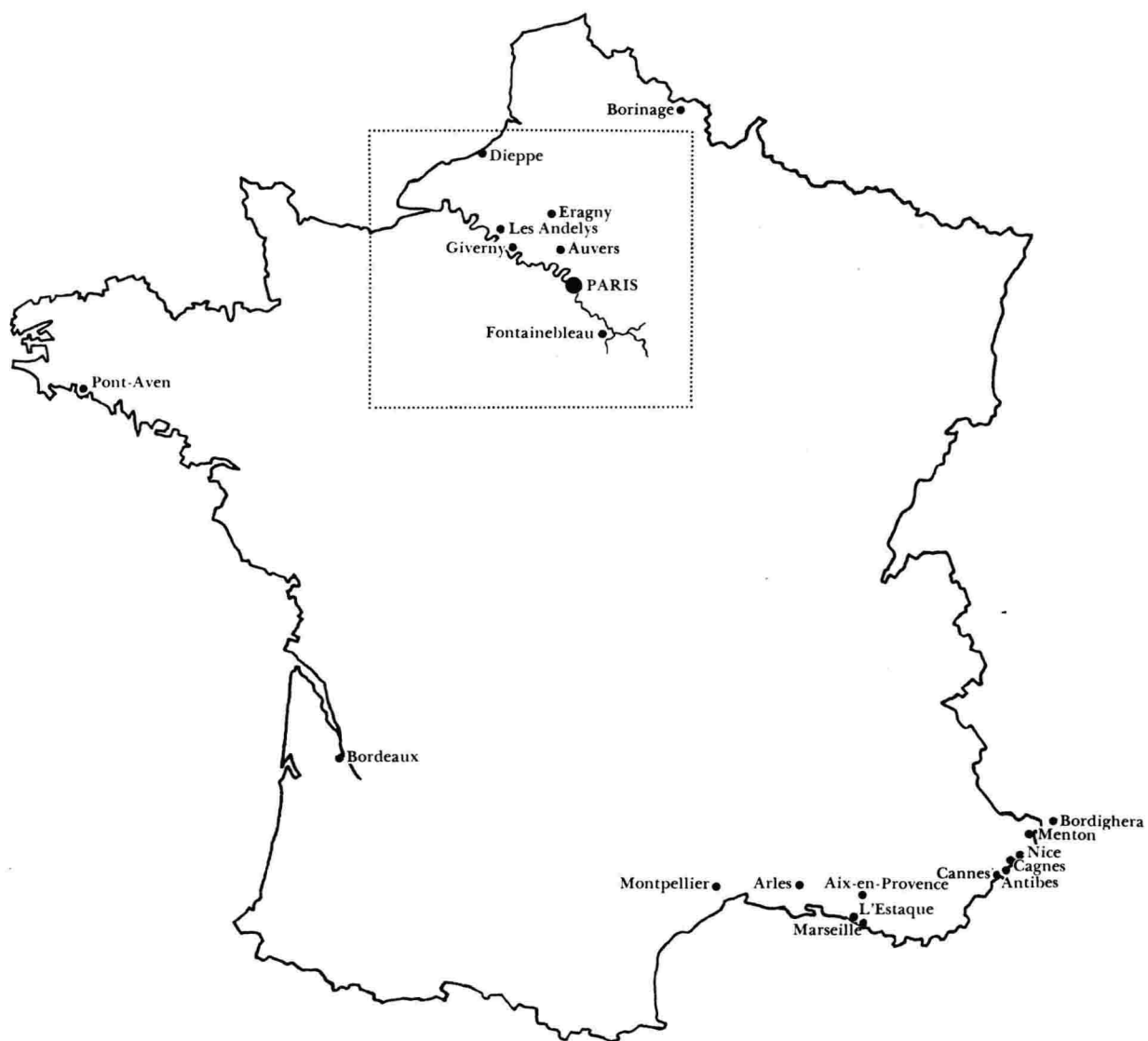
