
THE PAINTING *of* MODERN LIFE

PARIS IN THE ART OF MANET AND HIS FOLLOWERS

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(Timothy J.)

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CONTENTS

	Illustrations • ix
	Acknowledgements • xvii
	Introduction • 3
CHAPTER ONE	The View from Notre-Dame • 23
CHAPTER TWO	Olympia's Choice • 79
CHAPTER THREE	The Environs of Paris • 147
CHAPTER FOUR	A Bar at the Folies-Bergère • 205
	Conclusion • 259
	Notes • 271
	Bibliography • 319
	Index • 327

OLYMPIA'S CHOICE

"We shall define as prostitute only that woman who, publicly and without love, gives herself to the first comer for a pecuniary remuneration; to which formula we shall add: and has no other means of existence besides the temporary relations she entertains with a more or less large number of individuals."

From which it follows—and it seems to me the truth—that prostitute implies first venality and second absence of choice.

Ah! I know very well that by thus restricting the scope of the word, we end up reserving all our indulgence for those women-without-virtue who are the most fortunate, the privileged, the inexcusable, and at the same time we sanction the existence of a sort of proletariat of love over whom can be exercised with impunity all kinds of harshness and tyranny.

—Henri Turot¹

The Argument

That in depicting a prostitute in 1865, Manet dealt with modernity in one of its most poignant and familiar, but also difficult aspects: difficult because it had already become a commonplace in the 1860s that women of this kind, formerly confined to the edges of society, had more and more usurped the centre of things and seemed to be making the city over in their image. Thus the features defining "the prostitute" were losing whatever clarity they had once possessed, as the difference between the middle and the margin of the social order became blurred; and Manet's picture was suspected of revelling in that state of affairs, marked as it was by a shifting, inconsequential circuit of signs—all of them apparently clues to its subject's identity, sexual and social, but too few of them adding up. This peculiar freedom with the usual forms of representation was later held to be the essence of *Olympia* (Plate VI), as Manet's picture was called, and made it the founding monument of modern art; and certainly it was a painting which revealed the inconsistencies of its manufacture and breathed a kind of scepticism at the ways that likeness was normally secured. This went hand in hand, as the critical reaction at the time testifies, with a seeming displacement of the spectator from his accustomed imaginary possession

of the work. Like any other picture, *Olympia* provided various places from which the viewer might appropriate its main fiction, but those places ended by being precisely too various; I shall argue they were contradictory and largely uninhabitable; and to a great extent they remained so for later viewers, so that instead of the fictive body on the bed, a more limited fiction called "the picture" was consumed and imagined—it seemed the best on offer. Yet even this fact is open to contrary interpretations, and eager discussion of "the free play of the signifier" may on the whole be premature. It is true that *Olympia* makes hay with our assumptions as spectators, and may lead us to doubt the existence on canvas of three dimensions, the female body, and other minds; but this very negation is pictured as something produced in the social order, happening as part of an ordinary exchange of goods and services. The painting insists on its own materiality, but does so in and through a prostitute's stare, a professional and standardized attentiveness, with the self reserved from the purchaser's looking; though the possible grimness of that reflection on the painter's task was hardly understood in 1865, let alone approved of.

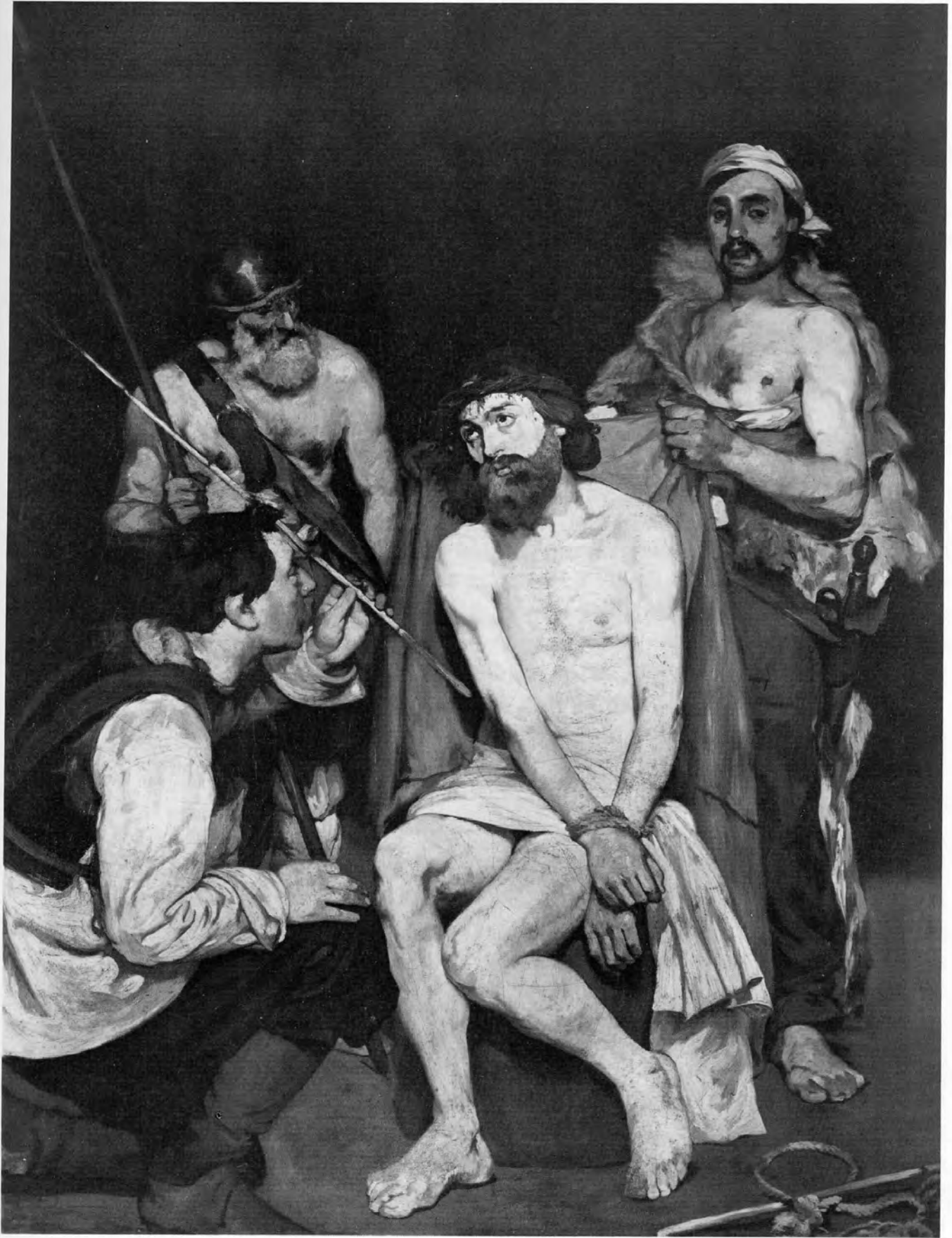
Towards the end of March 1865 Manet wrote a letter to Baudelaire in Brussels, outlining his plans for the salon that year:

My dear Baudelaire, you were right, I was miserable for no reason, and just as I was writing to you my picture was accepted. From the word I'm getting it actually seems this year won't go too badly; I've done a *Jesus Insulted by the Soldiers*, and I think it's the last time I'll take on this kind of subject; but obviously you didn't know that Th. Gautier was on the jury. I didn't send him your letter, it's unnecessary now, and it's wrong to use up good recommendations when there's no need.

The other day I had quite a surprise. Monsieur *Ernest Chesneau* bought one of my pictures, two flowers in a vase, a little thing I showed at Cadart's; perhaps he'll bring me luck.

I just finished your *Mystery of Marie Roget*—I started from the end, I'm always so curious—and I'm amazed that imbecile Villemessant doesn't want it. It's remarkable and amusing.²

Manet seems always to have worried a great deal about the salon, and there is no reason not to take at face value the writer's relief at having a picture get past the jury, and even his optimism as to how the public would react. It is rare to have the least hint of Manet's reading habits, and good to think of him reading Baudelaire's translation of Edgar Allan Poe. (What Manet was reading was a detective story, in fact: one of the early classics of the genre, whose sedentary hero, Auguste Dupin, solves the mystery in



26. Edouard Manet, *Jésus insulté par les soldats*, 1865.

question—the murder of a Parisian *grisette*—without leaving his study, on the basis of clues he gleans from reports in the newspapers.)

The optimism of Manet's March letter did not last long. The salon opened early in May, and the picture of Jesus was hung close by Manet's other entry—which he had not mentioned to Baudelaire—the painting entitled *Olympia*.³ Within a week or so Manet wrote to Baudelaire as follows:

I really would like you here, my dear Baudelaire; they are raining insults on me, I've never been led such a dance. . . .

I should have liked to have your sane verdict on my pictures, for all these cries have set me on edge, and it's clear that someone must be wrong; Fantin has been charming, he defends me, and that's all the more praiseworthy because his picture this year, though full of excellent things, makes less of an effect than last year's (what's more, he knows it). . . .

In London, the academy has rejected my pictures.⁴

To which Baudelaire addressed this kind and annihilating reply:

So once again I am obliged to speak to you about yourself. I must do my best to demonstrate to you your own value. What you ask for is truly stupid. *People are making fun of you; pleasantries* set you on edge; no one does you justice, etc., etc. Do you think you're the first to be placed in this position? Have you more genius than Chateaubriand and Wagner? And did people make fun of them? They did not die of it. And so as not to make you feel too proud of yourself, I shall add that these men were exemplary, each in his own genre, and in a world which was very rich, while you, *you are only the first in the decrepitude of your art*. I hope you don't take offence at my treating you thus, without ceremony. You know the friendship I feel for you.

I wanted the *personal* impression of Monsieur Chorner, at least insofar as a Belgian can be considered a *person*. I must say he was kind, and what he said tallies with what I know of you, and what several intelligent men say about you: "*There are faults, weaknesses, a lack of aplomb, but there is an irresistible charm.*" I know all that; I was one of the first to understand it. He added that the picture representing the nude woman, with the Negress and the cat (is it a cat, really?), was much superior to the religious picture.⁵

These are almost the only traces in Manet's correspondence of the scandal surrounding *Olympia* in 1865. There *was* a scandal, and Manet does not seem to have exaggerated its violence very much. The events of 1865 lived on in the public memory, and Manet never wholly escaped from his reputation as the "painter of *Olympia*." Degas waxed sarcastic in the 1870s about Manet's being as famous as Garibaldi, and Jacques-Emile Blanche told the story of "Manet the hero of songs and caricatures . . . followed as soon as he showed himself by rumours and wisecracks; the passers-by on the street turning to laugh at the handsome fellow, so well dressed and

correct, and him the man who 'painted such filth.'"⁶ Berthe Morisot recalled that her daughter, spending the summer at Bougival in 1881, once gave her name as Bibi Manet—she was the painter's niece—and made "two *cocottes* out promenading on the riverbank laugh till they cried, since they doubtless took her for the child of the celebrated Manet, put out to nurse in the land of *canotières*."⁷

What happened in 1865 can be briefly stated.⁸ The two pictures, as was customary, were hung in the same room, most probably one on top of the other, with *Olympia* below *Jésus*. Manet put the simple title *Jésus insulté par les soldats* in the salon catalogue, but underneath *Olympia* he added five lines of unforgiveable verse by Zacharie Astruc:

*Quand, lasse de songer, Olympia s'éveille,
Le printemps entre au bras du doux messager noir;
C'est l'esclave, à la nuit amoureuse pareille,
Qui vient fleurir le jour délicieux à voir:
L'auguste jeune fille en qui la flamme veille.*⁹

From the first days of the salon, it seems that Room M was more than usually crowded. "Never has a painting," wrote Louis Auvray in *La Revue Artistique et Littéraire*, "excited so much laughter, mockery, and catcalls as this *Olympia*. On Sundays in particular the crowd was so great that one could not get close to it, or circulate at all in Room M; everyone was astonished at the jury for admitting Monsieur Manet's two pictures in the first place."¹⁰ The crush of spectators was variously described as terrified, shocked, disgusted, moved to a kind of pity,¹¹ subject to epidemics of mad laughter,¹² "pressing up to the picture as if to a hanged man,"¹³ and on the verge of adopting the then fashionable tactics of Mr. Lynch.¹⁴ Once or twice the description was more detailed and pretended to extend its sympathy to all concerned, painter and public alike. Here, for example, is a journalist named Bonnin writing in the republican paper *La France*:

Each day [*Olympia*] is surrounded by a crowd of visitors, and in this constantly changing group, reflections and observations are made out loud which spare the picture no part of the truth. Some people are delighted, they think it a joke that they want to look as if they understood; others observe the thing seriously and show their neighbour, here a well-placed tone, and there a hand which is improper, but richly painted; finally one sees painters whose work was rejected by the salon jury this year—and there is the proof that they *do* exist—standing in front of the picture, beside themselves with spite and indignation. Very probably everyone is right to some extent, and such diverse opinions are authorized by the incredible irregularities of Monsieur Manet's work. He has shown mere sketches. Yet we are not of the opinion, which is too widespread, that this negligence is a *parti pris* on his part, a sort of ironic defiance hurled at the jury and the public. The jury

would certainly have distinguished a studio jape from an unsatisfactory work of art, and would have closed the doors of the Palais des Champs-Élysées against it. From another point of view, an artist cannot treat the public lightly without compromising his reputation, which sometimes never recovers; and Monsieur Manet, who appears at each exhibition, is certainly pursuing something other than the sad celebrity obtained by such perilous procedures. We prefer to think he has made a mistake. And what is his aim? His canvases are too unfinished for us possibly to tell.¹⁵

This text becomes more sober as it goes on, and ends by being almost too judicious to interest us much; but at least the writer does not seem to be producing the *Olympia* scandal for his readers' easy delectation. Women are not turning their heads from the picture in fright,¹⁶ the crowd is not united by a "unanimity of reprobation and disdainful pity."¹⁷ These were the commonplaces of criticism that wished to be lively in the nineteenth century, and when even this unlively critic toys with the idea that Manet may *intend* to offend, he is taking up and refuting a well-established theme—one Baudelaire could afford to make fun of in his letter the previous month. The bourgeoisie was used to the fiction that great art, new art, would necessarily not conform to its expectations; it had learnt to be ironical about the claims of Realists and bohemians. This, for example, is Francis Aubert in *Le Pays*, discussing the typical inhabitant of the Quartier Latin:

A great drinker of beer and absinthe, a great smoker of black pipes filled from his pocket, cobbling together three or four artistic, literary, or political commonplaces, so out of date that a schoolboy would not dare use them, cursing and swearing every sentence, speaking only the argot of thieves, republican certainly, socialist probably, communist perhaps, but without knowing what any of the doctrines means . . .

His career? His past? The same as his present, which consists of going from boardinghouse to brasserie, dreaming up ways of paying neither; and as capital diversion being insolent to an honest man—which is called *épater le bourgeois*.¹⁸

Manet in 1865 was suspected of possessing opinions of this kind, and the more intelligent critics were prepared to forgive them as youthful folly. The crowd in front of *Olympia* "was not exclusively composed of *bourgeois*," wrote one;¹⁹ the painter should not offer himself that consolation. Another talked of "armed insurrection in the camp of the bourgeois," and of Manet's going down to a "popular execution,"²⁰ but the phrases were clearly meant as conceits, or ironic rendition of the common wisdom, and the critic's entry as a whole hardly granted the picture sufficient weight—or weight of the right kind—to justify the metaphors.

But however suspicious one might be about the evidence, it still makes

sense to talk of an *Olympia* scandal. Some critics described the scene in front of the picture with genuine distaste and could hardly be suspected of playfulness: when the grim and lordly Dubosc de Pesquidoux told the Catholic readers of *L'Union* that people were laughing at Christ in Room M, he was surely telling nothing but the truth. In any case, the brouhaha was enough to alarm the administration, always jealous of the salon's precarious dignity. Some time towards the end of May, they moved *Olympia* and *Jésus* out of sight, and stood back to receive the critics' congratulations. Thus Félix Jahyer in his *Etude sur les Beaux-Arts*:

May I be allowed, on this subject, to thank the commission for having acceded in the four days the salon was closed to the request I made on the subject of Monsieur Manet. At the moment his two canvases are so well hidden above the two doors in one of the end rooms that you need the eyes of a lynx to detect them.

At this height the *August Olympia* looks like an immense spider on the ceiling. She cannot even be laughed at any more, which has quite disappointed everyone.²¹

Olympia, as Baudelaire described it in his letter, was a picture of a nude woman with a Negress and a cat. The poet pretended to doubt the latter detail—"est-ce un chat, décidément?"—which might suggest that it was added to the picture after he left for Brussels, or simply that he raised his eyebrows at the thought of such an overtly Baudelairean signature. It was also a picture of a prostitute, we can be fairly certain of that. And in this too it seems to have derived, at least partly, from Baudelaire: Olympia's hopeless, disabused nobility recalls the kind described—and recommended to the modern artist—in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*:

Among these women, some, in whom an innocent yet monstrous fatuity is only too apparent, carry in their faces and in their eyes, which fix you audaciously, the evident joy of being alive (in truth, one wonders why). Sometimes they find, without seeking them, poses both provocative and dignified, which would delight the most fastidious sculptor, if only the sculptor of today had the courage and the wit to seize hold of nobility everywhere, even in the mire; at others, they show themselves in prostrate attitudes of desperate boredom, or adopt the indolent postures of the estaminet, with a masculine cynicism, smoking cigarettes to kill time, with all the resigned fatalism of the Orient; there they lie, sprawling on sofas, skirts ballooning to front and back like two fans, or they balance themselves precariously on stools and chairs; heavy, sad, stupid, absurd, their eyes glazed with brandy, and their foreheads bulging with the force of their own obstinacy.²²

Zacharie Astruc was a friend and admirer of Baudelaire, and his five lines in the salon *livret* read like an attempt to provide Manet's naked woman with some of the same connotations. *Olympia* was Astruc's choice

of title: it was on the face of it a dignified name, and its formality was emphasized by the phrase in his poem—the much-quoted, much-mocked description—“l’auguste jeune fille.” Part of the critics’ mockery had to do with Astruc’s talents as a poet, and part with their conviction that the appearance of dignity was deliberately flimsy. For Olympia was a pseudonym favoured by prostitutes: it figured in the classic list of names drawn up in 1836 by the trade’s first great investigator, Parent-Duchâtelet:²³ the better class of brothel was full of Floras, Aspasia, Lucretias, Delphines, Thalias, Sidonias, Azelinas, Calliopes, Lodoiskas, and—invariably—Virginias by the score. For readers in 1865 the name Olympia probably also conjured up, as Gautier put it in his *Salon*, “the memory of that great Roman courtesan on whom the Renaissance doted,”²⁴ by whom he meant La Dona Olympia, villainous heroine of a popular novel by Etienne Delécluze; sister-in-law, mistress, and manipulator of Pope Innocent X; prisoner and harlot, so avid for gold that after Innocent died she refused even to pay for his coffin.²⁵ Delécluze’s romance had been reprinted as recently as 1862; the reference came easily to Gautier, and other critics seem to have echoed it; but even this reference, Gautier argues, is undeserved by the picture itself.²⁶ For, after all, the great Dona Olympia had been beautiful as well as sordid; Manet’s young woman had taken nothing but her predecessor’s name, and in that she was one of many. Her title was bogus; and as for Astruc’s “auguste jeune fille”! It appeared to the critics a euphemism coined with the same cynical aplomb.

Some of the critics in 1865 were sure that Manet’s Olympia was a prostitute and said as much. There was nothing very remarkable in their doing so: it had become an established critical tactic in the 1860s to detect the contemporary, even the bourgeois, *courtisane* beneath the skin of a Venus or Phryne; and in any case, as we shall see, prostitution demanded and received its representations in the salon each year, in forms both ancient and modern. But the words these critics used to indicate Olympia’s profession were once or twice less ordinary, the strangeness having to do with their attempt to exceed the concept *courtisane*—its comfortable, general, archaic field of reference—and specify where Olympia came from and whom she could possibly be looking at.

Of course there were writers who did no such thing. Several were happy with the single epithet *courtisane*, and one followed Gautier’s lead in calling Olympia “la dame de beauté de la Renaissance.”²⁷ “What is this odalisque with a yellow belly [asked another], ignoble model picked up who knows where, who represents Olympia? Olympia? What Olympia? A courtesan, no doubt.”²⁸ The question was easily answered, in other words. And *courtisanes* came from the Quartier Bréda, the area just north of the Bou-

levard des Italiens, not far from the railway station and felicitously close to the debtors' prison in the Rue de Clichy. Olympia was no exception: "It was said of Pradier," wrote one critic in 1865, "that he set out for Athens each morning and arrived each evening in the Rue de Bréda. Nowadays a certain number of artists go to the Rue de Bréda direct."²⁹ Manet was certainly one of them: he could be seen in Fantin-Latour's ridiculous painting *Le Toast* paying homage to Truth "in the guise of a redhead from the Quartier Bréda."³⁰

These references are essentially normal. Brief and highly coded, they barely interrupt the critics' main business of aesthetic judgement. The same is true of Félix Deriège in *Le Siècle*, who ends his account of *Olympia*—we shall see later on that it was an exceedingly hostile one—with the inevitable jibe at Manet's claim to be painting the truth: "one can be true indeed, if one is able to paint like Goya, even in representing a *manola de bas étage*, lying quite naked on her bed, while a Negress brings her a bouquet."³¹ No doubt the phrase *de bas étage* is a sneer at Olympia's presumed place in the social order, or at least in her chosen profession—she is clearly no *grande cocotte*—but the phrase is elliptical, and the writer sees no need to spell out its unpleasant implications.

Some writers were not so reticent. Postwer, for example, writing in an eccentric journal called *La Fraternité Littéraire*, quoted all five of Astruc's limping lines and proceeded to the following fraternal analysis:

What verse! What a picture! Olympia awakes, weary from . . . dreaming. She has had a bad night, that is evident. Insomnia and colic have disturbed her serenity; her colour indicates as much. There are two "*black messengers*": a cat which has unfortunately been flattened between two railway sleepers; a Negress who has nothing about her that *recalls the amorous night* unless it be a bouquet bought at the florist's on the corner, and paid for by Monsieur Arthur, which tells me a great deal about Olympia. Arthur is certainly in the antechamber waiting.³²

Monsieur Arthur's identity is obscure now and perhaps always was, but his purpose could hardly have been made plainer. And it was dangerous to talk at all of the real circumstances of prostitution, even in this lugubrious way, since doing so could lead so quickly to the kind of fact which the stately word *courtisane* was intended to obscure. The *courtisane* was supposed not to belong at all to the world of class and money; she floated above or below it, playing with its categories, untouched by its everyday needs. It was not clear that Manet's prostitute did any such thing. To more than one critic in 1865 she seemed to occupy a quite determinate place in the Parisian class system: she was an "Olympia from the Rue Mouffetard,"³³ "the wife of a cabinetmaker,"³⁴ a "coal lady from Batignolles."³⁵ All of these references were meant to be funny, of course, but the jokes depended

on Olympia's being placed, to some extent unequivocally, in the world of the *faubourgs* and the working class.

The same is true—though here the tone is more elusive and ironical—of Jean Ravenel's description of *Olympia* in a paper called *L'Époque*. It has at its centre the following compacted, staccato sentence or two, in which the writer seems to be casting round for categories in which *Olympia* might begin to make sense. The list he provides is brilliant and unexpected:

Painting of the school of Baudelaire, freely executed by a pupil of Goya; the vicious strangeness of the little *faubourienne*, woman of the night from Paul Niquet's, from the mysteries of Paris and the nightmares of Edgar Poe. Her look has the sourness of someone prematurely aged, her face the disturbing perfume of a *fleur du mal*; her body fatigued, corrupted, but painted under a single transparent light. . . .³⁶

For the moment let us extract from the pattern of phrases the words "petite faubourienne, fille des nuits de Paul Niquet, des mystères de Paris et des cauchemars d'Edgar Poe." No doubt these descriptions are meant to evoke the painting's dreamlike, literary quality, but for the reader in 1865 they would also have suggested that Olympia belonged to Paris in quite ordinary ways. To call her a *petite faubourienne* was simply to say she was working-class; to have her be a character from Eugène Sue's novel *Les Mystères de Paris* was essentially to make the same point; to imagine her haunting the tables of Paul Niquet's was to place her in the lower depths of prostitution, among the women who catered to the porters of Les Halles. (Niquet's establishment in the Rue aux Fers stayed open all night and "was frequented by a quite special clientele of ragpickers, idlers, drunkards, and women whose sex and age were indistinguishable beneath their mass of rags."³⁷ For a while the bar had been a stopping place for sightseers of the Parisian underworld, but by 1865 it had returned to its normal obscurity.)

These are descriptions of Olympia's class; and I shall end this chapter by arguing that class was the essence of Olympia's modernity and lay behind the great scandal she provoked. But it seems none of the critics in 1865—not even Jean Ravenel—would have agreed with me. There were over seventy pieces of writing on Manet's picture that year, and they contained, as I have shown, no more than a handful of references to prostitution and a grand total of six attributions of class, all fleeting and formulaic. However one looks at it, this is a strikingly poor haul, and the questions raised by the scarcity can be put as follows: If class was somehow signified in *Olympia*, and sometimes mentioned, what were the signs of it? And why could they not be identified in more detail, even by a critic like Ravenel, who seemed convinced that Olympia was working-class and

27. Théodule-Augustin Ribot, *Saint-Sébastien*, 1865.



that he should say so? The critics were certainly offended by *something* in Olympia: What was it, then, that they believed they saw and thought improper?

