5

The Pictorial World of Henri Fantin-Latour

"…c'est l'intimité, le calme, l'honnêteté paisible de cet intérieur." (Castagnary) [1]

Compared to other French artists of his time such as Manet and the Impressionists, Henri Fantin-Latour is not so widely known. Besides experts in art history, others who know who Fantin-Latour can be considered fairly well-versed in 19th-century French painting. However, even in such cases, and even among art historians, the reputation of this artist is probably rather obscure.

The first image that comes to mind at mention of this artist's name might be that well-known elegant picture of fresh flowers. Alternatively, it could be a fantasy inspired by a piece of music. But the most common answer would probably be his group portraits, for which Fantin-Latour chose famous artists as models. *An Atelier in the Batignolles* (fig. 11) and *A Corner of the Table* (fig. 1) portray distinguished figures who innovated the history of late 19th-century painting and poetry, such as Manet, Monet, Renoir, Rimbaud, and Verlaine; consequently, these portraits are frequently quoted or reproduced. In this way, we see how Fantin-Latour has been condemned more to the fame of his portrait's subjects than to fame as an artist in his own right. Fantin-Latour's name sinks into the background without leaving much of an impression.

1. Jules-Antoine Castagnary, "Salon de 1877," in id., *Salons* (1857–1870), 2 vols., Paris, 1892, p. 304.

Let us take this opportunity to refute such crude and dishonorable appraisals and instead consider his work anew by standing in front of his canvases and lending a direct ear to the murmurs of the art. Let us carefully analyze the characteristics of the artworks themselves and the historical significance of this artist. Without undertaking this process, on cannot hope to see the distinctive pictorial world of Fantin-Latour.

Self-Formation and Socialization

Born in 1836, it was from the late 1850s that Fantin-Latour was to establish himself as an artist and start out on his career. His self-formation and development as an artist began before then, however. Henri learnt how to draw from his father, who was an artist and a follower of Jacques-Louis David. For a very brief period in 1854, he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. As far as his artistic education was concerned, even more significant than these episodes was his encounter with Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran. Lecoq de Boisbaudran was a professor at the Ecole de Dessin, the predecessor of the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, which was known as the *Petite Ecole* as opposed to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which was known as the *Grande Ecole*. As indicated in his book, *Education de la mémoire pittoresque*,[2] Lecoq de Boisbaudran practised a systematic educational method to build up a good memory, which he considered necessary for an artist to observe and accurately reproduce a subject. Fantin studied under Lecoq de Boisbaudran in the early 1850s and benefited from instruction that was tailored to temperament and individuality to bring out each pupil's talent. Other students included the artists Legros, Cazin, Lhermitte, and the sculptor Rodin.

Without a doubt, it was the Louvre that served as the most fruitful

2. Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, *Education de la mémoire pittoresque*, Paris, Bance, 1862. Regarding Lecoq de Boisbaudran's education and the artists influenced by him, see Petraten-Doesschate Chu, "Lecoq de Boisbaudran and Memory Drawing: A Teaching Course between Idealism and Naturalism," in *The European Realist Tradition*, ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 242–244, 249–260, 277–289.

fig.1: Henri Fantin-Latour, *A Corner of the Table*, 1872, Musée d'Orsay.

place for Fantin's studies. His efforts to absorb the dignity and artistry manifested in classic paintings through copying them proved a decisive experience. In fact, he was so renowned as a copyist that he was commissioned to produce copies of Veronese's *The Marriage at Cana* and did so—five times. In addition to the Venetian School represented by Veronese and Titian, he also admired masters such as Rembrandt, Rubens, and Velasquez.[3] His friend Manet shared such tastes. As regards 19th-century French predecessors, besides Corot and Millet, above all, his admiration for Delacroix lasted throughout his life.

During the 1850s and the 1860s, Fantin became acquainted with many artists of his generation. Close friendship with such fellow artists proved mutually beneficial. Particularly significant was his association with two talented artists, Alphonse Legros (1837–1911), whom he

3. Regarding the works Fantin copied, see the following work which is currently considered the catalogue raisonné. Mme Fantin-Latour, *Catalogue de l'œuvre complet de Fantin-Latour*, Paris, Henri Floury, 1911; repr. Amsterdam and New York, B.M.Israël & Da Capo Press, 1969.

met as a student at the Ecole de Dessin, and James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), who travelled frequently between London and Paris. Together they formed the "Société des trois." His encounter with Edouard Manet (1832–1883), who was to become a lifelong friend, cannot go without mention. These artists, including Fantin-Latour, come after Courbet (1819–1877) and belong to the generation preceding Monet and the other Impressionists, most of them born circa 1840. Other artists belonging to the same generation were Félix Bracquemond (1833–1914), Antoine Vollon (1833–1900), Edgar Degas (1836–1917), James Tissot (1836–1902), and Carolus-Duran (1838–1917).

Fantin-Latour also had acquaintances abroad. He had a great many friends in England, who were introduced to him by Whistler. The existence of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Edwards, who undertook the sale of Fantin's still-lifes, was particularly important. Unlike Fantin, the German artist Otto Schölderer, who came to Paris from Frankfurt, was a faithful follower of Courbet. However, they both shared a common taste for music and became literally lifelong friends. In fact, Fantin's best friends living abroad, such as Whistler, Edwards, and Schölderer, have played a valuable role, as far as historical records are concerned, by keeping many of the letters that Fantin wrote to them.[4]

In the late 1850s, when his apprenticeship was about to come to an end, Fantin attempted a large number of self-portraits in both drawing and oil. As manifested in *Self-portrait, Standing Holding Paintbrush* (fig. 2), there are quite a few works strongly influenced by Rembrandt, style-wise, in which the artist is depicted against a dark background. Photographic record reveals that Fantin was right-handed, but the abovementioned self-portrait is depicted with the brush in the artist's left hand as if in a mirror image. Why did Fantin concen-

4. See the following reference regarding the whereabouts of Fantin's letters: Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, exh. cat., Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Ottawa, Galeries nationales du Canada, San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honour, Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1982, p. 351. This exhibition catalogue, the catalogue *raisonné* by Mme Fantin-Latour (Note 3), and the biography by Adolphe Jullien (Note 23) are considered the basic bibliography for the research of this artist. See also the recent exhibition catalogue: *Fantin-Latour, de la réalité au rêve*, Lausanne, Fondation de l'Hermitage, 2007.

[image omitted]

fig.2:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Self-Portrait, Standing Holding Paintbrush*, 1859, Musée de Grenoble.

trate on self-portraits during this period? One practical reason would have been that his own image appearing in the mirror was his most convenient "model." It also could have been an opportunity for the introspective young artist to search for his own ego. In any case, from circa 1859, the year he submitted three works to the Salon for the first time—of which were none accepted—Fantin started out on his artistic career.

Fantin-Latour's Portraits and Fried's Generation Theory

Let us examine *The Two Sisters* (fig. 3), which the jury for the Salon of 1859 rejected. Fantin's younger sisters were the models for this painting. The girl reading on the right-hand side is the elder sister Marie and the girl embroidering on the left-hand side is Nathalie. Even though this was probably one of his very first fullscale works,

the themes characteristic of Fantin's work as a whole, such as "girl," "interior," "reading," and "embroidery," are all included. However, even more interesting in this case is the format and composition in this picture. To understand this, firstly, we must ask whether or not this is a portrait or a genre painting in the traditional sense. As there is no mention of names or the word "portrait" in the title, whatever it may have meant to the artist himself, surely it was not intended for public display as a formal portrait. Yet, it does not appear to be a mere genre scene either. In support of this view, we might consider one of his drawings in the Louvre which depicts a reading girl and an embroidering girl (his sisters were the models for this too and it is undeniably relevant to *The Two Sisters*), which is treated as a sketch reminiscent of a genre scene by Gavarni. And yet, although the content depicted is more or less the same, this oil painting is totally different in character.

