

Lyutsiya Staub

Revisiting Renoir, Manet and Degas

Impressionist Figure Paintings in
Contemporary Anglophone Art Fiction



narr\f
ranck
e\atte
mpto

Revisiting Renoir, Manet and Degas

Schweizer Anglistische Arbeiten Swiss Studies in English

Begründet von Bernhard Fehr

Herausgegeben von Andreas Fischer (Zürich), Martin Heusser (Zürich),
Daniel Schreier (Zürich)

Band 145

Lyutsiya Staub

Revisiting Renoir, Manet and Degas

Impressionist Figure Paintings in Contemporary Anglophone Art Fiction

narr\f
ranck
e\atte
mpto

Umschlagabbildung: Maria Rasskazova
Umschlaggestaltung: Martin Heusser, Zürich

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Die vorliegende Arbeit wurde von der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Zürich
im Wintersemester 2018 auf Antrag der Promotionskommission Prof. Dr. Martin Heusser
(hauptverantwortliche Betreuungsperson) und Prof. Dr. Ana Sobral als Dissertation
angenommen.

© 2019 · Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH + Co. KG
Dischingerweg 5 · D-72070 Tübingen

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung
außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des
Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen,
Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in
elektronischen Systemen.

Internet: www.narr.de
eMail: info@narr.de

CPI books GmbH, Leck

ISSN 0080-7214
ISBN 978-3-7720-8700-4 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-7720-5700-7 (ePDF)
ISBN 978-3-7720-0213-7 (ePub)



To my grandmother, Katusha, who taught me to love books.

Contents

List of Paintings	9
Chapter 1. Introduction	13
Chapter 2. Intermediality: Narrative Texts and Visual Arts	21
2.1. Visual and Verbal Overstepping of Boundaries	21
2.1.1. Evolution of the Definition of Ekphrasis	27
2.1.2. The Diversity of Ekphrastic Relations	36
2.2. Perception, Re-presentation and the Making of Meaning	44
2.3. Intermedial Interaction in Contemporary Art Fiction	53
2.3.1. The Communicative Category	53
2.3.2. The Re-presentational Category	57
2.3.3. The Interpretive Category	60
Chapter 3. Communication	65
3.1. Verbal Elements	68
3.2. Visual Elements	78
Chapter 4. Re-presentation	95
4.1. The Process of Making an Artwork: Labour	95
4.1.1. Inspiration for the Painting	99
4.2. Models and Modelling in Art-fictional Figure Paintings	105
4.2.1. The Boating Party	106
4.2.2. Opportunists, Dancers, Lovers	123
4.3. Selected Visual Details and Colour	148
Chapter 5. Interpretation	167
5.1. Perceived versus Intended Meaning	167
5.2. Paintings Viewed on Display	178
5.3. Revisiting Images and Looking at Collections	191
5.4. Art Criticism	202

Chapter 6. Conclusion 211

Bibliography 223

List of Figures 231

List of Tables 233

List of Paintings¹

1. Manet, Édouard. *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130 x 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
2. Manet, Édouard. *Le Repos (Repose)*, 1869, oil on canvas, 147 x 111 cm, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, USA.
3. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Le déjeuner des canotiers (Luncheon of the Boating Party)*, 1880-1881, oil on canvas, 1.3 m x 1.73 m, The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., USA.
4. Degas, Edgar. *Two Ballet Dancers*, c. 1879, pastel and gouache on paper, 46 x 66 cm, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT, USA.
5. Degas, Edgar. *Danseuses bleues (Dancers in Blue)*, 1890, oil on canvas, 85.3 x 75.3 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
6. Manet, Édouard. *Berthe Morisot au bouquet de violettes (Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet of Violets)*, 1872, 55 x 38 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
7. Degas, Edgar. *La danseuse chez le photographe (Dancer at the Photographer's Studio)*, 1875, oil on canvas, 65 x 50 cm, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia.
8. Degas, Edgar. *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen (La Petite Danseuse de quatorze ans or Grande Danseuse habillée)*, 1878-1881, sculpture (pigmented beeswax, clay, metal armature, rope, paintbrushes, human hair, silk and linen ribbon, cotton faille bodice, cotton and silk tutu, linen slippers, on wooden base), overall without base: 98.9 x 34.7 x 35.2 cm, weight: 22.226 kg, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.
9. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Bal au Moulin de la Galette (Dance at Le moulin de la Galette)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 1.31 m x 1.75 m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
10. Veronese, Paolo. *The Marriage Feast at Cana (Nozze di Cana)*, c. 1562-1563, oil on canvas, 6.77 m x 9.9 m, Louvre, Paris, France.
11. Manet, Édouard. *Le balcon (The Balcony)*, 1868-1869, oil on canvas, 170 x 124.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
12. Goya, Francisco de. *Majas on a Balcony (Majas en el balcón)*, c. 1800-1810, oil on canvas, 194.9 x 125.7 cm, The Met, New York, USA.

