy; they are condemned to conditions which make their leisure worse than none at all. This idea is what Seurat intended to convey to the art-viewing bourgeoisie. Although the means are subtle, a careful examination of the pictorial evidence makes the conclusion inevitable.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: SEURAT’S CAREER BEFORE THE BAIGNADE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: UNE BAIGNADE A ASNIERES</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Satyr and Goat, c. 1878, Paris: private collection.
Figure 2. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880, Callian: Georg Collection.
Figure 3. Manet. Coin des Jardins des Tuileries, c. 1862, Paris: Musée du Louvre.
Figure 4. Manet. Rue Mosnier au bec-de-gaz, 1878, Chicago: Art Institute.
Figure 5. Manet. The Balloon, 1862, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.
Figure 6. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880.
Figure 7. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880-1, Besancon: Besson Collection.
Figure 8. Factories in Moonlight, c. 1883, New York: Tarnopol Collection.
Figure 9. The Railway Embankment, c. 1883.
Figure 10. Homme Assis, c. 1883.
Figure 11. Mme. Seurat Reading, c. 1883, New York: Lewyt Collection.
Figure 12. Hommage a Puvis, 1881, Paris: Beres Collection.
Figure 13. Puvis de Chavannes. The Poor Fisherman, 1880-1, Paris: Musée du Louvre.
Figure 14. Hoer, c. 1883, New York: Guggenheim Museum.
Figure 15. Millet. The Hoer, 1860-2, USA: private collection.
Figure 16. Woman Leaning on a Parapet, c. 1881, Paris: Angrand Collection.
Figure 17. Burnt-out Palace of the Tuileries, c. 1882.
Figure 18. Faneuses à Montfermeil, c. 1881-2, Paris: private collection.
Figure 19. Stonebreaker, c. 1883, Bradford: Hanley Collection.
Figure 20. Factories, c. 1883, Troyes: Levy Collection.
Figure 21. Hobo, c. 1886, Paris: private collection.
List of Figures (Cont'd)

Figure 22. Figures in the Street, c. 1883, Switzerland: private collection.

Figure 23. L'Invalid, c. 1881, New York: Rothbart Collection.

Figure 24. Une Baignade à Asnières, 1883-4, London: National Gallery.

Figure 25. Les Deux Rives, 1883, Glasgow: Art Gallery and Museum.

Figure 26. Le Pont de Courbevoie (Asnières?), 1883.

Figure 27. La Seine à Asnières, 1883, Paris: Renand Collection.

Figure 28. Chevaux dans le Fleuve, 1883, London: Courtauld Institute.

Figure 29. Cheval et Bateaux, 1883, Paris: private collection.

Figure 30. Baigneurs, 1883, Paris: Renand Collection.

Figure 31. L'Arc-en-Ciel, 1883, New York: Davis Collection.

Figure 32. Personnage Assis, 1883, Cleveland: Museum of Art.

Figure 33. Cinque Personnages Males, 1883, Paris: private collection.

Figure 34. Vêtements, 1883, London: Tate Gallery.

Figure 35. Vêtements et Chapeau, 1883, Scotland: private collection.

Figure 36. Jeune Garçon et Cheval, 1883, Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

Figure 37. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880.

Figure 38. Garçons se Baignant, 1883, Paris: Gourgand Collection.

Figure 39. Baigneur Assis, 1883, Kansas City: Nelson-Atkins Museum.

Figure 40. Etude Finale, 1883-4, New York: Levy Collection.

Figure 41. L'Echo, 1883-4, New York: Wetmore Collection.

Figure 42. Garçon de Dos, 1883-4, Paris: private collection.

Figure 43. Nude, 1883-4, London: Morrison Collection.

Figure 44. Garçon Assis, 1883-4, New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery.
List of Figures (Cont'd)

Figure 45. Jambe, 1883-4, Stockholm: Bonnier Collection.

Figure 46. Reclining Man, 1883-4, Basel: Beyeler Collection.

Figure 47. Man, 1883-4, New York: Seligman Collection.

Figure 48. Man, 1883-4, Paris: Musée du Louvre.

Figure 49. Vêtements, 1883-4, Pomfret Center: Orswell Collection.

Figure 50. Une Dimanche après-midi à L'Île de la Grande Jatte, 1884-6, Chicago: Art Institute.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS


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IMT
Georges Seurat's *Une Baignade à Asnières* was first exhibited in May of 1884. The first critical comments date from shortly after the opening of the Salon des Indépendants.

The first published reference to the *Baignade* is Roger Marx's review of the Indépendants in *Le Voltaire* of May 16, 1884. Marx, although non-committal, does express pleasure at the "indication of serious qualities." Calling the painting impressionist as he does, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that Marx found something in the work to distinguish it from the paintings of the older "impressionists" - Monet and Renoir.

What Marx means by the phrase "marque d'un temperament" is difficult to assess, but in all likelihood it is the imprint of Seurat's mind which appealed to Marx.

Only a day later Trublot (Paul Alexis) commented on the work in *Le Cri du Peuple*.

> *Une Baignade (Asnières), by Monsieur Seurat (Georges), boulevard de Magenta. - This is a fake Puvis de Chavannes. What ridiculous bathers, men and girls /sic/! But painted with such earnestness that it is almost moving, and I dare not ridicule it further.*

Despite the *aperçu* of Seurat's earnestness, Trublot/Alexis makes a fundamental mistake when he assumes that Seurat intended to emulate Puvis. While formal and perhaps colouristic debts are certainly present, we hope to show that the content of the picture is very much removed from Puvis.

In 1886 Bernheim-Jeune, at the behest of Camille Pissarro, included Seurat in an exhibition of impressionist paintings which he sent to New York. The work received notice in three newspapers.
Seurat's big study of boys bathing, a "plein-air" effect, will receive an attention which might better be bestowed upon Pissarro's remarkably truthful and beautiful drawings of peasants, and Serret's delightful little studies of children. There is more humanity here.

The reviewer for the New York Daily Tribune requires in his art an anecdotal quality which, while possible to read into Pissarro, is not found in Seurat's picture.

The second American reviewer was much more hostile towards the Baignade:

The great master, from his own point of view must surely be Seurat, whose monstrous picture of the "Bathers" consumes so large a part of Gallery D. This is a picture conceived in a coarse, vulgar and commonplace mind - the work of a man seeking distinction by the vulgar qualification and expedient of size. It is bad from every point of view including his own.

While certainly unfair in accusing Seurat of "seeking distinction" through the creation of a large picture, the writer is by no means incorrect when he calls the work vulgar. This was surely one of the objections of the Salon jurors. It is a failing of the reviewer that he could not perceive that the work would have been a failure if it had not been vulgar in middle-class terms.

The third American reviewer echoes his colleague at the Sun in calling the work "uncouth," and feels that this work reveals "the uncompromising strength of the impressionistic school." What this "uncompromising strength" entailed is difficult to ascertain. It does, however, seem fairly certain, in view of the use of "uncouth" as a descriptive term, that it is the subject matter which is referred to. The "strength" which is
stressed indicates a willingness to deal with life as it is in all its uncouth elements.

Signac was the first to discuss in detail the importance of Seurat's use of colour in 1899,9 and it is in fact this feature which has to a large extent dominated the literature of the painting since then.

It was not until 1925 that an article devoted to the Baignade appeared - this on the occasion of it passing into the collection of the Trustees of the Courtauld Fund, and thence to the Tate Gallery. J. B. Manson's article, while extremely general, does make several interesting observations: that it is, while extremely formal, quite unacademic; and that while being an "impressionist" picture, it is distinct and individual. The article does not, however, speak of the subject matter; the majority of the text being confined to description and comments on the transitional nature of the image.

Finally, however, the work is treated as an art object:

It owes its fine quality of decoration to its very harmonious and intimate relationship of mass and line.\(^{14}\)

Roger Fry was particularly attached to the Baignade for its formal qualities:

...the secret of this great composition, the compelling harmony of all these forms...\(^{15}\)

and the remarkable justness of Seurat's compositional balance. This harmonious balance, which Seurat owes to Puvis, and perhaps at least in part to Piero, was also remarked upon by
Robert Rey in his *La Renaissance du Sentiment Classique*. As Rey suggested, Seurat had, despite choosing a subject which was "familiar"\(^{16}\), created an image which was far from the "sensual tumult"\(^{17}\) of impressionist pictures such as Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*.

In 1941, Benedict Nicholson published the first extensive study of the picture. In his article the evolution of the work is traced through the three sketches known to him (H 89, DR 92; H 88, DR 95 and H 91, DR 96). Otherwise, he comments briefly on Seurat's use of dull colours and Chevreul's theory.

Like Rey and Fry before him, Nicholson comments on the formal properties of the work. However,

...analyses of this description fail to reveal any new facts about Seurat's real intentions.\(^{20}\)

What is worthy of notice is that

These strange elemental beings have no organic inter-relationship. There is no sense of continuity from one bather to another. It is as though each figure had been painted on a drop curtain and lowered into place at his correct distance from the spectator so as to exist independantly in his own atmosphere. They are not acquainted with one another, these bathers, nor show any interest in the behaviour, thoughts or appearance of each other.\(^{21}\)

Yet Nicholson feels that they are "united in the common purpose of recreation."\(^{22}\)

Nicholson distinguished the *Baignade* from the works of the impressionists because Seurat does not deal with "life in all its
moods of gaiety, sadness, debauchery, and love but "the society of common people," and the relationships of "people and things." Nicholson describes these figures as "cogs in a social machine," and yet, paradoxically, feels that

They profit from the leisure society provides for them.

and that the Baignade is symbolic of "organised leisure."

While many of Nicholson's conceptions are correct, we will argue that rather than viewing this situation favourably, Seurat intended that we see it in a very unfavourable light.

In 1946 John Rewald, with extensive assistance from Felix Feneon, published his study of Seurat. His comments on the Baignade are essentially descriptive, and echo Signac and Feneon in analyzing the colour and the compositional dynamics. Indeed, although he quotes Feneon's statements indicating that Seurat was of anarchist leanings, he does not discuss the subject matter at all, and makes the extraordinary assertion that "there is no sadness in the pictures of Seurat."

In the same year, Douglas Cooper published a short pamphlet on the picture. In his article, Cooper details the history of the work, and briefly discusses the technical variations found in it.

Why the Baignade was rejected by the Salon jury is a vexing question; Cooper feels that it is because the work is too matter-of-fact, and that it was the lack of a "moral uplift" which led to its rejection.
Cooper feels that:

The subject of Une Baignade is an everyday scene on the banks of the Seine in one of the working-class suburbs of Paris. The motionless figures all face the same way and show no interest in each other; they appear an aimless and chance collection of people, each occupied with his own private relaxation, united only by their common absorption in a pleasurable experience.

There is therefore "no moral to be discovered, no situation to be understood," the picture expressing "the attitude to life of a particular society at a particular time, as well as the relation of man to his world."

Cooper does not provide us with any clue as to what this "attitude" is, or how man relates to his world. The work is about pleasure pure and simple, in Cooper's opinion: the sun is shining, the colours are light, the water is smooth, and nothing moves. Cooper rails against those who treat the picture in only formal terms, and yet seems to have been seduced by the exquisite formal harmony and classical calm, into believing that all is right in the world which these men and boys occupy.

In 1958, William Homer pointed out the Baignade's kinship with Puvis' The Happy Land: both works relate a group of figures on a shore to a large expanse of water; in each there are sailboats on the water; both are pale in colour, and have a strong thrust from the upper left to lower right; and finally both are static and calm in tone. In the same article, Homer began his studies of Seurat's colour theory.