We have to do with art critics writing salon reviews in the daily press or monthly magazines. These writers would presumably have liked to discuss Manet's picture as an example of a school or a tendency in art, most probably that of Realism. Was not Manet included, along with Astruc, Whistler, the etcher Félix Bracquemond, and others, in the picture Fantin-Latour had sent to the salon entitled *Le Toast* or *Hommage à la Vérité*? Courbet had a painting in the salon of the anarchist Proudhon; Théodule-Augustin Ribot a study of Saint Sebastian, in his best Spanish manner; and Whistler his odd *Princesse du pays de la porcelaine*. The critics could flesh out their account of Realism in various ways: by including a kitchen scene by Antoine Vollon, for example, or a "metallic" Virgin by Albert Lambron,³⁸ or by giving encouragement to two beach scenes by Claude Monet, the "young Realist who promises much."³⁹

This was already a list of eccentrics and anomalies, and perhaps Manet could be added to it. He was the "self-styled Realist, pupil of Courbet";⁴⁰ his *Jésus* was "Raphael corrected by a third-rate Courbet";⁴¹ master and imitator were the two "Marquis de Sade of painting."⁴² The violence of this final phrase was not necessarily a guide to the critics' overall tone: though Courbet was still condescended to in 1865, his school was an

28. James McNeill
Whistler, *La Princesse du
pays de la porcelaine*,
1864.



established part of the French scene, and even its enemies wished to discriminate and recognize talent where it occurred. They tried to do so in Manet's case.

Manet was a skilful technician, they quite often conceded. His draughtsmanship had character and originality, his colour was supple and mordant, he had "tempérament," "facultés," "une main d'artiste."⁴³ His painting was understood to be deliberately bold and experimental, and regularly attained to "a very great truth of tone";⁴⁴ it had "the charm of naïveté," it had touch, vigour, and "hardiesse,"⁴⁵ it derived (a bit slavishly) from Goya,⁴⁶ and even at its worst "one made out passages which were straightforwardly well done."⁴⁷

Yet on the whole the critics in 1865 could not be so charitable as this.



29. Antoine Vollon, *Un Intérieur de cuisine*, 1865.

There was something about *Olympia* which eluded their normal frame of reference, and writers were almost fond of admitting they had no words for what they saw. *Olympia* was "informe," "inconcevable," "inqualifiable," "indéchiffrable"; the picture "ne s'explique pas."⁴⁸ "The least handsome of women has bones, muscles, skin, form, and some kind of colour,"⁴⁹ whereas *Olympia* had none; she was "neither true nor living nor beautiful."⁵⁰ The negatives multiplied: "she does not have a human form,"⁵¹ and therefore "I can say nothing about her in truth, and do not know if the dictionary of French aesthetics contains expressions to characterize her."⁵² "Not that I dream of examining her, describing her. God preserve me from so doing!"⁵³ "*Que signifie cette peinture,*" finally, "and why does one find these canvases in the galleries of the Palais de l'Industrie?"⁵⁴

Of course these phrases are partly mechanical. A good salon review was



30. Cham, Manet, *La Naissance du petit ébéniste*. Wood engraving in *Le Charivari*, 14 May 1865.

MANET.

La Naissance du petit ébéniste.

M. Manet a pris la chose trop à la lettre :

Que c'était comme un bouquet de fleurs !

Les lettres de faire-part sont au nom de la mère Michel
et de son chat.



31. Titian, *The Venus of Urbino*, 1538.

incomplete without its quota of monstrosities, and one or two works each year were consigned to the space outside Art altogether. They were to be compared with the latest popular song or Hottentot Venus, and described as mere sign painting or “images d’Epinal.”⁵⁵ All of these stock figures were tried out on *Olympia* in 1865; and yet in this case the critics’ sneering claim not to be able to see or describe *Olympia*—not to have the least sense of its formal logic—does seem to be close to the truth. There are ways, after all, in which *Olympia* was at pains to disclose its relationship to the great tradition of European art, and by and large the critics seem genuinely not to have noticed that it did so.

For instance, *Olympia* derived—and stated its derivation—from Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*.⁵⁶ The pose of the nude is essentially the same, and the nude’s accessories seem to be chosen as the modern forms of their Renaissance prototypes: orchid in place of roses, cat for dog, Negress and flowers instead of servants bringing dresses from a distant *cassone*. The nineteenth century believed that Titian’s Venus was a courtesan. This was probably too secular a reading, but the sense of the picture’s sensuality it

stemmed from—the unchasteness of its chastity, the openness of its promise of undress and attentiveness—does not seem much mistaken. Promise, in Titian's case, may have been the operative word: if the picture was painted to commemorate a wedding, it was most likely that of Guidobaldo II della Rovere, who was married in 1534 to a ten-year-old girl, Giulia Varano.⁵⁷ That the body represented in the picture is older and more mature, and that the signs arranged round it seem to denote for the most part fidelity and the domestic virtues, may well have carried in the circumstances a quite pointed meaning. In any case, the picture's domesticity is of a special kind: the woman on the bed is Venus as well as wife, and the Urbino records were surely right to name her, bluntly, "la nuda."⁵⁸

For the nineteenth century this painting *was* the nude. Like many another student, Manet had done an oil copy of it in the Uffizi when he was in his twenties, as a normal part of learning the alphabet of art. Salon criticism was supposed in turn to be largely about that alphabet and how well young painters were using it: the writing of a *Salon* was organized around the critic's ability to recognize quotations from older art and say whether they were apposite or not. But in the case of *Olympia's* relation to the *Venus of Urbino*, for all that the critics were capable of producing the key word *courtisane*, the usual connections did not follow. In the mass of commentary in 1865, only two critics talked at all about Manet's sources, and they did so in a thoroughly outlandish way. "This Olympia," wrote one Amédée Cantaloube in *Le Grand Journal*,

a sort of female gorilla, a grotesque in India rubber outlined in black, apes on a bed, in a state of complete nudity, the horizontal attitude of Titian's *Venus*: the right arm rests on the body in the same fashion, except for the hand, which is flexed in a sort of shameless contraction.⁵⁹

This should be compared with some lines by Pierrot in a fly-by-night publication called *Les Tablettes de Pierrot*:

... a woman on a bed, or, rather, some form or other, blown up like a grotesque in India rubber; a sort of monkey making fun of the pose and the movement of the arm in Titian's *Venus*, with one hand shamelessly flexed.⁶⁰

Perhaps the other seventy-odd writers said nothing about Titian as a way of registering their contempt for what Manet had done to him; but I am inclined to think that they simply did not see that Manet had done anything. We might compare their silence in 1865 with what they had had to say two years earlier about Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. That painting was similarly held to be bizarre and immoral, and it had been shown in the extraordinary Salon des Refusés—to that extent, officially beyond the pale of Art. Critics certainly came to laugh at its mistakes and incoherences,

32. Titian (in the nineteenth century commonly attributed to Giorgione), *La Fête champêtre*, c. 1510–11.



and yet the very way to do so best was to point out what Manet's picture derived from—and how incompetently. The writers whose *Salons* dealt with *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* were quick to connect it to the painting in the Louvre then thought to be by Giorgione, the so-called *Fête champêtre*; and one of them even claimed to detect that Manet had quoted—a peculiar, literal repetition it is—from a print after Raphael of river gods and attendant nymphs.⁶¹

But in 1865 none of this took place. If the revisions of the *Venus* could be seen at all, they could not be said; and if on one or two occasions they were spoken of, it was in Cantaloube and Pierrot's terms. Their violent fantasies of what Manet had done to Titian explain the other critics' silence, I think, for if the old arrangement of the nude was present at all in Manet's picture, it seemed there as a sign of everything the actual, latter-day *Olympia* was not. The past was travestied in *Olympia*: it was subjected to a kind of degenerate simian imitation, in which the nude was stripped of its last feminine qualities, its fleshiness, its very humanity, and left as "une forme quelconque"—a rubber-covered gorilla flexing its hand above its crotch. **PAUSE HERE**

I shall take Pierrot and Cantaloube's descriptions as licence to say—quite crudely in the end—that the meanings Manet contrived in terms of Titian in 1865 amounted to nothing for most of his viewers. The *Venus of Urbino* was painted out or painted over, and seemed to the public no part of the image Manet had produced. It is as if the work of negation in

Olympia—and some such work was surely intended, some kind of dissonant modernization of the nude, some pitting of Baudelaire against Titian—were finally done, but somewhat too well. The new *Dona Olympia* was too much the opposite of Titian's for the opposition to signify much, and the critics were able to overlook those features the two pictures had in common.

What the writers saw instead was some kind of indeterminacy in the image: a body on a bed, evidently sexed and sexual, but whose appearance was hard to make out in any steady way, and harder still to write about. Of course, the fact of *Olympia*'s sexuality did appear in the critics' writing, but mostly in displaced form: they talked—not wholly facetiously, it seems—of violence done to the body, of its physical uncleanness, and of a general air of death and decomposition. It was often quite clear—and presumably meant to be—that in talking of the one set of qualities they wished to indicate the other. Victor de Jankovitz, for example, managed the transition from fig leaf to putrefaction in fifteen words:

The author represents for us under the name of *Olympia* a young girl lying on a bed, having as her only garment a knot of ribbon in her hair, and her hand for fig leaf. The expression of her face is that of a being prematurely aged and vicious; her body, of a putrefying colour, recalls the horror of the morgue.⁶²

A critic called Ego, writing in *Le Monde Illustré*, was equally abrupt:

The *auguste jeune fille* is a courtesan, with dirty hands and wrinkled feet; she is lying down, wearing one Turkish slipper and with a red cockade [*sic*] in her hair; her body has the livid tint of a cadaver displayed in the morgue; her outlines are drawn in charcoal and her greenish, bloodshot eyes appear to be provoking the public, protected all the while by a hideous Negress.

No, never has anything so . . . strange been hung on the walls of an art exhibition.⁶³

Olympia was unwashed, that was the commonest opinion. "Ce corps est sale," "cerné de noir," "avec du charbon tout autour."⁶⁴ "The tone of its flesh is dirty, the modelling nonexistent. Shadows are indicated by stripes of blacking of various widths."⁶⁵ Surely that was the steam of a bath in the background—from the look of things not a moment too soon! And why do the Realists, asked Louis de Lancel, "choose unclean women as their models and, having done so, reproduce even the filth which clings to their contours?"⁶⁶ The cat was a possible culprit: perhaps it had "left its mark on the contours of this *belle personne*, after having rolled on a coalheap"; perhaps those were its pawprints on the sheet; and so on.⁶⁷ *Olympia* was a coal lady "whose modest outlines had never been outraged by water, that banal liquid" (see p. 145).⁶⁸ She was a skeleton, said Lorentz in his *Revue galopante au salon*,

dressed in a tight-fitting tunic made of plaster, all surrounded with black like the armature of a stained glass window . . . and who to the horror of so much stupidity and ignorance now adds the disappearance of a finger . . . which cries out for examination by the public health inspectors!⁶⁹

Some of this sarcasm has to do with Manet's way of modelling—those brief, matter-of-fact lines of shading which trace out the edges of Olympia's hand and breast, her near shoulder, her ankle, and her heel. But the writers seize on these visual facts and immediately exceed them: the conceit of uncleanness constantly leads to others more fantastic. Olympia was dressed in rubber, said Cantaloube. She was "exposed quite naked on a bed," so Victor Fournel told his readers, "like a corpse on the counters at the morgue, this Olympia from the Rue Mouffetard, dead of yellow fever and already arrived at an advanced state of decomposition."⁷⁰ There was more than ordinary ugliness here: there was decrepitude and outright bodily decay. It was no wonder that "the crowd presses up to the putrefied *Olympia* as if it were at the morgue."⁷¹ Olympia, wrote Félix Deriège, is lying on her bed, having borrowed from art no ornament but a rose which she has put in her towlike hair. This redhead is of a perfect ugliness. Her face is

33. Bertall, *Manette, ou La Femme de l'ébéniste, par Manet*. Wood engraving in *Le Journal Amusant*, 27 May 1865.

PROMENADE AU SALON DE 1865, — par BERTALL (suite)



MANETTE, ou LA FEMME DE L'ÉBÉNISTE, par MANET.

Que c'est comme un bouquet de fleurs.
(Air connu.)

Ce tableau de M. Manet est le bouquet de l'Exposition. — M. Courbet est distancé de toute la longueur du célèbre chat noir. — Le moment choisi par le grand coloriste est celui où cette dame va prendre un bain qui nous semble impérieusement réclamé.

stupid, her skin cadaverous. She does not have a human form; Monsieur Manet has so pulled her out of joint that she could not possibly move her arms or legs. By her side one sees a Negress who brings in a bouquet and at her feet a cat who wakes and has a good stretch, a cat with hair on end, out of a witches' sabbath by Callot. White, black, red, and yellow make a frightful confusion on this canvas; the woman, the Negress, the bouquet, the cat, all this hubbub of disparate colours and impossible forms, seize one's attention and leave one stupefied.

*Quand, lasse de songer, Olympia s'éveille,
Le printemps entre au bras du doux messenger noir:
C'est l'esclave, à la nuit amoureuse pareille,
Qui vient fleurir le jour délicieux à voir.*

Thus says the stanza appended in the catalogue to the mention of *Olympia*. The verses are worthy of the painting.⁷²

The catalogue of insults is now finished. The reader is entitled to be impatient with them and find them untrustworthy, for no doubt they are part of a journalistic game whose rules are obvious and in which hyperbole always wins. Yet I intend to play the Dupin with them, and treat them as evidence in which the real appearance of *Olympia* can be made out, in however distorted a form. Certainly the critics' descriptions belong to a shifty, knowing, hypocritical game of make-believe: make-believe anger, make-believe morality, counterfeit concern for art. But what other kind of evidence could we expect to have, and what better kind for the questions raised by *Olympia*—questions of modernity and sex? When these are the subject, even abuse can be depended on for information: it will show the traces of actual desire and anxiety, sometimes with comic distinctness. Consider the case of Lorentz and his disappearing finger, for example; or Olympia's left hand's appearing to Ernest Chesneau, no less, "in the form of a toad"; or a critic called Merson entitling Olympia "l'enseigne de la *Femme à barbe*"!

Confronted with classic parapaxes like these, it is tempting to move straightaway into the Freudian mode: Is that really a finger which has disappeared? Where precisely is the lady's beard located? "Est-ce un chat, décidément?" The mode is certainly appropriate to the material in hand, and I do not intend to avoid it; but I think it should figure alongside other kinds of questioning, more literal and for the most part more plodding. To put the point most guardedly: though there is such a thing as normal critical discourse in the mid-nineteenth century, and within it a flourishing discourse of scandal, this is not it. There is something else appearing in discourse here, and leaving behind the usual signs of its passage: repetitions and redundancies, falterings, false and real silences, misrecognitions, illogic,

unintentional comedy (especially when the subject is sex). Or, to put it another way, we certainly have a normal critical discourse, even about *Olympia*—we have it in plenty—but there is nothing much to say about it, except that it has nothing to say about *her*. Normality in 1865 is largely a matter of making embarrassed noises off.

The case is clearest, naturally, when we come to the acknowledged experts in the field: connoisseurs like Gautier or Théophile Thoré, Paul Mantz, Gonzague Privat, Maxime Du Camp, and the sympathetic Ernest Chesneau. Some of these writers can be seen in 1865 *preparing* to criticize *Olympia*—going through the motions of making the picture an object of criticism. This was usually done by erecting a frame of generalization strong enough, so the critic hoped, to hold even this eccentricity. Paragraphs of well-informed and mostly empty prose were put together, in which it was clear that the critic had heard the studio gossip about Manet—his tonal aims, his Realist connections, his technical facility. Chesneau and Gautier were rather good at this, and their preliminary page or so was at least informative; but when they came at last to *Olympia*—they did so with obvious reluctance—they declined at once to the level of Pierrot and *Dérrière*.⁷³ They saw no sources and found no terms; they failed to sustain attention to the particulars of form and content, much less their relation; the language of appreciation—the language of art—stood as futile preliminary to the language of description. So that all those coy figures of refraining—the promises not to speak, the wish not to analyze “*par courtoisie*”⁷⁴—turned out to be accurate and serious after all.⁷⁵

There was one exception to this rule, Jean Ravenel, to whom I shall return at the end of the chapter. He too was an expert, hiding behind a pseudonym: Alfred Sensier, friend and biographer of the painter Millet. Sensier, we shall see, broke the codes of *Olympia*, and applied to the picture the usual apparatus of art criticism: he detected sources and connotations, he moved between meaning and style, he was capable of saying that some things in the picture were well painted and others less so. He did the job of criticism, up to a point; but he was one, and there were seventy others who did not.

These were good critics, with a clear sense of the scope of their writing, and in particular a confidence, usually, about the move between seeing and interpretation. They savoured the painter's manual skills, and were sometimes long-winded about them, because they believed it was touch and handling—the ways the painter made his matter evident but showed it becoming an image—that best offered them entry into the picture's fictive world. It was not that they wished simply to look *through* the picture's surface: on the contrary, their writing often kept the surface present almost

too vividly. But it was valued as the place where the imagination could properly do its work, where the viewer was offered a rich, exaggerated play with normal identities, and reminded how much the most ordinary world was altered by being represented.

In a sense *Olympia* offered much the same thing. My argument will be that it altered and played with identities the culture wished to keep still, pre-eminently those of the nude and the prostitute, and that that was largely why it proved so unpopular. But the case should be inflected in the following way. It is the *means* of alteration which are crucial in matters of art in the nineteenth century; and even these identities, disputed and feared as they were, could have been put into a painted surface in such a way that change would have been allowed or at least comprehensible. If that did not happen in *Olympia's* case, it was because the identities were in the surface, or on it, in such a brutal, odd, unmediated fashion. The surface contained a nude, a Negress, a cat, and some flowers; they were even done skilfully, but the skill was like a parody of itself, and of all the normal ways in which pigment, texture, and tone declare a likeness and let it be qualified. This is perhaps what critics meant, a few years later—when they were able to produce a few words—by calling Manet's handling “curt” or “acrid” or “abbreviated.” There is a dreadful mere adequacy to the way things belong in paint when Manet is painting at his best.

We are used to thinking adequacy of this kind—the efficient production of a sign for something, so unequivocally that the mind is hardly engaged in the reconstruction—the mark of bad painting. But in Manet's case it seems to me his most complex and distinctive achievement—and an imaginative act in itself, however much it is meant to disqualify ours. For that reason a response to *Olympia* ought to recapitulate, at least partly, the first critics' sense of exclusion and defeat. A phrase from Baudelaire is useful here: talking of Ingres's painting and the feeling of malaise, ennui, and fear it produced in him, the poet wrote of “a population of automatons, who trouble our senses by their too visible and palpable extraneity” (*une population automatique et qui troublerait nos sens par sa trop visible et palpable extranéité*).⁷⁶ It is the best description of Manet's illusionism I know.

Olympia was a prostitute, and that fact alone presented the viewer with difficulties in 1865. Yet even here the case is not simple: there were contexts in this same culture in which the difficulties could be relished as necessary and significant, and they were certainly ones that *art* could make palatable. To start with a casually chosen example, consider the showing of Degas's *Femmes devant un café, le soir*, a pastel-on-monotype included in the third Impressionist exhibition, in 1877 (Plate IX). The critics that year were

certainly aware that the women in question were prostitutes, sitting at a table on the sidewalk of the Boulevard Montmartre, swapping stories and picking up trade information. It was the kind of scene that cropped up quite often in worried surveys of the social question at this time, such as this, from 1869:

There are even some of these *Panuches* who sit at the tables in the windows in the wintertime, or in summer on the verandahs of the luxurious cafés. Laughing and provocative, they gather in certain cafés on the boulevards of Paris which become bazaars of prostitution. The police, overindulgent as they are, turn a blind eye to these exhibitions and find reason to tolerate them. . . .⁷⁷

In the decade of *ordre moral*—when public standards were ostentatiously prim, in expiation of the *fête impériale* and the several dooms it had brought in its wake—one might have expected Degas's picture to be unpopular. It was not exactly liked, most often, but it was negotiated by the critics with considerable ease; they all saw the point of it, they placed it as part of Degas's exhibit, and the scolding they administered was really rather mild. Bernadille, for example, has this to say in *Le Français*:

Monsieur Degas lacks neither fantasy nor wit nor observation in his watercolours [*sic*]. He has gathered at the tables of an estaminet, or in the cafés-concerts and the corps de ballet, types of a cynical and quasi-bestial truthfulness, bearing all the vices of civilization written in large letters on their triple layers of makeup. But his wit has a heavy hand and a crude expression.⁷⁸

This is close to being the most favourable note—only Caillebotte is better treated—in a long and scathing account of the Impressionists' show. Compare Alexandre Pohey in *Le Petit Parisien*:

Monsieur Degas seems to have issued a challenge to the philistines, that is to say to the classics. *Les Femmes devant un café, le soir* are of a terrifying realism. These painted, blighted creatures, sweating vice, who recount to one another the doings and gestures of the day, you have seen them right enough, you know them, and you will come across them again in a little while on the boulevard. And those hideous singers, braying away with their mouths wide open, are they true enough for you! And that dancer who floats by so gracefully, throwing her last smile to the audience? And the café-concert singer? It is nature studied on the spot, and a movement which is exact, living; transfixing in spite of its crudity.⁷⁹

Degas's pastels appeared to appreciate the dark side of Paris, and this obliged the critics in 1877 to raise a verbal hand or two in horror. "The studies in the boulevard cafés are no less comic and curious, though cruel—passably so." "Passably" was the word: two sentences later and the same critic, Jacques, in an opposition paper called *L'Homme Libre*, was calling the pastel "an incomparable page in the book of contemporary anecdote."⁸⁰ And that is the characteristic note: these critics evidently approved of the

satirical edge to Degas's depiction of Paris, and did not seem to find his subjects too rebarbative. Part of their clemency had to do with the pastel's small size and its odd, modest medium, part with its lending itself to an anecdotal reading, and part with the fact that its women were fully clothed. No doubt the critics were tolerant, in other words, because they were able to trivialize Degas's achievement, but that in itself is interesting. It shows how easily prostitutes could appear in painting and be praised; as we shall see, they could even appear in the nude.

Prostitution is a sensitive subject for bourgeois society because sexuality and money are mixed up in it.⁸¹ There are obstacles in the way of representing either, and when the two intersect there is an uneasy feeling that something in the nature of capitalism is at stake, or at least not properly hidden. Reasoning on the subject therefore tends to become overheated, like arguments about transubstantiation; and the issues in question are similar, if secularized. It is specifically a matter of bodies turning into what they are usually not, in this case money. The sociologist Georg Simmel, for example, believed that in prostitution both women and money were degraded, and the latter abasement was hardly less serious than the former. "Money loses its dignity," he wrote, and can only regain it if the price of the sexual act is increased beyond reason, till the sheer glitter of gold obscures the woman's tarnished reputation.⁸² Thus the great courtesan redeems money and sex simultaneously, allowing them to put in an appearance arm in arm in the best society. This line of argument was the approximate opposite of that mounted by Simmel's contemporary Karl Kraus, for whom prostitution had a kind of glory, and certainly a symmetry: in it sex was given a genuine value, the only one left, and money was at last *desired* in the way it deserved.⁸³ But for both writers prostitution was some kind of unlikely plenitude: it was the site of absolute degradation and dominance, the place where the body became at last an exchange value, a perfect and complete commodity, and thus took on the power of such things in a world where they were all-powerful. The prostitute, or so the imaginary story ran, rode roughshod over the client: she offered money's body to him, she named the price.

No doubt these arguments were far-fetched and cynical. They certainly removed the prostitute from the world in which she made her living—the world of the pimp and policeman, of drunkenness, poverty, pregnancy, and the client's straightforward bargaining power. But that, of course, was the arguments' purpose. The prostitute is a *category*: one that authority tries to keep in being on the edge of social space, as a kind of barrier against nature—against the body's constant threat to reappear in civilized society and assert its claims. Balzac put the matter succinctly in his *Splen-*

deurs et misères des courtisanes, when he had a character say to one of his heroines, "You are, in the files of the police, a number, apart from all social beings" (*un chiffre en dehors des êtres sociaux*).⁸⁴

The category "prostitute" is necessary, and thus must be allowed its representations. It must take its place in the various pictures of the social, the sexual, and the modern which bourgeois society puts in circulation. There is a sense in which it could even be said to anchor those representations: it is the limiting case of all three, and the point where they are mapped most neatly onto one another. It represents the danger or the price of modernity; it says things about capital which are shocking perhaps, but glamorous when stated in this form; and by showing sexuality succumbing to the social *in the wrong way* (if completely), it might seem to aid our understanding of the right ones.

That the courtesan was thought to be a main representative of modernity in the 1860s is hardly in need of demonstration: every second book of gossip or sociology has the same story to tell. The ordinariness of the equation is suggested by the passion with which it was sometimes refuted: for instance, in a report by the *facteurs d'instruments de musique* made to the emperor in 1867. The instrument makers were especially alarmed by Haussmann's argument—his excuse for the exodus of industry from the city—that "Paris, to speak properly, has no inhabitants, it is only a floating or, better still, a nomadic population."⁸⁵ They replied to the charge as follows:

This is the moment to point out that here the functionary has followed the example of certain journalists who, speaking of a Paris of idlers and interlopers, have dared to describe it as *tout Paris*.

We have several times put these senseless phrases in their place, phrases which would lead someone who did not know our great city well to believe it composed of nothing but dandies and *cocottes*.

We frankly avow that this Paris of the turf and equivocal gallantry inspires in us only disgust. We are not afraid to say it: it is one of the shames of our time.⁸⁶

So spoke the decent voice of the trades, but of course the instrument makers' indignation changed nothing. It went without saying that modernity *was* made of dandies and *cocottes*, especially the latter. "He talks to us of the *modern* he wishes to do from nature"—the Goncourt brothers are describing the young printmaker Félicien Rops—"of the sinister, almost macabre aspect he found in the house of a whore named Clara Blum, at daybreak after a night of sex and gambling: a picture he wishes to do, and for which he has made forty-five studies of *filles*."⁸⁷



34. Chaffour, cover illustration for "Autre Temps, Autre Mode," c. 1865. Lithograph.

The literature of the 1860s is characterized, in fact, by a fear that the equivalence of Paris and prostitution might be too complete. "We are on our way to universal prostitution" was Dumas's catchphrase in 1867.⁸⁸ "Courtisanes exist in all times and places. . . . But has there ever been an epoch in which they made the noise and held the place they have usurped in the last few years? They figured in novels, appeared on stage, reigned in the Bois, at the races, at the theatre, everywhere crowds gathered": thus Paul de Saint-Victor, looking back on the empire from 1872.⁸⁹ Experts at the time said much the same thing as journalists. They feared an invasion of vice, and in their minds it was associated with the belief that prostitution had slipped out of police control. The streets and stages were full of women who not only sold their bodies but did so *without registering*. It was the "deregulation of vice" that was the matter, and Paris was threatened most mortally by the *insoumise*. Hence the peculiar urgency of Charles Lecour in 1870:

Uncontrolled prostitutes, that is to say nonregistered, form the majority of the personnel of prostitution in Paris. They are everywhere, in the cafés-concerts, the theatres, the balls. One meets them in public establishments, railway stations, and even railway carriages. They are there on all the promenades, in front of most of the cafés. Late into the night they circulate in great numbers on all the finest boulevards, to the great scandal of the public, which takes them for registered prostitutes breaking the rules, and thus is astonished at the inaction of the police in their regard.⁹⁰

Or this, from the *Annales d'hygiène* in 1871:

Clandestine prostitution has completely changed its outward signs; it advertises itself and becomes arrogant: just as things in the old days were kept hidden, nowadays they are put on show.