1 The paintings are indicated in the order they are first mentioned in the present study.

13. Manet, Édouard. *Vase de pivoines sur piédouche* (*Vase of Peonies on a Small Pedestal*), 1864, oil on canvas, 70.2 x 93.2 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
14. Manet, Édouard. *Young Lady*, 1866, oil on canvas, 185.1 x 128.6 cm, The Met, New York, USA.
15. Degas, Edgar. *L'Absinthe* or *Dans un café* (*The Absinthe Drinker* or *Glass of Absinthe*), 1875-1876, oil on canvas, 92 x 68,5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
16. Da Vinci, Leonardo. *The Last Supper* (*Il Cenacolo* or *L'Ultima Cena*), 1495-1498, fresco-secco, 4.6 x 8.8 m, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, Italy.
17. Degas, Edgar. *A Coryphée Resting*, c. 1880-1882, pastel, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
18. Degas, Edgar. *Portrait de Mlle Eugénie Fiocre: à propos du ballet "La Source"* (*Portrait of Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet "La Source"*), c. 1867-1868, oil on canvas, 130.8 x 145.1 cm, Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA.
19. Degas, Edgar. *Dancer with a Fan*, c. 1880, pastel on grey-green laid paper, 61 x 41.9 cm, The Met, New York, USA.
20. Degas, Edgar. *Dancer Resting*, c. 1878-1890, chalk, pastel board, dimensions unknown, private collection.
21. Manet, Édouard. *Street Singer*, c. 1862, oil on canvas, 171.1 x 105.8 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA.
22. Manet, Édouard. *The Railway*, 1873, oil on canvas, 93 x 112 cm, National Gallery of Art West Building, Washington D.C., USA.
23. Manet, Édouard. *The Bunch of Violets* (*Bouquet de violettes*), 1872, oil on canvas, 22 x 27 cm, Private Collection, Paris, France.
24. Manet, Édouard. *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*The Luncheon on the Grass*), 1863, oil on canvas, 2.08 m x 2.64 m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
25. Manet, Édouard. *Mlle. Victorine in the Costume of a Matador*, 1862, oil on canvas, 165.1 x 127.6 cm, The Met, New York, USA.
26. Manet, Édouard. *La Prune* (*The Plum*), 1878, oil on canvas, 74 x 50 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA.
27. Degas, Edgar. *Four Dancers*, 1899, oil on canvas, 151.1 x 180.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA.
28. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Madame Monet Reading "Le Figaro,"* 1872, oil on canvas, 54 x 72 cm, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Portugal.
29. Cassatt, Mary. *Reading 'Le Figaro,'* 1878, oil on canvas, 104 x 84 cm, private collection.
30. Degas, Edgar. *Criminal Physiognomies*, 1881, pastel, dimensions unknown, private collection.

