

## Beer in Bohemian Paris: A symbol of the third republic

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### Symbols of the republic

On 30 June 1878, Claude Monet began a series of paintings of Haussmann's Paris, which on this summer's day was shrouded in hundreds of tricolours, alive in the breeze and flying above the crowds filling the Parisian boulevards (Figure 9.1). Édouard Manet depicts the same day on a street further to the north of the city (Figure 9.2). With the same palette we again see the tricolour and the sandy colour of the street and buildings. But in this harsh realism, the flurry of flags – some tangled in their pole – are hung oblivious to the scene's destitution. The grand buildings of Monet's boulevard are replaced by a mound of rubble, and instead of a bustling crowd we see the back of a single one-legged pensioner, hobbling down the cobbled street. Seen side by side they show differing views of modern Paris. One affirming the official version: the vibrant gathering of people, celebrating a moment of republican liberty. The other highlighting the ruin of Paris: of buildings destroyed, and men crippled by war.

Just a few years earlier, in 1870, France had lost its war against Prussia, and through it the country lost its elected leader, Louis Napoléon, the nephew of the great Napoléon Bonaparte who for many had symbolized stability, and the nationalist spirit of France's re-emerging imperial might. In his place sprung a conservative provisional government led by President Adolphe Thiers, a royalist driven by the right-wing agenda to reinstate the Bourbon Monarchy.<sup>1</sup> A republic only by name, his was a government willing to slaughter thousands of its own people to defend its aims, as evidenced during the annihilation of the Commune when Thiers's army 'gunned down' ordinary men, women and children of Paris.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 9.1** Claude Monet, *Rue Montorgueil*, 1878, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Reproduction permission granted by Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



**Figure 9.2** Édouard Manet, *Rue Mosnier*, 1878, oil on canvas, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content programme.

Following this dark chapter in France's history, the fête of the 30 June 1878 celebrated peace and productivity, and promoted the country's recovery from war. Taking place alongside the *Exposition Universelle*, this was part of the state's wider agenda to project a rejuvenated image of French society: one that was innovative and culturally progressive, which embraced modernity and was not held back by archaic traditions. Yet, this was a country still divided by an intensely partisan political environment. While France remained under conservative leadership, by this time under the presidency of Patrice de MacMahon and his policy of 'Moral Order', the elections sparked by the Crisis of May 1877 had handed a substantial majority to the republicans in the Chamber of Deputies. The left was starting to gather pace.

In the aftermath of the Paris Commune, socialist activity had been curtailed by the loss of left-wing revolutionaries, either through fatalities suffered during the massacre of 1871, or by the subsequent imprisonment and exile of communards. While amnesty was not granted until 1880, socialist and working-class political activism began to re-emerge in France as early as the mid-1870s, and by 1879 (the year the Presidency was won by the republican Jules Grévy) Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue founded the Parti Ouvrier Français. This was a Marxist political party with a 'radical republican programme' that campaigned to subvert royalist conservatism, and embed republican ideology in the French legislature, and in society more broadly.<sup>3</sup> The tricolour, whose three stripes came to represent the three tenets of the democratic nation – *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* – had been a symbol of the republic since the years of the First Revolution. And following the Bourbon Monarchy's reinstatement of the white flag during its brief restoration in 1815, the subsequent re-adoption of the tricolour as the national flag had symbolized republican victory during the July Revolution of 1830. Seen in 1878 in the works of Monet and Manet, the tricolour is once again raised to symbolize growing republican strength, starting to emerge victorious over their royalist adversaries in this long-fought battle for the republic.

In this chapter I turn away from the more prestigious Fine Arts, to instead examine how the bohemian clubs of the time responded to this struggle between republicans and royalists: a battle for the soul of France. This analysis focuses specifically on two associated clubs, the Hydropathes and the Bon Bocks. If republicans promoted their ideology through symbols such as the tricolour, for the bohemian clubs, it was beer that became an unlikely symbol of their beliefs in sovereignty, *laïcité*, and the rights of the common man.

This is an atypical look at Paris's bohemian clubs, and a view at odds with the notion of the forward-thinking, absinthe-drinking, bohemians usually

associated with artists of Montmartre around the turn of the century. Seemingly motivated by aesthetic progression and social freedoms, such clubs are more widely understood in sharp contrast to previous generations of communards, anarchists and Realist painters, who confronted fraught socio-political tensions. Indeed, the clubs themselves reinforced the idea that they had no political agenda: at the Hydropathe club all talk of politics was expressly forbidden. I will show how beer was employed as a symbol to promote a more radical opposition to the royalist, catholic factions that still threatened to return the country to a conservative monarchist state, as well as how it became a symbol of sovereignty: a weapon in the battle against the ascendancy of foreign authority and culture.

