



Nature and Modernity in Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* and William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*: a Comparative and Critical Reading

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Abstract. The painting *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (*The Luncheon on the Grass*) (1863) by the French artist Édouard Manet (1832-1883) received negative comments for the awkward nude and the puzzling narratives in the painting. After much debate, this work is now considered representative of both the artist's oeuvre and of the French modern art movement after the 1850s. While Manet and his fellow Impressionists provided their definition of modern art through their quick brushwork representing speed and light, English art from the same period needs its own definition. A Pre-Raphaelite artist, William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), through the painstaking techniques that characterize the style of the group, presented his version of modern art. In his *The Awakening Conscience*, a mistress is shown stunned by the sunlight and struggling to wake up her conscience. This paper juxtaposes the two paintings and explores two aspects of the paintings that have rarely been discussed and compared before: modernity and Nature. It was investigated how, in both paintings, Nature (as visualized through the image of greenery) is exploited by modern society and how the bourgeois protagonists relate themselves to Nature. In doing so, this paper provides an interpretation of the cultural and social significance of both art works.

Keywords: *The Awakening Conscience*; Édouard Manet; *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (*The Luncheon on the Grass*); Modern Art; Modernity; Nature; William Holman Hunt.

1 Introduction

By 'modernity' the French poet Baudelaire (1821-1867) meant "the ephemeral, the fugitive....", as he wrote in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (originally written in 1860 and first published in 1863) [1]. The French painter Édouard Manet (1832-1883) also developed in his art a similar feature of representing speed through clear tracks of brushstrokes and paint applied on the canvas [2]. In doing so Manet and his fellow Impressionists set a model for modern art in the second half of the nineteenth century [3]. However, some art historians find it difficult to discuss English art produced contemporaneously using the same standards. Corbett and Perry have questioned why the standards

by which to judge whether or not English art was modern were those set by contemporary French art [4], whereas Prettejohn argues that the art of the Pre-Raphaelites can be considered modern, but in a different way [5]. Following this line of inquiry, this paper juxtaposes Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, ('The Luncheon on the Grass' in English, after this abbreviated as *Le Déjeuner*) (Figure 1) [6] with the Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt's (1827-1910) *The Awakening Conscience* (Figure 2) [7] and presumes that both paintings represent a certain form of modern art in their respective social and cultural contexts. This certain form of modern art not only lies in both paintings' brushwork (Section 3.2), but also in their varied depictions of the modern circumstances in which they were produced (Sections 3.1 and 3.3). More specifically, this paper aims to elucidate how exactly these modern circumstances, i.e. modernity, are represented in the paintings and how the imagery of Nature plays a significant role in this representation.

In this paper, 'Nature' refers to leaves, trees, grass and bushes, i.e. greenery. Greenery is an important aspect to consider because both paintings relate their protagonists with it. In the French painting, although the rationale behind the picnic remains enigmatic and has been continually explored by art historians since its creation in 1863, one thing that is certain is that the lunch-eaters are nineteenth-century contemporaries of the artist. It is thus curious why these sitters must take their lunch on this particular patch of grass and how they make use of this natural setting. Equally, in *The Awakening Conscience*, these modern and fashionable protagonists, especially the woman, are shown as living in a town house but influenced by Nature (the tree leaves grow outside of the house). Although it is generally agreed that these tree leaves represent a moral call, little has been written about why Nature is depicted in such an unusual manner: confined in a modern town house and framed by many modern artifacts.

The scope of this journal contains many different aspects of visual arts and design and not every reader of the journal has an art-historical background, so I will explain the methodology used in this art-historical study. Firstly, I approach the images carefully and pay attention to their details. I interpret as yet unreported hidden meanings from those graphic depictions with the help of the findings from the relevant literature (Section 2). This is a typical method adopted by art-historians called 'visual analysis'. Meanwhile, this analysis is done *comparatively* (between the French and the English painting) and my argument has a tone of art *criticism*. This is why the title of the paper mentions "comparative and critical reading". The exact content of my interpretation/comparison includes the meanings of the human figures, their behaviors, the outdoor and indoor spaces, the artifacts, and the animals. Besides the meanings of the 'things' above, I will also compare the meaning of both

artists' different painting techniques. I will point out that although Hunt usually paints with slowly applied paint, rather than, like Manet, with quick brushwork causing a thick surface layer, in *The Awakening Conscience* Hunt actually painted the image of greenery (visible in the window glass) with thick brushstrokes. This exceptional paint handling adds an unusual message to this painting.