31. Degas, Edgar. *The Dance Lesson*, 1879, oil on canvas, 37.9 x 87.9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA.
32. Manet, Édouard. *The Dead Christ with Angels*, 1864, oil on canvas, 179.4 x 149.9 cm, The Met, New York, USA.
33. Manet, Édouard. *La Lecture (Madame Manet and Leon)*, 1848-1883, oil on canvas, 61 x 73.2 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
34. Degas, Edgar. *Dance Examination (Examen de Danse)*, 1880, pastel on paper, 60.9 x 45.7 cm, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, USA.
35. Degas, Edgar. *After the Bath*, 1876-77, pastel over monotype, dimensions unknown, private collection.
36. Degas, Edgar. *Cabaret*, 1875, pastel over monotype, 24 x 43 cm, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.
37. Degas, Edgar. *Woman Ironing*, 1876, oil on canvas, 81 x 66 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.
38. Degas, Edgar. *Room in a Brothel*, c. 1879, monotype in black ink on laid paper, 22 x 15.9 cm, Stanford University Museum of Art, Stanford, CA, USA.
39. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Alphonsine Fournaise sur l'île de Chatou (Alphonsine Fournaise, Daughter of a Restaurant Owner of Chatou)*, 1879, oil on canvas, 93 x 73 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
40. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *La Grenouillère*, 1869, oil on canvas, 66 x 81 cm, National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.
41. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *At the Inn of Mother Anthony, Marlotte (Mother Anthony's Tavern)*, 1866, oil on canvas, 194 x 131 cm, National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.
42. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Portrait of the Actress Jeanne Samary*, 1878, oil on canvas, 174 x 105 cm, Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.
43. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Sleeping Girl with a Cat*, 1880, oil on canvas, 120.3 x 92 cm, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, USA.
44. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Madame Charpentier with Her Children*, 1878, oil on canvas, 153.7 x 190.2 cm, The Met, New York, USA.
45. Degas, Edgar. *Women on a Café Terrace (Femmes à la terrasse d'un café le soir)*, 1877, pastel, 55 x 72 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
46. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *The Swing (La Balançoire)*, 1876, oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.
47. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Cup of Chocolate*, 1877-78, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Private Collection.
48. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Lovers*, c. 1875, oil on canvas, 130 x 175 cm, National Gallery in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic.

49. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Confidences*, 1878, oil on canvas, 61.5 × 50.5 cm, Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur, Switzerland.
50. Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. *Woman with a Cat*, c. 1875, oil on canvas, 56 × 46.4 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA.

Chapter 1. Introduction

The visual arts have always been a source of inspiration for writers, from classical antiquity (starting from Homer, who included a description of the Shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad*) to the present. However, it seems that early twenty-first century literature, more than ever before, is geared towards visuality through the use of visual images in verbal texts. The recent upsurge in the popularity of the word-image relationship is especially noticeable in the contemporary novel, which not only focuses on works of art, artists' and models' lives and the artist-model relationships, but also, while fictionalising the story of the very process of creating an artwork, seeks to test and evaluate its historical interpretation. While a variety of definitions of this particular genre have been suggested – “fictions about painters” (Bowie), “artist novels” (Beebe), “atelier narratives” (Joyce) and most recently “art-historical fiction” (Chapman) –, this paper will address it simply as *art fiction*. My concern is primarily with contemporary novels that allude to two-dimensional works of art, Impressionist figure paintings by Renoir, Manet and Degas in particular. Although my work focuses on literature, I hope this research will also be of interest for art experts, as art fiction does not only re-present a painting to make the reader see it through its description but creates a story around it, and by that delves deeper into the question of possible meanings of an artwork.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the relationship between visual art and contemporary art fiction by addressing the problem of the ekphrastic re-presentation and re-interpretation of an Impressionist figure painting through its composition, selected details of the painting and allusion to specific techniques used in the process of creating the masterpiece based on the examples of the following novels: *Luncheon of the Boating Party (LOTBP)* by Susan Vreeland (2007), *Mademoiselle Victorine (MV)* by Debra Finerman (2007), *With Violets (WV)* by Elizabeth Robards (2008), *Dancing for Degas (DFD)* by Kathryn Wagner (2010) and *The Painted Girls (TPG)* by Cathy Marie Buchanan (2013). The reason for choosing the corpus of five novels about Impressionists is twofold: the scope of the study is narrowed down, on the one hand, to a single period of literature and, on the other, to a specific period of art history. The overall aim of reducing of the scope of the corpus of texts is to avoid further risk of the study being too broad and unintentionally ambiguous.