Sven Lövgren's interesting study The Genesis of Modernism only touches on Seurat's work before 1884-5. However, in prepar-
ing the ground for his study of *La Grande Jatte*, Løvgren comments upon the extremely introverted and melancholy character of the picture - and on Seurat's soon-developed friendships in Zola's circle.

Henri Dorra and John Rewald point out that the final sketch for the *Baignade* was exhibited in February and March of 1884, at a showing for the *Cercle des Arts Liberaux* - unfortunately we have no record of public reaction, if indeed there was any. Neither writer suggests any social significance for the *Baignade*. In commenting on earlier panels of peasants and workers, however, they do note the influence of Millet and Pissarro.

Kenneth Clark's chapter on the *Baignade* is certainly the finest appreciation of the work as painting. Lord Clark does not, however, feel that there is anything of a social nature in this work.

Eugenia Herbert's exceptionally important study, *The Artist and Social Reform*, while primarily concerned with the post-*Baignade* activities of Seurat and the other neo-impressionists, does briefly discuss the painting. Herbert notes that the painting is a direct contrast to the elegant bathing and boating scenes of the impressionists.

and is set in Asnières, "then very much a working class district dominated by factories."

Robert Herbert's *Seurat's Drawings*, although only concerned with the *Baignade* in a subsidiary fashion, makes a number of observations about Seurat's art as a whole. Herbert comments on
Seurat's new use of the industrial suburbs as subject matter, his sympathy for workers and peasants, and the fact that criticism of the bourgeoisie is implicit in such subject matter. Of the Baignade, Herbert discusses the defining role of the drawings, and notes the peculiar disparity of technique between the solid and heavy figures and the lightness of the landscape and river.

De Hauke's great oeuvre catalogue, while indispensable for any serious work on Seurat, does not include a critical study of the artist's work. We must note, however, that he does not include one of the sketches for the Baignade in his catalogue, although the work in question seems authentic.

A thorough, and almost overly convincing study by William Homer, discusses the use of technique in the Baignade. Homer distinguishes three types of brushstroke - the heavy, pasty paint of the figures, the rough balayé of the grass, and the long parallel strokes of the water. Homer characterizes Seurat as wishing to combine Puvis' sense of decorative design with a modern divisionist approach and contemporary subject matter...

Russell's study of Seurat points out the transitional nature of the Baignade; Seurat's use of impressionist technique, combined with more solid style, and his attempts at using Ogden Rood's colour system. Yet for all this, Russell feels that Seurat is making a comment. The precise nature of this comment is difficult to define; Seurat, however, probably shared the leftist views of his friends. Russell feels that
...the mere fact of his wishing to democratize Arcadia and picture it in the likeness of pleasures of the working-class was a gesture of defiance.

Russell points out Seurat's affinities with Puvis, but notes the fact of modern subject matter in Seurat.

The author's most interesting suggestions are two, which he does not fully elaborate upon. He suggests

...that the subject matter of the painting was planned as carefully as its mathematics, or as the relation between the top of the head of the central figure and the roofline of the Clichy factories.

Finally, and most interestingly, Russell suggests that the small ferry boat is

...the bark of officialdom, indifferent if not actually hostile to the unorganized working-men on the bank...

making towards the pleasure-ground of La Grande Jatte.

Pierre Courthion, although noting, as had many writers before him, Seurat's interest in the working class, does not discuss the Baignade in such terms. Rather, he views the disparate techniques and somewhat stiff nature of the Baignade as being the result of Seurat's youth, the Baignade functioning as a test piece for his skill.

Jean Sutter's study of the neo-impressionists deals with Seurat at some length. Sutter is at some pains to point out the dualism of the Baignade: the impressionism of the landscape and subject matter as a whole, and the sense of permanence and classical calm of the figures. It is, however, these formal
concerns which occupy Sutter, virtually to the exclusion of sub-
ject matter.

In 1976, the Baignade was the subject of one of the National
Gallery's Painting in Focus exhibitions. The small pamphlet by
Cecil Gould, which was the catalogue of the exhibit, is the most
recent discussion of the picture.

Gould discusses the image in terms of what he calls "the
crisis of impressionism", this being the doubts and difficulties
experienced by artists such as Renoir and Pissarro in the early
eighteen-eighties. There was, Gould feels, a desire to solidify
and strengthen the ethereal and light structures of pictures such
as Renoir's The Swing. This crisis would account for the diversity
found in the picture itself - water/figures and between the
croquetons and the drawings. Therefore, Seurat is to be seen as
attempting to couch old impressionist subject matter in a new formal
language.

A brief examination of the literature reveals two strains of
thought about the Baignade. The older, and more prevalent, is
that which suggests that the primary import of the picture lies
in its formal aspects: the solidity of the figures, the geometric
organization and the beginning of an ordered use of colour. This
view is expressed by Alexis (Trublot), and is continued through
Christophe, Fry, Cooper, Dorra, Homer and most recently, Gould.

The other school of thought which has only emerged in fairly
recent times, suggests that the key to the Baignade lies not in
formal and technical considerations, but in the subject matter.
This essay seeks to expand on the suggestion of the Herberts and
Russell, that there is "more than meets the eye" in these sullen
figures by the Seine. In short, to answer the questions, why, if these people are at leisure, do they look so unhappy, and what did Seurat mean by it?
CHAPTER 1: SEURAT'S CAREER BEFORE THE Baignade
In 1879, Seurat was posted to the coastal town of Brest, to perform his national service. This posting marked the end of his formal artistic training. Of this year, 1879-80, spent in Brest, we have one artistic record, the so-called Brest notebook.

The notebook, some sixty leaves, has received scant attention in Seurat literature, perhaps due to the dispersal of the leaves. The difficulty of assessing these drawings has led to an unfortunate neglect, and perhaps an overly strong emphasis on the reading Seurat did at this period. The drawings themselves are remarkable in that they are so fundamentally different from his earlier student drawings.

His student drawings, which can be characterized by H 299, (Satyr and Goat), are marked by an immense care and attention to subtle shifts of shadow, and minute modulations of form. In the Satyr and Goat (figure 1), as in the best naturalistic work, the flow of light is precisely documented, and contour is carefully set. The drawing is thus typically academic, rigourous, careful, and yet mechanistic and detached.

The drawings of the Brest notebook are, in contrast, rapid notations. The subjects are recorded with extreme speed and economy. There is almost nothing of the shading and hatching of his student drawings H 319 (figure 2). A few strokes are used to record the outline, and this suffices to convey a sense of volume and movement.

The Brest notebook, unlike the student drawings, confronts situations and characters of the natural world. While a sense of volume had always been part of Seurat's art, a sense of movement is not found in the student drawings. This new movement is
indicative of the shift away from the posed, and thus controlled, models of the studio situation to the world at large.

There is a constant mix of characters in these drawings - middle class and worker - his peers, and those who are quite apart from his experience. All are observed in an almost matter-of-fact fashion.

This treatment of subject matter is not, of course, peculiar to Seurat. Here, he shows himself very much a part of his times - honing his observational skills, as had many naturalist writers and artists before him. We may yet be more specific, however; for Seurat stands, as we shall see, within a specific tradition in a larger naturalism: that of the flâneur.

Baudelaire in his famous essay, The Painter of Modern Life, characterizes Constantin Guys as a "lover of crowds." A crowd allows anonymity and permits the recording of small idiosyncratic detail. Guys is for Baudelaire a flâneur, a "non-I"; he floats at a distance, and yet is neither unthinking nor unfeeling. He can, and does feel the horror of war; he can, and does love as a lover; but this is not evident in the apparently ephemeral and trite products of his hand. The "I" is not directly present; Guys might be a machine in making his work so "non-I", so outside of self. The essence of the work is intellectual rather than emotional; Baudelaire's flâneur feels with his intellect rather than his emotions. The whole is therefore vastly greater than the sum of the parts of the work.

It is all the more remarkable that Baudelaire should have lighted upon Guys as the painter of modern life, for Guys, while infinitely malleable, did not really adopt the intellectual stance
which Baudelaire required. As a consequence one has a feeling of unease when trying to relate Baudelaire's call for the "heroicism of modern life" to the pallid products of Guy’s hand.

The concept of the flâneur is perhaps more vivid and interesting when one considers the work of Manet. In the early seventies, he begins to record, seemingly at random, isolated events in and of the streets. These random, or apparently random, drawings are an interesting statement of the Baudelairean ideal: a concern for modern life. The seemingly cold renderings contain a good deal more of the artist than is immediately apparent.

Manet’s naturalism was, like Emile Zola’s, much more pointed than might appear to the casual observer. While one cannot call Manet a crusader, to suggest that he was indifferent to politics and society would be to seriously underestimate him.

Drawings such as de Leiris 170, Coin du Jardin des Tuileries, (figure 3) and de Leiris 502, Rue Mosnier au bec-du-gaz, (figure 4), are good examples of Manet’s detached imagery of the "non-I". Both are observational, matter-of-fact in tone. Yet a work such as The Balloon (figure 5), which on the surface is only an indifferent recording of an event, in fact makes a direct comment about progress and French society in the last half of the century. Thus Manet is the ideal flâneur, committed, if you care to look and think, and yet not vulgarly rhetorical.

Seurat’s drawings are often strikingly similar to those of his predecessor. Both dealt with the casually encountered subject - drawings such as de Leiris numbers 246, 269 and 291, would seem to be of special interest in relation to Seurat. The lone figure is isolated; little indication is made of setting - only enough to
orient the viewer.

The Brest notebook has essentially only one subject, as do most figure drawings: the individual, whether middle class or worker, going about his business or in some cases failing to do so. In H 332, a cobbler plys his trade. Despite relative economy of means, Seurat has been careful to specify who this figure is, by showing him at work. In another drawing, H 350, a cleaner scrubs a wall. Both figures work at solitary occupations of a rather dreary nature. Drawings such as the two mentioned, like others in the Brest notebook, in isolation are worthy of little attention, but if without editorial rhetoric, they are not without comment about manual labour and its nature - the stultifying repetition and painful boredom.

The tone of most of the drawings is neutral; there is virtually no emotion - where emotion appears it is melancholic. A sad, resigned sense of despair is evident in the dejected slouches of H 364 (figure 6), H 374, and H 331 (figure 7); the latter drawing the more remarkable for its reference to Degas' *Absinthe Drinker*.

If we define naturalism as recording what one sees, Seurat is not greatly different from the Impressionists. The Impressionists did not, however, choose to see people. Seurat is concerned with people in a way that Monet, and even Renoir, are not. While Seurat's art is not essentially negative in tone, it does not (at least at this point) have an artificial gaiety about it. He observes what comes before his eye and exercises his art in deciding what to record and what not to record.

The Brest notebook represents a passage from the dead Ingriste tradition of the student drawings to an art of some modernity and
relevance to Seurat's own situation - as a modern artist, as a man interested in events, in politics and modern life. He emerges as an individual who gives considerable thought and, as we shall see, direction to his work.

In November of 1881, Seurat returned to Paris from Brest. We know little of his activity for the rest of 1881. It is at this point, however, that the remarkable development of his mature drawing style begins. During the next six months, Seurat worked almost exclusively with charcoal and paper, creating superbly atmospheric drawings which, despite often mundane subject matter, retain an element of mystery and strangeness.

The subjects of these drawings are incredibly varied. The urban drawings, houses (H 537), and streets (H 564), are of a mysterious, inky blackness. There are also images of the increasingly industrial outskirts of Paris, factories, (H 536, figure 8; H 550), and the railway (H 471, figure 9; H 472; H 478). The Parisians drawn by Seurat are middle and working class. There are many well-dressed and discreet ladies (H 495), but also a remarkable number of derelicts, (H 490, figure 10), labourers, (H 520), laundresses, (H 493), and street sellers (H 450). Despite the variety of subjects, the tone is virtually unchanged: non-committal and distant. This lack of emotion is even true of portrayals of his mother and father (H 584, figure 11; H 600).