There would have been little point in a vivid portrayal in those days or the detailed reproduction of contemporary daily life such as we see in this painting. The space is depicted at an angle without much depth and the room serves as the background with chaste simplicity. The two girls reading and embroidering are dressed in modest clothes, making it a commonplace scene. Whereas the girl at the right is fully absorbed in the world of books, for some reason, the girl on the left is casting a vacant gaze beyond the image. Was Fantin trying to contrast the mental states of concentration and absence of mind? Whether or not such was the artist's intention, the situational setting remains vague and the figures are isolated without any psychological interrelation. There are no story-like or anecdotal elements to explain this. Yet, as if to support the tension presented by the figures depicted, the composition of the image is extremely tight. The book, embroidery frame, and picture frames produce a rhythmical intricacy of vertical and diagonal lines and the overall arrangement including the figures is strictly planned. While a dull green and brown, as well as the black and white of the clothing, are dominant, the bright red, green, blue threads are painted as tonal accents. The degree of compositional interest in this picture makes clear that the artist's main object could not have been to reproduce a so-called genre. The subject matter was certainly taken from the

fig.3: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Two Sisters*, 1859, The Saint Louis Museum.

reality in front of him. However, the commonplace reality was incorporated and refined into a compositional work and became subject to "elevation" (not "idealization"). This painting is neither a portrait nor a genre, but strictly a figure painting presented as "a pictorial recomposition of the reality."

The abovementioned characteristics of Fantin's portraits were more or less common feature identifiable in works by such contemporaries as Manet, Whistler, Legros, and Degas. In that sense, there is a highly historical significance to it. Despite such significance, the unique paintings created by the young artists represented by Manet, who appeared on the art scene in the 1860s, are still waiting to be fully understood in historical context. A positive viewpoint defining the works of this particular period, which belong neither to Courbet's "Realism" of the 1850s nor to the "Impressionism" of the 1870s still remains to be presented. Above all, Fantin's works dating from the 1860s, which is the most important decade in his artistic career, should be examined in this context.

In recent years, Michael Fried has bravely challenged what might be called a blind spot in the history of art. In *Manet's Modernism*, a major book published in 1996, he named Manet, Fantin-Latour, Legros, and Whistler "the generation of 1863" after the famous "Salon des Refusés" and attempted a redefinition of their works through the relationship between painting and beholder.[5] The nucleus of Fried's theory is the concept of "absorption." The girl reading in *The Two Sisters* is a good example of this concept. She is so absorbed in a certain act that the existence of a beholder who might happen to witness the situation depicted is more or less negated. Fried examines the existence and meaning of such a figure from the correlation between representation and reception.[6] Although he does not quite reach a clear-cut conclusion, he raises a number of stimulating questions. Focusing on the group of early self-portraits by Fantin, Fried identifies the paintings as "the generation of 1863," a form of Realism on the border of the two forms of Realism presented by Courbet and the Impressionist artists.[7] Other than a few rare exceptions, self-portraits predating the 1860s could have been executed with the help of a mirror, but the image itself would be adjusted to appear accurately in the painting. In contrast, self-portraits (as in the example of fig. 2) by Fantin and later artists intend to represent mirror images. According to Fried, this historical turnabout symbolizes the transition from Courbet's "corporeal realism" to the Impressionist artists, "ocular realism," that is, the transition from a bodily, materialistic realism to a visual, retinal realism. Fried designates Fantin's self-portraits and works by other artists of the same generation as typical examples of the initial step towards "ocular realism" where traces of "corporeal realism" still exist.

Although Fried makes an interesting point, there are two major problems with his theory. Firstly, the originality of the works by Fan-

5. Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or the Face of Painting in the 1860s*, Chicago and London, The University, Chicago Press, 1996.

6. Concerning the concept of "absorption," there are two other works by Fried predating *Manet's Modernism; Absorption and Theatricality, Painting & Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, The University of California Press, 1980 and *Courbet's Realism*, The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

7. Fried 1996, *op. cit.*, pp. 365–398.

tin's generation is not adequately defined merely by describing them as a form of realism existing between two other forms of realism. Secondly, he does not explain why self-portraits began to be painted in reverse from the 1860s. Here I shall take up these questions in order to present my own historical interpretation of the paintings of Fantin's generation.

As a "Post-Realist"

What was Paris of the 1860s like from an art historical point of view? One way to answer this question would be to describe it as a period when, for the first time in history, there was a supersaturation of images.

For example, as was the case with Fantin, an artist traditionally acquired his or her basic knowledge by studying works of the past at the Musée du Louvre or by looking at the reproductions of master paintings in the print collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. However, between the late 1850s and the 1860s, the images surrounding artists underwent drastic changes. What was probably the world's first encyclopedic reference on art, *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles* edited by Charles Blanc, was published one volume after another during the 1860s.[8] Thanks to this publication, many master paintings were reproduced and circulated. The first art magazine, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, was also launched in 1859. This magazine included quality illustrations and interesting articles on art. Critiques of the Salon also increased immensely in number from this period. As far as the environment for images was concerned, in a broad sense of the word, one cannot ignore the fact that illustrated magazines including visual information on all kinds of social events were extremely popular during the Second Empire and all kinds of popular prints were being distributed. It was indeed during the 1860s that Japanese Ukiyo-e was introduced in Paris, and Manet and Fantin were among the artists

8. Charles Blanc (ed.), *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles*, 14 vols, Paris, Renouard, 1861–1876.

who were quick in reacting to them. Lastly, there is the question of the new visual medium, photography. Beginning with daguerreotype, photographic technique reached the golden age of calotype in the 1850s, making it possible to produce multiple prints. The tremendous vogue for the photographic portraits Disderi designed to be the size of a visiting card during the 1860s is also a well-known feature in the history of photography.

As outlined above, 1860s' Paris was a decade during which the historical awareness of art was intensified through reproductions and literature. At the same time, it was an era a vast group of images diverse in quality coexisted. Indeed, it might even be said that for the first time in history disorder characterized the visual environment. Under such circumstances, Fantin's generation rejected academic stereotypes and pursued a new way for post-Courbet painting to express the reality of this environment.

For them, the point was how to grasp the "reality" and then best express it in painting. It was not an illusionistic realism (as were the academic paintings of J.-L. Gérôme) expressed by tracing one's prejudice or prediction and elaborately depicting a fictitious scene. Neither was it the type of realism practised by Courbet, where realistic depictions of fiction were rejected in favor of a commonplace "reality" whose materialistic feeling qualities were assimilated to the body. It also differed from the realism practised by the Impressionist artists, in which the "reality" was interpreted as a visual phenomenon changing from one moment to the next and applied to the canvas by the visible coloured "touche." In essence, it was different from all the abovementioned types of realism. In the painting, *The Two Sisters*, an ambiguous "reality" that cannot be defined straightforwardly is expressed in formal recomposition. To put it another way, the obscurity encountered in the attempt to perceive reality is itself rendered as a painterly image. Let us give this realism positioned between "corporeal realism" and "ocular realism" a new name: "cognitive realism." As images diversified in the visual environment generally, this multilayered "reality" led to representations of reality that were more indefinite. In this era, a form of realism questioning the perception of reality itself emerged. It was up to the artist to reconstruct the "reality" as a manifold image.

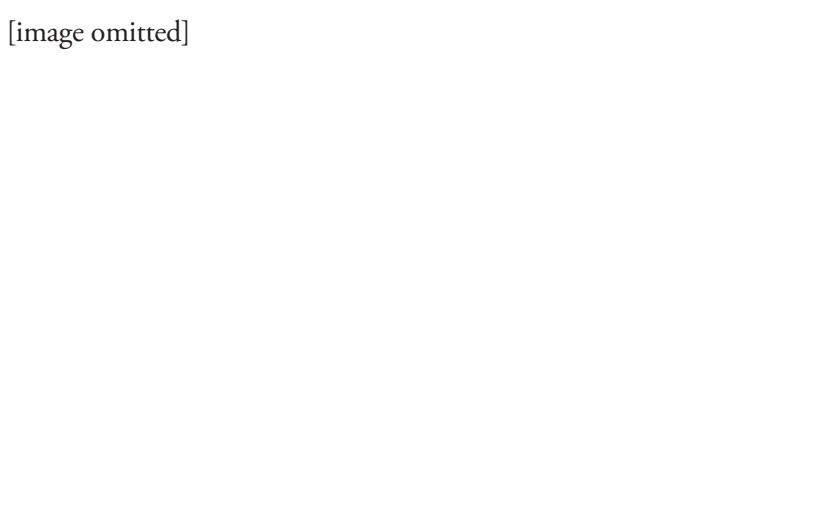

fig. 4: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Homage to Delacroix,* 1864, Musée d'Orsay.