Impressionism¹ is probably one of the most popular movements with audiences – it is light, pretty to look at and easy to understand. Barbe-Gall points out that Impressionist paintings do not require prior knowledge and thus offer certain comfort to contemporary viewers who are usually able to “recognise something familiar in the paintings, something they have once experienced, or simply glimpsed, an ordinary situation or a passing sensation” (4). According to Brettell, the main attraction of these “joyous works remains the sense of spontaneity they impart, the pure pleasure they suggest in the artist’s act of looking and in the ability to capture a quick visual impression, seemingly without second thought or the aid of theory” (7). In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, in comparison to the mainstream work of artists accepted by the Institut² and the Salon, Impressionist paintings looked rushed, incomplete and utterly incompetent, and thus caused bitter opposition and received fierce criticism from both the art critics and the audience. Impressionists step aside from traditionally approved historical or mythological subjects and find theirs in everyday ‘real’ life. They depict what they see and illustrate their subjective point of view. The work that emerges from this personal vision becomes rather rela-

-
- 1 Impressionism originated in France in the second half of the nineteenth century and developed against the established conventions of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. The term “impressionism” was originally coined by Louis Leroy (1874) in his review of the first independent exhibition of the Impressionists (which took place in Paris on 15 April 1874), namely in the dialogue between an attacker and a defender of a new style of painting who are discussing Monet’s painting *Boulevard des Capucines*:
 ‘There’s impression, or I don’t know what it means. Only, be so good as to tell me what those innumerable tongue lickings in the lower part of the picture represent?’
 ‘Why, those are people walking along!’ I replied.
 ‘Then do I look like that when I am walking along the Boulevard des Capucines? Blood and thunder!’
 (Leroy, Louis. “L’exposition des impressionnistes.” *Charivari*, April 25, 1874 in Rewald 320)
 - 2 According to Milner, the Institut “hous[ed] a highly exclusive body of expertise with the five assemblies of the French Academy and administer[ed] the affairs of the Sciences and the Arts. Since 1795 the Académie des Beaux-Arts met here [at the Institut] to oversee developments in painting, sculpture, architecture and music. There were forty members. Each new member was appointed by the votes of existing members and approved by the government. Membership was normally for life and appointment to the Academy comprised the highest public honour available specifically to artists. Its influence upon exhibitions, teaching and recognition was far-reaching, insofar as its aims stressed the continuity of traditions, it is not surprising that its authority was repeatedly challenged by independent groups of artists. [...] The Institut stood for the ultimate in professionalism and no hint of radical changes in painting was permitted...” (9)

tive.³ It is both the subject itself and the effects of the natural light on this subject that interests Impressionists and makes them rethink and adjust the manner they paint and by implication the dynamics of the painting process. According to Baxandall, Impressionism offers “canvases that [play] on a tension between an openly dabbed-on plane surface and a rendering of sense-impressions of seen objects that put emphasis on their hues” (45). The practical innovation of ready-made paint in tubes was one of the reasons why Impressionists could paint much more quickly than their predecessors and were able to take their work outdoors. They developed various techniques – visible brush strokes, *impasto*, *alla prima*, *en plein air* – and tried to adapt them in order to reveal the subject through soft forms, representing a shimmering texture of light, fostering an illusion of movement and depicting the instancy of a ‘real’ moment of modern life. Many talented artists are known as Impressionists and although there are certain similarities in their philosophy of painting, their works appear materially different – the style and preferred subject matters of each painter can be clearly distinguished. Therefore, Impressionism cannot be reduced to just a few aspects and be spoken about in general terms – each painter should be studied individually.

Impressionism has been so popularised through countless reproductions on posters, calendars, napkins, umbrellas, chocolate boxes and the like that people are sometimes surrounded by Impressionist art without even knowing it. Now Impressionist paintings and painters are subjected to another form of recycling – they penetrate the pages of art fiction. In the last ten years many contemporary writers (Vreeland, Finerman, Robards, Wagner, Buchanan, Cowell, Oliveira, Figes, Lasky, Scott Chessman, Gibbon – to name just a few) have turned to the subject of Impressionism, creating portrayals of famous Impressionists and their models, developing the stories of their relationships, yet also focusing on re-presentation (by describing the process of their creation and exploring it from both the artist’s and the model’s perspectives) and interpretation of the artworks. Analysis of ekphrastic re-presentation of an Impressionist artwork is particularly interesting in view of the fact that in Impressionist painting attention is diverted from separate details to the overall effect of the image, yet it is usually the composition and the details of the painting that help to re-present the visual

