

Ambitious Model, Ambiguous Artist

Three Case Studies of Victorine Meurent, Suzanne Valadon and Alice Prin

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Abstract

This thesis is about a singular figure who appeared on the artistic scene in the middle of the nineteenth century. I call this figure the Model-Artist. This term conjugates two facets of the production of art, which links issues of labour, creativity, class and gender. In this thesis, I look specifically into three case studies of the Model-Artist working in Paris from the second half of the nineteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth: Victorine Meurent (1844-1927), Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) and Alice Prin (1901-1953). By scrutinising the archives of these three individuals and reading critical writings on their work at the time and in subsequent biographies and art historical studies, I advance an argument about the significance of the model's labour/the labour of modelling, in order to shift the canonical histories of modern art from 1860 to 1930 which privilege the artist. I also challenge, by expanding some of the feminist studies that examine the work of women as artists and as models in this period. I do so by examining three instances of women who worked as both models and artists in artistically and culturally different moments of the histories of modernism. This highlights the specific relations between the shape of each of these three women's careers. It underscores both the new conditions of artistic production associated with the emerging formation of the avant-garde community and the new modes of art that were generated in terms of both the treatment of old and new subjects and in terms of artistic representation.

Through the case studies, I avoid creating exceptional histories, and acknowledge invisibility (other stories yet to be found) as much as re-read known stories. Methodologically, I challenge and expand existing feminist art histories by criticising their continuation of the hierarchy between model and artist and the privileging of the artist.

Through close reading of images, I pinpoint the changing aesthetic of art and analyse its impact on the artist's practice of modelling as well as the modelling labour.

The study of Victorine Meurent rests on a fragile and fragmented archive. I draw on Derrida's theory of the archive and Foucault's theory of the fold in the discourse to tackle the question of how to study a subject about which the documentary evidence is scarce. With a much more documented and substantial *œuvre*, Suzanne Valadon's case enables an investigation into her artistic manoeuvres and *avant-garde gambits* in relation to her contemporaries. I examine her paintings as traces of an articulation of embodied experience that at the same time solicit different forms of spectatorship. The chapter on Alice Prin is an analysis of the cultural and social dynamics within the Montparnasse circle in Paris in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. From this close-knit community of international artists, the mythological figure of Kiki de Montparnasse emerged.

Each case study situates the strategies and practices of three women negotiating a relation to artistic practice determined by the social, cultural, organisational and aesthetic specificities of three different moments in the emergence of modernist artistic practice and its communities. Labour, community and gender are key concepts throughout this study.

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Introduction

This thesis is about a singular figure who appeared on the artistic scene in the middle of the nineteenth century. I call this figure the Model-Artist, a term that conjugates two facets of the production of art. The emergence of this figure introduces questions of gender in both artistic production and the writing of art history by feminist and non-feminist scholars alike. I begin this study with an examination of a painting by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), the complexities of which serve to set the scene for the study. This close reading makes visible the factor at the heart of my study: the labour of the model in the making of artworks produced at a specific point in history, characterised by changing ideologies of art-making and artistic practice in relation to the representation of the modern social world. The central figure of Model-Artist and the issue of labour in the space of art-making within the historical frame that is traditionally associated with the emergence of the modern is pursued through three detailed case studies. To grasp the historical importance of each case study, in terms of the history of women in artistic practice and the changing modes of modern art-making, the methodology is both art historical and linguistic.

A Prelude: Realism and the Art World— An Initial Reading of *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life* (1855) by Gustave Courbet

In 1855 six weeks after the *Exposition Universelle* opened on 15 May, French artist Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) mounted an exhibition of forty works. The exhibition was housed in a temporary structure called the Pavilion of Realism (*Pavillon du Réalisme*) on Avenue Montaigne, a site carefully selected by the artist because of its adjacency to the

Exposition Universelle. Among the exhibits was a monumental painting of life-sized figures, *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life* (1855) (Figure 0.1), which was then titled *The Painter's Studio: Real Allegory Determining a Phase of Seven Years of My Artistic Life*. The painting was produced by the artist specifically for the *Exposition Universelle*, and was submitted along with thirteen other canvases. Eleven were accepted, but this one was rejected by the authorities due to its monumental size.

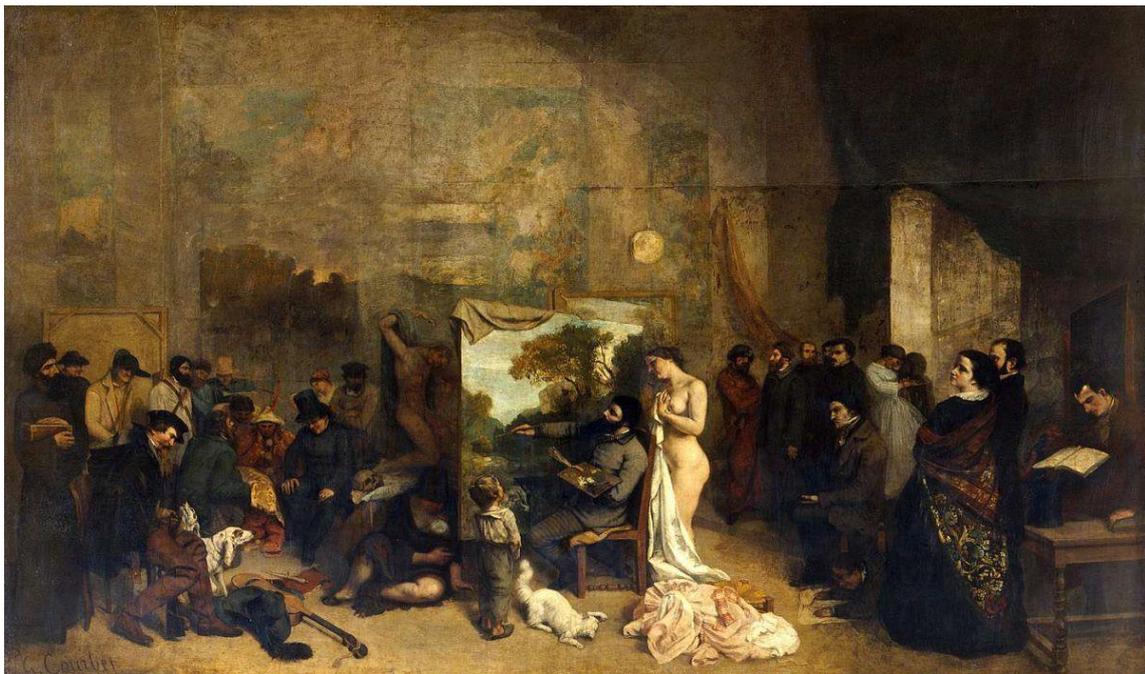


Figure 0. 1, Gustave Courbet, *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life*, 1854-1855, oil on canvas, 361×598 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

In a letter to his critic friend, Champfleury, a pseudonym of Jules François Felix Fleury-Husson (1821-1889), dated in the last two months of 1854, Courbet described the composition of the painting as being in three sections. 'I [Courbet] am in the middle, painting. On the right are the shareholders, that is friends, workers, devotees of the art world. On the left, the other world of trivial life, the people, the misery, poverty, wealth, the

exploited and the exploiters, the people who live off of death'.¹ Despite the fact that the artist offers some elucidation, the painting remains one of Courbet's most enigmatic works. Much study has been dedicated to identifying the personages in the painting and analysing the ways in which they are represented and positioned, as well as the reasons of their inclusion.² My interest in this work lies in its portrayal of the artist's world between 1847 and 1854. The assembly, exchanges and dynamics allude to shifts in artistic practice and institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century.

1) The Dealer-Critic System

Following the section of the letter to Champfleury quoted above, Courbet continued with details and identities of the figures depicted, most of whom were preserved in the final work. In the letter Courbet clearly states the names of some of the figures on the right of the painting, 'Promayet, Bruyas, Cuenot, Buchon, and Proudhon', Champfleury and Baudelaire.³ These were Courbet's friends, people who, according to Courbet, 'serve me, support me in my ideas, and take part in my actions'.⁴ Alphonse Promayet, Max Buchon and Urban Cuenot were Courbet's old companions from college and school, whereas Alfred Bruyas, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Champfleury and Charles Baudelaire were new friends Courbet had made since 1847 in the seven years prior to the conception of the painting. Among them, Max Buchon and Champfleury were champions of the Realist movement in the field of literature and aesthetics. They had published articles in art journals appraising Courbet's paintings

¹ The letter was collected and translated by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. & trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.131.

² Apart from the sources cited elsewhere in this chapter, other examples include Linda Nochlin, *Representing Women* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), pp.106-151; Jennifer Anne Tennant Jackson, 'Evidence as a Problem: Foucauldian Approaches to three Canonical Works of Art: Courbet's *L'Atelier*; Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, 1656; Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, circa 1483' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2001).

³ Courbet, [Ornans, November-December 1854], in Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, p.132.

⁴ Courbet, [1854], in Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, p.132.

from as early as 1848.⁵ Alfred Bruyas was Courbet's first and most loyal patron, who made his first purchase of Courbet's works *The Bathers* and *The Sleeping Spinner* from the Salon of 1853. Over the years, Bruyas had supported the artist through purchases, acts of hospitality and generosity.⁶ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was an anarchist politician and philosopher, who had a profound influence on Courbet's political ideas. This can be discerned in Courbet's defiant attitude towards the jury system. Members of the group were likely to have known each other as they all frequently attended the gatherings at *Andler Brasserie* starting in late 1848.⁷ Yet, the specific gathering represented in the painting did not actually happen. Depictions of the figures largely relied on portraits that Courbet had previously completed, plus a lithograph of Proudhon that the artist had received from Champfleury. Arising from this imaginary assemblage is a network of artist, patrons and critics, which anticipates a change in the institutions of the Parisian art world, which became fully-fledged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In their book *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (1965) Harrison and Cynthia White identify the change in the institutional structure in France, particularly Paris, as a shift from an Academy system to what they define as a dealer-critic system.⁸ Under the Academy system, artists made themselves known through exhibiting at the Salon. Admission to the Salon was regulated by a jury, the majority of the members of which were closely associated with the *Académie de Peinture et Sculpture*, or the Academy, along with State appointed officials. As a public spectacle, the Salon was a cultural and social event. By the mid-nineteenth century, the paid attendance often reached 10,000 per

⁵ Champfleury was one of the first to promote Courbet's works with his article in *Le Pamphlet*. A quote of the notice can be found in Alan Bowness's introduction in the exhibition catalogue of *Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877*, ed. by Hélène Toussaint, trans. by P.S. Falla (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), p.13.

⁶ Hélène Toussaint, *Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877*, p.106.

⁷ Marie-Thérèse de Forges, 'Biography', in *Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877*, p.26.

⁸ Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (New York: Wiley, 1965).

day.⁹ There were some private exhibitions, but none would enjoy the spotlight of the Salon. When Édouard Manet (1832-1883) organised his own one-man retrospective in 1867 it suffered from the neglect of the critics. All the works Manet submitted to the Salon jury between 1859 and 1866, rejected or accepted, were exhibited there, with the exception of his parents' portraits. In contrast to the heated debate his scandalous paintings, such as *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), entitled *Le Bain* when it was first exhibited in the *Salon des Refusés*, and *Olympia* (1863-65), had stirred when they were displayed for the first time at the Salon, not a word about Manet's 1867 exhibition appeared in the major art journals of the time except some pages dedicated to views of the building and caricatures of the exhibited artworks in the *Journal Amusant*.¹⁰ With no alternatives stable or mature enough to be comparable, the annual, sometimes biennial, Salon attracted most attention and was the most highly valued occasion for exhibition. Although dealers and critics had already existed in the art world since the seventeenth century, the Academy had been the ultimate arbiter under this highly centralised system. It possessed unparalleled power over whose work got to be seen in the Salon, received prizes and was eventually bought by the State. The reviews of art critics were largely confined to the outcome of the jury's selection.

As for the sale of artworks, purchases and commissions of large-scale paintings and sculptures usually came from the State as forms of reward for artists who excelled at the Salon. Works acquired this way might be sent to provincial museums all over France, facilitating the spread of the artist's fame. Dealers did not yet play a significant role in the contemporary art market. According to an essay published in 1867 by Philippe Burty, a well-known critic, on the art market of Paris, all the shops that specialised in modern painting (*tableaux modernes*), as opposed to old paintings (*tableaux anciens*), in Paris were founded

⁹ White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p.30.

¹⁰ George Heard Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, c1986), p.107.

after 1848 with the only exception of the gallery Adolphe Goupil, which was founded in the late 1820s.¹¹ A common method of attracting clients used by artists was to leave the addresses of their studios in the Salon catalogue, expecting studio visits and hopefully purchases of smaller works or possible commissions.

According to the Whites, the highly centralised and exclusive nature of the Academy made it inadequate to face the challenges brought by the development of the technologies of mass-production, such as lithography, the growth in the number of artists and the emergence of a larger market as a result of the dispersion of economic power in France in the nineteenth century. Arising from this crisis was a new system that the Whites termed the ‘dealer-critic system’. In this system dealers and critics became significant players in promoting and selling modern art. ‘The Academy and the State were once arbiters of taste, patrons, educators of the young, and publicists. Now these functions were spread out and assumed by different parts of the new system’.¹² Dealers now served as patrons and speculators, the critics as theorists, publishers and ideologues. The Romantic representation of the artist as a talented man unrecognised or excluded by the official system was revived by critics. When the new system was in competition with the existing one, the disapproval and rejection of an artist by the Salon might have been taken by favourable critics as an indicator of creativity and innovation. When Theodore Duret commented on Manet’s exhibits at the Salon of 1870, he stated, ‘the good public here mocks our original artist precisely because of his originality and invention’.¹³

¹¹ Philippe Burty, ‘L’Hotel des Ventes et le Commerce des Tableaux’ in *Paris Guide par les Principaux Ecrivains et Artistes de la France* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1867), vol. 2, pp.949-63, cited in David W. Galenson & Robert Jensen, ‘Careers and Canvases: The Rise of the Market for Modern Art in the Nineteenth Century’, *National Bureau of Economic Research* (September, 2002), p.18, accessible from <http://nber.org/papers/w9123>.

¹² White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p.151.

¹³ Théodore Duret, ‘Salon de 1870’, *Critique d’avant-garde* (Paris, 1885), p.39.

What the Whites perceive as the distinction at the heart of these two systems is the valuing of artists or artwork, mainly paintings in the context of their discussion. This is careers versus canvases. They argue that the official ideology of the Academy system centred around the painting, which ‘led an independent existence as a separate entity with its own reputation and history’, whereas the dealer-critic system put its focus on the career of the artist.¹⁴ Putting all the marketing and publicity effort into one single painting was just not economical for dealers. Dealers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century often offered artists ‘a predictable income, the hallmark of the middle-class concept of a career’.¹⁵ In this system, the value of the artworks was the promise of a future, at the centre of which was speculation on both finance and taste.¹⁶

Galenson and Jensen dispute the Whites’ argument in two respects.¹⁷ Firstly, they suggest that it was not only the artwork that was at the centre of the Academy system, the Academy system incorporated a progressive ladder of award for the artists. After medals were introduced to the Salon in 1849, if an artist won a medal, *hors concours* would be granted, which secured the exhibition of his works in all successive Salon without being examined by the jury. The Salon was the best place for artists to make their names, with its annual or biannual organisation securing the regular exhibition of artists who took up subjects and styles favoured by the jury. A successful Salon career could lead to a stable income, as artists who excelled at the Salon were offered teaching positions at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Admission to the Legion of Honour, election to the Academy and a retrospective were other possible awards and recognitions. Secondly, Galenson and Jensen’s research into the emerging market for modern art in the nineteenth century reveals that it was still the works of artists who had been recognised by the Academy system that sold better. Profit from the

¹⁴ White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p.88.

¹⁵ White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p.98.

¹⁶ White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, pp.98-99.

¹⁷ David W. Galenson & Robert Jensen, ‘Careers and Canvases’.

acquisition of the artworks of non-academic or unestablished artists often lagged far behind. Paul Durand-Ruel, one of the most well-known dealers of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artworks, might have gone bankrupt in the early 1880s if he had not expanded into the American art market in 1886, shipping there forty-three crates of Impressionist works.

In his case study of the Belgian-based art dealer, Gustave Coûteaux (1815-1873), Jan Dirk Baetens points out that studies following the Whites tend to consider the dealer-critic system as an avant-garde business mode, which is in turn identified with avant-garde art.¹⁸ Baetens reveals that this is a modernist myth. As exemplified by the long-term contractual relationships between Coûteaux and Belgian artists, especially Henri Leys (1815-1869), such a mode of promoting artist and artworks on the dealer's part - 'monopolisation, speculation, the sustained support of young artists, the recruitment of art critics and the development of strategic exhibition policies' - had been operating prior to the emergence of those artists that came to be identified as Impressionists.¹⁹ Leys' eventual triumph at the *Exposition Universelle* in 1855 was a result of the maturation of his art as well as Coûteaux's continuous efforts to develop the Parisian market. Scrutinising the case of Leys, Baetens argues that his success might owe a debt to the specificities of the Belgian art market. The international

¹⁸ Jan Dirk Baetens, 'Vanguard Economics, Rearguard Art: Gustave Coûteaux and the Modernist Myth of the Dealer-Critic System', *Oxford Art journal*, 33 (2010), no.1, 27-41. One instance that Baetens cites is Nachoem Wijnberg and Gerda Gemser's article, 'Adding Value to Innovation: Impressionism and the Transformation of the Selection System in Visual Arts', *Organizational Science*, 11, (May/June 2000), no.3, 323-329. Wijnberg and Gemser suggest that the Impressionist artists wish to have the value of their art recognised, but only gain success through pushing institutional changes. Vital to this system that facilitates commercial success are art dealers, especially ideological dealers, and art critics. They work together to 'spread the gospel of a particular type of art, meaning, in practice, the work of a particular artist or, most often, of a group of artists'. (p.327). The value that made the Impressionist artists unacceptable at the Salon was the same ideology identified by dealers and critics; that is, innovation. In this way Wijnberg and Gemser place innovation as the central value of an avant-garde loop comprised of avant-garde artist, along with dealers and critics operating in this avant-garde business mode.

¹⁹ Baetens, 'Vanguard Economics', p.38.

network of Coûteaux makes it plausible that such an institutional mode was known throughout Europe before the advent of Impressionism.

Baetens makes the case, by raising the example of this lesser-known Belgian art dealer, that the dealer-critic system as a business mode was not an avant-garde invention. Yet, the fact that Coûteaux, along with his cooperating artists and recruited critics, had to operate within the structure of the Academy in Belgium as well as France confirms the Whites' assertion of the authority and dominance of the Academy system in both countries in the 1850s and 1860s. In fact, the Whites do not deny the existence of dealers or critics before 1870, nor do they consider the emergence of artists whose work was not accepted by the Academy system as the sole contributor to the institutional shift. Social factors, such as the advance of printing technology and the increasing economic power of the expanding middle-class, are also taken into the Whites' consideration. Indeed, what Baetens' discussion of Coûteaux exemplifies is not a dealer-critic system, but rather a dealer system. His quotations from contracts and letters between Coûteaux and Leys suggest that it is the dealer, as the most significant player in this system, who signed contracts with artists, recruited critics, and established connections in the art world. What is seen in the last two decades of the nineteenth century is the existence of a more reciprocal and interactive network of artists, critics, writers and dealers. This is what is represented in the group on the right side of Courbet's painting - exchanges between the artist and the people who had a significant impact on his art production - his artistic and literary friends and supporters. More important to our discussion is that along with the collapse of the Academy system and the emergence of the dealer-critic system, the territory of the art world became subject to alteration. Boundaries were redrawn. As a result, new art practices were adopted and new players were allowed access. As the discussion of self-taught artists, especially the case study of Alice Prin,

demonstrates, this new system was a necessary condition for the recognition these artists obtained in the early twentieth century.

Women were being granted more significant roles in the art world in the nineteenth century. There have always been women in the history of art. Some made art, some collected art and some were patrons of various cultural activities. One instance can be found in Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*. The couple in the foreground to the right, described as 'a fashionable lady with her husband' by the artist, were identified by Joanna Richardson in 1977 as Apollonie Sabatier (1822-1890), or Madame Sabatier, and her escort, Belgian banker Alfred Mosselman.²⁰ Madame Sabatier was a courtesan who hosted a salon, with the financial support of Mosselman, in an apartment at 4, rue Frochot from 1846 to 1861. The salon was a significant cultural event in Paris. Many writers, musicians and artists participated. It was a re-presentation of the intellectual community gathered around the House of Medici during the Italian Renaissance where artists mingled with writers and poets. There is no record of Courbet attending Madame Sabatier's salon and her identification in the painting is tentative. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a woman in the group that Courbet considered 'friends, workers and devotees' highlights the roles the cultural world of the mid-nineteenth century Paris was not solely dominated by men. Over the course of the second half of nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, women were involved in every aspect of art training, production, sale and collection. Under the name Pauline Orelle, Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884) published art criticism for *La Citoyenne* in 1881 for the campaign for women's entry into the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*.²¹ Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) encouraged art collectors such as the Havemeyers to collect works by contemporary French modern artists

²⁰ In many pieces of research on the painting, Alex Seltzer's article, 'Gustave Courbet: All the World's a Studio' *Artforum* 16 (1) is cited as the source. In the same article, however, Seltzer credits Joanna Richardson for the identification (p.46). Hélène Toussaint, in a dossier in which she identifies all the figures on the left hand side, makes the same identification (p.267).

²¹ Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), p.53 & 85.

and Avant-gardists. In fact, it was Cassatt who first introduced the couple to Courbet and encouraged them to buy his paintings, from as early as 1880. Dealers who were women, such as Berthe Weill (1865-1951), contributed to the creation of the market for avant-garde art in the early 1920s.²² It should be noted that except for Madame Sabatier's salon, all other examples mentioned were in the years after the establishment of the new dealer-critic system. In fact, if we take the awards won under the Academy system as the only criteria, we would reach the conclusion that women achieved less recognition in art. As demonstrated by the table the Whites use to illustrate the career characteristics of nineteenth-century French painters, the percentage of women who received any Salon medal or official job was significantly lower than that of men. No women born between 1785 and 1854, or who exhibited at the Salon for the first time between 1815 and 1865, received the Legion of Honour for their achievement in art.²³ The Academy system put women at a great disadvantage by restricting their access to artistic training. Women were not admitted to the *École des Beaux-Arts* until 1897. Other forms of training were either more expensive for women than men, or did not focus on fine art. In the chapter on Victorine Meurent I consider all the opportunities of artistic training available to women before 1897.

2) Realism and the Practice of Modelling

In contrast to the specific identities of the figures to the right of *The Painter's Studio*, the individuals to the left are described as general types in Courbet's letter to Champfleury. From the extreme left, there is 'a Jew... a priest... an old Republican... a ninety-year-old man... in an old patched... hat, a hunter, a reaper, a muscle man, a clown, a fancy-clothes

²² I will address this in more details in the chapter on Suzanne Valadon. For further discussion of Weill's role in promoting artworks by artists who are women, see Gill Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and "Feminine" Art, 1900 to the Late 1920s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c.1995).

²³ White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, pp.48-49.

merchant, a worker's wife, a worker, an undertaker's mute, an Irishwoman'. In 1977, on the occasion of the exhibition celebrating the centenary of Courbet's death, French art historian Hélène Toussaint published her research on this painting, in which she suggests that most of the figures on the left had specific identities as Courbet's contemporaries, through iconographical comparison.²⁴ The Jew was Achilles Fould, Minister of Finance and friend of Louise Napoleon; the priest Louis Veuillot, a Catholic journalist and an obedient adherent of the Imperial power; the Republican Lazare Carnot, the previous Minister of the Interior; and a journalist in exile under the Restoration; the hunter Giuseppe Garibaldi, a representative of the Italian social and political movement Risorgimento; the reaper Kościuszko, a representative of the insurgent Poland; the muscle man Turkey; the clown China; the fancy-clothes merchant Persigny, Louise Napoleon's close associate and then Minister of the Interior; the worker Alexander Herzen, a Russian socialist; and the undertaker's mute Émile de Girardin, a turncoat republican. The man with a dog in the foreground, not mentioned in Courbet's letter, she suggests is Napoleon III. No firm identification is made of the worker's wife or the Irishwoman.²⁵ The identities of the figures were deliberately made elusive due to the strict press censorship implemented by the Emperor.

This left section of *The Painter's Studio* exemplifies on several levels the agenda of the art movement called Realism, of which Courbet has been identified by art historians as a leading figure. In *Realism* (1977) Linda Nochlin points out that the Realist movement was 'a historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature... dominant... from about 1840 until 1870-80'.²⁶ Although some earlier artists, such as Jan Van Eyck (1390-1441), Diego Velasquez (1599-1660) and Dutch still-life painters of the seventeenth century, concerned themselves with a kind of verisimilitude in representation, what set nineteenth century

²⁴ Hélène Toussaint, 'The Dossier on "The Studio" by Courbet', in *Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877*.

²⁵ Toussaint, 'The Dossier', pp.260-268.

²⁶ Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.13.

Realism apart was its belief in nothing but the fact. Nochlin states it clearly: ‘It was not until the nineteenth century that contemporary ideology came to equate belief in the facts with the total content of belief itself’.²⁷ This exclusive belief in facts resulted in a unique focus on contemporaneity and a strong emphasis on empirical experience, which is by definition social as well as individual. In the introduction to the catalogue of Courbet’s one-man exhibition of 1855, later referred to as the *Realist Manifesto*, Courbet articulates the goal of his Realist project.

I no more wanted to imitate the one than to copy the other; nor, furthermore, was it my intention to attain the trivial goal of *art for art’s sake*. No! I simply wanted to draw forth from a complete acquaintance with tradition the reasoned and independent consciousness of my own individuality.

To know in order to be able to create, that was my idea. To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well; in short, to create living art - this is my goal.²⁸

Thus, according to Courbet, paintings are ‘to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch according to my own estimation’. The Emperor, supporters of the Imperial regime, revolutionary exiles, foreign diplomats, rebels and the Irishwoman who was so poor that ‘her only clothing were [sic] a black straw hat, a green veil with holes and a frayed blacked shawl’ were, thus, in the same room.²⁹ They all existed in Courbet’s epoch and in his experience of that epoch.³⁰ There is an apparent lack of communication among them because in the real world they seldom did. They are what he attempted to translate into his paintings, because ‘it is the demand for contemporaneity and nothing but

²⁷ Nochlin, *Realism*, p.45.

²⁸ Linda Nochlin, ed., *Realism and Tradition in Art, 1848-1900: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp.33-34.

²⁹ Courbet, [1854], in Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, p.132. Linda Nochlin took a close scrutiny at this figure of Irish woman in relation to the nineteenth century discourse of misery and justice in her article, Linda Nochlin, ‘Representing Misery: Courbet’s Beggar Woman’, *South as a State of Mind* (Fall/Winter 2015) issue 6, [accessible online via http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/3_representing_misery_courbet_s_beggar_woman].

³⁰ Courbet, [1854], in Chu, *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, p.132.

contemporaneity, which here separates the Realists from their fellow artists'.³¹ The figures in the painting, even as general types, cannot be timeless or universal. On the contrary, they have to bear some features of their time and culture, if not of a particular person. Even the landscape on the canvas on which the artist is working is a detailed representation of the region the artist came from. As noted by Nochlin, one moral implication of Realism is manifested in the expanded range of subject matter it incorporates. If contemporaneity is the only criteria, people of the poorer classes are no less important a subject matter than those with higher social status. Thus the poor Irishwoman is as much in the foreground as the Emperor. They are all possible subjects. The emphasis on contemporaneity anticipated the later Impressionists' attempts to capture the instantaneity of phenomenal experience, as a shift from a current epoch to a current moment.

Before elaborating on the Realists' insistence on empirical experience, let us first look at the group at the centre of this monumental painting. Made up of the artist working on a painting, a model standing behind the artist and a boy looking up to the artist, the group stands out from the painting, not only because it is the centre of the composition, but because it is the most finished in comparison to the sketchiness of the other figures. As Nochlin notes in her article *The Painter's Studio*, the unfinishedness is most likely intended as Courbet would have had plenty of time to refine the painting after its exhibition in the Pavilion of Realism if he had not already done so beforehand.³² The meaning of this central group depends on, and is vital to, the interpretation of the entire painting.³³ For example, taking the

³¹ Nochlin, *Realism*, p.25

³² Linda Nochlin, 'Courbet's Real Allegory: Rereading "The Painter's Studio"', in *Courbet Reconsidered*, ed. by Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), pp.17-41 (24).

³³ An incomplete bibliography of studies on the painting includes: Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed., *Courbet in Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, c1977) ; James H. Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon* (London: Phaidon, 1997), pp.38-63; Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971); Linda Nochlin, *Gustave Courbet: A Study of Style and Society* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976); Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, ed., *Courbet Reconsidered*

context of the *Exposition Universelle* of 1855 into consideration, German art historian Klaus Herding argues that the universal gathering depicted in the pictorial space was Courbet's petition to the Emperor for 'a reconciliation of society through art' and an attempt to create a 'balance of forces'.³⁴ Art, therefore, claimed the central position of society. So did the artist. I concur with Herding that the central position of the artist in this painting corresponds, to a certain extent, to the centrality of artists in real life, but my argument is confined to the Realist perception of the world.

If we think of the Realists' emphasis on empirical experience and the pursuit of truthfully representing the facts as they are, there immediately arises a contradiction. Facts are supposed to be objective, whereas empirical perception is definitely conditioned by personal knowledge and experience. As Nochlin states, an 'artist's perception is conditioned by the physical properties of paint and linseed oil... in converting three-dimensional space and form onto a two-dimensional picture plain'.³⁵ One solution is to be as accurate as possible through being attentive to detail, as exemplified by Manet's painstaking research into the event as preparation for his *Execution of the Emperor Maximilian* (1867). Another solution is to 'interpret their era as men who feel it live within them' as Zola remarked in his *Salon of 1868*.³⁶ Courbet shared Zola's opinion on the subjectivity of artist's perception and stated that he would translate the epoch 'according to [his] own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well'. The artist, therefore, claims the centre of the painting not only as its creator, but also as the existential focal point of its content.

(New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); Timothy J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Jennifer Tennant Jackson, 'Courbet's *Trauerspiel*: Trouble with Women in the Painter's Studio', in *Visual Politics of Psychoanalysis: Art and the Image in Post-traumatic Cultures*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013), pp.77-101.

³⁴ Klaus Herding, *Gustave Courbet: To Venture Independence*, trans. by John William Gabriel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp.45-61.

³⁵ Nochlin, *Realism*, p.15.

³⁶ Cited in Nochlin, *Realism*, p.28.

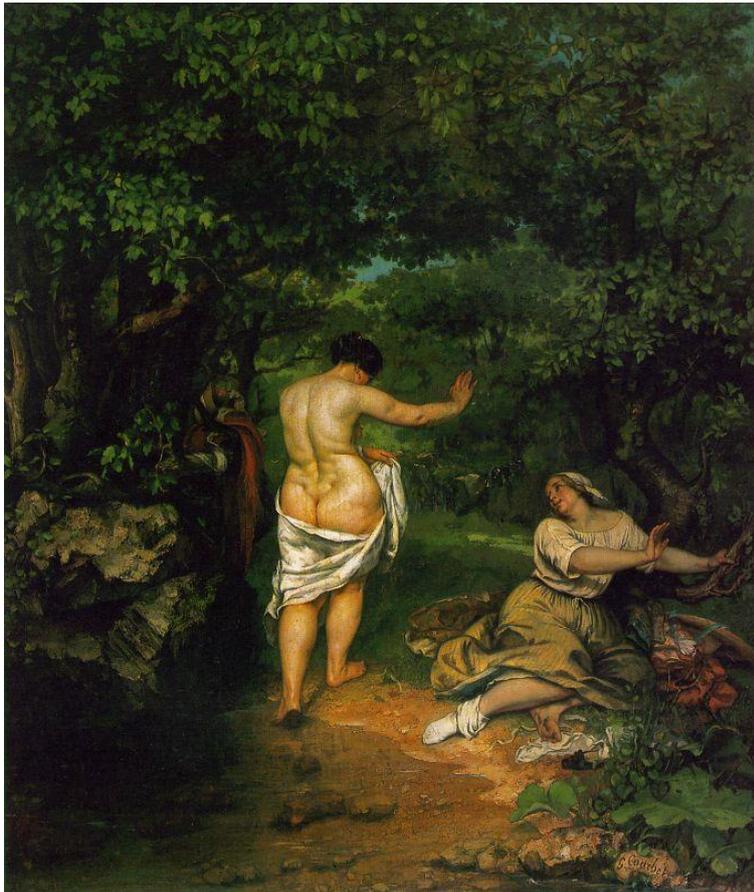


Figure 0. 2, Gustave Courbet, *The Bathers*, 1853, oil on canvas, 227×193 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France

Having recognised that complete reproduction of the world is impossible, Realist artists and writers advocated sincerity in art. An innocent vision unmediated by conventions and preconceptions was sought. In *The Painter's Studio*, this is embodied in the boy's look in the central triangle.³⁷ The Idealist convention needs to be discarded for a sincere representation of the body. The most often cited example is Courbet's *The Bathers* (1853) (Figure 0.2), in which the naked body of the bather stepping out of the pool bears marks of wearing a corset for an enduring amount of time. Folds and depressions on the body add a sense of voluptuousness and flesh.

In *The Painter's Studio* the Irishwoman sitting on the floor behind the left of the canvas may also hint at Courbet's representation of a woman's body in an unvarnished and coarse manner. I propose an analysis of the Irishwoman in comparison to the naked woman,

³⁷ Nochlin, *Realism*, p.36.

or model, standing in front of the right side of the canvas behind the artist (Figure 0.3). These are the only two figures with parts of their bodies exposed. Indeed, their bodies are exposed in a corresponding manner. Both are leaning towards the central canvas. The model is under the light holding a white cloth to modestly cover her body, while the Irishwoman is shrouded in the shadow dressed in dark colours. The model is standing at a profile angle to the viewer, while the Irishwoman is facing directly to the front. The model's left breast is completely exposed, while a baby is held to the left breast of the Irishwoman, the head of which blocks our view of the breast. The left thigh of the model is exposed with the white cloth covering her shank, while it is precisely the left shank of the Irishwoman that is not covered by her clothes. The exposed skin of the left shank of the Irishwoman is flabby and lustreless. In contrast, the skin of the model is ivory and radiant. Yet, this is not a classical idealised body of woman. The curve of the back of the model's thigh is not smooth. The shape of her pelvis bone is made visible as an effect of the light cast on her body. These two partially naked bodies are not profoundly different from each other because neither resembles the boneless, smoothly curved body of academic art. Both bodies are 'real' living.



Figure 0. 3, Gustave Courbet, *The Artist's Studio*, 1854-1855, detail

Courbet's insistence on the experience of the world as a man, not just as a living and observing painter, extends to the model in *The Painter's Studio*. Not only do the specificities of the model's body underscore its corporeality, the clothes piled up prominently in the foreground at her foot, with no expensive fabrics or lavish colours visible, is set in contrast with the fashionably dressed woman identified as Madame Sabatier, attesting to the modest social-economic condition of the model. She is not captured in the act of posing. Nor is the artist depicting her on the canvas. She is, thus, not rendered only to disappear into the two canvases, one of *the Painter's studio* and the other within *The Painter's Studio*. She is represented as a woman who models, not a woman who *is modelling*. Her body is no more exploited than any other figure in the painting.

The naked woman standing behind the artist is, in fact, not the only model in the painting. Cuenot, Courbet's childhood friend, had posed as the host in Courbet's *After Dinner at Ornans* (1853). Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it became increasingly common for artists to invite their friends to pose for them. Unlike a sitter for a portrait, such favours put artists' friends into the equivocal position of model, as representations of them were often anonymous and served a purpose other than capturing the resemblance in physiognomy and psychology. This will be further explored in the chapter on Alice Prin. It is sufficing now to say that Realist aesthetics, therefore, contributed to transformations of artistic practices involving models.

The traditional training of artists started with the study of two-dimensional materials, making prints or drawings after antiques and the masters. The next step was to work with three-dimensional casts of antique sculptures. Not until the students were familiar with the idealised proportions of antique art were they allowed to work from live models. Models, therefore, were involved at a relatively advanced stage of artistic training and art-making. In her book *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris 1830-1870* (2005) Susan

Waller points out that professional models were traditionally men because the idealised male nude had been considered, since the fifteenth century, the embodiment of the noblest and greatest human qualities.³⁸ As no human is immune from bodily idiosyncrasies, the production of art involved a process of correction and idealisation. The model in academic practice, therefore, served to help artists aspire to the ideal of beauty. His identity outside the studio was immaterial.³⁹ Studying from the life model had been a privilege of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* since 1663 when Charles-Nicolas Colbert granted it a monopoly. Private life classes were prohibited until 1760 when Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809), a member of the *Académie Royale* and teacher of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), introduced live models to his teaching studio.⁴⁰ Models who were women were banned in the *École des Beaux-Arts* before the nineteenth century, but in the early years of that century they were found in some private studios.⁴¹

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the female body started to become the new ideal and the Salon walls were soon dominated by female nudes. The metier of modelling changed accordingly. In the 1830s, the female modelling profession was invented, along with it the notion of the model who was a woman being a specific social type and cultural topos.⁴² Marie Lathers identifies three periods of modelling in the nineteenth century, according to the favoured ethnicity of the models who were women. The first period (1825-1848) was characterised by the dominance of the bohemian *grisette* and Jewish, mostly African Jewish, woman. From 1848 to 1870, Italian immigrants took over the market. Jewish women were still visible, but over the course of the three decades they became less emphasised. The

³⁸ Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), p.4.

³⁹ Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, p.XIII.

⁴⁰ Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, pp.5-6.

⁴¹ Marie Lathers, *Bodies of Art: French Literary Realism and the Artist's Model* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p.4.

⁴² Lathers, *Bodies of Art*, p.23.

Parisian type rose from the 1870s and remained popular until World War I. The changes between the periods were the result of the often intertwining aesthetic and social-political factors. The industrial revolution drove Italian immigrants to urban France and the subsequent upsurge in anti-Semitism in France led to a shift in aesthetic taste from 1850s to 1870s. The new genre of bourgeois leisure promoted by the Impressionist artists in the 1880s, and a rising tide of nationalism, contributed to the prevalence of Parisian models. Along with changing preferences for the ethnicities of models were constantly alternating stereotypes. For example in the 1840s when the Jewish model dominated the trade, they were considered 'pure models' who were not models by choice, whereas in the 1860s they were often rendered as greedy.⁴³

Unlike Lathers who classifies models according to their ethnic-national identities, Susan Waller categorises models according to their professional status, as irregular models (*modèle occasionnel*), professional models (*modèle professionnel*) or proprietary models (*modèle privilégié*).⁴⁴ While professional models were those who took modelling as a regular job and made a living out of it, irregular models were those who occasionally posed for artists, often as who they were in the real world. The Realists' attempts to sincerely represent their empirical observation compelled them to study from live models. The traditional practice of life-drawing was meant for the final representation of ideal beauty. Artists would correct the idiosyncrasies of the model's body with their knowledge of the proportions of the antique. Un-idealised yet truthful depiction was damned as a failed attempt. Over the years, artists derived a type from various models which were considered the most perfect to their eyes. This practice would not be appropriate for the Realists' aim of representing the body sincerely. Irregular models were in demand for the study of people living in the real world.

⁴³ Lathers, *Bodies of Art*, pp.24-42.

⁴⁴ Susan Waller, 'Realist Quandaries: Posing Professional and Proprietary Models in the 1860s', *The Art Bulletin*, 89 (June 2007), no. 2, pp. 239-265.

For example, when Courbet worked on *The Stone Breakers* (1849-50), he invited two stone breakers he encountered on his way to the Château of Saint-Denis to his studio to model for him. In contrast to professional models and irregular models who were paid for their posing, proprietary models were usually closely associated with the artists and their posing did not involve financial transaction. Although there were examples of propriety models prior to the 1870s, such as Cuenot in *After Dinner at Ornans* and Manet's brothers in *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbs*, it was not until the Impressionists who carried forward the subjects of bourgeois life and leisure that propriety models became prevalent. For both propriety models and irregular models, their identities outside the studio were no longer irrelevant. The notion that bodies were registers of social-economic situation culminated in the 1880s was exemplified by James Tissot's (1836-1902) series of *La Femme à Paris* (1883-1885), in which the Parisian woman's body is taken as the manifestation of her family's wealth and social status.

Along with the increasing demand for, and number of, models came a drop in models' salary and social status. Modelling had been a permanent position in the *Académie Royale* in the eighteenth century. Three or four models would be employed, and some would spend their lives posing. As an integral part of the *Académie Royale*, they enjoyed a stable income and a certain social status. They were housed in the Louvre. Pensions would be paid upon their retirement, which would be extended to their widows after their death. The *Académie Royale* was abolished during the French Revolution and the *École des Beaux-Arts* was reorganised in 1795. Between the codification of the *École's* curriculum in 1817 and the curricular reforms in 1863, a limited number models were offered annual contracts whereas others were hired by the sitting. All privileges were gone. The pay for models with annual contracts (550 francs per year) was lower than the door-keepers (800 francs per year). Although the pay of models hired by the sitting was higher than normal craftsmen, the job did

not guarantee a stable income.⁴⁵ The collaborative relationship between artist and model was replaced by one of simple employment.

The Figure Model-Artist

The Realist aesthetics that arose in the 1850s profoundly transformed the artistic practice regarding models. The dealer-critic system that became mature in the 1880s, along with the emergence of alternative Salons, offered different paths to artists and ultimately redefined the notion of the artist. A feature shared by both tendencies was the increasing loosening of conventional boundaries in the art world. Previous experience and systematic training were no longer essential conditions for being a model or an artist. New possibilities and opportunities emerged. From this period to the present day we witness a process of redefining the model, from someone employed to pose for an artist or display clothes, a rather passive and laborious profession, to more active and intellectual roles, such as artists and designers.

In order to fully comprehend this process of destabilisation from its beginnings, I undertake three case studies of women between 1860 and 1930, who made their initial contact with art through modelling and later aspired to making art. All three women started their modelling careers in Paris after 1860 and posed for artists associated with Realism and the avant-garde milieu. Victorine Meurent (1844-1927) started modelling as early as 1861 and posed for nine paintings by Édouard Manet (1832-1883) between 1862 and 1873. Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) posed for a panoply of artists, including Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905), and

⁴⁵ Waller, *The Invention of the Model*, pp.16-18.

Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), between 1883 and 1896. Alice Prin (1901-1953), more widely known as Kiki de Montparnasse, started modelling in 1915 and worked for artists who worked or lived in the Montparnasse area in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The selection of these women as the subjects of my case studies is intentional as well as mandatory. On the one hand, the lives of these women span nearly a century that is critical to the formation of avant-garde art and our understanding of it. A timeline derived from the addresses of their residences and studios corresponds to the migration of the artists' district from Montmartre, which was established with the moving-in of Impressionist artists in the 1870s, to Montparnasse in the early twentieth century when foreign artists moved to Paris and inhabited the area. Despite that all these three women were known for having modelled for non-academic artists, their professional choices, as artists, were immensely different. Meurent painted in a rather academic tradition and exhibited only at the *Salon de la Société des Artistes Français*, the oldest and most conventional Salon. Valadon aligned herself with the avant-garde milieu by taking up a relatively bold and expressive style, and exhibiting at later-founded Salons such as *Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, *Salon d'Automne* and *Salon des Indépendants*. Prin never showed such professional ambition as Meurent or Valadon and never exhibited at major Salons but private galleries. The representations of these women in the discourse of art history are equally divergent. Meurent is often identified as one of Manet's favourite models. Only in studies by feminist art historians, such as Eunice Lipton, and historical fiction, is attention paid to her artistic career. Valadon was widely recognised as an established artist by her contemporaries and later historians. Her modelling experience remains rather obscure in the literature. In contrast to these two, Prin is documented more as a muse than a model. That is to say, writings on her are less concerned with identifying the artworks for which she posed than underscoring her as an inspirational personage for artists living in the Montparnasse area in the 1920s, and an embodiment of

their lifestyle. Her engagement with drawing and painting has been investigated along this line of thinking.

On the other hand, there is not a large pool of cases from which to choose. Apart from Meurent, Valadon and Prin, the only example I have discovered is Juana Romani (1869-1924), a woman of Italian origin who moved to Paris with her family in 1877. Like Meurent, Romani inclined to align herself with the academic tradition by exhibiting regularly at the *Salon de la Société des Artistes Français*, between 1888 and 1904, as well as the *Exposition Universelle* in 1889, in which she won a silver medal. Despite being more established than Meurent, primary sources and scholarly study of Romani are limited. More work needs to be done, which is beyond the scope of this project.

I limit this research to the study of women whose initial contact with the art world was through modelling. This might be arguable in Meurent's case as she came from an artisan family, but no evidence suggests that she engaged with any artistic activity before she started modelling. There are also women who modelled for money at certain points in their artistic career - Gwen John (1876-1939) being one of the most prominent examples. Before she moved to Paris in 1904, John received systematic artistic training at the Slade School of Art in London and had experience of working with models. While she was in Paris, she modelled for artists, men and women, to earn a living. In her case, being a model for hire was a conscious decision to facilitate her artistic pursuit. As such, the negotiations John made as a model and an artist could be very different.⁴⁶

So far, I have been talking about artists and models as if these are self-explanatory notions that need no clarification. Juxtaposition of the archives of lives and works of

⁴⁶ For instance, John would join the women for whom she posed in social activities, such as going to the theatre and painting together at the café. These accounts are found in her notebooks and correspondence. For the study of these writings, see Maria Tamboukou, *Nomadic Narratives, Visual Forces: Gwen John's Letters and Paintings* (New York, N.Y.; Oxford: Peter Lang, c.2010).

Meurent, Valadon and Prin, however, begs the following questions: What is an artist? Specifically, what makes one an artist? Despite Meurent joining the artist's association, *Société des Artistes Français*, in 1903, she was not recognised by biographers, for example Adolphe Tabarant, as an artist. Prin had significant commercial success as an artist with a sold-out single-woman exhibition, but she is mostly documented in the memoirs of her contemporaries as a model and muse. Of the three women, Suzanne Valadon was most established as an artist and well-acknowledged by her contemporaries and later art historians. What was it that made the transformation from model into artist work for Valadon? Investigation into this issue invites further questions on the historical conditions between 1860 and 1930 that affected such a transformation. How did these women become artists? Did they join any artists' associations? How did they establish themselves in the artistic community? What kind of artwork did they produce? What artistic training did they receive? Where did they exhibit their works? How did they sell their works? What was the market for their works? With these questions I examine the training and exhibiting opportunities available to women who aspired to be artists and their negotiations with these conditions.

Model is a notion no less difficult to define. The shift in artistic practice resulting from the burgeoning of the Realistic aesthetic gave rise to new kinds of models, which Lathers and Waller devote their study to categorising. What remains unchanged, in their paradigms, is that the individual identity of the model is not pertinent to the content or the meaning of artwork for which he or she poses. It is this concept of identity that marks the distinction between model and sitter. In fact, this leads John Klein to define 'the artist's respect for the identity of the sitter' as the decisive factor in defining Matisse's portraits from his other paintings of figures.⁴⁷ In most cases, we learn the identity of the model through other historical documents, such as the artist's biography or correspondence. When it comes to

⁴⁷ John Klein, *Matisse Portraits* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.12.

Prin, however, we find that her nickname, Kiki de Montparnasse, is often used to title the works for which she modelled. The question becomes one of how to make sense of a model whose identity is visible.

The transformation from model to artist, as a dynamic process, is not the only concern of this dissertation. Another set of enquiries concerns the visibility of models. Investigating Prin's eminence in the 1920s is one aspect of this. Another concerns the subjective modelling experience. The reform of 1863 introduced models who were women into the *École*, and moral concerns arose as female models became common in public and private studios. Measures of supervision were adopted in the studios at the *École* in 1883 due to previous commotions resulting from student hazing.⁴⁸ As a woman who worked in public and made money particularly with her body, model becomes incompatible with the bourgeois ideology of femininity, as well as the notion of woman. The definition of woman in the nineteenth century were social constructs which were exclusively bourgeois, and intrinsically alienated women of the working class. As Griselda Pollock remarks, 'working-class women went out to work, but that fact presented a problem in terms of definition as woman. For instance, Jules Simon categorically stated that a woman who worked ceased to be a woman'.⁴⁹ It appears that the incompatibility was internalised by the models.

It will perhaps surprise you,' she told me after I had rejoined her, 'but while it doesn't disturb us to pose, we are uncomfortable remaining nude before the students as soon as they are no longer working. When we are on the table, we are models, that are little more than 'objects', but as soon as we climb down, we become women again, and our first gesture is an instinctive gesture of shame.'⁵⁰

This is a quote from an interview with Theresa, a model who posed for Jules Lefebvre (1836-1911), Gustave Boulanger (1824-1888), and William Bouguereau (1825-1905). Theresa felt at

⁴⁸ Lathers, *Bodies of Art*, p.45.

⁴⁹ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 96.

⁵⁰ Cited in Waller, *The Invention of Model*, p.45.

ease with being nude as a model because she realised that a model is more or less an object - at least she reported experiencing it so. Once she became a woman, a subject that could interact with men, being nude made her uncomfortable. The posing platform was the locus of transition. Having investigated excerpts from biographies of models and paintings of studio praxis produced in the nineteenth century, Waller concluded that it was the conceived reassurance of the professionalism of the artists and their students that made models who were women believe that they would not be treated erotically and feel at ease being naked on the posing platform. The result of this reassurance is the abandonment of sexuality and subjectivity *as women*.

The interview with Theresa was published in 1902 in the journal *La Presse*. In two issues of *Mercure de France* in 1919, eighteen months after the death of Edgar Degas (1834-1917) and in the middle of the sales of the artist's collection, an article entitled '*Degas et son Modèle*' by Alice Michel was published. While it is not certain if Alice Michel had someone pen the article for her, it is generally accepted that the model in the article, Pauline, was the author's persona. The article documents a period when Pauline was modelling for Degas when the artist was between 65 and 67 years old.⁵¹ Pauline was obviously no object to Degas as she often managed to evoke certain emotions in the artist's. In one session Pauline talked to Degas about Huysmans and enraged the artist. Pauline deeply regretted bring up the topic as she cursed 'her carelessness which was going to have the consequence of a morning passed in a glacial silence. Which is what happened.'⁵² The repentance Pauline felt was a result of her expectation of a morning of awkward silence, which suggests that there were better times in the session. The article gives several examples. There was a time when Degas

⁵¹ Alice Michel, 'Degas et son Modèle', *Mercure de France*, CXXXI 16, February 1919. I used a revised edition of it, *Degas et Son Modèle*, rev. edit. (Paris: L'Échoppe, 2012).

⁵² Michel, *Degas et Son Modèle*, pp.55-57. Also translated and reprinted in Heather Dawkins, 'Frogs, Monkeys and Women: A history of Identifications Across a Phantastic Body' in *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, ed. by Richard Kendall and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1992), pp.202-217 (214-5).

talked to Pauline about his deteriorating sight. ‘There was so much pain in his words that the girl was quite disturbed. These complaints were not new to her. She tried to comfort him... he laughed, then jumped up... and sat down in front of his statue’.⁵³ Both Degas and Pauline were affected by the pain the artist went through. Pauline comforted Degas, cheered the artist up and got him to return to work. After Pauline resumed her pose, the cheerful Degas sang *Don Juan*, made up funny stories and teased the model while working.⁵⁴ In this specific session, Pauline intervened in the artist’s process of art-making by cheering him up and getting him to work. She was obviously very familiar with the artist. Not only did she correctly predict Degas’ reaction when the topic of their conversation upset him, at other times she also managed to manipulate the artist’s emotions by deliberately being obedient to him in order to lighten the mood of the room. In a good mood, the artist tended to be more agreeable, making Pauline’s time in the studio more pleasant.

If Michel’s article disputes the notion that models are ‘objects’ in the studio, as Theresa suggests, from the perspective of a model, Man Ray offers us an account of the unease of working with naked models as an artist. In his memoirs, Ray recalls that he ‘had not looked at a nude with the disinterested eyes of a painter’ without speculating on the possible reasons for such unease.⁵⁵ I am not suggesting that Michel and Ray’s statements are more factual than Theresa’s, rather they are all documents of subjective experience and perceptions that need to be critically examined. What is intriguing in Theresa’s statement is, therefore, not that the model was like an object on the posing platform, but that Theresa *felt* she was like one in that context. The need she felt to justify her womanhood by stripping herself of it while working as a model alludes to that bourgeois ideology of sexual difference depending on the marginalisation of certain types of women. This is further explored in the

⁵³ Michel, *Degas et Son Modèle*, pp.32.

⁵⁴ Michel, *Degas et Son Modèle*, pp.33.

⁵⁵ Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1999), p.119.

chapter on Meurent in which I discuss the conceptualisation of commercial bodies in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In her study of the nude in French culture between 1870 and 1910, feminist art historian Heather Dawkins describes Michel's article as a break in the monopoly of representation of models only by artists.⁵⁶ Artworks, especially nudes, are considered by Dawkins as an acquiescence in the subjection of models to the masculine gaze. Even those by models-turned-artists, such as Suzanne Valadon, cannot escape such an idiom and are, therefore, insufficient for exploring the complexities of modelling, even though she admits that Valadon managed to translate 'the model's unself-conscious confidence about the female body and the freedom to scrutinise it into images'.⁵⁷ Yet I still pose the question: Can we discern traces of modelling in artworks? As the artwork is the primary subject of study of the art historical discourse, if we deny the existence of any of such traces it becomes virtually impossible to effectively write models into the history of art. This is why I study modelling as a form of labour, of which the result is the artwork, in the chapter on Meurent. The paintings of her by Manet are scrutinised as the outcome of the labour of the artist and the model. What is more, if Michel's writing can be taken as an articulation of the modelling experience, Valadon's paintings and drawings can also be interpreted in this light. I therefore concentrate on the articulation of the body in my study of her artwork.

⁵⁶ Apart from the article, 'Frogs, Monkeys and Women', Heather Dawkins also discusses Michel's article, especially in comparison with Valadon's art and biography in *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.86-114.

⁵⁷ Dawkins, *The Nude*, p.90.

Politics of Language

When Dawkins asserts that models who are working-class women are muted subjects, denied ‘the means to represent their particular view of modelling or of the nude’, she is referring to the articulation of the subjective experience.⁵⁸ Materials, such as the accounts by Michel and Theresa, as well as drawings and caricatures of models, are found in contemporary journals and publications alike. Waller reproduces an abundance of such textual and visual material in her book, *The Invention of the Model*.⁵⁹ Research devoted to models, however, remains exceptional in the discourse of art history in terms of their quantity and impact. Exploration of models’ visibility should, and eventually will, take place on the level of art historical discourse. An attempt to do so can be discerned in Dawkins’ reclamation of Michel’s article in the archive of Degas.⁶⁰ Yet, as argued, such a manoeuvre is insufficient for two reasons. Firstly, it fails to effectively register the model’s labour in the artwork and recognise the execution of artwork is a result of that labour. As long as artwork remains the privileged subject of study in the discourse of art history, this failure will lead to the further marginalisation of the model. What should be recognised, instead, is that many artists choose to hire a model because they really need one, and cannot work otherwise. This is exactly why artists needed to search for new kinds of model in order to visualise the aesthetics of Realism. As Ellen McBreen notes in her study of Matisse’s studio interiors, careful setups of the studio with objects and the presence of the model offered Matisse the visual effects that he captured and explored in his paintings.⁶¹ That is to say, the model, as well as his or her labour, is indispensable to the production of art, and constitutes a significant part of the cultural and aesthetic negotiations that artists make. I look for traces of this labour

⁵⁸ Dawkins, *The Nude*, p.86.

⁵⁹ Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model*.

⁶⁰ Dawkins, ‘Frogs, Monkeys and Women’.

⁶¹ Ellen McBreen, ‘The Studio as Theatre’, in *Matisse in the Studio*, ed. by Ellen McBreen and Helen Burnham (Boston, Massachusetts: MFA publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2017), pp.113-140.

with its effects and embodied experience in works for which models have posed and which are produced by models-turned-artists. Secondly, Dawkins recognises that the rare occasions on which Michel's text has been incorporated into the masculine structure of the art historical discourse tend to reduce it to a simple reflection on the image of the canonical artist Degas, from which the model is excluded. Yet, Dawkins misses that this discursive strategy serves a dual purpose of not only preserving a certain image of Degas intact, but also maintaining a segregation between artist and model in the discourse. The latter problematic cannot be adequately addressed by just reclaiming Michel's text back into the Degas archive.

This discursive strategy of segregation which leads to the marginalisation of models and hence their diminished visibility is by no means homogenous. It operates on various levels, the most fundamental of which is the linguistic level. This is best exemplified by the inconsistencies in two idiomatic terms, 'female model' and 'woman artist'. As a user of English as a foreign language, when I first tried to formulate this research I found the terms very perplexing, as both 'female' and 'woman' function as noun modifiers to denote the gender. In this case the gender is the same, so why not use the same word? In the very beginning of the first chapter of her book of paramount importance, *The Second Sex*, French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir states that 'the term "female" is pejorative not because it roots woman in nature, but because it confines her in her sex'.⁶² The word 'female' embodies the idea that a woman is nothing more than her sex as she is defined only by her reproductive function, overlooking her historical, social and cultural specificity. She has no agency, nor individuality. It is complicit with the long standing idea that woman is innately primitive, unmediated and passive.

⁶² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage, 2011), p.21.

Beauvoir worked in French, so her discussion of ‘female’ concerns the French word ‘*femelle*’. Unlike in modern French, where ‘*femelle*’ is seldom used to describe one of the sexes of the human species unless for insulting purposes, the distinction between ‘female’ and ‘woman’ in English is less pronounced. In daily use, ‘female’ and ‘woman’, as noun modifiers, seem interchangeable. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* states that ‘female’ can be a mere synonym for ‘woman’, but it also specifies that this simple use is now commonly avoided by good writers unless for contemptuous implication.⁶³ In the dictionary, ‘female’ as a noun is explained by itself in adjectival form, namely a female is a female person, animal or plant. As an adjective, ‘female’ refers to the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs. Not exclusively identified with the human species, ‘female’, like *femelle*, emphasises the biological procreational ability of one of the sexes of organic beings. In contrast, ‘woman’ specifically denotes an adult human being. That is to say, ‘woman’ can only be used to describe a human and, as in French, it is this particular *humanness* that differentiates ‘woman’ from ‘female’. In this humanness lies agency and subjectivity.

Given the explicitly negative implication associated with *femelle*, we should exercise more discretion in the use of ‘female’ when studying French culture. When Beauvoir articulates the damage *femelle* has done to *femme*, she is not just referring to those women who make art. Her argument, however, seems especially provocative in the case of the figure Model-Artist, if we are reminded of the assumption that subjectivity is a necessary prerequisite for creativity. Deprived of her agency, a female may never possess creativity, making it theoretically impossible for her to become an artist. It is only in this light that we can really discern what has been denied to models who are women by referring to them as ‘female models’. Not only does the term agree with the negative connotations conveyed by

⁶³ John Simpson and Edmund Weiner, ed., *Oxford English dictionary*, vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p.824.

‘female’, it explicitly waives their right to be equal women when confronted by their companions of the same sex involved in the art world. The language signifies and constitutes the seemingly insurmountable gap between women who are models and ‘women dealers’, ‘women curators’, ‘women collectors’ etc.

Within the context of this thesis, it seems only reasonable to look at the expressions in French to see if the distinction could be justified as originating from the French language. Indeed, like their English translations, the French terms for models and artists who are women are different. One is *modèle de femme* and the other *femme artiste*. Yet this distinction comes from a different reason. Unlike English, French attributes gender to nouns, with which the adjectives should agree. While the French word *artiste* is of neutral gender, *modèle* is a masculine noun that cannot be modified by a feminine modifier, making *modèle de femme* the only grammatically correct option. The masculine gender of *modèle* comes from the long history of professional models usually being men until the nineteenth century. As the title of Susan Waller’s book on models, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870*, suggestively tells, professional models who were women were an invention of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ This is not to say that there were no women working as models before then, but it was not until the nineteenth century that they formed a social category.⁶⁵

My thinking on the linguistic implications of ‘woman artist’ and ‘female model’ is preceded by feminist art historians’ endeavours to disclose the gender asymmetries embedded in the terms used in art historical discourse and the effect they have on our ways of thinking. In the catalogue of a 1972 exhibition: *Old Mistresses, Woman Artists of the Past*, the organisers of the exhibition, Ann Gabhart and Elizabeth Broun, remark that ‘the title of

⁶⁴ Waller, *The Invention of the Model*.

⁶⁵ Lathers, *Bodies of Art*, p.22.

this exhibition alludes to the unspoken assumption in our language that art is created by men. The reverential term “Old Master” has no meaningful equivalent; when cast in its feminine form, “Old Mistress”, the connotation is altogether different, to say the least’.⁶⁶ The feminine substitution exposes the encoded meaning and the underlying imbalance of power, which is otherwise often indiscernible. Taking this exhibition as a starting point, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock explore, in their book *Old Mistresses: Woman, Art and Ideology*, the historical construction of the notion of the artist as an exceptional being, defined in masculine terms, and the concurrent gradual trivialisation, even exclusion, of women.⁶⁷ Their analysis of contemporary criticism reveals that women artists have often been discussed, since the eighteenth century, in a set of terms different from artists. As a group, women artists have been seen as less serious, or inferior. That is to say, women artists constitute a category separate from artists. ‘The phrase “woman artist” does not describe an artist of the female sex, but a kind of artist that is distinct and clearly different from the great artist’.⁶⁸ Therefore, the ‘woman’ in ‘woman artist’ is an added-on modifier that suggests negative connotations. It points to the normalisation of the artist as a white man and continues to fix woman in the space of the Other.

Although Parker and Pollock pointed out that ‘woman artist’ puts women’s position in art-making at stake in 1972, the term is still often taken for granted as if it requires no justification or negotiation. The effect of the omnipresence and wide acceptance of this term in daily life is double-edged. On the one hand, it establishes the expression ‘woman artist’ as *a priori* knowledge and presents the agency of women who paint as an indisputable fact throughout history. On the other hand, it overlooks the complex history of women’s fight to

⁶⁶ Ann Gabhart and Elizabeth Broun, *Walters Art Gallery Bulletin*, vol.24, no.7, 1972, quoted in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Pandora, 1991), p.6.

⁶⁷ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*.

⁶⁸ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, p.114.

study, make and exhibit art, as well as the heated debate about gender difference involved in this process. As remarked by Parker and Pollock, without a critical review of the term, we might be in danger of reaffirming the position of women as the Other in the history of art. It is for this reason that instead of 'woman artist', the expression, 'artist who is a woman' should be adopted, using the phrase to evacuate the position of artist which has been already occupied by masculinity.

Language, as a discursive system through which we understand and are understood by the world, structures and regulates what can be said, thought and, ultimately, known. It is the symbolic embodiment of the rules and relations of a particular culture. It is the site where ideological assumptions are manifested and can be worked on. The gender asymmetry in the English language, as revealed by these authors, shows a privileging of the masculine as the sole signifier of creativity, especially in the discourse of art history. Their works make it clear that the arena of language is where gender struggles must take place. In this thesis, in order to displace the established norm of 'female model' and 'woman artist', I am going to adopt the terms 'model who is a woman' and 'artist who is a woman'.

The second level at which we could discern a hierarchy between artist and model is the manner in which they are written into the history of art, of which appellation is the most blatant. In the field of art history, models are often addressed by their first names, whereas artists by their last names. In fact, models are among the last few examples of individuals being referred to by their first name in historical writings. One practical reason is that models' last names are often not documented. Yet, in cases where the model's last name is known, such as Victorine Meurent, the first name is still frequently used. My interrogation of the literature on Meurent in Chapter two demonstrates that the author's choice of appellation is an indicator of his or her perception of Meurent as mainly an artist or a model.

The categorisation of women as artists or models is in itself very telling. In *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, the editor, Jill Berk Jiminez, selects to include Edma Pontillon (1840-1921), born Marie Edma Caroline Morisot, but not her sister Berthe Morisot (1841-1895).⁶⁹ The sisters Edma and Berthe had identical artistic training and exhibition experience until 1869 when Edma married Alfred Pontillon and moved to the Brittany port of Lorient. Edma Pontillon modelled for her sister Morisot mainly between 1867 and 1884. She never sat for any other artists. The intimate personal relation between Edma and Berthe Morisot along with the fact that Edma Pontillon was not paid for her modelling made her not a professional model, but a proprietary one. If it is Jiminez' intention to incorporate both professional and non-professional models, why is Berthe Morisot exempted since she modelled for Édouard Manet (1832-1883) in his *Balcon* (1868)? A similar situation is the case for the Gonzalès sisters, where Jeanne Gonzalès (1852-1924) is included while Eva Gonzalès (1849-1883) is not. The last paragraph of the entry of Edma Pontillon can enlighten us.

It is tempting to speculate whether Edma Pontillon could have been as *successful* an artist as her [...] Their art teachers had thought that Edma's work showed more promise than Berthe's. Manet made an offer to an art dealer in 1867 for a painting of Edma's, and Corot exchanged pictures with Edma, not Berthe. In 1874 Degas invited both Edma and Berthe to exhibit with the Impressionists, an indication that he found Edma's work qualified for the exhibition. If Edma had not married early, lived in the provinces, and had three children to care for, could she have become an artist to rival her sister? (my italics)⁷⁰

Despite the recognition of Edma Pontillon's achievements by her teachers and colleagues, according to the contributor of this entry, Alicia Craig Faxon, Edma was not as successful as her sister. If we follow Faxon's logic without questioning her standard for success or her attributing of Edma Pontillon's failure to her marriage and family, we have to ask if Berthe Morisot was too 'successful' an artist to be included in this book. Or was it because Edma Pontillon was not as good that she ends up in this dictionary of models? The segregation,

⁶⁹ Jill Berk Jiminez, ed., *Dictionary of Artists' Models* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001).

⁷⁰ Alicia Craig Faxon, 'Entry on Edma Pontillon', in *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, pp.432-5.

therefore, is not between models and artists who are women. Rather, it is specifically between models and *successful* artists. What drives the separation of exemplified artists from models is an anxiety over the status of those artists who were women, as if admitting their experience as posers would impugn their dignity. There are further examples of the manifestation of this anxiety in my discussion of the archives of Meurent and Valadon.

The anxiety is not confined to writings on art history. When Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) was questioned about her posing for Edgar Degas (1834-1917), she refused to be considered as a model.⁷¹ Instead, she provided the answer that she only posed when models could not understand what Degas wanted. She implied that she was better able to understand Degas, as a fellow artist. She did not want to be categorised as a model and wished to maintain an intellectual distance, if not a hierarchy, between artist and model as there were some artistic intentions that could only be communicated between artists and that could not be comprehended by models.⁷² It was her contrast with the model, in terms of her ability to make artistic communication, that defined and consolidated her identity as an artist. Despite Cassatt's rejection of being treated as a model, her response confirms that an element of intellectual communication was necessary, or at least desired, in the process of posing. According to Cassatt, models were not supposed to be mere still-life objects.

The boundary between artist and model, even at a linguistic level, may not be as rigid as it appears. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida coined a term '*différance*' to articulate that meanings of language are produced through difference (to differ), yet are destabilised

⁷¹ Cassatt is known to have sat for two paintings by Degas, *Mary Cassatt at the Louvre* (c. 1880) and *Mary Cassatt* (c.1880-1884). It is arguable if Cassatt can be considered as a model or a sitter for these two paintings. For detailed discussion of the relationship between Cassatt and Degas, see Kimberly A. Jones, ed., *Degas/Cassatt* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2014).

⁷² Lois Oliver, 'Bodies of Work, Models as Artist', in *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, pp.20-25 (21).

and postponed by endless deferral (to defer).⁷³ That is to say, although the distinction between artist and model is necessary for their meanings to be produced, they are relational and positional in the chains of signifiers which occur during the process of deferral. The definition of artist relies on the notion of model and vice versa, with each having the potential to undermine the fixity of meaning of the other. It is only by recognising the connection between artist and model that we can imagine and understand the occupation of both positions by one sex, and even one individual.

The figure Model-Artist, as derived from my research of artists who are women and who entered the art world through modelling, questions not only the hierarchy between artist and model, but also the justification of the effectively established segregation altogether. The three women that constitutes the subject of my case studies suggest that one person could occupy the two positions at the same time. Apart from that, towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the early twentieth century, we find it increasingly common for artists to pose for their colleagues. It is, therefore, more flexible than fixed in terms of the boundaries between model and artist. I am not denying the presence of power structure in the model-artist interaction in the artistic studio, but if we think of the relation between model and artist only in terms of employment or domination, we would not be able to accommodate those instances where artists of the same community model for each other, without rendering them as exceptional. But again how can we justify their exceptionality? Just by them being *successful* artists? It is, hence, important that we consider model and artist as different forms of labour that are vital to the execution of artworks. In this way we can avoid reproducing the hierarchy and segregation between them, as well as register the contribution of the model in artworks and, eventually, in the discourse of art history.

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, 'Différance' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.3-27.

Methodologies

Apart from the search for traces of models' labour in artworks, reading the archives of models-turned-artists is central to my quest to disclose the hierarchy between model and artist in the discourse. The three case studies selected present three archives very different in nature. For Victorine Meurent, I have in the archive, among other things, paintings of her by Manet and other artists, fragmentary texts on her by biographers of her contemporary artists, a doctoral thesis on her biography and her role in Manet's art, a piece of feminist research conducted by the American art historian Eunice Lipton and one surviving figurative painting by her. For Suzanne Valadon, there is a much more substantial collection of artworks, artistic reviews by her contemporaries and a humble but not scarce amount of personal correspondence and documents preserved in the archive of *Musée National d'Art Moderne*. For Alice Prin, I am confronted with an overwhelming number of primary documents comprising photographs, correspondence and personal memoirs. There are two versions of memoirs by Prin herself completed in 1929 and 1938. With such diverse archives, my methodologies are inevitably different from case to case. In fact, each chapter allows me to ask a different methodological question.

The case of Victorine Meurent bears one of my biggest anxieties when I started this project. My predecessor, Lipton, spent a significant amount of time in Paris and the United States tracking down as much information on Meurent as she could.⁷⁴ It appears that she has exhausted every lead. Since her study in the early 1990s, the only primary materials that have emerged are three painting by Meurent, one of a woman's head, *Le Jour des Rameaux* (1885), one of a young man's head, *Le Brisque* (1896) and one still under restoration, *Le Jup*

⁷⁴ Eunice Lipton, *Alias Olympia: A Woman's Search for Manet's Notorious Model & Her Own Desire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

(not dated). Will I be able to dig up more primary documents concerning Meurent, given the limited time and resources?

