Culinary Metaphor, Materiality, and Constructions of Gender in French Painting and Art Criticism, 1865-1890

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I, ________________________________, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
ABSTRACT

By the mid-nineteenth century, Parisian art criticism was saturated with culinary metaphors used alternatively to describe figures within paintings (usually female), to characterize the appearance of paint, or to refer to a painter’s process. These three purposes were linked, and the foods chosen as analogues for paint and for figures were aligned with certain constructions of femininity. To date, these examples of commentators lingering upon their multi-sensory responses to paint material and painted subjects, and drawing attention to the artist’s attempts to capture senses other than vision, have received very little attention from art historians. But these responses enable a radical rethinking of the perceived ocular basis and bias of self-consciously modern painters and their critics in later nineteenth-century France. References to gustatory taste in art criticism point to a gastronomic culture in artistic and literary communities that is not so easily separable from discourses of aesthetic taste. The migrating language of cuisine contributes to an understanding of the visceral effects of the material, facture, and technique of specific works, and appears in some of the most widely studied critical texts of the period. The model of embodied spectatorship that it raises, which returns a body vulnerable to desire and disgust to the “detached” connoisseur, destabilizes established art historical readings of that criticism and the paintings that it described. As viewing was positioned as analogous to ingestion, with concomitant dangers or benefits to the body, the fiction of aesthetic detachment (with the flanéur as its avatar) broke down. Because gender was the base upon which comparisons to the culinary were most often elaborated, interrogating these analogies provides a fresh lens through which to investigate nineteenth-century constructions of gender and the gendering of sensory experience, as well as offers an alternative framework through which to examine painting itself.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been my privilege to develop this material under the generous and insightful supervision of Tamar Garb. I can imagine no better mentor or model, and will be ever guided by her close attention to the nuances of language and of pictures as well as the broader issues at stake. Her example and inspiration are in every sentence of this dissertation. My secondary supervisor Mechthild Fend has been a source of constant support and encouragement to me ever since she accepted my MA application. She has offered crucial commentary at defining moments, and I am deeply grateful for her kindness throughout this process. As the research tutor for most of my PhD, Rose Marie San Juan provided the continued advice that kept me on track, and assured a research community filled with rigour and camaraderie. Her unfailing ability to formulate questions penetrating the heart of an argument has been invaluable to my work as it has been to so many others. It is due to Carol Ockman’s teaching at Williams College that I decided to specialize in nineteenth-century France, and together with Holly Edwards, it was her advice that sent me to London to pursue it. I would also like to thank Bradford Carpenter, my first art history teacher, who introduced me to art by way of feminism and opened my eyes to the exhilarating possibilities of academic research.

Funding for this dissertation was provided by a University College London Overseas Research Scholarship, and I am deeply grateful for this support. I presented material drawn from these chapters at several conferences, and I would especially like to thank the members of the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Association, the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes, and the European Society for Nineteenth-Century Art for their comments and encouragement. Much of my research was carried out at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, and the archive centre at the Musée d’Orsay. I would like to particularly thank the librarians at the BnF Département des Estampes et de la photographie for helping me to locate culinary ephemera, and at the BnF François-Mitterrand for their assistance tracking down sometimes obscure contemporary reviews.

I have had the very good fortune to have spent the last five years in the company of peers without whom writing this dissertation would have been much less fun, and who
have enriched its product and its author beyond measure. To Sophie Morris, Afonso Dias Ramos, Kelly Freeman, Sarah Wade, Tom Snow, Zara Meerza, Susie Stirling, and Zoe Stevens, thank you for sharing your time, intelligence, and humour with me. You have made London home. The support and unwavering belief that I have enjoyed from my parents has seen me through every stage of my intellectual and personal development. My father Robert Deutsch has tirelessly debated questions of syntax and grammar for as long as I have been writing. My mother Laurie Egger has a passion for art and especially for *Olympia* that has fostered and continues to further my own. She has shared in my periods of anxiety and doubt more than anyone else during the writing of this dissertation. I gratefully acknowledge her patience, wisdom, and conversation.
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**INTRODUCTION**

In the 1890s, the culinary journal *Le Pot-au-feu: journal de la cuisine pratique et d’économie domestique*, named after the beef stew symbolic of Frenchness, was published for an audience composed mainly of Parisian bourgeois housewives. Its primary function was instruction, and it claimed to be the only such practical journal addressed to *maîtresses de maison*. Each issue opened with a cooking lesson from a professional male chef called the professor, followed by other recipes as well as humorous anecdotes, historical inquiry into food and dining customs, reviews of culinary exhibitions, recommendations for table setting, and illustrations.¹ One illustration from 1894 shows a woman seated before a canvas on an easel, holding a pastel with which she is presumably at work upon a still life of the flowers, bottle, and fruit on a table to her left (figure 1). The drawing appears without context, as is usually the case with these visual vignettes, which stand on their own independent of any text. The artist does not look toward the subject of her painting, but outward in the viewer’s direction, which is also the direction of the apparent muse or teacher beside her. This male figure is her chef, identifiable by his hat, jacket, and the set of knives slung about his waist, tools that suggest the analogous instruments required to make a painting. He points to the canvas and leans in close to the artist to offer suggestions, a role that must derive from his expertise in the appearances, but also the textures, tastes, and smells of her subject matter. Implied here is that the chef’s specialized knowledge of food may be useful in representing it visually, that a model of spectatorship inclusive of other senses and drawn from other arts could hold benefits for painting. As her pastel is echoed in his extended finger, equivalences are suggested between the artist and the chef who are wearing matching hats and aprons, and the image implies that making art and cooking a meal could be conceived as analogous processes.

The drawing clearly evinces gendered concepts of professionalism. While the vast majority of cooks in late nineteenth-century Paris were women, whether working for another household or their own families, restaurant chefs were exclusively men, and employing a

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¹ The best resource on culinary journals is Amy Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia, 2000). These journals remain under researched.
male chef in the home was regarded as more prestigious. As has long been well known, the case was similar in the fine arts. Upper-class women were encouraged to develop their skills as amateur painters, preferably of fruits and flowers, as in the Pot-au-feu drawing. This illustration of a stylish woman painter requiring direction, even if from a chef, can be interpreted in these terms. On the other hand, the art historical precedent for such an arrangement of figures was the male artist’s atelier self portrait which often included a female muse or Pittura, the female allegorical figure of Painting. When Gustave Courbet made his “real allegory” of seven years of his artistic life, the standing nude—ambiguously functioning as allegorical figure, muse, and model—was positioned similarly to the chef seen here (figure 2). Although in The Painter’s Studio Courbet’s nude watches in admiration, while in the print the chef gesticulates in participation, the power to create art in the sketch is granted to the seated woman artist with her foot assertively placed upon the easel, a pastel in one hand and the other on her hip, waiting, perhaps, for her chef to return to his place in the kitchen. Represented with a debonair moustache and an outstretched finger that comes uncomfortably close to the bosom of his employer, the cook has taken on airs that leave the viewer dubious. In a female-oriented journal he becomes the target of a joke exchanged between women, even if the illustrator intended to mock the aspirations of the woman painter and the male chef as both out of place before the canvas. Versions of these two figures appeared in an earlier Pot-au-feu drawing by the same illustrator, in which their roles were reversed (figure 3). Here the woman, endowed with the professional knowledge of the cookery book on her lap, advises the chef on his art. The two drawings are arranged in similar format, so that the canvas support and stove are located in the same position, both vehicles for art making, whether through the medium of paint box and pastel or frying pan and boiling sauce.

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2 Culinary journals aimed at men in professional practice are instructive in this regard, as in an article by Phineas Gilbert in L’Art Culinaire (1883, pp. 114-115), the official organ of the Société des Cuisiniers Francais, outlining why women should not be accepted into the culinary profession.


Culinary historians have shown that in nineteenth-century Paris, chefs, critics, and dining enthusiasts relied upon the example of the fine arts in order to establish and legitimate gastronomy as an art form. Haute cuisine was taught at professional schools modelled on the Académie des Beaux-Arts, exhibited through culinary exhibitions meant to mimic the Salon de Paris, and disseminated through printed images and descriptions in the same tradition as art criticism and caricature. In art history, however, very little literature addresses the culinary insofar as it inflected the beaux-arts. This is surprising because such connection is easily established, and I am interested in exploring why this has gone almost entirely unremarked. By the middle of the nineteenth century Parisian art criticism was saturated with culinary metaphors, not to mention that when “taste” emerged as the key concept in eighteenth-century aesthetics, the slippage between gustatory and aesthetic taste was of paramount concern and far from incidental. The relationship between the two understandings of taste, as a metaphor for cerebral judgement or as a mode of sensory perception, will be foundational to my arguments in this dissertation. The potential of reading art criticism and viewing painting alongside gastronomic literature—a burgeoning genre in the nineteenth century comprising restaurant reviews, instructive magazines, advice pamphlets, and philosophical treatises on dining that established eating and drinking as objects of discourse—have only just begun to be investigated in the last decade.

Culinary literature contained contributions by the journalistic elite, including established art critics and caricaturists who were also food critics writing or illustrating to order for the burgeoning daily and weekly presses and producing a shared language around consumption. Painters designed menus and dinner invitations as supplemental sources of

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6 Frédérique Desbuissons is the only art historian to have published widely on this topic, in articles, conference papers, and book chapters that are cited and discussed throughout the course of my dissertation, alongside the ways in which my interests and arguments diverge from hers.
income, to which art historians have not turned in any detail. The role of dinner clubs and restaurant spaces and proprietors in the cohesion of artistic communities and trends has not been well enough established, although it was of significant interest to contemporaries. One reviewer of the Impressionist Exhibition in 1877 chose not even to discuss the painting on display at 6 rue Le Peletier, but instead to reprint the menu in full from a dinner that the exhibiting painters had shared with Émile Zola, called an “impressionniste de la plume,” at the Café Riche, a well-known upscale haunt for that community. References to taste and appetite in art criticism open a lens into gastronomic culture in nineteenth-century artistic and literary communities that is not so easily separable from discourses of aesthetic taste.

To argue that the rich archive of visual culture that accompanied developments in the culinary field provides useful material to consider alongside painting is immediately to confront the inadequacy of the term “visual culture” with which to describe literatures of taste, a challenge facing art history in the midst of a “sensory turn” in the humanities and social sciences that seeks to redress the perceived logocentrism and ocularcentrism of linguistic and pictorial hegemonies respectively. This paradigm shift encourages greater emphasis on the experiential and embodied in order to account for the materiality of a work and its effects on the body of the viewer, and my dissertation shares these concerns.

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7 A collection of menus and dinner invitations by Jean-Louis Forain, Henri Guérard, Jean Béraud, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, among many others, are conserved in the BnF, Estampes et photographie, LI MAT-5-BOITE PET FOL (Menus: de 1843 à 1883).
8 Un Vieux Parisien, “L’Indiscret: Le Diner des impressionnistes”, L’Événement (8 April 1877), p. 1. Desbuissons is the exception, and her article “Des moos et des mots: Courbet à la brasserie Andler”, in Bruno Girveau et al., À table au XIXe siècle (exh. cat., Paris, 2001) explores how Courbet’s public persona was bound up with his love for beer and reputation as a habitué of the Brasserie Andler.
historical scholarship generated in explicit relation to this sensory turn tends to privilege modern and contemporary practice that directly stimulates senses other than vision through multimedia and installation work, or else to focus its attention on tactility, which has long figured in art historical analysis because of the manual nature of the painter’s or sculptor’s activity as well as the ways that materials appeal to the sense of touch. Even those art historians who have challenged the concept of “visual” media, arguing that encounters with any art object draw upon a range of sensory responses in an embodied viewer, have rarely considered taste as one among those senses that mingle with vision in the viewing experience. Of course, the dominance attributed to the visual in the interpretation of painting, the medium of focus in my dissertation, makes sense, for it is through vision that a painting engages the entire sensorium. Beyond this, there now exists a substantial literature on the longstanding prominence of vision within philosophy, a tradition out of which art history as a discipline has emerged. Jacqueline Lichtenstein, who has written extensively on touch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has traced these sensual

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10 Jenni Lauwrens gives an overview of the implications of the sensory turn for art history by discussing Margaret Moore’s multimedia installation Still Sounds (2012) in “Welcome to the Revolution: The Sensory Turn and Art History”, Journal of Art Historiography (7, December 2012). Responding to the premise that art history has been dominated by the visual and marginalizes the other senses, Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas edited the volume Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present (Burlington, 2010), a crucial contribution to this field of study, with essays focusing on photography, symbolism, Futurism, and installation work. None of the essays consider French painting outside of symbolism, when synaesthesia became a major topic of artistic discourses. I wish to show that this symbolist emphasis on the multi-sensorial had strong roots in the mid-nineteenth century.

11 W. J. T. Mitchell has been the key figure in interrogating the concept of “visual media.” His essay “There are No Visual Media”, Journal of Visual Culture (4:2, 2005, pp. 257-266) is a manifesto for the necessarily multi-sensorial encounter with any art object, and the imbrication of the other senses in the act of seeing. However, Mitchell all but ignores taste and smell in the essay. See also “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture”, Journal Of Visual Culture (1:2, 2002), pp. 169-170. Mitchell is associated with the pictorial turn, a term that he coined (1994), but the lack of consideration given to the sense of taste continues into the sensory turn. For example, taste receives the least attention in Di Bello and Koureas 2010.

12 On how visual hegemony was built into the discipline, see Francis Halsall, “One Sense is Never Enough”, Journal of Visual Arts Practice (3:2, 2004), pp. 103-122; and Caroline Jones, Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses (Chicago; London, 2005).
hierarchies in aesthetic discourse, hierarchies that still bear upon scholarship in the humanities that has comparatively neglected the senses of taste and smell in particular, at least until very recently. Contesting the assumption that vision was considered the “noblest” of the senses in the eighteenth century by showing that touch also vied for primacy in philosophical debates about how knowledge was acquired and the fine arts encountered, Lichtenstein also reveals the continuing prejudice against the senses of smell and taste in those processes. In the following passage her voice blends with those of eighteenth-century philosophers, which is indicative of how historic understandings of the sensorium continue to permeate our thinking:

It is difficult to see what cognitive function would be fulfilled by the faculties of taste and smell. Too deeply immersed in the world of the physical, these two senses scarcely lend themselves to metaphorical use, the sole route by which sensation can attain the domain of truth. One can “see” an idea, “touch on” a theoretical difficulty, “hear out” a problem, but one never “scents” an argument and one rarely “tastes” a concept...\(^{13}\)

Yet, taste was the primary metaphor around which eighteenth-century aesthetics revolved, naming the ability to discern specific qualities of beauty. Granted, most eighteenth-century philosophers maintained a distinction between aesthetic and gustatory taste, and the latter was considered a “lower” sense associated with animalistic bodily desires and disgust. It was also attributed with an unfortunate relativism. Aphorisms derived from the Latin \textit{de gustibus non est disputandum}, there is no disputing about taste, were repeated in major dictionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under \textit{goût}. According to Immanuel Kant, this perceived relativism disqualified gustatory taste from the realm of aesthetic judgment, which he argued needed to attain universality through

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} Lichtenstein, \textit{The Blind Spot: An Essay on the Relations Between Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Age} (Los Angeles, 2008 [2003]), p. 69. It is surprising that she makes such a strong case for the irrelevance of taste to the arts here because her final chapter considers Joris-Karl Huysmans’s comparisons of paint to aliments (pp. 171-173). Lichtenstein’s work on colour (1987, 1993) and its association with the feminine, the formless, and the inexpressible has been important for my thinking about the visceral effects of paint material. For a discussion of etymology that would seriously challenge Lichtenstein’s claim for the irrelevance of taste and smell in metaphoric language, see Constance Classen, \textit{Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures} (London; New York, 1993), pp. 52-72.}
“disinterest,” meaning that an aesthetic judgment had to operate independently of practical drives or personal desires. For Kant, the sense of taste was hopelessly linked to the necessity of eating and fickle food preferences. Hegel echoed this belief and brought it to bear specifically upon the appreciation of the arts, stating unambiguously: “smell, taste, and touch remain excluded from the enjoyment of art.”14 While the scope and authority of such statements in the eighteenth century stand in need of further analysis, the landscape was very different in nineteenth-century France. Sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson has shown that in the 1800s a “gastronomic field” was established as cuisine moved into the public sphere and consciousness. The proliferation of culinary literature, among other developments, led to “the socialization of individual desire and the redefinition of appetite in collective terms.”15 Menus were published in newspapers and posted outside of boulevard restaurants, establishments that grew exponentially in number during the first half of the century but were virtually unknown before then. Culinary journals and columns in the popular press furnished readers with descriptions of types of meals that would probably never be tasted. “Gastromania,” to borrow a popular term, created a “taste community,” and French cuisine was aestheticized, intellectualized, and nationalized. The “gastronome” became a model of discipline, cultivation, and restraint, evidence that throughout the nineteenth century concerns about appetite and its connection to baseness and glutony were being shed from elevated discourses of taste by a growing population fascinated with, proud of, and widely able to participate in cultures of public dining and the


construction of a uniquely French cuisine. Aesthetic taste was less rigorously separated from gustatory taste. In fact, the two could be seen as mutually inflecting.

In light of these developments, it is no surprise that gastronomic language entered art criticism with such gusto by mid-century. To be sure, this often emerged out of the perceived distinction between the culinary and fine arts, and comparison to food and cooking was seized as a tool to denigrate painting or, less frequently, sculpture. Frédérique Desbuissons, the only art historian to turn consistently to these metaphors as they appeared in nineteenth-century French art criticism and caricature, argues in her survey of this material that the intention of analogies between painting and food was to assess an artwork as a failure. While my dissertation will challenge this generalization, certainly Desbuissons is right to point out that this was at least the goal, achieved or not, of many such caricatures and reviews (if not those Salon reviews published in culinary journals), in much the same vein as comparisons of painting to other arts deemed to be lower on a hierarchy, such as clothing design. Ruth Iskin has analyzed the associations made between paintings by Manet and the Impressionists and mass-produced fashions and accessories, intended to introduce the unflattering spectre of commodification and consumerism. There are many parallels between comparisons of paintings to fashion and to food, and I

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17 Desbuissons, “The Studio and the Kitchen: Culinary Ugliness as Pictorial Stigmatisation in Nineteenth-Century France”, in *Ugliness. The Non-Beautiful in Art and Theory* (Andrei Pop and Mechtild Widrich, eds., London, 2014), pp. 104-121. Philippa Lewis considers culinary metaphor in art criticism in her article “Stomaching the Salon: The Sense of Taste in Le Tintamarre’s ‘Boulangerie du Louvre’ and Baudelaire’s Salon de 1846”, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* (42:1-2, Fall-Winter 2013-2014, pp. 35-50), making a case for the ambivalence of such metaphors, which were not necessarily insults but instead introduced the pleasurable effects of visual art and encouraged a synaesthetic response to it. Lewis does not discuss these analogies in relation to particular artworks, and for Desbuissons, too, critical constructions are rarely brought to bear in extended analysis of specific paintings.

18 See, for example, Charles Coligny, “Le banquet du Salon de 1865”, *La Salle à manger* (20 May 1865, pp. 116-199) in which works of art are described as edible.

explore the twin characterizations of the Salon as a *pâtisserie* and a boutique of *confections pour dames* in Chapter Three. Like Iskin, who situates painting within the material culture of fashion consumption that proliferated in the 1870s and 1880s, my dissertation contextualizes painting in the 1860s through to the 1880s within the broader discourses and material culture surrounding food. However, this often leads me to quite different interpretations of some of the same paintings. Iskin’s attention to the mass-produced and commodity culture of Paris causes her to foreground notions of the anonymity of the urban marketplace, the interchangeable, spectacular status of those goods for sale within it, and the potential detachment of the *flanêur* from it all. By contrast, the allusions that I trace to food ground my analyses in the visceral effects of the material, *facture*, and technique of specific paintings, a characteristic that also distinguishes my inquiry from that of Desbuissons, who attends more closely to culinary analogies raised in text and caricature than in paint. My dissertation asks how these critical comparisons and the language of materiality that emerged in relation to food production and consumption offer new ways of conceiving of paint material that I explore through close analysis of paintings by Édouard Manet, Gustave Caillebotte, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro. Alimentary metaphors insisted upon an embodied viewer, and as viewing was established as analogous to ingestion, with dangers or benefits to the body, the fiction of aesthetic detachment for which the *flanêur* has so often been considered as the ultimate avatar broke down.

Gender was the base upon which comparisons to the culinary were elaborated. This is an aspect not considered in depth in Desbuissons’s publications, but which is central to many of the instances of alimentary art criticism that she describes. Culinary analogies appeared for three related purposes: to describe figures within paintings (usually female), to

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20 For example, see the description of Caillebotte’s butcher shop scenes: “The detached viewpoint connotes the anonymity of the metropolis” (Iskin 2007, p. 177). By contrast, in her discussion of Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (both 1881 and 1882 versions), she notes her intention to undermine the fiction of a singular and mastering “male gaze” (pp. 55-59).

