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To cite this article: Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby (2015) Still Thinking about Olympia's Maid, The Art Bulletin, 97:4, 430-451, DOI: [10.1080/00043079.2015.1014753](https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2015.1014753)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2015.1014753>



Published online: 22 Jan 2016.



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Still Thinking about Olympia's Maid

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby

On February 4, 1849, only weeks after his seventeenth birthday, Édouard Manet landed in Rio de Janeiro after a two-month sea journey. The teenager, here shown at age fourteen, had embarked on the voyage to make himself eligible to retake the naval exam that he had failed, since only those who crossed the equator were given a second chance (Fig. 1). On board ship Manet had the opportunity to deploy his juvenile artistic skills. As he informed his mother, he had been enlisted to make caricatures of the officers, including the captain, who asked him to teach drawing to his shipmates on their return voyage.¹ The eye exercised by the teenage Manet in Rio was therefore both that of a voyager and an artist, albeit an amateur. Manet dutifully described what he could and could not see in Rio in a letter to his mother:

For the artist, however slight, [Rio] offers a particular cachet; in the street one encounters only negroes and negresses; Brazilian men seldom leave [their houses] and the Brazilian women even less so; one sees them only when they go to mass or in the evening after dinner; they place themselves at their windows and once they perceive that they are being watched they immediately retire.

In this country all negroes are slaves; all these unfortunate people appear stupid [*abrutis*]; the power that whites have over them is extraordinary; I saw a slave market, a somewhat revolting spectacle for us. . . .

Negresses are for the most part nude to the waist; some have a scarf attached to their neck and falling to their chest; they are generally ugly [*laidés*], but I have seen some who are somewhat pretty; they dress themselves with care. Some make turbans; the others very artistically arrange their curly hair and almost all wear skirts adorned with monstrous flying petticoats.²

Manet repeated these observations in another letter to his cousin, specifying that “the population is three quarters negro or mulatto; this part is generally hideous [*affreuse*] except for some exceptions among the negresses and mulattas, the latter are almost all pretty.”³

In his letters from Rio de Janeiro, Manet is frustrated by the invisibility of the elite he calls Brazilian and also “white.” He writes that “Brazilian women” are indolent (*mou*), lacking energy, and not the least lighthearted, as they were reputed to be. Instead, Brazilian women—and by this he means white women—seemed to him prudish and stupid (*bête*). But Manet’s letters are more concerned with the alienating spectacle of a society consisting mostly of slaves. Like the earlier French artist Jean-Baptiste Debret, former student of Jacques-Louis David, Manet contrasts the inaccessibility of indolent white women glimpsed through windows to the omnipresence of black slaves (Fig. 2) And his letters conflate the appearance of the enslaved with the institution of slavery: sometimes the slaves themselves, sometimes the system of slavery are called revolting, frightening, stupid, and repugnant. The naked

Negresses—whose nudity he likely exaggerates—are, he writes, “generally hideous.” Of course, we must take into account his addressees: writing to his mother and family, he professes a repugnance he may or may not have felt. Still, Manet was willing to admit to the attractiveness of a minority: the exceptions dress themselves with care, make turbans, and artistically arrange their curly hair. Manet, the dandy fascinated by fashion, already associated dress with the pretty few among dark women.⁴

In these letters of February 1849, Manet was writing only nine months after France’s second abolition of slavery that took place during the Revolution of 1848.⁵ Manet was thus able to look on slavery in Brazil with a righteous Republican eye. As of April 27, 1848, France no longer permitted slavery in its colonies; it had never officially allowed slaves to exist in France itself. Slaves brought to the metropole had always purportedly become free.⁶ The revolutionaries of 1848 treated the second abolition of slavery, its righting of Napoléon’s wrongful reinstatement of slavery in 1802, as a high priority. The ending of slavery was one of the Second Republic’s very first acts, an act that confirmed its allegiance to the first Revolution’s legacy.

In midcentury France, slavery and class could be spoken in the same breath. Historian Louis Chevalier long ago alerted us to the ways the members of the working class were continually racialized as brutal barbarians, comparing, for instance, “the most degraded part of the poor classes [to] the Negro of the African coast.”⁷ Abolitionists before 1848 had to counter arguments that slaves enjoyed a better life than France’s laborers. In their 1844 petition calling for the abolition of slavery, eight thousand French workers eloquently argued:

Slavery degrades the possessor as much as the possessed. In order to obey the great principle of human fraternity we have made our voice heard in support of our unfortunate slave brothers. We also feel the need to protest vigorously, in the name of the working class, against the supporters of slavery who dare to claim . . . that the lot of French workers is more deplorable than that of slaves. Whatever are the vices of the current social organization of work in France, the worker is free. . . . The worker belongs to himself; no one has the right to whip him, to sell him, or to separate him violently from his wife, children and friends.⁸

The petitioners rightly understood that the fundamental question posed by slavery is not the condition of labor but whether one’s person belongs to oneself or to another. To be a slave is to be conceived as less than human. Personhood, not labor, was the decisive issue. Could black men and women be conceived as owning their own persons?

After the 1848 Revolution’s abolition of slavery, free blacks entered representation more frequently in the illustrated



1 Édouard Manet, age fourteen, 1846, daguerreotype (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Wikimedia Commons)

press than in the Salon.⁹ Cartoons foregrounded the novelty of their control over their own financial transactions. Appearing just three weeks after the abolition of slavery on April 27, 1848, a cartoon by Cham (Charles Amédée de Noé) highlights the novelty of a black worker holding money in his hand and expressing astonishment at the high price presumably named by the top-hatted white man: “What! Three sous? . . . But I am telling you that I am a free negro!” (Fig. 3). The joke rests on the contradiction that personal freedom brings with it the cost of everything. Questions about a world without slavery had come to pivot on how liberated blacks would comport themselves and manage their own finances. Who were these black persons once they emerged from the anonymity and “social death” to which they had long been subjected as slaves?¹⁰ What did it mean to see them inside rather than outside the economy of paid labor?

After 1848, so the revolutionary rhetoric went, the oppressed would wield political and economic power. So, too, would former slaves, whose bodies finally became their own property—and, as in so many revolutions, those frightening, radically redefined bodies came into visibility as male. The workers’ petition on behalf of abolition was emphatically patriarchal: “The worker belongs to himself; no one has the right to whip him, to sell him, or to separate him violently from his wife, children and friends.” Subsequent to the Revolution of 1848, the images of free blacks examined the relation between slavery and labor, slaves and workers, as a negotiation among men.



2 Jean-Baptiste Debret, detail of p. 64 from *Costumes du Brésil*, 1820, watercolor. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by BnF)

Manet’s *Olympia*, painted in 1863 and exhibited at the Salon of 1865, focuses on the modern, post-Revolutionary condition of white and black bodies, but it redefines them as female (Fig. 4). Here, I turn back to this most famous nineteenth-century French painting in order to think further about the relationship between French workers and freed slaves in a picture that cites but modernizes the conventional iconography of the white female nude and a darker, sometimes older, sometimes partly clothed subordinate attendant, whether in early modern paintings such as Titian’s *Venus d’Urbino* of 1538 or nineteenth-century Orientalist pictures such as Léon Benouville’s *Odalisque* of 1844.

Olympia’s maid has flickered in and out of visibility in art historical scholarship. In his preface to the 1999 revised edition of *The Painting of Modern Life*, T. J. Clark remembers a friend’s disbelief: “For God’s Sake! You’ve written about the white woman on the bed for fifty pages and more, and hardly mentioned the black woman alongside her!”¹¹ Clark acknowledges that “the snake of ideology” has “always a deeper blindness in reserve”; he quickly adds that Manet’s



3 Cham, "Comment! Trois sous?... Mais puisque je vous dis que je suis un nègre affranchi!" from *Le Charivari*, May 21, 1848, 3 (artwork in the public domain)

picture also deployed "the fiction of 'blackness,' meant predominantly, ... as the sign of a servitude still imagined, as existing outside the circuit of money—a 'natural' subjection, in other words, as opposed to *Olympia's* 'unnatural' one."¹²

Since Clark's book was first published in 1985, *Olympia* has been revisited by numerous scholars, even adorning the cover of an anthology entitled *Race-ing Art History*, but the discussions of racial difference in the painting are remarkably rare.¹³ Ironically, the relative inattention to racial difference in *Olympia* has largely been due to scholars' acceptance of Sander Gilman's bold, ahistorical generalization that, for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans, "Black women were ontologically the essence of animality and abnormality."¹⁴ If Clark in 1985 suffered from an ideological blind spot that left the maid in Manet's *Olympia* invisible, Gilman that same year spotlighted the black female body as a naked specimen in an essay that linked her to Saartjue Baartmann, the Khoikhoi woman who was exhibited as the Venus Hottentot in both England and France during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Amply illustrated, Gilman's essay trained a clinical, fetishizing gaze on Baartmann's genitalia and buttocks, repeating the violence to which she had first been subjected.¹⁵ For Gilman, Manet's *Olympia* served as evidence that the heightened, deviant sexuality of black women intensified anxieties about the abnormal sexuality of the white prostitute. Stressing "Manet's debt to the pathological model of sexuality," Gilman argued, "It is the black female as the emblem of illness who haunts the background of Manet's *Olympia*."¹⁶

Gilman's generalizations have been widely accepted and uncritically repeated; indeed, it is revelatory that although *Race-ing Art History* of 2002 puts Manet's *Olympia* on its cover, it simply reprints Gilman's essay from seventeen years earlier. Thankfully, around the same time, a few scholars convincingly contested his claims about Baartmann. In a carefully researched essay of 1999, Africanist Zoe Strother argued:

Baartman's contemporaries in London and Paris classed the Hottentot neither as "black," nor as sexy. In fact Baartman's success lay in her status as a figure of the anti-erotic. [She was] reassuring to a European audience.... Far from representing Baartman as a lascivious creature, her display acted as an apotropaic device mocking the threat of interracial marriage and relationships.¹⁷

In 2001 sociologist Zine Magubane likewise insisted that Gilman got it wrong: Europeans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not consider the Khoikhoi people "broadly representative of Africans"; nor were the Khoikhoi considered "black," because their skin was tawny yellow.¹⁸

If Baartmann's tragic history has inspired an extensive body of scholarship, the status of the black woman in Manet's *Olympia* has received far less attention. Exceptions include African-American artist Lorraine O'Grady's seminal and polemical article of 1992, which does not, however, closely analyze the painting itself, and feminist art historian Griselda Pollock's important essay of 1999, the year of Clark's preface to his new edition.¹⁹ Pollock closely attends to the black woman in *Olympia*, concluding that Manet's "painting is an anti-Orientalist or de-Orientalising work. The painting of the head wrap is the sign which indexes ... Orientalism." For Pollock, recognition of an Orientalist frame for Manet's picture "gives us a way to locate this figure ... within metropolitan modernity and not as either blank darkness (Zola) or exotic attribute of venal sexuality (Gilman)."²⁰

Pollock's desire to situate Manet's black model in modern Paris is productive, but her emphasis on the counterpoint of Orientalism diminishes the relative import of France's actual colonial history and long-standing links to the so-called new world. The latter history allows us to see slavery not as a timeless Orientalist harem fantasy but as a specific French institution rejected only fifteen years before the painting of *Olympia* and only nine months before Manet's voyage to Brazil. Here I am testing how productive it is to see *Olympia* as staging a Creole scene that made visible France's former colonial reliance on slavery, as well as its recent enfranchisement of its colonies' slaves and redefinition of all black persons as paid workers. How does our understanding of this painting change if, against Clark in 1999, we see the black woman in *Olympia* as less the sign of "a 'natural' subjection" "existing outside the circuit of money" than as a newly enfranchised member of the working class?