Moreover, the contrast I seek to draw between Nature and modernity necessitates certain Marxist perspectives. This Marxist point-of-view is an instrument to interpret the paintings and therefore forms part of the methodology used in this paper. According to Marxism, a capitalist (or, as in this paper, modern) society prospers at the expense of and the exploitation of laborers [8]. If we consider the source for such exploitation beyond human labor, natural resources can also be exploited, for they provide, with the help of the working class, what Marx called the 'raw materials' for the production of commodities. Therefore, this paper considers Nature as a source of wealth for the middle class and its use was important in the respective modern middle class societies in which such paintings as Manet's *Le Déjeuner* and Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* were produced. Besides, according to Marxism, all classes seek and secure their own interests [8], so it is interesting to explore how the protagonists in both paintings (clearly middle-class by their apparel) exploit Nature, prosper from such exploitation and establish a modern world in the process.

Overall, this paper not only reiterates the idea that the art of the Pre-Raphaelites might be as modern as its contemporary counterpart in France [5], it also reveals the Nature-modernity relationship underlying both paintings.

2 Literature Review

In the relevant literature, Nature and modernity in either painting have only briefly been discussed. Hunt himself did not advocate his own work, but critic John Ruskin (1819-1900), immediately after the first exhibition of the painting, published a letter in a newspaper to defend it [9]. Much of Ruskin's interpretation of the meanings in the painting has been adopted by later researchers. A few decades after this newspaper article was published, Ruskin still celebrated it [10]. Additionally, other earlier research tended to focus on the religious aspect of *The Awakening Conscience* [11,12] while studies published in the recent two decades paid more attention to visual details [5,13]. Gissing [12], in particular, draws a parallel between *The Awakening Conscience* and another painting by Hunt, *The Light of the World* (1851-1853) [14]. The latter depicts Jesus, holding a lantern in the evening and standing outside of a forsaken house representing unlighted human minds. Jesus' attempt to knock at

the door symbolizes that ‘the light’, both the lantern and Jesus, are waiting nearby to radiate human life. Thus, *The Awakening Conscience*, which depicts a woman’s conscience being awakened by the sunlight, was understood in the same context as awakening Christianity [12]. Hunt, as a Christian, also meant to convey such a moral religious message when working on *The Awakening Conscience* [15], although there also has been an interpretation that a ‘Hogarthian’ satire is part of this painting [16]. Recent interpretations, on the other hand, show more interest in the precise details in the painting. I will follow this emphasis on intricate visual analysis. Corbett, in particular, argues how Hunt’s clear visualization of artifacts constructs a materialistic world [17]. I will follow this idea and further explore how Nature plays a role in this materialistic context.

As for the literature on Manet, his friend the writer Émile Zola (1840-1902) wrote a letter about Manet in 1867 [18]. Although speaking of a more scandalous work by Manet, *Olympia* [19,20], Zola emphasized an overall avant-garde feature of Manet’s art, which I will quote and discuss. Posthumously, many studies on Manet have been published and I will introduce the relevant ones in a chronological order. As for the composition of the painting, a relationship has long ago been noted between Marcantonio Raimondi’s (?1480-?1534) *The Judgment of Paris* (after Raphael) produced in the sixteenth century [21] and Manet’s *Le Déjeuner* [22]. In addition, the identity of the particular sitters in the painting has also been observed [23]. There has also been discussion about what inspired Manet to create such a scene [24]. Early on, Fried defined Manet’s art as a form of modernism [2]. Although the exact meaning of the painting has become clearer over time, an entire book was dedicated to its enigmatic quality in 1998 [25]. In 2009, Foucault’s comments on *Le Déjeuner* were published [26]. My discussion of the woman’s face in *Le Déjeuner* is supported by mentioning Foucault’s observations on the light and shadow in the painting. While the twentieth-century books elucidate the composition, identification, inspiration, value, meanings and light in *Le Déjeuner*, this paper concentrates on less discussed aspects of the figures’ behavior and interpret them in relation to the ideas of Nature and modernity.