As my own research proceeded, I realised that this lack of information was exactly a symptom of the epistemic violence of the current discourse. The notion that an archive is a structure complicit with the power and desire of a discourse is pointed out by literary theorist Gayatri Spivak in *'The Rani of Sirmur'*.⁷⁵ In this ground-breaking article which Spivak first presented in 1984 at a conference, she points to the mode of documentation of the Rani of Sirmur in the Imperialist archive. Anyone who is determined to learn something about this Rani will be disappointed as there is not much to be discovered in the archive. She was brought up in letters between British officers discussing her tendency towards *Sati*. Yet not even the result of whether she burned herself could be found by Spivak. 'The Rani emerges only when she is needed in the space of imperial production'.⁷⁶ Spivak, thus, asks, 'as the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when, and why?'⁷⁷ Since Spivak reveals the illusion of an archive as an innocent and all-inclusive reservoir of information, it became evident that in order to avoid being trapped in that illusion, I should not take the discovery of new material to be the sole purpose of my study. I therefore pose the question: How can we study a subject, on which the information in the archive is limited? Is there any way to undermine the epistemic violence that the discourse has admitted?

I think through these questions with Foucault's concept of the *énoncé*. This concept forms part of Foucault's argument in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in which he theorises *énoncé*, discursive formation and archive.⁷⁸ According to Foucault, *énoncé* signifies two

⁷⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1985), pp.247-272.

⁷⁶ Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', p.270.

⁷⁷ Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', p.270.

⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

levels of the statement, the level of its meaning and the level of its modality of existence in a certain discourse. On the latter, Foucault writes

We will call *énoncé* [inadequately translated into English as] *statement* the modality of existence proper to that group of signs: [...] a modality that allows it to be in relation with a domain of objects, to prescribe a definite position to any possible subject, to be situated among other verbal performances, and to be endowed with repeated materiality.⁷⁹

What is in the archive are not, therefore, transparent documents that articulate knowledge. Foucault argues that the archive is a collection of statements that have to be read in relation to and as constituents as well products of specific discursive formations and protocols. We have to question their modes of existence by analysing their positions in the discourse, the moment of their appearance and disappearance, and the traces they have left. In addition, I adopt the Foucauldian concept of fold, along with the Derridean notion of archive as a regulating authoritative structure, to investigate the discursive field where Meurent appears and disappears.

My understanding of Foucault's theories is informed by Jennifer Tennant Jackson's work. In her thesis, 'Evidence as a Problem. Foucauldian Approaches to Three Canonical Works of Art: Courbet's *L'Atelier*, 1855, Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, 1656; Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, circa 1483' (University of Leeds, 2001), art historian Jennifer Tennant Jackson draws on string theory in the physics to investigate the implications of Foucault's concepts of *énoncé* and discursive formation, and advocates their relevance for the writing of art history. Looking closely into the archive of Gustave Courbet and the modality of existence of *énoncés* such as 'Courbet is a Socialist', 'Courbet is a Realist' and 'Courbet has a mistress and a son', Jackson explores in her thesis the problems of evidence and 'an invisibility, or absence, as the

⁷⁹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.120.

object of art history'.⁸⁰ In her 2007 article 'The Efficacy of Meta-Conceptual Performativity: Or, we just do not know what we are talking about', Jackson further examines Foucault's idea of *dispositif* and fold to underlie the significant function of that which is hidden in maintaining the discourse.⁸¹ I will discuss this with more details in the chapter on Meurent.

The theorisation of Meurent's archive as a fold informs my thinking on the other two case studies, but I attempt different things with them. The challenge presented by Valadon's archive is that many of the primary documents are likely to have been altered by Valadon's hand. Compared to Meurent, Valadon secured herself a more substantial voice in the art historical discourse through her *œuvre*, interview records, personal correspondence and writings which were well preserved first by her family and then by the national archive of the *Musée National d'Art Moderne*. We know, from comparing official census files, such as her birth certificate, with accounts of her in the biographies of contemporary artists, that Valadon altered her date of birth and advocated several versions of her life before modelling and making art. This tendency makes it difficult to determine the reliability of the information on her that has passed to me through archival preservation. Instead of verifying the archival materials, the question I explore is what effect the statements, or *énoncés*, recurring in Valadon's archive, have. In order to comprehend such an effect in the discourse of art history and Valadon's manoeuvres of self-invention, I employ the study of the image of the artist by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, as well as Griselda Pollock's theory of the avant-garde gambits of reference, deference, difference.⁸²

⁸⁰ Jennifer Tennant Jackson, 'Evidence as a Problem. Foucauldian Approaches to Three Canonical Works of Art: Courbet's *L'Atelier*, 1855, Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, 1656; Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, circa 1483' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2001), p.210.

⁸¹ Jennifer Tennant Jackson, 'The Efficacy of Meta-Conceptual Performativity: Or, we just do not know what we are talking about', in *Conceptual Odysseys: Passages to Cultural Analysis*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp.153-171.

⁸² Ernst Kris & Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Griselda Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits, 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, c.1992).

If materials relating to Meurent are alarmingly scarce, those in Alice Prin's archive are overwhelmingly large in quantity. Improvements in the technology of portable cameras made it much easier to take photographs anywhere, resulting in a substantial collection of photos taken in the first three decades of the twentieth century. A significant number of memoirs of individuals who lived in or visited the Montparnasse area in Paris in the 1920s recall either encounters with Prin or hearsay about her. Known for its international ambience, Montparnasse was frequented by artists, tourists, dancers and models from all over the world. As a result, many of their accounts are in languages other than English or French. My anxiety this time comes from the frustration of admitting that it is impossible to exhaust all the available materials within the time scope of this project. Again, different questions need to be asked; questions about the cultural and historical conditions for Prin's position in the Montparnasse circle and the image of that circle in discourse and popular culture. Montparnasse in the 1920s is often celebrated and imagined as a sensual, carnivalesque, if not hedonic, site where artists and writers indulged in sexual freedom and vigorous creativity. Instead of investigating the avant-garde history comprised of the narratives of individual canonical artists, I propose to borrow Raymond Williams' theorisation of the Bloomsbury Group to consider the Montparnasse circle as a cultural group that functioned to shift social formalities.⁸³ This group comprised not only artists, but also dancers, models, publishers and proprietors, characterised by democracy and equality among its members. I therefore refer to the group as the Montparnasse circle, rather than *École de Paris*, or the School of Paris, to emphasise the fact that artists were not the only, nor the most significant, figures in the group. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, I argue that Prin is constructed as a myth of the celebrated imagination of 1920s Montparnasse.⁸⁴

⁸³ Raymond Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, c1980), pp.148-169.

⁸⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993).

It eventually became evident to me in the process of studying these three women that the aim of the study could not only be to search for a more authentic or comprehensive representations of their lives and work based on newly discovered primary resources. Not only is this the case because the archive as an authoritative structure regulates the narratives that can be told, but also because such approach would disguise the epistemic violence of the archive, reinforcing the illusion that it is or can be complete and innocent.⁸⁵ While not denying the merit of and necessity for art historians to undertake archival research, which I did in several instances,⁸⁶ it has not been the primary purpose of this study to perfect the archive by discovering new materials (in Meurent's case), verifying every detail in the existing materials (in Valadon's case) or exhausting all documents in the archive (in Prin's case). While working with the existing archives and carefully reconsidering available primary documents, my purpose in this analysis was, more importantly, to subject existing interpretations of the *énoncés* to critical analysis in order to challenge the narratives they have produced and to explore new lines of interpretation. It is in this way that this research recognises the archive not as an established, inert and fixed collection of materials, but as an institutional structure that subjects its content to disruptions, changes, power relations, and even to silence when it fails to be the deposit of necessary traces of lives and works.

Although my research is greatly informed by feminist theories, the interrogations I make of the archive also extend to feminist desires in the study of the models-turned-artists who are women. In so far as feminist art historians have managed to expose the

⁸⁵ Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', p.270.

⁸⁶ Regarding Meurent's case, I looked into several archives including the archive of Musée d'Orsay, communal archive of ville de Colombes as well as the archive compiled by Eunice Lipton. A follow-up on the record of the Musée municipal d'Art et d'Histoire shows that the museum has acquired two more works of Meurent since 2016. The two new works are *Le Briquet, ou portrait de jeune garçon* (1896) and *Jup* (undated, currently under restoration). Regarding the cases of Valadon and Prin, I investigated the archive of Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, where I found access to a number of their personal correspondence, reproductions as well as originals of some of their works and later publications on them.

phallocentrism in the discourse on art with their analyses of the axis of power between artists and woman artists, as well as between men and women, they have not extended their critical analysis to the hierarchies that exist between the other positions in artistic production and artists. It is in this blind-spot that the phallocentric paradigm remains intact. The segregation of women who are models and those who are artists may work temporarily for the benefit of women who are artists, but will eventually betray their intention to defend their subjectivity. The original opposition of artist/man/subject versus model/woman/object serves to fix each gender in certain positions, contributing to the objectification of woman. Those who threaten to disrupt this opposition have been neglected, or obliterated. Feminist art historians recognise the existence of this opposition and endeavour to remove gender from it by focusing on artists who are women. They have proved that there have always been artists who are women throughout history, but their notion of gender is confined to the relationships between the sexes. When the focus of discussion shifts to relationships within the sexes, or relationships that do not concern sex, they remain silent. This is evocative of the challenge Joan Scott, an American feminist historian, formulates in her article, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis'. To answer her question: In what ways gender is relevant to issues to which it appears irrelevant, such as war, diplomacy and high politics, Scott defines gender not just as a problematic opposition, but as 'a primary way of signifying relationships of power'.⁸⁷ Her study reveals that gender is a recurrent, often implicit reference in the articulation of asymmetric hierarchical structures, which in the discourse of art history is demonstrated by the feminisation of the model by overlooking the history of professional models being largely men. On the one hand, the neglect of the long history of models who are men since the fifteenth century is a symptom of the privileging of the modernist and post-modernist periods in the discourse. On the other hand, it normalises models being women and

⁸⁷ Joan Wallch Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91 (December 1986), no. 5, 1053-1075 (pp.1072-1073).

prevents the association of the job with masculinity. Therefore, the obliteration of the history of models who are men not only serves to consolidate man's occupation on the extreme of artist/subject, but also, along with the notion that models are objects, helps to objectify woman in art historical discourse. It is in this sense that the desire of 'woman artist' to separate herself from 'female model' and fix her in the position of the Other/object traps her in a complicity with 'artist', which put her own subjectivity at stake. It is, indeed, this blind spot of the hierarchies of positions that women could occupy in the production of art that threatens to overthrow the achievements that feminist interventions in art history have accomplished.

Women and Modernity

My inquiry into the models-turned-artists who were women in Paris between 1860 and 1930 needs to be prefaced by probing into the transformations of women's experience of modernity within this period. I start with two images; the first a painting by Edgar Degas (1834-1917), *Femmes à la Terrasse d'un Café le Soir* (1877) (Figure 0.4), the other a photograph by Maurice-Louise Branger (1874-1950), *Terrasse de Café Paris* (c.1925) (Figure 0.5). It should be noted that this photograph must be perceived as a deliberate composition, like the pastel by Degas, as the two women are professional models who appear in another photograph of two women reading journals at the pond in Tuileries Garden (Figure 0.6).



Figure 0. 4, Edgar Degas, *Femmes à la Terrasse d'un Café le Soir*, 1877, pastel on monotype, 41×60 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Figure 0. 5, Maurice-Louis Branger, *Terrasse de Café*, c. 1925, gelatin silver, ©Maurice-Louis Branger/Roger-Viollet



Figure 0. 6, Maurice-Louis Branger, *Bassin des Tuileries*, c. 1925, gelatine silver, ©Maurice-Louis Branger/Roger-Viollet

In Degas' painting, four women are depicted sitting on the terrace of the café at night with the gaslights illuminating the boulevard from across the street. The four women represented are generally recognised by art historians as prostitutes. The identification is made in various ways. Linda Nochlin uses 'signs of physiognomy and gesture' as her evidence and Robert Herbert makes the deduction with the aid of 'contemporary representation of costume, and by numerous witness accounts of the boulevard Montmartre'.⁸⁸ These women, as a type, were so recognisable that when the painting was first exhibited at the third Impressionist Exhibition in 1877, art critic Alexandre Pothey remarked that 'the women in front of a café at night are realistically frightening. These painted, withered creatures, suggestive of the vice, are cynically recounting with each other the events

⁸⁸ Linda Nochlin, 'Afterword', in *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp.172-177 (172); Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1988), p.45.

and gestures of the day. You have seen them, you know them and you will soon find them on the boulevards'.⁸⁹ The viewer is positioned inside the café, confronted by the prostitutes in a cramped space that seems to extend into the boulevard on the other side. Such a composition evokes what Hollis Clayson identifies as the fear of the prostitutes' 'invasion of the boulevard'.⁹⁰ No interaction can be found between the two at the table on the right whereas at the table on the left the woman behind the pillar appears to be talking to her companion at the extreme left edge of the painting. The animated posture, between sitting and standing, of the woman second from the right suggests that the conversation is either beginning or ending. The facial expressions of the women display either boredom or dullness. Apparently, in Degas's representation they are not enjoying themselves at the café.

In contrast to the cramped confrontation with prostitution that a viewer is likely to experience in Degas's painting, the photograph of Branger offers a sense of ease and comfort. This time the viewer is positioned from a moderate distance on the street to see two young fashionably-dressed women sitting and chatting at a café terrace. On the table to their right is a stash of paper publications. Behind them a waiter is pouring a drink for a man in a hat. The availability of empty tables around them indicates that the two women are not strangers that happen to sit together. They know each other and might very well be friends. The woman on the left is writing on her pad, while the one on the right is looking at the pad with a teaspoon in her right hand. Both appear to be having a good time with smiles on their faces. Rather than invading the boulevards, these two women are inhabiting the café.

⁸⁹ Alexandre Pothey, 'Beaux-Arts', *Le Petit Parisien*, 7 avril 1877, reprinted in *Les Archives de L'impressionisme: Lettres de Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley et Autres; Mémoires de Paul Durand-Ruel; Documents*, ed. by Lionello Venturi (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), vol.II, pp.303-4.

⁹⁰ Hollis Clayson argues that this painting is an ambiguous representation of prostitutes who are either waiting for their clients or resting and relaxing on their own. Either way, these women are widely recognised as prostitutes. Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, c1991), pp.93-112.

The contrast between the representations of women in the public space of a café in these two images highlights a transformation in women's experience of urban modernity. In her chapter on spaces of modernity in Paris during the 1870s and 1880s, Griselda Pollock remarks on the gender discourse of bourgeois culture when it comes to the separation of spaces.⁹¹ Through scrutiny of the representation of spaces in paintings by Impressionist artists, Pollock argues that men and women in this Baudelairian moment experienced the impact of modernisation on urban life differently, as a result of the difference in their codes of social conduct. One of the merits of this pioneering study is that it points out that it is not a simple dichotomy of woman/private sphere and man/public sphere. Not only were bourgeois women found in public spaces such as parks and theatre loges, there were also women in spaces that were morally ambiguous and considered inappropriate for bourgeois women, for instance theatre backstages, brothels, cafés and *folies*. Those in the latter category of space were either mistresses, prostitutes, or working class, whose conducts violated the codes of bourgeois femininity. This is an example, apart from Theresa's account of ceasing to be a woman while modelling, where the bourgeois ideology of sexual difference depends on the marginalisation of certain types of women.

Pollock's argument draws upon Baudelaire's concept of the *flâneur*. In his book, *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire renders his main character as a *flâneur*, a middle class man who is free to wander the metropolis. Pollock's research suggests that there was no such thing as a '*flâneuse*', a woman counterpart to a '*flâneur*', in Paris in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Since her study in the 1980s, a number of feminist historians have taken up this exploration of the relation between gender politics and modernity in terms of modern spaces. Their work reveals that women enjoyed a larger degree of mobility in public from the 1880s than Pollock outlines in her redrawn Baudelairian map, especially with the

⁹¹ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, pp.70-127.

emergence of new commercial spaces, such as arcades, department stores and cinemas. The debate over the *flâneuse* has remained a heated topic. On the one hand, certain spaces and experiences were made available to women as a result of a series of historical and political events. As Deborah Parsons demonstrates in her research on the subject of women's writing produced between the 1880s and 1920s, women were represented in literature as having a freer life to walk the city, observing it, and enjoying the cafés and women's clubs, sometimes alone.⁹² For Parsons, the *flâneurie* of women lies in their writings and imaginations of the metropolitan experience, which did not necessarily require actual action. As she eloquently puts it, 'all these women wrote as *flâneuses*, for whom the city was irresistible'.⁹³ On the other hand, historians such as Janet Wolff argue that despite the expansion of women's presence in public, the ideological advent of 'New Woman' and contemporary political changes, women's movement around the metropolis was fundamentally different from that of the *flâneur*. Specifically, women did not enjoy complete or uncompromised freedom, nor were they invisible. On the contrary, they subjected themselves to masculine gaze.⁹⁴ At the centre of the debate is the perceived characteristics of *flâneurie*. While Parsons considers *flâneurie* to be a metropolitan experience which could also lie in the realm of imagination as a result of the expanded physical mobility, Wolff insists on the corporeality of that experience. More importantly, Wolff highlights one aspect of Pollock's argument, which is that women were subject to being sexualised in the modern public urban spaces in the late nineteenth century, even in those that were considered in accordance with bourgeois femininity, such as streets and theatre lodges. This is pertinent to the contemporary acknowledgement of the infiltration of clandestine prostitution in all public spaces in Paris, as

⁹² Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹³ Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, p.223.

⁹⁴ Janet Wolff, 'Gender and the Haunting of cities (or, the Retirement of the Flâneur)' in *The Invisible Flâneuse?*, pp.18 - 31.

exemplified by Octave Uzanne's 1894 book, *La Femme à Paris: Nos Contemporaines*. The book not only maps out types of women and associates them with specific locations in Paris, but also dedicates a section to clandestine prostitutes, pointing out that it requires real expertise to recognise them.⁹⁵ The alert of clandestine prostitutes in books like Uzanne's encourages a inspecting gaze on all the women in public spaces regarding their sexual availability.

The situation changed dramatically in the 1920s. Photos of Montparnasse of that time show the gathering of women of a wide range of specialisations, professions, classes and nationalities at the *terrasse* of cafés with their friends and colleagues; for example there is a photo of Nina Hamnett, a Welsh artist and writer, sitting at the *terrasse* of the *Café du Parnasse* in 1921;⁹⁶ Mina Loy, a British artist and writer, Jane Heap and Margret Anderson, American publishers, were photographed with Prin in front of The Jockey night club;⁹⁷ and Marie Vassilieff, a Russian Empire painter, was a frequent visitor to *Café du Dôme*.⁹⁸

The cafés and *terrasses* became places frequently represented in artwork by artists who were women. Hermine David (1886-1970), a French painter, made drawings of the *terrasse* in around 1924. Prin also took up the subject of bar scenes in her paintings and drawings. As epitomised by Branger's photograph, women in the 1920s enjoyed the urban café, which was central locus of *flâneurie*, along with men. Complex factors contributed to this shift of women's experience in a modern metropolis. A comprehensive interrogation of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. I therefore outline three pertinent sociological and political transformations between 1860 and 1930 which had an impact on women's lives in Paris, and intersected with the art world.

⁹⁵ Octave Uzanne, *La Femme à Paris: Nos Contemporaines* (Paris: Quantin, 1894).

⁹⁶ Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams 1989), p.92.

⁹⁷ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.127.

⁹⁸ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.169.

The first is the various women's movements. As far back as the French Revolution there were women's movements in France. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they took on a diversity of form and agenda. Despite some of the movements being in conflict with others in terms of their appeal, in general they improved women's social and political right to live, work and study.⁹⁹ When it comes to art, intervention was most prominent in the campaign for the admission of women to the *École des Beaux-Arts* initiated by the *Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs*. The very foundation of this first all-women exhibiting society in France suggests an awareness of a substantial collective of artists who were women and the necessity of nurturing a sense of community and support among them. In her meticulous study of this society during its first fifteen years, from 1881 to 1896, Tamar Garb carefully analyses the arguments about women and art that the *Union* put forward in their negotiations within the context of contemporary discussions of women's professional advancement and political rights, in publications of the early Third Republic.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, women's achievements in various areas, including art, offered a good cause for the women's movements to champion. On the other hand, the *Union's* campaign for women's entry into the *École* has to be comprehended alongside the institutional and professional reforms of women's educational access and careers in other areas such as medicine, that these movements initiated and promoted in France. The campaign was overtly supported by feminist writers who contributed greatly to discussions about women's nature, responsibility

⁹⁹ For a history of women's movements in France during the Third Republic, see James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, c1984). Examples of research dedicated to a specific tendency or inclination include Magali Della Sudda, 'Gender, Fascism and Right-Wing in France between the Wars: The Catholic Matrix', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 2012, 13(2), 179-195; Karen Offen, 'Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin-de Siècle France', *The American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984), no.3, 648-676; Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).

¹⁰⁰ Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*.

and capability.¹⁰¹ Despite gender equality being at the centre of the concerns of such reforms, the arguments that the leading figures of the *Union* eventually put forward were relatively conservative, possibly for strategic purposes, with a repeated emphasis on women's propriety and the essential attributes of femininity, which agreed with the bourgeois ideology of gender. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the subjects of my case studies, Meurent, Valadon and Prin, ever attended the *École*, its opening to women marks new training opportunities available to women with less financial means, and more importantly, indicates that the decisions regarding their artistic training that these three women made were deliberate and therefore worth close examination.

Pertinent to women's movements, the second factor concerns women as workers in Paris. Modernisation, as well as urbanisation, brought migrant workers into the metropolitan cities of Europe, such as Paris. Some of the reasons for the exodus of rural women are speculated on by Frances Clark. The shift from 'an agricultural polity' to 'an industrial form of polity' and the reduced need for manual labour as a result of mechanisation were two of them. Another two relate to the temptation of the comforts of urban life as a result of industrialisation, and the appeal of a more independent life with fairer working conditions in the city, as opposed to unpaid domestic farm work.¹⁰² The situation shifted with the outbreak of the First World War. With men being summoned to military service, new forms of female labour were in demand and new jobs became open to women.¹⁰³ The change in the conditions of women's work brought by the war was, however, complex. On the one hand, through studying government statistics on gainfully employed women in 1906 and 1926, Clark suggests that the change was more in structure than quantity as there was no significant

¹⁰¹ Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*, p.99.

¹⁰² Frances Clark, *The Position of Women in Contemporary France* (London: P. S. King, 1937), pp.26-27.

¹⁰³ Renate Bridenthal, 'Something Old, Something New: Women Between the Two World Wars' *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal & Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, c1977), pp.473 -497 (473).

increase in terms of the number of women who were employed. The increased number can be explained by the expansion of French territory over these years, instead of a flood of women into labour markets. His study reveals a significant shift in terms of the industries in which women were employed.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Renate Bridenthal's research suggests that after the war women who worked during the war did not end up higher in the hierarchy or with better salaries than the men who went to war. The new opportunities provided by the war did not, therefore, lead to a change in the gender hierarchy or offer much social mobility for women.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, migrant workers, especially women, in Paris managed to transform the city. The mothers of both Valadon and Prin left them to relatives in the countryside when they were young, and went to work in Paris. Years later, they took their daughters to the city. Women often took up temporary jobs. Many turned to modelling or prostitution in order to make ends meet.¹⁰⁶ The former would frequent the models markets, such as the one at Place Pigalle where Valadon went to find modelling jobs. The latter had a regular presence in contemporary literature and painting, as exemplified by the painting by Degas described at the beginning of this section.

The last sociological change I outline is the rise of bohemianism. Defined as a practice of lifestyle emphasising youth, liberation, frankness and love, *la Bohème* is associated with the life of young artists in Henry Murger's book, *Scènes de La Vie de Bohème*.¹⁰⁷ First published as a series of short stories in *Le Corsaire* in 1851, the book, widely considered one of the major texts of bohemianism, narrates episodes in the life of a clan of young friends who are all engaged in the liberal arts - a poet, a painter, a musician and a philosopher - especially their surmounting of financial obstacles without compromising their creative

¹⁰⁴ Clark, *The Position of Women*, pp.17 -39.

¹⁰⁵ Bridenthal, 'Something Old'.

¹⁰⁶ Clayson, *Painted Love*, p.1.

¹⁰⁷ The editions I used are Henry Murger, *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* (Paris: M. Lévy Frères, 1859); Henry Murger, *Bohemians of the Latin Quarter* (London: Vizetelly, 1888).

propositions. By *fin-de-siècle* the term bohemian signified rebellious behaviour and an attitude that rejected bourgeois modernity. It gradually became identified with the figure of the artist and the artistic community, first in Montmartre and later in Montparnasse, in the decades after the First World War.¹⁰⁸ Hedonism, audacity, wildness, lightheartedness and marginalisation are some of the qualities of bohemianism most often associated with artists and creativity. My understanding of this practice as a lifestyle is informed by Jerrold Seigel's book, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*.¹⁰⁹ In this book, Seigel suggests that bohemianism and bourgeois life maintain a relation 'like positive and negative magnetic poles'. They were and are, 'parts of a single field: they imply, require, and attract each other' in terms of their definitions and histories.¹¹⁰ This is a relation of Derridean *différance*. Bohemianism, thus, stands in my research for the possibility of precarious communities that are anti-establishment on the one hand whilst maintaining the potential to initiate shifts that have impacts on bourgeois society. This alternative, as we shall see, is crucial to the 'making' of Suzanne Valadon and Alice Prin.

I have identified in this introduction the complex field of sociological and political changes necessary to my understanding of the figure of the Model-Artist. This figure is situated at the intersection of women's entry into the art world and the art practice we call modern and eventually avant-garde in Paris. Exploration of this figure through case studies of Victorine Meurent, Suzanne Valadon and Alice Prin makes methodological as well as historiographical intervention in the history of modern art. Through the case studies, I avoid creating exceptional histories, and acknowledge invisibility (other stories yet to be found) as much as re-read known stories. I emphasise the notion of modelling labour with the figure of

¹⁰⁸ Michael Wilson, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Louis XIII Chair', in *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture*, ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg (New Brunswick, N.J.; London: Rutgers University Press, c2001), pp.180-204 (185).

¹⁰⁹ Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Seigle, *Bohemian Paris*, p.5.

the Model-Artist in order to shift the privileging of the artist in canonical as well as feminist histories of modern art from 1860 to 1930. Specifically, modelling labour is approached from its affective effects on artists and the production of art in the chapter on Meurent, from its embodied experience and its articulation in artwork in the chapter on Valadon, and from its registration in an artistic community in the chapter on Prin.

Chapter One

Theorising the Fold: Approaching Victorine Meurent

Victorine-Louise Meurent,
Exhibiting artist
at the Palais de l'Industrie.
I am Olympia,
The subject of the celebrated painting
By M. Manet
I invite you to look at this drawing.
Thank you!¹

These lines, in their original French, were alleged to be hand-written on the visiting cards (*les bostols*) that Victorine Meurent (1844-1927) made and dispensed at cafés and dance halls in Paris around 1885.² Before we start to make sense of the content of this card, let us start with a brief biography of this woman's life.

Born on 18 February, 1844, Victorine Louise Meurent was the daughter of Jean-Louis-Etienne Meurent and Louise-Thérèse Lemesre. Her original certificate of baptism, preserved in the archives of St Elizabeth church, states the profession of her father as *ciseleur*, a

¹ In the unpublished manuscript by Adolphe Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut l'Olympia de Manet', a schematic reproduction of two versions of visiting cards are to be found. Lipton also reproduces the cards in her book, *Alias Olympia: A Woman's Search For Manet's Notorious Model & Her Own Desire* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993, p.153). Another slightly different version is included in Eunice Lipton's, 'Representing Sexuality in Women Artists' Biographies: The Cases of Suzanne Valadon and Victorine Meurent', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 27, Feminist Perspectives on Sexuality, Part 1 (Feb 1990), no. 1, 81-94 (p.90). What I adopt here is a literal translation of the format and meaning of Tabarant's original, which is of insignificant difference in terms of the punctuation. In Tabarant's manuscript, it reads:

Victorine-Louise Meurent
Artiste exposante au
Palais de l'Industrie
Je suis Olympia
sujet du célèbre tableau
de M. Manet
Veuillez regarder ce dessin,
Merci!

² Adolphe Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut l'Olympia de Manet', unpublished manuscript (1948). In the manuscript Tabarant does not specify the exact time when Meurent made and dispensed this version of the visiting cards. The date is deduced according to the textual context.

craftsman whose tool is the chisel.³ There is little information on Meurent's childhood or early adolescence. It is most likely that between December 1861 and April 1862 as well as between December 1862 and January 1863, she worked as a model in Thomas Couture's studio.⁴ Sometime no later than 1862, she started to work for Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and is known to have posed for nine of his paintings, *Portrait de Victorine Meurent* (1862), *Mlle. V en Costume d'Espada* (1862), *La Chanteuse des Rue* (1862), *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (1863), *Olympia* (1863-65), *La Femme au Perroquet* (The Woman with a Parrot) (1866), *Joueuse de Guitare* (1866), *Le Chemin de Fer* (1872-73) and *Partie de Croquet* (1883).⁵ Apart from Manet, she might also have modelled for artists, such as Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), Norbert Goeneutte (1854-1894) and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898).⁶ Around the mid-1870s, she started to learn drawing and painting with Etienne Leroy (1828-1876), an artist who exhibited several times at the Paris Salon in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. Between 1875 and 1876, she also attended evening classes at *Academie Julian*, a private artistic training institution established in 1868.⁷ She exhibited four times at the Paris Salon, in 1875,

³ The original certificate of baptism was accepted as a supporting document to verify the information on Meurent's birth certificate, which is stored in one of the archives reconstituted in 1873 as a result of the destruction of the Commune in 1871 and was made out in Meurent's own hand. Jacques Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende: "L'Olympia" n'était pas Montmartroise', *Le Journal de l'Amateur d'Art*, 10-25 February 1967, p.7 & 10-25 March 1967, p.7 (February).

⁴ Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', 1967. A model named Louise Meurand appears in Thomas Couture's payment book in the entries of December 15, 1861-January 15, 1862; February 15-March 15, 1862; March 15-April 15, 1862; and December 15, 1862-January 15, 1863. A reproduction of the entry of December 15, 1862-January 15, 1863 can be found in Goedorp, Feb 10-25, 1967, p.7. Since Louise is Meurent's middle name and Meurand is pronounced the same as Meurent in French, it is very likely that this 'Louise Meurand' could be Victorine Louise Meurent.

⁵ There are studies indicating that Meurent might have also posed for other paintings by Manet. For example, Seibert suggests that Meurent might have modelled for *La Nymphe Surprise* (1861). Jean-Paul Crespelle, Paul Jamot and Carol Armstrong argue that Meurent also posed for *Le Fifre* (1866). The nine paintings I adopt in this thesis are the most widely agreed. See footnote 44 of this chapter.

⁶ Tabarant is the first to make the suggestion that Meurent modelled for Stevens and Goeneuttein in his article, 'La Fin Douleureuse de Celle qui Fut Olympia', *L'Œuvre*, 10 July 1932. No other sources verify this statement. Maurice Joyce, biographer of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, claims that Meurent also posed for Puvis de Chavannes in his *Hope* (1872). Maurice Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: 1864-1901* (Paris: Flourey, 1926), p.130.

⁷ The largest archive of *Académie Julian* remains in private hands and this information comes from Lipton, p.164. She quotes the records '1876 -76, Meurent, Victorine, evening classes', and identifies the source of this information as 'a scholar working-on the Académie Julian', Ms. Catherine Fehrer.

1879, 1885 and 1904. In 1903 she joined the *Société des Artistes Français* (SAF) with her presentation made by Charles Hermann-Léon (1838-1908) and Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1911).⁸ The latter was the founder of the organisation. To date, only one of Meurent's paintings has resurfaced, *Le Jour des Rameaux* (The Palm Sunday) (1883). The painting is currently in the collection of the Municipal Museum of Art and History of Colombes. Colombes is a commune in the suburbs of Paris, where Meurent spent her later years until she died on 17 March, 1927.

None of the visiting cards are known to have survived. We know of their existence through an unpublished manuscript on Meurent, titled 'Celle qui fut l'*Olympia* de Manet' by Adolphe Tabarant, an art critic and journalist mostly known for his biographies of Manet. The unpublished manuscript was recovered by an American art historian, Eunice Lipton, when she devoted herself to searching texts and documents on Victorine Meurent in the mid-1980s.⁹ Tabarant reproduces two schematic drawings of the visiting cards. The later card has the inscription given above, while the earlier provides almost identical information, except it omits Meurent's connection with *Olympia* (1863). It says:

Victorine-Louise Meurent,
Exhibiting artist
at the Palais de l'Industrie,
invites you to look at her drawing.
Thank you!¹⁰

In the unpublished manuscript, Tabarant attributes the source of the information on the cards to Léon Koella Leenhoff, stepson of Manet, who happened to have kept one of each version.

According to Lipton, Fehrer points out that 'it was unusual to be given the first name of the student'. It should be noted, however, that in one of Fehrer's articles, Fehrer cited Lipton as the source of the information that Meurent studied at the *Académie*. Catherine Fehrer, 'Woman at the Académie Julian', *The Burlington Magazine*, 136 (November 1994), no.1100, 752-757 (p.757, note 25).

⁸ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.162.

⁹ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*.

¹⁰ Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut l'*Olympia* de Manet', p.61, translated and quoted in Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.152.

Our knowledge of the visiting cards is therefore mediated by Tabarant. Without the presence of the actual cards, the reliability of this piece of information is not entirely indisputable. It is likely that the cards did exist, but how faithful Tabarant's schematic drawings are is unknown. In the manuscript it is indicated that the visiting card was produced sometime around 1885. A posthumous retrospective dedicated to Manet was held at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in early 1884 where *Olympia* (1865) was on display to the public, seventeen years after it was last seen at Manet's one-man exhibition in 1867. To Tabarant, the visiting card that stated 'I am Olympia (Je suis Olympia)' is part of a series of manoeuvres initiated by Meurent to make a profit out of the fame of the painting by Manet when it re-entered the realm of public visibility. Apart from the visiting cards, Tabarant reports that Meurent also made tracings of *Olympia* and later photographs for sale, on which she added the caption 'Olympia, my portrait by M. Manet' and her signature 'Victorine-Louise Meurent, exhibiting artist at the Palais de l'Industrie'.¹¹

Surprising as it might seem for a model to claim the painting as a portrait, Meurent was often referred to as **the Olympia** in biographies written about her and her contemporaries. This chapter endeavours to examine with what aspects of **the Olympia** Meurent was identified by authors approaching this historical character from various perspectives, from the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century.

'Victorine Meurent is Olympia' - The Tragically Destined Model

Literature on Meurent can be roughly divided into three groups. The first group comprises texts written by biographers of artists, namely Manet, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) and Edgar Degas (1834-1917). Goedorp's article and Margaret Seibert's

¹¹ Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut l'Olympia de Manet', p.66.

doctoral thesis are categorised in the second group as these works attempt to verify some details in the text of the first group, and expand the archive on Meurent, either by discovering new evidence or by incorporating other kinds of texts and documents.¹² Lipton's book, *Alias Olympia*, I suggest, should comprise a category of its own. It not only provides important new information on Meurent, but also epitomises a certain form of feminist intervention into the discourse of art history, as it is devoted to the reclaiming of Meurent *as an artist*.

Tabarant, the biographer of Manet, is the only author among those writing on Manet who had an extended interest in Meurent. He published two monographic articles on Meurent, 'Celle qui Fut "l'Olympia"', in *La Bulletin de la Vie Artistique* in 1921 and 'La Fin Douleuruse de Celle qui Fut Olympia' in *L'Œuvre* in 1932. In 1948 he completed an eighty-five-page manuscript on Meurent. Most biographers of artists, who were contemporaneous with Meurent, restricted their recollections of the woman to the moments when her life intersected with the artists who are the focus of the biographies.¹³ Little biographical information on Meurent *per se* is offered in their texts. When it comes to the years in which Meurent worked for Manet, it is their encounters that attract the most attention. Apart from those, the personal life of Meurent remains largely elusive. The information available on Meurent after she stopped modelling for Manet has two major themes: Meurent's artistic activities, including the fact that Meurent started to make drawings and paintings, and

¹² Margaret Mary Armbrust Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent and Her Role in the Art of Edouard Manet' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1986).

¹³ An incomplete list of texts that mention Meurent includes Théodore Duret, *Histoire d'Édouard Manet et de Son Œuvre* (Paris: Floury, 1902); Antonin Proust, *Édouard Manet: Souvenirs* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1913); Adolphe Tabarant, *Manet, Histoire Catalographique* (Paris: Editions Mouton, 1937); Adolphe Tabarant, *Manet et Ses œuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947); Paul Leclercq, *Autour de Toulouse-Lautrec* (Geneva: Cailler, 1954); Jean-Paul Crepelle, *Degas et Son Monde*, (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1972); Maurice Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: 1864-1901* (Paris: Floury, 1926); François Mathey, 'Olympia, Manet', *Le Musée des Chefs-d'Œuvre* (1948); Paul Jamot, 'Manet and the Olympia', *The Burlington Magazine*, (January 1927), 27-32; Paul Jamot, 'Manet, La Fifi et Victorine Meurent', *Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne*, (January to May 1927), 31-41; George Moore, *Memoirs of my dead life* (London: Heinemann, 1928); Adolphe Tabarant, 'Celle qui Fut "l'Olympia"', *La Bulletin de la Vie Artistique* II, 1921, pp.297-299; Adolphe Tabarant, 'La Fin Douleuruse de Celle qui Fut Olympia', *L'Œuvre*, July 10 1932, p.1.

exhibited at the Salon; and the visits Toulouse-Lautrec paid to Meurent around 1890. No biographers report anything about Meurent beyond 1892.

In the texts by these biographers, we quite often find Meurent being referred to as Olympia, as exemplified by the titles of the two aforementioned articles by Tabarant, ‘This woman who was the Olympia’ (*‘Celle qui Fut “l’Olympia”*’) and ‘The sad end of this woman who was Olympia’ (*‘La Fin Dououreuse de Celle qui Fut Olympia’*). In the former, when Tabarant delineates Meurent’s early life before she met Manet, he starts a paragraph with a question, ‘where was the future Olympia from?’¹⁴ Olympia is, thus, evoked in the episodes of Meurent’s life when Manet had not yet even appeared. This effectively makes being Olympia the heyday of Meurent’s life, as if the years before deliberately built towards this moment.

Tabarant is not alone in addressing Meurent as Olympia. In his biography of Lautrec, Paul Leclercq, a French writer and one of the founders of *La Revue Blanche*, documents accompanying Toulouse-Lautrec on a visit to Meurent.

One day when I was in his studio, Lautrec said to me: ‘Little gentleman (he always called me this), get your cane and your hat, we are going to see *her (la)*...’
I took my hat and cane, intrigued and attempted to query Lautrec.
He put his finger to his lips and murmured mysteriously. ‘not a word!’
I cannot be more attracted.
With short steps, I followed Lautrec through a maze of Montmartre streets.
From time to time, he turned to me, raising his finger, and said this enigmatic word: ‘Mystery!’ and he laughed.
To where is the evil Lautrec leading me?
At the end of a fifteen minute walk and after he stopped in front of a grocery store where he bought a box of dragée, he darted under the porch of an old house on the rue de Douai.
He slowly climbed five floors of an obscure staircase, clinging on to the greasy banister and leaning on to his little cane. And arriving at the attic, he stopped, panted, and said to me again, lifting his finger: ‘she is more famous than M. Loubet’.
Really, I was intrigued.
Finally, he knocked at a little door.
An old woman came to open it to us and Lautrec presented me to...the Olympia of Manet.

¹⁴ Tabarant, ‘Celle qui Fut “l’Olympia”’, p.298.

This old woman was, in fact, the model, in flesh and bone, who formerly posed for the famous painting.¹⁵

I quote this retrospective account extensively, as the rhetorical effect of these passages can only be perceived within their full context. The author's recollection is carefully built up around the suspense of the identity of the woman whom Leclercq was about to meet with Lautrec. All the details of their journey, including the time of the walk, the stairs, the banister, Toulouse-Lautrec's refusal to disclose the identity of the woman on their way ('not a word') and so on, aim to enhance the excitement when the answer is revealed. Voila, it is 'the Olympia of Manet'. Throughout the paragraphs that read like a thriller, Meurent's name is never mentioned. Neither does it seem to matter, since all the suspense and mystery of the trip amounts to the disclosure of her identity as 'the Olympia of Manet'. To Leclercq, Meurent did not bear any significance as a historical subject. Instead, it is her having been the model for 'the famous painting' that defines her historical relevance and value.

Leclercq may not be the only friend Toulouse-Lautrec brought to this apartment. Nor did Toulouse-Lautrec visit Meurent only once. Maurice Joyant, an art dealer, describes his encounter with Meurent accompanied by Toulouse-Lautrec as a 'melancholy pilgrimage' to see 'a shapeless old lady on the fifth floor of a building on the opposite side of the street. She posed for Manet and for Puvis de Chavannes's *Hope* (1872). She kept a drawing of her head with a purity and simplicity like that of Ingres'.¹⁶ Meurent's name does not occur in this account either. This time, there is not even an appellation. She is 'an old woman' who was 'a young girl'.

For Leclercq and Joyant, the visits to Meurent were events worth-mentioning in their time with Lautrec. It was around 1891 that Toulouse-Lautrec commenced his contact with

¹⁵ Paul Leclercq, *Autour de Toulouse-Lautrec* (Geneva: Cailler, 1954), pp.54-6; also later reprinted in Henri Perruchot, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, trans. by Humphrey Hare (London: Constable, 1994), p.173-74.

¹⁶ Joyant, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, p.130. Also cited in Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', March, and in Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', p.310.

Meurent.¹⁷ By then Manet had been dead for almost a decade and was considered a pivotal figure by the small coterie of modernist artists. *Olympia*, one of Manet's most scandalous paintings, had been enjoying renewed visibility. After its debut in the Salon of 1865, it was subsequently exhibited in Manet's one-man exhibition, opened in a pavilion he built for himself outside the *Exposition Universelle* in 1867. Fifty of Manet's artworks were exhibited in the tent, including all the paintings for which Meurent posed before 1867 except for the *Portrait*. The exhibition barely created a ripple among the public or the press. Less than a year after Manet's death on 30 April, 1883, *Olympia* was exhibited at a retrospective exhibition of his work which opened in January of 1884. The exhibition was organised by *École des Beaux-Arts*, marking the acknowledgement of Manet by the official art institution. In 1889, *Olympia* was selected to demonstrate the achievements of French contemporary art and exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle*. One year later, Claude Monet (1840-1926) and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) organised a subscription to raise money from their acquaintances, artists, art dealers and collectors, to buy the painting from Mrs Manet. The painting was then donated to the state and exhibited in the Luxembourg Museum before it entered the Louvre in 1907. With the exhibition of the painting in 1889, and the subscription in 1890, there might still have been some press heat about *Olympia* when Toulouse-Lautrec took his friends to visit Meurent in about 1891. I shall leave the discussion of *Olympia* and Meurent hanging for now, because the conflation between Meurent and *Olympia*, as revealed by the discussion in the following sections, survived through time into research on Meurent in the 1990s.

In 1967, French writer, Jacque Goedorp published an article on Meurent across two issues of *Le Journal de l'Amateur d'Art*, in which he made the earliest attempt to verify

¹⁷ Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', p.310.

some of Meurent's biographical details.¹⁸ Meurent's birth certificate is one of Goedorp's most significant discoveries, and is indeed his departure point. The names and professions of Meurent's parents as stated on the certificate allow Goedorp to reconstruct a short family history of Meurent up to the generation of Meurent's grandparents. He reveals that Meurent came from an artisan family as her father was a *ciseleur* and her uncle a sculptor.¹⁹ Taking the address on the certificate, Goedorp investigates the history of the neighbourhood in order to propose a childhood that Meurent might have had. Goedorp's analysis of the family history and the childhood neighbourhood dispel the myth that Meurent was from the Montmartre district, which was widely accepted by his predecessors.

What is more, Goedorp offers a tentative alternative regarding the first meeting between Meurent and Manet. Among the narratives of that occasion, Theodore Duret's version is the most frequently cited. According to Duret, Manet accidentally met Meurent in the middle of a crowd in a room at the *Palais de Justice*.²⁰ This narrative was adopted by Tabarant in 1921.²¹ Authors who published after Tabarant tend to cite him and adopt Duret's words uncritically. Sceptical of this narrative, Goedorp criticises its lack of support with solid evidence and proposes that Meurent and Manet could have met on rue Maître-Albert. The address is taken from Manet's address book, as revealed in Tabarant's book, *Manet et Ses Œuvres*. The complete note reads 'Louise Meuran, rue Maître-Albert, 17'. Along with this note, Tabarant also suggests that this 'Louis Meuran' may very well be Victorine Meurent as Louise was her middle name and Meuran shares a pronunciation with Meurent.²² Taking these reasonable speculations into consideration, Goedorp argued that this address could be

¹⁸ Goedorp, 'La Fin d'une Légende', p.7.

¹⁹ It is stated on Meurent's original certificate of baptism that her father is a *ciseuler*. The profession of her uncle is discovered on his death certificate. However, it should be noted that the profession is usually reported by oneself and may change over the years as is shown by the census records of Meurent, in which she sometimes leaves the space blank and sometimes states herself to be an artist.

²⁰ Duret, *Histoire d'Édouard Manet et de Son Œuvre*, pp.199-200.

²¹ Tabarant, 'Celle qui Fut "l'Olympia"', p.298.

²² Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre*, p.49.

where the two first met, as it is on the same street that the shop where Manet sent his prints for manufacture located.²³

As exemplified by Goedorp's investment in reconstructing the childhood and ancestry of Meurent, Goedorp's interest in Meurent goes beyond her connection with Manet. On the one hand, he looks for evidence of Meurent modelling for artists other than, and before, Manet. Pages of Thomas Couture's payment accounts for models were published along with the article, which states that a Louise Meurand worked as a model in Couture's studios in 1861 and 1862. 'Louise' is Meurent's middle name and 'Meurand' is pronounced the same as Meurent in French, Goedorp therefore speculates, as does Tabarant, that this Louise Meurand could be Meurent. On the other hand, Goedorp also investigates Meurent's artistic activities. Not only does he make a list of the Salon exhibitions in which Meurent participated from 1876 to 1885, he also provides information on Meurent's artistic mentor, Étienne Leroy, which is, although brief, the most comprehensive to date in the literature on Meurent. Addresses are important leads for Goedorp, who follows every one associated with Meurent in order to trace her life. All traces, according to Goedorp, disappeared after 1890.

Despite all the effort Goedorp puts into reconstructing an extensive personal history and biography of Meurent, he nevertheless orders episodes of Meurent's life in parallel with Manet's up to the point of Manet's death in 1883. For example, Goedorp concludes the paragraph in which he mentions Meurent's exhibition at the Salon in 1885 with the following statement: 'Manet died on 30 April, 1883', evoking the connection between Meurent and Manet, but without any further justification.²⁴ Like Tabarant and Leclercq, Goedorp sometimes addresses Meurent as 'the Olympia', or 'the future Olympia'.²⁵ He finishes his

²³ Goedorp, 'La Fin du' une Légende', February.

²⁴ Goedorp, 'La Fin du' une Légende', March.

²⁵ Goedorp, 'La Fin du' une Légende', February.

introduction of Meurent's father with: 'This is the Olympia's own father',²⁶ which reminds the reader that every detail is relevant because Meurent *is* the Olympia.

Goedorp's project to delineate a biography of Meurent as comprehensively as possible was carried on by an American art historian, Margaret Mary Seibert, who devotes her entire doctoral thesis to Meurent.²⁷ Seibert meticulously scrutinises every piece of information of Meurent in the archives, supplementing and extending them with other material such as journals, novels and theatre plays contemporaneous with Meurent. Specifically, as with Goedorp, Seibert takes addresses she discovered in documents of various kinds, such as those listed in Meurent's birth certificate, Manet's notebook²⁸ and the Salon catalogue, as her departure point. She reconstructs the general condition of the neighbourhoods and related communities with the aid of various travelling journals. Seibert's interest in Meurent is primarily inspired by Meurent having been Manet's model, but her exploration of Meurent's biography is not restricted to the intersections of their life paths. Seibert investigates every fragmentary moment of Meurent's life on a fuller scale than Goedorp. For example, Seibert proposes that Meurent might have first made contact with Couture through her father.²⁹ Couture acquired a footed bowl from a bronze factory, which was a likely employer of Jean-Louis-Etienne Meurent. What is more, the factory was located on the same street as the address stated on Meurent's birth certificate.³⁰ Seibert, therefore, argues for a possible personal connection between Jean-Louis-Etienne Meurent and Couture, and thus Victorine Meurent and Couture.

²⁶ Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', February.

²⁷ Margaret Mary Armbrust Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent and Her Role in the Art of Edouard Manet' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1986).

²⁸ Again, 'rue Maître-Albert, 17'. Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre*, p.47.

²⁹ Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', pp.51-52.

³⁰ On the certificate, the address is 39, rue de la Folie-Méricourt, which used to be 103 rue Popincourt. Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', February.

Like Goedorp, Seibert's research on Meurent extends to the years after Meurent ceased modelling for Manet. Three months after Manet's death Meurent wrote an letter to his widow, mentioning that Manet was going to help her get a job as an usher (*œuvreuse*) in a theatre.³¹ Taking Meurent's interest in that post into consideration, Seibert studies the duties and work conditions of an usher and concludes that considering the other options available to a single middle-aged woman of little means, 'Victorine wanted what was among the more gentle and respectable modes of survival'.³²

Seibert's ultimate aim in studying Meurent's biography is, however, to provide an innovative interpretation of the artworks of Manet. This is suggested by the title of her thesis, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent and Her Role in the Art of Edouard Manet'. Accordingly, her general methodology of research is iconographical, considering Meurent as a decipherable symbol. Taking Seibert's analysis of *Olympia* as an example, Seibert meticulously investigates every detail in the painting, including the representation of jewellery, the fallen slippers, the loose hair, the bow or flower in Olympia's hair, the possible categories of flower in the bouquet, Olympia's pose, the black maid and the cat. All the details are interpreted in relation to contemporary literature, street culture, public events and conventions in the history of art. Seibert concludes that all these symbols are associated with Venus as goddess and her mortal practitioners, i.e. prostitutes: 'Victorine's naked presence was shocking, symbol of a commoner and the profane prostitute and Venus Pandemos.'³³

To reach the conclusion that Meurent's personal biography was integral to the meanings of the paintings for which she posed, it is necessary for Seibert to argue for the recognisability of Meurent's personal life by her contemporaries. Inspired by Tabarant's suggestion that Meurent 'was not unknown in the Latin Quarter', Seibert establishes Meurent

³¹ The letter is partially reprinted in Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre.*, pp.488-489. Lipton includes the full version in her book, *Alias Olympia*, pp.51-53.

³² Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', p.301.

³³ Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', p.183.

as representative of a type despite claiming to offer Meurent ‘a more individualized portrait and biography’.³⁴ According to Seibert, contemporary viewers of Manet’s paintings may not have known Meurent personally, but they must be familiar with her type, a woman from a working-class quarter, which was separated from the middle-class quarter as a result of Baron Hausseman’s reconstructions of Paris.³⁵ ‘Victorine represented a certain type because she was a specific instance of it’.³⁶ In her thesis, Seibert seems to provide us with a variety of alternatives regarding Meurent’s life. In the end, all these alternatives fall in line, forming a continuous and consistent trajectory, one that seems unsurprising for the ‘type’ of woman Meurent exemplifies. Here we witness a woman who grew up and inhabited neighbourhoods filled with crime and violence. She was often caught up in morally dubious situations. Her life conformed to ‘the grisette-lorette-courtesan type’.³⁷

On the one hand, by incorporating circumstantial documents such as travel journals, novels, plays and personal reminiscences into her project, Seibert shows she is aware of the tentativeness of the biography she reconstructs for Meurent. On the other hand, Seibert treats her evidence without much criticality. For example, when she incorporates travel journals and recollections of visitors in order to reconstruct the conditions of the neighbourhoods in which Meurent lived, Seibert overlooks the fact that authors of these writings were mostly from the middle-class while the neighbourhoods they commented on were mostly identified as working-class. This class difference likely leads to biased descriptions. Even if Meurent does represent a type of working-class woman, that type may not have necessarily lived in the way Seibert concludes from the texts produced by middle-class men.

Like her predecessors, Seibert is convinced that the representations of Meurent are faithful to her ‘real’ look and condition, if not portrait-like. In some chapters Seibert uses

³⁴ Seibert, ‘A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent’, p.58.

³⁵ Seibert, ‘A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent’, p.47.

³⁶ Seibert, ‘A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent’, p.329.

³⁷ Seibert, ‘A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent’, p.328.

paintings as references to changes in Meurent's life. For instance, the chapter on *Le Chemin de Fer*, *La Partie de Croquet* and *The Masked Ball at the Opéra* (1873) concludes that these paintings 'tend to indicate that Victorine's life had altered' because Meurent was posing as a middle-class woman.³⁸ In this way Seibert equates Meurent with the figures for which she posed, conflating the historical subject with her representations.

Discussion of Meurent's artistic achievement comprises only a limited part of Seibert's thesis. The same effort that Seibert takes to reconstruct the neighbourhood with which Meurent was associated before she stopped posing for Manet does not extend to the analysis of Meurent's addresses listed in the Salon catalogues of the years when Meurent exhibited. Although not referred to as 'the Olympia', Meurent is nevertheless addressed by her first name, Victorine. This is a common practice in the discourse of art history to treat models, whereas artists are mostly addressed by their last names. In the case of Meurent, however, we do know her full name. Yet, 'Meurent' in Seibert's thesis is used to name Victorine Meurent's father, who is recognised as a *ciseuler*. The last name seems, therefore, become the privilege of artists. It is also symptomatic of deliberate unconscious discrimination against models.

My discussions of the aforementioned literature are informed by another endeavour of feminist intervention, Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock's work on Elizabeth Siddall (1829-1862).³⁹ The essay was first published in *Art History* in 1984, and later revised and collected in Pollock's book *Vision and Difference* (1988). Best known as the favourite model and later wife of the Pre-Raphaelite painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Elizabeth Siddall also produced paintings, drawings and poetry. In this essay, by studying the Pre-Raphaelite literature, in which Siddall is mentioned, Cherry and Pollock establish that the

³⁸ Seibert, 'A Biography of Victorine-Louise Meurent', p.254.

³⁹ Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: The Representations of Elizabeth Siddall' in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.128-162.

references place Siddall only in relation to Rossetti, the masculine artists. Interpreting these findings along with Elizabeth Cowie's structuralist text, 'Woman as Sign', Cherry and Pollock argue that the references to Siddall in the Pre-Raphaelite literature are not references to a biographical subject outside the text with her own history, but rather produce a 'Siddal', as her name is often misspelled in those texts, as a sign. 'More than the name of a historical personage it does not simply refer to a woman, or even Woman. Its signified is masculine creativity'.⁴⁰ Cherry and Pollock reveal that this gendered definition of creativity has ideological effects on perceptions of essential qualities of masculinity and femininity. What is more, taking Elizabeth Siddall as a case study, Cherry and Pollock examine the discourse of art history with Michel Foucault's theory of knowledge and power. The production as well as reiteration of the knowledge of Siddall as 'Siddal' in the official pre-Raphaelite archive is, therefore, interpreted as a process permeated with and shaped by gender politics, which reinforces a certain order of sexual difference. Elizabeth Sidall appears as the model, wife and muse, but also disappears as a creative subject.

Informed by this method of discourse analysis, my investigation reveals that in the first two groups of texts, the statement that 'Meurent is Olympia' allows Meurent to be written into the archive, but ensures Meurent a limited mode of existence within the discourse. In these texts, Meurent is primarily recognised as a model. Even though some of the authors acknowledge the fact that Meurent produced paintings and exhibited at the Salon several times, none of them ever address her as an artist or painter. When Joyant considers his visit to Meurent as a 'melancholy pilgrimage', the 'pilgrimage' is not to Meurent the 'shapeless old lady', but to a glorious past, consisting of Manet and Puvis de Chavannes, the masculine artists for whom she had worked. Written into the history of art as **the Olympia**, Meurent functions as a sign, just like 'Siddal', whose signified is the masculine creativity of the

⁴⁰ Cherry and Pollock, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature', p.134.

canonical artists. Like ‘Siddal’, Meurent, or ‘Victorine’ as the aforementioned authors most often addressed her, functions ‘a signifier in and for a discourse about the establishment of masculine dominance/feminine subordination’.⁴¹

To help us read this signification, Cherry and Pollock point out that it is secured by the construction of a series of attributes associated with the woman, ‘Siddal’ or ‘Victorine’, one of which is the tragic life, implying their ‘dependency, incapacity, inactivity, suffering.’⁴² The tropes of the destined tragedy and the decaying body are visible in most of the texts investigated. For example, in the unpublished manuscript of Tabarant, one of the most well-known biographers of Manet, the author claims that Léon Koelin-Leenhoff describes Meurent as ‘unrecognisable’ and ‘deathly’, and ‘only her breasts seemed unchanged’ when Meurent went to ask him for money in the winter of 1882-83.⁴³ Speaking of Meurent distributing the visiting card that she made to evoke her connection with Olympia, Tabarant comments that it was a misjudgement on Meurent’s part because it brought back ‘the charm of a bust and a belly, that she no longer had, that she could no longer have’.⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Crespelle, in his book on Degas, states that Meurent ‘rapidly came to grief in oblivion. Only Toulouse-Lautrec remembered her, and one day in order to surprise his friends after dinner, he took them to her place by way of dessert. The model of the *Fifre* was a miserable toothless woman (une miséreuse édentée)’.⁴⁵ If we were to believe these authors, Meurent became ‘deathly and unrecognisable’ when she was about 37, a decade after she last posed for Manet in 1873 for

⁴¹ Cherry and Pollock, ‘Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature’, p.135.

⁴² Cherry and Pollock, ‘Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature’, p.136.

⁴³ Adolphe Tabarant, ‘Celle qui fut l’Olympia de Manet’, p.53, also partially quoted in Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, pp.150-151.

⁴⁴ Adolphe Tabarant, ‘Celle qui fut l’Olympia de Manet’, p.67.

⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Crespelle, *Degas et Son Monde*, (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1972), 135-136, cited in Seibert, p.311. Crespelle claims that Meurent also posed for *La Fifre*, based probably on Paul Jamot’s argument published in 1927. Paul Jamot, ‘Manet, *La Fifre* et Victorine Meurent’, *Revue de l’Art Ancien et Moderne*, (January to May 1927), 31-41. Carol Armstrong also suggests that Meurent might have modelled for the painting. Carol Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p.144. The evidence included by these authors is circumstantial.

his *Le Chemin de Fer* (The Railway) (1872-73) and *La Partie de Croquet* (The Croquet Party) (1883). About another decade later, Meurent became 'formless' and 'toothless'.

Goedorp also expresses his surprise at the supposed ageing of Meurent at an exceptionally rapid speed. He cites the full paragraph from Joyant's book, *Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec* (1927), about his visit with Toulouse-Lautrec to Meurent's place, commenting:

Dinners at the Dihau should be around 1890 and the 'old formless woman' was *only* 46 [my italic].

There are other more precise statements. You may find them in *Autour de Toulouse-Lautrec* by Paul Leclercq.

Victorine was 46 and in everyone's eyes she is already a very old woman. She did not leave Montmartre and lived on rue de Douai.⁴⁶

Along with the paragraphs preceding and those cited above, in which Goedorp claims that Meurent suffered from poverty, Goedorp hints that her material difficulties were the cause of Meurent's severe and visible ageing. His surprise does not imply any suspicion, but sentiment that change had happened to a formerly legendary body, the body in *Olympia*, the body of Olympia.

I too am surprised by the descriptions of the severely aging body of Meurent, but for a different reason to Goedorp. I simply wonder if these accounts can be held as accurate. To a twenty-first-century eye, the age of forty-six is typically when a person reaches maturity and starts to make significant achievements after years of effort and accumulation. What was it like in the nineteenth century for a woman of limited financial means to be forty-six?

Without any photographs firmly identified as Meurent, I have to investigate Meurent's condition as she aged by studying photographs of women who were contemporaneous with Meurent. I understand that ageing is a highly complex and individualised process that may be affected by many financial, psychological and health factors. Photography should also not be approached as mere factual evidence. The relatively low quality of photography due to the

⁴⁶ Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende:', March, p.7.

technological limitation should also be taken into consideration. It is not my aim, therefore, to present a pattern of the ageing process that could be generalised to every woman who lived in Paris in the late nineteenth century. Rather, my investigation of the ageing condition of Meurent's contemporaries is a pathway to understanding the accounts of her by contemporary men.

A photo of Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) taken in 1891 shows her dressed as Cleopatra (Figure 1.1). Bernhardt was born in the Latin Quarter of Paris to a mother who is a courtesan with a rich clientele and thus, raised in relatively well-to-do environment. Since her debut in Paris in 1860, Bernhardt had gradually obtained international fame and toured around Europe as well as to the United States. Born in the same year as Meurent, Bernhardt would be 47 at the time when the photo was taken. Reclining on a sofa, she shows absolutely no identifiable sign of age. There are no wrinkles on her face. Her hair is dark. Her body is in good shape. As Bernhardt is dressed as a character in this photo she is wearing heavy makeup. Does the makeup conceal the real condition of her ageing? It is possible, but the makeup would be effective to only a certain extent. In another photo of Bernhardt taken around 1920 (Figure 1.2), after she had her leg amputated in 1915, her pouches and her wrinkles are significantly more apparent. Compared to Meurent, Bernhardt had a relatively stable income, as she worked throughout her life. Did Meurent look older because her financial situation was less stable?



Figure 1. 1, Napoleon Sarony, photograph of *Sarah Bernhardt*, 1891



Figure 1. 2, Anonymous, photograph of *Sarah Bernhardt*, c.1920

The second comparative sample is a photo of Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) taken between 1893 and 1894 when she was about 52 (Figure 1.3). Morisot was born and raised in an affluent bourgeois family in Paris. In 1874, she married Eugène Manet, a painter and novelist, who is also the younger brother of Édouard Manet. The couple both inherited a considerable wealth and had a comfortable life. Compared to Meurent and Bernhardt, Morisot, as a bourgeois woman, lived in an environment that was more socially and financially stable. Yet, in the photo her hair has completely turned silver and her deep pouches are evident. Although the photo was taken only one or two years before Morisot's death, her health condition should not be assumed as the major contributor to the ageing signs as she did not suffer from any chronic or fatal disease at that time. In fact, she died of pneumonia which she contracted from attending her daughter's illness.

My last example is Louise Weber (1866-1929), better known by her stage name, *La Goulue*. Weber was one of the most well-known can-can dancers in Paris in the early twentieth century.⁴⁷ Her moments in the history of art were fixed by Lautrec's posters of her, such as *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue* (1891) and *La Goulue Arriving at the Moulin Rouge* (1892). A photo of Weber was taken in 1920s, not long before she died (Figure 1.4). It shows her sitting on wooden stairs in front of her caravan, in which she had been living for some years. The photo renders Weber's destitution so brutally that even the minute detail is telling (Figure 1.5). Her hair is messy, greasily sticking to her forehead. Her brows are knitted with one eye appearing smaller than the other. Her boots are covered in mud and dirt. A hole on the left sleeve of her sweater, located right in the centre of the photograph, is echoed by the rough-edged, unhemmed cloth hanging on the back of the door behind her. The white curtain over the door behind Weber is perhaps the last reminder of the glorious years Weber had on stage when she was young.

⁴⁷ A biography of *La Goulue* was published in 2008 by her grandson. Michel Souvais, *Moi, La Goulue de Toulouse-Lautrec: Les Mémoires de Mon Aïeule* (Saint Denis: Editions Publibook, 2008).



Figure 1. 3, Anonymous, *Berthe Morisot*, 1893-1894, photograph, Musee Marmottan Monet, Paris, France



Figure 1. 4, Anonymous, *Louise Weber*, 1920s, postcard, 14×9cm, Wheaton College permanent collection, Norton, Massachusetts⁴⁸



Figure 1. 5, Louise Weber in 1920s (detail)

⁴⁸ The full credit line of the image is Wheaton College Permanent Collection (Norton, Massachusetts, USA). Purchased with the Kenneth C. and Louise McKeon Deemer '33 Fund.

Among the three cases discussed, Weber's situation might be the most like Meurent's at the time when she was visited by Toulouse-Lautrec. Neither had a stable job, nor a steady income. Both were said to be alcoholic in their later lives, which, as we now know, is an influential factor that may accelerate ageing. It is hard to tell whether Weber is toothless in the photograph, but her body has lost the curves she once had during her years as a can-can dancer. Regardless of Weber's economic difficulties, as manifested by her ragged sweater and living in a caravan, she appears younger in this photograph than Morisot does in hers, even though Weber, aged 63, was older than Morisot, aged 52, at the time when their photographs were taken. Economic conditions, therefore, cannot be the sole factor that explains the severe aging of Meurent documented by the biographers.

A short footage of Weber in Georges Lacombe's silent documentary film, *La Zone: au Pays des Chiffonniers* (1928), is also worth consideration.⁴⁹ The film portrays a day of ragpickers living in the outskirts of Paris. Weber was a resident in the area by then and is captured in the film as one of the interspersed episodes of human interest. The footage is captioned by "*Parfois un reporter s'aventure chez une ancienne 'gloire'...*" and shows Weber chattering with one of the ragpickers and performing some of her old steps in front of the camera of a reporter. She was about 62 at the time. Her body appears voluptuous. Her eyes seem small with drooping eyelids. Some wrinkles are detectable in the close-ups. Her hair is combed and she looks tidy in her large sweater and skirts with a long light-coloured scarf. The caravan appears in the background of the clip. She seems quite delightful, shaking her legs, twirling and dancing swiftly.

The footage is a representation that is no less constructed than the photograph. It does not provide the viewers with a context of Weber's performance. An interview of Weber,

⁴⁹ Georges Lacombe (Dir.), *La Zone: au Pays des Chiffonniers* (Paris: La Société des Film Charles Dullin, 1928). For further discussion of the film as well as the Paris zone, see James Cannon, *The Paris Zone: A Cultural History 1840-1944* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.146-1150.

which might be conducted at the same time of the shooting of the film, reports that Weber agreed to dance in exchange for a box of rice powder.⁵⁰ Nevertheless it offers a glimpse into the last years of a woman who had financial difficulties, yet whose life was not necessarily miserable or gloomy. Another photo of Weber by Maurice-Louis Branger (Figure 1.6) confirms that a different representation of the last years of this former can-can dancer is possible. The photograph takes up a composition that resembles the tradition of portraiture of a three-quarter view. Weber is centrally positioned, sitting on the step of her caravan with her hands resting on her thigh. She is neatly dressed in dark colours with her hair tidily tied up and fixed with a clip. The composition, the posture and the way she is dressed all contribute to a sense of solemnness in this photograph. Signs of poverty and ageing are still visible, yet she appears more dignified here.



Figure 1. 6, Maurice-Louis Branger, *La Goulue shortly before her death on the step of her caravan*, gelatin silver, ©Maurice-Louis Branger/Roger-Viollet

⁵⁰ Henri Danjou, 'Le Dernier Interview de La Goulue: Un Million à Retrouver?', *Vu*, 6 February 1929, pp.84-5. Discussed and cited in Cannon, *The Paris Zone*, p.146.

The juxtaposition of the postcard, the footage and the photograph reveals to us that they are all outcome of constructive processes that are informed by the class and gender ideology in France in 1920s. It is hard to tell if any of them is more accurate than the others. Nor does this matter in our discussion. Given that Weber lived in a caravan in the *Zône*, a region where working-class men and women with minimal means lived, it is not likely that she had an affluent life in her last years. The contrast between the footage, the photograph and the postcard, however, suggests that the representation of her in an almost monstrous moment with her filthiness and despair is more of a subjective re-presentation than an evidential documentation.

Can this be what happened in the case of Meurent as well? Are the descriptions of her desolation and misery in her later life a representation of a certain narrative creative for her, among many other alternatives? For one thing, none of the aforementioned authors seem to know about the end of Meurent's life. In the biographies of the artists for whom Meurent modelled, there is no mention of her situation after the 1890s, except for Toulouse-Lautrec's visits. In the monographs dedicated to her by Goedorp and Tabarant, both admit that there was no trace of Meurent after the 1890s. In his unpublished manuscript, Tabarant claims that 'after [1892], it's anybody's guess... Opinions that I have obtained from wise old experts agree that she died toward '92'.⁵¹ Yet, we now know that not only did Meurent live until 1927, she joined a professional organisation of artists, the *Société des Artistes Français* (SAF), sponsored by Charles Hermann-Léon (1838-1908) and the founder of the organisation, Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1912) in 1903. She exhibited for the last time at the Salon of SAF in 1904. These discoveries come from Lipton's research trips to Paris and New York, and were published in her book, *Alias Olympia*, in 1992. I will discuss the book in the following section. Suffice it here to say, to the eyes of the biographers of artists, it is the heyday of

⁵¹ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.153.

Meurent's life was marked by her modelling for *Olympia*. This teleological approach compels them to condemn everything after that moment as declining in order to set in contrast with the past glory. Without conclusive evidence, they follow the logic of their own perception and attributed a tragic ending to Meurent with their brutal descriptions; 'deathly', 'formless', 'toothless', etc.

It is not at all an exception that these authors adopted brutal language to describe the tragic destiny of a woman. This can also be detected in contemporary novels. One example is *Nana* by Émile Zola published in 1880. The novel delineates the last three years of a young woman, Nana, who is constantly caught up in love affairs with various men and engaged in prostitution. In the last chapter of the book, people gather at the apartment where Nana died from smallpox at the age of 21, similar to the way they gathered at the *Théâtre des Variétés* for Nana's performance in the first chapter.

Now Nana was left alone, lying face upwards in the light of the candle, a pile of blood and pus dumped on a pillow, a shovelful of rotten flesh ready for the bone-yard her whole face covered in festering sores, one touching the other, all puckered and subsiding into a shapeless, slushy grey pulp, already looking like a compost heap. Her features were no longer distinguishable, her left eye entirely submerged in discharging ulcers, the other one a sunken, fly-blown black hole. A thick yellowish fluid was still oozing from her nose. Starting from the left cheek, a reddish crust had overrun the mouth, pulling it into a ghastly grin. And on this horrible and grotesque death mask, her hair, her lovely hair, still flamed like a glorious golden stream of sunlight. Venus was decomposing; the germs which she had picked up from the carrion people allowed to moulder in the gutter, the ferment which had infected a whole society, seemed to have come to the surface of her face and rotted it.⁵²

In this passage, the same violent style of language is adopted to describe a woman's lifeless dead body. The detailed descriptions of Nana's appearance when dead enhance the horror of the disease and allude to the agony Nana might have gone through. As if it is not enough to describe every horrifying detail, Zola reminds his reader of the youth and beauty of Nana's body ten pages before this passage. Ironically, he does not even describe Nana's body in such

⁵² Émile Zola, *Nana*, 1st edn (Paris: Bibliothèque Chaptentier, 1880). The version used here is Émile Zola, *Nana*, trans. by Douglas Parmée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.425-426.

detail in the first chapter when she first appears. Before Nana loses her health, she loses her beloved son. It is from the dead body of her son that she becomes infected. The destiny designed for Nana, therefore, is a complete destruction of both her mind and body. Her disease-ravaged body is the ultimate manifestation of her tragedy.