Magubane has made a similar argument about the historically different circumstances of Baartmann's exhibition in England:

The discussions concerning the Khoikhoi at the Cape thus paralleled the legal furor over Baartmann's exhibition.



4 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 75 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (130 × 191 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Patrice Schmidt, © RMN–Grand Palais, provided by Art Resource, NY)

The question of the ownership of labor power took center stage in both. The immediate concern of the African Association [for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa] (which sued Baartmann's captor, Henrik Cezar, on her behalf) was to ascertain *whether she owned her own labor*.²¹

After 1848 black women in France did indeed own their own bodies and labor; they signified not just racial and sexual difference, which they surely did, but also class. Sexual anxieties are clearly at issue in contemporary responses to the presence of a black woman in Manet's *Olympia*—Gilman was, of course, right to this extent—but equally significant is the related history of slavery and its abolition. How does thinking about the entry of blacks into the economy of wage labor after 1848 differently illuminate Manet's painting?

Laure

While French representations of postservitude blacks betray an anxiety about the relative socioeconomic status of white and black men, Manet's economic transaction with a black worker once back in Paris was with a woman. The young man who had witnessed the spectacle of slave labor in Brazil made a notation in a notebook of 1862:

"Laure, very beautiful negress, rue Vintimille, 11, 3rd floor."²²

Now age thirty, Manet noted Laure's address in order to contact her; he specifies that she lives on the third floor (the fourth floor in American usage), likely one of the cheaper apartments near the top of an apartment building. Pollock assumes that Manet met Laure in the Tuileries Garden, where she cared for the children of a fashionable family, because his earliest painting of a black woman is *Children in the Tuileries*, likely painted in 1862 (Fig. 5).²³ In this picture, the young child seated before a turbaned, brown-faced woman is certainly dressed in fancy clothes. Still, such a reading relies on the presumption that *Children in the Tuileries* is an accurate document, scarcely the painter's general approach. Even Manet's radically unlike pictures from the early 1860s are notable for their obvious artificiality, uneven attention to detail, and aggregate compositions. Whether naturalistic in pretense, as in *Concert at the Tuileries* of 1862, a picture flaunting the selective gaze of the flâneur whose roaming eye is materialized in the inconsistent focus trained by Manet on a crowd, or unabashedly staged, as in *Luncheon on the Grass* of 1863, a studio confection pasting together discrepantly sized figures, Manet's paintings challenge naturalistic illusion. We do not believe that the depicted persons necessarily shared a time and place.



5 Édouard Manet, *Children in the Tuileries*, ca. 1861–62, oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (37.8 × 46 cm). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, 42.190 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Erik Gould, provided by Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design)

Yet Manet was reported to have said, “I can’t do anything without the model. I don’t know how to invent.”²⁴ The artifice of his paintings was a matter of composition, the aggregation of studies from life that left traces of their disparate assembly, not the whole-cloth invention of figures. I am inclined therefore to believe that Manet relied on Laure to model for him during these years. He may have sketched her working as a nanny in the Tuileries and written down her address, or he may have met her in other circumstances and had her pose for the governess in his studio, all of this assuming that we actually see Laure in this hastily sketched dark woman without facial features. If so, she was painted three times by Manet between 1862 and 1863: first, in the scene in the Tuileries, then in a portrait known in the twentieth century as *Laure* and presumed to be a preparatory sketch for *Olympia* (Fig. 6), and finally, as the maid in that picture.²⁵ However, I admit we cannot be certain: what we do know is that Manet identified Laure as a contact and noted that she was “a very beautiful negress” in a notebook of 1862 and that he painted a black woman three times around the same time. I will call his model Laure.

“Very beautiful” matters, I think. In nineteenth-century France it was a commonplace to call black persons ugly and unfit for painting. In 1849, for example, a critic of François-Auguste Biard’s *The Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies* (April 27, 1848) had disingenuously claimed that “these Negroes to whom it was no doubt right to restore freedom, will always show up badly as principal figures in a picture.”²⁶ Manet himself had referred to the black people he saw in Brazil as “hideous,” even frightening (*affreuse* connotes both), although he admitted that there were exceptions.

I think we could not be sure whether Manet found Laure beautiful from the three extant pictures. He has difficulty

painting Laure’s face in the portrait; his brushwork is uncharacteristically clumsy and uncertain. The consummately facile painter falters here as he attempts to establish what one might call a pictorial intimacy with her embodiment; an intimacy, that is, at the level of painting practice. To render her dark face, he first applied brown of a medium value and then tried to establish form with black outlines and a darker umber pigment that carves out her cheek and forehead. This deep brown appears too dark, an overlaid mark rather than an illusion of shadow. Similarly, he resorts to white to lighten a patch on her forehead and chin to suggest their convexity. He appears to have mixed some red and white into the brown to lay down the circles of her cheeks. Manet, known for his elimination of middle values, is fussing here, and we sense a desperate, additive building up of wet pigment, slick oily patches on patches rather than, for example, the remarkably decisive and economical suggestion of form in the thinly painted face of *Olympia* (posed by his favorite model, Victorine Meurent) (Fig. 7). In Laure’s portrait, he made a dark complexion by overlapping one opaque color onto another, an effect all the more apparent because the neck and shoulders are sketched so thinly over the light-colored canvas as to appear luminous. The sheer clumsiness of Laure’s face contrasts with Manet’s assured handling of her colorful head wrap, off-the-shoulders cotton blouse, and briefly suggested necklace and earrings. Even in Brazil, the painter had associated the aesthetic appeal of black women with their careful “artistic” dress. Painting cloth was Manet’s forte; jewelry was easily reducible to a few quick strokes. His entirely new challenge was to paint a black face and body.

But Manet was a quick learner. In *Olympia*, Laure’s face is easily ignored, so absorbed is it by the dark ground, but it repays closer attention (Fig. 8). Now her dark face is treated

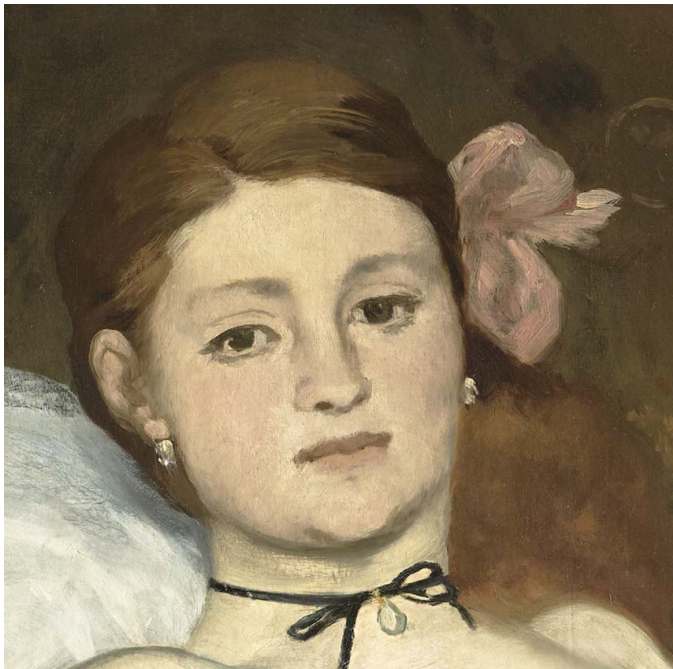


6 Édouard Manet, *Laure*, 1862–63, oil on canvas, 24 × 19 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (61 × 50 cm). Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin)

smoothly and tonally, not as an accretion of separate wet, relatively thick patches of color. A single, evenly applied, warm dark brown has been laid down continuously from the top of her head to her neck and shoulders and subtly blended with a darker tone modeling the far side of her nose and the receding planes of her cheeks, forehead, and undersides of her eyes. Only the most minimally lightened strokes suggest the protrusion of her nose, the rounding of her upper eyelids, and the convexity of her chin. And Laure's mouth has become gorgeous, a tour de force, the lower lip glistening and red, carefully observed, irregular in shape, with a soft dent at left and a brilliant white highlight at right that is repeated on the long drop of her exquisite coral earring. Now the head wrap is subordinate to her face and earring; her scarf is more loosely and thinly painted than the precise, carefully delineated, thick white collar that beautifully frames her.

Yet the effect of Laure's presence, the way we typically read her, is as a subservient foil, a woman that even the keen eyes of Manet scholars such as T. J. Clark, Michael Fried, and

Carol Armstrong could all but ignore.²⁷ Manet's painting has often been discussed as the picture of one woman, the white woman who gives the painting its name. Cat, Negress, shawl, slippers: these are Olympia's accessories. Yet Laure importantly inflected how the white woman Olympia, posed by Victorine Meurent, was read by Manet's contemporaries. Whatever the origins of the model herself, the figure in Manet's picture brought the colonies to the metropole. She heightened viewers' awareness of racial difference and the colonial history of slavery, including art historical precedents, not only Orientalist paintings but also the many pictures of light-skinned Caribbean women accompanied by dark slaves (Fig. 9). French images of slave societies in the Caribbean and Americas often juxtaposed supine white Creole women and their standing, sometimes half-naked, black slaves, as can be seen in the title page illustration to Charles Expilly's *Les femmes et les moeurs du Brésil* (The Women and Customs of Brazil) published in Paris the same year that Manet painted his picture (Fig. 10).²⁸



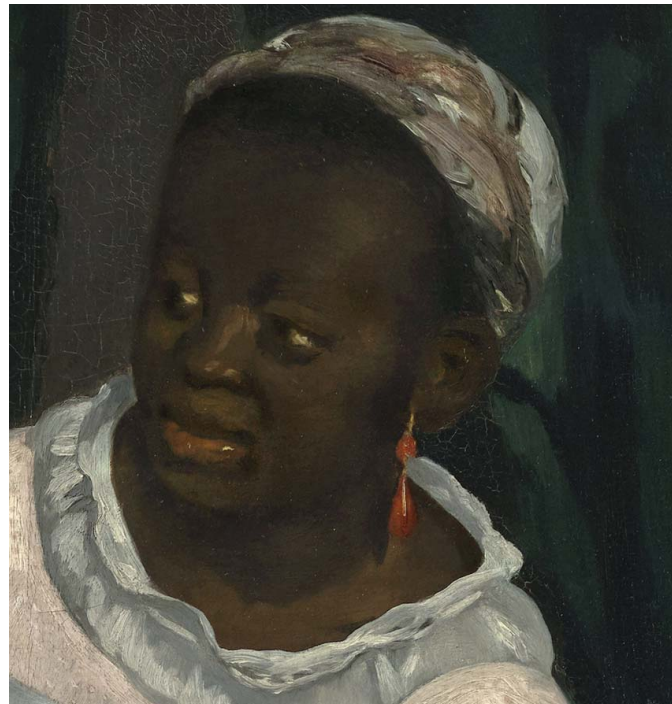
7 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, detail showing Olympia's face. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph © RMN–Grand Palais, provided by Art Resource, NY)

Manet's painting can be seen to stage a Creole scene wherein the white woman's pampered indolence and implicit sexual perversity results from black slavery, an image pervasive in France. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry's influential late eighteenth-century portrait of Caribbean society described Creole women as at once lazy, imperious, indulged, and high-strung. Creoles, he told his readers, were spoiled by

the habit of being surrounded by slaves and needing only to look to have their way cleared before them. No tyrant ever had as much unremitting homage nor more constant worshippers than a creole child. . . . Young creoles should be raised in France, because they are free there from the despotism that the service of slaves has made into a habit and taste.²⁹

For Moreau de Saint-Méry, France was the place where Creoles would stop being corrupted by their tyrannical rule over slaves. Manet moved that primal Creole scene of inequity to Paris, replacing the indolent sensuality of the despotic Creole with Olympia's unsentimental alertness in a painting that nevertheless sustains her priority and command. Just three years before Manet painted *Olympia* as a foil to a prostitute, a publication entitled *Ces dames, physiognomies parisiennes* declared that courtesans highly valued their Negro servants who "obeyed" and "belonged" to them, thereby connoting both the conditions of slavery and the eighteenth-century iconography of black women as accessories.³⁰ Here is evidence of the lingering French fantasy of slavery as possession.