The *fille insoumise* no longer has another profession; she lives solely on the product of the street to which she has descended, on the same sidewalk alongside the *fille publique*, wearing the same kind of costume.⁹¹

These images are no doubt overdrawn. For the learned doctors they were a way of arguing for one more campaign against syphilis and gonorrhea, and a general revival of the *police des mœurs*. For the journalists they were figures of decadence in a society which liked to believe in its own dissolution—liked it too well in the end. The rhetoric continued unabated through the 1870s. Experts debated numbers, and Maxime Du Camp excelled, with an estimate of 120,000 prostitutes in Paris alone.⁹² The fear of vice invading everything was spliced with wider fears of insurrection and general social mixing. Communard and prostitute often seemed to mean much the same thing to these writers: "Shareholding and sleeping partnerships have spread as far as love itself,"⁹³ said one, and "we find in the same bed, each given his day and accepting it without jealousy, the son of a good family, the draper's assistant, and the tenth-rate actor" (*le fils de famille, le calicot, le cabotin*).⁹⁴

None of these anxieties were new. At the root of Parent-Duchâtelet's classic description of the prostitute had been the fear that if she were not analyzed, counted, and controlled she would circulate in the social body, spreading disease and confusion. They "come back into the world . . . they surround us. . . . They penetrate our houses, our interiors":⁹⁵ that was the danger with courtesans and had always been so. But in the later 1860s these fears were voiced with a new kind of urgency. There was a feeling abroad that the whole effort at counting and quarantining had come to nothing.

If we are to understand the new pessimism, we should first try to establish how prostitution was meant to be organized under the law. Being a prostitute was not in fact a common-law crime, but a network of city

ordinances and police regulations had grown up supposedly to deal with each step of the prostitute's trade, and keep it as wholesome as possible. (If Degas's prostitutes, for example, had been sitting in their café around 1900, they would have been breaking 351 separate prohibitions on their entering such premises;⁹⁶ and the situation in 1877 was hardly less complicated.) A prostitute was obliged to register with the police and receive a card. She was subjected as a result to regular checks for venereal disease, and sent to the care of the sisters of Saint Lazarus if she were found to have it. A *fille inscrite* was allowed to operate in two main ways. She could earn her living as a *fille publique*, an accredited member of a brothel recognized by the police and monotonously raided; or she could earn the uncommon status of *fille en carte* and begin a career as *isolée*—walking the streets, taking care not to fall foul of the unwritten rules surrounding *racolage*, her life a labyrinth of registrations, reports for duty, inspections, and proprieties.

This structure was never much more than a set of excuses for haphazard repression. There was always on the edge of it an informal war and collusion between the police and that great mass of women who did not collect their cards. Prostitution was many-faceted and widespread: nobody believed that it could be wholly confined to the brothel, with the doctor arriving each month with his speculum and *chaise*; but the system could be said to work if its specifications were not too grossly exceeded by what people saw on the streets; women might slip through the net, but the net existed, and its mesh at least divided them into classes—they were *filles publiques* or *isolées*, they were *insoumises* or part of *la prostitution populaire clandestine*, and so on. The system was a means of knowing the prostitute, and keeping her “dans les cartons de la police, un chiffre en dehors des êtres sociaux.”⁹⁷

When there was talk of invasion in the 1860s it was a matter first of visibility on the streets. As usual, Haussmannization was given a large part of the blame, and to some extent deservedly. The baron's demolitions had laid waste some famous streets of brothels near the Louvre and on the Ile de la Cité; the general rise in rents had obliged the owners of some brothels to move them out to the periphery, and many more to convert their establishments into *hôtels garnis* at the disposal of the individual streetwalker.⁹⁸ The city had changed shape, and the usual places in which the prostitute sought her client—places where men danced, drank, took dinner, or were entertained—had multiplied and become more conspicuous. Behind these matters of fact there were other changes taking place, more pervasive and harder to grasp at the time. The basic conditions which had determined the *demand* for prostitution in the first half of the century were coming

to an end: no longer was the ordinary prostitute most often catering to the physical need—the simple sexual deprivation—of a worker recruited from the countryside, living in the city as a kind of stranger and suffering from a shortage of women of his own age and class. That immigrant proletariat was being made part of Haussmann's city, in the manner already described. What it wanted from sex for money was changing: here, as elsewhere, it began to take its cue from the behaviour of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁹

The bourgeoisie believed in Desire. The papers and streets were supposed to be full of it, and its force was imagined as working and changing the whole social body—breaking down the old distinctions between urbanity, sexual tolerance, *galanterie*, adultery, debauchery, and prostitution proper. These things appeared to be becoming aspects of one another, and men and women moved among the various states with ostentatious ease. In the 1860s there began to be visible as a consequence a new kind of demand from the prostitute's client, one which eventually altered the whole trade—a demand for intimacy, for the illusion of seduction. That doubtless went hand in hand with other theatricals, of pain and degradation, dominance and submission, Sacher-Masoch and de Sade. It made the prostitute's job more dangerous; and Edmond de Goncourt's description in *La Fille Elisa* can stand—a translation would sabotage its stabbing, perfunctory syntax—as the best description of the new regime:

D'ordinaire, à Paris, c'est la montée au hasard, par une ivresse, d'un escalier baïllant dans la nuit, le passage furieux et sans retour d'un prurit à travers la mauvaise maison, le contact colère, comme dans un viol, de deux corps qui ne se retrouveront jamais. L'inconnu, entré dans la chambre de la fille, pour la première et la dernière fois, n'a pas souci de ce que, sur le corps qui se livre, son érotisme répand de grossier et méprisant, de ce qui se fait jour dans le délire de la cervelle d'un vieux civilisé, de ce qui s'échappe de féroce de certains amours d'hommes.¹⁰⁰

Surely Goncourt did not exaggerate the grimness and risk very much; but to his verdict should be added (it is the final irony of prostitution in the bourgeois era) that what fuelled the anger now was disappointment. For this, after all, was what money could buy; behind the apparatus of desire—on the other side of a great image, that of the courtesan and her cognates—was merely this abrupt, bathetic transaction. Someone must pay for it, and it could hardly be the drunken old man—he had paid enough already.

The fear of invasion—to return to that cliché—thus consisted of several different fears. It was partly a dislike of Haussmann's city and the general ambiguity it brought in its wake. There was a feeling that clandestines were everywhere and the policeman's mathematics more pure than applied. The boundaries between moral laxity and prostitution seemed to be dis-

solving, and this was held to be the more dangerous because it was not just sexuality that strayed over into the public realm, but money—money in fleshly form.

Of course there were ways in which the empire took pride in making money visible. That was its special glamour as an age, and there could be something almost comforting in the comparison—it was often made—between prostitution and high finance. “Les hommes boursicotent, les femmes traficotent”:¹⁰¹ analogies of this kind could be made quite lightly. The metaphor was not unsettling so long as its terms were made part of the same spectacle—the scheming men and unscrupulous women stepping out in a dance of experts and strangers, with money calling the tune. If prostitution could be represented thus, it posed no special threat to society’s self-esteem; rather the contrary, in fact. But if it escaped from the spectacle or overwhelmed it—and that seemed to be the commentators’ fear—it might still prove, even as an image, an embarrassment. For it could easily be taken to show money inflecting everything now, even those corners of life the culture wished to have private and “personal.” The fear of invasion amounted to this: that money was somehow remaking the world completely, that it might indeed—as Parent-Duchâtelet had feared—“come back into the world . . . penetrate our houses, our interiors.” Such an image of capital could still not quite be stomachied.

Like any other society, the empire needed a representation of sex—representation here meant in its two main senses. The empire had to give sexuality a certain form, and wished to make it the property of a chosen few: women who would be given power over what they possessed, but also *impersonality*, a quite special existence lived out on the edge of the human world. These were the women called *courtisanes*. And they were part of the normal order of things: they were a necessary term in the myth of the “social,” one which defined, by opposition, the more difficult category *femme honnête*. “Prostitution,” wrote the *Westminster Review* in 1868, “is as inseparable from our present marriage customs as the shadow from the substance. They are the two sides of the same shield.”¹⁰² Of course the English writer wished to be understood in practical terms: he had in mind the need for guarantees of female chastity, and outlets for young men who had not yet come into money. But the truth of the argument exceeds his common sense: it can be said to apply at the level of epistemology. *Courtisane* and *femme honnête* are classifications dependent on each other for what clarity they have, in areas of conduct and perception where most things are in doubt. They are sides of the same shield, even if it is necessary for them not to perceive the fact.

Consider, for example, Parent-Duchâtelet’s dream (it haunted the dis-

course of the experts who followed):

We will have arrived at the limit of perfection, and of the possible, in this regard, if we arrange it so that men, and in particular those who are looking for [prostitutes], can distinguish them from honest women; but that those women, and especially their daughters, cannot make this distinction, or at least can do so only with difficulty.¹⁰³

We might ask of this imaginary scheme of things: first, why is it desirable, and second, whom is it desirable for? The answers are clear from the text itself. The women in the case know more or less nothing about what is going on; and doubtless Parent-Duchâtelet would have said that even the streetwalker, beneath her cynicism, was ignorant of the essential distinction—between herself and *honnêteté*. Women must know nothing in order for men to know: it is striking that in Parent-Duchâtelet's best of all possible worlds it is not only the client who can tell the difference, but any man: all men possess the categories, only some men will wish to possess what they contain.

The clearest statement of the general logic here is made by Huysmans in his novel *Marthe*. Towards the end of the story, the abominable hero, Léo, forgives his prostitute lover in a letter announcing his return to polite society. He offers her pardon because she has done a certain indispensable work: "Women like her," Léo sums up, "have this much good about them, that they make us love those they do not resemble; they serve as *repoussoir* to respectability."¹⁰⁴

This was the essential task of the *courtisane*, or the *joueuse*, the *lionne*, the *impure*, the *amazone*, the *fille de marbre*, the *mangeuse d'hommes*, the *demi-mondaine*, or the *horizontale*—her names were legion, but they all meant much the same thing. The *courtisane* was a category, that is my argument: one which depended not just on a distinction made between *courtisane* and *femme honnête*—though this was the dominant theme of the myth—but also on one between *courtisane* and prostitute proper. The category *courtisane* was what could be *represented* of prostitution, and for this to take place at all, she had to be extracted from the swarm of mere sexual commodities that could be seen making use of the streets. These humbler tradespeople were shuffled off stage, and the world of sex was divided in two: on the one hand, the dark interior of the *maison close*, where the body escaped outright from the social order, and on the other the glittering, half-public palaces of the *grandes cocottes* on the Champs-Élysées. Money and sex were thus allowed to meet in two places: either apart from imagery altogether, in the private realm, in the brothel's illicit state of nature; or

in the open space of the spectacle, the space of representation itself, where both could appear as images pure and simple.

Of course it was possible to doubt these ideological distinctions, especially that between *courtisane* and *fille publique*. Jules de Goncourt, for example, was sceptical, coming back from an evening at La Barucci's in 1863:

That makes several great *courtisanes* I have had the chance of knowing. In my opinion none of them escapes from the class of prostitutes. They offer you nothing but a woman of the brothel. Whether they emerge from it or not, it seems to me that they smell of it for ever, and by their gestures, their words, their amiability, they constantly return you to it. None of them, this far, has seemed to me of a race superior to the woman of the streets. I believe that there are no *courtisanes* any longer, and all that remain are *filles*.¹⁰⁵

But this kind of cynicism was only the obverse of the myth; for the most part in the 1860s the distinctions Goncourt begs leave to doubt were maintained quite successfully, and the *courtisane*'s qualities rehearsed at length—in the press, on the stage, in songs and photographs and the stream of books and pamphlets on Parisian *moeurs*.

The *courtisane* was supposed to be beautiful. Therefore her price was high and she had a choice of clients, to some degree. Her business was dominance and make-believe; she seemed the necessary and concentrated form of Woman, of Desire, of Modernity (the capital letters came thick and fast). It was part of her charm to be spurious, enigmatic, unclassifiable: a sphinx without a riddle, and a woman whose claim to classlessness was quite easily seen to be *false*.

The myth of the *courtisane* may strike us now as tedious and dispiriting, and the list of her qualities will not bear much elaboration. But there has to be a word or two about dominance and falsity, the key items in the bill of fare. They both derived, no doubt, from the *courtisane*'s role as representative of Desire: Desire ruled and Desire deluded, and consequently so did she. She was "the captain of industry of youth and love,"¹⁰⁶ she was "the true, the only 'Classe Dirigeante.'"¹⁰⁷ Naturally these claims were not meant to be taken seriously, and it was part of the myth that the *courtisane*'s attempt to be one of the ruling class should eventually come to nothing. Here, for example, is Dr. Jeannel:

Most often they try, in their pompous and crumpled costumes, to follow the latest fashions for balls and soirees! . . .

Their language, as gross as that of the lees of the people, and which they season quite naturally with obscenities, thicken with jargon and patois, or enrich with argot; their worn-out, raucous voices with their ignoble timbre; . . . their *tutoiements* and their swearwords, their falsely lascivious glances, the nicknames they give themselves—all of this makes a hideous contrast with the appearance and manners of the *grand monde*, which they so pretentiously and clumsily counterfeit.¹⁰⁸

This verdict is rather too harsh to be typical: it is, after all, an expert in public hygiene speaking, with an interest in appearing above mythology. Those with no such interest were less sure that the illusion was unsuccessful:

. . . clothes, jargon, pursuits, pleasures, cosmetics, everything brings together the *demi-monde* and the *monde entier*; everything allows us to confuse things which should not even be aware of one another's existence. . . . The nobleman's wife from the Faubourg Saint-Germain passes, on the staircase at Worth's, the elegant female from the Quartier Bréda.¹⁰⁹

These writers were sure that the *courtisane's* great game was to play at being an honest woman; and she played very skilfully, though not so well as to deceive her clients; that would have spoilt the whole thing. Her purpose was to pretend to be a woman of no identity and many: her admirers knew perfectly well that she had come from the *faubourgs* or the Parisian lower depths, and she even took care that her speech should indicate that freedom; for what she had to offer her guests—the Goncourts were really no exception here—was the fact of her own falsity.¹¹⁰ It was her most lavish production: "Bored chatelaine, misunderstood bourgeoisie, failed actress, corrupted peasant girl, she is all of these. . . . She is the perpetually undeciphered enigma, intriguing and terrifying man."¹¹¹

Bourgeois, peasant and *petite faubourienne*—the *courtisane* was the person who moved most easily between roles in the nineteenth century, trying on the seemingly fixed distinctions of class society and discarding them at will, declaring them false like the rest of her poses. And falsity was what made her modern—in Rops's terms or Ravenel's, or even Flaubert's in retrospect.

Looking back on the empire in September 1870, Flaubert penned the inevitable epitaph for the decade. "Everything was false," he wrote, "false army, false politics, false literature, false credit, and even false *courtisanes*."¹¹² This was perhaps as close as the novelist ever came to stating programmatically what he took to be modernity's distinctive features; and it seems that the category is finally secured for him when social practice is soaked right through with duplicity, when nothing is spared from the rule of illusion. In such a society, prostitutes are purveyors of essential goods.

The most cursory survey of the salons in the same period will show how often the *courtisane* was allowed to appear among the portraits and still lifes. She was what could be represented of prostitution, and though the explicitness of visual art made for certain difficulties here, they were regularly circumvented. Year after year the *courtisane* looked down from the salon walls; usually she did so in some kind of antique or allegorical disguise, but there were notable exceptions to even this rule. In any case,

the critics were fond of disbelieving the painters' claim to show them prostitution in ideal form: one had only to attempt a *courtisane* picture to be added immediately to the list of those who set out for Athens each morning and ended in the Rue de Bréda.

In the Salon of 1861, for example, there was a painting by Félix-Joseph Barrias called *La Conjuration des courtisanes* which, from the critics' description, seems to have been taken from the history of Venice. There were two pictures by Gérôme, one of Phryne naked before the Areopagites, and the other of Socrates admiring the great *courtisane* Aspasia. Critics were scornful of the Parisiennes in both of them, trying to look like Greeks.¹¹³ In the same year, Auguste Glaize showed a large picture, nearly nine feet long, entitled *La Pourvoyeuse misère*. On a road outside a gaslit city—too modern to be Babylon or Sodom, it was suspected¹¹⁴—a carriage full of naked and half-naked women came across Poverty in the form of a ragged and misshapen old woman. The carriage rolled on. The painter spelt out his moral in the Salon livret:

How many young girls, grown tired of work, throw themselves into all the vices that debauchery brings in its wake, in order to escape from this spectre which seems always to pursue them?¹¹⁵

35. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Phryné devant l'Aréopage*, 1861.





36. Auguste-Barthélemy Glaize, *La Pourvoyeuse misère*, 1860.

Maxime Du Camp was an expert on the subject. In his *Salon de 1861* he launched into the following explanation:

This picture should have been called the wise and foolish virgins. It is the allegorical figuration of what we see every day on our sidewalks and in our theatres, the growing invasion of women of dubious virtue who are today a new element of our society in transition and who, in the always active and intelligent hands of civilization, are perhaps no more than the instruments of equality, destined to make our inheritance prove illusory or at least to put it in forced circulation. When I look at this uninterrupted movement of *lorettes* (let us call them by their name), wave after wave of them, I've often wondered if the lower classes of our society were not carrying on, without being conscious of the fact, the struggle begun at the end of the last century, and whether, in producing these beautiful women whose mission seems to be to ruin and cretinize the haute bourgeoisie and the last remnants of the nobility, they were not continuing quite peacefully the work of the most violent clubs of 1793. Marat today would not ask for the heads of two hundred thousand aristocrats; he would decree the emission of two hundred thousand new kept women, and the result would be the same.¹¹⁶

It should be clear from this example—remember that Du Camp kept silent four years later in the face of *Olympia*—that critics knew quite well that prostitution and class struggle were connected, and that this and other dangers were part of the subject's appeal. Tony Zac sent a *Compagnes de Sappho* to the 1868 Salon which was inspired by Baudelaire's *Femmes damnées*, and known to be so.¹¹⁷ Charles Marchal showed two pictures in the same salon of women in contemporary dress, one entitled *Phryné* and the other *Pénélope*.¹¹⁸ The following year Emile de Beaumont had a painting hung called *Pourquoi pas?* in which an up-to-date young woman sat at her

dressing table amid a crowd of monstrous and suggestive old men. Gautier explained:

It is a madhouse for millionaires. The *courtisane* looks on at them without fear, without disgust, with that supreme indifference to beauty or ugliness which characterizes these creatures, and from her lips, with a puff of cigarette smoke, escape these words, which sum up what she is thinking: Why not?¹¹⁹

Pictures of this kind were almost commonplace, and certainly saleable. In 1864 the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel paid Thomas Couture no less than 25,000 francs for rights to a picture under way, already called *La Courtisane moderne*.¹²⁰ When it was finished—many years later—its debt to Glaize's *Pourvoyeuse misère* was clear; only now the half-naked *courtisane* was dragged in her chariot along a weed-choked road far from the city, past the reproving gaze of a herm. Under her whip were Harlequin and Silenus, and behind them one young man wearing a poet's laurel wreath and another carrying a sword.¹²¹ False army and false literature, no doubt, both dragged along by pleasure and make-believe, and subject to the *courtisane's* chastisement.

37. Charles Marchal, *Phryné*. Wood engraving after oil painting in *L'Artiste*, 1 June 1868.





38. Thomas Couture, *La Courtisane moderne* (known as *The Thorny Path*), 1873.

These pictures of prostitutes are lunatic and fascinating in their own right, and yet misleading. For this was not the normal way in which the *courtisane* appeared in the salon: she was present for the most part only indirectly, as a kind of inflection or interference in pictures done with a different purpose. She was discovered, and to some extent permitted, in almost *any* depiction of the body or Desire in this decade. She seemed to be the necessary, if regrettable, form of nakedness itself. And not just of nakedness: everywhere that flesh was visible and feminine, the *courtisane* materialized. Consider, for example, the young critic Camille Lemonnier writing on Henri Regnault's *Salomé* in the Salon of 1870:

Her cheeks, white as those of a *fille d'amour*, are daubed with rouge, and pucker at the corner of the mouth into a proud, triumphant smile. . . . Her flesh has a tired and pampered look, a fat, unhealthy moistness, the livid colour that pleasures imprint on the skin of *courtisanes*. . . . I shall not quibble with Monsieur Regnault over the accuracy of his clothes and accessories. I am not looking for history here, I am looking for Woman. . . . I find his figure to be a *Salomé*, it does not matter to me if she is not *the* *Salomé*. It is enough if the artist has given us the *fille d'amour* in her crumpled finery, and done so picturesquely and with truth.¹²²



39. Henri Regnault, *Salomé*, 1869.

The odd thing here is the self-evidence of Lemonnier's similes, for himself and presumably for his readers: the way it seemed to go without saying that Salome was a courtesan (which, strictly speaking, she was not); the confidence that Regnault's subject was woman in general, which meant *courtisane* in particular; the sight—which may strike us still as the right one—of the prostitute beneath the fancy dress.

The *courtisane* was not an easy subject for visual art. If she were left as an unrecognized inflection of the nude, she might produce representations worse than herself: Paul Baudry's nudes or Alexandre Cabanel's were "less than *courtisanes*," Maxime Du Camp once complained.¹²³ In any case, she was a dangerous fiction, a woman with a whip, impersonal and vicious, prone to Sappho's deviation,¹²⁴ apt to cretinize the bourgeoisie. But whatever the risks, it seemed she had to be represented; and so she was each year, that "chiffre en dehors des êtres sociaux," chased from the happy state of Venice; that ruler of youth, that misleader of millionaires, that Salome who "smells of rut and butchery, fierce in her indifference and lascivious without love."¹²⁵

START HERE

It is clear that critics in 1865 suspected Olympia of being less than a *courtisane*, and Manet of making her so deliberately. The category *cour-*

tisane, in other words, no longer quite covered or displaced those of *insoumise* and *petite faubourienne*, and the whole untidy place those words suggested of the prostitute in class society.

Yet this cannot be the whole story; or, rather, it cannot explain why the critics reacted as they did in 1865—why their prose was so vehement and strange, and why they found it so difficult to say *how* class figured in *Olympia*, even if they seemed sure that it did so. Class, after all, was regularly one of the *courtisane*'s best performances, and critics like Du Camp could play with the idea of social danger in such cases without seeming unduly nonplussed. Olympia could have been given a place in class and still have hardly disturbed the critics' sensibilities. She could have been pitied or half admired, or consigned to the nether world of pleasure which Alfred Delvau refers to at the end of his 1867 *Plaisirs de Paris*:

It is important here to draw a great demarcation line on the map of *galanterie*. The innumerable fallen women who wander in this great desert of men we call Paris can be divided into two classes. On one side are the poor *misérables*, of whom Victor Hugo talks in his novel of that name, living from day to day and wandering the streets haphazardly, in search of the human animal that Diogenes tried to find, and counting on his generosity to face the expense of their rent, food, and clothes.

There are special books, books of statistics, which will recount the atrocious lives of these daughters of sadness, as Monsieur Michelet calls them. Such turpitudes should have no place in a book devoted to Parisian pleasures. There are sores one must hide and tend in secret. . . .¹²⁶

Hugo . . . Michelet . . . no doubt there were ways in 1865 to represent even the prostitution of the *faubourgs*. But such representations would not necessarily have challenged the myth of the *courtisane*; as Delvau's description suggests very well, they normally did no more than provide a glimpse of the dark and pitiable other side of her power. *Olympia*, on the contrary, tried to describe that power more completely; it tried to unfix the category *courtisane*, by contriving a different kind of relation between a prostitute's class and her nudity. The transcription of class in Manet's picture—this was its odd and *indescribable* force—was nothing now but an aspect of its subject's nakedness.

The challenge to the myth in this was twofold. What the myth essentially did, I have been arguing, was offer the empire a perfect figure of its own pretended social playfulness, of the perfect and fallacious power of money. "Les hommes boursicotent, les femmes traficotent"—and class, in the game, was merely another kind of masking. The *courtisane* put on the mask occasionally, and was appreciated for her falsity in this as in all other things. To break such a circuit, it would not have been enough to show a prostitute



possessed of the outward signs of class—costume and makeup, slippers, flowers, bracelets, servants, tokens of vulgarity or distinction—since these were all believed to be extrinsic to her real power. Her power was her body, which only money could buy.

But if class could be shown to *belong* to that body; if it could be seen to remake the basic categories of nudity and nakedness; if it became a matter of the body's whole address and arrangement, something read *on* the body, in the body, in ways the spectator could not focus discriminately—then the circuit would be broken, and the category *courtisane* replaced by others less absolute and comforting. The body and money would not be unmediated terms any longer, intersecting in the abstract, out there in the hinterland of images; they would take their place as determinate facts in a particular class formation.

Of course, it is not very likely that a picture on its own could do any



40. OPPOSITE Contemporary photograph of state purchases from the 1865 Salon, including (top left) Louis Lamothe's *L'Origine du dessin* and (top right) Louis-Frédéric Schutzenberger's *Europe enlevée par Jupiter*.