Let us take a closer look at the formative expression in *Homage to Delacroix* (fig. 4), a representative example of Fantin's group portraits. I shall not go into detail about the similarity in composition between Fantin's work and 17th-century Dutch or French paintings. More noteworthy in this case is the way he places each figures side by side in a shallow space and in the psychological isolation from each figure. Such features were also to be found in prints and photographs of the same period.[9] Even more interesting is the fact that Fantin has placed the portraits of people who were not actually present at the same occasion in the same picture. That is to say, the scene, which portrays the artists lined up in front of a portrait of Delacroix, who had died the year before, is of course an obvious fiction. It was simply composed by painting each model according to his pose and in the correct position. However, Fantin himself, dressed in a white shirt, has his palette in his right hand, indicating that this self-portrait is a mirror image. Real images and a mirror image are nonchalantly juxtaposed.

9. Regarding the formative features of *Homage to Delacroix*, see Miura Atsushi, *Kindai Geijutsuka no hyôshô : Manet, Fantin-Latour to 1860 nendai no France Kaiga* [*The Representation of Modern Painters : Manet, Fantin-Latour and French Painting in the 1860s*], Tokyo, Tokyo University Press, 2006, pp. 31–84.

Not only that, but the portrait of Delacroix in the centre of the canvas itself did not really exist. It is a fictional portrait created by Fantin based on a photograph of Delacroix. By juxtaposing sketched models, a mirror image of himself as a painter, and a fictitious portrait on the same canvas, Fantin represent the way multi-dimensional images unite to produce a new "reality."

In fact, the realistic paintings of the 1860s are closely related to early photographic techniques. Although this paper is not intended as a discussion of the complex relation between painting and photography in the 19th-century, Fantin's painting certainly reproduces some features of photographic portraits in those days. The figures pose motionlessly in front of a stage setting-like background and psychological interrelationship seems nonexistent. Although the scene was probably staged, the "sense of reality" is so ambiguous that it looks as if it were a fragmentary shot of an unexpected "reality" or blended with an unforeseen "coincidence." This is also a feature identifiable in contemporary photographs as well. The reason the artist began to paint his self-portrait as a mirror image (without reversing the left and right) from circa 1860 could have something to do with the sudden circulation of photographs, which occurred around the same time. Photographs print images indiscriminately on photographic paper. Stimulated by this new materialistic visual image, a new group of artists possessing an acute sensibility emerged. Be it a real image, a mirror image, or a photograph, these artists were able to perceive a vivid "reality" in them. Fried explains that these artists were painting "as seen by their own eyes" and treats this point as a question of visual reception. In the sense that these artists identified reality even in a mirror image, I would say that it is rather more a question of painting the perception of reality "as reflected." This new phenomenon in the realm of self-portraits was influenced by photography, which had prompted the movement towards a democratization of diverse images; therefore, we should say these developments all occurred as a matter of course.

Fantin, Manet, Whistler, and Legros were the key figures that pursued such "cognitive realism." Bracquemond, Degas, Tissot early on in his career, and Carolus-Duran could also be included in this gener-

ation. From an art historical point of view, precisely because it developed Courbet's realism in a new direction, I would call it "Post-Realism" and the artists "Post-Realists." Although they were surrounded by a supersaturation of images from classical paintings to prints and photographs, the Post-Realists practised this new "Realism" in Paris during the 1860s. They had the sensibility to recognize the diverse "realities" and bring them together in order to compose an original image in the form of a painting. In that sense, we should not forget that "Post-Realism" was not only a "cognitive realism" but also a "compositional realism." A unique pictorial world given form according to each artist's subjectivity and expressive will took up their images and recomposed them in a variety of ways. It is no coincidence that motifs implying the multi-dimensionality of reality such as mirrors, a painting within a painting, a window, or a door are frequently incorporated in such works.

So far I have discussed the characteristics of the paintings by the "Post-Realist" generation. In this context, particularly during the 1860s, together with Manet, Fantin could be considered an "avant-garde artist." After this, Manet proceeded with his experiments in daring forms while Fantin would gradually close himself up in his own world of beauty. Let us now study the unique pictorial world of Fantin-Latour subject by subject.

Portraits of Women in a Room

If I were to be asked the most suitable theme for the artist Fantin-Latour, I would not hesitate to answer portraits of women in a room, particularly portrayals of women concentrating their minds on something. Be it a portrait or a still-life, in treating a realistic subject, the outdoors and the daylight were totally irrelevant to Fantin. An enclosed room was always the stage he favoured. The pictures of women concentrating their minds on an act such as reading, embroidering, or painting in a room apparently best suited this artist's mentality. Whether reading letters, threading a needle, or holding a brush, the images of such women blend into such a tranquil and

introspective atmosphere that the entire canvas aligns to create an elaborate artistic dimension.

Judging from the number of works depicting such women, those "reading" were by far the most privileged subject matter. After *The Two Sisters*, Fantin created *Reading* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) in 1861, and this time it was accepted at the Salon. Marie, the elder one of his two younger sisters, alone was the model for this picture. As in the previous work, it is composed of minimal motifs. The choice and depiction of sofa, a painting on the wall, and books on the floor give a fragmentary impression as if a slice of reality were being presented. Fantin originally entitled this picture *Etude d'après nature* in submitting it to the Salon, which suggests that he did not consider this type of painting either a portrait or a genre scene. Moreover, although he named it an "étude," this was not a preliminary "study" for another fullscale work, but a "study" on its own, evidencing a new attitude held by Fantin. In the catalogue for the Fantin-Latour retrospective, there is a category entitled "Studies from Nature," which covers this type of work. However, for our purposes here, it would be useful to define them more loosely by dividing his figure paintings into two types: "women in a room" and "portraits."

In *Reading* (fig. 5), which was submitted to the Salon of 1863, the background becomes even more simplified and the woman absorbed in the world of books alone is depicted in restrained colour and delicate brushwork. The art critic Thoré, who is known for rediscovering Vermeer in the 19th-century, praised this painting. It is indeed a fine work of a quality similar to the various works Vermeer painted of "a woman reading a letter."[10] "Reading" was a theme Fantin continued working on in the 1870s. *Portrait of Victoria Dubourg* (1873, Musée d'Orsay) shows his future wife reading a book. The following two works that are literally entitled "Reading" are slightly more complicated in composition. Both works depict two women and, in both cases, the models were the sisters Charlotte and Victoria Dubourg. In the earlier version, *Reading* (1870, Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulben-

10. Théophile Thoré, *Salons de William 1861 à 1868*, 2 vols, Paris, Renouard, 1870, Vol. I, p. 384.

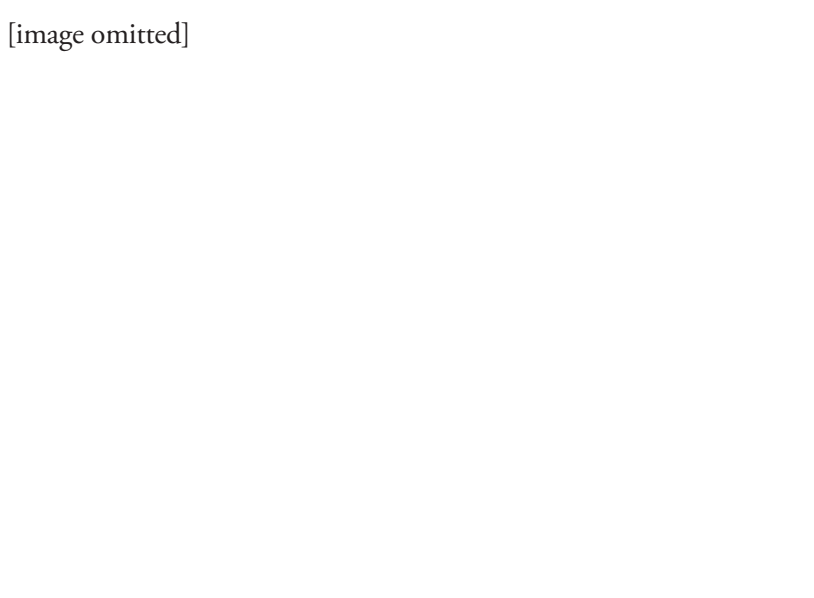

fig. 5:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Reading*, 1863, Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

kian), Victoria is reading and Charlotte faces the beholder. They are juxtaposed in a rather odd manner that gives the beholder a sense of discord. In contrast, the later work, Reading (1877, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts), captures the models in an exquisite combination. Charlotte is depicted in profile looking straight ahead, while Victoria is immersed in her book with her elbow resting on the table. The isolation of each figure provides a positive tension. If we were to interpret these two works in Micheal Fried's manner, the latter version, in which "absorption" is expressed more thoroughly, would be the more successful work.[11]

Besides "reading," mention should also be made of "embroidering" and "painting." "Embroidering" appeared in the abovementioned *The Two Sisters*, but the finest example of this theme is *Woman Embroidering* (1881, Private collection). The woman looking down with her attention focused on her work reminds us of Vermeer's masterwork,

11. Cf. Fried 1996, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–222.

The Lacemaker (Musée du Louvre). It is a rare case in which Fantin-Latour was sensitive to the effect of light. "Painting" was even more significant a theme and two works need to be discussed here.