Manet himself made slavery the surround to his picture. The accompanying poem by his friend Zacharie Astruc provided a heavy-handed colonial frame for Manet's painting:



8 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, detail showing Laure's face. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph © RMN–Grand Palais, provided by Art Resource, NY)

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.³¹

The verse adorning *Olympia* is well known and long scorned. Manet's admirers have been dismissive, rightly alienated by Astruc's well-worn, inflated language, so unlike the taut matter-of-factness and contemporaneity of Manet's painting. Overlooked is the title of Astruc's poem: "La fille des îles," which can be translated as "Girl or Daughter of the Islands," but also prostitute. For the French, "the islands" would have been the West Indies (or Antilles).

Like the framing poem, Salon criticisms and caricatures of *Olympia* betray Caribbean associations. The colonial images erupting in reviews are heterogeneous, stemming from different regions and encompassing not only race but also tropical diseases, animals, minerals, and flora. Take, for example, the especially hysterical criticism by Geronte (Victor Fournel), which confuses rather than conflates the two women:

this Hottentot Venus with a black cat, exposed completely naked on her bed like a corpse on the counters of the morgue, this Olympia from the rue Mouffetard, dead of yellow fever and already arrived at an advanced state of decomposition, would be impertinences to the public, if they were not above all colossal ineptitudes, much more burlesque than serious and convincing.³²

Note the purposeful confusion of referents here. The passage alternates between African curiosity and white Parisian prostitute, colonies and metropole, death in Paris and death in



9 Agostino Brunias, *The Linen Market, Santo Domingo*, detail, ca. 1775, oil on canvas, 19½ × 25½ in. (49.6 × 64.8 cm). Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on deposit at Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Colección Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza)

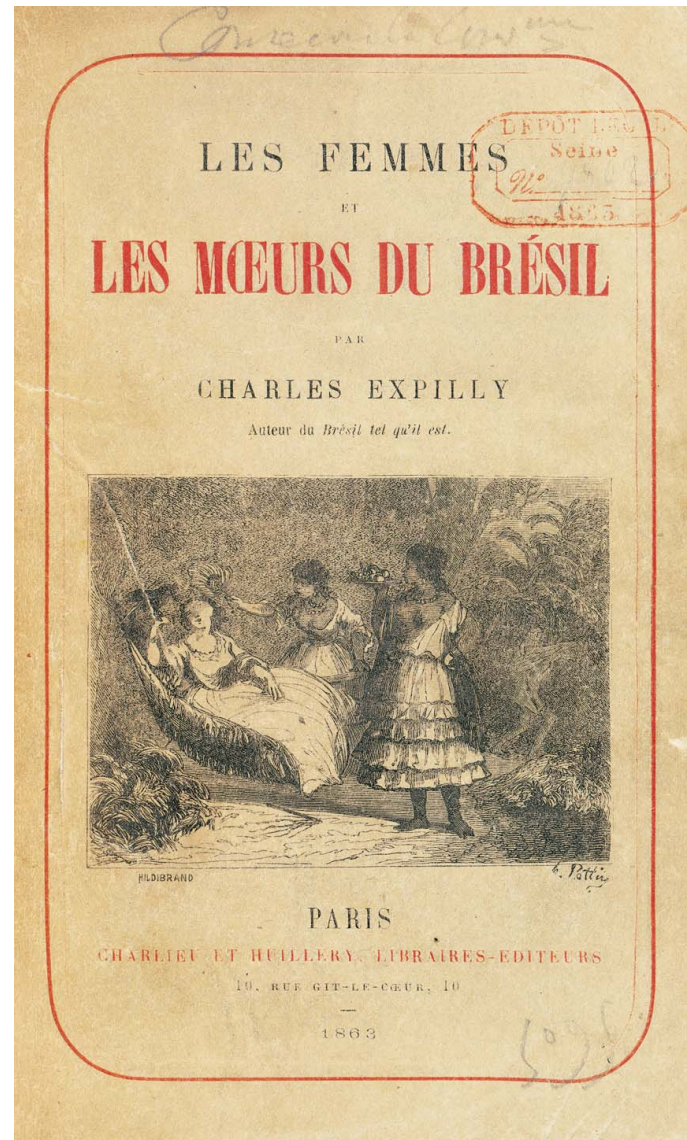
the West Indies from yellow fever. Race, sex, bodily degradation, and death are geographically sited, but dislocated by the passage's bewildering circuit of switches. Here, there, here, there, both repugnant, the grotesqueness of each amplified by the illogic of their conjoining. And all along, Geronte is talking about Manet's painting, not actual women, inviting yet another level of misreading.

Another critic, Amédée Cantaloube,³² makes the issue of racial degeneration raised by the "negress" explicit:

And the negress? and this black cat, wouldn't you call it the vision of a nightmare? It is horrible!

My faith, monsieur, they assure me that they feel the same in America, and with the help of progress, our great grandchildren will look like them.³³

The word "progress" suggests that miscegenation is a modern phenomenon horrifying Americans and French alike. In the following lines, past art is sarcastically



10 Title page of Charles Expilly, *Les femmes et les mœurs du Brésil*, Paris: Charliet et Huillery, 1863 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by BnF)

deployed to underscore the horrors of racial and sexual difference:

Never has one seen a similar spectacle with a more cynical effect: this Olympia, a sort of female gorilla, a grotesque in 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. On the other side of the bed a negress, "a sweet black messenger" brings her, upon waking, spring in the form of a bouquet that hardly appears to flatter the sense of smell.³⁴

Astruc's gentle black messenger brings spring in a form that stinks. Olympia is a female gorilla, a grotesque in rubber outlined in black, aping Titian's Venus. Repeating the strategy of Geronte, Cantaloube attributes the colonial imagery of racial difference to the white woman.



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

33168

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.

11 Bertall, "Manette, ou la femme de l'ébéniste, par Manet," from *Le Journal Amusant*, May 27, 1865, wood engraving. Collection of the author (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Julie Wolf)



M. HÉBERT.

— Vite un médecin!
Le vomito negro s'étant déclaré chez les portraits de M. Hébert.

12 Cham, "Vite un médecin!" *Le vomito negro s'étant déclaré chez les portraits de M. Hébert*, from *Le Salon de 1865 photographié*, 2nd ed., Paris: Arnauld de Vresse, 1865, lithograph (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Anne and Jerome Fisher Fine Arts Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia)

Pierrot, surely another pseudonym for Cantaloube, published a review in another journal that repeated the simian and rubber imagery: "A woman on a bed, or, rather, some form or other, blown up like a grotesque in 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."³⁵ In 1985 Clark translated the French word *caoutchouc* as India rubber, but in 1863 the term would have connoted South America, where the plant is native. Rubber was not transplanted to the east until the end of the century, when an Englishman first shipped plants to India. Rubber, furthermore, is naturally white (not black, as we imagine, because of the decision by tire makers to dye it that color): thus, Cantaloube's image of a white rubber body outlined in black.

Add to these colonial images—slavery, the Hottentot Venus, yellow fever, gorilla, monkey, rubber, and unpleasant smell—the reference in two caricatures to Olympia as an "ébéniste," or wife of an "ébéniste," a word meaning cabinet-maker but also ebony worker, as it derives from ebony, the hard black wood from West Africa and Asia, used, for instance, to make black piano keys (Fig. 11).³⁶ Pertinent here is the disturbing fact that ebony was a euphemism for the human cargo on slave ships.³⁷ In his book *Le Salon de 1865 photographié*, Cham, whose caricature of Olympia refers to the birth of the little "Ebony worker," also mocked Ernest Hébert's painting of an Italian girl in shadowy woods incongruously entitled "Black Pearl" (Fig. 12). The title surely inspired Cham to suggest her dark skin tone in Italian:

"Quick, a doctor!"

Vomito negro is being declared in the portraits of M. Hébert.



13 Isaac Cruikshank after George Woodward, *A Morning Surprise*, “Why, who the Devil have we got here!! —It is only me Massa,” ca. 1807, hand-colored etching, $8\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{3}{8}$ in. (21.3 × 29.4 cm). British Museum, London (artwork in the public domain; photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum)

“Vomito negro” can be translated as “black vomit,” but it also connotes “negro vomit” and was a common name for yellow fever, the disease that decimated Napoléon’s troops in St-Domingue. No surprise that there is a virulent racism consistently running through Cham’s work: he was the grandson of the comte de Noé, the former owner of Haitian revolutionary hero Toussaint Louverture.³⁸

The Salon reviews and caricatures of 1865 suggest the mobility of colonial signifiers and the rapidity of these chains of association. In Hébert’s case, mere painted shadows on a Mediterranean model lead to a foreign expletive, disfiguring blackface, and West Indian disease. Darkness, specifically, blackness, rapidly contaminates the Salon with the horrors of racial difference, the specter of racial degeneration, and the sublimated history of colonial defeats. Of the colonial signifiers—the Hottentot Venus, yellow fever (*vomito negro*), gorilla, monkey, ebony, and rubber—only the last, surprisingly, was white in color; the rest are black and introduce a contaminating blackness.

Clearly, the black woman in Manet’s *Olympia* importantly contributed to the Salon critics’ hysterical animosity toward his white nude. A sign of slavery and also racial difference, the black maid exacerbated contemporary anxieties about the female sexuality so flagrantly yet opaquely signaled by the picture. A lurid caricature such as Isaac Cruikshank’s *A Morning Surprise* of about 1807 (Fig. 13), made in a different British colonial context, bears a striking compositional similarity to *Olympia* and betrays how potentially threatening was the sexuality of black women to “the moral and physical well-being of the white male body,” to cite Kay Dian Kriz.³⁹ Yet Manet’s critics discussed the two women, not the offstage men under threat. Reviewers repeatedly chose to confuse the two figures and their attributes rather than to conflate them; *their strategy was alternation, not assimilation*. The caption to Honoré Daumier’s picture of viewers gaping at an unseen

painting also makes unclear the identity of the picture’s actors by switching between their different attributes (Fig. 14) :

“Why the devil is that big red woman *en chemise* called Olympia?”
 “Perhaps it’s the name of the cat.”

Here the caption plays havoc with the painting one cannot see, pretending that there is only one female figure in Manet’s picture: a “big woman” identified as red, not red-head (“rouge,” not “rousse”), wearing a blouse. The caption therefore better describes brown Laure in her pink dress and red head scarf than naked Olympia, even as it simultaneously draws attention to the white woman’s red hair. In Daumier’s economical black-and-white lithograph, color won’t stay put and clarify racial difference. In Manet’s reviews, the questions were purposefully befuddling: Which woman was red? Which looked like a gorilla? Which appeared to be blown up?