The return from Brest marks the real introduction of painting into Seurat's oeuvre as well. His paintings prior to 1882 are confined to a copy after Ingres, and a rather melancholy portrait of his cousin.
One of the things that Seurat does appear to have done during the last few days of 1881 was to reestablish, or rather establish, some contacts in the art world of Paris. With Aman-Jean, he joined many other young artists who found some work and encouragement in the studio of Puvis de Chavannes.

Puvis de Chavannes was then engaged on the decorative scheme for the Pantheon and employed several young men to help prepare the canvas and assist in the laying in of the figures.

It is only within the last year that an attempt has been made to assess Puvis' importance for the art of the late nineteenth century. The exhibition Puvis de Chavannes and the Modern Tradition has shown how widespread was his influence. That he was immensely admired by the younger generation is indisputable. Even the fact that Toulouse-Lautrec should caricature a Puvis composition (Lautrec's Bois Sacré which introduces moderns into Puvis' classical arcadia), speaks of a certain position.

Signal evidence of how highly Seurat regarded his is offered by an incident which occurred shortly before Seurat's death. In The Circus, 1890-1, the last work exhibited by Seurat, there is a slight spatial difficulty in the positioning of the horse. Seurat was heard to remark, at the opening of Les Independants, that he was afraid that Puvis would notice his mistake.

Puvis de Chavannes was a decorator in an age when virtually all important painting was easel painting. He created huge decorative schemes in Palaces of Justice, libraries, and the like. Puvis, in fact, received virtually every large decorative scheme available for almost thirty years. The obvious question is, of
course: why? What did Puvis have that Monet, Renoir or even Manet lacked? The quality of permanence seems to have been Puvis' greatest asset; his classicizing forms speak of solidity and calm. He excelled at creating a mood of quiet dignity through pale and often chalky colouring, pseudo-classical figures, and warm, gentle landscapes. He appealed to an ambiguous emotional sense, a certain ill-defined sweetness which we find somewhat vapid.

Puvis' work elicited considerable emotional response in his own day, however. In 1880-1, he was engaged on one of his most celebrated works, the Poor Fisherman. Featuring a profoundly pathetic figure, the image was shown at the Salon of 1881. Like so much of Puvis' work, its meaning is unclear. We are presented with a seeming Christ-figure, an imago pietatis, but one that lacks any real power. We do not feel anything more than a slight sympathy for the fisherman, if indeed we feel that. The position of the artist is unclear, as is that of the observer. If the painting is intended to be an expression of sympathy for the poor (as it seems to be), it is somewhat oblique. The work denies any specificity; it is rather a tone piece.

The suggestive tone is appealing, and herein lies its fault; the image is sapped of all force. There can in fact be no bite without greater specificity. Perhaps the painter of the Solemn Land could not bring himself to introduce real suffering or poverty into Arcadia.

This work seems to have interested Seurat a great deal, for in 1881 he painted Hommage à Puvis (H 6, DR 4, figure 12), which refers directly to the Poor Fisherman (figure 13). The small
panel isolates the Poor Fisherman as a painting, an object; placing it in a suburban landscape. It has been suggested by Fiorella Minervino that Seurat combines these two seemingly incongruous elements, to suggest that there is a need to combine the classicism of Puvis with the spontaneity of nature and Impressionist technique. Minervino may not be entirely wrong in this view, but it seems likely that Seurat was less disinterested. In Seurat's painting the essential elements of the Puvis are simplified so as to become almost iconic and, interestingly, more distant. The painting (Poor Fisherman) is tightened up and compressed, creating an almost square subsection of the panel. The object-nature of the Poor Fisherman subsection is further emphasized by the heavy areas of shadow on the top and right, which serve to push the picture away from the surface. The landscape is in marked contrast to this closure. It is unrestricted and expansive, despite the small size of the panel. It is a naturalistic depiction of a reality, where the Poor Fisherman is an artificial rendering of a fiction. There is then a reality, and an object within that reality.

Seurat is surely commenting on Puvis' treatment of the subject. Just as the Poor Fisherman of the panel does not relate to the larger sphere of the panel, Puvis' depiction of the poor fisher does not relate to the reality of the working classes. The implication is clear: if one is to show workers, show them as they are, not set in an idyllic never-never land of pastel colours and misty atmosphere.

Puvis is the last important bastion of academic art, a classicist in an impressionist, soon to be post-impressionist, world. This Seurat admires, and yet while paying tribute to Puvis
in the Hommage panel, he must of needs go beyond him.

In the spring of 1882, Seurat went to Barbizon. By the 1880s, this journey had become a common one — indeed by Seurat's time, Barbizon boasted an artist's supply shop. The impressionists had come to paint the countryside; and while Seurat did the same, his major interests lay elsewhere.

While in Barbizon, Seurat introduced peasants into his work; peasants who, for the most part, work in the fields. It would therefore appear that Seurat went to Barbizon not because everyone else did, but rather because of its associations with Millet.

Seurat was probably exposed to Millet in a number of ways, but two events were probably of major importance: the 1879 estate sale, and more importantly, the publication in 1881 of Sensier's memoir. Sensier stresses the directness and honesty of Millet's style. Millet's statement, "I paint things as I see them," no doubt appealed to Seurat's naturalistic side.

The recasting of Millet is evident in the theme of the hoer (H 103, DR 42, figure 14). Here is another example of Seurat relating to, and yet subtly adjusting an idea. Millet's painting (figure 15) is savage and brutal, wrenching at the viewer's sensibilities. Seurat's panel has none of these qualities; it is placid and anonymous.

Seurat does not need to paint in the relentlessly physical fashion of Millet. Where Millet elicits an emotional, visceral response (indeed could be said to demand it), Seurat appeals to the intellect. Like Manet, Seurat understates his case. If we cannot make the associations which are necessary, we miss the point.
Seurat, in evoking Millet, relates himself to the socially conscious art of the generation of 1848. Millet, despite his protests, was perceived as sympathetic to socialist ideas as late as 1886. Here Seurat differs markedly from the impressionists who, with the exception of Pissarro, apparently displayed little interest in social themes or ideas.

On his return to Paris, Seurat's interest in the people continued. He turned from peasants back to the streets. There are more drawings of the type we have seen previously—street people (H 671) and drifters (H 514). The subjects seem to speak of a general dis-aftection found in the lower classes (H 462, figure 16).

One of the works Seurat executed upon his return is a small panel of the Burnt-out Palace of the Tuileries (H 13, DR 60, figure 17). The Tuileries was a large palace which adjoined the Louvre on what is now the Jardin des Tuileries. It housed many government offices, and during the rebellion of 1871, the workers of the commune burned it as a seat of unjust government.

Seurat had not experienced the Commune of 1871. His father had taken the family from the city during the uprising, and by the time the family returned to Paris, there were virtually no traces of the uprising left. The major exception was the Palace of the Tuileries, which remained as a reminder against challenging authority (also because of indecision as to what to do with the large area now freed).

Compositionally the picture is of little interest, but selecting that particular subject is at the very least highly suggestive. Seurat could not have been unaware of the association of the ruin with the struggle for emancipation of the worker.
A second trip to Barbizon in the fall of 1882, or early spring of 1883, deepened Seurat’s ties with Millet’s form of naturalism. We find small panels of workers in the fields - gleaners, people raking and gathering; figures which, as Russell suggests, occur constantly in Millet. These studies (H 34, DR 10, figure 18; H 60, DR 41; H 62, DR 19) combined with the earlier more particularized "portraits" (H 59, DR 20; H 15, DR 30; H 16, DR 44) of more solemn (one might even say sullen) bent, represent Seurat’s comments upon, and absorption of, Millet’s subject matter and context.

The second trip to Barbizon also introduced new subject matter in the form of stonebreakers (H 33, DR 20, figure 19). There are ten small panels dealing with the subject of stonebreakers, as well as at least five drawings - either singly or in groups. Each figure is isolated in his job; even in the groups there is no communication other than working at the same job in the same place. Seurat’s steadfast refusal to give these figures any humanity has led others to suggest that the artist was not really concerned with subject matter. Surely, however, the very fact of employing this subject so many times suggests some interest in the idea of the theme.

The use of this motif must inevitably cause us to consider Courbet’s famous essay of 1848. Clark has suggested that the reason for the profoundly negative reaction to Courbet’s Stonebreakers was not so much what was there, as what was not there. The picture lacks any sense of hope. Max Buchon, in his announce for the exhibition of the Stonebreakers and the Burial at Ornans, begins his description of the former:
Les Casseurs de pierres sont un tableau a deux personnages grand comme nature, un enfant et un veillard, l'alpha et l'omega, l'aurore et la crépuscule de cet existence de forcats.

In Bouchon and Clark's socialist view of the work these two figures are indeed prisoners. For the old man there is no escape, he is resigned to constant toil until he dies. More devastating however, is the realization that the boy will just as surely follow the same path.

Courbet presents these workers to us with little elaboration. There is virtually no space in the picture. The figures are forced upon us, allowing us no convenient escape. We are forced to deal with these men, not as men; but as objects or rather machines. The image is unpleasant; the only way we are allowed to finish the ideation is negatively. One cannot, in the face of such evidence, cling to the myth of the peasant in a sylvan arcadia.

The coldness of presentation may have led Proudhon to take Courbet as the painter of humanitarian anarchism. Whatever the reason, however, Proudhon's writings associated Courbet with the anarchistic idea of freeing the peasant from his life of drudgery. Thus there was more involved than just taking advantage of bourgeois guilt. The reaction could not help but be negative in Paris, that most bourgeois of cities. Whether Courbet intended the picture to have that message remains in doubt, but there can be little doubt that the picture was perceived as such by the supporters of Courbet, and by the middle class alike.

Seurat was, we must assume, aware of the associations inherent in such subject matter and not incidentally of Courbet's role
in the Commune of 1871. Assuming his awareness of these associations, he has in using the subject annexed Courbet's position to his own mind set. While it is obviously impossible to make categorical statements about Seurat's position (lacking, as we do, hard evidence), it is surely not unreasonable to suggest that Seurat has gone one step further than Courbet in these panels. By depriving these figures of even the little humanity afforded them in Courbet, by making them insistent parts of his imagery, Seurat has shown us their plight intellectually, even more vividly than Courbet did.

As in works by Manet - the old solier in Rue Mosnier decked with Flags - the workers are there, but not there; and yet finally are definitely and disturbingly there. Seurat seems to have been sympathetic to the position of the stonebreakers he saw in Barbizon. The extreme austerity of this sympathy, completely devoid of the cloying sentimentality Millet was sometimes guilty of, has led, however, to the assumption that Seurat was completely objective and unmoved by the world around him.

On the second trip to Barbizon, Seurat also continued the series of panels which depicted workers in the fields - H 58, DR 59, for example - which make reference to Millet's subject matter, while dispensing with the semi-pious overtones which the latter gave to his work. On his return to Paris, Seurat continued working outdoors and executed several landscapes which are remarkable for their lucidity and very close to the impressionists in technique. Soon, however, his work in the "banlieue" turned to more urban subject matter: factories.
Seurat was by no means the first French artist to use factories as subject matter. There are numerous smokestacks creeping into the pastel world of the impressionists. He is, however, the first to deal with factory as factory. There are four panels which centre on factories and that depressing feature of industrial Paris, la Zone: the barren defense areas, devoid of vegetation, which surrounded the factories.