The Drawing Lesson, or Portraits (fig. 6), a major work which was submitted to the Salon of 1879 entitled *Portraits*, shows two women in a studio. One is standing with a mahlstick in her left hand in front of an easel, while the other is seated and is sketching a reproduction of a statue by Michelangelo, *The Slave*. What we must note here is that although the figures are positioned in a stable composition, the circumstantial setting is unclear. As usual, there is no communication between the two figures and it is hard to tell what the standing woman is doing. If she were holding a brush or charcoal in her right hand (although it is not really clear whether she is or not), she could be working on a picture, but even in that case, what is it that she is painting? Could she be painting the rhododendrons behind the statue? If so, the flowers are placed in the shadow of the canvas and, besides, her eyes are cast towards the woman drawing. Did she just happen to glance that way or is she doing a picture of her friend drawing? If the latter is the case, we are looking at "Fantin-Latour's painting of a woman drawing a statue and a woman painting another woman drowing." The situation is simultaneously so vague and complicated that it makes us dizzy at the mere speculation.

There are two preliminary studies (Musée du Louvre) for this painting. Compared to the final painting, the drawings are clearly more faithful to the actual scene. In the drawings, there is more depth to the space in which the two women are placed and they are each working on the flowers and the statue. Therefore, it is probably true that the standing woman just happened to cast her eyes towards the woman seated. However, in the final version, the pictorial space becomes much shallower with emphasis on the flatness. Fantin tried to combine the existence of both motifs in a pyramid-shaped composition that positions the standing woman at the centre. However, his effort to maintain balance in the composition resulted in blurring the sense of reality. Most conspicuously, the rhododendrons were forced into an unnatural position. The statue also should be facing the person who is drawing it. Yet, the best angle is turned towards the viewer.

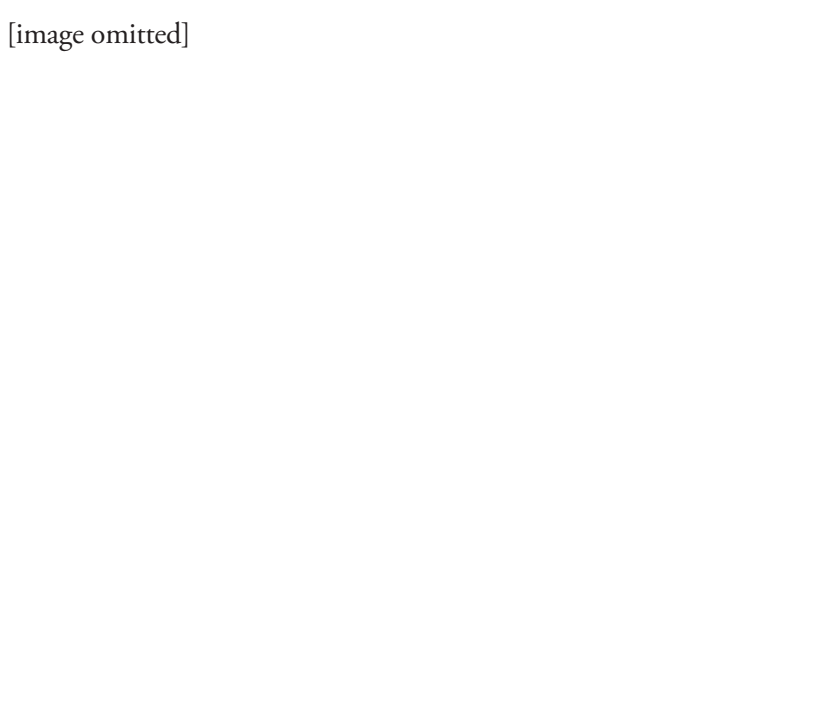

fig. 6: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Drawing Lesson, or Portraits*, 1879, Musée royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique.

This is not merely a realistic reproduction of the reality but a restructuring of the "reality" anew by adjusting the images. Therefore, the situation is obscured and falls into an indecisive state so that the viewer thus invited into the picture is bewildered. A review of the Salon of 1879 comments suggestively that Fantin's painting "is lacking in subject." [12] The artist's critical mind of the 1860s and the question of "realism and composition" are an ongoing debate about this work.

The Study (1883, Tounai, Musée des Beaux-Arts) shows a woman wearing an apron and seated in profile. She is holding a brush and a palette and is looking at a white canvas. Beside the canvas is a vase of flowers she is about to depict. The title *Study* not only describes Fantin's painting but also seems to refer to the painting that the woman in the picture is about to start. As was the case in *The Drawing Lesson, or Portrait*, the artist has paid careful attention to the harmony of col-

12. D. Druick and M. Hoog, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

[image omitted]

fig.7:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait of the English-painter Ridley,* 1861, Private Collection.

ours (dominantly yellow here) in this painting.

The portraits discussed so far could also be interpreted as portrayals of the domestic chores and humble hobbies of the bourgeois women of the time. In that sense, they would appear to be extremely limited themes. And yet, actually, the artist's attempts to perceive the "reality" and build up a composition out of the quotidian are often both thrilling and enchanting. In depicting the everyday world he is familiar with, the artist incorporates not only pictorial ambition but a loving spirit, both of which are visible in the subtle colouring and the delicate touch of the material, making these female portraits all the more valuable.

Portraits and Manifesto

We know from letters that remain that Fantin did not like doing portraits on commission. To him, a job in which the person who commissioned the painting had more of a say than the artist stood for the corruption of his own art. Of course, the financial aspect could

[image omitted]

fig.8:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait of Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Edwards*, 1875, Tate.

not be ignored, however, so during the 1860s, he did some portraits of English and French élite society. However, from 1868 onwards, he did not do any work of that kind and made a living exclusively by painting still-lifes.

Therefore, the models for the majority of portraits by Fantin-Latour are close relatives and friends. He even presented some of them at the Salons. Here again we see Fantin's tendency to restrict his subject to the world close to him and to render it according to his own aesthetics. *Portrait of the English-painter Ridley* (fig. 7) was a major portrait exhibited at the Salon of 1861. Here again we encounter that "absorptive" pose and the obscure circumstantial setting that was discussed in the portraits of women in a room. The landscapist and print artist Ridley was a friend of Whistler's. This is a portrait of his bust against a plain background. The model's eyes are cast down as if the beholder were nonexistent. His expression is obscure and it appears as though his right hand is stretching forwards, but it is

impossible to tell whether he is looking at a print or what he is doing. Unintentionally, the beholder feels as if he or she is being swallowed up in the image. Without using many colours and by such simple means of expression, it is truly, profound effect the artist produces.

Portrait of Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Edwards (fig. 8) depicts a couple who were Fantin's friends and agents for the sale of his still-lifes in England from the 1860s. This is a representative portrait of the 1870s. It was painted at a time when they were temporarily on awkward terms because of a disagreement over how Fantin's works were being sold in England. The models are posing in a manner suggestive of psychological discord. The cool expression on Ruth Edwards' face as she looks on with her arms folded, together with the elaborate brushwork, almost ruin any charm in this painting. The artist himself was dissatisfied with it. Yet, ironically, it was received with favour at the Salon of 1875 and won second prize, thus allowing Fantin to exhibit at the Salon without having to be judged.

Victoria Dubourg, with whom Fantin-Latour was to get married in 1876, and her family, especially Charlotte, were often the models for his works. The Dubourg Family (fig. 9) portrays the two sisters and their parents and is a fine example of Fantin's portraits of the 1870s. This is believed to be a scene either before or after paying a visit to the grave on All Saints' Day on 1 November. The way the models are posing motionlessly with their eyes cast in scattered directions is similar to Manet's *The Balcony* (Musée d'Orsay) and Degas' *The Bellelli Family* (Musée d'Orsay). The most fascinating aspect of this painting is the way Fantin depicts the hands, which are all gathered in the centre of the canvas. There are hands wearing or taking off gloves, arms folded, hands on a shoulder, and hands crossed on the lap. Hands, rather than faces, are here a means to represent subtle changes in expression.