Geronte, the critic who called Olympia both a Venus Hottentot and a victim of yellow fever, made the conjoining of the two women into some monstrous freak even more explicit:

In looking at this Olympia, compared in the exhibition booklet (*livret*) to the day delicious to see, and qualified by the lyric poet Manet called to his aid, as “an august young girl in whom the fire burns,” makes me remember the hawkers at public carnivals where a distinguished gentleman at the door promises you extraordinary, incomparable, unique marvels in elegant language, and where once you enter, you are shown a cow with two heads, one of which is made of cardboard.⁴⁰

“A cow with two heads, one of which is made of cardboard”! In *Olympia*, which head, we might ask, is the



14 Honoré Daumier, *Devant le tableau de M. Manet*, “Pour quoi diable cette grosse femme rouge et en chemise s’appelle-t-elle OLYMPIA? —Mais mon ami c’est peut être la chatte noire qui s’appelle comme ça?” originally published in *Le Charivari*, June 19, 1865, from *Croquis pris au Salon par Daumier*, 1865, pl. 9, lithograph, 9 × 7¼ in. (22.9 × 18.4 cm). Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, Gift of Lisa Andrus (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Portland Art Museum)

fake? And if, in Clark’s words, “falsity was what made [the courtesan] modern,”⁴¹ what should we make of Geronte’s reading of the painting *Olympia* as a two-headed hoax? Does each figure falsify the other, proving one is not a real courtesan or odalisque and the other is not a real slave? Is this where the picture’s modernity lies? Would the falsity, the modernity, of *Olympia* be as apparent without the “monstrous” falsehood of her pairing with an equally inauthentic slave?

Manet’s painting was not the only cultural production prominently putting a black woman on view in 1865. Indeed, the Salon opened only two days after Giacomo Meyerbeer’s opera *L’Africaine* premiered on April 28, 1865. Although the slave who gave the opera its name was a South Asian woman bought at an African slave market, caricaturists ran wild depicting her as black. Cham, not surprisingly, mocked the director’s infatuation with his immense statuesque black woman wrapped in a head scarf (Fig. 15): “In love with his work, the new Pygmalion always thinks he hears a director banging at the door to abduct his African woman, and he gets ready to defend her from daily danger.” Despite its mockery, Cham’s print alerts us to the potential value of the black woman in Paris. Laure may well have been a desired model, although this does not necessarily mean that she was a well paid. We do not know. She was nonetheless a woman who was remunerated for her services. When Manet shifted



15 Cham, “*Amoureux de son oeuvre, le nouveau Pygmalion croit toujours entendre un directeur cogner à sa porte pour lui enlever son AFRICAINE, et il s’apprête à la défendre au péril de ses jours.*” Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by BnF)

her from the role of governess in a picture of the Tuileries to that of prostitute’s maid, he simultaneously placed her in quotes as a slave attendant and inserted her into the tawdry space of bodies for hire.

Yet even as he moved Laure from the context of child care to that of prostitution, Manet suppressed her sexual availability.⁴² Through placement, coloration, and oversize costume, the painter subordinated the black woman to her bold, naked, white counterpart. We do not see Cruikshank’s aggressive sexual predator or the genitalia of the Hottentot Venus. Nor do we see *Olympia*’s maid as another prostitute, despite the fact that black women had long been prostitutes in Paris and also appeared in explicitly pornographic commercial photographs.⁴³ A decade earlier, Manet’s close friend Nadar had twice photographed Marie l’Antillaise, once bare-breasted, in photographs intended for sale (Fig. 16).⁴⁴ Manet, by contrast, suppressed the maid’s sexual availability, distancing her from a pornographic cliché. Laure is neither a repugnant caricature nor an enticing lure. The painter made it possible *not* to see Laure as an object of sexual desire. We do not imagine her partly unclothed like Nadar’s Marie or Eugène Delacroix’s *Aspasie*, the “mixed-blood” woman whom he painted three times in similar, quicky painted oil studies. Nor does she resemble the half-naked slaves in Creole scenes, or the redolently sensual, half-naked, dark servants to white harem women in Orientalist painting.

Instead, she is the modern, fully clothed, discreet working-class black attendant to the white sex worker.

In 1868, the Goncourt brothers made the same move when they jotted down notes for their novel *La fille Élisa* about the fall of a young prostitute, daughter of a midwife, and twice placed a “negress” at the site of prostitution. What began as a notation about the voice of a brothel’s barker shifted to that of a prostitute’s friend: “Barker for a brothel, not at all a hoarse voice, voice of a false Creole negress, with crystalline and breaking notes like a broken harmonica . . . make the friend of the whore a negress, study the type and place her in the scene.”⁴⁵ Once again, falsity is located at the site of sex and contact between black and white bodies. Here, however, it is not the courtesan or prostitute who is false but the “friend of the whore,” the “Creole negress,” a subordinate black woman born in the colonies, not Africa. The word “Creole” itself invites the confusion of black and white. The French primarily used the term to refer to white Europeans born in the colonies, but it could also be applied to blacks born there.⁴⁶ What Creoles of both races shared was an alienation from their ancestral origins and culture. Creole was where dislocated Africans and Europeans met; where black slaves served spoiled white mistresses and all were thereby corrupted. Creole, in short, meant slavery. And also falsehood: French, but not; African, but not. Geronte had recognized a long-standing inauthenticity.

Another Laure

In Paris, black women entered a wage-labor economy; they were being paid to work as models and prostitutes. They were also being paid to be governesses and wet nurses. As we have seen, Manet may have met Laure working in this role. For the Salon of 1865, a black woman was also paid to model as a nanny. While the Paris Opéra performed Meyerbeer’s *L’Africaine*, the Salon of 1865 featured not just *Olympia* but also Jacques Eugène Feyen’s all but forgotten *Le baiser enfantin*, or *The Childlike Kiss*, a large painting measuring approximately three and a half feet by five feet, only a bit smaller than Manet’s canvas (Fig. 17).⁴⁷ In Feyen’s painting, two women pose as *nourrices*, “nannies” or wet nurses. Given the infants’ young age, they may have been seen as the latter. After all, in the 1860s at least four thousand live-in wet nurses worked in Paris.⁴⁸

Unlike *Olympia*, Feyen’s academic painting attracted little critical attention in 1865, although I have located two reviews and two graphic reproductions (Fig. 18).⁴⁹ Here is *L’Illustration*:

Monsieur Feyen found [in *Childlike Kiss*] a gracious composition, perhaps a bit big, but arranged and painted with care. Two nannies, one blond, Alsatian with a black cap, the other, a strong negress with white teeth and yellow eyes, are seated on a bench that supports a trellis. The first holds a small girl of about eight months, dressed in a white blouse, and the second a small boy of a year and a half, as strong as the small one is delicate. The two babies hug, or rather it is the little girl who with her nose in the air presses the cheek of the boy with her right arm and kisses him on the lips. The surprised toddler lets his slightly muscular left arm fall on the length of the



16 Nadar, *Marie l'Antillaise*, 1856–59, collodion salt print, 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (25 × 19 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Art Resource, NY/Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

negress’s arm; he feels himself sliding off the knees of his nanny. The small girl, by contrast, is supported without any effort on her part.⁵⁰

What a narrative! At its center is French manhood, the sturdy baby boy kissed by the eager little girl and slipping off the lap of the strong Negress with white teeth and yellow eyes who fails to secure him! *L’Illustration* was a journal that consistently attempted to appear objective, reproducing the painting quite accurately without any of Cham’s invective; yet the celebratory review betrays its author’s anxiety: yellow eyes! As if Feyen was Delacroix or Balzac! But while Balzac dedicated “Girl with the Golden Eyes” to the Romantic painter, this critic resorts to the word “yellow,” thereby connoting disease—yellow fever—rather than golden treasure.⁵¹ Colonial anxiety leaks out despite *L’Illustration*’s moderation and despite Feyen’s splendid portrait of a vital, beaming black woman, so lovely in her blue dress with a crisp white collar, dark orange shawl, and golden yellow head scarf and earrings. She is as gorgeous as her white counterpart, also in regional costume, and Feyen derived obvious pleasure in painting her brown hand at the center of an orgy of white cotton and pink baby flesh (Fig. 19). Here is the achievement of a splendid versimilitude; Feyen has effortlessly suggested a vital physicality and presentness. The painter is acutely attentive to the alterity of this woman’s body, and his



17 Jacques Eugène Feytaud, *Le baiser enfantin* (*The Childlike Kiss*), 1865, oil on canvas, 43¼ × 59⅞ in. (110 × 152 cm). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by The Image of the Black in Western Art Project, Harvard University)



18 After Jacques Eugène Feytaud, *Le baiser enfantin* (*The Childlike Kiss*), from “Salon de 1865,” *L’Illustration*, May 27, 1865, 334 (artwork in the public domain)

precision makes us believe that we see another person’s hand rather than a phantasmic projection (the projection, in other words, falls on the side of the viewers, not the painter). All in all, the picture exudes good health, and the statuary in the

background also celebrates women and babies. Without the black woman, we might assume that this was a picture of the joys of motherhood, but she effectively cancels such a reading and makes us look more carefully at the regional costume of the white woman and its difference from the extremely fancy clothing and hats of the two fleshy infants. Celebrated here are paid caretakers, not mothers, a choice all the more remarkable given the controversy in precisely these years about the dangers of France’s long-held reliance on wet nurses and its terrible resulting infant mortality rates of over 30 percent (one historian estimates that the mortality rate in 1865 was almost 39 percent).⁵²

Is this Laure who poses for Feytaud?⁵³ Although she was certainly not the only black woman to model in 1860s Paris, it is possible that the woman I am calling Laure posed for both painters. The faces painted by Manet and Feytaud share a roundness, different, for example, from the thinner, longer face of the black woman who was painted by Thomas Eakins in Jean-Léon Gérôme’s studio in the mid- to late 1860s (Figs. 20, 21). Moreover, the women painted by Manet and Feytaud both have a slightly upturned nose, unlike the larger and straight nose of Nadar’s model Marie. Both painters were drawn to their sitter’s high forehead, round face, and large, full, lower lip, unlike Marie’s thinner one. But while Manet consistently avoided the challenges posed by his unfamiliarity



19 Jacques Eugène Feyen, *Le baiser enfantin* (*The Childlike Kiss*), detail showing the hands and babies. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by The Image of the Black in Western Art Project, Harvard University)

with black hair, both Feyen and Nadar depicted their models' center part. Still, I believe that Laure may have posed for both of the extraordinary large-scale paintings that paired a white and a black woman at the Salon of 1865.