21 For example, she notes that Manet’s and Renoir’s figures were discussed as decaying in “La peinture faisandée. Un fantasme de haut goût dans le second XIXème siècle”, in *Les usages et les représentations du cadavre dans l’art* (Anne Carol and Isabelle Renaudet, eds., Aix-en-Provence, 2013, pp. 91-108), but does not account for the fact that this trope was specifically applied to paintings of nude women from the 1860s into the 1880s. This is the subject of my second chapter, but also crucial to the third and fourth chapters.
characterize the appearance of the paint itself, or to refer to the process of painting (to introduce a common phrase, *la cuisine de la peinture*). These purposes were often linked, and the foods chosen as analogues for paintings as objects, as well as for the figures depicted within them, were aligned with certain constructions of femininity. My dissertation is structured around those connections. Chapter One establishes the types of metaphors used as well as the main theoretical frameworks and the model of spectatorship that they raised. Chapter Two considers the link between red meat, the figure of the female sex worker, and the “flesh” of the paint surface. Manet was accused by both supporters and detractors of painting raw flesh, paradigmatically in relation to *Olympia*. But whatever the subject Manet’s art was widely experienced as crude, direct, and harsh, with brush strokes that to some suggested the bloody cuts of a butcher across the canvas. Chapter Three questions the connection between pastry, the chic *Parisienne*, and the crusted surface of the “licked” canvas, whether the smooth appearance preferred by successful Salon painters or the projecting “tongue-lickings” of Monet and Caillebotte. Painters linked to the Academy and its standards were understood by both their champions and malcontents as confectioners of whipped cream and pastry, which was most often recognized in their paintings of *Parisiennes*, phantasmatic figures themselves culturally conceived in similar terms. The process of such an artist was not perceived to be like the butcher, breaking down the subject into pieces with variegated strokes, but akin to the chef who built up thin layers, attended to minute details, and created shining surfaces. Surprisingly, similar metaphors of pastry or confectionary were also used to describe paintings exhibited at Impressionist Exhibitions—sometimes portraits of young women, which would make sense within the familiar tendency already established by the nineteenth century to describe attractive women as appetizing, but also landscapes. My final chapter considers the correlation between fresh vegetables, the *paysanne* figure, and colours described as “raw” and “bitter.” Pissarro earned the label “cabbage painter” despite the fact that these hardly ever appeared as subject matter in his paintings. Instead, commentators exploited and

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22 Françoise Cachin has drawn attention to Pissarro’s label as a cabbage painter, considering it a “merely oft-repeated journalistic tag,” in “Some Notes on Pissarro and Symbolism”, in *Studies on Camille Pissarro* (Christopher Lloyd, ed., London; New York, 1986), pp. 95-98. Instead, I will argue that cabbages signified the artistic and political revolutions that Pissarro saw as linked, and that he accepted and responded to this label.
contributed to the construction of an affinity between the humble vegetable and Pissarro’s most common subject, female agricultural workers. Beyond this, to many critics, Pissarro’s technique connoted the laboriousness of agricultural labour and his paint colouration and materiality suggested the substances of dirt, sand, and soil.

At the level of represented subject matter, within art history the symbolic significance of certain foods have been better developed than others. The visual and rhetorical connections between female bodies and fruit, for example, have long figured in feminist analyses. But what it signified to call a painting cabbage-like, or a confection, and what that implied about the way it was made, its maker, and its consumer, offers a new perspective into painting and criticism of this period and allows for a richer historicization of certain equations, such as the one between sexualized and commodified female flesh and raw meat, that have remained pervasive to this day. Art historical inquiry into nineteenth-century Paris has centered around representations of female “prostitutes” and “Parisiennes.” I put these categories into quotations here to emphasize that these terms named figurations of difference rather than actual women. The categories were not necessarily distinct from one another, and taken together they can be seen to encapsulate the vast majority of Parisian women as the products of male discourses. As such, these figurations have been central to feminist art history, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau contends that prostitutes and Parisiennes became the major categories of femininity in nineteenth-century Paris onto which desires and anxieties about modernity were

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24 The connection between female bodies and meat has been a recurring theme in feminist art practice. For example, Carolee Schneemann, Meat Joy, 1964; Linder Sterling, performance at The Haçienda, 1982; Jana Sterbak, Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic, 1987; Lisa Salamadra, Mon Olympia, 2011, discussed in Chapter Two.

25 For example, The Musée d’Orsay exhibition “Splendour and Misery. Pictures of Prostitution, 1850-1910” (22 September 2015-17 January 2016) begins with a room entitled “Ambiguity,” referring to the ambiguity as to which women sold sex, in which paintings of Parisiennes by Jean Béraud, Ernest Ange Duez, James Tissot, and Giovanni Boldini are displayed. A later room titled the “Aristocracy of Vice” considers the courtesan as the quintessential Parisienne, with agency to define fashionable femininity. This exhibition is discussed further in the Conclusion to this dissertation.
projected.\textsuperscript{26} Considering these categories in relation to their culinary affiliates provides further insights into how gender was constructed at the time and foregrounds how this was riddled with instability. Like any ideological operation, the objectification of the female body in the ways traced in my dissertation was often on the verge of collapsing under the weight of internal inconsistencies in its articulation, whether in text or in paint. I will argue that Caillebotte was particularly attuned to the ways that women might be constituted as disgusting or delicious specimens, and my second and third chapters make the case that the artist parodied the fabrication of the venal body as meat or the \textit{Parisienne} as an haute cuisine confection in his still lifes, raising questions about the role of painting in that process.

As I will continue to establish throughout my dissertation, comparisons between an artist and a \textit{boucher, pâtissier}, or \textit{maraîcher} did not rest on subject matter alone. In fact, a staple trope in criticism of the Impressionist Exhibitions was that the overbearing presence of the paint material displayed, and traces of the processes of painterly production (once again nicknamed the \textit{cuisine de peinture}),\textsuperscript{27} obscured the subject matter to such a degree as to make even genre indecipherable (figure 4). Culinary analogies used to characterize materiality and technique remained connected to gender. Feminist art historians have shown that the surface of a painting already had a long history of discursive feminization by the nineteenth century, and that one way in which this manifested itself was in comparisons of paint to cosmetics, as the canvas surface could be considered analogous to a woman’s flesh and oil paint linked to facial paints and powders. Such conflation introduced an eroticized look carrying with it the experience of touching, particularly insofar as the artist’s brush had already caressed—or attacked, where a work like \textit{Olympia} was concerned—that surface.\textsuperscript{28} In addition and even more pervasively, the surfaces of

\textsuperscript{26} Solomon-Godeau, “The Other Side of Venus: The Visual Economy of Feminine Display”, in \textit{The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective} (Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., Berkeley, 1996), pp. 113-150.
\textsuperscript{28} The feminizing of the canvas and comparison of paint to cosmetics is the subject of Tamar Garb’s Introduction to \textit{The Painted Face} (2007) as well as “Powder and Paint:
certain canvases were described as “licked.” If the comparison of paint to cosmetics has allowed a metaphor through which to consider the experience of making and viewing painting as inflected by touch, the analogy of paint to food allows for a similar understanding of spectatorship as inflected by tasting its “delicious” or “disgusting” surfaces as well as subjects. In this context I will revisit the significance of Louis Leroy’s now famous complaint against Monet’s “tongue-lickings” in 1874,29 one among many examples of the language of oral sensation being used to describe the appearance and qualities of paint. In relation to artists who displayed their material candidly, paint itself figured into the critical discourses and challenged divisions between different forms of art, the culinary and the painterly. With Manet, Caillebotte, Monet, and Pissarro, the metaphor of artist as a butcher, confectioner, or gardener even operated outside of explicit critical attention to undermine the boundaries upon which the typically derogatory metaphors were built. On another level, the conspicuous culinary analogies in art criticism also bring awareness to more subtle moments when terms used to describe painting sat within a larger metaphor of viewing as ingestion. The tache, the term for coloured patches large and diffuse enough to announce their identity as brushstrokes and which became synonymous with self-consciously modern paint application, offers one such example. I will argue that the concept of the tache was meaningfully associated with the edible as a greasy kitchen stain, a reminder of the organic instability of paint and the potential for its decomposition, which was connected to the broader accusation that painters exhibiting at Impressionist Exhibitions borrowed their subjects and colours from the morgue. The tache, offering an underside to the more apparent references to food within criticism, was also feminized, both in literatures of taste and the arts. While the feminizing of Impressionism as a movement has been well established, I will extend this scholarship in relation to the language used to describe the Impressionist brushstroke itself, undisciplined material

Framing the Feminine in Georges Seurat’s Young Woman Powdering Herself”, Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle France (New York, 1998), pp. 114-143. See also Melissa Lee Hyde, Making up the Rococo: François Boucher and his Critics (Los Angeles, 2006); and Jacqueline Lichtenstein, “Making Up Representation: The Risks of Femininity”, Representations (20, Autumn 1987), pp. 77-87.

associated with the corporeal experience not just of the finger’s touch but also the tongue’s lick. As this sensuality suggests, culinary comparisons attested to an embodied viewer who might experience nausea and abjection, as well as desire and appetite (or some complex combination of these) through the visual. Inquiry into the specific meanings attributed to certain foods, as well as attention to their visceral effects that sometimes escape easy explanation, challenges the social art historical tendency to position food and drink as ciphers of exchange value within the Second Empire and Third Republic’s rapid expansion of capitalist glamour in the form of spectacle. As a result, art historical accounts of still life and shop window painting made from the 1860s to the 1880s often evacuate the amassed and displayed objects of their sensual complexity, as I have suggested so far in relation to Iskin’s analyses of certain paintings by Caillebotte and Pissarro, and will develop in Chapters Two and Four. At another extreme, still life became crucial to the tradition now known as formalist, whereby the primary significance of painted objects is as vehicles for colour and form. Within such accounts, from the nineteenth century onwards, the perceived insignificance of still life objects has been understood to allow the artist freer reign to explore the possibilities of paint to represent them. Operative within both these frameworks for analysis is the perspective of a detached flâneur-artist or flâneur-viewer, famously described by Baudelaire as an “independent, passionate, impartial” figure (how

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31 Marni Kessler’s analysis of Antoine Vollon’s Mound of Butter (c. 1875-1885) is an important exception to this trend. Kessler probes beyond the “deceptive innocence” of the painting, exploring how disjunctive painterly effects and sensuous materiality demonstrate the potential of still life to over-represent and exceed expectations. See “Antoine Vollon: Rendering Butter”, Dix-Neuf (10, 2008), pp. 12-24.
these qualities should be reconciled speaks to the tension in Baudelaire’s articulation who may be imagined surveying the boulevard étalages “presented strictly as commodities for sale” or bourgeois sideboards “with a connoisseur’s combination of keenness and dispassion.” In this dissertation I build upon recent work that has troubled the understanding of the flâneur as an “impassive stroller,” a voyeur characterized by a masculine “gaze,” as Griselda Pollock has described this figure. In Pollock’s formulation, referencing Walter Benjamin’s influential reading of Baudelaire, the flâneur is reducible to a gaze, a figure whose desire is configured in visual and non-reciprocal terms as “he” observes without interacting or indeed even being observed himself. While this account and others, namely Janet Wolff’s “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity” (1985), have been critical for exposing the gendered structure underlying the mythology and practice of flânerie, aligning the flâneur with primarily visual experience maintains a premise of the modernist narrative that Pollock works to dismantle, namely that isolating optical experience was not only desirable but somehow possible. In contrast to

34 Quote from Ruth Iskin’s discussion of Caillebotte’s still lifes (2007, pp. 176-177). Chapters Two and Four depart from established readings of his still lifes in these terms.
35 Quote from Richard Brettell and Stephen Eisenman’s discussion of Manet’s Still Life with Fish and Shrimp (1864) in Nineteenth-Century Art in the Norton Simon Museum (New Haven, 2006, p. 254), developed in Chapter One.
36 She writes: “The flâneur embodies the gaze of modernity which is both covetous and erotic”, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art (London; New York, 1988), p. 67. While Pollock positions the flâneur as a figure and not a person, and the “detached observing gaze” as an ideology rather than a practice, the rigidity with which she demarcates the gendered terrain of city space suggests an acceptance of the flâneur’s masculine authority which has been debated in recent years. The volume edited by Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough, The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris (Manchester, 2006) brings together essays that broaden our understanding of women’s experience of city space and question the flâneur’s mastery. Recently, scholars have also challenged the alignment of the flâneur with opticality. See especially the special issue of Dix-Neuf entitled Rethinking the Flâneur: Flânerie and the Senses (16:2, July 2012). Lynda Nead has argued that the prevailing notion of the city as a visual spectacle, inherited from twentieth-century scholarship centered upon the flâneur, distorts our understanding of how embodied men and women experienced city space by marginalizing the role of touch and speech. See “..Many little harmless and interesting adventures.: Gender and the Victorian City”, in The Victorian World (Martin Hewitt, ed., London; New York, 2012) pp. 295-306.
Pollock’s account, and closer to Honoré de Balzac’s description of *flânerie* as “the gastronomy of the eye.” Baudelaire actually portrayed the self-consciously modern artist that he described in the essay “The Painter of Modern Life” as the “perfect *flâneur*” as “drunk” with an “insatiable appetite” for his surroundings, for whom “no aspect of life has become *stale*” [emphasis Baudelaire’s throughout]. While vision is undoubtedly the privileged sense in Baudelaire’s articulation of the necessarily male *flâneur* with his panoramic “eagle eye” surveying the Paris streets that he negotiates freely, this vision goes thoroughly by way of the body. It is an immersive imbibing of images and a fervent attachment to specific figures and objects in the crowd that is at odds with an understanding of vision as connoting impassivity and impartiality, qualities closely linked to masculinity in opposition to a perceived irrational feminine mania for material goods and sensual pleasures to be grasped rather than assessed from a distance. If as Jonathan Crary has argued, by the nineteenth century vision was conceived as embodied and dependant upon the activity of an individual viewer, the sense of taste as it emerged in metaphors for visual consumption offers a more specific means to test the limits and possibilities of this new appreciation of corporealized vision as well as its implications for gender.

I will explore these themes not through the writings of Baudelaire, but mainly through those of Émile Zola. It is often remarked that Zola was preoccupied with the senses of smell and taste in his novels, but the culinary metaphors in Zola’s art criticism have received very little attention. The only source that I have located to engage them directly is

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38 Baudelaire 1964 [1863], pp. 8-9. While the essays in *Dix-Neuf* 16:2 (July 2012) establish the *flâneur* as an embodied figure, none probe the metaphors of taste used by Baudelaire to describe the *flâneur*’s absorption into the crowd.
39 Baudelaire 1964 [1863], p. 11. These clichéd aspects of feminine desire will be explored throughout my dissertation. It suffices here to raise Émile Zola’s *Au Bonheur des dames* (1883) as a key text articulating and reinforcing these themes.
a book chapter by the Zola specialist Collette Becker.41 Becker traces Zola’s use of this language in the 1860s to describe literature, painting, and theatre, arguing that it was intended to shock readers with its perceived vulgarity. My consideration of Zola’s culinary metaphors takes this as a starting point, moving on to interrogate the effects, intended and unintended, of such metaphors that imagined viewing as consumption. My first two chapters offer a reading of the young author’s defence of Manet between 1866 and 1867, and the novel Le Ventre de Paris (1873) is central throughout my dissertation. Zola developed a juxtaposition that was pervasive more broadly, describing self-consciously modern painting as raw vegetables or meat and “academic” painting as pastry or confectionary. But unlike some of the more facile appropriations of culinary language to be used as insults, Zola’s texts that position viewing as tasting are especially ambivalent. His consistent use of these and other culinary metaphors in fiction and art criticism deserves sustained analysis for two reasons. First, criticism of modern life painting from the late 1860s through to the 1880s consistently linked that painting to naturalist literature, specifically to Zola.42 Zola’s interest in the multi-sensory would have been read alongside the imagined priorities of those painters with whom he was associated. Second, Zola’s criticism has been central to art historical scholarship. This heightens the significance of bringing unacknowledged aspects of it to attention because Zola’s view of Manet in

particular, but the Impressionists also, has been authoritative into our day. His assertion of
the triviality of subject matter, his focus on formal aspects of paintings, and his allusions to
scientific method contributed to a specific version of Manet and his legacy that was
dominant in the mid-twentieth century. Zola’s account may easily be traced through to
Clement Greenberg’s contention that “Modernist” painting began with Manet, due to what
Greenberg saw as Manet’s frank acknowledgment of medium in his “flat colour-modeling”
and “insolent indifference to his subject.”

Like Zola, Greenberg positioned the artist as an
analyst testing the limits of the medium and of perception with a quasi-scientific method.

Some of the most cogent criticisms of this history of modernism, encapsulating both
Zola’s and Greenberg’s articulation of Manet’s aesthetics, have come from feminist art
historians. Zola’s disavowal of the importance of subject matter helped to obscure aspects
of Manet’s painting from art historical analysis, resulting, for example, in the lack of

43 I maintain Greenberg’s capitalization of Modernism only when referencing his writings. Greenberg’s version and history of Modernism are set out in “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (1939), “Toward a Newer Laocoon” (1940), and “Modernist Painting” (1965), all reprinted in Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism (John O’ Brien, ed., Chicago, 1993). Quotation from “Laocoon” (V.I, pp. 29-30), in which Greenberg also argues that Zola was the correlative of Manet in literature, because Greenberg saw both Zola and
Manet as engaged in the project of purging their production of the anecdotal or the “idea”
in favour of an “objective” description based on a model of scientific detachment.

Greenberg’s continued importance for art historians of nineteenth-century France is
demonstrated by the fact that three of the most eminent reckon with him (for widely
divergent purposes) in the Introductions to their Manet books: Timothy J. Clark, The
Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers (Princeton, 2008 [1985]); Michael Fried, Manet’s Modernism, or, the Face of Painting in the 1860s (Chicago, 1996); Carol Armstrong, Manet Manette (New Haven, 2002). Charles
Bernheimer comments more explicitly upon the legacy of Zola’s effacement of subject
matter as carried into twentieth-century accounts in “Manet’s Olympia: The Figuration of

44 Greenberg 1960, V.4, pp. 90-91.

45 The feminist intervention largely opened with the publication of Linda Nochlin’s “Why
Have There Been No Great Women Artists”, Artnews (69, 9 January 1971), pp. 22-39, 67-
71. Key feminist art historians who have deconstructed modernist art history and criticism
include Griselda Pollock (1981; 2013 [1981]; 1988; 1999); Carol Duncan (1989); and
Tamar Garb (1993). For a discussion of Greenberg’s emphasis on the visual and its legacy
within the discipline, see Jones 2005. I have also relied upon Norma Broude’s account of
how art critics and historians in the mid-twentieth century (paradigmatically Greenberg)
privileged a reading of Impressionism as concerned with science-based optical experience
in order to position its painters as precursors to modernism (1991).
explicit attention given to the figure of the “maid” in *Olympia* until relatively recently, as has been discussed by Griselda Pollock and by now many others.\(^4^6\) Pollock exposes what Zola did not take into account, what he obscured to further his own agenda or what he could not (consciously) see as a result of it. Feminist critiques that have been crucial for deconstructing modernist art history and criticism can be supported and expanded by a close reading of Zola’s texts and a willingness to take them as polyvalent. Zola has usually been interpreted within the terms of the positivism with which he identified. The most frequently discussed passages from his criticism are those in which he described the importance of the painter’s eye and directness of its vision. Even Richard Schiff, who problematizes the connection between “Manet and other naturalistic artists” and “philosophical positivism,” focuses exclusively upon Zola’s descriptions of Manet’s eye and vision.\(^4^7\) One study of Manet goes as far as to claim that “[i]n 1866, Zola evacuated from Manet’s canvases everything but strictly visual experience.”\(^4^8\) This statement is informed by a retrospective reading of Zola through the lens of Greenberg, who argued that Manet and the Impressionists acknowledged that painting should privilege “purely optical experience” as opposed to “optical experience as revised or modified by tactile associations.”\(^4^9\) These claims formed Greenberg’s understanding of modernist painting as defining itself exclusively in relation to the sense that perceived its effects, as he argued for


\(^{49}\) Greenberg 1960, V.4, p. 89; see also Greenberg 1940, V.I, pp. 28-31.
the “Impressionist insistence on the optical as the only sense that a completely and quintessentially pictorial art can invoke.”\textsuperscript{50} The apparent celebration of vision by Impressionist painters (paradigmatically Monet, who has a certain primacy in these accounts) was also paramount to influential histories of Impressionism published by John Rewald (1946) and later Phoebe Pool (1967). The arguments mounted by these authors echo the ways that certain of Impressionism’s most vocal critics and champions described the art in the 1870s and 1880s as primarily, even exclusively, addressed to the eye.\textsuperscript{51} Probably the most important proponent of this view for the subsequent literature of art history was Jules Laforgue, the poet who claimed that the Impressionist eye became a scientific instrument and rid itself of its connection to all other sensory modes. It is worth quoting Laforgue at length:

... the Impressionist painter is therefore a modernist painter endowed with an uncommon sensibility of the eye... the eye sees light only roughly and synthetically and has only vague powers of decomposing it in the presence of nature, despite the three fibrils described by Young, which constitute the facets of the prisms. Then a natural eye—or a refined eye, for this organ, before moving ahead, must first become primitive again by ridding itself of tactile illusions—a natural eye forgets tactile illusions and their convenient dead language of line, and acts only in its faculty of prismatic sensibility. It reaches a point where it can see reality in the

\textsuperscript{50} Greenberg 1960, V.4, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{51} Stéphane Mallarmé’s essay “The Impressionists and Edouard Manet”, The Art Monthly Review and Photographic Portfolio (1:9, 30 September 1876, pp. 117-122) is also noteworthy for the way in which it privileges vision. For a discussion of the equation of Impressionism with “purely optical experience” which agrees with this logic (“As a generalization about Impressionism or rather about the contemporary response to the work of the landscape Impressionists Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Alfred Sisley, this is incontestable”) while admitting that is in need of some qualification, see Fried 1996, pp. 18-19. Fried argues that Manet was implicated in the negotiation between what he terms the bodily realism of Courbet and the ocular realism of the Impressionists, and contends that “the transition from a corporeal to an ocular realism… constitutes a new framework within which Manet’s art will need to be rethought” (pp. 380, 395). Interrogating the language of bodily consumption used by so many of Manet’s critics allows me to take up Fried’s claim for Manet’s “corporeal realism” (which arrives at the end of his book and requires, indeed he asks for, further development) in different terms, and extend its implications. However, in centralizing the continuity of this language of consumption into descriptions of Impressionist painting, I will challenge Fried’s argument that a paradigm shift occurred from the corporeal to the ocular.
living atmosphere of forms, decomposed, refracted, reflected by beings and things, in incessant variation. Such is this first characteristic of the Impressionist eye.  