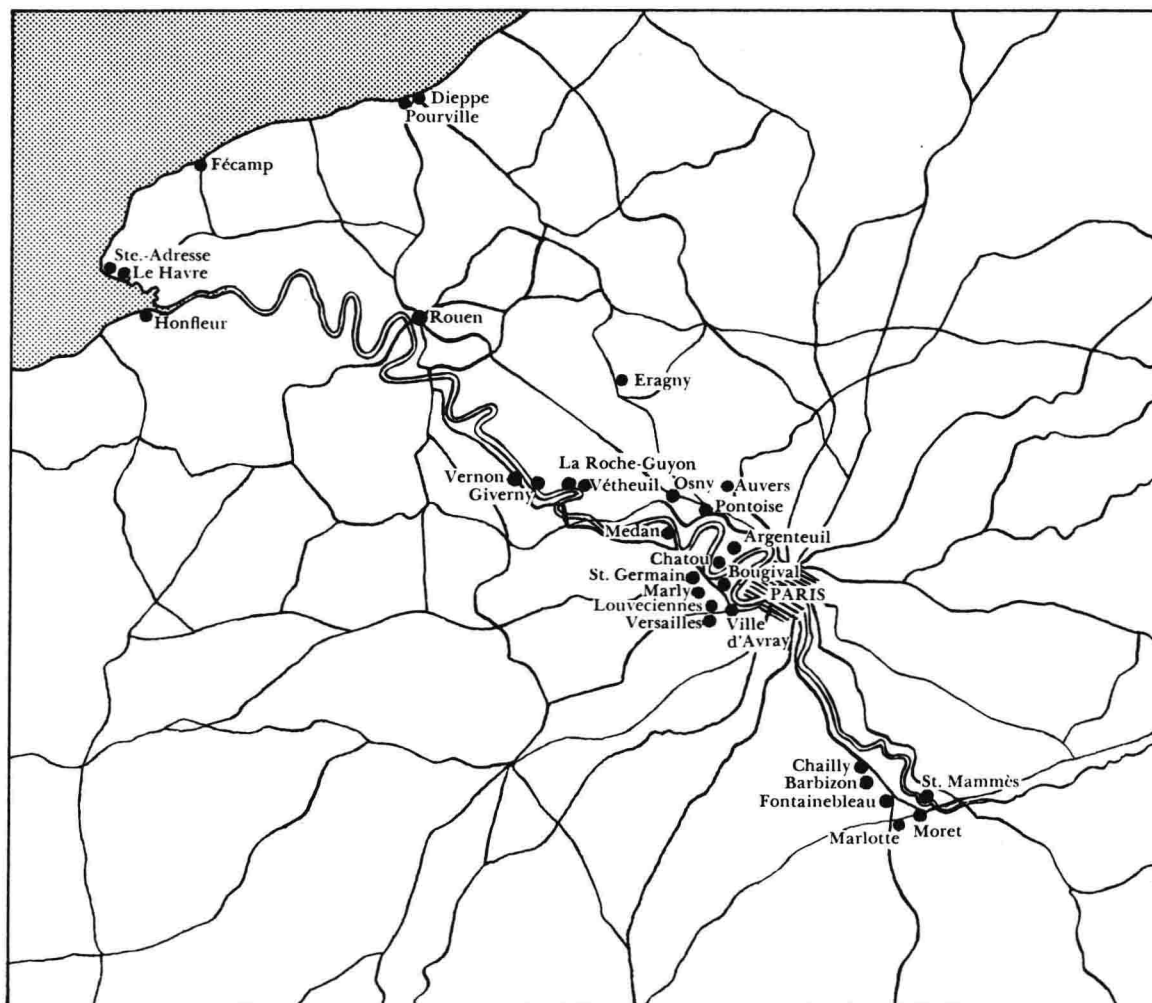