She may also have worked as a nanny or wet nurse and not just modeled as them. Perhaps Feyen, like Manet, first noticed her working in that capacity at the Tuileries very near his studio. Black women were being employed as governesses and wet nurses in France, and occasionally they entered French representation. A daguerreotype of a grave, elegantly dressed wet nurse holding a sleeping white baby dates from the years directly after the second abolition of slavery (Fig. 22).⁵⁴ During the same years, Cham twice caricatured black wet nurses. His 1849 cartoon from an extensive series mocking Haiti's new Emperor Soulouque features his "diplomatic gift" to the queen of Spain, "a superb black wet nurse" whose milk, however, repulses the envoy because it resembles black shoe polish.⁵⁵ Another Cham caricature from 1853 represents the mixed-race playwright and novelist Alexandre Dumas cross-dressed as the wet nurse of Louis XIV and Louis XV, an image referring, as the caption tells us, to the censorship of his plays of those names (Fig. 23). Cham, as we have seen, expressed racist invective generally, and specifically targeted the pretensions of freed blacks. Here he relishes the high/low dissonance of contact between European royalty and a lower-class black woman. Wet nursing predictably incited such a titillation wedded to anxiety because it entailed bodily intimacy between strangers of different classes, sometimes regions and races.⁵⁶

In France the jobs of modeling and wet nursing were not mutually exclusive. Edgar Degas painted wet nurses more than once. Berthe Morisot would paint her baby daughter in the arms of a wet nurse who sat for her while nursing, thereby



20 Jacques Eugène Feyen, *Le baiser enfantin* (*The Childlike Kiss*), detail showing the black woman's face. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by The Image of the Black in Western Art Project, Harvard University)



21 Thomas Eakins, *Female Model*, ca. 1867–69, oil on canvas, 30¼ × 27 in. (76.8 × 68.6 cm). Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, museum purchase, Mildred Anna Williams Collection, 1966.41 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco)



22 *Nourrice noire tenant une petite fille sur les genoux (Black Wet Nurse with Young Girl in Her Lap)*, 1848–52, daguerrotype. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by BnF)

performing two jobs at once.⁵⁷ Manet kept a photograph of the two in his personal album of cartes de visite. An American visitor to the Académie Julian noted that after “A series of nude and shivering figures had . . . passed before the cruelly critical eyes of the pupils . . . [one student said,] ‘Look at her bust. No doubt she has suckled half a dozen bastards.’”⁵⁸ Besides confirming that women who worked as wet nurses and nannies could also work as models, this comment attests to the fact that these same women could suckle the bastard children of prostitutes; even working-class women in nineteenth-century Paris relied on wet nurses. Although Manet’s painting undoubtedly suppresses this scenario, the prostitute Olympia could have been seen as a mother, her black servant as a wet nurse.

The American visitor’s statement also makes us aware that Manet never depicted Laure nude, although he had associated Negroesses above all with nakedness in Brazil. In 1849, the boy apparently believed that he saw black women’s breasts everywhere. Young Manet’s professed discomfort in face of what he perceived to be the pervasive nakedness of black slaves might have been exacerbated by the omnipresence of black wet nurses in midcentury Brazil, where they also could be objects of desire.⁵⁹ In 1863, Expilly, the French commentator on Brazil, wrote that “the ideal” of “the man of the tropics” was “embodied in the opulent type of the wet nurse.”⁶⁰

In his painting *Olympia*, thirty-year-old Manet inverted his teenage trauma of viewing an immense, degraded, half-naked slave population—surely not as naked as he claimed,



23 Cham, “*La nouvelle nourrice du Théâtre Français. Caricature à propos de la censure de deux comédies de Dumas: La Jeunesse de Louis XIV et La Jeunesse de Louis XV,*” from *Le Charivari*, November 1, 1853 (artwork in the public domain)

but on view. In Paris he was paying a white woman to pose naked and a black woman to model dressed. The latter’s clothing may have been for Manet the sign of the financial transaction that differentiated her position in Paris from enslavement. Being dressed was not a sign of natural servitude, as some would have it, but of the contrary: her entry into class relations, her modernity.

The black woman in *Olympia* is both a paid servant and a paid model, and the caricaturist Bertall placed her alongside other paid servants on the cover of the issue of *Journal Amusant* that includes his caricature of Manet’s *Olympia* (Fig. 24). Almost crowded out by other attendants, the caricatured, turbaned black maid with immense earrings carries her oversize bouquet to a prettified, now-dressed French courtesan, also adorned by jewelry, while a white man and woman servant carefully paint her hair “Venetian red” and her shoulders “pearl white.” A personification of the arts, the seductive white woman touches up her cheeks while gazing into a mirror. Framed paintings hang from her skirt, and she holds a palette in her left hand. The satirical caption mocks the collective “industrial” and “commercial” production of a commodified art.⁶¹ Modern “industrial” art is produced by a phalanx of paid workers, including a black maid.



24 Bertall, “Heureuse tendance de la peinture et des arts: ils prennent de plus en plus la caractère industriel et commercial qui leur avait trop malheureusement fait défaut jusqu’alors,” cover of *Journal Amusant*, May 27, 1865 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Julie Wolf)

Models

Free black Parisiennes were betwixt and between: bodies, dress, ethnicity were all unstable markers attesting to the complexity of black women’s status in the capital of modernity and also of empire. Even clothing was complicated: Were so-called Negresses who wore contemporary fashion attesting to their modernity, or were Parisian costumes a form of masquerade? Did head wraps authenticate black women’s foreign roots or were they exotic accessories that veiled their Parisian identity? And what role precisely did their skin color play? Take the immensely complex remark made later in the century about a Senegalese model: “Marthe coquettishly dons a red madras, and although very Parisian, she poses negresses.”⁶² In this astonishing statement by Paul Dollfus, race is a performance tied to costume. Marthe is very Parisian but she poses *as* a Negress by donning a red madras scarf, just as Laure did. In his subsequent book *Modèles d’artistes* of 1888, Dollfus offered another comment that underscores the complexity of black models’ roles: “The slave—a superb negress—was posed by a model named Marthe.”⁶³ Here the depicted slave is identified as the superb Negress, not the model Marthe who posed for the part.

Dollfus’s amply illustrated book includes three pictures related to Marthe. In the most ambitious, full-page portrait of her head and shoulders, Marthe wears a high-necked, button-up jacket, punctuated by a white collar and a rooster pin (Fig. 25).⁶⁴ Her frontal pose, direct stare, and closed, almost pursed, mouth make her appear alert, but also formal. There is nothing coquettish about this woman, no tilt of her head



25 Rose Maury, *Marthe*, “Marthe. Overall model, much sought after by orientalists, Benjamin Constant, Desportes, etc. Often poses in the academies of young girls,” illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d’artistes*, Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1888, 114 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Julie Wolf)

or veiled glance; rather, she appears professional. Her large hoop earrings signal cultural difference, but the bow at the top of her head may be the topknot of a headwrap or it may simply be a bow (a neat, frugal counterpoint to Olympia’s lavish, almost floral, peach-colored ribbon). Here is a dark-skinned Parisian worker buttoned up as primly as the nursemaid in the earlier daguerreotype (Fig. 22). The other two illustrations to Dollfus’s book bifurcate Marthe into black Afro-Caribbean and white Parisienne. In one vignette, a small, almost ornamental head of a black woman is shown with a head wrap (or cap) punctuated by three pins, hoop earrings, and an off-the-shoulder blouse akin to that worn by Laure in Manet’s preliminary portrait study.⁶⁵ The other illustrates an anecdote about Marthe’s embarrassment when she inadvertently saw a naked white male model in the studio of Gérôme’s students.⁶⁶ Directly above the picture Dollfus’s text states that she blushed; below, he reports that she exclaimed, “I will never get used to this profession [*métier*]!” In this illustration we see Marthe from the back, and she wears a dark, full-length, high-collared Parisian dress with a bustle and a dark head wrap that could be mistaken for her hair. Her skin is white, as if Marthe’s modesty, her Parisian propriety, were most easily given form in the formulaic representation of a bourgeois white woman fleeing the artist’s studio. Together, the three pictures, like Dollfus’s commentary, suggest how challenging it was to appear a modern and black Parisienne; the terms existed in tension.

In Manet’s painting, the black woman’s overlarge, awkwardly fitting dress contributes to our sense that she has



26 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, detail showing Laure's hand. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph © RMN–Grand Palais, provided by Art Resource, NY)

taken on a new role. In fact, Manet paid careful attention to details of Laure's dress that are seldom visible in reproduction and rarely noted; the cloth is diaphanous, with small pink dots that suggest a surprising refinement. The maid with her gorgeous earrings may wear an ill-fitting, hand-me-down dress, but she is not represented as impoverished.⁶⁷ Close looking makes us appreciate the indeterminacy of Laure's costuming; her dress and accessories combine Parisian and Afro-Caribbean associations. We might say that unlike Marthe, she poses as both at one and the same time. For a black woman in nineteenth-century France, modeling entailed such a doubling, a doubling that was not only geographic—straddling the metropole and the colonies, Paris and the African diaspora—but also the result of France's long reliance on slavery: women like Marthe and Laure were paid a wage, but their bodies looked like those of slaves. If the early nineteenth-century debate about Baartmann had pivoted on the uncertainty of her self-possession—the question of whether she or others put her body on view—black models in late nineteenth-century France chose to exhibit themselves for money, but they could not erase the connotations of slavery, or, should we say, the spectacle of inequity, modernity's defamiliarization of what had once been naturalized. Falsehood again. Like the Creole, neither one nor the other.

Although Manet closely renders the details of Laure's costume, he provides only a perfunctory, if effective, representation of her hand, so unlike the beautifully modulated and veined black hand in Feyen's picture (Fig. 26). Most disturbing is the abrupt truncation of her wrist, cut off prematurely before the sleeve covers it, as if Manet never studied the length of her arm or conceived of her body as extending beneath her clothes. Instead, he arrived at a pose of the hand and simply relied on it. This is not a body that has been

dressed; Laure is emphatically not a naked model with clothing laid over her anatomy.⁶⁸

Laure does not appear to have modeled nude for Manet. As we know, his favorite model, Victorine Meurent, who posed for *Olympia*, often did. The finished painting of *Olympia* suggests, moreover, that the two women did not model for him at the same time. One of the strangest and never discussed aspects of the picture is precisely the space where Olympia and the maid meet, the pictorial site of contact between the white and black women who served as Manet's models (Fig. 27). Here, above the leg of Olympia and below the paper cradling the bouquet is a swath of pink and umber; Manet's brushstrokes shift from vertical at far left to horizontal at right. That perfunctorily filled-in area is too bright to recede into shadow; instead, it undoes the illusion of the descent of Laure's dress. Nor does it suggest an extension of the paper wrapping the bouquet, as Manet may have intended. Instead, we see here the unmooring of illusion: the free-floating appearance of paint that fails to attach to form. And, of course, need I say it, this odd curving thin pink shape with dark umber slashes resembles a slit, a bodily orifice, in this case, feminine. Yet it also divides Laure from Olympia; we do not believe Manet knows how to suture them, nor do we believe that the two women modeled for him in intimate proximity to one another.

While I agree with Clark that "class was the essence of Olympia's modernity and lay behind the great scandal she provoked," I emphasize here that the painting inscribes not just the lower-class status of the prostitute but also that of her servant. Manet's evenly lit, deadpan, studio arrangement foregrounds the working-class status of the white woman and black woman who were paid to model for their fictive counterparts.⁶⁹ The two depicted figures share this origin, an origin left visible, as in so many of Manet's pictures, by the painting's unabashedly staged and aggregate character. Models studied at different times have been placed side by side. The picture's power derives from its strange, masterful combination of directness and impassivity; in the figure of Olympia especially, Manet captures and refuses to modify the bold, blank forthrightness of the bored woman paid to remain static, the sheer tedium of stilling oneself as an object.

In *Olympia*, Manet makes the viewer look at two modern working-class models, one white, one black, in close proximity. The words "modern" and "model" are key to the explosive challenge made by the picture: *the white woman is not art's nude; the black woman is not art's slave*. Instead, both are working-class models.⁷⁰ Yet Manet himself hesitates to describe the contact between these two women who modeled, creating instead a strange bodily buffer zone. He cannot fully integrate the two sitters. Black and white working-class women coexist in modern Paris, but their relationship to one another, so familiar an artistic convention as to be ignored, is here characterized by a gap, a nonagreement at once temporal (they were not posing at the same time) and spatial: their bodies do not meet; the envelopes of time and space that they occupy are incongruent.