### **The Hydropathes: a secular Eucharist**

Founded in 1878, the Hydropathe club was active at the turning point between conservatism and liberal republicanism in France's early Third Republic. Taking place just before the social liberalization of the 1880s, the club was still subjected to the laws and censorships of MacMahon's Moral Order. Yet, despite the state's suspicion of its people and anxiety of further uprisings, new social liberties were instigated, and the Hydropathe club was one of the first artistic societies to successfully take advantage of the ability to gather in large numbers.<sup>4</sup>

For almost two years the club hosted soirées twice a week for artists, poets, musicians and the youth of the Latin Quarter. In contrast with the radical political action of artists in previous decades, the young men who attended the Hydropathe club were forbidden from discussing politics, and its president Émile Goudeau consistently claimed that they were interested only in matters of the arts: 'The Latin Quarter, numb from inflexible politics, and from religious questions that are of little interest today, wakes to listen to verse and song. It devises its philosophical-poetic works, allowing fantasy to hover with its wings deployed.'<sup>5</sup> Its members produced and performed poetry, music and song, and while artistic talent was appreciated, it was by no means required, and was secondary to the need to participate socially within the club's fraternal spirit. The club was highly successful, attracting a crowd of several hundred young Parisians each week. It was also hugely influential, not least for being the birthplace of the Fumiste movement, a humorous, satirical form of proto-performance art. In 1880 the Fumiste was described to be at odds with the typical man of letters:

To abandon one's senses and to make him give the quintessence of his imbecility, is characteristic of Fumisme. The spirit of bourgeois culture demands to be

rewarded with cheering and discreet smiles; Fumisme on the other hand carries its own reward within itself: it is art for art's sake. In order to be considered a man of bourgeois spirit it will often suffice to be an ass in a lion's skin; to be a good Fumiste it is often essential to be a lion in the skin of an ass.<sup>6</sup>

At the heart of Fumiste philosophy was a cutting, yet obscure, satire, which sought to subvert the political order through seemingly nonsensical actions and absurdity in daily life. This was a proto-anti-art, and a basis for conceptual art as we would understand it today. After the Hydropathe club, Fumisme was soon developed by the *Arts Incohérents*, the *Chat Noir* (co-founded by Goudeau), and the notorious Alfred Jarry. These in turn inspired the twentieth-century anti-art of Paris Dada, therein sparking an historical lineage that spanned numerous subsequent generations.

At the Hydropathe club, alcohol helped to create a carefree environment of unrestrained artistic creativity; and in a room of several hundred young men, drinking songs helped to both unite and provoke the often boisterous crowd. Despite later claims that the Hydropathes indulged in a vast array of drinks, in the club's earliest months, beer was the only drink that was consumed.<sup>7</sup> As Francisque Sarcey wrote in 1878: 'There, we speak verse, we make music, we sing and we talk. No drink other than beer is permitted.'<sup>8</sup> In the following decades associated bars followed the same trend. In the early twentieth century the Cabaret Zut opened in Montmartre as a homage to the Zutistes – the 1870s collective including Verlaine, Rimbaud and Hydropathe Charles Cros – and likewise prided itself on only selling beer.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Aristide Bruant's *Le Mirliton*, which took over the lease of the Chat Noir's original venue on the rue Rochechouart, also only stocked beer.<sup>10</sup>

Given the ubiquity of wine in French society, its economic importance and symbolic value to the nation's cultural identity, it is conspicuous by its absence at these events. Much is known of the 'cultural landscape of viticulture' in French history, and according to statistics gathered in 1899, wine accounted for over 72 per cent of the country's alcohol intake.<sup>11</sup> A further 22 per cent was made up by spirits, and only 5.5 per cent by beer. This is in contrast with Britain, whose tastes are shown to have been almost exactly opposite, with beer accounting for 72 per cent of the total alcohol consumed, and only 2.2 per cent by wine. Given this, the choice made by these clubs to sell only beer is notable.

The widespread contamination of phylloxera (otherwise known as the Great Wine Blight) may have been a potential cause of this phenomenon. From the 1850s through to the mid-1870s, aphids devastated French vines,

causing unprecedented damage to the country's wine industry. The quality and availability of wine were both severely affected. Poor-quality synthetic substitutes and expensive foreign imports became a common, though unwelcome sight. As stocks ran dry the prices escalated, and although the worst of the disease was vanquished by 1875, its repercussion on the industry lasted until the end of the century. The Hydropathe club was active as the cost of a bottle of wine was near its peak, and as prices more than doubled its consumption decreased to less than half.<sup>12</sup> Although this might suggest that beer provided a necessary alternative during a difficult time for the French wine industry, for the beer-drinking cultures such as the Hydropathes, the consumption of beer also helped to distance the club from dominant cultural practices in French society, not least dissociating it from symbolic reference to the Eucharist. During the Holy Sacrament of the Catholic church, Christians gather to 'celebrate' the Eucharist, breaking bread, drinking a sip of wine, singing and praying as a mass to reinforce and confirm their collective beliefs. The Hydropathes similarly gathered en masse, drinking and singing together to confirm their belief in a modern, secular way of life. In the years leading up to *laïcité* – the official separation of church and state – this celebration of a secular Eucharist, in which the blood of Christ was replaced with a symbol of the working man – was a loaded political gesture denoting this generation's separation from the liturgical rites of the church, and the 'anti-republican' conservatives who continued to follow it.