Laforgue’s essay “L’Impressionnisme” was written in 1883 but not published until 1902. Despite this, passages such as the above have provided compelling support for the argument that Impressionism’s most sensitive supporters understood the painting in its time as dedicated to purely optical experience, despite Laforgue’s otherwise extended use of music and the auditory to describe painting and optical perception, and his invocation of cuisine in closing:

But even if one were to make allowance for an eye bewildered and exasperated by the haste of these impressionistic notes taken in the heat of sensory intoxication, the language of the palette with respect to reality would still be a conventional tongue susceptible to new seasoning. And is not this new seasoning more artistic, more alive, and hence more fecund for the future than the same old recipes for academic colour?

In my dissertation I set out to trace this culinary language used to defend self-consciously modern painting against “academic recipes.” Laforgue may have argued that

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53 Larforque 1902, pp. 143-144: “…même dût-on faire la part de l’incohérence d’un œil naturellement, volontairement si l’on veut, exaspéré dans la hâte de ces œuvres d’impressions notées dans la toute première ivresse sensorielle d’une réalité déjà choisie rare et imprévue, tout cela, la langue de la palette par rapport à la réalité étant une langue conventionnelle et susceptible d’assaisonnements nouveaux, tout cela n’est-il pas plus artiste, plus vivant et par conséquent plus fécond pour l’avenir que les tristes et immuables recettes des coloris académiques?” Translation from Nochlin 1966.
“the optical arts spring from the eye and solely from the eye,” and that the special quality of the Impressionist eye was that it became like a prism, but his reference to a “language” of colour registering like sounds across the “keyboard” of the sensorium to form a freshly seasoned dish sit uneasily alongside those claims.\(^{54}\) I will contend that the scope of the nineteenth-century claims for the Impressionist celebration of the exclusively visual have been overestimated in retrospect by art historians from the mid-twentieth century through to today. This is inseparable from the history of Impressionism’s feminization in the 1890s and the resistance to that interpretation in the twentieth century, a resistance accomplished by promoting a link between painting, positivism, and optical science.\(^{55}\) Zola indeed wrote frequently and forcefully about the specificities of the artist’s eye with its unmediated empiricism, but to take such passages in relative isolation results in a partial perspective, along the same lines as privileging Baudelaire’s discussions of the truly modern artist as an optical device, a mirror or kaleidoscope, or Laforgue’s description of the Impressionist eye as a prism, at the expense of other passages or texts in which such views were put under pressure. I challenge Zola’s formalism, an anachronistic term with which he could not have identified, with his own language. Despite claiming and championing the purportedly dispassionate gaze of the critic and artist, in his defence of Manet (and others, although this is outside the scope of my dissertation) he described an encounter with paint that was insistently bodily and resistant to the penetrating eye. He embedded his dichotomies of meat versus cake in texts that referred to viewing as tasting or ingesting, construed the painter’s process as digesting nature, and positioned painting as the materialized “flesh and blood” of its artist in a striking reversal of the established connection between a canvas and the female body as well as the pervasive alignment of masculinity with detached witness and femininity with embodiment and appetite. Zola’s use of culinary language extended beyond the self-consciously metaphorical appropriation of binaries such as meat versus cake, and its meanings were vexed and overdetermined. Through my reading of Zola, I will show that recognizing culinary metaphors in art criticism need only be the starting point for

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\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 141: “Chaque homme est selon son moment dans le temps, son milieu de race et de condition sociale, son moment d’évolution individuelle, un certain clavier sur lequel le monde extérieur joue d’une certaine façon. Mon clavier est perpétuellement changeant et il n’y en a pas un autre identique au mien. Tous les claviers sont légitimes.”

\(^{55}\) Broude 1991 is the key source on this.
analysis, and that instances of gastronomic description are most productive when understood to be as opaque as the paintings that they describe.

Beginning with Zola, I expose moments of tension, paradox, and unease in criticism through the Impressionist Exhibitions that was expressed though reference to the body and the sensorium. My goal is to further dissemble the fiction of aesthetic detachment and decentre the self-contained masculine viewer or artist understood to represent it with what has come to be known as his mastering “male gaze.” A model of aesthetic consumption implied continuity between the subject and object, whether viewer and painting or artist and nature, as well as the ability for the painting or motif to act upon the body of viewer or artist. These continuities between the subject and surrounding world make up the terrain of phenomenology, and the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who wrote consistently about painting, provides theoretical grounding for my inquiry. Merleau-Ponty argued that the senses were intertwined within one another, and similarly, that no firm distinction could be drawn between the viewer and the painting or the subject and the environment because people and things are caught up in what he called the “flesh” of the world. To overcome the separation of sensory modes and test their interaction, Merleau-Ponty turned to the

56 Laura Mulvey established the concept of the “male gaze” in “Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema”, Screen (16:3, Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18. The work of Luce Irigaray (1985 [1974]; 1985 [1977]; 2004 [1984]) has been crucial to my understanding of the mastering impulse of the gaze and the devaluation and feminization of other senses. 57 Merleau-Ponty’s essays on painting are “Cézanne’s Doubt” (1945), “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” (1952), and “Eye and Mind” (1960), all reprinted in The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting (Galen A. Johnson, ed., Evanston, 1993). It is common for scholarship associated with the sensory turn to reference (if not often to develop) Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of embodied perception and the intertwining of the senses. For example, see Lauwrens 2012; Howes 2013; Di Bello and Koureas 2010, p. 14. Art historians have invoked Merleau-Ponty to explore the relationship between vision and touch within a work of art or during its process of production. In relation to this period, important discussions that take up Merleau-Ponty are Garb 2007, pp. 138-179; Michael Fried’s consistent use of phenomenology (especially 1990; 1996), as well as that of his students, especially Rachael Z. Delue, whose article “Pissarro, Landscape, Vision, and Tradition”, The Art Bulletin (80:4, December 1998, pp. 718-736) is discussed in Chapter Four; and Lynda Nead’s work on corporealized vision in the early years of film, significantly for my dissertation, in relation to erotic scenes of women undressing, in “Strip! Moving Bodies in the 1890s”, Early Popular Visual Culture (3:2, September 2005), pp. 135-150. 58 Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 65.
encounter with painting, for he saw the painter and phenomenologist as engaged in the same pursuit of questioning and representing the operations of perception. Merleau-Ponty’s discussions of painting and the entanglements of lived perspective—his term for the perception experienced by an embodied human, still, in his account, sexless—have encouraged a now extensive feminist literature concerned with the possibilities of embodied perception to challenge the gendered hierarchies separating the eye from the other senses and the body from the mind. These feminist critiques and extensions of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology inform my research into the gender implications of alimentary consumption being used as a discursive model for spectatorship. As has been well established, women were considered more embodied in nineteenth-century France than men, understood to have heightened sensory awareness and more pronounced appetites. Given the ambivalence that the sensorium presented as a result of its historic gendering, responses to painting that appealed to it risked treading into feminized territory and undermining the critic’s status as a dispassionate “analyst,” as Zola was fond of describing himself and those artists that he admired.

Taking culinary-inflected debates about painting seriously and critically opens the space for reinterpretation of texts and paintings that have been granted canonical status today. While my dissertation returns to male authors and painters who have received more than their fair share of scholarly attention, this line of inquiry brings out a side of the critical discourse and the paintings that it addressed (and some that it did not) that has been


60 This literature is substantial. It suffices at this stage to note the work of Tamar Garb, who has exposed these stereotypes in her discussions of the feminizing of Impressionism as a movement, suited to woman painters with their perceived heightened sensitivity to sensory “impressions.” See Garb 1990; 1993; 1994, pp. 123-127. See also Broude 1991, pp. 110-172.
underappreciated, for reasons that I will argue are caught up in social constructions of sexual difference. These constructions were present in the gender connotations of certain foods that served as analogies for painted figures and for paint material itself, as well as in nineteenth-century understandings of bodies and sensory experience. Attending to culinary analogies is not just to expose an unfamiliar critical trope. A trope implies a pre-existing articulation that may be tried on and discarded with ease, which does not emerge from the immediate encounter with painting but from a repertory of learned categories through which to manage and explain that experience. Allusion to the culinary and the multisensory dimension that it implied could do more than that, even the opposite. Appealing not just to the sense of taste but also to a complex integration of smell and touch (and even sound, although this is outside the scope of my dissertation), paintings were described as causing visceral reactions in their viewers. These responses direct attention to the material qualities of specific paintings that interrupted the normal processes of critical writing that would, like Zola’s purportedly scientific analysis of works of art, ignore the potential of that material to migrate between identities, at once sublimated to representation and then disrupting it.61 As one critic complained of the Impressionist Exhibition in 1877:

It is impossible to stand more than ten minutes before certain of the most sensational canvases without being reminded straight away of seasickness. You think involuntarily of a certain lunch taken before embarking on a beautiful spring morning, a lunch of strawberries and cream cheese that could not stand up to the whims of the pitching boat.62

61 I have found Georges Didi-Huberman’s *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, 2005 [1990]) enabling here. Didi-Huberman argues that the discipline is overinvested in the explanation of paintings, to the point of ignoring or repressing (his work draws upon Freudian models of knowledge and consciousness) the “effects of the paint” (p. 237). His concept of the *pan*, a French term that has proven difficult to translate, signifying a piece of a painting that intrudes upon representation by announcing its identity as overdetermined, opaque material, has been important for my discussions of the *tache* in this dissertation. The *pan* generates questions rather than answers, provoking unending webs of association that elude stable identification, remaining in the realm of metaphor and metamorphosis rather than meaning. For another critique of art history as semiotic interpretation, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, 2005).

62 Bariolette 1877: “Il est impossible de stationner plus de dix minutes devant quelques-unes des toiles les plus à sensation de cette galerie, sans évoquer aussitôt le souvenir de mal de mer. On pense involontairement à certain déjeuner que l’on a fait avant de s’embarquer
I open my dissertation with this image of a destabilized critic retching up strawberries and cream, a far cry from a subject in possession of detached analytical expertise.
CHAPTER ONE: METAPHOR AND MATERIALITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

Around 1873, Manet painted a beer mug across a vertically placed palette, known today only by an old, ill-defined black and white photograph taken before 1932 (figure 5). There has been no record of La Palette au bock since it was shown in an exhibition of commercial signs in Paris in 1935. On the palette paint moves strikingly between signifying itself and signifying the object depicted. The work looks to have been created quickly and freely from the extra paint left on the support. The top section of the palette is covered with such traces of remaining paint in an array of colours, at least according to Manet’s early biographer Adolphe Tabarant who included the palette in his 1947 monograph. But as the eye moves down the palette this mass of paint comes to resemble beer froth emerging from a thickly painted mug, anchored as though on a table by a shadow to its right. Just as a real mug would rest upon a wooden brasserie counter, its condensation or overflow spreading out under it, this painted mug also rests upon the wooden surface of the palette where the sticky traces of paint extend beneath. The palette itself doubles as a mug, for its contour echoes that of the mug’s handle, its thumb hold situated directly above the glass’s grip. The paint on it can then be construed as a consumable substance, an effect heightened because Manet linked the material of paint to the foam of beer, creating a visual analogy between the frothiness, wetness, and sticky texture of both.

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65 In her discussion of La Palette au bock in “À l’enseigne du Bon Bock”, 48/14 La revue du Musée d’Orsay (30, 2010), Frédérique Desbuissons points to the dialogue between the signifier and the signified, the beer foam and the leftover scraps of paint already scattered across the tool (p. 35). She mentions this tool as one among a constellation of objects made after the painting that reference it, within her broader exploration of the social and political meaning of Manet’s painting Le Bon Bock and its afterlives in the 1860s and 1870s. Debuissens argues that Le Bon Bock functioned as a sign for the values in art and politics.
Suggestions of both touch and taste are accessed through the palette painting. The elision of the palette with the palate, or appetite, is implied. This connection between palette and palate was not exclusive to Manet. It was repeatedly exploited in nineteenth-century menu design, when the shape of the artist’s piece of equipment served as a popular prop for the listed courses of a meal (figure 6). The J. Minot printing house designed and marketed a series of such menus that could be ordered by restaurants or households in the second half of the nineteenth century. While decorated around the outside, these include blank space within for the inscription of dishes. One of these palette-shaped menus features multi-coloured dabs of paint arranged along its upper edge as though ready to be applied to canvas, with an illusionistic depiction of a waiter emerging from a door carrying a tray of food at the bottom right. Such a menu alludes to the artistry of designing, cooking, presenting, and consuming food. Just as the painter would arrange mounds of pigment upon the palette, so too would the chef place helpings of sauce-soaked foods upon a plate, which the palette also evokes because of its ovular shape. In this way the physical object of the menu suggests correspondence between the materials of food and paint. So too does La Palette au bock.

The distinctive shape of the palette, with its thumb hole and kidney bean shape, also suggests its tactile function and its status as an extension of the artist’s hand. A vogue for collecting palettes at this time reflected the collector’s desire to possess an object that an artist had held for long periods, an object that seemed intimately connected to its original owner, even standing metonymically for the artist with whom it was indexically and symbolically associated.66 If one painted image or genre upon the palette could stand in as a sign for Manet’s practice, as a signature of sorts, it would be a still life element. Still life comprises a fifth of Manet’s total production, some eighty works. Beyond this, nearly all of his large format figure paintings include still life objects that migrate between them, that Manet and colleagues had espoused in brasseries such as the Café Guerbois under the Second Empire, and around which they would rally in the 1870s.

66 For other examples of this trend, see Terry Van Druten, “Making and Creating. The Painted Palette in Late Nineteenth-Century Dutch Painting”, in Rachel Esner et al., Hiding Making - Showing Creation: The Studio From Turner to Tacita Dean (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 73-85.
sometimes as signatory signifiers. Since critics commonly complained that Manet’s figures themselves resembled still lifes, the genre became representative of how the artist’s production was understood more generally. A beer mug would have held particular symbolic significance within artistic and literary circles in nineteenth-century Paris. Beer had already come to signify realism in painting (although realism was not an accepted or well-theorized term at this time) through Gustave Courbet, who famously used his taste for beer to construct a coarse and provincial persona mobilised also to characterize his artistic production. Beer was considered a cruder, less mainstream beverage than wine, and could stand for anti-conservatism of many kinds. Within art history, beer was linked explicitly to seventeenth-century Dutch painting, in which it was a frequent iconographic feature. In mid nineteenth-century Paris, a revival of interest in seventeenth and eighteenth-century painting in the Netherlands crystallized around artists including Jan Vermeer, Frans Hals, and Rembrandt van Rijn. This legacy was particularly useful within debates about realism, which were being formulated by artists who believed in the significance of asserting the value and visuality of the present, because it was claimed that Dutch painters had also been invested in the project of depicting their contemporary reality.

Manet travelled to Holland in 1872 and submitted a painting entitled Le Bon Bock to the 1873 Salon upon his return (figure 7). This painting of a portly middle-aged man grasping a glass of beer in a café or beer hall, modelled for by the print-maker Émile Bellot, was understood to reference seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes and portraiture. It was a critical success at the annual Salon, an unusual event in Manet’s Salon experience at that time. In fact, it inspired Bellot to found a dinner club in 1875 that he

69 See Desbuissons 2001 for the connection between Courbet and beer.
called the “Dîner du Bon Bock,” attracting artists, writers, and performers to Montmartre and its environs for some fifty years. Bellot presided over the club committed to the anti-establishment ideals that he saw captured in Manet’s painting, however ironic it might be that the painting actually afforded its artist a measure of approval in the conservative press. In mid-nineteenth-century Paris, the practice of groups of men who dined together, usually in restaurants, spread in popularity and prestige. They were frequently organized as artistic and literary confraternities. A list of their members and their menus were regularly published in newspapers for the eyes and appetites of curious readers. The artistically decorated invitations to the “Dîners du Bon Bock,” made for a group that published an album of poems, songs, and drawings by its members in 1878, were of special interest to the wider public. They specialized in humour, as in an 1883 example in which caricaturist Alfred le Petit depicted a man knocking on a door while holding a giant playing card representing Bellot as king of hearts holding a mug of beer (figure 8). Manet was often accused of flattening his subjects and making paintings that resembled playing cards, most famously by Courbet. This invitation was a jocular reference to Manet’s original painting of Bellot. Both show the portly, bearded figure in similar format, close up and wielding a mug of beer in the left hand, while the pipe that Bellot holds in Manet’s painting is transformed into a sceptre in le Petit’s variation.

Tabarant claimed that Manet painted La Palette au bock in celebration of his Salon success with Le Bon Bock, and that the palette was the same one that Manet had used for that canvas. Once embellished, the palette was shown in a fashionable boutique on the Rue Vivienne, presumably to drum up publicity for the artist. It would have functioned as a sign for Manet’s practice just as the signs depicting beer mugs that frequently featured on the invitations to the “Dîners du Bon Bock” were a summons for the crowds of figures,

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73 Tabarant 1947, p. 212.
sometimes toting artist’s palettes (figure 9, 1883), united in celebration of liberal artistic ideals. Manet’s critics were also fond of comparing his paintings to actual signage, implying that they were unrefined and schematic. Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne wrote in his 1873 Salon review that “there are certainly tavern signs that are more life-like” than Manet’s submissions to that year’s Salon, Le Bon Bock among them,74 and a Latin Quarter brasserie actually took a reproduction of Le Bon Bock as a sign.75 These connections indicate that in Paris by the 1860s and 1870s cultures of dining, drinking, and the arts were intertwined, thus raising the possibility that experiences of viewing and tasting were mutually inflecting. Throughout the nineteenth century, art critics contributed to culinary magazines, wrote novels, journal entries, and correspondence focusing on the alimentary habits of modern Parisians, and allowed, whether consciously or unconsciously, this language to seep into their discussions of painting. Comparisons of paint to food focused attention onto the materiality of paint itself, the ways in which that substance could be representative of a practice or a craft independent of subject matter. Beyond that, such analogies also implied a visceral viewing experience. Whereas sight operates best under the conditions of distance, and the visual field can be scanned and assessed relatively rapidly, taste operates differently. It breaks down the boundaries between the self and other bodies or objects and implies a sustained process, a sequence of movements of the mouth and throat that are activated and engaged with each bite. Taste requires proximity with potentially dangerous or pleasurable effects.

The possibility for paint to migrate between the conventional categories of the aesthetic and the alimentary was especially pronounced in relation to Manet because the materiality of his paint-work, displayed so candidly upon La Palette au bock, garnered much contemporary attention. As Manet’s painting challenged critical vocabularies, cuisine and its associated language provided a place to turn.76 Over the course of twenty years, Émile Zola, one of Manet’s earliest and most vocal supporters, drew on culinary analogies when describing his work, and many of these instances still challenge established art

76 For accounts of Manet’s painting’s failure to signify see Clark 2008 [1985], pp. 80-146; Rubin 1994, pp. 28–29, 93-100.
historical readings of Zola’s criticism as well as the novelist’s own posturing as a detached analyst of the visible “facts” of painting.\textsuperscript{77} Similarly, descriptions of paint as a consumable substance and viewing as ocular ingestion expand the frameworks of visuality that have been privileged in art historical discussion of painting in Paris at this time.