To signal Laure's status as worker rather than slave, Manet renders her chaste, but in so doing he represses the fact that prostitution, domestic service, wet nursing, and modeling were far from mutually exclusive jobs in nineteenth-century



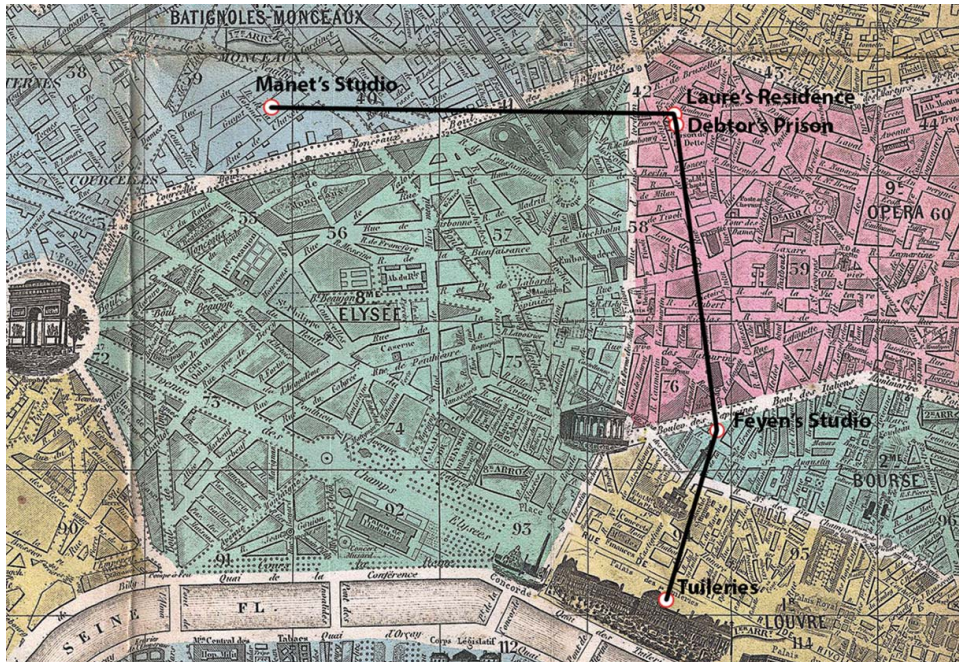
27 Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, detail showing the space between Olympia and Laure. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (artwork in the public domain; photograph © RMN–Grand Palais, provided by Art Resource, NY)

Paris. In 1836, the best-known and most influential commentator on prostitution, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet, noted that “there are perhaps no better wet nurses than prostitutes whether in terms of their care or the attachment they have for their infants and for the infants they adopt or have given to them.”⁷¹ Nineteenth-century working-class women moved in and out of professions; the maid could intermittently work as a prostitute even as she modeled for artists and suckled both legitimate and bastard children for pay.⁷² The babies she nursed could be the children of the wealthy or the urban working poor, including prostitutes, so pervasive was the reliance on wet nursing in 1860s Paris. Finally, the wet nurse had to be a mother herself. One of the ideological achievements of Feyen’s painting is to make us forget the black baby who is missing, the baby whose birth initiated his or her mother’s lactation.

Another is its seductive repression of the virulent racism pervading the culture. Feyen’s *Childlike Kiss* proposes that white and black working-class women—servants who played the role of mothers to the children of the affluent in both city gardens and painters’ studios—could coexist beautifully, even equally. Significantly, Feyen’s picture was never visually caricatured. Manet’s painting, by contrast, exacerbated rather than silenced the expression of racism by his contemporaries. The painting’s unsentimental, hard-edged, flatly lit modernity incited hysteria about race, class, and empire now relocated in the metropole, generating a host of racist images wherein Laure is deprived of her lovely gravitas and made to seem a grinning mammy. Whether we praise Manet’s picture for its avant-garde credentials or wonder why the academic style—long dismissed by art historians as conventional and anachronistic—sublimated such racial anxieties, or at least

curbed their expression, we need to examine the politics of our appraisals more self-consciously, especially given the racism pervading nineteenth-century France. Does an idyllic, celebratory painting such as Feyen’s accomplish any political work on behalf of postabolition blacks other than offering a deceptive fantasy? Is attentiveness to a different beauty in itself a value or merely a long-standing exoticist ploy? Does the contrary value of Manet’s picture reside in its refusal to sentimentalize the inequities of modernity, including the subordinate status of the black working-class woman to her white counterpart? Flowers from Olympia’s customer may be held by a complacent, visually subordinated black maid, but those flowers arrive wrapped in crisp, modern paper, not the spring breeze. So many studio props, so many paid models to pose with them, but one model was more vulnerable and subject to violence; one was more likely to be treated as yet another object, as if slavery lingered.⁷³ One woman connoted objecthood and dispossession—the black woman whom art historians have failed to see.

The hostility toward black women was pervasive, and so, too, was the dehumanization. A dictionary of argot or slang informs us that “ugly” could be signified by the phrase “wet nursed by a monkey.”⁷⁴ In nineteenth-century Paris, a bottle of red wine could be called an eggplant, a beet, a peony, or a Negress.⁷⁵ To drink a bottle of red wine was to stifle, suffocate, or strangle a choirboy or a Negress.⁷⁶ Émile Zola used this popular slang in his novel *L’assommoir* of 1877, a book read and praised by Manet,⁷⁷ in imagery that horrifyingly combines women, milk, violence, and murder: “When the liter [of red wine] was empty, he made a joke, taking the neck and squeezing it with the gesture familiar to women who milk cows. Again a negress that has a broken mouth! In



28 *Plan de Paris en 1863 en 20 Arrondissements*, Paris: A. Bes et F. Debreuil, 1863 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Julie Wolf, with additions by the author)

a corner of the store, the heap of dead negresses grew."⁷⁸ This was another aspect of life in Paris for the free black woman negotiating hatred, indifference, desirability, dehumanization, fashionability, desexualization, and violence, and all for a wage.

"Laure, very beautiful negress, rue Vintimille, 11, 3rd floor." How the woman we call Laure managed to support her life as a free black woman in Paris is unknown to us. She may have always been free; she may have been born in Paris; but she, like all blacks, was visually marked by slavery, the institution abolished only fifteen years before Manet's painting. Laure's address places her equidistant from the Tuileries Garden, where she may indeed have worked as a governess or wet nurse, and Manet's studio on Rue Guyot, and even closer to Feyen's studio on Rue de la Paix (Fig. 28). But the precariousness of her financial position must have been vivified for her every day as she passed by the Debtors Prison at her building's door, a full block in size. Wages, debt, and poverty were the corollaries of the personal freedom recently won by all blacks governed by France. Self-possession was shadowed by debt, and the challenges must have been intense for many ("What! Three sous? . . . But I am telling you that I am a free negro!"). Laure may have been relatively financially secure as a member of the working class or she may not have been. In either case, she opened her front door and saw the frightening specter of class inequity made into monumental material form. The Debtors Prison was across the street, so much closer to her apartment than the spectacle of modernity at the Tuileries, or the studio of the painter famed for giving that modernity form, or, finally, the studio of the forgotten academic painter who makes us feel that we suddenly know her smile. Such are the illusions of art.

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Notes

This essay stems from a book-in-progress entitled *Creole Looking: Portraying France's Foreign Relations in the Long Nineteenth Century*. It began as a Glass Lecture at Brown University, February 2013; was further developed as an Angela Rosenthal Memorial Lecture at Dartmouth College, February 2014; and given in briefer form as a paper at the conference "Manet Then and Now" at the University of Pennsylvania, April 2014. I thank Kay Dian Kriz, Evelyn Lincoln, Katie Hornstein, André Dombrowski, and Kaja Silverman for these invitations and the audiences for their questions and suggestions. I also wish to thank my wonderful undergraduate research assistants: Ariela Alberts, who assisted me in the first stages of research; Alice Main, who conducted invaluable research on Feyen and prostitution and also found a number of wet-nurse images; Lilly Rosenthal, for researching representations of Brazil at the time of Manet's voyage; Susannah Roberts, for reconstructing the shifting definitions of the word "Creole"; and Valerie Law, for attempting to track down the history of immigration in nineteenth-century France. I am also grateful for the assistance of graduate students Kailani Polzak and Alexandra Courtois and indebted to the perseverance of Kathryn Stine, senior digital curator, Visual Resources Collection, U.C. Berkeley. As always I thank Julie Wolf for her photography and design work. Nancy Locke has generously shared her expertise on the scant evidence concerning Manet's sex life. Finally, I thank Todd Olson for his close readings and suggestions so generously offered in the midst of many obligations. This essay is dedicated to Huey Copeland; we have been thinking about this painting for a very long time.

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

1. See Manet's undated letter to his mother, in Édouard Manet, *Lettres de la jeunesse: 1848–1849 voyage à Rio* (Paris: Louis Rouart, 1928), 53–57, at 51–53. This undated letter follows another to his mother dated February 5, 1849, *ibid.*, 49–50. In this undated letter, Manet writes (55): "On n'a pas pu trouver de maître de dessin à Rio, le Commandant m'a prié de donner des leçons à mes camarades, me voici donc érigé en maître de dessin; il faut te dire que pendant la traverse je m'étais fait une réputation, que tous les officiers et les professeurs m'ont demandé leur caricature et que le Commandant même m'a demandé la sienne pour ses étrennes; j'ai eu le bonheur de m'acquitter du tout de manière à contenter tout le monde."
2. *Ibid.*, 51–53: "pour l'Européen quelque peu artiste elle [Rio] offert un cachet tout particulier; on ne rencontre dans la rue que des nègres et des negresses; les Brésiliens sortent peu et les Brésiliennes encore moins; on