Outside of the Hydropathe meetings, particularly after the club's close, many of its leading figures were associated with anticlerical discourse. Such views, for instance, surfaced overtly at Goudeau's Chat Noir, and the increasingly controversial matter of the church's authority was confronted in the first edition of the cabaret's journal: 'It is high time to correct an error which has weighed down on more than sixty entire generations ... The writing which we call holy – I don't really know why – has done nothing more, to put it politely, than make a mockery of the people.'<sup>13</sup> As Julian Brigstocke has argued, in opposition to the Catholic church's tactical construction of the Basilica de Sacré Cœur, such articles attempted to re-imagine Montmartre as a place characterized by 'anti-clericalism and anti-traditionalism.'<sup>14</sup> While anticlerical views are not so vehemently confronted in the Hydropathes' own journal, *l'Hydropathe*, potentially due to persistent surveillance at this earlier moment, such beliefs nonetheless occasionally surfaced. In the final few issues of the journal (by this point publishing under the title *Tout-Paris*), there are a number of advertisements for anticlerical publications. Unlike the advertisements for local bars and bookshops that appear in a designated advertising space on the back page, the

promotion of anticlerical literature occurs on the inside cover. They sit alongside the artists' poetry and prose, and the texts are given full endorsement by the Hydropathe club. Publicity for the anticlerical publication, *Le Jésuite Rouge* by Alfred Sirven and Henri Le Verdier appeared in the journal's final issue; and the following promotion of Pompeu Gener's *La Mort et le Diable* was published in four consecutive issues:<sup>15</sup>

In these times of conflict between the church and the state, between superstition and reason, it is good fortune to find work of a profound analysis of dogmas and religious myths of diverse races and ages, in which the beliefs of theologians are reduced to their meagre value compared to the omnipotent truth of positivist science. It is to this text that we are happy to signal an important work published by Reinwald, with a preface by Littré, and entitled: *La Mort et le Diable: Histoire et philosophie de deux négations suprêmes*. This study, which exposes all the obstacles that man must overcome to extend civilization on Earth, is due to a young Spaniard, Mr. Pompejo [*sic*] Gener, member of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris, and correspondent member of the Cercle des Hydropathes.<sup>16</sup>

Gener was a Catalan writer who was influential in late nineteenth-century Spanish modernism, not least for introducing Nietzschean ideas to the country before the appearance of authorized translations of Nietzsche's texts.<sup>17</sup> The journal's declaration of Gener as a 'correspondent member of the *Cercle des Hydropathes*' indicates the club's attempts to link with a wider network of anticlerical European intellectuals.<sup>18</sup> As well as being a proponent of Nietzschean ideals, Gener is closely aligned with Positivist theories. The preface for his text was written by Émile Littré himself, the student of the founder of Positivist thought, Auguste Comte.

As many historians agree, it was from Comtean Positivism that the seed of *laïcité* grew. The term was coined in the early 1870s to define 'the principle of separation of civil society and religious society.'<sup>19</sup> It formulated a scenario by which the state held no power over religion; and in return the church held no influence over politics.<sup>20</sup> In practical terms, within the context of the 1870s, *laïcité* represented the idea of tolerance of religious faiths, but only under the precept that they were practised in the private domain, without interference in the public realm, and renounced all influence upon state institutions:<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, it must ensure that religions remain in the private domain. Private does not mean individual; there is a possibility of private organizations. The public domain, that which the Republic is responsible for, which begins with the school, should be influenced as little as possible by religions.<sup>22</sup>

It was with the introduction of *laïcité* that the republican politician Jules Ferry made his name in the late 1870s.<sup>23</sup> The republicans still held only a minority in the French legislature for most of the decade, yet due to the lack of a formal party system, it was possible for political figures to hold senior positions under a de facto opposition government. Ferry was one such figure, and in February 1875 he was appointed as Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. Ferry understood the importance of culture and education in society, and saw how it could be mobilized to influence public opinion. This is clearly demonstrated by his choice to continue in this role as head of arts and culture after he was elected as prime minister in 1880, and again in 1883. Convention dictated that the head of government take the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs, taking charge of war and defence, and Ferry was the first and only prime minister to do otherwise, giving greater emphasis to the cultural pursuits within the nation. As part of his responsibilities for the country's cultural institutions, Ferry was involved in the official state Salon. Diverging from the standard, mundane speeches made at the awards ceremony, in 1879 Ferry spoke against the Institute for its suppression of modern painters in favour of academic traditions:

The Institute conceived the plan to force all of French art to submit to its discipline and obey its rules. To this end, the learned society set itself up as the vigilant guardian of the doors of the Salon [...] Contemporary art is at the same time very strong and absolutely individual [...] It would be difficult to find it in any traditional schools or influences like those of years past. We might say that right now individualism overflows its banks.<sup>24</sup>

In essence, Ferry exploited the arts as a weapon in the battle between conservatives and republicans. While conservatives continued their long-established relationship with Academicism, the republicans aligned themselves alongside modernist art practice. Where the Academic traditionalists attempted to impose restrictions on artists, demanding they follow rigid standards of quality and value, the republicans, Ferry claimed, saw that what made their country great was the 'individualism' of its citizens. In making this claim he distanced the debate from partisan political divides. Instead, the argument focused on defending the natural character of *all* French citizens against oppressive state institutions such as the Academy. This oppression, it was proposed, would hold back the nation, and everything that made it great. Republican individualism, on the other hand, would *support* the citizens of France in freedom of thought and expressions of liberty. As Patricia Mainardi has stated, Ferry asserted the republican position in favour of art's liberty, championing the French pursuit

of individualism.<sup>25</sup> This accords with Tamar Garb's claims that although the diversification of style, genre and the place of exhibition was not new to the Third Republic, it expanded within the liberal democratic system, which promoted the free market economy under the republican 'political credo of individualism'.<sup>26</sup> And as Nicholas Green concisely asserts, the 'independence of artists [...] was actively produced by state sponsorship'.<sup>27</sup>