THE HISTORY OF IMPRESSIONISM

JOHN REWALD





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PAUL CÉZANNE, LETTERS, London, 1941, New York, 1976

PAUL GAUGUIN, LETTERS TO A. VOLLARD AND A. FONTAINAS, San Francisco, 1943

CAMILLE PISSARRO, LETTERS TO HIS SON LUCIEN, New York, 1943, 1972

THE WOODCUTS OF ARISTIDE MAILLOL (a catalogue), New York, 1943

THE SCULPTURES OF EDGAR DEGAS (a complete catalogue), New York, 1944, 1956

RENOIR DRAWINGS, New York, 1946, 1958

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PAUL GAUGUIN, LETTERS (complete edition; in collaboration with M. Bodelsen and B. Danielsson)



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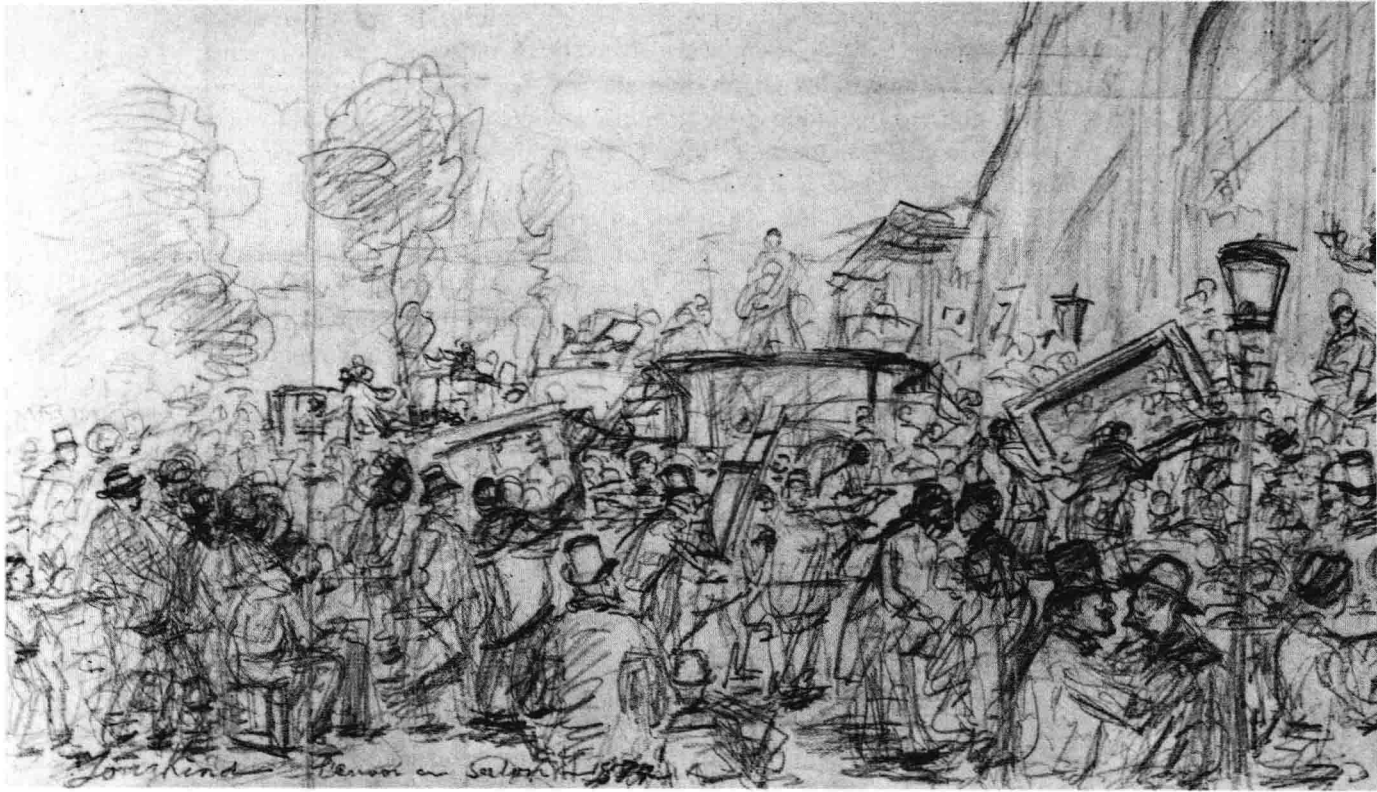
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CONTENTS