- ne les voit que lorsqu'elles vont à la messe ou le soir après le dîner; elles se mettent à leurs fenêtres et qu'elles s'aperçoivent qu'on les regarde elles se retirent aussitôt. Dans ce pays tous les nègres sont esclaves; tous ces malheureux ont l'air abruti; le pouvoir qu'ont sur eux les blancs est extraordinaire; j'ai vu un marché d'esclaves, c'est un spectacle assez révoltant pour nous. . . . Les négresses sont pour la plupart nues jusqu'à la ceinture, quelques-unes ont un foulard attaché au cou et tombant sur la poitrine, elles sont généralement laides, cependant j'en ai vu d'assez jolies; elles se mettent avec beaucoup de recherche. Les unes se font des turbans, les autres arrangent très artistement leurs cheveux crépus et elles portent presque toutes des jupons ornés de monstrueux volants."
3. Manet to his cousin Jules Dejoux, Monday, February 26, 1849, in *ibid.*, 57–60, at 58: "la population est au trois quarts nègre, ou mulâtre, cette partie est généralement affreuse sauf quelques exceptions parmi les négresses et les mulâtresses; ces dernières sont presque toutes jolies."
 4. *Ibid.*: "At Rio all negroes are slaves. The trade is in great force. As for the Brazilian men, they are soft and have, I believe, little energy; the Brazilian women are generally very well but they do not merit their reputation for lightness that they are accorded in France; nothing is as prudish and as stupid as a Brazilian woman, they never appear in the street during the day; only at five in the evenings do they place themselves at their windows, then it is permitted to ogle them at leisure [*A Rio tous les nègres sont esclaves. La traite y est en grande vigueur. Quant aux Brésiliens, ils sont mous et ont, je crois, peu d'énergie, les Brésiliennes sont généralement très bien mais ne méritent pas la réputation de légèreté qu'on veut bien leur prêter en France; rien n'est si prude et si bête qu'une Brésilienne, elles ne paraissent jamais de jour dans la rue; le soir seulement à 5 heures elles se mettent toutes à leurs fenêtres, il est permis alors de les lorgner à loisir.*]" On Manet as dandy, see Carol Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
 5. See Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France 1802–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
 6. See Sue Peabody, "There Are No Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 7. Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 360. Chevalier quotes numerous remarks in Eugène Buret, *De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France* (Paris: Paulin, 1840). See also M. A. Frégier, *Des classes dangereuses de la population dans grands villes, et des moyens de les rendre meilleures*, 2 vols. (Paris: chez J.-B. Ballière, 1840), 141, 364.
 8. Petition of Workers of Paris, in favor of the abolition of slavery, January 22, 1844, quoted in full in Patricia Motylewski, ed., *La Société Française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage, 1834–1850* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), 157–58: "L'esclavage dégrade autant le possesseur que le possédé. C'est pour obéir au grand principe de la Fraternité humaine, que nous venons vous faire entendre notre voix en faveur de nos malheureux frères esclaves. Nous éprouvons aussi le besoin de protester hautement, au nom de la classe ouvrière, contre les souteneurs de l'esclavage, qui osent prétendre, eux qui agissent en connaissance de cause, que le sort des ouvriers français est plus déplorable que celui des esclaves. . . . Quels soient les vices de l'organisation sociale actuelle du travail en France, l'ouvrier est libre. . . . L'ouvrier s'appartient; nul n'a le droit de le fouetter, de le vendre, de le séparer violemment de sa femme, de ses enfants, de ses amis."
 9. See Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, "Cursed Mimicry: France and Haiti, Again (1848–1851)," *Art History* 38, no. 1 (February 2015): 68–105.
 10. The term stems from Orlando Patterson's classic study *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).
 11. T. J. Clark, preface to *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xxvii.
 12. *Ibid.*, xxvii–xxviii. Clark continues, "'Nakedness' was a word . . . for a form of embodiment that somehow puts the free circulation of images (such as Woman, desire and money) in doubt. . . . The problem is that 'class,' too, was one of the images on which modernity thrived. Class was one of its favorite games, but the game obeyed essentially the same rules as the other terms of spectacle—rules of mobility, elusiveness, disembodiment, pure visibility and confinement to the world of signs. [But in *Olympia*] class appeared in the form of nakedness."
 13. Kimberly N. Pinder, *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
 14. Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 204–42.
 15. Oft quoted is Gilman's assertion (*ibid.*, 216) that "Sarah Baartmann's sexual parts, her genitalia and her buttocks, serve as the central image for the black female throughout the nineteenth century."
 16. *Ibid.*, 232. "Black females do not merely represent the sexualized female, they also represent the female as the source of corruption and disease." (*ibid.*, 231).
 17. Z. S. Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," in *Africans on Stage*, ed. Berth Lindfors (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 1–61, at 2, 40.
 18. Zine Magubane, "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the Venus Hottentot," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (December 2001): 816–34, at 822. Magubane (823) points out the basic fact that "Blackness is less a stable, observable empirical fact than an ideology that is historically determined and, thus, variable." It is notable that contemporary scholars often discern fewer distinctions among persons from Africa and the African diaspora than people over a century ago, lumping persons into categories of black and white because of the long-standing binary opposition in United States history.
 19. Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity," *Afterimage* 2 (1992): 1–23, at 16: "Whether the theory is Christianity or modernism, each of which scripts the body as all-nature, our bodies will be the most natural." Griselda Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women: Seeing in the Dark, Seeing Double, at Least, with Manet," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 246–315, esp. 255, 277–305. See also Jennifer De Vere Brody, "Black Cat Fever: Manifestations of Manet's *Olympia*," *Theatre Journal* 53, no. 1 (March 2001): 95–118. For another Orientalist reading of *Olympia*, see Nancy Locke, *Manet and the Family Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). On the related issue of Manet's painting of Charles Baudelaire's mixed-race lover, Jeanne Duval, see also Therese Dolan, "Manet's Portrait of Baudelaire's Mistress, Reclining," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (December 1997): 611–29; and Myriam J. A. Chancy, *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 41–42. On the problematic of the "negress," see Huey Copeland, "In the Wake of the Negress," in *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Alexandra Schwartz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 480–97.
 20. Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 285.
 21. Magubane, "Which Bodies Matter?" 829 (my emphasis).
 22. Paul Jamot and Georges Wildenstein, *Manet, L'art français*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Beaux-Arts, Édition d'Études et de Documents, 1932), vol. 1, 81; and Achille Tabarant, *Manet et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 79.
 23. Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 286. Pollock has also located a birth certificate for a woman named Laure who was born April 19, 1839, in Paris. This Laure is listed without a surname and her race is not mentioned (*ibid.*, 308 n. 19).
 24. According to Émile Zola in *L'Événement Illustré*, May 10, 1868, quoted in Juliet Wilson Bareau, *Manet by Himself, Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 49.
 25. For identification of this picture as "Laure" rather than "A Negress," see Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art from the American Revolution to World War I: Black Models and White Myths*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 2nd ed. (1989; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 206–7, 325. For the scant evidence about Laure's life, see Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 255, 277–305, 308; and Marie Lathers, "Laure," in *Dictionary of Artists Models*, ed. Jill Berk Jiminez (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 315–16. The recent Royal Academy of Arts exhibition catalog *Manet: Portraying Life* lists the painting as "The Negress" (London: Royal Academy of Arts; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2012), 138 n. 25, 156, 276. Pollock and her research assistant, Nancy Proctor, located a rental agreement for a Laure at this address residing on the fourth floor; they also found a birth certificate for a Laure born April 19, 1839; in 1863 this Laure would have been twenty-four years old; Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 255, 308 n. 19.
 26. Nicolas Auguste Gallimard, *Examen du Salon de 1849* (Paris, 1849), 78, quoted in Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art from the American Revolution to World War I*, vol. 1, pt. 2, *Slaves and Liberators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 172.
 27. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*; Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or the Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Armstrong, *Manet Manette*.
 28. Charles Expilly, *Les femmes et les mœurs du Brésil* (Paris: Charliet et Huillery, 1863).
 29. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'île Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: chez l'auteur, 1797), vol. 1, 15, vol. 2, 72.
 30. Auguste-Jean-Marie Vermorel, *Ces dames, physiognomies parisiennes* (Paris: Tous les Librairies, 1860), 28: "Il ne manque rien à Finette, rien, pas même un nègre! un nègre dont elle parle à tout propos! un nègre qui n'appartient qu'à elle et n'obéit qu'à elle. Elle l'aime tant, son nègre!"