3 Discussion

3.1 The Protagonists and the Scenes

In *Le Déjeuner* (Figure 1) there is a group consisting of one woman, two men in the middle and a separate female bather in the background. The composition is derived from the river gods and nymph in Raimondi’s *The Judgment of Paris* from 1520 [21,22,24]. In Manet’s version, they are, from left to right, a professional model, Manet’s brother, and Manet’s brother-in-law who was a

Dutch sculptor [23]. It has also been pointed out that the initial source for this subject matter may have been Manet's intention to paint a nude after he saw bathing women on the bank the river Seine [24]. Yet this information does not reveal why Manet painted a group having a picnic, particularly in this public space, as if it were a common and agreeable social activity. Moreover, since the critics called it *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* instead of *Le Bain* (The Bath, or The Bather), as Manet originally named it [24], it is crucial to consider the behavior of and the interactions within this group.



Figure 1 Edouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 207 x 265 cm, Musée d'Orsay. Photo ©RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Benoît Touchard / Mathieu Rabeau / Dist. Seven Apex. [6]

First, the lower-left corner contains a tipped-over basket on the nude's Persian blue dress. There is food inside and outside the basket, such as bread, cherries, apricots, etc. Most of them are intact while some have rolled out of the basket. In the center at the bottom of the canvas, we see empty oysters shells. These empty shells imply that they have been consumed and thrown away. The grey water container to the right of the basket lays flat. We see no liquid flowing out of the water container and the soil nearby is not wet. This means the water has also been consumed and the water container is empty. The consumed oysters

and the empty water container show that the painting depicts a moment in the middle, not in the beginning, of the meal. Also, as the woman's dress lies beneath the tipped-over basket, it can be presumed that she took off her clothes first, and then placed them beneath the basket, possibly to avoid having them blown away by wind. It remains, however, curious why, in the midst of the process of consuming food, the woman chose to go from clothed to naked.

In the meantime, her body's exposure among the clothed men is puzzling. One explanation might be that if the oyster symbolizes female sexuality, then the stripped female body here further 'embodies' and 'visualizes' sexuality as well. (This also partially explains why Manet's contemporary audience found the painting unacceptable.) But puzzles remain. Apart from the material still life, the naked woman with her bare feet points her big toe upward at the sculptor's groin while the sculptor raises his right arm and points with a slightly downward index finger toward her. 'Sandwiched' between the woman and the sculptor, the man without a hat appears awkward in the midst of this activity. His disengaged eyes also illustrate how alienated and distanced he seems to be from the group, even though he is physically close to them. The other 'sandwiched' figure is the bather in the background. It is she who, it seems, should be naked, rather than the woman seated in the grass.

Through the above observations and interpretations, we are certain about two things. The first is that the more the viewer tries to understand the visual clues represented in this painting, the more they become lost in this constructed scene of modern life. Viewers look at the figures and their poses, but the painted figures' eyes look elsewhere. The sculptor looks forward. Manet's brother does not seem to focus his eyes on anything. The nude stares at the viewer. These disturbing eye contacts between viewer and painted figures inside and outside the painting communicate a strong sense of 'non-communication' [2]. Although the viewer can still identify the objects, such as trees, bushes, and still life, what the viewer reads from this painting is still "*inexplicably blank, opaque... without psychological interiority of any kind*" [2]. Making the viewer feel blank and strange does not mean that this painting is a failure; on the contrary, its richness in material depiction (such as the still life and the lush greenery) overwhelms the psychological weight and indeed warns clearly that materiality has overgrown the spiritual development, not only here in this bourgeois luncheon in open space, but also in the viewer's own modern life. Most essential of all is that this visual warning against modern life is not taking place in Haussmannized nineteenth-century Paris with its broad avenues, but in a natural and unidentified forest. So the second idea to be certain about is that Nature (or at least greenery) has become a background for modernity and that the Nature in *Le Déjeuner* has been appropriated by the modern bourgeois of the mid-nineteenth century.

Around ten years earlier, William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (Figure 2) [7] situated Nature within the context of English modernity. The painting, unlike *Le Déjeuner* whose scenarios still require more research, is generally agreed upon to be about a mistress who does not recognize her moral decay until she sees sunlight shining on the leaves of a tree growing outside the room in which she and her paramour consort [5,9,13]. The golden figures, Daphne and Apollo, mounted on the clock at the top of the piano and protected carefully under a glass roof, signal the woman's and her paramour's confinement to this suburban London house [27] because of their unspeakable, immoral affair.