In aligning the republic with the avant-garde, which he deemed representative of the nation's greatness, Ferry poses them as allies against the common enemy: the traditionalist gatekeepers that suppressed the arts with 'rules' and 'discipline'. While at times seeming to be subversive, the Hydropathes were therefore part of a cultural realignment that worked in favour of republican ideology, by providing a space to perform individuality through a novel anti-art aesthetic that rejected conservative judgements of value; and by promoting, within this space, associated beliefs in anticlericalism.<sup>28</sup>

While the consumption of beer may seem innocuous, within this context it was a small gesture that connected the young group of artists to this heated debate. In rejecting the loaded symbol of the Eucharist, the group disconnected itself from conservatism and the Catholic church, and replaced it with a symbol of a rural, working-class ideal, unpretentious and befitting of a culture for a brave new world that was yet to be won.

Although this republican debate stimulated support for 'individuality', it was not intended to reject patriotic sentiment. On the contrary, it was part of an attempt to reinforce French identity in the image of the republican citizen, and partook of Gambetta's controversial declaration that one could not be both catholic *and* a patriot. To support the Catholic church, he claimed, was to support an authority based outside of the nation, and whose allegiance was not to the people of France, but to Catholics worldwide. This, Gambetta asserted with the approval of his republican compatriots, undermined their nation's sovereignty, which must be reclaimed as a matter of priority.<sup>29</sup> Intricate gestures that undermined the traditional cultures and values of the church and autocratic regimes were a crucial way in which this was achieved on the streets.

### The Bon Bocks: anti-modern modernists

The implication that beer represented a symbol of French patriotism may well be countered by the drink's simultaneous reference to Britain or Germany, since beer was a prominent element of these national cultures. However, as I shall now

argue, for parts of the avant-garde its consumption symbolized artists' rejection of a standardized, stereotypical national identity, and the pursuit to construct a French persona that was not influenced by official doctrine.<sup>30</sup> This can be seen most acutely at the Bon Bock club: a society of artists that met for lively monthly dinners during the early Third Republic. These meetings continued, rather extraordinarily, for over fifty years, with the only recess forced by the First World War.<sup>31</sup> The lunches combined arts and music in an exclusive social space. Among this privileged crowd were figures such as Charles and Antoine Cros, André Gill, Georges Lorin and Coquelin Cadet, who were all central members of the Hydropathe club, and regular contributors at the Chat Noir, therefore closely linking the Bon Bock club with the avant-garde circles of bohemian Paris.

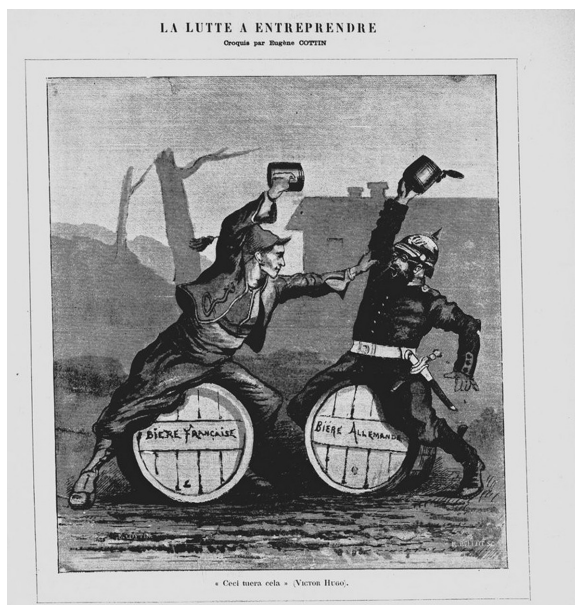
The term '*Le Bon Bock*' translates into English as 'The Good Pint', and the club was so-named in honour of Manet's well-known painting of the same title which received critical acclaim at the Salon of 1873 (Figure 9.3).<sup>32</sup> The portrait depicted Émile Bellot, an engraver and future founder of the Bon Bock lunches, who Manet portrayed sat calmly with a pipe and a glass of beer, in a style reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age. Instead of rejecting such classical cultural connotations, the Bon Bocks embraced them. They drew on these cultural roots at their monthly lunches, as they recited classical music, and poetry – the forms of high culture that might seem at odds with the avant-garde spirit of bohemian Montmartre. Yet they revelled in this kind of high-brow education, and awareness of the country's cultural history that also included the coarse humour, exaggerated characters, and carnivalesque spirit of Rabelais, who Bellot referenced in his *Album du Bon Bock*: 'beloved brothers, I pray our immortal master, Rabelais, to maintain you in good bodily health and joyous frame of mind.'<sup>33</sup> The Bon Bocks were searching for a contemporary French identity, and here they found an affinity with historical cultures that seemed to offer a more genuine Gallic persona than could be found in their own changeable society.<sup>34</sup> This is paralleled in Manet's image of Bellot as a rural champion; the rustic brass table, characteristic agrarian clothing, the pipe and beer, all create a timeless image that rejects the temporality of Parisian urbanism and modernity.