If one were to exclude the group portraits executed during the latter half of the Second Empire, the impression of Fantin's œuvre would be quite different. Although Fantin tends to be regarded as an artist of mild and reserved character, during the 1860s, together with his comrade Manet, he challenged the Salon's academism most radically and militantly. There are three portraits of a group of artists that eloquently prove this point. They served as Fantin's manifesto, public-

[image omitted]

fig.9: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Dubourg Family*, 1878, Musée d'Orsay.

ly declaring that he was taking part in avant-garde painting as a "Post-Realist."

Homage to Delacroix (fig. 4), whose artistic features have already been discussed above, was the first manifesto. Although the subject was artists paying homage at the death of the Romantic master, at the same time, it served as a group portrait of mainly the younger generation of artists. To identify some of the figures at the centre of the image, seated at the front right are Champfleury and Baudelaire, who were art critics of Courbet's generation. Standing to the right of Delacroix's portrait are Manet and Bracquemond and to the left are Whistler and Legros. The man holding a palette is the artist himself. These men formed a group of realists who were proceeding in a different way from Courbet. Unlike the portraits of women in a room, a considerable number of these men are facing the viewer, a manifestation of their self-assertion as artists. The painting was a success in that it became the target of numerous criticisms at the Salon of 1864 and

[image omitted]

fig.10:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Edouard Manet*, 1867, The Art Institute Chicago.

the existence of this new group of artists was recognized.[13]

The Toast: Homage to the Truth was bitterly criticized when it appeared at the Salon of 1865, and was destroyed after the exhibition. Although only three fragments of it remain,[14] it is the second group portrait of artists manifestly expressing Fantin's more radical conviction and should not go unremarked. There is hardly need to point out the fact that the Salon of 1865 was the year Manet's *Olympia* (1863, Musée d'Orsay) gave rise to a huge scandal. Around the same time, Whistler and Legros moved their bases to London. Consequently, from then on, Post-Realist painting in Paris was to revolve around Manet, who was in conflict with the jury of the Salon. Under such circumstances, a rising art critic, Zola, took a firm stand for

13. Regarding the reviews of the Salon of 1864 and *Homage to Delacroix,* see D. Druick & M. Hoog, *op. cit*., pp. 175–178 and Miura, *op. cit.* pp. 31–84.

14. *Portrait of Vollon,* Musée d'Orsay; *Portrait of Whistler*, Washington, Freer Gallery of Art; *Self Portrait,* Private Collection.

[image omitted]

fig. 11: Henri Fantin-Latour, *An Atelier in the Batignolles*, 1870, Musée d'Orsay.

Manet, and Fantin also supported his best friend at this time of crisis by presenting *Portrait of Edouard Manet* (fig. 10) at the Salon of 1867. Manet dressed in perfect attire and depicted against a plain background looks more like a bourgeois gentleman than an artist. Not merely a man of taste (equipped with silk hat, tie, and leather gloves) who is impeccably turned out Manet is also portrayed as an artist resolute in attitude (evidenced in his stern glance and both hands firmly grasping his cane). In the lower left corner is an inscription, "A mon ami Manet, Fantin 1867." This dedication was a courageous declaration of their friendship.

Fantin's support for Manet escalated to virtual worship in the third group portrait mainly of artists, *An Atelier in the Batignolles* (fig. 11). Manet is painting a portrait in his studio while surrounded by friends. The model seated is the critic Zacharie Astruc and standing from left to right are Schölderer, Renoir, Zola, Edmond Maître (an amateur musician), Bazille, and Monet. The background is accented with a painting and a frame, while a sculpture and Japanese-style pottery on

the table indicate that this painting has been constructed with a certain intention. Unlike the bold, flat composition in *Homage to Delacroix*, this painting has some sense of spatial expression and the subjects are soundly painted. Despite the content of the subject, stylewise, there is no doubt that there are signs of a return to tradition. This may be the reason it won third prize at the Salon of 1870. Interestingly enough, unlike the former two group portraits, the artist himself does not appear in this picture. The people depicted here are a mixture of Post-Realists and Impressionist artists. As Fantin-Latour was later to oppose Impressionism and was worried that Manet was approaching Impressionism, he may have been hesitant about participating in this group portrait. Although this painting was originally intended as an homage to Manet, "the modern Velasquez," ironically, it was later to play a decisive role in establishing the image that the "Batignolles School," led by Manet and gathering at the Café Guerbois, was the origin of Impressionism.[15]

In sum, it was during the 1860s that Fantin was actively involved in the most advanced artistic trend of the time. From the 1870s onwards, during the period of the Third Republic, ambitious portraits became scarce and the artist's interest shifted to still-lifes and eventually to fantasies. Nevertheless, *A Corner of the Table* (fig. 1), which was presented at the Salon of 1872, is worth taking note of as the fourth group portrait. At the lower left of the canvas are Verlaine and Rimbaud. The overall image is a portrayal of the Parnassian poets, who had just launched the magazine *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique*, signifying that Fantin had contact with the avant-garde literati.[16] At the same

15. For details regarding this painting, see D. Druick & M. Hoog, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–210, Miura, *op. cit.*, pp. 382–417, and Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Fantin-Latour and Still Life Symbolism in *Un atelier aux Batignolles*," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, décembre 1977, pp. 205–215. For a further detailed study on Fantin-Latour's three group portraits, *Homage to Delacroix, The Toast: Homage to the Truth, An Atelier in the Batignolles*, and *Portrait of Eduard Manet*, see also Atsushi Miura, *La représentation de l'artiste autour de Manet et Fantin-Latour* (thèse de doctorat nouveau régime, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1996).

16. The figures portrayed are in the rear from left to right, Elzéar Bonnier, Emile Blémont, and Jean Aicard. In the front row from left to right are Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Léon Valade, Ernest d'Hervilly, and Camille Pelletan. The research on this portrait is

time, there are several compositional characteristics that were evident in *An Atelier in the Batignolles*. The flowers and tableware placed on the table clearly indicate that Fantin's interest was focused on still-lifes during this period.

Fantin did not do any group portraits for a long time after *A Corner of the Table*. In 1885, he painted the last work of this type, *Around the Piano* (Musée d'Orsay), to which we will soon turn our attention.

Still-Lifes as "Flower Arrangements"

Frank Gibson, who wrote the first biography in English of Fantin-Latour, relays an episode concerning this still-life artist, which he heard directly from Mrs. Edwards. While Fantin was visiting the Edwards' in England, a lady came and asked Mrs. Edwards whether Mr. Fantin-Latour would give her lessons. Upon being told that Fantin did not teach painting, the lady said, "No, it is not painting that I want to learn. I am an artist myself. I just wondered if you could ask Mr. Fantin-Latour to teach me how to arrange flowers." [17]

Although we are not sure whether this story is true, it does tell us how well-known Fantin was as a "floral painter" in England. Moreover, it appears that his sense of composition in combining the flowers he was using as his motifs and arranging them was fine enough to impress fellow artists. As I have already mentioned, Fantin's still-lifes were the bread-and-butter of his family's life. Even after Edwin Edwards died in 1879, he kept in touch with the widow, Ruth, and continued providing floral paintings for the British art market into the 1890s. Even though there may have been some cases in which he was not so keen about painting a particular work, there is no doubt that still-lifes meant more to him than their more value as commodities. In a sense, he experimented with an even more diverse variety of expressions than he did with his portraits to find an ideal way to blend

published in *Fantin-Latour, Coin de la table*, exh. cat., by Luce Abéles, Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 1987.

17. Frank Gibson, *The Art of Henri Fantin-Latour, His Life and Works*, London, Dane's, 1924, p. 112.

[image omitted]

fig.12:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Hydrangeas, Ranunculus, and Fruit*, 1866, The Toledo Museum of Art.

and arrange the actual subjects and turn them into a work of art. As Douglas Druick points out, still-lifes provided Fantin with a "further chance to experiment in composition, colouring, and material." [18]

It was in 1861, during his stay in England, that Fantin seriously began to work on still-lifes. *Still-Life with Cup and Glass* (Private Colletion), which dates from this period, already demonstrates an outstanding sense of reality in the treatment of the subject and the way the artist expresses the reflection of light. Flowers were by far the motif Fantin chose most frequently for his still-lifes. Some composition for his early floral paintings are rather unusual. For example, there is *Autumn Bouquet* (1862, Philadelphia Museum of Art), which is a flat depiction of the flowers and vase viewed from the side against a plain background. It is possible that Fantin was aware of the unique pictures of flowers that Delacroix painted in his late years. After all, he paints bouquet beneath the portrait of the master in *Homage to Delacroix*.