In 1886 Zola published a novel that takes up the subject of artist and model, *L'Œuvre*. The protagonist is an artist, Claude, whose artistic career was not successful. Not a professional model, Christine is saved by Claude from a predicament on the first day of her arrival in Paris. She then agrees to pose for Claude and eventually marries the artist after a child of theirs, Jacques, is born. Zola explicitly comments on Christine's lack of maternal ability after Jacques comes along. '[Christine], who had shown herself such an active housewife, proved to be a very awkward nurse. She failed to become motherly...She was pre-eminently an amorosa and would have sacrificed her son for his father twenty times over.'⁵³ Jacques eventually dies and the poor care he received from his parents since his birth is constantly mentioned in the novel. Like Nana, Christine had a child, but lost him as she could not take care of him properly. Maternity is, thus, rendered as incompatible with prostitute and model.

In order to maintain the love of her lover and later husband, Christine proposes to pose for Claude. It is from that moment that Claude begins to treat her as a professional model with his demands and mockery. The accidental discovery of his early painting of Christine finally ignites his dissatisfaction with her current ageing body. She is now in rivalry with her own youth. This failure of the model's body, as Marie Lathers has convincingly argues, marks the aged body as unrepresentable in realist literature and Zola's inability to

⁵³ Émile Zola, *L'Œuvre*, ed. and trans. by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (London: Chatto & Windus, 1902), p.124.

accommodate model, mother, lover and wife in one body.⁵⁴ It is, therefore, not surprising that there are no detailed descriptions of Christine's older body in *L'Œuvre*.

I propose that we have to situate these descriptions of Meurent's body and life as well as those of *Nana* within the discourse of prostitution in Paris in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for what is concealed by these brutal expressions is the public anxiety over uncontrolled disorder induced by prostitution. With its unsettling transgression of the economic and social norms of bourgeois ideology, prostitution has long been considered as the social and religious evil, posing a notable threat to the bourgeois society. Regulations were imposed during the Empire and the Restoration to keep the trade under control and confinement. Prostitutes in Paris need to register themselves with the police to be legal, or they could get arrested. From the mid-nineteenth century, there was an increasing fear that the registration system was failing and the vice was invading. This is the moment, as T.J. Clark reveals, when Manet exhibited the *Olympia*.⁵⁵ In fact, French historian, Alain Corbin suggests that the regulationist system was breaking down during the Third Republic as a result of a series of political upheavals, legislative changes and shifts in social as well as philosophical structures.⁵⁶ Since 1876 prostitution started to become a subject of public debate with its frequent appearance in fictions and press.⁵⁷ Degas's painting, *Femmes à la Terrasse d'un Café le Soir* (1877), which I have raised in the introduction captures the

⁵⁴ Marie Lathers, *Bodies of Art: French Literary Realism and the Artist's Model* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), pp.169-193. Lathers makes the observation that towards the end of the century there started to be detailed descriptions of model's death and deformed body. Her study concentrates on the symbolic meaning of these descriptions. She argues that these novels signify the end of naturalist and realist literature.

⁵⁵ T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), pp.103-109.

⁵⁶ Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp.115-185.

⁵⁷ Corbin, *Women for Hire*, p.261.

prostitutes, most likely unregistered, soliciting in café.⁵⁸ In fact, one of the perceived major threats posed by unregulated prostitution, forms of which have been remarkably changed in the Third Republic, lies in their potential to corrupt decent bourgeois women. As Corbin puts it, it is the thought of sexual liberation within bourgeoisie that induces the terror.⁵⁹ The topos of tragic destiny of prostitutes is, therefore, a warning for the respectable women at the time. The brutal language adopted to describe the complete destruction of the morally dubious women, from details of their disgusting bodies to their devastating psychological suffering, serves to enhance the admonitory effect.

What is indicated by such topos is a dichotomy of the norm of respectable femininity and forms of deviancy such as the adulteress and prostitution. As Lynda Nead argues in her study of Victorian ideology of sexuality, such dichotomy that leads to depriving the prostitute of their femininity and rendering her as 'unnatural'.⁶⁰ Childless is one symptom of it. So *Nana cannot* have a child. It is simply impossible for the writers to imagine the femininity of the prostitute.

Such thinking has two intertwining effects in the documentation of Meurent. Although none of the authors assert, in explicit terms, that Meurent was ever a prostitute in her life, they all claim that Meurent engaged in morally dubious jobs, such as modelling and playing guitar in cafés. They can only position Meurent on the deviancy side of the dichotomy. Descriptions of her late life and body, therefore, have to echo with the topos of the tragic destiny of prostitutes. In fact, Tabarant ended his unpublished manuscript with

⁵⁸ For the investigation of the representation of prostitution in 1870s and 1880s, see Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, c1991).

⁵⁹ Corbin, *Women for Hire*, p.22.

⁶⁰ Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.91-109.

Victorine-Louise Meurent... At the age of twenty, a pleasant singer of the streets, then model of Manet, incarnation of Olympia, a friend of Stevens, an artist elected at the official Salons. Then total fallen, prostitute, drunkard, filthy wreck.⁶¹

We know that this is not true. Meurent is registered as living with with one Marie Dufor, in Colombes in the last decades of her life.⁶² The assumptions writers made and the language they used alludes to their reluctance to acknowledge the possibility that a woman who has done morally dubious work does not have to be tragic and doomed. In fact, there are examples of former models getting married and enjoyed a stable life. Joséphine Bloch (1822-1891), known as Joséphine Marix and model of Paul Delaroche (1797-1856), married a Danish aristocrat, Baron Hermann von Ahlefeld and retired from modelling. Nini Lopez (?-?), model of Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), married an actor. Not to mention Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) who married a middle-class businessman, Paul Mousis. If the repeated reference to Meurent's body is symptomatic of the melancholy and nostalgia of these authors projected onto to the woman who modelled for *Olympia*, the brutal descriptions of her late life and body, along with the unwillingness of the authors to recognise forms of femininity beyond the dichotomy of normal/respectable and deviant/dubious, eventually confound Meurent with *Olympia*. *Olympia* names a situation but also is associated with one figure in a painting who was identified by the first viewers in 1865 as a prostitute— predominantly, as Clark has shown, through the language of disgust and dirt projected onto the body Manet represented.⁶³

'Victorine Meurent is Olympia' - The Heroine Artist

Dissatisfied with the existing archives that register Meurent primarily as a model, Eunice Lipton, an American art historian, in the early 1990s initiated a feminist intervention

⁶¹ Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut L'*Olympia* de Manet', p.85.

⁶² The census record of Colombes show that Meurent lived with Dufor and her son at 22 rue Clara-Le moine in 1906, with Dufor at 6 Avenue Marie-Thérèse in 1911 and 1926.

⁶³ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p.103

to restore Meurent's position as an artist. As a part of the feminist project in art history, in 1992 Lipton published her book on Victorine Meurent, entitled *Alias Olympia: a Woman's Search for Manet's Notorious Model & Her Own Desire*. In this book, Lipton documents her journey of tracing every lead on Meurent across various archives, libraries and private collections in Paris and New York. Most of the facts we now know of Meurent's artistic career were first published in this book. Records of Meurent's attendance of evening classes at *Académie Julian* from 1875 to 1876, her membership of a professional organisation, the *Société des Artistes Français* (SAF), sponsored by the founder of the organisation, Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1911), her exhibitions at the Salon until 1904, and her last years living and painting in Colombes, all turned up in Lipton's search in Paris. On the census records of Meurent that Lipton recovered, Meurent lists her profession as artist-painter in 1906, 1911 and 1921. With these documents, it is evident that Meurent's artistic career was longer (as her last public exhibition was in 1904) and her identity as an artist was better acknowledged during her lifetime (as manifested by her joining of SAF in 1903) than any of the aforementioned authors document in their texts.

The genre of Lipton's book is as important as the evidence it provides to restore Meurent's position as an artist. While it is researched with the diligence of an art historian, the book demonstrates a feminist freedom to use a semi-autobiographical-semi-fictional form. It is divided into two parts, which are intertwined and distinguished by different fonts. One part is autobiographical, documenting the difficulties Lipton encountered in her personal life and the details of her research trip; while the part in bold is a narrative she constructed to present Meurent as an artist, based on the existing evidence and the documents she discovered on her Parisian research trip. This mixture of genres effectively earned Lipton a wider readership, which eventually fulfilled her wish to have Meurent acknowledged more widely as an artist. After the publication of Lipton's book, the general public came to accept

the idea of Meurent as an artist. The Wikipedia entry for Meurent starts by defining her as ‘a French painter and a famous model for painters’.⁶⁴ V.R. Main’s novel (2008) inspired by Meurent’s biography also portrays her primarily as an artist.⁶⁵

Although Lipton does not always address Meurent as Olympia in the book, the title of the book, *Alias Olympia: a Woman’s Search for Manet’s Notorious Model & Her Own Desire*, reveals the perceived significance of the connection between Manet and Meurent and the identification of Meurent with Olympia. If the title is a part of a publication marketing strategy, starting the book with *Olympia* is definitely a gesture towards privileging this painting. Indeed, Lipton gets to know Meurent *through Olympia* as she was mesmerised by the painting in 1970.

I could not shake the feeling that there was an event unfolding in *Olympia* and that the naked woman was staring quite alarmingly out of the picture. I could not make her recede behind the abstract forms I knew - I had been taught so fervently to believe - were the true content of the work. Her face kept swimming forward, her eyes demanded attention. I saw that unlike other naked women in paintings, Olympia did not drape herself suggestively on her bed or supplicate prospective lovers, or droop resignedly. Nor did she smile flirtatiously. Rather, she reigned imperiously, reclining on silken pillows, her tight little body and proprietary hand on omen... This was a woman who could say ‘yes’ or she could say ‘no’.⁶⁶

And then Lipton read other paintings by Manet for which Meurent modelled for similar qualities.

From each and every canvas I saw that the model surveyed the viewer, resisting centuries of admonition to ingratiate herself. Locked behind her gaze were thoughts, an ego manoeuvring. If later on Freud would ask, ‘What do women want?’ then this woman’s face answered. You knew what she wanted. Everything. Or rather she wanted, she lacked, nothing. And *that* is why in the spring of 1865 men shook with rage in front of *Olympia*. She was unmanageable; they knew she had to be contained.⁶⁷

From the beginning of this passage, Lipton stealthily conflates the representations of faces in paintings with the model *per se*, and attributes the shared qualities of the women represented

⁶⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorine_Meurent, accessed on 20 July 2015.

⁶⁵ V.R. Main, *A Woman with No Clothes On* (London: Delancey, 2008).

⁶⁶ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.2.

⁶⁷ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.4.

in the paintings of Manet to Meurent, the historical subject. Towards the end of this passage, *Olympia* is brought up again. This time, Olympia, the represented woman, becomes an alias for Meurent.

Despite the fact that Lipton is discontent with her predecessors who write about Meurent primarily as a model and her effort to restore Meurent's artistic identity, her privileging of the painting turns out to reinforce the canonical status of Manet. If *Olympia* was scandalous when it was first exhibited at the Salon in 1865 because of the unmanageable qualities of Meurent/Olympia, Manet would have to be different from other men of his time in order to recognise those qualities and dare to represent them in his paintings. Indeed, in the fictive section of the book, Lipton makes her version of Meurent say:

Why is it none of the writers understand the rage at Olympia? It was my face, they hated my face. Manet knew what he was doing, and he loved my face... He was telling the world 'This woman is not yours.' My eyes, my smile, it was for girls, not the boys. He knew that.⁶⁸

Here, Lipton presents Manet as a man standing on the side of Meurent, against other writers, if not the contemporary Parisian world. By rendering Manet as exceptional, Lipton legitimises not only Manet's canonical position but also the structure of the canon as a collection of men with special talent. It is in this way that Lipton acquiesces to Meurent's functioning as a sign of Manet's creativity.

In 1893 years after she last modelled, Meurent posed for Norbert Goeneutte (1854-1894). This is a decade after Koelin-Leenhoff reported last seen her as 'deathly' and 'unrecognisable' in the winter of 1882-1883, and about the time when Toulouse-Lautrec took his friends to visit her, describing her as 'toothless' in 1893. Several paintings were produced, possibly including one depicting Meurent in nude from the back. Lipton mentions one of Goeneutte's paintings in her book, in which Meurent posed as a drunk woman. In contrast to her willingness to take *Olympia* as a reflection of the genuine qualities of Meurent, when it

⁶⁸ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.90.

comes to Goeneutte's painting, Lipton is reluctant to accept that it is a faithful capture of Meurent. Candid about her desires, she writes:

Even assuming these distortions, by what right do I persist in thinking that Meurent was Manet's picture of her, and not Goeneutte's and the image produced by all the men who wrote about her? For if I have archival data that undermines the writers' and Goeneutte's interpretation, the material does not entirely support Manet's view either. Far from it. *I know*. I'm searching for a hero...⁶⁹

The search for a hero is one form of feminist intervention in the discourse of art history, which aims to disclose and subvert the gendered hierarchy of the canon.⁷⁰ Victorine Meurent as a case of a woman who was a professional model and who produced paintings attracted Lipton in the first place because Lipton reads in the texts of the biographers of artists the discourse that 'silences her' and 'would bar her presence, indeed would transform her into her opposite - a helpless woman'.⁷¹

Lipton is correct that the discourse only allows a certain kind of femininity to be written into it; one that identifies femininity with passivity. For Meurent to be visible in such a discourse, her productivity and activity have to be suppressed. When Tabarant discusses Meurent's paintings exhibited at the Salons, his tone is full of contempt and prejudice.

⁶⁹ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.115.

⁷⁰ One precedent in point would be a serious study on the representation of female heroes in Renaissance art by Mary Garrard. In her article on Leonardo Da Vinci's portraits of women (1992), Garrard suggests that Leonardo is honouring the cultural and intellectual contributions made by these sitters, rather than their generic beauty. Her argument, similar to Lipton's assertion of Manet, positioned Leonardo as exceptional to his contemporaries because of his 'pro-female philosophical position'. [Mary D. Garrard, 'Leonardo Da Vinci: Female Portraits, Female Nude', in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. by Norma Broude & Mary D. Garrard (New York, NY: IconEditions, 1992), pp.59-86 (79).] This study is preceded by Garrard's research on Artemisia Gentileschi, in which Garrard interprets Gentileschi's forceful representation of Susanna, Lucretia, Cleopatra and Judith as searches of forms female heroism that are permitted in a patriarchal world. These searches, according to Garrard, are related to the institutional and sexual violence that Gentileschi experienced in her life. [Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1989).] Griselda Pollock criticises Garrard's argument of female heroes in Gentileschi's art for its over-emphasis on the artist's biography and overlooking of the social, cultural and artistic negotiations Gentileschi would have made as an artist as well as a woman. It is in these negotiations lies her creative power. Pollock identifies Garrard's research as a form of feminist desire to search for exceptional women in the history of art. [Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.97-127].

⁷¹ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.2.

[Victorine Meurent] decided to paint. Instead of asking for advice from Alfred Stevens who protected her all along, she turned to Etienne Leroy, a mediocre artist. Soon she thought about exhibiting her works in the Salon whose jury was not very discerning. In 1876, she sent a self-portrait along with some paintings of trivial subjects, such as history and anecdotes. How bad these paintings are. Where was the intimate time she spent with Manet?⁷²

[In the] very mediocre salon [of 1879]...what a surprise for Manet, that his neighbour in the same room was Victorine Meurent. She was there, smiling, happy, camped in front of her entry, which had brought her such honour, the Bourgeoise de Nuremberg au XVIe Siècle...⁷³

Not a single decision Meurent made regarding her artistic career escapes Tabarant's disparagement. The tutor Meurent chose was not good enough. The subjects of her paintings were trivial. The paintings and drawings were bad. Her entry into the Salon in 1876 was due to the lack of discernment of the jury. To Tabarant, Meurent's exhibiting at the Salon marked the decreasing quality of this once prestigious institution. Even the fact that Meurent exhibited her work in the same room with Manet in 1879, because artworks in the Salon were arranged in alphabetical order of the artists' last names, did not redeem her.

The visibility of the statement 'Meurent is Olympia' in the discourse of canonical art history, indeed, pre-determines the invisibility of Meurent's artistic career. It is not a matter of whether these texts are reliable sources of information. Rather it is about the discourse being a structure which, on the one hand, is defined by the same criteria of statements, whereas on the other hand, governs the statements that it entails. As French philosopher, Michel Foucault explains, discourse, as a structure of power, defines what can be said and what cannot. For 'Meurent is Olympia' to be visible, 'Meurent is an artist' has to be invisible. If Meurent's modelling for *Olympia* is considered to be her heyday, by logic the rest of her life, whether it is her childhood or the years after she stopped modelling for Manet, have to be not as good, at least.

⁷² Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut "l'Olympia"', p.299.

⁷³ Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvres*, p.211.

In order to bring Meurent's artistic achievement to the fore, Lipton overturns the visibility-invisibility relation by suppressing Meurent's years as a model. This is not an easy job, as most of the resources then available concerned Meurent only as a model. There are documented occasions in which Meurent acknowledged herself as once being a model. For example, Meurent wrote a letter to Manet's widow in 1883, in which she asks for financial help, reminding the new widow of Manet's promise of a share of the income he would make from selling the paintings she had posed for. An auction sale record states that Meurent signed her painting, addressing herself as a 'student and model of Manet'. Sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s, Meurent made the name cards on which she wrote 'I am Olympia, the subject of the celebrated painting of Monsieur Manet'. When it comes to these incidents, Lipton seems compelled to provide explanations to Meurent's self-identification as a model in the fictive sections. Her Meurent emphasises the financial difficulties that forced her to make such a desperate decision as to write to Manet's widow.⁷⁴ Lipton's Meurent also denies her association with Manet as a model – that she signed the painting she sent to the Salon (*Bust-Length Portrait of a Young Woman*) 'Victorine Meurent, student and model of Manet, posed for Olympia' – by saying 'I never wrote that. Maybe someone did that for practical reasons'.⁷⁵ The name cards are not mentioned at all in the fictive sections. It seems that Lipton is reluctant to accept the notion that Meurent may have been willing to evoke her modelling years, especially when she could profit from her connection with Manet.

In the few places the Meurent in Lipton's construction talks about her modelling experience, she says: 'I never saw myself as a professional model.'⁷⁶ Later she continues,

'... And before I knew it, [Manet] was drawing me. I was flattered, but annoyed, too. It didn't feel right. He hadn't even asked permission. Also he saw the package from Ottoz's that I was carrying. He knew I was a painter. He had to know.'⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, pp.48-49 & p.89.

⁷⁵ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.89.

⁷⁶ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.69.

⁷⁷ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.70.

As she modelling for Goeneutte, Meurent says:

‘[Goeneutte] knew I needed money and asked if I wanted to model. I could hardly say no. But he must have seen the hatred in my eyes when I said, ‘For What?’...[Goeneutte’s painting of me] is a dreary little red painting... What could I do? I needed the money.’⁷⁸

Here we witness Lipton’s textual invention of a woman who aspired to be an artist from the beginning but took up modelling for various reasons. Lipton’s Meurent could be flattered when she discovered that Manet, an artist she liked, was trying to draw her. But she would feel offended because Manet did not ask for permission and he knew she was a painter. This feeling of being offended is not unlike the disappointment that the Guyanese artist Aubrey Williams (1923-1975) felt about his encounter with Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), the canonised artist long credited for his interest in African art and his effort to introduce it into Western art.

As Williams later recalled in an interview:

I remember the first comment he made when we met. He said that I had a very fine African head and he would like me to pose for him. I felt terrible. In spite of the fact that I was introduced to him as an artist, he did not think of me as another artist. He thought of me only as something he could use for his own work.⁷⁹

Williams’s terrible feeling comes from his uncomfortableness to be perceived as a model, especially after he was introduced as ‘another artist’. By using the expression ‘another’, what Williams hints at is that he was just like Picasso, as his equal artist colleague. His resistance to the idea that he was treated as a model discloses a distinct separation and hierarchy between artist as subject and model as object. Lipton’s Meurent echoes this. Indeed, Lipton’s Meurent hates to model intentionally for money. In other words, she hates to be a professional model.

If the hierarchy between artist and model is not eliminated, Meurent’s history in modelling has to be minimised in the picture Lipton wishes to create for Meurent. Lipton’s

⁷⁸ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.108.

⁷⁹ Rasheed Araeen, ‘Conversation with Aubrey Williams’, *Third Text* 2 (1987–88): 32, cited in Simon Gikandi, ‘Picasso, Africa and the Schemata of Difference,’ *Modernism / Modernity*, 10, no. 3, 455-480 (p.455).

Meurent always, and only, aspires to be an artist. It is financial difficulties that often force her to take the desperate decisions to model or to profit from being a former model. What Lipton overlooks, intentionally I think, is that with many other jobs available to women, Meurent chose to model. It was not unheard of for middle class women living at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century to support the cost of their artistic training by modelling. Gwen John (1876-1939) is an example. John established herself as an artist in London before going to Paris, where she modelled to support herself.⁸⁰ An exact description of Meurent's motivation to model is not possible, and indeed is not my aim. Instead, I draw attention to the way in which Lipton makes a convenient assumption that modelling is a ready choice for a woman who aspires to be an artist and needs money. During the years when Meurent modelled, the morally dubious nature of this job often made it comparable to prostitution in the public imagination. I am not suggesting that every model who is woman would be involved in a sexual relationship with the artists for whom she modelled; but being a model would definitely compromise a woman's respectability.⁸¹ Manet once asked a waitress to pose for a character in his painting. The waitress agreed on the condition that she would be accompanied by her boyfriend during the session to protect her and her reputation.⁸² Agreeing to model, especially in the nude, is therefore a gesture with serious social and cultural implications, which Lipton overlooks in her book.

To Lipton, Meurent's modelling experience is more a problem than a history, which she needs to resolve because her feminist programme only allows for reclaiming Meurent by making her into the artist that Lipton wishes to establish. What is imbedded in Lipton's desire

⁸⁰ Jill Berk Jiminez ed., *Dictionary of Artists' Models* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001).

⁸¹ Contemporary novels such as The Goncourt brothers' *Manette Salomon* (1867) and Émile Zola's *L'Œuvre* (1886) portray the sexual and romantic relationships between artist who is always a man and his model who is always a woman. For discussion of the representation of models in French literature, see Lathers, *Bodies of Art*.

⁸² This episode is mentioned in Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1988), p.76.

to minimise the model Meurent is her worry that Meurent's modelling years could impugn her artistic identity. The anxiety that modelling could potentially undermine artistic achievement comes from one of the most fundamental binaries and hierarchies in the discourse-model/object vs. artist/subject-as witnessed in the case of Aubrey Williams. Regarding Meurent in the discourse as either a model or an artist, therefore makes little difference, as both strategies select one side of the binary without effectively or critically engaging with it. It is in this sense that Lipton aligns with her predecessors, with whom she wishes to dispute. All the effort Lipton puts into making sure Meurent is a heroine artist, indeed, substantiate the precariousness of Meurent's artistic identity. Lipton's text, ultimately, profoundly betrays her intention.

Historical Writing and the Dialectical Image

Who is Victorine Meurent? Is she a painter? Is she primarily a painter or a model? When did she start painting? Are there any other possibilities besides being a painter or a model? These are the questions that the existing literature on Meurent intends to answer. Are these, however, really productive questions to ask? In their pursuit for answers to these questions, all the aforementioned authors end up with producing monographic biographies. As Foucault argues, traditional questioning of documents tends to produce conventional biographies which aim to construct a narrative that best reconstitutes the historical facts.⁸³ Foucault points out several problematics with this type of treatment of documents, among which I discern two as being most pertinent.

Firstly, the conventional biography tends to construct a single linear narrative out of fragmented moments, the sequence of which indicates a causal relationship. Documents are

⁸³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

often treated as a decipherable trace, of which the origins, or beginnings, carry great significance and possess ‘some sort of shaping power, and hence some sort of explanatory force’.⁸⁴ This significance and power may be the reason that Lipton insists upon Meurent starting to paint before she poses for Manet, even though logically this is neither essential nor necessary to establish her identity as an artist. Is Meurent not, or less of, an artist if she painted after she modelled? Should Meurent be defined solely by where she started? What is more, along with the notion of origins, motivations become important, which poses questions that cannot be answered. Among all the authors, both Tabarant and Lipton look into Meurent’s incentive to model. For Tabarant, it is Meurent’s ambition to escape working class misery; whereas for Lipton, it is her financial difficulty. There is no one, however, who asks questions regarding Meurent’s motivation for being an artist. This discrepancy is another example of their privileging artists over models as they make the simple assumption that it is only natural that Meurent would aspire to being an artist.

Secondly, for consistency is a valued quality in this kind of questioning, origins are usually teleologically informed. The best instance are the different interpretations of Meurent’s address discovered in Manet’s sketchbook, ‘Louise Meuran, rue Maître-Albert, 17’. Given that this was a chaotic neighbourhood, Seibert believes that this is where Meurent lived because her coming from such a background adds to the scandal of Manet’s paintings. On the contrary, convinced that Meurent is primarily an artist, Lipton takes this to be the address of Meurent’s studio. It is not a matter of who is correct and who is not; but it should be evident that the interpretations of authors are retrospectively informed by their perceptions of Meurent’s identity.

⁸⁴ J.R.R. Christie and Fred Orton, ‘Writing on a Text of the Life’, in *Avant-gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, ed. by Fred Orton & Griselda Pollock (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp.295-314 (308).

As problematic as biography appears, it nevertheless cannot be avoided. J.R.R. Christie and Fred Orton remark in their chapter, ‘*Writing on a Text of the Life*’, that writing biography becomes ‘impossible’ as the object and subject are no longer fixed or coherent, but ‘dispersed, divided and decentred by language’.⁸⁵ Yet, they recognise that ‘humans are irreducibly narratable, narrating beings’.⁸⁶ What they propose as a resolution is writing plural biographies, in which the ‘individual ceases to exist as this unitary object and becomes a series of meeting points, a pattern of possibilities to read from all kinds of texts. Not *the* biography, but a book of biographies’.⁸⁷ Only by writing plural biographies can we approach a multitudinous Victorine Meurent, who is model and at the same time artist.

What we now know of Meurent are fragments of her life. Instead of producing a consistent and continual narrative out of them, as my predecessors have, I would like to propose that we think about the discrete pieces with the Benjaminian concept of a dialectical image.

It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectical as a standstill... the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.⁸⁸

With the notion of dialectical image, history is no longer perceived as a linear progression that leads to the present. Rather, it forms a constellation with the present. In his last piece of writing, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, German philosopher Walter Benjamin explains that ‘to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it “the way it really was” (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger’.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Christie and Orton, ‘Writing on a Text of the Life’, p.307.

⁸⁶ Christie and Orton, ‘Writing on a Text of the Life’, p.309.

⁸⁷ Christie and Orton, ‘Writing on a Text of the Life’, p.311.

⁸⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press, 1999), p.462.

⁸⁹ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp.253 -264 (255).

The present and the fragments of the past form a constellation at this specific instant, which illuminates the genuine relations beneath the false appearances of phenomena.

The implications of this concept could be numerous, partly due to it never being clearly defined in any of Benjamin's writings, two of which are especially relevant to my study of Victorine Meurent. Firstly, if fragments of Meurent's life are to be understood as stars in a constellation, no single moment is to be privileged over others, yet every such moment is necessary. The constellation is about the simultaneity and the whole; it allows us to avoid replicating the either-or situation. The second implication concerns the visibility of certain relations that are otherwise foreclosed, which can be discerned in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*. Although concepts of dialectical image and constellation could be traced back to some of Benjamin's earliest output, it is in *The Arcades Project* that they are most fully elaborated. The project, which was never completed during Benjamin's life time, studied the arcades constructed in Paris in the nineteenth century. Deeply grounded in the Marxist value theory of labour, Benjamin studied the real relations of capitalist society, which were buried under the dazzling commodities displayed in the windows of the arcades. The dialectical image is, therefore, the flash, in which the real relations are revealed to us.

In the next two sections, I present my study of Meurent as a model and an artist. In the section on Meurent as a model, I borrow Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theory of affective labour, which is a revision of the Marxist value theory of labour, to conceptualise the labour of a model. The labour of a model is only made visible after we discover the contradictories and inconsistencies in the representations of Meurent in Manet's paintings. In the section on Meurent as an artist, I investigate the conditions of various forms of artistic training in order to understand the meanings of being an artist to a woman of little means. Dividing the studies into two sections does not indicate a clean separation of the two

identities. As my discussion demonstrates, being a model and being an artist are related and can be simultaneous.

I could hardly say that next two sections follow the methodology of historical research embodied in the Benjaminian concepts of dialectical image and constellation. Rather than providing a concrete theoretical framework within which to investigate the fragments collected on Meurent, the concepts allow me to see the relations and meanings generated by not only various combinations of these fragments, but also their links to other elements of the past. By looking beyond the fragments of Meurent, I approach a multitudinous Meurent. To me, the concepts are more inspirational than instructive.

‘I am Olympia, the subject of M. Manet’s celebrated painting.’

I began this chapter with a visiting card hand-made by Meurent, on which is written ‘I am Olympia, the subject of M. Manet’s celebrated painting’. I then investigated the statement ‘Victorine Meurent is Olympia’ in the existing literature on Meurent. The content of the statements ‘Victorine Meurent is Olympia’ and ‘I am Olympia’ is virtually the same, as it is Meurent making the statement that involves ‘I’. But if we take them as Foucauldian *énoncés*, they could not be more different. Before we turn the discussion to ‘I am Olympia’, some explanation of the concept *énoncé* may help us better orient our discussion.

In 1969, French philosopher Michel Foucault published his fourth major book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.⁹⁰ Following his previous book, *The Order of Things*, published in 1966 and translated into English in 1970, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault carried on his interrogation of the configurations in epistemological space that function as

⁹⁰ The book was first translated into English by Alan Sheridan Smith and published in Great Britain by Tavistock Publications in 1972 and in the United States by Pantheon Books later the same year. The edition I use is Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

conditions of possibilities of knowledge in a particular time and area, or a historical *a priori*.⁹¹

According to Foucault, the statement is neither entirely linguistic, nor simply material.

The statement is not therefore a structure (that is, a group of relations between variable elements, thus authorizing a possibly infinite number of concrete models); it is a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense', according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written). One should not be surprised, then, if one has failed to find structural criteria of unity for the statement; this is because it is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space.⁹²

The statement operates, therefore, on a different level from groups of signs, a level that is termed enunciative. It works on these structures and allows itself to be worked on. As a function it obtains its materiality through these effects. For the function to operate, it cannot be isolated from the conditions of its operation, which is to give groups of signs their modalities of existence. It is by being the modality of existence of groups of signs that statement is also an action. It not only conditions the existence of signs, it is also the particular condition of their existence.

It is for this reason that the translation of the French term *énoncé* as statement appears insufficient. In French, *énoncé* is not only a noun but also a past participle of the verb *énoncer*. It articulates therefore a sense of being both a thing and an action. By translating it into statement, not only do we lose the action aspect of the term, we add to it a value of judgment, as statement in English implies formality and truthness. I therefore use *énoncé* rather than statement throughout this thesis to constantly underscore its duality.

⁹¹ The French title of *The Order of Things* is *Les Mots et les Choses: Une Archéologie des Sciences Humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). The book was first translated into English and published by Tavistock Publications in 1970. The edition I use is *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁹² Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.97.

Because *énoncé* is both a thing and an action, rather than asking what is being said, it is more important for the analyses of *énoncés* to

question them as to their mode of existence, what it means to them to have come into existence, to have left traces, and perhaps to remain there, awaiting the moment when they might be of use once more; what it means to them to have appeared when and where they did - they and no other.⁹³

As *énoncés* ‘Victorine Meurent is Olympia’ and ‘I am Olympia’ have different modes of existence, leave different traces, generate different meanings and appear in different times and places. Specifically, ‘Victorine Meurent is Olympia’, as I demonstrate, is prevalent in almost all the texts on Meurent. It has effect in constructing the sign, ‘Victorine’, of which the signified is masculine creativity. ‘I am Olympia’, on the other hand, only exists in Tabarant’s unpublished manuscript and is later reprinted in Lipton’s book. Both authors consider it the same as ‘Victorine Meurent is Olympia’. What does it mean however, when Meurent, the historical individual, claims the subjective position, I, of the *énoncé*? What kind of effect does it have? What traces does it leave, if there is any? I, therefore, propose that we look more closely into Meurent’s modelling career.

In this section, I consider the representations of Meurent, specifically the nine paintings by Manet, as registers of Meurent’s labour as a model. Of all the artists with whom she might have worked and all the paintings for which she is said to have modelled, Manet and his nine paintings are those that are most widely acknowledged and firmly attributed. These paintings constitute a body of work that provides a great deal of detail. Their conditions of conservation and easy access are not unrelated to the canonical status of the painter and the work. Those paintings, completed between 1862 and 1873, reveal the changes, or lack of changes, over the years and the negotiations that the painter and model made in the rapidly changing Parisian society.

⁹³ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.123.

This section is not intended to diminish the contribution a painter makes to the artwork. If one is tempted to think it that way, a competitive relationship between painter and model is immediately assumed. Throughout the nineteenth century, the relationship between painters and models became less intellectually collaborative and more financially determined as the model was often considered an employee. While the model's labour is more mediated; both artist and model doubtlessly contribute to the production of art. Artist and model can therefore be considered co-workers. This is not the same as collaborators. Sharing the same working space, they are not necessarily in an equal relation as collaborators, for the artist gets to make most of the decisions. As co-workers, their contributions to the completion of the artwork are different. The study of paintings from the perspective of the model, therefore, supplements rather than competes with the same study from the perspective of the artist. It is, moreover, not my intention to simply shift the angle from one side of the easel to the other as this would always lead to an alignment with one side. Rather, what I wish to construct is a fuller image of the time artists and models spend together in the studio space. This is like a holographic projection, but with more than three dimensions – multiple dimensions with the addition of discourse on the class, gender and even race, in some cases, that are on-going in society. Paintings are, thus, discussed as productions of labour and sites that generate meanings as well as effects.

Before I proceed to analyse the paintings, I have to confess that developing this approach in the way that I just formulated is an extremely challenging process, for two main reasons, both of which are very revealing. The first reason is that there is no theoretical framework available with which to start. On the one hand, the model's labour is often neglected in the discourse. The role a model who is a woman plays in the production of art is often romanticised or minimised. It is often assumed that a model who is a woman would be in a personal loving or sexual relationship with the artist who is a man. This relationship, over

and above their professional one, would be the source of the artist's inspiration, making the model a muse or an erotic object. Apart from the ideological and gender problematics raised by the notion of a muse, which is addressed in my previous discussion of Cherry and Pollock's chapter on Elizabeth Siddall, one consequence of constructing a model's relation to art in that way is that it actually denies any relation between the model and the artwork. By conceptualising the model as a muse, the effect of her existence only extends as far as to the artist. Whatever happens in the painting is the sole production of the artist. The labour of model is not registered in any way, which is to be expected as she has already been objectified. Similarly, artworks are often considered to be an expression of the artist's inner world, which contributes to one of the myths about artist, that art is one of their intrinsic attributes. I shall investigate the myths of artist further in the chapter on Suzanne Valadon. Suffice to say that such transcendent notion of artist and artwork makes it difficult for anyone else to claim any share in the production.

Without any precedents from which to learn, the second aspect with which I have struggled is a lack of perceived consistency in the paintings of Meurent. With the prevalence of monographs and *catalogue raisonnées* in libraries and on bookshelves, I am used to finding clues to continuities or progressions in series of paintings. In fact, if I try to analyse this series from the perspective of the artist, I shall certainly be able to make some sense of the juxtaposition. For example, all the paintings depict people living in the modern era. All, except *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (1863) and *Olympia* (1863-65), seem to capture a moment of modern life. As to *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* and *Olympia* it is now widely agreed that these two paintings make brutal comments on contemporary capitalist society. What I detect here is a project depicting modernity, which has its fluctuations over the years. When I attempt to detect traces of Meurent's labour in the paintings, however, the consistency collapses. In the paintings, Meurent assumes various identities, wearing different outfits, if not naked. She

poses at various angles and her face does not necessarily look the same. Moreover, she is accompanied by different people in various settings. What is she doing in all those paintings? What can we take from this inconsistency?

These paintings form a Benjaminian constellation along with the re-conceptualisation of labour in recent years as a result of the boom in the service industry. The labour of modelling is the true relation between artist and model, which is concealed beneath its often phantacised and sexualised appearances. I therefore conduct an almost forensic observation of the representations of her face and body in eight paintings of this series. *Le Partie de Croquet* is not included in the discussion as it does not offer us a clear image of Meurent. There is no way to know what Meurent really looked like, since there are no photographs that are firmly attributed as her.⁹⁴ My intention is not therefore to find the most authentic representation; otherwise it would become another biographical research.

⁹⁴ A photograph said to be Meurent's portrait is now circulating online. It comes from Manet's photo album of portraits, yet it is not indicated explicitly in the album that the woman is Meurent. It is likely that the suggestion is made by comparison with Manet's paintings for which she is known to have modelled. In 1981, Beatrice Farwell argued that a woman who appears in several of Félix-Jacques Antoine Moulin's photos is 'almost certainly' Meurent, based on physiognomic resemblance. The woman identified by Farwell as Meurent is certainly not the one in Manet's album. Without further evidence, there is no way to decide which, if either, of the claims is correct. Moreover, we should be careful about the extent to which we consider Manet's representations of Meurent to be faithful, for there is a lack of consistency in the depictions of Meurent's face and body in the eight paintings of her by Manet. Beatrice Farwell, *Manet and the Nude: A Study in Iconography in the Second Empire*, (NY: Garland Publishing, 1981), p.161.



Figure 1. 7, Édouard Manet, *Portrait de Victorine Meurent*, 1862, oil on canvas, 42.9×43.8 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 1. 8, Édouard Manet, *La Chanteuse des Rue*, 1862, oil on canvas, 171.3×105.8 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 1. 9, Édouard Manet, *Mademoiselle V... en Costume d'Espada*, 1862, oil on canvas, 165.1×127.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 1. 10, Édouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, 1863, oil on canvas, 208x264.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Figure 1. 11, Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863-65, oil on canvas, 130×190 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Figure 1. 12, Édouard Manet, *Le Femme au Perroquet*, 1866, oil on canvas, 185.1×128.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 1. 13, Édouard Manet, *La Joueuse de Guitare*, 1866, oil on canvas



Figure 1. 14, Édouard Manet, *Le Chemin de Fer*, 1873, oil on canvas, 93.3×111.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Juxtaposing the eight paintings that Meurent posed for Manet, *Portrait de Victorine Meurent* (1862) (Figure 1.7), *La Chanteuse des Rue* (1862) (Figure 1.8), *Mademoiselle V... en Costume d'Espada* (1862) (Figure 1.9), *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (1863) (Figure 1.10), *Olympia* (1863-65) (Figure 1.11), *Le Femme au Perroquet* (1866) (Figure 1.12), *La Joueuse de Guitare* (1866) (Figure 1.13), and *Le Chemin de Fer* (1873) (Figure 1.14), it is not difficult to see that there are some shared features. Her heavily lidded eyes, fair-coloured eyebrows, thin and flat lips, iconic red hair and sloping shoulders are visible in most of the paintings. In the *Portrait*, *Le Déjeuner* and *Le Femme au Perroquet* her hair is centrally parted decorated with a ribbon that is blue in the *Portrait* and *Le Femme au Perroquet* and black in *Le Déjeuner*. The blue hair accessory also appears in *La Joueuse*. A choker style necklace appears in the *Portrait*, *Olympia*, *Le Femme au Perroquet* and *Le Chemin*. In the two former paintings, the necklace is made of a simple black bow-knotted string. In *Le Femme au Perroquet*, it is a black ribbon with a metal medallion and there seems to be a bowknot in the back of her neck. In *Le Chemin*, it is just a simple black ribbon.

Despite these similarities, in contradiction to Seibert's and Lipton's conflation of these representations of Meurent with the historical subject, Meurent is not entirely recognisable in each painting, as her face is represented from distinct angles and some details of her face are slightly different. The years 1862 and 1863 were when Meurent posed most frequently for Manet. Three paintings were completed in 1862 and two in 1863. According to the timeline given by Tabarant, of the three 1862 paintings, *La Chanteuse*, *Mlle V...* and the *Portrait*, *La Chanteuse* were the earliest and the *Portrait* was the latest.⁹⁵ In *La Chanteuse*, Meurent is captured in a moment of walking out of a small bistro. Her face is not entirely visible as her lips are covered by a cluster of cherries. The conception of this painting comes from Manet's

⁹⁵ Carol Armstrong suggests that the *Portrait* is likely to be the first painting of Meurent by Manet. See Armstrong, *Manet/Manette* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p.135. The change of sequence does not affect my argument that Manet might have painted the *Portrait* as a study of Meurent's face as a step of his working habit.

encounter with a street singer, who he invited to sit for the painting. The street singer refused for whatever reason, and Manet told Proust that he would try again, but if he did not succeed, he 'had Victorine'.⁹⁶ According to Proust, Meurent must have been posing for Manet before he started this painting and must have expressed her interest in continuing to model, if not in being a professional model.⁹⁷ What is more, this anecdote reveals that prior to the Meurent's posing session for this painting, Manet already had a role prepared for her to play.

In *Mlle V...*, Meurent's identity is further shifted as she is dressed in the guise of a male espada. Here, her distinctive individual features are visible unlike in *La Chanteuse*, including her cleft chin, her red hair, her eyelids and her round nose tip. She stands in the middle of canvas and, by comparison, the figures in the background are disproportionately small, highlighting her monumentality. The bullfighting scene in the background is, in fact, a reproduction of one of Goya's *Tauromaquia* series (1816). Her pose is derived from an engraving of *Temperance* (1515-25) by Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael (Figure 1.15), but here in the painting Meurent's upper body is turned to us, with her back slightly arched backward. As a result, her right leg as well as her waist bear the weight of her body, mitigating the sense of movement created by the contrapposto pose, even stressing its artificiality. The artificiality is further enhanced by the outfit being not completely authentic as the costume of an espada matador. The shoes are not correct and her cape is the wrong hue. This is not a careful attempt to make her into a real matador, but by having her assume a role, it serves to dissociate Meurent from who she really is. The falsity of the posing is what is at play here and is highlighted by all the discrepancies.

⁹⁶ Proust, *Édouard Manet: Souvenirs*, p.170.

⁹⁷ Tabarant accounts *La Chanteuse* as the first painting of Meurent by Manet. He might be wrong as according to Proust, Manet already had Meurent in mind before he started executing *La Chanteuse*. Another possibility is that Meurent had been posing for Manet's drawings before the coming of *La Chanteuse*.



Figure 1. 15, Marcantonio Raimondi, *Temperance* (After Raphael), c.1515–25, Engraving, 21.9×10.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 1. 16, Édouard Manet, *Portrait de Victorine Meurent* (detail), 1862



In the *Portrait*, Meurent's face slightly turned to her left facing the source of light. This painting is a meticulous study of the face of Meurent. Her fair ginger-coloured eyelashes, her flat forehead, her cleft chin and her distinctively curved earlobe are all depicted in great detail. A mole on the left of her face can clearly be detected in a zoom-in detail (Figure 1.16) made available online by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston where the painting is now located. Although an extremely individualised marker, the mole never turns up in any other representations of her. The *Portrait* was never exhibited while Manet was alive, and I suggest that Manet may have made this portrait as a preparation for a later painting. One year later Manet painted a portrait of Laure (Figure 1.17), who modelled for the other woman in *Olympia*. Compared to the *Portrait*, the portrait of Laure is sketchier, but her facial features, such as her wide nose, high cheekbones and full lips, are carefully delineated with large brushstrokes. In the portrait, Laure is dressed similarly to her representation in *Olympia*, in a large white top and a colourful turban. The portrait of Laure is, therefore, very likely a preparation for *Olympia*. If painting portraits of models is one of the habits that Manet kept in



Figure 1. 17, Édouard Manet, *La Nègresse*, 1863, oil on canvas, 58.4×48 cm, private collection

order to facilitate his later representations, this portrait of Meurent may very well fall into this category.

The *Mlle V...* was submitted to the Salon in 1863 along with the scandalous *Le Déjeuner*, then titled *Le Bain*. They were both rejected and later exhibited at the *Salon des Refusés*. Contemporary critics did not articulate any recognition of the same model in these two paintings. There are several reasons for this indifference. Firstly, critics tend not to notice the identity of models. Paintings of Meurent by Manet were placed in the same exhibition room in Manet's solo exhibition of 1876 and retrospective of 1884. No contemporary critics seem to comment extensively on the identity of his models even after Meurent distributed her name cards in cafés and dance halls in early 1880s, explicitly stating that she modelled for *Olympia*. Secondly, it may have been an intentional choice on the part of Manet, with which a message is constructed. We will return to this later.

Nevertheless, the fact that Meurent's face is turned at a very different angle in *Le Déjeuner* contributes to her unrecognisability. Turning back to look at the viewer, her cleft chin is covered by her right hand and her cheekbone is flattened without the patch of red seen in the *Mlle V....* Proportionally, her nose appears shorter in *Le Déjeuner* and her eyebrows closer to her eyes. Her fair-coloured eyelashes are more visible, indicated by light-coloured brushstrokes near her left eye. As natural and relaxed as the pose appears, certain details reveal its artificiality. For example, the left elbow is, in fact, not supported by the left knee. Rather it rests on her lap. Anyone who tries out this pose would notice instantly how exhausting it is for the muscles of the forearm to hold to this position. The shape of her breast is a partial circle that is too perfect to be realistic, as if the breast has escaped the influence of gravity. One explanation could be that during the modelling session, Meurent was not naked, so Manet failed to make a correct observation of the position of the elbow or change of the shape of the breast. This is, in fact, very unlikely. Even if Manet did not observe Meurent in

this pose naked, his knowledge of pre-modern art would well-prepare him for the effect of gravity on the human body. As for the position of the elbow, as long as Manet asked someone to try out this position, they would immediately discover how unnatural it is. Proust mentions that between 1862 and 1864, Manet went to the *Atelier Suisse*, an open independent studio where artists could work from live models for a small fee.⁹⁸ Manet would have plenty of chance, therefore, to observe a live body even without Meurent. The composition of this painting is based on a print of *Judgement of Paris* (Figure 1.18) after Raphael made by Marcantonio Raimondi (1480-1534), in which the elbow of the man in a position corresponding to the woman Meurent modelled for is clearly resting on his knee. The only remaining possibility is that this artificiality is indeed intended, just as the incongruity of a naked woman going on a picnic with two fully clothed men.

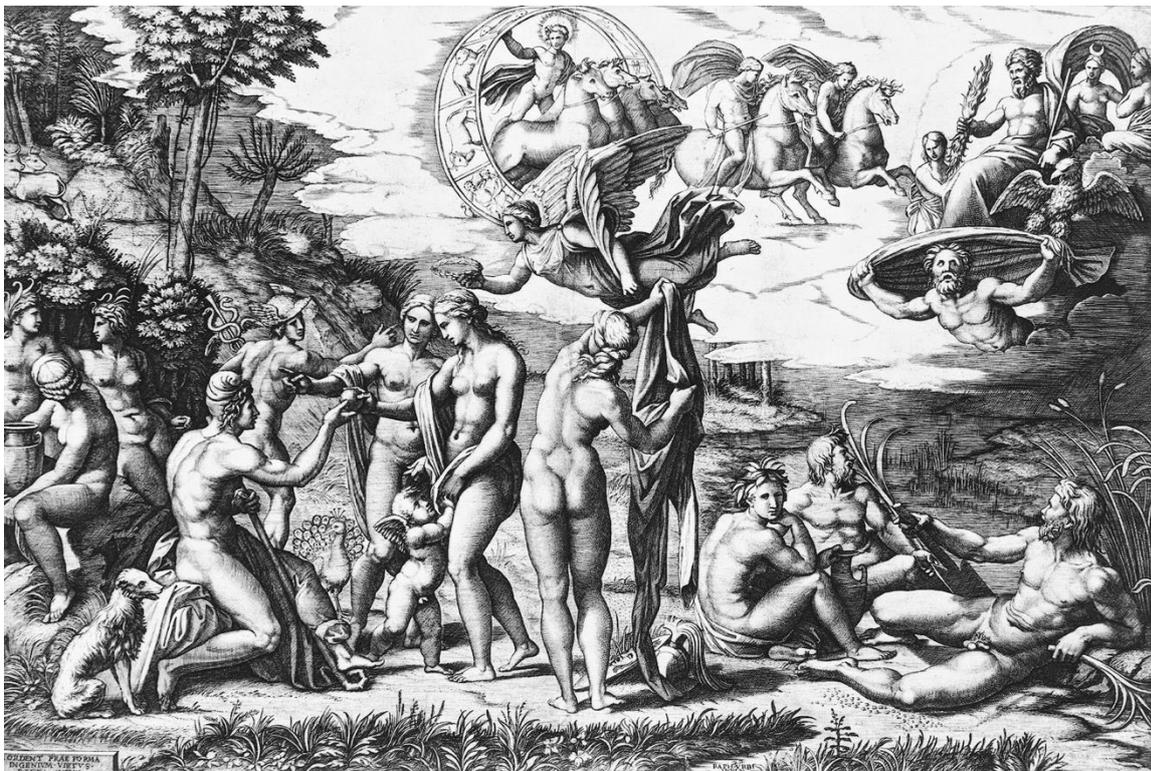


Figure 1. 18, Marcantonio Raimondi, *Judgement of Paris* (After Raphael), c.1510–20, Engraving, 29.1×43.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

⁹⁸ Proust, *Édouard Manet*, p.20.

Manet once intended to exhibit the notorious *Olympia* with other three paintings at the *Salon des Refusés*, but he held the painting at his studio for reasons now unknown. The negative response he received to *Le Bain*, which changes its title to *Le Déjeuner* in 1866, might have intimidated him. He ended up with submitting two works that were more traditional in terms of subject, *Episode d'une Course de Taureaux* and *Le Christ Mort et les Anges*, to the jury of the 1864 Salon. In 1865, Manet exhibited *Olympia*, along with another painting of religious subject, *Jésus Insulté par les Soldats*.

In terms of facial features, Meurent's face in *Olympia* resembled her the least of all eight paintings. The proportion of her face is changed, with a smaller forehead contoured by a rounder hairline; her face looks fuller. Her hair is not centrally parted or neatly tied as in the previous paintings. The colour of her eyebrows is darker, her nose appears wider and her chin is more pointed. Her body is slimmer in comparison to *Le Déjeuner*. The woman in two drawings Manet made in red chalk resembles the *Portrait* in terms of the centrally parted hair style and oval face (Figure 1.19 & 1.20). The body is also more voluptuous in the drawings. The body and face are, therefore, deliberately altered in the final completed painting. I argue that this might be due to an attempt of avoiding any recognition of the model's identity. The eyelashes in *Olympia* show traces of mascara. In the nineteenth century, it was considered inappropriate and not virtuous for women to wear make-up. The mascara here functions not only to allude to her involvement in prostitution, but also to blur the identity of the model. Given the explicitly negative comments *Le Déjeuner* received in 1863, is it possible that making the identity of the model harder to recognise was the result of a negotiation between Meurent and Manet? Meurent never posed in the nude in frontal view after *Olympia*, even though she continued to work for other artists during the next decade before turning to painting. Is it also possible that Meurent was intimidated by the acrid comments, just as

Manet may have been?⁹⁹ The answer may never be ascertained. No matter what the answer is, however, the fact that Meurent only appears in frontal nude twice in the paintings for which she modelled suggests that, even for financial reasons, she was cautious in accepting jobs.



Figure 1. 19, Édouard Manet, *Étude pour Olympia*, 1862-63, sanguine on ruled paper, 22.5×30 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris



Figure 1. 20, Édouard Manet, *Étude pour Olympia*, 1862-63, sanguine, 24.5×45.7 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

⁹⁹ A pastel painting by Norbert Goeneutte might be modelled by Meurent, *Victorine Meurent au Bain*, 1888. The painting portrays a woman entering her bath tub from her back. The painting is mentioned only in one reference, the entry of Meurent by Marie Lathers in *Dictionary of Artist's Models*.

After *Olympia* was completed in 1863, it seems that Meurent stopped working for Manet for three years. During this period, discouraged by the critical responses to his art, in August of 1865 Manet left for Spain. Next year, however, he had Meurent pose for his *Le Femme au Perroquet* and *La Joueuse de Guitare*. The former might be Manet's response to Courbet's painting of the same subject exhibited at the Salon of 1866. In *Le Femme au Perroquet*, the centrally-parted hairstyle is back, along with the blue bow. So are the fair-coloured eyebrows and eyelashes as well as the sloping shoulders. In terms of the angle of the face, this painting is closer to *Mlle V...* but further diverted and a little tilted. Mona Hadler suggests that by tilting her head this way, her left eye is fully exposed. The dark line under this eye is elongated to meet the shadow of the eyebrow at the nasal bone, creating a shape that resembles the eye of the parrot on the woman's left hand side.¹⁰⁰ The gown and jewellery that Meurent is depicted wearing suggests her being a fashionable Parisian in this painting. Although, as in *Olympia*, Meurent is accompanied by a pet animal, here the parrot carries a completely different symbolic meaning from the cat. According to Hadler, during the nineteenth century, the parrot was valued for its intelligence and anthropomorphic qualities and considered a symbol of eloquence. In the tradition of literature and art, the parrot is often rendered as the intimate companion of woman. In this painting, the intimacy between the woman and the parrot is underscored by the similar depictions of their eyes.¹⁰¹

In *La Joueuse de Guitare*, Meurent again assumes the identity of an entertainer as in *La Chanteuse*. The contour of her back resembles that in *Le Déjeuner* and they share similar facial features, such as the shape of the lips and her fair-coloured eye brows and eyelashes. This is the only painting in which Meurent is shown in profile. Against a monochromatically black background, Meurent sits on a chair holding her guitar, exposed to strong light. Her left

¹⁰⁰ Mona Hadler, 'Manet's Woman with a Parrot of 1866', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 7 (1973), 115-122 (p.117).

¹⁰¹ Hadler, 'Manet's Woman with a Parrot of 1866', p.120-122.

hand, in the very front, is pressed on the guitar and appears to be disproportionately large, as in *La Chanteuse*. Given that none of the other paintings of Meurent by Manet display any disproportion, this alteration must be a strategy to emphasise the relationship between the depicted woman and her instrument. Tabarant, using the paintings as evidential document, suggests that Meurent herself played the guitar and sometimes worked as a street entertainer to supplement her income. It is, however, not clear when Meurent learned to play the guitar. She never registered her profession in census record as musician or guitar player. Moreover, as I have mentioned before, *La Chanteuse* was conceived when Manet saw a street singer. Meurent was asked to pose for the painting after the singer refused to do so. It is, hence, not the case that Manet had Meurent modelled as a singer because she plays guitar. In a similar manner, this painting also should not be taken as a faithful depiction of Meurent as herself.

Sometime in 1867, Meurent took a trip to America and returned to Paris in the early 1870s. She returned to modelling soon after. Around 1872 or 1873, Meurent worked again for Manet and posed for *Le Chemin de Fer*. This time, she is supposed to be the caretaker of the little girl accompanying her. There is nothing morally dubious here and her outfit suggests that she comes from a modest middle-class family. Certain features are preserved, such as the eyelids, the flat lips and the sloping shoulders. Her face is oval and her cleft chin is gone, making the contour of her face softer. She seems to be caught in a sudden interaction with the viewer. The sense of immediacy is enhanced by the open book in her hands and the puppy that is still tightly asleep on her lap. She is engaging, but not in the same manner as Olympia. What is depicted is a moment of soft tranquillity.

Except for the *Portrait*, in each painting Meurent assumes a different identity, and the settings are remarkably varied. Certain features of her face and body are shared by some of the paintings, but more often, they are altered in various ways. All these inconsistencies are reasonable in their own settings. In this project of painting modern life, Manet is not looking

for a timeless face or body, a type that he could deploy in any setting. On the contrary he explores every aspect of modern life and wishes to maintain the distinctions among them. Instead of employing various models, he relies on Meurent to help him complete his visualisation of these distinctions, and this is where Meurent's labour as a model contributes to the production of art.

In order to extend this discussion, I introduce the concept of affective labour, which is articulated in a trilogy consisting of *Empire* (2000), *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (2009). American theorist and philosopher Michael Hardt and Italian Marxist sociologist Antonio Negri have collaboratively identified a new kind of labour that they call 'affective labour', as part of their project to review traditional Marxist categorisations of labour. According to them, in the late twentieth century, industrial labour lost its hegemony to a new form of labour that created immaterial products. This immaterial labour is subcategorised into two principle forms, intellectual or linguistic labour and affective labour. Whereas intellectual or linguistic labour involves 'problem solving, symbolic and analytical tasks, and linguistic expressions', affective labour 'produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion'.¹⁰² 'Unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking'.¹⁰³ By differentiating affects from emotions, Hardt and Negri highlight how affective labour is not limited to the realm of psychology, but also embodied, as it 'directly produces social relationships and forms of life'.¹⁰⁴ Affective labour is only immaterial in terms of the intangible form of its products. In fact, it often relies on material forms of labour to carry

¹⁰² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.108.

¹⁰³ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p.108.

¹⁰⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p.110.

itself out. Although typical examples of affective labour can mostly be found in service industries, affective labour permeates other forms of labour which involve human communication and interaction, contributing qualitatively to the hegemony of immaterial labour.

It should be clarified that Hardt and Negri's arguments largely concern the shifts of economic paradigms throughout human history, rather than the emergence of new forms of labour. In fact, they are aware that neither the form of labour that they term as affective labour nor the fact that this labour produces values are new. In his article on affective labour, Hardt cites socialist feminist scholars' research on kin work, caring labour and maternal work, as well as Marx and Freud for their conception of affective labour, using terms such as desiring production.¹⁰⁵ Affective labour is therefore not exclusive to the culture and economy of the twentieth century.

Not unlike affective labour, I argue, the labour of the model invites psychological and/or intellectual responses. Employment of a model is not merely an opportunity for artists to study the human body in life. If that were the primary aim of a rather mature artist like Manet, he could either go to a model studio, such as *Atelier Suisse*, or use other material aids, such as photographs, prints or a lay figure that can be posed by twisting its joints. In fact, Manet seems to favour the specific practice of working with a person during the decade he employed Meurent. When Meurent was gone, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, he was introduced to Morisot in 1868 and invited her to pose for his *Le Balcon* (1868-69) later the same year. Even when Meurent was around, if there was more than one figure in a painting, he would invite his family or friends, such as his brothers in *Le Déjeuner*, or Stevens and Paul Rodier in *Le Partie de Croquet*, to pose. He would also employ other models, for example Laure as the other woman in *Olympia* or Alice Legouvé in *Le Partie de Croquet*.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Hardt, 'Affective Labor', *Boundary 2*, 26 (Summer 1999), no. 2, 89-100 (pp.89 & 99).

There must be some reason beyond merely studying human body, some affect produced as the result of the interaction, that explains why the artist chooses to work with a model. What exactly is the nature of a model's job?

The job of a model, as is manifested by the series of paintings by Manet for which Meurent posed, involves performing roles at the selection of the artist. I term this kind of labour performative labour, which refers to labour that involves assuming personas, with the production of certain effects on others as its aim. The actor is perhaps the closest analogy in this regard. Whereas affective labour is defined primarily by its product, performative labour is defined by both the product and the method of production. Performative labour could be involved in some forms of affective labour, as people could put on certain personas in order to manipulate the affect. Affective labour concentrates on the transformations extrinsic to the labourer while performative labour concerns both the extrinsic and intrinsic effects, as both artist and model are affected.

Like the actor, the persona a model assumes is often selected by the artist, or the director in the case of an actor, prior to the actual modelling session. This decision encompasses not only the artist's conception of the coming work, but also his or her perception of the possibilities of the model, which is conditioned the affect the model has on the artist. The effect of the model taking up the persona does not have to be completely convincing or match the artist's expectation, but it has to be significant enough to shift the dynamics between artist and model and destabilise the social relationship they otherwise possess in the 'real' world. This is not to say that the studio is thus exempted from the discourses of race and gender. Rather, it is one of the effects of performative labour that it creates a temporary moment of a different and other world. In this difference and otherness lies the recognition of the 'real' world.

Problematics of falsity and authenticity are inevitably involved in this process. When Manet tells his friend that he will ask the street singer to pose for him again, after she previously rejected him, and that he would employ Meurent as a back-up plan, his preference for the authentic and genuine is revealed. As falsity is an explicit feature of performative labour, concealing it is not the ultimate aim. Rather it serves the purpose to evoke certain memories, feelings, emotions and affects. Meurent, by assuming the persona of a street singer, allows Manet to relive the moment he saw the street singer walking out of a club. In this way, Meurent participates in Manet's project of painting modernity, answering the call of Charles Baudelaire.

The effect of the performative labour can be prolonged. Again, the case of acting will be a good illustration. When a role an actor portrayed is so powerful that it leaves an imprint on viewers, it could have impact on their perception of his or her later roles, or even him or her outside their roles. 'I am Olympia, the subject of M. Manet's celebrated painting'. At the moments when Meurent posed for Manet, her job was to perform 'Olympia'. She was 'Olympia' to Manet in that specific time and space. This moment of having been 'Olympia' and its effect on Manet as well as Meurent will endure throughout their later interactions. All the other paintings for which Meurent modelled, whether by Manet or not, would bear this impression. For this reason, Meurent could say 'I am Olympia', in a *present tense*.

In 1888 Belgian artist, Alfred Stevens (1832-1906) completed a painting of three women in an artist's studio, *In the Studio* (Figure. 1.21). The painting shows a moment when artist and model are taking a rest to welcome a visitor. The three women depicted represent three positions that woman can occupy in the studio space as a model, an artist and a visitor. On the easel is a sketchy watercolour of Stevens's *Salomé* (1888). The contrast of the clothes these women are wearing is prominent. The model is dressed up as *Salomé* with her own clothes resting on the left arm of the sofa. The artist is in her simple coloured smock, holding

her palette and brushes in her left hand while resting her right arm on the canvas. The visitor is in her street outfit of a solemn black with decorative details on the shoulder. Curiously, no one is looking at the canvas. Rather they are engaging each other with the model looking at the visitor while the visitor and artist turning towards the model. This is a transformation of Courbet's *The Artist Studio*. Instead of the quadrangular relation among artist, model, artist's subject and artist's friend, we have here a triangle of artist, model and friend, or a likely patron, with the model coinciding with the artist's subject. Here, Stevens not only takes up Courbet's assertion of the model as a modern woman by encompassing her contemporary dress and locating it in the centre of the painting, he moves further to suggest that whatever the subject matter the artist selects, it all, eventually, comes down to a form of representation of model, the execution of which requires his or her presence in the studio. Fundamental to the production of modern art is, therefore, the labour of the model.



Figure 1. 21, Alfred Stevens, *In the Studio*, 1888, oil on canvas, 106.7×135.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Victorine-Louise Meurent, Exhibiting Artist at the Palais de l'Industrie

On the name card, before Meurent makes the claim, 'I am Olympia', she starts by introducing herself as 'Victorine-Louise Meurent, Exhibiting artist at the *Palais de l'Industrie*'. After all, the name card is an invitation to see her artworks. It demonstrates Meurent's determination to establish her presence as an artist while preserving her ontological being as *Olympia*. The exact date of the circulation of this name card is hard to confirm. The only known painting by Meurent may however give us an idea of what those people who received the name card would have seen at the Palais de l'industrie, the exhibition space of the Salon.

It was not until 2008, fifteen years after Lipton published her book, that a surviving painting by Meurent entered public view, when it was donated to the Municipal Museum of Art and History of Colombes.¹⁰⁶ It is an oil painting entitled *Le Jour des Rameaux* (The Palm Sunday)(1885) (Figure 1.22) and is signed and dated by her on the upper left corner. This is likely to be the painting Meurent exhibited at the Salon of 1885, although Tabarant describes the young woman in the exhibited painting holding an armful of box tree,¹⁰⁷ whereas in this painting the woman is holding only a twig. The young woman is dressed in black, which sets her in strong contrast against the light background with very subtle tonal gradation. The tonal gradation creates a sense of space for the woman to inhabit on the flat surface of the canvas. Meurent's treatment of the pictorial space is unusual as she leaves plenty of blank space on the left while cutting off the tree branch abruptly on the right. The immediate effect of this arrangement is that the monochrome black stays in the centre. The contour of the body, as indicated by the shape of her clothes, is clear yet delicate with a slight bulge at the back, indicating the raised hand. The curls of the hair are clearly indicated with brushstrokes of

¹⁰⁶ Since I completed my research in Paris in 2015, the Municipal Museum of Art and History of Colombes acquired two more works of Meurent, *Le Briquet* (1896) and *Jup* (not dated). For more information on these two works, see p.39 and footnote 86 on p. 44 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁷ 'figure de jeune femme tenant une brassée de buis', Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvres*, p.489.

various volumes. The hand appears disproportionately large. This might be the only flaw in the work. Overall, the painting shows that Meurent is very skilled at representing textures and is very conscious of the effects caused by various degrees of detail.



Figure 1. 22, Victorine Meurent, *Le jour des Rameaux*, 1885, oil on canvas, 41×32 cm

Musée Municipal d'Art et d'Histoire de Colombes, France

I do not consider the painting the ultimate tangible evidence that affirms Meurent's status as an artist, as suggested by Lipton. Without this painting, there is still sufficient evidence that suggests Meurent was recognised as an artist by her contemporaries. Her works were accepted by the jury of the Salon several times. She was included in the professional organisation of artists, the *Société des Artistes Français*. I perceive the painting, instead, as a production of Meurent, which allows us to understand her artistic labour and skills. It is not my intention to argue that Meurent is a great, or a bad, painter, either. Meurent's artistic career does not intrigue me as another story of an artist who is a woman. Simple and single biographical investigation does not necessarily allow the telling of fundamentally different narratives. It is not the individual narrative, but the possibility of plurals in which I am interested. By dissecting Meurent's artistic career and interrogating her every possible access to training and opportunity for making art, I reveal the conditions of art production during the late nineteenth century in Paris.

To become an artist at the level of sophistication manifested in *Le Jour des Rameaux* requires training and practice. The earliest possible training available to Meurent might have come from her father, a *ciseuler*, and her uncle, a *sculptor*. It is not unheard of for artists who are women to get their training from their relatives, especially their fathers; Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656) and Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842) are two examples. Art historian April Masten suggests that in New York in the mid-nineteenth century, the number of women trained by their fathers to be artists increased due to the growth of economic market in the 1820s and 1830s, and the fact that the dependent status of unmarried daughters made them, ironically, reliable partners.¹⁰⁸ As a *ciseuler* and a sculptor respectively, both Meurent's father and uncle would have used chisels and worked on metal, marble and

¹⁰⁸ April F. Masten, *Art Work: Women Artists and Democracy in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p.11.

plaster. Despite the differences in medium, painting and sculpting require the same knowledge of space and proportion. They would have been able to offer Meurent proper understanding in these regards.

Lipton suggests that Meurent could have started learning painting when she modelled in Thomas Couture's studio, with whom Manet studied from 1850 to 1856.¹⁰⁹ By the time Meurent started to pose for him between 1861 and 1863, Couture had been running a studio especially for women for decades. Training in the private studios of renowned artists was one possibility for women. Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) worked with Couture in 1868. Meurent herself later entered the studio of Etienne Leroy to learn painting. It is, however, unlikely that Couture's studio is the place that Meurent was trained to paint. Private studios such as Couture's targeted women from the upper classes and the tuition fee was usually very expensive. Meurent does not seem to come from an affluent family as she had to work as a model when she was 17. It would be implausible for a family as such to pay a large amount of money to have the daughter trained as an artist from an early age.

Women coming from wealthier families could afford to engage with private tutors. It was common, in fact, for women from bourgeois families to receive art education. For example, Berthe Morisot and her sisters, Yves and Edma, studied privately with Geoffrey-Alphonse Chocarne (1797-1857?) and Joseph Guichard (1806-1880). They were not, however, encouraged to become a professional and pursue careers in art. Neither did they rely on the sales of their paintings for their livelihoods. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that they were less serious. Yet with different motivations, the subjects they could explore would be different from those of Meurent's. *Le Jour des Rameaux* is modest in size, and both its subject and style are the kind most welcomed in the art market. Morisot however,

¹⁰⁹ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.65.

sometimes took up personal subjects, for instance her portraits of her daughter Julie Manet, for which sale was apparently not the goal.

Tabarant suggests that when Meurent started to paint, she sought advice from Etienne Leroy. The exact time when Meurent started to get training to paint is unclear, but it is not until the second time that Meurent exhibited at the Salon in 1879 that she listed Leroy's name in the catalogue, by which time Leroy would have been dead for three years.¹¹⁰ Born in 1828, Leroy exhibited regularly at the Salon in the 1850s, 1860s and early 1870s. The titles of his paintings exhibited at the Salon suggest that he specialised in portraits and genre paintings. Given that Meurent did not list Leroy as her teacher in the catalogue of 1876, the year Leroy died, it is likely that she was trained by Leroy for a short time after she submitted her work to the Salon in the spring of that year, before Leroy died on 21 November.

Another possible tutor of Meurent is the Belgium painter Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), with whom Tabarant reports, though without presenting any further evidence, she had a romantic relationship.¹¹¹ One of Stevens' paintings, *Le Bain* (1867), is said to have been modelled by Meurent. She became acquainted with Stevens in the early 1870s. In fact, it is Stevens' garden that is depicted in Manet's painting, *La Partie de Croquet*, for which Meurent posed in 1873. Around the same period, Stevens also opened a studio, offering artistic training to women. Sarah Bernhardt, the renowned actress, was one of his students when she turned to a career as a sculptor and painter. In fact, the subject of Meurent's painting could be inspired by a series of paintings of the same subject by Stevens, *Les Rameaux*, completed in c.1862 (Figure 1.23). Stevens's *Les Rameaux* exists in four variants

¹¹⁰ 'élève de M. E. Leroy'. *Catalogues of the Paris Salon, 1673 to 1881*, compiled by H.W Janson (New York; London: Garland, 1977-78). Catalogue of 1879, no.2128.

¹¹¹ Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut L'Olympia de Manet', pp.17-20 & 32-37; Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre*, p.272.

with almost identical composition.¹¹² In this painting, a young woman, also solemnly dressed in black, is putting a palm branch on top of a portrait. This was a tradition to pay tribute to the deceased on this religious day. Resting on black fabric, possibly her outerwear, on a chair next to her is another branch, which might be placed upon another portrait on the wall later. The monochrome black fabric is not unlike the clothing in Meurent's painting, but it cannot be ignored that the gown in Stevens' painting is more elaborate, trimmed with decorative folds, alluding to the woman's higher social status than the young woman in Meurent's painting. Like Stevens' other images of woman, a psychological interiority is granted to the represented woman as she is completely absorbed in her own commemorative conduct.¹¹³ In this light, Meurent's selection of this subject can be interpreted as an interest in the modernity of a psychological space, which is in contrast with Manet's project of delineating modern social spaces in Paris. On the other hand, in terms of the artistic style, instead of embracing Stevens' exquisite delicacy, Meurent chooses to flatten out the space in a way that Manet has painted Olympia's body. The black clothes of the woman in Meurent's painting are delineated with a patch of colour, which is in contrast with the carefully depicted hair and the subtle tonal gradation of the background. The painting has, therefore, demonstrated Meurent's contemplation of both Stevens's and Manet's works.