The name 'Bon Bock' also alluded to the cultural heritage of the society's leaders, many of whom were from the region of Alsace. One of the reasons Manet received such acclaim for Bellot's portrait was due to its apparently conservative subject matter and style. This united left- and right-wing press, appearing as respite from the previous controversies of '*Olympia*' and '*Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*'. Yet this view does not account for the painting's political undercurrent, such as those alluded to by Jules Claretie when he asserted that

this calm, dignified figure was likely ‘a good *Alsatian* philosopher and patriot, quietly enjoying his tobacco and hops.’<sup>35</sup> Alsace had long been the main producer of French beer, and for the Bon Bocks, the pint of beer referenced in its name was a symbolic allusion to the region, which had recently been lost to Germany following the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>36</sup> The Bon Bock meetings had strong links with Alsace, held as they were at the Alsatian restaurant ‘Krauteimer’ on the rue Rochechouart in Montmartre. Before the war this was a local haunt of artists and actors of German and Alsatian origin.<sup>37</sup> This Alsatian connection was evident from the first Bon Bock meeting, which was co-organized by the Alsatian satirist Eugène Cottin, during which the caricaturist Étienne Carjat ‘recited his “Toast to Alsace-Lorraine”’, which was said to ‘stir the emotions of all those in attendance.’<sup>38</sup> The Bon Bocks’ reference to beer, as well as the Hydropathes’ consumption of beer at their séances in 1878, was a symbol of solidarity with the Alsatian people, and the communities alienated by political agenda.



**Figure 9.3** Édouard Manet, *Le Bon Bock*, 1873, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Mr. and Mrs. Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Collection, 1963, 1963–116-9.



**Figure 9.4** Eugène Cottin, 'La Lutte à Entreprendre', *Le Bon Bock*, no. 1, 21 February 1885, p.3. Courtesy of BnF.

PREMIERE ANNEE - N° 10. Prix de Vente: 15 Centimes. SAISON D'ÉTÉ 1885.

| BREVETÉ DÉPOSÉ. DÉSIGNATION                                |               | BREVETÉ DÉPOSÉ. DÉSIGNATION                                |               |
|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| ABONNEMENTS  |               | ABONNEMENTS  |               |
| Paris  | 12 fr. par an | Paris  | 12 fr. par an |
| France   | 10 fr. par an | France   | 10 fr. par an |
| Étranger   | 15 fr. par an | Étranger   | 15 fr. par an |
| Les abonnements partent du 1 <sup>er</sup> de chaque mois. |               | Les abonnements partent du 1 <sup>er</sup> de chaque mois. |               |

**MAISON FONDÉE**  
**E. BELLOT**  
 Propriétaire de la Brasserie de la Bière de France.  
 4, rue de la Harpe, 40, Paris.

**MAISON FONDÉE**  
**E. BELLOT**  
 Propriétaire de la Brasserie de la Bière de France.  
 4, rue de la Harpe, 40, Paris.

**ANCIENNE BIÈRE**  
**DE BRASSERIE**  
**DE FRANCE**  
 Paris - 40, rue de la Harpe, 40 - Paris

## LE BON BOCK

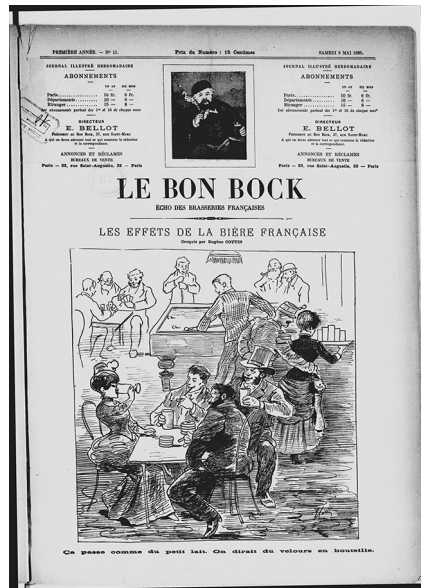
BIÈRE DE BRASSERIE FRANÇAISE

LES EFFETS DE LA BIÈRE EN ALLEMAGNE

Dessiné par Eugène COTTIN

Les sorts des Strasbourgs en Bavière

**Figure 9.5** Eugène Cottin, 'Les Effets de la Bière en Allemagne', *Le Bon Bock*, no. 10, 2 May 1885, p. 1. Courtesy of BnF.



**Figure 9.6** Eugène Cottin, ‘Les Effets de la Bière Française’, *Le Bon Bock*, no. 11, 9 May 1885, p.1. Courtesy of BnF.