There is a peculiar, austere quality to most of these panels, but particularly striking is H 75, DR 13 (figure 20), a small picture probably executed in late 1882, or very early 1883. The colour is extremely low key, as though everything was soiled. This, of course, is the case; and the painting is a remarkable study of urban (or rather suburban, where city and country meet) desolation. There is no sign of life, no hint of warmth in the work. It is almost as if the horrors of the situation - the smoking factories, the dead landscape, the sharp, brutal buildings - have already succeeded in eradicating that pale inhabitant, the modern industrial worker. Man's own creation has, by implication, destroyed him.

Seurat's interest in the factories once again led him back to the Parisian people: workers before a factory (H 550), launder-dresses (H 648), a street washer (H 561) and isolated, anonymous figures (H 573, H 603). The latter are a part of the disaffected to which Seurat so often returns (H 645, figure 21; H 521). There is also a small panel of urban figures (H 69, DR 59, figure 22), lounging and strolling, seemingly suffering from the most urban of fates: ennui.
This panel has links to the earliest work of Seurat, the haunting panel and drawings of the 'Invalides' (H 12, DR 9, figure 23; H 460, H 459) - the despairing character looking over the parapet of the Seine, contemplating, it seems, suicide.

How are we to assess these works? Generally, it is fair to say that Seurat is sympathetic to the position of the worker and the peasant. We know little of Seurat's politics, indeed he makes no statements of any kind which are political. It is not, however, impossible to suggest his leanings.

Seurat's later friends amongst the neo-impressionists, namely Dubois-Pillet, Signac, Cross, Pissarro, Luce - and amongst critics Alexis, Feneon, and Verhaeren, are to a man socialist. Indeed, Herbert suggests that Pissarro may have joined the neo-impressionists more for their politics than their art.

All of the other neo-impressionists contributed drawings (and Signac money) to a variety of socialist organs, most notably Le Temps Nouveaux. Feneon wrote of Seurat, in a letter to Rewald:

...his literary and artistic friends and those who supported his work in the press belonged to anarchist circles, and if his opinions had differed radically from theirs, the fact would have been remarked.

These attitudes were not only found in the neo-impressionist circle, however. Since the 1840s, when George Sand had espoused socialism, such doctrines had been important in French intellectual life. In French literature, these sentiments are found in the novels of Zola and in Belgian, in the poetry of Verhaeren. In the visual arts, Van Gogh before Seurat had dealt
with the sufferings of miners in Belgium and the peasants of southern France.

Kropotkin, who asks artists to

...show the people the ugliness of contemporary life.

is expressing what many artist had already begun to do.

Seurat's work forms an unmistakable pattern, relating to the political left, and strongly suggesting the need for better treatment of peasant and worker.

Seurat at this period also turns his attention to that other most notable feature of Paris: the river Seine. There are a number of impressionistic essays of the river, including H 74, DR 75 which may be Courbevoie. In these panels of boaters and fishermen, Seurat explores the relationship of men to the river and learns to depict the now sluggish, now sparkling Seine.

In Seurat's post-Barbizon paintings then, there are two unequal strains: a concern for the industrial, factories and workers, and a concern for the Seine. In the spring of 1883 the stage is set for the Baignade.
CHAPTER 2: UNE Baignade a Asnieres
In the late spring of 1883, probably May, Seurat began his most ambitious project so far: the preparations for the painting *Une Baignade à Asnières*. Buoyed no doubt by a modest success at the Salon of that winter, he now began a project of vastly greater scale (the painting is 2 by 3 metres) and complexity than any of his previous pictures. For none of his earlier works are there any drawings or studies. For the *Baignade* there are fifteen oil sketches, and nine drawings. Such preparations would seem to suggest that Seurat conceived of the *Baignade* as a Salon debut from its conception.

Indeed the whole program of its painting up to and including the preparation of a *modello* suggest an approach quite different from the earlier *plein-air*, rapidly executed, panels. Seurat has fallen back on his sound academic training, producing a composition slowly and carefully from a series of studies and drawings, the final painting being entirely a product of the studio.

The *modello* for the work was exhibited in February and March of 1884 at the Cercle des Arts Liberaux. There is no record of any public reaction. The completed work was submitted to the Salon at the end of March. It was rejected and not shown until May 15, when the Salon des Indépendants opened.

The *Baignade* (H 92, DR 98, figure 24) shows us eleven people in, on or by the Seine. Five of the figures sit or lie on the left bank in various states of undress. Two of them, the central figure and that on the extreme left, wear summer clothing. The central figure has left his clothes in a pile beside him. The others on the relatively steep bank remain fully clothed—perhaps taking a brief rest from work. Two small boys are in the water.
near the bank - the nearer perhaps bugling with his hands to an unseen foe; the farther with his back towards us.

The river is placid, and there are a variety of boats on this wide stretch: three small sailboats, a racing shell and three people in a small boat making its way across. The last-mentioned are a woman holding a white parasol; and a top-hatted man - being rowed to the land on the right, by a man in a small boat decorated with a large French flag. The land to the right is the Ile de la Grande Jatte, the site of Seurat's next picture.

In the background is a bridge and a row of factory smokestacks. From the central one, smoke billows upward and off to the left, suggesting a very slight breeze (although we must note that the flag is unfurled).

The colours are light but somewhat chalky, and none are close to full saturation. Most are prismatic, but there are still earth tones, which he was not to dispense with until much later when he adopted a fully impressionist palette at the urging of Signac.

Compositionally, the picture is built around the major diagonal of the shore. This descends from about two-thirds up the left edge to almost the right corner. There is a strong horizontal right across the picture, at about the two-thirds mark of the vertical (i.e. 2:1); there is, finally a strong vertical running through the main figure at about the same proportion (2:1).

As Homer has noted, the paint is applied in a number of different methods: the grass and trees being executed in rough criss-cross or balaye strokes, the water in long thin, parallel strokes of slightly differing tone, the sky in a fairly rough scumbling.
of the paint. Although there is this variety of stroker, all these sections have a lightness, almost a sparkle to them. The figures are, however, painted in a more traditional, more finished manner. This difference in technique has the effect of making the figures much more solid, physically heavier. These dense, earth-bound creatures seem out of place in this almost weightless world.

This heaviness is echoed in the quality of the light in the picture. Unlike impressionist images of similar scenes, Renoir's Luncheon of the Boating Party for example, there is a dullness, a haze, over all in the Seurat. Rather than being light and en-vigorating, the atmosphere is heavy and oppressive. The breeze is virtually nonexistant, the heat is blistering and the river sluggish. Rey\(^5\) characterized the work as being of a classical calm. Torpor would seem to be a more accurate description. The figures are listless and weary, they have none of the vivacity and *joie de vivre* which is such an important part of the riverine compositions of the impressionists. This is something clearly different from an impressionist picture. These figures are not happy and are not enjoying a pleasant afternoon on the riverbank.

As we have previously mentioned, there are several studies for the *Baignade*, and it is therefore possible to establish a sequence for the studies and trace the evolution of Seurat's conception.\(^6\)

The first sketch is probably that known as *Les Deux Rives* (H 79, DR 84, figure 25), now in Glasgow. In it, Nicholson suggests,\(^7\) Seurat seems to remain reasonably faithful to the topography
of the area. In the background is the Asnieres bridge and some smokestacks. The left bank of the Seine is more irregular, and not as high as in the final work. The panel is also devoid of any hint of life.

The position of the next sketch, *Le Pont de Courbevoie (Asnières?)* (figure 26), in the evolution of the picture is problematic. Unlisted in de Hauke, it is catalogued at number 84 bis in Dorra-Rewald, and yet there is no evidence to suggest that they are connected in any way. The panel is, however, of some significance, establishing as it does a number of the final features of the painting. The importance of the left bank, although ill-defined here, is asserted by the mass at the left of the panel. The smoking stack is introduced in virtually the same horizontal position as in the final work. The horizontal thrust of the bridge is asserted. Finally, two boats are introduced: a small sailboat to the right and, more importantly, the small rowboat with the three people—two customers, a woman with a parasol, and a man in a top hat, transported by a boatman. Finally, it represents an experiment in collapsing the picture space, thus clarifying the background in a way not found in the earlier sketch. This proximity to the bridge is rejected in the final work, but Seurat does maintain the greater clarity introduced here.

The introduction of people into the landscape seems to have been a two-fold process. There exist a number of sketches which clearly seem to have been executed *en plein-air* and yet a greater number which were probably executed in the studio.

*La Seine à Asnières* (H 83, DR 85, figure 27) brings us much closer to the bridge, raises our point of view and introduces
three (possible four) people; two (or three, the third being the object on the left edge) on the shore, and a figure in the river. Just above the figure in the water is a low boat, possibly one of the type introduced in the preceding sketch. Generally, this composition is unsatisfactory; and Seurat soon abandons it for a more clearly defined bank area, as well as a deeper space which allows the retention of a strip of the Grande Jatte. As is now evident, Seurat takes considerable liberties with the form of the riverbank and the shape of the space-box.

The next sketch seems likely to have been painted out of doors, but it is probably the last one Seurat painted *en plein-air*. The sketch *Chevaux dans Le Fleuve* (H 86, DR 88, figure 28) retains several of the features introduced in the second sketch: the strong horizontal of the bridge, the relatively shallow space, the high left bank, and the two boats on the river (the positions have, however, been altered and the rowboat is awkwardly depicted head-on). Into the foreground he has introduced a black horse, being washed, and a white horse, with a man astride it. Nicholson\(^9\) suggests that Seurat's placement of horses in the river is fantasy. It appears, on the contrary, that this practice was quite common during the period. One author reports seeing horses being washed in the Seine, and reproduces a drawing of the subject by Jacomb Hood.\(^10\)

The horses in the river seem to have interested Seurat sufficiently for them to have been retained in the next sketch, *Cheval et Bateaux* (H 85, DR 87, figure 29). This work, which might be called an omnibus of his ideas to date, was evidently not executed
out of doors, but in the studio. While retaining the high left bank and the horizontal of the bridge, a number of major changes have occurred. There are now three figures seated on the riverbank, the one on the left perhaps an initial study for the left figure of the final picture. The horse has been moved to the middleground separate from the figure in the water who, now turning his back to us, occupies a position similar to that in the final version. There are now three boats on the river: two of the small rowboats - one midstream with one passenger and carrying a tricolour, the other with three passengers - and the last, a small and distant sailboat. The viewpoint in this panel is higher, cutting off the sky and La Grande Jatte to the right. The overall effect is cluttered and untidy; there is no easy movement into the panel. The eye is tripped up on too many snags and unnecessary bits of business.

Seurat's next sketch seeks to remedy some of these problems. Baigneurs (H 87, DR 86, figure 30), while retaining the three figures seated on the bank, reorganizes them; thus making the figure in white the most important. There are now three figures in the water, two standing and one swimming. A horse remains in the picture, but is now pushed into the lower right corner - unfortunately seeming to be, as it no doubt was, an after-thought.

The area occupied by the Grande Jatte has been expanded by a shift to the right, thus reducing the importance of the bridge and factories in the background. The jumble of boats in the river has been thinned, leaving only a single sailboat. The water is treated here in a fashion which is rougher but technically similar to that
in the picture itself - long, thin, approximately parallel strokes of colour.

This sketch seems to be an experiment with a set of building blocks, consequently it is rough and jarring. There has been little attempt to smooth any rough spots.

In what is likely the next sketch, *L'Arc-en-Ciel* (H 89, DR 92, figure 31), Seurat establishes the shape of the leftbank, which up to this point has been amorphous. The forward point, the cove in the mid-ground, the second point and the strong but gentle diagonal undergo little alteration. The proportions of the background are established in a form which is essentially unchanged in the *Baignade* itself. The tip of the Ile de La Grande Jatte is at the right; the long stretch of the Pont d'Asnières, with a row of smokestacks behind it, is in the centre. As in the final work, from the central stack a cloud of smoke billows upward.