In his *In the Studio*, Stevens shows to us an occupation of the studio space all by women. Even the recognisable figures in the artworks on the wall are all women. It renders the availability of a female body to other women, highlighting the intertwining gender and class complexities in modern art practice and its interruptions of the simple man/artist vs. woman/model opposition. The spatial segregation of the model from the artist and the visitor

¹¹² The presumed original version as well as the most elaborate one used to belong to Robert Hoe but its current whereabouts is unknown. The version I use for my discussion is the one in the Walters Art Museum.

¹¹³ Griselda Pollock, 'Extimacy and Interiority: The Psychic Spaces of Modernity' in *Centres and Peripheries*, Yale Centre for British Art 7-8 April 2000.

is prominent and is effected by the presence of the easel. Whereas the artist and the visitor are positioned in front of the canvas, the model is sitting on the sofa behind it. Ironically, it is thought to be in Stevens's studio that this painting is situated. It is also Stevens's own artwork on the canvas. This seeming exclusively female space on the canvas is, therefore, undermined by its own condition of production.



Figure 1. 23, Alfred Stevens, *Les Rameaux*, c.1862, oil on panel, 34.2×26cm, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Until the admission of women to the *École des Beaux-Arts* in 1897, private studios were venues where women could receive artistic training from contemporary artists, some of whom were prestigious at the Salon. For example, Marie-Guillemine Benoist (1768-1826), daughter of a civil servant, studied with Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) from 1786, and later opened her own studio for women. More importantly, before the Salons were open to women, in 1791, the connections of established mentors were vital for women to get commissions, and they remained valuable resources even after women could display their

artwork in the public spaces of the Salons after 1791 and private galleries and salons in the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the student body of private studios became more internationalised with women from other parts of Europe and America coming to Paris to seek guidance. Joanna Mary Boyce (1831-1861), an English painter, studied briefly in Couture's studio in the winter of 1855-56. Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) came from America to Paris for the first time in 1865 and subsequently studied with various artists. She was instructed privately with Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) in 1865, joined the studio of Charles Joshua Chaplin (1825-1891) and studied with Pierre Édouard Frère (1819-1886) and Paul Soyer (1823-1903) from 1866 to 1867. In 1868 she entered Couture's studio.

With the establishment of private academies, among which the most famous was *Académie Julian* founded by Rodolphe Julian (1839-1907) in 1868, the situation changed. Whereas the private studios of individual artists were often run by the artists themselves and located in suburban areas, these private academies ran several studios at several locations across the city of Paris. Celebrated artists such as William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905) and Tony Robert-Fleury (1837-1912), were invited to give instruction on a regular basis. Men and women were both admitted. The mixed education certainly raised concerns regarding impropriety, and separate studios were finally set up in the late 1870s. In 1890, there were five studios for men and four studios for women at the *Académie Julian*.¹¹⁴

One of the most well-known students of *Académie Julian* was Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884), whose journal is a useful source for the information on the early years of the *Académie*. Bashkirtseff entered the *Académie Julian* in 1870, believing that it was 'the only

¹¹⁴ Gabriel P. Weisberg, 'The Women of the Académie Julian', in *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian*, ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker (New York: The Dahesh Museum; New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press, c1999), pp.13-67 (16).

good one for women'.¹¹⁵ Bashkirtseff mentions that she was going to work with men, but since women could also draw from the male nude in their separate classes, she felt there was no advantage in joining the men.¹¹⁶ Once a month, there would be a competition among students in the *Académie Julian*, where works would be marked anonymously. The winning works would be exhibited on the walls of the studios, and prizes would be awarded by the professors teaching at the *Académie*. It was not rare for women to win the competition. Bashkirtseff won several times.

Some of the allure of *Académie Julian* came from the illustrious professors Julian hired. Both the teaching ability and the influence of the professors were valued. Julian himself was notorious for his efforts to get his students to exhibit in the Salon.¹¹⁷ An American student once remarked that a certain number of places in the Salon were allotted to *Académie Julian*.¹¹⁸ Whereas for students who were men, *Académie Julian* usually functioned as a preparatory school for their entrance exams into the prestigious *École des Beaux Arts*. Before 1897 private institutions like *Académie Julian* were the only option for women to receive comprehensive artistic training. The greater chance to show in the Salon, tacitly promised by *Académie Julian*, therefore appears to have been very tempting for women.

Despite the comprehensive training provided in the *Académie*, women studying there were encouraged to pursue specific subjects, such as portraiture and genre paintings. It was believed that their innate soft and perceptive nature made them especially capable of capturing the psychological insights and the sense of sentiment. The discussion of what women were able to do, or were suitable for, from the perspective of innate nature, was not

¹¹⁵ Marie Bashkirtseff, *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, trans. by Mathilde Blind (London: Virago, 1985), Wednesday, 3 October 1877, p.273.

¹¹⁶ Bashkirtseff, Thursday, 4 October 1877, p.274.

¹¹⁷ Catherine Fehrer, 'Women at the Académie Julian in Paris', *The Burlington Magazine*, 136 (November 1994), no.1100, 752-757 (p.754).

¹¹⁸ C. Warton, *Jeunes-Miller Magazine* [July 1890], p.398, quoted in Fehrer, p.754.

confined to the studios of the *Académie Julian*. It continued even in the campaign to admit women to the *École*.¹¹⁹

As promising as the situation appeared, studios in *Académie Julian* were in fact classed spaces with considerable tuition fees. Almost double that for men, the tuition fee for women varied from 400 to 700 francs depending on the time they wanted to spend there.¹²⁰ It was common practice for women to pay more to get the same training, if not less, in private studios and institutions. The flexibility of the fees according to classroom hours expanded the studentship of the *Académie Julian* to women with meagre resources. Meurent attended evening class in 1875 and 1876. To get a sense of the currency value at the time, Meurent's rent of a studio/flat on the third floor of 1 Boulevard de Clichy was reported by Goedorp to be 280 francs per year.¹²¹ Attending only the evening class seems like a cost-effective strategy for Meurent, not only because she could save a large amount of money, but because she may have been able to work during the day to earn a living. It should be noted that Lipton cites Fehrer as her source for the information about Meurent's training in the *Académie*, whereas Fehrer cites Lipton as her source.¹²² For this study, it is not important if Meurent actually attended *Académie Julian*, as I took these episodes of her life recorded in biographies as signposts to the training opportunities available to women with limited resources. This said, it is highly likely however, that Meurent received, at least part of, her training in the *Académie Julian*, where she could make herself acquainted with Tony Robert-Fleury who later recommended her to the *Société des Artistes Français*.

There were several studios for women within the *Académie Julian* located at venues across Paris. For example, apart from the studio on the second floor at 27 Galerie Montmartre

¹¹⁹ For details of the debate, see Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-century Paris* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994).

¹²⁰ Weisberg, 'The Women of the Académie Julian', p.14.

¹²¹ Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', March 15, 1967.

¹²² Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.164 and p.181 for the note of the source. Fehrer, p.757, footnote 25.

on the Passage des Panoramas, there was a second on rue Vivienne, which was later closed. The studio on Passage des Panoramas was the first women's studio in the *Académie Julian* and appears to be a major one, as many famous women who studied at the *Académie* were from this studio, among them include Bashkirtseff, Louise Breslau (1856-1927) and Elizabeth Gardner (1837-1922). There seem to be some differences between the studios, at least as perceived by the students. Mary Breakell, Bashkirtseff's colleague who studied in the same studio, once contrasted the seriousness of the women in her studio with those relatively dilettante ladies in the rue Vivienne studio.¹²³ The distribution of students into studios appears to be flexible. A student may go to different studios depending on her will. Breakell mentions that Breslau sometimes worked in the rue Vivienne studio.¹²⁴ For Tony Robert-Fleury was the director of the Passage des Panoramas studio, it is likely that Meurent studied there.

What was taught in the classes Meurent attended is not clear. There are two possibilities that we could conjure from the recollections of other visitors and students. One is live model classes. Albert Rhodes notes in his article that 'there was posing in this *atelier* [the studio on the Passage des Panoramas] day and night'.¹²⁵ If it was merely for drawing from live models, there were indeed cheaper options, such as *Atelier Suisse*, the one Manet attended.¹²⁶

Another possibility is anatomy class. From the notes of other women students who studied at the *Académie Julian* around the same time, we know that the evening sessions in

¹²³ Mentioned and quoted in Jane R. Becker, 'Nothing Like a Rival to Spur One On', in *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian*, ed. by Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker (New York: The Dahesh Museum; New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press, c1999), pp.69-114 (75-76).

¹²⁴ Becker, 'Nothing Like a Rival to Spur One On', p.76.

¹²⁵ Albert Rhodes, 'Views Abroad', *Galaxy*, (July 1873), pp.5-15 (13).

¹²⁶ Proust, *Édouard Manet*, p.126.

the studio on the Passage des Panoramas did include anatomy lessons.¹²⁷ As a visitor to the Passage des Panoramas studio recalled, there was ‘a course of lectures on anatomy and perspective given by an assistant of Mathias Duval, lecturer at the *École des Beaux-Arts*’.¹²⁸ Mathias Duval (1844-1907) was popular at the *École*, and advocated the reduction of the medical aspects of anatomy, specifically dissection. He believed that it was enough to provide students with the knowledge their artistic creation required, and accordingly encouraged them to focus on live figures over dead.¹²⁹ In François Sallé’s painting, *The Anatomy Class at the École des Beaux-Arts* (Figure 1.24), Duval is depicted giving a class with a live model to students of the *École*. The painting was completed in 1888, so it is not a surprise that there are no women depicted in the classroom. Human bones are to be found on the teaching table at the front of the room, and on the wall hang two illustrations, one a frontal skeleton and the other a man in profile view with every muscle clearly depicted. A full-length sculpture of the *Gladiator* is placed at the front of the auditorium. Classical sculptures were, at the time, commonly used teaching tools to demonstrate the shape of muscles and bones in particular positions, and the *Gladiator* was a popular choice thanks to the variety of actions of his body and limbs. Duval points to a specific place on the right arm of the half-naked model who is standing in a traditional contrapposto pose. It is likely that he is explaining the change in the wrist as the model makes a fist. Notice that his right arm is in a similar pose to the *Gladiator*. The connection between the model and the sculpture is indicated by the bright light cast on their bodies. The model in this teaching studio is an explanatory tool. This painting shows that one of the purposes of the anatomy is to help students understand the bone and muscle structure of the human body, specifically a man’s

¹²⁷ Becker, ‘Nothing Like a Rival to Spur One On’, p.75.

¹²⁸ E. Bellet, ‘Julian’s Studios. Painting Schools Where Women Learn to Become Artists’, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [30th July 1888], quoted in Fehrer, p.755.

¹²⁹ Anthea Callen, ‘The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century’, *Art History*, Vol. 20, No.1 (March, 1997), pp.23-60 (31).

body, with the aid of various tools. Although many other types of training, such as drawing from models, were provided in private studios of individual artists, particular lessons that require specialists, such as anatomy, might not have been available there. It is likely therefore, that Meurent paid specifically for the anatomy class in the evening, given her insufficient financial situation.



Figure 1. 24, François Sallé, *The Anatomy Class at the École des Beaux-Arts*, 1888, oil on canvas, 218×299 cm, Art Gallery of NSW, Australia

For women from humble families such as Meurent, who wished to have artistic training at relatively low cost, another option was the state-funded *École Nationale de Dessin pour les Jeunes Filles*, founded in 1803. However, the objective of the curriculum was mainly to train women in the skills for making decorative objects.

In *École Nationale de Dessin pour les Jeunes Filles*, some fine-art-oriented courses, such as still life, flower painting, anatomy and drawing after the live model, were provided

from 1860 under the directorship of Mlle. Marandon de Montyel.¹³⁰ In the 1870s, however, the administrators of the school, often government officials assigned by the state, made it explicit that the state had no intention of supporting women's artistic aspirations. 'We are not aiming at all in kindling in you an elevated ambition for high art',¹³¹ said Louis de Ronchaud at the school's 1879 prize-giving ceremony, before his presidency at the *École* from 1882 to 1887. Many students rebelled against the imposed restriction and managed to exhibit their works at the Salon and other exhibitions. In the early 1890s, with more students dedicated to developing their skills in making higher forms of art, the school eventually closed down and became attached to the *École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs*, which was completely oriented towards industrial design and applied art.

With some basic knowledge of painting, another way to study art at no cost was to copy the masterpieces exhibited at the Louvre. A print titled *Art Students and Copyists in the Louvre Gallery* (Figure 1.25), published by Harper's Weekly in 1868, depicts men and women copying works exhibited on the wall of the Louvre gallery. There are three women in the foreground with the one on the left looking at the large painting on the wall, the one in the middle copying the painting, and the one on the right, nicely dressed, gazing at an uncertain space. Judging from the rough contours of the canvas on which the woman in the middle is working, the painting she is copying is of a religious subject, specifically, Christ carrying the cross. What the woman on the right is working on cannot be determined. She could be working on the small painting on the far left side or the one behind her, which is invisible to us. It was not merely mechanical copying that is happening there. As demonstrated by the three women in foreground, the practice also involves observation, contemplation and

¹³⁰ Charlotte Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth-century France and England* (New York; London: Garland, 1984), vol.1. pp.42-45.

¹³¹ de Ronchaud's speech, quoted in Tamar Garb, 'Men of Genius, Women of Taste', in *Overcoming Obstacles*, p.114-131 (122). For more discussion on the role of *École Nationale de Dessin pour les Jeunes Filles* in the late nineteenth century, see Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*, pp.77-80.

execution. This was a serious occasion of learning to which people brought large easels and canvases to make full-size reproductions, which may have taken days to complete. This was also a social arena. There is a group of three men in the middle ground, two of whom are looking at the other working. It is likely that artists would give each other suggestions and comments. It was not uncommon for women to work in the Louvre. Berthe Morisot was introduced to work at the Louvre gallery by her private tutor, Joseph Guichard. There, she befriended many artists, including Camille Corot (1796-1875).



Figure 1. 25, Winslow Homer, *Art Students and Copyists in the Louvre Gallery*, 1868, wood engraving, 23×34.9 cm, Art Institute Chicago, Chicago

Manet was introduced to Morisot's sisters and Eva Gonzalès (1849-1883), when Meurent was away in America. Specifically, in the summer of 1866, Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) introduced Manet to Morisot's sisters at the Louvre, and in September Berthe Morisot posed for Manet's *Le Balcon* (1868-69) in his studio, accompanied by her mother. Morisot exhibited at the Salon as early as 1864 before she joined the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. It is also in 1866 that Stevens introduced Gonzalès to Manet. Gonzalès

came to Manet's studio to pose for a portrait in 1869, and was also chaperoned by Berthe Morisot's mother. The *Portrait of Eva Gonzalès* depicts her in the process of painting, even though she is not dressed accordingly and the painting she is working on is actually Manet's. Nevertheless, sometime around the execution of this portrait, Gonzalès started to study under Manet.

When Meurent started to pose for Manet after she returned to Paris in 1873, she may have known Morisot and Gonzalès, and that Manet was tutoring Gonzalès. Did Meurent seek Manet's advice? It does not look like it, as she does not seem to share Manet's passion for subjects of modern urban experience. In 1876 Meurent exhibited a self-portrait; in 1879 a painting titled *Bourgeoise de Nuremberg, au XVIe Siècle*; in 1885 *Le Jour des Rameaux*, and in 1904 *Le Chat à la Guêpe, Etude*. Judging from the titles, her choice of subject matter appears more conventional than innovative. 'Where was the intimate time she spent with Manet?'¹³² By posing this question, Tabarant was suggesting that Meurent should have learned from Manet and was apparently making an oversimplified assumption regarding the artistic training as well as relationship between model and artist. Yet, Meurent's *Le Jour des Rameaux* does demonstrate certain proximity with Stevens's interest in representing psychological interiority as well as Manet's flattening rendering of space. It is more likely than not that Meurent learned from the artists for whom she had posed regardless if they were formal instructions. What Tabarant was really asking is that why did she not join the modernist and later avant-garde milieu? In fact, as Lipton astutely argues, it is because Meurent did not join the avant-garde milieu that Tabarant failed to track down her life after 1880s.¹³³ The academic system that Meurent joined was an alien reference to Tabarant's story of art. The question Tabarant posed is not only about Meurent's career choice, but also a teleologically informed assumption of her preferred artistic style and direction.

¹³² Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut "l'Olympia"', p.299.

¹³³ Lipton, *Alias Olympia*, p.155.

It is Meurent's conscious decision to join the academic system. Not only did she take up more conventional subject matter, she selected Leroy, an artist established in the Salon, as her stated tutor. In fact, she exhibited at the Salon until as late as 1904 when the Salon lost its privileged power in art market. She did not even exhibit at the non-juried *Salon des Independants*. What she wanted is, therefore, not merely visibility, but also recognition from the once mainstream art world. This is probably why she did not seek suggestions from Manet, who, despite his determined regular submissions, were never considered very successful in official terms. Whereas Tabarant set Manet as the benchmark by questioning Meurent's decision not to learn from Manet, the series of selections that Meurent made is actually legitimate in 1870s and 1880s. The approval of Salon not only represents a substantial acknowledgement of professional skill, but also brings attention and clients. Although it is not my primary intention to probe Meurent's motivations for her actions, I suggest that it is likely that Meurent perceived the success in the Salon as a guarantee of visibility in the art world and then art market and thus, income.

Conclusion: The Archive and the Fold

The existence of Meurent's name cards is not made known to art history until the publication of Lipton's book in 1993. Its invisibility in the archive is probably more striking if we note that these cards were once disseminated in public. Georges Rivière, Renoir's biographer, once mentioned seeing Meurent 'submitting her latest studies to artists' at the tables of the café.¹³⁴ Evidently, Meurent was willing to promote herself to the public as an artist in various ways. Although the exact number of copies of the name cards that Meurent sent out is hard to determine, and I suspect it would not be a great number as they were all

¹³⁴ Georges Rivière, *Renoir et ses amis*, (Paris: H. Floury, 1931), p.32.

hand-written, Leenhoff was certainly not the only one who had seen and knew of these cards. Yet none of the cards made it into the archive. The historiography of Meurent's archive is exemplary of the very essence of the archive, as articulated by Jacques Derrida.

In his lecture, *Archive Fever*, given during an international conference in 1994, French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, deconstructed the notion of archive to reveal that immediately embodied in the derivation of the word, the Greek *arkhē*, is both origin (commencement) and rule (commandment).¹³⁵ The word, archive, also comes via the Greek *arkheion*, a place where the *archons*, the superior civil officers, resided. It was in this domicile that 'law and singularity intersect in *privilege*', as archons often possessed the authority to interpret.¹³⁶ What I find intriguing in Derrida's theory is the embedded anticipation of the future in the nature of the archive. Derrida writes:

And as wager [*gageure*]. The archive has always been a pledge, and like every pledge [*gage*], a token of the future.¹³⁷

As much as and more than a thing of the past, before such a thing, the archive should *call into question* the coming of the future.¹³⁸

In an enigmatic sense which will clarify itself *perhaps*... the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.¹³⁹

The future is, indeed, one of the primordial concerns at the moment of the formation and construction of an archive. To collect documents and house them in the domicile of the *archons* who were initially their guardians was a means of ensuring the 'physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate'.¹⁴⁰ These documents are preserved because they not only record the past, but also offer rules, orders and references to what comes after. The

¹³⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics*, 25 (Summer 1995), no. 2, 9-63.

¹³⁶ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p.10.

¹³⁷ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p.18.

¹³⁸ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p.26.

¹³⁹ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p.27.

¹⁴⁰ Derrida, 'Archive Fever', p.10.

future, thus, is implied constantly in the very existence of the archive and partly constitutes the ethical dimension of the archive. The archive holds ‘a responsibility for tomorrow’.

What Derrida perceives in the concept of archive is ‘a spectral messianicity’, which concerns the ‘singular experience of the promise’ of an emancipatory event in ‘the times to come, later on or perhaps never’.¹⁴¹ Whether this future is realised does not matter, because the effect of messianicity relies on its promise instead of its actual happening. ‘Messianicity does not mean messianism’, a distinction Derrida specifically clarifies.¹⁴² It is not a teleological or retrospective future, to which Derrida is looking. Rather it is uncertain and unfixed. Even a prediction is not necessary. The notion of spectral messianicity crystallises Derrida’s understanding of the relations among past, present and future, which are not those of linear successions. Whereas the present is indeed the future of the past, it may not be *the* future, or one of the futures, that the past imagined when it made the promise. Time is, thus, disjointed.

The notion of disjointed time disrupts the illusion of the archive as an absolute and complete storage of documents. The documents selected and safeguarded in the first place were in accordance with a tomorrow envisioned at that moment. The promise made and the responsibility held were all for *that* tomorrow, which may never come. Archived or not, documents no longer exist in the same way as they were. Their relation to the future is changed. The archive is constitutive of the future by both inclusion and exclusion. As Harriet Bradley remarks:

Only what has been stored can be located (the voices have been already selected and in a sense heard); and it can be approached only by the application of a code, the archivists’ cataloguing or classificatory system in combination with that of the historian herself. Only what has been pre-judged as relevant is likely to be recovered.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, p.27.

¹⁴² Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, p.28.

¹⁴³ Harriet Bradley, ‘The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 12 (1999), no.2, 107-122 (p.113).

Lipton's failure to obtain more detail of Meurent's journey to America exemplifies the difficulty of recovering documents that were not well preserved in the first place. The journey was mentioned in Meurent's letter to Manet's widow in 1883 shortly after Manet's death. In the letter Meurent writes, 'I was so young then and reckless... I went for America'.¹⁴⁴ Paragraphs of this letter are reprinted in Tabarant's biography of Manet.¹⁴⁵ In an earlier section of the same book, Tabarant mentions that Meurent was 'silent about the trip which we know is for romantic reasons (A folly had taken her to America....)'.¹⁴⁶ Goedorp claims in his article that 'it is certain she fell in love and went to America with a man. Her letter of 1 August 1883 to Mrs. Manet confirmed this'.¹⁴⁷ Lipton took some interest in this trip, but ended up with nothing. The only fact of which we are now certain is that Meurent definitely took the trip, as proved by her letter. On the one hand, Tabarant acknowledges that Meurent did not talk about the trip much; on the other hand, he is very content to state that the trip was a result of foolish love even though he does not provide any evidence of this. Goedorp adopts this narrative in his article, in a way that suggests Meurent admitted it in her letter. Meurent did not seem proud of that trip, but did not disclose the reason, either.

Tabarant claims that the trip was between 1866 and 1873. Without any evidence to dispute this, let us take this rough date as correct. According to Tabarant, the trip took place in the middle of the years when Meurent posed for Manet. This is the period of Meurent's life that is most heavily documented. Yet, we cannot locate any information on the trip except that it happened. One possible reason for this absence is Meurent's own silence about the trip, as reported by Tabarant. From Meurent's letter, it however seems that more than a decade after the trip, Meurent was willing to mention it. For she brought up the incident that is not

¹⁴⁴ 'J'étais toute jeune alors et insouciance...Je partis pour l'Amérique.' Meurent's letter to Madam Manet, collected in the Morgan Library in New York.

¹⁴⁵ Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre*, pp.488-489.

¹⁴⁶ Tabarant, *Manet et Ses Œuvre*, p.221.

¹⁴⁷ Goedorp, 'La Fin du'une Légende', March.

indispensable to the purpose of the letter – to ask for the money she claimed Manet had promised her. It appears that Madame Manet did not reply to this letter. The letter was filed, and later passed on to Tabarant along with other personal correspondence related to Manet. It is very well preserved. In fact, apart from the paintings by Manet, this letter has been much better preserved and studied than any other documents of Meurent. If we were to draw a pattern, it could hardly be overlooked that the information and documents about the moments in which Meurent's life intersected with other artists, especially those canonical ones such as Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec, are the best preserved, whereas Meurent's trip to America, in the interval of years between when Meurent posed for Manet, is rather obscure. It is not unlike the Rani of Simur who 'emerges only when she is needed in the space of imperial production'.¹⁴⁸ This is another instance of epistemic violence.¹⁴⁹

Lipton's interventions are of a future, alternative to the one to which the archive made its promise. She effected change in the content and structure of the archive through her discoveries of new documents on Meurent and her critique of its embodiment of a gendered discourse. Yet, there are still more unknowns than knowns about Meurent's life, especially her artistic career. Once we accept that the archive is incomplete in nature, we can no longer count on the recovery of inaccessible and unknown documents, as they may have been destroyed during the years they failed to make it into the safeguarded archive. The remaining challenge is, therefore, how to study a subject without much information.

There are many loose ends in my discussion. Many questions raised are not met with absolute answers. Many assertions are tentative. It is my intent to leave them so. What I am trying to achieve is to map a field around Victorine Meurent, without attempting to fill in any gaps in her personal biography. Here, I introduce a Foucauldian concept, fold, as it is

¹⁴⁸ Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', p.270.

¹⁴⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1985), pp.247-272

elaborated in Jennifer Tennant Jackson's work. In her doctoral dissertation, 'Evidence as a Problem. Foucauldian Approaches to Three Canonical Works of Art: Courbet's *L'Atelier*, 1855, Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, 1656; Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, circa 1483', Jackson invites art historians to review the condition of existence of evidence through Foucauldian theory. By asking 'what is absent or does not exist', Jackson probes what she identifies as the interstitial space, or the fold.¹⁵⁰ The concept of the fold dissolves the inside/outside binary, as the fold is the outside turned inside. As there is no distinction between the outside and the inside, there is also no truth in the fold. What is folded out of sight is merely the hidden.¹⁵¹ The fold, therefore, is not empty, but filled and functional. Using reinforced cardboard as an analogy, Jackson elaborates that the fold reinforces the surface while being fixed by it. The fold is, therefore, a constructive part of the discourse as it is a necessary space to harbour the hidden. What is in there, is not outside the discourse. In fact, nothing is outside the discourse. It is precisely the hidden's lack of existence that conforms to the rules of the discourse. Conforms in a negative way, let us say. In this negativity lies possibilities.

Goedorp, Seibert and Lipton all endeavour to discover new documents about Meurent's life. On the one hand, this additive approach reinforces the notion that the archive is innocent and complete. Even if it is not, it can be perfected by adding in new documents. Such approach creates the illusion that all the information is out there somewhere and can be recovered if we simply work hard enough. What has been overlooked is the historicity of the archive. As a constructed and privileging structure, the making of the archive is confined by its selective nature. Just as not everything is selected to be included in the archive, things that do actually make into it are not preserved in equal condition. Only what has been decided in the first place as relevant are likely to be recovered.

¹⁵⁰ Jennifer Anne Tennant Jackson, 'Evidence as a Problem. Foucauldian Approaches to Three Canonical Works of Art: Courbet's *L'Atelier*, 1855, Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, 1656; Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, circa 1483' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2001), p.12.

¹⁵¹ Jackson, 'Evidence as a Problem', p.219.

On the other hand, all these writers end up with is another constructed narrative of Meurent. They attempt to read into the fold and to iron the fold flat. By doing so, what was formerly hidden now has to conform to the rules of the discourse. The rule, in this case, is the privilege of artist over model, a hierarchy of positions that a woman could occupy in the production of art. As a result, Lipton creates this persona of Meurent in an almost schizophrenic manner, making her deny her own past. It is in this way that Lipton fails to accommodate a complex historical subject negotiating a set of social and gender conditions, whose name is Victorine Meurent.

If the fold is formed by what is hidden and the unknowable, Jackson suggests that its seen edge is *dispositif*.

If the *dispositif* is formed by what is said, and the fold by what is not, then it is at this disjuncture of words and things that the discourse of art history rules. The rules of discourse, as *dispositif*, structure how we see the world, and ourselves, in relation to knowledge that is power. The power of the *dispositif* is its efficacy: that which sustains it is the 'fold'. The fold is the effect of the unthought on the thought, the affect.¹⁵²

What I propose with this case study of Victorine Meurent is to read the fold, instead of to read *into* it. Specifically, it is to study the fold by mapping out the discursive field around it, the *dispositif*. It is in this way that we can acknowledge the existence of the fold, the unknowable, without compromising its possibilities to continue penetrating the discourse and holding the ambiguities. We should not be convinced that Meurent was the only model who aspired to be an artist at that time. Yet the narratives of such women's lives may never be constructed, not even in biased ways, as very few, or no traces of their existence is left in the archives. To dig these few traces out would require an enormous amount of work, or may simply be impossible. I, therefore, offer them an existence in the discourse in the form of a

¹⁵² Jennifer Tennant Jackson, 'The Efficacy of Meta-Conceptual Performativity: Or, we just do not know what we are talking about', in *Conceptual Odysseys: Passages to Cultural Analysis*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp.153-171 (165).

fold, with the archive of Meurent being a signpost. This is not to say that Meurent is representative of them; nor are their voices lent to Meurent. Otherwise we assume that there are truths about them to be found in the fold. There is nothing outside the discourse. What I offer is a tangible existence of the absence, without depriving them the possibilities they once possessed.

Chapter Two

Articulating the Body: Suzanne Valadon and Her Play of the Avant-Garde Gambits

Just as Victorine Meurent serves as a signpost in the discursive field, in the form of which other women who modelled in the mid-nineteenth century and subsequently aspired to become artists could acquire an existence in the art history, Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) brought this double possibility into view in her own moment in the early twentieth century. As one of the most prominent model-turned-artists in European art history, the relatively established visibility of Valadon is a consequence of her long and professionally successful artistic career. Indeed, most of the archival literature about her comprises of reviews and research dedicated to her artworks. In contrast to the case of Meurent, there does not seem to be any dispute over the status of Valadon as an artist, because she left a substantial body of works in various media and of diverse subject matter, and along with them, a considerable record of exhibitions. Throughout the fifty-five years of Valadon's career, from 1883, the year of her earliest known artwork, to 1938 when she died on 7 April, Valadon completed 273 drawings, 476 paintings and 31 studies.¹ Valadon's incontestable status throws into relief Meurent's fragile situation. Yet the challenges with which they were confronted in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century are not entirely divergent. The question is, how did Valadon manage to obtain such visibility? In this case study of Valadon, I shall examine her biography and researches on her works to reveal the modes in which Valadon and her artworks are documented in the history of art. I will draw on Griselda Pollock's

¹ These numbers are based on the catalogue raisonné compiled by Paul Pétridès, see *L'Œuvre Complet de Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Compagnie française des arts graphiques, 1971).

framework of the avant-garde gambits to investigate the artistic decisions Valadon made as a creative subject.²

The Image of Valadon: A Legend

In contrast with the clear trajectories of Valadon's life after she started to exhibit regularly since 1890s in public spaces, such as Salons, private galleries, exhibitions organised by *Les Femmes Artistes Modernes*, little is known about her early life as an apprentice in various shops and factories, an acrobatic performer and a model for artists. Born Marie-Clémentine Valadon in Berssines-sur-Gartempe in Western France in 1865, Suzanne Valadon was the illegitimate daughter of a widowed woman. We cannot be sure of the exact point at which Valadon moved to Paris, but it seems that since moving to Paris, she always lived in *La Butte* of Montmartre.³ After a series of different jobs and a trapeze accident, Valadon started modelling at the age of sixteen and took up an alias, 'Maria'. Over the next two decades, before she married Paul Mousis in 1896, Valadon posed, sometimes in the nude, for artists of both the academic and avant-garde milieu, including Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905), Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), Gustav Wertheimer (1847-1902) and Vojtech Hynais (1854-1925). In 1883 Valadon gave birth to a boy, Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955). It was also in this year that her earliest known artwork was dated. From 1883, Valadon made a large number of drawings modelled by her son, her mother and herself. In 1894 she submitted five drawings to the *Salon de la Société National des Beaux-Arts*, after which her artworks were not

² Griselda Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits, 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, c.1992)

³ None of Valadon's biographers can give a clear timeline of her childhood. Her mother, Madeleine Valadon, moved to Paris in 1866, and might have taken the baby with her. Robert Rey indicates that Valadon spent some time in Nantes as a child. Thérèse Diamond-Rossinsky suggests that Marie Valadon was sent to her oldest sister in Nantes, and returned to Paris later. Robert Rey, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Éditions de la 'Nouvelle revue française', 1922); Thérèse Diamand-Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1994) p.16.

exhibited until 1909 and were sold only by *Le Barc de Bouteville* and Vollard. In 1896 she married Paul Mousis, a middle-class man of means but divorced him in 1909 when she met André Utter (1886-1948) through her son, Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955). From this date she started to exhibit regularly at the *Salon d'Automne*, and *Salon des Independants* after 1911.

Biographies of Valadon recurrently bear a tone of determinism. Robert Rey wrote in his biography of her in 1922 that '[...]her inevitable destiny of major work will lead her, sooner or later, close to the fire or the absinthe [...]'.⁴ Adolphe Basler wrote in 1929 that,

The sweet acrobat, later becoming a model, had grown up under the shadow of the great painters. This teenager who had the devil in the flesh, the demon of the painting was going to possess her in its turn. [...] Suzanne [...] had only to listen to her instinct and to follow its lead. It was the destiny that drove her to Degas.⁵

Later in 1959 Paul Petridès, the compiler of a *catalogue raisonné* of Valadon's work wrote in the preface to an exhibition of Valadon that

From a distance, everything about her seemed to constantly remind us of her abandoned childhood from Limousin, her adventurous apprenticeship of life, the Montmartre where the unfortunate student-acrobat was going to discover her real destiny by learning about art... as a model.⁶

In one of the earliest English biography of Valadon, *The Valadon Drama: The Life of Suzanne Valadon* (1958), John Storm wrote,

Not until later did she remember having seen him in salt-and-pepper tweeds, swathed in scarves at the Nouvelle-Athènes, when she was a child. But once she remembered, she never forgot the vision. At the age of ten, she had mysteriously noticed one [Degas, my note] who years later would play a large part in the moulding of her destiny.⁷

⁴ Rey, *Suzanne Valadon*, 1922, p.13.

⁵ Adolphe Basler, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Crès, 1929), p.3-4.

⁶ Paul Petridès, Preface to the exhibition, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Galerie Paul Petridès, 1959).

⁷ John Storm, *The Valadon Drama: The Life of Suzanne Valadon* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), p.88.

Without exception, all the authors of these biographical accounts perceive it to be Valadon's destiny to become an artist. When Basler claims that 'it was destiny that drove her to Degas', he is definitely not referring to modelling as Valadon never modelled for Edgar Degas (1834-1917). Valadon's destiny is, therefore, art making. In line with this teleological narrative, Valadon's histories that deviate from the trajectory of art making at first sight are retrospectively recorded as formative and informative of her later career. That is to say, they either serve to facilitate her becoming of an artist (for instance, she learned about art 'as a model'), or anticipate, as predicting signs (for example, she remembered seeing Degas at the age of ten), of her eventual engagement with art production.

A case in point that exemplifies the latter approach is that various biographers trace the earliest sign of Valadon's creative inclination to her childhood interest in drawing.⁸ The source of this information might have come from Valadon herself when she was interviewed by Tabarant in 1921. The interview was published in the *Bulletin de La Vie Artistique*, in which the then emerging artist recalled that she had 'been drawing on every piece of paper that she could find ever since she was nine'.⁹ Toulouse Lautrec's biographer, Henri Perruchot

⁸ Many biographers mention that Valadon started to draw at an early age, but there is a disagreement regarding the exact age. To name a few examples, Diamond-Rossinsky suggests that 'Valadon had started to draw at eight' (*Suzanne Valadon*, p.18). Michèle Peinturier agrees with her. Michèle Peinturier, 'Suzanne Valadon, les Debuts d'une Carrière Exceptionnelle: Jeune Modèle, Mère, et Artiste Reconnu par ses Pairs' in *Utrillo, Valadon, Utter: Hôtel de Ville d'Aulnay-sous-Bois*, (Aulnay-sous-Bois : Ecole d'art Claude Monet, 2005), pp.34-38 (34). Jeanne Warnod and Storm, on the other hand, indicate that Valadon was nine years old when she started drawing. John Storm, *The Valadon Drama: The Life of Suzanne Valadon* (New York: E. P. Dutton 1959), p.34; Jeanine Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, trans. by Shirley Jennings (New York: Crown, 1981), p.40. There are also biographers who suggest that Valadon started to draw as a child without mentioning the exact age. Examples include Rey, 1922, p.5; Basler, p.4; Sarah Baylis, *Utrillo's Mother* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1989) p.84.

⁹ Adolphe Tabarant, 'Suzanne Valadon et Ses Souvenirs de Modèle,' *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique*, (December 15 1921), 626-629 (p.628). There is a disagreement regarding the first name of this Tabarant. Several researchers believed that it was André Tabarant, while others use Adolphe Tabarant. Nevertheless, several articles were published in *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique* under the name Tabarant throughout the 1920s with the earliest being 1921, demonstrating the author's persisting interest in Valadon. Given that Adolphe Tabarant mentioned his personal connection with Suzanne Valadon in his unpublished manuscript on Victorine Meurent and he is the biographer of Maurice Utrillo, I am

notes that ‘she had drawn all her life on anything that came to hand’.¹⁰ In an undated manuscript by Valadon, she claimed that drawing ‘hit me when I was so young, at eight years old’.¹¹

In their research into the biographies of artists written before and during Renaissance, Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz remark that there exist certain formulae in such literature.¹² Pertinent to our discussion of Valadon’s histories other than art making, Kris and Kurz identify two motifs recurring in the accounts of artists’ childhoods prior to their establishment: the discovery of talent and the obstacles in their careers that have to be overcome. Renaissance artists such as Giotto (1276-1337) and Filippo Lippi (c.1406-1469) are said to have displayed their creative talent at an early age. Giotto drew pictures of animals while tending his father’s flock, whereas Filippo Lippi filled paper and walls with drawings. Similar accounts can be found in the biographies of artists across time and geographical area. As Kris and Kurz point out, whether these anecdotes of artists displaying their creative talent at an early age are reliable is not the concern; rather, it indicates the meaning that society and culture bestow on the artist. Kris and Kurz argue that this formula for artists’ biographies, comprising the motifs of childhood prodigy and the overcoming of obstacles, which I shall discuss with Valadon’s case below, has its roots in Greek mythology as well as Christian hagiography. It not only renders creative ability an innate attribute that cannot be curbed by a disadvantageous environment, but also serves to accord to the artist the special and esteemed

inclined to believe that this author is the same Tabarant. I, therefore, use Adolphe Tabarant in my footnotes and references.

¹⁰ Henri Perruchot, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, trans. by Humphrey Hare (London: Constable, 1994), p.94.

¹¹ ‘Suzanne Valadon ou l’Absolu’, in dossier of Suzanne Valadon, *Archives, Musée Nationale d’Art Moderne* (MNAM). Also cited in Thérèse Diamand-Ronsinsky, ‘Suzanne Valadon’s many identities: Marie-Clémentine, “Biqui,” or “Terrible Maria”?’ in *Suzanne Valadon: Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, Suisse, 26 janvier-27 mai 1996*, ed. by Daniel Marchesseau (Martigny, Suisse: La Fondation, 1996), p.31-53 (34).

¹² Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

position by regarding 'his genius as a "childhood miracle"'.¹³ This is one of the important aspects of 'the image of the artist', in Kris's and Kurz's term.

Ever since the Renaissance, the artists have strived for an elevation of their social status from artisans or craftsmen with certain professional skills, to the creative individuals who are members of the intellectual community and social elite.¹⁴ The adoption of the biographical formula that Kris and Kurz identify in biographies written from the sixteenth century onwards is, therefore, caught at this moment of reinventing the image of the artist. The prevalence of such accounts indicates that this transformation is not confined to the level of individuals, but extends to the conceptualisation of the profession on a social and ideological level. The recurrence of such a formula in the biographies of Valadon can, hence, be understood in light of this custom of artists' biographies. In Valadon's case, however, the formula serves a slightly different purpose and has a different effect. At the time when Valadon's biographies were written, from the 1920s onwards, the concept of the artist as a creative individual with distinctive characteristics had already been well-established. There is no longer the need to transform the conceptualisation of the artist profession. That is to say, Valadon's biographies must have had a larger impact on the image of the individual artist, that is Valadon, than on the ideology of the profession.

The motif of a young child from a non-artisan, unprivileged social background displaying creative talent at an early age evokes genealogy between Valadon and the established masters whose biographies are scrutinised by Kris and Kurz. The tales suggest that creativity is an innate quality and 'the artist is born an artist'.¹⁵ This had a distinct effect in Valadon's case. As Victorine Meurent, whose case demonstrates that it was not easy for a

¹³ Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p.32.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the evolving history of the concept artist, see Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, new edn. (London: Pandora P., 1986), pp.82-113.

¹⁵ Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p.50.

former model to be recognised as an artist, Valadon might have tasted the exclusivity of the artists' community in the 1880s. In 1894, approximately two decades after Meurent started to exhibit at the Salon in 1876, Valadon made an attempt to exhibit at the *Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (Salon de la Nationale)*. Before the submission, she approached Puvis de Chavannes, the first employer of her modelling career and the founder of the *Société*, hoping he would introduce her to other artists. She was told, however: 'What an idea! You have not had any training. Whose pupil are you? What will people say?'¹⁶ 'You are a model, not an artist!'¹⁷ She then went to the sculptor Paul-Albert Bartholomé (1848-1928) who wrote her a recommendation letter without mentioning Valadon's modelling past.¹⁸ Despite the fact that being a former model was regarded as a formative experience of her artistic career in biographies, it had an equivocal impact on her real life experience. The biographical motifs that Valadon inherited from earlier canonical artists have justified Valadon's establishment as an artist, not only by evoking a genealogy, but also by suggesting she was 'born an artist' and thus, her creativities are not impugned by her 'temporary' modelling experience.

More intriguing is that whereas the biographical accounts that Kris and Kurz interrogate cannot be traced to sources other than biographers, Valadon's childhood histories came from her own mouth. That is to say, she was involved in the re-invention of herself in accordance with a certain social and ideological image of the artist. If the interview Tabarant transcribed and published in the *Bulletin de la Vie Artistique* in 1921 is still subject to mediation and compromise, the undated manuscript (presumably completed later than 1921) from her hands demonstrates a persisting interest in recounting her childhood interest in art. Specifically, in this manuscript Valadon reports that she would draw on every paper she

¹⁶ Cited in Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.51.

¹⁷ Cited in Diamand-Ronsinsky, 'Suzanne Valadon's Many Identities', p.36.

¹⁸ Full version of the letter is reprinted in Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.51 and June Rose, *Mistress of Montmartre: A Life of Suzanne Valadon* (London: Richard Cohen 1998), p.117.

could find, resembling one of the motifs Kris and Kurz identify. I shall return to the issue of Valadon consciously reimagining herself later. Suffice to say that it might have been Valadon's intention to evoke the biographical motifs found in biographies of artists of previous centuries in her own histories. She was certainly motivated to have done so.

Another pattern is also discernible in Valadon's biographies, related to the pivotal roles that several male artists played in the establishment of Valadon's artistic career;¹⁹ specifically Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul-Albert Bartholomé, Edgar Degas and André Utter (1886-1948). These men appeared at various stages of Valadon's life, had various relationships with Valadon and served various functions in Valadon's establishing as an artist. Toulouse-Lautrec is widely considered to be the first to recognise Valadon's ability to draw when they may have had a romantic relationship while she modelled for him in the early 1880s. Not only did he encourage Valadon to create art, he also promoted her works to his friends by buying them and hanging them in his studio. Toulouse-Lautrec is said to have made suggestions to Valadon's professional name. He advised her to adopt Suzanne with a reference to the biblical Susannah.²⁰ Through Toulouse-Lautrec, Valadon befriended

¹⁹ An incomplete list of such works include: Robert Rey, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Éditions de la 'Nouvelle Revue Française', 1922); Adolph Basler, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Crès, 1929); Jacques Trapenard, 'La Vie Artistique: Oeuvres de Suzanne Valadon', *Le Trait d'Union* (February and March 1933) no. 5&6, 61-63; Nesto Jacometti, *Suzanne Valadon* (Genève: P. Cailler 1947); Robert Beachboard, *La Trinité Maudite: Valadon, Utter, Utrillo* (Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1952); John Storm, *The Valadon Drama: The Life of Suzanne Valadon* (New York: E. P. Dutton 1959); Claude Roger-Max, 'Le Dessins de Suzanne Valadon', in *Suzanne Valadon* (Exhibition Catalogue) (Paris: Galerie Paul Pétridès, 1962), pp.1-6; Paul Pétridès, *L'œuvre Complet de Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, 1971); Jeanine Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, trans. by Shirley Jennings (New York: Crown, 1981); Thérèse Diamand-Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1994); June Rose, *Mistress of Montmartre: A Life of Suzanne Valadon* (London: Richard Cohen 1998).

²⁰ Different authors give different reasons to this naming. Marchesseau indicates it is because of the sexual power that Valadon possesses, whereas Sakia Ooms suggests it is due to that Valadon posed for many old artists. Ooms's suggestion is adopted by Jean-Pierre Valeix. None of them cite a primary document as evidence. Daniel Marchesseau, 'Suzanne Valadon, A Furor for Painting', in *Suzanne Valadon: Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, Suisse, 26 janvier-27 mai 1996*, ed. by Daniel Marchesseau (Martigny, Suisse: La Fondation, 1996), p.13-21 (14); Sakia Ooms, 'The Female Avant-Garde Artist: Suzanne Valadon', in *Valadon, Utrillo & Utter in the Rue Corot Studio: 1912-1926* (exhibition catalogue), (Paris: Musée de Montmartre, Jardins Renoir, 2015), pp.19-28 (21);

Bartholomé, who wrote her a recommendation letter to Paul Helleu, the president of the *Salon de la Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, in 1894, in order to enable her to submit her drawings for exhibition.

Sometime in the 1890s, Valadon met Degas through Toulouse-Lautrec or Bartholomé.²¹ Like Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas bought Valadon's drawings and hung them in his dining room with his other collections. It was in his studio that Valadon tried soft-ground etching. Degas also encouraged Valadon to submit her works to the Salon in 1894. Letters from Degas to Valadon were first cited by Robert Rey in his biography of Valadon, and frequently reproduced in catalogues, biographies and scholarly research to illustrate their close relationships.

My dear Maria. Your letter always arrives at me punctually, with its engraved and firm letters. It is your drawings which I do not see any more. From time to time, in my dining room, I look at your red chalk drawing, which is always hung there, and I always say to myself: 'that she-devil Maria, what talent she has on drawing!' Why do you not show me anything anymore? I am about to reach sixty-seven years-old...

Come to see me with drawings, I like seeing these bold and supple lines.

In spite of your son's illness, you must bring me some of your wicked and supple drawings.

Al. Rouart bought a small engraving at *Le Veil* (on street Lafayette opposite to the street Saint-Georges). He gave it to me. When will you show me some good hard and flexible drawings since you make them so well?²²

In these letters, Degas repeatedly urged Valadon to make more drawings as if she stopped doing so. The nickname Degas gave Valadon, 'Terrible Maria', is mentioned in virtually every biography of her.

Jean-Pierre Valeix, 'Suzanne Valadon ou le Corps Rebouté' in *Valadon, Utrillo: au Tournant du Siècle à Montmartre - de l'Impressionisme à l'École de Paris*, exhib. cat. (Paris: Pinacothèque de Paris, 2009) pp.26-35 (29).

²¹ Adolphe Tabarant, 'Suzanne Valadon et Ses souvenirs de modèle,' in *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (December 15 1921), 626-629 (p.629).

²² Rey, *Suzanne Valadon*, pp. 8-10.

Valadon continued making drawings, paintings and engravings in the fifteen years following 1894, but she stopped exhibiting at the Salons. It was not until 1909 when she met Utter, who encouraged her to commit to painting, that her name appeared in Salon catalogues again. Not only did Utter encourage Valadon to make artworks, as other artists did, he also modelled for Valadon's paintings, including those of male nudes such as *Adam et Eve* (1909) and *Lancement du Filet* (1914). Moreover, he acted as a dealer, managing the careers of Valadon and Utrillo. Thirty-one years younger than Valadon, Utter was a self-taught artist and closely associated with the young avant-garde artistic circle gathered in the *Bateau-Lavoir*, which included Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Max Jacob (1876-1944), André Salmon (1881-1969) and André Warnod (1885-1960). The latter two were among the first to write about Valadon's work in journals.²³ What is more, John Storm suggested that Utter arranged exhibitions and secured contracts for Valadon and Utrillo with gallery owners, Berthe Weill and Bernheim Jeune.²⁴ It is also through Utter that Valadon met Paul Petridès, in 1928, who became an important dealer of Valadon's works.²⁵ Eventually, Utter himself became a dealer of both Valadon and Utrillo's works.

These men appeared at different stages of Valadon's artistic career and assumed different, yet pivotal, roles. Among all the artists for whom Valadon modelled, Toulouse-Lautrec was not the first to discover that Valadon had been producing artworks. Utter recalled in his later years that Valadon told him that Renoir once caught her drawing but did not do anything apart from exclaiming 'Ah, you too! And you hide this talent!'²⁶ Toulouse-Lautrec's recognition of her works and encouragement are, therefore, both exceptional and

²³ André Salmon, in *Montjoie* (December 1913); André Warnod, in *L'Avenir* (December 1921). Both references cited in Rey, *Suzanne Valadon*.

²⁴ John Storm, *The Valadon Drama*, pp.205-218.

²⁵ Paul Petridès, *Suzanne Valadon*, exhib.cat. (Paris: Galerie Paul Petridès, 1959), unpaginated.

²⁶ Utter, Archives MNAM. Reprinted in Thérèse Diamand-Ronsinsky, 'Suzanne Valadon's many identities: Marie-Clémentine, "Biqui," or "Terrible Maria"?', in *Suzanne Valadon*, p.38. Also mentioned in Storm, p.72.

essential to the initiating of Valadon's artistic career. Bartholomé also offered Valadon paramount help at the early stage of Valadon's career by writing her a recommendation letter to Paul Helleu in 1894 when Puvis de Chavannes had refused to help.

One of the obstacles to becoming an artist was getting artistic training. Like Meurent, Valadon was neither able to enter the state-funded *École des Beaux-Arts* before 1897 nor affluent enough in her early years to attend systematic artistic courses offered by private academies such as the *Académie Julian*. Some of Valadon's early biographers tend to suggest that she was self-taught and was not a pupil of Degas,²⁷ whereas later biographers indicate that it was Degas who first introduced Valadon to soft-ground etching.²⁸ Despite their seeming disagreement, these two claims may not be contradictory after all. The rejection of the assumption that Valadon as a pupil of Degas, in fact, aims at securing her creative independence. This is exemplified by Robert Rey's claim that none of Valadon's artworks were corrected by Degas.²⁹ Yet, without being Degas's pupil, Valadon might still have explored the etching technique in his studio on his press. In fact, it is unlikely that Valadon would have had access to the facilities necessary for etching in other contexts. Other artists with whom she was associated may not have had the facilities in their own studios, as they were not as passionate as Degas was about etching. Valadon herself would not have had the means at that stage to possess her own studio. Apart from offering Valadon access to an artistic technique, Degas appears to have assumed the role of urging Valadon to create artworks and move forward in her artistic career. Letters from Degas, cited in Rey's book, some of which are quoted above, date to the years between 1890 and Degas's death in 1919, indicating the continuous encouragement Degas gave Valadon in his later years.

²⁷ For example, Basler, p.4; Jacometti (the copy of his book that I found in Bibliothèque Kandinsky is not paginated).

²⁸ For example, Claude Roger-Max, 'Le Dissins', p.3; Storm, *The Valadon Drama*, p.91; Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.90; Rose, *Mistress*, p.256; Diamand-Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.120.

²⁹ Rey, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.8.

Despite the fact that Valadon carried on producing art and her drawings and etchings were sold by *Le Barc de Boutteville* and *Vollard* between 1896 and 1909, biographers often mark 1909 as the landmark year in Valadon's artistic career. It was in this year that Valadon met Utter who encouraged her to commit to painting. Comparing to drawing and etching, painting is a medium of art that is traditionally considered to be superior and necessary for the establishment of a serious artistic career. In the same year Valadon started to exhibit in the Salon again, only this time not *Salon de la Nationale*, but *Salon d'Automne*. The implication of this choice will be discussed later. Suffice to say that if we consider Valadon's production of artworks before 1909 as being motivated by the need to live, from 1909 onwards Valadon set out an agenda to obtain public recognition as a serious artist, to which Utter's connections with art critics, dealers and artists associated with the then avant-garde circle in Montmartre were vital.

Up to this point, the pattern becomes conspicuous. Every time Valadon's artistic career was confronted by an obstacle, someone appeared to help her through. On the one hand, this pattern is not unheard of. Kris and Kurz identify it as 'the young prodigy triumphing over obstacles put in the way of his chosen profession'.³⁰ This motif, like that of the discovery of talent, is intended to substantiate that the really gifted artist proves his mettle. On the other hand, it is notable that the individuals in Valadon's biographies, who are considered to be significant to her artistic career, are all men. There are definitely women who were important to Valadon's production of art and the making of her career. Her mother, Madeleine Valadon, and her house maids, Catherine and Louise, for example, frequently posed for her and appeared in her artworks. Their contribution to Valadon's art is seldom articulated, whereas on the contrary, Utter's agreement to pose nude for Valadon is mentioned often. This contrast is not only the result of a discourse of gender asymmetry.

³⁰ Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p.30.

Utter's posing is generally considered to be a testament of the love between the couple. It is through this personal sexual relationship that Utter's modelling labour is camouflaged. This exemplifies a mode of representing virtually every artist-model couple in the history of art. Such translation of modelling labour into romanticised personal relationships acts back on the discourse of art history by consolidating and justifying its neglect and belittlement of the metier of the model, making it difficult to recognise the labour of models, such as Catherine and Louise, who do not have sexual relationships with the artist.

The role Valadon's mother played in her artistic career path was equivocal. On the one hand, Madeleine Valadon appears in a large number of Suzanne Valadon's drawings and paintings. The two lived together until the mother died in 1915. Very often, Valadon's mother helped her take care of Maurice Utrillo and run the household. On the other hand, the mother-daughter relationship, as suggested by biographers, was not easy, especially in their early years. Madeleine Valadon was said to be bewildered and angry when Valadon started to draw compulsively on every piece of paper she could find as a child. This detail was mentioned by Valadon in her interview with Tabarant, and later in his undated manuscript on Valadon.³¹ Kris and Kurz again identify in their book this trope of people close to the artist becoming the obstacle, which did not stop artist from making art.³² One example is Édouard Manet who insisted on painting despite his parents' disapproval. In the Valadon's case, her mother is, thus, represented as one of the first people to put obstacles in Valadon's way to developing her creative talent.

Women other than Valadon's models are equally underemphasised. For example, Berthe Weill, an established dealer of contemporary art in the early twentieth century in Paris, organised sixteen group and one-woman exhibitions of Valadon's work in the nineteen

³¹ Tabarant, 'Suzanne Valadon et Ses Souvenirs de Modèle,' p.629; Suzanne Valadon ou l'Absolu', in dossier of Suzanne Valadon, *Archives, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne* (MNAM).

³² Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, p.30.

years between 1913 and 1931, making her gallery the most frequent venue for exhibiting Valadon's work. In fact, it is she who organised the first one-woman exhibition of Valadon's paintings in 1915, during the First World War, before Valadon began to receive wide recognition at the turn of the decade. Weill writes in her memoirs that 'Madame Valadon asked me to give her an exhibition; I would be delighted. Sold virtually nothing... but the exhibition had many visitors'.³³ In the context of the maturing dealer-critic system in early twentieth century, Weill has demonstrated a commitment on the part of a dealer to the artist she took up.³⁴

Another location in which Valadon exhibited regularly was the annual exhibition of the *Société des Femmes Artistes Modernes* (FAM), an organisation founded by Marie-Anne Carmax-Zoegger (1881-1952) with the agenda of promoting artists who are women.³⁵ Despite her initial objection to the group's preoccupation with 'women's art', Valadon joined the group in 1933 upon the invitation of Caarmax-Zoegger, and exhibited with them every year until her death in 1938. While Weill played a significant role in building the commercial success Valadon received from the 1920s, exhibiting regularly with FAM was among the most notable decisions Valadon made in the later years of her career, as it allowed her constant visibility when she no longer worked extensively.

It is no simple coincidence that Weill and FAM, as entities belonging to the commercial sector, rather than to art world, are understated.³⁶ In Valadon's case, this neglect

³³ Berthe Weill, *Pan! Dans l'oeil... ,ou, Trente Ans dans les Coulisses de la Peinture Contemporaine 1900-1930*, intro. by François Roussier (Dijon: Echelle de Jacob 2009), p.113.

³⁴ For the exploration of Weill's role in promoting works by painters who are women in early twentieth century, including Marval, Halicka, Valadon and Charmy, see Gill Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and "Feminine" Art, 1900 to the Late 1920s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c.1995), especially pp.88-89.

³⁵ For further discussion of FAM, its role in promoting art by women and its vision of artists who are women, see Paula J. Birnbaum, *Women Artists in Interwar France: Framing Femininities* (Farnham: Ashgate, c.2011).

³⁶ There is a general tendency in biographies of artists to overlook the contributions institutions and individuals in the commercial sector make to the establishment of an artistic career. It is beyond the

of Weill and FAM, along with the belittlement of Valadon's models who are women and the equivocal impact Valadon's mother had on her artistic development, presents a gendered, patronising narrative in which women receive help and encouragement only from men.

In contrast with other men, who are represented as heroes lifting Valadon up when she was confronted with obstacles, Maurice Utrillo assumes a controversial role in Valadon's artistic career. On the one hand, he was the subject of myriads of Valadon's early drawings, between 1883 and 1909. It was also he who introduced Utter to Valadon. His own artistic and commercial success brought benefits to Valadon's career and life. Valadon moved in with him to a house he bought on Avenue Junot with money he received from the contract with Bernheim-Jeune after she separated from Utter in 1926. On the other hand, Utrillo constantly caused trouble with his alcoholism and bad temper, which forced Valadon to reduce, if not completely stop, her art making in order to take care of him. In this sense he became a liability to Valadon's career. While some biographers acknowledge the difficulties Utrillo might have brought to Valadon, they seldom consider his position as an obstacle. Rather, they tend to attribute his artistic accomplishment to the success of Valadon's motherhood. The troubles he caused came to be seen therefore, not as obstacles, but as proof of Valadon's devotion as a mother. This is exemplified by the chapter on Utrillo in Jacommetti's biography of Valadon, which says, 'the name of Suzanne Valadon is doubly inscribed on the pediment of the modern temple: her glory as a painter is dazzled by her glory as a mother'.³⁷ It is in this way that Utrillo's negative impact on Valadon's career is circumvented.

With these nuanced shifts, the 'Image of Valadon' is transformed from the one Kris and Kurz identify as an individual with mysterious and even magical creativity. It is layered

scope of this case study to examine the social and ideological reasons, but I would like to suggest here that such tendency contributes to the illusion that the success of the artist depends solely on his or her creativity.

³⁷ Jacommetti, *Suzanne Valadon*, unpaginated.

by the gendered discourse concerning motherhood in early twentieth century France. It also intersects with position of individuals who are not artists, and institutions, which do not concern artistic training, in the discourse of art history. Specifically, it is symptomatic of an inability to recognise their contributions to the production of artwork and the establishment of artistic and commercial success.

Kris and Kurz point out to us in their research that the reliability of the biographical episodes is not the key. Rather it is the effect of the telling as well as the configuration of these episodes that we should probe in order to perceive the formula. That is to say, it is the modality of existence of these biographical narratives as *énoncés* that we should investigate.³⁸ This is going to be fully unpacked in this chapter, as I shall argue that this ‘Image of Suzanne Valadon, the Artist’ is in part a product of the artist project to establish her work and place within the artistic sphere. As such it is also a significant outcome of a carefully manoeuvred gambit that Valadon played out to get herself acknowledged as an artist. Valadon was not a passive receiver of this ‘Image’. Rather she acted on it and negotiated with it.

The Gaze Returned?

Narrative biography is not the only mode of studying Suzanne Valadon. Another takes her artwork as the primary topic. Among her works, certain genres, such nudes and self-portraits, receive more attention than others. There are two approaches to interpreting her work, the first reads clues in them in order to return constantly to Valadon’s biography, and the other completely ignores the details of her biography to concentrate exclusively on form and the issue of sexuality. An example of the psycho-biographical approach is Diamand-Rosinsky’s reading of her drawings of naked children.³⁹ She suggests that *Nu Accroupi*

³⁸ More detailed discussions on Foucault’s concept of *énoncés* can be found on p.41 & pp. 99-100

³⁹ Thérèse Diamand-Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1994), p.18.

Tenant La Grand-Mère par La Robe (c.1909) (Figure 2.1) might ‘reflect the artist’s unhappiness during her own childhood’.⁴⁰ She observes that there exists a relationship of alienation as well as affection between the girl and her grandmother. While the girl is crouching on a blanket, alone and naked, she is also tightly grabbing to the skirt of her grandmother. They remain at arm’s length. The drapery of the skirt reveals that she is neither pulling nor pushing her grandmother. She is simply reaching out to her as if to make sure she is there, suggesting a sense of insecurity. Diamand-Rosinsky attributes the represented insecurity to the fact that Valadon was sent away as a child, and that even when she lived with her mother the latter did not have time to take care of her. Diamand-Rosinsky notices that Valadon’s fellow artists avoided the implication of parental shortcomings in their work. She is both right and wrong.



Figure 2. 1, Suzanne Valadon, *Nu Accroupi Tenant La Grand-Mère par La Robe*, c.1909, black pencil drawing on paper, 33×42cm, private collection

⁴⁰ Diamand-Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.37.

The choice of this subject matter may be related to Valadon's experiences of the world as a child, but Diamand-Rosinsky overlooks the possibility that Valadon's experience is not singular and is, in fact, framed by her class and gender. Not many of Valadon's contemporary artists were from working-class backgrounds. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, bourgeois men had the privileged access to the resources for art training, which made it the norm for artists to be white, middle-class men. The traditional division of labour in modern bourgeois society is that women belong to the private sphere and undertake the responsibilities for caring and educating the next generation. As a result, the childhood of a bourgeois man would usually be accompanied by his mother and/or a mother figure, an older woman servant.⁴¹ On the contrary, in a working-class family, women usually needed to work to support the family. In Valadon's case, after her mother took her to Paris and tried to raise her by herself, she was eventually sent away because her mother had to work and was not able to take care of her. Yet we have to note that bourgeois men and women may have acquired some knowledge of working-class childhoods from their interactions with servants.⁴² Such interpretation of the work as not just self-referential is a likely explanation for the fact that Valadon's work addressed a wide body of audience wider audience and were

⁴¹ It is not rare, indeed, for modernist artists to represent their mothers. James McNeil Whistler, Édouard Manet, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Mary Cassatt, just to name a few, all have made such works. In most cases, the mothers are portrayed as still, calm and solemn. Griselda Pollock points out that Henri Toulouse-Lautrec depicts his aristocratic, white mother in a manner that is in significant contrast with his representation of working-class dancers and prostitutes. Drawing on Freud's psychoanalytical theories of sexuality and fetish, she argues that the deformed body, deprived of its femininity, is the physical other of the calm, still mother that the artist desires. Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.65-93.

⁴² In her study of Mary Cassatt's colour print, *In the Omnibus* (1890-91), Griselda Pollock underscores the intimacy between the baby of a bourgeois family and the nanny, as manifested by their interlocking pose and eye contacts. The mother, on the other hand, appears distant. The image is, thus, interpreted as a comment on the notion of maternity, as a social and psychological relationship of work and money. Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt: Painter of Modern Women* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), pp.168-72. Manet also takes up this subject in *Chemin de Fer* (1873). Compared to Cassatt's print, the governess, modelled by Victorine Meurent, in this painting seems more distant from the girl next to her, but with the absence of the mother, this adult-child space becomes reserved for the governess and the girl, and hence, a work and money relation.

appreciated by the avant-garde circle, members of which came from a mixture of varied social and cultural backgrounds.

Rosemary Betterton and Patricia Mathews are representative of the feminist art historians who study Valadon without dwelling overmuch on her biographies. Their publications on Valadon are among the earliest and most frequently cited research of feminist interventions.⁴³ Both study Valadon's paintings of female nudes with a focus on the issue of the 'gaze'. In her attempt to answer the question: 'How does an artist who is a woman look at the female nude?', Betterton positions Valadon in the dual space of woman and artist. She suggests that Valadon transformed existing codes and symbols to represent her experience of a 'different [from a man] but overlapping definition of femininity and masculinity, creativity and class'.⁴⁴ According to Betterton, Valadon worked with the existing iconography of the nude, but refused the static, timeless vision by depicting women engaging in actions and stressing the individuality of the model in some works. Her representation of the nude 'offers us a new way of looking at the female body which is not entirely bound in the implicit assumption that all such images are addressed only to a male spectator'.⁴⁵

In her article *Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representation of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon*, Mathews notes the diversity of nudes in Valadon's oeuvre, which is not confined to women engaging in actions. She categorises Valadon's nudes into several types, all of which are 'unseductive, even asexual'.⁴⁶ The first type overlaps, in a way, with Betterton's conclusion: the comfortable openness in front of another woman, underlining the intimacy among women and the availability of the female body to women, instead of men.

⁴³ Rosemary Betterton, 'How Do Women Look? The Female Nude in the Work of Suzanne Valadon', *Feminist Review* (Spring 1985), no.19, pp.3-24; Patricia Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon', *The Art Bulletin*, 73 (September 1991), no.3, pp.415-430; Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Betterton, 'How Do Women Look?', p.14.

⁴⁵ Betterton, 'How Do Women Look?', p.21.

⁴⁶ Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 419.

The second type consists of Valadon's allegorical paintings, exemplified by *The Joy of Life* and *Adam and Eve*. These two paintings subvert the illusionary consistency by juxtaposing a variety of visions and possibilities, some of which might even be conflicting. The third type refers to paintings of a single woman, often modelled by Valadon's own servants and acquaintances. In her representations Valadon delineates several distinct personas, instead of anonymous nudes. In terms of style, these women are not idealised. According to Mathews, this set of paintings is characterised by a female gaze, which implies a multiplicity of identifications and a sense of self-awareness. Women are presented as both subjects and objects. Mathews reads multiple, sometimes contradictory narratives, in Valadon's work and considers it radical that the traditional controlling gaze is absent in her images while the women depicted display 'a sense of being present in their own powerful bodies'.⁴⁷

Mathews later devotes a chapter to Valadon in her book on symbolism, in which some of the arguments can be anticipated. In her book, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art*, Mathews reveals that Valadon's contemporary critics tended to associate her work with Symbolism. Mathews argues that, despite the stylistic similarity to Symbolist art, Valadon's representations of women display a distinct understanding of women's bodies and gender. The critics' failure to recognise the difference is perceived by Mathews as a result of the fact that they are unable to handle the power of Valadon's work 'and its underlying subtext of women's sphere'.⁴⁸

Given that Mathews was aware of Betterton's research, it should not be surprising that their interpretations of Valadon's work and their methodologies share commonalities. Both consider it highly unusual that Valadon chose the subject of the female nude in the late nineteenth century. Both engage with the notion of the masculinisation of the 'gaze' and the

⁴⁷ Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 429

⁴⁸ Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, p. 211.

contestations of its norm as heterosexual, voyeuristic and sadistic.⁴⁹ Both interpret the depicted women's absorption in their own actions or activities as a rejection of that gaze. Both attempt to concentrate on one feature that they make into a characteristic of all Valadon's female nudes. Both select to analyse similar, if not identical, works of Valadon as their illustrations. Both assume that Valadon's modelling career allowed her to work comfortably with naked women and also, along with her so-called bohemian life style, freed her from the restraints of bourgeois femininity, which did not allow women to view the naked female body, even their own.

One effect of Betterton's and Mathews's argument for Valadon's exceptionality in taking up the pictorial category of female nude is that they overlook the history of women's struggle to be allowed to study and paint nude figures. While female nude had become, during the nineteenth century, one of the central category of art in the academic system, it was, surprisingly, not displaced, as was the academic system, by the rise of the realist aesthetic. In 'The Heroism of Modern Life', published as the final section of his Salon review of 1846, Charles Baudelaire called for artists to create modern nude.

The *nude* - that darling of the artists, that necessary element of success - is just a, frequent and necessary today as it was in the life of the ancients; in bed, for example or in the bath, or in the anatomy theatre. The themes and resources of painting equally abundant and varied; but there is a new element - modern beauty.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Both Betterton and Mathews draw on Laura Mulvey's theory of spectatorship in her influential essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975). In fact, they quote the same paragraph. Both identify Mulvey's argument that the masculinisation of the gaze, (which has two elements, 1) the association, in a patriarchal order, of active looking with the masculine position and passive exhibitionism with the feminine; and 2) the effect of the castration complex that renders the sight of female body the threatening site of castration for the becoming-masculine subject thus triggering defensive responses: fetishism or sadistic voyeurism), becomes the apparatus of constructing woman as the signifier of the masculine desire. Betterton and Mathews also criticise this argument for its focus on the exclusivity of the so-called 'male gaze' because it fails to address a feminine position in the spectatorship. They interpret Valadon's paintings of women as emblematic of the latter. Betterton, 'How Do Women Look?', p.7; Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p. 417.

⁵⁰ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1846', in *Art in Paris 1845-1862: Salons and Other exhibitions*, trans. & ed. by Jonathan Mayne (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1965), pp.41-120 (119).

Acknowledging the centrality of the female nude in the academic tradition, Baudelaire not only approves of it as embodiment of modern beauty, but also directs artists to look for modern nude 'in bed, for example or in the bath, or in the anatomy theatre'. Eighty years later, in 1924 French art critic, Francis Carco, published his book, *Le Nu dans La Peinture Moderne: 1863-1920*.⁵¹ Here, Carco carefully maps out the genealogy of contemporary mainstream as well as avant-garde artists who paint the female nude. He thus places and reaffirms the female nude as a pivotal category of modern art.

It is not until the second half of the nineteenth century when private institutions in Paris, such as the *Académie Julian*, offered women life classes that women started to gain access to naked or partially dressed models who were men and women. In her pathbreaking essay, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' in 1971 [1973], Linda Nochlin identified this restricted access as one of the key institutional factors that suppress women's achievement in art.⁵² Since then, feminist scholars have examined the evidence more extensively. Not only do they scrutinise how women accessed training in life-drawing and painting, they also disclose that women worked in a renewed classicism, in Britain and France later in the nineteenth century, did paint the female nude. Henrietta Rae (1859-1958) submitted two studies of mythological female nudes, *Ariadne* and *Bacchant*, to the Royal Academy in 1885. Both were accepted.⁵³ In 1884 Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) made a copy of two female nudes from François Boucher's (1703-1770) *Venus dans la Forge de Vulcain* (1757) in the Louvre. Eight years later in 1892 Morisot copied another Boucher's painting,

⁵¹ Francis Carco, *Le Nu dans la Peinture Moderne: 1863-1920* (Paris: G. Crès et Cie., 1924).