Ten years after the inaugural Bon Bock dinner, this was confirmed in the *Journal du Bon Bock*, which was published weekly by the group’s leading members for at least six months.<sup>39</sup> This is no doubt a peculiar magazine to be published by so-called bohemian artists. Beer was its sole subject. It included poetry and cartoons, as typical of artistic magazines of the period. But it also included historical articles on the history of French beer, reported the fluctuating costs of hops and barley in the capital, and published studies by pre-eminent scientists supposedly proving unequivocally that French beer was superior to its foreign rivals. In all it was an odd mix of satirical literary magazine, trade journal and nationalistic propaganda. Throughout this range of articles, it championed the superiority of French beer, in particular above the German counterpart. In the opening article of the first issue Bellot stated explicitly that this was a ‘battle – albeit a passive one – against the Germans.’<sup>40</sup> In this same issue the leading caricature expressed that the battle was underway. Here we see a handsome young Frenchman, clean-shaven showing his chiselled jaw, and wearing clothing reminiscent of the sans-culottes – clearly of the peasantry, but nonetheless clean and respectable (Figure 9.4). He is the personification of French beer battling his German counterpart, imagined as a Prussian soldier, somewhat bestial with his

thick beard, and despite being armed with a long dagger, unable to fight off the stoic might of the French revolutionary. Such rivalry continues throughout the journal. In issue ten, we see the supposed 'effects of German beer' (Figure 9.5). Once again pictured as soldiers, the Germans are, under the influence of their own country's beer, turning on each other as they brawl in the streets. On the other hand, when shown the 'effects of French beer', we see patrons as civilized clientele, engaged in conversation over a game of cards or billiards (Figure 9.6). In the presence of women (who they are subtly leering over) they represent the kind of macho masculinity that, we can assume, its readers could have identified with.

The Bon Bock caricatures argued against the consumption of German beer not only for the sake of patriotism, but for health reasons too. German beer, they argued, was mass-manufactured. It used scientific brewing methods, and large quantities of the controversial Salicylic Acid as a preservative. This we can see satirized in issue thirteen, where we are shown a crowd of scientists learning German brewing methods in a scientific laboratory (Figure 9.7). If the message here wasn't transparent enough, the text below clears up any misunderstanding: 'the use of salicylic acid prevents beer from spoiling. The beers do not spoil, it is true, but the health of the drinkers is spoiled. Do not drink beers from Germany: they are all salicylic.' The message had already been made a few months earlier in the image entitled 'A Dream', in which Cottin invokes the death of German beer, killed by her own deadly poison (Figure 9.8). As inscribed on the headstone: 'Here lies Lady German Beer of Munich [...] Deceased victim of her own germs. Eternal regrets for all who they poisoned.' And there in the funeral march are the embodied figures of apoplexy and paralysis: the supposed side-effects of this controversial substance. French beer, on the other hand, was supposedly brewed with traditional, rural techniques, and was the healthy choice against the poisonous German alternative. Thus, for the Bon Bocks, the consumption of beer was not about youthful liberation and bohemian ideals. Its message was to oppose scientific methods of modernity, and to instead stimulate support for a rejuvenation of rural values, rallying against the modern urban ways that were influenced by the invasion of foreign (in this case, German) cultures. By expressing this message through the long-established language of visual satire they appear to maintain a voice of the young free-thinkers, mocking the authority of science, and all the while promoting the reinstatement of a more ancient way of life.

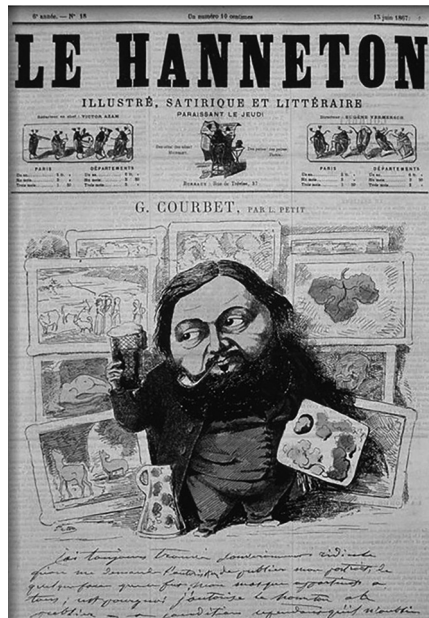
The symbolism adopted by the Bon Bocks had been used in recent times, notably by the revolutionary Realist painter, Gustave Courbet, who



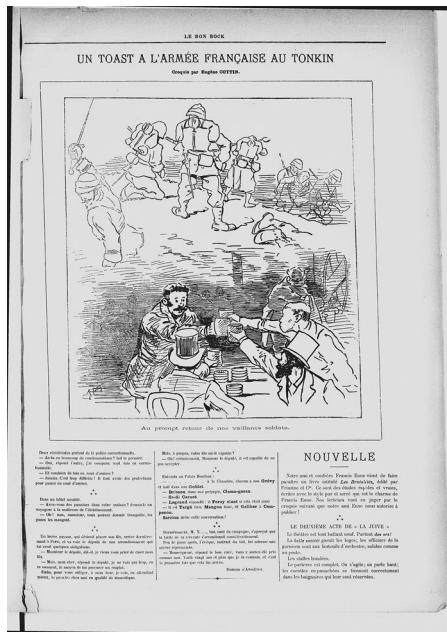
often frequented the Alsatian bar, the Brasserie Andler in Paris, and in the extensive collection of caricatures during his later life, he was rarely pictured without his customary pipe and stein of beer (Figure 9.9). For Courbet, who frequently manipulated his public persona through self-portraiture, the beer stein completed his real-life image of masculine, anti-bourgeois 'naïvety'. Just as much as the substance indicated Courbet's cultural roots, its consumption dictated his behaviour, ideas, the company that he kept and the physical state of the writing he produced often on beer-stained paper, as T. J. Clark describes:

[Courbet] thrived on [the Brasserie Andler's] mixture of the gross and the intellectual; the others sat and laughed at his hour-long tirades against the Ideal and in favour of Alsatian beer: they laughed but they listened, night after night. Courbet was, in fact as in legend, a naïf, almost an illiterate, with wild spelling and disintegrating syntax spilling over page after page. Yet he was also, in his own cantankerous way, a theorist, a doctrinaire. Proudhon himself groaned under the onslaught of the twelve-page letters, beer-stained and crumpled, which greeted his drafts of *Du principe de l'art*.<sup>41</sup>

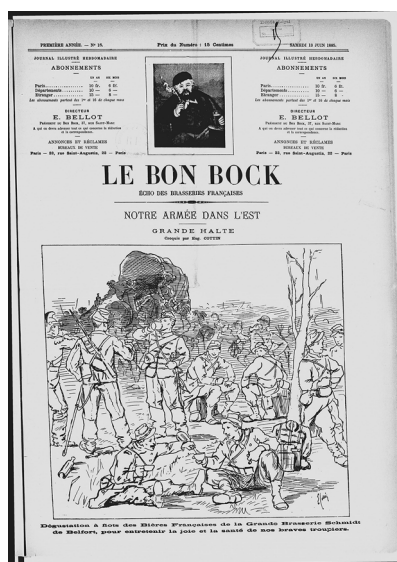
Courbet exemplified beer drinking as a rejection of refined culture and etiquette; and offered a glimpse of a world in which intellectualism, vulgarity and naïvety were complimentary, rather than conflicting traits. Fearing further imprisonment for his role in the Commune, Courbet was exiled to Switzerland in 1873, the same year Manet's portrait of Bellot was exhibited. And it is perhaps no coincidence that the Bon Bock subject – with his pipe and glass of beer – uses a palette and tone remarkably similar to that of Courbet's own *After Dinner at Ornans* (1848). While the Bon Bock club equally drew on this idealized image of the rural man, it was, however, far from matching Courbet's more radical anarchism. While the journal empathizes with the common Frenchman, and a rural character in particular, by 1885 – at the height of the Tonkin military campaign that sought to establish a French protectorate in Vietnam – this empathy lay specifically with the French infantryman. In two separate issues of 1885, the reader is invited to identify with the French foot soldier fighting for the colonial empire (Figures 9.10 and 9.11). In sharp contrast to the representations of the Prussian military as drunken aggressors, the courageous French soldiers gather to drink beer in the spirit of community. Rather than attempting to subvert the authority of the state, the group encouraged the reader to support the state's military agenda, inviting them to toast to the health of their valiant soldiers with a glass of French beer.



**Figure 9.9** Léonce Petit, 'G. Courbet', *Le Hanneton*, 13 June 1867, p.1. Léonce Justin Alexandre Petit (1839–1884), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



**Figure 9.10** Eugène Cottin, 'Un Toast à l'armée française au Tonkin', *Le Bon Bock*, no. 7, 11 April 1885, p. 3. Courtesy of BnF.



**Figure 9.11** Eugène Cottin, 'Notre Armée dans l'est', *Le Bon Bock*, no. 16, 13 June 1885, p.1. Courtesy of BnF.

## Conclusion

National celebrations, such as the fête of 30 June 1878 as depicted by Monet and Manet, were a means by which the emerging liberal Republic entrenched its ideology within French society. They provided a means to collectively engage with common ideals, under the flurry of tricolours that symbolized the victory of the left over the conservative royalists and the Catholic church. The bohemian cultures of the Hydropathes and the Bon Bocks performed an equivalent role on a smaller scale. As we have seen, this was wholeheartedly in support of the republic; but the agency permitted through their own cultural expressions allowed these artists to define what they understood to be the essential characteristics of the new republican citizen. The Bon Bocks championed masculinity, a carnivalesque spirit of Rabelais, the quiet dignity of the rural Frenchman and the regaining of sovereignty from the German invasion (both military and cultural). The Hydropathes were similarly focused on regaining sovereignty, partaking of Ferry's and Gambetta's left-wing agendas that sought to supplant the power of the Catholic church. For both, beer symbolized their defiance and acted as an agent to create and maintain unity in support of their republican cause.

As roots of twentieth-century anti-arts and avant-garde practice, the two clubs under question thus appear to be suitably subversive in respect of their rejection of authority and pursuit of independence. Yet, as I hope to have shown, this nonetheless acted in favour of the emerging liberal republican state, and aided the promotion of its ideology to the Parisian youth. Given the widespread violence against catholic communities, which were expelled from France due to suspicion of the church's authority, and distain for a religious way of life, to understand this to occur within the context and name of liberty, only highlights a certain hypocrisy at the source of avant-garde practice. Similarly, their engagement with a hypermasculine aesthetic, and distrust of the apparent influx of foreign cultural influence, may be less palatable to today's liberal western values. The Bon Bocks, furthermore, did not practice what they preached. Despite what they so doggedly express in their journal, at the Bon Bock lunches they didn't drink beer: in practice, within their exclusive circle they were comfortable with more bourgeois pursuits, toasting their ideas over a glass of fine French wine.