41. Contemporary photograph of state purchases from the 1865 Salon, including (top left) François Lemud's *La Chute d'Adam*, (top centre) Firmin Girard's *Le Sommeil de Vénus*, (top right) Félix-Henri Giacomotti's *L'Enlèvement d'Amymoné*, and (bottom centre) Joseph-Victor Ranvier's *L'Enfance de Bacchus*.

such thing. Ideologies are not magically dismantled in single works of art; and if paintings try too hard to anticipate social process, they run the risk of ending up speaking to nobody, neither those inside the world of ideology nor those existing at its edges. It remains to be seen how successful *Olympia* was in redescribing the nude, and whether the price of success was too high.

PAUSE HERE

It so happens that in 1865 the state employed a photographer to record the works it had bought from the salon before they went off to the provinces. Two of the photos that survive group together paintings which contain the female nude. In one there is *Europe enlevée par Jupiter* by Louis-Frédéric Schutzenberger, a pupil of Charles Gleyre, an established salon medallist; and next to it *L'Origine du dessin* by Degas's teacher, Louis Lamothe:



42. Félix-Henry Giacomotti, *L'Enlèvement d'Amymoné*, 1865.



43. Paul Baudry, *La Perle et la vague*, 1863.

"Dibutades, a young Greek woman, traces on the wall the profile of her lover, drawn there by a shadow." In the other photograph there is *Le Sommeil de Vénus* by Firmin Girard, another pupil of Gleyre; an eight-foot *Enlèvement d'Amymoné* by Félix-Henri Giacomotti, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1854; *La Chute d'Adam* by François Lemud; and *L'Enfance de Bacchus* by Joseph-Victor Ranvier.

These pictures make a context for *Olympia*. It is almost too easy to imagine Manet's painting in the midst of them, and consider the differences—between *Olympia* and Schutzenberger, say—too obvious and comic to need much explanation. For what the photos show us is the official nude, the kind derided even at the time as academic, empty, timid, prurient, and bourgeois. Substitute bull for rock, and need we do more than repeat Castagnary's questions, asked two years earlier of Baudry's *Perle et la vague*?—

And how much better this beautiful lady, she with the looks of a Parisian *modiste*, would look upon a sofa! After living so well in her luxury apartment on the Chaussée-d'Antin, she can't feel quite comfortable on this rock, near all those painful pebbles and sharp-pointed shells.

But a thought occurs: what is it she's doing here all alone, rolling her enamel eyes and flexing her dainty hands? Is she lying in wait for a millionaire, on his travels to faraway places? Perhaps this isn't the Venus of the boudoir after all, but the Venus of the seaside resort?¹²⁷

To put the questions another way: Is it any wonder that Cantaloube could hardly discover Titian in *Olympia*, and was disgusted when he did, if this was how the past normally appeared in the nude—as Titian does

in Schutzenberger's picture, or Raphael in Giacomotti's? And if this was the past, then how could the present manifest itself in painting except as some kind of ludicrous disjunction, an unintended text to be read in Europa's profile and hairdo, or Amyone's fierce eyebrows and mouth?

The general run of critics in the 1860s would have put these questions in a somewhat different form, but by and large they would have recognized their force. Critics agreed that the nude as a genre was in a precarious and confused state. The full extent of its disarray can be suggested best by mentioning straightaway some additions to the handful of pictures from the 1865 Salon; for *Olympia's* competitors are less bizarre than many others of the decade's favourite nudes. There is Cabanel's *Nymphe enlevée par un faune*, for example, which was mightily celebrated in the Salon of 1861, or the same painter's best-selling *Naissance de Vénus*. There is Bouguereau's



44. Alexandre Cabanel,
*Nymphe enlevée par un
faune*, 1860.



45. Alexandre Cabanel, *La Naissance de Vénus*, 1863.

1863 *Bacchante*, fallen down in drunken glee and playing amorously with a goat; there is Puvis's deadly, unfortunate *Autumn*, and Jules-Joseph Lefebvre's *Nymphe et Bacchus*, sent from Rome to the Salon of 1866 and snapped up immediately for the Musée du Luxembourg. And if we include the 1870s, there are images of outright and imperative lust to add to the canon, like Bouguereau's *Nymphes et satyre* of 1873, in which the nymphs take their revenge on an all-too-human satyr, or Edouard Blanchard's impotent and perverse *Bouffon*.

The confusion of the genre centered, or so the critics said, on matters of propriety and desire, and the fact that there seemed so little agreement about either. Most writers and artists knew that the nude's appeal, in part at least, was straightforwardly erotic. There was nothing necessarily wrong in that, they insisted; it was part of the strength of their beloved "pagan ideal" that it offered a space in which woman's body could be consumed without too much (male) prevarication. Desire was never quite absent from the nude, and the genre provided various figures in which it could be represented: as an animal demand arriving in a half-man, half-goat form; or as Eros, that infatuated guide who stood for man's desire and woman's desirability. But the main business of the nude was to make a distinction between these figures and nakedness itself: the body was attended and to



46. William Bouguereau,
Une Bacchante, 1863.

47. Jules-Joseph Lefebvre,
Nymphe et Bacchus, 1866.





48. William Bouguereau, *Nymphes et satyre*, 1873.



49. Edouard Blanchard, *Le Bouffon*, 1878.

some extent threatened by its sexual identity, but in the end the body triumphed. To make the language less metaphorical: the painter's task was to construct or negotiate a relation between the body as particular and excessive fact—that flesh, that contour, those marks of modern woman—and the body as a sign, formal and generalized, meant for a token of composure and fulfilment. Desire appeared in the nude, but it was shown displaced, personified, no longer an attribute of woman's unclothed form.

I might make the point clearer by applying these absolute standards to a picture by Ingres, the *Vénus Anadyomène*, completed a generation earlier, in 1848 (Plate X). It is an appropriate painting to take as exemplary, since so many of the artists and writers of the 1860s looked back to it as a recent classic of the nude, and sometimes paid homage to it directly.¹²⁸ No critic worth his salt would have wished to deny that Ingres's Venus was sexually enticing, and intended to be. He might even have admired Ingres's ability to make a certain kind of sexual content legible in an unembarrassed way. Not that he necessarily would have wished, or been able, to translate the passage at the picture's bottom right—adoring *putto*, penis, dolphin, foam, red eye, fishtail, snout—into the analytic terms which are established, more or less, for the twentieth-century reader. But the picture's subject *was* Venus, and the *putti* are there to enact her power, offering her a mirror and us an arrow. The key word here, for the critic, would have been “enactment.” The unavoidable sexual force of this nakedness is transposed into various actions and attributes, and made over into a rich and con-

ventional language. What is left behind is a body, addressed to the viewer directly and candidly, but grandly generalized in form, arranged in a complex and visible rhyming, purged of particulars, offered as a free but respectful version of the right models, the ones that articulate nature best.

The painting of the nude in the 1860s could be characterized by its inability to do the things Ingres does here. In the pictures I have presented already, sexual force and nakedness are most often not disentangled. When they are, and the active proponents of desire are included, there seems to be a massive uncertainty about how much reality to grant them: satyrs, fauns, and cupids regularly take on too much of the look of goats, male models, and three-year-old children. The naked body itself, as the critics



50. Eugène-Emanuel
Amaury-Duval, *La
Naissance de Vénus*, 1862.

in the 1860s never tired of saying, is left curiously hybrid, marked by modernity in an incoherent way. If it is chaste, and it sometimes is, it is rigid and inanimate with its own decorum; and if it engages with sexuality, it does so in ways which verge on violence or burlesque.

Something is wrong here: a genre is disintegrating. Perhaps in a general way Castagnary was right to blame the bourgeoisie for the state of the nude: no doubt a culture pays a price for exaggerated concern for the proprieties, especially if such a concern sits ill with its appetite for sexual entertainment. But it does not necessarily pay it in terms of art. It would be hard to argue that Titian's Ferrara or Correggio's Mantua were notably healthier in sexual terms than Bouguereau's Paris. The nude is a matter not of sexual health but of artistic conventions, and it is these that were foundering in the 1860s. If there was a specifically bourgeois unhappiness, it centered on how to represent sexuality, not how to organize or suppress it. (Though the one unhappiness had effects. . . .)

One might expect these problems—especially the way they seemed to invite a reading in terms of some general cultural doom—to produce a lot of bad criticism. One might especially predict, at the end of a genre, a squad of Cassandras inflexible for truth and purity; and, sure enough, they existed. In the face of Cabanel's *Vénus* and Baudry's *Perle*, Maxime Du Camp put paid to the salon nude in general. "Art," he wrote in 1863, "should have no more sex than mathematics."¹²⁹ The mark of the nude in art was chastity and abstraction: "The naked body is the abstract being, and thus it must preoccupy and tempt the artist above all; but to clothe the nude in immodesty, to give the facial features all those expressions which are not spoken of, that is to dishonour the nude and do something disreputable."¹³⁰ The nude "ceases to be honest when it is treated so as intentionally to exaggerate certain forms at the expense of others,"¹³¹ when its poses are "provoking," its attitudes "violent," and its whole language contorted and unnatural.

The vocabulary is tortuous—trying to speak of sex and yet not to speak of it—but the message is clear. Desire is no part of the nude: the nude is human form in general, abstracted from life, contact, attraction, even gender. Ingres is called in by Du Camp to attest to all these things.¹³²

Now, insofar as critics in the 1860s attempted a general theory of the nude, they found themselves drifting in Du Camp's direction. Often they did so in spite of an effort—a quite spirited one—not to be absolute and moralistic. Here, for example, is Camille Lemonnier in 1870:

. . . The nude is not the same as the *undressed*, and nothing is less nude than a woman emerging from a pair of drawers or one who has just taken off her chemise. The nude has modesty only if it is not a transitory state. It hides nothing

because there is nothing to hide. The moment it hides something it becomes prurient, for in reality it shows it all the better. In order to stay virgin the nude in art must be impersonal and must not particularize; art has no need of a beauty spot upon the neck or a mole on the hindquarters. It hides nothing and shows nothing: it makes itself seen as a whole. . . .

The nude has something of the purity of little children who play naked together without minding at all. The *undressed*, on the contrary, always reminds me of the woman who shows herself off for forty sous and specializes in "artistic poses."¹³³

But compare Lemonnier's statement of general rules and purposes with his description, in the same *Salon*, of a lost picture by Alphonse Lecadre:

The breast is well realized: one sees its lassitude, the marks of embraces upon it, the traces of kisses, and the breasts hang down, pulled out of shape by pleasure. There is a real solidity to the girl's form, and the grain of her flesh, stamped out in powerful impasto, is like a solid mass of close-woven fabric under the touch.¹³⁴

And compare Lemonnier with Edouard Hache, describing a picture by Ferdinand Humbert in the 1869 *Salon*, of a North African odalisque sprawling naked on a bed:

The pose is bizarre, I grant you; the head horrible, certainly; and let us agree that the body is hardly seductive, if you insist. But what admirable drawing! With what richness of colour the painter has rendered the shifting tones of the flesh! And the modelling, the fineness of the belly, the delicacy of the arms, the soft folds that hollow the breasts! How palpably the nude's flesh sinks into those fine red cushions! It really is the woman of the Orient, in all her softness and bestiality.¹³⁵

The examples could be multiplied. What they suggest is hardly surprising: the general rules simply did not apply when the critic was faced with particular nuditities. The appeal of the nude was both simpler and more complex than theory, in an anxious time, could possibly allow. It included, as Cantaloube put it of Cabanel's *Nymphe*, "the idea of voluptuous beauty."¹³⁶ And even the insistence on *pudeur* would not make sense completely if the image did not include elements or traces of its opposite. In Jourdan's *Secrets de l'amour*, for example, from 1866, a naked young woman was surprised by Love in a wood. This is Félix Jahyer's description of the scene that ensued:

The child is artful and insistent: as he tells his dangerous secret his little hand is placed on the adolescent's breast, and she in turn, in a movement of exquisite grace, puts her own hand in the same place, which proves she has to defend herself against some kind of sensation. The child's delicious profile is put boldly against the delicate face of his confidante, in whom modesty and pleasure are joined in an adorable combat.¹³⁷

We end in bathos, but it is there we are told the obvious truth. Of course

the burden of the nude was conflict, adorable or otherwise, between propriety and sexual pleasure. The genre existed to reconcile those opposites, and when the nude was working normally as a form of knowledge, both would be recognized in criticism and spelt out in paint. In the 1860s that did not happen: the nude, for the most part, was conceived to be the strict antithesis of sex; because sex had no part in the matter, it kept appearing directly in the flesh, unintended, as something which spoilt what was meant to be a pure formality.

I have argued once or twice already against the critics' readiness to see in all this a test of the empire's general sexual health. Théophile Thoré had his own reasons for making that kind of premature equation—he had fled from the empire in 1851—and dealing with the salon nude in 1865 he saw no reason to doubt that its form answered immediately to the tastes of a new ruling class:

Who is it encourages mythological and mystical art, Oedipuses and Venuses, madonnas and saints in ecstasy? Those in whose interests it is that art means nothing and fails to connect with modern aspirations. Who encourages these nymphs and scenes of courtship à la Pompadour? The Jockey Club and the Boulevard Italien. To whom are these pictures sold? To *courtisanes* and stock-exchange *nouveaux riches*, to the dissipated members of a particular aristocracy.¹³⁸

Thoré's questions and answers may be crude, but that does not necessarily mean they are mistaken. Clearly the break-up of the nude is at some level a social matter. The nude is a term of art and art criticism; but I have quoted enough from the writers of the 1860s to make it clear that art criticism and sexual discourse of a more general kind intersect at this point, the one providing the other with crucial representations. Or so the culture hopes: the nude is one important form—and there are very few—in which sexuality can be put on show in the nineteenth century. It is the place in which the body is revealed, given its attributes, brought into order, and made out to be unproblematic. It is the frankness of the bourgeoisie—here, after all, is what Woman looks like; she can be known in her nakedness without too much danger. That is because her body is separate from her sex. Her sex, one might say, is a matter of *male* desire: those various fauns, bulls, falling coins, enfolding clouds, tritons, goats, and *putti* which surround her. There they all are, for the male viewer to read and accept as figures of his own feelings; and there *she* is, somehow set apart from her own sexuality, her nakedness not yet possessed by the creatures who whisper, stare, or hold up mirrors.

It was exactly the problem of the nude in the 1860s that this separation

proved so hard to obtain. Sex was supposedly expelled outright from Woman's body, only to reappear within it as a set of uncontrolled inflections—those rolling eyes and orgasmic turns of the hip that the critics spent their time finding decent ways to denounce. The nude became embarrassing; and what *Olympia* did, I shall argue, is insist on that embarrassment and give it visual form. It is as if Manet's picture drew the logical conclusions from the chaos of Bouguereau and Cabanel. The nude in its degenerating state was right about sexuality: sexual identity *was* nowhere but in the body; and it was not there as a structure or a set of attributes, but had to be figured as interference and excess, a tissue of oddities and inconclusiveness.

Of course the picture still contained, in a clichéd, almost comic fashion, the signs of separate male desire: there was the hissing tom cat and the offering of flowers from Monsieur Arthur. But these were read at the time, and surely correctly, as a kind of travesty of the old language of the nude; and Desire itself, in a form which carried any conviction, was the property now—the deliberate production—of the female subject herself. It was there in her gaze, her address to the viewer, her consciousness of being looked at for sexual reasons and paid accordingly—no doubt a good deal more than forty sous.

A nude, to repeat, is a picture for men to look at, in which Woman is constructed as an object of somebody else's desire. Nothing I go on to say about *Olympia* is meant to suggest that Manet's painting escapes that wider determination, or even escaped it once upon a time, in the 1865 Salon. It was meant as a nude and finally taken as one; the texts I have collected should not be read as so many indices of defeat in that project, but, rather, for signs of difficulty surmounted. The critics were obliged to take a metaphorical detour, produce their own hesitations, play with the picture's recalcitrance, before they declared it a nude of some kind—comic perhaps, or obscene, or incompletely painted. Nonetheless, the difficulties *counted* in 1865: the anger and uncertainty were not simply ersatz. The anger needs explaining, therefore; even if, in the critics' writing, it is already presented in retrospect, as a kind of fiction.

I have argued the gist of the matter already. *Olympia* is depicted as nude and *courtisane*, but also as naked and *insoumise*; the one identity is the form of the other, but the two are put together in such a way as to make each contingent and unfinished. The case is particularly clear when it comes to the picture's obvious main subject: *Olympia's* beauty, her sexual power, and how that relates to her body's being female. It is sometimes

said—it was said already in 1865—that Olympia is not female at all, or only partly so. She is masculine or “masculinized”; she is “boyish,” aggressive, or androgynous. None of these words strikes me as the right one, but they all indicate quite well why the viewer is uncertain. It is because he cannot easily make Olympia a Woman that he wants to make her a man; she has to be something less or more or otherwise aberrant. This seems to me wrongheaded: surely Olympia’s sexual identity is not in doubt; it is how it belongs to her that is the problem.

The achievement of *Olympia*, I should say, is that it gives its female subject a particular sexuality as opposed to a general one. And that particularity derives, I think, not from there being *an order* to the body on the bed but from there being too many, and none of them established as the dominant one. The signs of sex are present in plenty, but they fail, as it were, to add up. Sex is not something evident and all of a piece in *Olympia*; that a woman has a sex at all—and certainly Olympia has one—does not make her immediately *one thing*, for a man to appropriate visually; her sex is a construction of some kind, or perhaps the inconsistency of several.*

To show this in detail, I shall first of all point to the way the body is addressed to the viewer in *Olympia*, and then go on to talk of the body’s “incorrectness,” as a thing drawn and painted; from there I shall move to the particular marks of sex upon it, and how they are handled; and, finally, to the way the body is inscribed in paint.

A nude could hardly be said to do its work as a painting at all if it did not find a way to address the spectator and give him access to the body on display. He had to be offered a place outside the picture, and a way in; and be assured somehow that his way was the right one, leading to the knowledge he required. This was sometimes done simply by looking: by having the woman’s eyes and face, and her whole body, address themselves to the viewer, in the fashion of Ingres’s *Vénus Anadyomène* or Titian’s

* The books sometimes say that *Olympia*’s depiction of a prostitute is “realistic,” and that that, quite simply, was why it offended in 1865. But the word “realistic” is as usual puzzling here—for instance, as it might apply to the picture’s representation of sexuality. Insofar as it disposes of ordinary signs of that quality—the cat, the Negress, the orchid, the claustrophobic room—they are far from being “realistic” in any obvious sense of the word. Are they even self-evidently “contemporary”? (Several critics were certain in 1865 that the flowers were being brought in last month’s newspaper; but the paint itself is grandly noncommittal on this subject, as far as I can see. The “contemporary” reference was *made* by the viewer out of something deliberately guarded and generalized.) Even if we wish to say that reality *is* figured here, it still leaves us with the question why it was offensive, if its figures are so hard to pin down.

Venus of Urbino. That candour, that dreamy offering of self, that looking which was not quite looking: those were the nude's most characteristic forms of address. But the outward gaze was not essential; the spectator could be offered instead a pair of eyes within the picture space—the look of Cupid or the jester's desperate stare, the familiarity of a servant or a lover. In any case, the woman's body had to be arranged in precise and definite relation to the viewer's eye. It had to be placed at a distance, near enough for seeing, far enough for propriety. It had to be put at a determinate height, neither so high that the woman became inaccessible and merely grand, nor so low that she turned into matter for scrutiny of a clinical or prurient kind.

These were fragile achievements, and open to burlesque or refutation. But that was not what took place in *Olympia*, for all the critics' occasional certainty that her look was a provocation and her body laid out for inspection at the morgue. By and large the critics could not dismiss the picture in this way, because they could not so easily specify their own exclusion from it.

They were offered an outward gaze: a pair of jet-black pupils, a slight asymmetry of the lids, a mouth with a curiously smudged and broken corner, features half adhering to the plain oval of the face (Plate VII). A look was thus constructed which seemed direct and reserved, in a way which was close to the classic face of the nude. It was close, but so is parody. This is not a look which is generalized or abstract or evidently "feminine." It appears to be blatant and particular, but it is also unreadable, perhaps deliberately so. It is candid but guarded, poised between address and resistance—so precisely, so deliberately, that it comes to be read as a production of the depicted person herself; there is an inevitable conflation of the qualities of precision and contrivance in the way the image is painted and those qualities as belonging to the fictive subject; it is *her* look, her action upon us, her composition of herself.

It is not just looking, that is the point: it is not the simple, embodied gaze of the nude. Aggression is not the word for it; that quality is displaced to the cat and given comic form. Compliance is inaccurate; that is the Negress's character, and what makes her inert and formulaic, a mere painted sign for Woman in one of her states. Olympia, on the other hand, looks out at the viewer in a way which obliges him to imagine a whole fabric of sociality in which this look might make sense and include him—a fabric of offers, places, payments, particular powers, and status which is still open to negotiation. If all of that could be held in the mind, the viewer might have access to Olympia; but clearly it would no longer be access to a nude.

Yet in a rough-and-ready way the viewer puts an end to this stalemate, at least temporarily, and tries to see Olympia's body as one thing. We have noticed already the signs of the critics' disappointment even here. The body was *not* one thing; it was pulled out of shape, its knees dislocated and arms broken; it was cadaverous and decomposing; falling apart or held together by an abstract, rigid armature of lead or plaster or India rubber; it was simply incorrect. These are the signs of panic and incomprehension in the critics, but they have some basis in the way Olympia's body is actually drawn. One aspect of that drawing is emphatically linear: it is the side seized on by some writers in 1865 and described in such phrases as "circled in black," "drawn in charcoal," and "stripes of blacking." These were ways of objecting to Manet's disregard of good modelling and the abruptness of his lights and darks. But this use of shadow—these lines of darkness put round heel or breast or hand—is also part of Manet's drawing, in the limited sense I want that word to have here. Olympia's whole body is matter of smooth hard edges and deliberate intersections; the lines of her shoulders are a good example, singular and sharp; or the way the far nipple breaks the bounding line of the arm with a neatness nothing short of ostentation; or the flat, declarative edge of the thigh and the kneecap, or the hand staked out on its grey surroundings. This kind of drawing is presumably what was meant by the journalist Gille when he talked of *Olympia's* being full of "jarring lines which made one's eyes ache."¹³⁹ But it was just as common in 1865, and just as appropriate, for the critics to accuse the picture of *lacking* definition. It was "unfinished," after all, and drawing "does not exist" in it;¹⁴⁰ it was described as "impossible" or evasive or "informe."¹⁴¹ One critic called it disarticulated, another inarticulate, and both were right.¹⁴² The latter was responding to a second kind of graphic mode in the picture, which we might describe as painterly—meaning by that a grand and free suppression of demarcations, a use of paint to indicate the indefiniteness of parts.

One aspect of this is again the picture's suppression of halftones: it lies behind the lack of detail in Olympia's right breast, and the faded bead of her nipple; it is what makes the transition from breast to rib cage to stomach to thigh so indistinct, so hard to follow. But the body contains quite other kinds of ambiguity, harder and sharper and more directly tied to *line*: the direction of Olympia's forearm, for example, as it crosses her belly—perhaps touching it, perhaps not—is just as much a matter of high visual uncertainty.

There is a lack of articulation here. On its own it is not too disconcerting, and in a sense it tallies well with the conventions of the nude, where the body is offered—if the trick is done—as just this kind of infinite territory,

uncorseted and full, on which the spectator is free to impose his imaginary definitions. But the odd thing in Olympia's case is the way this uncertainty is bounded, or interrupted, by the hard edges and the cursive grey. The body is in part *tied down* by drawing, held in place quite harshly—by the hand, the black bootlace round the neck, the lines of charcoal shadow. The way this kind of drawing qualifies or relates to the other is not clear; it does not qualify the other because it does not relate; the two systems coexist; they describe aspects of the body, and point to aspects of that body's sexuality, but they do not bring them together into a single economy of form.

It is as if the painter welcomes disparity and makes a system of it; as if the picture proposes inconsistencies, of a curiously unrelieved kind—left without excuse or mediation—as the best sort of truth when the subject is nakedness.

This leads to the way the picture treats the particular marks of sex upon the body. The nude has to indicate somehow the false facts of sexual life, and pre-eminently that woman lacks a phallus. This is the issue that lies behind Lemonnier's talk of showing and not showing what woman is. The nude, he says, "hides nothing because there is nothing to hide." That is no doubt what most male viewers wish to believe, but it regularly turns out that that *nothing* is what has to be hidden, and indicated by other conventions. The *Vénus Anadyomène* shows us one of them, the most perfect: the illusion of simple absence and equally simple completeness, the fiction of a lack which is no lack and does not therefore need to be concealed or shown. Another is the hand placed over the genitals in Titian's *Venus* or Giorgione's: the hand seemingly coinciding with the body, enacting the lack of the phallus and disguising it. In that sense—in that particular and atrocious detail—Olympia was certainly scandalous (Plate VIII). Her hand enraged and exalted the critics as nothing else did, because it failed to enact the lack of the phallus (which is not to say it quite signified the opposite). When the critics said it was shameless, flexed, in a state of contraction, dirty, and shaped like a toad, they toyed with various meanings, none of them obscure. The genitals are *in* the hand, toadlike; and the hand is tensed, hard-edged and definite; not an absence, not a thing which yields or includes and need not be noticed. "When a little boy first catches sight of a girl's genital region, he begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest; he sees nothing or disavows what he has seen, he softens it down or looks about for expedients for bringing it into line with his expectations."¹⁴³ Freud's account of origins is not necessarily to be taken as the whole truth, but it states quite well the ordinary form of male inattention in art. And Olympia's hand demands to be looked at; it cannot be disavowed or

brought in line with anyone's expectations—anyone, that is, brought up on Ingres or Titian.

The hand is Olympia's whole body, disobeying the rules of the nude. We might even say that it stands too strongly for that disobedience, for, after all, the body on the bed is not simply scandalous; the hand is a detail, and the critics were wrong to focus upon it, as they sometimes did, as if there were nothing else there to be seen.