- (Finette did not want for anything, nothing, not even a negro: a negro with whom she shared everything; a negro who belonged only to her and who obeyed only her. She loved her dearly, her negro!), quoted and trans. Phyllis A. Floyd, "The Puzzle of *Olympia*," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2004), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/70-spring04/spring04article/285-the-puzzle-of-olympia>.
31. Trans. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 283; for the complete poem, see Julius Meier-Graefe, *Edouard Manet* (Munich: Piper, 1912), 134–36.
 32. Geronte [Victor Fournel], "Les excentriques et les grotesques," *La Gazette de France*, June 30, 1865, quoted in full in Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 289. This essay fully relies on Clark's extensive compilation and often complete citation in French of *Olympia*'s reviews, as well as many of his translations. Here I have translated additional text.
 33. Amédée Cantaloube, *Le Grand Journal*, May 21, 1865, 2, partly quoted in Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 287–88.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. Pierrot, "Une première visite au Salon," *Les Tablettes de Pierrot—Histoire de la Semaine*, May 14, 1865, quoted in full in Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 288.
 36. See Mina Curtiss, "Manet Caricatures: *Olympia*," in *Massachusetts Review* 7, no. 4 (1966): 725–52.
 37. See, for example, Théophile Gautier's response to Alphonse de Lamartine's play *Toussaint Louverture*, which opened April 7, 1850, after the second abolition of slavery: "on ne voit sur la scène que nègres, mulâtres, quarterons, métis, griffes et autres variétés de bois d'ébène," *La Presse*, April 8, 1850, reprinted in Gautier, *Histoire de l'art dramatique* (Paris: Magin, 1859), vol. 6, 163, and quoted in Léon-François Hoffmann's introduction to Alphonse de Lamartine, *Toussaint Louverture*, ed. Hoffmann (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), xxvi.
 38. Cham, *Le Salon de 1865 photographié* (Paris: Arnauld de Vresse, 1865). On Cham, see David Kunzle, "Cham, the Popular Caricaturist: Cham and Daumier—Two Careers, Two Reputations, Two Audiences," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 96 (December 1980): 213–24.
 39. Kay Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
 40. Geronte, "Les excentriques et les grotesques."
 41. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 111.
 42. Although models were assumed to be sexually available, there is no evidence suggesting Manet's sexual relationship with either of his models. Of course, men past and present have indulged this erotic fantasy, all the more titillating when conceived as transgressive. One twentieth-century fabulist even claimed Manet died of venereal disease contracted in Brazil: despite his captain's warnings, young Édouard's "first experience of love, was embodied in the sable features of a Rio slave girl." See Henri Perruchot, *Manet*, trans. Humphrey Hare (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1962), 41, 226. There is no real evidence Manet contracted venereal disease, but if he did, he could as easily have done so in Paris. I thank Nancy Locke for references and conversation and Todd Olson for his lecture regarding the long identification of syphilis with the New World, "Recto/Verso: Poussin's Reversals," in the session "Disappearing Acts: Invisibility and the Limits of Representation in Seventeenth-Century France," chaired by Katherine Ibbett (Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Cambridge, 2005).
 43. Historian Robin Mitchell has located a Parisian brothel of "negresses" in a published guide at the end of the eighteenth century, *Les bordels de Paris, avec les noms, demeures et prix, plan salubre et patriotique soumis aux illustres des états généraux pour en faire un article de la Constitution* (Paris: MM. Dillon, Sartine, Lenoir, La Trolière, & Compagnie, 1790). See Mitchell, "Les Ombres Noires de Saint Domingue: The Impact of Black Women on Gender and Racial Boundaries in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010). Louis-Léopold Boilly also placed a black woman among the prostitutes at the Palais-Royal in 1804. See Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 278–79; and Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 47–58.
 44. In her essay "Nadar and the Art of Portrait Photography," Françoise Heilbrun betrays the lengths to which French scholars can go to repress colonial history in order to celebrate an artist's achievement: "In the second of Nadar's images, the half-nude sitter offers us her opulent bosom. The beauty of her expression, her eyes lifted in a melancholy gaze that is admirably brought out by the lighting, makes us realize we are miles away from the modes of erotic and licentious photography"; in *Nadar*, by Maria Morris Hambourg et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 50. On this photograph see also Hambourg's entries for these portraits, nos. 61, 62, in *ibid.*, 239.
 45. Jules de Goncourt and Edmond de Goncourt, consecutive notes for *La fille Élisa*, quoted in Robert Ricatte, *La genèse de "La fille Élisa"* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 67: "Une marcheuse d'un bordel, pas du tout voix éraillée; voix de négresse créole fausse; des notes cristallines et cassées comme un harmonica qui se briserait . . . faire l'amie de la putain une négresse, étudier le type et le mettre en scène."
 46. See, for example, A. Scheler, *Dictionnaire d'étymologie française d'après les résultats de la science moderne* (Brussels: A. Schnée, 1862), s.v. "Créole": "d. l'esp. criollo (de crier, produire. L. creare). Le sens le plus large de ce mot est: individu de race étrangère, né dans le pays." M. Beschelle, *Dictionnaire national: ou, Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1870), s.v. "Créole": "(en espag. criolo, de crier, élever, nourrir; ou de criado, élève domestique; on disait jadis criole, ou du caraïbe, creol). Nom qu'on donne à un Européen d'origine qui est né dans les colonies. Ce nom était autrefois appliqué aux nègres nés dans l'esclavage, des parents africains. Il s'est étendu même jusqu'aux animaux."
 47. Though there is a scant literature on Jacques Eugène Feyen, he was known and respected among his contemporaries. A student of Paul Delaroche, he evolved into a competent painter of fishing scenes, and, like his brother, the sculptor Augustin Feyen-Perrin, Feyen worked extensively in the Breton coastal village of Cancale. He was awarded a medal at the Salon of 1866, second-class in 1880, and the Legion of Honor in 1881. His work was especially popular with upper-middle-class British and American collectors in the late nineteenth century and appeared frequently at auction. See John Denison Champlin, *Cyclopaedia of Painters and Paintings*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 54; Étienne Charles, "Le doyen des artistes français: M. Eugène Feyen," *Le Mois Littéraire et Pittoresque* 16 (July–December 1906): 158–66; and Lalance, "Eugène Feyen," *Bulletin des Sociétés Artistiques de l'Est* 14, no. 10 (October 1908): 117–22. Feyen painted a related subject the following year in a little-known, more disturbing painting auctioned by Sotheby's London on May 7, 1986. Entitled *A Group of Children with Their Coloured Servant*, 1866, 30 by 20½ in., the work harkens back to eighteenth-century paintings of walks in the park. The painting portrays a fashionably dressed white girl and boy holding the hands of a lavishly attired toddler, attended by a black servant boy who is oversize, costumed in vaguely North African clothes, and caricaturally smiling.
 48. On the history of wet nursing, see George D. Sussman, "The Wet-Nursing Business in Nineteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 1975): 304–28; and *idem*, *Selling Mother's Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France, 1715–1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Fanny Fay-Salloy, *Les nourrices à Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1980); and Bernadette de Castelbajac, *Nourrices et nounous: Une histoire des femmes allaitantes* (Paris: Cosmopole, 2007).
 49. "Salon de 1865," *L'Illustration*, May 27, 1865, 333–34; and A. P. Martial, *Lettre illustrée sur le Salon de 1865 à M. r Gustave Henry a [sic] Commercy* (Paris: Cadart et Luquet, 1865), 17.
 50. "Salon de 1865," *L'Illustration*, 334: "M. Feyen y a trouvé le motif d'une gracieuse composition, un peu grande peut-être, mais arrangé et peinte avec soin. Deux bonnes, l'une blonde, Alsacienne à coiffe noir, l'autre, forte négresse aux dents blanches et aux yeux jaunes, sont assises sur un banc qui s'appuie à un treillage. La première tient une petite fille de huit mois environ, vêtue d'une blouse blanche, et la seconde un petit garçon d'un an et demi, aussi vigoureux que la petite est délicate. Les deux enfants s'embrassent bien, ou plutôt c'est la fillette qui, le nez en l'air, presse de sa main droite la joue du garçon et l'embrasse sur les lèvres. Le bambin étonné se laisse faire, son bras gauche, un peu musculéux, s'applique en longueur au bras de la négresse: il sent glisser des genoux de sa bonne. La petite, au contraire, est soutenue et n'a aucun effort à faire."
 51. See Honoré de Balzac, "La fille aux yeux d'or" [Girl with the golden eyes], in *Histoire des treize*, pt. 3 (Paris: Bréchet, 1835), which he dedicated to Eugène Delacroix. Delacroix's construction of his studio as a site of what I have called "heterosexual conquest" offers a foil to Manet's pictorial practice and silence regarding his personal relationship with his models. Delacroix's youthful journal entries explicitly note sexual acts and conflate them with pictorial mastery over his models; see Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France*, 237–79.
 52. Sussman, *Selling Mother's Milk*, 117.
 53. This has recently been claimed by Sheldon Cheek's online article of October 21, 2014, entitled "Laura, the Black Model Who Graced the Art of 19th-Century France," *Root*, in conjunction with Image of the Black Archive & Library, Harvard University, http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/10/a_black_model_who_graced_the_art_of_19th_century_france.html.
 54. See, for example, Chanteloub's *Portrait de Marie-Jeanne Grellier en compagnie de sa nourrice*, Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux.
 55. Cham, "Revue comique de la semaine," *Le Charivari*, December 16, 1849, 2. The caption reads: "L'empereur Souloque, ayant appris la grossesse de la reine d'Espagne, se hâte de lui expédier en cadeau diplomatique une superbe nourrice noire qui apporte un échantillon de son lait, que Narvaez prenait, à première vue, pour du cirage anglais." (The Emperor Souloque, having learned of the pregnancy of the queen of Spain, rushed to send her as a diplomatic gift a superb black wet nurse who brings a sample of her milk, that Narvaez mistook at first view for English

- [shoe] polish.) General Ramón María Narváez, Duke of Valencia, was a leader of the Moderados (Moderates) faction at the Spanish court. On the Soulouque series, see Grigsby, "Cursed Mimicry."
56. The caricature is described as "The New Wet Nurse of the Théâtre Français. Caricature about the censorship of two comedies by Dumas: The Youth of Louis XIV and The Youth of Louis XV." See also Jean-Ignace-Isidore-Gérard Grandville's print, inscribed in French and English: "Arrivez, arrivez, nourrice. . . Dieux comme y ressemble à Mosieu [*sic*]!" / Come, Come nurse. . . Good God! what a likeness! (The literal translation would be "how he resembles Monsieur!") The print depicts the wet nurse as a different species. Lithograph, from Grandville's *Les métamorphoses du jour* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1869), no. 11.
 57. See Edgar Degas, *Nourrice à jardin de Luxembourg*, ca. 1874 (Musée Fabre, Montpellier) and Berthe Morisot, *Wet Nurse with Julie*, 1880 (private collection). On French representations of wet nursing, see Linda Nochlin, "Morisot's Wetnurse: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting," in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 231–42, at 235: "If prostitution was excluded from the realm of honest work because it involved women selling their bodies, motherhood and the domestic labor of child care were excluded from the realm of work precisely because they were unpaid. . . . The wet nurse, then, is something of an anomaly in the nineteenth-century scheme of feminine labor. She is like the prostitute in that she sells her body, or its product, for profit and her client's satisfaction; but, unlike the prostitute, she sells her body for a virtuous cause. She is at once a mother—seconde mère, remplaçant—and an employee."
 58. The American Elisabeth Finley Thomas is here describing the women's studio at the Académie Julien, *Ladies, Lovers and Other People* (New York: Longman, Green, 1935), 88–89, quoted in Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830–1870* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2006), 46. In the early twentieth century, Paul Milliet likened models seeking work to a "slave market": "Not one [of the students] seemed aware that he was looking at a degraded human being who was overcome by misery; not one felt the least bit of pity." Milliet, "Une famille des républicaines fourrieristes: Les Milliet," *Cahier de la Quinzaine*, 12th ser., 8, sec. 6, 31, quoted in Waller, *Invention of the Model*, 35. See also Susan Waller, "Realist Quandaries: Posing Professional and Proprietary Models in the 1860s," *Art Bulletin* 89, no. 2 (June 2007): 239–65.
 59. See Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *História da vida privada no Brasil*, vol. 2, *Império: A corte e a modernidade nacional* ([São Paulo, Brazil]: Companhia das Letras, 1997–98). See also Jean-Baptiste Debret's portrait of "Don Pedro II, âgé d'un an et demi, dans le giron de sa gouvernante." Debret repeatedly depicted wet nurses. See also Agostino Brunias, *A Linen Market with a Linen Stall and Vegetable Seller in the West Indies*, ca. 1780, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, which includes a topless, turbaned, standing black female figure and another who is seated with her breast revealed as she nurses her baby.
 60. Expilly, *Les femmes et les moeurs du Brésil*, 374: "L'homme des tropiques ne tient pas essentiellement à trouver une âme chez l'instrument de ses plaisirs, et son idéal peut très-bien s'incarner dans le type opulent de la nourrice."
 61. The caption reads, "Happy tendency of painting and the arts: they assume more and more the industrial and commercial character that has unfortunately hitherto been lacking."
 62. Paul Dollfus, "Paris qui pose," *La Vie Moderne* 9, no. 19 (1887): 300, quoted in Marie Lathers, "Changing Tastes: Ethnicity and the Artist's Model," in Jiminez, *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, 15–16. Here I am indebted to Lathers's research. See also Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'artistes* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1888).
 63. Dollfus, *Modèles d'artistes*, 122.
 64. *Ibid.*, 114.
 65. *Ibid.*, 129.
 66. *Ibid.*, 125.
 67. Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 284.
 68. In an especially convoluted and disturbing passage, Sander Gilman ("Black Bodies, White Bodies," 231–32) asserts that Laure's "presence in both the sketch and in the final painting emphasizes her face, for it is the physiognomy of the black which points to her own sexuality and to that of the white female presented to the viewer unclothed but with her genitalia demurely covered." Outrageously, Gilman is arguing that Laure, while dressed, is all sex; she does not need to show her body because her face (or physiognomy) alone stands for her sexuality as well as that of the naked white woman who "demurely" covers her genitalia. No one who has looked at Olympia's odd hand would describe the gesture as demure.
 69. Clark, *The Painterling of Modern Life*, 88.
 70. Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," 294, has made this point, although she hinges it on Orientalism: "In a way, this involves shifting from a stress on race, to finding ways to incorporate difference as specificity while also revealing the women as having some things in common: class becomes the means to provide a gender and a history for them both."
 71. Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*, ed. A. Trébuchet and Poirat-Duval, 2 vols. (1836; Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1857), vol. 1, 147.
 72. According to Parent-Duchâtelet (*ibid.*, 103–4), women moved in and out of prostitution, working the streets between stints as "our dressmakers, our seamstresses, our menders." Jill Harsin's examination of Parent's text has led her to conclude that "most prostitutes succeeded, eventually, in saving themselves; prostitution was merely a stage of life rather than life in its entirety." Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 123. See also James F. McMillan, *France and Women: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).
 73. On Olympia's maid and inanimacy, see Huey Copeland, "Flow and Arrest," *Small Axe* (forthcoming).
 74. Aristide Bruant, *L'argot au XXe siècle: Dictionnaire français-argot* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Flammarion, 1901), 290.
 75. *Ibid.*, 72.
 76. *Ibid.*, 63, 68.
 77. Françoise Cachin, entry to *Nana*, in *Manet, 1832–1882*, by Cachin, Charles S. Moffett et al., exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 393: "Manet greatly admired *L'Assommoir*." An April 28, 1877, letter to Manet by the comtesse de Castiglione thanks him for sending her Zola's novel autographed for her by the author.
 78. Émile Zola, *L'assommoir* (1877; Paris: Charpentier, 1879), 276: "quand un litre était vide, il faisait la blague de retourner le goulot et de le presser du geste familier aux femmes qui traient les vaches. Encore une négresse qui avait la gueule cassée! Dans un coin de la boutique, le tas des négresses mortes grandissait, un cimetière de bouteilles sur lequel on poussait les ordures de la nappe."