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JOHN ZAROBELL

The story of French marine painting in the nineteenth century remains largely untold.
Despite a handful of important studies and exhibitions, relatively little has been written
about how and why French painters approached marine subjects in this era.[1] The British
marine tradition has been explored in more depth, with particular emphasis on leading
figures such as Joseph Mallord William Turner and John Constable. However, critics and
historians have insisted for a hundred and fifty years that the most significant development
in French painting in the nineteenth century was the rise of landscape, which has led to
the perception that marine painting was secondary, a sort of footnote for enthusiasts.

Marine painting, in various guises, was actually central to the progress of the arts in
France. Who could imagine a history of French painting that did not include Théodore
Géricault's *The Raft of the "Medusa"* of 1819 (fig. 11)? This is just one of a series of marine
paintings that riveted the public's attention, as history painting caught up with contem-
porary politics and provided a means for viewers to come to terms with burning issues of
the day. Marine painting was often practiced by specialists, and it developed alongside a
burgeoning French navy that sponsored depictions of its present and past exploits. It was
also practiced by countless artists, including Eugène Delacroix and Jean-François Millet,
who were better known for other genres of production. Further, marine painting, like
landscape painting, to which it was closely linked, reflected fundamental changes in artis-
tic practice, as artists moved out of the studio and away from the conventions associated
with it. In the second half of the nineteenth century, artists worked on-site in locations
devoted to leisure and tourism. Most important, sea painting flourished at mid-century
among progressive painters who explored the formal properties and possibilities of their
medium and developed innovative methods and approaches that allowed them to achieve
effects unprecedented in painting.

One reason that the technical and historical significance of nineteenth-century French
marine painting has been overlooked is the difficulty in determining what, exactly, con-
stitutes a marine painting. While a landscape painting is relatively self-declarative—any
depiction of the world outside qualifies—marine painting is more difficult to define. Is it
any scene that includes water, or does it have to be all sea? What about harbor or beach
scenes? Does there have to be a ship or sailboat? Salt or fresh water? The list of potentially
defining questions goes on, and each successive generation of marine painters sought new
ways of answering them.

When Edouard Manet began to paint seascapes in the 1860s, a distinct tradition of
French marine painting had already been established in France. Although a history of this
tradition is clearly outside the scope of this essay, I seek here to provide a historical sense
of what constituted a marine painting in nineteenth-century France and to explore some
of the most prominent examples of the genre at mid-century. In doing so, I hope to set the
stage for Manet's innovative contributions to sea painting.

Opposite page: Louis-Gabriel-Eugène
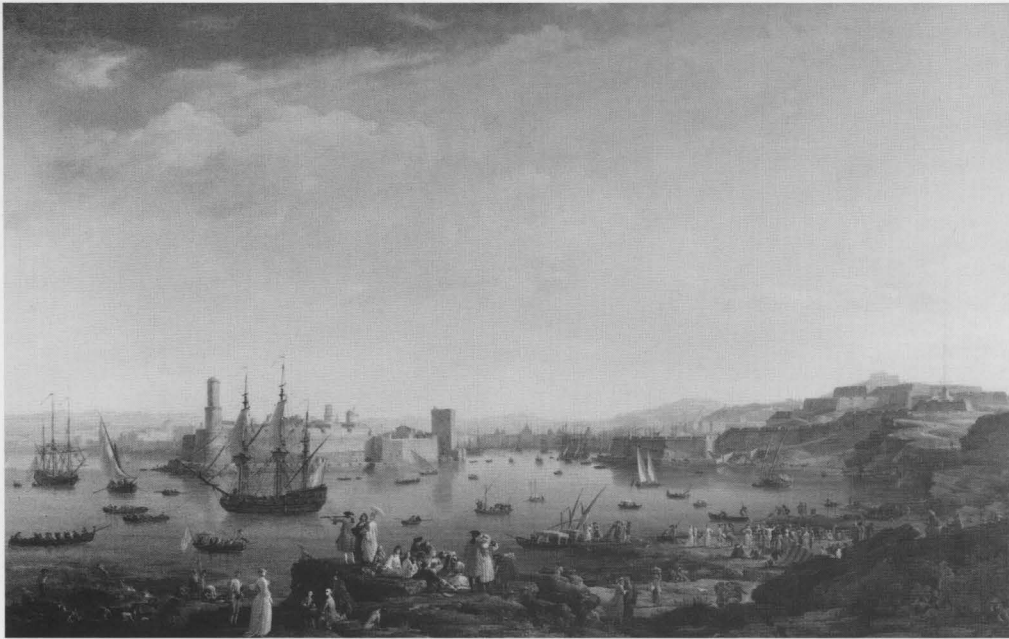Isabey, *Fishing Village* (plate 9, detail)