Introduction			7
Chapter I	1855-1859	The Paris World's Fair, 1855 A Panorama of French Art	13
Chapter II	1859-1861	Monet and Boudin Manet and Degas L'Académie Suisse The Atelier of Courbet	37
Chapter III	1862-1863	Gleyre's Studio The Salon des Refusés and the Reorganization of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts	69
Chapter IV	1864-1866	Barbizon and Its Painters New Salons Successes and Disappointments	93
Chapter V	1866-1868	Zola as an Art Critic Another World's Fair Plans for a Group Exhibition More Difficulties for Monet	139
Chapter VI	1869-1870	The Café Guerbois Japanese Prints "La Grenouillère"	197
Chapter VII	1870-1871	The Salon of 1870 The Franco-Prussian War and the "Commune" Monet and Pissarro in London	239
Chapter VIII	1872-1873	The Years after the War Auvers-sur-Oise Another Salon des Refusés (1873)	271
Chapter IX	1873-1874	The First Group Exhibition (1874) and the Origin of the Word "Impressionism"	309

Chapter X	1874–1877	Argenteuil Caillebotte and Chocquet Auction Sales and Further Exhibitions First Echoes Abroad Duranty's Pamphlet "La Nouvelle Peinture"	341
Chapter XI	1877–1879	The Café de la Nouvelle-Athènes Renoir, Sisley, and Monet at the Salon A New Art Critic: Huysmans Serious Disagreements	399
Chapter XII	1880–1883	More Exhibitions and Divisions of Opinion The Death of Manet	439
Chapter XIII	1883–1885	Dissatisfaction and Doubts Gauguin in Copenhagen Redon Seurat and Signac The Société des Indépendants (1884)	481
Chapter XIV	1886	The Eighth and Last Impressionist Exhibition Durand-Ruel's First Success in America Gauguin and van Gogh	521
Chapter XV		The Years after 1886	547
Sources of Illustrations			590
List of Participants in the Various Group Shows			591
Biographical Chart			592
Bibliography			608
Index			654
Map of Places Where the Impressionists Worked			Endleaves



JONGKIND: *Delivery of Paintings at the Salon*, d. 1874. Pencil, $9\frac{3}{8} \times 16\frac{3}{4}$ ". Private collection, New York.

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1874 a group of young painters defied the official Salon in Paris and organized an exhibition of its own. While this was in itself a break with established customs, the works which these men showed seemed at first glance even more revolutionary. The reaction of visitors and critics was by no means friendly; they accused the artists of painting differently from the accepted methods simply to gain attention or pull the legs of honest folk. It took years of bitter struggle before the members of the little group were able to convince the public of their sincerity, not to mention their talent.

This group included Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas, Cézanne, and Berthe Morisot. They were not only of diverse characters and gifts, but also, to a certain extent, of differing conceptions and tendencies. Yet born almost within the same decade, they all went through similar experiences and fought against the same opposition. Thrown together more or less by chance, they accepted their common fate and eventually adopted the designation of "impressionists," a word coined in derision by a satirical journalist.

When the impressionists organized their first group exhibition, they were no longer awkward beginners; all of them were over thirty and had been working ardently for fifteen years and more. They had studied—or tried to study—at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, gone to the older generation for advice, discussed and absorbed the various currents in the arts of their time. Some even had obtained a certain success at different Salons before the Franco-Prussian War. But they had declined to follow blindly the methods of the acclaimed masters and pseudo-masters of the day. Instead, they had derived new concepts from the lessons of the past and the present, developing an art entirely their own. This independence had brought them into repeated conflicts with the reactionary jury of the Salon, to the extent that to show their works outside of the official exhibitions seemed to be the only means left them to approach the general public.

✓ Although their canvases shocked their contemporaries as being brazen, they represented in fact the true continuation of the endeavors and theories of their predecessors. Thus the new phase in the history of art inaugurated by the impressionist exhibition of 1874 was not a sudden outbreak of iconoclastic tendencies; it was the culmination of a slow and consistent evolution.