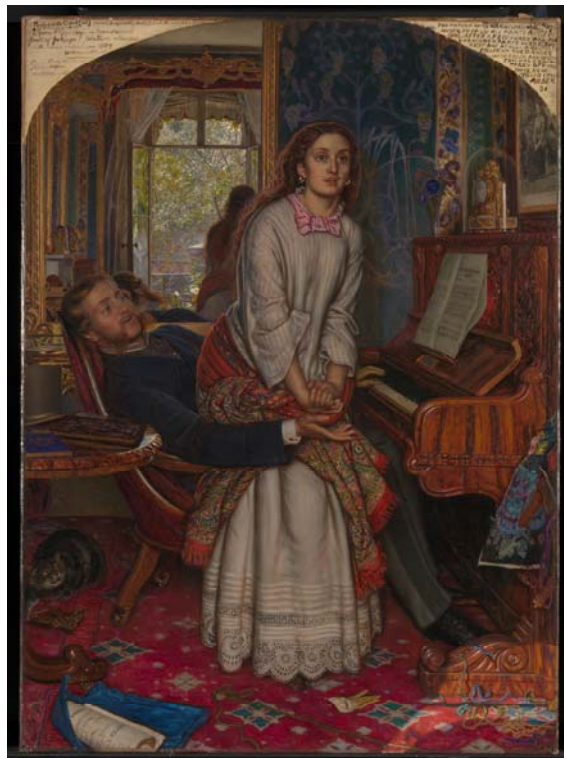


Figure 2 William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-1856. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 55.9 cm, Tate. Photo ©Tate. [7]

As in *Le Déjeuner*, I will again start with describing the setting of *The Awakening Conscience*. In this garishly-furnished interior, the farthest right and the lowest corner is lit. This is an important visual clue for the viewer to understand the event of 'awakening' [5]. It illustrates that, at this very moment, there is a shaft of sunlight shining in. This sudden revelation of sunlight also illuminates the crevices of the tender green leaves on the branches of the tree

growing outside the house (as one can easily see in the mirror that reflects the tree). The sunlight is refracted as it passes through the translucent green leaves and all the little shafts of refracted light together create a delightful vision composed of greenery, light, and shade. The woman in white witnesses this precious revelation and is seized with a sudden impulse to stand up and look at it. She gazes at it as if drinking the elixir of life through her eyes. Hence the purpose of painting the lit corner is to demonstrate the coincidence of this vision with the moment of the awakening of her conscience. Although the viewer cannot see directly what she sees, the viewer can still understand what is occurring because of the shaft of light in the right corner and the image reflected in the mirror behind the couple. In the other corner of the painting lies a music book. The lyrics revealed in the music book, which the couple was looking at before her awakening, stimulate the woman to realize her present moral decay [13].

In addition to the two corners, the rest of the interior is also notable, with many carefully depicted commodities, including the frame of the mirror, the clock mentioned earlier, the piano and the wooden furniture with their colors and patterns clearly elaborated. In addition, there are contradictory color schemes in the painting to add visual richness. For example, the mistress' white dress, with its 'thread-by-thread' [10] delicacy contrasts with her lover's black suit; and the green wall-paper with a flora pattern relates to the red carpet dotted with varied diamond shapes. While this bedazzling verisimilitude characterizes Hunt's style as a Pre-Raphaelite artist, it actually warns against the possibility of a loss in spirituality in the midst of this material feast made possible by these industrially constructed products, and this warning is exactly the theme of the painting: how a mistress, kept within a room full of material richness, struggles to maintain her spirituality [17].

After the setting, I will focus on the protagonists. I will particularly discuss the meaning of the male protagonist's gloved and ungloved hands. To do so I will mention Van Dyck's (1599-1641) two royal portraits and point out how gloved and ungloved hands are used as an important clue to emphasize the role of the male characters in his paintings. In *The Awakening Conscience*, the paramour is singing with his lasciviously open lips, touching the woman with his bare right hand and playing the piano with his gloved left hand. In Van Dyck's *Charles I at Hunt* (Figure 3) [28], the king stands magnificently with his bare right hand holding a walking stick. The king's gloved left hand is holding the glove taken off from his right hand. These hands and gloves suggest that the king is capable of different kinds of activities, like riding (visualized by the horse next to him), which needs a glove to protect his hand, and tasks that require seating, like writing or signing important documents – usually the function of the right hand and actions that do not require gloves. A similar depiction can be found in Van

Dyck's later work, the double portrait *Lord John Stuart and his Brother, Lord Bernard Stuart* [29] in which one brother, standing to the (viewer's) right, offers his bare right hand and his gloved left hand. In *The Awakening Conscience*, although the male lover is not an aristocrat, his hands tell the viewer that he is also capable of both seated tasks (playing piano) and lovemaking. The only difference is that he does the 'sport' (touching the woman) with a bare hand and the seated task with a gloved hand.