The Genealogy of French Marine Painting

French marine painting arguably reached its peak in the eighteenth century with Claude-Joseph Vernet's *Ports of France* series of 1753–65.[2] Through this royal commission, Vernet (1714–1789) brought the seaside to central France. One goal of the series was to unify the country by representing its outer limits. While the ports signified France's boundaries, they also symbolized its connection to the outside world through maritime trade, which increased considerably in the eighteenth century. Vernet's *Entrance to the Port of Marseilles* of 1754 (fig. 9), for example, depicts a panoramic view of the Bay of Marseilles including both maritime activities and social life. Unlike his more idealized marine pictures of storm-tossed seas, shipwrecks, and rustic ports, this topographical view provides a more or less accurate representation of Marseilles at the moment it was painted. The infusion of Mediterranean light and the various groups of pleasure seekers add elements of naturalism to this otherwise highly structured composition. The classical balance of Vernet's composition demonstrates both his academic training and his ability to draw upon the example of Claude Gellée, also known as Claude Lorrain (1600–1682). Considered the prototype of French marine painters, Claude often featured mythological scenes or themes drawn from classical history in his seascapes. Vernet, however, dispensed with these classical elements, instead absorbing Claude's pictorial interests in light, atmosphere, and compositional balance and employing these effects to represent scenes of everyday life in the ports of France.

Fig. 10. Louis-Philippe Crépin, *"The Redoubtable" at the Battle of Trafalgar*, 1805. Oil on canvas, 41⅜ × 57⅛ inches (105 × 145 cm). Musée de la Marine, Paris

Although the marine painters of the Revolution and Empire periods (1789–1815) never equaled Vernet's groundbreaking achievements in the genre, he continued to serve as an inspiration, and his interest in dramatic themes such as stormy seas and shipwrecks found expression in their work particularly in depictions of naval battles. One such painter was Louis-Philippe Crépin (1772–1841). He, like Vernet, was trained in the academic tradition, but his *"The*

Fig. 11. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the "Medusa,"* 1819. Oil on canvas, 193⁵⁄₁₆ × 281⁷⁄₈ inches (491 × 716 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris. RF 1667

When this painting was first shown at the Salon of 1819, it caused a scandal due to the graphic nature of the depiction, but also because the notorious incident it illustrated underlined abuses of power in the French navy. When the *Medusa* struck a reef and sank off the coast of Senegal in 1816, there were not enough lifeboats to hold all of the passengers. A raft was built for the excess passengers and tied to the lifeboats. After a day at sea, however, the line was cut, leaving those on the raft to drift for thirteen days on the high seas. Only fifteen of the original 150 passengers survived.

Redoubtable" at the Battle of Trafalgar of 1805 (fig. 10) is entirely different from Vernet's topographical or dramatic scenes. Crépin's painting depicts a battle scene in which the ships cover the length of the canvas, blocking out any sense of the natural environment or atmospheric conditions. His passion was for the details of naval engagement, including the particular ships that participated and the specific events of the battle. Battle paintings such as this one, typical of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, are distant indeed from Vernet's almost philosophical meditations on nature and the human place within it and were produced with a different sort of patron in mind. For Crépin and other artists of his day, a marine painting was the re-creation of a historical naval battle made primarily for the glory of the state or for a naval officer who could afford a painted commemoration of a momentous engagement.[3] In these paintings, the sea is primarily a field of activity, and, unlike Vernet, the artists did not study the conditions of light and atmosphere so much as reconstruct them from an official account.

In the hands of Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), however, competing detailed accounts of a naval disaster were woven into a shocking and horrifying masterpiece that did not glorify, but in fact vilified, the French navy and the Restoration government under Louis XVIII. *The Raft of the "Medusa"* (fig. 11) turned the standard formula for official marine painting on its head, providing a vivid, grotesque depiction of the official abuse of power.[4] This enormous painting was the crowning achievement of a Romantic artist who worked within the broadly accepted definitions of art in his period but nevertheless visibly rejected the authority of both the Neo-Classical tradition and the Restoration government.