3 One the one hand, it is relative to the conditions under which the same scene is observed; on the other, it is relative to each and every painter. That is why Impressionists experimented with painting the same scene together, for example, Monet and Renoir painting the panoramic views of Paris in 1868 and the series of La Grenouillère; or exploring the same subject repeatedly in the so-called “series paintings” (for instance, Monet’s series of *Waterloo Bridge*; *Water Lilies*; *Rouen Cathedral* or *Haystacks*).

source verbally. The aim of this study is therefore to examine how Impressionist figure paintings are re-presented through the composition of the painting and selected details and how such re-presentation affects the re-interpretation of an artwork alluded to in the narrative as well as the understanding of an extant work of art.

Chapter Two lays out the theoretical dimensions of the research, addressing the question of the visual and the verbal and emphasising the complementary function of arts. It examines the idea that the semiotic duality of an intermedial artefact facilitates close interaction between spatiality and temporality and by doing so creates great potential for generating new meanings in a cultural product, thus leading to new interpretations. There are different ways of manifesting visual arts within a literary text; however, the present analysis focuses solely on the actual subject matter captured directly in both media, bringing ekphrasis and the variety of ekphrastic relationships into the primary focus in contemporary art fiction. The first section presents a brief diachronic overview of the evolution of the definition of ekphrasis (Webb, Lessing, Heffernan, Krieger, Mitchell, Cheeke, Clüver, Yacobi). The study suggests a contemporary reading of the phenomenon of ekphrasis based on the tripartite principle of the representation of an art object and its multiple re-interpretations and proposes to define ekphrasis as a *verbal re-presentation and re-interpretation of a visual representation* (painting). The chapter moves on to consider the diversity of ekphrastic relationships by introducing several typologies of word-image relations (Hollander, Heffernan, Yacobi, Torgovnick, Robillard, Sager Eidt). I adapt and challenge the existing categories of ekphrasis by making them more specific for my study and finally elaborate a framework of intermedial interaction (*communicative*, *re-presentational* and *interpretative* categories) that is further applied to the study of selected contemporary art fiction narratives. While the *communicative* category is concerned with paratexts of contemporary art fiction, the *re-presentational* category focuses on ekphrastic descriptions of details, composition and the process of creation of an artwork, and the *interpretative* category considers perception and interpretation of a painting as well as meta-commentary on art movements in general provided by the story's actants. In the chapters that follow I will examine different types of ekphrasis as well as their combinations in the novels in order to analyse to what extent the visual source is used in the text, which aspects of it are highlighted, which are omitted altogether, what is added and why. The overall objective of this research is to examine if and how art fiction influences the way the painting is perceived and to determine what effects the transmission of a painting through one or several

ekphrastic categories (*communicative, re-presentational or interpretative*) has on its general understanding.

Chapter Three concentrates on the *communicative* category and analyses how the co-presence of media is established in the paratextual zone (Genette) of contemporary art fiction, with main focus being on the verbal and visual elements of the book cover. This chapter promotes the approach of judging the book by its cover. As the first manifestation of an intermedial artefact the book cover frames the future reading of the text. It provides the reader with verbal (the name of the author, title, genre indication, press blurbs) and visual (cover illustrations) information that aims to attract attention to the product, establish a relationship with a potential reader, encouraging the reader to interpret the conveyed meaning of the literary work in question, and eventually to persuade the reader to purchase the book. In this chapter, it will be argued that in the case of art fiction based on extant works of art, the book cover becomes a manifestation of the intermedial nature of the product (referring to the content of the book, naming or illustrating the characters, or alluding to the artist, an artwork or an artistic movement in general), often giving the reader an opportunity to engage with an art object both visually and verbally and thus activating new reading skills. I will analyse the form in which the textual and iconic images appear, the location of the image and the text, their referents and their inter-relationship on the front and back covers. The main purpose of this research is therefore to study the role of the book covers of art fiction, to interpret the functions of displayed verbal and visual elements and, most importantly, to examine the effects they produce.