Fantin experienced his initial success as a "floral painter" among

18. D. Druick & M. Hoog, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[image omitted]

fig.13:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Betrothal Still-Life*, 1869, Musée de Grenoble.

the rich Greek society in London, to which he was introduced by Whistler. Partly due to the failure of *The Toast: Homage to the Truth* in 1865, he spent most of the years 1865 and 1866 working on still-lifes that were commissioned. In 1866, for the first time, he submitted a still-life to the Salon. The still-lifes of that period were mostly full-scale tableaux consisting of flowers, fruit, and tableware, which followed the examples set by 17th-century Dutch paintings and Chardin. Fantin was no exception, but he also manifested some distinctive characteristics of his own. Let us take a look at *Hydrangeas, Ranunculus, and Fruit* (fig. 12), which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1867. The wall and table meet each other at a subtle angle, which creates an obscure space. A vase of flowers (hydrangea and ranunculus) is surrounded by strawberries, oranges, what seems to be a sugar pot, and a lacquer tray (which might be Japanese). Philippe Rousseau, a contemporary still-life painter who endeavoured to revive Chardin, may have depicted a "tea time" scene. However, in Fantin's case, there is no realistic situational setting to provide a sense of unity in the image. All we can see are traces of his struggle to overcome the difficult task of representing the stark reality of each motif

each in its unyielding form while also achieving a unified pictorial work. The photograph-like texture of this painting is the result of the artist's delicate colouring and brushwork. He has also worked passionately to distinguish the textures of hard surfaces such as transparent glass, china, and lacquerware. As far as shapes are concerned, the round orange plays the key role and from there, various solid rhythms and variations derive. From the point of view of colours, warm colours such as red, orange, and brown are dominant and enfold the viewer in their harmony. It can be considered a post-realist still-life equalling the quality of his portraits. Other examples painted during this period are *Still Life with a Carrafe, Flowers and Fruit* (1865, Tokyo, The National Museum of Western Art) and *Spring Flowers, Apples and Pears* (1866, The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Besides the paintings intended for sale, there were also still-lifes he painted for private reasons. *The Betrothal Still-life* (fig. 13) is one such example, which he gave to his fiancée Victoria Dubourg, who was also a still-life painter, in 1869. Although it is small in size, the delicate treatment of the subject is reminiscent of Chardin and each motif is accurately positioned to produce an impressive structure.

Fantin added further formative experiments in his works from the 1870s onwards. Influenced by Japonisme, he employed compositional effects such as daring cut-outs and close-ups. *Still-Life: A Corner of the Table* (The Art Institute of Chicago), which was exhibited at the Salon of 1873, evolved from the still-life motifs in his group portrait *A Corner of the Table*. The flowers and branches of the rhododendrons in the foreground are cut off at the frame, resulting in an unprecedented sense of perspective. *Flowers and Various Objects* (fig. l4), which was submitted the following year to the Salon of 1874, was even more exciting. On the table are a flowerpot and a vase of flowers and a partial view of some flowering branches that appears at the lower front of the image. Combined with such conventional motifs are a reproduction of a Hellenistic statue, a Japanese fan (also with a flower pattern), a plain canvas, and a Hiroshige-like Ukiyo-e print on the wall. By blending Western art and Japanese art in the same image, Fantin has managed to balance the unbalanced in this vertical composition. From the late 1870s, he produced more small-scale floral

[image omitted]

fig.14:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Flowers and Various Objects*, 1874, Göteborgs Konstmuseum.

paintings more to please his customers than to innovate his art. He did many simple compositions of a vase of flowers against a plain background. However, I should add that there were novel examples such as *Double Nasturtiums* (1880, Victoria & Albert Museum), which provides a close up on part of only some of the flowers and branches.

Fantin's fame as a floral artist was known not only in England but also in his home country, France. For example, in the final volume *The Past Recaptured* (*Le Temps retrouvé*) (1927), of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (*A la recheche du temps perdu*), the artist Elstir is introduced as "the artist who is cited by connoisseurs today as our leading flower-painter, superior even to Fantin-Latour."[19]

19. Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, in *A la recheche du temps perdu*, Vol. IV, Jean-Yves Tadié (dir.), Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p. 292.

Musical Inspiration

If one were to divide Fantin's œuvre by subject, the third major category after portraits and still-lifes would be his "fantasies" of imaginary scenes. Although there are some traditional subjects, the characteristic of this category is that it includes many scenes inspired by music, especially opera. It may appear contradictory for an artist who had always worked on subjects based on reality to visualize the invisible world. However, from the very beginning, alongside his interest for "reality," there was potential for Romantic reveries. In my view, as time passed by, the latter potential gradually germinated to blossom finally in the form of "fantasies."

The 1860s was, in my view, the best period of Fantin's career. However, whether or not the fact that he dealt with "realism" as the avant-garde of painting during this period fitted his inborn temperament cannot be easily determined. It was a period when even Whistler the aesthete got involved in the trend for realism as part of the generation after Courbet. No doubt, Manet's existence also stimulated Fantin's interest in realism. Nevertheless, it is true that from the late 1860s, Fantin's view of Courbet became more negative. In contrast, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, his admiration for Delacroix remained constant throughout his life. His œuvre of the 1860s are the product of a highly tense period during which an artist of Romantic aesthetics deliberately chose to express reality together with his comrades. From then on, Fantin roamed to and from the "realistic world" of portraits and still-lifes and the "imaginary world" of fantasies and eventually sank into the latter. To put it another way, he attempted to merge the art of Courbet and Manet, which gave rise to complications, and gradually resulted in his return to the art of Delacroix. As for Impressionism, he was basically critical of it, as I shall discuss this point further on in this paper.

The abovementioned two potentials in Fantin were already being reflected in his works from around 1862 to 1863, but a particularly interesting example was a painting he exhibited at the Salon of 1864. Together with *Homage to Delacroix, Tannhäuser: Venusberg* (The Los Angeles County Museum of Art) also passed the screening. Next to a

dark-coloured group portrait of people who actually existed was this painting of a scene from a Wagnerian opera painted in bright colours and misty brushstrokes. The composition of *Tannhäuser: Venusberg* is based on a Venetian masterpiece in the Musée du Louvre, but stylewise, the artist was definitely conscious of Delacroix. These two works are contrasting and yet, at the same time, closely related. That is to say, Fantin matched his literally entitled homage to Delacroix with a Delacroix-style painting in double memory of the master.

His interest in imaginary subjects was sporadic during the 1860s, but by the 1870s, his tendency towards a romantic world of aesthetics became stronger and stronger. The majority of the subjects had to do with music. Fantin was a music fanatic from the very beginning. His wife Victoria was a still-life artist and, at the same time, good at the piano. Maître, who was depicted in *An Atelier in the Batignolles*, was also an amateur pianist and often played duets with the music critic Adolphe Jullien, who wrote the first biography of Fantin. Fantin often listened to such duets. Besides being an artist, his German friend Schölderer played the violin and introduced Fantin to music by Wagner. Let us now consider the kinds of music that inspired Fantin's works.

During the 1870s, Fantin participated in a music circle hosted by the poet de Reysac and soirées held by Antoine Lascoux, a judicial officer and an admirer of Wagner. Such occasions proved splendid opportunities for Fantin to foster an appreciation for contemporary German music by Wagner, Schumann, and Brahms and Berlioz, whose works were unpopular in his own country, France. As regards themes for Fantin's pictorial works, the most influential composer was Wagner, followed by Berlioz.

It was in the late 1850s that Fantin first came across Richard Wagner (1803–1883). Baudelaire, who defended Wagner on the occasion of a performance of *Tannhäuser* in Paris in 1861, was an acquaintance of Fantin's and appears in *Homage to Delacroix*. In 1864, Fantin himself wrote how impressed he had been by the overture to *Tannhäuser* in a letter to Edwards.[20] His most crucial Wagnerian experience came in

20. Letter from Fantin-Latour to Edwin Edwards dated 26 December 1864.

1876, when he attended the actual performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Bayreuth Festival. The impact of Wagner's opera as a Gesamtkunstwerk became the inspiration of many works thereafter.

