

The Bar at the Folies- Bergere: a Manet Painting

by Jerry Ratch

The mystery is in the barmaid's impersonal stare.
It's all there. Recognizable the bottles of Bass Ale
And Crème de Menthe. Glazed oranges piled in a bowl.
Two roses in a small clear glass of water.

A wide gold bracelet on her arm, halfway
Up from the wrist. A corsage centered on her breast,
And a locket hanging from a black velvet ribbon
Around her neck.

Her cheeks are flushed,
As she stands listening to the frank man in the
Top hat, with his deep red face in reflection,
Serious, intent. The long brown moustache, his
Cane clutched firmly in one hand.

While off above
Swings a pair of legs with green feet
From a trapeze over the big crowded room.

The barmaid is quite young still, and tired,
Or dazed. We see her reflected back.
We are perhaps that man.