The fourth chapter focuses on the re-presentation of visual sources in art fiction. Contemporary writers tend to take the reader on a journey around the painting and show it gradually coming to life. That is why in this section I examine how the artwork is re-presented through the process of its making – considering the labour that goes into a creation (obtaining inspiration, finding locations and models, choosing colours, applying paints, confirming composition, considering details, dealing with the problems of artistic creation and the like). I will argue that by narrating the process of making, the novelists – delving deeper into the images and their stories – on the one hand accentuate the dynamic and experimental activity of art making and draw attention to the fact that artworks are neither really static nor unchanging, while on the other, by examining the artist's intentions in the process of creating an artwork, suggest a new narrative interpretation of the image.

As the central element of a figure painting is a human model, the process of making an artwork naturally involves posing. During the modelling process, the

reader is introduced to the model as an element of a painting. However, in art fiction models also have the ability to move within and beyond a given artwork, live and act on and off the canvas, interact directly with the creator (thus becoming a mediator between the creator and the artwork), discuss the intended meaning of an artwork and even influence the resulting representation. On this basis I propose and further examine a hypothesis that the model performs a threefold function in the narrative, being 1) a human subject with a life outside the canvas, 2) an object of the painting, and thus a representation of art itself, and 3) a co-creator of the end product or an artist *tout court*. My analysis is divided into two sections, firstly addressing Renoir's boating party in *LOTBP* (Alphonse, Alphonsine, Jeanne, Aline, Angèle, Antonio, Gustave, Ellen, Charles, Jules), and, secondly considering the opportunists, dancers and lovers who pose for Manet and Degas (Victorine (*MV*), Berthe (*WV*), Marie (*TPG*) and Alexandrie (*DFD*)). In this research I aim to study how the models contribute to the creation and interpretation of the artworks and how the modelling process described in the narrative helps to re-present the painting.

The chapter moves on to consider the re-presentation of fragments (selected details, compositional components and colour) of Impressionist figure paintings and the role they play in art fictional narratives. By describing or alluding to the details of the painting, contemporary writers take control of the selective process, guide the reader's attention and eventually affect his/her visual perception of an artwork. I will discuss both the limitations of this guiding principle and the advantages of creating new effects *en route* of exploring the artwork, analysing the impact these effects exert on the reader. Further I examine which details tend to be singled out in Impressionist figure paintings, analyse them as focal points of the re-presentation, and analyse how they assist in re-presenting and contextualising the painting in its socio-historical and cultural settings as well as how they affect the visual perception and influence the interpretation of an artwork in contemporary ekphrasis. Finally, in view of one of Impressionism's main concerns, I distinguish colour as a significant component of re-presentation and track the meaning that is assigned to colour in art fiction. I argue that the description of colour solution allows the novelists to re-direct the reader's attention to specific details and to refer to the style and painting techniques of the artist, and thus reinforce the idea of creation, enhance the experience of 'seeing' and enrich the aesthetic value of the re-presentation as a whole.

Finally, the fifth chapter investigates how the re-presented artworks are perceived and interpreted by various actants and how the Impressionist art movement in general is commented upon in the narratives. The use of actually existing works of art in fiction allows novelists to explore and recycle ready-made

interpretations of the image and, by using them as a foundation, create new meanings of a re-presentation. However, regardless of the derivation (ready-made or newly created) of the meaning, it is generally conditioned by a certain framework used for viewing art pieces and is thus determined by art historical method. The discussion will include the most popular and influential art historical methods usually used in regard to Impressionist paintings, such as connoisseurial (or biographical), formalist, iconographical, Marxist, social art history and feminist methods. This part will examine which approaches the novelists apply and in which combinations, what effects they create in the narrative and, most importantly, if and how they embellish the understanding of the re-presentation. Therefore, central questions raised within the *interpretive* category are: who are the transmitters; what type of transmission is offered; how do interpretations given by characters differ, and what impacts do they exert?