⁵² Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', in *Art and Sexual Politics: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists ?*, ed. by Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth C. Baker (New York: Collier Books; London: Collier Macmillan, 1973), pp.1-39 (24-27).

⁵³ For the artistic training involving naked life models and the transformation of the category of the nude in Victorian Britain, see Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

Apollon révélant sa divinité à la Bergère Issé (1750)⁵⁴ In fact, between 1886 and 1892 Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) made several attempts to paint or draw the nudes.⁵⁵ In 1891 Mary Cassatt depicted a partially woman in a print, *La Toilette*, of which Valadon might have been aware through their mutual friend, Edgar Degas. It is also likely that Valadon would have seen this print at Cassatt's first independent exhibition at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in 1891, where it is displayed as one of a group of ten colour prints. Other examples in point include Émilie Charmy (1878-1974) and Jacqueline Marval (1866-1932). It is, therefore, not exceptional for Valadon to paint female nude.⁵⁶

Betterton and Mathews assume that Valadon's decision to take up the female nudes in her artworks, despite its equivocal moral implications, is a convenient one for her as she had already violated the codes of bourgeois femininity by modelling, by selling the sight of her body in exchange for money. This conclusion is drawn partly from their consideration of Valadon as an exceptional case of a woman painting female nudes at the time, which, as discussed, is an overstatement. It also renders Valadon as transcendent from the dominant social structures and art communities, undermining her sophistication as an artist and as a woman. I agree that being a model would have affected Valadon's view of the body, but it did not necessarily drive her to take up the category. It definitely would not make her immune to moral criticism. By assuming the modelling past as simply a convenient pass for

⁵⁴ Heather Dawkins interprets these two copies as attempts to reframe the category of nude. Specifically, the 1884 painting, considering its location over the entrance to Morisot's studio in her new home on rue de Villejust, is read as a metaphor of the Salon being a place of feminine tranquillity, free from family drama. The 1892 copy, on the other hand, completed in the same year when her husband died, is argued as a manifestation of Morisot's grief over the tragic separation despite that she never loved Eugène Manet. See Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.126-132.

⁵⁵ Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.185-186. Higonnet compares Morisot's nudes with Cassatt's and argues that their images represent the impossibility, rather than possibility to offer any solution to the problems of nude. Dawkins disputes this argument in *The Nude* by offering a different interpretation that I illustrated in footnote 51.

⁵⁶ For detailed discussion of Charmy's oeuvre, see Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*.

Valadon's engagement with the controversial category of nude, Betterton and Mathews fail to notice the ideological and social negotiations Valadon had to make in order to become recognised as an artist of nude. It is, in fact, in this transformation process that we can truly discern the creative decisions Valadon made.

Gill Perry criticises Betterton's and Mathews's assertion for Valadon's exceptionalism in her book, *Women Artists and the Avant-Garde: Modernism and 'feminine' art, 1900 to the late 1920s* (1995). Specifically, she argues that the decision to paint the female nude should not be reckoned as a transgression as by 1900 the category of the female nude was as important to artists who were women as to their avant-garde colleagues who were men.⁵⁷ By incorporating Valadon's art into her discussion of other women who worked on the category, such as Charny, Perry restores Valadon's position in the terrain of representing female nudes and her connection with her contemporaries. Such proposition is further investigated in Paula Birnbaum's research on women artists in interwar France (2011). Not only does Birnbaum discuss Valadon's art in comparison with other artists who are women, such as Tamara de Lempicka (1898-1980), Romaine Brooks (1874-1970) and Marval, she also identifies Valadon's place in the matrilineal history of art that the *Société des Femmes Artistes Modernes* endeavoured to establish in the decades of early twentieth century.⁵⁸

Betterton's and Mathews's very intention to characterise Valadon's substantial body of work through a single perspective is itself a gesture of simplification. Throughout the fifty-five years of her career as an artist, Valadon's works changed in terms of style, and she engaged with a great variety of subjects. Often, she would experiment with positions and settings of the same subject (Figures 2.2 & 2.3). Sometimes, she would return to similar compositions years later (Figures 2.4 & 2.5). While both Betterton and Mathews discuss the

⁵⁷ Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, p.127.

⁵⁸ Paula J. Birnbaum, *Women Artists in Interwar France: Framing Femininities* (Farnham: Ashgate, c2011).

Nu Couché sur un Canapé (1928) (Figure 2.2), neither mentions *Nu Allongé sur un Canapé* (1928) (Figure 2.3). Mathews discusses *La Joie de Vivre* (1911) (Figure 2.4) extensively in both her article and her book, yet she does not mention *Les Baigneuses* (c.1928) (Figure 2.5).



Figure 2. 2, Suzanne Valadon, *Nu Couché sur un Canapé*, 1928, oil on canvas, 60×80.5cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 2. 3, Suzanne Valadon, *Nu Allongé sur un Canapé*, 1928, oil on canvas, 73×100 cm, Private Collection



Figure 2. 4, Suzanne Valadon, *La Joie de Vivre*, 1911, oil on canvas, 122.9×205.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 2. 5, Suzanne Valadon, *Les Baigneuses*, c.1928, oil painting, 73×96.5 cm

Betterton considers the *Nu Couché sur un Canapé* as a demonstration of Valadon's insistence on the individuality of the model, which 'asserts the recognition of women's own view of their bodies against tyranny of images of youth, beauty and attractiveness endlessly reflected in contemporary culture' and 'ruptures the particular discourse of the fine art nude in which nudity = sexual availability = male pleasure'.⁵⁹ Mathews reaches a similar conclusion with a focus slightly shifted onto the gaze. According to her, along with the concealing pose, the gaze of the woman is full of 'awareness, response and recoil' and recognises, yet rejects, the viewers' intrusion.⁶⁰ Thus, the gaze is returned. All these features are altered in *Nu Allongé sur un Canapé*. Here, her gaze is directed to the hat rather than the viewer, and she seems a lot more comfortable on the sofa. The diverted face shows her individuality and she is less invested with a sense of self-consciousness. I am not going to

⁵⁹ Betterton, 'How do Women Look?', p.21.

⁶⁰ Mathews, 'Returning the Gaze', p.424.

discuss these works in full here, as I intend to return to them later in the chapter. What I want to argue now is that Mathews's interpretation of Valadon displays a tendency to reproduce and reaffirm Betterton's. They have overlooked much of the complexity of Valadon's representations of female nudes, with their overlapping selections, and interpretations informed by a moment of feminist intervention in the 1980s and 1990s.

Whereas Betterton and Mathews confine their discussions of Valadon's work concentrate to the intentionality of the artist, Joanne Heath's thesis on Valadon explores the affect of her artworks. Heath's study is two-fold, with one chapter dedicated to the response to Valadon's nudes by viewers and researchers, and another probing the psychological affect that Valadon's works might have had. On the one hand, by closely reading the comments on Valadon's works by her contemporaries, Heath's research effectively shows how these writers maintained the distinction between womanhood and the great painter, asserting the connection between creativity and virility. Heath argues that by attributing virility to Valadon's work, as a sign of their appreciation of that work, the artist's contemporaries in effect defeminised her. By contrast, Heath's own argument is that there are 'traces of a supplementary, feminine difference'⁶¹ in Valadon's works that cannot be fully comprehended in a binary, phallic economy of meaning. She introduces feminist psychoanalytic approach, drawing on the Matrixial paradigm developed by Bracha Ettinger. Specifically, Heath's reading is informed by Ettinger's Matrixial reading of the emergence of a girl's femininity, in relation to the other woman and not as a negative or wounded body in relation to phallic masculinity. Thus, Heath explores Ettinger's theory of Matrixial gazing, what Ettinger names, *fascinace*, a prolonged learning process as a means to develop an interpretation of Valadon's paintings of pubertal nude, especially in the painting, *The Abandoned Doll* (1921).

⁶¹ Joanne Margaret Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images between Hysteria and Modernism: Tracing the Maternal in the Case History of "Frau Emmy von N" and in Selected Paintings by Suzanne Valadon', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011), p.55.

Fascinace is not a gaze of mastery, voyeurism or sadistic looking; it is akin to a prolonged curiosity on the part of a girl seeking to learn about femininity from an older woman who is already a sexual desiring and desired adult.⁶² Heath concludes that Valadon's representations of the female nude are not only products of a woman looking at another woman's body in the context of the studio. They are potentially inscribed a Matrixial gaze of *fascinace*, which 'has the potential to open new channels of connectivity between artist and model, viewer and art work'.⁶³ The Matrixial gaze as co-affective and mutually transforming, between artist and model, viewer and artwork, produces subjective partners in the aesthetic encounter.

Heath's research on Valadon opens up a new way of reading Valadon's position as a woman inhabiting, looking at and painting the female body. Throughout her thesis, Valadon's modelling career does not concern Heath much. She considers Valadon to be 'a self-reflexive woman artist seeking to negotiate for herself a position in relation to the early-twentieth-century avant-garde and having as a result to engage with the genre of the female nude'.⁶⁴ While she recognises that Valadon's choice of the category is not a convenient decision but rather a careful trade-off, she nevertheless shares other feminist historians' assertion that Valadon's working-class background made things easier for her. When she compares Valadon's representation of adolescence to Berthe Morisot's paintings of her adolescent daughter, Julie, Heath considers Valadon's work richer with a rendered nudity which is 'an imaginative and iconographic resource then unavailable to the upper-middle-class Berthe Morisot'.⁶⁵ This is unjust. Even without access to naked life models, Morisot would have

⁶² The concept of Matrixial gaze is developed in several of Ettinger's publications and is too complicated to be fully laid out here, but it is important to note that the Matrixial gaze is a non-Freudian theory of the subject. It renders the field of vision as affective and co-affective in distinction from the phallic gaze of mastery and captured subject. See Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Gaze* (Leeds: Feminist Arts and Histories Network, 1995); Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁶³ Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images', p.257.

⁶⁴ Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images', p.222.

⁶⁵ Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images', p.245.

seen the paintings of modern nudes completed by her Impressionist friends who were men as well as those of idealised beauty in museums and Salons, as proved by Morisot's own copy of Boucher. What Heath implies may be that the regulations of the codes of bourgeois femininity discouraged Morisot from engaging extensively with the female nude. However, as discussed, the negotiation with the norms of bourgeois femininity were not necessarily easier for Valadon.

The notion of gaze has a specific currency in Valadon's case as it is often suggested that with her artworks Valadon returns the gaze. This gaze, thanks to Valadon's modelling experience, is double-faceted as one returned by an artist who is a woman and one returned by a model. The former is interrogated by Betterton, Mathews and Heath. As Heath eloquently argues with the notion of Matrixial gaze, there is a tendency for feminist scholars such as Mathews and Betterton, to get 'trapped in a paradigm in which looking can only be understood in terms of domination and control'.⁶⁶ Such a phallic paradigm suggests a polarised situation in which the gaze is only allowed to be *returned* whenever it is assumed. Without breaking down such a paradigm, any attempt to look for alternative forms of gaze ends up finding the patriarchal mode of control and domination, a power that is always possessed by the artist.

This notion of gaze, in its essence, and despite its varied forms, is symptomatic of the hierarchy embedded in the artist-model relation. This leads to the second facet of the gaze pertinent to our discussion, the gaze returned by the model. Not much has been written on this subject. Heather Dawkins offers us a brief discussion of Suzanne Valadon in relation to this issue. As Dawkins rightfully recognises in her book, *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870-1910*, the case of Suzanne Valadon presents a rare example of how the gaze

⁶⁶ Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images', p.210.

can be returned as an artist who was a former model.⁶⁷ Dawkins concludes that the modelling experience brings Valadon three advantages: knowledge of art through observing artists working, connections with the circle of artists, especially Degas, and ‘the model’s practised acceptance of nakedness and the gaze’.⁶⁸ Dawkins continues, ‘in becoming an artist Valadon translated the model’s unself-conscious confidence about the female body and the freedom to scrutinise it into images’, but she also recognises that the issue of modelling cannot be fully addressed from the perspective of an artist. ‘The wider issues of modelling, of being a body for an artist, could not be represented in the idiom of the model’s subjection to the gaze; another language was needed.’⁶⁹ She then introduces an article published by Alice Michel who is supposed to be a former model of Degas and recollected her memories of working with him upon his death.⁷⁰ To Dawkins, commenting on Degas allows Michel to acquire subjectivity. The look is, therefore, returned. Pauline, the main character in the article, who is taken as Michel’s persona, presents Degas as an annoying, bad-tempered person. In her own process of ‘dealing-with’ Degas, Michel returns the look and ‘produces a woman’s historical moment, a complex moment of feminine agency’.⁷¹ I agree with Dawkins that Michel’s article restores, to a certain extent, some subjectivity to the other side of the easel. It should, however, be noted that even though Dawkins considers Michel’s writing a gesture by which to return the look, this is a different kind of look from that which is bestowed on Michel by Degas when the artist is working with a model. Michel’s look is her perception of Degas, which certainly affects their interactions; whereas Degas’s gaze is possessive as he transforms Michel’s body into representations in his artworks and claims a right over it as an

⁶⁷ Dawkins, *The Nude*. For the discussion on Valadon, see pp.86-90.

⁶⁸ Dawkins, *The Nude*, p.88.

⁶⁹ Dawkins, *The Nude*, p.90.

⁷⁰ Dawkins, *The Nude*, pp.90-114. Also Heather Dawkins, ‘Frogs, Monkeys and Women: A history of Identifications Across a Phantastic Body’ in *Dealing with Degas: Representations of Women and the Politics of Vision*, ed. by Richard Kendall and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1992), pp.202-217.

⁷¹ Dawkins, ‘Frogs, Monkeys and Women’, p.215.

artist. That is to say, Degas's gaze is permeated with the power and dominance bestowed by art historical discourse as a result of its ultimate privileging of artworks and canonical artists, which is not made available to the models. The gaze is indeed not returned. The space between artist and model remains disjointed.

Dawkins must have become aware of this unequal structure of the power of the gaze in her book of 2002, ten years after her chapter on Michel's article in 1992. In fact, this is where, as she perceives, the significance of Michel's writing lies. This output fully and solely embraces the perspective of a model in the studio, whereas Valadon's art is a mediated result of her translation of that perspective as *an artist*. Dawkins points out that the article by Alice Michel is not effectively incorporated into the archive of Degas, because 'it subverts the production of a masculine genius, indeed the text renders such overvaluation incomprehensible'.⁷² The voice of this model is muted while the gaze of the artist is much more effectively recorded. The discourse of art history has, therefore, played a role in reinforcing such power of possession and the domination of artists.

Discovering and reclaiming instances of the disenfranchised voices of models, such as Alice Michel's article, is an effective yet limited approach to restoring the subjectivity of models. As long as the gaze denotes domination and control, it can never be returned from the other side of the easel, at least not in a way that can be recognised by the art historical discourse. To counter this paradigm, I propose in the case of Victorine Meurent that we have to acknowledge the existence of such absence, its necessity to the structure of the discourse, and the impossibility of its unfolding. If the gaze of the artist is associated with authority and control, the gaze of the model can only obtain the same power by being the gaze of the unknown, or the gaze from the abyss. Suzanne Valadon's art offers us, as I perceive, another possibility. As a relatively more successful artist, her presence and that of her art is more

⁷² Dawkins, 'Frogs, Monkeys and Women', p.212

visible and recognised in the discourse. The question is whether it is possible for us to read traces of her modelling past in these artworks. Can she articulate certain aspects of the gaze she had as a model with the visual languages of art she later acquired? Can we detect a model's 'voice' in the artworks she produced? My stand on these questions is positive. A modelling career has to be understood as a significant embodied experience, extended over a duration of years, and in Valadon's case over a decade. What I am trying to do is look for traces of articulation of this experience in Valadon's art. It is not my intention to argue for a general tendency characteristic of Valadon's entire oeuvre. I agree with Paula Birnbaum, as I intend to reveal, that in terms of her approach to various themes in representing women's bodies, Valadon is more diverse and complex than unitary or straightforward.⁷³ I have to admit that the quality of Valadon's work is uneven, and some works are not proficient. This is not unexpected given that Valadon did not have any systematic formal artistic training. My argument in subsequent sections must be considered specific to the artworks I include in the discussion. This is tentative, but it is by interpreting Valadon's art in this light that it is possible for us to register Valadon's modelling career and labour more substantially in the art historical discourse. Instead of reinforcing the hierarchical segregation between artist and model, this approach underlies the relativity and relation between these two positions.

The Transformation Strategy

Before I proceed to investigate the articulation of embodied experience as a model in Valadon's art, I first need to scrutinise the process of her transformation from a model to an artist. Similarities in the career trajectories of Victorine Meurent and Suzanne Valadon are too conspicuous to be overlooked. Both came from non-middle-class families and lived in

⁷³ Birnbaum, *Women Artists in Interwar France*, pp.161-220.

Paris from childhood; both started professional modelling at an early age, Meurent at sixteen and Valadon at fifteen; both posed for famous avant-garde artists who are men and the lists of names overlap; both strove to be artists and exhibited works in public Salon exhibitions. The question is, what made the transformation from model to artist work for Valadon, so completely that she gained artistic and commercial success during her lifetime?

I argue that Valadon carefully played a gambit in the process of this transformation. A series of manoeuvres can be detected. One was joining the avant-garde milieu. The first occasion on which Valadon exhibited her work to the public was at *Salon de la Nationale* in 1894. Other major Salons at the disposal of Valadon were *Salon de la Société Artistes Français* (SAF), the former official Salon, and *Salon des Indépendants*, founded in 1884. It was in 1890 that *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* (SNBA) separated from SAF. Compared to the latter, SNBA tended to be more hospitable to artists and art categories previously rejected by SAF. Foreign artists were allowed membership. Works of decorative art, such as objects, vases and interior decoration, featured in the Salon from 1892. As Constance Hungerford argues, SNBA was not an avant-garde group, nor was it marginal.⁷⁴ Not only did it receive government support in forms similar to those previously reserved for SAF, many of its founder-members established themselves in previous SAF Salons. It is difficult to be certain of the exact reasons for Valadon's decision to exhibit with this recently founded group, as opposed to the more established but also more rigid SAF or the relatively more marginalised non-jury *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, where artists would often find themselves engulfed by amateurs. We do not know how well informed Valadon was in 1894. The decision might be driven by her hope that she could ask for a favour from her former employer, Puvis de Chavannes, the founder of SNBA. Since she did not give up and turn to

⁷⁴ Constance Cain Hungerford, 'Meissonier and the Founding of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', *Art Journal*, 48 (Spring 1989), no.1, pp.71-77 (71).

other Salons when she was turned down, a more plausible situation might be that Bartholomé, who exhibited four of his sculptures the same year, suggested this Salon to Valadon.

The drawings Valadon exhibited did not seem to incite a heated reaction. As I remarked earlier, the response of Puvis de Chavannes: ‘You are a model, not an artist!’⁷⁵, might have revealed to Valadon the rigidity of the barriers between models and artists. She stopped exhibiting in the grand Salons and sold her work through two private galleries, *Le Barc de Boutteville* and *Vollard*. This situation might have been due to the fact that she did not produce much work between 1894 and 1909, as she had committed more time to her family and taking care of Maurice Utrillo. Fifteen years later, in 1909, when she re-committed herself to art making and produced an extensive number of paintings, she turned to *Salon d’Automne*, which was founded in 1903. In the catalogue of *Salon d’Automne* 1906, Roger Marx, a French art critic and member of the Salon’s committee, stated the self-perception of *Salon d’Automne* to be ‘a place of understanding and combat, an asylum open to originality’.⁷⁶ *Salon d’Automne* also positioned itself as a transition from the closed exclusive exhibitions (*les expositions fermées*) to the unique Salon of open access (*le Salon unique, de libre accès*). Specifically, it addressed itself to self-taught artists as ‘inventors’ (*inventeur*) who claimed to be followers of the masters, to whom *Salon d’Automne* paid tribute. It is in these terms that Marx portrayed *Salon d’Automne*, at its emergence, as a democratic arena where every artwork, with its originality and expression of free will, was entitled to ‘public display and judgement’. The self-taught artist no longer needed an actual teacher, as he or she could claim the teaching of any previous master. This essay might have been drafted in response to the heated debate over the exhibition of artworks by a group of young artists, who received the name *les fauves*, at *Salon d’Automne* the year before. If it was

⁷⁵ Cited in Diamand-Rosinsky, ‘Suzanne Valadon’s Many identities’, p.36.

⁷⁶ Roger Marx, *Catalogue des Ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Dessin Gravure, Architecture et Art Décoratif* (Paris: Société du Salon d’automne, 1906).

not explicit before, from 1905 *Salon d'Automne* began to be identified with the avant-garde milieu. From 1911 onwards, Valadon abandoned SNBA and showed at both *Salon d'Automne* and *Salon des Independants*.

In terms of exhibiting occasions, Henri Matisse (1869-1954) had a similar trajectory to Valadon. He first showed at the SNBA in 1897. Subsequently, in 1899, his *Dinner Table* (1896-1897) at SNBA incited a hostile reaction. In 1901, Matisse sent his work to *Salon des Independants*. From its foundation in 1903, Matisse showed work at the *Salon d'Automne* while continuing to exhibit at the *Salon des Independants*. This shift from SNBA to its relatively avant-garde alternatives was, indeed, not unique. Belgian architect, Frantz Joudain (1847-1935) showed at SNBA before he broke away and founded the *Société du Salon d'Automne*. The turning away from SNBA by these artists might be due to it having become increasingly conservative, especially after the death of Puvis de Chavannes in 1898. Valadon's decisions should, therefore, not be regarded as exceptional resulted from her failure to obtain recognition at SNBA as a former model. Rather they are symptomatic of the concerns about freedom of exhibiting art, which are shared by many of her contemporary artists. These artists shared the conviction that, as Marx eloquently articulates, 'every creation has the right to meet the light and the public judgment, from the moment when an individuality expresses itself in the fullness of free will and originality'.⁷⁷

That said, I need to emphasise that there were other options available. The SAF Salon was another possibility. In fact, Meurent exhibited work for the last time in her life at the SAF in 1904, and joined the *Société* in 1903. Valadon's decision was, therefore, a manifestation of her conscious alignment with the avant-garde group, which might have been induced by two factors. First, she gained connection with the group through Utter, whose friends André Warnod and André Salomon were the first art critics to publish reviews of

⁷⁷ Marx, *Catalogue des Ouvrages*, 1906.

Valadon in journals. In the mature dealer-critic system of the art market of the 1910s, such reviews were instrumental in establishing Valadon's fame as an artist and her position within the avant-garde group. Second, the celebration of the art of Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), another self-taught artist, among the avant-garde circle, as exemplified by *Le Banquet Rousseau* that Picasso organised in 1908, would have been perceived by Valadon as a welcoming sign from the avant-garde group for artists who did not have formal or systematic artistic training.

Another move Valadon made in her transformation was to separate her modelling and artistic careers. In contrast with Meurent, who claimed herself to be *Olympia* in name cards to promote her art, Valadon simply constructed a new identity. Born Marie-Clémentine Valadon, she was called 'Maria' when she modelled. Information on the first years of her life is very scarce. In 1883, the same year her earliest work can be dated to, she adopted the professional name, Suzanne Valadon, a gesture marking the beginning of her artistic career. From then, her new identity as an artist gradually became established, and her new name, Suzanne, became widely known despite Degas continuing to address her as 'terrible Maria' in their private correspondence. Maria was so forgotten that she had to explain to Adolphe Tabarant that 'Maria was my other name, my name as a model' in their interview in 1921 after she had already gained a certain success as an artist.⁷⁸ The modelling years are, therefore, separated from her artistic career, but are not abandoned entirely.

Valadon was also very cautious about articulating her relationship with other artists, especially those for whom she had posed. In her interview with Tabarant, despite revealing her past as a model for Renoir and Puvis de Chavannes in extensive words, she did not mention that she modelled for Toulouse-Lautrec, but rather positioned him as her neighbour and the initiator of the idea of introducing her to Degas. When asked about Degas, with

⁷⁸ Adolphe Tabarant, 'Suzanne Valadon et ses souvenirs de modèle' p.629.

whom she was known to be friends from the early 1890s until his death in 1917, she insisted that she had never posed for Degas.⁷⁹ Valadon's understanding of her relationship with Toulouse-Lautrec might have been equivocal, but she made that with Degas very clear: she was neither his mistress, nor his student. Yet, as I suggested before, Degas introduced Valadon to the technique of soft-ground etching. In fact, many of Valadon's early paintings of female nudes shows a close connection with Degas. If the denial of Degas as a master reveals Valadon's desire to be considered Degas's comrade, with equal status, her conscious rejection of any sexual association with Degas indicates her awareness of her sexual vulnerability in the public imagination due to her previous modelling career and the damages it may bring to her artistic career.

Upon the separation of her modelling past from her artistic career, Valadon moved on to re-inscribe herself as an artist. Valadon once claimed to be the offspring of an illustrious family, abandoned as an infant on the porch of Limoges Cathedral, and introduced her biological mother, Madeleine Valadon, as her adoptive mother.⁸⁰ This is not the only version that came from her. When she modelled for Renoir, she presented herself as 'a very well brought-up girl' who pursued this career because her family had lost its fortune.⁸¹ Apparently the paucity of information on her early years allowed her to create various life experiences. Whatever motives Valadon had to make up stories about her background, these inconsistencies suggest her tendency to re-imagine herself, even at the time when she was modelling.

⁷⁹ Ronald Pickvance, "Terrible Maria": Degas and Suzanne Valadon', in *Suzanne Valadon: Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, Suisse, 26 janvier-27 mai 1996*, p.23-29 (24).

⁸⁰ Jeanine Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.11; also in Thérèse Diamand Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.15.

⁸¹ 'Une jeune fille bien élevée' in Jean Renoir, *Renoir* (Paris: Hachette, c1962), cited in Diamand-Rosinsky's article, p.37-38.

Years later, Valadon altered her date of birth from September 23, 1865 to June 6, 1867 in the passport and identity card issued on October 26, 1931.⁸² Along with the story of her compulsively drawing as a child, which she also mentioned in the 1921 interview with Tabarant, these changes to her biographical information contrive an image of Valadon as a young woman who should belong to the artistic community with her early displayed talent. As the discussion in the first section of this chapter shows, the episodes she narrated echo the recurring motifs in biographies of artists. It is in this way that Valadon strived to be considered and documented, first and foremost, as an artist.

A Conscious Player of the Avant-Garde Gambit

Valadon's management and manipulation of her life stories discloses her consciousness of the underlying social and cultural implications of being an artist, as well as her desire to be considered one. Her artworks throughout the years display her knowledge of various iconographic resources and encounters with other artists who were her contemporaries. Heath identifies a number of artists, such as Manet and Degas, with whom she thinks Valadon's art is in conversation.⁸³ There is one name she has missed, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), whose influence on Valadon's art is the only source the artist herself admitted.⁸⁴ John Storm traced her interest in Gauguin's work back to 1889 at the *Exposition Universelle*.⁸⁵ On 10 June 1889, an exhibition organised by Gauguin and his friends opened within the grounds of the *Exposition Universelle* in the *Café des Arts*. The exhibition

⁸² Passport No. 58382 delivered in Paris on 10/26/1931, *Archives*, MNAM. The same information is stated on her identity card (No.23381) delivered on 26, October 1931, *Archives*, MNAM.

⁸³ Heath, 'Bodies, Gazes and Images', pp.228-258.

⁸⁴ *Suzanne Valadon: Musée National d'Art Moderne*, exhibit. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1967).

⁸⁵ Storm, *The Valadon Drama*, pp.111-114.

eventually became known as the Volpini exhibition after the café's proprietor. At the exhibition, Gauguin showed seventeen works, eleven prints that constitute the *Volpini Suite* and six paintings, all of which were produced when he was in Brittany, Martinique and Arles.

No evidence suggests that Valadon met Gauguin in person, yet subtle traces of Gauguin's art can be discerned in Valadon's art produced immediately after the exhibition. Heath's discussion of Valadon's approach to artistic reference reveals that Valadon did not make identical copies of the works of any artist. Even though she adopted a similar pose or composition, she would always make changes, making it more difficult to identify her sources, while demonstrating her contemplation. A drawing, *Le Conte à l'Enfant* (c.1890) (Figure 2.6) she completed around the time of the Volpini Exhibition, is an example of her attempt to absorb Gauguin's style, as the trees in the background appear Gauguinesque. However, its subject, reading to a child, and its composition suggest that she may have been aware of Cassatt's *Mrs. Cassatt Reading to her Grandchildren* (1880) (Figure 2.7). The setting of the room is almost identical but reversed, with a window on the left side and a door, or a larger window, on the right side. The young child on grandmother's right looking up to her face in Cassatt's painting is sitting in front of grandmother in Valadon's.



Figure 2. 6, Suzanne Valadon, *Le Conte à l'Enfant*, c.1890, drawing

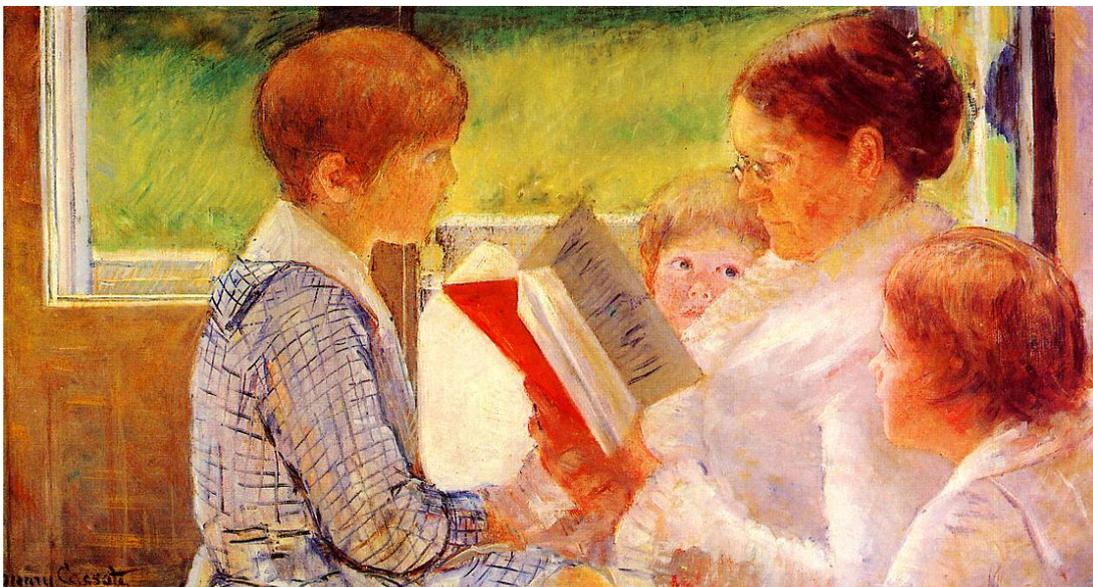


Figure 2. 7, Mary Cassatt, *Mrs. Cassatt Reading to her Grandchildren*, 1880, oil on canvas, 55.7×100 cm

Mathews notices the similarities in style that Valadon's works share with French Symbolism of the time, but her analysis of the content leads to the argument that Valadon's representations of the female body do not conform to the Symbolist consideration of woman as nature. Mathews thus concludes that Valadon's art is fundamentally different from

Gauguin's.⁸⁶ As sophisticated artists as they are, both Valadon and Gauguin were developing their artistic styles and ideas throughout the years from 1889 as a result of their encounters with various social-artistic relations and structures. Although the works Mathews discusses cover a temporal range of over 20 years and a variety of subjects, it is still too selective a sample to draw such a general conclusion.

Mathews' conclusion about the characteristics of Symbolism is a retrospective summary of the underlying similarities she discerns in the works of those who were later recognised as Symbolist artists. Her understanding of Symbolism may, therefore, be different from Valadon's perspective as a contemporary colleague. To take a step back; the definition of Symbolism was first given in an article on Gauguin in 1891 by French art critic, Albert Aurier. Aurier defines Symbolism, as opposed to Realism, as a way of depicting the world, not aimed at imitating nature or reflecting sensational experience, but rather attempting to reflect ideas.⁸⁷ To Aurier, 'the strict duty of the Ideist painter is to make a reasoned selection from the multiple elements of objective reality, to use in his work only the lines, forms, general and distinctive colours that enable him to describe precisely the Ideic significance of the object'.⁸⁸ Art could be called Ideist if 'its unique ideal is the expression of the idea,' and Symbolist if it 'expresses the idea by means of forms'.⁸⁹ The article was published in *Mercure de France* and its argument was addressing Gauguin's *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, a painting exhibited in 1889. Given Valadon's excitement about the exhibition, it is very likely that she read this article. Informed by Aurier's interpretation of Gauguin's art and his definition of Symbolism, Valadon might have made some attempts. In fact, traces of

⁸⁶ Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, pp.178-211.

⁸⁷ Albert Aurier, 'Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin', *Mercure de France*, T.2, (mars 1891), no.15, pp.155-165.

⁸⁸ Aurier, translated and reproduced in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1994), p.200.

⁸⁹ Aurier, in *Symbolist Art Theories*, p.200.

Symbolist tendency can be found in some of her artworks, manifested by her choice of subjects as well as her manipulation of forms.



Figure 2. 8, Suzanne Valadon, *La Lune et Le Soleil, or La Brune et la Blonde*, 1903, oil on cardboard, 100×81cm

Gauguinesque landscapes appeared many times in Valadon's drawings around the period and also in her first oil painting of a female nude, *La Lune et Le Soleil, or La Brune et la Blonde* (1903) (Figure 2.8). This was Valadon's earliest attempt to paint women in a natural setting. Both the women are rendered naked. The blonde woman is standing and holding a twig above the head of the brunette, who assumes a seemingly passive pose, sitting on the ground with her legs straight. They look at each other with their bodies nearly fully exposed to the viewer. There is a certain degree of ambiguity in terms of the poses. The blonde could either be taking the plant away from, or placing it on, the brunette, while the pose of the brunette captures her in the middle of a movement that could be in the middle of either lying down or getting up.

Equally ambiguous is the title of the painting. The two titles are given in the *catalogue raisonné* of Valadon's work compiled by Paul Pétridès in 1971, but in catalogues of the earliest exhibitions of her work, which were all after her death, it is listed as *La Brune et la Blonde*.⁹⁰ We cannot be sure whether Valadon intended the painting to have two titles. Nor can we be absolutely certain which woman corresponds to which celestial body. The woman with blonde hair has a fairer skin, whereas the skin of the brunette is of a more red-brown tone. This striking contrast of their skin tones might serve to indicate their correspondence with the sun and moon, with the blonde being the embodiment of the sun and the brunette the moon. If we interpret the painting in this light, it could be about the sun empowering the moon by giving light to it, a natural phenomenon. If we do not take the alternative title, *La Lune et le Soleil*, into consideration, the different skin colour could be indicative of race difference. In fact, the red-brown tone of the brunette is just like the skin colour of Tahitian women, as depicted by Gauguin. The juxtaposition would appear more problematic if one thinks of the iconographical tradition of the association of the blonde with innocence or purity and the brunette with excessive sexuality or the idea of the *femme fatale*. The painting could, thus, also be a warning about the danger of female sexuality which may appear deceptively passive. Both the embodiment of nature and the motif of the *femme fatale* were popular subjects among Symbolists artists, and this could be one of Valadon's first engagements with Symbolism.

In one of Valadon's most recognised works, *La Chambre Bleu* (1923) (Figure 2.9), she employs the traditional iconography of a reclining woman, depicting a contemporary woman lying on her bed with a cigarette in her mouth and a pile of books near her feet. She

⁹⁰ Paul Pétridès, *L'œuvre Complet de Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Compagnie française des arts graphiques 1971), catalogue No. P.11. The earliest two exhibitions that the painting showed, as listed in the entry of the painting in Pétridès's catalogue, are *Exposition d'Œuvre Anciennes et Récentes de Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Galerie Pétridès, 1938), 2; *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Galerie Pétridès, 1942), 14.

wears a pink camisole and green-striped pyjama trousers. With its reclining pose and the open curtains, the painting cannot escape comparison with Manet's *Olympia* (c.1865) (Figure 1.11). However, this is apparently not *Olympia*. First and foremost, she is clothed. She is more voluptuous. She smokes. She reads. She contemplates. She does not make her bed. There are other details that go missing. She does not have a black maid with a bouquet. She is not wearing that pair of slippers, a sign of *Olympia* being a courtesan. Nor is she accompanied by a cat, an indication of promiscuity. All representational clues lead Mathews to believe this is probably a bohemian intellectual.⁹¹ This is a woman who is wearing her relaxing pyjama. She is not a woman whose body is made an available commodity on the market. She resists to be sexualised or objectified in front of the viewers' as well as the artist's gazes.

Mathews's desire to set Valadon's work in contrast with Symbolist tradition prevents her from citing another painting to which Valadon might have referred, *Manao Tupapau* (1892) (Figure 2.10) by Gauguin, which itself takes *Olympia* as its reference. Griselda Pollock suggests that the painting is Gauguin's big stake in his play of avant-garde gambits.

To make your mark in the avant-garde community, you had to relate your work to what was going on: *reference*. Then you had to defer to the existing leader, to the work or project which represented the latest move, the last word, or what was considered the definitive statement of shared concerns: *deference*. Finally your own move involved establishing a *difference* which had to be both legible in terms of current aesthetics and criticism, and also a definitive advance on that current position. Reference ensured recognition that what you were doing was part of the avant-garde project. Deference and difference had to be finely calibrated so that the ambition and claim of your work was measured by its difference from the artist or artistic statement whose status you both acknowledged (deference) *and* displaced.⁹²

As an integral project, the three moves are inter-dependent and mutually determined. This suggests a model to think about art production as the result of a series of negotiations and

⁹¹ Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, p.207.

⁹² Griselda Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits, 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, c.1992), p.14.

incorporations rather than a mere realisation of the artist's talent, or their passive response to 'influence'. It suggests that the sociology of art making in the avant-garde is creatively competitive and mutually reflecting. To take a lead in the game of avant-garde practice requires conscious analysis of the latest play. It means knowing what the latest move implies, analysing it and seeking to show that understanding while moving the game in a new or different direction. As to Gauguin's gambit, Pollock argues that Gauguin had to take Manet's *Olympia* — the modernist female nude—as a reference. He had to show deference to the authority of Manet as a way to indicate where he, Gauguin, wanted to be placed in terms of participating in this avant-garde gambits. Exoticism was his difference.⁹³



Figure 2. 9, Suzanne Valadon, *La Chambre Bleue*, 1923, oil on canvas, 90×116 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, Paris

⁹³ Pollock, *Avant-garde Gambits*, p.28-34.



Figure 2. 10, Paul Gauguin, *Manao Tupapau*, 1892, oil on canvas, 116.05×134.62 cm, Albright–Knox Art Gallery, New York

To apply this model to our consideration of Valadon's *La Chambre Bleu*, the vigorously floral-patterned sheets, the brownish decorative background behind the curtains, and the tonal gradation of the skin colour might act to evoke *Manao Tupapau*, and hence, the signifier 'Gauguin'. The painting earned Gauguin his position as the new leader of avant-garde art. By referring to this painting, Valadon completed her steps of reference and deference. The differences, however, are as obvious as the similarities. The background in *Manao Tupapau* is constituted by brushstrokes of several colours. In the middle, there is a conspicuous patch of brown, the shape of which echoes the contour of the female body right below. The colour is comparatively darker in the central background, creating a stronger sense of depth, as if the body of Teha'amana, the girl represented, is going to be sucked in. Thus, apart from the presence of the spirit of the dead on the other side of the bed and the

girl's alert gaze, the entire space creates a sense of fear and dread. On the contrary, the space in *La Chambre Bleue* is lighter coloured and more vivid. The repetitive pattern, the curving lines in the background which echo the curves on the sheets and curtains and the visible brushstrokes create a busy space. This is in dramatic contrast with the heaviness of the woman's body and the solemnness of her expression. There are two possible interpretations of this effect. The first is that the space resembles her mental activity, as she is preoccupied by thinking, while the second is that she is so absorbed in thinking that she ignores the busyness of her surroundings. Nevertheless, the animating background serves to create a space that the body and the mind of the woman inhabit. The presence of the woman is highlighted, rather than subsumed, by the space.

The difference between *La Chambre Bleue* and the *Manao Tupapau* does not only lie in one being a relaxing, contemplating Parisian woman, while the other a frightened girl who lives in a French colony. As noted by Pollock, whereas *Olympia* constructs a disturbing space of modernity where a woman's body is for sale as a commodity, *Manao Tupapau* transforms Teha'amana's body into a sexual object and naturalises it with colonial, racial and aesthetic discourses imported from and returned to Paris. One question is why Valadon chose to clothe the woman, given her interest in female nudes. Not unexpectedly, Valadon produced a large number of drawings and paintings of reclining women, from various angles, with various postures, using various models. Among these works, only four represent clothed women, with the earliest dated to c.1917 and the latest 1932. In this particular painting, even though the woman is clothed, her sensuality is not compromised, due to her full round breasts and the clear shape of her pubic area revealed by the draperies of her trousers. Yet, she has to be clothed in order to be different enough from both *Manao Tupapau* and *Olympia*, to remove her from the prostitutional Paris and the colonial exotic. She becomes modern in a different way. By dressing in such manner, her desire is registered. She is a woman who lived in early

twentieth century Paris, who negotiated herself a space in the city. She is a woman for herself. She is a modern woman, of whose existence modernity is a necessary condition .

The look and lifestyle of modern woman is captured vividly in Victor Margueritte's 1922 best-selling novel, *La Garçonne*. It portrays an independent young woman, Monique Lerbier, living in Paris after the First World War.⁹⁴ Born to a bourgeois family that received its wealth by supplying explosives during the war, the protagonist has an arranged marriage engagement, to which she looks forward, until she surprises her fiancé and his mistress. Refusing to compromise, she decides to escape the marriage and start an art and decoration store of her own. Monique starts a new life, which reflects the changes of her appearance and behaviour. She wears short hair, adopts male dress and smokes, just like the woman depicted in *La Chambre Bleue*. As the narrative proceeds, the protagonist has several romantic relations, homosexual and heterosexual, and promotes sexual and political equality between genders. The look of a woman in the book is taken as symptomatic of a change in both certain lifestyle, as well as a political stand. When Monique's old acquaintances see her on the street with her short hair, they say 'it changes her, of course, that hair. Today, for the woman, that's the symbol of independence, if not strength'.⁹⁵

We know that Valadon welcomed the notion of modern woman and was aware of her stereotypical image with trousers, cropped hair and smoking in public. At some point no later than 1930 Valadon cut her own hair short, and completed a portrait of herself with short hair in 1931. Even if Valadon had not already read the book in 1923, she must have been aware of its existence as the book caused a scandal and heated debate after its first publication. Margueritte was pursued for 'offending public decency' and his name was removed from the

⁹⁴ Victor Margueritte, *La Garçonne: Roman* (Paris: Flammarion, c1978).

⁹⁵ 'Ce que ça la change par exemple, cette coiffure! Aujourd'hui, pour la femme, c'est le symbole de l'indépendance, sinon de la force.' Margueritte, *La Garçonne*, p.110.

Legion of Honour.⁹⁶ The woman on the bed in *La Chambre Bleu* is, therefore, exemplary of women who lived independent and liberated lives. She neither signifies the underlying capitalist rule of trading her body for money in modern society, nor embodies a timeless vision of exotic passive femininity. The body is inhabited by a subject who is truly modern, as without modernity her existence would be impossible. It is in these terms that Valadon completed her *difference* in the avant-garde gambit.

The Nude

La Chambre Bleu was completed in 1923 when Valadon's art career matured. It is exemplary of a body that does not conform to the notion of ideal beauty. Betterton notes that Valadon emphasises the physicality of the body as she chooses to represent its volume and age.⁹⁷ This is even more visible in Valadon's paintings and drawings of female nudes. For a long time, the Western tradition of the female nude required an idealised body to be stripped of any traces that resemble any individual woman, as idealised beauty is not supposed to, and cannot, be achieved by any human. A representation of this body that conform to the academic aesthetic at the time when Valadon started producing art in late nineteenth century is characterised by the pale-coloured and tender skin, as well as soft body as if it was boneless. The traditional practice of art making and modelling confines the contact between the artist and the represented body to vision, i.e. the painter observes the model. The representation does not necessarily inscribe the artist's, or anyone's, experience of the body. When it comes to Valadon whose body had been the object of observation, modelling may

⁹⁶ Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer, 'Becoming Modern: Gender and Sexual Identity after World War I', in *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris between the Wars*, ed. by Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, c2003), pp.3-20 (4).

⁹⁷ Betterton, 'How do Women Look?', pp.18-21.

have affected both her experience of her body as well as her relationship with the bodies she depicts in her art. Without returning to the simplified assumption that Valadon painted nude because she used to pose in nude, I wish to consider the modelling labour as a corporeal experience that has a prolonged impact on one's perception of the body.

Having already produced several drawings of girls at puberty, in 1909 Valadon made her first attempt to approach this subject matter in the medium of oil painting. The outcome are two large paintings, *Nu au Miroir* (1909) (Figure 2.11) and *La Petite Fille au Miroir* (1909) (Figure 2.12), both over 70cm wide and over 90cm high. The latter was exhibited in 1913 at *Salon d'Automne*, but the former was never exhibited in public during Valadon's lifetime. In *Nu au Miroir*, a girl is rendered from a frontal view with most of her body exposed. Her maturing breasts and lack of pubic hair suggest that she is at puberty, not yet having completed the physical transition into a woman. She has probably just come out of her bath as she is carrying a white blanket in her left hand and her skin is tinted with a reddish hue. She is holding a small mirror in her right hand, at which she is looking. The number of figures is multiplied in *The La Petite Fille au Miroir*. Here, a girl is accompanied by a mature woman who is holding a mirror, probably the same mirror from *Nu au Miroir*. The direction of her head implies that she is probably gazing into the mirror and a glimpse of her little breasts reveals that she is also at puberty.

Representing mirror and woman in art has a long history, making it a rich field for art historical study, not to mention that the complicated philosophical question regarding the nature of reflection.⁹⁸ I am going to touch on a small section of this diverse and discursive conversation here. Pertinent to our discussion is the iconographical interpretation of the

⁹⁸ For an overview of the motifs with which mirror has been associated since antiquity, see Laurie Schneider, 'Mirrors in Art', *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 5 (1985), no.2 283-324. For the discussion of the specific motifs of vanitas and veritas, see Helena Goscilo, 'The Mirror in Art: Vanitas, Veritas, and Vision', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 34 (2010), iss.2, article 7.

mirror to symbolise woman's vanity. One example is Hans Baldung's *Death and the Maiden* (1510) (Figure 2.13). In this painting, the infant, young woman, old woman and skeleton represent the four stages of life. While the infant and the old woman have seen the skeleton, a signifier of death, the young lady is so preoccupied with her reflection in the mirror that she turns her back on death. Despite the fact that the old woman is trying to intervene, death has put the sandglass right above the head of the young woman, indicating the passing of time. The left hand of the old woman is supporting the back of the mirror. This contact indicates that she, who was once a young lady, still approves this self-obsession. That is to say, age does not give her enough wisdom to refuse vanity and she still makes vain attempts to reject death. This *vanitas* painting is, thus, not only a reminder of death, but also a mockery of woman's vanity and ignorance of their destined fate of losing the youth and beauty. The mirror in such interpretation becomes a moralising device for an admonition.

In his discussion of the Western tradition of the female nude, the English art critic John Berger introduced the additional argument that there is always an implication that 'the subject (a woman) is aware of being seen by a spectator'.⁹⁹ According to him, there is simultaneously a surveyed and a surveyor within a woman. Women are constantly looking at themselves and at the same time are aware of being seen. Berger suggests that this type of representation renders woman in the image an object of the desire, who is often presumed to be a man. The painting speaks of his sexuality, not hers. Berger also critically discusses the iconography of a woman with a mirror.

You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting Vanity, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure.

⁹⁹ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1985), p.49.



Figure 2. 11, Suzanne Valadon, *Nu au Miroir*, 1909, oil painting, 90×71cm



Figure 2. 12, Suzanne Valadon, *La Petite Fille au Miroir*, 1909, oil on wood, 104×75cm



Figure 2. 13, Hans Baldung, *Death and the Maiden*, 1510, oil on panel, 48.2×32.7 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

The real function of the mirror was otherwise. It was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight.¹⁰⁰

That is to say the mirror serves to compel the woman to confront the spectacle of her body. The mirror is not a moralising symbol, but rather a device to construct the woman as a sight even for herself, aligning her with the spectator who is positioned as a masculine subject.

The notion that the mirror enhances the pleasure of the spectator is exemplified by *Venus at the Mirror* (1647-1651) (Figure 2.14) by Diego Velázquez (1599-1660). The goddess lies on a bed with her entire back exposed. She is accompanied by Cupid holding a mirror in front of her, in which her otherwise hidden face is reflected. The mirror reveals and testifies her beauty to the viewer.¹⁰¹ Thus, not only is the presence of the viewer, who is

¹⁰⁰ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p.51.

¹⁰¹ As Andreas Praters marks, mirror images appear in large numbers in Northern Italy during high Renaissance. The theme of Venus looking at herself in front of a mirror has been explored by Italian painters, such as Titian and Rubens, both of whom were closely associated with the Spanish court. In paintings of this theme, mirror is assigned a more active role than passively revealing the passer-by. For a detailed interpretation of the painting, see Andreas Praters, *Venus at Her Mirror: Velázquez and the Art of Nude Painting* (Munich; London: Prestel, 2002)

presumed to be a man, acknowledged, he is also privileged for he occupies a position to enjoy the beauty from two angles. The mirror expands, even multiplies, the pictorial space, and it has a similar function in paintings of subject matter other than female nudes. For example, in the *Moneychanger and His Wife* (1514) by Quentin Massys (1466-1530) the reflection in the mirror gives a glimpse of the view of the town outside a window. In such instances, the reflection in the mirror, as a representation within a representation, could be considered a message from the artist to the viewer. The mirror is no longer a neutral scientific device. It is invested with desires and expectations of both the artist and the viewer. As a matter of fact, the reflection in the mirror in the centre of the *Rokeby Venus* is not realistic. Gavin Ashworth's photographic reconstruction of the composition suggests that it is the naval part of the body that the spectator can see through the mirror from his position.¹⁰² It is, therefore, the artist's deliberate decision to show her face in it. But Velázquez does not want the spectator to fully probe into the space of the goddess. The reflection is so vague that the viewer is not able to capture any detail in it. What is more, the viewer is not positioned right behind the woman's head, so the reflection is definitely not what the woman is looking at. With all these tensions and ambiguities, Velázquez explores the potential of the mirror as a site of negotiation between artist and viewer.

¹⁰² For a reproduction of this photograph, see Praters, *Venus at Her Mirror*, p.25.



Figure 2. 14, Diego Velázquez, *Venus at the Mirror*, 1647-51, oil on canvas, 122.5×177 cm, National Gallery, London

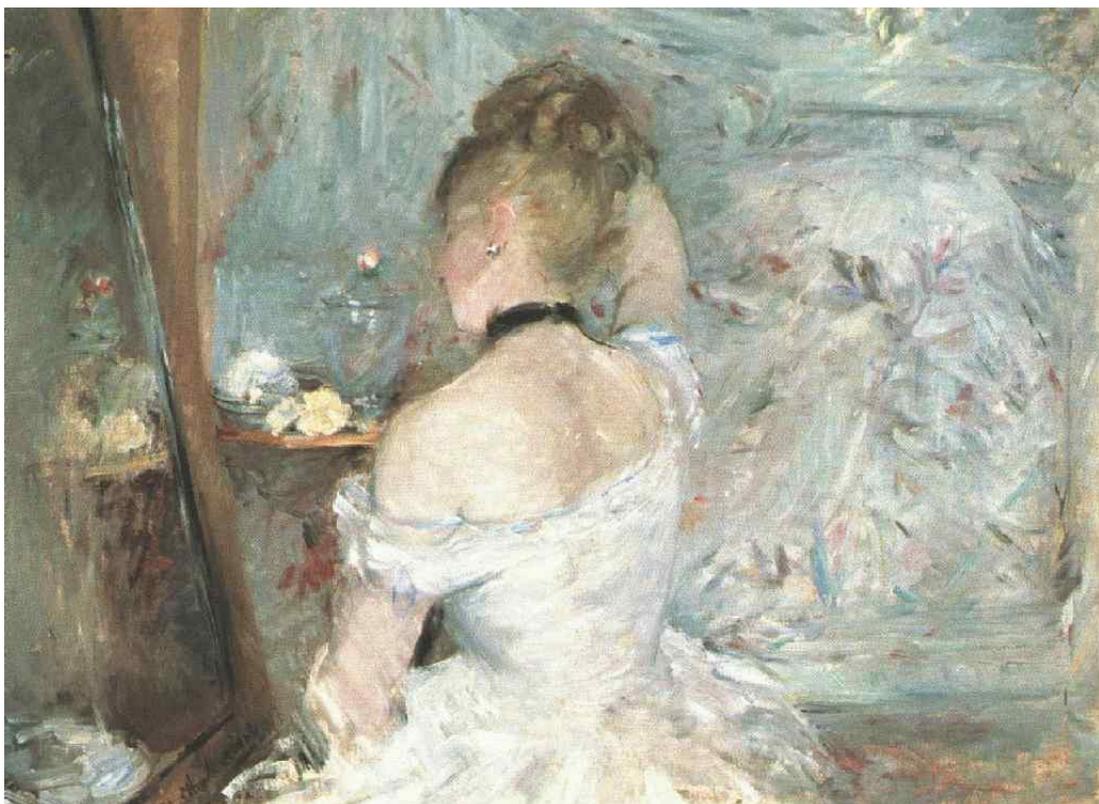


Figure 2. 15, Berthe Morisot, *Femme à sa Toilette*, 1875-1880, oil on canvas, 60.3×80.4 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Modernist artists inherited the subject of a woman with a mirror from their predecessors and modernise it by favouring a specific occasion, woman at toilette. When artists who were women took up the theme, the mirror became a site of struggle and resistance. Tamar Garb reads a potential subversion in *Femme à sa Toilette* (1875-1880) by Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) (Figure 2.15), in her analysis of the mirror reflection.¹⁰³ There is no reflection of the woman but some vigorous brush strokes in the mirror. As ‘a painting within a painting’, the image in the mirror frame, ‘while depicting one woman at her make-up, frees another from it as her only legitimate destiny’.¹⁰⁴ In so interpreting, Garb suggests that the mirror is an interface between the represented and the artist. There are two women present in the painting. One is dressing up within the pictorial frame and the other painting on the canvas. It is the latter that the mirror frame captures. What the woman dressing up sees exactly in her mirror is not visible to the viewer. Morisot reveals a corner of the mirror the woman is looking at and cuts the rest off with the picture frame. Garb perceives Morisot, an artist who was a woman, in that corner. Maybe this is also what the woman sees. She sees herself as both a woman and an artist. She paints and she spends time in front of the mirror like other bourgeois women. The separation is not necessary.

The toilette also promised artists who are women an acceptable subject to engage with modern nudes.¹⁰⁵ In 1891 Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) produced a dry point and aquatint print, *La Toilette* (Figure 2.16), depicting a half-naked woman in front of a mirror with her hands in a water basin. In the same decade, another American artist who was a woman, Lucy Lee-Robbins, painted two nudes, *À la Toilette* in 1892 (Figure 2.17) and *Le Miroir* in 1895

¹⁰³ Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France* (London: Thames & Hudson, c.1998).

¹⁰⁴ Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, p.130.

¹⁰⁵ We here recall again Baudelaire’s call for seeking modern nudes in bed, in bath and in anatomy theatre. Baudelaire, ‘The Salon of 1846’, p.119.

(Figure 2.18).¹⁰⁶ In Cassatt's print, the woman's entire back is exposed and she is bending to wash her hands or face. The space framed by the mirror is filled with monotonous peacock blue with a glimpse of her hair and part of her forehead on the left side. Neither her face nor other parts of her body are shown. The mirror reflection refuses to join the voyeuristic gaze, even though the woman's nakedness and absorption appear to invite sexualisation and objectification. In contrast with the ambivalent resistance embedded in Cassatt's print, Lee-Robbins' paintings appear more conventional in terms of the way the nudes are posed. The relationship between the viewer and the represented woman, which is mediated by the mirror, in *À la Toilette* resembles that in the *Rokeby Venus*. The idealised body and sensual pose, which allow a glance at the woman's breast, essentially eroticise her. Her face is visible in the mirror, just like the Venus in the *Rokeby Venus*. Her gaze acknowledges a presumed viewer. However, while Velázquez's *Venus* seems relaxed and the viewer's eye is positioned at a point slightly above the naked body of the goddess, in Lee-Robbins's painting the gaze is intense and the viewer is positioned at the woman's lower left. She looks down to the viewer from the mirror and appears calm. She is not tantalising, but dominating. She is not a lovely goddess. Rather she evokes her sister of another extreme, a *femme fatale*, whose sensuality is transformed into a weapon. The mirror either discloses her deadly power to the viewer and thus warns him, or is a reflection of his own hidden fear of her excess sexuality. Lee-Robbins's 1895 painting, *Le Miroir*, appears less threatening. A woman is looking and smiling at her reflection in the mirror with her entire body exposed. The viewer's gaze is paralleled by her own, but this time the mirror is for her pleasure. Even though the painting exemplifies Berger's argument that the woman joins the spectator in making her own body a sight, it provoked concerns among contemporary critics as the woman seems to take too much

¹⁰⁶ Much is remained to be studied with Lucy Lee-Robbins. Most of her works are now lost but their existence is evidenced by photographs and reproductions in contemporary Salon reviews. For the discussion of her biography and art works of female nude, see Brandon Brame Fortune, 'Not above Reproach': The Career of Lucy Lee-Robbins', *American Art*, 12 (Spring 1998), no.1, pp. 40-65.

pleasure in her self-image.¹⁰⁷ This anxiety over the body being not entirely available for the viewer's pleasure summons a second type of nudity that Berger identifies, paintings that frustrate the viewer by constantly reminding him that the nude body is not for his purpose.¹⁰⁸

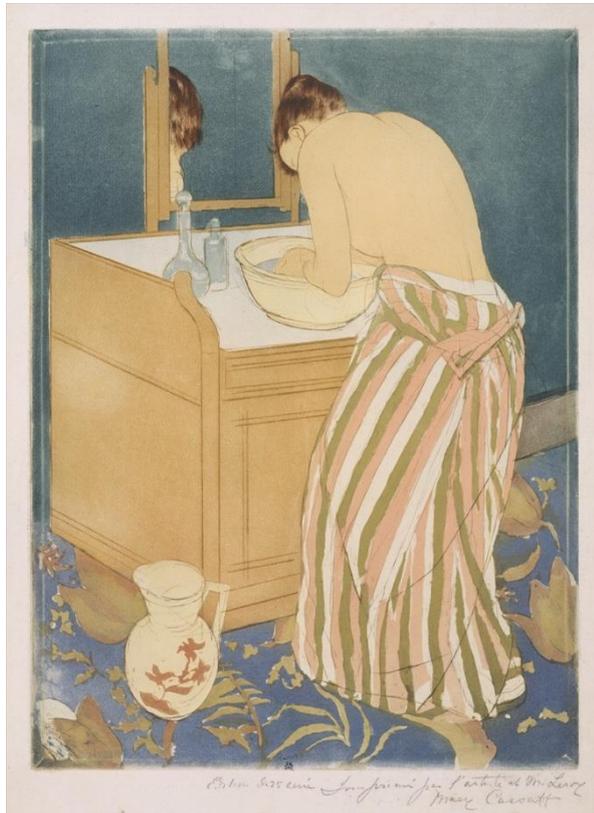


Figure 2. 16, Mary Cassatt, *La Toilette*, 1890–91, Drypoint and aquatint, printed in colour from three plates; fourth state of four, 43.2×29.8cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

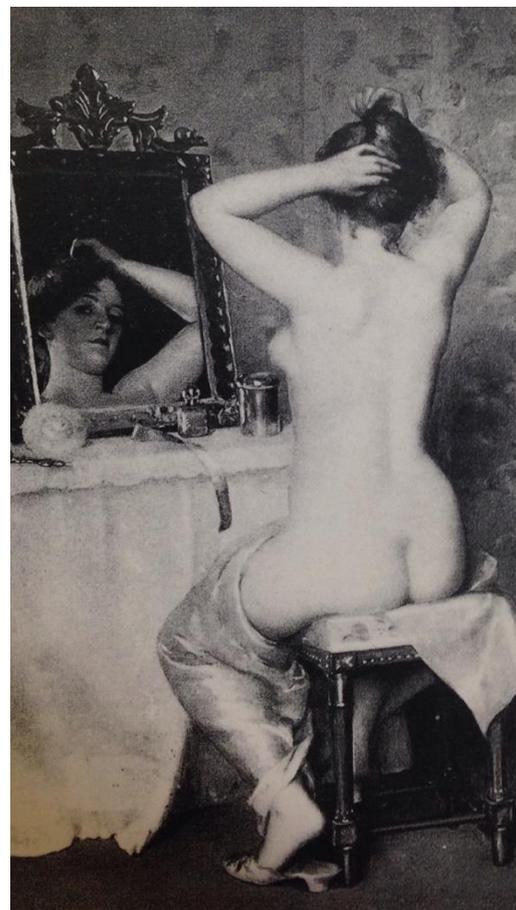


Figure 2. 17, Lucy Lee-Robbins, *À la Toilette*, 1892, oil on canvas

¹⁰⁷ Garb, *Bodies of Modernity*, p.122.

¹⁰⁸ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp.57-64.



Figure 2. 18, Lucy Lee-Robbins,
Le Miroir, 1895, oil on canvas

As in the works by Morisot, Cassatt and Lee-Robbins, the mirror in the two paintings by Valadon resists its traditional iconographical association with women's vanity. Yet, Valadon's attempt is slightly different. First, both girls hold relatively small hand mirrors, which are portable and for informal use, in the sense that one would rarely dress-up in front of them. Frequently, they are used to examine places that are out of sight even with the aid of a table mirror or a freestanding mirror. In Valadon's paintings, the two girls are observing a specific part of their bodies with the device. According to their poses and the positions of the mirrors, the girl in *Nu au Miroir* is probably looking at her right heel and the one in *La Petite Fille au Miroir* her right shoulder. Reflections of the mirror in both paintings are not made visible to the viewer, making it impossible to be certain of at what the girls are looking. In *Nu*

au Miroir, the colour tone of the reflection resembles that of the floor, whereas in *La Petite Fille au Miroir* it is filled with dark colour. Considering the source of light and the intended position of the viewer, these reflections cannot be realistic. There should be reflections, but they are deliberately left concealed. This explicitly rejects the intrusive vision of the spectator. The usage of a hand mirror and the places at which the girls are gazing decide that this is a temporary moment. If there is a hint of vanity, it must be in their concentration on appearance. Yet these body parts, the back of the shoulder and the calf, could hardly form a spectacle in public. This refusal is enhanced by the fact that rather than mature adult women, the girls represented are at puberty, an age rarely made the object of sexualisation in the Western tradition of the nude. In fact, in these scenarios, the girls are more likely observing rather than admiring themselves. Their gazing is an act less of vanity than scientific curiosity about their changing bodies, one of the characteristics of the adolescent stage.

The mirror is, therefore, not for the expansion of voyeuristic pleasure of the external viewer, but for the girls' benefit. This extends to the realm beyond the space in the pictorial frame to the artist's studio. In *Nu au Miroir*, the girl is standing in a traditional contrapposto pose. Whatever part of her foot or calf she is observing, it would be visible to her without the aid of the mirror, but that would require a more twisted and, therefore, laborious pose, an example of which can be found in Degas's painting, *Après le Bain* (c.1895) (Figure 2.19) and statuette, *Danseuse Regardant la Plante de Son Pied Droit* (1910-1911) (Figure 2.20). A similar circumstance can be imagined with *La Petite Fille au Miroir*. In the same year Valadon made two drawings (Figure 2.21 & Figure 2.22) of a girl looking at her shoulder by lifting one arm and holding the hand mirror herself. This is a much more tiring pose than the one in *La Petite Fille au Miroir*, where the maid is holding the mirror for the girl. Valadon deliberately adopted ease poses in these two paintings of young girl, in which mirror serves as an instrumental device.

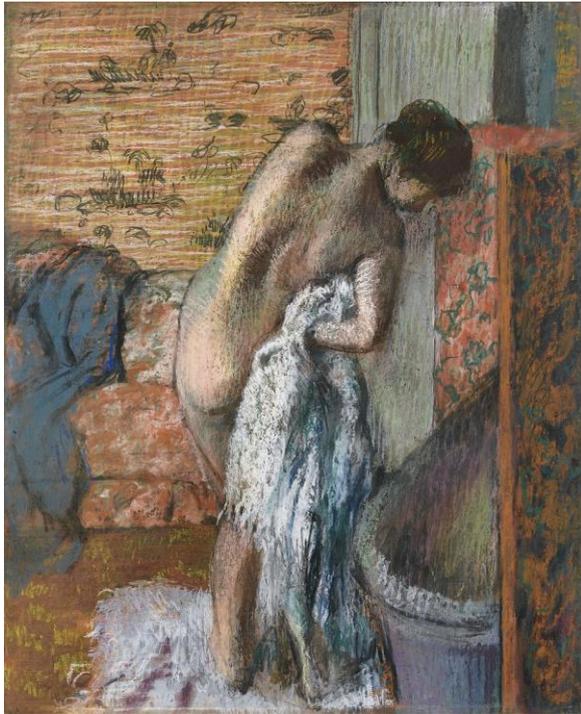


Figure 2. 19, Edgar Degas, *Après le Bain*, c.1895, pastel on paper, laid down on board, 72×58 cm, private collection



Figure 2. 20, Edgar Degas, *Danseuse Regardant la Plante de Son Pied Droit*, 1910-1911, bronze, 48.2×26×11.5 cm

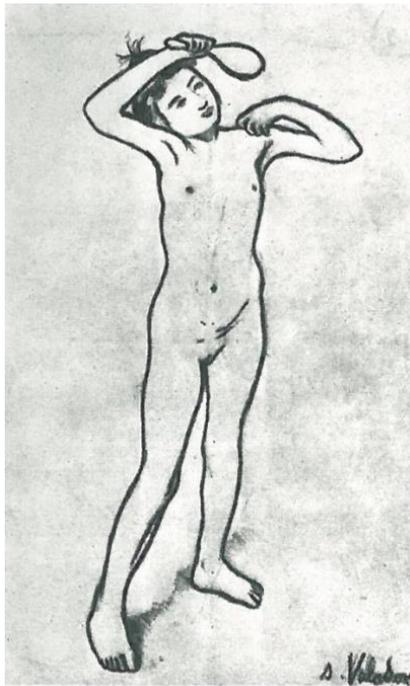


Figure 2. 21, Suzanne Valadon, *Fillette Nue au Miroir*, c.1909, pencil drawing on paper, 33×20 cm

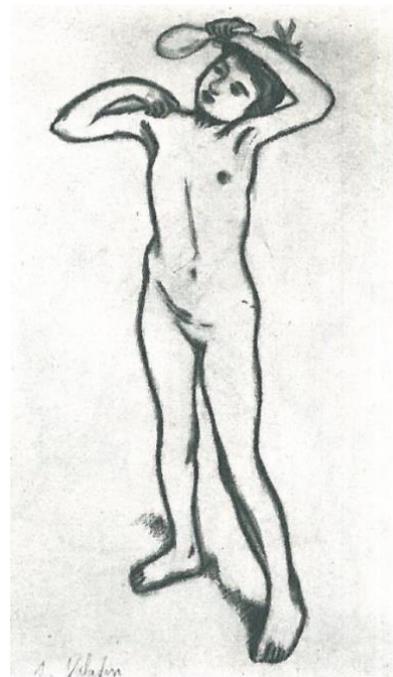


Figure 2. 22, Suzanne Valadon, *Jeune Fille Nue au Miroir*, c.1909, pencil drawing on paper, 33×19 cm

Most likely Valadon had someone pose for these two paintings. ‘I would not be able to draw a sugar bowl from memory’.¹⁰⁹ This is among the most frequently quoted words of Valadon, often used to testify to the naturalistic tendency in her art. Paul Pétridès marks this as Valadon’s preference for representing ‘the reality perceived by her eyes’.¹¹⁰ What I take from it is an indication of the artistic practice that Valadon employs in accordance with an embrace of a realistic aesthetic. That is, she inclines to make art with the presence of the object or the individual. The fact that most of Valadon’s earliest drawings are of her family members or acquaintances, including Maurice Utrillo, Madeleine Valadon, Miguel Utrillo (the man recognised as Maurice’s biological father) and Catherine (her servant), is further proof of her penchant for working with live models. In light of this conclusion, the convenience and comfort offered by the hand mirror to the depicted girls extends to the models posing for Valadon in the studio.

Modelling is a tiring job. Alice Michel starts her article with how arduous it was to pose for Degas.

[Pauline] made her last effort to stay balanced on her left leg, while her right hand was held with pain and his right foot lifted backwards.

Looking sour, the young woman slipped her nude feet into the slippers placed next to her and walked down the model’s stand, without saying a word, to go to the wood-burning stove. She rubbed her leg, numbed from the difficult pose, and occasionally threw a glance toward the angry old artist who continued to shape his statuette.

Had he therefore grumbled after her all morning? ‘Hold yourself better than that!’ ‘Lift your foot!’ ‘The very right torso!’ ‘Don’t be slouched!’ Hasn’t she done her best to give a good pose?¹¹¹

Degas is known for his difficult poses. Pauline must have been asked to pose for one of Degas’s dancer statuettes, to which he devoted his last years. It is not easy not to ‘slouch’

¹⁰⁹ Rey, *Suzanne Valadon*, 1922, p.5.

¹¹⁰ Paul Petridès, *Suzanne Valadon*, exhib.cat. (Paris: Galerie Paul Petridès, 1959), unpaginated.

¹¹¹ Alice Michel, *Degas et Son Modèle*, rev. edit. (Paris: L’Échoppe, 2012), pp.9-10. Originally published in two issues of *Mecure de France* (1 February 1919), pp.457-478; (16 February 1919), pp.623-39.

when standing on one leg, yet it is a job requirement for a model to hold difficult poses for a prolonged amount of time. As an excellent model who was reported to be able to hold a pose for hours without moving, Valadon must have been very aware of the bodily visceral painfulness of posing. Thérèse Diamand Rosinsky noticed the casualness of the poses assumed by Valadon's models, which in great contrast with Degas's demande for absolute stillness in his models.¹¹² I have to emphasise that the most important implication of this resistance of visceral poses is that Valadon fully recognised the labour that model contributed to the production of art. That is to say, Valadon acknowledged that the pose is a site of negotiation between the artist and the model. This suggests a kind of relations between artist and artwork, and between artist and model, that are not entirely about domination or control. The gaze has changed in the process of acknowledging two related subjects of labour.