The Raft of the "Medusa" was a sensation when it was first presented to the public at the Salon of 1819. Critical estimation of the work, both in the nineteenth century and today, holds it as not only the defining moment of French Romantic painting but also the most important marine painting of nineteenth-century France. In his intense preparation for this work, Géricault assiduously studied all of the accounts of the 1816 event and even interviewed some of the survivors. Thus, the picture emerges primarily from factual accounts of a real event. In its mood and its graphic depiction of the suffering of the figures on the raft, however, Géricault's marine composition aims to tell a universal story through the

particular details of a raft lost at sea. What is communicated most forcefully is not the event itself, but rather the surging ocean and the human inability to master it. This effect is accomplished through formal means such as the roiling gray swells that surround the raft and the high horizon line with a small ship in the distance. These devices make the sea seem like the main character of the story, against which the pyramid of human figures must struggle for survival. *The Raft of the "Medusa"* represents an unprecedented and powerful depiction of the sea.

A Panorama of French Marine Painting: Three Predominant Styles

Among the various forms of seascapes that existed in France around the middle of the nineteenth century, the most prominent, in terms of numbers of paintings produced and official commissions, were naval battle scenes. Significant historical developments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made official accounts of naval battles likely subjects for marine painting. This was an era of great advancement for the French navy, due in part to France's colonial ventures, and in 1830 the new title and office of Official Painter of the Navy was instituted. Although any number of painters working at the time could have held this title, it was first awarded to Crépin and Théodore Gudin (1802–1880). Other artists to hold the title during the July Monarchy (1830–48) included Pierre-Julien Gilbert (1783–1860) and Antoine Léon Morel-Fatio (1810–1871). These painters and others were charged with the ambitious project of producing a complete history of French naval engagements for the newly created Musée de l'Histoire at the Palace of Versailles. Between the announcement of the museum in 1836 and the fall of Citizen-King Louis Philippe's regime in 1848, hundreds of naval battles were commissioned to decorate the halls of Versailles.[5]

Although it was not commissioned for the museum, Gilbert's 1832 painting *Naval Combat between the French Vessel "Formidable" and Three English Vessels* (plate 5) easily found a home there. While this is clearly a naval battle painting produced for an official audience, it

nevertheless seeks to communicate a sense of light and atmosphere in order to evoke the setting, namely the southern coast of Spain. Historical detail is married to atmospheric particularity as the artist attempts to provide a sense of both the time of day and the climate in which this battle was fought. The dynamic of the battle can be read from the position of the ships in the water. The clouds of smoke from the vanquished ships drift up and mix with the clouds in the golden sky. Despite the unfolding story of human victory and tragedy, the water is calm at day's end. A frigate in the right foreground approaches the scene of battle, obscuring the setting sun.

The later work of Léopold LeGuen (1828–1895), another painter in the tradition of official marines, adds a new twist on the theme of naval engagements and demonstrates the persistence of this genre beyond the July Monarchy and into Napoléon III's Second Empire (1852–70). LeGuen's 1853 painting *Naval Combat between "The Rights of Man" and the English Vessel "Indefatigable" and the Frigate "Amazon"* (plate 6) is more mannered than previous battle pictures. Fewer ships are involved and the engagement is more dramatic. It seems that a change in weather is afoot, with gray clouds covering the sky. In addition, the sun is setting and night is about to fall. These atmospheric conditions provide for colorful effects in the water but also presage a shift in the fate of the French vessel, whose demise is forecast by the collapse of the two main masts. Here one can see the particularity of Gilbert's account giving way to a general, more melodramatic style of battle painting, perhaps best demonstrated by the foreground figures attempting to survive on the sinking dinghy. This work may also reflect a change in the times for naval battles, and thus for battle painting. In 1847 the last first-class warship powered solely by sails was built in France. From then on, all warships would be powered by a combination of steam and sail. By the time this

PLATE 7
Eugène Delacroix
Shipwreck on the Coast
1862
Oil on canvas
15¼ × 18⅜ inches (38.8 × 46.7 cm)
Private collection, courtesy of
Richard L. Feigen & Co. 20315-P
AIC, PMA

work was made, LeGuen's painting was a nostalgic re-creation of a lost era of battles between sailing ships on the high seas. By contrast, steam-powered craft would be featured prominently in the marines of Manet and his followers.

Well into the Second Empire, the Romantic tradition offered a competing form of marine painting pitched to a different audience than the one for officially commissioned battle scenes. Although the height of this genre was unquestionably Géricault's *Raft of the "Medusa,"* it also includes a number of seascapes by his friend and follower Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863). Delacroix first made a name for himself with his *Barque of Dante* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), shown at the Salon of 1822, and he continued to paint seascapes throughout his career, notably *The Shipwreck of Don Juan* of 1840 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and numerous versions of *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* executed between 1841 and 1853 (see fig. 2). Delacroix painted large-scale state commissions during the Second Republic (1848–52) and Second Empire (1852–70), but earlier in his career he had developed an audience of bourgeois and aristocratic patrons who bought less ambitious (though highly developed) works on a smaller scale.