Its effect is qualified, for instance, by the picture's employment of a second sign—a strong one—for much the same thing: the body's hair and hairlessness. Hair, so the textbooks say, is a secondary sexual characteristic. In the nude, however, it is a prime signifier of sex: plenty of it in the right places is delightful and feminine; pubic hair, need it be said, may hide the lack of the phallus but is somehow too close to *being* that lack, which is why it cannot be shown; and hair is disallowed for some reason in all manner of other places, armpit (usually), nipple, stomach, legs—the list is still current. The right kind of hair more than makes up for the wrong kind, however, in pictures like Cabanel's *Vénus*: the painter is encouraged to provide a miserable profusion of tresses, overtaking the body and weighing it down, acting in this case as a second (equally spermatorrhoeaic) foam. This kind of hirsuteness is a strong sign and a safe one, for hair let down is decent and excessive at the same time; it is allowed disorder, simple luxuriance, slight wantonness; and none of these qualities need be alarming, since hair on the head can be combed out and pinned up again in due course.

How nearly Olympia obeys the rules—to the point, we might think, of uneasy parody again. She has no pubic hair, of course; that would have been unthinkable; there is honestly nothing beneath her open hand but shadow; and yet the painting lays on a whole series of substitutes for what it is forced to omit. The armpit carries a trace of hair (this was permitted in any case: even Giacomotti did it). The line which runs from Olympia's navel to her ribs is seemingly marked by something—it may be a shadow, but that would be odd on a body which is missing so many others. And there is an equivalent, a metaphor, in the frothing yellow fringe which hangs down the fold between pillow and sheet: it is the one great accent in all that cool surface of different off-whites.

These are all displacements of one kind or another: they put hair on the body, but do so with discretion; and on the head, above the choker, there is an odd, fastidious inversion of much the same terms. Olympia's face is framed, mostly, by the brown of a Japanese screen, and the neutrality of that background (what is shown is the back of the screen, the unpictured part) is one of the things that make the address and conciseness of the face

the sharper. But the blankness is illusory: to the right of Olympia's head is a shock of red-brown hair, just sufficiently different from the screen's dull colour to be visible with effort. Once it is seen, it changes the whole disposition of the woman's head and shoulders: the flat, cut-out face is suddenly surrounded and rounded by the falling hair; the flower converts from a plain silhouette into an object which rests in the hair beneath; the head is softened, the hair is unpinned; this body has abundance after all, it has a familiar sex. And yet my first qualifying phrase is essential here: once it is seen, this happens, but in 1865 it was not seen, or not seen to do the things I have just described. (The caricaturists were in that sense right to leave it out altogether from their versions of *Olympia*; it is the absence of hair which is this nude's distinctive, comic feature.)

The hair may be noticed eventually, and maybe it was meant as a test of looking and a small reward. But I doubt if even now it can be kept in vision very easily and made part of the face it belongs to. Face and hair are incompatible, precisely so; and in that they are a better pair of signs for what is done to the body in *Olympia* than the singular scandal of the hand.

There are *two* faces, one produced by the hardness of the face's edge and the closed look of its mouth and eyes; the other less clearly demarcated, opening out into hair let down. Neither face is ever quite suppressed by the other, nor can they be made into aspects of the same image, the same imaginary whole. The difficulty is visual, partly: a matter of brown against brown. But it is more basic than that, and more pervasive: the face and hair cannot be made into one thing because they fail to obey the usual set of equations for sexual consistency—equations which tell us what bodies are like and how the world is divided, into male and female, hairy and smooth, resistant and yielding, closed and open, phallus and lack, aggressive and vulnerable, repressed and libidinous. These are equations the nude ought to prove or provide.

Olympia's rules could be stated as follows. The signifiers of sex are there in plenty, on the body and its companions, but they are drawn up in contradictory order; one that is unfinished, or, rather, more than one; orders interfering with one another, signs which indicate quite different places for *Olympia* in the taxonomy of woman—and none of which she occupies.*

* A text by Georges Bataille is sometimes enlisted in the argument that *Olympia* "has no subject" (is purely pictorial, visual, or whatever). In *Manet: Etude biographique et critique*, Bataille takes issue with Valéry, who described *Olympia* as a "public power and presence of a miserable arcanum of Society," "the Impure *par excellence*, she whose position obliges a candid ignorance of any kind of shame. Bestial vestal, given over to absolute nudity, she makes one think of all the remnants of primitive barbarism and ritual animality which lurk beneath the routine of prostitution in great cities." Bataille comments (pp. 66–67): "It is possible (though questionable) that in a sense this was initially the *text* of *Olympia*,

Olympia, finally, is *painted* in a disconcerting way. The painter seems to have put his stress deliberately on the physical substance of his materials, and the way they only half obey his efforts to make them stand for things in the world. It is this which was subsequently held to be the essence of *Olympia*, and the basis of its claim to be modern in artistic terms. Critics came to admire the picture's peculiar transitions—or the lack of them—from passages of open, complex brushwork to areas where line and colour had been quite brutally simplified. The picture, they said, was overt about its means and their limitations; it admitted and relished the marquetry of paint; it spelt out the disparities involved in making an image of anything, not only the nude. One sign of that, for example, is the way the tangible hand at the centre of things is played against its painted neighbours, one holding the shawl and the other the flowers. These two hands are shadows of the one which hides Olympia's genitals: they appear as a double antithesis to that hand's efficient illusionism, its hard, convincing light and shade. One of them, the maid's hand inside the newspaper, is plain black, a clipped and abstract silhouette; and the other, as the critics said, is incomplete; perhaps it does not literally lack a finger, but it barely does its work of holding the cashmere shawl, and seems purposely left without substance, an approximate instance of hand, a sketched-in schema. We might compare the pillow which props up Olympia's shoulders, all puckers and shadows and softness, with the shoulders themselves, as sharp as a knife; or the flowers with the newspaper, or the shawl with the cartoon cat.

To call these disparities "flatness" or "flattening" does not seem to me quite right. The passages I have pointed to insist on something more complex than a physical state, or at any rate the state of a medium. They put in question how the world might appear in a picture if its constituents were conceived—it seems they may be—as nothing but material; and how paint might appear as part of that world, the ultimate dry sign of it. To call the picture "modern" is perhaps more sensible, if we mean by that

but this text is a separate matter from the woman ... the text is *effaced* by the picture. *And what the picture signifies is not the text, but the effacement.* It is to the extent that Manet did not wish to say what Valéry said—to the extent that, on the contrary, he has suppressed (pulverized) that meaning—that this woman is there; in her provoking exactitude, she is *nothing*; her nudity (in this, it is true, corresponding to that of the body itself) is the silence which issues from her as from a drowned and empty ship: what she is, is the 'sacred horror' of her own presence—of a presence as simple as absence. Her hard realism, which for the Salon visitors was the ugliness of a 'gorilla,' consists for us in the painter's determination to reduce *what he saw* to the mute simplicity, the open-mouthed simplicity, of *what he saw.*"

This is a stranger argument than it seems. What Bataille objects to in Valéry is the poet's attempt to situate *Olympia* in an older, established, pseudo-sacred text of prostitution—a text of ritual, mystery, pollution, animality. *Olympia* is the obliteration of that text, and the putting of another in its place—the text of literalness, the real silence of the

word desperate, ironic, and grim beneath the fiction of technique. But however we describe it, this manner of putting on paint should surely be seen as part of a complex attempt at meaning, whose elements I have tried to outline. For instance, the facticity of paint in *Olympia* is not something given or discovered or simply "seen." It is a kind of fiction; it is part of making this particular fictive world, this body. *Olympia*, that has been my argument, *is not an enigma*, not a *courtisane*; and her final, factual existence on the bed is the key to that of paint. We could put it another way: in order that the painted surface appear as it does in *Olympia*, the self-evidence of seeing—seeing the world, seeing Woman—had to be dismantled, and a circuit of signs put in its place. The places where that was likely to be done in the 1860s were few and special: a *courtisane*'s nakedness was one of them, for the reasons I have proposed.

These are remarks about Manet's practice, not his own theory of it; and they are not meant as an argument that Manet did not look hard at his model Victorine Meurent.

It is best to end with the one critic who managed criticism of *Olympia* in 1865. Jean Ravenel, writing in *L'Epoque* on 7 June, described Manet's two pictures in the following terms:

MONSIEUR MANET—*Olympia*—The scapegoat of the salon, the victim of Parisian Lynch law. Each passer-by takes a stone and throws it at her face. *Olympia* is a very crazy piece of Spanish madness, which is a thousand times better than the platitude and inertia of so many canvases on show in the exhibition.

Armed insurrection in the camp of the bourgeois: it is a glass of iced water which each visitor gets full in the face when he sees the BEAUTIFUL *courtisane* in full bloom.

Painting of the school of Baudelaire, freely executed by a pupil of Goya; the vicious strangeness of the little *faubourienne*, a woman of the night from Paul

body, the fact of *being nothing*—another sacred horror, that of presence so unmediated that it has no sign. Clearly Bataille sees this as reducing *Olympia* to *what a man sees*, but vision for Bataille is always wrapped up in some such complex act *against* meaning ("it is the hard resolution with which Manet *destroyed* that was scandalous": as before, Bataille's italics); seeing is making the world into nothing.

These are themes which figure endlessly in Bataille's fiction and philosophical prose: presence as absence, the body as essentially inanimate, death as its purest and most *desirable* state, representation as colluding in this putting to death. Bataille's untranslatable last words on *Olympia*—"Aux yeux mêmes de Manet la fabrication s'effaçait. L'*Olympia* tout entière se distingue mal d'un crime ou d'un spectacle de la mort. . . . Tout en elle glisse à l'indifférence de la beauté" (p. 74)—should therefore be read in at least two ways: as a reproduction of the cadaver fantasies of the critics in 1865, and as final, overt recuperation of *Olympia* into the terms of Bataille's own eroticism. Whatever else one might wish to say of this criticism, it has little to do with the simpler narratives of modernist art history.

Niquet's, from the mysteries of Paris and the nightmares of Edgar Poe. Her look has the sourness of someone prematurely aged, her face the disturbing perfume of a *fleur du mal*; her body fatigued, corrupted, but painted under a single, transparent light, with the shadows light and fine, the bed and pillows put down in a velvet, modulated grey. Negress and flowers insufficient in execution, but with a real harmony to them, the shoulder and arm solidly established in a clean and pure light.—The cat arching its back makes the visitor laugh and relax; it is what saves M. Manet from a popular execution.

*De sa fourrure noire et brune
Sort un parfum si doux, qu'un soir
J'en fus embaumé pour l'avoir
Caressé une fois . . . rien qu'une.
C'est l'esprit familier du lieu;
Il juge, il préside, il inspire
Toutes choses dans son empire;
Peut-être est-il fée, est-il dieu?*

Monsieur Manet, instead of Monsieur Astruc's verses, would perhaps have done well to take as epigraph the quatrain devoted to Goya by the most *advanced* painter of our epoch:

GOYA—*Cauchemar plein de choses inconnues
De foetus qu'on fait cuire au milieu des sabbats,
De vieilles au miroir et d'enfants toutes nues
Pour tenter les démons ajustant bien leurs bas.*

Perhaps this *olla podrida de toutes les Castilles* is not flattering for Monsieur Manet, but all the same it is something. One does not make an *Olympia* simply by wanting to.—The *Christ* would call for a certain technical analysis which we do not have time to give.—To summarize, it is hideous, but all the same it is something. A painter is in evidence, and the strange group is bathed in light.¹⁴⁴

This is an extraordinary piece of writing. It is the only salon entry in 1865 to say anything much—or anything reasonable—about form and content in *Olympia*, and the way one might possibly inflect the other. It seems to accept or produce a measure of complexity in its object, and the points of reference it proposes for Manet's picture are not only well chosen but really explored in the text. This does not mean that Ravenel approves of *Olympia*, or thinks its allusions coherent. Rather the contrary, in fact: the more points of reference he proposes, the more certain he seems that they are ill-assorted, and the better prepared is his final, crushing verdict on the whole thing.

And yet the text provides material for other verdicts; that is its strength. Let us take, for example, the way it deals with Manet's relation to Goya and Baudelaire.¹⁴⁵ The two names appear together first as generalities,

masters whose lessons Manet is believed to have by heart. But they are immediately connected, across a simple but puzzling semicolon, to the further terms *petite faubourienne*, Paul Niquet, Eugène Sue, and Edgar Allan Poe. These are all terms a reader might have derived quite easily from *Les Fleurs du mal* in the 1860s, or at least from certain aspects of it that still seemed paramount then—the Satanic and fantastic, say, or the plainer city poetry of “Le Vin des chiffonniers” and “Le Crépuscule du soir.” They are important to *Olympia*, and yet of course there are other, quite contrary, qualities to Baudelaire’s verse which seem just as apposite: qualities of discretion and formality (all the more potent because they invite the reader to see through them), purity of diction, stateliness of rhythm, and general decorum. These qualities appear directly in Ravenel’s text in the shape of the eight lines quoted, not quite accurately, from Baudelaire’s “Le Chat”; but even here the actual entrance of Baudelaire is prepared for in two ways, both of them distracting. First, immediately before, Ravenel has the cat come on as a comic figure, which matches oddly with the two intense verses which follow. Second, in a more general way, this new aspect of *Olympia*—the aspect which is not out of Sue or Poe or Paul Niquet—has already appeared in the text, and quite elaborately, when Ravenel describes Olympia’s form. The body is one thing, in other words, the way it is painted another. The body may be fatigued and tainted, but it is put down in a unified and transparent light, and the paint calls forth a stream of adjectives—pure, fine, frank, harmonious, solid, *moelleux*—which change our sense of what could have been meant in the first place by the references to Goya and Spanish madness.

This ambivalence is perfected in the final stroke, the compounding of Baudelaire and Goya in the quatrain quoted from “Les Phares.” It is again, as in the glancing reference to Poe, the Baudelaire of nightmare who is invoked. This is the wildest stanza from “Les Phares,” and supposedly we are meant to take it as an index of *Olympia*’s wildness. For Manet’s creation is *not* Olympia, so the text concludes—by which is meant, I take it, not the Renaissance courtesan, not the “auguste jeune fille.” She is an “*olla podrida* de toutes les Castilles,” a character out of *Los Caprichos*, something brewed up on a witches’ sabbath.

But is this the way *Olympia* derives from Goya? Is it even the way the quotation from “Les Phares” suggests? The figures Baudelaire brings on in his last two lines seem to be a compressed description of several plates in *Los Caprichos*, most obviously of Plate 31, *She Prays for Her*. And the link between it and *Olympia* is striking. Yet once we accept the possible source, and focus on the last two lines of the quatrain as opposed to the more vivid and strident first two, the valency of Baudelaire and Goya is



51. Francisco Goya, *Ruega por ella*, 1797–98. Etching and aquatint.

altered once again. These plates in *Los Caprichos* are after all among the sparest and most restrained of the series; they do not fall into either of its main modes—the satirical, burlesque depiction of the social scene or the narrative of outright fantasy. They belong to the former category, but lack its flavour of exasperated masque; and the lines from Baudelaire have something of their ceremonious, generalizing air. The word “demon,” by the time we encounter it, is hardly enough to pull back the procession of figures—naked children, old women in front of a glass—from the realm of allegory or something like it.

That last proviso is the important one: it points to the special character of these few plates and the ground of Baudelaire’s enthusiasm for them. Plate 31 of *Los Caprichos* may be something *like* allegory, but it is evidently not allegory pure and simple. There is a measure of grand simplification in it, even of decorum; but an equal portion of the grotesque or everyday or simply outrageous (that vessel on the floor, what is it?). And does that not read like a description of Olympia in turn? She is likewise not quite creature of fantasy and not quite social fact; neither metaphor nor violation of one, neither real nor allegorical. She is balanced between incompatible

modes; and no doubt it was this Manet learnt from Goya, as opposed to undiluted Spanish wildness.

This leads us finally to two aspects of Ravenel's text which are hardly less perplexing: where it appeared, and by whom it was written. It appeared in a paper of the Left opposition called *L'Epoque*, one associated closely with the republicanism, even socialism, of Jules Vallès. Ravenel, we know already, was a pseudonym, and behind it was hidden a civil servant, Alfred Sensier. He was a critic whose main allegiance was to the painter Jean-François Millet; he was already Millet's friend in 1865, and later in life he became his biographer. His *Salon* spelt out his commitments, to the painting of nature and *plein air* and *sens rustique*: it began with an epigraph from Rabelais, went on to enlist Euripides in praise of Corot, and started its discussion of landscape painting with Hesiod and Virgil.¹⁴⁶ Millet was absent from the Salon of 1865 and Sensier bemoaned the fact; he contented himself with a long panegyric of Millet's *Daphnis et Chloe s'amusant à donner la becquée à des petites merles qu'ils viennent de dénicher*, a decorative panel just completed for a house in Colmar.¹⁴⁷

In no sense is Sensier's entry on *Olympia* a betrayal of these, his basic and ordinary aesthetic beliefs. The entry, one should realize, is *not important* in Sensier's *Salon*. It comes at the end of the eleventh long article in the series of twelve he did for *L'Epoque*, and it figures there as part of the alphabetical listing of pictures left out of account so far—items that had not found a place in the extended narrative of the main text. Insofar as the entry produces an author's voice at all—and it does so only incompletely, I feel—it is doubtless meant to be ironic, only half impressed by Manet's peculiar tour de force. The tone had been set already in Sensier's second article, on 4 May, when he dealt with Manet as follows:

Monsieur Manet, a nude Olympia lying on a bed, and near her a Negress presenting some flowers; picture capable of exciting sedition if its neighbour, a Christ, by the same author, did not disarm the furious with a Homeric laugh. These two canvases are the two victims of the salon; nothing can convey the spectators' initial astonishment, then their anger or fear. These two excellent jokes do not merit this excess of rage; they are a trifle daring in their poses—Olympia especially!—but too visibly the natural offspring of Goya for anyone to be disturbed by their misdeeds.¹⁴⁸

It is as if in the later entry Sensier tried to reproduce this tone and failed, and in doing so happened upon some kind of knowledge.

This is not meant to detract from the commentary Sensier in fact produced. It is a brilliant piece of criticism; but its success seems bound up, first, with the author's anonymity, his detachment from his normal aesthetic stance;¹⁴⁹ and second, with the way the offhand, compressed, notelike form of the

alphabetical listing allowed the text to leap from aspect to aspect, reference to reference, in a movement which did not need to be construed as judgement. There is a quality of inadvertence to Ravenel's writing; and by now it should not seem inappropriate that the only real criticism of *Olympia* in 1865 was done in these circumstances—by a critic leaving off his artistic self, and coming upon the picture in the most perfunctory of critical settings.

Or almost the most perfunctory, one should say: there was, after all, the page in the paper allotted to caricature. On one or two occasions, that mode allowed *Olympia's* story to be told more or less in full. Bertall, for example, could offer the reader of *L'Illustration* his own solution to the absent phallus: he put the black cat, with its tail erect, in place of the hand which covered the genitals. He put a chamber pot under the bed, a pipe under the pillow, called Olympia a coal lady from Batignolles and added to her bouquet a *commandement*—an order from the bailiffs to pay up or prepare for the consequences. Aside from Ravenel, no critic scanned the picture to better purpose, or found a more economic way to denote its main effects.

It had once been possible for painters to show prostitution in a straightforward light, with actual coinage changing hands in an atmosphere of lechery, alcohol, and good cheer. Johannes Vermeer's *Procuress* is the best example. No doubt Vermeer's viewers were meant to take the figures in this scene as signs of the vanity of earthly things, but they were ordinary signs, easily read, and meant to be laughed at as well. Comedy has disappeared from *Olympia's* world, unless we agree with Ravenel about the cat, and with it has gone the rest of Vermeer's openness. Money cannot be shown as part of prostitution now, nor can the client, and least of all a definite and matter-of-fact relation between the buyer and seller of sex. The picture is about the absence of such things.

We might sum it up by saying that in *Olympia* prostitution has become more extravagant and threatening; and that seems to have been an accurate reflection of the state of the trade in the later nineteenth century. Relations between prostitute and client involved, among other things, matters of social class; they often meant a transgression of normal class divisions—a curious exposure of the self to someone inferior, someone lamentable. That doubtless lent spice to the transaction, but only if it were made part of a set of sexual theatricals which became more cumbersome as the years went on. For prostitution to work in this society, the disproportion Simmel talked of between commodity and price had to be fought for and maintained in the sexual exchange itself. The client wished to be assured he



La queue du chat, ou la charbonnière des Batignolles.

Chacun admire cette belle charbonnière, dont l'eau, liquide banal, n'a jamais offensé les pudiques contours. Disons-le hardiment, la charbonnière, le bouquet dans du papier, M. Manet, et son chat, sont les lions de l'exposition de 1865. Un bravo senti pour M. Zacharie Astruc.

52. Bertall, *La Queue du chat, ou La Charbonnière des Batignolles*. Wood engraving in *L'Illustration*, 3 June 1865.

53. Johannes Vermeer, *The Procuress*, 1656.



had access to some mystery there, probably of Woman; hence the prostitute was obliged to make herself desirable—to run through the identities in which desire was first encountered by the child. It was a game in which the woman most often collaborated and to an extent was trapped; but there were other forces—market forces, essentially—which threatened to dislodge her from belief in the parts she played. She could be returned quite abruptly to the simple assessment of herself as seller of her own labour power, someone who put physical complaisance on the market and could never be sure what it would fetch. In this sense she belonged to the proletariat as undramatically as Vermeer's loose women.

START HERE I have given my reasons for believing that the ultimate cause of the critics' difficulty with *Olympia* in 1865 was the degree to which she did not take part in the game of prostitution, and the extent to which she indicated the place of that game in class. She came from the lower depths. The images of sickness, death, depravity, and dirt all carried that connotation, but they stayed as passing figures of speech precisely because the critics could not identify what in the picture told them where *Olympia* belonged.

Reduced to its most simple form, this chapter's argument amounts to saying that the sign of class in *Olympia* was nakedness. That may still seem a cryptic formula, so I shall redefine its terms for the last time. Class is a name, I take it, for that complex and determinate place we are given in the social body; it is the name for everything which signifies that a certain history lives us, lends us our individuality. By nakedness I mean those signs—that broken, interminable circuit—which say that we are nowhere but in a body, constructed by it, by the way it incorporates the signs of other people. (Nudity, on the contrary, is a set of signs for the belief that the body *is ours*, a great generality which we make our own, or leave in art in the abstract.)

It follows that nakedness is a strong sign of class, a dangerous instance of it. And thus the critics' reaction in 1865 becomes more comprehensible. They were perplexed by the fact that *Olympia's* class was nowhere but in her body: the cat, the Negress, the orchid, the bunch of flowers, the slippers, the pearl earrings, the choker, the screen, the shawl—they were all lures, they all meant nothing, or nothing in particular. The naked body did without them in the end and did its own narrating. If it could have been seen what signs were used in the process—if they could have been kept apart from the body's whole effect—they might still have been made the critics' property. They would have been turned into objects of play, metaphor, irony, and finally tolerance. Art criticism might have begun.

END

- 117 A point made by Kirk Varnedoe in lectures.
 118 E. de Amicis, *Studies of Paris*, pp. 31–32; cited in *Paris, A Century of Change: 1878–1978*, by N. Evenson.

Chapter Two: Olympia's Choice

- 1 Henri Turot, *Le Proletariat de l'amour*, 1904, from pp. 107–9: "Acceptons donc, si vous le voulez bien, la définition de M. Emile Richard, qui s'appuie sur le *Digeste* pour formuler sa pensée dans les termes que voici:

"Doit seulement être réputée prostituée toute femme qui, publiquement et sans amour, se livre au premier venu, moyennant une rémunération pécuniaire, formule à laquelle il convient d'ajouter: et n'a d'autres moyens d'existence que les relations passagères qu'elles entretient avec un plus ou moins grand nombre d'individus."

"D'où il résulte—ce qui me paraît être la vérité—que la prostitution implique d'abord la vénalité et ensuite l'absence de choix.

"Ah! je sais bien qu'à vouloir ainsi restreindre la portée du mot, nous arrivons à réserver toutes les indulgences pour les plus heureuses des femmes sans vertu, pour les privilégiées, pour les plus inexcusables, et que nous consacrons au contraire l'existence d'une sorte de *proletariat de l'amour* sur qui peuvent impunément s'appesantir toutes les sévérités et toutes les tyrannies. . . .

"Et ce proletariat est, tout comme l'autre, l'inéluctable conséquence du régime capitaliste."

- 2 C. Pichois, ed., *Lettres à Baudelaire*, pp. 232–33 (about 25 March 1865).
 3 The literature on *Olympia* is vast. I owe most to the chapter in N. G. Sandblad, *Manet: Three Studies in Artistic Conception*; Theodore Reff, *Manet: Olympia*; E. Lipton, "Manet: A Radicalized Female Imagery," *Artforum*, March 1975; and B. Farwell, *Manet and the Nude: A Study in Iconography in the Second Empire*. A treatment (albeit sketchy) of the criticism will be found in A. Tabarant, *Manet et ses oeuvres*, pp. 106–10, and G. H. Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics*, pp. 65–80. I learnt a great deal from the article by M. Fried, "Manet's sources: Aspects of His Art 1859–1865," *Artforum*, March 1969, and the reply to it by Theodore Reff, "Manet's Sources: A Critical Evaluation," *Artforum*, September 1969. (Fried's study really has been "un-

justly neglected" in the Manet literature. Many of its most interesting arguments for my purposes are in the notes.) Some issues raised by the study of a picture through its critical reception were dealt with in my "Un Réalisme du corps: *Olympia* et ses critiques en 1865," *Histoire et Critique des Arts*, May 1978, and "Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of *Olympia* in 1865," *Screen*, Spring 1980. The latter provoked a reply from P. Wollen, "Manet, Modernism and the Avant Garde," *Screen*, Summer 1980. We were both taken to task in C. Harrison, M. Baldwin, and M. Ramsden, "Manet's *Olympia* and Contradiction," *Block*, no. 5 (1981).