A Critical Framework in 1866-1867

In 1866, twenty-six year-old Zola published a series of Salon reviews in L’Événement which would later be collected and published as Mon Salon, 1866. He opened with a thirteen-page discussion of the exhibition jury:

Imagine that the Salon is an immense artistic ragout which is served to us every year. Each painter, each sculptor, sends his morsel [morceau]. Now, as we have delicate stomachs, it was thought prudent to name a group of cooks to accommodate the food to our varied tastes. One fears indigestion, and said to these guardians of public health: ‘Here are the elements of an excellent meal: hold the pepper, because the pepper gets us overheated; put water in the wine, because France is a grand nation who cannot lose her head’… The Salon is not the entire and complete expression of French art in the year 1866, but is an attempt at a sort of ragout prepared and fricasséed by twenty-eight cooks deliberately named for this delicate task… The old Academy, that founding cook, had her recipes from which she never strayed; she always managed, whatever might be the temperaments or the age, to serve the same dish to the public.78

While the articles of Mon Salon, 1866 are well-known to Manet scholars, these pages comparing the Salon jury to the gastronomic committees made famous at the start of the century by prolific author-gourmand Alexandre Grimod de La Reynière are rarely considered.79 This is surprising because Zola’s support for Manet and scorn of painting taught and appreciated by members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts continued to be framed in culinary terms, and Zola was not the first to rely on such a conceit. Twenty years prior Baudelaire had compared good-quality painting to “a refreshing and warming drink

78 Zola, “Le Jury”, L’Événement (27 April 1866). Reprinted in Zola 1893, pp. 264-265: “Imaginez que le Salon est un immense ragoût artistique, qui nous est servi tous les ans. Chaque peintre, chaque sculpteur envoie son morceau. Or, comme nous avons l’estomac délicat, on a cru prudent de nommer toute une troupe de cuisiniers pour accommoder ces victuailles de goûts et d’aspects si divers. On a craint les indigestions, et on a dit aux gardiens de la santé publique: ‘Voici les éléments d’un mets excellent; ménagez le poivre, car le poivre échauffe; mettez de l’eau dans le vin, car la France est une grande nation qui ne peut perdre la tête.’ Il est donc bien entendu que le Salon n’est pas l’expression entière et complète de l’art français en l’an de grâce 1866, mais qu’il est à coup sûr une sorte de ragoût préparé et fricassé par vingt-huit cuisiniers nommés tout exprès pour cette besogne délicate...La vieille Académie, cuisinière de fondation, avait ses recettes à elle, dont elle ne s’écartait jamais; elle s’arrangeait de façon, quels que fussent les tempéraments et les époques, à servir le même plat au public.”

79 Alexandre Grimod de La Reynière (1758-1837) was a food critic of unprecedented fame who assembled a jury to evaluate dishes from the capital’s top restaurants. His Almanach des gourmands, a restaurant guide, was printed from 1803 to 1812.
that restores the stomach and the mind” in the introduction to his *Salon de 1846*.\textsuperscript{80} Zola took the metaphor further. He mocked the self-perceived importance of the jury, which included members of the Academy, an institution composed of a fixed number of life members who also set the curriculum and contests at the École des Beaux-Arts, and thereby contributed to the maintenance of specific artistic practices and ideals.\textsuperscript{81} In making their selection of works for the Salon, Zola wrote, the jury believed itself to be presenting a gourmet, or at least salubrious, meal to the public. On the contrary, Zola argued that the combination of *morceaux*, those individual paintings served/exhibited, was merely pre-digested, bland, and sobering. A common argument about a painting’s merits turned on the distinction between the *tableau*, a work that attained formal unity, expressive closure, and technical finish, and the *morceau*, a fragmentary painting without compositional coherence or adequate technical development.\textsuperscript{82} Zola’s use of *morceau* suggests in this context the double meaning of the word, most often used in relation to a small piece of food (morsel). Zola then called the exhibition a ragout, a term for a thick stew which like the term *fricassé* that follows, similar in meaning, was a common means of suggesting that a show or its art were muddled because the ingredients were not clearly defined or harmoniously integrated.\textsuperscript{83} For Zola, the 1866 Salon was not an epicurean feast prepared for delicate palates but a sloppy mush destined for public edification that was swallowed with difficulty. Zola intended his comparison of art to food to debase the works of art and their chef-artists. Comparing paintings to foodstuffs turned paintings into just another commodity for sale, drawing attention to the similarity of their increasingly bourgeois markets. Manet would make a germane point when he affixed his signature to a bottle of liqueur in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* in 1882, or sent the art historian and critic Charles Ephrussi the single *Asparagus* (1880) because his friend had overpaid for his *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880). Likening the jury members to aged cooks, Zola suggested that as artists they were no better than the cooks of the Salon buffet, which was another method for

\textsuperscript{80} These and other occasions when Baudelaire compared art to food are discussed in Lewis 2013-2014, pp. 41-47.


\textsuperscript{82} On this distinction see Fried 1996, pp. 267-280.

\textsuperscript{83} On the use of the term ragout within Zola’s criticism, see Becker 2013, pp. 178-179, and outside of it, see Desbuissons 2014, p. 20.
calling the fine artist just another ouvrier, a turn of phrase that Zola applied to a number of Academicians.84

Most broadly it was the “taste” of the Academy that Zola called into question, accusing the institution of designing recipes to keep France healthy and sober in order to sustain a specific version of public good taste and decorum. Goût was a term that straddled the discourses of art and gastronomy. Voltaire described goût in its entry in the Encyclopédie (1751-1772): “this capacity for discriminating between different foods, has given rise, in all known languages, to the metaphorical use of the word ‘taste’ to designate the discernment of beauty and flaws in all the arts.”85 While most eighteenth-century philosophers separated aesthetic taste from appetite, by the nineteenth century this distinction was challenged and defied, from philosopher of taste Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin who posed gustatory discernment as the pinnacle of aesthetic appreciation, to epicurean political theorist François Marie Charles Fourier who imagined a future society guided by the principle of “gastrosophy,” or the social utility of pleasure.86 La table became an ever more important location of distinction, and the proliferation of gastronomic literature testified to the importance placed on comprehending the “code gourmand.”87 The emergence of countless guides to behaving properly at the table, now often located in the public restaurant, were inseparable from the rapidly growing urban populace and the changing cityscape of the Haussmannian era. Debates about what constituted good taste, synonymous with respectability, and who could cultivate it helped the reader/eater to navigate the new city spaces and residents. The dependability of the sense of sight to

accurately assess social class was hotly debated, and the refined use of all the senses was considered important for rendering social hierarchies transparent.88

For Zola, the class system itself could be summarized by the dichotomy detected between “Fats” and “Thins,” a distinction that the author elaborated in Le Ventre de Paris (1873), the third novel in his Rougon-Macquart cycle of twenty books chronicling an extended family during the Second Empire. The narrative of Le Ventre de Paris is set in the newly renovated pavilions of Les Halles, the massive, centralized Parisian marketplace. Florent, the protagonist who returns to Paris after incarceration abroad, feels a stranger in the new quartier that resists his recognition after Haussmannian reorganization. As Florent’s sight fails to orientate him, Zola relies upon the senses of smell and taste to describe the new city, its inhabitants, and its products to his marooned hero. At stake in Zola’s text was his own ability to sort through the sensory experiences of modern Paris, a task that he took seriously in the detailed sketches and notes that survive from his research.89 Le Ventre de Paris sold out its first edition in just one month, and the young author’s success in representing the marketplace is thrown into relief by the struggle of Claude Lantier, his fictional modern artist who fails throughout the novel in his attempts to do just that. Lantier believes that a grand oil painting of Les Halles would serve as the manifesto of self-consciously modern painting. Manet, too, may have believed this, given his 1879 proposal for a mural project for the council chamber of the new Hôtel de Ville comprising “a series of compositions representing, to use an expression that has become consecrated and clearly expresses my thought, Le Ventre de Paris.”90 The language that Zola lent Lantier to articulate this conviction turned on a culinary analogy. In Zola’s later

89 On these research materials see Alexandra Leaf, “Émile Zola’s Portrait of Les Halles”, Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture (1:2, Spring 2001), pp. 72-75.
90 His letter went unanswered, although by 1890 the government had commissioned Léon L’Hermitte to paint a 579 by 366 cm. canvas for the space entitled Les Halles. See the discussion in Iskin 2007, pp. 179-180.
novel *L’Œuvre* (1885), Lantier argues that self-consciously modern art both embodies and represents a humble carrot, in opposition to the École’s confections:

> Is not a bunch of carrots, yes, a bunch of carrots studied directly and painted naively, in the personal manner in which it was seen, worth as much as the timeless confections of the École, that tobacco juice painting shamefully cooked according to recipes? The day is coming when a single original carrot will be pregnant with revolution.91

Tobacco juice was a common analogy for dark underpainting, and was used to mock methods perceived by some as old-fashioned, as in Théodore Duret’s 1878 assertion: “[i]t is to them [Corot, Courbet, and Manet] that we owe light-coloured painting, finally freed… from chocolate, from tobacco juice, from burnt fat and bread crumbs.”92 These substances come with associations all their own, of painting as excessively dark, overworked (overcooked), and outdated (coarse and stale). If in his novels Zola waged the debate between the École and modern painting in the language of the carrot versus the cake, the raw and humble in opposition to the confected, he did the same in the articles of *Mon Salon, 1866*. In a subsequent *L’Événement* piece entitled “M. Manet,” Zola compared the artist trained at the École to a pâtissier or confiseur selling delicious sweets. These were labels for artists including Alexandre Cabanel, Édouard Louis Dubufe, and Jean-Léon Gérôme, whom Zola understood to flatter the vulgarized taste of the bourgeoisie by striving toward a preconceived “beau absolu.”93 In this manner, Zola explained the effects of Manet’s paintings at the 1866 Salon:

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Quite simply they burst open the wall. All around them stretch the sweets of the fashionable artistic confectioners, sugar-candy trees and pastry houses, gingerbread gentlemen and ladies made of vanilla cream. The candy shop becomes pinker and sweeter, and the artist’s living canvases take on a certain bitterness in the midst of this river of milk. Also, one must see the faces made by the grown-up children passing through the gallery. For two cents you will not make them swallow veritable raw meat, but they stuff themselves like famished people with all the sickening sweetness served them.  

This is an abrupt change of metaphor from Zola’s first article on the 1866 jury. He no longer describes a public trudging through the exhibition dutifully digesting the year’s art, but a wild crowd rushing to satisfy obsessive cravings for the likes of Cabanel’s “delicious” young women made of white and pink “pâte d’amande.” Viewing is voracious as the visitors are propelled forward in a corporeal crush much like the crowds on department store sale days in Zola’s later novel *Au Bonheur des dames* (1883). Once again, Zola was not the first to use such a comparison, which was common among critics who shared his sympathies, including Champfleury [Jules François Felix Fleury-Husson] and Jules Castagny, and Baudelaire had already used a similar metaphor in his *Salon de 1846* to describe paintings by Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña, an artist whom Baudelaire

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94 Zola, “M. Manet”, *L’Événement* (7 May 1866). Reprinted in Zola 1893, pp. 295-296: “Tout autour d’elles s’étalent les douceurs des confiseurs artistiques à la mode, les arbres en sucre candi et les maisons en croûte de pâté, les bons hommes en pain d’épices et les bonnes femmes faites de crème à la vanille. La boutique de bonbons devient plus rose et plus douce, et les toiles vivantes de l’artiste semblent prendre une certaine amertume au milieu de ce fleuve de lait. Aussi, faut-il voir les grimaces des grands enfants qui passent dans la salle. Jamais vous ne leur ferez avaler pour deux sous de véritable chair, ayant la réalité de la vie; mais ils se gorgent comme des malheureux de toutes les sucreries écœurantes qu’on leur sert.” It is worth noting the similarity of this language to Maurice Drak’s Salon commentary the previous year. Arguing that Manet’s paintings caused “indigestion,” Duret described Théodore Gudin’s *Arrivée de l’Empereur à Gênes*: “M. Gudin a exposé une mer à la crème, vanille et pistache, avec des figures en sucre, une flotte blindée de confiture de groseille, une tartine d’œufs à la neige avec fleurs d’oranger pour ciel.” See “Promenades d’un Flâneur parisien, Salon de 1865”, *L’Europe-artiste* (18 June and 2 July 1865).

95 Zola, “Nos Peintres” 1867, p. 111. That Cabanel painted with almond oil or paste was a well established trope, as noted by Jules Claretie, “Echoes of Paris”, *Le Figaro* (25 June 1865), p. 6.

96 Champfleury’s reliance on culinary metaphor is discussed in Desbuissons 2012.
found only superficially appealing. Pretending to hold a discussion with an apologist for Diaz de la Peña, Baudelaire wrote:

> Every artist has a role, you [Diaz de la Peña’s defender] say. Great painting is not for everyone. A good dinner contains some pièces de résistance and some appetizers. Would you dare to be ungrateful to Arles sausages, peppers, anchovies, mayonnaise, etc. [common appetizers]? But you call these appetizing hors-d’œuvres [replies Baudelaire]? They are nothing but nauseating candies and sweets. Who would want to fill up on dessert? One barely grazes upon it, when one is content with his dinner.97

For Baudelaire, Diaz de la Peña’s painting was not even fit as a prelude to “La grande peinture.” It did not whet the appetite, but was a superfluous addition to the exhibition, easily overlooked if one had filled up on more substantial painting. The gender implications come across clearly. It was widely believed that women as well as children craved confections with irrepressible appetites. The vogue for afternoon tea in Paris, it was feared, would spoil a woman’s desire for her dinner. Due to such associations, no doubt, dessert was sometimes skipped when men dined amongst themselves. Beyond this, the airiness of cakes and pastries made for easy comparison with perceived female superficiality, and real and painted women were frequently described in terms appropriate to confectionary, as delicious, delectable, sweet, fresh, and so on, as I will explore in Chapter Three. For now it is enough to say that as in Baudelaire’s prose, Zola’s claim for the bitterness of Manet’s painting in the midst of rivers of milk and cream, the “vast candy shop with sweets for all tastes” as he put it the following year in his monographic essay on Manet entitled “Une nouvelle manière en peinture: Édouard Manet,” allowed him to stake out Manet’s masculine virility while feminizing and infantilizing fashionable artists and the

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crowds that devoured their work. Zola took the metaphor of art as food further than Baudelaire had because in his more extensive formulation, pastry and confectionary became a means to address technique, finish, and training. The tools of pastry-making and painting overlap, including with brushes, knives or spatulas, and sponges. The artist in a frock coat makes easy comparison with the pâtissier in an apron, both adding fatty oils to create the desired consistency of materials, and both applying them to a canvas (a non-stick surface upon which a pâtissier would roll out dough). The surface of a painting by Cabanel, Dubufe, or Gérôme, often referred to as the “licked” canvas, shone with glaze and varnish not unlike the surface of a pastry glazed in mixtures of butter, egg, and sugar. Zola and others referred to methods by which “fashionable artistic confectioners” arrived at these effects as recipes, implying that the techniques learned at the École and in the ateliers of Academicians, analogous to the precise measurements required of baking, were based on mere copying that denied individual artistic vision or invention. For Zola deliciousness was an insult, and he explained that the tastier a work the less it contained the personality of its artist, who merely succumbed to the “goût de jour” and appeased audiences with delicious “plats.” Zola’s references to “sugar-candy trees... pastry houses, gingerbread gentlemen and ladies made of vanilla cream” also related to subject matter that he despised, including prettified landscapes and idealized figures, delicate and dainty rather than rooted firmly in purportedly impartial observation of contemporary reality. By contrast, Zola described Manet’s painting as “raw meat [viande crue]” and praised the fleshy materiality of his brushstrokes. The comparison to meat implied painting of substance, for meat had very different associations than confectionary. As will be explored in the next chapter, it

99 It was actually common practice in the early nineteenth century to cover a newly finished painting with egg white, which could be removed later when the painting was varnished. See Callen 2000, pp. 209-210.
was aligned with animal strength, and treatises on santé as well as gastronomy identified it as particularly healthy for the active male. That Zola described Manet’s painting as raw, still holding the “reality of life,” rendered it untouched by culinary practice that had been proven dubious through its association with painters that Zola ridiculed. Unlike the well-cooked and easily digestible submissions, Zola claimed a “bitter and strong savour” for Manet’s works in 1867.103 Such formulations corresponded to the author’s desire for “raw” sensual immediacy in painting and for an artist who served up the experience of nature as directly as possible, without “seasoning” or “sweetening” it to disguise bad quality.104

These references to flavour point to a more subtle use of the language of taste, for Zola repeatedly referred to a “new savour” or “particular savour” of Manet’s paintings and asserted that “one tastes real charm” in contemplating them.105 Despite Zola’s apparent disdain for the culinary insofar as it entered painting, the author returned time and again to the language of alimentary consumption when describing Manet’s work, even before a metaphor was self-consciously applied. He was not alone. George Heard Hamilton, whose Manet and his Critics (1954) presents a sizeable portion of the criticism generated by the artist’s accepted Salon submissions, notes that many of Manet’s critics used language that did not belong to the typical vocabulary of pictorial criticism, such as “acrid,” “savour,” and “pungency.”106 The implications of these words remain largely unexplored. They suggest that viewing painting did not unfold as a form of detached witness or commanding oversight, but as consumption of images by an embodied viewer whose vision was configured in visceral terms. Certainly, at times, the strategic mobilization of culinary metaphors was just another rhetorical device that did not push the boundaries of visual experience and description, and remained closely tied to dichotomies around which critical logic was commonly structured, including whether the painting in question was of high or low quality, beautiful or ugly, finished or unfinished. But on other occasions, culinary vocabulary manifested a struggle to come to terms with contested practice and exceeded such conventional categories.

103 Zola “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 329.
Zola’s descriptions of Manet’s paintings that unfolded as though he were tasting their savour or flavour went beyond the author’s bravado metaphorical opposition of cake versus meat, and ran counter to his goal of aligning Manet with positivist progress. Positivism, as first elaborated by Auguste Comte in his *Cours de philosophie positive* (1835), called for empirical observation of material reality as the basis of all knowledge. Comte privileged science over metaphysics or religion, and argued that a scientific method of careful analysis of perceived data was the answer not only to comprehending the laws of the universe, but also of human nature. His work met with widespread approval and was incorporated into art theory, most notably by critic and historian Hippolyte Taine, a mentor for Zola. Taine described art as the product of “race, milieu, and historical moment,” and Zola set out to explore the outcomes of such factors upon fictional individuals in his Rougon-Macquart series, and upon artists in his art criticism. In a Comtian mode, Zola conceived of his criticism as a form of analytic questioning of visual evidence and argued that art as well as his criticism of it was approaching science. He emphasized the physiology of Manet’s eye (“The whole personality of the artist consists in the manner in which his eye is organized”) and directness of the artist’s vision (“the painter has proceeded as nature herself proceeds, in clear masses and large splotches of light”), even calling Manet a “peintre analyste.” As early as 1864 Zola compared the modern artist to an optical device, the prism, more than a decade before this would become an established reference in Impressionist criticism. He wrote to his friend, the artist Antonin Valabrégue: “The artist places himself in direct contact with nature, views it in his manner, is penetrated by it, and then sends back its light rays after refracting and colouring them, like a prism, according to his nature.” Zola’s rhetoric again approaches Baudelaire, who the previous year had famously imagined “Le peintre de la vie moderne” as a “mirror as vast as the crowd itself” or a “kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its

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107 For more on positivism as well as its social and political implications see James Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet & Proudhon* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 75-78; and Schiff 1986, pp. 72-73.
108 Carol Armstrong cites and discusses the two previous quotations from “Une nouvelle manière” in her discussion of Zola’s positivism and the similarities between Taine’s and Zola’s art criticism (2002, pp. 38-44). See also Rubin 1994, pp. 109-122.
movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life.”

Both Baudelaire’s and Zola’s descriptions privileged the hyper-sensitive vision of the self-consciously modern painter who becomes a conduit for light rays. This was consistent with Zola’s claims for his own scientific method and that of Manet, for the emerging ideal of scientific objectivity was enshrined in vision above any of the other sensory modes. While Jonathan Crary and Michael Baxandall have shown that even in the eighteenth century such constructions of vision as detached and neutral were tenuous, certainly nobody would have argued that the sense of taste could approach these concepts. Aphorisms derived from *de gustibus non est disputandum* were repeated in the major dictionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under *goût*, and treatises on physiology emphasized that the same flavours could produce different sensations in diverse individuals.

Passages in Zola’s 1860s art criticism that describe the importance of Manet’s eye and directness of his vision—the artist must “see through his own eyes,” “be guided by his eyes,” and other similar formulations—are most frequently the subject of art historical debate, rather than the pervasive characterization of looking as tasting or the artist as a cook. To be sure, this period generated art that was especially concerned with the

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111 Baudelaire 1964 [1863], p. 9. Despite certain correlations between the critical positions and strategies of Zola and Baudelaire, Zola actually “positioned himself as Baudelaire’s opposite,” as Carol Armstrong puts it in her discussion of “Une nouvelle manière” (2002, p. 46).

112 Crary explains that theories of vision shifted away from the incorporeal relations of the camera obscura, where the eye was imagined to reflect the exterior, to emphasize how each person saw according to his or her anatomy (1990, pp. 1-67). Michael Baxandall shows that even in the eighteenth century, with the spreading writings of John Locke and Isaac Newton, vision was increasingly understood to be inseparable from other sensory modes and dependant upon how the specific viewer’s eye perceived light rays. See *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 76-100.

Richard Schiff also explains that nineteenth-century theorists of sensation were establishing the essential subjectivity of knowledge based upon sensory experience (1986, p. 70).


experience of vision, given such factors as the realist and naturalist commitment to close observation of contemporary reality as well as the rapidly expanding possibilities of sight with new technologies for lenses, illumination, image proliferation, and the construction of Haussmann’s scenic boulevards and parks. However, if frameworks of visuality—those efforts to determine how sight was conceptualized and experienced in specific cultural and historical contexts—are over-privileged, occasions when Zola (or Baudelaire, who bemoaned art that showed an excessively blunt emphasis on material reality) described vision as deeply subjective and embodied are passed over. When he linked the artist to an optical device in his letter to Valabrégue, Zola also wrote that the artist was “penetrated” by nature and transferred it to canvas through the medium of his own body, his own “nature.” The boundaries between external nature and the painter’s body with its nature or temperament dissolve. In this formulation, scientific objectivity is not found in the reproduction or reflection of an external scene as by a mirror, but in “nature as seen through a temperament,” as Zola famously put it, the faithful transcription of the artist’s

42-44. Armstrong does, however, mention Zola’s use of culinary language in a footnote for Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas (Chicago, 1991), p. 281. Historically this emphasis on Zola’s assumed ocularcentrism has also been true of scholarship on Zola’s novels. A good example is Philip Walker’s argument that Zola’s privileges the eye above all other senses in his fiction in “The Mirror, the Window, and the Eye in Zola’s Fiction”, Yale French Studies (42, 1969), pp. 52-67. For a more recent and comprehensive study, see William J. Berg, The Visual Novel: Émile Zola and the Art of His Times (University Park, 1992).