Within this section I will focus on the issue of the perceived versus intended meaning of an artwork, considering a painting to be a visual form of communication between a sender-artist and a receiver-viewer, in which the viewer is invited to decode or translate the message the artist has intended to send. The study will show how meaning making occurs in fictional visual communication, and suggest that the perceived meaning of an artwork is relative to the artist's intentions, standard conventions, established systems of painting, familiar socio-cultural circumstances, and the viewer's aesthetic values and ability to interpret. Moreover, it will draw a conclusion as to how the meaning given to re-presentation supplements the way the original extant artwork is perceived and interpreted. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the paintings viewed on display (in either museum spaces or the painter's studio) and the resulting multiple interpretations. The analysis intends to explain how the spatial distance dictated by museum culture (the viewer's inability to touch the object), the temporal distance established via the separation of an object from the artist's labour (experiencing the ready-made artwork not in the process of its creation) and the viewer's emotional and aesthetic distance to the art object influence the understanding of the art piece.

In addition, I will explore the effectiveness of making characters revisit the same image and look at collections in the narratives. The discussion will centre on the re-presentation of Impressionism through the interpretation of artworks of several artists. It will argue that the novels introduce the readers to a heterogeneous group of painters, allowing readers to see the contrast between the individual styles, techniques, depicted subjects and artists' intentions, and hence enrich the assembled collection of re-presented artworks, on the one hand, and

extend the reader's knowledge about the Impressionist art movement in general on the other. Additionally, this section investigates the historical and socio-cultural re-presentation of Impressionism through the medium of art criticism illustrated in the novels, seeing it as an ekphrastic meta-commentary on both a specific work of art and art movement. It is interesting to see how a combination of historically accurate settings, factual knowledge of Impressionism, authentic information about the paintings and fictional stories around them complement each other and eventually manipulate the reader's understanding of the re-presentations. Ultimately, this study deliberates the question whether contemporary art fiction, which re-presents and interprets actually existing works of art through the lens of contemporary culture, can be considered a new guide to understanding art, acknowledged as a distant form of art history, seen as a contemporary aesthetic discipline or simply regarded as an *à la mode intermedial product*.

Chapter 2. Intermediality: Narrative Texts and Visual Arts

2.1. Visual and Verbal Overstepping of Boundaries

[P]ainting and writing have much to tell
each other; they have much in common. The
novelist after all wants to make us see.
(Woolf 22)

Visual art has never been as quantitatively and qualitatively available as in the twenty-first century. Due to its accessibility beyond the traditional gallery walls, art has become a desired, inseparable part of one's everyday life. It is no longer possible to speak about an artwork being unique, nor is it necessary to go to the gallery to see the original, as "the uniqueness of the original now lies in it being *the original of a reproduction*" (Berger 21). Not only are the most famous masterpieces copied, photographed and reproduced, but due to the advent of online galleries, they are also visible on a round-the-clock stage. The fact that works of art are reproducible and easily accessible allows for them to be used and recycled in many possible ways. Therefore, it is not surprising that visual art penetrates the works of contemporary writers, whose texts serve as representative examples of intermedial relations between visual works of art (paintings) and narrative texts.

However, the semiotic differences between the two media have given cause for serious concern among scholars: "A great concern with the production and understanding of painting as a visual text to be decoded seems to lie at the heart of the [contemporary] novel, constituting as it does one particular form of a general epistemological questioning" (Wagner, *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts* 9). This concern demands that the very concept of intermediality be defined. Wolf proposes two definitions of intermediality: an 'intracompositional' definition that dislimits intermediality in a narrow sense while focusing on "the participation of more than one medium within a human artefact" ("Relevance of Mediality and Intermediality" 19) and, opposing it, an 'extracompositional' definition of intermediality, which, taken in a broad sense, "applies to any transgression of boundaries between conventionally distinct media [...] and thus comprises both 'intra-' and 'extra-compositional' relations between different media" (19). In-

termediality in its narrow sense deals with a concrete cultural product and its functions in a literary text, such as in evocative descriptions of a work of art, formal imitation through structural analogies to an artwork, reproduction or re-presentation of a work of art, and discussions about it within a novel (32). Since the 'intracompositional' definition of intermediality presupposes directing all attention to the actual subject matter captured directly in both media, it is more suitable for the purposes of the present study, which brings the variety of ekphrastic relationships in contemporary art fiction into sharper focus.