Figure 3 Anthony Van Dyck, *Charles I at Hunt*, c. 1635. Oil on canvas, 266 x 207 cm, Louvre. Photo ©RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Christian Jean / Dist. Seven Apex [28].

3.2 Different Painting Techniques

In 1867, Manet's admirer Zola defended Manet's *Olympia*. He wrote:

Tell them... for you a painting is merely a pretext for analysis. You needed a naked woman, and Olympia was the first to mind; you needed clear, luminous patches, so you painted a bunch of flowers; you needed something black, so you put a negress and a cat in one corner. What does it all mean? You scarcely know, and neither do I. But I do know that you have done the work of a painter, even a great painter; by which I mean that in your own special language you have vigorously interpreted the truths of light and shadow and the realities of objects and living creatures. [18]

This might help interpret *Le Déjeuner* in two ways. First, Zola describes how freely Manet gathered things and people available to him (such as the flower bouquet, the cat, the woman named Olympia and the black servant) for the purpose of creating this painting. This behavior not only shows Manet's creativity, but also how he utilizes various modern resources around him. This ideology of utilization is, in fact, presaged in *Le Déjeuner*, as it can be seen that the protagonists appropriate the greenery for their own use. The second way in which Zola's comment helps understand *Le Déjeuner* is in the painting techniques he describes. Zola mentioned the selection of color ("luminous" and "black"), the formation of the brushstrokes ("patches"), and the motivation behind these techniques (to express "the truths of light and shadow"). All of these can also be observed in *Le Déjeuner*. For colors, we see how luminous, white female bodies (the nude and the bather) are in contrast to the men's dark, black clothes. The tree trunks to the left are represented with clear brushstrokes to express thickness and texture. For "the truths of light and shadow", the right thigh of the nude has many clustered impastos on it to create a chiaroscuro effect. It is therefore reasonable to claim that Manet's art has a "special language" in which "a painting is merely a pretext." It is then no wonder that when Zola asked "what does it all mean", the viewer may find nothing but 'non-communication' [2] between the intimately posing figures (discussed in the earlier section), which may just be the "realities of objects and living creatures" in the modern world.

While Manet's 'realities of objects' are optical, Hunt's 'realities of objects' are desperately moral. In *The Awakening Conscience* Hunt demonstrates astonishing painting techniques that capture material qualities through carefully applied paint and slowly colored objects. The greenery reflected in the mirror in the background, in particular, is executed in meticulous detail and loaded with moral messages. This representation of greenery can be divided into two groups. The first group is the greenery that is reflected once only. The second group is the greenery that is reflected twice. The first group is the image of Nature that appears directly in the mirror and is actually the leafy view outside the window that the woman sees. This leafy view seen from the mirror, toned from tender green to bright yellow and interwoven with sunlight flickers and shades, is faithfully conveyed to the viewer through the paint. The second group of greenery is seen in the glass panels of the window. This particular image of Nature is reflected twice because it reflects, firstly, in the window panel, and then, secondly, in the mirror. Perhaps because this greenery is reflected twice it appears deliberately blurred. There are clusters of green, patches of yellow, and a smearing of white. These colors appear to have been applied with Manet's or another Impressionist's quick brush, which is not a technique Hunt generally adopted. This exception does not mean that Hunt failed to represent Nature clearly. In fact, under normal and general circumstances, such blurred and hazy

images are what we see with unaided eyes. Hunt noticed that the outdoor greenery reflected via different media must look different. Hence, in order to distinguish this, he provided the viewer with two different representations: actual tree leaves represented in the mirror that look clearer, and blurred leaf images in the glass window panels. This unusual technique of painting the greenery in a blurred way tells the viewer that Hunt was still realistic when painting Nature and that his technical precision was, as customary, based on careful observation.