The impressionist movement, therefore, did not begin with the year 1874. While all the great artists of the past contributed their share to the development of impressionist principles, the immediate roots of the movement can be most clearly discovered in the twenty years preceding the historic exhibition of 1874. Those were the years of formation, during which the impressionists met and brought forth their views and talent toward a new approach to nature. Any attempt to retrace the history of impressionism will thus have to begin with the period in which the essential ideas took shape. That period, dominated by such older men as Ingres, Delacroix, Corot, and Courbet, as well as by ill-understood traditions, was the background against which the young generation promoted its heretical concepts. This explains the importance of those early years when Manet (who chose not to participate in the group exhibition), Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro refused to follow their teachers and set out on a road of their own, the road which led to impressionism.

✓ The present survey follows the evolution of the impressionist painters from their beginnings to the culmination of their efforts in 1874 and throughout the eight exhibitions organized by them. It ends virtually with the year 1886 in which the last group show marked the definite disbandment of the companions and their more or less complete abandonment of impressionism. As to the story of the twenty succeeding years—until the death of Cézanne—it will be treated in an equally detailed history of post-impressionism, of which the first volume, *From van Gogh to Gauguin*, appeared in 1956. After the publication of the second part, *From Gauguin to Matisse* (now in preparation), the three volumes together will cover fifty years of French art, from 1855 to 1906.

✓ “It would be impossible now, I’m afraid,” stated E. A. Jewell in 1944, “for anyone to piece together a full and in the minutest degree accurate report of developments that led up to the first impressionist exhibition. . . . An inclusive record such as that would cover the germinating decade, and to it we should want added, of course, as full and minute and accurate a report covering the decade that followed,

with its triumphs and its setbacks, its slow and often painful success in breaking down barriers of critical and popular disesteem." Nothing could describe better the program of the present book, for it is exactly its ambition to offer such an "accurate report of developments."

There exist already a score of publications on impressionism, but most of them are divided into chapters devoted to the individual painters, and do not tell the story of the movement itself. The first attempt to consider simultaneously the evolution of the various artists was made by R. H. Wilenski, whose brilliantly conceived *Modern French Painters* (1940) unfortunately suffers from numerous inaccuracies as well as from an abundance of not always related details. As to the many books concerning individual members of the impressionist group, they naturally have a tendency to isolate their specific subject. Yet, to appreciate fully the stature of each impressionist, it seems essential first to study his position in the movement, his contribution to it, and also the contribution of the others to his own progress.

"Perfection is a collective work," Boudin once wrote. "Without that person, this one would never have achieved the perfection he did." If this is true of any artist, it is even more so in the case of a group of painters who learned, fought, suffered, and exhibited together. But not all who participated in these exhibitions were real impressionists, while others, who did not openly join the group, can be considered as such. For this reason the scope of the present study has been extended to the men who, from near or far, were connected with the movement and collaborated in giving it shape. Even if they sometimes acted contrary to each other's interests and were, as a group, occasionally divided by internal struggles, their works tell, almost better than their actions, how they pursued—both individually and together—the conquest of a new vision.

The story of this conquest may be told in many ways, but most effectively by presenting it through the works themselves. By placing these in their historical context, by reproducing together paintings conceived and executed during the same period by the various members of the group, by following the progress of each artist simultaneously with that of his colleagues, it seems possible to obtain a true image of the impressionist movement. Such a procedure may not always do justice to individual works—since it considers them merely as part of a whole—but once they have been given their place in that whole, it will become easier for others to explore them more completely.

The evidence on which this study is based can be divided roughly into the following elements: the artists' *works* (and here, in many instances, little-known ones have been reproduced in preference to more famous examples); next to these, the *writings* and comments of the artists themselves; furthermore, the numerous *accounts of witnesses*, who offer substantial information about these artists, their work, their surroundings, etc.; finally, *contemporary criticisms*, which are essential insofar as they are not only of anecdotal interest but are facts in every artist's life, implying a wide range of psychological and financial consequences. By quoting contemporary sources extensively in preference to rewriting the information derived from them, I endeavored to reconstitute to a certain extent the atmosphere of the period, placing the reader in direct contact with the original texts. In this way students are provided with actual documents that could otherwise be obtained only through

long research. Most of these documents, moreover, have not previously been available in English.