One such painting is Delacroix's *Shipwreck on the Coast* of 1862 (plate 7), which is in many ways emblematic of Romantic seascapes. It is a scene that pairs a representation of the sea with a human drama, in this case the wreck of a small boat. The viewer peers out at a choppy sea through the rocky grotto that forms a frame within the frame. While it is a late work, it is similar to his earlier seascapes in its sense of motion and drama, implicitly connected to the tumultuous sea. *Shipwreck* also benefits from Delacroix's firsthand study of the sea in the immediacy of the touch and the luminous sensation the work produces. In a series of pastel and watercolor studies, culminating in *The Sea at Dieppe* of 1853 (fig. 12), an oil study rendered on panel, Delacroix took on the challenge of representing the immensity and emptiness of the sea with a freshness and immediacy that suggest *plein-air* painting. In this non-narrative work he employed a high horizon line and rhythmic brushstrokes to communicate the movement of the waves, technical innovations that lead the viewer to contemplate the sea as a subject in itself, free from human dramas or naval battles that take place on its surface.

Fig. 12. Eugène Delacroix, *The Sea at Dieppe*, 1853. Oil on panel, 13¼ × 20¹⁄₁₆ inches (35 × 51 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris. RF 1979-46

Delacroix's friend and fellow Romantic painter Paul Huet (1803–1869) also produced numerous marines. Like Delacroix, Huet had been exhibiting in the official Salon since the 1820s but made his living by selling small-scale works to private collectors. Whereas Delacroix was influenced primarily by the human excesses expressed in Géricault's work, Huet was a quieter, more intimate painter whose landscapes derived from Dutch models by way of Georges Michel (1763–1843), an early painter of the landscapes of France. Both Huet and Delacroix were also acquainted with Richard Parkes Bonington (1801–1828), a British watercolorist who introduced them to the seascapes of Constable and Turner. Huet practiced both landscape and marine painting throughout his career, but his most famous marines were produced during the Second Empire. *Breakers at Granville Point* (plate 8), exhibited at the Salon of 1853, is a somber and moody representation of France's seacoast. Gray tones predominate in this somewhat gloomy composition, providing a viewer with the chilly sensation of being on the coast on a stormy winter evening. Though the picture is localized both by its title and by its depiction of the half-light of the Normandy coast in winter, the sea is here presented as a universal force of nature whose power cannot be contained even by the distant cliffs. In Huet's composition, the immediacy of the particular visual experience is more important than the clear delineation of landscape forms.

Along with the official and Romantic traditions of marine painting existed a third, the picturesque, which drew its inspiration directly from Bonington as well as other illustrators and lithographers. The most adept proponent of this tradition in France was Louis-Gabriel-Eugène Isabey (1803–1886). Early in his life, as an officer in the French navy, he made sketches that were used by the official Navy painters, including Gudin and Gilbert.[6] By 1855 the critic Théophile Gautier called Isabey "incontestably our best marine painter,"[7] and the influence this artist exercised on the future of sea painting was considerable, as he was the teacher of Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), among others. Isabey's pictorial production was so copious and diverse—including landscapes and historical scenes— that categories such as "marines" or "picturesque seascapes" do not suffice to sum up his oeuvre. His paintings were famous enough to be illustrated in art journals and elsewhere, and he sometimes produced works specifically for illustration.[8] Isabey's *Fishing Village* of 1854–56 (plate 9) is an excellent example of his mastery of the picturesque tradition. This is not a scene from the high seas but a coastal view, the artist's specialty. The almost monotone image is true to the generalized locale (unlike in Huet's work, we do not know what village is pictured), which includes rows of houses climbing a rise in the distance. Isabey is interested in the particularities of the atmosphere here; however, as in Vernet's *Ports of France* paintings, the artist is preoccupied by the everyday activities transpiring on the shore. Like the Romantic artists, Isabey worked predominantly for private collectors. Such a large work was the proper format for the official Salon, but this picture was never shown there. In fact, Isabey rarely participated in Salons during the Second Empire. While this disappearance from the Salon could be attributed to a variety of factors, it takes on a certain

significance as we turn to the more experimental artists who embraced marine painting in the 1860s.

The Sea and Its Representations in Second Empire France

Marine painting is dying, marine painting is dead. Without a doubt, I am not the first to sound this cry of distress. But the sickness increases daily; and, if one does not protect against it, this genre, that was represented by the Ruysdaels and the Backhuysens, that alone made the glory of Joseph Vernet and a large measure of [Claude] Lorrain's, will be completely abandoned. Already the public's indifference surrounds it. Artists with a certain notoriety who are protected from this indifference, Isabey, Gudin, Lepoittevin, cultivate the genre with some success; but the young artists, who have a name to make, do not dare adventure into it. . . . Young artists retire from the genre one by one, like sailors on an imperiled ship; and one sees them pass on to landscape, or portraiture, or interior scenes.[9]

As Jules Castagnary suggests in his review of the Salon of 1861, sea painting seemed to be in decline by the early 1860s, just as the young Edouard Manet was about to begin his investigation of the genre. However, given that critics in Second Empire France had a propensity for bemoaning artistic decline, it would be wise to be skeptical about Castagnary's remarks and further investigate the transformation of marine painting in this period.

To do so, we must take into account some broad historical shifts. During the Second Empire the city of Paris was almost entirely rebuilt under the direction of the enterprising Baron von Haussmann. Paris was also increasingly connected to surrounding regions, both physically and culturally, primarily through the development of the railroad. Emperor Napoléon III, who strove to provide a good climate for business, helped to advance the railroad, and by the 1850s a Parisian could reach the Mediterranean (Marseilles) or the Channel coast (Le Havre, Fécamp) by rail in a matter of hours.

While access to the sea was thus assured even to the middle classes, it is not clear that the general public initially was interested in making the journey. In his book *The Lure of the Sea*, Alain Corbin notes that at least since the late eighteenth century people of means had been taking seaside holidays, and in the early nineteenth century the salubrious effects of sea air were suggested as a salve for those living in increasingly soot-choked cities. Although the British side of the Channel coast was developed first, a resort existed at Dieppe as early as the 1820s. However, the vogue for sea bathing did not really reach the general population in France until it was promoted by Napoléon III and Empress Eugénie, who were passionate about the seaside.[10]

Robert L. Herbert, in his work on the marine paintings of Claude Monet, provides another explanation for this trend. Tracing the development of one of Monet's favorite seaside haunts, Etretat, Herbert concludes that it was artists who first made such places into tourist destinations. The phenomenon of the artist colony on the Normandy coast goes back as far as the 1820s, when Bonington, Isabey, and others traversed the seacoast in order to produce views for illustrated books and travel guides. Herbert points to a hotel in Etretat, known originally as Rendez-Vous des Artistes, as one example of such artist colonies; another is the famous Auberge Saint-Siméon in Honfleur. At the latter, Barbizon artists such as Camille Corot (1796–1875), Constant Troyon (1810–1865), and Charles Daubigny (1817–1878) mixed with a new generation of marine painters, including Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819–1891) and Boudin (see, respectively, Zarobell, pp. 125–29 and 131–37 below). Artistic residency on the coast led to picture-making in the form of both

Salon paintings and popular illustrations. Such images encouraged adventurous travelers to seek out these remote locales, which led in turn to the production of guidebooks, the building of resorts, and, eventually, the transformation of these sleepy seaside towns into flourishing vacation destinations for urban dwellers.[11]

As the sea became more accessible to the larger French public, its cultural meaning also began to shift. While such a broad cultural transformation is difficult to pinpoint, a new sensibility toward the sea was clearly emerging around mid-century, perhaps best exemplified by Jules Michelet's 1861 book titled simply *La Mer* [The Sea]. Michelet, who had begun his career in 1830 by publishing what soon came to be regarded as the quintessential history of the French Revolution, by 1861 was a predominant cultural figure in France. His tribute to the sea, which became an instant classic and was reprinted numerous times, emphasizes the subjective response to an all-encompassing natural world that can serve as a source of personal rejuvenation.[12] For Michelet, the sea was in dialogue, not just with humans, but with the cosmos:

> Great, very great is the difference between the two elements: the earth is mute and the
> sea speaks. The ocean is a voice. It speaks to distant stars, responds to their movement
> in its grave and solemn language. It speaks to the earth, to the coast, with a sympathetic
> accent, a dialogue with echoes; plaintive on one hand, menacing on the other, it grinds
> or sighs. Above all, the sea speaks to humans.[13]

The symbolic dynamic of the sea would perhaps not be fully explored until the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), but already in 1855 Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) had published a poem in *Revue de Paris* titled "L'Homme et la mer" [Man and the Sea]. While the poem is hardly an inducement to visit the seaside, depicting as it does the tragic struggle of humans with the overpowering sea, it does suggest a strong comparison between the power of the sea and the passion of humans and ends by referring to man and the sea as "frères implacables" [implacable brothers].[14] Baudelaire's poem points to one reason that painters and others pursued the sea in this period: it offered a reflection of their own lives and demanded an internal response. The sea became a subject of paintings and a destination for tourists because viewers began to apprehend something in the water they had not seen there before. Further, this new understanding of the sea was something that they wanted to consider and reflect upon. It would open up new realms in the exploration of human existence, yet each individual could understand it personally.

If this social and cultural exploration of the sea was fully under way by 1861, why did Castagnary write of the potential demise of marine painting? There are a number of reasons for Castagnary's comments. Official painting of naval battles had indeed fallen off by this point, and though a few famous practitioners continued to depict engagements at sea, the Versailles commissions had ceased and government support overall had declined considerably. Further, through endless repetition the naval battle motif had become generalized and less than original. The example of LeGuen has already been mentioned; another important figure was Gudin, one of the founding members of the navy's elite group of official painters. By the time Castagnary wrote his review, Gudin was listed as one of the elders of marine painting and, along with Isabey, was certainly considered one of the leading lights of the seascape genre. Gudin's most famous painting, *The Burning of the "Kent"* of 1838 (fig. 13) was an epic work of breathtaking scale. This hugely ambitious picture employed Turner's aesthetic developments in the realm of seascape in order to render a dramatic contemporary tragedy. Though it was an official commission, Gudin clearly aimed to compete with the overpowering sensations created by Géricault's *Raft of the "Medusa"*

(fig. 11). Whether a viewer feels that Gudin achieved his goal, this marine possesses a vivid intensity not present in paintings of naval engagements and beach scenes the artist produced in the Second Empire, which were more modest in scale and ambition. While he painted a wide variety of sea motifs in his later years, none approached the impact of his earlier compositions.

Quite apart from any decline of the genre, official marine painting had never held great promise in the eyes of some critics, who found it an inherently false and theatrical staging of supposedly historical naval battles that were, in fact, quite distant from the lives of the cultured urbanites who saw such works at the Salon. For example, despite the sonorous praise heaped on an artist like Gudin by many critics, others saw his works as easy entertainment for an uncritical public. Gudin's use of atmospheric effects, as seen by a critic such as Louis Peisse, was not meant to achieve a sense of verisimilitude but rather to please the viewer through artificial means.[15] In this sense, Gudin's productions could not have been more distinct from the movement among independent artists experimenting with marine painting as a means to explore the intimate and personal response to nature and to place.

There was, in fact, something like an explosion of marine painting in the 1860s among artists not connected with the Academy or bound by official commissions. However, this new movement fulminating on the Normandy coast would likely not have come to the attention of a Salon reviewer, since its products were not, for the most part, Salon paintings, but rather pastels, watercolors, and small paintings (*études*). As the behemoths of official marine painting declined in artistic importance, the field was left open to experimental artists who did not much care about their relationship to the artistic establishment in Paris and who sought, in the sea, a means of furthering their inquiries into the relationship between the self and the natural world. Following the example of established painters such as Delacroix, Huet, and Isabey, all of whom continued to make seascapes during the Second Empire, a number of independent artists began to turn to marine painting, devel-

Fig. 14. Jean-François Millet, *The Cliffs at Gréville*, 1867. Pastel on paper, 17⅛ × 21¼ inches (43.5 × 54 cm). Ohara Museum, Kurashiki, Japan

oping their new techniques in the laboratory of the seacoast. Among them were artists who would eventually achieve fame—and change the course of art history—including Manet, Daubigny, Millet, Jongkind, Boudin, Monet, Gustave Courbet, Berthe Morisot, and Frédéric Bazille. Many of these artists are examined at length elsewhere in this book, so here I will contend with just a few noteworthy examples.

Millet's *The Cliffs at Gréville* of 1867 (fig. 14) is a relatively large pastel rendered with a high degree of finish. For Millet, this is a unique composition that registers a transformation in his thinking on the relationship between worker and natural site. The picture offers a scenic view of the sea from the cliffs above. Millet is widely known for his representations of peasant life, and this work is no exception, but the peasant's position in the natural world is different than we might expect. The peasant here is lying atop the cliff and is placed in the composition in such a way as to dominate the scene. The colors of his clothing do not really distinguish him from his verdant surroundings, and his reclining form is mirrored by a cloud at right. The plow at lower right identifies this man as a farmer, who is here shown at rest, propped on one elbow, taking in the scene around him. This solitary figure is a departure from Millet's traditional compositions of peasants at rest, usually in a pair or group and placed beside either the site or products of their agricultural labor. The mood is one of quiet contemplation, and the picture, taken as a whole, seems to operate as a meditation on the relationship of the man to the cosmos, here represented by land, sea, and air. This composition clearly signals new developments in the meaning of both the peasant and the sea, which appears here not so much as a force to be reckoned with but as a calm background for personal contemplation.

More experimental in technique is Daubigny's *The Sea* of about 1858–65 (fig. 15), a fully developed canvas that takes on the enormity of the sea through a two-tiered composition featuring only sea and sky, with a tiny boat on the horizon. This work forecasts Courbet's wave pictures (plates 76–78) in that it contends directly with the sea without any intermediary figures or picturesque motifs. Here a viewer can see Daubigny applying formal experiments developed at Barbizon to the subject of the sea, so charged with symbolic meaning at this time. French Barbizon artists first made a consistent practice of producing

finished paintings *en plein air.* This led to various technical innovations, including the use of impasto (thick unmixed paint) directly on canvas and the suppression of linear elements in a composition. Above all, color and tone were used to express a sentiment of the place. In *The Sea*, Daubigny employs a very limited range of tones, but the sense of weather and atmosphere is palpable. He likely produced the painting in a single session, working *en plein air.* The thickly applied pigment bespeaks the immediacy of the painter's apprehension of the scene, and the freshness of the brushstrokes gives the impression of an artist attempting the impossible feat of creating a static image of a body of water constantly in flux. The sense of the artist's internal response is suggested by these technical effects and also by the composition, which places the viewer in the artist's position, looking directly out to sea. The solitary boat on the horizon provides some sense of scale and also a focal point for the viewer. Daubigny's development of a new technical means to represent the sea is in evidence in this work. He is clearly struggling to depict a surging sea, and he employs visible brushwork and scrapes down the thick dry paint with a palette knife. The sky, in contrast, is painted in a much more lucid and casual manner. Equally important, this work represents the development of a new form of marine painting that positions the viewer for a one-on-one confrontation with the sea as a force of nature.

Bathing at Etretat of 1865–66 (fig. 16) by Eugène Lepoittevin (1806–1870), an established master of the seascape genre, is experimental in its bold use of large areas of undifferentiated color. More important in this context, it represents a new genre of painting altogether, the depiction of tourists—some of them identifiable cultural figures—at the seaside resorts that were springing up along the Normandy coast. This work is a picture not just about the sea but also about the social activity of going there and being seen to participate in the new culture of bathing. Lepoittevin had a long history at Etretat. He first bought his own house there in 1851 and thus would have seen the development of the casino and the concomitant growth of this tourist site during the decades of the Second Empire. In this image, the natural and scenic character of the place is subsumed into its role as a site for

leisure. Bathers, among them the author Guy de Maupassant, the caricaturist Bertall, and the actress Eugénie Doche, mount the platform and prepare to dive into the deep water, while other bathers float and swim around them. In this artificial snapshot of leisure activities, the sea is a real social space, where the leisured classes spend vacations, seeing and being seen.[16]

Because they are not ambitious in scale and did not appear to be decisive aesthetic statements, works such as those described in this section were not normally fodder for critics in the Second Empire. An exception was Baudelaire, who concerned himself with more fugitive artistic representations such as Boudin's pastels and Jongkind's etchings. Castagnary's partisan comments about the demise of marine painting were part of a public debate about paintings and thus were prone to a degree of critical posturing. In fact, his remarks were put forward in an evaluation of the works of a certain M. Hintz, now forgotten, who exhibited marines regularly in the Salons of the Second Empire. Castagnary did not devote many lines to evaluating Hintz's works, choosing instead to critique marine painting in general by making suggestions about how painters ought to pursue the subject. The critic's primary interest seems to have been to encourage artists to study the sea from nature and to develop a personal sensibility for it, in keeping with his own aesthetic positions. What is most strange is that Castagnary was arguing for the survival of the marine genre, as distinct from others such as landscape or history painting, at the very moment such artificial divisions were beginning to disappear, despite the renewed interest in classification that accompanied the Beaux-Arts administration of the Second Empire.[17] Even critics close to the official establishment acknowledged the waning significance of genre classification in a new era in which artists could not be pigeonholed so easily. In his review of the Salon of 1861, Gautier wrote, "Classification, even by genres, is no longer possible. Most paintings escape these useful, but old, categories: history, genre, landscape; almost none rigorously delimit themselves."[18] Perhaps the best demonstration of this is that the Salon was organized that year in alphabetical order, ostensibly to provide fair placement to all of the artists participating, but also underlining the difficulty the organizers had in keeping traditional divisions intact. By 1864 the Salon itself had reached a crisis and the Academy had lost its traditional monopoly of the practice of judging Salons.[19]