- 4 Pichois, *Lettres à Baudelaire*, pp. 233–34 (beginning of May 1865).
 5 Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondance générale*, 5:96–97 (11 May 1865).
 6 Jacques-Emile Blanche, *Manet*, pp. 36–37 (also reports Degas's *mot*).
 7 D. Rouart, ed., *Correspondance de Berthe Morisot avec sa famille et ses amis*, p. 101 (letter to a friend, probably 1881).
 8 In the following list of criticism and other items on the 1865 Salon, I have attempted to be as complete as possible, though there are omissions and loose ends. Entries which contain some mention of Manet or *Olympia* are marked *; the more significant discussions or descriptions **. Unless otherwise indicated, these items have the standard title "Salon de 1865" or minor variants. Page numbers are not given for newspaper *feuilletons*, invariably on pp. 1 and 2. All subsequent references to 1865 criticisms refer to this list.

Out of the 87 items known to me, 15 do not mention Manet or *Olympia*. Of the 72 that do, the kindest possible estimate would have to judge 43 as trivial, formulaic, or casual mentions; of the 29 which have something a little more substantial to say, 13 strike me as containing description or discussion of a vivid or cogent kind (this is not to say that there is nothing of interest in the rest, but it comes in utter fits and starts). Three of these 13 are caricatures-plus-captions, and of the 10 remaining there are 6 items (Cantaloube, Deriège, Geronte, Jankovitz, "Pierrot," and Postwer) where insight is *happened upon*, splenetically or ludicrously, in ways the writer is barely in control of. This leaves four pieces of criticism which

could be called deliberate and good—Chesneau, Gautier, Gonzague Privat, and Ravenel. None of the first three, as I argue in the text, is particularly detailed or acute about the form or content of *Olympia*; where they are good is in their preliminary and generalizing discussion of Manet. Ravenel is thus one out of 87.

I have attempted no systematic description of the politics or even the general aesthetic commitments of the journals in which the criticisms appear (this in spite of the arguments presented for doing so by Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "La Fortune critique et son sort," *Histoire et Critique des Arts*, November 1977). *Olympia* is a special case. There simply is no correlation that I can see between political and social ideology and ability or willingness to respond to the picture. For the one Ravenel writing in the radical opposition paper *L'Epoque*, there are the silences of other radical or socialist papers, such as *La Rive Gauche*, *Le Courrier du Dimanche*, and *L'Avenir National*. I cannot detect a significant ideological difference between the entry of Victor Fournel in the Legitimist *Gazette de France* and that of Félix Deriège in the leading Leftist republican paper, *Le Siècle*; or, for that matter, between the condescending hostility of the solid Bonapartist *Le Pays*, the solid republican *Journal des Débats*, the good Centre-Rightist *Le Constitutionnel*, and so on.

As for aesthetics, *Olympia* exceeded the available ideological frames of reference: hacks, caricaturists, and provincials like Victor de Jankovitz did better than experts and progressives like Edmond About, Charles Blanc, Maxime Du Camp, Paul Mantz, Marc de Montifaud, or even Théophile Thoré. The critic (C. S. d'Arpentigny) writing in the paper owned by Manet's dealer, Louis Martinet, was notably feeble. Especially tantalizing in this connection is the absence—or disappearance?—of a *Salon* by Castagnary. In *La Chronique des Arts* of 21 May 1865, he was announced as writing a *Salon* for *L'Europe*; neither of the papers I could find which possibly correspond to that title—*L'Europe Artiste* and a French-language paper published in Frankfurt—contains the piece. Did the salon present too many problems for a critic committed to Naturalism? (Also not located by me was the *Salon* by Jean Rousseau announced in *Le Figaro* as about to appear in a special number of the paper.)

*Anon., *L'Autographe au Salon de 1865*, 8

July, p. 87; *Edmond About, *Le Petit Journal*, 27 June; *A. Andréi, *La Comédie*, 4 June; *C. S. d'Arpentigny, *Le Courrier Artistique*, 21 May; *C. S. d'Arpentigny, *Le Monde Artiste*, 24 June (approving Privat's pages on Manet); *Francis Aubert, *Le Pays*, 15 May; *X. Aubryet, *Le Moniteur Universel du Soir*, 16 June (possible reference); *A. Audéoud, *La Revue Indépendante*, 1 July, p. 758; *Louis Auvray, *Exposition des Beaux-Arts: Salon de 1865*, Paris, p. 59 (originally in *La Revue Artistique et Littéraire* 9 [1865]); *C. Bataille, *L'Univers Illustré*, 10 May, p. 291, and 5 July, p. 423; *Rapin Beaubleu, *Le Han-neton*, 11 June; **Bertall, *Le Journal Amusant*, 27 May (caricature); **Bertall, *L'Illustration*, 3 June, p. 341, and 17 June, p. 389 (caricatures); *A. Berthet and E. Simon, *Le Tintamarre*, 7 May; C. Blanc, *L'Avenir National*, 12 May, etc. (8 articles); *E. Blondet, "A l'Exposition," *Le Nain Jaune*, 27 May; *A. Bonnin, *La France*, 7 June; *J. Bonus, "Chronique," *Le Journal Illustré*, 7–14 May, p. 146 (obscure joke); F. Borgella, *La Critique Illustré*, 21 May, etc. (5 articles); *H. Briolle, "Faites attention à la peinture s.v.p.—Quatrains pour le salon," *Le Tintamarre*, 4 June; *A. de Bullemont, *Les Beaux-Arts*, June, p. 354; *H. de Callias, *La Gazette des Etrangers*, 24 May (internal evidence suggests that there is fuller discussion of Manet in the edition for 6 May, which I was unable to locate); **Amédée Cantaloube, *Le Grand Journal*, 21 May; *Amédée Cantaloube, *L'Illustrateur des Dames et des Demoiselles*, 18 June (passing reference, disguised); *P. Challemel-Lacour, *La Revue Moderne*, 1 July, p. 92; **Cham, *Le Charivari*, 14 May (caricature); *Cham, *Le Musée des Familles*, June, p. 288 (caricature); **Ernest Chesneau, "Les Excentriques," *Le Constitutionnel*, 16 May; *Jules Claretie, "Deux Heures au salon," reprinted in *Peintres et sculpteurs contemporains*, Paris, 1874, pp. 108–9 (originally printed in *L'Artiste*, 15 May); *Jules Claretie, "Echos de Paris," *Le Figaro*, 25 June; *C. Clément, *Le Journal des Débats*, 21 May; A. Courbet, *La Rive Gauche*, 14 May (critical of Courbet's Proudhon); **Félix Deriège, *Le Siècle*, 2 June; *C. Diguët, *Le Messager des Théâtres et des Arts*, 25 June; *M. Drak, *L'Europe Artiste, Journal Général*, 2 July; *Dubosc de Pesquidoux, *L'Union*, 24 May; *Maxime Du Camp, *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 June, p. 678 (cryptic but unmistakable reference); Alexandre Dumas, *La Mode de Paris*, 16 May and 1 June; *A. J.

Du Pays, *L'Illustration*, 17 June, p. 382 (and other mentions); *Ego, "Courrier de Paris," *Le Monde Illustré*, 13 May, p. 291; *H. Escoffier, *Le Journal Littéraire de la Semaine*, 29 May–4 June; *Ernest Fillonneau, *Le Moniteur des Arts*, 5 May, p. 2; *L. Gallet, *Salon de 1865: Peinture-Sculpture*, Paris, 1865, p. 36; **Théophile Gautier, *Le Moniteur Universel*, 24 June; *Théophile Gautier fils, *Le Monde Illustré*, May 6, p. 283; **Geronte, "Les Excentriques et les grotesques," *La Gazette de France*, 30 June; *P. Gille, *L'Internationale*, 1 June; A. Hemmel, *La Revue Nationale et Etrangère*, 10 May and 10 June; *F. Jahyer, *Etude sur les Beaux-Arts, Salon de 1865*, Paris 1865, pp. 23–26 and 283; **Victor de Jankovitz, *Etude sur le Salon de 1865*, Besançon 1865, pp. 67–68; *Junior, "Courrier de Paris," *Le Monde Illustré*, 6 May, p. 275; E. de Labédollière, *Le Journal Politique de la Semaine*, 21 May, etc. (4 articles); *L. Lagrange, *Le Correspondant* 29 (1865):143; *Louis de Laincel, *L'Echo des Provinces*, 25 June, p. 3; *Louis de Laincel, *Promenade aux Champs-Élysées*, Paris 1865, pp. 13–14 (slight changes from previously published version); C. Lavergne, *Le Monde*, 24 May; *L. Leroy, *Le Charivari*, 5 May; *L. Leroy, "Un Critique d'art autorisé," *L'Universel, Journal Illustré*, 1 June, p. 139; *L. Leroy, *Le Journal Amusant*, 27 May; *M. de Lescure, *La Revue Contemporaine*, May–June, p. 535; *A.-J. Lorentz, *Dernier Jour de l'Exposition de 1865: Revue galopante au salon*, Paris 1865, pp. 12–13 (cryptic but unmistakable attack); *Paul Mantz, *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1 July, p. 7; *O. Merson, *L'Opinion Nationale*, 29 May and 31 July; *M. de Montifaud, *L'Artiste*, 15 May, p. 224; C. de Mouy, *La Revue Française*, June, pp. 177–207; J. Nilis, *Revue d'Economie Chrétienne* 8:893–916; T. Pelloquet, *Le Nain Jaune*, May–June; **Pierrot, "Une Première Visite au Salon," *Les Tablettes de Pierrot—Histoire de la Semaine*, 14 May, pp. 10–11; *Pollux, "Mathurin au Salon," *Les Petites Nouvelles*, 8 and 18 May, p. 4; **C. Postwer, *La Fraternité Littéraire, Artistique et Industrielle*, 1 June; E. Poujade, *La Parisienne, Revue Mensuelle*, July, pp. 125–33; **Gonzague Privat, *Place aux jeunes! Causeries critiques sur le Salon de 1865*, Paris, 1865, pp. 63–66; **Jean Ravenel, *L'Epoque*, 7 June (also 4 May, 8 July); *C. Rolland, *L'Universel, Journal Illustré*, 8 June, p. 154; *E. R. Sainfoin, *La Mode Illustrée, Journal de la Famille*, 18 June, p. 198; *P. de Saint-Victor, *La*

Presse, 28 May; *C. de Sault, *Le Temps*, 24 May; *M. de Thémynes, *La Patrie*, 18 May, p. 3; *Thilda, *La Vie Parisienne*, 6 May, p. 239 (13 May, p. 257, has a caricature of the cat and flowers set into the salon, between columns); *Théophile Thoré (W. Bürger), *L'Indépendance Belge*, 13 and 19 June; P. Thouzery, *La Gazette des Familles*, 15 June, etc. (3 articles); G. Vattier, *Le Courrier du Dimanche*, 7 and 28 May, 4 and 25 June (a radical paper); A. de Viguerie, *Le Monde Chrétien Illustré*, May, pp. 341–43; *C. Wallut, *Musée des Familles*, June, p. 287; *J. Walter, *Messager des Théâtres et des Arts* (daily edition), 19 May; "Y", *L'Europe*, 8 May and 18 June; A. Z., *Jockey*, 16 May.

Where possible, I have used the notes to provide the full French text of the most interesting entries on *Olympia*; sometimes this has meant reserving to the notes the whole of an entry, citing only a part of it in the main text, or discussing and citing it in several different places in the text, according to the topic and vocabulary of particular sentences.

- 9 "When, weary of dreaming, Olympia wakes, Spring enters in the arms of a gentle black messenger; it is the slave, like the amorous night, who comes to make the day bloom, delicious to see: the august young girl in whom the fire burns." See J. Meier-Graefe, *Edouard Manet*, for complete poem, "La Fille des îles," and S. Flescher, *Zacharie Astruc: Critic, Artist and Japoniste*, chap. 2, for full discussion. The poem was dropped from the entry on *Olympia* in what appears to be a second edition of the salon *livret*, presumably at Manet's or poor Astruc's request!
- 10 Auvray: "Enfin, si, comme le dit la Presse théâtrale, M. Manet a voulu attirer l'attention par une excentricité, il y a réussi au-delà probablement de ses désirs, car jamais peinture n'a excité tant de rires, de moqueries, de huées que son *Olympia*. Le dimanche, surtout, la foule était si grande, qu'on ne pouvait en approcher, ni même circuler dans la salle M; tout le monde s'étonnait que le jury eût admis les deux toiles de M. Manet."
- 11 Audéoud: "l'unanimité de la réprobation et de la dédaigneuse pitié qu'a manifesté le public . . ."
- 12 Fillonneau: "l'épidémie de fou-rire . . ."
- 13 Jankovitz: "Le public, abasourdi d'une pareille exhibition, ne savait si c'était une plaisanterie

ou un défi porté à son adresse, et, pendant qu'on se pressait devant le tableau comme autour d'un dépendu, la risée publique et son grognement ont fait justice de l'oeuvre. Seuls, quelques rares connaisseurs aux notions super fines de l'art aventureaient quelques louanges modérées!"

14 Ravenel: see pp. 139-40 and note 144, below.

15 Bonnin: "C'est avec une couleur plus harmonieuse, mais sans la même facilité de pinceau [the comparison is with Jolyet's *Conscrits de la Bresse*], que M. Manet traite des toiles de genre historique d'une assez grande dimension. Son *Olympia* (no. 1428), étendue sur un lit, ayant pour tout costume un noeud de ruban rouge dans les cheveux; la négresse habillée de rose qui lui apporte un bouquet; le chat noir qui arrondit sa maigre échine et dont les pattes marquent des couleurs singulières la blancheur des draps, forment bien le tableau le plus bizarre qu'on puisse imaginer. Chaque jour il est entouré d'une foule de visiteurs, et, dans ce groupe sans cesse renouvelé, les réflexions et les observations à haute voix ne lui épargnent aucune vérité. Les uns se pâment d'aise et croient à une plaisanterie qu'ils veulent avoir l'air de comprendre; d'autres regardent sérieusement et montrent à leur voisin, un ton heureux ici, là une main malpropre, mais grassement peinte; enfin on a vu des refusés de cette année, et c'est la preuve décisive qu'il en existe, s'emporter de dépit et d'indignation devant cette peinture. Il est bien probable que tout le monde a un peu raison, et ces opinions si diverses sont autorisées par les incroyables irrégularités de la peinture de M. Manet. Il n'a exposé que des ébauches. Cependant nous ne partageons pas l'opinion, trop répandue, que cette négligence soit un parti pris, une sorte de défi ironique jeté au jury et au public. Le jury eût certainement distingué une charge d'atelier d'une oeuvre malheureuse, et il lui eût fermé la porte du palais des Champs-Élysées. D'un autre côté, un artiste ne peut traiter légèrement le public sans compromettre sa réputation, qui reste parfois à jamais atteinte; et M. Manet, qui paraît à chaque Exposition, poursuit certainement autre chose que la triste célébrité que l'on peut acquérir par ces procédés périlleux. Nous aimons mieux penser qu'il s'est trompé. Maintenant, quel est son but? Ses toiles sont trop inachevées pour qu'il soit possible de l'apercevoir."

16 Ego: "Les femmes qui passent se détournent,

et les hommes ne s'arrêtent que pour protester dans tous les styles."

17 Audéoud; see note 11 above.

18 Aubert: "Grand buveur de chopes et d'absinthe, grand fumeur de pipes noires qui n'ont d'autre étui que sa poche, rabâcheur de trois ou quatre lieux communs, artistiques, littéraires ou politiques si vermoulus, qu'un écolier n'oserait s'en servir, jurant et sacrant à tout propos, ne parlant que l'argot des voleurs, républicain à coup sûr, socialiste probablement, communiste peut-être, mais sans savoir ce que c'est que l'une ou l'autre doctrine . . .

"Sa carrière? son passé? Ils n'ont de semblable que son présent, qui consiste à aller du garni à la brasserie, à imaginer des expédients pour ne payer ni l'un, ni l'autre, et, comme divertissement capital, à être insolent envers quelque honnête homme, ce qui s'appelle 'épater le bourgeois.'"

19 Drak: "Espérons que les rires moqueurs d'une foule qui n'était pas exclusivement composée de *bourgeois*, M. Manet, vous inspireront le désir d'une revanche où vous prouverez qu'il y a un artiste sous le mauvais plaisant."

20 Ravenel; see pp. 139-40 and note 144, below.

21 Jahyer, p. 283: "Qu'il me soit permis, à ce sujet, de remercier la commission d'avoir réalisé, pendant les quelques jours de la fermeture, le voeu que j'émettais au sujet de M. Manet. Actuellement, ses deux toiles sont si bien cachées au-dessus de deux portes dans l'un des salons du fond, qu'il faut des yeux de lynx pour les découvrir.

"A cette hauteur, l'*Auguste Olympia* fait l'effet d'une immense araignée au plafond. Il n'est plus même possible d'en rire; c'est devenu navrant pour tout le monde."

The removal is also mentioned by Geronte, and by Claretie in *Le Figaro*: "La réprobation publique l'avait chassée de cette place d'honneur. . . ." For the administration's similar treatment of Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* in the Salon of 1850-51, see T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, p. 134.

22 Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 1188-89.

23 See A.-J.-B. Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, 1:134. Its usual French form, *Olympe*, is given as one of a list of thirty-five common *surnoms* for prostitutes of the *classe*

- élevée*. (Those of the *classe inférieure* preferred Belle-cuisse, Faux-cul, Mont-Saint-Jean, La Ruelle, Crucifix, Le Boeuf, etc.) B. Farwell, *Manet and the Nude*, p. 232, was the first to point out that Olympia was a well-known prostitutes' nickname.
- 24 Gautier: "*Olympia*, dont le titre réveille le souvenir de cette grande courtisane romaine dont raffola la Renaissance, ne s'explique à aucun point de vue, même en la prenant pour ce qu'elle est, un chétif modèle étendu sur un drap. Le ton des chairs est sale, le modelé nul. Les ombres s'indiquent par des raies de cirage plus ou moins larges. Que dire de la négresse qui apporte un bouquet dans un papier et du chat noir qui laisse l'empreinte de ses pattes crottées sur le lit? Nous excuserions encore la laideur, mais vraie, étudiée, relevée par quelque splendide effet de couleur. La femme la moins jolie a des os, des muscles, une peau, des formes et un coloris quelconque. Ici, il n'y a rien, nous sommes fâché de le dire, que la volonté d'attirer les regards à tout prix."
- 25 See L. Pastor, *The History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 30:32-47. Delécluze's novel was first published in 1842.
- 26 As far as I can tell, these are the only connotations of the title to which the critics seem alert. There are other tempting possibilities: for instance, the automaton heroine, Olympia, of E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "L'Homme au sable," with which Astruc and Co. would surely have been familiar (see *Contes d'Hoffmann*, pp. 115 ff.). There is a similarly named cold *courtisane* heroine in Dumas's *La Dame aux camélias* (see Reff, *Manet: Olympia*, pp. 111-13).
- 27 Ego: "L'auguste jeune fille est une courtisane..." Leroy, *L'Universel*: "O chat de la courtisane Olympia..." Cantaloube, *Le Grand Journal*: "Il s'agit d'une Olympia chantée par M. Zacharie Astruc, et bien différente de la dame de beauté de la Renaissance."
- 28 Claretie, *L'Artiste*: "Qu'est-ce que cette odalisque au ventre jaune, ignoble modèle ramassé je ne sais où, et qui représente Olympia? Olympia? Quelle Olympia? Une courtisane sans doute."
- 29 Du Pays: "on a dit de Pradier qu'il partait le matin pour Athènes et arrivait le soir à la rue de Bréda. Aujourd'hui, un certain nombre d'artistes vont à la rue de Bréda directement."
- This follows a discussion of Fantin-Latour's *Le Toast*, and various apoplectic asides about Manet in previous articles.
- 30 Challemlacour, in a passage on the "grotesques" of painting: "Leur trait commun, un des symptômes les plus connus dans les Petites-Maisons, est la prétention d'être les seuls vrais amants de la Vérité; on l'adore sous les traits de quelque rousse du quartier Bréda, on se réunit autour d'elle en paletot, en robe de chambre, en chapeau tubuliforme, on lui offre des fleurs, on lui porte des toasts, on appelle le public à lui rendre hommage, et le public répond à cette leçon par une autre que ces artistes feraient bien de comprendre." Manet's painting and Fantin's are deliberately being conflated. See also p. 89.
- 31 Deriège: "l'on peut être également très-vrai, quand on sait peindre comme Goya, en représentant une *manola* de bas étage, couchée toute nue sur son lit, pendant qu'une négresse lui apporte un bouquet."
- 32 Postwer: "Quels vers! Quel tableau! Olympia s'éveille, lasse . . . de songer. La nuit a été mauvaise, c'est évident. Une insomnie, panachée de coliques, en a troublé la sérénité; son teint l'indique. Il y a deux '*messagers noirs*': un chat, qu'une circonstance malheureuse a aplati entre deux tampons de chemins de fer; une négresse, qui n'a rien de *pareil à la nuit amoureuse*, si ce n'est un bouquet acheté chez la fleuriste du coin, et dont M. Arthur a fait les frais, ce qui m'en apprend très-long sur Olympia. Arthur est certainement dans l'antichambre, qui attend."
- 33 Geronte; see p. 97 and note 70 below.
- 34 Bertall, *Le Journal Amusant*.
- 35 Bertall, *L'Illustration*, 3 June.
- 36 For full text and translation, see pp. 139-40 and note 144 below.
- 37 Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du dix-neuvième siècle*, 3:11: "Ce cabaret, ouvert toute la nuit, était fréquenté par une clientèle tout particulière, des chiffonniers, des rodeurs, des ivrognes et des femmes dont l'âge et le sexe n'eussent pu se reconnaître sous l'amas de hailons qui les couvraient. . . . Grâce à tout ceci, le cabaret de Paul Niquet était connu du monde entier, et lorsqu'un roman d'Eugène Sue eut mis les tapis francs à la mode, ce fut à qui irait

visiter celui-là, au risque de s'y trouver en bien mauvaise compagnie."

- 38 Described as such by Cantaloube in *Le Grand Journal*, in his general attack on the Realists that year. Geronte described him as "un Fra Angelico de pacotille." Lambron was regularly bracketed with Courbet and his followers. Geronte had previously, in an article of 2 June, praised Vollon's *Intérieur de cuisine* as worthy of Chardin, but could not resist a side swipe at Baudelaire in passing: "Il y a, dans cette cuisine, un certain mou de veau, pendu à un croc, qui vaut tout un poème. (Est-ce bien un mou de veau? Je consulterai M. Baudelaire.)"

- 39 Gallet: "un jeune réaliste qui promet beaucoup.—Ses deux marines: *L'Embouchure de la Seine à Honfleur* et *La Pointe de la Hève à marée basse*, portent l'empreinte d'une main forte, peu soucieuse du joli, très-préoccupée de la justesse de l'effet." Cf. Geronte: "Que dire, par exemple, de cette *Embouchure de la Seine à Honfleur* (no. 1524), où les flots sont figurés par des mottes de terre, les voiles des bateaux par des triangles de bois noir, et qu'on croirait dessinée par un enfant de douze ans sur la couverture de son catéchisme. . . ."

Among the many critics who discuss Manet in the context of a Realist school, the more interesting accounts are those by Louis Auvray (a bitter attack on the Realists' assault on traditional standards, and the art of Bouguereau in particular), Deriège, Geronte, Jankovitz, Mantz (for whom the Realism of 1850 survives only in Belgium!), and, in a typically bizarre way, Pierrot. One standard tactic was to extract Ribot from the group and declare him the only Realist worthy of the name; see, e.g., Gallet and Bonnin.

- 40 Ego: "Je ne cite pas le nom du prétendu réaliste, élève de Courbet, qui a déposé cette *Olympia* le long du mur officiel. . . ."
- 41 Jankovitz: "*Jésus insulté* par M. Manet, je veux dire dû à son pinceau, est un tableau au-dessous de toute critique. C'est du Raphaël corrigé par un Courbet de troisième qualité. . . ."
- 42 Gille: "Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas, MM. Courbet, Manet et autres font vraisemblablement ainsi, parce qu'ils ne peuvent faire autrement, et j'ai grand peur pour eux qu'ils ne soient que consciencieux en nous offrant ces monstruosité. Ce sont des esprits malades, comme qui dirait des sortes de marquis de Sade de la peinture,

dont le sens artistique est déplacé ou corrompu, et qui ont perdu le chemin lumineux du naturel et du beau; tous deux se heurtant dans l'ombre, y chercheront vainement l'inconnu et le nouveau, ils ne pourront y trouver que des fantômes difformes et hideux." The Baudelairean echoes in the last few phrases—especially the echoes of the close of *Le Voyage*—seem deliberate. Compare the terms of Ravenel's evocation of the same "source."

- 43 Anon., *L'Autographe au Salon*: "M. Manet a de rares qualités d'originalité et de caractère comme dessinateur, de souplesse et de mordant comme coloriste. On peut s'en apercevoir rien qu'à ces petits croquis qui semblent faits du bout d'une plume usée avec l'insouciance parfaite et la verve pittoresque de Goya." About uses the words "tempérament" and "facultés." Drak: "Une main d'artiste guidée par une cervelle bourrée de paradoxes jusqu'à l'indigestion."
- 44 Compare Fillonneau, "M. Manet exposé aussi Jésus insulté par les soldats, où nous voudrions trouver autre chose à louer que des valeurs de tons, témoignages insuffisants d'une certaine recherche," with d'Arpentigny in Martinet's magazine: "M. Manet, entre autres, artiste d'une nature fine, distinguée, est remarquable dans ses oeuvres, par une vérité très-grande des tonalités, par une hardiesse, sans mesure il est vrai, mais qui cédera devant le besoin d'études plus sévères." Aubert, Chesneau, and Du Camp were also well aware of Manet's tonal aims.
- 45 Gonzague Privat, p. 66: "Eh bien! moi, je n'hésite pas à le dire: M. Manet a le tempérament d'un peintre, l'inspiration poétique, le charme de la naïveté, des tons, des finesses, et un côté vivant que peu d'artistes possèdent." Montifaud: "Nous savons reconnaître la touche de M. Manet au milieu des excentricités qu'il a voulu nous servir, comme son Christ insulté et sa composition d'*Olympia*, et cette touche dénote une vigueur qui, employée par un esprit plus sain, pourrait produire des oeuvres." Rapinus Beaubleu: "Un peintre de cette valeur devrait se méfier de son extrême facilité qui touche en quelque sorte à l'improvisation. Mais ce défaut prouve une ardeur, une vigueur, un tempérament peu communs à notre époque." (Fillonneau; see note 44 above.)
- 46 The Goya link is mentioned in *L'Autographe au Salon*; Cantaloube in *Le Grand Journal*—"Constatons, en effet, des tons dérobés aux Es-

pagnols, surtout à Goya, mais délayés dans je ne sais quelle mixture nauséabonde”—and more cryptically in *L'Illustrateur des Dames*: “Elle [the figure of Truth in Fantin’s *Toast*] dirait à l’un, ne démonétisez ou ne barbouillez pas Goya avec vos hideux pastiches à la façon de Barbarie; à l’autre, ne décalquez pas au carreau l’une des estampes de l’album des cinquante femmes du Japon” (clearly Manet and Whistler are meant); Deriège (see note 31 above); Gautier, in discussing the Christ: “L’exécution rappelle, moins l’esprit, les plus folles ébauches de Goya, lorsqu’il s’amusait à peindre en jetant des baquets de couleurs contre sa toile”; and Ravenel (see pp. 139–40 and note 144 below).