Jay 1993, pp. 114-147.

For a nuanced formulation of “visuality,” see Hal Foster’s Introduction to his edited Vision and Visuality (Seattle, 1988). For a discussion of the art historical tendency to equate Manet and the Impressionists with painting that privileges optical experience, see Fried 1996, pp. 18-19.

Temperament signified more than personality, and derived from the concept of the humours. Zola believed that psychology was linked to physiology, and described his understanding of temperament in his 1868 defense of his novel Thérèse Raquin in the preface to its second edition: “I set out to study temperament, not character... I chose protagonists who were supremely dominated by their nerves and their blood, deprived of free will and drawn into every action of their lives by the predetermined lot of their flesh... I tried to explain the strange union that can take place between two different temperaments, showing the profound disturbance of a sanguine nature when it comes into contact with a nervous one.” Thérèse Raquin (trans. Robin Buss, London; New York, 2004), p. 4. Richard Schiff explains how self-consciously modern painting could be seen to be “both objective
personal perspective as embedded in his physiology (Zola assumes a male artist, although as I will show in the next two chapters, his description of that artist and “his” process leans upon qualities associated with femininity). Zola linked the competing concepts of the artist as detached scientific witness and specific temperament rooted in the world through the material of the artist’s body, which in the case of the “sincere” artist, Zola’s favourite description of artists and works that he admired, would be directly correlated to a personal “body” of work. To this end, Carol Armstrong has shown that Zola characterized Manet the person in the same way as his paintings, as blond and elegant, as well as paradoxically both doux and âpre.118

Given that Zola tied Manet’s temperament and his painting to the material of his body, it was in analysing that body—both of artist and of work, which could be conceived as contiguous—through the model of anatomical dissection that the critic hoped would serve to locate the secrets of Manet’s subjectivity. “There is, for the critic, a penetrating joy in saying that he can dissect a being,” Zola wrote in “Une nouvelle manière.” With the information that such a dissection would provide, the knowing critic could then “rebuild, in all his living reality, a man with all his limbs, all his nerves and all his heart, all his dreams and all his flesh.”119 This model for painterly/scientific analysis was built upon bodily investment and corporeal particularity, and required that the bodies of artist and critic temporarily merge, Zola’s hands probing Manet’s interior. In this context Zola’s language of tasting the flavours of Manet’s art, and of an artist who himself “tastes the pleasures” of reality,120 resembles the anatomical analogy which also depends upon the dissolution of boundaries between critic, painter, and nature, and thus calls into question the very possibility of distance or detachment on the part of critic toward artist or artist toward nature. The critic penetrates the painter in the same way that the world penetrates the painter. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, this focus on the artist’s body, with

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119 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 327-328: “Et il y a, pour le critique, une joie pénétrante à se dire qu’il peut disséquer un être, qu’il a à faire l’anatomie d’un organisme, et qu’il reconstruira ensuite, dans sa réalité vivante, un homme avec tous ses membres, tous ses nerfs et tout son cœur, toutes ses rêveries et toute sa chair.”
120 Ibid., p. 334.
its vulnerability and permeability, introduces gender ambiguity that threatens Zola’s simultaneous characterization of Manet’s virile, self-contained masculinity.

The metaphorical languages of eating and drinking, therefore, emerged in Zola’s criticism not just in his comparison of viewing to tasting, reception to edibility, and paint material to food, but also in his description of the painter’s process as one of consumption of experiences, where the artist was closer to digesting nature than simply reflecting it, given that the artist was understood to transform nature into another material, oil paint. That material, Zola could then insist, would be inhabited by the artist, supported by Manet’s technique that drew attention to that paint in its broad handling and impastoed effects. Zola proclaimed that “[w]hat I look for before all else in a painting is a man, and not a painting.” For him, art should not be “confected,” but instead “sweated out” by the artist.\footnote{Zola, “Le Moment artistique”, \textit{L’Événement} (4 May 1866). Reprinted in Zola 1893, p. 281: “Ce que je cherche avant tout dans un tableau, c’est un homme et non pas un tableau... l’art est un produit humain, une sécrétion humaine; c’est notre corps qui sue la beauté de nos œuvres.”} In this vein, and as will be the subject of the next chapter, Zola wrote that a work like \textit{Olympia} was “truly the painter’s flesh and blood,” thereby linking the concepts of painting as consumable raw meat and as an artist’s human flesh.\footnote{Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 357. The slippage between \textit{viande} and \textit{chair} in Zola’s criticism was literal. Zola referred to Manet’s painting as “véritable viande crue” in \textit{Mon Salon}, 1866, p. 47, but the same passage was reprinted as “véritable chair” in \textit{Mes Haines} in 1893, p. 296.} Such critical manoeuvring between man and painting was connected to the problem commonly experienced of putting words to Manet’s works, which led in many cases to the appropriation of culinary vocabulary.\footnote{Gastronomic critique grapples with putting words to flavours, which makes it an apposite model for criticism of works not easily describable. On the challenges of describing flavour see Gordon M. Shepherd, \textit{Neurogastronomy: How The Brain Creates Flavor And Why It Matters} (New York, 2012), pp. 82-83, 211-215. Rubin argues that the critical search for new vocabulary to describe Manet’s painting led commentators to focus on his biography and biology (1994, pp. 93, 108-109).} In the absence of Zola’s willingness or capability to engage with the subject matter of \textit{Olympia}, for example, he described the man instead, and his dizzying jumps between artist and painting operated as a defence. In proclaiming that in front of a Manet painting the viewer was not looking at any particular object depicted, but at an artistic subject, Zola promoted paintings that were consistently devalued
by a comparison between any of the artist’s paintings and a still life composition. “His painting is no more interesting than a still life,” declared Paul Mantz characteristically in his “Salon de 1869” for the Gazette des beaux-arts.124 It will therefore be through still life—crucial to Manet’s oeuvre and to how critics described it, but less often the subject of art historical analysis than his figure paintings—that I will continue to call into question the frameworks of detachment and distance that have frequently been invoked by art historians since Zola to describe Manet’s relationship to his subject matter as well as Zola’s and the viewer’s relationship to Manet’s art.125

125 The most sustained engagement with Manet’s still life is the exhibition catalogue by George Mauner and Henri Loyrette, Manet: The Still-Life Paintings (New York, 2000).
THE CULINARY MODEL AND STILL LIFE PAINTING

We must, I cannot repeat enough, forget a thousand things to understand and taste this talent... what is called composition does not exist for him, and the tache that he uses is not to represent some thought or historical act... He treats his figure paintings in the same way that it is permitted, in the schools, to treat still life; I mean that he groups the figures in front of him, a bit randomly, and then has no other concern than to fix them on the canvas just as he sees them, with the lively oppositions that they make against one another.\textsuperscript{126}

In his defence of Manet in “Une nouvelle manière,” Zola wrote that he approached all subjects in the way that had historically been associated with still life production. The comment assumed a great deal about still life, at least as Zola saw it conceptualized by the École: namely that composition was less important to the genre and that narrative reading was inappropriate in relation to it. This particular understanding of still life implied that the objects chosen were of little importance, and that the main purpose of the genre was painterly, so as to be an arena in which the artist had free reign to explore the juxtapositions of coloured \textit{taches}, or distinctive painterly marks. In approaching all of Manet’s production through this still life lens, Zola inferred that any of Manet’s paintings was no more than a configuration of \textit{taches}, the subject merely “a pretext for painting.”\textsuperscript{127} This allowed the critic to avoid the question of subject matter entirely, and to describe any work in the following terms:

Then I am impressed by the inevitable consequence of this exact observation of the law of values. The artist, in front of any subject at all, lets himself by guided by his eyes which perceive the subject in broad areas of related tones. A head placed against a wall is nothing more than a whiteish spot against a greyish background, and the clothing next to the face becomes, for example, a bluish spot beside a whiteish spot.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{126} Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 346: “Il nous faut, je ne saurais trop le répéter, oublier mille choses pour comprendre et goûter ce talent... ce qu’on appelle composition n’existe pas pour lui, et la tâche qu’il s’impose n’est point de représenter telle pensée ou tel acte historique... Il traite les tableaux de figures comme il est permis, dans les écoles, de traiter les tableaux de nature morte; je veux dire qu’il groupe les figures devant lui, un peu au hasard, et qu’il n’a ensuite souci que de les fixer sur la toile telles qu’il les voit, avec les vives oppositions qu’elles font en se détachant les unes sur les autres.”

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p. 356.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 343: “Ce qui me frappe ensuite, c’est une conséquence nécessaire de l’observation exacte de la loi des valeurs. L’artiste, placé en face d’un sujet quelconque, se
This passage defines the artist as a dispassionate pair of eyes, and exists in surprising relation to Zola’s hyper-corporealized language of taste, savour, and inter-bodily penetration. It is doubly strange that Zola made such an argument by placing all of Manet’s production under the sign of still life, the genre in which objects of alimentary consumption with all their visceral associations are most likely to be found. In one fell swoop Zola would level the academic hierarchy of genres, in which still life remained decidedly at the bottom. Still life had been, and continued to be, marginalized in aesthetic discourses because of a suspicion that it was less challenging to paint and compose than the full-scale human figure, and less stimulating to the mind than narratives of history, allegory, religion, or myth.129 Usually smaller in scale and perceived to be less ambitious, the genre was considered appropriate for the amateur painter or the woman artist. It was also linked more explicitly than other genres to the marketplace, for its purpose was more easily understood as mere decoration of bourgeois interiors. Indeed, still life paintings were frequently the “bread and butter” of the painter, a source of steady income. This was especially true for artists who struggled to gain acceptance to the Salon or sell their work. Smaller scale still lifes ran less risk of scandalizing the jury or the public. Despite nineteenth-century challenges to this denigration, in the form of a revival of seventeenth-century Dutch and eighteenth-century French still life painting, the hierarchy had not been abolished. In 1864 Léon Lagrange chastized those who, like Zola, would attempt to dispense with categories of genre, in terms that are surprisingly similar to Zola’s own focus upon the tache and use of disparaging comparisons to cuisine:

M. Ribot makes blacks, as M. Viry makes a white, as M. Manet makes a yellow or a pink. The watchword is given, and a small school, believing that it has found the philosopher’s stone of art, in its hatred of the subject, abolishes with the same blow thought, feeling, composition, line, drawing, colour, charm, and above all beauty. Make a black, make a white, that is all there is to the secret of the masters.— “Make

laisse guider par ses yeux qui aperçoivent ce sujet en larges teintes se commandant les unes les autres. Une tête posée contre un mur n’est plus qu’une tache plus ou moins blanche sur un fond plus ou moins gris; et le vêtement juxtaposé à la figure devient par exemple une tache plus ou moins bleue mise à côté de la tache plus ou moins blanche.”

a roux,” says the Cuisiniere bourgeoise [a popular cookbook aimed at middle-class women].—But a Vatel [a famous seventeenth-century chef], who commands respect, disdains these vulgar recipes and only serves at tables those dishes knowingly prepared. An artist worthy of his name does his cooking at home, keeps his sketches in the studio, and only submits serious paintings to public view.\(^\text{130}\)

Lagrange turned the tables on Zola’s method, arguing that like-minded critics did not liberate artistic subjectivity but merely created a new recipe-book to produce self-consciously modern artists. This is especially ironic given that Zola himself mocked formulaic novelists as following recipes like a housewife with her Cuisinière bourgeoise cookbook, a dismissal doubly damaging because it aligned male artists with a quality perceived as feminine, the innate capacity for imitation rather than invention.\(^\text{131}\) Such recipes, Lagrange wrote, reduced painting to another type of formula whereby colour oppositions were valued above all and unfinished paintings too marked by the studio process of the artist were nonetheless exhibited, on the grounds that they exposed the hand of the artist and thereby communicated unique artistic temperament. But artistic identity was just what Lagrange deflated in this comparison, equating a signature “Manet” to any old roux. A roux is the base of a sauce that requires the addition of other ingredients, and remains a generic and ubiquitous preparation in French cooking.

This language of taste, used by critics for differing purposes as with Lagrange and Zola, contributes to interpretations of Manet’s work that foreground the sensual complexity of corporeal encounters with motifs and their painted representations. Used consciously or

\(^{130}\) Léon Lagrange, “Salon de 1864”, Gazette des beaux-arts (1 June 1864), p. 528: “M. Ribot fait des noirs, comme M. Viry fait un blanc, comme M. Manet fait un jaune ou un rose. Le mot d’ordre est donné, et une petite école, croyant avoir trouvé la pierre philosophale de l’art, supprime du même coup, en haine du sujet, la pensée, le sentiment; la composition, la ligne, le dessin, la couleur, le charme et la beauté surtout. Faire un noir, faire un blanc; c’est tout le secret des maîtres.—‘Faites un roux,’ dit la Cuisinière bourgeoise.—Mais un Vatel qui se respecte méprise ces recettes vulgaires et ne sert sur table que des mets savamment préparés. Un artiste digne de ce nom fait sa cuisine chez lui, garde les études pour l’atelier, et n’apporte au public que des tableau sérieux.” See the discussion in Przybyski 1995, pp. 156-157. She references but does not develop the fear of “culinary” painting, pp. 145-146, 157.

\(^{131}\) Zola, “Correspondance littéraire”, Le Salut public de Lyon (19 April 1866): “MM. Adrien Robert et Jules Cauvain ont suivi exactement la recette, comme les dames qui jouent en grand à la dinette et qui tiennent la cuillère à ragoût d’une main, La Cuisinière bourgeoise de l’autre.”
unconsciously, operating to a variety of ends, slippages between the culinary and painterly set up and call for a more embodied model of spectatorship than is usually granted to artists and audiences in this period. Exploring consumption as a model for viewing painting is most appropriate to Manet’s still life production, both because this is the genre in which food and drink stand out most, but also because Zola was not the only commentator to place all of Manet’s production under this umbrella. For the painter’s disgruntled critics, the comparison of figure painting to still life served as a common means of condemning figures perceived as inanimate—wooden, plaster, or doll-like, to name just a few epithets. However, when it came to his actual still life production, critics were often begrudgingly respectful, causing Zola to comment that “it is generally agreed that he paints inanimate objects well.”

Following these critical trends, Manet’s still life can even be positioned as representative of his production more generally. He painted still life throughout his career, but especially in the 1860s and in declining health in the early 1880s. In the 1860s, while also undertaking large-scale figural compositions, he made a series of seafood paintings that include three depictions of whole raw seafood: *Fish (Still Life)*, *Still Life with Fish and Shrimp, Eel and Mullet* (figures 10-12, all 1864), and one finished dish ready for consumption, *The Salmon* (figure 13, 1869). The fishy materiality of these paintings, especially of *Fish (Still Life)*, hereinafter referred to as *Fish*, makes them fitting case studies for questions of embodiment, both as to how Zola animated Manet’s paintings by arguing that the artist was present in the paint material, and how the paintings themselves address the viewer’s entire body through the visual.

At 73.4 by 92.1 centimetres, *Fish* is a larger than life depiction of carp, red gurnard, eel, and oysters, accompanied by a copper pot, lemon, and knife. The seafood could have been obtained fresh at the market in Boulogne-sur-Mer, which remains France’s largest fishing port, where Manet painted this scene in his summer studio. The ingredients evoke a fish stew in a bourgeois home, and the artist seems to take the perspective of a cook who chooses and arranges ingredients as the painter does motifs. Whether critics used cookery puns in their analyses of *Fish* is an open question; no known contemporary

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133 *A bouillabaisse* made in the north of France may include these ingredients. See Urbain Dubois, *Nouvelle cuisine bourgeoise* (Paris, 1888), p. 46.
criticism is recorded. Manet’s 1860s still lifes were not intended for the Salon, the exhibition that generated the most reviews. Instead, several were exhibited at the galleries of dealers Louis Martinet and Alfred Cadart in 1865.\textsuperscript{134} The artist included Fish in his 1867 retrospective, indicating that he considered it important, or at least saleable (it did not in fact sell in his lifetime). Certainly, however, viewers would have associated Fish with the legacy of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), who had elevated the status of still life and genre painting in the preceding century. In the 1850s and 1860s Chardin’s work entered the Louvre and became newly popular and valued as a part of French artistic heritage. This contributed to a revival of interest in Chardin’s typical subject matter, domestic still lifes and genre scenes, by such painters as Henri Fantin-Latour, François Bonvin, Théodule Ribot, and Antoine Vollon. It also received new critical attention, as evidenced by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt’s 1863 essay “Chardin” in the Gazette des beaux-arts, which would be included in their book L’Art du XVIIIe siècle (1873-1874). For his part, Manet probably saw some forty works by Chardin in the show organized by critic Philippe Burty at Martinet’s gallery in 1860. One of the paintings exhibited, The Silver Tureen (figure 14, c. 1728), is generally cited as the compositional model for Fish, although in terms of subject matter it has more in common with The Skate (1725-1726), then in the Louvre.

Chardin was not trained academically and was known to have had a long and arduous painting process. He mixed his own colour “recipes,” as contemporaries called them, which he secretly guarded.\textsuperscript{135} Art historians and critics from the eighteenth century through to today have noticed that his unusual technique produced canvases that seemed particularly tactile. One such influential voice belonged to Denis Diderot, a prolific writer on Chardin whose reaction to his work at the 1767 Salon follows:

\begin{quote}
One says about him, that he has a technique all his own, and that he uses his thumb as much as his brush. I do not know if this is true. What is sure is that I have never met anyone who has seen him work; however that may be, his compositions call out to amateurs and connoisseurs. It’s an incredible vigour of colour, a general
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{135} On Chardin’s technique, see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, \textit{Chardin Material} (Berlin, 2011).
harmony, a piquant and true effect, beautiful masses, a magic that brings one to despair, a ragout in selection and organization.  

Two aspects merit attention here: the importance of touch and the language of taste. Those two senses were sometimes allied in eighteenth and nineteenth-century physiological writing because of the tongue’s ability to both touch and taste. Diderot accorded touch a philosophical importance that he claimed even surpassed that of sight, but his reference to a spicy quality, and comparison of the composition to a ragoût (a complement that by the nineteenth century, as we have seen with Zola, had transformed into an insult) suggests that taste also held metaphorical significance for the author.

The case for the metaphorical importance of taste is made stronger by assessing nineteenth-century reactions to Chardin. The de Goncourts’s admiration for the artist made their chapter dedicated to him in L’Art du XVIIIe siècle particularly rich in description. To narrate Chardin’s materiality in the 1860s they turned to the model of gastronomic critique, in the context of the contemporaneous explosion of gastronomic literature that was often written by the journalistic elite and established art critics. Culinary journals such as La Salle à manger, published in the 1860s, included contributions by Charles Blanc, Arsène Houssaye, Théophile Gautier, and Jules Claretie, all of whom are better known to art historians for their reviews of painting in journals including the Gazette des beaux-arts, L'Artiste, Le Figaro, and Le Temps. The de Goncourts’s description of Chardin’s The Provider (1739) demonstrates how these shared languages might operate:

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137 Charles Bonnet, Essai de psychologie (London, 1755), p. 58. Hippolyte Taine is particularly sensitive to how taste interacts with smell and touch in his analysis of the senses in De l’Intelligence (Paris, 1870), pp. 240-242.


139 This is noted but not developed in Jean Louis Schefer, Chardin (Paris, 2002), pp. 41-44, 50-52.
... this radiant woman, from shoes to bonnet in a clear whiteness, *creamy*, in a manner of speaking... the contour *fatty* in its outlines, the scratched scrapes of the brush, the *cloths* of colour, in a sort of crystallization of the paint [*pâte*, which also translates as dough or batter]. The lightweight tones... *rise*, like... a dust of *heat*, a *floating vapour* that envelops the woman.\textsuperscript{140} [emphasis added]

In this prose the painting, like the female figure within it, becomes semantically edible with its creamy, clotted colours rising like dough, giving off heat and steam as though freshly baked. Such passages portray Chardin as though making bread, his “grainy,” “buttery,” and “raw” pigments fusing to make a “shining,” “porous” product. His “feast for the eye” is characterized by the “freshness” and “richness” of “burnt” colours. Jealous artists endeavored to acquire knowledge of “sa cuisine de peinture,” his “colour recipes” and the “flavour” of his touch. The viewer “penetrates” the painting as though viewer and painting merge in a metaphor of incorporation modelled off of ingestion.\textsuperscript{141} The de Goncourt’s mode of viewing—what Jacques Rancière has called a “de-figuration” that transforms figurative details into “events of pictorial matter,” granting new autonomy to the materials of paint and the artist’s gestures—would, as Rancière has argued, help to construct a “gaze” for painting of the 1860s and 1870s even though the de Goncourts did not engage that contemporary painting directly.\textsuperscript{142} The de Goncourt’s prose not only reconfigured the visual in terms of the tactile, but also in terms of the gustatory and olfactory; for example, they wrote that Chardin’s “materials give out an amber odour.”\textsuperscript{143}

Instead of imagining the process of viewing painting as occurring between a self-contained

\textsuperscript{140} Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1873-1874), pp. 130-131: “cette femme rayonnante, des souliers au bonnet, dans une clarté blanche, et pour ainsi dire crémeuse... du contour à la fois gras et cerné, des égrenures raboteuses du pinceau, des grumelots de la couleur, d’une sorte de cristallisation de la pâte. Des tons légers, tendres et rians, jetés partout et revenant sans cesse, jusque dans le blanc du casaquin, se levait, comme une trame de jour, une brume gorge de pigeon, une poussière de chaleur, une vapeur flottante enveloppant cette femme...”