Two visual representations require two interpretations. Firstly, the clearer one in the mirror seems to be displayed directly in front of the viewer and awaiting his/her scrutiny. Yet it is already a mediated Nature because what the viewer sees is not what she sees. The viewer does not have direct access to the very vision of Nature that inspires and wakes up human conscience. As a result, Nature as seen in the mirror, though with its surface explicitly painted, is actually accommodated by Hunt's critical attitude. It challenges us with the suggestion that what (modern) people consider to be natural, graceful, or spiritual may already have been manipulated and therefore untruthful. If Manet's *Le Déjeuner* illustrates the crisis of Nature having been appropriated by humans, Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* challenges the veracity of Nature.

The second group of greenery, in the glass window panels, seems to imply that the more we try to distinguish between the two different ways of handling the paint (clear vs. blurred) and to interpret their meanings, the more surely we are confined to look only within this small space of the mirror. Following this, the viewer of Hunt's painting becomes trapped and confined in a space of gaudy materialistic products. The viewer's situation thus ironically becomes similar to that of the woman: although she is experiencing enlightenment, she is still held in her greedy lover's arms and cannot escape from them. Although viewers of the painting do see this inspiring greenery that the woman sees, their conscience is not necessarily awakened like the woman's is and they are still confined to have to live in their modern world filled with commodities.

To summarize, *Le Déjeuner* exposes a bourgeois appropriation of Nature and suggests that a painting may simply be a 'pretext' (in Zola's sense) that does not necessarily has to mean anything. On the other hand, *The Awakening Conscience* is a bourgeois citation of Nature, a statement that is hung high on a wall and dead, refined by delicate painting skills and re-contextualized within a typical Victorian modern life supported with material prosperity.

3.3 Human-Nature Relationships

In *The Awakening Conscience*, Nature is limited to several rectangles (mirrors and window panels), all hung on the wall. But in *Le Déjeuner*, Nature surrounds the people depicted in the image and they seem to enjoy it (Figure 1): on the bottom of the canvas, there is a soft lawn to lie down on; from the right to the left hand side, exuberant trees provide shelter; a bird is flying above; and from the back, a shallow brook flows past. Moreover, the Dutch sculptor to the right is shown leaning comfortably against a conveniently placed grassy mound that appears ideally designed for his relaxation. (This mound was probably not Manet's invention; a similar grassy mound can be seen in Raimondi's print.) The nude can place her limbs freely and willfully without feeling embarrassed. Also she casts an extraordinarily confident glance at the viewer standing in front of her. Her facial expression is intensified by the strong light spot cast upon her. This light spot comes from the (viewer's) left-hand side [26] and stops at her entire back and the right half of her face, leaving on her left cheek a sharp line of shadow caused by her nose. Before she turns her head and looks at the viewer standing outside the painting, she must have been engaged in light-hearted conversation with her friends. She looks at us (the viewers) as if we are impolite invaders who have wandered carelessly into this forest and interrupted their picnic. Her firm eyes signal that everything seen in this painting is hers/theirs and outside viewers like us are merely spectators. In this way, Nature in this painting is neither romantic and sublime nor wild and full of danger, but rather modern, accessible, useful and appropriate to its time.

Intriguingly, it is a modern metropolis in which *The Awakening Conscience* takes place that is full of dangers and misfortune. In the Victorian era, women represented in literary works received quite polarized imagery: either as angels or as sirens [30]. An angel could be either a loving mother or a loyal and supportive wife. A siren could be the mistress who is sexually attractive, just as the one in *The Awakening Conscience*. Therefore, Hunt's decision to paint a mistress was an up-to-date topic and would have encouraged his contemporaries to imagine how the story might end. If successfully escaping from her paramour, she might become a prostitute as Ruskin warns [13]. If she stays, she will remain hopeless like the bird caught and killed by the cat under the table in the left of the painting. This savage animal brutality does not take place in the wild Nature, but in this modern and beautiful house in mid-nineteenth century London.