Although the initial works inspired by the Bayreuth experience were mostly pastels and lithographs, it should be noted that, from the 1880s, Fantin also began doing oil versions.[21] At first, Wagner's music was interpreted as a vast world of black and white with rubbed traces characteristic of lithography or the pale colouring of pastels, through which everything melts together under a dim light. Therefore, the oil paintings also depicted the same scenes but with a pastel-like touch. For example, *Das Rheingold, Opening Scene* was executed in lithograph and pastel between 1876 and 1877, followed by an oil version of identical composition, which was exhibited at the Salon of 1888 (fig.15). This style became more and more noticeable in his late years, although it was received both favourably and negatively. In any case, *Das Rheingold, Opening Scene* certainly expresses Fantin's sympathy for Wagner and his yearning for "fantasies" is manifested as refined poetry in the guise of elegant women. As was the case with *Tannhäuser: Venusberg*, in his fantasies, Fantin freely combines the movement of his figures to produce a flowing sense of rhythm, a feature that was not to be found in his portraits. Various scenes from *Die Walküre, Siegfried*, and *Götterdämerung* were pictorialized. In addition to *The Ring*, there are numerous works showing Fantin-Latour's devotion to Wagner, such as *The Flower Maidens in Parsifal* (1885, lithograph) and *Lohengrin: Prelude* (1892, Musée du Petit Palais).

One point we should emphasize is that what Fantin pictorialized was not his impression of pure music but scenes from narrative stage art. In that sense, his work naturally included an interest in literary matters. Consequently, it is no coincidence that we are reminded of the connection between Romantic literature and lithographs. There is nothing wrong in assuming that Fantin made lithographs of various

21. Fantin-Latour's lithographs are catalogued by Hédiard, which is reprinted in the following exhibition catalogue: Germain Hédiard, *Fanitin-Latour : Catalogue de l'Œuvre lithographique du Maître*, Paris, Librairie de l'art ancien et moderne, 1906 ; réédition, Genève, Musée d'art et d'histoire, *Fantin-Latour : Lithographies*, exh. cat., Genève, Editions du Tricorne, 1980, pp. 47–144.

[image omitted]

fig.15:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *Das Rheingold : Opening Scene*, 1888, Hamburger Kunsthalle.

scenes from *The Ring* in the same way that Delacroix did illustrations for *Faust and Hamlet*. Another element Fantin's work held in common with Romanticism was the sense that painting, literature, and music all resonated in the name of "the arts." It was Fantin that mediated between Romanticism and Symbolism in the aesthetics of a "correspondence among the arts". As a result, he ended up playing the role of a late Romanticist and a pioneering Symbolist. Fantin in his late years ranked closer to Moreau or Redon than Manet.

Returning to Wagner, he painted *Around the Piano* in 1885, depicting a Wagnerian gathering around the composer Chabrier, which was his fifth and final group portrait.[22] According to one of the

22. Standing from left to right are Adolphe Jullien (music critic and pianist), Arthur Boisseau (violinist), Camille Benoît (musician and curator at the Louvre), Antoine Lascoux

models, Adolphe Jullien, Fantin began by painting the individual figures or small groups and then, as a final step, gathered everyone to check the overall effect.[23] The motionless impression of the figures and their psychological isolation can be explained by this method of production. Fantin thus assembled a gathering of composers, performers, and music critics who shared an admiration for Wagner. In the same year, 1885, he also provided lithographs for *Revue wagnérienne* launched by Edouard Dujardin. Viewing this painting in the context of the group portraits of artists Fantin had been working on from the 1860s, we get the impression that the evolution of his work has reached its natural conclusion here in art, literature, and music.

The dramatic works by Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), a key figure in French Romantic music, were not appreciated so highly in his own country, France. It was only from the late 1870s that Fantin became so enthusiastic about Berlioz, but his admiration is clearly expressed in *The Commemoration* (fig. 16), a major work submitted to the Salon of 1876. Following *Homage to Schumann*, which remained unfinished, Fantin conceived this idea of an homage to Berlioz. He elaborated his plans in a letter to Schölderer.[24] According to that letter, the woman at the centre standing in front of the grave is "Clio," the muse of history, and the figure in lamentation to her left with a lyre on her lap is "the allegory of music." The figures at the right derive from the major works by Berlioz. From top to bottom, they are the angel in his oratorio *The Childhood of Christ,* Marguerite (offering a wreath) from his dramatic legend *The Damnation of Faust*, Dido, Queen of Carthage (holding a golden branch) from his opera *The Trojans*, and the lovers in his dramatic symphony *Romeo and Juliet*. The titles of these four pieces are inscribed on the scroll Clio is holding to emphasize their immortality. The man offering a wreath at the lower right is regarded a "contemporary figure," but we might also see it as the alter ego of Fantin himself. In any case, *The Commemoration*, painted in admira-

(judicial officer who travelled to Bayreuth with Fantin-Latour in 1876), and Vincent D'Indy (composer). Seated from left to right are Emmanuel Chabrier (composer), Edmond Maître (pianist), and Amédée Pigeon (novelist and art critic).

23. Adolphe Jullien, *Fantin-Latour, sa vie et ses amitiés*, Paris, Lucien Laveur, 1909, p. 130.

24. Letter from Fantin-Latour to Otto Schölderer dated 9 February 1876.

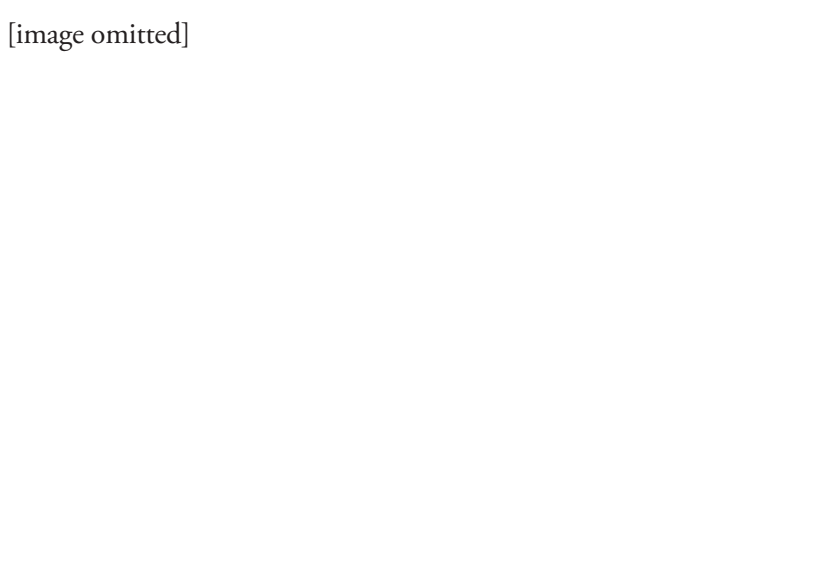

fig.16:
Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Commemoration*, 1876, Musée de Grenoble.

tion of the glory of the departed genius, was the first full-scale allegory since *The Toast: Homage to the Truth* and exhibits a fine 19th-century example of the application of old iconographic traditions. Fantin did many other oil paintings and lithographs portraying narrative scenes of works by Berlioz.

Fantin's "fantasies" were not all based on music. There were examples of traditional themes such as Toilet of Venus, the type of which was produced increasingly in the artist's late years. By the 1890s, Fantin's fame was firmly established and his exhibits at the Salon were subject to official purchases. The City of Paris purchased *Helen* (Musée du Petit Palais) in 1892 and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (Musée du Petit Palais) in 1897. *Night* (1897, Paris, Musée d'Orsay) received the honour of being purchased by the nation. At last, the time had come for him to be freed from having to produce those bread-and-butter still-lifes. From then on, there was no need for Fantin to worry about financial problems and he was able to concentrate on painting as he liked. The themes he was partial to at this stage were imaginary

images of female nudes at their "toilet" or "bathing." He repeatedly produced "fantasies" in a Delacroix-like style, which emerge from out of a dim forest. It was what might be called Fantin's utopia in his late years, when he was affectionate toward the faint beauty lurking in his own depths. However, they were so self-indulgent and repeatedly produced that one cannot deny that some lack sufficient tension.

Having started out by inheriting Romanticism, from the late 1880s onwards, Fantin's "fantasies" had to respond to the anti-Impressionist trends that were becoming notable in the art world. Once consistent in his own sense of value, quite unintentionally, Fantin anticipated the shift towards *fin-de-siècle* Symbolism.