\textsuperscript{141} For the quotations above see Ibid., pp. 117, 129, 130, 139, 168-169. This language runs through to Norman Bryson’s account of Chardin’s paint that “is applied like cream-cheese, is buttery, is an almost comestible substance which announces unequivocally that it has been worked...”, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 118.


\textsuperscript{143} de Goncourts 1873-1874, pp. 98, 124.
subject at a proper distance from the object of reflection, the viewer is here positioned as proximate to, even contiguous with, the painting which is smelled or tasted.

The de Goncourts’s model of vision as informed by multi-sensory engagement with art was indeed widely shared with contemporary critics and artists in the popular press as well as authors of literature and poetry. In Zola’s Le Ventre de Paris, sensory experiences mingle and the tools of art criticism are applied to gastronomic description and vice versa. Sometimes the food and its vendors are compared directly to the beaux-arts: the fishmonger is like “a virgin in a Murillo painting,” a poultry vendor holds her swan “in the classical pose of Leda,” and mounds of butter “looked like models of stomachs onto which some sculptor had thrown wet cloths to keep them from drying out.” Arrangements of culinary goods are described as works of art for all the senses. The flânerie of Lantier and his friends is directed by scent: they “inhaled the odours of Paris, their noses in the air. They could have recognized every corner with their eyes shut, just by the scent of alcohol of the wine merchants, the warm breath of bakeries and pastry makers, or the vague impression of fruit.” If smell functions as sight, it also operates as sound. The smell of each cheese in a dairy stall plays “its own shrill note in a composition… the Parmesan still periodically added a thin high note as from a panpipe while the Bries kept thundering like damp tambourines.”

Such literary evocations of the sensory adventures presented by modern Paris drew upon precedents including Baudelaire, whose notion of “correspondences” held that stimuli from different senses could provoke the same responses and emotions in the subject, and ran through to the end of the century in the synesthetic experiences of Des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysmans’s À Rebours (1884), a fictional aesthete who claims to create poetry, visions, and symphonies from mixtures of scents and tastes. Part of the

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144 Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 21, 202, 237.
146 Ibid., pp. 238-241. Orig: “les camembert, d’un fumet de gibier trop faisandé; les neufchâtel, les limbourg, les marolles, les pont-l’évêque, carrés, mettant chacun leur note aiguë et particulière dans cette phrase rude jusqu’à la nausée… Cependant, au milieu de cette phrase vigoureuse, le parmesan jetait par moments un filet mince de flûte champêtre; tandis que les brie y mettaient des douceurs fades de tambourins humides.”
ambition of my dissertation is to show how Huysmans’s synaesthetic fantasies did not emerge unprecedented, but out of some fifty years of interest in the multi-sensorial in artistic discourses.

Given the value that many of Manet’s contemporaries and compatriots placed on the multiple sensory registers through which a work of art was experienced, we should consider how a painting like *Fish* can be enriched by this opening up of the metaphorics of appreciation or antipathy. In the painting, Manet depicted the seafood larger than life and out of proportion, the gurnard too small next to the oysters, the carp too large in front of the copper pot.\(^{148}\) The play between life and death reverberates in the opened and closed oysters, the tails of the fish that suggest rigor mortis as well as upward flapping movement, and particularly the eel slithering along the tablecloth as through an ocean of undulating strokes, painted in colour variations of white, grey, brown, and blue that make it look more like a sea than pressed white linen. At the bottom right its corner flows up to meet the knife, only to fuse again with the surface as the eye moves to the left, like a breaking wave or like the process of painting, with each new stroke folding into the surface, seeping into the paint and canvas like the saltwater from the oysters leaking into the tablecloth. The table rises too high at the back as if tilted up to suggest overlap between the tablecloth and the canvas, both of which support the still life objects. As Carol Armstrong notes in her discussion of *Fish*, reciprocity is also established between the sticky materiality of paint and of seafood.\(^ {149}\) Broad strokes of impastoed white on the carp’s belly evoke the cool slickness of the animal. The mixing of colours in the tablecloth, especially at the upper left, adds fluidity to forms that is echoed in the curving right edge of the pot. What should be solid flows in an organic rendering that takes its cues from the watery home of the transposed sea creatures and sets the viewer adrift with the eddies and currents of the paint. As if to demonstrate this instability, painted outlines do not adhere to the objects they represent, as evident in the tablecloth on the lower right where the thick black contour line

\(^{148}\) The other seafood paintings have similar disjunctive effects. In *The Salmon*, a porcelain bowl tips forward in an unlikely manner, the salt dish at the left has an oddly amorphous form, the fork and knife seem to float above the composition, the twine around the decanter pokes out surprisingly far over the porcelain bowl, and the line of the tablecloth is at the different height on either side of the decanter. In *Still Life with Fish and Shrimp* a white wrapper suggests a misshapen cutting board and the shrimp are shrunken in scale.

pulls away from the peak of the cloth tip. The loose strokes indicated to contemporary audiences that this was painted rapidly, which raises questions about Manet’s process of painting raw fish during the summer months.\textsuperscript{150} The clotting paint suggests the crusting over time of slimy materials, as does the stiffness of the carp’s elevated tail, intimating the decay of once-fresh food and its effect on the nose and palate.

For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, painting could reveal how vision intertwined with other senses. The phenomenologist resisted the distinctions drawn between the five sensory modes, which he believed was only the result of modern science. Critical of the tradition stemming back to René Descartes through Immanuel Kant, in which the conscious mind was understood as an “impartial spectator” detached from the body, Merleau-Ponty insisted that all knowledge was the result of one’s embodied experience of the world, and that description of that experience, rather than explanation or analysis of it, would provide the greatest insight into human perception. In this way Merleau-Ponty believed himself aligned with French novelists, notably Honoré de Balzac and Marcel Proust, authors that Merleau-Ponty found especially attentive to human immersion in space and time and attuned to the nuances of interaction between people and the object world.\textsuperscript{151} Reading Merleau-Ponty alongside nineteenth-century French authors and critics yields surprising parallels, which will be explored further in the next chapter in relation to Zola. In order to describe “lived perspective,” Merleau-Ponty relied upon tactile metaphors, in explicit reaction to the philosophical privileging of the visual and its isolation from other senses. He argued that the body was caught up in the materiality of the world, in constant contact with a dense envelope experienced globally and synthetically rather than as divided into particular sense perceptions.\textsuperscript{152} He developed the concept of “flesh” to describe the subject’s imbrication in material and social reality, and through this concept argued for the reversibility of perception, the fact that the body is both sensitive and sensing. When one touches one also feels oneself being touched back, and when one sees one is also seen, whether by oneself,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{150} Philippe Burty, “Le Salon”, \textit{Le Rappel} (11 May 1870), p. 3: “Il est surtout un reproche qu’on adresse chaque année à cet artiste très militant et très convaincu: c’est celui de travailler trop vite.”
\item \textsuperscript{151} As outlined in the preface to \textit{Phenomenology of Perception} (trans. Colin Smith, London, 1962 [1945]).
\item \textsuperscript{152} Ibid., pp. 148-150; see also Merleau-Ponty 1945, pp. 64-65; Merleau-Ponty 1960, pp. 123-125, 138.
\end{itemize}
another observer, or even another object.\textsuperscript{153} Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty there could be no distinction between the body and the world (also “flesh”) around it, no limit where one ends and the other begins. Merleau-Ponty particularly admired Paul Cézanne because he understood Cézanne’s project as the rediscovery of the world as apprehended in lived experience, also the goal of the phenomenologist. For Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne’s composite views were closer to the actual experience of the moving eye and body than single-point perspective that imposed distance between the viewer and a painting and thereby separated the eye from the body. Cézanne, he argued, painted objects in such a way as to return to their viscous objecthood, the materiality that appears to the eye before the question of what an object is, or what a painting represents, is addressed.\textsuperscript{154}

Phenomenology provides a framework for thinking through the “imperfections” of perspective and scale in \textit{Fish}, with its approximate brushwork and the flowing outlines that emphasize medium over narrative or presentational clarity. We might imagine Manet as having painted in a manner informed by the textures of the objects and their marine habitat. The viscosity of the open oysters is not evoked through details of their appearance, but by broad, shining strokes that suggest what it would feel like to touch or lick one. The open oysters resemble open mouths, the white edges like teeth surrounding the tan and pink-tinged flesh of a tongue. The actions of licking, slurping, and swallowing are further invoked by the paint, applied to the interiors in short, wide strokes as if with the tongue itself, implying the same motion of that muscle as would be required to lift the flesh out of its shell and into the mouth. The same orality is evident in the virtually licked-on, creamy belly of the carp. In front of this large painting, the viewer is not set at a distance, but is drawn into its airless density and can imagine touching or licking its surface as well as its subject. The materiality of the human body, the animal body, and the paint itself laps and overlaps like Merleau-Ponty’s “intertwining.” While Merleau-Ponty was most concerned to set out the “inscription of the touching in the visible, of the seeing in the tangible,”\textsuperscript{155} his model of a break-down of boundaries between sensory modes and between the subject and

\textsuperscript{153} Merleau-Ponty claimed that painters in particular often feel “looked at” by objects. See \textit{Le Visible et l’invisible} (Claude Lefort, ed., Evanston, 1968) p. 139.


\textsuperscript{155} Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 143.
the world is equally suggestive when the processes and traces of ingestion are evoked, as they are in *Fish*. In this context it is especially noteworthy that despite Merleau-Ponty’s focus on touch and sight, he described the vision directed at a painting as voracious:

>This voracious vision, reaching beyond the “visual givens,” opens upon a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man in his house.\[156\]

This passage forms part of his larger argument that a painting does not evoke texture, but actually gives us texture that is grasped at the same time as it is seen. The tactile sense is embedded within vision, he claimed, but in describing vision as hungry, he also suggested that taste is intertwined with vision as vision is with it. Merleau-Ponty described this phenomenon with reference to Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of “alimentary intuition.” Sartre, similarly, argued that colours are not just experienced visually, but are connected to the other senses. The yellow of a lemon carries its acidity, Sartre wrote, and when eating a lemon we also taste its colour.\[157\] Sartre’s existential philosophy connected eye and body through extended discussion of the visceral responses of the embodied human that precede rationality and reflection. Paradigmatically, Sartre theorized these reactions through the concept of the *visqueux*, the material viscosity of the body and other objects that, he contended, produce nausea in the human subject confronted with a manifestation of it. Sartre articulated the immediacy of the *visqueux* not through the sense of touch, as might be expected, but through the sense of taste, as a “sugary sliminess” and “indelible sweetness.” In his formulation of *le regard*, he turned to the notion of vision as drinking in images that flow toward the viewer and threaten to engulf him or her.\[158\] When Jacques Lacan took up Sartre’s and Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of sight as interacting with other senses, and similarly refused to align vision with a distanciating operation disconnecting the viewer from the object of the gaze, he too compared seeing to ingestion.

\[156\] Merleau-Ponty 1960, p. 127.


Like Merleau-Ponty, Lacan described vision as voracious and most fully theorized viewing as feeding the hungry eye in relation to painting, which he argued “gives something for the eye to feed on” and satisfies the “appetite of the eye on the part of the person looking.” And like Sartre, Lacan described looking as drinking, light as a “milky” substance, and the eye as a liquid-filled bowl.\(^{159}\)

The viscosity and liquidity so central to Sartre’s and Lacan’s accounts are suggestive in relation to *Fish*, in which the tablecloth flows upward like an approaching wave and the side of the cauldron appears to flicker by virtue of a few patches of fiery orange as though seen through water. The oysters resemble open eyes as well as mouths, leaking saltwater tears as they overflow with milky pigment. But like the eyes of the carp and gurnard, they are blind, pools of gooey material that do not suggest the penetrative power of sight but the muscular tissue of the organs themselves. The viewer’s own eye becomes stuck in the viscous passages of oil paint, caught in the surface of a canvas that resists recession with its uptilted table and unelaborated background. The discrepancies in paint, sometimes thinly applied and sometimes curling off of the canvas, represent the objects as unstable surfaces, both dry and wet, solid and yielding, with bleeding boundaries. The effect is of seasickness, or even the nausea that Sartre claimed was the result of confrontation with the *visqueux*, one formulation of what Julia Kristeva would name the abject, or that which disturbs human identity by drawing attention to the permeable boundary between humans and other creatures and objects.\(^{160}\) Behind any of these philosophies, formulated by Lacan, Sartre, or Kristeva, who described abjection as an encounter with the clotted skin on milk, is the experience and metaphoric language of drinking or eating, the sensory experiences in which the boundaries between the body and


other bodies or objects dissolve most decisively. Tasting threatens the autonomy of the subject, on the opposite side of the sensory spectrum from vision as traditionally understood within philosophy, summed up by Luce Irigaray: “the eye objectifies and it masters. It sets at a distance, and maintains a distance.”

In 1864, Courbet was the primary artist in Paris associated with materiality, his paint applied in heavy layers displaying traces of his tools. As Frédérique Desbuissons has shown, hostile critics mocked his paint by comparing it to food, demonstrating once again that paint material was meaningfully associated with the edible. Critics and especially caricaturists extended the metaphor to express disgust at Courbet’s appetite as manifest in his corpulence. While Desbuissons argues that there is no similar discourse on Manet’s body in its specificity, for he did not cultivate a hedonistic persona as did Courbet and his well-to-do Parisian upbringing lent him an air of sophistication and detachment, we have seen that Zola had a remarkably embodied understanding of Manet’s painting, which he aligned with the “flesh and blood” of the artist. By privileging the tache, or the work of one artist’s hand, Zola invested materiality with the only “meaning” of painting as well as the body of the painter. That he accomplished this by reclaiming the domain of still life, arguing that Manet truly did treat his subjects as though they were still life objects, aligned Zola with a trend that extended back to the eighteenth century in Diderot’s writing on Chardin, and was articulated by other critics in the nineteenth century including Théophile Thoré and Jules Claretie. These commentators argued that still life was the genre that allowed the greatest transparency through which to see the artist him or herself. This potential was the upside to the perceived insignificance of still life objects. Because these

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161 Kristeva 1982, pp. 2-3; Sartre 1957, p. 609.
162 This forms part of Irigaray’s argument that “[i]nvestment in the look is not as privileged in women as in men,” and therefore that the ocularcentrism characteristic of Western philosophy has been the result of a male-dominated field. See her interview in Les femmes, la pornographie et l’erotisme (Marie Françoise Hands and Gilles Lapouge, eds. Paris, 1978), p. 50.
were so often assumed to carry little visual interest or significance in themselves, frequently banal objects overlooked in everyday life, they could become vehicles for the painter to demonstrate his or her consummate skill. If Chardin could make a water glass or walnut capture the viewer’s attention in paint, it was because of the “rare and particular faculty of his perception” and his singular technique, leading Thoré to conclude that “[i]t is Chardin that we admire in the glass that he paints...”\textsuperscript{164} The status of still life objects as indexical of their artist was a theme carried into the Chardin revival in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{165} In this way, a genre associated with small scale, decorative painting destined for the walls of a bourgeois household could be rescued from the status of de-personalized commodity for sale at the Salon, essentially interchangeable with any objects depicted within it. The latter suspicion lay behind the common derogatory comparisons of the Salon to \textit{Les Halles}, the work of art to a \textit{ragoût}.\textsuperscript{166}

Read alongside \textit{Fish}, the framework of still life as indexical and Zola’s claim for Manet’s embodiment within his paintings opens the interpretive possibility that in \textit{Fish}, the material of paint moves not just between signifying itself and the viscera of fish, but also between signifying itself and the viscera of its artist. Zola’s emphasis on Manet’s painting as flesh and blood that sweats out subjectivity animates the work itself, apart from any creatures or figures that might be depicted, supported by the insistent painterly marks that attested to the artist’s individual mode of perceiving and process of painting. Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the reversibility of perception, that to sense is also to be aware of being sensed, is useful as a mode of interrogating \textit{Fish}, as the viewer is made conscious of his or her proximity to the “flesh” of animals, of paint, and even of the artist. The language used by critics including Zola of consuming Manet’s painting is appropriate to \textit{Fish}. The

\textsuperscript{165} As for example in Claretie’s claim in \textit{Peintres et sculpteurs contemporains} (Paris, 1874) that Antoine Vollon was embodied in his painted grapes: “Cette grappe de raisin qui pend sur la table, ce n’est plus, dans le cadre, une grappe de raisin: c’est un Vollon.” See citation and discussion in Przyblyski 1995, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{166} For example, Edmond About described “Le Salon de 1868” in the \textit{Revue des deux mondes} (1, June 1868), p. 720: “Aujourd’hui, dans le coin d’une bâtisse à plusieurs fins, qui n’est ni une serre ni une halle, mais qui participe des deux, on improvise une exhibition simultanée des beaux-arts et des beaux légumes, entre un concourse de chevaux carrossiers et une exposition des fromages sans doute.”
work shows the makings of a meal, suggests parallels between the materials of food and of paint, and presents challenges to the eye—distorted perspective, migrating outlines, discrepancies in scale and paint application—that replace visual transparency and ease with the opaque density of a bodily confrontation with paint that is applied as if to suggest the experience of touching or tasting its greasy smears. This encounter is especially powerful when read in the context of Zola’s criticism, which positioned Manet as embodied in that paint and figured immersion in painting as a dissolution of boundaries between viewer and painter/painting that was based upon ingestion or even penetration. For it was also the case that taste was aligned with sex, as both ingestion and sexual intercourse require the breakdown of boundaries between bodies, and the mouth and tongue are also sexual organs.  

Gastronomic literature of the nineteenth century sometimes even counted physical attraction among the senses. *Fish* can be seen to signify on this level, too, with its strokes that seem orally applied, intimating oral gratification. In the nineteenth century oysters were thought to stimulate appetites both gustatory and sexual because they were associated visually with the female genitalia and connoted erotic interaction through the motions of the tongue while eating the live mollusc. The male body is implicated also in the stiff tail of the engorged carp, with the penile fold of its head, on a fluid stained  

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167 These connections are discussed in Carole Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power* (New York, 1999), pp. 62-63; and Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life V2: Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis, 1998), pp. 195-196. Evidence of these associations in nineteenth-century French literature abound. In *Le Ventre de Paris*, Marjolin’s sexual fantasies are described in the following manner: “He experienced a sense of gratification whenever he saw her as though he had just eaten something delicious or had a good drink. And when he left, he had a hunger and thirst to see her again… He started to imagine taking her thick waist and ample arms into his arms, as though plunging his hands into an olive barrel or a cask of dried apples” (2009 [1873], p. 193). On these connections in Zola, see also Suzana Yvonne Michel, “Producing an Ideology: Food and Sexuality in Émile Zola’s ‘Les Rougon-Macquart’”, Unpublished PhD Dissertation (University of Oregon, 1991).  


tablecloth rumpled like a bed sheet. As frameworks of aesthetic detachment break down, the painting’s erotic potential emerges as much as its ability to disgust the viewer, and this potential is equally at odds with the construction of the artist or viewer as a disinterested connoisseur.
CONCLUSION

Considering Fish through the lens of sensory interaction and methodologies that structure vision as a form of consumption of images undermines the frameworks of detachment and distance that are frequently invoked to describe Manet’s relationship to his subject matter and the viewer’s relationship to his still life, from Zola through to art historical orthodoxies still operative today. For while the shock value of Manet’s large-scale figure paintings is not usually understated, his still lifes are regularly construed, even by Zola and into the present, as less challenging. In art historical scholarship these are often discussed in terms of the “aesthetic pleasure” or “visual delectation” that Manet and his viewers experienced through contemplation of real or painted table scenes. For example, when James Rubin discusses Fish, it is as “a vehicle for the visual delectation associated with the pictorial properties of the image, as opposed to the referent itself.” The framework of “aesthetic pleasure,” for which Rubin looks back to Kant, who defined aesthetic pleasure in the Critique of Judgement as dependent upon recognizing the difference between the representation of an object and the actual object depicted, is inadequate for encountering Fish because the painting suggests taste and smell, the senses identified by Kant and other eighteenth-century philosophers as precisely those opposed to aesthetic pleasure. The distinction in Fish between the model and its representation falters, first, because the paint suggests equivalence with the fishy material depicted, a strategy that was not unusual and was much remarked upon when a painter accomplished it. Jules Claretie assessed Antoine Vollon’s Le Chaudron (Salon 1872) with reference to Diderot’s writings on Chardin:

Broadly painted, with firm strokes, skillfully, in thick impasto, they [two large fish] have a natural sliminess, and one is tempted to say of them the same words that

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171 Rubin 1994, pp, 27-8, 68, 215. However, Rubin is sensitive throughout to the effects of these pictorial properties upon the viewing body.
Diderot wrote about Chardin’s Ray: “It is the flesh itself of the fish, and the sight of the thing itself would not affect you otherwise.”