At the left side, Seurat has re-introduced the small group of houses and trees seen in the first sketch. This placement of equal weights at either end of the span of the bridge seems to have been essential in the dynamics of the composition. Although Seurat experimented with a composition without this system of balance, he inevitably returned to this scheme, which is first broached in the *Deux Rives* sketch. The composition requires a sense of stasis, of calm, and this is achieved by confirming the major horizontal thrust.

There are three figures sitting on the bank, but as Nicholson suggests, Seurat seems to have felt that only the figure on the left was worth developing further.
The most extraordinary part of this panel is, however, the rainbow. This delicate arch seems ill-suited to these staid and silent figures. There is no hint of rain (present or recent) in this or any of the other panels. In all of them the sun is shining, so as to create a bright, if hazy, illumination. It would therefore appear that Seurat included the rainbow in this panel for other than naturalistic reasons. We must ask why Seurat might have included the rainbow in this image.

In attempting to determine Seurat's motive it is worth examining the effect of the rainbow of the tone of the panel. Traditionally, the rainbow has been used as a symbol of hope, and it seems not unlikely that it performs a similar function here. There is little movement in the panel, the figures are very solidly planted on the ground, the colours are light but of low intensity. In the background, smoke rises from the stack. None of the figures communicate in any way, and it is only through the river that any sense of summer and its sparkle is relayed. The rainbow, however, adds an element of life and hope. Our negative reactions are stayed; something is about to change, the monotony of the situation may be relieved.

The optimistic note expressed in the *Arc-en-Ciel* panel soon vanishes. The panel *Personnage Assis* (H 80, DR 93, figure 32) eliminates the rainbow; further, the space between foreground and background is abridged. We and the lone figure are closer than ever to the fact of the industrial background. The shape of the bank is preserved, however; as is the balance established between the two landforms on either end of the bridge.
The figure is pushed right up to the picture plane so as to almost spill into our space. This man, incongruously dressed in a dark jacket and bowler hat, is perhaps a reference to or a preliminary idea for the farther of the two crouched figures in the completed work. He is clearly not enjoying himself. Although almost forced into our space, he remains insular. Why he is here, and whether he should be, are left in doubt. The effect of his presence is to dampen and dull the image. It gives to an otherwise pleasant landscape a decidedly negative tone.

Seurat seems to have had some difficulty in deciding on poses and number of figures, as is evident in the works we have looked at so far. The sketch *Cinq Personnages Males* (H 82, DR 94, figure 33) represents an attempt to sort out some of these difficulties. None of the figures are given any real context, save that they are sitting, standing, or lying down. The penultimate figure on the right seems to be a variation on the figure in the sketch just discussed - slightly less formal (he is now without any outer jacket) although hardly cheerier. In the background, two figures stand in the water - one nude and one clothed - both apparently staring at some distant object.

While the nude figure seems to be quite successful, Seurat apparently found both figures uncongenial and utilized neither.

The most interesting aspects of this panel are the two remaining figures, on the extreme right and on the extreme left. The figure on the right is a preliminary version of what is to become the main figure. In this first version the figure, while incomplete, is already sitting with his hands in the same position as in the final work, his shoulders slightly hunched over.
His head, however, is completely lost to us; there is no hint of facial expression. The final figure in this panel is remarkably close to the pose of the figure in the same position (i.e. the lower left corner) in the final work. Even the details of costume, hat and long white overcoat, remain largely unchanged in the final work.

It is difficult to ascertain if Vêtements (H 81, DR 89, figure 34) fits into the sequence of sketches at this point, the picture's evolution being somewhat puzzling in any case. Perhaps Seurat had seen a pile of discarded clothes when originally sketching out of doors. He seems to have liked the idea of a pile of clothing for use in defining the space, or perhaps as a way of referring to Manet's Déjeuner sur l'herbe. The most interesting element of the panel is however, the treatment of the water, for here it is most clearly like that of the final work. Long thin strokes of slightly differing colour give the work a form of sparkle or glisten. The second, and more remarkable, point about the depiction of the water is the presence of a green patch floating on it. This would seem to be a patch of weed or algae, something which is found in about the same position in the Baignade itself.

The premise for the sketch is, however, the discarded pile of clothes. Here it is ill-defined; and in the next sketch, Vêtements et Chapeau (H 90, DR 90, figure 35), Seurat further examines the problem. In this sketch a hat, trousers and shirt clearly emerge where, in the previous sketch, there was an indecipherable jumble. This more clearly defined group is used in the final work.
This sketch, even more decisively than the last, concentrates on the form on the river bank. Seurat here explores the use of the lighter-coloured rift as a device to define space. The background is brought considerably closer than Seurat has had it for some time, placing more emphasis on the bridge and the smoking stacks behind it.

A clear indication of Seurat's lack of experience in dealing with a compositional problem this complex is found in the next sketch. *Jeunes Garcons et Cheval* (H 88, DR 95, figure 36), because of the shape of the shoreline must closely relate to the sketch just discussed. The work reintroduces figures, including a young man washing a horse. Seurat seems, however, to have found the idea of the horse in the water unrewarding, and with this sketch discards it; although he does not abandon the idea of figures in the water. The background has retreated into the distance once more, although in doing this Seurat has created another difficulty: resolving the transition from middle to background. Here, this transition does not really exist, being abrupt in the extreme. In the background, we see the emphasis on the bridge and the smoking stacks retained; only here it is more insistent than anything to this point.

Seurat has placed two figures on the shore: in the foreground a crouched figure, and in the middleground a reclining figure. The reclining figure is utilized in the same pose in the background of the final composition.

The major figure in this sketch is a refinement on figures in the sixth and seventh *croqueton*. Seurat, however, in refining
and clarifying the figure, turns to a much earlier drawing from the Brest notebook (H 370, figure 37). Unlike the drawing, however, this figure is much more upright and alert. He stares off across the river at an unseen source of interest.

The next sketch, Garçons se Baignant (H 84, DR 91, figure 38), reintroduces bathers, with two figures in the water. In the foreground, the discarded pile of clothing is used once more, now introducing a pair of boots. On the second point of the bank, a new figure is introduced. This man, dressed in white, is used in the final work in approximately the same position; although Seurat there expands the foreground, thus thrusting the second point further back into space.

The next croqueton, Baigneur Assis (H 91, DR 96, figure 39), is of major importance. For the first time, the two primary figures appear in relation to each other, in positions close to the final version. The left figure is virtually unaltered from the twelfth sketch. The major figure first seen in the ninth sketch has been placed on the edge of the bank, his legs dangling in the water. The pile of discarded clothing is placed behind him establishing a role for this device within the larger context of the composition. The main figure is defined somewhat more clearly, Seurat having now given us a profile view. Slightly hunched, he stares out over the water.

On the right, the Grande Jatte has again emerged, thus delimiting the bridge and factories. The form of the long factory buildings is defined for the first time in these studies, as are the buildings at the right. The number of smokestacks (eight)
is determined and the central stack is established as the one which will spew out its black fumes.

In the river which in this, the penultimate oil sketch, is treated very closely to the technique of the final work, we again see a floating mass of green vegetation.

As may be clearly seen, Seurat's compositional method was, at least at this point in his career, somewhat disorganized. It was perhaps late in 1883 or January 1884 when Seurat re-examined the sketches he had made so far, and attempted to consolidate this variety of ideas into a workable format. This resulted in the *Etude Finale* (H 93, DR 97, figure 40).

The composition laid out in the sketch we have just discussed is retained with two subtle and important shifts: more space is added at the right, thus increasing the portion of La Grand Jatte visible; and more space is added to the foreground, thus pushing the two figures in the previous sketch away from the picture plane.

On the shore, there are now four figures and a dog: the major central figure; the reclining man, his back to us and his dog at the lower left. In the middleground there is the crouched figure, who now wears the straw hat found in the final work; and on the second point of land, the figure dressed in white seen in the thirteenth sketch.

The two piles of clothing sketched earlier are placed in a convincing manner - that of the eleventh sketch to the far left, and that of the tenth and fourteenth sketches beside the main figure, now with the addition of his straw hat.

In the water, there are three figures, two of which are to remain: the small boy in the red hat hallooing, and the more
distant figure looking back over his shoulder. The third, at the far right, is eliminated by Seurat in the final version, in favour of a sculler.

On the river, which is quite roughly painted, are two sailboats and once again there is a patch of green floating in the water, just above the second bather.

In this synthesis, Seurat makes one very subtle but important change, of a type not suggested by the additive and selective processes we have just been describing: he reduces the intensity of the colour. By this reduction of colour, he alters and cools our reactions, reduces our pleasure in the image.

The work is rough, however, even at this point; there remain a number of points with which Seurat was obviously unsatisfied. Once he had the basic composition, he sought to refine the poses of several figures. To do so he turned to drawings.

There are nine, possibly ten, drawings for the Baignade. They are all sublime variations and refinements of ideas united in the final study. The drawings can be broken down as follows: one drawing of the boy hallooing (H 591, DR 97a); one drawing of the other bather (H 596, DR 97c); a drawing of the main figure (H 598, DR 97b); two drawings of the crouched figure (H 594, DR 97d and H 595); three drawings of the reclining man (H 589, DR 97h; H 590, DR 97g and H 591, DR 97f); and finally, a drawing of the pile of clothes by the main figure (H 593, DR 97e).

All of the drawings were executed in the studio, and all employ the technique of his mature style, conte on Michallet Ingres paper.
The first drawing, *Echo* (figure 41), acts as the vehicle for refining the very rough indication of the figure in the final study. Seurat uses the drawing to define points of emphasis, primarily the cheek and hand, in the final painting. The drawing also serves to bring the figure more sharply into focus, a focus which is not found in the study.

The second drawing defines for the first time the pose of the second bather. *Garçon de Dos* (figure 42) shows us, in virtually complete detail, the figure as it appears in the picture. The shaded face turned back towards the viewer, the strongly lit back and the slight hunch of the shoulders are all used in the final version. There is here, perhaps, a reference to Ingres' *Bather of Valpincon*, in which the figure adopts a similar pose.

The drawing is also an interesting document of the working method the artist used. A model was hired and drawn in the studio - here we can see an easel and a window in the background. This careful study is in marked contrast to an impressionist approach to similar subject matter, and recalls the vigorous approach of Seurat's student years.

The study of the central figure (figure 43) is particularly interesting for two reasons: the use of the nude model, and the subtle shifts in the light and pose of the figure.

The use of the nude is in the best tradition of Seurat's training. This careful study of the model allows Seurat to get at the essence of the figure's structure, and depict him with the sense of solidity required in the final work.

Seurat keeps us at about the same distance as in the final sketch, but brings the whole into much greater focus, and defines
the light-fall for the final work. Seurat's drawings are often, paradoxically, more colouristic than his paintings; and this work is no exception. We get a remarkably rich range of tone in the figure, from the highlights, on the shoulders, arm and leg, to the half-shadow on the back and, more importantly, the face.

The face in shadow, in combination with the pose, serves to define the tone of the image. Here the head is lower, the shoulders more hunched and the chest more caved-in than in any of the sketches. There is an unmistakably gloomy, depressed feeling to the figure. His introspection and melancholic pose do not speak of a happy individual.