- 47 Gautier fils: “Dans *Olympia* M. Manet semble avoir fait quelque concession au goût public et à travers le parti pris on discerne des morceaux qui ne demandent pas mieux que d’être bons.”
- 48 Aubert: “Eh bien, comment se fait-il qu’il soit l’auteur de cette *Olympia*, que par courtoisie, par intérêt sympathique pour l’homme, je ne veux pas analyser, mais que je caractériserai en peu de mots en disant qu’elle n’est ni vraie, ni vivante, ni belle (belle, grand-Dieu!), qu’elle est informe, qu’elle a je ne sais quoi de lubrique, que ce corps est sale, que sais-je?” Cantaloube, *Le Grand Journal*: “Nous voulons, ici, parler de certaines ébauches informes ou grotesques qui causent un véritable scandale.” Chesneau: “un parti pris de vulgarité inconcevable.” Clément: “Quant aux deux toiles qu’a envoyées M. Manet, elles sont inqualifiables.” Gille: “Cet indéchiffable *rébus* . . .” Gautier; see note 24 above.
- 49 Gautier; see note 24 above.
- 50 Aubert; see note 48 above.
- 51 Deriège; see pp. 97–98 and note 72 below.
- 52 Dubosc de Pesquidoux: “Quant à l’*Odalisque* que M. Manet a exposée au-dessous de son *Christ*, et dans une pose si honnête, je n’en puis rien dire en vérité, et je ne sais pas si le dictionnaire de l’esthétique française offre des expressions pour la caractériser. . . . On ne peut point parler de tels tableaux, ni en donner l’idée.”
- 53 Merson: “Auparavant, néanmoins, un mot des tableaux de M. Manet, initiateur fameux selon quelques gens. Non pas que je songe à les examiner, à les décrire. Dieu m’en préserve!”
- 54 Escoffier: “Que signifie cette peinture et pour-

quoi trouve-t-on ces tableaux dans les galeries du Palais de l’Industrie?”

- 55 Auvray: “Et voilà pourquoi *Olympia* est si bien placée. . . . ‘Que c’est comme un bouquet de fleurs.’” Compare the captions of the Bertall cartoon in *Le Journal Amusant* and Cham’s in *Le Charivari* (in all three cases the reference is to a famous café-concert song by Paulus, “Le Baptême du petit ébéniste,” which is quoted and discussed in chapter four); Geronte: “cette Vénus hottentote”; Postwer: “Le tableau peut servir d’enseigne à une maison d’accouchement; l’auteur a une consolation toute trouvée”; Merson: “M. Manet, qui a peint l’enseigne de la *Femme à barbe*, est original,” and, “Et aux personnes qui n’ont pas vu ces pièces mirifiques, il suffira d’affirmer que le *Juif errant*, tel qu’Epinal l’expédie à toutes les auberges du globe, est un pur chef-d’oeuvre auprès d’*Olympia* et de *Jésus insulté par les soldats*”; Cantaloube, *L’Illustrateur des Dames*: “Voilà donc ces artistes, comme bien d’autres entraînés par l’abus des improvisations et du métier, uniquement préoccupés d’attrouper le public selon le mode des enseignes de la foire” (his verdict on Manet, Fantin, and Lambron); Deriège, see note 72 below; Geronte (the pseudonym hides Victor Fournel, a special expert in such matters), see note 70 below, and a parallel phrase earlier in his article, “ces deux toiles foraines.”
- 56 See Farwell, *Manet and the Nude*, p. 199 ff. for full discussion. See also Reff, *Manet: Olympia*, pp. 46–61.
- 57 See Theodore Reff, “The Meaning of Titian’s Venus of Urbino,” *Pantheon* XXI (1963): 362–63. C. Hope’s more recent dismissal of the Guidobaldo connection (*Titian*, p. 82) seems based on an odd view of Titian’s scrupulousness as regards the art market.
- 58 See H. Wetthey, *The Paintings of Titian*, 3: 203.
- 59 Cantaloube: “Jamais, du reste, on n’a vu de ses yeux spectacle pareil et d’un effet plus cynique: cette *Olympia*, sorte de gorille femelle, de grotesque en caoutchouc cerné de noir, singe sur un lit, dans une complète nudité, l’attitude horizontale de la Vénus de Titien; le bras droit repose sur le corps de la même façon, sauf la main qui se crispe dans une sorte de contraction impudique. De l’autre côté du lit, une négresse, ‘un doux messenger noir,’ lui apporte, à son réveil, le printemps sous le forme d’un bouquet de fleurs qui n’a guère l’air de flatter l’odorat.

On ne sait ce que vient de faire un pauvre chat maigre, d'une couleur de noir animal, car il gonfle piteusement son échine au pied de 'l'auguste jeune fille en qui la flamme brûle' (voir le livret)."

60 Pierrot: "L'autre peintre de ce groupe expose: 1. un Christ. O divin maître, tu n'a jamais été plus torturé; qu'on éloigne de toi ce calice! 2. une femme sur un lit, ou plutôt une forme quelconque gonflée comme un grotesque en caoutchouc; une sorte de guenon grimaçant la pose et le mouvement du bras de la Vénus du Titien, avec une main impudiquement crispée! Une négresse, un chat noir, tout maigre d'échine qu'il soit, n'en faisant pas moins le gros dos, complètent cette vision du sabbat." The nearest thing to another reference in 1865 is the title "la Vénus au chat" given the picture in passing by J. Claretie in *Le Figaro*. Pierrot and Cantaloube are surely one and the same writer.

61 The evidence for the critical reaction in 1863 is incomplete; but of the handful of references to Manet we know, one mentions the Giorgione connection directly—Zacharie Astruc in "Le Salon," *Le Feuilleton Quotidien*, 20 May 1863, p. 5 (cited in *Zacharie Astruc*, by Flescher, p. 121). Astruc's reference seems to be echoed, quite casually and not approvingly, in Thoré's attack on "ce contraste d'un animal [he means the reclining man] si antipathique au caractère d'un scène champêtre, avec cette baigneuse sans voiles," where the words "scène champêtre" are perhaps meant to remind the reader of the nineteenth-century title of Giorgione's picture (see Théophile Thoré, *Salons de W. Bürger, 1861 à 1868*, 1: 425.) The recognition of the Raphael source was added as a note to E. Chesneau's *L'Art et les artistes modernes en France et en Angleterre*, p. 190, which is a reprint of his "Salon" in *Le Constitutionnel* the previous year. Though Chesneau does not say so, one suspects he had been primed, perhaps by the artist.

The evidence is fragmentary and odd, as I say, but what we have of it suggests some kind of contrast between the critical language of 1863 and 1865 along the lines I have sketched.

62 Jankovitz: "L'auteur nous représente, sous le nom d'Olympia, une jeune fille couchée sur un lit, ayant pour tout vêtement un noeud de ruban dans les cheveux, et la main pour feuille de vigne. L'expression du visage est celle d'un

être prématuré et vicieux; le corps d'une couleur faisandée, rappelle l'horreur de la Morgue. Une hideuse négresse vêtue de rose tient à côté d'elle un bouquet d'une douteuse allégorie, tandis qu'un chat noir faisant le gros dos vient sur le drap imprimer avec ses pattes la trace non équivoque du lieu où il a marché. . . .

"A côté d'erreurs de tous genres et d'audacieuses incorrections, on trouve dans ce tableau un défaut considérable, devenu frappant dans les oeuvres des réalistes. En effet, si la plupart de leurs tableaux affligent tant la nature et nos yeux, c'est que la partie harmonique qui tient aux rayonnements de la lumière et à l'atmosphère est pour ainsi dire complètement sacrifiée. A force d'éliminer le sentiment de l'âme, ou l'esprit de la chose, dans l'interprétation de la nature, les sensations des yeux ne leur donnent, comme aux Chinois, que la couleur locale nullement combinée avec l'air et le jour. On dirait du scepticisme physique."

The last sentences, for all their clumsiness, represent a real effort at criticism.

63 Ego: "L'auguste jeune fille est une courtisane, aux mains sales, aux pieds rugueux; elle est couchée, vêtue d'une babouche et d'une cocarde rouge; son corps a la teinte livide d'un cadavre exposé à la Morgue; ses lignes sont dessinées au charbon, et ses yeux éraillés et verdâtres ont l'air de provoquer le public sous la garantie d'une hideuse négresse.

"Non, jamais rien de plus . . . étrange n'a été appendu aux murs d'un salon artistique."

64 Aubert; see note 48 above. Cantaloube; see note 59 above. Lorentz; see pp. 96–97 and note 69 below. Pollux: "il a fait aussi une vilaine bonne femme avec une négresse; tout est dessiné avec du charbon tout autour et de la pommade au milieu."

65 Gautier; see note 24 above.

66 Laincel, *Promenade*: "Mais pourquoi s'obstinent-ils à ne reproduire les choses que sous le côté le plus laid? pourquoi, en fait de modèles, vont-ils, par exemple, choisir des femmes malpropres, et, après cela, reproduire jusqu'à la crasse qui enduit leurs contours? Olympia n'est pas la seule qui se trouve dans ce cas."

67 Laincel, *L'Echo des Provinces*: "Je me trompe peut-être par rapport à Olympia; il est possible que tout simplement le gros matou noir qui fait ronron à ses pieds ait déteint sur les contours de cette belle personne, après s'être roulé sur un tas de charbon." Bonnin; see note 15

above. Gautier; note 24 above. Jankovitz; note 62 above. Leroy, *L'Universel*; see note 145.

68 Bertall, *L'Illustration*.

69 Lorentz: "Mais c'est encore bien plus horriblement frappant; devant cette toile qui nous montre un squelette habillé par un maillot collant de plâtre, cerclé du noir, comme une armature de vitrail sans verrerie; et qui, à l'horrible de tant de sottise et de laideur, adjoint la disparition d'un doigt . . . qui appelle à grands cris l'examen des inspecteurs de la salubrité publique!"

70 Geronte (Fournel): "Ce Christ, insulté par des soldats vêtus en saltimbanques, et plus insulté encore par l'artiste lui-même; cette Vénus hottentote, au chat noir, exposée toute nue sur son lit, comme un cadavre sur les dalles de la Morgue, cette Olympia de la rue Mouffetard, morte de fièvre jaune et déjà parvenue à un état de décomposition avancée, seraient des impertinences envers le public, si ce n'étaient avant tout de colossales inépties, d'autant plus burlesques qu'elles sont plus sérieuses et plus convaincues. L'effet irrésistible que ces deux compositions produisent sur les rates les plus hypochondres provient surtout du contraste énorme qui existe entre l'attitude solennelle de l'artiste et la pauvreté de l'oeuvre, entre l'orgueil incommensurable et l'avortement piteux des prétentions qu'il affiche. Les roueries de M. Manet sont trop naïves; les maladresses et les gaucheries de son dessin trop grossières ou trop enfantines, pour qu'on les puisse croire aussi volontaires qu'il le souhaiterait. Son coloris au verjus, aigre et acide, pénètre dans l'oeil comme la scie d'un chirurgien dans les chairs. En regardant cette Olympia, comparée sur le livret au 'jour délicieux à voir,' et qualifiée par le poète lyrique que M. Manet a appelé à son aide, d' 'auguste jeune fille, en qui la flamme veille,' il me prend ressouvenir de ces baraques de fêtes publiques, à la porte desquelles un Monsieur distingué vous promet, en langage élégant, des merveilles extraordinaires, incomparables, uniques, et où, dès que vous êtes entré, on vous montre un veau à deux têtes, dont l'une est en carton."

71 Saint-Victor: "La foule se presse, comme à la Morgue, devant l'*Olympia* faisandée et l'horrible *l'Ecce homo* de M. Manet. L'art descendu si bas ne mérite même plus qu'on le blâme. 'Ne parlons pas d'eux, regarde et passe,' dit

Virgile à Dante en traversant un des bas-fonds de l'Enfer:

Non ragionam di lor ma guarda e passa

"Mais les caricatures de M. Manet reviendraient plutôt à l'Enfer de Scarron qu'à celui du Dante."

The morgue has occurred as a point of reference in Jankovitz, Ego, Geronte, and Saint-Victor. Its connotations are not quite so simple as they may seem. The word designated a building where the bodies of the unknown dead of Paris, fished from the river or found in the streets, were put on show in the hope that someone would identify them. It stood for nameless, specifically urban, and specially horrifying death. Haussmann had allowed the morgue to stay near its old place on the Ile de la Cité, though he provided it with a new Beaux-Arts building. *Morgue* also meant a kind of facial expression, intent, grim, rigid, and overbearing; some etymologies connect the two senses of the word via the look on the corpses' faces.

72 Derière: "*Olympia* est couchée sur son lit, n'ayant emprunté à l'art d'autre ornement qu'une rose, dont elle a paré la filasse de ses cheveux. Cette femme rousse est d'une laideur accomplie. Sa face est stupide, sa peau cadavéreuse. Elle n'a pas forme humaine; M. Manet l'a tellement estropiée qu'il lui serait impossible de remuer ni bras ni jambes. A côté d'elle, on voit une négresse qui apporte un bouquet, et, à ses pieds, un chat qui s'éveille et s'étire, un chat ébouriffé qui semble venir du sabbat de Callot. Le blanc, le noir, le rouge, le vert font un vacarme affreux sur cette toile; la femme, la négresse, le bouquet, le chat, tout ce tohu-bohu de couleurs disparates, de formes impossibles, vous saisit le regard et vous stupéfie.

Quand, lasse de songer, [etc.]

"Telle est la stance que le livret ajoute à la mention d'*Olympia*. Ces vers valent la peinture.

"Un plaisant assurait que Mlle Olympia, engagée par un impresario pour aller représenter des tableaux vivants dans les foires, avait commandé le tableau de M. Manet comme enseigne."

73 The whole of Chesneau's entry—it comes at the end of a long discussion of Manet's aims, his previous successes (*L'Enfant à l'épée*; the still lifes shown *chez* Cadart, one of which Ches-

neau bought; the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*; and the *Course de taureaux*), etc.—is a study in critical embarrassment. The problem is clear: to explain “les rires quasi-scandaleux qui attroupent les visiteurs au Salon devant cette créature cocasse (on me passera le mot) qu’il appelle Olympia.” He is aware that the laughter has to do with both form and content: “d’abord . . . une ignorance presque enfantine des premiers éléments du dessin, ensuite . . . un parti pris de vulgarité inconcevable.” But when he comes to *Olympia*, he finds words only for the formal insufficiencies—apart, that is, from the inadvertent “crapaud” and the clanking repetition of “auguste jeune fille”:

“La construction baroque de ‘l’auguste jeune fille,’ sa main en forme de crapaud, causent l’hilarité et chez quelques-uns le fou rire. En ce cas particulier, le comique résulte de la prétention hautement affichée de produire une oeuvre noble (‘l’auguste jeune fille’ dit le livret), prétention déjouée par l’impuissance absolue de l’exécution; ne sourit-on pas en voyant un enfant se donner l’air important d’un homme? Dans cette *Olympia* tout ce qui est dessin est donc irrémisiblement condamné. La coloration générale elle-même est désagréable. En certaines parties seulement elle est juste: ainsi dans le ton des linges, dans les contrastes du drap, du cachemire et des fleurs. Mais si nous prenons au sérieux l’effort de M. Manet [i.e., his wish to reproduce tones in nature strictly and directly], nous devons lui dire que dans la nature les ombres charbonneuses sont rares, et qu’il n’en voit ou du moins qu’il n’en fait point d’autres. Il ne tient aucun compte des reflets, des contre-reflets; et ce n’est qu’en les étudiant qu’il peut réussir à donner à sa peinture l’harmonie que la nature possède toujours.” Thus do “progressive” critics end by reproducing the wisdom of the schools! Chesneau claims to find *Jésus insulté* even worse, since there “les vulgarités de l’exécution sautent aux yeux.” (Vulgarity is thus, in the end, securely a matter of technique.)

For Gautier, see note 24; the paragraph on *Olympia* follows four long ones—“Nous arrivons avec quelque répugnance aux étranges tableaux de M. Manet”—of evasive generality.

74 Aubert; see note 48.

75 Of the other experts, the efforts of Mantz, Du Camp, and Thoré are weaker still. Maxime Du Camp’s passing reference, on p. 678 of his *Salon*,

is so elliptical that Hamilton, in his *Manet and His Critics*, missed it altogether: “Dans cette sorte d’école nouvelle, outrageusement injurieuse pour l’art, il suffit donc de ne savoir ni composer, ni dessiner, ni peindre pour faire parler de soi; la recherche de sept tons blancs et de quatre tons noirs opposés les uns aux autres est le dernier mot du beau; le reste importe peu.” Mantz has one phrase, “le prince des chimériques,” and a lofty denial of Fantin and Derière’s claim that Manet is a Realist. Thoré has a dispirited aside on Manet’s slavish quotations from past art—he connects *Jésus* with Van Dyck, and the previous year’s *Course de taureaux* with the Pourtalès Velásquez, but no word of *Olympia*’s derivation—and then this mention, in a list of pictures he wishes he had more room to describe: “et l’*Olympia* de M. Manet, qui a fait courir tout Paris, pour voir cette drôle de femme, son bouquet splendide, sa négresse et son chat noir; les amis de M. Manet défient l’auteur des scarabées siamois [Gérôme] de peindre un bouquet aussi lumineux et un chat aussi hoffmannesque.”

About Gonzague Privat it is possible to disagree. He certainly wishes to say something, and mostly something favourable, about Manet, and his general comments are effusively warm (see note 45 for a typical sentence). Hamilton is enthusiastic about the paragraph he produces on *Olympia*: “Dans l’*Olympia* de M. Manet, ne vous en déplaie, il y a plus que du bon, il y règne de solides et rares qualités de peinture. La jeune fille est d’un ton mat, ses chairs sont d’une délicatesse exquise, d’une finesse, d’un rapport juste sur les draps blancs. Le fond est charmant, les rideaux verts qui ferment le lit sont d’une couleur légère et aérienne. Mais le public, le gros public, qui trouve plus commode de rire que regarder, ne comprend rien du tout à cet art trop abstrait pour son intelligence” (pp. 63–64). Those readers less inclined to be impressed by the premonitory word “abstract” may be struck by the effort here to read out of the picture its rebarbative aspects and have it be unequivocally charming. Gonzague Privat offers no more detail on the picture in the three pages that follow, and when he returns to the question of *Olympia*’s effect, later in his *Salon* (p. 137), his answer again seems to me preliminary to a discussion which does not, in fact, follow: “Pourquoi certaines gens sont-ils effrayés par l’aspect de la jeune femme? pourquoi

en fait-elle rire d'autres? Parce qu'elle vit, que cette vie est sensible pour tout le monde; parce qu'on sent qu'elle pourrait remuer, cette femme que l'on trouve laide et mal faite, non sans quelque raison."

76 Charles Baudelaire, "Exposition Universelle de 1855," *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 963.

77 J.-F. Jeannel, *De la prostitution dans les grandes villes au dix-neuvième siècle*, pp. 247-48: "Il en est de même de ces *Panuches* qui s'attablent en hiver derrière les glaces, en été sous les vérandas des cafés luxueux. Rieuses et provocantes, elles se réunissent dans certains cafés des boulevards de Paris qui deviennent comme des bazars de prostitution. La police trop indulgente ferme les yeux sur ces exhibitions et trouve des raisons pour les tolérer. . . ."

78 Bernadille, *Le Français*, 13 April 1877: "M. Degas ne manque ni de fantaisie, ni d'esprit, ni d'observation dans ses aquarelles. Il a ramassé devant les tables d'estaminet, dans les cafés-concerts, dans le corps de ballet, des types d'une vérité cynique et quasi-bestiale, portant tous les vices de la civilisation écrits en grosses lettres sur leur triple couche de plâtre. Mais son esprit a la main lourde et l'expression crue."

79 Alexandre Pohey, *Le Petit Parisien*, 7 April 1877: "M. Degas semble avoir jeté un défi aux philistins, c'est-à-dire aux classiques. *Les Femmes devant un café, le soir* sont d'un réalisme effrayant. Ces créatures fardées, flétries, suant le vice, qui se racontent avec cynisme leurs faits et gestes du jour, vous les avez vues, vous les connaissez et vous les retrouverez tout à l'heure sur le boulevard. Et ces choristes hideux qui braillent à pleine bouche sont-ils assez vrais! Et cette danseuse qui balonne avec tant de grâce en jetant son dernier sourire aux spectateurs? Et la chanteuse du café-concert? C'est la nature prise sur le fait, dans un mouvement exact, vivante, empoignante, malgré sa crudité."

80 Jacques, *L'Homme Libre*, 12 April 1877: "Les études dans les cafés du boulevard ne sont pas moins finies ni moins curieuses, bien que cruelles—passablement. Il est permis de critiquer une certaine accentuation des détails. Mais l'ensemble constitue une page incomparable du livre anecdotique contemporain."

81 In my discussion of prostitution I am deeply indebted to Alain Corbin's excellent book, *Les Filles de noce: Misère sexuelle et prostitution aux*

19^e et 20^e siècles (hereafter referred to as Corbin). I have learnt a lot from work done, often from a feminist point of view, on prostitution in England and America, such as J. R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*; F. Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York*; and from S. H. Clayson, "The Representation of Prostitution in France During the Early Years of the Third Republic." Among briefer theoretical or polemical treatments I would single out Annie Mignard's "Propos élémentaires sur la prostitution," *Les Temps Modernes*, March 1976. One passage from it could have stood as a second epigraph for this chapter: "If prostitution can never leave women indifferent, that is because they know that men's relation to the prostitute is their relation to women in general, or rather to the image which men put in place of the various women of the Real. If women are often fascinated, even tempted, by prostitution, it is as the limiting case of a representation whose power and imposture only they can know" (pp. 1540-1).

82 Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, p. 383: "With regard to prostitution we find that, beyond a certain quantity, money loses its dignity and ability to be the equivalent of individual values. The abhorrence that modern 'good' society entertains towards the prostitute is more pronounced the more miserable and the poorer she is, and it declines with the increase in the price for her services. . . . The basic and more fundamental reason is that the exorbitant price saves the object for sale from the degradation that would otherwise be part of the fact of being offered for sale." I am not suggesting that this passage's *bizarrie* is characteristic of Simmel's rich discussion of the whole subject, though it represents, I think, a typical ideological terminus of such reflections.

83 I know Kraus's argument only via Walter Benjamin's citation and discussion of it, in "Karl Kraus," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, p. 276: "Contempt for prostitution? / Harlots worse than thieves? / Learn this: not only is love paid, / But payment, too, wins love!"

84 Honoré de Balzac, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, p. 290; cited in Corbin, p. 17.

85 Report cited in *De l'hygiène sociale à l'urbanisme: Etude des conditions politiques de la planification urbaine en région parisienne (1871-1940)*,

by A. Cottereau, pp. 74–75: “Paris, à proprement parler, n’a pas d’habitants, ce n’est qu’une population flottante, ou, pour mieux dire, nomade.”

- 86 Ibid.: “C’est le cas de faire remarquer ici qu’en cela ce fonctionnaire a suivi l’exemple de certains journalistes qui, en parlant du Paris oisif et interlope ont osé écrire: tout Paris.

“Nous avons plusieurs fois réduit à leur juste valeur ces phrases vides de sens, qui feraient croire à ceux qui ne connaissent guère notre grande cité, qu’elle n’est composée que de gaudins et de cocottes.

“Pour ce qui est de notre sentiment, nous avouons avec franchise que ce Paris du turf et de la galanterie équivoque ne nous inspire que du dégoût. Nous ne craignons pas non plus de le dire: c’est une des hontes de notre époque. . . .”

- 87 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, 2:302 (5 December 1866).

- 88 Alexandre Dumas, “À propos de La Dame aux camélias,” in *Théâtre Complet*, 1:25.

- 89 Cited by H. Mitterand in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, by Emile Zola, 2:1655 (notes on *Nana*).

- 90 C.-J. Lecour, *La Prostitution à Paris et à Londres*, p. 145, cited in *De la prostitution*, by Jeannel, pp. 182–83: “Les prostituées insoumises, c’est-à-dire non-inscrites, forment à Paris la majorité du personnel de la prostitution. Elles sont partout, dans les cafés-concerts, les théâtres, les bals. On les rencontre dans les établissements publics, les gares de chemin de fer et même en wagon. Il y en a sur toutes les promenades, aux devantures de la plupart des cafés. Jusqu’à une heure avancée de la nuit, elles circulent nombreuses sur les plus beaux boulevards, au grand scandale du public, qui les prend pour des prostituées inscrites en infraction aux règlements et qui dès lors s’étonne de l’inaction de la police à leur regard.” On the fear of invasion by the *insoumise* in the later 1860s and 1870s, see Corbin, pp. 38–53, 190–220. Compare remarks on the English case in K. Nield’s introduction to *Prostitution in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from 19th Century Critical Journals*, ed. K. Nield (unpaginated).