Even more importantly for my argument, the distinction between the representation of the model and the model itself breaks down not because the viewer literally mistakes Manet’s painted oysters for real ones, but because the paint suggests the non-visual qualities of what it depicts and more, and thereby insists on the connection of eye to body. While this is accessed through the visual, reactions of disgust or desire might easily result. Those emotions are best described through the proximate sense of taste, whether in the writings of Sartre, Lacan, or Kristeva, or as evidenced by the gustatory declarations of attraction and revulsion used by Manet’s critics. These nineteenth-century responses are further explored in the next chapter in relation to the disgust, even abjection expressed as *Olympia* was compared to rotting meat in 1865.

Such connections between eye and body also challenge art historical accounts asserting that Manet maintained detachment from his subject matter. While this might be persuasively argued of certain figure paintings in which the models appear distant and psychologically disconnected from the viewer or from one another, it is less compelling as a characterization of this series of 1860s still lifes. For example, Richard Brettell and Stephen Eisenman claim of *Still Life with Fish and Shrimp*: “The components that constitute this still life are no more salient for the artist-observer than if they were flowers, shoes, or dead rabbits; they are observed with a connoisseur’s combination of keenness and dispassion.” This contention is echoed in other accounts of later nineteenth-century still lifes that are guided by a social art historical understanding of the period’s rapid expansion.

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174 See, for example, James Rubin’s discussion of *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* as presenting an “aesthetic of the detached gaze” *par excellence*, “severing vision from bodily functions such as desire and emotionality” such that “Manet posits an art of pure aesthetic vision...” (1994, pp. 88-89). Rubin stages this lack of emotional connection as occurring both between figures in the painting and between artist and subject (pp. 74-78, 108). Another formulation comes from T. J. Clark, who frames *The Painting of Modern Life* as an account of the effects of the “distance and superficiality” shared by Manet’s paintings (2008 [1985], p. xxx).

175 Brettel and Eisenman 2006, p. 254.
of capitalist spectacle with its evolving culture of display, and which position still life objects including food and drink as appearing “anonymously and arbitrarily—as signs for commodity value.”¹⁷⁶ The painted objects are then indistinguishable from one another, and their sensual complexities and individual significations are elided. Once again, while this might be a more effective mode of analyzing Manet’s later still lifes in the 1880s, such as the dazzling countertop display in A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, it is unconvincing here.¹⁷⁷ Frameworks of visuality that have been privileged in art historical discussion of painting in France at this time cannot on their own do justice to the gastronomic environment of 1860s Paris or the importance of smell and taste in art and literature. As a result they cannot account for the orally-inflected criticism shared by so many of Manet’s most prominent viewers. Instead of relying upon the inherited knowledge that self-consciously modern painting in the second half of the nineteenth century was primarily concerned with optical experience and addressed to the viewer’s eye alone, an ocularcentric narrative that Michael Fried has argued was formulated in relation to the Impressionists and then projected backward onto Manet as their purported forefather,¹⁷⁸ we can as easily show that the body was acknowledged as the condition of all perception, knowledge, and art-making to a much greater extent than such accounts allow.

As I will explore in the rest of my dissertation, the significance of these metaphors of gustatory taste was far-reaching in a culture that did not believe sensory perception was shared across gender, class, or nation, when good taste was a slippery but crucial means for painters to be classified as good artists as well as good citizens.¹⁷⁹ Zola encountered difficulty when writing about Manet, whom he wanted to affirm was a “well brought-up”

¹⁷⁶ Przybłyski 1995, p. 11.
¹⁷⁷ See Carol Armstrong’s analysis of the still life of commodities in that painting (2002, pp. 269-301). For Armstrong, Manet’s late still lifes “distinguish between the bodiliness of use value and the disembodiedness of exchange value,” coming down on the side of the latter (p. 281).
¹⁷⁹ My discussion is informed by Jacques Rancière’s concept of the partage du sensible, a dividing line on a spectrum of perceptibility through which Rancière explores how the rights to perception are distributed within a society, or who in a community is granted visibility and audibility. Interested in “aesthetic acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception” (p. 9), Rancière argues for the capacity of art to challenge the given distribution of the sensible, and therefore the basis of any politics, by expanding the possibilities of sensory experience within a community (2004 [2000]).
man of “exquisite politeness, of distinguished appearance,” a bourgeois with an “innate need for distinction and elegance”—in other words, a sophisticated gentleman and not the “bohemian rascal” that the public assumed him to be.\textsuperscript{180} Others followed suit, for among his supporters and often even his critics Manet was described as a refined gentleman with delicate technique. But the language of “good taste” into which the materiality of Manet’s paint was sublimated was overdetermined, for it was not just metaphoric good taste that was suggested, but an encounter in which paint was construed as comestible, pungent, and savourable. Zola’s discussions of relishing Manet’s tongue-like brushstrokes and creamy impasto drew attention to the physicality of paint in ways that undercut their author’s intention of appearing detached and positivist in approach, as well as challenged the more general trend within art criticism, including Zola’s own, to allude to cuisine as an insult. Opening the sensorium and rethinking painting in relation to it destabilizes nineteenth-century criticism as well as art historical interpretation, and in the following chapters I will argue that this potential derives from how nineteenth-century understanding of the senses and embodied perceptual experience was gendered.

\textsuperscript{180} Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 333-334: “...nous trouverons dans Édouard Manet un homme d’une amabilité et d’une politesse exquises, d’allures distinguées... Les farceurs contemporains... ont changé Édouard Manet en une sorte de bohème, de galopin... il y a aussi, au fond de lui, un besoin inné de distinction et d’élégance... il fréquent le monde assidûment, il mène l’existence de chacun, avec cette différence qu’il est peut-être plus paisible et mieux élevé que chacun.” For a discussion of the future of this project to establish Manet’s respectability, which gained particular urgency after his death and in regards to his legacy, see Michael R. Orwicz, “Reinventing Édouard Manet: Rewriting the Face of National Art in the Early Third Republic”, in \textit{Art Criticism and Its Institutions in Nineteenth-Century France} (Michael R. Orwicz, ed., Manchester; New York, 1994), pp. 122-145.
CHAPTER TWO: THE FLESH OF PAINTING

INTRODUCTION

In Lisa Salamadra’s collage entitled Mon Olympia (figure 15, 2011), a figure based upon the reclining nude in Manet’s Olympia is composed of hundreds of images of raw, red meat cut from the printed advertisements in French grocery store catalogues. At 195 by 252 centimetres, Salamadra’s work outsizes Manet’s original (figure 16). Heavily textured with layers, the papers composing the body blend so that individual pieces of meat, like the features of the figure’s face or details of the body, are difficult to distinguish. But nor does the viewer experience the figure as unified, as elements of the form and features continually disassociate into pieces of meat made grotesque by their multiplication and superimposition on the body. The source painting effected similar impressions in 1865. Posed on creased white sheets, not unlike the “dazzling white tablecloth” or paper wrappers upon which Manet placed his contemporaneous still lifes of seafood, the figure is exposed. “M. Manet has shown [exposé] two paintings and, this time, the word exposed is the right one,” jeered one critic. Salamadra describes her theme as the “‘cru-ôté’ d’un corps féminin et érotique,” pulling the word raw out of cruelty to raise the violence inherent in the creation of a female erotic object, paralleled in the butchering of animal flesh. The equation between the female body and sexualized meat is a cliché by now, well established in the mass media, and in the nineteenth century it was being articulated in painting and its criticism. However, in the extensive art historical literature generated by Olympia and its scandal, no art historian has brought together the critical reactions.

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182 From Théophile Thoré’s discussion of Manet’s still lifes shown at Cadart’s in 1865, quoted in Tabarant 1931, p. 123.
comparing the nude to raw meat, drawing the abattoir into the atelier and the 1865 Salon.\textsuperscript{185}

I will introduce this language through Zola’s metaphor of a painting as the “flesh and blood” of its artist, which he developed in “Une nouvelle manière en peinture: Édouard Manet” (\textit{La Revue du XIX siècle}, 1 January 1867) foremost to praise \textit{Olympia}. His terms can be connected to other criticism that the painting engendered, specifically those negative assessments that produced the nude figure as analogous to diseased and decomposing meat. While this chapter continues to focus on Zola’s defence of Manet, it opens out onto other contemporary voices, for the disgust that Zola discerned on the faces “made by the grown-up children” at the Salon was readily expressed by those who described the painting and its subject as rotten, introducing dangerous orality to describe loathing. For such commentators, the “unhealthy” works “served”\textsuperscript{186} by Manet provoked widespread “indigestion”\textsuperscript{187} with their “nauseating mixture”\textsuperscript{188} of spoiled colour. Jules Claretie explained in 1865 that such perceptions of Manet had become so widespread as to migrate onto other artists whose work held the merest resemblance to his, because “the public resists this bloody flesh, this raw, violent, bloody painting.”\textsuperscript{189}

Zola’s understanding of the flesh of painting is compelling read alongside Merleau-Ponty’s, for there are surprising parallels in how each employed the concept. Merleau-

\textsuperscript{185} This language did not originate here. The \textit{Dictionnaire de l’Académie française} (Paris, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 1798) notes a vulgar use of “viande” as the genital region (p. 734). Alfred Delvau’s \textit{Dictionnaire érotique moderne} (Bâle, 1850) defines “viande” as “Femme publique” and “boucherie” as “bordel, où abondent les gros morceaux de viande, – humaine” (pp. 66, 368). T. J. Clark has most thoroughly addressed the critical reaction to \textit{Olympia} in the chapter “Olympia’s Choice”, 2008 [19\textsuperscript{85}], pp. 79-146.

\textsuperscript{186} Marc de Montifaud, “Salon de 1865”, \textit{L’Artiste} (15 May 1865), p. 224: “Nous savons reconnaître la touche de M. Manet au milieu des excentricités qu’il a voulu nous servir, comme son Christ insulté et sa composition d’Olympia, et cette touche denote une vigueur qui, employée par un esprit plus sain, pourrait produire des œuvres.”

\textsuperscript{187} Maurice Drak, “Promenade d’un Flâneur Parisienne au Salon de 1865, IV”, \textit{L’Europe artiste, journal général} (2 July 1865), p. 3: “Une main d’artiste guidée par une cervelle bourrée de paradoxes jusqu’à l’indigestion. L’indigestion a eu lieu cette année.”

\textsuperscript{188} Amédée Cantaloube, “Salon de 1865”, \textit{Le Grand Journal} (21 May 1865), p. 2: “Constatons, en effet, des tons dérobés aux Espagnols, surtout à Goya, mais délayés dans je ne sais quelle mixture nauséabonde...”

\textsuperscript{189} Jules Claretie, “Deux heures au salon”, \textit{L’Artiste} (15 May 1865), pp. 226: “...le public résiste à ces chairs sanglants, a cette peinture crue, violente et saignante.”
Ponty used the term flesh to describe the material density of lived experience, the reversibility of sensation, and the intermingling of the senses, and it was often through painting that he theorized the synaesthetic nature of experience. Like Merleau-Ponty, Zola described a bodily encounter with paint and resisted the imposition of meaning onto it. Zola’s response to *Olympia,* typically understood as a deflection of the subject matter through substitution of formalist prose, set a precedent for analyses that have downplayed the importance of subject matter. Georges Bataille depended heavily upon Zola’s account, from which he sometimes lifted phrases, for his claim that Manet initiated “the negation of that kind of painting which, like language, expresses sentiments and relates anecdotes.”

But Zola’s assessment of *Olympia* in similar terms is not as airtight as it first appears. Through interrogating his ambivalent metaphors of flesh, I will explore the moments when his critical strategies were put under pressure and his prose appears vexed and overdetermined.

Merleau-Ponty has been criticized by feminist philosophers since Luce Irigaray for failing to gender his concept of flesh. While he used biological metaphors relating to the female body to describe it, he did not consider the experience of the flesh of the world as different for women than for men. While I will not address the specificity of female embodied experience, by now the subject of a large literature, I will consider how phenomenology’s revaluation of bodily incarnation presents an opportunity to question how the sensorium has historically been gendered. The language of taste could be a dissembling force within art criticism because of the connotations that taste held, the ways in which it could be understood as gendered as well as sexualized. The notion of flesh as raised by Zola offers an example of a freighted term that was used in widely divergent ways to describe and construct masculinity and femininity. Its meanings could never be

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190 Bataille 1955, p. 52. Bataille’s debt to Zola surfaces in his account of Manet’s sophistication (p. 78), the claim that Manet’s subjects were “mere pretexts for painting itself” (p. 52), the contention that *Olympia* was Manet’s “masterpiece” (p. 61), and the connection between Manet’s painting and still life (pp. 74-75). For Bataille, modern painting does not just treat the subject with indifference, but suppresses and destroys it (p. 52), introducing violence into the pictorial process that is appropriate to the critical appraisals of Manet’s brutality addressed in this chapter.

191 See especially Young 1990. Luce Irigaray began her critique of Merleau-Ponty with the premise that he did not, and indeed could not, describe a woman’s embodied experience. See especially Irigaray 2004 [1984], pp. 127-153.
stabilized, even within Zola’s prose. Caillebotte’s paintings of butcher shop windows from the early 1880s (figures 17-18), in which animal flesh is gendered and sexualized, take up certain of these themes. Aspects of these paintings recall *Olympia* and the commentary that the painting had provoked (a painting that Caillebotte admired given that he contributed a generous 1000 francs to Monet’s 1889 campaign to buy *Olympia* from Suzanne Manet to donate to the French nation), but unmediated by any critical opinion, as they were never shown in Caillebotte’s lifetime, the paintings upset the boundaries between male and female, human and animal bodies.
MANET’S FLESH AND BLOOD PAINTING

In 1866, when Zola positioned Manet’s paintings as “viande crue” or “chair fraîche” in opposition to Cabanel’s whipped-cream confections, he praised Gustave Courbet in the following terms:

... [Courbet] feels driven by all his flesh [chair]—by all his flesh [chair], do you hear—toward the material world that surrounded him, the fleshy women [les femmes grasses] and the powerful men, the fertile and buxom countryside. Stocky and strong, he had the fierce desire to grasp true nature in his arms; he wanted to paint in the midst of meat and fertile ground [en pleine viande et en plein terreau].

In this curious passage the notion of flesh is raised three times, as chair, grasse, and viande, testament to the complexities of the concept. The first two uses of chair portray Courbet as compelled to artistic action by the material fibres of his being. The second evocation of flesh, used to describe the female body, rested upon the widespread understanding of that body as passive material to be given significance by the activities of men, in this case, by Courbet. Nature, too, is feminized, its amplitude and fertility available to be seized by the arms and bent to the will of the virile male painter. The final sentence refers to the physical world in which Courbet immerses himself as “meaty,” a fecund and organic space, the productive powers of which are coterminous with the painter, the “homme puissant” who feeds off of it and comprises part of it. This is a Merleau-Pontian environment in which Courbet is physically moved, touched by the material world that surrounds him, felt in its immediacy as a dense (female) flesh. The painter enabled by the fertility of nature who works with animalistic power as if by intuition alone to produce the “energetic,” “vigorous” canvases that Zola commended could only in his art-

192 “Les Chutes” 1866, p. 311: “...il se sentait entraîné par toute sa chair,—par toute sa chair, entendez-vous,—vers le monde matériel qui l’entourait, les femmes grasses et les hommes puissants, les campagnes plantureuses et largement fécondes. Trapu et vigoureux, il avait l’âpre désir de serrer entre ses bras la nature vraie; il voulait peindre en pleine viande et en plein terreau.”
193 These were favourite terms of his. See “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 331, 342, 354, 359, 368.
worldview be male, and Zola never minced words on this point, with his repeated claim that “men are in charge of painting realities” and his self-appointed task of searching for “real” men in the sea of “eunuchs.”

The following year, Zola claimed that Manet’s best paintings embodied the artist’s “flesh and blood,” a declaration that he repeated no less than four times in “Une nouvelle manière.” The painting that Zola believed demonstrated this transubstantiation best was *Olympia*:

I said [that this painting is his] masterpiece, and I will not retract the word. I contend that this canvas is truly the flesh and blood of the painter. It contains him entirely and nothing but him. It will remain the work most characteristic of his talent, as the highest mark of his power. I read in it the personality of Édouard Manet, and when I analyzed the temperament of the artist, I had only this painting before my eyes, which contains all of the others.

As with Courbet, such allusion to Manet’s flesh and blood, suggesting the core or essence of the painter, implied that the artist was viscerally invested in the work. A painting that partook of the artist’s flesh and blood would be the “sincere” product of an artist guided by his temperament and personal perceptual experience, not the servile imitation of art history, popular trends or instructors. The phrase flesh and blood also relates to “pleine viande” in the discussion of Courbet, or Zola’s use of the metaphor “viande crue” to describe Manet’s painting in opposition to the “douceurs des confiseurs artistiques à la mode” in 1866. Designating Manet’s works as raw was a means of assuring the reader that they had not been adulterated with cheap tricks to render them more palatable. Zola and others mocked practices associated with Academic standards as seasoning or sweetening a

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194 Ibid., p. 332; see also the “Le Moment artistique” 1866, p. 280; “Les Réalistes au Salon” 1866, p. 304; “Les Chutes” 1866, pp. 312, 315; “Adieux d’un critique d’art” 1866, pp. 319, 320.
197 This was another of his favourite terms. See Ibid., pp. 330, 343, 349, 356.
dish, masking poor quality or superficial subject matter.\textsuperscript{198} Flesh and blood painting therefore was “meaty” and substantial, unlike the paintings of frivolities that Zola associated with women or castrated men. Théodore Duret described this dichotomy between masculine depth and feminine superficiality in 1870 as the difference between the skin of painting and its flesh and blood. He wrote that Cabanel’s \textit{Portrait de Madame la Duchesse de V.} was “nothing but clean and licked, a pale and milky skin that gives no idea of flesh and blood.”\textsuperscript{199} By this formulation painting had a skin beyond the depicted skin of the sitter. That skin or paint surface was feminized by its description, pale and milky like the idealized French woman’s complexion. Since at least the seventeenth century the surface of a painting had been analogized to a woman’s skin and paint to her cosmetics.\textsuperscript{200} Such conflation rested upon the visual appeal as well as the deceptive potential of illusionistic painting or painted women. According to Duret, Cabanel’s seductive finish masked the development of a painting and therefore the traces of artistic temperament, just as a woman’s make-up could be accused of obscuring the reality of her complexion.\textsuperscript{201} Furthermore, like the slippage between Zola’s use of \textit{chair} and \textit{viande},\textsuperscript{202} the binary of skin versus flesh and blood was embedded in a gustatory metaphor. Beneath Cabanel’s milky, licked surface, for Duret as for Zola, the meat of painting was absent, and viewing could be understood either as carnivorism or \textit{friandise}, the latter used to describe feminized taste for sweets. This was especially true for Zola, who so frequently depended upon metaphors of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[198] “Adieux d’un critique d’art” 1866, p. 318; “Les Réalistes au Salon” 1866, p. 304.
\item[200] Lichtenstein 1993, pp. 185-195; Garb 2007, pp. 1-17.
\item[201] Skin versus flesh had been used since the seventeenth century in debates about colour versus line. Admirers of Titian and Rubens claimed that their painted figures were made of real flesh, for their colourism so skillfully reproduced the blood beneath the skin, while Poussin’s more linear style was compared to the edges of sculpture, a smooth, skin-like surface (Lichtenstein 1993, pp. 62-63, 163-167). Delacroix and Ingres inherited this \textit{paragone} in the nineteenth century, the former aligned with flesh, the latter with skin. See Mechthild Fend, “Bodily and Pictorial Surfaces: The Skin in French Art and Medicine, 1790-1860”, \textit{Art History} (28:3, June 2005), pp. 311-339. When Duret and Zola privileged flesh, they aligned artists they admired with Delacroix’s legacy, as was common among those artists themselves.
\item[202] In \textit{Mon Salon}, 1866 Manet’s art is described “véritable viande crue” (p. 47), but reprinted as “véritable chair” in \textit{Mes Haines} in 1893, p. 296.
\end{footnotes}
alimentary consumption, sometimes as straightforward as the opening to Mon Salon, 1866: “When you eat a steak, do you concern yourself with the ox? You think only to thank or curse the scullion that served it too bloody or not bloody enough.”\textsuperscript{203} The raw materials of painting are compared to animal flesh, and the artist to the cook who prepares it, adequately or not, for public consumption.