The first of two drawings for the crouched figure (figure 44) again clarifies and focuses the figure, to a greater degree than exists in the final croqueton. Here this involves changes in costume and pose, and a definition of the light-fall. The drawing eliminates the figure's dark shirt or vest, and substitutes a light one. In addition, the legs of his trousers are rolled up. In terms of pose, like the last figure discussed, the drawing hunches the shoulders a little more and lowers the head. While defining the face more by sharpening the profile, Seurat deepens the shadows upon it; thus making the figure more removed from the viewer. The light-fall established in the drawing is essentially that of the final work; this is especially true of the highlights on the arms and hat, which serve to thrust the face deeply into shadow.

The second drawing associated with this figure is Jambe (figure 45). In this drawing, Seurat studies the volumes of the
figure's legs, in addition to further clarifying the fall of light and shadow. Although not a major drawing, this work displays an exquisite sense of control, and is a superb rendering of three dimensions through the use of light and shadow.

The first of the drawings which relate to the reclining man (figure 46) removes us slightly from the figure. We are given more information about him, in that Seurat has decided to include the whole figure. Seurat has also lengthened the figure's white jacket, indicating that he is a butcher or some similar shopkeeper.

The other two drawings concentrate on the head and shoulders of the figure. The first of these (figure 47) shows us a closer view of the figure's head, and depicts his overcoat as being wrinkled and animated by shadow. His facial features begin to emerge from the heavy shadow of the previous drawing.

Although the pose and form of the figure are more clearly defined in the drawing just mentioned, Seurat was still unsatisfied. In the third drawing (figure 48), the figure is brought much closer to its final form. The figure's facial features are better delineated - the large ear, the dark patch of the eye and nose; and the head is turned slightly more towards us. Seurat has also smoothed out the cloth of the figure's coat, transforming it into the hard shell of the final picture.

The final drawing (figure 49) is a study of the clothing of the central figure. Here Seurat refines the form of the pile, isolates the boots and positions the hat more carefully.

With the data provided by these drawings and the final sketch, Seurat now begins the picture itself.
There are several changes which occur between the final sketch and the completed painting. On the bank everything is moved slightly to the right, so as not to interfere with the left edge of the picture. The figure crouched on the second point of land is now joined by a reclining man, who is not in the final sketch but appears in the twelfth study.

The reclining man in the foreground is moved slightly into the space, as he is in the drawing; and his dog is clearly elaborated.

The central boy/man is moved slightly deeper into the space of the picture - clearly separating him, and his pile of clothing, from everyone else in the picture. Seurat retains the greater hunching of the shoulders found in the drawing, as well as the shaded face. His pile of clothes is further elaborated, and the upturned hat and the boots are amplified in detail.

The crouched figure on the near point is very similar to the drawing, save here he is provided with an orange sash around his waist.

The young boy hallooing is very similar to the drawing, the major change being the cap which is now more closely fitting. The other bather is pushed further back in space, to appear in conjunction with the patch of green floating in the water.

On the river, a number of changes have occurred. On the left side another sailboat has been added, and on the right, a shell. The most important change, however, is the reintroduction of the small rowboat of the second and fifth sketches, with its load of passengers and a boatman.
The background is much the same as that in the final sketch, except that here it is clarified by a greater focus.

Technically, Seurat introduces a number of new things not found in the sketches. Firstly, he has used a variety of different techniques in applying the paint; whereas formerly, in the sketches, a fairly uniform technique had been used. For the grass, and most of the foliage, Seurat used a rough criss-cross stroke; for the water, the paint is applied in quite long parallel strokes (this is especially true near the small ferry); however, for the people and the background of the bridge and factories, Seurat employed a much smoother, pastier stroke which has the effect of solidifying and weighing down the figures.

The other major technical change is his use of value contrast; through the use of auras, he solidifies and monumentalizes the figures. This technique, visible in some of the drawings (notably figure 43 and figure 45), places a dark contour against a light ground, and vice versa. This creates a hard, block-like figure, which is not mitigated by the application of reflected tone.

We are presented with seven figures on, or in the water beside, the left bank of the Seine. On the water are five boats, three sailboats and two propelled by hand - one, to the extreme right, apparently a racing shell, the other apparently a small commercial ferry. In the background, there is a bridge, and some factories and a row of smokestacks, one of which sends a cloud of smoke spewing upwards.

The sun is shining, the wind is blowing faintly, the water is calm, everything is as it should be. And yet, there is none
of the joy so readily found in similar impressionist pictures. As Russell has noted, if one was to look for the spot from which Seurat painted, even in Seurat's day it would have been impossible to find. Seurat took considerable liberties with the landscape, altering it beyond recognition. Yet, he did not simply call the picture *Une Baignade*, but *Une Baignade à Asnières*, thus giving the work a specific geographic location.

Asnières, to the north and west of Paris, was in Seurat's day a relatively small (population about 7,000) manufacturing town, being particularly noted for perfumes and toiletries, and later some light manufactured goods. The town was mixed residential and industrial, and although blessed with a chateau, was decidedly lower class. It was and is a town of no remarkable attributes.

Traditionally (and by Seurat's day this was well established), Asnières was an area used by Parisians for recreation. The river here was fairly wide and quite slow, making it ideal for rowing, canoeing, and, when the breeze allowed it, sailing. The popularity of the area for this purpose is clearly indicated by the four pleasure craft on the water.

Asnières is downstream from Paris, and in the 1850s Baron Haussman used Asnières as the main outflow of the Parisian sewers. The 1900 Baedeker guide to Paris specifically comments on the "foul liquor" of the "great Parisian sewers."

Therefore a new light is cast upon the picture; the water in which our bathers stand is polluted and no doubt smells it. It is thus no surprise to find this cast of characters so glum.
The patch of green in the water is now easily explained as a patch of weeds, which, no doubt, thrived in the nutrient-rich water.

Virtually the entire cast of figures looks towards the Île de La Grande Jatte, which was then becoming a fashionable pleasure ground. This is where the fashionably dressed couple in the ferry are being conveyed - a world from which all on the bank are cut off.

This realization must cause us to once again examine the picture. It has already been suggested that there is an immense heaviness to the figures, but this is especially true of the crucial central figure. In the final picture Seurat has used two devices to give further emphasis to this feeling. A strong vertical is established through the figure, and it intersects at the top of the figure's head with the dominant horizontal - the line of the bridge and factories. The figure is rigidly locked into position; he seems incapable of movement. And in the background, factories where men such as these work, send up a cloud of smoke.

Russel is surely right when he suggests that the Baignade is

...a profound comment upon modern industrial society.

Seurat deals with working people and their lot. When they are able to take some recreation, it is by a smelly, weed-infested, polluted river; and the air they breathe is polluted as well.

Far from Russell's democratized Arcadia, Seurat here depicts a profoundly unhappy and unpleasant scene.

The formal relationships between the Baignade and Puvis' The Happy Land also take on a new light. Seurat, by utilizing the
composition and colour of Puvis' work, makes an ironic comparison between the idyll of Puvis' art and the realities of modern industrial society.

When Seurat submitted this work to the Salon, it was rejected. The reasons for this rejection can now perhaps be suggested. In the Baignade, Seurat deals with the working class and relates them to a specific location. It is, however, a group of unhappy, depressed workers in what Parisians knew to be an unpleasant location. The viewer is thus forced to consider the worker's lot; and this, for a bourgeois Parisian, was not a pleasant or desirable pastime.

The conclusion, that Seurat intended to evoke such associations, is suggested by the image itself, but also by the pattern he established in his pre-Baignade work. Seurat, it now seems evident, was very much interested in the plight of the worker. This surely is why, when his friends Aman-Jean and Ernest Laurent were preparing respectively, a Portrait of a Woman and a Hommage à Beethoven, Seurat chose a contemporary working class subject for the Salon. Finally, it is surely not unreasonable to suggest that the subject matter of Seurat's work, in addition to the use of colour, was of interest to Signac when the two met in 1884.

Rey was correct when he characterized the Baignade as being far from the spirit of impressionism. Just how far would have been impossible for him to imagine.
CONCLUSION
The history of the socialist movement in nineteenth century France is one of immense complications. This is largely due to the fact that it was some time before any single group gained ascendancy. It becomes even more confusing when one attempts to relate it to the literary and visual arts - firstly, because few artists were willing to produce overtly propagandistic works, and secondly, because several artists were extremely changeable when it came to political persuasion.

Marx never achieved a pre-eminent position in French socialist circles. There was a good deal of competition in the followers of Saint-Simon, Proudhon and later the anarchist, Kropotkin. Yet, despite this variety of choices and allegiances, there was, by Seurat's time, a distinct tradition of artists and writers attacking the status quo and its supporters, the bourgeoisie.

It is in mid-century that we find the first signs of socially conscious painting, when it makes a dramatic appearance in Paris; specifically in Gustave Courbet's Stonebreakers and The Burial at Ornans. The nature of Courbet's political beliefs remains controversial, but, whatever they may have in fact been, Proudhon and more importantly, the public, perceived Courbet as a representative of radical political views.

While Courbet's paintings are still, in Goldman's terms, "anecdotal", the anecdotes they relate are not palatable. Courbet's desire to make a "living art", and his conscious abandonment of "the idealized", provided critics and viewers with all the data required. Supporters and critics "sensed" the latent critical content.
The introduction of the truly humble - the peasant as he was - led to extremely adverse reaction on the part of conservative audiences. Courbet's peasants are ugly and brutal; it was this coarseness which offended the bourgeoisie.

The use of such subject matter (peasants and manual labourers) soon became firmly identified with radical political sentiments in the minds of the public. This was to cause the other great painter of peasants and peasant themes a good deal of distress; for Millet, unlike Courbet, never considered himself or wanted to be considered a socialist. Despite Millet's disclaimers, works such as The Man Leaning on a Hoe, which "seemed to admit that the human is not always vastly superior to the animal," aroused "in some minds a whole world of political and social problems." Yet, as Robert Herbert has noted, Millet must have been aware of the manner in which his work was going to be interpreted; and therefore we must, as his contemporaries did, believe him sympathetic to the socialist ideal of a more egalitarian society.

In literature there was a similar current, although as Herbert has pointed out, it has a strongly romantic tone. George Sand declared herself a socialist, and wrote of the plight of the peasant. Gautier was reminded of Sand's Mare au Diable when he saw Millet's Sower. Victor Hugo was strongly sympathetic to the plight of the worker, and documents the lives of workers in Les Misérables.

The overt social concern of Courbet, which culminated in his active role in the Commune and subsequent exile, was not found in the next generation. The "modern life" of Baudelaire did not include any recognition of the plight of the worker. The impression-
ists devoted themselves not to peasants and the country, but rather to the bourgeoisie and the city.

Although recent research has proven unsuspected social interest in Manet, the majority of the "generation of 1871" was amazingly nonpartisan. The notable exception to the lack of political and social conviction is Pissarro, and yet his art gives little reflection of the radical views he is known to have held.

The period was not, however, without considerable "radical" political activity. In the early 1870s, anarchists began attempting to form unions, encouraging the working classes to utilize their power of numbers. Worker's Congresses were established in an attempt to consolidate power, and better the working man's lot. This was to lead to five socialist deputies being elected in 1885.

While there was little recognition of these social changes in the visual arts, in literature there was an attempt to document the lives of the lower classes. The naturalist writers, beginning with the Goncourts and most significantly Zola, examined unsparingly the life of the city and the lower classes.

Zola and, by implication, the other naturalists recorded in a scientific manner untinged by moral overtones. Therefore in the novels of the Goncourts, the life of a prostitute is recorded without the sense of moral outrage felt by the middleclasses. In the visual arts, Courbet's Demoiselles au bord de la Seine, which was equally vilified, provides an interesting counterpoint.