When Betterton talks about the physicality of the bodies depicted by Valadon, she refers to their ugliness as signified by age and excess voluptuousness. Courbet adopts a similar visual language in his *Bathers* of 1853. What I find unusual in these two paintings of Valadon is the blunt suggestion of the skeleton. Looking at the spine of the girl in *La Petite Fille au Miroir*, located right at the centre of the painting, each vertebra is clearly delineated. The shade and light on the side of the body faintly suggest her ribs. The body looks realistically scary. It should be pointed out that the very depiction of vertebrae is not common in Valadon's oeuvre, but her concern with the skeletons is manifest in many of her paintings and drawings. The closest visual analogy with the delineated vertebra I could find are photos of an anorexic patient (Figure 2.23) published in *Nouvelles Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* 5 in 1892.

¹¹² Rosinsky, *Suzanne Valadon*, p.15.

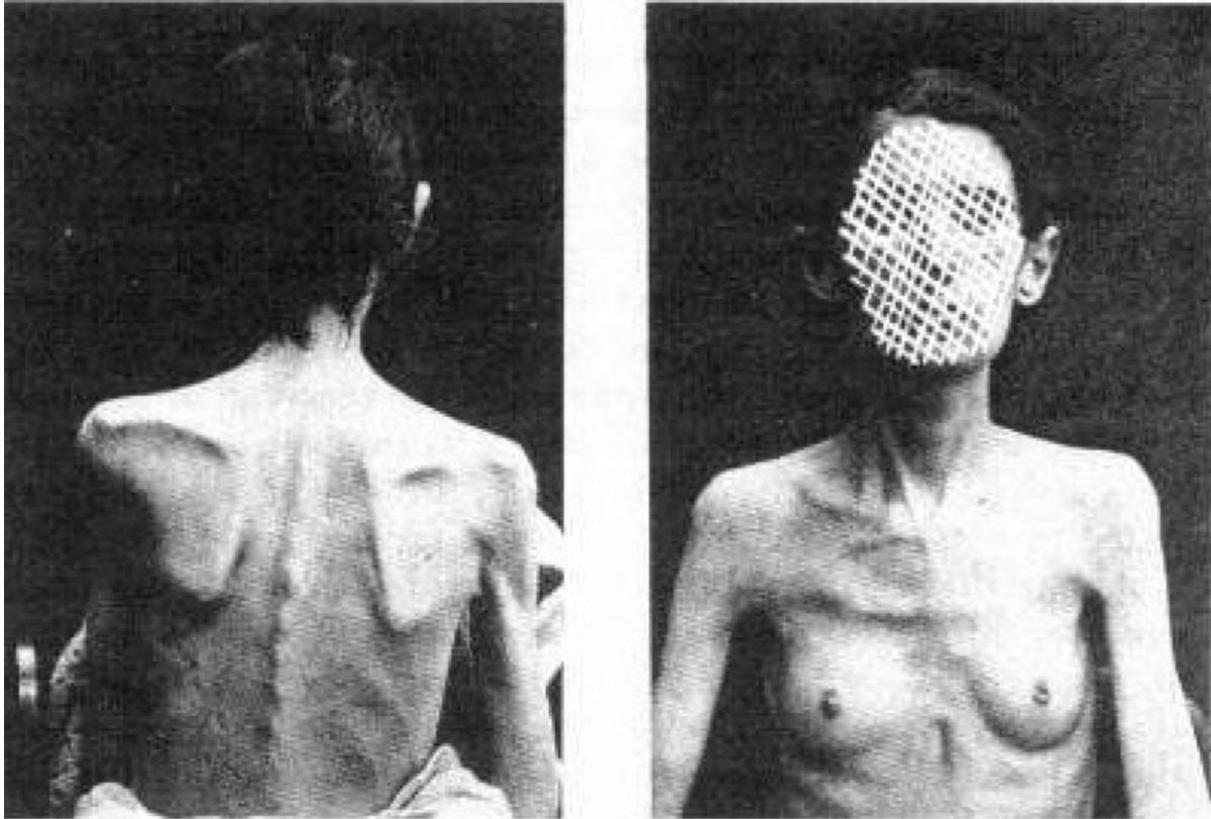


Figure 2. 23, Louis Bataille, "Deux Cas d'Anorexie Hystérique," *Nouvelles Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* 5 (1892), plate opposite p. 277

Nouvelles Iconographie de la Salpêtrière was a journal produced between 1888 and 1918, as a result of the prevalence of its predecessor, *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*. Under the direction of Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist, *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* was produced in three volumes between 1876 and 1880, and contained Charcot's findings on hysteria. Most intriguingly, it contained photographs of Charcot's patients, all women, who were captured in the midst of hysterical attacks, as illustrations and supporting evidence of Charcot's four-stage theory of hysteria. The journal was widely circulated in European countries. Compared to its predecessor, the later *Nouvelles Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* expanded its focus from hysteria to other neurological diseases and published photos of patients, both men and women, documenting their body deformations as a result of their medical conditions.

In her investigation of Charcot's study of hysteria, Elisabeth Bronfen aptly argues that by primarily focusing on the corporeal symptoms and presenting them to the public through the publication of journals and his well-known Tuesday lectures, Charcot made the hysteric female body a spectacle, where discourses of pathology and gender intersected.¹¹³ The photographic reproductions effectively constructed a new repertoire of images of the body. In their nosological approaches to various neurological diseases and making the corporeal symptoms into spectacle, Charcot and his team significantly privileged the body over the psychic topology. Whereas the images in *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* were primarily of women's facial expressions and clothed bodies, the second journal, *Nouvelles Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*, incorporated many photographs of naked deformed bodies or body parts. Both journals effectively breached western iconographic traditions, but in different ways. With its concentration on hysterical women, *Iconographie Photographique* offered bodies that were multiplied. For instance, in the case of Geneviève Legrand, one of the best known patients of Charcot, the patient oscillated between a seductress and an ecstatic saint. The traditional separation of representations of virgin and whore is, thus, transgressed.¹¹⁴ The photographic reproductions in *Nouvelles Iconographie*, on the other hand, offered alternative representations of bodies. The extremities in these photographs, from fine parts, such as the hands and tongue, to the entire gesture, spoke a language utterly different to the *académie*, a category of photographs of naked women with various poses circulated to artists for the purpose of artistic training. As Heather Dawkins points out, it required the skill, knowledge and inspiration of an artist to transform the *académie* into the ideal, or the nude.¹¹⁵ The *Nouvelles Iconographie* photographs, therefore, posed a new challenge to the artist, as they present bodies that were fundamentally in contradiction with

¹¹³ Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and Its Discontent* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp.175-239.

¹¹⁴ Bronfen, p.178.

¹¹⁵ Dawkins, *The Nude*, pp.12-16.

the notion of nude, a theme which was among the most established and highly regarded in Western art history. In his book *The Nude: the Study in Ideal Form* (1956), Kenneth Clark defines the classic ideal of the western nude as ‘a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed’.¹¹⁶ By critically interrogating Clark’s arguments, Lynda Nead convincingly contends that the nude Clark discusses serves to contain and regulate representations of the corporeal body, specifically the female sexual body.¹¹⁷ The bodies presented in *Nouvelles Iconographie* were unregulated. Not only were they out of the control of the consciousness of the subjects, they were also deemed to be outside the norms of society. By submitting these bodies to his charts, Charcot’s own nosological theory was, however, an attempt to regulate these bodies.

The study of the body in the project on neurology guided by Charcot had an impact beyond the field of pathology. Possibly lured by the unconventional, often extreme forms of the body presented as demonstrations of the phases of hysteric fits, artists and actors were often found among the audience of Charcot’s lectures. Art historians such as Richard Thomson, Anthea Callen and Joanne Heath suggest the possibility that Degas might have borrowed some poses from Paul Richer’s photos recording the stages of hysteria, and applied them to his representations of the bathers.¹¹⁸ Dawkins’s research into Degas’s series of artworks reveals that contemporary critics, such as Octave Mirbeau and Maurice Hemel, noted the rejection of female beauty in the works, but defended this radical form of

¹¹⁶ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p.3.

¹¹⁷ Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹¹⁸ Richard Thomson, *Degas: The Nudes* (London: Thames and Hudson, c1988), p.102; Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.52; Heath, pp.41-42.

representing a woman's body by deeming it sincere and truthful.¹¹⁹ Charcot's bodies were, therefore, incorporated into the avant-garde by being resolved into realistic aesthetics.

It might be through Degas that Valadon gained access to these photos. Yet she adopted a different approach to Degas, as the latter used the hysterical bodies to explore extreme poses that would cause additional pains to models. Valadon did not try to reproduce the poses. In fact, the poses in her paintings are often more relaxed. Aiding devices, such as mirrors, are included, and the setting is often designed to offer support. In *La Petite Fille au Miroir*, the girl is balancing her body with both hands pressed on the sofa. A similar pose can be found in Degas's *The Tub* (1885-6) (Figure 2.24), in which the woman supports herself by pressing her elbow on her knees. Exposed to the viewer is her back. Three of the vertebrae are vaguely indicated by three patches of cyan. This is the only painting in the Bathers series that we can discern such details.

Valadon depicts the vertebrae with much clarity (Figure 2.25). In fact, they are positioned in the centre of the painting. It is in the visibility of the vertebrae and their centrality that the radicalness of Valadon's intervention lies. In comparison to Degas, Valadon's re-presentation of the deformed body is more straightforward and rigorous. This, I propose, may partly result from Valadon's previous experience as a model. To fully understand the physical experience of modelling, I tried to hold a pose as still as possible for ten minutes. It was an easy pose, just sitting straight up by my desk. It was painful within this ten minutes. After two or three minutes, I started to feel parts of my body that I would not normally notice, such as the clavicle and ribs. I imagine if I attempted a more challenging pose, such as bending my back, I would feel the stretch of each vertebra. The experience as a former model had, thus, allowed Valadon to translate the extremity of the diseased body in

¹¹⁹ Dawkins, *The Nude*, pp.65-85.

Nouvelles Iconographie into her paintings. The vertebrae are the transforming site of Valadon's sincere memory of the visceral corporeal experience of the modelling labour.



Figure 2. 24, Edgar Degas, *Le Tub*, ca. 1885-86, Pastel on blue-grey paper, 69.9×69.9 cm, Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington

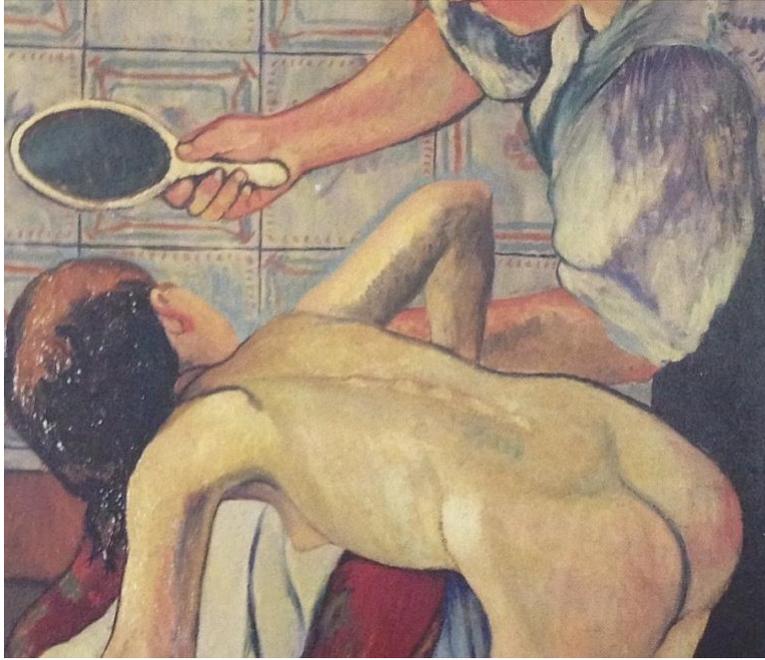


Figure 2. 25, Suzanne Valadon, *La Petite Fille au Miroir* (detail), 1909

Apart from the realism embedded in Valadon's representations of bodies, there also exists a sense of expressiveness. Poses, colours and effects of light and shade often suggest a mood. In *Nu Couché sur un Canapé* (Figure 2.1), the body is crouching on a small sofa, enhancing the sense of shallowness of the space as a result of the cropped view. Her skin has a red tone with touches of green, blue and grey, which represent the deadliness of a body, echoing her uneasiness. In *Nu Allongé sur un Canapé* (Figure 2.2), the same woman is now lying on the same sofa, but this time she seems more at ease, playing with her hat. This is like a back-stage scene where the atmosphere is more relaxed, enhanced by the pinker colour of her skin. In *La Chambre Bleu*, the bulkiness of the body not only highlights the figure, but helps establish a sense of absorption and contemplation by effectively separating it from the animating settings. The sense of disturbance floating in *Nu au Miroir* and *La Petite Fille au Miroir* is manifested by denial of mirror reflections of the over-stretched right arm of the girl in the former, the indication of the skeleton in the latter.

In most cases the relation between the artist and the body he/she depicts is confined to vision or imagination, i.e. the artist observes or imagines the body. Even though in some cases the artist and the model are involved in a sexual relationship, the artist remains unable

to experience the body in the way the model does. As a result, the artist can only transform it in the way he/she observes or thinks of it. With her experience as a former professional model, Valadon's relation to the depicted body is more than just observation, imagination or identification, both of which suggest an external position. She could inhabit it. I am not suggesting that Valadon's relationship with her body is better than or superior to her colleagues, but there exists a difference in terms of the registration of the body with the viewer. Traditionally, the masculine viewer possesses the body while the feminine identifies with it. The works of Valadon discussed in this essay reject this possession and provide a different kind of identification, which is no longer based on sexuality but rather on a shared experience of a body that is put into a pose.

The Self-Portraits

Another series of art works that may allow us to detect traces of Valadon's experience and meditation of her past as a professional model is her self-portraits. Over the course of her artistic career of more than half-century, Valadon constantly depicted herself in her artworks, sometimes alone and sometimes with her family. A total of fourteen single-figured self-portraits were executed, with the first in 1883 and the last in 1931.¹²⁰ Indeed, the earliest artwork of Valadon that survives is a pastel self-portrait on paper (1883) (Figure 2.26). The subtlety of the tonal gradation, details of the facial features, correct proportion and shifted composition indicate that this may not be her first work. This representation of herself in a green-blue tone has effectively become the first of her *œuvre*, reproduced in full page on the

¹²⁰ There is another drawing that depicts her sitting on a stool with no facial features rendered. It is, therefore, questionable whether this qualifies as a portrait. Its entry number in the catalogue raisonné compiled by Pétridès is D160.

first page of the *catalogue raisonné* compiled by Paul Pétridès.¹²¹ All fourteen works (Figure 2.27- Figure 2.38) are bust-length with ten of them in three-quarter view and four in frontal. In terms of the medium, six are drawings on paper and eight are oil paintings on canvas. In three of the eight paintings Valadon renders herself naked. There are several reasons for the artist to take up this genre. The fact that the earliest surviving work of Valadon's is a self-portrait and that she frequently used Maurice Utrillo and her mother as models in her early drawings suggests that her initial taking up of the genre could be due to the penury of the artist. Yet the constant return to this genre, even after she became financially affluent, indicates a persistent interest.

¹²¹ Paul Pétridès, *L'œuvre Complet de Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Compagnie française des arts graphiques 1971).

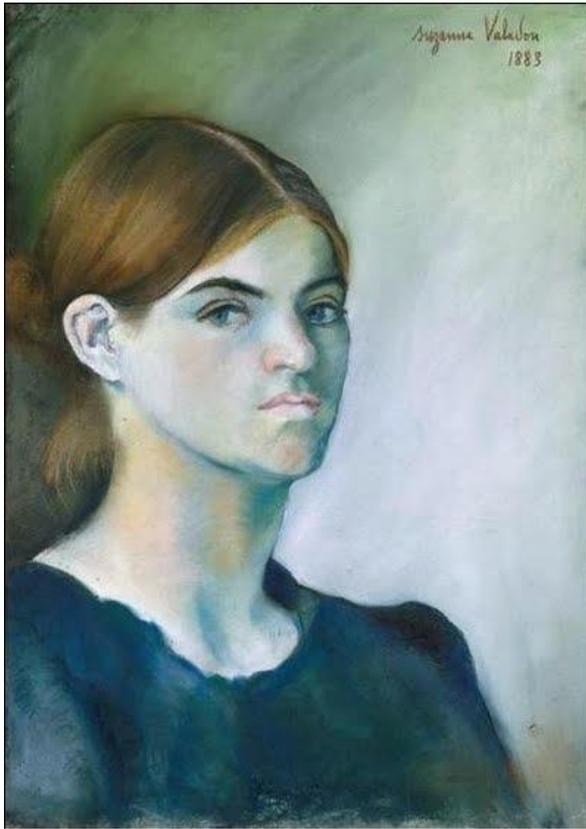


Figure 2. 26, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1883, Pastel on paper, 43.5×30.5 cm, Musée National d'art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, Parris

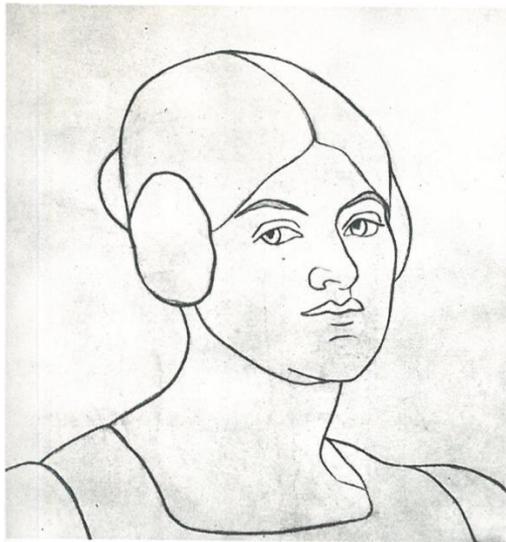


Figure 2. 27, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1893, pencil on paper, 25×23 cm

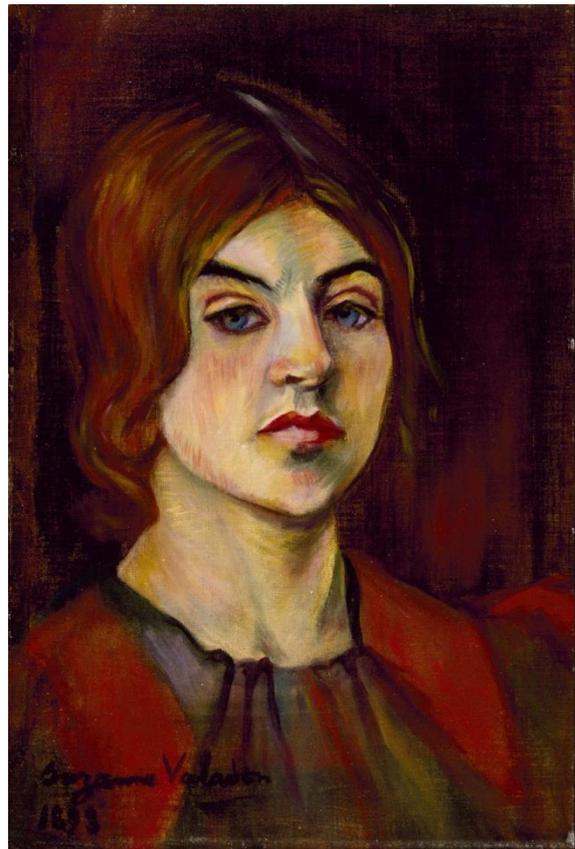


Figure 2. 28, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1893, oil on canvas, 26×40 cm

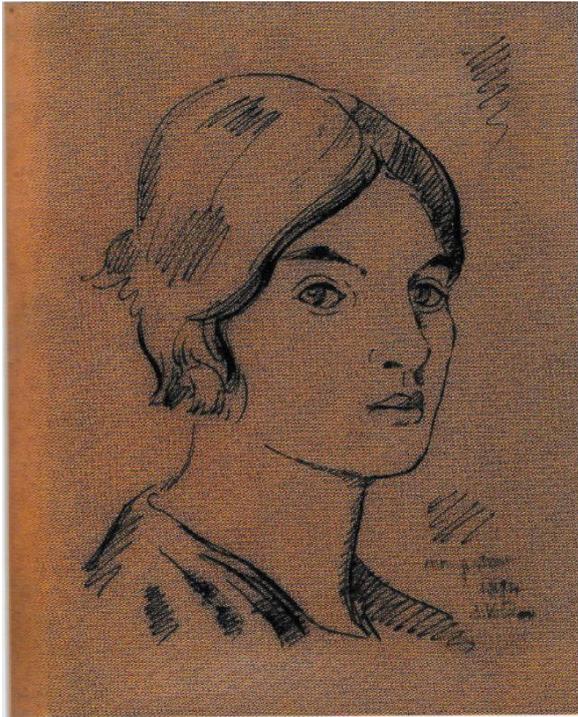


Figure 2. 29, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1894, drawing, 25×23 cm



Figure 2. 30, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1902, drawing in pencil and pastel, 20×13 cm



Figure 2. 31, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1903, sanguine drawing, 33×39 cm

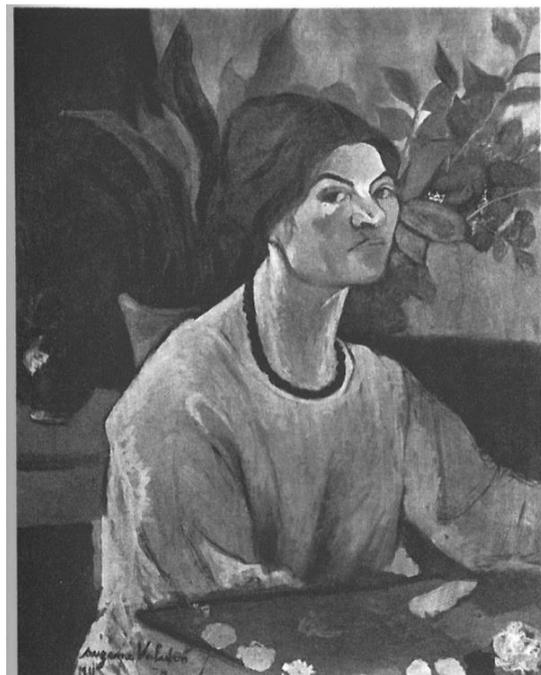


Figure 2. 32, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1911, oil painting



Figure 2. 33, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, c.1916, oil on canvas, 46×38 cm

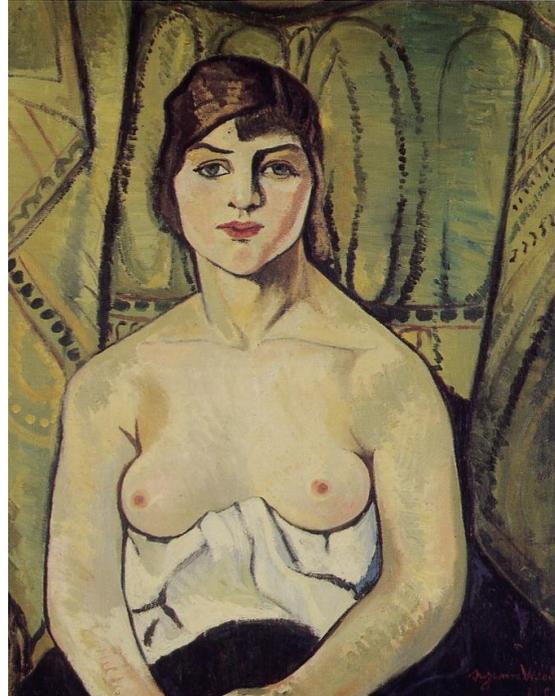


Figure 2. 34, Suzanne Valadon, *Femme aux Seins Nus (Autoportrait)*, 1917, oil painting, 65×50 cm

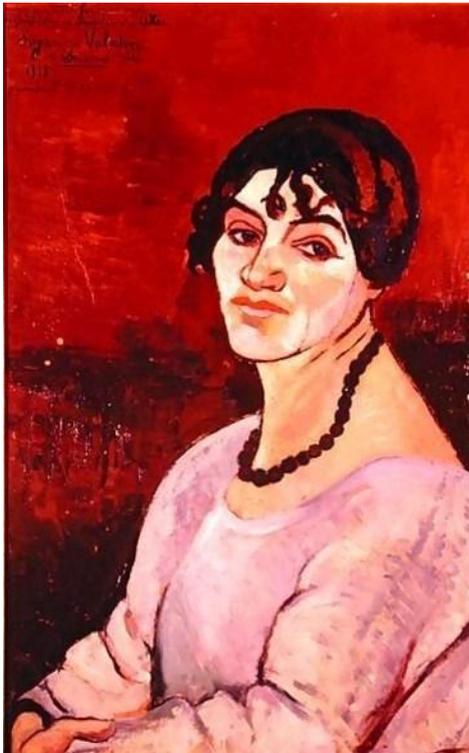


Figure 2. 35, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1918, oil on cardboard, 53×38 cm



Figure 2. 36, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1924, oil painting, 81×65 cm

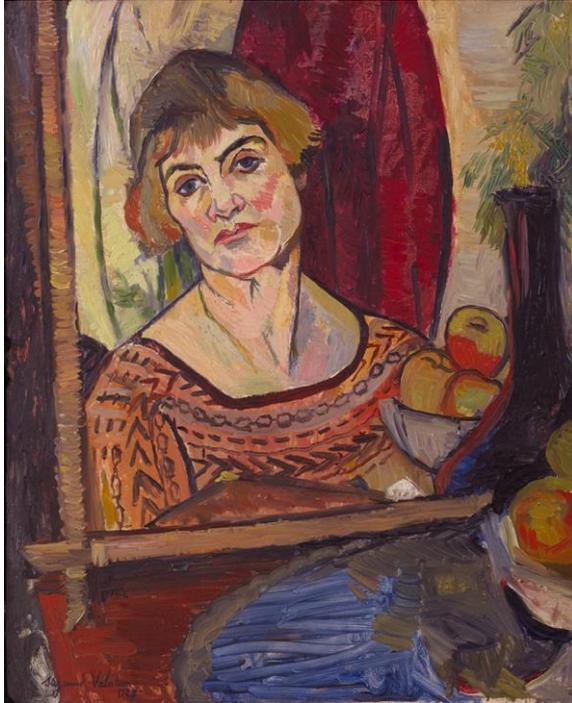


Figure 2. 37, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait*, 1927, oil on wood, 62×50 cm

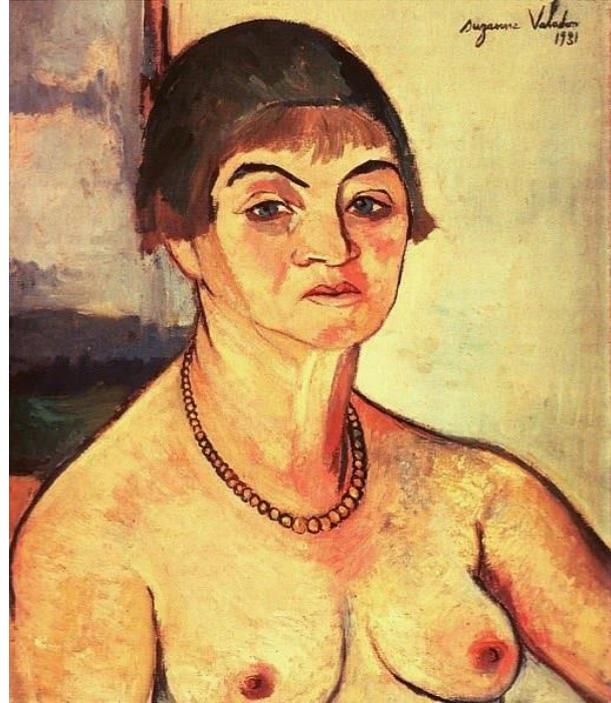


Figure 2. 38, Suzanne Valadon, *Autoportrait aux Seins Nus*, 1931, oil on canvas, 46×38 cm

Valadon's engagement with the subject of the self-portrait should be understood in light of the prevalent interest in the genre shared by many contemporary artists. This common interest itself needs to be situated within the centuries-long tradition of artists' self-portraiture in Western art. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Rembrandt (1606-1669) are two often discussed examples of artists who repeatedly painted themselves throughout their careers. In the period under discussion, Impressionist artists preferred to depict each other rather than themselves on their canvases. Academic artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were not concerned with self-portraiture either. It was not until a generation later, with artists such as Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Émile Bernard (1868-1941) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954) that the genre was revived. Artists who are women, such as Helene Schjerfbeck (1862-1946), Gabriele Münter

(1877-1962) and Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907), also displayed great interest and produced self-portraits throughout their careers.

With their engagement with self-portraiture, these artists effectively transformed and modernised the genre, but this transformation varied depending on the gender of the artist. In his book, *Matisse Portraits* (2001), John Klein defines the genres of portraiture and self-portraiture in the context of modern art, especially their relation to the concepts of likeness and character.¹²² What is problematic with likeness and character, Klein suggests, is that both presume criteria that cannot be scientifically illustrated and perspectives that are not fixed or unchanging even though they appear to be objective attributes. Questions about the extent to which the likeness must be accurate enough for the work to qualify, or the character according to whose perception, make it difficult to attain a neat and clear definition. Modernist artists' artistic practice and aesthetics do not make it easy. The conscious rejection of realistic depiction and the tendency towards expressiveness, even abstraction, which is partially a result of the challenge that the invention of photography posed to artists, almost make the concept of likeness irrelevant.

Representations of models, still life and even spaces, which aim to express the character of a subject, posit another question. In her critical essay, *Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting*, Carol Duncan aptly argues that women's bodies were represented by avant-garde artists who were men in early twentieth century artworks in ways that assert their virility, and thus demonstrate their artistic control.¹²³ In fact, 'the assertion of virility becomes sublimated, metamorphosed into a demonstration of

¹²² John Klein, *Matisse Portraits* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹²³ Carol Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting' in *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*, Carol Duncan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.81-108.

artistic control, and all evidence of aggression is obliterated.’¹²⁴ The controlling and dominating gaze of the artist is thus, naturalised. Representing women, among other subject matter such as landscape and still life, has become a reflexive process, of which the creativity and artistic freedom of the artist is the real subject matter.

Klein is aware of this tendency. In his research, he expands the definition of self-portraiture, with the concept of the surrogate or symbolic self-portrait, ‘in which the presence of the artist is implied through other personages or objects’.¹²⁵ Indeed, Matisse himself perceived his art this way. In an interview with André Verdet in 1952, he stated that ‘the work of art is the emanation, the projection of oneself. My drawings and canvasses are pieces of myself. As an ensemble, they constitute Henri Matisse’.¹²⁶

Such kidnapping of subject matter and genre either for the expression of the masculine qualities of the artist, as Duncan contends, or the manifestation of the presence of the artist, as Klein states, calls for new perspectives on the self-portraits of these artists. If the artist could assert himself through other genres, what then is the reason for making self-portraits? Some conventional reasons have been outlined by Frances Borzello, including ‘to show their skills’, ‘to boast of their status’, ‘to emulate past masters’, ‘to give reign to the wit not required by customary subject matter’ and ‘to publicise one’s artistic beliefs’.¹²⁷ Many of these approaches are identified by Klein in his study of Matisse’s later self-portraits. The assumption underlying this reasoning is the existence of an already informed and confident artist who, attracted by the autonomy and candour of the genre, uses it to promote a certain self-image or experiment with form and expression. In his investigation of Matisse’s early

¹²⁴ Duncan, ‘Virility and Domination’, p.90.

¹²⁵ Klein, *Matisse Portraits*, p.13.

¹²⁶ This is translated from French and cited in Kathryn Brown, ‘Against Autobiography: Henri Matisse’s Essays on Art’, *Life Writing*, 12 (January 2015) issue 1, pp.43-58 (44).

¹²⁷ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women’s Self-Portraits* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), pp.17-18.

self-portraits, Klein proposes another possibility, that through presenting himself in various poses and costumes, the genre could, for Matisse, be ‘a metaphor for acquiring self-knowledge, for completeness’.¹²⁸ The self-awareness as an artist, therefore, does not necessarily exist prior to the production of a self-portrait, but might come along with the process.

The identification of creativity with virility, along with the claim of the latter as the image of the artist through his self-portraits and other works, made the situation particularly difficult for the artist who was a woman in the early twentieth century. There was already a different history of women’s engagement with self-portraiture. Borzello reveals in her study on self-portraits by artists who are women that while artists who are men adopted the genre to articulate their artistic ambitions and professional skills, artists who are women needed to negotiate these aims with the gender discourse of the time.¹²⁹ As a result, tenderness, youth, beauty, such feminine traits and respectable avocations are often found in these self-portraits. It was not until the last two decades of the nineteenth century that a new type of self-portrait by artists who are women was seen, in which they depicted themselves as serious determined artists, sometimes in smocks and often with palettes and brushes in their hands. The emergence of the bohemian artist at the turn of the twentieth century offered the possibility for women to foster self-images that indicated independence and liberation from bourgeois definitions of femininity. What emerged was a proliferation of diverse self-representations of women: woman who paints, woman with a cigarette, woman in top hat and suit, woman with her naked model. Self-portraiture as such underlines the complexity of the subjectivity of its maker as it is a representation of and by her. Unlike their predecessors from the sixteenth to early nineteenth century, who would represent themselves in roles other than artists, such as a

¹²⁸ Klein, *Matisse Portraits*, p.35.

¹²⁹ Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves*, pp.20-35.

mother, music instrument player or reader, artists who are women in the twentieth century deliberately avoided these respectable activities and reinforced their freedom *as women* in the era of modernisation. One aspect of such freedom lies in the admission of women into the *École des Beaux-Arts*, giving them access to the same training and prizes reserved for men only before 1903. In this sense, the act of making art professionally is itself a signification of the experience as a modern woman. This freedom was, however, not endless. Negotiations with contemporary gender discourse were still necessary. This is best illustrated by the fact that while artists who are men frequently included models of the opposite sex in their self-portraits, none of the artists who were women in the early twentieth century rendered themselves with models who were men. On the one hand, this alludes to the centrality of women's bodies in avant-garde art. On the other hand, it effectively fixes the association of modelling, as a profession, with women. In the trope of artist with a model, the model is assumed to be a woman. At the expense of women who were models, artists who were women made a compromise.

There were also artists who were women pronouncing their presence as artists in works other than self-portraiture. Emilie Charmy's *Interior in Lyons: The Artist's Bedroom* (1902) is one example. This surrogating of a surrounding space as a signifier of the artist's creativity can be found in artworks of Avant-gardist artists who are men. In general, however, this tendency is confined to the artist's own working and living space, and hardly extends to representations of other persons or objects. It seems that artists who were women did not assert their domination over subjects and objects. As Duncan states, 'her task was to master her own image'.¹³⁰

Ten out of fourteen of Valadon's self-portraits are representations of her in three-quarter view, with eight turning to the right and two turning to the left. The other four are all

¹³⁰ Duncan, 'Virility and Domination', p.92.

in frontal view. The lack of variation in the poses suggests that these portraits were not merely for the purpose of studying the human face. None of the three-quarter view self-portraits has recognisable objects in the background, whereas the frontal ones have relatively more details. Only in one of these self-portraits is Valadon rendered with a palette in her hand (Figure 2.32). The other portraits bear no indication of her identity as an artist. The only clue would be the title, *Autoportrait*. The one with the palette was not included in any exhibition during Valadon's lifetime. In fact, only four ever were, all of which were her early work completed before 1894. The series of self-portraits, therefore, seem to be less for the public than for Valadon herself. They were definitely not intended to establish or demonstrate Valadon as a serious artist to her contemporaries. In other words, making self-portraits was an introspective process, which Valadon saved for herself.

Klein argues, in his definition of portraiture, that what is missing from the traditional definition of the genre in relation to concepts of likeness and character is the social dimension. Not only does portraiture serve a social purpose of presenting the sitter to a certain group of viewers, the process of making it involves negotiation between the artist and the sitter.¹³¹ In the case of a self-portrait, however, the artist and sitter are one. It appears that the artist transgresses the boundaries and occupies the space on both sides of the easel, or the space of the entire studio. Yet, quite the contrary, what really happens in the studio is the artist remains on one side of the easel and the inhabitation of the other side is an illusion created by the mirror. It is, therefore, not the case that the artist and sitter are unified, but rather that the sitter is utterly muted. It is, ultimately, a conversation with the self. The other is just a reflection of that self, a self that either already exists or is in the process of formation.

The singularity of Valadon's case is that she was once on the other side of the easel, for over a decade, not as a sitter but as a model. Valadon's self-portraits are, therefore, not

¹³¹ Klein, *Matisse Portraits*, pp.1-4.

merely representations of herself at specific moments of her life. They are denser, as they are a negotiation between her present and her past, through which she is in dialogue with the artists for whom she modelled. The gaze in her self-portraits comes from both the self, as viewer-artist and the other, as formerly the-viewed-model. These contradictions and conflicts are present in her 1927 self-portrait, in which she rendered her reflection (Figure 2.37). The presence of the mirror is indicated by the reflection of the fruit on a red table in front of her. There is no easel, canvas, brushes or palette in the painting, but the mirror and the reflexive vantage point make sure we recognise the painting as a self-portrait. This is not one of those artists' self-portraits, in which the artist confronts the look of the viewer, as the sitters often do in ordinary portraits. This exposes that the look on the canvas is mediated, through the artist or a mirror. The vantage point is particularly disturbing. It is at the level of the eyes in the reflection, tilted just like the artist in the mirror. It forcefully compels the viewer to assume the position of the artist, to look into her mirror, but find in it only her reflection. This time it is the viewer who is muted. This is exactly the experience of the model who looks at his or her body in artworks, only through the lens of the artist.

Apart from this depiction of a reflection, Valadon is represented as naked with her breasts exposed in all three other self-portraits with a frontal view. The earliest is dated to 1917 (Figure 2.34). This is also the most softly painted self-representation of all her self-portraits. Her skin looks smooth and pale. Her eyebrows are less pointed. Her look is less acute with her eyeballs slightly parted to the sides. Under her breasts some white cloth is rolled, below which is probably a black skirt. Depicted in frontal view, she appears more still than those in the three-quarter views, as there is minimal indication of movement. Behind her is a piece of green textile, possibly a curtain, with draperies on the side. Unlike in *La Chambre Bleue*, the decorative pattern of the draperies is not too animated to disturb the tranquillity of the figure. This restfulness reminds us of one of the paintings she posed for

Renoir, *La Natta* (1885) (Figure 2.39), in which she is rendered as absorbed in braiding her hair. The shadowing of the left cheek, the white and black dress that she is wearing and the green leaves in the background are further indications of the connection.

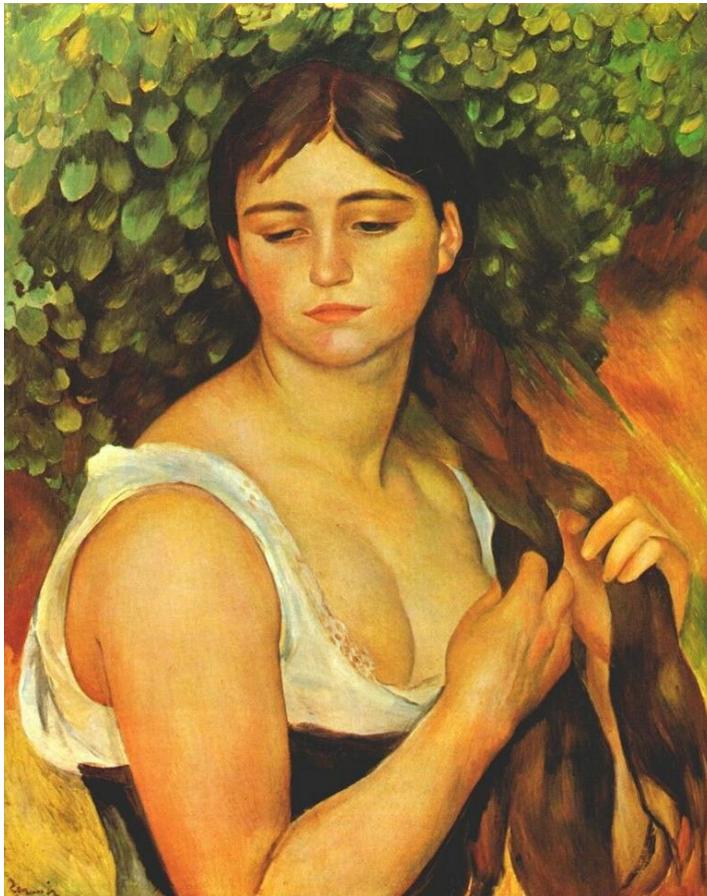


Figure 2. 39, August Renoir, *La Natta*, 1885, oil on canvas, 57×47 cm, Museum Langmatt, Switzerland

Seven years later, when Valadon painted herself naked again, she adopted a much more expressive style with visible broken brushstrokes and large patches of colour (Figure 2.36). Her face is more pointed. Her hairstyle is more rigid, like a helmet. Although the body is in frontal view, her head is slightly turned to the left. Her mouth is open as if she is saying something. In the background next to her head is a bowl, on which there are fruit. The sketch-like quality of this painting creates a chaotic and emotional ambience, which is in great contrast to her 1917 painting. The self-portrait of 1931 (Figure 2.38) is the last of Valadon naked, and also her last production of this genre. The brushstrokes are less animated. The helmet-like chopped hairstyle is softened by a fringe. She appears older with more visible

folds on her neck and face. Behind her is either a painting or a window on the wall. There is not much indication of movement as her face and body are turned in the same direction, her left.

Not many artists represented themselves naked in their self-portraits. The rare few were almost exclusively men. One case in point, which was relatively recent in Valadon's time was Hippolyte Bayard's photograph of himself as a drowned man (1840) (Figure 2.40). In this example the nakedness of the artist can be justified by the fact that he was playing the role of man drowned, but it is not necessarily so, as a drowned man could be found with his clothes on. The composition of the body leaning to one side, and the subject matter of a dead half naked man, recall the prevalent religious motif of Christ's body being taken off the cross. The nakedness, therefore, might serve as a clue to the reference.



Figure 2. 40, Hippolyte Bayard,
Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man,
1840, direct paper positive

In Valadon's time, the early twentieth century, she was not the only artist who is woman to take up the genre of self-portraiture in combination with the motif of the female nude. German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907) and Welsh artist Gwen John (1876-1939) also did so. In the case of John, her naked self-representations bear apparent qualities of unfinishedness. Her drawing (1908-1909) (Figure 2.41) of herself naked with a

paper in her hand onto which she is writing or drawing something renders the raw contours of her body in simple lines. Finer details of her hands and feet are not finished, yet it is made evident to the viewer that she is naked by the indication of her nipples and belly button by a small triangular shape and a long dot. What is more, she is faceless, without any facial features delineated. The viewer is denied her gaze, while in fact, it is herself who is denied this gaze. Another watercolour drawing of herself sitting on a bed, naked, shares many of these features (Figure 2.42). The drawing is only partially coloured. A large patch of pale blue covers her torso, vaguely revealing the carefully delineated breasts and belly underneath it. Her eyes are lowered or closed. What is present in these drawings is a tension between showing and hiding, gazing and avoiding, which is symptomatic of the struggles and difficulties John might have experienced when she produced these works.¹³²

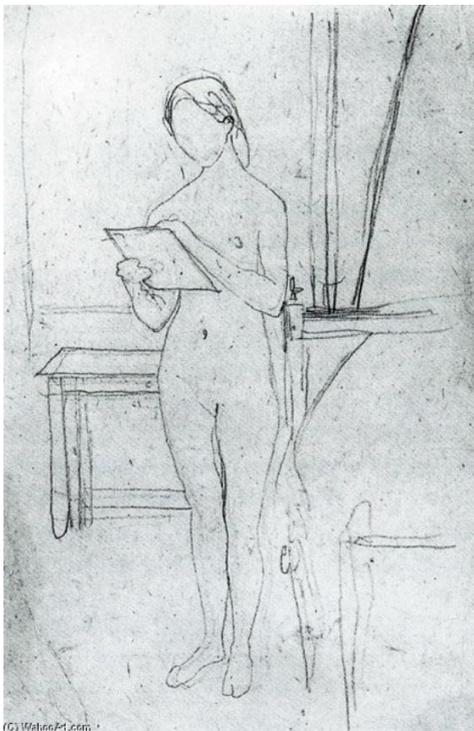


Figure 2. 41, Gwen John, *Self-portrait Naked, Sketching*, 1908-1909, pencil on paper, 24.8×16.5 cm



Figure 2. 42, Gwen John, *Self-portrait Naked, Sitting on a Bed*, 1908-1909, pencil and gauche on paper, 25.4×16.2 cm

¹³² Maria Tamboukou, *Nomadic Narratives, Visual Forces: Gwen John's Letters and Paintings* (New York, N.Y.; Oxford: Peter Lang, c.2010), pp.68-74.

Similar difficulties were perceived by Rosemary Betterton in her discussion of Modersohn-Becker's self-portraits. Modersohn-Becker often represents herself with fruit and flowers. This visual language has its roots in artworks by Symbolist artists such as Gauguin, who identify women's sexuality with nature. While acknowledging the potentially problematic reinforcing of such encoding, Betterton interprets these portraits as part of Modersohn-Becker's strategy to 'address the *absence* of a visual language of the body available to women artists in the 1900s'.¹³³

This is the vicious circle that avant-garde art presented to artists who were women and who wished to join the milieu. As Duncan reveals, by allying creativity exclusively with virility and from a masculine position, avant-garde artist urges aspiring women either to be assimilated, assuming the masculinised gaze, or to admit their inferiority as 'feminine' artists. Both Gwen John and Modersohn-Becker recognised this quandary through the process of posing naked for themselves. While Gwen John articulated it through the literal unfinishable-ness of this task, Modersohn-Becker played the game by employing avant-garde language to confound the portrait and the nude

Valadon confronted this problematic issue with a more radical approach, as she not only joined the game, painting in a style often described with terms associated with virile and masculine by contemporary critics, she took along with her the model she used to be.¹³⁴ The frontal view of her naked upper body in these self-portraits resembles an *académie*

¹³³ Rosemary Betterton, 'Mother Figures: The Maternal Nude in the Work of Käthe Kollwitz and Paula Modersohn-Becker' in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.203-232 (206).

¹³⁴ Some examples of critics describing Valadon's art work as 'violent' include Marius Mermillon in the exhibition catalogue, *Suzanne Valadon* (Lyon: Galerie des Archers Antoinin Ponchon, 1928), Adolphe Basler, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: CRÈS, 1929); Gustave Coquiot, 'Cubists, Futurists, Passeistes', reprinted in the exhibition catalogue, *Suzanne Valadon* (Paris: Galerie George Petit, 1932). There are, however, also authors considering Valadon's art epitome of 'feminine art' with its vividness and passion. Examples include Florent Fels, *L'Information*, 25 juin 1921, Carcot, *Le Nu*, 1924, pp.145-146.

photograph of her in 1886 (Figure 2.43). *Académie* refers to drawings or paintings of the naked human body, male or female, for the purpose of artistic training. After the invention of photography in the first half of the nineteenth century, there emerged *académie* in photographic form. Dawkins discusses the equivocality of such photographs in the era of censorship against pornography.¹³⁵ The *académie* was allowed to circulate providing that it was necessary to artists' training. It was, therefore, a form of imagery that was identified specifically with the process of art making. By representing herself in a pose similar to the one she assumed in *académie*, Valadon unified her past as a professional model and her present as an artist. She worked on her own past and transformed it into an image of her present.



Figure 2. 43, Photograph of Suzanne Valadon, 1886, Musée de Montpartre, Paris

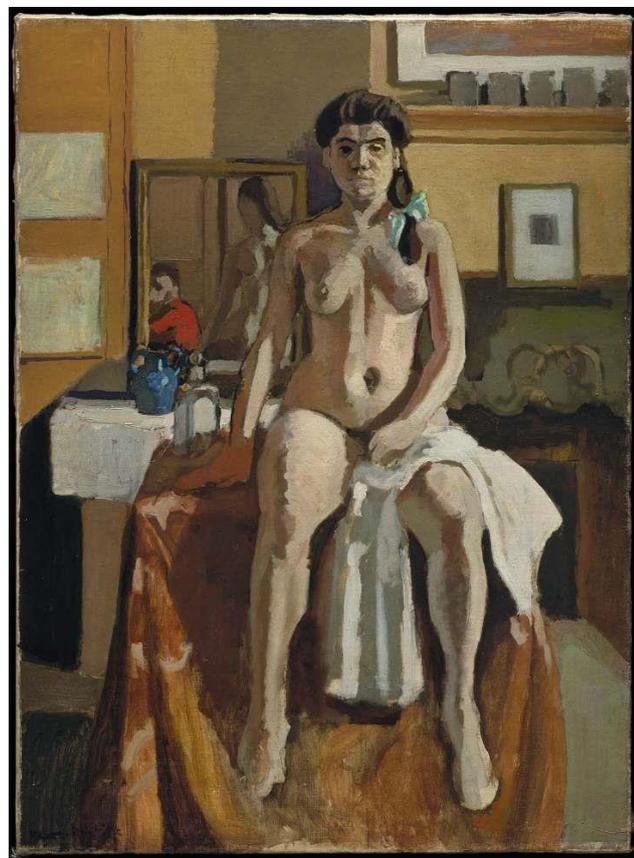


Figure 2. 44, Henri Matisse, *Carmelina*, 1903, oil on canvas, 81.3×59 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

¹³⁵ Dawkins, *The Nude*, pp.12-16.

In his painting *Carmelina La Pose du Nu* (1903) (Figure 2.44), Matisse renders his model in frontal view facing the viewer. Patricia Briggs suggests in her study of Matisse's exposure to sensual and erotic photographic *académies* that *Carmelina* was completed in a particular moment when Matisse, instead of going to communal ateliers for live models, started to hire professional models in his private studio while not yet fully taking up photographic *académies*.¹³⁶ Comparing the poses in *académies*, those in communal ateliers were found to be less provocative in order to underplay sexual connotations and to encourage disinterested observation for aesthetic aspirations. Having laid out this difference, Briggs, thus, argues that the sensuous intimate representation of sexualised body of woman in Matisse's artworks from 1905 onwards is a result of his employment of photographic *académies*. Produced before that moment, *Carmelina* has reserved the disinterested objective quality that Matisse learned in communal ateliers. 'Carmelina (*La pose du nu*) offers a view of Matisse's studio as a space of reason and aesthetic disinterestedness, where sexuality has been neutralized and the model and the artist display no sign of shared intimacy or personal connection.'¹³⁷ What Matisse is asserting in this painting, according to Briggs, is his exclusive access to the model as she is depicted in her frontal view, a vantage point that signifies a privileged position in a communal atelier.

I concur with Briggs that *Carmelina*, the model, is depicted at a distance from viewer and the neat horizontal and vertical lines that outline the studio setting create a sense of reason and calmness. Yet, the frontal view of her body and her condescending gaze resulted from she sitting on a table presents a confrontation with the supposed viewer. Her genital area is positioned in the centre of the canvas, implying the power of her sexuality. The painting

¹³⁶ Patricia Briggs, 'Matisse's Odalisques and the Photographic Académie', *History of Photography*, 31 (December 2007) issue 4, 365-383.

¹³⁷ Briggs, 'Matisse's Odalisques', p.369

appears to have empowered the model by suppression of the voyeuristic pleasure of the viewer. Duncan points out that it is, however, the artist, in his eye-catching red clothes, lurking near the model as well as drawing the eyes of the viewer through the mirror, that possesses the ultimate control of the space.¹³⁸ The viewer is, indeed, a void, as we cannot register his/her presence in the reflection in the mirror. The model, looking in the direction of the viewer, is, hence, looking at empty space. It is ultimately the gaze, the masculine artist, that occupies the entire space. Even the confrontational tension is cancelled by the lurking gaze of the artist who is sitting in his chair looking at the scene with much ease. It is, indeed, a confrontation between the artist and the viewer. This is also what happens in other representations of women's confrontational bodies, such as *Olympia*, with the lurking gaze of the artist signified by his creativity. In *Carmelina*, rendering the viewer as a void, the artist claims the utter control. Brigg's conclusion that Matisse is asserting his exclusive access to the model agrees with Duncan that the painting is a statement of the artist's privilege and control over the model's body.

By representing herself naked in a frontal view, confronting the viewer in a manner similar to the woman in Matisse's *Carmalina*, Valadon effectively eliminates the possibility of any such lurking gaze of the artist. Instead of claiming domination of the space through the model, she did so simultaneously *as* a model and *as* an artist. The confrontations between the represented woman and the viewer, between the artist and the viewer, are restored. She articulated her body into the language of Avant-garde. She was a model with subjectivity and at the same time, an artist with a body.

¹³⁸ Duncan, 'Virility and Domination', pp.89-90.

Conclusion

This case study looks into the ways in which Suzanne Valadon negotiated herself into and within the avant-garde milieu. Valadon's biographers and critics not only retell the stories Valadon concocted, but also adopt a determinist tone to suggest that Valadon's becoming of an artist is predestined. Such accounts not only facilitated the writing of Valadon into the history of art as primarily an artist, but they also naturalise the negotiations and selections that Valadon made to become established and be recognised as an artist. By reconstructing details of her life that evokes recurrent motifs that Kris and Kurz identify in biographies of canonical Renaissance artists, Valadon has invited the notion that one is born to be an artist and has managed to elicit a genealogy between her and those highly recognised predecessors, justifying her position in the art circle as an artist. As a painter, furthermore, by playing the avant-garde gambit of 'reference, deference, difference', she inscribed herself into the avant-garde milieu.

Adopting the avant-garde visual language, Valadon managed to articulate the embodied experience of the labour of modelling in some of her paintings of the nudes and her self-portraits. In this manner, the masculinised gaze of domination and control is transformed. Her paintings of girls at puberty looking at their own bodies transforms the conventional motif of a woman looking at herself through mirror. Not only do the paintings seek to displace the voyeuristic pleasure of the masculinised viewer, Valadon turns the scene that symbolises women's vanity into depictions of an adolescent experience, the curiosity that the girls have in observing their own bodies as they change. The series of self-portraits further indicates Valadon's engagement with motifs that were prevalent among avant-garde artists at her time. By representing herself in nude, however, she shifts the power relationship between artist and model by uniting them in one. Her work thus articulates the creative body of the artist as well as the subjectivity of the model.

Chapter Three

Alice Prin and the Mythology of Kiki de Montparnasse

Alice Prin, 1925, An Artist

On April 5 1925, a local paper of Nice, *Le Petit Niçois*, reported the arrest of ‘a loose woman, Alice Prin, aged twenty-three, born in Paris’.¹³⁹ Alice Ernestine Prin (1901-1953), born in a small Burgundy town, Châtillon-sur-Seine, not Paris, was widely known to the Parisians of the 1920s as Kiki de Montparnasse. The short report continued to reveal that the charges against Prin included indecency, damage of private property, resistance and assault of a magistrate in performance of his duties. In her memoirs of 1929, Prin documents the incident at great length. Four of twenty-nine chapters are dedicated to it, making it the most meticulously recorded episode. According to Prin, she travelled to Ville-franche in February 1925 with her friends, and was later joined by others, including Per Krohg (1889-1965), a Norwegian artist, and Thérèse Maure (1900-?), known as Treize, a physical education teacher and a confidant of hers. After her companions departed early for Paris, Prin was left behind in Ville-franche with a friend. As a Mediterranean port for foreign military ships, Ville-franche was frequented by sailors and prostitutes. As warm-hearted and vivacious as Prin was said to be, she soon became popular with the sailors. In retrospect, Prin traced the incident that resulted in her arrest to the moment she stepped into an English bar to look for some sailor friends. She was mistaken by the owner for a prostitute, who yelled at her, ‘no whores allowed here’. Prin’s response was to shove of a pile of saucers in his face. A fight broke out but Prin managed to leave the scene before the police arrived. A constable came to Prin’s hotel the following morning and announced her arrest. On their way to the police office he

¹³⁹ *Le Petit Niçois*, 5 April 1925. ‘la fille aux mœurs légères, Alice Prin, âge de 23 ans, née à Paris’. Quoted and cited in Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki’s Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930* (New York: Harry N. Abrams 1989), p.143. In the book the quote mistranslates the age of Prin to thirty-two.

attempted to punch Prin when she did not walk fast enough. As an intuitive reaction Prin accidentally hit him. She was thus charged with hitting a police officer and was eventually taken to a jail in Nice.¹⁴⁰ In the memoir, Prin continues to describe her encounters in the prison cell and courtroom. A gentleman friend of hers was present during the trial as ‘a character witness’, along with some of his friends.¹⁴¹ The bar owner was willing to drop the complaint as the sailors paid for his loss with money he raised from other sailors. The constable however, was keen to convict Prin. According to Prin the defence conducted by her lawyer was intended to show that she had ‘nervous trouble’, which she had certificates to prove.¹⁴² Kiki reported in her memoirs that she was ‘free again!’, whereas in fact she was in parole.¹⁴³

In retrospect, Man Ray (1890-1967), an American artist and Prin’s then lover, later recounted a slightly different version of the incident in his autobiography, published in 1963 in the United States.¹⁴⁴ According to Ray, Prin was not in a fight with the bar owner but a prostitute who was jealous of her popularity among the sailors. The bar owner then filed a complaint, demanding the expulsion of Prin. Two officers came to take Prin the next day. The reason for her fight with the officer was not a physical assault, but a verbal insult as the officer was ‘calling her an ugly name’.¹⁴⁵ Concerning his role in the incident, Ray recalls:

I received a wire from Thérèse, who was her close friend, to come down at once. Taking the next train, I arrived in Nice.... The case was grave, [the lawyer] said, Kiki was liable to three to six months’ detention... There was only one way out: for her to plead guilty, backed by a certificate from a doctor testifying that she was being treated for some mental aberration and had come down from Paris to rest, with me, her protector, paying the bills. *She was not a prostitute* [my italics]. I wrote to a doctor friend who at once sent me the necessary papers...

¹⁴⁰ Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, trans. by Samuel Putman, ed. by Billy Klüver and Julie Martin (Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco 1996), pp.161-172.

¹⁴¹ Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, p.174.

¹⁴² Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, p.174.

¹⁴³ Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*. p.174.

¹⁴⁴ Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1999), pp.125-127.

¹⁴⁵ Ray, *Self Portrait*, p.125.

[In the court room], she looked over the audience; I raised my hand slightly.... The law was the law, the magistrate continued, it provided a definite punishment for this case; he sentenced her to six months in jail. I gasped, while the old sadist stroked his beard, then he spoke again; he was sorry only for her friend who had been put to so much trouble, for his sake he commuted her sentence - let her off on parole.¹⁴⁶

Notwithstanding some discrepancies regarding the reason and process of Prin's arrest, Ray decidedly underscores the significance of his effort to save Prin from prison. Not only was he the person who secured documents vital to Prin's defence, it was also he, not Prin's sailor friend, who paid the bills. No presence of other friends in the incident is indicated in this account. Even the magistrate was 'sorry only for her friend', singular form. The efforts Ray made seem to have affected the magistrate. Indeed, in Ray's version it was the magistrate's sympathy with Ray that led him to commute Prin's sentence to parole.

Billy Klüver and Julie Martin offer a slightly different account of the incident in their book on the Paris art world in the first three decades of the twentieth century, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930*. They accepted most of Prin's recollection of the bar fight and her encounters with the officers, but only some of Ray's reminiscences of the development of Prin's defence. New documents were taken into consideration, namely the correspondence between Robert Desnos (1900-1945), a surrealist poet and a good friend of Prin who contributed an introduction to the leaflet-catalogue of Prin's one-woman exhibition in 1927, and Georges Malkine (1898-1970), a surrealist painter and dear friend of Desnos. In his letter to Desnos of 11 April, after he met with Prin's court appointed lawyer, Bonifacio, Malkine mentioned that Bonifacio did not believe Prin's story, thinking of her as a quarrelsome Parisian prostitute. To convince him of Prin's good character and that she deserved a strong defence, Malkine presented a letter in Prin's favour from one of his patrons, the director of a

¹⁴⁶ Ray, *Self Portrait*, pp.126-127.

garbage collection company in Nice.¹⁴⁷ Persuaded by Malkine, Bonifacio paid a visit to the accusing officer, with whom he was acquainted, and procured a more benign statement. This letter was read out at the trial. In another letter dated 13 April, just before the trial, Malkine mentions three other statements, the medical report from Dr. Fraenkel and two testimonies by Desnos and Louis Aragon (1897-1982), another Surrealist poet, testifying that Prin was an artist.¹⁴⁸ All three were taken to Nice by Ray.

Despite the discrepancies in these versions of the incident, they more or less agree on some important matters. The defence arguments on Prin's side comprised two parts, demonstrating Prin's good character and, perhaps more importantly, establishing her psychological problems as an extenuating factor. The latter was substantiated by the medical report. The former, on the other hand, was endorsed by the recommendation letter of Malkine's patron as well as the testimonies by Desnos and Aragon of Prin being an artist. Against Prin was an assault charge for hitting the police officer, from which being an artist would not exempt her. These statements were, therefore, likely to serve the purpose of restoring the credibility and reputation of Prin after being suspected of prostitution. By claiming that Prin was an artist, the statements not only testified that Prin had a proper profession, they also helped explain her morally dubious behaviour. Ever since the publication of Henri Murger's *La Bohème: Scènes de la vie de Bohème* in 1851, artists had been bound to the bohemian lifestyle in the public imagination. The bohemians were known for their repudiation of, and struggle against, the bourgeois order. Specifically, they were perceived to be sexually free and economically unstable. Throughout the decades of the nineteenth century, many works of diverse media evoked this association. One example is Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème*, which was based on Murger's writing and premiered in

¹⁴⁷ George Malkine, letter to Robert Desnos, 11 April 1925. Quoted and cited in Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.143 & p.233 (note).

¹⁴⁸ George Malkine, letter to Robert Desnos, 13 April 1925. Quoted and cited in Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.143 & p.233 (note).

France on 13 June 1898 at the *Théâtre des Nations Paris*. The centenary celebration of Murger's birth in 1922 incited a nostalgic wave.¹⁴⁹ Claiming to be an artist, therefore, offered an alternative explanation for Prin's problematic behaviour that had been mistaken for prostitution.

Although not mentioned by Prin or Man Ray in their memoirs, historical evidence discovered by Klüver and Martin indicates that the satisfactory result of saving Prin from imprisonment depended on the efforts of several individuals. Thérèse Maure informed Man Ray of Prin's situation, and he later secured the doctor's certificate and travelled to Nice, most likely to be a 'character witness'. Desnos probably also received news from Maure as they had been friends since 1922. Contacting Malkine, who was then based in the area, was likely to have been Desnos's idea, as Malkine only contacted Desnos and updated him on the situation in their subsequent correspondence. It is probably through Desnos that the statement of Aragon was obtained as the two surrealist writers had been meeting, along with other writers such as André Breton, Max Ernst and Picabia, every evening in the early 1920s to collaboratively create impromptu texts.¹⁵⁰ There is no evidence suggesting any personal relationship between Malkine and Prin, or between Aragon and Prin. What is shown by this seemingly personal incident, therefore, is the mobilisation of a network that demonstrates a significant degree of trust and support. Not only were Desnos and Man Ray willing to pull strings to help Prin in the most immediate and effective way, but Malkine, Malkine's boss and Aragon also trusted their friends enough to vouch for a woman they barely, if at all, knew. What was Prin's position in these networks? Did these people form a community? If so, what were the dynamics? Or, if we adopt Raymond Williams's terms, what were the

¹⁴⁹ Jerrold E. Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.367.

¹⁵⁰ Natasha Lushetich, *Interdisciplinary Performance: Reformatting Reality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.41.

social formations of this cultural group?¹⁵¹ What social changes and shifts had been effected by this group?

By 1925, Prin had taken up art, but was yet to exhibit any of her works in public. On most occasions, she would give her drawings and paintings away as presents to friends. Prin was a versatile woman, and painting was only one of the several artistic and cultural activities in which she engaged. She was also a model, a night club singer and an actress. She started modelling for artists, such as Chaim Soutine (1893-1943), Jules Pascin (1885-1930) and Möise Kisling (1891-1953) after she ran away from home in 1915 when she was fourteen. She sang regularly at The Jockey, a night club on Boulevard du Montparnasse, from its opening in 1923. Prin travelled to New York for a screen test for Paramount in 1923, but in the end did not attend it. This little setback did not stop her from appearing in films as, in 1924, she starred in *Ballet Mécanique*, a Dadaist art film directed by Fernand Léger (1881-1955) and Dudley Murphy (1897-1968). By the time she was arrested in 1925, Prin had achieved least, as far as the public acknowledged, in the field of painting and drawing among all the endeavours in which she was involved. If we use the criteria for and against Victorine Meurent and Suzanne Valadon, Prin was in no way an artist. Puvis de Chavannes rejected Valadon when she wished to exhibit in the Salon, saying, ‘you [Valadon] have not had any training. Whose pupil are you?’¹⁵² Prin did not have any formal artistic training, nor did she ever study art under the instruction of any specific artist. Both Meurent and Valadon started their careers by exhibiting in Salons that were acknowledged by certain groups of artists. If Prin had not been publicly acknowledged as an artist by 1925, she would be two years later when she had her first one-woman exhibition at the private gallery, *Galerie au Sacre du*

¹⁵¹ Raymond Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*, (London: Verso, c1980), pp.148-169.

¹⁵² Cited in Jeanine Warnod, *Suzanne Valadon*, trans. by Shirley Jennings (New York: Crown, 1981) p.51; reprinted in June Rose, *Mistress of Montmartre: A Life of Suzanne Valadon* (London: Richard Cohen 1998), p.117.

Printemps. The exhibition was reported to have attracted a large Montparnasse population.¹⁵³

What established Prin as an artist in 1925 or 1927? To what artistic career did she aspire? A career recognised by the conventional but long-established Paris Salon, as selected by Meurent, or the one through avant-garde Salons and exhibitions in private galleries adopted by Valadon? What was, after all, perceived to be the essence of being an artist in the 1920s?

Alice Prin, Kiki, Kiki de Montparnasse

So far, I have deliberately addressed Alice Prin by her last name. Yet if we were to investigate her archive, we would find her referred to in most documents as Kiki or Kiki of Montparnasse (*Kiki de Montparnasse*). In fact, the report of the arrest in *Le Petit Niçois* and the correction after the trial, on April 16, are among the only two texts I could locate which address Prin as Alice Prin, without mentioning her sobriquet Kiki or Kiki de Montparnasse.¹⁵⁴

The exact moment at which Prin adopted Kiki as her life-long sobriquet is hard to pin down. Nor can we be certain about the reason for her to take it up. All we can be sure of is that Prin started to be addressed as Kiki sometime in 1918 when she was living with Maurice Mendjizky (1890-1951), a Polish artist who moved to Paris in 1906.¹⁵⁵ While Valadon

¹⁵³ 'In the Quarter', *Chicago Tribute European Edition*, also cited in Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.161.

¹⁵⁴ Correction report in *Le Petit Niçois*, 16 April 1925.

¹⁵⁵ There are three versions of who gave Prin the nickname. The most widespread is that Mendjizky pronounced Alice as Alikí in Greek, although it was not clear how Mendjizky, born in Poland and travelling to Russia and Berlin before 1920, acquired Greek. Another possibility is that Mendjizky gave his own nickname to Prin. The website of the Musée Mendjizky, (http://www.fmep.fr/maurice_mendjizky.php, accessed on 15 November, 2016), a museum dedicated to the artist, founded by his son, Serge Mendjizky, and affiliated with Écoles de Paris, states, however, that it was Foujita who came up with the name Kiki initially because, being Japanese and arriving in Paris in 1917, he found it difficult to pronounce Mendjizky's last name. There is no information given about how the name become transferred to Prin. The third version is that Cláim Soutine named Prin

consciously used Suzanne when she turned to painting and stopped modelling to sever her painting career from her early years as a model and an acrobat, Prin continued to pose in the nude for artists and perform in nightclubs for money after adopting the sobriquet. In fact, as exemplified by her memoirs, she never attempted to sever her careers and carried on to talk about her pre-Kiki years. In 1918, Prin probably did not know that she would start making paintings and drawings in the next few years. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that Prin had a clear agenda for the name change in 1918.

The sobriquet was fully embraced by Prin and her friends. Prin not only adopted ‘Kiki’ on public occasions, for instance by signing her artworks and titling her memoirs *Kiki’s Memoirs*, she also used it in personal correspondence. ‘Kiki’ is also widely used by Prin’s friends. She is often referred to as ‘Kiki’ in the memoirs of her friends as well as the correspondence among them.¹⁵⁶ Many artists named the works for which Prin posed with ‘Kiki’ or ‘Kiki de Montparnasse’. I will explore the effect of such practice on the convention of modelling in the following section. Suffice to say that Prin willingly established herself as Kiki and was recognised as Kiki in the Montparnasse circle.

Should this naturally lead us to identify Prin as ‘Kiki de Montparnasse’? The earliest source of the use of ‘Kiki de Montparnasse’ is difficult to track down, but the connotations of the appellation can be discerned. The link between a person and a location can be a means of specification: Which Kiki? Kiki of Montparnasse. In the case of Prin, this cannot be its only justification. In fact, in the first decades of the twentieth century Prin was not the only Kiki living in the Montparnasse area. Möise Kisling (1891-1953), another Polish painter who

Kiki. One of Kisling’s early portraits of Prin, dated 1918, was entitled *Kiki au Décolleté*. This suggests that Prin adopted ‘Kiki’ no later than 1918. The year that Kiki started her relationship with Mendjizky is also disputed. In her memoirs, Kiki starts the chapter ‘1918’ with ‘I’m keeping house with a painter’. The painter is speculated to be Mendjizky. The museum website, however, states that Mendjizky was in Berlin in 1918 and did not return to Paris until 1919.

¹⁵⁶ Examples include a note Prin wrote to Maurice Vellay, an illustrator and drawing maker, in 1929, which she signed Kiki; a letter from Kiki to Man Ray from Nice in 1926; and an inscription on a photo of her taken by May Ray which she sent to her cousin Madeleine in 1930.

moved to Paris in 1910, was also addressed by his friends as Kiki. Prin met and befriended Kisling in 1918. Kisling was among the first to offer Prin a modelling contract, and painted her in several of his artworks between 1918 and 1930. Like Kisling, who received the nickname due to its proximity of pronunciation to his birth name, Kees van Dongen (1877-1968) was another Kiki in Montparnasse.¹⁵⁷ With more than one Kiki living in the Montparnasse area associated with the art circle there, how did Prin get the title Kiki de Montparnasse? This designation has to be a process that involves selection and negotiation. It should not be taken for granted, but requires close critical analysis.

A comparison of the conditions of the adoption of Kiki by these three people points us to one pertinent factor. Unlike Prin, the use of 'Kiki' by Kisling and Van Dongen is often confined to a personal context and at a much lower frequency. Neither artist signed their paintings Kiki. Even in personal texts such as private correspondence or biographical recollections, Van Dongen and Kisling are not often addressed as Kiki.¹⁵⁸ As a result, no contemporary or later texts refer to them as Kiki constantly or systematically. Indeed, very few mention this anecdotal detail at all. Prin, on the other hand, is called Kiki, in texts of many kinds, including reviews of her memoirs,¹⁵⁹ the memoirs and biographies of her

¹⁵⁷ Foujita mentioned these three Kikis in his introduction to Alice Prin's memoir, 'My Friend Kiki', in *Kiki's Memoirs*, pp.41-45 (41).

¹⁵⁸ To give a few examples: Thora Dardel used Kisling's last name when she recalled the details of Nils Dardel's hiring of models Bonia and Tylia Perlmutter, in her biography of Nils Dardel, in Thora Dardel, *En Bok om Nils Dardel* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1953), p.110, cited in Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.228; a postcard Van Dongen sent to his friend Félix Fénéon when he was in Egypt in 1913 was signed 'Amities, Kees', in Anita Hopmans, *All Eyes on Kees van Dongen* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, c2010), p.100; Yuki Desnos mentions Van Dongen by his birth name in her autobiography when she describes her experience of an invitation to a casino, in Yuki Desnos, *Les Confidences de Youki*, (Paris: Fayard, 1999), p.60.

¹⁵⁹ A non-exhaustive list of the reviews in French and English includes E. H., 'Souvenirs d'un Modèle', *Le Temps*, 7 October 1929; Claude Ballerov, 'Review', *Revue du Vrai et du Beau*, 10 October 1929, p.15; and Louis Kronenroer, 'Kiki, Who Queened it Over Montparnasse', *New York Times*, 28 September 1930.

contemporaries,¹⁶⁰ the folded leaflet of her first solo exhibition, a three-page feature on her in the 29 June 1953 issue of *Life* magazine commemorating her recent death, and cultural and scholarly productions about her after she died.

Subjective intention is, however, only one factor that contributes to the prominence of Prin as *the* Kiki in the Montparnasse area in the 1920s. The materials selected, and not selected, to be included in the archive guarantee the sole registration of Prin's existence as 'Kiki', in the social and cultural activities of the circle of Montparnasse. Unlike Valadon, who shifted her career track when she adopted Suzanne as her first name, the adoption of Kiki did not mark any significant change in Prin's life. It is not the case that Prin began her professional or personal connection with artists only after she adopted Kiki. She took up her first modelling job in 1916.¹⁶¹ She was barely fifteen then and was looking for work when she was approached by an older sculptor. Without any other options, she agreed to pose for the sculptor in the nude. Over the next few years she had occasional modelling jobs, made friends with some artists and, in one case, fell for one. All these details come from Prin's memoirs. There is no further information on either the artworks for which she posed or the artists with whom she worked in this period. That is to say, Prin's engagement with the artists who worked in Montparnasse in the late 1910s was acknowledged by the archive only after she refashioned herself as Kiki. As far as the archive of Montparnasse in the early decades of the twentieth century is concerned, Alice Prin bears no significance other than a civil legal identity. Whatever other significations in the discourse of art history that this historical agent carries, they are attributed to Kiki or Kiki de Montparnasse. This is particularly intriguing given that Kiki never completely gave up the identity of Alice Prin. Not only does she

¹⁶⁰ For example, Man Ray, *Self Portrait*; Frederick Khoner, *Kiki of Montparnasse* (London: Cassel, 1968), Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini*, trans. by Jennifer Franchina (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1996).

¹⁶¹ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, p.102.

recount the years before she took up the sobriquet in her memoirs, the name Alice Prin was also used in the title of the folded leaflet for her solo-exhibition. The more or less exclusive attribution of ‘Kiki de Montparnasse’ to Alice Prin is, therefore, the result of her own initiative and, more importantly, the effect of what is and what is *not* included in the archive.

I have, so far, tried to make some distinction between Alice Prin, Kiki and Kiki de Montparnasse. Alice Prin is a civil legal identity of a historical agent who later adopted a self-fashioned persona, Kiki. Kiki is a woman whose body and features recurred frequently in the artworks of her contemporaries. This is a woman who had, to a certain extent, her voice heard through her paintings, illustrations, drawings and memoirs. This process of re-fashioning and re-positioning is not confined to the virtual establishment of herself in a previously unfamiliar milieu; she encouraged it physically by changing her appearance. The short haircut, along with her heavy eye make-up and carefully outlined lips, was maintained for the rest of her life and constituted an image that eventually became the iconic ‘Kiki de Montparnasse’.

The number of sources and materials used in this case study set it apart from the other two. The quantity of available materials is overwhelming, for two reasons. Firstly, the Montparnasse circle is a substantial group of people who, compared to those covered in the previous chapters, are more diverse in terms of their cultural background, and more complicated in their creative and artistic inclinations. The texts accessed are only those available in English and French. As many individuals in the Montparnasse circle were from non-English speaking countries, there could be an even larger body of documents in various other languages. Secondly, apart from those kinds of documents investigated in previous chapters, such as individual biographies, personal correspondence, artworks, contemporary journals, newspaper articles and exhibition catalogues, the increasing popularity of cameras following the invention of various Kodak models has left a myriad of photographs and a

number of short films. Advancement in printing technology and development in publication industry also resulted in an unprecedented proliferation of memoirs and postcards.

An important source of primary information on both Kiki and Montparnasse comes from a widely cited book by Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930*.¹⁶² Before Billy Klüver, an American electronic engineer who endeavoured to encourage the incorporation of technology in art, and his wife, Julie Martin, an active figure in the New York art community, dedicated themselves to a research project on Kiki in 1978, Kiki appeared only sporadically in the historical study of Montparnasse artists. The project was initiated for an American television series on French culture. After reading memoirs of the 1920s, Klüver and Martin decided to take Kiki as their focus.¹⁶³ Their first book, *Kiki's World: Montparnasse-Paris 1900-1930, Who They Were, People, Lives And Loves*, was published in 1982 in a format of a collection of captioned images with captions.¹⁶⁴ Seven years later in 1989, they recompiled the images and their findings based on primary documents and interviews into a more widely-read book, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930*. The book was translated into French and published as *Kiki et Montparnasse, 1900-1930* in 1989.¹⁶⁵ In 1996 they republished the English version of *Kiki's Memoirs*, first

¹⁶² An incomplete list of researches that cite *Kiki's Paris* includes Kenneth Wayne, *Modigliani & the Artists of Montparnasse* (New York, London: Harry N. Abrams, 2002); Erin C. Garcia, *Man Ray in Paris* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, c.2011); Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace (ed.), *Gothic Modernisms* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2001); Stanley Meisler, *Shocking Paris: Soutine, Chagall and the outsiders of Montparnasse* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2015); Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (ed.), *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001); Phyllis Birnbaum, *Glory in a Line: A Life of Foujita - the Artist Caught Between East & West* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2006); Mary E. Davis, *Erik Satie* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Elizabeth Wilson, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

¹⁶³ Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, 'Foreword' in Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, p.9.

¹⁶⁴ Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's World: Montparnasse-Paris 1900 - 1930, Who They Were, People, Lives and Loves* (New Jersey: BMK Production, 1982).

¹⁶⁵ Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki et Montparnasse, 1900 - 1930* (Paris: Flammarion 1989).

published in French in Paris in 1929, and added the articles she wrote in 1950. Then, in 2002, they curated an exhibition of artworks of, and by, Kiki at the Zabriskie Gallery in New York.

Despite the fact that Klüver and Martin's research project on Kiki coincides with the emergence of a trend of feminist intervention in art history that endeavoured to claim women back for the history, their interest in Kiki has a rather different agenda. Instead of reconstructing Kiki's biography and reclaiming her for the history of art, they employ Kiki as a lens through which to explore the condition of Montparnasse. Both versions of the book by Klüver and Martin position Kiki at the centre of life in Montparnasse between 1900 and 1930, even though Kiki arrived in Paris in 1913. The book is not a comprehensive biography of Kiki either. A number of well-known individuals are mentioned, including Man Ray, Tsuguharu Foujita (1886-1968), Aragon, Desnos, and even Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) who had little contact with Kiki due to his tragic early death. This wide coverage is probably the reason that when their books are cited, it is often taken as the source of either the primary documents they reproduced or contextual information on the Montparnasse area. In many cases, Kiki is not even mentioned in these subsequent research.

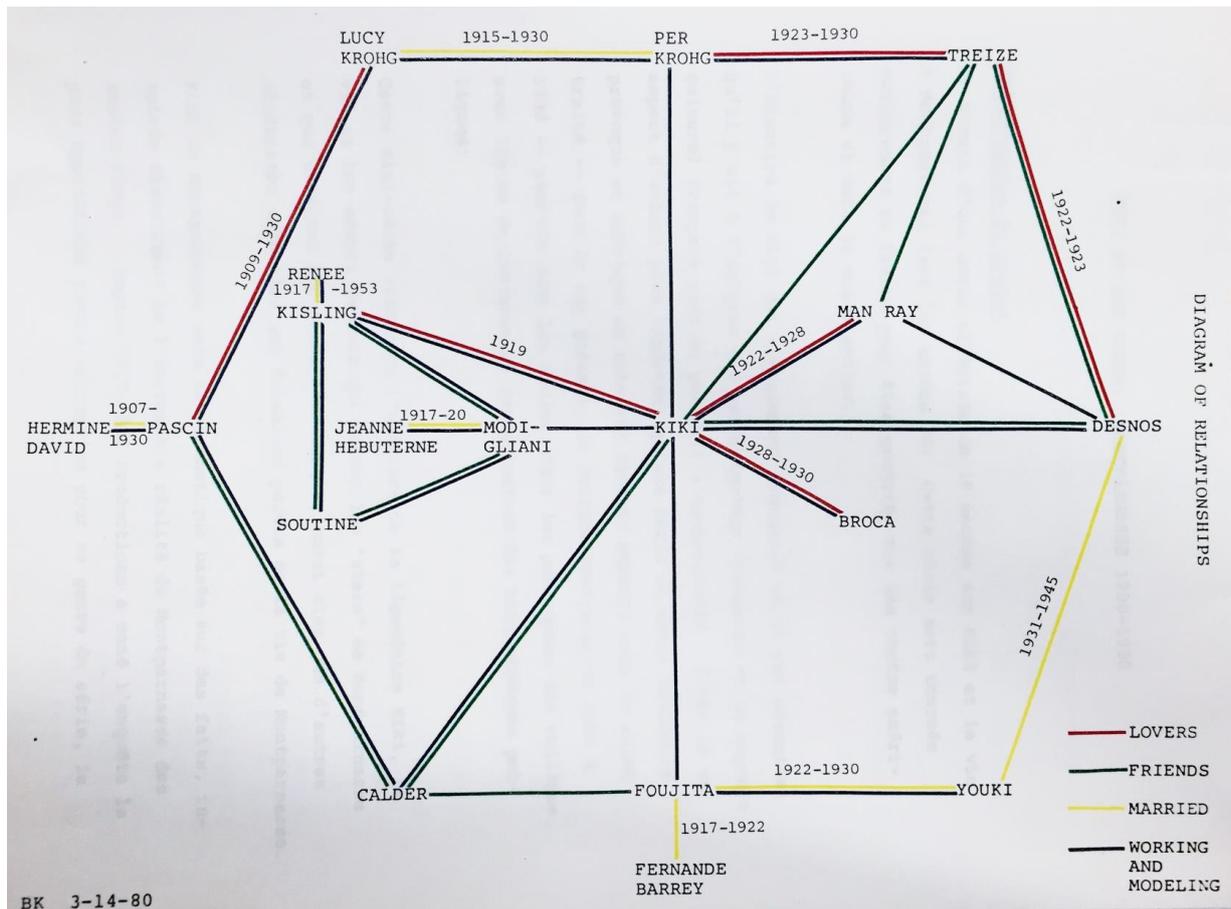


Figure 3. 1, Billy Klüver, Diagram of Relationships in Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's World* (New Jersey: BMK Production, 1982)

Klüver's and Martin's desire to explore Montparnasse in the first three decades of the twentieth century, with Kiki being its locus, might be best elucidated by a diagram of relations among the major figures of the Montparnasse circle, in which Kiki is placed at the centre (Figure 3.1). This comes at the price of the map being over-simplified in two ways. On the one hand, the diagram neglects connections that do not involve Kiki. For example, Kisling and Pascin became close friends when they lived in apartments at 3, rue Joseph Bara between 1913 and 1914, yet the friendship is not charted. On the other hand, people significant to the Montparnasse circle but not in close contact with Kiki, for instance Léopold Zborowski, dealer of Kisling, Soutine and Modigliani, are left out. For unknown reasons, this diagram is removed from *Kiki's Paris*.

Klüver's and Martin's publications function as an important sourcebook about Kiki and her contemporaries, and offer an enormous number of pertinent primary resources. Yet, *Kiki's Paris* is more narrative and descriptive than analytical. The authors devote themselves to verifying biographical and historical details by comparing information from different sources and of various kinds, endeavouring to intermingle the biographies of the individuals living in Montparnasse in the 1920s. Without an analytical framework to critically investigate the positions of Kiki in the Montparnasse circle, the authors' intention to place Kiki within the history of Montparnasse and as the locus of its social and cultural life could be easily betrayed. In fact, Kiki is often set as a peripheral anecdotal figure in research that cites *Kiki's Paris*, if she is mentioned at all. It is, therefore, the challenge of this chapter to develop an analytical framework that allows me to write Prin's importance into the history of art.

Anecdotes from memoirs and biographies are not selected as reliable sources of fact. As my discussion of the accounts of Prin's arrest demonstrates, the details of anecdotes are often permeated with authorial desire. Instead, they should be considered products of cultural and social negotiation, as well as important constituents of cultural memory. Studies of such accounts are, therefore, intended to reveal the ethos of the time. Apart from the memoirs and biographies of people who once lived or stayed in Montparnasse and encountered Kiki in the 1920s, two versions of Kiki's memoirs are of great importance in establishing the timeline of significant events in her life, each with an intriguing publication history. From approximately 1929, Kiki started to write a series of biographical accounts, some chapters of which were published in the April issue of *Paris - Montparnasse*, a journal launched by Henri Broca.¹⁶⁶ A contract for a book was subsequently signed on 24 April that year. The book proved to be a success, as orders were received at a party to present the mock-up on 25 July in restaurant Falstaff. After its release on 25 July, a book signing was organised on 26 October at the

¹⁶⁶ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.188.

Edouard Loewy bookshop. Reproduced and printed in the book, alongside the text, were six illustrations, twenty paintings by Kiki, ten photographs by Man Ray and paintings of Kiki by artists such as Kisling, Krohg, Foujita, and Hermine David (1886-1970). The book was soon translated into English by an American journalist, Samuel Putnam, upon the invitation of Edward Titus. Ernest Hemingway contributed an introduction to the English version. When the English copies were printed and shipped to the United States, they were confiscated by customs for obscenity. It wasn't until the 1950s that Samuel Roth published the text of the memoirs, along with a series of pin-up glossies of nude women captioned, without any justification, 'a few of Kiki's beautiful friends'. The book took the title *The Education of a French Model*. Ten new chapters on her life, that Kiki presumably wrote directly before her death, were added to the editions of 1955 and later. These were suspected to be Roth's own work.¹⁶⁷ In 1996 Klüver and Martin edited and printed the 1929 memoirs with their own selection of paintings by Kiki and photographs of Kiki, mainly by Man Ray. Translations of eleven autographical articles by Kiki published in *Ici Paris* and *Ici Paris Hebdo* in 1950 were also included. One year after Klüver's death, in 2005, Serge Plantureux discovered the memoirs Kiki wrote in 1938. It turns out that the articles Kiki sent to the newspaper in 1950 came from this version. The publication of the manuscript at the time of its original completion was disrupted by the war. After Kiki's death in 1953 André Laroque, Kiki's lover until her death, made a vain attempt to edit the manuscript and get it published. The versions I employ in my study are the 1996 edition of the 1929 memoirs and the 2005 publication of the 1938 version.¹⁶⁸

Once again, drawing on Foucault's concept of the *énoncé*, I want to emphasise that meaning is the product not of the words alone, but the modality of the existence of the

¹⁶⁷ Mark Gaipa and Robert Scholes, 'She "Never Had a Room of Her Own": Hemingway and the New Edition of Kiki's Memoirs', *The Hemingway Review*, 19 (1999) no.1, 106-125 (p.115).

¹⁶⁸ Kiki, *Souvenirs Retrouvés* (Paris: José Corti, 2005).

statement. In my analysis of the reports of the incident of Prin's arrest, I have not taken the statement that Prin is an artist as a simple affirmation of her professional status. Rather I gradually unravel its function and effects, which are dependent on the time and place specificities of the cultural group named Montparnasse in Paris in 1920s. The questions I pose here concern two intertwining issues. One concerns the historical conditions that enabled Prin to achieve prominence as Kiki. While Meurent and Valadon were visible as either models or artists to their contemporaries, Kiki was able to obtain public prominence for both her modelling and artistic careers. As a model, Prin posed for a number of works by various artist, some of which named Kiki in their titles. Examples include two paintings of Prin by Per Krohg (1889-1965) from 1928, *Kiki* and *Kiki Nude*; a bronze sculpture of her by Pablo Gargallo (1881-1934) completed in 1928, *Kiki of Montparnasse*; and a number of paintings of her by Foujita and Kisling, completed in the 1920s. As an artist, Prin had a sold-out solo exhibition at *Gallerie au Sacre du Printemps* in 1927. What had changed in the practices of modelling and art that made it possible for Prin to escape the either-or quandary that frustrated her predecessors? What is the nature of the prominence that Prin obtained as a model and an artist? What had Kiki contributed to the Montparnasse circle, with which she was so closely associated during her lifetime and afterwards? What is the impact of the community on the experience of modernity in Paris?

Investigating the ways in which Prin has been written into research and popular culture is the focus of this chapter. In 2007, a graphic biography of Kiki was published in French, which provoked a series of productions on Kiki and Montparnasse in the sphere of popular culture, including an animation in 2015, its theatre version in 2014 and two musicals, both premiered in 2015.¹⁶⁹ My approach is to read Kiki de Montparnasse as a semiotic

¹⁶⁹ José-Louis Bocquet and Catel Muller (known as Catel), *Kiki de Montparnasse* (Belgium: Casterman, 2007).

signifier drawing on Roland Barthes's concept of myth.¹⁷⁰ (I will come back to this in the final section of this chapter) If Kiki is a persona that Prin initiated and proactively encouraged when she established herself in the artistic milieu in Montparnasse, 'Kiki de Montparnasse' is an externally attributed image. In fact, 'Kiki de Montparnasse', the eventual icon of the history of Montparnasse during the inter-war period, is an effect of a prolific number of texts and artworks by, and of, her. In many cases Kiki de Montparnasse is found to serve as either an exemplar of life in Montparnasse in the 1920s or an observation point from which that era can be disclosed and deciphered. Kiki de Montparnasse is, therefore, less a recollection of either the almost neglected individual, Alice Prin, or the subject with historical agency, Kiki, than a cultural re-imagining of an irretrievable past, the discourse of which has to be critically investigated. This slippage between Kiki as a historical subject and Kiki de Montparnasse as an archival effect is substantiated by the inconsistency between the obscurity of Prin's later life, as is the case for Meurent, and the persistent visibility of 'Kiki de Montparnasse' to the present day.

Kiki as an *Iconic Model* in Montparnasse, in the 1920s

The artworks in which Kiki appears can be categorised roughly into three groups, according to the ways Kiki is represented. The first group take a form resembling the conventional bust length portrait, and adopt *Kiki* or *Kiki de Montparnasse* as their titles (for example, Figure 3.2, Figure 3.3 & Figure 3.4). Pablo Gargallo's sculpture of Kiki's head, *Kiki de Montparnasse* (1928) (Figure 3.5), and three sculptures by Alexandar Calder (1898-1976), *Kiki de Montparnasse II* (1930) (Figure 3.6) and *Féminité / Nez de Kiki* (1931) (Figure 3.7) all fall into this group. The second group comprises the rest of the paintings in which

¹⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993)

Kiki assumes various poses and is rendered from various angles. Photographs of Kiki by Man Ray and films in which Kiki starred make up the last category. For the last category comprises works of medium that inevitably reproduce Kiki's face as it was at the moment of shooting and are thus fundamentally different from the previous two groups, this last group are touched upon only occasionally.

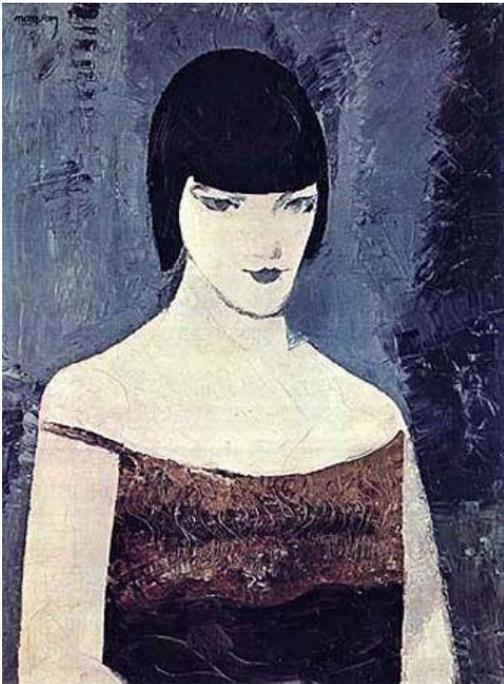


Figure 3. 2, Man Ray, *Kiki*, 1923, oil on canvas, 61×45.7 cm, private collection

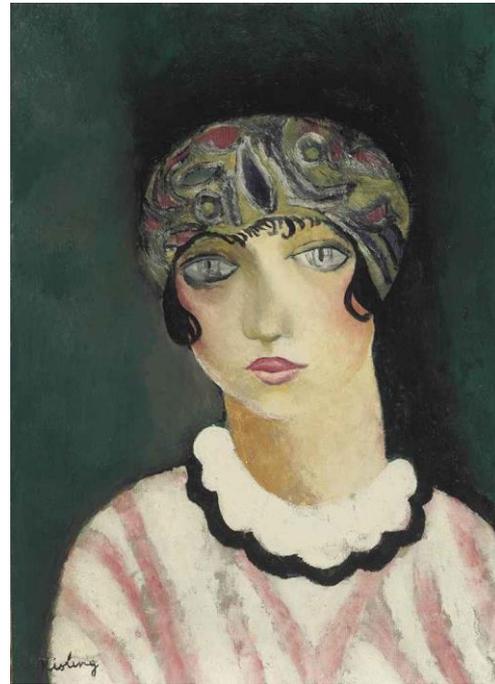


Figure 3. 3, Moïse Kisling, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 1924, oil on canvas, 55×38.1 cm, private collection



Figure 3. 4, Maurice Mendjizky, *Kiki*, 1921, oil on canvas 61.5 x 30 cm, Fonds de Dotation Mendjisky-Ecoles, Paris



Figure 3. 5, Pablo Gargallo, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 1928, lost-wax casting, polishing and welding, 20.5 x 17.2 x 11.5 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Figure 3. 6, Alexander Calder, *Kiki de Montparnasse (II)*, 1930, wire, 30.5 x 26.5 x 34.5 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, Paris

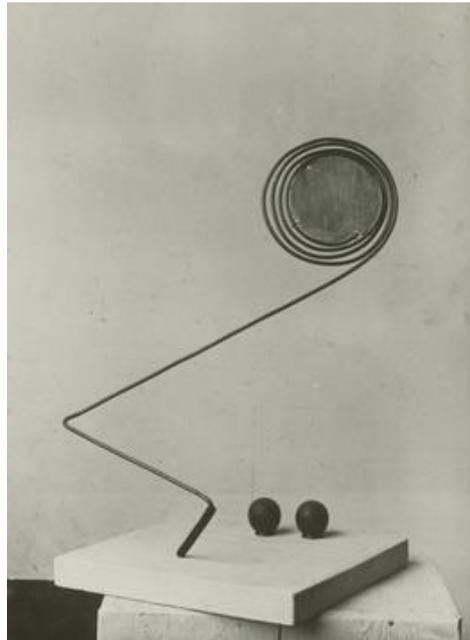


Figure 3. 7, Alexander Calder, *Féminité / Nez de Kiki*, 1931, wire

The composition and titles of artworks in the first group share some similarities with those of conventional portraiture. This poses a question: is Kiki a model or effectively a sitter for portraits? To differentiate it from modelling, the convention of portraiture renders the person depicted as a sitter, for whose representation a commission has been made to the artist. Upon its completion, the portrait belongs to the patron. Both the sitter and the patron have a certain power over the production of the work. As there is no subject matter apart from the sitter, portraits are often titled with the name of the sitter, if there is any given by the artist. In many cases, titles of portraits are retrospectively designated by art critics and historians. In contrast, a model is paid by the artist to facilitate the artist's production of art. The artist owns full rights over the creative production as well as the completed work. The representation does not have to be faithful. In fact, as I have explained in previous chapters, any idiosyncrasy is often removed from the completed work. According to the academic tradition of idealisation, the figure is supposed to embody idealised beauty, which by its definition cannot be possessed by any single person. In summary, conventional distinctions between sitter and model are marked by three features, 1) the economics of the transaction, 2) a hierarchy of power between the artist and the person depicted over the production of the work and its ownership, and 3) the requirement for faithful representation. By faithful, I do not mean scrupulously realistic but true to the manner in which the social identity as well as the recognizable appearance of a named individual could become an image for public or private display under the conventions, historically changing of course, of the portrait in which the sitter enjoys and often pays for the privilege of being represented. A faithful representation is, as a matter of fact, a reserved privilege.

Since the Realist aesthetic and practice emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, the three features summarised above shifted remarkably. As Melissa McQuillan observes in *Impressionist Portraits*, 'a figure, once it attains a certain scale within an Impressionist

painting, almost inevitably presents a likeness of its model'.¹⁷¹ In some examples, the degree of individuality is enough for identification. Yet, the rendering of recognisable features does not necessarily secure a painting's status as a portrait.¹⁷² On the contrary, artistic practice and artworks as such serves to destabilise the traditional category of portraiture, rather than conform to it. Not only was the sitter's privilege to be faithfully represented popularised, the traditional private function of portraiture was substituted, as these artworks were often made accessible to a much wider audience in public exhibitions. Two new types of model, *modèle de l'occasion* (irregular model) and *modèle privilégié* (proprietary model), were introduced as alternatives to professional models.¹⁷³ Unlike the professional model, the irregular model was hired for the authenticity. Faithful representations of the traces of the face and body as marks of social and cultural background were essential for it to be effective. Yet in contrast with a sitter for a portrait, depictions of irregular models do not aim to celebrate individual identity. Since the model functions as a social type, some degree of generalisation is necessary for it to be representative. The identity of the model often remains invisible.

The distinctions further dissolve when it comes to proprietary models. Adopted first by artists associated with the Impressionist circle, such as Édouard Manet and Claude Monet (1840-1926), proprietary models were often members of the artists' families or friends. Unlike irregular models, no money transaction was involved in the model-artist relationship of this category, at least not in the form of hourly pay. Instructions of the pose are more flexible. Sometimes the artist would direct the pose, and in other cases model might reject an artificial pose in order to stay true to life according to the model's opinion. Susan Waller

¹⁷¹ Melissa McQuillan, *Impressionist Portraits* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p.13.

¹⁷² McQuillan, *Impressionist Portraits*, p.12.

¹⁷³ I owe this categorisation of models to Susan Waller's important research on the history of modelling as a *metier* up to 1870, published in the journal article, 'Realist Quandaries: Posing Professional and Proprietary Models in the 1860s', *The Art Bulletin*, 89 (June 2007), no. 2, 239-265; and book, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830 -1870* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

remarks that ‘the important difference between these [proprietary] models and those for hire by the hour [i.e. irregular occasional models and professional models] is that the pose [assumed by model], however it is arrived at, is an episode within a sustained association but is not the primary basis for that association’.¹⁷⁴ Another factor is hence added to our consideration of the artist-model relation: that is the nature of the relation between artist and model outside the modelling business.

What Waller tries to resolve is an increasing difficulty of distinguishing the model from the sitter, at a moment when the notion of the former was constantly shifting, as a result of the emerging new artistic practices and aesthetics after 1840.¹⁷⁵ Despite the expansion of the categories of models, at the heart of Waller’s definitions is the asymmetry between artist and model in terms of their power over the finished artwork. All Waller’s analyses concentrate on the process of art production. Building on Waller’s arguments, I propose one way to distinguish the model from the sitter. The question here is this: is it the individual identity of the depicted person that the artist intends to capture in the artwork? Information on the artist’s subjective intention is not always available to us, but two details of the artwork might be revealing. The first is whether the identity or name of the person represented is given in the title. The other is whether the person represented is irreplaceable for the content of the work. The latter is often more telling. For example, both of Henri Fantin-Latour’s (1836-1904) two group portraits of his contemporaries, *Homage to Delacroix* (1864) and *The Toast! Homage to Truth* (1865), made statements about the collective artistic aspirations shared by himself and his associates, such as James McNeill Whistler, Manet, Baudelaire, Louis Edmond Duranty, Jules Champfleury, Louis Cordier, Alphonse Legros, Félix Bracquemond and Albert de Balleroy. Even without the names of the sitters being listed in

¹⁷⁴ Waller, ‘Realist Quandaries’, p.240.

¹⁷⁵ This is elaborately addressed in the Introduction chapter, pp. 11-22.

the title, their identities, as well as their social and artistic commitments, are indispensable to the statement that Fantin-Latour wishes to make with the two paintings to an intended audience who might recognize the individuals thus gathered. The physiognomic resemblance becomes essential for this purpose. These two paintings can, therefore, be identified as portraits.

Let me discuss another case from the works of the American painter, James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (1863-1865) (Figure 3.8) as it will illuminate us on the problematics of the sitter/model distinction. The person depicted in the work is Christine Spartali, the daughter of Michael Spartali, later the Greek consul general in London. According to his early biographers Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell, Whistler met the Spartali sisters, Marie (later Mrs. Marie Stillman) and Christine (later the Countess of Edmond de Cahen) at gatherings hosted by Alexander Constantine Ionides, a British art patron and collector, of Greek ancestry. He asked the younger sister Christine to sit for him. Over the course of the winter of 1863-1864, Christine went to Whistler's studio and sat twice a week. She was properly chaperoned by Marie each time as this was the common practice for bourgeois women to stepping in to the studio of an artist who was a man.¹⁷⁶ Upon its completion, despite the fact that the sisters suggested to their father that he should purchase the painting, Michael Spatali objected to it as a portrait of his daughter and disapproved of its display at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. After another rejected purchase and more work on the painting in October 1864 and March 1865, it

¹⁷⁶ Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Heinemann, 1908), pp.122-5. In the fifth edition of the same book published in 1911 (London: Heinemann, 1911), pp.87-8.

was submitted to the Paris Salon of 1865 as *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*. Christine Spartali's name was not attached to it.¹⁷⁷



Figure 3. 8, James McNeill Whistler, *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*, 1863-1865, oil on canvas, 199.9×116.1 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington

¹⁷⁷ Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret MacDonald & Robin Spencer, *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (New-Haven; London: Yale University Press for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1980), vol. 1. pp.22-27.

Perhaps Michael Spartali's rejection of it being a portrait was well grounded. As the sitter is the sole subject of a portrait, it is a portraiture convention that objects and details rendered in such works, apart from the physiognomic resemblance, serve the purpose of revealing the social-cultural background or personal traits of the sitter. This is not the case in *La Princesse*. Not only did Whistler take liberties by elongating the body of the figure in order to resemble a certain type of woman called *Lange Leizen*, or the Long Elizas, found on Chinese porcelain of the Kangxi period, he also created an oriental Japanese-Chinese setting, with a floral screen, a Chinese blue and white rug possibly borrowed from Dante Rossetti, two round paper fans, and a Japanese robe. There is no evidence indicating Michael, Marie or Christine Spartali had an interest in East Asian art, but Whistler was a well-known collector of objects from China and Japan. It is very likely therefore, that the Japanese-Chinese ambience in *La Princesse* stems from the artist's personal interest in oriental aesthetics. At approximately the same time as Christine Spartali sat, Whistler explored the figure paintings on Chinese porcelain in another painting, first exhibited at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1864 as *The Lange Leizen – of the Six Marks* (Figure 3.9). The painting depicts a woman wearing a Chinese brocade robe, sitting on a chair, surrounded by various pieces of blue and white Chinese porcelain and many other oriental accessories. The woman holds a brush in one hand and a Chinese porcelain jar in the other as if she is going to paint on it. Three elongated women's figures on the jar, or the *Lange Leizen*, are vaguely visible. The pose of the woman in the middle with her back slightly leaning backward and belly pushed forward is similar to that assumed by Christine Spartali in *La Princesse*, which serves to elongate the body to better resemble the *Lange Leizen*. *La Princesse* therefore inherits the painter's interest in Chinese porcelain figures at that time and takes it as its subject. Like the model in *The Lange Lizen – of the Six Marks*, Christine Spartali's individual identity is not indispensable to the realisation of this subject.



Figure 3. 9, James McNeill Whistler, *The Lange Leizen – of the Six Marks*, 1864, oil on canvas, 93.3×61.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Christine Spartali's chaperone and sister, Mrs. Stillman, later disclosed some details of the sitting sessions to Whistler's biographer, Pennell. 'On the first day, when they arrived in the studio, Whistler had his scheme prepared. The Japanese robe was ready, the rug and screen were in place, and he gave the pose at once.'¹⁷⁸ It is not clear whether Whistler had communicated with Spartali about the setting and the pose in advance. Given the resemblance of the pose to the figure on the porcelain jar in *The Lange Lizen – of the Six Marks*, it is very likely that it is Whistler who proposed it.

This is not to say, I must suggest, that Spartali did not contribute to the production of the painting. On the contrary, it appears that Whistler often relied on the exact presence of the actual object and subject to finish the painting. In his letter to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, dated to 1864 or 1865, Whistler asks to borrow his 'Chinese blue and white rug'.¹⁷⁹ There are several speculations on which rug Whistler was referring to, but this nonetheless underlines Whistler's needs for the actual object to create a setting.¹⁸⁰ As to the contribution of Christine Spartali, Mrs. Stillman's recollection might again shed some light on it.

The sittings went on until the sitter fell ill. Whistler was pitiless with his models. The head in the *Princesse* gave him most trouble. He kept Miss Spartali standing while he worked on it, never letting her rest; she must keep the entire pose.... During her illness, a model stood for the gown, and when she was getting better, he came one day and made a pencil-drawing of her head.... There were a few more sittings after this, and at last the picture was finished.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Robins and Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (1908), p.123.

¹⁷⁹ Letter to Dante Gabriel Rossetti [1864/1865], in *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, University of Glasgow (on-line edition), <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/art/display/?cid=9393&filename=y050&titlestr=La%20Princesse&year=&rs=4> [accessed 23 June 2017].

¹⁸⁰ Reasonable speculations include the one in *La Princesse*, a pale blue carpet in *Symphony in White, No. 3*, the white carpet with blue pattern in a sketch for *Annabel Lee*, and a purplish-blue patterned rug in the foreground of *Harmony in Flesh Colour and Red*. These are the paintings that Whistler was working on around the time. See note 3 of the letter to Rossetti.

¹⁸¹ E.R. and J. Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Heinemann, 1908), p.124.

For Whistler, the presence of someone in the pose was essential in order for him to complete the painting. Not only was Christine Spartali asked to attend many sitting sessions, when she fell ill, possibly due to those sessions, a model had to be in the studio to stand for the gown. In comparison to having a model standing in for the pose in most sessions, which is common in portraiture convention, Whistler preferred to have the depicted person come in for the sitting and keep the pose.

A close look at the history of the title of the work when it was on public exhibition offers some clues to Whistler's perception of it. After failed attempts to sell it to Michael Spartali and another collector, the painting was exhibited as *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* at the Paris Salon in 1865, *The Princess, Variations in Flesh Colour and Blue* at the International Exhibition in the South Kensington Museum in London in 1872, *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey - La Princess des pays de la Porcelaine* at the Second Annual Exhibition of Modern Pictures in the Royal Pavilion Gallery in Brighton in 1875, *Harmony in Flesh Colour and Grey, La Princess des Pays de la Porcelain (Portrait de Miss S...)* at the Second Exhibition of the Society of Portrait Painters in London in 1892, and *Rose and Silver: La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* at the Exhibition of International Art organised by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers in London in 1898.¹⁸² The last title was adopted by two retrospective exhibitions shortly after Whistler's death in 1903, respectively in Boston in 1904 and Paris in 1905. The entry of the painting on the website of the Freer Gallery of Art where the painting currently resides, however, catalogues it as *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*.¹⁸³ Only once in the exhibiting history of this painting was Christine Spartali's involvement indicated by the 'Portrait de Miss S...'

¹⁸² For a full exhibiting history of the painting prior to it being bequeathed to the Freer Gallery of Art in 1919, see Young et al., pp.26-27.

¹⁸³ The item entry of the painting on the website of the Freer Gallery of Art is at http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg_F1903.91a-b [accessed on 28 June 2017]. The work is not on exhibition at the time of writing.

in brackets. This exception probably owes itself to the context of its display as it was a group exhibition of the Society of Portrait Painters. While it is common for portraits of respectable women to be exhibited with a title that reveals their identity in a veiled way, the ambiguity of Spartali's name in this case is very likely the result of the artist's deliberation. In fact, Whistler, if he names the sitter in the title, more often releases the full name of the sitter of his portraits. This carefulness may be due to Michael Spartali's objection to it being a portrait.

It was not uncommon for Whistler to change the titles of his works when they were displayed in various contexts. He established categories for his artworks by naming them *variations*, *harmonies*, *symphonies*, *arrangements*, *nocturnes*, etc. In a personal letter to his Parisian art dealer friend George Aloysius Lucas, Whistler writes, 'by the names of the pictures also I point out something of what I mean in my theory of painting'.¹⁸⁴ The changing titles, therefore, allude to Whistler's evolving theory of art as well as his changing perception of his own oeuvre and the position the painting occupied in it. In the chapter 'The Red Rag' in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, a collection of Whistler's responses to critics published in 1890, Whistler elucidates his 'theory of painting':

Why should I not call my works 'symphonies', 'arrangements', 'harmonies', and 'nocturnes'?...

The vast majority of English folk cannot and will not consider a picture as a picture, apart from any story which it may be supposed to tell.

My picture of a 'Harmony in Grey and Gold' is an illustration of my meaning - a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care nothing for the past, present, or future of the black figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of the picture. Now this is precisely what my friends cannot grasp.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Letter to George Aloysius Lucas [18 January 1873], in *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, University of Glasgow (on-line edition), <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display/?cid=9182&year=1873&month=01&rs=1> [accessed 13 July 2017].

¹⁸⁵ James McNeill Whistler, 'The Red Rag' in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies: as Pleasingly Exemplified in Many Instances, Wherein the Serious Ones of the Earth, Carefully Exasperated, Have*

Whistler sets his nomenclature against the popular tendency in British art at the time to read paintings as narrative. Although Ruth Yeazell argues that Whistler sometimes betrayed his own words by inviting such associations with titles evoking popular novels and operas, she nevertheless admits that ‘Whistler’s titles were meant to evoke recurrent formal patterns rather than to identify particular motifs’.¹⁸⁶ Towards the end of his life even *arrangements*, *variations*, *harmonies*, etc. were sometimes omitted, and colour combinations became the main titles, as exemplified by the last alteration to the title of *La Princesse* made by Whistler during his life time, *Rose and Silver: La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelain*. The adoption of a universally structured main title not only integrates the artworks into a more substantial project, it also underplays the singularity that portraits usually possess as artworks of a specific person. By reconfiguring his work into groups and guiding the audience through the titles of his works, Whistler manages to claim the power that was traditionally attributed to the sitter by the motif, making the painting an embodiment of his ‘theory of painting’, instead of the sitter’s subjectivity or stature. The breakdown of the sitter-model dichotomy is, hence, to a certain extent symptomatic of the artist’s struggle for increasing creative autonomy and authority over the process of art production and the meaning of the completed work.

If we examine the artworks of Kiki in the first category with the criteria established above, the status of Kiki as a model for paintings and sculptures is called into question. On the one hand, two features of Kiki’s modelling practice strongly suggest that she was a professional model. Firstly, she would pose in the nude, as exemplified by many of the paintings in the second group and photographs in the third. Although it was common for artists in the Montparnasse circle to paint portraits of friends and family, the fine line between

Been Prettily Spurred on to Unseemliness and Indiscretion, while Overcome by an Undue Sense of Right (London: Heinemann, 1890), pp.126-8 (126).

¹⁸⁶ Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Picture Titles: How and Why Western Paintings Acquired Their Names* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp.210-215.

professional model and others who engaged in the activity of modelling was carefully maintained. One example is Modigliani and his nudes. In her chapter, *Modigliani and the Bodies of Art: Carnality, Attentiveness, and the Modernist Struggle*, Griselda Pollock points out that although his nudes were believed to be his most representative artworks, Modigliani produced the series of paintings under exceptional conditions.¹⁸⁷ They come from a period of intense concentration on the subject between 1916 and 1919. Léopold Zborowski, a long-time patron of Modigliani, provided the artist with the necessary materials and a working space in his new apartment at 3 rue Joseph Bara, paid for the professional models and offered a daily payment of fifteen to twenty francs for what Modigliani produced. In that room, we are told, Modigliani demanded to work alone with his models. Apart from the series of nudes, most of Modigliani's other paintings were portraits of his friends, lovers and acquaintances. Although he would paint and draw his lovers and wife, he seldom depicted them nude. As his early companion, Anna Akhmatova, a Russian poet, recalled in her memoirs, Modigliani made sixteen nude drawings of her, none of which were from life. The drawings were given privately to her as presents and were therefore never meant for public display.

My interest in Modigliani lies in his practice of employing models. In Modigliani we see the coexistence of two methods of using models. One was inviting his personal acquaintances to sit for him, for which he did not have to pay; the other was the conventional practice of hiring professional models. Even though he might have painted his lovers and wife nude, he did not mean it for public display. It is only the nude paintings of the professional models that were displayed in public. Since he was often in financial difficulty, he had to rely on his dealer to pay the professional models. The exceptionality of Modigliani's series of nudes results, therefore, from the distinction he maintained in his

¹⁸⁷ Griselda Pollock, 'Modigliani and the Bodies of Art: Carnality, Attentiveness, and the Modernist Struggle', in *Modigliani: Beyond the Myth*, ed. by Mason Klein (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp.55-73.

practice of using models, especially in terms of whose bodies were going to be seen by the public.

The second feature is that Kiki managed her modelling practice professionally. From her own memoirs, we are told that money was the primary reason driving Kiki into modelling in the first place. She took up a three-month modelling contract with Kisling, indicating her involvement in the metier of professional modelling.¹⁸⁸ Foujita also mentions that in one session Kiki demanded money from him for posing.¹⁸⁹ It is, therefore, apparent that money was involved in the relationship Kiki had with artists.

Yet in many cases, posing ceased to be the primary relationship between Kiki and the artists for whom she worked. Both Kisling and Fujita became life-long friends with Kiki. In fact, one of the crucial features of the close-knit Montparnasse circle is that it made models an integral part, to an extent unprecedented in the history of French art. A possible counterpart to the circle's proximity can be found in London's Pre-Raphaelite circle in the mid-nineteenth century. Founded over half a century previously in 1848, the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood was primarily comprised of seven figures, all men, painter John Everet Millais (1829-1896); painter William Holman Hunt (1827-1910); painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882); sculptor Thomas Woolner (1825-1892); writer and critic, brother of Dante Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), and painter James Collinson (1825-1881). Unlike the Montparnasse circle which was, first and foremost, united casually by the closeness of the space in which the artists worked and lived, the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood was the result of a conscious statement made by young artists who shared a vision of art and idealism. The brotherhood was later expanded to artists, poets and critics with shared social

¹⁸⁸ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, pp.142.

¹⁸⁹ Foujita, 'My Friend Kiki', in *Kiki's Memoirs*, pp.41-45 (42 & 44).

and artistic values.¹⁹⁰ Women identified as members of the circle were mostly either artists who shared Pre-Raphaelite aspirations, such as Emma Sandys (1843-1877), or families of the Pre-Raphaelite men, such as Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) and Jane Morris (1839-1914). There are numerous well-known anecdotes of Pre-Raphaelite men searching for beautiful women to pose for them, but the models, who were women, also constituted a significant part of the circle. Yet, their position was decidedly different from Kiki's. On the one hand, being a model in itself was not sufficient for a woman to stay in the circle. Models such as Anne Ryan and Ellen Frazer soon fell out of the circle as they got married. On the other hand, in alliance with the Pre-Raphaelites' rejection of academic practice, models who posed for their paintings were not professional. Nor were any of them depicted as naked.

What differentiated the Montparnasse circle from the Pre-Raphaelites, and also from other collective artistic groups in history such as the Impressionists and various artists' communities in rural areas across Europe, was its indifference to people having various professions and diverse social and artistic values.¹⁹¹ Artists and models in Montparnasse mingled at all kinds of social events and activities, including balls, private parties, entertainment at night clubs as well as travelling, swimming and drinking coffee on the terraces of cafés. I will explore the effects of such a close community further in the following sections. Suffice to say that Kiki sustained close associations with artists apart from posing, while obtained payment for posing at the same time. This makes it difficult to fit her into any of the aforementioned categories of model.

Drawing and painting friends was an exceptionally common practice in the Montparnasse circle. Due to their lack of financial resources, young artists living in

¹⁹⁰ Jan Marsh, *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* (London: National Portrait Gallery, c.2005), p.14

¹⁹¹ Nina Lübbren estimated a number of over three thousand artists from all over the world, who left the established centres of art production in Europe and moved to artists' colonies that scattered in the countryside. Nina Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.2.

Montparnasse were often not affluent enough to hire professional models to work alone with them in the studio. Organising a group session and sharing the cost in artists' colonies was one solution. The example of such practice at *La Ruche* will be further investigated in the coming sections. Another solution is drawing and painting each other, as a form of mutual support. This is probably one of the reasons for the proliferation of portraits produced by Montparnasse artists. The completed works were sometimes given to the represented person as presents, but this always depended on the artist's good will. Since artists took painting and drawing each other to be part of their artistic training, they often concentrated on the advancement of their skills and the exploration of individual techniques and styles. As a result, portraits of the same person by different artists sometimes bear little resemblance to one another in terms of the physiognomy of the person represented. For example, if we were to juxtapose portraits of Kisling by Modigliani (1916) (Figure 3.10) and Soutine (c.1930) (Figure 3.11), in spite of the similar pose Kisling assumes in both paintings, the features of his body and face are reformulated to conform to the artists' differing styles, so that it is difficult to discern physiognomic resemblance between the paintings except for the parted hairstyle and the prominent ears. Where Modigliani's Kisling has almond-shaped eyes, long eyebrows and sharp facial contours, features found in many other figurative paintings by Modigliani, Soutine's Kisling has two circular brush strokes to mark the eyes and a puffy face. I make no attempt to judge who captures the true resemblance of Kisling; rather it is the significant differences between the two portraits and the prominent artistic style they bear that are intriguing. These paintings do not establish the individual identity of Moïse Kisling as there is hardly any indication of his characteristic. Rather, they are manifestations the artist's creativity. Such practice of portrait making not only disturbs the conventional sitter-model dichotomy, but also presents a more fluid positional relation between artist and model. The artist could be model, and vice versa, depending on the contexts.

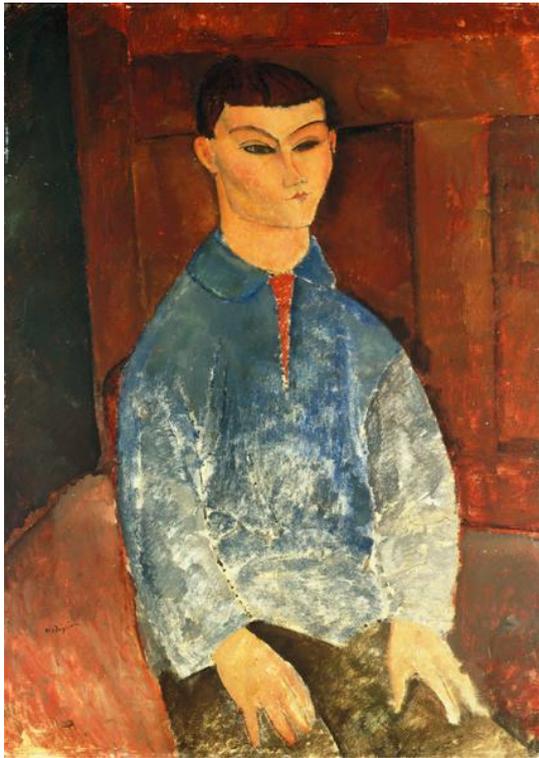


Figure 3. 10, Amedeo Modigliani, Moïse Kisling seated, 1916, oil on board, 104.8×74.9 cm, private collection

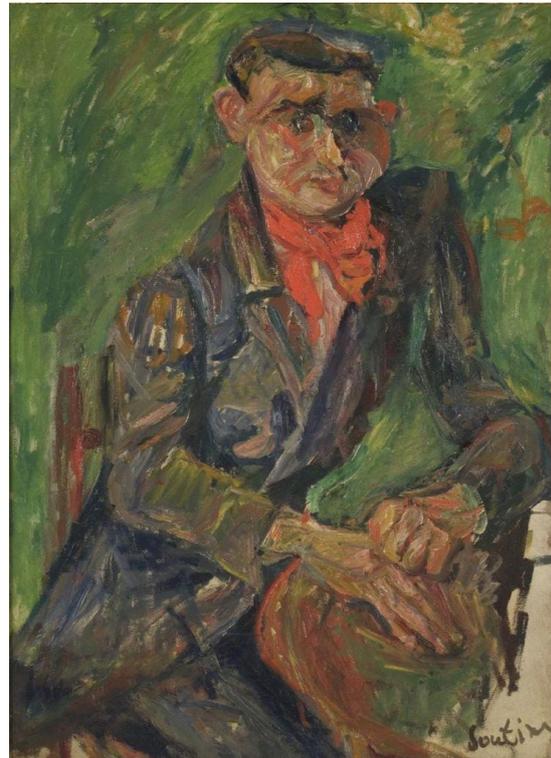


Figure 3. 11, Chaim Soutine, *Portrait of Moïse Kisling*, c.1930, oil on cardboard on Masonite, 99.1×69.2cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Painting artistic colleagues and friends is hardly exclusive to the Montparnasse artists. The Impressionists, to give an example, also painted each other. As McQuillan argues, a large number of paintings ‘appear to make a statement about “The Artist”, to engage in a dialogue about artistic life and the enterprise of painting, and to formulate an artistic persona’.¹⁹² All of the Impressionists were either from Paris or settled in Paris with their families, which made it possible for them, as they often did, to paint their families and friends who were not engaged in any artistic activities. Painting their colleagues, therefore, was a conscious and deliberate decision, which served to reformulate their position as artists in a specific artistic community and reconfigure the stature of artists. On the contrary, many of the Montparnasse artists were foreigners who knew virtually no one in Paris before they arrived. Painting each other is, on

¹⁹² McQuillan, *Impressionist Portraits*, p.18.

the one hand, a manifestation of their participation in, and contribution to, this community; and on the other hand, a means of practical necessity. When it was affordable, some of them, such as Foujita and Kisling, would pay for professional models, as they did with Kiki. As mentioned, Modigliani's dealer, Léopold Zborowski, paid for the professional models who posed for his series of female nudes.

When it comes to the artists' depictions of Kiki, it has to be acknowledged that Kiki got to know the artists through posing, rather than painting each other. The context of their first encounters must, however, not be the only factor that defined the nature of the relationship between them. Otherwise we would overlook constant change and evolution of the relations between the two subjects. What sets Kiki apart from those artists in terms of their posing praxis is that instead of posing as a return of favour, she demanded a pay from the artist. The involvement of money makes it difficult to fit her neatly into the category of proprietary model.

Careful scrutiny of artworks of Kiki in the first group calls into question not only the categories of model, but also the conventional sitter-model distinction. On the one hand, the fact that she was paid for the sitting pins her down as a model. On the other hand, despite the discrepancies in style and technique employed by artists, representations of Kiki in these artworks all carefully delineate Kiki's distinctive facial features, such as the thin eyebrows, wide eyelids, large eyes, pointed nose, clearly contoured lips, short straight black chin-length bob haircut and straight fringe. Such specific idiosyncrasies enhanced the individuality of the person depicted, making her recognisable, while stylising her features at the same time.

Being recognised in imagery used to be the privilege of portrait sitters, for which the artist has to be paid. For models, of whatever category, this privilege was not guaranteed and always depended on the creative decision of the artist. Few in the history of models have

obtained such consistent representation, albeit in the diverse styles and mediums that various artists used. What Kiki presents, I propose, is an innovative notion of model, the iconic model. In her analysis of Virginia Woolf as an icon of contemporary political and cultural life, Brenda Silver introduces us to William Safire's etymological study of icons published in the *Heroine Worship* issue of the *New York Times Magazine*.¹⁹³ The word icon can be traced to the Greek word *eikon*, which means 'to resemble' and connotes 'the material representation, or image, of a saint or angel in the Eastern Orthodox Church'.¹⁹⁴ Representation of resemblance is, therefore, integral to the concept of the icon, rendering it a symbol of something extrinsic to the representation. For a religious icon to be effective, certain features, such as the Virgin Mary's blue robe and the Christ's beard, need to persist across copies. This distinctiveness and consistency in Kiki's case is contributed by the nearly stylised facial features of Kiki recurring in the artworks. Such features do not serve to resemble, but rather to ascribe iconicity to this specific look of Kiki.

Juxtaposing photographs of Kiki taken in the 1920s for various purposes and on various occasions, it is conspicuous that although Kiki had her iconic straight bob haircut for most of the 1920s, she sometimes did make changes, such as parting the fringe or curling the bob. A photograph taken on the night Kiki was crowned 'the Queen of Montparnasse', 30 May 1929, shows her with curly hair (Figure 3.12). There are representations of Kiki in this period with different hairstyles. For instance, Fujita's portrait of Kiki from 1925 depicts her with a parted fringe (Figure 3.13). In *Ballet Mécanique* (1923-1924), a Dadaist film directed by Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Kiki is captured without the fringe. Perhaps the best example of artist's deliberate intention to evoke Kiki's iconic image is the three-quarter view of Alexander Calder's (1898-1976) wire portrait of Kiki (1930) indicates her iconic straight

¹⁹³ Brenda Silver, *Virginia Woolf Icon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.7. William Safire, 'Many Icons, Few Iconoclasts,' *New York Times Magazine*, 24 November 1996.

¹⁹⁴ Safire, 'Many Icons, Few Iconoclasts', pp.42-44.

fringe (Figure 3.6 & 3.14). We do not know how many sessions Kiki sat for this portrait, nor whether she was paid for these sessions. One of the sessions, however, was captured in footage on Montparnasse shot by British Pathé, *Montparnasse - Where the Muses Hold Sway* (1929) (Figure 3.15). Kiki wears a hat in the footage, through which we glimpse the curly tips of her hair as well as her fringe, a tuft of curly hair resting in the middle of her forehead. It is visible in the footage that Calder was working on a wire portrait of Kiki, which roughly resemble the one he completed in 1930. The footage was shot in May 1929. In all photos of Kiki taken between March and November that year her hair is curly. The straight fringe in the portrait was, therefore, not meant to capture a real-time resemblance, but to re-present what had become known as the stylised face of Kiki of Montparnasse. It is such transformation of Kiki into the iconic face that defines Kiki as a model instead of a sitter.

The stylised image of Kiki does not necessarily evoke Kiki, the living historical subject. Calder's interest in Kiki lies, to a certain extent, in the symbolic meaning of her image. As an iconic model, the perceived individual identity of Kiki, which is indispensable and irreplaceable to the meaning of the artwork, is therefore an attributed fixed representation. Kiki herself did not deliberately conform to the iconic image. Unlike Fujita who kept his trademark look with round eyeglasses and a kappa hairstyle throughout his life, Kiki did not seem keen to maintain the short straight bob. She was not opposed to the alteration of her features in artworks either, probably because she understood her role as a model, of whom the representation does not have to be faithful. In fact, as I discuss in the next section, she tended to capitalise on the effect of her iconicity.



Figure 3. 12, Anonymous, *Photograph of Kiki*, 1929



Figure 3. 13, Tsuguharu Foujita, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 1925, oil and pen and ink on canvas, 41.5×33.3 cm, private collection



Figure 3. 14, Alexander Calder, *Kiki de Montparnasse (II)*, 1930, wire, 30.5×26.5×34.5 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, Paris



Figure 3. 15, Kiki in *Montparnasse - Where the Muses Hold Sway*, 1929

Another condition for iconicity is that it has to be widely acknowledged. The visibility of Kiki's individual identity is necessary in this sense. Thanks to technological advancements in printing, photography and film making, it became easier for material representations to spread widely, as postcards, journals, magazines, photographs and films are more portable than paintings or sculptures. The flocking of tourists from other European countries and North America into Paris after World War I is another factor that might have facilitated their dissemination. The public visibility of Kiki from her regular performance in nightclubs, such as the Jockey, would make her known to tourists and short term visitors who would spread the word after they left Paris. Frederick Kohner's memoir of Kiki is one example.¹⁹⁵ In fact, Kiki's fame must have travelled across the ocean in the 1920s, as Paramount invited her to attend an audition in New York in 1923. It is this widespread fame of Kiki as a historical subject that allows artworks, which bears her name in their titles, to incorporate her into their processes of producing meaning.

¹⁹⁵ Frederick Kohner, *Kiki of Montparnasse* (London: Cassel, 1968)

The obsession with woman's face needs also to be considered in the context of stardom. Historically, Kiki's modelling career coincided with the rise of the concept of star in the film industry of the 1920s. The notion of star is a historical invention. Actors do not naturally become stars. As pointed out by Richard deCordova, it was not until 1909 that film players ceased to be anonymous.¹⁹⁶ Picture personalities started to appear by name, or the name assigned to them by the public. As formulated by film historian Christine Gledhill, in the shift from actor to star, 'actors become stars when their off-screen life-styles and personalities equal or surpass acting ability in importance'.¹⁹⁷ I do not think that Kiki was a star in the sense that Gledhill's research presents, as Kiki's life was not as widely exposed in newspapers, journals, magazines or other publicity media as the film actors in Gledhill's analysis. Kiki did, however, gain certain visibility for her individual traits, which, like the star, suppressed the anonymity that is definitive to the model's metier. What is more, the rise to stardom changed people's conceptualisation of the model in the public sphere, especially in the terrain of visual representations. Curiosity about the person not for what he or she represented on the screen but the individual beyond the pictorial frame threatens to undermine the sitter's privilege of being identified in artworks. Idiosyncrasies became a key factor in this economy, although stereotypes are often involved.

Having proposed the concept of the iconic model, I have not provided a clear definition of the category that can be applied to other subjects. This new category is neither intended to be supplementary to the previous ones nor is it an attempt to offer a comprehensive system of classing models. If I were to define the iconic model as a model with extensive recognisability and visibility, I would have to set clear standards for such features. What kind of recognisability and visibility would be necessary for classifying a

¹⁹⁶ Richard deCordova, 'The Emergence of the Star System in America', in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.17-29.

¹⁹⁷ Christine Gledhill, 'Introduction' in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991), p. xiv.

model as iconic? How extensive should they be, in terms of time or space or both? Could the iconicity be a retrospective attribute? To what extent does the artist's authorial intent determine the categorisation? Once the stylised face of Kiki is widely acknowledged, should artworks of Kiki that represent similar features be considered instances of her being an iconic model, even though it was not the artist's intention to make Kiki so visible? As hard as I have tried to fit Kiki into any of the existing categories of sitter and model, her modelling practice constantly eludes this confinement, and marks their failure. The case of Kiki, in fact, signifies the precariousness of the categories as fixing limits and presents to us a possibility of overthrowing them. The iconic model is, therefore, not a category within the model metier, but a resistance to the very gesture of categorisation and a questioning of the authorial intention, which reconfigures the conceptualisation of models.

The iconic image of Kiki is, indeed, a crystalised outcome of her performative labour as a model. It is the result of a series of negotiations she had with a number of artists, which also is integral to the process of her construction and adoption of the persona, Kiki, in the artistic community. What the case of Kiki demands from us, with her unprecedented visibility in representation, as well as in the Montparnasse circle, is an increasing recognition of the agency of the model in art practice and the lives of artists. As Kiki befriended many of the artists through modelling, the practice has to have involved some form of affective exchange between the subjects. In the case of Meurent, this traffic was embodied in her capacity to offer Manet a specific image of modern life in the form of performative labour. For Kiki this extends beyond the territory of the studio.

Kiki as an *Outsider Artist* in Montparnasse, 1920s

On March 25, 1927, an one-woman exhibition of Kiki's paintings opened at a private gallery, *Galerie au Sacre du Printemps*. Lasting for two weeks until April 9, the exhibition was reported to be a success. Not only did it attract a great number of visitors, it made a number of sales as well. In the report on the exhibition's opening in the *Chicago Tribune European Edition*, the event was described as 'the most successful *vernissage* of the year. Those who came to smile, remained to buy and before the night was over, a large number of the canvasses were decorated with little white *vendu* cards.'¹⁹⁸ According to another report, 'there was a crowd, an international crowd, because this was an event there'.¹⁹⁹

In the leaflet-catalogue of the exhibition, two of the twenty-seven exhibited paintings were marked as on loan. This indicates that there had been collectors of Kiki's artworks even prior to this exhibition that was likely to also be Kiki's first one-woman exhibition. In her memoirs, Kiki mentions that her portrait of Jean Cocteau, a French writer and film-maker, completed sometime between 1922 and 1925, was sold in London.²⁰⁰ Henri-Pierre Roché, a French author who sympathised with and collected works of the avant-garde artists, recorded in his diary that he started to collect Kiki's watercolours from as early as 1922. The inventory of Roché's collection shows that he once owned 10 paintings by Kiki.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ 'in the Quarter', *Chicago Tribune European Edition*, also cited in Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.161.

¹⁹⁹ In the dossier on Alice Prin collected in the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, the source of this newspaper clip is Fonds Man Ray without further detail. Judging from the content, it should be dated 26 March, 1927. A copy of this page is included in the Appendix.

²⁰⁰ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, p.182. The date of the painting is deduced according to the chronology of events recounted in this chapter on Cocteau. According to Kiki, she first met Cocteau in Man Ray's studio when the latter was taking a photo portrait of the former. Photos of Cocteau by Man Ray are dated as early as 1922. She made the painting from memory after meeting Cocteau several times before they found themselves in the same hotel in Ville-franche in 1925.

²⁰¹ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.236, note 1 pp.162-163.

In contrast to such commercial success in Paris and on the Euro-American art market, Kiki had little ambition to gain acknowledgement from the public as an artist. First of all, there is no evidence to suggest that she made any attempt to submit work to any of the grand Salons where public attention could be attracted; not even the *Salon des Independants*, where no jury was set to select the entries. Exhibitions at private galleries seemed to be the only public occasions to view Kiki's artworks. It is said that before the exhibition at *Galerie au Sacre du Printemps*, she had a joint exhibition with Per Krohg, a much widely recognised artist, in 1926, but there is no certainty this actually happened.²⁰² The report in the *Chicago Tribune European Edition* mentions that the collection at *Galerie au Sacre du Printemps* was going to be sent to the Sturm Gallery, Berlin. She had another one-woman exhibition at the gallery of Jean Charpentier in 1931 which was reported in *L'Africain* on 16 January.²⁰³ Secondly, not much detail of Kiki's art-making activities are given in her own memoirs. She does not even mention the exhibition of 1927, that was alleged to be a success, in either version. She rarely expresses her own opinion of art or comments on works of her own or by other artists. When she does, more often in her 1938 memoirs than in the 1929 version, is more of a general description than a critical evaluation. For instance, when introducing Soutine, she writes 'Soutine is today one of the great painters of our time'.²⁰⁴ Her only comment on her own artistic achievement is found in her 1938 memoir, in which she states 'I am not a great artist'.²⁰⁵

Kiki's self-perception of her artistic skills is just and fair. There are no records of Kiki receiving any formal training in drawing or painting. Her paintings and drawings mainly comprise two subjects, portraits of her friends and genre scenes, some of which are derived

²⁰² Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.158.

²⁰³ 'L'Exposition de Kiki', *L'Africain*, 16 January, 1931.

²⁰⁴ 'Soutine est aujourd'hui un des grands peintre de notre époque...' Kiki, *Souvenirs Retrouvés*, p.128.

²⁰⁵ 'Je ne suis pas une grande artiste...' Kiki, *Souvenirs Retrouvés*, p.145.

from her childhood memory and life encounters. In all her drawings and paintings, space is often not rendered with correct one-point linear perspective. Instead, it is often flattened with large patches of vivid colour and minimal, if any, tonal gradation. Contours of figures are often distorted without much detail in the finer body parts, such as hands or ears. One example in point is her painting, *Cirque Ambulant* (1926) (Figure 3.16). Her drawings, such as *Le Bar À Ville-Franche* (1929) (Figure 3.17), reveal a tendency to emphasise only lines and general features. At best, her genre paintings and drawings are caricature-like although, as critics also noticed, she was clearly aware of the graphic simplifications or schematizations of the face associated with Henri Matisse as well as his flattening use of unmodulated colour.



Figure 3. 16, Alice Prin (Kiki), *Cirque Ambulant*, 1926

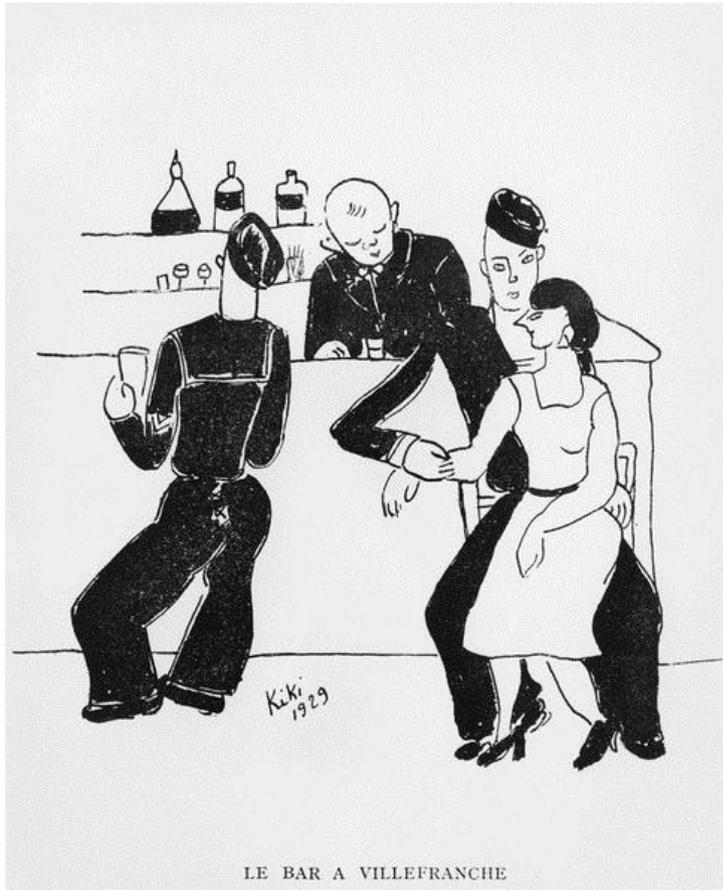


Figure 3. 17, Alice Prin (Kiki),
Le Bar à Villefranche, 1929

Unlike Meurent and Valadon, Kiki did not demonstrate any subjective intention to establish herself as a serious artist or have sufficient skills or techniques. How then shall we understand Kiki's position as an artist with all these ideosyncracies? When Kiki's friends claimed she was an artist in court, two years before the exhibition, as described at the beginning of this chapter, was it just a defence strategy to help Kiki beat the charges against her? If that was the only reason, how did Kiki come to obtain her alleged commercial success? What does it tell us about Kiki's position in the Montparnasse community and the discourse of art history, that there was a primary market for artworks by amateur artists such as Kiki?

Being able to sell artworks without exhibiting at any of the major or grand Salons would only be possible with a mature dealer-critic system. As discussed in the introduction, Harrison and Cynthia White, in their 1965 study, show a paradigm shift in the institutions of

art making and selling from the academy system to the dealer-critic system.²⁰⁶ The fundamental distinction between these two systems, as the Whites explain, is that the latter values artists over artworks. An important step in this new system is building the artist's reputation in order for the dealer to resell artworks at higher prices. The organisation of exhibitions in galleries and the befriending of art critics to have them publish reviews of the artist are two ways to serve this purpose. It is from this marketing perspective that Kiki's public prominence in the Montparnasse circle could be a great advantage. No matter what personal motivation Kiki might have when she started painting, what she managed to achieve, after all, was to cash-in her iconicity through sales of her work and later her memoirs.

Another significant factor contributing to Kiki's commercial success was the emerging aesthetic of the unschooled artist in modernist art circles. From its origins, and at its roots, French avant-garde art is characterised by its embrace of the 'innocent' gaze, as embodied by the presence of the little boy looking at the artist's canvas in Courbet's *L'Atelier du peintre. Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique et morale* (1854-55). The idea that children are born innocent can be traced back to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the mid-eighteenth century. Since then, the Romantic writers of the nineteenth century developed the idea and suggested that the innocence of childhood was a state of being to which adults desired to return.²⁰⁷ The mediated way of looking, acquired through exposure to and engagement with learned culture, should, therefore, be rejected. So should the academic training of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which was perceived as an imposed dogma. During women's campaign to obtain admissions to the *École*, one form of objection was based on the grounds that women were better off without

²⁰⁶ Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (New York: Wiley, 1965).

²⁰⁷ Elizabeth Foyster, *Marital Violence: An English Family History, 1660–1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.132.

formal training. Jean Beraud exclaimed: ‘I am inclined to admit neither women nor men to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which I regard as an absolutely useless, if not dangerous institution’.²⁰⁸ As Tamar Garb convincingly argues, such cynical claims were the result of the internationalisation of the *fin-de-siècle* construction of the artist as unfettered subject and the belief in the autonomy of genius.²⁰⁹ Despite the privileged gender/class positions that the artist occupies ideologically, such beliefs drove European artists to seek alternative categories of art for their representations of modernity.

Whereas art had been used for therapeutic purposes in Swiss asylums since the 1890s, it was not until the Surrealists that the artworks of the asylum inmates were appreciated as uncultured, spontaneous expressions, not confined by traditional artistic doctrine.²¹⁰ The publication of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical research on unconsciousness at the turn of the twentieth century was a driving force. Artists who believed in the unconscious as a source of creativity, uncorrupted by the learned social and cultural conventions, sought for the ultimate origin of civilisation. Such an aesthetic informs artists’ fascination with the art of those who were unschooled, for instance the untrained and children.²¹¹

Kiki was not the first unschooled artist in the history of French modern art, but she came to the stage at an opportune time. Nearly two decades before her exhibition, in 1908 Pablo Picasso (1881-1937) organised an event that manifested the admiration of alternative expressions of art by those artists associated with the avant-garde milieu, *Le Banquet Rousseau*. The banquet was held in honour of the artist, Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), in

²⁰⁸ Cited in Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), p.84.

²⁰⁹ Garb, *Sisters of the Brush*, p.84.