Although I was able to gather some material for this book in France (the descendants of Pissarro, Zola, Cézanne, and Berthe Morisot were most helpful in this connection), I naturally had to depend chiefly on previous publications. A list of them, together with a discussion of their respective value for the student, will be found in the bibliography, but it should be stated here that even the most authoritative sources have not been used without checking.

It is obvious that the historian who explores a period through which he himself has not lived must rely exclusively upon sources and upon deductions derived from them. The extreme of scholarly procedure would be therefore to accompany every single sentence by a footnote explaining its origin. Although this can be done, such a method is hardly advisable in a book destined for a wide public. With notes reduced in most cases to simple references at the end of each chapter, it appears not unimportant to acquaint the reader with the manner in which the material has been handled, so as to convince him that every fact has been investigated and every word carefully weighed. Wherever I have not resorted to actual quotations, the reader is given (a) information derived directly from documents, though these remain unquoted; (b) deductions arrived at by consideration of facts often in themselves not worth mentioning; (c) guesses, indicated as such by the use of qualifying adverbs—"probably," "apparently," etc. Deductions are more difficult to obtain when various sources contradict each other. Since the most scrupulous investigation does not always yield definite results, I have occasionally resorted to guessing unless I felt authorized to draw conclusions.

In doing so, I have been inspired by the principles of the great French historian Fustel de Coulanges, who wrote: "History is not an art, it is a pure science. It does not consist in telling a pleasant story or in profound philosophizing. Like all science, it consists in stating the facts, in analyzing them, in drawing them together and in bringing out their connections. The historian's only skill should consist in deducing from the documents all that is in them and in adding nothing they do not contain. The best historian is he who remains closest to his texts, who interprets them most fairly, who writes and even thinks only at their direction."

The first edition of this book, published in 1946, was followed by a second printing in 1955, featuring only minor alterations and corrections, except for the bibliography, which was brought up to date. The third edition, however, which appeared in 1961, was extensively revised, a great number of illustrations, both in color and in black and white, were added, and the format was changed to match that of the first volume on post-impressionism. For the present edition, further revisions have been made, if not always in the text, at least in the footnotes in order to take into account all the findings and data included in recent publications.

Because the material is chronologically arranged, it was possible, for the third printing as well as for the present one, to make additions and revisions without interrupting the narrative or interfering with the general plan of the book. Indeed, all new documents and facts almost automatically found their logical place in the general context. Errors have been corrected (but only in very few instances are such corrections discussed in notes) and a few passages have been shifted. A major change

in the third edition concerned the division of chapters, which had to be modified so that the accumulation of new material would not unduly lengthen some sections of the book. As a result, there were fifteen chapters in the third edition as compared to eleven in the previous ones, but these additional chapters were not really altogether "new." It should be added that an effort has been made—particularly in the last chapters—to deal more extensively with various figures such as J. K. Huysmans, Gauguin, Seurat, Signac, and van Gogh, in order to introduce more fully some of the personalities who are prominently featured in the first volume on post-impressionism and thus to establish a closer link between the present book and its sequel. If the final chapter on the impressionists after 1886 has been maintained, the reason is that the impressionists were mostly kept "in the background" in the succeeding volume. On the other hand the section devoted to the years 1884–86 unavoidably overlaps with the opening pages of *Post-Impressionism—From van Gogh to Gauguin*.

Any effort to encompass a period and its numerous protagonists must forcibly neglect to a certain extent the individual figures. Fortunately, since this book first appeared some twenty-seven years ago, many valuable works have been published, on which I have drawn for this revised edition. Among these are the Degas œuvre catalogue by P. A. Lemoisne; the catalogues of Bazille's and Sisley's paintings by F. Daulte; A. Tabarant's exhaustive volume on Manet, N. G. Sandblad's study of the same master's artistic conception, G. H. Hamilton's treatise on Manet and his critics; D. Rouart's excellent publication of Berthe Morisot's correspondence; and a complete edition of Zola's art criticism by F. W. J. Hemmings and R. J. Niess. Among general surveys, special mention should be made of J. C. Sloane's book on French art from 1848 to 1870, O. Reuterswärd's study of impressionism, and J. Lethève's compilation of press comments on the impressionists and their exhibitions. Articles in periodicals with important contributions are too numerous to be listed here. Of publications which had previously escaped my attention, I wish to mention A. Silvestre's volume of souvenirs which provided much additional information for the chapter on the Café Guerbois. Quotations from these and other sources are acknowledged in the notes; it goes without saying that these sources as well as many other publications are also listed in the newly extended bibliography.