The Artist Who Turned His Back on Impressionism

Fantin-Latour remains one of the most "unknown artists" of 19th-century France. Nowadays, we tend to view 19th-century French painting from the point of view of the "winners," i.e. Delacroix, Courbet, Manet, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and innovative Modernism leading to the 20th-century avant-garde. Consequently, even though he was a friend of Manet's, having rebelled against Impressionist painting, Fantin is rather awkward for us to place. Regardless of individual taste, at present historical interpretation is such that it is theoretically impossible for Fantin's œuvre to receive positive appreciation. The best that one can say is that he was a favourable artist close to Manet but not so daring as Manet or mention him episodically on account of his group portraits of artists.

Indeed, there is a significant difference between Fantin's paintings and Impressionist paintings. Whereas the Impressionist artists cut off the past and entered "modernity," in Fantin's case as was the case with Manet of the same generation, tradition and innovation, classicism and modernism coexisted and rivaled each other. This was evident primarily in his treatment of realistic themes, in which he persisted in painting figure-based pictures. Unlike the Impressionist artists, he did not do any landscapes. His attitude towards portraits firmly adhered to traditional allegory so that he was among the last generation to

experience the conflict with History Painting in the broad sense of the term. To Fantin, portraits remained an exclusive subject in his subject.

Unlike Impressionism, which treated the *plein-air* world as its subject, Fantin chose to represent the enclosed domestic world. His limited scope of themes converged into women's figures and other portraits "indoors", "indoor" still-lifes, and fantasies visualized "inside himself." Fantin was an artist who had nothing to do whatsoever with natural light outdoors. What is more, whether indoors or in his own imaginary world, he chose only people and objects that he knew intimately as his motifs and placed them in a tranquil space to depict them over and over again. Most of the models in his portraits close relatives, his still-lifes are of familiar flowers, and his fantasies are composed of musical pieces of which he was particularly fond.

Furthermore, unlike the Impressionist artists who depicted a momentary image of a transitional world, Fantin preferred the motionless world in which time had come to a stop. His figures were portrayed in motionless poses reminiscent of early photographic portraits and his flowers arranged in an interior were, in that sense, the ideal "model." His fantasies were an exception in that there were some scenes with movement, but even in these, his memory of masterworks of the past exerted great influence. To our surprise, Lecoq de Boisbaudran's teachings may have borne fruit here.

There was also a significant difference in technique compared to Impressionism. In summer 1874, Fantin visited to Manet, who was staying at Monet's house in Argenteuil. He wrote to Schölderer as follows: "What I see here seems loose and so easygoing. The drawings are soft, the colour tone tasteless, and particularly unfinished and void of effort." [25] Fantin seems to have regarded an Impressionist technique by which Manet was also influenced in the mid-1870s, as a kind of decadence in its ignoring the fundamentals of painting and abandoned careful finishing. He was not to be satisfied merely by pursuing the visual effect. His colouring places more emphasis on chroma than on brightness, which was a characteristic inherited from Delacroix. Similar to the Romantic master, Fantin's ultimate aim was to represent the spirit.

25. Letter from Fantin-Latour to Otto Schölderer dated 16 Auguste 1874.

Is it useless to insist on reevaluating Fantin-Latour, who continuously produced paintings with his back turned on Impressionism? I do not think so. Not only Fantin-Latour but also 19th-century French painting as a whole should be understood and evaluated more freely from multiple points of view.

In the case of Fantin, firstly, he should be largely appreciated as a "Post-Realist" of the 1860s. The paintings of the 1860s, including those by Manet, Whistler, and Legros, have not been examined that minutely until now. This is due to the historical circumstances wherein they were difficult to understand and examined that minutely Manet was interpreted too heavily in the context of Impressionism. In reconsidering the grand question of "Realism" in 19th-century French painting, the avant-garde painting of this period, which we have redefined employing the terms "cognitive realism" and "compositional realism," is worthy of being reexamined as a genre that created its own unique image. During this decade, there was a strong awareness of the need to perceive and represent "reality." The sheer numbers of works composed and their innovativeness were remarkable. As a portraitist, Fantin was significantly influential during this particular decade in the history of art. His group portraits of artists should be appreciated not only as historical evidence of prominent figures but as artistic works representing homage and manifesto.

Secondly, although there is hardly need for repetition, I would like to confirm that Fantin was one of the finest "floral painters" of the 19th-century. While inheriting some elements in Chardin's works, he added a modern touch and created still-lifes that are simply a joy to the eye. How charming is every single petal and leaf he painted are!

Thirdly, there is the subtle question of Romantic "fantasies." It cannot be denied that the quality of Fantin's works that indicate his aesthetic awareness, in a long line from Delacroix to Symbolism, are somewhat erratic. Even so, he employed diverse means such as oils, pastels, and lithography to produce psychologically provocative scenes and there exist some fine noteworthy examples. There is still room for him to be studied from the point of view of an artist who deepened the relationship between art and music.

Lastly, it should not be forgotten that Fantin played a significant

role in the history of artistic intercourse. He cultivated profound ties with England through Whistler and still-lifes, and with Germany through Schölderer and music. Therefore, in future studies of the history of 19th-century European art in more than one country, Fantin would serve as an ideal site to examine such couvergences.

Having analyzed the overall image of Fantin as an artist, he may appear an artist who was good at taking in diverse elements and balancing them. He may also be misunderstood as an artist who cleverly chose the middle path between Academism and innovation. However, such images are mistaken. Judging from his remaining works and letters, he was essentially a sincere follower of "art for art's sake." Supported by his ethical consciousness, Fantin most honestly pursued the 19th-century ideal that painting was to be the sole purpose and that life should be dedicated to art. Just like other artists who were serious about innovating painting during that period, to Fantin, "truth" was an aesthetic creed that he manifested under his own responsibility with the determination that he would be persistent in his own view of painting and sensibility. This was similar but not equal to "truth" as the aesthetic ideal of Academism stripped of all its contents. Starting out from such circumstances, to the very end, Fantin followed the path he believed in, one that did not intersect with Impressionism.

In a collection of essays entitled *De David à Degas* (1927), the artist Jacques-Emile Blanche, who was a good friend of the novelist Proust, once commented on Fantin's subtle historical position as follows: "Fantin-Latour was fashionable and always the talk of the town, yet, less amidst the innovators so much as to their side."[26] A corollary to this: While Fantin-Latour may well have been at the innovators' side, he nonetheless maintained a unique world of his own throughout his life.

Figures

fig. 1: Henri Fantin-Latour, *A Corner of the Table*, 1872, Oil on canvas, 160×225cm, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

fig. 2: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Self-Portrait, Standing Holding Paintbrush*,1859, Oil on can-

26. Jacques-Emile Blanche, *De David à Degas*, Paris, Emile-Paul frères, 1919, p. 6.

vas, 101×82cm, Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble.

fig. 3: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Two Sisters*, 1859, Oil on canvas, 98×130cm, Saint Louis, The Saint Louis Museum.

fig. 4: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Homage to Delacroix*, 1864, Oil on canvas, 160×250cm, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

fig. 5: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Reading (Portrait of Marie Fantin-Latour)*, 1863, Oil on canvas, 100×80cm, Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

fig. 6: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Drawing Lesson*, *or Portraits*, 1879, Oil on canvas, Bruxelles, Musée royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique.

fig. 7: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait of the English-painter Ridley*, 1861, Oil on canvas, 73×60cm, Private collection.

fig. 8: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait of Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Edwards*, 1875, Oil on canvas, 130×98cm, London, Tate.

fig. 9: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Dubourg Family*, 1878, Oil on canvas, 146×170cm, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

fig. 10: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Edouard Manet*, 1867, Oil on canvas, 117.5×90cm, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago.

fig. 11: Henri Fantin-Latour, *An Atelier in the Batignolles*, 1870, Oil on canvas, 204×273cm, Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

fig. 12: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Hydrangeas, Ranunculus, and Fruit*, 1866, Oil on canvas, 73×59cm, Toledo, The Toledo Museum of Art.

fig. 13: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Betrothal Still-Life*, 1869, Oil on canvas, 32×29.5cm, Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble.

fig. 14: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Flowers and Various Objects*, 1874, Oil on canvas, 116×90cm, Göteborg, Göteborgs Konstmuseum.

fig. 15: Henri Fantin-Latour, *Das Rheingold : Opening Scene*, 1888, Oil on canvas, 116.5×79cm, Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle.

fig. 16: Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Commemoration*, 1876, Oil on canvas, 220×170cm, Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble.