

History B357 \$ang

Modern France: Society, Culture, *Politics*

Mass Culture and the Modern City

Passage Pomeraye
Nantes (Loire Atlantique)
begun in the 1840s



What is Modern?

modern politics

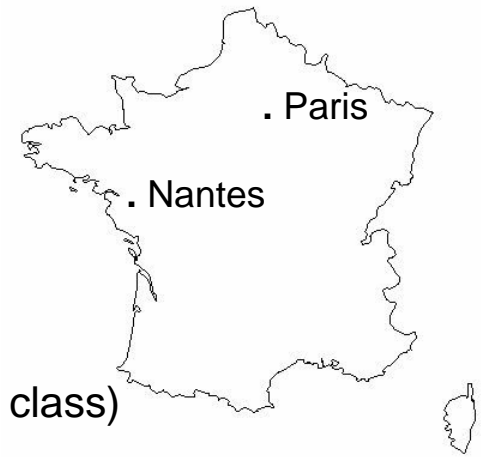
structures that allow for mass participation in public life

modern society
(and economy)

industrialization and mass production
(peasantry replaced by “modern” working class)

modern culture

awareness of change, which seems to be speeding up, such that “all that is solid melts into air”* and nothing is left but dizzying excitement of the always new as experienced via mass consumption and mass communication



1789 “universal” rights
1792 Convention elected
1794 abolition of slavery
1802 plebiscite makes Napoleon
“Consul for life”
1815 vote restricted (based on wealth)
1848 universal male suffrage; slavery
abolished
1852 plebiscite ratifies Louis Bonaparte
1867-1868 free press, association rights;
legislative can challenge Emperor

1791 Le Chapelier Law
1798 nationwide trade fair to
encourage industry
1800 Bank of France founded
1831, 1834 silkworkers’ protests
1848 first French postage stamps
1852 Pereire brothers found Crédit
Mobilier bank
1850-1875 French railroads built
1864 trade unions legalized
1867 collapse of Crédit Mobilier

1793/4 Year 2 of Republic
1820s arcades built
1852 Bon Marché opens
1852-69 “Haussmannization”
1855 Paris World’s Fair
1861 Nadar’s 1st sewer photos
1863 *Petit Journal*
1863 “Painter of Modern Life”
1867 Paris World’s Fair
1889 Paris World’s Fair
1900 Paris World’s Fair

* Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

Modern and its suffixes

Modernism



Pablo Picasso,
The Guitarist (1910).

modernization



Gare du Nord (North Station),
Paris (built, 1861-1864; recent photo).

modernity



Eiffel Tower, Paris
(built for 1889 World's Fair).

... and some prefixes?

pre-modern

post-modern

The *flâneur*—a modern observer

The convalescent, like the child, enjoys to the highest degree the faculty of taking a lively interest in things, even the most trivial in appearance. ... The child sees everything as a novelty; the child is always “drunk”... genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will, childhood equipped with man’s ability to express himself...



The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird’s and water that of the fish. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer, it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting, the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very center of the world, and yet to be unseen by the world—such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense, impartial spirits...

He admires the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities... He gazes at the landscape, landscapes of stone: now swathed in mist, now struck in full face by the sun. He enjoys handsome carriages, proud horses, the spit and polish of the grooms, the smooth rhythmical gait of the women, the beauty of the children—in short, life universal.

He is looking for that indefinable something we may be allowed to call “modernity”, for want of a better term... Modernity is the fleeting, the ephemeral, the contingent...

Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863).

Painter of Modern Life

Today I want to talk to my readers about a singular man, whose originality is so powerful and clear-cut that it is self-sufficing, and does not bother to look for approval. None of his drawings is signed ... except by his soul. [When he learned I was going to write this] he begged me, in a most peremptory manner, to suppress his name, and to discuss his works only as though they were the works of some anonymous person. I will humbly obey this odd request. The reader and I will proceed as though M. G. did not exist ... He is an I with an insatiable appetite for the non-I, at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself

Baudelaire, "Painter of Modern Life"



Guys, "Two mounted officers"
(San Francisco MFA).



Guys, "Woman with young girl and man with walking stick" (1860?) [Courtauld Institute, London].

Does modernity have a gender?

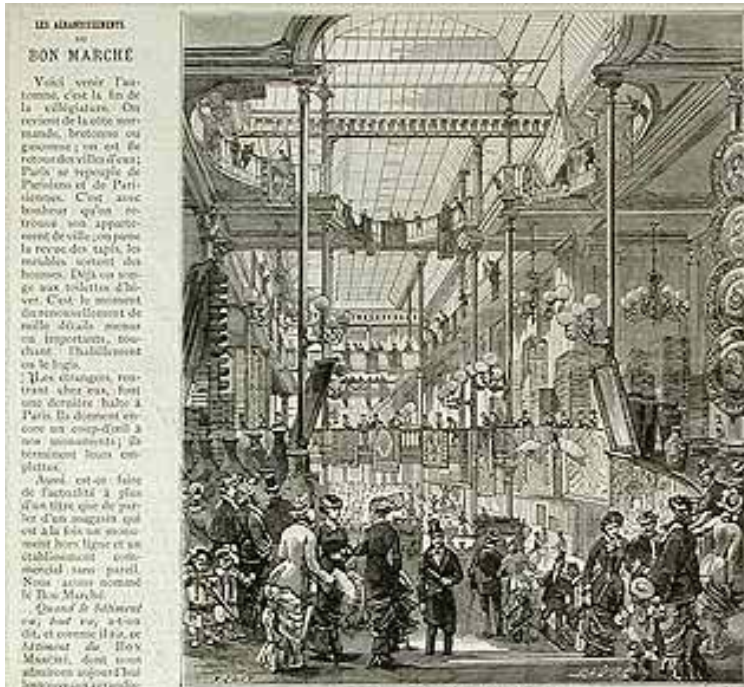
Woman is a divinity, a star... a kind of idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching, who holds wills and destinies suspended on her glance... Woman is quite within her rights, indeed she is even accomplishing a kind of duty, when she devotes herself to appearing magical and supernatural; she has to astonish and charm us; she is obliged to adorn herself in order to be adored.

Baudelaire, "Painter of Modern Life"



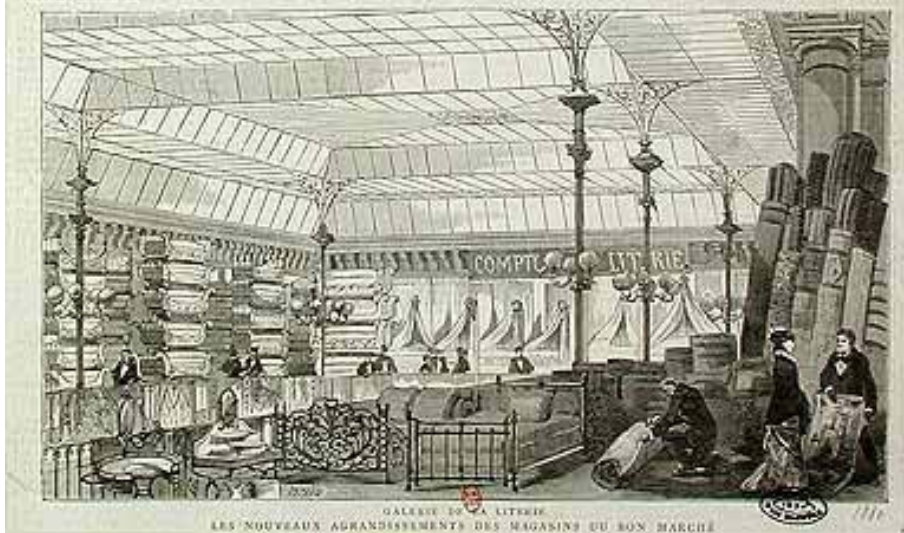
Constantin Guys,
"Two Shopgirls and Two Soldiers" (c. 1860)



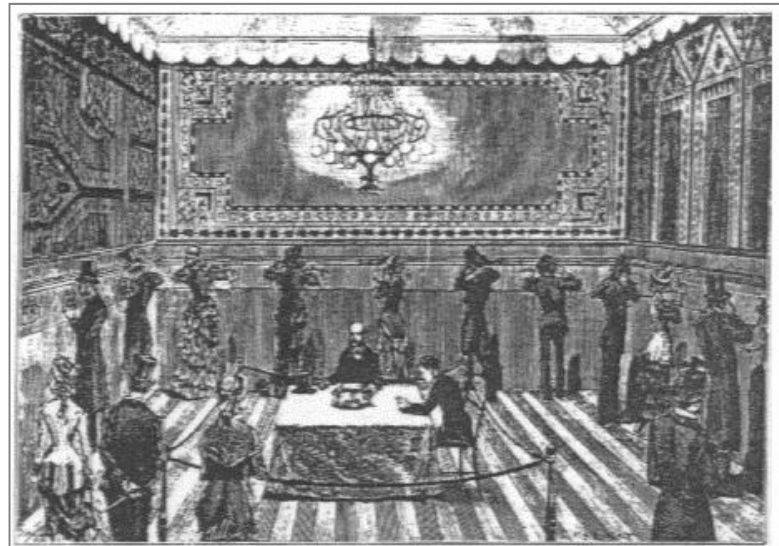


14, cette maison, qui, depuis vingt ans, s'agrandit, pour ainsi dire, à chaque saison, devenant ainsi l'édifice le plus vaste de la rue du Bac, après avoir absorbé successivement tout l'édifice sur la rue de Sévres, toute la longueur de la rue Velouté, sans compter le côté de la rue de Babouze, occupant ainsi d'un moment à l'autre toute une immense surface toujours venue au devant et y créant le mouvement fécond, la vie exultante. Vingt fois élargi, les magasins du Bon Marché ont élargi vingt fois cette business difficile d'être toujours trop petite pour leur mouvement d'affaires, de se retrouver à chaque saison, tous étendus devant l'affluence grouillante de la clientèle, devant la faveur toujours croissante du public parisien.

C'est que la devise inscrite par Aristide Boucicaut au fronton de son édifice, alors naissant, et se transformant de temps en temps, est restée et peut devenir et continuera de l'être, est restée dans les magasins du Bon Marché, et y a toujours été observée consciencieusement, scrupuleusement, c'est qu'à chaque moment agrandissement, cette merveilleuse organisation, à l'appui de nou-



The Bon Marché Department Store, depicted in *L'Illustration* (1880)



International Electrical Exhibition, 1881 telephone room at the Paris Opera



Palace of Electricity, 1900 World's Fair (Paris)



Courbet, *Burial at Ornans* (1849-1850), detail



C. Guys "French Officer on Horseback" (1850s?) Basel



Millet, *The Gleaners* (1857)

Modernity, Above and Below



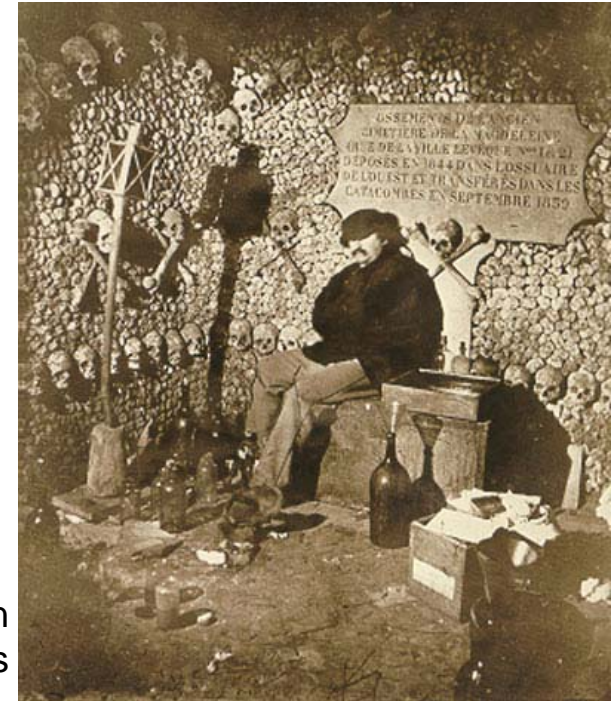
Nadar, "Paris sewers"



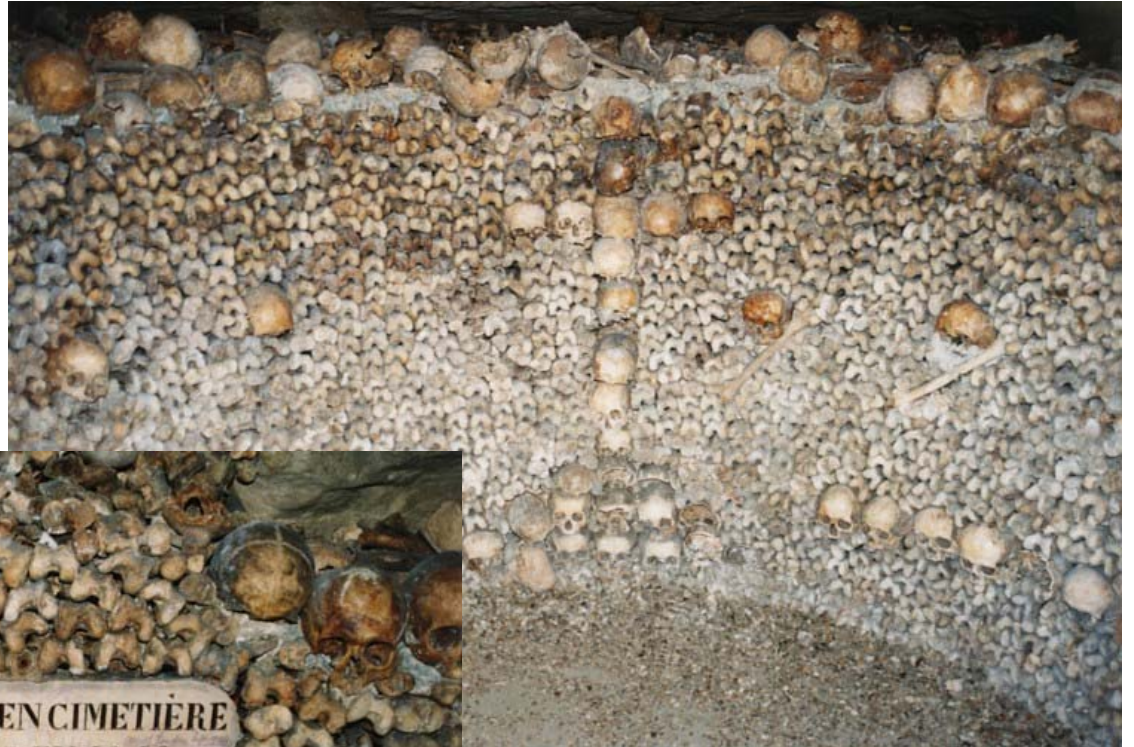
Manet, 1867 *Universal Exhibition*



Felix Nadar, self-portraits in hot-air balloon and in Catacombs



Catacombs of Paris





Monet, *Sunrise Impression* (1873)



Bellange, *Reviewing the Troops under the Empire*



Caillebotte, *The Europe Bridge [in Paris]* (1876)