Documents which appeared for the first time in the previous editions of this book are still listed in the notes as "unpublished." In addition there are now others that have not been made public before and that are given here with the same indication.

I should like to record my deep appreciation of the generous assistance I have received—in the United States as well as abroad—from many scholars and collectors who permitted me to examine and reproduce their paintings, from scholars and staffs of museums and libraries who helped with my research, and from art dealers. Special thanks are due to the Durand-Ruel Galleries, whose important role in the history of impressionism cannot be over-emphasized, for facilitating the use of their invaluable files of photographs, catalogues, and other records, as well as for assisting me in any conceivable way; also to Mr. Herbert Elfers, formerly of the New York branch of that firm, for his gracious personal support.

Because of war-time conditions, the original edition of this book had to be prepared exclusively in the United States, but the revisions were made with access to European sources. The late Mlle Guillaumin in Paris kindly corrected some errors

about her father, Armand Guillaumin, and the late Mme Julie Manet-Rouart, also of Paris, did likewise concerning her mother, Berthe Morisot. Maître Jean Ribault-Menetière, Paris, and especially Dr. Oscar Reuterswärd, Stockholm, drew my attention to a number of inaccuracies which I have thus been able to amend; Miss Hanne Finsen, Copenhagen, gave assistance with translations of Scandinavian texts; Dr. Ernest L. Tross, Denver, kindly communicated personal recollections of Renoir. M. Jean Adhémar of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; M. Albert Châtelet, Strasbourg; the late V. Loewinson-Lessing, formerly Counsellor to the Director, Hermitage, Leningrad; Mr. Helmut Ripperger, New York; Dr. Haavard Rostrup, Director of Ordrupgaardsamlingen, Copenhagen; Mr. William Seitz, University of Virginia; MM. Daniel and the late Georges Wildenstein of Paris and New York were particularly helpful in providing photographs and information. Without the untiring courtesy of M. François Daulte, Geneva, it would have been impossible to discuss Bazille as extensively and to reproduce as many of his works as I was able to do. I am also conscious of having taxed with innumerable queries the patience of Mlle Martine Charpentier of the Durand-Ruel Galleries in Paris; to her and to M. Charles Durand-Ruel I wish to express my special gratitude.

Last but not least, I am greatly indebted to Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Miss Agnes Rindge, and Professor Meyer Schapiro for their constructive criticism of the original manuscript; also to Mr. Monroe Wheeler for his sympathetic encouragement and to Miss Isabella Athey for perfecting the translations. For the third edition, Mr. Allan Porter and Miss Frances Pernas gave me invaluable and always friendly help; this fourth printing owes much to the untiring care of Ms. Christie Kaiser, Ms. Jane Fluegel, and Mr. Richard Oldenburg.

J. R.

NOTE CONCERNING THE ILLUSTRATIONS

There are usually no references in the text to illustrations if reproductions of works mentioned appear in the same chapter. Generally such references are given only when reproductions occur in other chapters.

As far as possible, the illustrations are arranged chronologically and in close connection with the narrative. For dated works, the date is given in the caption preceded by the letter d. (for dated); for undated works which can be dated within a definite year, this date is given; for works which can be dated only by deduction, the date is either preceded by c. (for circa), or two different years are indicated, connected by a hyphen. In cases of doubt, the date is followed by a question mark in parentheses.

Unless otherwise mentioned, the medium is oil on canvas. In all dimensions height precedes width.

A list of sources of illustrations may be found on p. 590. The illustrations themselves are incorporated, under the artists' names and in alphabetical order according to titles, into the general index; they are given in italics and are invariably listed after all other entries concerning the artist.