## Notes

- 1 Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18.
- 2 Monarchists held a majority in the National Assembly with up to 400 seats, compared to 250 republicans, making restoration of the monarchy a distinct possibility. See William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870–1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 24. John M. Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 2.
- 3 Fortescue, *The Third Republic*, 28.
- 4 Alan R.H. Baker, *Fraternity among the Peasantry: Sociability and Voluntary Associations in the Loire Valley, 1815–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 37.
- 5 Émile Goudeau, *Dix ans de bohème* ([1888]; Paris: Éditions Champs Vallon, 2000), 324.
- 6 Georges Fragerolle, 'Le Fumisme', *L'Hydropathe* 2, no. 8 (12 May 1880): 2–3. (All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.)
- 7 Charles Cros, 'Udadushkhînam – Çruti', *Le Chat Noir*, no. 77 (30 June 1883): 4.
- 8 Francisque Sarcey, 'Les Hydropathes', *XIX Siècle* (28 November 1878): 1.
- 9 Dan Franck, *Bohemian Paris: Picasso Modigliani, Matisse, and the Birth of Modern Art*, trans. Cynthia Liebow (New York: Grove Press, 2003).

- 10 Steven Moore Whiting, *Satie the Bohemian: From Cabaret to Concert Hall* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 46.
- 11 Kolleen M. Guy, 'Wine, Champagne and the Making of French Identity in the Belle Epoque', in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 165. David Grigg, 'Convergence in European Diets: The Case of Alcoholic Beverages,' *GeoJournal* 44, no. 1 (January 1998): 11.
- 12 James Simpson, 'Cooperation and Conflicts: Institutional Innovation in France's Wine Markets, 1870–1911', *The Business History Review* 79, no. 3 (autumn 2005): 534.
- 13 Jacques Lehardy (Clément Privé), 'Montmartre,' *Le Chat Noir*, no. 1 (14 January 1882).
- 14 Julian Brigstocke, 'Defiant Laughter: Humour and the Aesthetics of Place in Late Nineteenth-Century Montmartre,' *Cultural Geographies* 19, no. 2 (2012): 220–1. Construction of the Sacré-Cœur began in Montmartre in 1875.
- 15 Alfred Sirven and Henri Le Verdier, *Le Jésuite Rouge* (Paris: Dentu, 1879). Pompeu Gener, *La Mort et le Diable: Histoire et Philosophie des deux Négations Suprêmes* (Paris: Reinwald, 1880).
- 16 *Tout-Paris*, nos. 9–12 (1880): 2.
- 17 Paul Ilie, 'Nietzsche in Spain: 1890–1910', *PMLA* 79, no. 1 (March 1964): 8. My thanks to Jordi Larios for discussion regarding this obscure figure connected to Catalan Modernisme (not to be confused with Anglo-Saxon Modernism).
- 18 *Tout-Paris*, nos. 9–12 (1880): 2.
- 19 Caroline C. Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). Guy Bedouelle and Jean-Paul Costa, *Les laïcités à la française* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), 11.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 John F. V. Keiger, *Raymond Poincaré* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 61.
- 22 Claude Nicolet, *Histoire, Nation, République* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000), 248.
- 23 Pierre Chevallier, *La séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Ecole* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), 228.
- 24 Jules Ferry speech at the 1879 Salon, reproduced in the 1880 Salon catalogue, v–xiv, cited in Patricia Mainardi, *End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 61.
- 25 Mainardi, *End of the Salon*, 61.
- 26 Tamar Garb, 'Revising the Revisionists: The Formation of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs,' *Art Journal* 48, no. 1, 'Nineteenth-Century French Art Institutions' (spring 1989): 64–6.
- 27 Nicholas Green, "'All the Flowers of the Field": The State, Liberalism and Art in France under the Early Third Republic,' *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 1, 'Art and the French State' (1987): 71.

- 28 Charles Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn of the Century France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).
- 29 Fortescue, *The Third Republic*, 33.
- 30 Grigg, 'Convergence in European Diets,' 11. According to statistics from Rowntree and Sherwell, in the German Empire, beer made up nearly 50 per cent of all alcohol consumed.
- 31 Philip Dennis Cate, and Mary Shaw, *The Spirit of Montmartre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1996), 3.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 33 Émile Bellot, 'Preface,' *Album du Bon Bock* (Paris: Ludovic Baschet, 1878). Translation from Cate and Shaw, *The Spirit of Montmartre*, 4.
- 34 Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). Golan looks in detail at representations of the rural landscape, regional cultures and rustic symbols in art during the modernist period.
- 35 Jules Claretie, *Le Soir*, cited in Eric Darragon, *Manet* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 217.
- 36 Katharina Vajta, 'Linguistic Religious and National Loyalties in Alsace,' *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 220 (March 2013): 110. As is well known, the region changed between French and German rule since the Early Middle Ages, but it had been a region of France since the rule of Louis XVI in 1648.
- 37 Cate and Shaw, 'Spirit of Montmartre', 3.
- 38 *Ibid.* Carjat was a journalist, and co-founded the journal *Le Diogène*. He is perhaps best remembered for having produced a number of well-known photographic portraits, including of Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud. Cottin produced illustrations for a number of journals, including front-page designs for *Le Grelot*, *Le Sifflet* and *Le Chat Noir*.
- 39 It was published for at least six months, between January and June 1885.
- 40 Émile Bellot, 'Notre Programme,' *Le Bon Bock*, no. 1 (21 February 1885): 1.
- 41 T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982), 30.