In the same vein, in discussing intermediality, Horst emphasises not only the idea of the "fusion of the different media" (19), but also recognition of the fact that a combination of two media gives birth to something new (19). In general, therefore, it seems that an artefact that integrates two or more medial forms may be regarded as intermedial, and can be expected to produce new meaning in a cultural product in any given medium. However, since each medium carries a dissimilar semiotic system in itself, any combination of media inevitably provides potential for new interpretations. Wolf maintains that in the process of framing and transmitting information, media extend and intensify the message as well as become an integral part of its meaning:

In fact, media inevitably channel and shape information, and in the process of communication this is as relevant for the sender as for the recipient. From the point of view of the sender, this shaping quality of media manifests itself in the fact that, with reference to similar contents, different media can function as limiting filters but can also provide powerful extension and intensification. From the point of view of the recipient, media possess tendencies that prestructure certain expectations. Thus one will not always expect illustrations within the covers of a new novel but would be surprised if a film consisted entirely of moving pictures, sounds and music without verbal text. This shows that media function not only as a material basis for transmission purposes but also as cognitive frames for authors as well as recipients and are therefore not merely a neutral means of communication but, indeed, part of the message itself. ("Relevance of Mediality and Intermediality" 22)

Hence, the value of the form of the medium is enormous; it constructs, develops and regulates the meaning: "Form is *constitutive* of content and not just a reflection of it" (Eagleton 67). By merging different semiotic forms, the sender transfers the meaning from one semiotic system into another and by doing so disrupts the conventional homogeneous practice of producing meaning; this, in turn, is relevant to each of the forms independently, and bewilders the receiver by applying heterogeneous or multiple perspectives to the construction of meaning. Albers points out that

[...] uniting word and image and merging them into a new type of work will at first have a confusing and even defamiliarising effect on the reader, an effect that will eventually be evened out when new meaning is created from the merged product. This new meaning is unique and impossible to construct from non-intermedial works, which points at the salient possibilities that intermediality can provide. (19)

However, the combination of the verbal and visual elements has not always been treated as a mutually profitable alliance. The most eminent supporters of the idea of disruption of the unity of arts are known to be Leonardo da Vinci (c. 1482) and Lessing (1766). Both set clear limits to the verbal and the visual: da Vinci delineates an opposition of eye and ear; Lessing suggests the dichotomy of space and time, which correspond to painting and literature respectively. Their oppositions contradict Horace's tradition of *ut pictura poesis* ("as a painting, so a poem") and, as a result, deny analogies between painting and literature. Moreover, da Vinci and Lessing believe in the inferiority of one of the arts to another – da Vinci subordinates literature to painting, whereas Lessing subordinates painting to literature. The latter refers to the visual arts as fundamentally spatial in that their "signs or means of imitation can be combined only in space" (Lessing 90). Furthermore, he defines the verbal arts as fundamentally temporal due to the fact that their signs "can express only objects which succeed each other ... in time" (90). In other words, the natural barrier between visual arts and literary texts is manifested through the unequal nature of the method of the perception of ultimate artefacts. In effect, one is perceived simultaneously in space, the other successively in time. Although Lessing's distinction between space and time has been challenged by a number of art critics and art historians, its validity cannot be denied – one art can never faithfully mirror another: "Writing cannot represent the visible, but it can desire and, in a manner of speaking, move towards the visible without actually achieving the unambiguous directness of an object seen before one's eyes" (Said 101). Speaking to the profound difference between words and images, Mitchell sees their relationship as essentially *paragonal*, a contest for dominance between the visual and verbal arts:

[D]ifferences between words and images seem fundamental. They are not merely *different* kinds of creatures, but *antithetical* kinds. They attract to their contest all the dualism that takes as one of its projects a unified theory of the arts, an "aesthetics" which aspires to a synoptic view of artistic signs, a "semiotics" which hopes to comprehend all signs whatsoever. [...] Words and images seem inevitably to become implicated in a "war of signs" (what Leonardo called a *paragone*) in which the stakes are things like nature, truth, reality, or the human spirit. (1)