In Zola's naturalist novel *Nana*, written in 1880 [31], the female protagonist Nana, although encountering many difficulties beyond her control, still tries to act morally and make a living. But as more and more misfortunes strike her, she cannot fight her inner weakness and finally becomes a fallen woman. The story

focuses on the dark side of human nature and its sometimes beastly desires. This is the point of Zola's *Naturalism*, or *Determinism* [32]. However, while being in the same cultural circle, Manet did not paint human nature in this way. It is actually Hunt's painting that presents an allegory similar to the French literary Naturalism. Even though Manet does visualize animals in *Le Déjeuner*, such as the bird at the top of the canvas and the frog near the nude's blue dress, their presence, made possible by quick brushstrokes, is to convey the idea of speed and how the artist grasps the external world [2] rather than how he considers beastly human nature.

More evidence regarding how Hunt's painting depicts a relatively more problematic human-Nature relationship is in the space (visual depth) created in the painting. The carpeted ground at the bottom of the painting is nearest to the viewer. The viewer is then drawn further into the room, confronted with the standing figure of the woman and then with the seated man behind her. In the farthest place, for the viewer, are the wall and the mirror, which share the same plane. And yet, intriguingly, the man stretches out his right arm. This action not only blocks the woman from standing up completely but also undermines the movement into the space of the viewer's eyes. Because the woman is situated closer to the viewer than the man is, the viewer should be able to obtain a thorough gaze of her figure first and then move on deeper into the picture where the man is seated. However, his out-stretched right arm bars her escape from his lap and from walking out toward the viewer. Apart from the red carpet on the floor, the woman's figure is actually the very first image that the viewer should read and yet she is sandwiched between his lap and his right arm. Therefore, a struggle ensues; the woman is struggling to get closer to see what has inspired her and the viewer of the painting is also struggling in order to find visual focus on the narrative.

Moreover, since this woman is specially placed so as to be the first figure in the viewer's eye, it is very ironical that she is looking at what the viewer cannot see directly but only through the reflection in the mirror on the back wall. The viewer and the woman are both looking ahead, but what is in front of her vision is actually shown at the farthest point of the viewer's vision in the mirror on the back wall. While discussing the technique Hunt used to represent the greenery in the mirror, I have argued that he meant to demonstrate the limitations of being able to really see into Nature. Here again, unable to see what the woman is really seeing, the viewer learns about the difficulty of approaching Nature in such a highly materialistic and modern place. No matter how perfectly Hunt replicates the details of every gaudy commodity, none of them is helping the viewer to get closer to Nature. Equivalently, no matter how many beautiful modern commodities the woman owns, she still has to struggle past them to reach her source of enlightenment in Nature.

Another piece of visual evidence symbolizing the virtual distance between modern people and Nature is the physical pose of their bodies. The upward-standing woman and the laterally leaning man compose a large 'X' shape. This 'X' is a giant cross that bars the viewer from going deeper into the picture. This bar created out of human bodies is standing in front of the Nature-reflecting mirror, as if prohibiting the viewer from seeking further meaning within it. The viewer seems to be allowed access only to the pretty objects scattered around. In this painting, the modern material world invites human scrutiny, while any attempt to embrace Nature is blocked in many ways.

Unlike the British way of confronting Nature, *Le Déjeuner* reveals more humor and ease. Previous sections of this paper have examined French bourgeois activities, poses, gestures, eye contact and their attitude about their place in Nature. These reveal how the picnic party selected and then appropriated Nature for the purpose of living a congenial modern life. Hunt, however, transcended Nature from a naïve tree to a lesson to teach his society about morality and conscience. And as the awakening woman learns it, her present situation in her modern life becomes difficult and hard to bear. On the other hand, *Le Déjeuner*, the setting of which may puzzle the viewer at the beginning, eventually exemplifies the idea of how Nature and the bourgeois can exist side by side in the modern world. If the uniqueness of *Le Déjeuner* lies in its representation of the modern world's integration into Nature and resistance to communication, then *The Awakening Conscience* also conveys a sense of resistance, not a resistance to communication or to being scrutinized and understood, but a resistance to man becoming reconciled with Nature.

4 Conclusion

While both artists demonstrate their own studies of Nature through their varied painting techniques, they also juxtapose Nature and the modern world to warn about modernity. *Le Déjeuner* focuses on bourgeois appropriation of Nature. *The Awakening Conscience* uses Nature to create a modern allegory. In *Le Déjeuner*, Nature and human beings co-exist without the implication that Nature may be wild and dangerous, while in *The Awakening Conscience*, it is modern urban society that is fraught with danger and temptation while Nature's beauty is enlightening, warm and inviting.

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