Seurat is known to have been fond of the work of several authors: the Goncourts, Huysmans, Zola and Sand. These, and Hugo, all share the quality of being anti-bourgeois, although not
equally for the worker. The Goncourts confined themselves to accurate, and thus unpalatable, reportage of the lives of the déclassé.

J. K. Huysmans expressed a common sentiment in *Au Rebours* when the chief character, the Duke des Esseintes, shouts "a bas les Bourgeois." The character is decadent simply because Huysmans wished to point out, and thus contravene and escape from, the restricting conventions of middleclass society. Huysmans also dealt with the harsher realities, however, and as Herbert has suggested, Seurat's drawings might easily be seen as illustrations of Huysman's prose which so vividly describes the squalor of the industrial suburbs...

From the ramparts one sees the marvelous and terrible view of the plains which lie exhausted at the feet of the city.

On the horizon, against the sky, tall brick chimneys vomit into the clouds their boiling soot...

A great silence covers the plain, since the rumbling of Paris has quieted little by little and the noise of the factories in the distance arrives only hesitantly. At times, however, one hears like a horrible groan the muffled and harsh whistle of the trains from the Gare du Nord which pass, hidden by the embankments planted in acacia and ash trees...

Towards dusk, in these moments when the smoky clouds roll over the dying day, the landscape becomes indefinite and still more sad; the factories show only blurred outlines, inky masses sopped up by a livid sky; the women and children have gone home, the plain seems even larger and, alone, along the dusty path, the beggar...returns to shelter, sweating, exhausted, down-and-out, painfully mounting the slope, sucking on his long empty clay pipe...

And it is especially then that the doleful charm of the suburbs has its effect; it is essentially then that the all-powerful beauty of nature glows, because the site is in perfect harmony with the profound distress of the families who people it.
Huysmans wrote in these terms only two years before Seurat began drawing and painting similar subjects.

There was thus a movement towards greater social consciousness in French literary circles. Although not overtly propagandistic, the writers mentioned so far do deal with modern subject matter in a socially-conscious fashion. The realm of the artist is no longer distinct from modern life, but rather comments upon and elucidates it.

It is, however, in the work of Emile Zola and his circle that we find the clearest expression of a new social awareness on the part of the artist.

As early as 1880, Zola had expressed doubts as to the direction, or rather lack of direction, of the impressionists. When asked by Monet and Renoir to speak up for them, Zola responded with less than the vigour the artists expected. He regretted

...that not one artist of this group /the impressionists/ has realized powerfully and definitively the new formula...they show themselves to be unfinished, illogical, exaggerated, impotent.

The formula of which he speaks is "contemporary naturalism." The probable reason for Zola's lack of enthusiasm is, perhaps paradoxically, revealed in a letter Camille Pissarro wrote to his son in 1883, concerning contemporary literature:

...it is clear that from now on the novel must be critical; sentiment, or rather sentimentality, cannot be tolerated without danger in a rotten society ready to fall apart.

Surely it is this lack of criticism that Zola regrets. The impressionists dealt with contemporary life, but only its pleasant
aspects.

It was not until 1885, however, that Zola wrote further of his formula. He expressed his ideas through the character Claude Lantier, the protagonist of the novel *L’OEuvre*.

After some years away from Paris, Lantier returns to find that several painters have become successful using his ideas, his formula. Lantier determines that he must better all his imitators.

And what a stroke it would be if, in the midst of all those unconscious copies by the impotent, in the midst of those fearful sly attempts by the clever fellows a master was revealed, carrying the formula into effect with the audacity of his strength, sparing no one, setting the formula afoot as it should be set up, solid and complete to be the truth of this close of the century.\(^24\)

The subject matter which Lantier chooses to accomplish this with is Paris and the city's inhabitants:

Look, this is it. I stand under the bridge, with the Port Saint-Nicolas, the crane and the barges with all the porters busy unloading them, in the foreground, see? That's Paris at work, understand: hefty labourers, with bare arms and chests and plenty of muscle!...Now on the other side, there's the swimming-bath, Paris at play this time. There'll be an odd boat or something there, to fill the centre, but I'm not too sure about that. I shall have to work it out a bit first...There'll be the Seine, of course, between the two, a good broad stretch...\(^26\)

It seems fairly clear that, although he denies Lantier's project fruition in the novel, Zola feels that a painter must deal with life in all its aspects, both good and bad.
The year 1885 was a watershed for the expression of this idea. Although not naturalists of Zola's circle, Henri Beauclaire and Gabriel Vicaire, in their sensational Les Deliquescences, express remarkably similar ideas for and about modern poetry. The imaginary author Adoré Floupette writes in the preface to the work that he dreams of creating

...a great modern poem in which the naturalistic evolution of the century would be summed up in a few hundred lines. A washer-woman's barge, a railway station, a hospital interior, a slaughterhouse, a horsemeat butcher, all today's poetry was there and there alone.27

A more decidedly political view was expressed by Kropotkin in Paroles d'un Révolté, also published in 1885.

Narrate for us...in your fervent pictures the titanic struggle of the masses against their oppressors;...show people the ugliness of contemporary life and make us see the causes of this ugliness.28

There was, as we have tried to suggest, a strong anarchist-socialist thread in French thought of the early eighteen-eighties; Seurat seems to have been keenly aware of this as it was developing. By the mid-eighties, Seurat developed strong connections with Zola's circle. He became friends with Paul Alexis and attended the salons of Robert Caze.29 It seems fair to suggest that Seurat was therefore aware of Zola's views in the early 1880s.

As we have tried to suggest, there was a current in French artistic circles which advocated a more socially conscious art. Although perhaps more prevalent in literature, the trends which we have mentioned did appear in the visual arts in the late 1870s
and early 1880s. As Herbert has suggested, Rafaelli was dealing with the "banlieue" in the late 1870s; and van Gogh's drawings of miners in the Borinage indicate a profound sympathy for these workers. In addition to these French artists, in Belgium the sculptor Constantin Meunier was immortalizing iron workers in large-scale bronze sculpture.

Within what was to become the neo-impressionist circle, there was a strongly political bent. Luce, Signac and Pissarro subscribed and contributed to *Le Révolté* (and its subsequent publications *La Révolte* and *Le Temps Nouveaux*). Luce and Pissarro also provided illustrations for the colloquial publication *Père Peinard*.

Signac, Seurat's greatest friend, wrote to Jean Grave, the editor of *Le Révolté*, that he was

...nurtured on your principles, on those of Reclus and Kropotkin - for it is you who have formed me.  

It is surely not unreasonable to suggest a similar political consciousness on Seurat's part.

If we grant that the analysis of the *Baignade* presented here is valid, then Seurat's later work must be considered in a new light. Seurat's next major painting, *Une Dimanche après-midi à L'Ile de la Grande Jatte* can be a revealing case study.

There are a remarkable series of parallels, and/or points of conjunction, between the *Baignade* and *La Grande Jatte* (figure 50).

Yet, while there are differences, there are also direct links between them. The little ferry, which appears in midstream
in the *Baignade*, also appears in the later work - about three-quarters of the way along the shore of the island. It is surely the same type of boat, with the tricolour at the stern. Secondly, in both works there is a racing shell.

It seems possible that the two works are to be viewed as a pair, the one showing the poorest of pleasures - a solemn, unhappy group of individuals against an industrial backdrop; the other a happy, pleasant group in a park. The characters of the *Grande Jatte* relate to each other in a way which is unthinkable in the *Baignade*.

The two paintings complement and comment on each other. How, we may well ask, can the workers of Asnières enjoy themselves on their parched strip of grass, when a short distance away are the pleasures of La Grande Jatte? Yet it is not so simple if, as Schapiro suggests, the most prominent female figure is a whore. The gentility is a facade and therefore both works are further linked in their condemnation of the middleclass.

In 1891, only two months after Seurat's death, Signac wrote that the "revolutionary" art of the neo-impressionists showed the "great social trial pitting the workers against capital."

He cited the innovation of depicting workers and working class quarters, as well as the portrayal of the decadent pleasures of the bourgeoisie.

As a prime example of a revolutionary artist he chose Seurat, who, through his use of biting satire, expressed his...
Thus, far from being "foolish to read into his Seurat's painting The Baignade a social or political programme", this is the only reasonable way to read Seurat. While very concerned with formal problems, Seurat, like his great mentor Piero, painted works which mean.
FIGURES
Figure 1. Satyr and Goat, c. 1878, conte, 63.5 x 48.2 cm., Paris: private collection.
Figure 2. *Studies (Brest Notebook)*, 1880, pencil, 15 x 24 cm., Callian: Georg Collection.
Figure 3. Manet. Coin des Jardins des Tuileries, c. 1862, wash, 17.8 x 11.2 cm., Paris: Musée du Louvre.
Figure 4. Manet. Rue Mosnier au bec-de-gaz, 1878, lead and wash, 27.8 x 44.1 cm., Chicago: Art Institute.
Figure 5. Manet. *The Balloon*, 1862, lithograph, 40.3 x 51.1 cm., Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.
Figure 6. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880, pencil and crayon, 15 x 24 cm.
Figure 7. *Studies* (Brest Notebook), 1880, pencil, 15 x 24 cm., Besancon: Besson Collection.
Figure 8. **Factories in Moonlight**, c. 1883, conte, 22 x 29 cm., New York: Tarnopol Collection.
Figure 9. The Railway Embankment, c. 1883, conte, 23 x 30.5 cm.
Figure 10. *Homme Assis*, c. 1883, conte, 32 x 25 cm.
Figure 11. Mme. Seurat Reading, c. 1883, conte, New York: Lewyt Collection.
Figure 12. Hommage à Puvis, 1881, oil on panel, 16.5 x 25.5 cm., Paris: Beres Collection.
Figure 13. Puvis de Chavannes. *The Poor Fisherman*, 1880-1, oil on canvas, 155.5 x 192.5 cm., Paris: Musée de Louvre.
Figure 14. Hoer, c. 1883, oil on panel, 46 x 55.7 cm., New York: Guggenheim Museum.
Figure 15. Millet. *The Hoer*, 1860-2, oil on canvas, 80 x 99 cm., USA: private collection.
Figure 16. Woman Leaning on a Parapet, c. 1881, conte, 23.7 x 15.7 cm., Paris: Angrand Collection.
Figure 17. Burnt-out Palace of the Tuileries, c. 1882, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm.
Figure 18. Faneuses à Montfermeil, c. 1881-2, oil on panel, 15.7 x 24.7 cm., Paris: private collection.
Figure 19. **Stonebreaker**, c. 1883, oil on panel, 16.7 x 26 cm., Bradford: Hanley Collection.
Figure 20. *Factories*, c. 1883, oil on canvas, 32.2 x 41 cm., Troyes: Levy Collection.
Figure 21. *Hobo*, c. 1886, conte, 24 x 31 cm., Paris: private collection.
Figure 22. Figures in the Street, c. 1883, oil on panel, 16.5 x 24.7 cm., Switzerland: private collection.
Figure 23. *L'Invalide*, c. 1881, oil on panel, 25 x 16 cm., New York: Rothbart Collection.
Figure 24. *Une Baignade à Asnières*, 1883-4, oil on canvas, London: National Gallery.
Figure 25. Les Deux Rives, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Glasgow: Art Gallery and Museum.
Figure 26. *Le Pont de Courbevoie* (Asnières?), 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm.
Figure 27. Le Seine a Asnières, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Paris: Renand Collection.
Figure 28. Cheveaux dans le Fleuve, 1883, oil on panel, 15 x 24.7 cm., London: Courtauld Institute.
Figure 29. Cheval et Bateaux, 1883, oil on panel, 15 x 24.5 cm., Paris: private collection.
Figure 30. Baigneurs, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Paris: Renand Collection.
Figure 31. L'Arc-en-Ciel, 1883, oil on panel, 15.5 x 24.5 cm., New York: Davis Collection.
Figure 32. Personnage Assis, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Cleveland: Museum of Art.
Figure 33. Cinque Personnages Males, 1883, oil on panel, 15 x 25 cm., Paris: Private collection.
Figure 34. *Vêtements*, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 24.7 cm., London: Tate Gallery.
Figure 35. *Vêtements et Chapeau*, 1883, oil on panel, 17 x 26.5 cm., Scotland: private collection.
Figure 36. *Jeune Garcon et Cheval*, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
Figure 37. Studies (Brest Notebook), 1880, pencil and crayon, 15 x 24 cm.
Figure 38. Garcons se Baignant, 1883, oil on panel, 16 x 25 cm., Paris: Gourgand Collection.
Figure 39. Baigneur Assis, 1883, oil on panel, 15.7 x 24.7 cm., Kansas City: Nelson-Atkins Museum.
Figure 40. *Etude Finale*, 1883-4, oil on panel, 15.7 x 24.7 cm., New York: Levy Collection.
Figure 41.  *L'Echo*, 1883-4, conte, 30.7 x 23.7 cm., New York: Wetmore Collection.
Figure 42. Garçon de Dos, 1883-4, conte, 31.2 x 24 cm., Paris: private collection.
Figure 43. Nude, 1883-4, conte, 31.5 x 24 cm., London: Morrison Collection.
Figure 44. *Garçon Assis*, 1883-4, conte, 24 x 30 cm., New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery.
Figure 45. Jambe, 1883-4, conte, 23 x 30 cm., Stockholm: Bonnier Collection.
Figure 46. Reclining Man, 1883-4, conte, 24 x 31 cm., Basel: Beyeler Collection.
Figure 47. Man, 1883-4, conte, 24 x 30 cm., New York: Seligman Collection.
Figure 48. Man, 1883-4, conte, 24.7 x 31.2 cm., Paris: Musée du Louvre.
Figure 49. Vêtements, 1883-4, conte, 23 x 30 cm., Pomfret Center: Orswell Collection.
Figure 50. Une Dimanche après-midi à L'Ile de la Grande Jatte, 1884-6, oil on canvas, 205 x 308 cm., Chicago: Art Institute.
INTRODUCTION