²¹⁰ Anne E. Bowler, ‘Asylum Art: The Social Construction of an Aesthetic Category’, in *Outsider Art: Contesting Boundaries in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Vera L. Zolberg and Joni Maya Cherbo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 11-36 (25-26). Dr. Hans Prinzhorn, a German psychiatrist and art historian, built up a collection of art of his patients and published it in 1922. His take on the works is more clinical than artistic.

²¹¹ Bowler, ‘Asylum Art’, p.26.

Picasso's *Bateau Lavoir* studio in Montmartre. Considered 'the first paradigm of untutored creativity', Rousseau started to exhibit regularly in the *Salon des Indépendants* from 1886, but did not devote himself entirely to painting until 1891 when he was 49.²¹² At the time of the banquet, Rousseau's exhibits in the Salons were often met with sarcasm and negative reviews. His lack of skill and technique, naivety and amateurism were defects frequently mentioned by art critics.²¹³

In the floods of insults, there were, however, some friendly voices from his peers, for instance the artists Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Paul Gauguin, Puvis de Chavannes, Louis Roy (1862-1907), Félix Vallotton (1865-1925), Wassily Kandinsky (1865-1944), Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), and Picasso. The writers, Alfred Jarry, André Breton and Guillaume Apollinaire also admired Rousseau's works. To them, the childlike naivety and vibrant expressionist colours offered an exotic sense of fantasy and an inventive alternative to artistic convention.²¹⁴ This is in much the same way that the Avant-gardists 'discovered' and appropriated African and folk art. It is also within this milieu that Kiki's lack of technique, intuitively delineated space and distorted forms were appreciated. In fact, in 1924 Roché bought a watercolour by Kiki to celebrate the acquisition of Rousseau's *Sleeping Gypsy* by John Quinn, which he strongly endorsed. The interest of the Montparnasse artists in the art of the untrained was manifested by their flooding into an exhibition of the art of the insane at *Paris Galerie Vavin* in 1928, just one year after Kiki's exhibition.²¹⁵

²¹² Roger Cardinal, 'Toward an Outsider Aesthetic', in *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture*, ed. by Michael D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalfe, Jr (Washington; London: Smithsonian Institution Press, c1994), pp.21-43 (21).

²¹³ Clair Frèches-Thory, 'From Sarcasm to Canonisation: Critical Fortune', in *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris*, ed. by Frances Morris and Christopher Green (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), pp. 169-189 (169).

²¹⁴ Frances Morris, 'Jungles in Paris', in *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris*, ed. by Frances Morris and Christopher Green (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), pp.12-27 (23)

²¹⁵ John M. MacGregor, *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane* (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1989), p.281.

However, a notoriously unschooled artist like Rousseau would not have been able to create art from nothing. In fact, Rousseau claimed Felix-Auguste Clément (1826-1888) and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) as his mentors.²¹⁶ As convincingly argued by Dora Vallier, Rousseau employed a pantograph to adapt visual sources of a smaller scale, such as journal illustrations or postcards, to his canvases.²¹⁷ Christopher Green points out that Rousseau's return to depicting exotic jungle scenes in 1904 after a nearly two-decade-long interval might have resulted from his exposure to Gauguin's Tahitian work at his posthumous exhibition in *Salon d'Automne* in October 1903.²¹⁸

What about Kiki? How did she learn to make art? How did she acquire her understanding of art? A recollection in Man Ray's autobiography may offer a plausible suggestion. Shortly after Man Ray met Kiki for the first time, he asked her to pose in the nude for him. Kiki responded to the request:

No, she said, she would not pose for photographers, they were worse than painters - the one she had recently posed for tried to work faster than his camera; she liked sentiment and poetry...

Kiki still demurred, she did not want photographs of herself all over the place. But she posed nude, I insisted, and the paintings were always on exhibition, sometimes with her name as the title. Well, she replied, a painter could always modify the appearance of things whereas a photograph was too factual. Not mine, I replied,...-then she said that she had a physical defect which she did not care to show.²¹⁹

According to Man Ray, Kiki's reluctance to pose for photographers is due to two concerns. The first related to the bad experience she had with other photographers, while the other was an unease over the photographic representation of her body. To her, photography was a process that was not sentimental or poetic. The produced image was characterised as factual,

²¹⁶ Frances Morris, 'Jungles in Paris', p.16.

²¹⁷ Dora Vallier, 'L'Emploi du pantographe dans l'œuvre du Douanier Rousseau', *La Revue de l'art*, (1970), no. 7, Paris.

²¹⁸ Christopher Green, 'Souvenirs of the Jardin des Plantes: Making the Exotic Strange Again', in *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris*, pp.28-47 (42).

²¹⁹ Ray, *Self-Portrait*, p.118.

without transformation or alteration. Her perception of these differences in art of various media indicates that by the time she met Ray, Kiki had developed a certain understanding of art-making practices, some of which derived from her experience of modelling.

There is no other evidence to verify this recollection, but at least it suggests Man Ray's perception of Kiki's knowledge of artworks of various media. As mentioned, Kiki seldom discusses her ideas about art in her own writing. When she recalls her time posing for various artists, she tends to restrict her description to the ways in which she was treated in the sessions. In most cases, she would only comment on the personality of the artist. An exception is in the chapter on Man Ray in her 1929 memoirs, in which Kiki describes the process of Ray shooting Luisa Casati and remarks the outcome had 'an extraordinary effect'.²²⁰ This rare recollection demonstrates that as a witness to art making, Kiki paid attention to the process and the effect it achieved.

A close study of some of Kiki's paintings suggests inconsistencies in the visual languages she adopted at various stages of the 1920s. Four portraits of Kiki's friends in Montparnasse, Jean Cocteau (Figure 3.18), Le Tarare, Fernande Barrey and Man Ray, possibly completed between 1924 and 1926, demonstrate a relatively consistent style reminiscent of Modigliani's figure paintings with a frontal view, almond-shaped eyes, heavily lined nose and lips, and beige skin tone.²²¹ The portrait of Cocteau particularly invites this association, with its elongated face. Yet a juxtaposition of this painting with Modigliani's portrait of the same writer (1916) (Figure 3.20) reveals less subtlety in the former. In the latter, the facial structures are carefully delineated with patches of colour on beige skin. Two

²²⁰ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, p.150.

²²¹ Most of Kiki's paintings after 1925 were dated by her on the picture, but there is no date on her portraits of Cocteau or Man Ray. Given that the Cocteau portrait was published by Thora Dardel in *Bonniers Veckotidning* on August 9, 1924 (p.9), it is certain that the painting was completed at least before that date. The approximate date of Man Ray's portrait is estimated according to the time Kiki was involved with him. Their relationship ended sometime in 1927.

patches of red are added to the face to highlight the cheekbones and patches of blue indicate shadow beneath the nose and lips. The features of the sitter in the Kiki's painting are less distorted with the face being more or less symmetrical. The elongation, a signature of Modigliani's style, cannot be found, for instance, in the neck, or anywhere else apart from the face. Nor does it appear in any of Kiki's other figurative paintings. The elongated face, therefore, may very likely be the result of Kiki's efforts to capture the oval shape of Cocteau's face (Figure 3.19).



Figure 3. 18, Alice Prin (Kiki), *Jean Cocteau*, c.1926, photograph by Man Ray

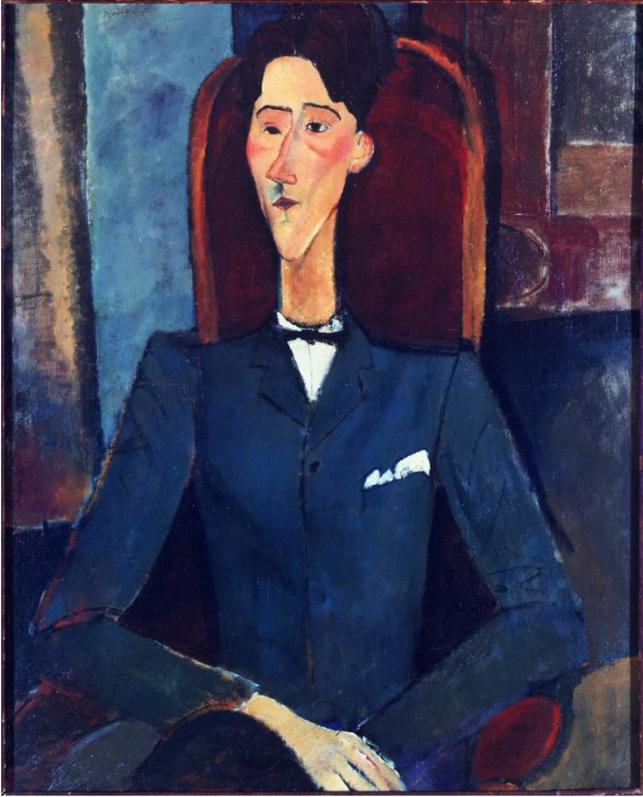


Figure 3. 20, Amedeo Modigliani,
Jean Cocteau, 1916, oil on
canvas, 100.4×81.3 cm, The
Peralman Collection, New York

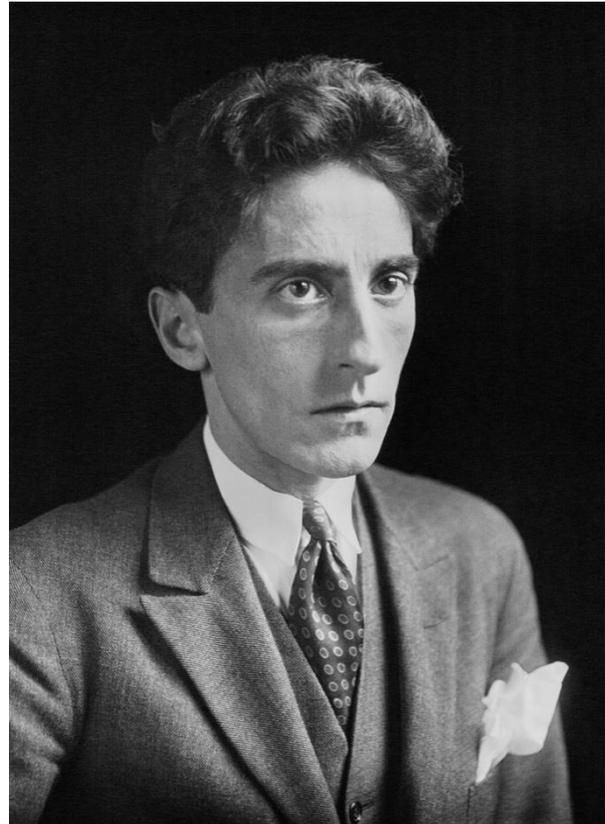


Figure 3. 19, Anonymous, *Jean
Cocteau*, 1923, glass negative,
restored and cropped print, Agence de
presse Meurisse, Paris

Some time around 1924 Kiki started to explore more complex compositions in her genre paintings. The subject matter was often derived from her own life. One example is the *Cirque Ambulant* (Figure 3.16), a black-and-white reproduction of which was printed on the leaflet-catalogue of her exhibition of 1927. Bright colours, simplified form and detail, and hand-written explanatory words, are among the signature features found in many of her paintings produced between 1924 and 1932, including a self-portrait completed in 1929 (Figure 3.21).²²² In contrast to the conventional form of a portrait in which the sitter is represented alone, a young woman is depicted in this painting sitting next to a table in a garden, with a child to her left. Compared to previous portraits, the facial features in this painting are further simplified. The nose is only indicated by a slim line and a large black dot. There are no delineation of eyelids and pupils that we can find in the portrait of Cocteau. Two patches of red are added to the face, but they are flattened out without suggesting any detail of the bone structure. The most intriguing feature of this painting lies in the high degree of resemblance that the pose and clothes of the depicted woman bear to those in a painting by Kisling of 1925, for which Kiki modelled (Figure 3.22). In both works, the woman is rendered as sitting with her hands on her legs. Both show her dressed in a red top with a pale-coloured scarf. The blue hem of the scarf in Kisling's painting is translated into the colour of the dress in Kiki's. In this way, the white, blue and red, in which the woman is dressed in Kisling's painting, are preserved and transformed. What Kiki has accomplished in this *Self-portrait* is the appropriation of an image of her, using it in a representation *of* her, and *by* her.

²²² The last work by Kiki that I can locate is *Le Marché Aux Soieries À Paris*, 1932.

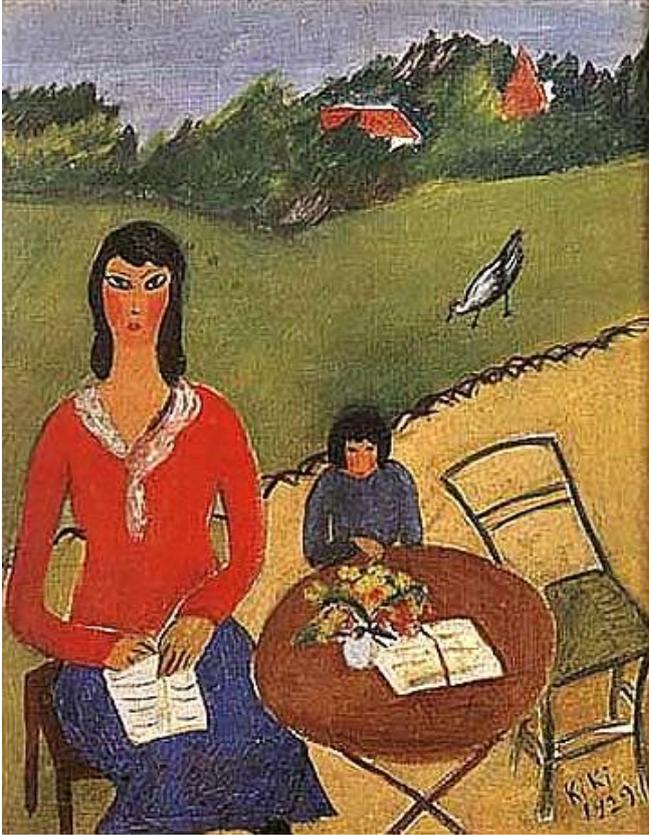


Figure 3. 21, Alice Prin (Kiki), *Self-portrait*, 1929, oil on canvas, 34×26 cm



Figure 3. 22, Moïse Kisling, *Kiki de Montparnasse in a Red Jumper and a Blue Scarf*, 1925, oil on canvas, 92×65 cm, Petit Palais, Geneva, Switzerland

The portrait of Henri Broca completed in 1929 (Figure 3.23) demonstrates another distinct visual language. The simple, thin, neat lines on a clean background, which outlines the facial features and the contour of the face, resemble the style of the Japanese-French artist, Foujita. Throughout the 1920s, Foujita made portraits of Kiki and asked her to pose for him for several times. There is, so far, no colour reproduction of Broca's portrait, but the detail of grey-white hair above his right ear is conspicuous in the black-and-white copy. This is a subtlety that is rare among Kiki's artworks. A possible source might be Foujita's portrait of Kiki completed the same year (Figure 3.24). In Foujita's painting, Kiki is rendered from an angle similar to that in Kiki's portrait of Broca. The effect of light on her hair is represented through tonal gradations with the grey areas suggesting reflection. The same method can be found in the portrait of Foujita by Kiki (Figure 3.25), in which a strip of Foujita's hair is a lighter shade.



Figure 3. 23, Alice Prin (Kiki), *Henri Broca*, 1929



Figure 3. 24, Tsuguharu Foujita, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 1929

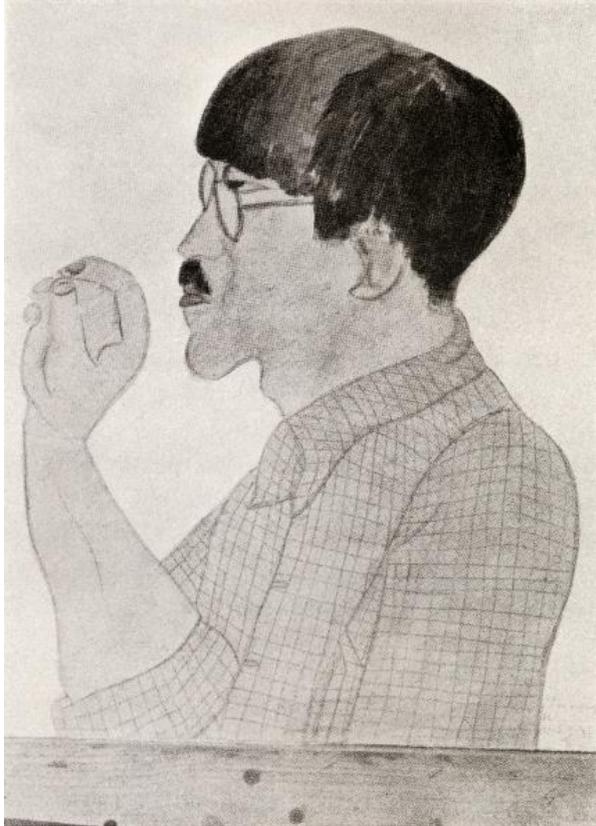


Figure 3. 25, Alice Prin (Kiki), *Leonard Tsuguharu Foujita*, lithograph, private collection

The erratic character of Kiki's artistic styles over time, and their resemblance to artists for whom she posed, suggest that at least part of Kiki's artistic training was learning from artists who painted her. It is, therefore, likely that Kiki learned art through her contact with artists either in modelling sessions or daily life. We cannot confirm the role artists might have played in the process. Did they deliberately nurture understanding and offer instructions, or did Kiki learn by her own observations? Features in her paintings over time, nevertheless, suggest that Kiki experimented with the various visual languages to which she was exposed. The juxtaposition of relatively simple details and forms in her genre paintings and the increasing subtlety in her portraits reveals her attempts to employ various styles that serve different representational purposes.

Regarding this aesthetic of art untutored by the tradition of academic art training, a term I have been deliberately avoiding may be pertinent, Outsider Art. The reason for such

avoidance is justified, as the term itself is charged with history and multiple meanings that need to be critically investigated before its adoption.

The specific term, Outsider Art, was coined by Roger Cardinal in 1972 in his book of the same title first and foremost to serve as an English synonym of *Art Brut*, a French term the French artist, Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) invented in the summer of 1945.²²³ Dubuffet's interest was induced by the publication of a book dedicated to the study of artworks by the mentally ill, *Bildneri der Geisteskranken. Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie der Gestaltung* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration), by the German psychiatrist and art historian, Hans Prinzhorn. A copy of the book was given to Dubuffet in 1923, and although he could not read German, he was struck by the images reproduced in it.²²⁴ He started to collect these works and eventually named the collection *Art Brut*. Although the term was intended, in its original context, to refer to the works of the asylum inmates, especially the ten artists discussed in Prinzhorn's book who were called 'the schizophrenic masters', the meaning of the term evolved as Dubuffet formulated his conception. Eventually, it came to refer to art produced by those outside the academic tradition of art, if not entirely free from cultural influences.²²⁵ In Dubuffet's own words in 1949, 'we understand by this term works produced by persons unscathed by artistic culture'.²²⁶

²²³ Roger Cardinal, *Outsider Art* (London, UK: Studio Vista; New York, NY: Praeger, 1972).

²²⁴ John Maizels, *Raw Creation: Outsider Art and Beyond* (London: Phaidon, 1996).

²²⁵ John Maizels, *Raw Creation*, p.33.

²²⁶ Jean Dubuffet, *L'Art Brut Préféré aux Arts Culturels*, (exhibition catalogue, Galerie René Drouin, Paris: 1949); translated by Paul Foss and Allen S. Weiss in *Art Brut: Madness and Marginalia*, a special issue of *Art & Text* (December 1981 - February 1988), no. 27, p.33. Quoted in John Maizels, *Raw Creation* (London: Phaidon, 1996), p.33.

As noted by Cardinal in 1994 in a collection of essays on Outsider Art, Dubuffet went through three stages of reflection when he articulated his formulation of *Art Brut*.²²⁷ I include three quotations by Dubuffet from Cardinal's article here, which characterise the evolutionary process:

It is surely not my business to formulate what Art Brut is. To define something - indeed even to isolate it - is to damage it a good deal. It comes close to destroying it. (1947)

What we mean by this term is work produced by people immune to artistic culture in which there is little or no trace of mimicry... so that such creators owe everything... to their own resources rather than to the stereotypes of artistic tradition or fashion. (1949)

It would be good to think of Art Brut rather as a pole, or as a wind which blows with variable strength and which, in most instances, is not the only wind to be blowing. (Late 1950s)²²⁸

Dubuffet, therefore, started from resistance to define the term, moved on to assert some criteria, and eventually gave a relatively loose understanding of *Art Brut* that allows for the coexistence of other influences, or other 'winds'. Fluctuations in Dubuffet's own conception of *Art Brut*, along with the development of the aesthetic of visual expressions that are alternative to the conventions of fine art, through avant-garde artists such as Paul Klee (1879-1940), lead to varied, sometimes contradictory, definitions and categorisations of artworks in later research on Outsider Art. For example, Colin Rhodes adopts Dubuffet's discrimination against naive artists as they are often found to aspire to cultured art.²²⁹ To Rhodes the absence of the cultured tradition is at the heart of Outsider Art. Aspiring to cultured art alludes to the acknowledgement of it. Not all works of unschooled artists, therefore, qualify. Even Rhodes admits, however, that such a strict definition of Outsider Art being completely free from cultural influence, is an ideal aspiration, as 'no one can create from a position oblivious to the

²²⁷ Roger Cardinal, 'Toward an Outsider Aesthetic', in *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture*, ed. by Michael D. Hall and Eugene W. Metcalfe, Jr. (Washington; London: Smithsonian Institution Press, c.1994), pp.21-43 (22-23).

²²⁸ All three quotes come from Cardinal, 'Toward an Outsider Aesthetic', p.23.

²²⁹ Colin Rhodes, *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p.140.

world around'.²³⁰ On the contrary, Vera L. Zolberg and Johni Maya Cherbo employ a more tolerant approach as they define Outsider Art against the academic tradition, or the inside, rather than the entire culture.²³¹ To Zolberg and Cherbo, as manifest in the essays selected for their edited book, the *Outsider Artist* includes the so-called primitivist, asylum inmates, the unschooled.

If we juxtapose Kiki with Rousseau, it seems that she might be better qualified as an Outsider artist, for Rousseau, in many ways, shows his commitment to art making and to obtaining recognition from the art world. Whereas Kiki never seems to have a professional studio of her own, Rousseau moved to a studio in Montparnasse in 1893, two years after he fully devoted himself to painting, and remained there until his death in 1910. Rousseau exhibited regularly in the *Salon des Independants* from 1886, where he eventually received wide recognition. What is more, unlike Kiki, who most often depicted personal subject matter such as portraits of friends and genre scenes of her own life, Rousseau appears to have been more aware of academic conventions and modernist tendencies, with his engagement of the monumental female nude in artworks such as *The Dream* (1910).

It is not my intention however, to establish certain criteria of Outsider Art so that I can reclaim Kiki back to the art history as an Outsider artist. As discussed, there is no evidence to suggest that Kiki wished to be appreciated as such, yet some of the problematics involved in the research of Outsider Art are pertinent. Should we position the Outsider artist at the oppositional pole to the cultured world or academic tradition? Rhodes, as well as Zolberg and Chebo, effectively position the Modernist artist as outside this binary opposition. Hal Foster, however, in his article on the Modernists' acceptance of the art of the mentally ill, contends that none of the Modernists' projection 'seems true of the art of the mentally ill at

²³⁰ Colin Rhodes, *Outsider Art*, p.14.

²³¹ Vera L. Zolberg and Joni Maya Cherbo, (ed.), *Outsider Art: Contesting Boundaries in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

all; instead it conforms to Avant-gardist ideologies of rupture, immediacy, purity and so on'.²³² Outsider Art, in other words, is set as the other against the culture, especially the academic tradition of art, to be a surrogate for Modernist art.

Certain qualities in Kiki's work are reflected in the reviews of the 1927 exhibition. Piere Loiselet remarked on Kiki's artworks in *Un événement parisienne: l'Exposition Kiki*, describing their qualities as 'full of peace and tranquil joy'.²³³ The *Chicago Tribune European Edition* remarked that "'amusing, naive, fresh, mouvementé'" were the adjectives most frequently applied to the charming collection of pictures. Those who were not aware that Kiki possessed a real talent for painting were pleasantly surprised'.²³⁴ Finally, another reporter described Kiki's paintings as comparable to the works of a child, 'without any delicacy of observation or colour'.²³⁵ Such qualities of being peaceful, amusing, naive and childlike were echoed in the introduction to the catalogue of Kiki's 1927 exhibition by Robert Desnos. This lyrical introduction opens and ends with similar sentences: 'You have my dear Kiki, such beautiful eyes that the world through them must be very pretty': 'Near or far, my dear Kiki, through your beautiful eyes, the world is pretty'.²³⁶ The main body of the introduction is dedicated to describing the pretty world that Kiki sees with some details, such as the sailor, the sea and the nude on the grass, corresponding to the motifs represented in the exhibited works. The pretty world is characterised by a sense of tranquillity and peace. When this world is disturbed, Kiki 'will hide her head under the sheets and cover her ears', like a

²³² Hal Foster, 'Blinded Insights, On the Modernist Reception of the Art of the Mentally Ill', *October*, 97 (summer 2001), pp.3-30 (17).

²³³ Piere Loiselet, 'Un événement parisienne: l'Exposition Kiki', source is stated as Fonds Man Ray in the dossier on Alice Prin collected in the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou.

²³⁴ 'In the Quarter', *Chicago Tribune European Edition*.

²³⁵ In the dossier on Alice Prin collected in the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, the source of this newspaper clip is stated as Fonds Man Ray without further details.

²³⁶ 'Tu as ma chère Kiki, de si beaux yeux que, le monde au travers d'eux, doit être bien joli.' 'Ici même ou bien loin, ma chère Kiki, à travers tes beaux yeux, que le monde est joli.' Robert Desnos, Vie de Kiki, in the catalogue of Kiki's exhibition in Galerie au Sacre du Printemps, 25 March - 9 April 1927.

child.²³⁷ The introduction presents a version of Kiki who is childish and innocent, who only sees the beauty of the world. Her artistic productions are, as a result, the unmediated outcome of her childish perception and imagination.

Among the limited number of reviews of Kiki's 1927 exhibition and comments on Kiki's paintings, all, without exception, position her artworks within the Modernist milieu. Roché wrote in his diary that he acquired a watercolour of Kiki, 'a super Matisse'.²³⁸ Less sympathetic were the reviews in the reports of the exhibition's opening. The reporter who considered Kiki's works childlike also compared them to those of Marie Laurencin (1883-1956) for her old pretentiousness (*prétentieuses aînées*).²³⁹ Another reporter for the Daily Mail remarked that 'for myself, though I am no critic of Modern Art... after a careful examination of Mlle. Kiki's work, I remembered with relief that she is said to be pretty good at dancing'.²⁴⁰ Regardless of their personal stand on modern art, their unanimous approach to Kiki's work through the Modernist milieu indicates that they perceived the visual style and formal qualities of Kiki's paintings to only be intelligible through the lens of modern art. On the one hand, this may be partially the result of Kiki's well-known close association with the modernist artists in Montparnasse. On the other hand, as demonstrated by my visual analysis of Kiki's paintings, the personal connections effectively resulted in a permeation of the formal elements of the art by Montparnasse artists into Kiki's own creations. Representations of the world in Kiki's eyes are, therefore, mediated by her exposure, as a model and a friend, to the artistic practices of the artists in the Montparnasse circle. It is in this sense that Kiki had never been on the outside.

²³⁷ 'Toi, tu te cachais la tête sous les draps et tu te bouchais les oreilles.'

²³⁸ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.161.

²³⁹ In the dossier on Alice Prin collected in the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, the source of this newspaper clip is stated as Fonds Man Ray without further details.

²⁴⁰ 'Chelsea, Please Note', *Daily Mail*, 3 April, 1927, found in the dossier on Alice Prin in Bibliothèque Kandinsky.

Montparnasse, 1920s

What the case of Kiki presents is indeed a question about the equivocal nature of the formalities of Avant-gardist artistic practice. Before I proceed to explore Kiki's significance in the Montparnasse circle of the 1920s, it is useful to introduce the framework of Raymond Williams for studying cultural groups.²⁴¹ In his study of the Bloomsbury Group, an influential cultural group in London contemporary with the Montparnasse circle, Williams argues that the group, as a social formation, has been overlooked and understudied in cultural theory or social theories of artistic practice. By tracing the history of British culture from the eighteenth to the twentieth century through three cultural groups, Goldwin and his circle (1780s and 1790s), the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (middle of the nineteenth century) and the Bloomsbury Group (early twentieth century), Williams directs our attention to the effect of the group, instead of its individual members, in shifting and changing social formalities.

In Williams's essay, he quotes and closely analyses two paragraphs from Leonard Woolf's biography, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911- 1918*. In order to thoroughly present Williams's argument on Woolf's perception of the Bloomsbury Group, I include the quotations selected by Williams in full here:

We were and always remained primarily and fundamentally a group of friends. Our roots and the roots of our friendship were in the University of Cambridge.²⁴²

There have often been groups of people, writers and artists, who were not only friends, but were consciously united by a common doctrine and object, or purpose artistic or social. The utilitarians, the Lake poets, the French impressionists, the English Pre-Raphaelites were groups of this kind. Our group was different. Its basis was friendship, which in some cases deepened into love and marriage... But we had no common theory, system or principles which we wanted to convert the world to...²⁴³

²⁴¹ Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', pp.162-163.

²⁴² Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911- 1918* (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p.23. Also quoted in Williams, p.149.

²⁴³ Woolf, *Beginning Again*, p.26. Also quoted in Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', p.164.

In these paragraphs, Woolf deliberately rejects the notion of the Bloomsbury group as a formal group, united by 'a common doctrine and object, or purpose, artistic or social'. This is interpreted by Williams as a gesture of denial of any imposed dogma, which is in accordance with the Group's 'philosophy of the sovereignty of the civilised individual'.²⁴⁴ Rather than there being no common ideas, Williams postulates that the members' differences and attitudes to 'system', are embodiments of the true organising value of the group. That is 'the unobstructed free expression of the civilised individual'.²⁴⁵ What the Bloomsbury group carried, therefore, was the classical values of bourgeois enlightenment, which are, according to Williams, determined by the social formations of the group as a fraction of the ruling English middle-class. The location that Woolf perceived to be the root of their bond, 'the University of Cambridge', is an indication of the group's social formations as a highly specific social and cultural institution that signifies privilege and power in contemporary discourses of gender and class.²⁴⁶

Like 'the University of Cambridge' which should be recognised as a 'highly specific social and cultural institution'²⁴⁷ rather than a simple location as Woolf seems to suggest, Montparnasse has historical and geographical specificities that affect the sociological formation of its habitants. It is, therefore, necessary for us to map out the social and cultural conditions of the area in the 1920s.

²⁴⁴ Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', p.165.

²⁴⁵ Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', p.165.

²⁴⁶ Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', p.149.

²⁴⁷ Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', p.149.

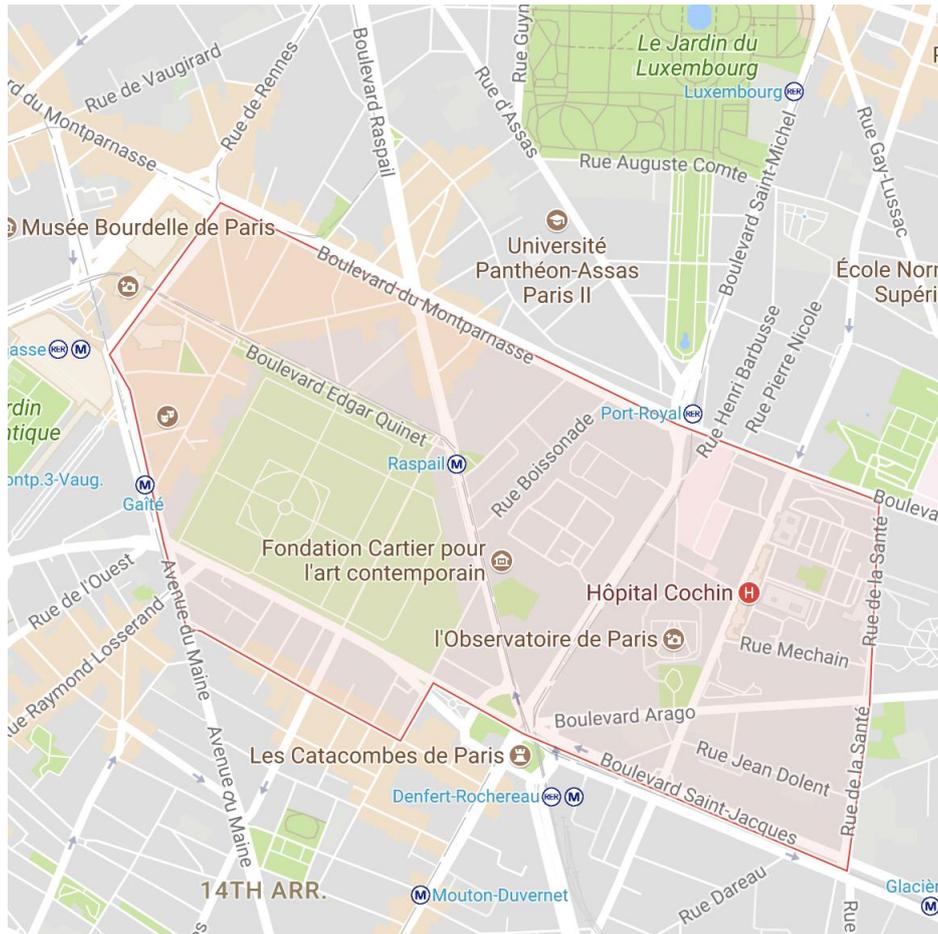


Figure 3. 26, Administrative district of Montparnasse (outlined and shaded in red on Google map [accessed 23 August 2016])

Much of the research on the Montparnasse quarter and individuals associated with the Montparnasse circle fails to offer a clear outline of the location of the geographical area on the map of Paris. When it was first officially recognised and constituted on January 1, 1860, the Montparnasse quarter was surrounded by boulevard de Port-Royal, boulevard du Montparnasse, rue du Départ, avenue du Maine, rue Daguerre, rue Boulard, place Denfert-Rochereau, boulevard Saint-Jacques and rue de la Santé (Figure 3.26).²⁴⁸ The Montparnasse area that art historians and literature scholars take as the subject of their research, however, seems to extend beyond the administrative district. Famous cafés, such as the *Rotonde* and the *Closerie des Lilas* fall on the other side of the boulevard du Montparnasse, just beyond the

²⁴⁸ Jean Émile-Bayard, *Montparnasse, Hier et Aujourd'hui: Ses Artistes et Écrivains, Étrangers et Français, les Plus Célèbres* (Paris: Jouve, 1927), p.16.

edge of the Montparnasse quarter. So do some *cité d'artistes* where cheap studios could be found and other artists' studios that are recorded in research, for instance the studio at 6 rue Vercingétorix that Gauguin took up in 1894.²⁴⁹ The Montparnasse of academic research refers to a cultural terrain, which, if outlined on a geographic map, centres around boulevard du Montparnasse and boulevard Raspail, extending South-West to the 15th *arrondissement* but not beyond boulevards des Maréchaux. In order for this research to be an effective participant in the dialogues of the Montparnasse archive, I adopt this conceptualisation of Montparnasse in this chapter.

In contrast to the popular belief that the artistic activities of Montparnasse only started with the gathering of artists there in the first decades of the twentieth century, the area has a much longer history as a place of residence for artists. Due to its proximity to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which was located in the Latin Quarter, Montparnasse was a popular area where artists and students flocked. The catalogue of the Salon of 1868 indicates that twenty-six percent of Parisian painters and sculptors lived there. To that we should add those from outside Paris. A large number of the artists who occupied the studios in Montparnasse in the second half of the nineteenth century were aligned with the academic milieu. Among them were painters Charles Auguste Émile Duran, or Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), William Bouguereau (1825-1905) and Ernest Hébert (1817-1908). Private ateliers run by artists who had already established themselves in the academic system served as teaching sites where students would receive instruction on making art from the masters. This would either help them pass the matriculation tests of the *École des Beaux-Arts* or prepare for the competition for the *Prix-de-Rome*. As these masters were often the judges of competitions, admission to

²⁴⁹ John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1988), p.227.

their studios would enhance one's chance of winning.²⁵⁰ The academic pedagogical system, therefore, brought a large student population to areas such as Montmartre and Montparnasse, where well-known professors' studios were to be found.

Apart from the masters' ateliers, one of the most popular private academies, *Académie Colarossi*, formerly known as *Académie Suisse*, moved to 10 rue de la Grande-Chaumière between rue Notre Dame des Champs and boulevard du Montparnasse in the 1870s.²⁵¹ In 1889 the *Académie Vitti* was founded, and situated at 49 boulevard du Montparnasse until 1917 when the First World War broke out. As discussed in the chapter on Meurent, private academies functioned as supplements to the *École* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in two ways. They not only prepared artists to pass the entry exam for the *École*, but also offered training to those who were rejected by it, including women as they were not allowed admission until 1897. From 1900 onwards, private academies, such as *Académie de la grand Chaumière* (active from 1904), *Académie Matisse* and *Académie Ranson* (from 1908), as well as *Académie Russe* (from 1910) were either founded in, or moved to, the Montparnasse district. These academies provided a form of art training alternative to the academic study adopted by the *École*. Many were well-known for their progressive and inspiring ambience.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing tendency for non-French artists and writers to come to Paris. As noted by Kenneth Wayne, those who arrived in the early twentieth century did so for several reasons. On the one hand, Paris was believed to be the art centre of the world. Not only did a number of artists who had gained international success gather there, it also offered a wide range of venues to exhibit works, notably the *Salon des Indépendants* which was formed in 1884 and the *Salon d'Automne* which was held

²⁵⁰ Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1986), p.23.

²⁵¹ Russian artist Marie Vorobief, known as Marevna, recalled her time at the Académie Colarossi in her autobiography, *Life in Two Worlds*, trans. by Bennet Nash (London: Abelard-Schuman 1962), p.122.

annually from 1903. The *Exposition Universelle* in 1900 brought international attention to Paris and underscored its advanced modernity. On the other hand, the rise of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe compelled many Jewish artists to move to Paris in search of protection.²⁵² What is more, the strict censorship and prohibition in the United States drove Americans to Europe. What Paris had promised to these visitors was a life with more liberty to paint, write, drink, love and live.

Many of the newcomers were attracted to Montmartre, as that was where many of the avant-garde artists lived and worked. *Le Bateau-Lavoir* was one of the artistic developments where artists gathered. Eventually, those with little money moved to Montparnasse for the abundance of newly-developed low price studio space there; to name a few, the Russians Marie Wassilief, Chagall and Soutine, the Norwegian Per Krogh (1889-1965), the Polish Mendjizky and Kisling, the Bulgarian Jules Pascin (1885-1930), the Italian Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), the Dutch van Dongen, the Japanese Fougjita, the Mexican Diego Rivera (1886-1957), the Romanian Brâncuși (1876-1957), the Welsh Nina Hamnett, and of course, the Americans Man Ray and Jacob Epstein (1880-1959). The internationality and vitality of the Montparnasse community was further enhanced by those who frequented Montparnasse to visit friends and attend gatherings of all kinds, from cultural events, such as the weekly poetry readings at the *Cloiserie des Lilas* organised by the French poet Paul Fort from 1903²⁵³, to poker games in the back room at the *Café du Dôme*.²⁵⁴ Perhaps the most well known and documented event in the Montparnasse district in the early twentieth century was

²⁵² Kenneth Wayne, *Modigliani & the Artists of Montparnasse* (New York, London: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), p.18.

²⁵³ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, pp.24-25.

²⁵⁴ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.31.

the Saturday night soirées hosted by Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in their apartment at 27, rue de Fleurs, which started as early as 1905.²⁵⁵

Beyond the edges of Montparnasse, developments designed specifically for the purpose of being artists' studios with large glass windows can be found in the backstreets stretching South to an area of cheap land.²⁵⁶ Many of these *cités d'artistes* were initiated by artists themselves. In 1895 painter and sculptor Alfred Boucher (1850-1934) bought an area of land between the railway and the slaughter houses to build a twelve-sided building known as the beehive, *La Ruche*, at 2 passage de Dantzig.²⁵⁷ Officially opened in 1902, the purpose of the property was to provide cheap studios to young artists. The cost of construction was reduced by Boucher's acquisition of pieces of the demolished pavilions from the *Exposition Universelle* in 1900. At its completion, there were 140 studios in the building, which were small and freezing in winter, but this was offset by the extremely low rent. Until 1914 the rent of the studios on the upper floor was one hundred and fifty francs and those on the ground floor were fifty francs per year,²⁵⁸ while in those decades a lunch would cost one to two francs fifty at *Closerie des Lilas*.²⁵⁹ Faithful to his philanthropic vision of the property, Boucher never expelled any artist who failed to make the payment as he did not want artists to stop their artistic studies for money. Indeed, he would often purchase the necessary but expensive materials for young artists, especially sculptors.²⁶⁰ Although there were many other *cités d'artistes* in the Montparnasse district and around Paris, the philanthropic actions of Boucher made *La Ruche* exceptionally attractive to artists, both men and women, who had limited funds and no recognition, especially those from outside Paris. Among those who once

²⁵⁵ Gail Stavitsky, *Gertrude Stein: The American Connection* (New York, N.Y.: Sid Deutsch Gallery, c.1990), p.28.

²⁵⁶ Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, pp.219-227.

²⁵⁷ Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, p.230.

²⁵⁸ Pierre-Gilles Kern, 'Les Cités d'Artistes et les Origines de La Ruche', in *La Ruche: Cité Des Artistes*, ed. by Sylvie Buisson & Martine Frésia (Paris: Alternatives c.2009), p.84.

²⁵⁹ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, p.24.

²⁶⁰ Kern, 'Les Cités d'Artistes', p.84.

lived or worked there in the early twentieth century were Józseph Csáky, Modigliani, Soutine, Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Kisling, Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Nina Hamnett (1890-1956) and Diego Rivera (1886-1957), some of whom stayed there for short transitions.²⁶¹

Communal areas in the building included an exhibition hall, a theatre and an ‘academy’, which served to nurture a sense of community among its residents.²⁶² Apart from the emotional effects, these areas were also welcomed for their practical advantages. For example, the ‘academy’ was in fact a shared work space where artists could draw from life models at shared expense. Although working from life models was a critical step in the training of artists, the young artists living in *La Ruche* often could not afford the cost of hiring one. The extent of their financial difficulty can be discerned from a number of anecdotes. Victor Libion, the owner of *La Rotonde*, would sometimes allow artists to pay with their paintings. In her memoirs, Kiki recalls the embarrassment of Modigliani when he thought Libion would be angry after finding out that all the tableware in Modigliani’s apartment was from his café.²⁶³ It was said that Soutine would go to cafés asking his acquaintances to buy coffee for him.²⁶⁴ Sharing a model in the ‘academy’ would significantly reduce the cost, as the room was often frequented by over thirty five artists. Even when there were no models to work from, artists would stay in the room, engaging each other in discussion and collaboration.²⁶⁵ What *La Ruche* offered was, therefore, not only physical space for working and living, but also psychological space for communication and collaboration.

²⁶¹ For a more complete list of the artists who once lived and worked in La Ruche, see Sylvie Buisson & Martine Frésia, *La Ruche: Cité Des Artistes* (Paris: Alternatives c.2009), p.203.

²⁶² Kern, ‘Les Cités d’Artistes et les Origines de La Ruche’, pp.88-90.

²⁶³ Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, p.232.

²⁶⁴ Ray, *Self Portrait*, p.116.

²⁶⁵ Kern, ‘Les Cités d’Artistes et les Origines de La Ruche’, p.88.

Not all the artists would choose cheap studios. In fact, many who lived in *cit  d'artistes* such as *La Ruche*, moved out when they became more affluent. The proximity of the community was maintained by the other venues they frequented, including restaurants (e.g. *Le Coupole* and *Chez Rosalie*), nightclubs (e.g. The Jockey and the Bobino) and caf s. This turned popular caf s in Montparnasse into efficient and effective spaces for social and intellectual encounters. Henri Le Fauconnier (1881-1946), Albert Gleizes (1881-1953), Jean Metzinger (1883-1956), Robert Delaunay (1885-1941) and L ger elaborated their ideas of Cubism in the *Closerie des Lilas*. The group, thus, became known as the Cubists of Montparnasse. In his memoirs, Andr  Level, the art collector, recalled his first encounter with Modigliani at the *D me* in 1914. Level was there to meet Picasso and the art dealer L once Rosenberg. When they left the caf , Rosenberg and Level were taken by Picasso to Modigliani's studio, where Level bought a watercolour of his with 25 francs.²⁶⁶ Kiki was introduced to Kisling by Mendjizky at *La Rotonde*, who later offered her a three-month modelling contract.²⁶⁷

Most of the better-known artists associated with the Montparnasse circle arrived in Paris before the First World War. This correlates with the large number of immigrants into France between the mid-nineteenth century and 1914.²⁶⁸ By scrutinising the census statistics of immigration into France and the exhibition records in Paris, Susan Waller and Karen L. Carter conclude that the proportion of foreign artists in Paris was higher than the proportion of foreigners of all kinds in the capital or the country as a whole. They thus argue that artistic migration was a defining characteristic of the cultural terrain of Paris.²⁶⁹ Although Waller and

²⁶⁶ Andr  Level, *Souvenirs d'Un Collectionneur* (Paris: Alain C. Mazo, 1959), p.41.

²⁶⁷ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, pp.139-142.

²⁶⁸ Susan Waller and Karen L. Carter, 'Introduction: Strangers in Paradise: Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870 -1914' in *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870-1914: Strangers in Paradise*, ed. by Karen L. Carter, Susan Waller (Farnham Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), pp.1-26 (4).

²⁶⁹ Waller and Carter, 'Introduction', p.7.

Carter endeavour less to examine the particular impacts migration had on Parisian culture than draw a general pattern of artistic migration in Paris, they identify contentions raised by the increasing number of artistic immigrants, mostly due to the concerns of their joining the competition for education opportunities, exhibition space, awards, and other valuable resources the capital provided to artists.²⁷⁰ In the *Exposition Universelle* 1889, four hundred and ninety three awards were issued, of which only seventy three were by French people. Whether these award winners should be granted the privilege to exhibit at the Salon without jury approval, as the winners of *Exposition Universelle* 1855, 1867 and 1878 did, became a key agenda at the meeting of the *Société des Artistes Français* committee. One of the concerns was that by granting exhibiting privileges to such a large number of foreign artists, the work of young and aspiring French artists would be crowded out.²⁷¹ The argument eventually led to the schism of the SAF, which restricts its membership to French artists, and the founding of the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, which welcomes foreign artists.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had significant impact on the production and sale of art. Larger Salons, such as the *Salon des Indépendants* and *Salon d'Automne*, closed during the war, whereas private dealers continued their business. Corresponding to the increasing visibility of women in the working sphere, as men were enlisted in military service, artists who were women constituted a relatively higher proportion of exhibitions at all scales.²⁷² Among the artists who were men and lived in the Montparnasse area before 1914, some left either to join the war (e.g. Kisling) or to take refuge in the United States or England (e.g. Pascin and Foujita), while some remained in the area, for instance, Picasso, Brancusi and Modigliani. The war made it difficult for foreign artists to receive allowances

²⁷⁰ Waller and Carter, 'Introduction', p.10.

²⁷¹ Constance Cain Hungerford, 'Meissonier and the Founding of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', *Art Journal*, 48, (Spring, 1989), no.1, 71-77 (p.72).

²⁷² Gill Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and "Feminine" Art, 1900 to the Late 1920s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c.1995), pp.93-94.

and stipends from abroad. Restaurants where cheap meals were provided, such as *Chez Rosali* and the cooperative canteen that Marie Vassilief opened for artists at her studio in 1915, became the most frequented spaces in Montparnasse. Although most intellectual and entertainment events were suspended for the duration of the war, the proximity of the circle was preserved with gatherings in such restaurants, which played an ever more significant role in the social life of Montparnasse. Food, dance and music of various sorts could be found in Vassilief's canteen. Because it was licensed as a private club, the canteen was not subject to the curfew of the city. It became a place where artists could, to a certain extent, carry on their lifestyle from before the war despite the irony that the very existence of the place was due to the war. Kiki stayed in Paris during the war and were found in these gatherings.

Montparnasse thrived in the decade immediately following the end of the war. Economic inflation rendered artworks attractive objects for investment.²⁷³ The devaluation of the franc encouraged foreign collectors and travellers to visit France. In his diary Gimpel notes a growth of small galleries and art exhibitions. 'They multiply and it's now impossible to keep up with them. Every post brings me one or two invitations.'²⁷⁴ Coinciding with this explosion was the success of artists who had settled in Montparnasse before the war. Foujita's one-man exhibition at *Galerie Devambez*, which opened on November 25, 1918, was acclaimed. One year later, Kisling and Per Krohg had their own exhibitions at *Galerie Druet* in November and December respectively, both of which were also successful. The famous story of the discovery of Soutine by the American collector, Albert C. Barnes, who bought all the paintings by Soutine that Zbrowski, a supporter of the artist, owned in 1922.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Gill Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, pp.94.

²⁷⁴ René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, trans. by John Rosenberg (London: Hamilton, 1986), p.119.

²⁷⁵ Sylvie Buisson, *Foujita: Foujita et Ses Amis Du Montparnasse* (Paris: Alternatives c.2010), p.58.

Cultural and social activities resumed in Montparnasse, with a few new establishments. It should be noted that most of these activities were for leisure purposes. *Bal Bullier*, the favourite place for artists' organisations to host costume balls, reopened in 1921. New night clubs and bars, such as the *Bœuf sur le Toit* and the Jockey opened in 1921 and 1923 respectively. Venues for intellectual exchange tended to be located outside the Montparnasse area, for instance the bookstores *La Maison des amis des livres*, founded at the end of 1915 at 7 rue de l'Odéon, and Shakespeare & Company, founded 1919 at 8 rue Dupuytren. Frequent gatherings of artists, poets, writers, models, and their friends in the forms of dinners, balls and picnics fostered a degree of self-consciousness about the existence of a group. The sense of an established community was further enhanced by the publication of two magazines that specifically concerned the area, *Montparnasse* and *Paris-Montparnasse*. *Montparnasse* was an art and literary monthly published by Paul Husson. After its first two issues, it was closed by the outbreak of the war and resumed on July 1, 1921. *Paris-Montparnasse* was launched on February 15, 1929 by Henri Broca. In its first issue, Broca announced his plans for monthly dinners to which all friends of the Montparnasse circle were invited.²⁷⁶ Each dinner was hosted by a different person, and reported in the following issue. If individuals were held together as members of the Montparnasse circle by living in the same neighbourhood or accidentally but frequently bumping into each other in cafés and restaurants as well as at various events, these dinners and the following reports of them served to pin down the circle to its more dedicated members, reinforcing the recognition of the existence of the group as a community within its membership and to the outside world.

When Man Ray arrived in Paris in 1921, he first lived on the right bank, until he learned that 'there was a quarter in Paris where expatriates of all nations gathered in the cafés

²⁷⁶ Henri Broca, *Paris-Montparnasse*, 15 February 1929, p.15.

- Montparnasse.’ He continues to describe his first impression of the quarter. ‘[I] found myself indeed in the midst of a cosmopolitan world. All languages were spoken including French as terrible as my own.... All in all, the animation pleased me and I decided I’d move into this quarter, away from the more staid parts of the city I was familiar with.’²⁷⁷ It is probably because of this cosmopolitan ambience that Montparnasse continued to attract foreigners, such as the American artist, Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), who arrived in 1927 and the Austrian-Argentine painter, Mariette Lydis (1887-1970) who arrived in 1926, to work and live.

The Montparnasse circle was exceptionally diverse and complex in terms of the cultural backgrounds and professional aspirations of its members. Artists, models, a gymnastic studio owner, proprietary owners, dancers, poets, writers, etc. from all over the globe mingled in the Montparnasse area in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Underlying this well-known cosmopolitan ambience, what characterised the Montparnasse circle was its elusive connection with the dominant French society. Foreigners, especially foreign artists, often found it difficult to merge with the Parisians. As the Hungarian Cubist sculptor, Józseph Csáky (1888-1971), recalls in his memoirs, ‘foreigners live in great isolation in Paris. At least they did before 1914. A foreigner would only meet foreigners... I’m talking about poor foreigners.’²⁷⁸ This came up when Csáky tried to explain his observation of the frequent marriages between artists of Montparnasse and prostitutes. He continued:

In a way it’s not difficult to understand this. Can anyone be certain about the future of a young artist? This profession is too risky. It’s a little bit different if the artist is at

²⁷⁷ Ray, *Self Portrait*, p.98.

²⁷⁸ Józseph Csáky, ‘Memoirs from the Great Decade of Modern Art, 1904 -1914’, trans. by Anna Fanyvesi, reprinted in Edith Balas, *Joseph Csáky: A Pioneer of Modern Sculpture* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1998), pp. 162–218 (212).

least French. At least his family would be known. But a foreigner? Who knows where he came from and whose kith and kin he is?²⁷⁹

What Csáky articulates here is a self-awareness as a foreigner in Paris. To him, such isolation, at least when it comes to marriage, emerged out of two reasons. First of all, young artists often did not have stable incomes, making their futures unpredictable. Secondly, the lack of connection with French society exacerbated the situation for foreign artists. With no secure financial means or established social connection, these foreigners were situated in ambivalent economic, political and cultural positions in Parisian society. It is this ambivalence that united Alice Prin, who came to Paris at the age of twelve as a complete stranger and lived by herself from the age of fourteen, and the Montparnasse circle.

This isolation consequently drew the individuals of the group closer together. All in a precarious position in Parisian society, the community of the group fully embraced ideas of egalitarianism and democracy in their lifestyles and professional practices. The isolation bestowed a certain degree of creative freedom on these young foreign artists, who would not be caught in the acceptance-assimilation dilemma, as some of their predecessors were.²⁸⁰ For expatriate artists, many of whom arrived in Montparnasse with certain forms of artistic training and experience, no single form of culture or art was the norm. This democratic lifestyle was best exemplified by the *Paris-Montparnasse* dinner. Individuals in the group would host the dinner in turns. Broca, the publisher, held the first; Foujita, the artist, the second; Kiki, the model, the third; and Paul Chambon, the proprietor of the *Dôme*, the seventh.²⁸¹ Regular gatherings fostered the friendship among those who attended, not only by offering opportunities for them to bond, but also because they indicated the equal position of the individuals within the group. What Montparnasse circle reveals to us is not a history of art

²⁷⁹ Csáky, 'Memoirs', p.212.

²⁸⁰ Several case studies in Carter and Waller's book, *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870–1914* address this challenge for expatriate artists.

²⁸¹ Klüver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, pp.192-913.

that is comprised only by stories of individual artists, but instead, by a community of people of various professions, which offered the support and affection necessary for the production of art.

Such dynamics within the Montparnasse circle and the transformation of the social and artistic formalities that it induced were the essential conditions for the historical subject, Alice Prin, to acquire the self-fashioning persona that we now know as Kiki. She posed, but not as a conventional model. She drew, but not as an artist. She sang like a singer. She danced like a dancer. She acted like an actress. She traversed boundaries and presented miscellaneous possibilities. Unlike Suzanne Valadon who reinscribed herself as an artist on the other side of the city in Montmartre, Kiki did not have to fashion herself as either a model or an artist. She was allowed to be both, and even more.

The vitality of the Montparnasse circle owes a debt to the booming art market, which was, to a certain extent, a result of the good global, especially American, economy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the following Great Depression effectively ended the golden age of Montparnasse. Some of the artists who were active members of the circle left the area. Pascin killed himself on June 5, 1930, ending his painful affair with Lucy Krohg. Per Krohg divorced Lucy in 1931 and settled in Oslo. Foujita travelled extensively to South America and Asia between 1931 and 1936 in search of alternative art markets.²⁸² Montparnasse is never the same, again.

Records of Kiki's life after 1930 are relatively fragmentary. In 1938 Kiki finished a revised version of her memoirs, but its publication was disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. In this version, Kiki added the struggles she had with Henri Broca when he became mentally ill, the success she obtained in Berlin as a performance artist, the death of her mother shortly after and her opening a cabaret of her own, *Chez Kiki*, for the *Exposition*

²⁸² Sylvie Buisson, *Foujita*, p.104.

Universelle of 1936.²⁸³ For most of the 1930s, Kiki sang at various cabarets in order to earn a living. A newspaper report disclosed that she had another exhibition at the *Galerie Jean Charpentier* at rue du Raubourg St. Honoré in 1931.²⁸⁴ She released two musical records, with a total of four tracks, in 1940. In 1950, three years before her death, Kiki was invited by *Ici Paris* and *Ici Paris Hebdo* to write a short recollection of her life. She selected eleven chapters from her 1938 memoirs for publication. These selected accounts stopped at the 1920s.²⁸⁵ Neither the exhibition in 1931 nor the publication of her recollections in 1950 excited the people in Paris or Montparnasse as much as Kiki's 1927 exhibition or the 1929 publication of her first memoir. Kiki continued to live, love, sing, dance, pose and paint, but never fulfilled the promise she had at the end of the 1920s. Not a coincidence, Kiki disappeared when social-historical ensemble of the Montparnasse circle collapsed.

Kiki's Afterlife as *Kiki de Montparnasse*

The name of Kiki went, more or less, dormant for over half a century until Billy Klüver and Julie Martin initiated their project on the cultural heritage of Paris in 1980s. The publication of the eleven articles in Paris newspapers might have facilitated the publication of the English version of Kiki's 1929 memoirs in the United States in 1950s and 1960s under the title *The Education of a French Model*. None of them, however, managed to elicit scholarly and public interests as their predecessor and successor did in 1929 and 1980s respectively. The decision of Klüver and Martin to take Kiki as the focus of their project was a result of Kiki's iconicity at the time, for she is frequently mentioned in 'virtually every

²⁸³ Kiki, *Souvenirs Retrouvés*, pp.277-279, 285, 289, 301.

²⁸⁴ 'L'Exposition de Kiki', *L'Africain*, January 16 1931, p.5.

²⁸⁵ Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, pp.193-233.

book from the period’ as well as ‘the memoirs of artists and writers who had made Montparnasse their home’.²⁸⁶

At the same time, a biography of Kiki in French, *Kiki, Reine de Montparnasse*, by Lou Mollgaard was published in 1988.²⁸⁷ The 1938 revised version of Kiki’s memoirs, *Kiki: Souvenirs Retrouvés* was discovered and published in 2005.²⁸⁸ Two years later in 2007, a graphic biography of Kiki, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, was published first in French.²⁸⁹ It was later translated into English and published in London in 2011.²⁹⁰ The graphic book incited a series of intriguing cultural productions in French language on Kiki and Montparnasse. A fourteen-minute animation by Amélie Harrault, *Mademoiselle Kiki et les Montparnos*, was produced in 2012. Its theatre version was put on the stage of Guichet Montparnasse in 2014. An one-woman musical, *Kiki, Le Montparnasse des années folles*, was developed by Hervé Devolder and premiered in Paris in 2015. Milena Marinelli portrayed Kiki. It was on the stage of *Theatre de la Huchette* daily from Tuesday to Saturday between June 17, 2015 and May 28, 2016. It was later restaged at *Essaïon* in 2017 between January 19 and April 01. Another one-woman musical, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, was created by Jean-Jacques Beineix with the inspiration he got from the graphical biography. It was performed at *Lucernaire* in 2015 from 29 August to 18 October with Héloïse Wagner portraying Kiki.

²⁸⁶ Klüver and Martin, ‘Preface’ in Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, p.10.

²⁸⁷ Lou Mollgaard, *Kiki, Reine de Montparnasse* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1988).

²⁸⁸ Serge Plantureux, ‘Preface’, in Kiki, *Kiki de Montparnasse: Souvenirs Retrouvés* (Paris: José Corti, 2005), pp.9 - 14 (14).

²⁸⁹ José-Louis Bocquet and Catel Muller (known as Catel), *Kiki de Montparnasse* (Belgium: Casterman, 2007)

²⁹⁰ José-Louis Bocquet and Catel Muller (known as Catel), *Kiki de Montparnasse: The Graphic Biography*, trans. by Nora Mahony (London: SelfMadeHero, 2011)



Figure 3. 27, Man Ray, *Le Violin d'Ingres*, 1924, gelatine-silver print, 31×24.7 cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Paris

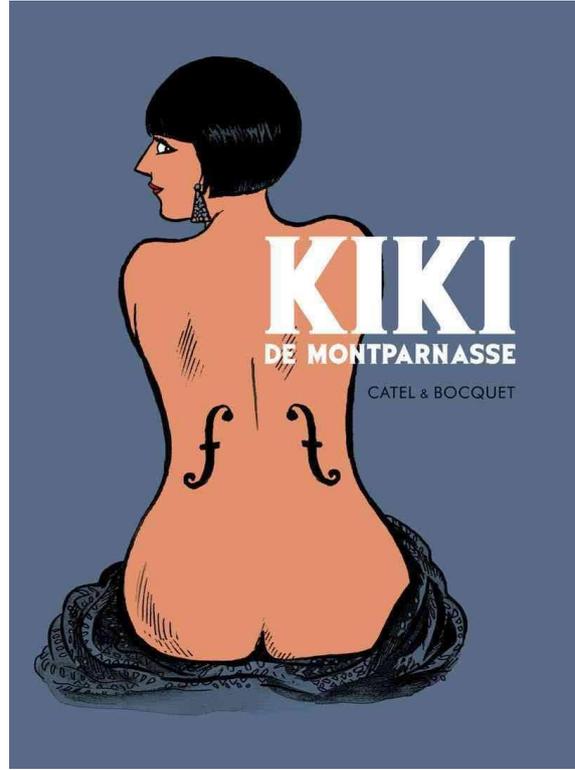


Figure 3. 28, Catel, cover of *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 2007

All of the cultural productions in France in 2010s represent and rework the iconic look of Kiki, with her straight short bob. In fact, on the cover of the graphic book, the illustrator has reworked the image of Kiki in Man Ray's photograph, *Le Violin d'Ingres* (1924) (Figure 3.27), but replaced the turban with her iconic bob look (Figure 3.28). Probably driven by the nature of their genres, these cultural productions tend to add into their accounts of Kiki's biography illustrating details that cannot be verified by historical evidence. Many of them were provocative. For instance, in Catel and Bocquet's graphic book, in a scene that Kiki posed for a sculptor, the sculptor who was a man is depicted as putting his hands around the breasts of the naked Kiki. In the dialogue pop, it writes 'My hands are learning your body so that I can remodel it better in the clay.'²⁹¹ The episode is derived from *Kiki's Memoirs*, in

²⁹¹ Bocquet and Muller, *Kiki de Montparnasse*, 2011, p.77

which Kiki described the experience of posing in nude ‘was something new’, but there is no further details, as those in the graphic book, mentioned.²⁹² The suggestive conversation, therefore, must come from Catel and Bocquet. A similar example could be found in the animation film, *Mademoiselle Kiki et les Montparnos*. In the animation Kiki commented on her job as a bookbinder’s apprentice as great and on the screen it shows Kiki watching a page of pornographic images, hinting at the advantage of the job to gain access to pornography. Kiki’s relationships with personalities of the Montparnasse circle, such as Man Ray, Kisling, Foujita and Wassilief, were often the emphasis of these productions. Kiki’s artistic career is rarely mentioned whereas scenes of Kiki modelling for various artists, often in nude, are plenty. The Kiki represented in these productions, therefore, is a sensuous woman with a liberated spirit.

What the iconicity of Kiki presents to the popular culture, as I am going to argue, is a myth as Roland Barthes defines it in his book *Mythologies*, published in 1957. Barthes employs the term myth to present bourgeois ideology as a form that naturalizes history. Drawing from Saussure’s semiological theory of the sign as the combination of signifier and signified, Barthes suggests that in ideology, a sign created at the first level of meaning, denotation, can be used as a signifier in a second order of signification, connotation. This second order becomes the plane of myth. Myth uses the apparent self-evidence of the denotational sign (This is x), emptying it of its own historicity, so as to make it available to lend its ‘nature’ to cloak and embody a contentious, ideological meaning.

What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality. And just as bourgeois ideology is defined by the abandonment of the name ‘bourgeois’, myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it things lose the memory that they once were made.²⁹³

²⁹² Kiki, *Kiki’s Memoirs*, p.102

²⁹³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), p.142.

The effect of the two orders of signification is, therefore, to empty the historical dimension of the first order of signs so that it becomes a signifier for an ideological signification, and thus, replaces the historical, naturalising the representation as self-evident, incontrovertible fact without historical conditions or specificity.

In the case of Kiki de Montparnasse, the stylised face with selected idiosyncratic features of Alice Prin, which appear recurrently in artworks as a result of Prin's modelling labour and its registration in the Montparnasse community, becomes the signifier of the persona that Prin took up at certain stage of her life, Kiki. By mythologising her as a sensuous liberated figure, Kiki becomes Kiki de Montparnasse, which is the signifier of sexual fantasy of the bohemian life in Montparnasse in 1920s with its pleasure and lightheartedness. As myth, Kiki de Montparnasse no longer connotes Alice Prin with her own complex history and agency, that is precisely the condition of her adoption of the persona, or the historical moment of 1920s in this Paris district called Montparnasse. The historicity is folded away and naturalised. The afterlife of Kiki is, indeed, not about Kiki any more.

As Barthes point out, for the myth to be effective, it can be neither too evident and straightforward, nor too obscure. The Montparnasse of 1920s is, therefore, mythologised through this woman who enjoyed a certain visibility in her own moment and in the historical records. This has to be investigated in the context of the art and literature of 1920s, in which, as noted by Elke Frietsch, major European cities were often codified in feminine terms.²⁹⁴ In her study of the Surrealist art and practice in 1920s, Frietsch points out that Surrealist artists in Paris at the time is continuing a tradition of encoding urban space as feminine that is to be conquered by the strolling artists who are men. Dated back to classical antiquity, such

²⁹⁴ Elke Frietsch, 'The Surrealist Artist is strolling around with the Little Puppy-Dog Sigmund Freud at his Heel: Perceptions of Space, the Subconscious and Gender Codifications in 1920s Paris' in *Rive Gauche: Paris as a Site of Avant-Garde Art and Cultural Exchange in the 1920s*, ed. by Elke Mettinger, Margarete Rubik and Jörg Tüschmann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp.99-120.

association was enhanced by nineteenth and twentieth century literature, as exemplified by Charles Baudelaire's figure of *flâneur*. The myth of Kiki de Montparnasse, therefore, not only renders Montparnasse in 1920s as a sexualised community with wild women and lovers, but also undermines, by portraying its passivity, the radical impacts the community had on its individual members, especially the artists, and on the woman Alice Prin.

Epilogue

The case studies of Victorine Meurent, Suzanne Valadon and Alice Prin tell us that all these women perceived a possibility in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Paris for a model to become an artist, or to earn a living by making artwork. This possibility comprised the growing opportunities for artistic training at a flexible and reducing rate, the maturing dealer-critic system for diverse marketing strategies and selling channels, the emergence of Salons alternative to the official one, the existence of collective communities of men and women learning and making art together, the destabilised boundary between artist and model with artists posing for their colleagues, and the aesthetic of officially untrained or self-taught artists. In addition, all of the above were conditioned by and had an impact on the social, political and ideological changes induced by the modernisation of France. The ambitions and initiatives of these three women were, therefore, the very epitome of their awareness of the shifts in social relations in this era and their negotiations of and with these changes. This is why their stories should not be disregarded in the history of modern art.

As I have stated in the chapter on Victorine Meurent, we must not be convinced that Meurent, Valadon and Prin are the only ones who discerned this possibility. If we were to assume that Meurent, Valadon and Prin were exceptions, we fall back into a search for female heroes in the history of art, which does not allow us to acknowledge the existence of other less visible attempts at the same professional combination. The very fact that these three women committed to making art one after another, Meurent in the 1870s, Valadon in 1880s, and Prin in 1920s, suggests that such a vision was shared across generations. According to Tabarant, Valadon reported seeing Meurent sometime between 1885 and 1886,

knowing that Meurent had become a painter after having posed for painters.¹ Alice Prin recalled in her memoirs that she posed for Maurice Utrillo once, through whom she might have learned about Valadon.² It is likely that Meurent, Valadon and Prin may have been an inspiration to each other as well as other contemporaries. This is why this thesis is not a study of a woman who is a well-known model and an undervalued artist, another woman who is a known-model and a widely recognised artist, and a third woman who is a highly visible model and an amateur artist. It is about new possibilities brought by modernisation as well as other significant social political events in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Paris.

Meurent, Valadon and Prin present to us miscellaneous strategies to facilitate their establishment as artists. Meurent's strategy worked within the official system of the Parisian art world in the first decade of the twentieth century and in feminist art history since the early 1990s. Valadon's worked most effectively, as she was recognised as an artist by her contemporaries as well as subsequent art historians. Prin's worked too, but only in the community of the Montparnasse circle. Their efforts refute the idea that being an artist demands only the innate quality of creativity. Rather, it requires negotiation and calibration. Their diverse approaches, along with the varied outcomes, indicate the complexities and prospects of the process. We would have known more if more such attempts were visible in the archive. More work needs to be done in this respect.

I use the term 'transformation' to designate the shift from a model to an artist. Having completed the research, it has become increasingly clear however, that the figure Model-Artist challenges and intervenes in the categories within which art history thinks. Categories such as model and artist come to be unstable because of the social dynamics and

¹ 'Suzanne Valadon situe entre 1885 et 1886 sa première vision de Victorine, qu'elle sut être une faiseuse de peintre, ayant pose pour des peintre. Tout le monde la connaissait'. Adolphe Tabarant, 'Celle qui fut l'Olympia de Manet', unpublished manuscript (1949), p.60.

² Kiki, *Kiki's Memoirs*, p.130.

transformations that are the conditions of the modern art. The negotiations these women made to establish themselves in a certain community disrupt the individualised story of art that comprises only the canonical artists, and underscore the notion of the artist as integral to a self-defined community, such as the Impressionists, the Montmartre group or the Montparnasse circle. Investigating these communities demands international thinking about art history. Paris is no longer just a city in France, but an artistic centre populated by artists from all over the world. It is a place for meeting and exchange. In this sense, it is French and not French at the same time. Underlying the artistic vitality and exuberance of these communities were the labours of models, artists, dealers, café proprietors and so forth. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, thinking of artworks as products of labour undertaken by various parties involved in the production of art allows us to move away from privileging the artist as the only significant player in the history of art while rendering other kinds of labour invisible.

Reading archival traces, texts, social practices, artistic activity and engagement with the processes of artistic production in studios and communities, the research presented here through three detailed case studies characterises itself as a contribution to an extended feminist history of art. Yet it is also a critique of those forms of feminist art history that have remained wedded to the central figure of the artist as the key subject of art historical research. By bringing to the fore issues of labour, self-fashioning and community, my purpose has been both to make visible a specific figure, the Model-Artist, and to challenge the wider terms of art historical studies, to change her status from anomaly to possibility, without underplaying the complex negotiations this possibility requires.

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