- 91 F. Carlier, “Etude statistique sur la prostitution clandestine à Paris de 1855 à 1870,” *Annales d’hygiène publique et de médecine légale*, 1871, p. 293; cited in *De la prostitution*, by Jeannel, p. 182: “La prostitution clandestine a changé

complètement d’allures; elle s’affiche et devient arrogante: autant on se cachait autrefois, autant on se montre aujourd’hui.

“La fille insoumise ne se livre plus à aucun travail, elle ne vit plus que du produit de la rue où elle est descendue, sur le même trottoir, avec les mêmes costumes que les filles publiques.” The ways in which this represented a threat to the politics of invisibility described in the previous chapter should be sufficiently clear.

- 92 On the numbers contest, see Corbin, p. 193.

- 93 P. Cère, *Les Populations dangereuses et les misères sociales*, 1872, p. 231; cited in Corbin, p. 46.

- 94 Flévy d’Urville, *Les Ordures de Paris*, p. 40; cited in Corbin, p. 46.

- 95 Parent-Duchâtelet, *Prostitution dans la ville*, 2:14. A great deal of recent work centres on whether this verdict was correct, and there is reason to believe that Parent-Duchâtelet and his followers—everyone who discussed prostitution after 1836 was his follower—grossly exaggerated the temporary nature of prostitution. They wished to extract the phenomenon from its proper place in an ordinary social geography of poverty, criminality, and working-class womanhood. (The forthcoming work of Jill Harsin, “Crime, Poverty and Prostitution in Paris 1815–1848,” part of which I was able to see in draft, will correct a lot of *idées reçues*.) Of course, what is most important from the point of view of this chapter is this ideology of prostitution and its effects on representation, verbal or visual.

- 96 Corbin, p. 130.

- 97 Behind Corbin’s presentation of the *discours réglementariste* lie Michel Foucault’s ideas on knowledge as a form of power and control in the nineteenth century, on the drive to classify and regulate more and more of previously “marginal” behaviours, etc. (see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, and the whole previous series of Foucault’s books.) The account is surely compelling in this case. In general, Foucault’s work seems to me to provide further reasons for finding the myth of modernity which this book attacks a distinctly repellent travesty—in particular its notion that the “modern” is characterized by some special degree of *un*-control in social relations generally.

- 98 See Corbin, p. 174.

- 99 Ibid., pp. 175, 285–314. Corbin himself makes the link with Gaillard’s work on Haussman-

- nization, in the section entitled "'Ville extravertie' et femme-spectacle," pp. 301-3.
- 100 Edmond de Goncourt, *La Fille Elisa*, p. 64. "Ordinarily in Paris, it is the chance climb, by some drunkenness, of a staircase yawning in the night, the furious and unrepeatable passage of a physical itch through the house of bad repute, the angry contact, as in a rape, of two bodies that will never meet again. The unknown man, come into the *fille's* room for the first and last time, does not care what, on the body that gives itself, his eroticism spreads of grossness and contempt, of what is revealed in the mental delirium of a 'civilized' old man, of what ferocity emerges from certain male loves." (The literalness of this translation is deliberate.) See R. Ricatte, *La Genèse de "La Fille Elisa,"* for the Goncourts' documentary work for the novel.
- 101 E. Augier and E. Foussier, *Les Lionnes pauvres* (a play), p. 26.
- 102 *Westminster Review*, November 1868, p. 365; cited in "Late-Victorian Sexual Respectability and the Social System," by P. Cominos, *International Review of Social History* 8 (1963): 230.
- 103 Parent-Duchâtelet, *Prostitution dans la ville*, 1:363: "On arrivera au terme de la perfection et du possible en ce genre, en obtenant que les hommes, et en particulier ceux qui les recherchent, puissent les distinguer des femmes honnêtes; mais que celles-ci, et surtout leurs filles, ne puissent pas faire cette distinction, ou ne la fassent du moins qu'avec difficulté."
- 104 Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Marthe*, p. 140. (The last word is again *honnêteté*.)
- 105 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Mémoires* 1:1354 (8 November 1863).
- 106 Jeannel, *De la prostitution*, p. 249: "de véritables chevaliers d'industrie de la jeunesse et de l'amour."
- 107 Nadar, "A une courtisane," *La Revue Moderne et Naturaliste*, 1878-79, pp. 408-9: "C'est toi . . . c'est toi la vraie, la seule 'Classe Dirigeante,' car que ne conduis-tu pas, et de quelle bonne et âcre haine ne hais-tu le peuple pour son incommensurable mépris!" My thanks for this reference to S. H. Clayson.
- 108 Jeannel, *De la prostitution*, pp. 233-34: "Le plus souvent elles cherchent, dans leurs costumes pompeux et fripés, à suivre les dernières modes adoptées pour les bals et les soirées d'apparat! . . .
- "Leur langage, grossier comme celui de la lie du peuple, et qu'elles salissent naturellement de mots orduriers, qu'elles embrouillent de jargon et de patois ou qu'elles enrichissent d'argot; leurs voix enrouées, usées ou d'un timbre ignoble; . . . leurs tutoiements et leurs jurons, leurs regards faussement lascifs, les surnoms qu'elles se donnent, tout cela forme un hideux contraste avec les toilettes ou les manières du grand monde, prétentieusement et gauchement contrefaites."
- 109 A. de Pontmartin, "Semaines littéraires," *La Gazette de France*, 11 June 1865: "toilette, jargon, curiosité, plaisir, cosmétiques, tout rapproche le demi-monde et le monde entier; tout permet de confondre ce qui ne devrait pas même se connaître. . . . La patricienne du faubourg Saint-Germain se croise, dans l'escalier de Worth, avec l'élégante du quartier Bréda."
- 110 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Idiot de la famille: Gustave Flaubert de 1821 à 1857*, 3: pp. 523-29, for a scathing discussion of the Second Empire intellectuals' involvement in this myth. The delight of such as Flaubert and the Goncourts ("les pisse-froid") in the falsity of Lagier or La Païva is part, Sartre argues, of the intellectuals' wish for a social reality which would prove as futile, derealized, and imaginary as themselves. The Second Empire was such a society, and the *courtisane* its perfect representative. These artists never recovered from its fall. See, for instance, pp. 547-78 and book 2, *passim*.
- 111 P. de Lano, *Courtisane*, p. vii; cited in Corbin, p. 200.
- 112 Gustave Flaubert, letter to Maxime Du Camp, *Correspondance*, 6:161 (29 September 1870); cited in *L'Idiot*, by Sartre, 3:616.
- 113 For instance, Amédée Cantaloube, *Lettre sur les Expositions et le Salon de 1861*, pp. 70-71: "Therefore one has to point out that Phryne would not have displayed the false modesty of a *parisienne* flaunting her charms, ogled by a crowd of burlesque and lascivious Areopagites. . . . Aspasia would have borne no resemblance, no more than Phryne, to the women of Breda Street, and would not have given her body a licentious allure. . . ."
- 114 Théophile Gautier, *Abécédaire du Salon de 1861*, p. 191: "The city, with its brightly lit palaces darting fascinating looks from all their win-

dows, spreads out its boulevards, its perspectives and its lines of gaslight in the depths of the abyss, at the left of the canvas."

- 115 Cited in *Le Salon de 1861*, by Maxime Du Camp, p. 138: "Combien de jeunes filles, délaissant le travail, se précipitent dans tous les vices que la débauche entraîne pour échapper à ce spectre (la misère), qui semble toujours les poursuivre?"
- 116 Ibid., pp. 136-37: "Ce tableau aurait pu s'appeler les vierges sages et les vierges folles. C'est la figuration allégorique de ce que nous voyons tous les jours sur nos promenades et dans nos théâtres, l'envahissement croissant des filles de mauvaise vie qui sont aujourd'hui un élément nouveau de notre société transitoire et qui, entre les mains toujours actives et toujours intelligentes de la civilisation, ne sont peut-être que des instruments d'égalité destinés à rendre l'héritage illusoire ou du moins à le réduire à une circulation forcée. En voyant ce mouvement ininterrompu de lorettes (il faut les appeler par leur nom), qui se succèdent incessamment parmi nous comme les vagues de la mer, je me suis souvent demandé si les classes inférieures de notre société ne perpétuaient pas, à leur insu, le combat commencé à la fin du siècle dernier et si, en produisant ces belles filles dont la mission paraît être de ruiner et de crétiniser la haute bourgeoisie et les débris de la noblesse, elles ne continuaient pas pacifiquement l'oeuvre des clubs les plus violents de 1793. Marat, aujourd'hui, ne demanderait plus la tête de deux cent mille aristocrates, il ferait décréter l'émission de deux cent mille filles entretenues nouvelles, et son but serait atteint."
- 117 See J. Whiteley, *The Revival in Painting of Themes Inspired by Antiquity in Mid-Nineteenth Century France*, p. 243. Whiteley's whole discussion of the *courtisane* theme in academic and official painting (p. 238 ff.) is excellent.
- 118 When the pair were printed in *L'Artiste* on 1 June 1868, an accompanying pair of sonnets interpreted the contrast of *courtisane* and *femme honnête* in terms of modern woman's susceptibility to the wrong kind of novel. Penelope's case is clear—"En vain le romancier va lui faire sa cour"—and Phryne's no less—"Elle a lu le matin Karr, Houssaye et Balzac."
- 119 Théophile Gautier, "Salon de 1869," in *Tableaux à la plume*, pp. 290-1: "C'est un cour des Miracles de millionnaires. La courtisane les regarde sans effroi, sans dégoût, avec cette suprême indifférence pour la beauté et la laideur qui caractérise ces créatures, et de ses lèvres, avec une bouffée de cigarette, s'échappe ce mot, qui résume sa pensée: Pourquoi pas?"
- 120 See P. Vaisse, "Couture et le Second Empire," *La Revue de l'Art*, no. 37 (1977), p. 43, and p. 63, note 17.
- 121 For the picture's iconography, see Couture's letter in *Thomas Couture (1820-1897)*, by G. Bertauts-Couture, pp. 94-95, and discussion in Whiteley, *Revival in Painting*. The picture is dated 1873.
- 122 Camille Lemonnier, *Salon de Paris 1870*, pp. 76-77: "Les joues, blanches comme celles des filles d'amour, sont blairautées d'un fard rose et se plissent, aux coins des lèvres, d'un superbe sourire triomphante. . . . La chair, d'ailleurs, fatiguée et tapotée, a par elle-même, en sa moiteur malsaine et grasse, la lividité que les plaisirs empreignent sur la peau des courtisanes. . . . Je ne chicanerai pas M. Regnault sur la justesse des vêtements et des accessoires. Je ne vois pas le côté histoire: je regarde la côté femme. . . . Je trouve une Salomé: je ne cherche pas la Salomé. Il me suffit que l'artiste ait caractérisé avec un style pittoresque et vrai, en sa resplendissante guénille froissée, la fille d'amour."
- 123 Maxime Du Camp, *Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle et aux Salons de 1863-1867*, p. 31: "To these Venuses that one paints with such care one can pronounce Heinrich Heine's anathema: 'Venus Libitina, you have become no more than a goddess of death!', for they are less than courtesans."
- 124 This was a standard part of the myth of the prostitute.
- 125 Lemonnier, *Salon de Paris 1870*, p. 76: "Elle sent le rut et la boucherie, féroce avec indifférence et lascive sans amour."
- 126 A. Delvau, *Les Plaisirs de Paris: Guide pratique*, p. 266: "Il importe ici de tracer une grande ligne de démarcation sur la carte de la galanterie. Les innombrables filles perdues qui errent dans ce grand désert d'hommes de Paris se divisent en deux classes. Il y a les pauvres misérables, dont Victor Hugo a parlé dans son roman, qui vivent au jour le jour et parcourent les rues à l'aventure, cherchant le même animal que Diogène, et comptant sur sa générosité pour faire face aux dépenses de leur loyer, de leur

repas et de leur toilette.

"Il y a des livres spéciaux, des livres de statistique qui vous raconteront l'existence atroce de ces filles de tristesse, comme M. Michelet les appelle. De pareilles turpitudes ne sauraient trouver place dans un livre consacré aux plaisirs parisiens. Il y a des plaies qu'il faut cacher et panser en secret. . . ."

- 127 J.-A. Castagnary, *Salons 1857-79*, 1:113-14: "Mais combien cette jolie femme avec son minois de modiste parisienne, serait mieux sur un sofa! Elle qui vivait si bien dans son riche appartement de la Chaussée-d'Antin, elle doit se sentir bien mal à l'aise sur ce rocher dur, près de ces galets blessants, de ces coquillages hérissés.
- "Mais une réflexion: que fait-elle à cette heure seule, ici roulant ses yeux d'émail et crispant ses mains coquettes? Guette-t-elle un millionnaire égaré dans cet endroit sauvage? Serait-elle non plus la Vénus des boudoirs, mais la Vénus des bains de mer?"
- 128 The most striking example is Amaury-Duval's *Naissance de Vénus*, in the Salon of 1863 alongside Baudry's and Cabanel's.
- 129 Du Camp, *Les Beaux-Arts*, p. 30: "L'art ne doit pas avoir plus de sexe que les mathématiques. . . ."
- 130 Ibid., p. 31: "L'être nu est l'être abstrait, il doit donc avant tout préoccuper et tenter l'artiste; mais vêtir le nu d'impudeur, rassembler dans les traits du visage toutes les expressions qu'on ne dit pas, c'est déshonorer le nu et faire l'acte blâmable." A look at the use of the word "abstract" here should suggest why I doubt that Gonzague Privat meant anything very modern by it when discussing *Olympia*.
- 131 Ibid., p. 39: "je trouve que le nu cesse d'être honnête lorsqu'il est traité de façon à exagérer intentionnellement certaines formes aux dépens de certaines autres."
- 132 Ibid., p. 30: "Monsieur Ingres . . . has treated nudity in all its splendour, and never, in a single detail, has he strayed from the purest chastity."
- 133 Lemonnier, *Salon de Paris 1870*, pp. 80-81, 91-92: "Le nu n'est pas le déshabillé, et rien n'est moins nu qu'une femme qui sort de ses pantalons ou qui vient d'ôter sa chemise. Le nu n'a pudeur qu'à la condition de n'être pas un état transitoire. Il ne cache rien parce que rien n'est à cacher. Du moment qu'il cache quelque chose, il devient polisson, car c'est pour mieux

montrer. Le nu dans l'art, pour se garder vierge, doit être impersonnel et il lui est défendu de particulariser; l'art n'a que faire d'une mouche posée sur la gorge et d'un grain arrondi sous la hanche. Il ne cache rien et ne montre rien: il se fait voir en bloc. . . .

"Le nu a quelque chose de la pureté des petits enfants qui jouent chair contre chair sans se troubler. Le déshabillé, au contraire, me fait toujours sentir la femme qui s'étale pour quarante sous et travaille les poses plastiques."

- 134 Ibid., pp. 83-84: "La poitrine est bien sentie: on y voit de la lassitude, des marques d'étreintes, des traces de baisers, et la gorge pend, mordue par les voluptés. Une solidité réelle groupe les formes de la fille, et le grain de la peau, écrasé dans la pâte morbide, se masse en tissu serré sous la touche."
- 135 Edouard Hache, *Le Salon de 1869*, p. 241: "La pose est bizarre, je le veux; la tête horrible, soit; ajoutez encore que le corps ne vous séduit pas, si vous y tenez. Mais quel admirable dessin! Avec quelles richesses chromatiques le peintre a rendu les tons si changeants de la chair! Et le modelé, et les finesses du ventre, les délicatesses des bras, les plis nacrés qui creusent les seins! Comme le nu se fond grassement avec ces beaux coussins rouges! C'est bien là une femme d'Orient, dans sa mollesse et sa bestialité."
- 136 Cantaloube, *Lettre sur les expositions*, p. 65: "Monsieur Cabanel is one of those who stay true to the noble quest for the pagan ideal, . . . The scene is conceived from a purely artistic point of view. Monsieur Cabanel has stopped at just the moment when the work would have lost its nobility; and that was the danger; the idea of voluptuous beauty is indicated very well in this group."
- 137 Félix Jahyer, *Deuxième Etude sur les Beaux-Arts: Salon de 1866*, p. 155: "Le bambin est malin et pressant: tandis qu'il conte son dangereux secret, sa petite main se pose sur la poitrine de l'adolescente qui, par un mouvement d'une grâce exquise, porte elle-même la main à la même place, ce qui prouve qu'elle a à se défendre d'une sensation. Le profil délicieux de l'enfant se pose avec hardiesse sur la figure délicate de sa confidente, chez qui la pudeur et le plaisir se livrent un adorable combat."
- 138 Thoré, "Salon de 1865," in *Salons de W. Bürger*, 2:206: "Qui encourage l'art mythologique et

l'art mystique, les Oedipe et les Vénus, ou les madones et les saints en extase? ceux qui ont intérêt à ce que l'art ne signifie rien et ne touche pas aux aspirations modernes. Qui encourage les nymphes et les galantes scènes Pompadour? le Jockey-Club et le boulevard Italien. À qui vend-on ces tableaux? aux courtisans [*sic*] et aux enrichis de la Bourse, aux dissipateurs d'une aristocratie exceptionnelle."

- 139 Gille: "M. Manet s'est jeté, tête perdue, dans son sujet; de cette détermination, est résulté un affreux et indécent assemblage de tons crus, de lignes heurtées qui brisent les yeux, de blanc et noir étalés à la main et limités par le seul caprice."
- 140 Bonnin; note 15 above. Fillonneau: "Dans les deux tableaux, le dessin est à l'abri de la critique: il n'existe pas. Si de pareilles tendances triomphaient jamais, il n'y aurait aucun inconvénient à mettre le feu au Louvre et à quelques autres musées qui pourraient gêner le développement de ces singulières manifestations."
- 141 Deriège; note 72 above. Aubert and Cantaloube; note 48 above.
- 142 Deriège; note 72 above. About: "À peine a-t-il établi une couche de pâte sur sa toile, on lui saisit le bras: —Arrêtez! lui dit-on; un trait de plus et vous gênez votre chef-d'oeuvre." Various others described Manet's works as mere sketches: Bonnin, Cantaloube, Bataille, Beaubleu, Rolland, Gautier.
- 143 Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, 19:252. My discussion of this passage in relation to representations of the nude is indebted to Stephen Heath's extraordinary article, "Difference," *Screen*, Autumn 1978 (see especially p. 53). I am aware that my use of this article is partial and unadventurous, but my treatment of the nude in art would have been even more limited without it.
- 144 Ravenel: "M. MANET—*Olympia*—Le bouc émissaire du Salon, la victime de la loi du Linch [*sic*] parisien. Chaque passant prend sa pierre et la lui jette à la face. *Olympia* est une folie d'Espagne très folle, qui vaut mille fois mieux que la platitude et l'inertie de tant de toiles qui s'étaient à l'Exposition.

"Insurrection armée dans le camp des bour-

geois: c'est un verre d'eau glacée que chaque visiteur reçoit au visage lorsqu'il voit épanouir la BELLE courtisane.

"Peinture de l'école de Baudelaire exécutée largement par un élève de Goya; l'étrangeté vicieuse de la petite faubourienne, fille des nuits de Paul Niquet, des mystères de Paris et des cauchemars d'Edgar Poe. Son regard a l'âcreté d'un être prématuré, son visage le parfum inquiétant d'un fleur du mal; le corps fatigué, corrompu, mais peint sous une lumière unique et transparente, les ombres légères et fines, le lit et l'oreiller sont observés dans le gris des modelés moelleux. La négresse et les fleurs insuffisantes dans leur exécution, mais d'une réelle harmonie, l'épaule et le bras droit solidement affermis dans un jour franc et pur.—Le chat qui fait gros dos porte le visiteur à rire et à se défendre; c'est ce qui sauve M. Manet d'une exécution populaire.

"[From its black and brown fur / Comes a perfume so sweet, that one evening / I was overcome from having / Caressed it once . . . only once. / It is the familiar spirit of the place; / It judges, presides, inspires / Everything in its empire; / Perhaps it is a fairy, perhaps a god?]

"M. Manet, au lieu des vers de M. Astruc, aurait peut-être bien fait de prendre pour épigraphe le quatrain consacré à Goya par le peintre le plus *avancé* de notre époque:

"[GOYA—Nightmare full of unknown things, / Of fetuses cooked in the middle of witches' sabbaths, / Of old women at their mirrors and naked children, / To tempt demon women pulling up their stockings.]

"Ce n'est peut-être pas flatteur pour M. Manet que cette *olla podrida* de toutes les Castilles, mais enfin c'est encore quelque chose. Ne fait pas une *Olympia* qui veut.—Le Christ demanderait une certaine analyse technique que nous n'avons pas le temps de donner.—En résumé, c'est hideux, mais c'est encore quelque chose. Le peintre y apparaît et la lumière court sur ce groupe étrange."

- 145 The link between *Olympia* and Baudelaire was rather rarely made in 1865, though Baudelaire was quite a favourite point of (mostly burlesque) reference for critics—for instance, in discussions of Gustave Moreau (see Louis de Lancel, *L'Echo de France*, 6 August: "Il y a là-dedans un fantastique d'où se dégage le même malaise que l'on éprouve lorsque'on a lu, par hasard, *Les Fleurs du mal*, de M. Baudelaire,

ou bien les contes d'Edgar Poë"). The Laincel reference, along with the sarcastic question of Geronte (note 38 above) and the echo in Gille (note 42 above), represents quite fairly, I think, what Baudelaire *connoted* in 1865. Ravenel's text should be read in this light; also Leroy's passing mad invocation in *L'Universel* ("Et ce chat! noir comme la nuit! profond comme l'enfer! O chat! o chat! . . . O chat animé de Baudelaire! O chat de la courtisane Olympia [de l'auguste jeune fille en qui la flamme veille], sois fier, mon minet! tu souilles de tes petites pattes crottées la couche immaculée de celle pour qui l'on voudrait mourir, s'il n'était plus doux de vivre pour elle!"); Cantaloube's description in *L'Illustrateur des Dames* ("Ce sont les fleurs moisies ou flétries d'un tableau qui a fait scandale! Une femme couchée, une négresse et un maigre chat noir, sortes de gnomes du sabbat qui composent avec les fleurs cette parodie de la nature"); and even the cryptic quatrain of Briolle ("Sur: *Olympia*, par M. Manet. No. 1428, / Astre qu'on éreinte, / Mais qui me toucha, / Tu n'es pas mal peinte, / Non, non,—c'est le chat!").

146 Ravenel, 1 May, 7 May; the whole discussion of landscape painting would be worth reprinting.

147 Ravenel, 17 May; using Amaury-Duval's *Daphnis et Chloé* in the salon as a pretext.

148 Ravenel: "M. Manet, une Olympia nue couchée sur un lit, près d'elle une négresse lui présente des fleurs, tableau capable d'exciter une sédition, si son voisin, un Christ, du même auteur, ne désarmait les furieux par un rire homérique. Ces deux toiles sont les victimes du Salon; rien ne peut exprimer l'étonnement d'abord, puis la colère ou l'effroi des spectateurs. Ces bonnes drôleries ne méritent certes pas cet excès de courroux; elles sont quelque peu audacieuses d'attitude, Olympia surtout! mais trop visiblement enfants naturels de Goya pour qu'on s'inquiète de leurs méfaits."

Compare Ravenel's remark in his conclusion, 8 July: "Ce qui perd les Salons, ce n'est pas les petits monstres de nos Narcisses ou les productions des artistes en démente: ce sont les platitudes et les ouvrages médiocres. Pour une *Olympia* de M. Manet ou un *Haras* de M. Brivet, oeuvres innocentes dans leur ridicule constitution, combien de machines académiques, de tristes tartines, de niaiseries ou de sottises combinons!"

149 The anonymity seems to have been carefully guarded: in the checklist of *Salons* published in *La Chronique des Arts* on 21 May, Ravenel's is the only pseudonym with a ? beside it; all the others are confidently identified.

Chapter Three: The Environs of Paris

1 Cited in *Grand Dictionnaire universel du dix-neuvième siècle*, by Pierre Larousse, 3:61 (in the entry "Café").

2 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, 1:1085 (8 June 1862).

3 "Y," "Un Dimanche d'été," *La Vie Parisienne*, 3 July 1875, pp. 375–76: "J'étais à la campagne depuis six jours, et je m'engourdissais, las de silence, lorsqu'enfin les cloches des villages annoncèrent le matin du septième jour, du jour de repos et de liesse. Puis bientôt un tressaillement se fit le long des bois et des prés, et l'écho des coteaux apporta un premier calembour.

"—Voilà les Parisiens qui commencent! m'écriai-je avec transport. La nature va quitter son rôle de nymphe mystérieuse et muette, elle va devenir une fille d'auberge à qui des commis-voyageurs font une cour quelque peu brutale.

"D'heure en heure l'invasion se répandit, prenant possession de la campagne comme d'une vaste guinguette, d'un café-concert plus grand que ceux des Champs-Élysées.

"Tous ces gens-là venaient tâter les collines comme des gorges, trousser la forêt jusqu'au genou et chiffonner la rivière.

"La brise se mit à souffler des *blagues* et des *lazzis*. Les odeurs de friture et de gibelotte s'élevèrent le long des berges et vinrent ramper sur les champs. Des bruits de bouchons qui sautent, de couteaux faisant tinter les verres, des chansons grivoises, ouvrirent le concert qui alla en grandissant jusqu'à la nuit. . . .

"Quand je vis la campagne ainsi livrée à ceux-là seuls qui la comprennent et savent en jouir, et m'étant repu de ce spectacle, j'allai prendre le chemin de fer pour revenir à Paris." (Cited in part in *Monet and Argenteuil*, by Paul Tucker, p. 118.)

4 Robert Caze, *La Foire aux Peintres. Extrait de Lutèce*, p. 15: "Oh! la pauvre petite Parisienne étonnante et étonnée au milieu de cette nature en toc de Sèvres ou de Ville d'Avray. Il faut être reconnaissant à M. Blanche d'avoir si bien vu les odieux gazons de villas hors murs, ces