The erosion of clear genres of painting and the democratization of Salon judging are both examples of the changing terms of contemporary art in France in the 1860s. Previous

Fig. 16. Eugène Lepoittevin, *Bathing at Etretat*, 1865–66. Oil on canvas, 8¼ × 19⅛ inches (21 × 48.5 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Troyes. 898.2.3

categories, such as "marine painting," were losing significance by this time because ultimately their relevance rested on conventional approaches, not on the burgeoning movement toward experimental painting among younger artists. The very definition of what constituted a marine painting was in the process of being redefined, not by critics and government arts administrators, but by the activity of artists. Marine painting reemerged in this period as a familiar genre, but as one that had been reshaped to allow for artistic experimentation and thus could be powerfully reborn in a world in flux.

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1. Of course, there are exceptions. Scholarly works on French marine painting in the nineteenth century include Robert L. Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast: Tourism and Painting, 1867–1886* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Pierre Miquel, *Eugène Isabey (1803–1886): La Marine au XIXe siècle*, vol. 2 (Maurs-La-Jolie: Editions de la Martinelle, 1980); Alain Tapié et al., *Désir de rivage de Granville à Dieppe*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994); and *Autour de Claude-Joseph Vernet: La Marine à voile de 1650 à 1890*, exh. cat. (Rouen: Musées de Rouen, 1999).

2. On Vernet, see Phillip Conisbee, *Claude-Joseph Vernet, 1714–1789* (London: Greater London Council, The Iveagh Bequest, 1976); and Marie-Antoinette Tippetts, *Les Marines des peintres: Vues par les littérateurs de Diderot à Goncourt* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1966). See also Heather MacDonald, "The Enlightened Landscape: Joseph Vernet's Ports de France" (unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley).

3. Miquel, *Eugène Isabey*, p. 22.

4. The literature on this work is vast, but Lorenz Eitner, *Géricault's "Raft of the Medusa"* (London: Phaidon, 1972), is quintessential. More recently, compelling reexaminations of the painting have been put forward in Serge Guilbault, Maureen Ryan, and Scott Watson, eds., *Théodore Géricault: The Alien Body; Tradition in Chaos*, exh. cat. (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1997); and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremes in Paint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

5. See *Galeries historiques du palais de Versailles* (Paris: Imp. De Fain et Thunot, 1842).

6. Gabriel Esquer, *Iconographie historique de l'Algérie jusqu'à 1871* (Paris: Plon, 1929), vol. 1, p. x.

7. Théophile Gautier, *Les Beaux-arts en Europe* (Paris: Lévy Frères, 1855), vol. 1, p. 98.

8. See Atherton Curtis, *Catalogue de l'oeuvre lithographié de Eugène Isabey* (Paris: Prouté, 1939).

9. Jules Castagnary, *Salon de 1861*, illus. H. Linton (Paris: Aux Bureaux du Monde Illustré, 1861), p. 61 (my translation).

10. Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

11. Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast*, pp. 61–70. On the development of Honfleur, see Anne-Marie Bergeret-Gourbin, "Honfleur, cité des artistes au 19e siècle," in *Boudin et les peintres à Honfleur*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1996), pp. 22–28.

12. Jules Michelet, *La Mer* (Paris: Hachette, 1861). For more on Michelet, see Groom, p. 45 below.

13. "Grande, très grande différence entre les deux éléments: la terre est muette, et l'Océan parle. L'Océan est une voix. Il parle aux astres lointains, répond à leur mouvement dans sa langue grave et solennelle. Il parle à la terre, au rivage, d'un accent pathétique, dialogue avec leurs échos; plaintif, menaçant tour à tour, il gronde ou soupire. Il s'adresse à l'homme surtout." Jules Michelet, *La Mer* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1980), p. 216 (my translation).

14. Charles Baudelaire, "L'Homme et la mer," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec, rev. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 18.

15. Louis Peisse, "Salon de 1841," *Revue des deux mondes*, 4th ser., 1 (1841), p. 613.

16. Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast*, pp. 66–67; Raymond Lindon, *Etretat, son histoire, ses legendes* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949).

17. This manifested itself in naming artists specialists in specific genres in the Salon *livrets* and giving prizes for more specific categories than had previously been awarded, such as marine painting.

18. "La classification, même par les genres, n'est plus possible. La plupart des tableaux échappent à ces anciennes catégories si commodes: histoire, genre, paysage; presque aucun ne s'y encadre rigoureusement." Théophile Gautier, *Abécédaire au Salon de 1861* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1861), p. 9.

19. See Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon, 1971); and Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).