> Je reconnais de bonne grace dans son tableau impressioniste l'indice de sérieuses qualités, la marque d'un temperament.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.


> Une Baignade (Asnières), par M. Seurat (Georges), boulevard de Magenta. — Ceci, c'est un faux Puvis de Chavannes. Les droles de baigneurs et de baigneuses (sic)! Mais c'est tellement convaincu que c'en est presque touchant, et que j'ose plus blaguer.

5*New York Daily Tribune*, 10 April 1886, as quoted in Dorra-Rewald, *Seurat*, p. 102.

6*The Sun* (New York), 11 April 1886, as quoted in Dorra-Rewald, *Seurat*, p. 102.

7*The Critic* (New York), April 1886, as quoted in Dorra-Rewald, *Seurat*, p. 102. The anonymous critic said in part:

> ...and in Seurat's large and uncouth composition "The Bathers," the uncompromising strength of the impressionist school is fully revealed.

8Ibid.


11J.B. Manson, "La Baignade," *Apollo* 1 (May 1925), pp. 299-300.

12Ibid., p. 299.
...a subi l'influence de l'époque, c'est tout au plus dans le choix du sujet et du site. Sujet familier et dépourvu d'intention pittoresque; site des environs de Paris; effet de plein air. Mais déjà ce tableau est bien loin du tumulte sensuel qui vibre à travers toutes les Grenouillères...

35 Ibid., p. 4.
36 Ibid., p. 10.
37 Ibid., p. 6.
40 Ibid., p. 5.
41 Ibid., pp. 3 and 37.
42 Dorra-Rewald, Seurat.
43 Ibid., p. xlii.
44 Dorra devotes the majority of his essay to discussing the compositional dynamics of later pictures in light of the theories of Charles Henri.
47 Ibid., p. 132.
49 Ibid., p. 182.
50 Ibid.
52 Ibid., p. 96.
53 Ibid., p. 98.
54 Ibid., p. 104.
55 Ibid.
57 Dorra-Rewald, Seurat, 84 bis.
There are, of course, four types of stroke if one includes the dots which were added in 1887.

60 Ibid., p. 97.


62 Ibid., p. 119.

63 Ibid., pp. 118-119.

64 Ibid., p. 123.

65 Ibid.


67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., p. 124.

69 Ibid., p. 125.


72 Ibid., p. 28.


74 Ibid., unpaged.

75 Russell, Seurat, pp. 124-5.
CHAPTER 1

1 Seurat's parents had paid 1500 francs to ensure that Seurat would remain in Metropolitan France and shorten his service from three years to one.

2 As a boy, Seurat had attended a municipal drawing school close to his home, drawing after engravings and some casts. In 1876, he entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He and his friend Aman-Jean were placed in the atelier of Henri Lehmann, a pupil of Ingres. There he began drawing casts and at the end of his time at the Ecole entered the life classes. On the whole, the atmosphere of the Ecole seems to have been ill-suited to Seurat and his time there was undistinguished.

3 The drawings were not fully published until Cesar de Hauke's monograph.

4 Seurat was reading Blanc, Sutter, Rood and Helmholtz. While not denying the significance of this research, writers such as Homer, Rich, Dorra and Rewald concentrate on the reading to the exclusion of any discussion of the shifts in Seurat's art.


6 Ibid., p. 17.

7 For more on this idea see Bradford R. Collins, "Manet's Rue Mosnier Decked with Flags," Burlington Magazine 117 (November, 1975), pp. 709-714.

8 Ibid., passim.


12 Feneon quotes Seurat as saying that he wanted "to make the impressionists permanent," see Dorra-Rewald, Seurat, p. lii.


Russell, Seurat, pp. 44-5.


Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 185.

Rewald, Seurat, p. 47.

CHAPTER 2

He had exhibited a drawing, the Portrait of Aman-Jean, now in the Metropolitan Museum, which had been noticed by Trublot/Alexis.

See Signac, Néo-Impressionnisme, p. 67.

Homer, Science, pp. 78-89.

We are not here including the 1887 alterations, when dots were applied to the small boy's cap and the 'halo' was made around the main figure's hat.

Rey, Renaissance, p. 117.

To date no writer on Seurat has attempted to arrange the studies for the Baignade into a sequence.


The measurements of the two panels (Les Deux Rives, 15.9 x 24.8 cm. and Le Pont de Courbevoie, 16 x 25 cm.), are sufficiently different to cast doubt on the idea that they were once two sides of one panel.


In Christian iconography it symbolizes the union of man and God or reconciliation.

The tenth (H 592) seems not only slightly earlier in style but also, in view of the other drawings, too far removed from the final work to be related.

The presence of the tricolour in the craft, especially one so large, would suggest that this is not a private craft, so too would the dress of its occupants - the top hat of the central gentleman and the more informal costume of the boatman.

Russell, Seurat, p. 118.


Russell, Seurat, p. 125.
19 Ibid., p. 123.

20 Ibid.

21 Joanna Richardson in La Vie Parisienne, 1852-1870 (London: H. Hamilton, 1971), p. 212, comments on the popularity of taking trips down the sewers and discusses such a trip made by the Princesses Mathilde and Clothilde. This would suggest that there was a familiarity with what is, to our minds, one of the least attractive features of Asnières.

22 Perruchot, La Vie, p. 80.

23 Rey, Renaissance, p. 117.
CONCLUSION

1. It could perhaps be argued that no group ever gained absolute ascendancy, although there is little doubt that Jean Grave's form of socialist anarchism, as espoused in a series of publications, *Le Révolté, La Révolte*, and finally, *Le Temps Nouveaux*, was the most influential in artistic circles.

2. This conclusion contains many ideas first expressed by Eugenia Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform: Art and Politics in France and Belgium, 1885-1914*.

3. Even so, prominent a figure as Huysmans could shift from a devout Catholic to anti-clerical in a few months.

4. This is perhaps, as Herbert suggests, *Artist and Social Reform*, p. 3, because of the lack-lustre quality of thought found in Jules Guesde, the Marxist leader and his colleagues.


10. In a letter to Sensier, Millet wrote:

   But, to tell the truth the peasant subjects suit my temperament best; for I must confess, that the human side of art is what touches me most...


12. Ibid., p. 111.


Collins, "Rue Mosnier," op. cit.

Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 188. Pissarro seems like Signac in that he felt that an overtly propagandistic art is a weak art.

Ibid., p. 8.

Manette Salomon.

Russell, Seurat, p. 56.

Perruchot, La Vie, p. 75.

Herbert, Drawings, pp. 82-3.

J.-K. Huysmans, Croquis Parisiens, as translated and quoted by Herbert, Drawings, p. 83.

Emile Zola as quoted in Lövgren, Genesis, p. 34.

Pissarro, Letters, p. 49.


Zola, L'Oeuvre, 1885, as quoted by Lövgren, Genesis, pp. 37-38. The parallels between this imaginary work and Seurat's two great pictures, the Baignade and the Grande Jatte, are striking and suggest that Zola may have seen both the Seurat works.

Adoré Floupette (Henri Beauclaire and Gabriel Vicaire), Les Délíquescences: Poèmes Décadent d'Adoré Floupette, 1885, as quoted in Lövgren, Genesis, pp. 28-29.

Pierre Kropotkin, Paroles d'un Révolté, 1885, as quoted in Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 14.

Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 70.

Ibid., p. 181.

Signac, Letter to Grave, as quoted in Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 187.

Indeed Féneon specifically addressed the question in a letter to Rewald.

Not as the vacuous formal studies they have been taken to be - Homer, Fry et al.

This sense of direction may be a beginning of his theory of sad, downward lines and exhilarating, upward lines, gleaned from his readings of de Superville and later expanded after contact with Charles Henry.
The two paintings are almost the same size, the Baignade, 201 x 301 cm. and the Grande Jatte, 205 x 308 cm. This closeness in size (the larger size of the latter is accounted for by the pointillists frame) would further suggest that Seurat conceived of the works together.


Signac, Letter, 1891, as quoted in Herbert, Artist and Social Reform, p. 190.

Ibid., p. 189.

Ibid.

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The *Baignade à Asnières* was completed in 1884, probably in March. When submitted at the end of that month for consideration in the Salon, it was rejected.

In 1884, there were a particularly large number of rejection, and a Salon des Independants was organized. The Independants accepted all submissions, and the *Baignade* was hung over the bar of a *buvette* in the military barracks where the show was held.

After its exhibition, the painting remained in Seurat's possession. In 1886, Bernheim-Jeune, at the urging of Feneon and Pissarro, sent the painting to New York with a show if impressionist works. The *Baignade* remained unsold, and when it was returned to Seurat in 1887, he added the pointillist touches now visible.

The work remained in Seurat's possession until his death in 1891, when it was given to Seurat's family. In 1892, it was shown in the memorial exhibition of Seurat's work, at Les Independants.

Probably in 1900, the painting passed into Felix Feneon's possession. In 1905, it appeared in the Seurat retrospective held at Les Independants. Feneon kept it until 1924. In that year it was bought by the Trustees of the Courtauld Fund for the Tate Gallery.

The work was transferred to the National Gallery in 1961, where, in 1976, it was the subject of a Painting in Focus exhibition.

The work, which is oil on canvas, measures 201 x 301.5 centimetres, and is in a good state of repair.
NOTES

1 Perhaps because it was difficult to accommodate such a large picture.

2 These include the cap of the boy in the water and the halo around the central figure's straw hat, as well as isolated sections in the grass.