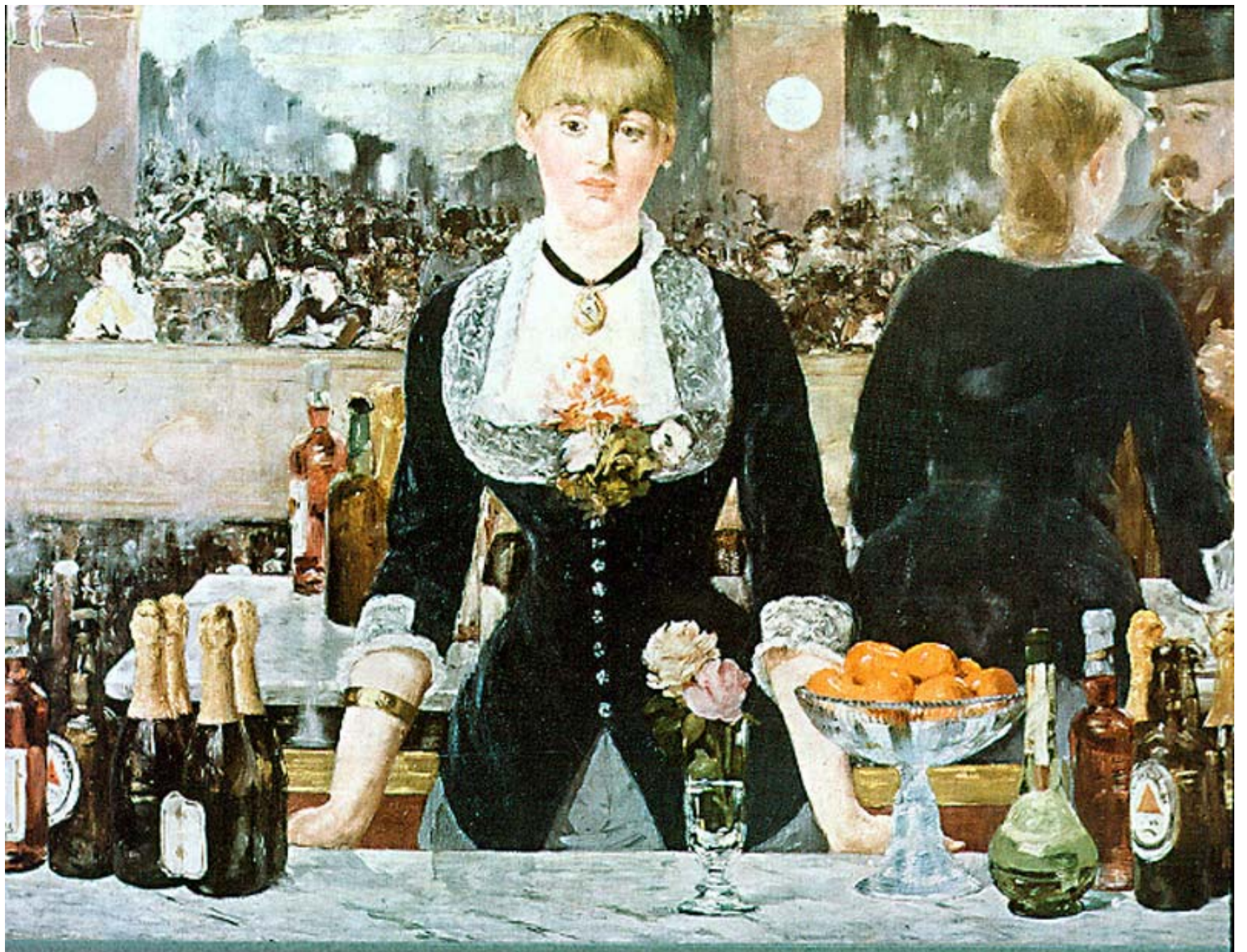
Fromentin, *Heron Hunting in Algeria*



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Swing* (1876)

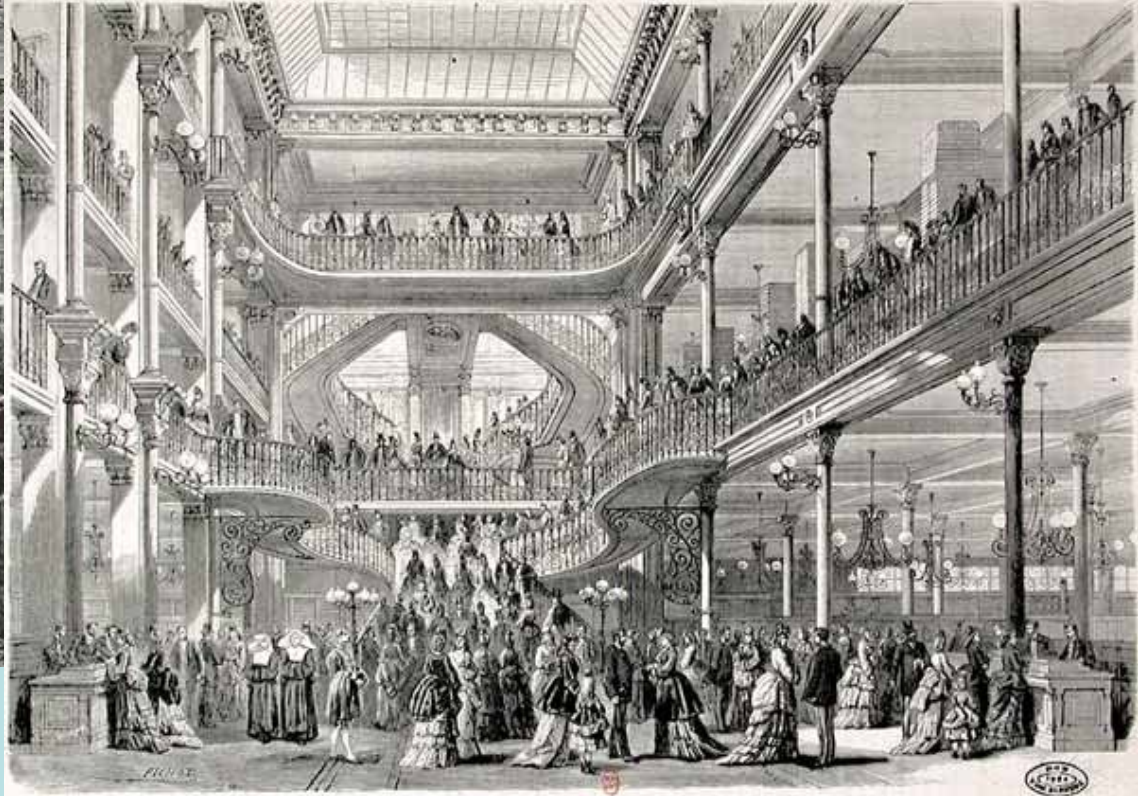
Gustave Caillebotte,
Paris Street, Rainy Day (1876)





Edouard Manet, *Bar at the Folies Bergères* (1882)

Bon Marché department store in the 1880s
--inspiration for Emile Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies' Paradise*)





1864



Tissot, *Balcony of the rue Royale cercle* (1868)

colorful women and somber men;
notice how dramatically women's styles
changed in five years and how minor are
the differences in dress among the members
of the exclusive men's club depicted above



1869