Carnivorism was identified with masculinity in the vast contemporary literature concerning diet and physiology. In the first half of the nineteenth century, meat consumption in Paris and its environs doubled and vegetarianism was all but unheard of, used primarily as an insult.\textsuperscript{204} Baudelaire criticized certain landscape artists in his Salon de 1859 as being “trop herbivores,” associating a meat-free diet with artistic weakness.\textsuperscript{205} A number of commentators took up diet and gender from a social standpoint, including historian Jules Michelet, whom Zola admired, and journalist Elphège Boursin. In \textit{La Femme} (1860), Michelet insisted upon women consuming “gentle” foods such as milk, believed to have calming effects on their so-called fragile sensibilities. For women and children Michelet recommended a fruit-based, “innocent” diet, for he believed that women and children would be easily upset by the knowledge that they were eating an animal killed for that purpose.\textsuperscript{206} Boursin agreed, arguing in \textit{Le Livre des femmes au XIXème siècle} (1865) that women were better served by a vegetable diet, men an animal one.\textsuperscript{207} According to Michelet, the foods that men enjoyed and which were necessary for their strength, including “viandes sanglantes,” were “poison” to his wife, rendering her “violent, fantastical, passionate.”\textsuperscript{208} So dangerous was a man’s “régime Carnivore” to the physical and mental health of his family that Michelet advised the patriarch to employ a hearty

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\item[203] “Le Jury” 1866, p. 264: “Quand vous mangez un beefsteak, est-ce que vous vous inquiétez du bœuf? Vous ne songez qu’à remercier ou à maudire le marmiton qui vous le sert trop ou pas assez saignant.”
\item[207] Boursin, \textit{Le Livre des femmes au XIXème siècle} (Paris, 1865), pp. 37, 159, 167. See also Ferdinand Rouget, \textit{Art de vivre longtemps en bonne santé, traité des aliments, leurs qualités, leurs effets et le choix que l’on doit en faire} (Nice, 1868), pp. 41-42.
\item[208] Michelet 1860, p. 52.
\end{footnotes}
peasant woman as cook, who would be better suited to preparing meat for him than his wife, leaving his spouse to busy herself instead with “some pastries, cakes, and creams.”

The erotic subtext is barely veiled. Michelet worried that meat stimulated sensuality and could damage the carefully guarded sexual innocence of wives and daughters. This concept was widespread and treated comically in culinary journals. An 1864 article in *La Salle à manger*, published for an audience of both sexes, described a steak cooking: “you will soon see the steak grilled in an ocean of voluptuous sauce that caresses the lips, moistens and glazes all its parts.” Purposefully integrated here are the concepts of meat as available female flesh, moist and voluptuous, and merely looking upon it as a sensually stimulating experience. Michelet’s and Boursin’s paternalistic theories were proscriptive, warnings that should a woman overindulge she risked her femininity, which depended upon limiting herself from the sensual experience of dining. No doubt these exaggerated accounts of feminine sensibility were perpetuated in reaction to a growing gastronomic culture in Paris that actually included women, who were to be seen enjoying the pleasures of the palate, even alone, in restaurants. But despite this evidence challenging the assumptions of Michelet and Boursin, their beliefs were widespread and drew upon a history of French medicine in which associations were commonly made between “deviant” behaviour and diet. Physician Philippe Pinel had argued at the turn of the nineteenth century that consumption of “rich foods” like meat could lead to pathological conditions including mental illness, especially in women. The power of such theories that considered diet

210 Benedict-Henry Révoil, “Le Beefsteak d’Epicure”, *La Salle à manger* (17, 10 November 1864), pp. 2-3: “...vous verrez bientôt le beefsteak griller dans un océan de sauce moelleuse qui caresse les lèvres, l’humecte et le dore de toutes parts.”
211 Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (London, 2000), pp. 67, 79-81, 200. This evidence challenges art historical accounts that have taken Michelet at his word. For example, citing Michelet’s comment that “Should [a bourgeois woman] find herself delayed at the other end of Paris and hungry, she will not dare to enter into a restaurant… All eyes would be constantly fixed on her,” Griselda Pollock concludes that “a woman going out to dine at a restaurant even with her husband present was scandalous” (Pollock 1988, p. 69).
212 Elizabeth A. Williams, “Neurosis of the Stomach: Eating, Gender, and Psychopathology in French Medicine, 1800–1870”, *Isis* (98:1, March 2007), pp. 54-79. She discusses
crucial in constructing normative gender roles was demonstrated in the widespread belief that prostitutes—the group identified with sexuality *par excellence* and around which bourgeois male fears about femininity often crystallized—had abnormal appetites. Public hygienist Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, best known for his monumental study *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris* (1836), explained to readers that prostitutes ate contraband meat such as horse, still illegal to sell until 1866. Parent-Duchâtelet, *Les Chantiers d’écarrissage de la ville de Paris envisagés sous le rapport de l’hygiène publique* (Paris, 1832), p. 43. See also Kari Weil, “They Eat Horses, Don’t They? Hippophagy and Frenchness”, *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* (7:2, Spring 2007), p. 50.

An analogy existed between the dangerous potency of these women and the meat eaten, each contributing to the other. In the ensuing decade, writer and politician Alphonse Esquiros argued that women turned to prostitution because of insatiable gustatory appetites. “Natural born” prostitutes, he declared, could consume enough in one sitting to feed fifteen to eighteen adults and could only sate themselves at the “ample tables” of brothels. Small wonder that this is the opposite of Boursin’s vision of a good wife and mother, for whom “it is a pleasure… not to entirely satisfy her hunger, to better meet the needs of her husband and her children.”

Flesh and blood or *viande crue* frameworks for painting existed in other criticism of Manet and especially of *Olympia*. Comparison to meat could be used as compliment, a symbol of artistic power and potency, in relation to the male artist. It operated differently when applied to the female body. In an admiring review of Manet’s work by Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly in 1872, the novelist claimed: “If ever there were a man of culture, of a high, ripe culture as they say of game, if there were ever a refined fastidious person… it is M. Manet.” The comparison of Manet to meat that had been hung and aged in order to


Boursin 1865, p. 167.

deepen its flavour was meant to suggest that the artist was as sophisticated as a dish for trained palates, intense as its gamey flavour and odour. A strange metaphor to be sure, but one intended as praise for a man ahead of his culture like meat in an advanced state. The same metaphor was applied to the female figure of Olympia, but in order to render the body violently dismembered, disempowered, and diseased. Describing the nude, Victor de Jancovitz exclaimed that “the facial expression is of a prematurely aged, vicious creature; the body has the colour of aged meat [une couleur faisandée], reminiscent of the horror of the Morgue.”

Paul de Saint-Victor echoed, “[t]he crowd gathers, as at the Morgue, before this gamy Olympia [devant l’Olympia faisandée]...” These instances of “faisandée” are most often translated as “putrid,” for in passages like these relating the nude or the painting itself to the decay of bodies, putrid is a term better suited to describe human decomposition. Lost in translation is the ability of the original to conjure up the repellent smell, slimy texture, nauseating taste, and changing colour of meat left hanging too long. Female figures were sometimes more explicitly compared to meat in art criticism. Another critic, A. de Bullemont, compared Academician Paul Baudry’s nude Diana to Olympia with mutual distain: “The general tone of the goddess [Diana] is yellow, and her skin is that disagreeable yellow that one sees in the old chickens on market stands that are kept at bay by all knowing cooks. She seems to be in a state of decomposition almost as advanced as Manet’s Olympia.”

A number of critics commented on the yellow colour of
the figure’s skin, but decomposition was also suggested by the technique, which Zola allowed required time to digest: “At first glance, one only sees two violently opposing hues… if you wish to reconstruct reality, you must move back a few steps.” Walking toward the painting representation breaks down into its material elements, the effect akin to literal decomposition for critics who saw Manet’s broad strokes burst free from their form and a unified whole disperse into morsels like curdles in milk. Critics also complained about the form, that the nude’s “skeletal” limbs appeared twisted and disarticulated, not unlike de Bullemont’s evocation of the plucked chicken on a market stall. The figure was called “deformed” and “unformed.” To Félix Deriège she was composed of “impossible forms” and “d[id] not have human form,” for Manet had crippled her such that she could not move her arms or legs. Deriège accused all “realists” of over-eagerness to disarticulate the arms and dislocate the legs of their models. Félix Jahyer alleged that Manet had no sense of anatomy or how a body fitted together. Among the imperfections cited by Marius Chaumelin were “the flattened torso, the head pulled out of joint, the limbs [that] do not connect to the body.” Saint-Victor compared the figure to the crippled seventeenth-century poet and novelist Paul Scarron, who suffered from paralysis and a twisted spine. Another critic accused Manet of flaying his model with his brushes,

cé jaune désagréable qu’on voit aux vieux poulets sur les étals des marchés et qui éloigne les cuisinières un peu habiles. Elle semble dans un état de décomposition presque aussi avancé que l’*Olympia* de M. Manet…”

221 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 357-358: “Au premier regard, on ne distingue ainsi que deux teintes dans le tableau, deux teintes violentes, s’enlevant l’une sur l’autre… si vous voulez reconstruire la réalité, il faux que vous vous reculiez de quelques pas.”

222 Jean Clay has written that Manet’s paint surface “decomposes into a multitude of small geological dramas… The painting turns…” in “Ointments, Makeup, Pollen”, *October* (27, Winter 1983), p. 39.


228 Chaumelin, “Notes sur la Salon de 1865”, *Tribune artistique et littéraire du midi* (compiled issues of 1865/07-1866/06), p. 177.
suggesting parallels between the artist, the anatomist who peeled off the skin, and the butcher who skinned animals.229

Aspects of the figure do suggest disarticulation. The black necklace separates the head from the body, emphasized in Bertall’s caricatures in *L’Illustration* and the *Journal amusant* (figure 19), in which the head floats above the chest and shoulders. Manet arranged the nude’s limbs in ways that segment them, such as the tip of the left breast that intersects the edge of the left arm, the left hand that hides the connection of left leg to torso, and the slipper that divides the toes of the right foot from the lower right leg. Bertall also drew attention to such disconnections with an enlarged bouquet dividing the figure in half and the engorged feet that hardly belong to the body. Cham was harsher, reducing the figure to a schematic face and elongated neck floating above one grotesque, disconnected arm with a massive, claw-shaped hand (figure 20). However, the dark contour lines of Manet’s nude simultaneously produced the opposite effect, a containment of the body. Critics complained that an outline of rubber or coal surrounded the undifferentiated planes of the figure’s skin, which seemed too flat, a “surface without depth.”230 As Zola remarked, this reminded viewers of the hard lines of printed images, including, perhaps, those found in cookery books.231 Limbs pulled out of joint, all the more audacious for the authority with which Manet outlined them, de Bullemont’s comparison to poultry once again seems close at hand. Widely circulating and lavishly illustrated cookery books were published for male perusal in a library rather than use in a kitchen, and even books intended for women occasionally played provocatively with the sexualization of butchered meat. The *Almanach*...
manuel de la bonne cuisinière (1865), for practical use, featured a print of a marketplace entitled La Foire aux jambons (figure 21). In the background a young servant discusses her purchases with the stallholder from appropriate distance. Her bared right arm echoes the shapes of the ham legs held by the vendor and hung from the stall. In the foreground a dandy with a cane and top hat bends down audaciously to smell a leg that the saleswoman holds out to him. We wonder, along with the skeptical male vendor surveying the exchange, what this gentleman is doing here dressed up and obviously hungry for fresh flesh. The pluralized title suggests that more than one kind of flesh market applies here. In the boulevardier’s enthusiasm for a leg of ham held out for his delectation, the Almanach evokes a procuress parading young women for the fancy of well-heeled men. The success of the joke depends upon a reader understanding that some women could be identified as commodified flesh. Such jokes linger suggestively in mind when confronting less explicitly feminized representations of raw meat. In manuals demonstrating how to segment animals and identify cuts, the absent referent was the female body.  

232 This was the body most easily imagined contorted in similar positions, as in pornographic photographs of the 1850s and 1860s, which provided source material for Olympia.  

233 In a commonly reprinted illustration of how to cut up a lamb (figure 22), the animal with its legs spread apart could suggest the pornographic configuration of a woman with opened legs and upper body cut off by the frame or covered by fabric.  

234 If certain criticism of the figure Olympia is read without knowledge of its referent, one could mistake the comments as describing a print of a skinned rabbit (figure 23), as critics forced the nude body into a framework akin to this crude print of animal flesh, with its hard edges containing a body filled with empty planes, the joints pulled out of place in order to pin the animal down, and the bald head with grimacing features seemingly disconnected from the body.

232 Carol Adams coined this term in The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory (New York, 1990), arguing that animals are the absent referent in imagery of female bodies as fragmented and consumable, and women often the absent referent when animals are the subject.


234 Solomon-Godeau reproduces a pornographic photograph of a woman with her legs positioned similarly (1986, pp. 96-97).
To call the figure Olympia faisandé was to draw upon language most commonly used to refer to prostitutes. An English guide to French brothels revelled in this conceit:

The abbess has just put the kipehook on all other purveyors of the French flesh market. She does not keep her meat too long on the hooks, though she will have her price; but nothing to get stale here. You may have your meat dressed to your own liking, and there is no need of cutting twice from one joint; and if it suits your taste, you may kill your own lamb or mutton for her flock is in prime condition, and always ready for sticking [slitting of the throat]. When any of them are fried they are turned out to grass, and sent to the hammer, or disposed of by private contract, but never brought in again; consequently, the rots, bots, glanders, and other diseases incidental to cattle, are not generally known here.235

The prostitutes may be expensive, the guide admits, but they are young, plentiful, submissive, and cast out by the Madam at the first sign of age or disease. Through the metaphor of butchery, sexual intercourse is compared to penetration by the hook or knife. The consequence for the prostitute is continuous attack and finally murder. Women and meat are also linked through the twin fears of venereal and meat-borne illness. “Olympia faisandée” was doubly threatening, contaminated meat as well as diseased human flesh, “dead of yellow fever... [in] an advanced state of decomposition”236 and in dire need of “an exam by the public health inspectors!”237 The term faisandé was most likely to be applied to an aged or undesirable prostitute, especially a black woman. Another guide to Parisian brothels described “a stinking, sweaty negress, who is always retained on the establishment for those who like to take their game when it is ‘high.’”238

235 The Man of Pleasure’s Pocket Book (c. 1850), quoted in Ronald Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality (New York, 1969), p. 259. See also the painfully titled book published by the Prefecture of Police, The Pretty Women of Paris: Their Names and Addresses, Qualities and Faults, Being a Complete Directory, or, Guide to Pleasure for Visitors to the Gay City (Paris, 1883) for its abundant references to women as “meaty” (pp. 61, 168), juicy morsels (p. 100), and as “fat as bacon” (pp. 146-147). See also Delvau 1850, entry for “Boucherie” as brothel, quoting Lemercier de Nerville: “Je vais connaître cette maison et savoir quelle viande il y a à son étal, à cette boucherie-là” (p. 66).


238 The Pretty Women of Paris, p. 160. Other examples of this language include aged sex workers being called “old meaty whores” (p. 61) or “dried-up, tough bits of meat that require a great deal of chewing before they can be digested” (pp. 107-108).
If metaphor that animalized and dismembered the female body interacted with conventions of pornography and discourses surrounding prostitution, it also raised the spectre of dissection, a cultural preoccupation and widespread scientific procedure especially associated with the venal or black female body. In well-known practice, the corpses of impoverished sex workers were sometimes dissected upon death. A scene of dissection had become almost de rigeur in naturalist literature, as in the future of a prostitute in Zola’s novel La Confession de Claude (1865). The other figure of difference as publicly connected to sexuality, embodiment, and dissection was the black woman. Earlier in the century a woman born in present-day South Africa was exhibited in Paris as the “Hottentot Venus,” fascinating scientists and the public because of the size and shape of her body, namely her buttocks and genitalia. After Saartjie Baartman died in 1815 her body was dissected by Georges Cuvier and displayed at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris. In 1865 two critics called the figure Olympia a “Venus Hottentot” to the same end as brothel guides comparing prostitutes to the “Hottentot Venus,” to exploit a perceived equation between racial difference and robust sexuality. Because the concept of well-hung meat was used more generally to refer to prostitutes and especially black women, the figure of “l’Olympia faisandée” could be seen as more securely encroaching upon both categories. And given that both groups were the subject of bodily scrutiny in their lifetimes.

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241 Geronte 1865 refers to “cette venus hottentot”. Bathild Bouniol asks “Where in the devil has the artist encountered this Hottentot Venus (except for the color)…”, “l’Amateur au Salon”, *Revue de monde Catholique* (T.12, 1865), p. 401. In these terms, a prostitute is described in *The Pretty Woman of Paris*: “The best parts about her are her posterior beauties; the Hottentot Venus not being able to boast of such a sculptural pair of marble buttocks” (p. 16). Sander Gilman suggests that the “Hottentot” was the central icon of racial and sexual difference for the French (1985, pp. 204-242). This has since been contested. Zine Magubane argues that no such simple cipher of difference and degeneration existed, nor a monolithic understanding of the category “blackness” (2001, pp. 816-834). See also O’Grady 2003 [1992]. Griselda Pollock contends that Manet allowed the maid figure to exist as a modern black Parisienne, beyond the position of non-presence or as an attribute of the venal sexuality of the white woman (1999, pp. 247-304).
and, in public consciousness, linked to dissection upon death, the nude called Olympia was ripe for semantic butchery/dissection. This occurred in the criticism in which the sexualized female body was broken into pieces by a public with “a bone to pick,” as Zola put it. Manet’s friend Antonin Proust claimed that a guard had to be stationed before the painting to prevent it from literal attack, and Manet himself referred to the critical assault in his early career as “the fight with knives.” While the painting was commonly dubbed undeserving of critical attention or impossible to characterize, many indulged in a sadistic survey of the body parts. In Jules Claretie’s review, the final death knell occurred when the painting was moved to the top of the wall, the result ensuring that “one can no longer tell whether it is a pack of nude flesh or of laundry.” Banished, the figure Olympia was rendered a lifeless object, the “victim of Parisian Lynch law” at whom “[each] passer-by takes his rock and throws it at her face.”


243 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 365. Bernheimer has argued that this was a common strategy of male authors in nineteenth-century France when confronted with the sexualized female body (1989A). See also Pollock 1988, p. 159. For a relevant discussion of the prevalence of the fragmented female body in fantastic nineteenth-century literature, see Deborah A Harter, Bodies in Pieces: Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment (Stanford, 1996).

244 Proust’s comment about the safety of the painting is cited in Paul Jamot, “Manet and the Olympia”, The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs (50:286, January 1927), p. 28. Manet’s comment was recorded by Proust, cited in Juliet Wilson Bareau, Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings (Boston, 1991), p. 204.

245 Claretie 1865B, p. 6: “...on savait à peine si l’on voyait un paquet de chairs nues ou un paquet de linge.”

246 Jean Ravanel, “Salon de 1865”, L’Époque (7 June 1865): “Le bouc-émissaire du Salon, la victime de la loi de Lynch parisienne. Chaque passant sa pierre et lui jette à la face.” Ingres’s Grande Odalisque (1814) and Odalisque à l’esclave (1839)—paintings in relation to which Manet positioned himself—received similar treatment by critics who claimed merely to be commenting upon violence enacted by the artist. Criticism of Olympia sometimes elided the titles of Manet’s and Ingres’s nudes (for example, Alphonse Audeoud, “Salon de 1865”, La Revue independante, 1 July 1865, p. 758). As with Manet, some viewers argued that violence was implicit in Ingres’s serpentine contour lines that broke bones and stretched vertebra, while inside them body parts seemed to flow into each other. Ingres’s nudes were called “rancid,” “monsters,” “corpses,” with “tapering forms
Such verbal butchery tended to leave critics unsatisfied, however, and the metaphors used to describe the figure, and the evidence of audience reactions cited, implied that the painting resisted language. Certain assessments that centralized the power of the nude’s returned gaze to freeze the viewer’s body characterized the figure like a Medusa. Two accounts suggested that the figure, and the painting itself as an object, were capable of “stupefying” the onlooker. Others claimed that the public was “stunned” in front of this painting that “assaults the eyes” and “disarm[s]” the spectator, creating the effect of “a glass of ice-water that each viewer receives in the face.” Victor Fournel claimed that “its coloring of verjuice [an acidic juice made from unripe grapes, used like vinegar], sour and acidic, penetrates into the eye as does the surgeon’s saw into flesh.” Similar language had been used by the pseudonymous Bourgeois de Paris (likely also Fournel) in the same journal to describe *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863): “[Manet’s] acidic and irritating colour pierces the eye like a steel saw... He has all the harshness of green fruit that will never ripen.” These reactions combined the tendency to describe embodied shock through the sense of taste and simultaneous destruction of the organ of vision. Another critic called the painting a “mixture of raw tones, of colliding lines that shatter the eyes,” again bringing together the sensual immediacy of the raw with the annihilation of the eye, the critic’s most important instrument. These accounts referred not, or at least not only, to the outward gaze of the nude, but also to the forms and colours of the painting itself which was

[that] seem to come from a meat grinder rather than a brush,” as discussed in Ockman 1995, pp. 85, 96-97.

247 The Medusa myth has been understood in terms of the fear of predatory female sexuality. See Bram Dijkstra’s discussion of the theme in fin-de-siècle art in *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York, 1986), pp. 305-311.

248 Deriège 1865; Ego 1865.

249 Jancovitz 1865, p. 68.


254 Gille 1865: “M. Manet s’est jeté, tête perdue, dans son sujet; de cette determination, est résulté un affreux et indécent assemblage de tons crus, de lignes heurtées qui brisent les yeux...”
understood to act upon its viewer by threatening his or her flesh, turning the weapons of the butcher or anatomist back against him or her. In these formulations the painting takes on the animate presence that Merleau-Ponty described of objects or the ability to produce the sensory scramble and nausea associated with abjection, as theorized by Sartre or Kristeva. In his discussion of Manet’s submissions in 1865, one commentator called Christ Insulted by the Soldiers “abject,” a word defined at the time as that which brought humans to their lowest state, beneath humanity.255 Kristeva’s description of abjection operates along these lines, as what the human subject must continually reject in order to maintain an autonomous, adult, human (paradigmatically masculine) identity. She argues that abjection haunts the territories of the animal and the feminine, for animal instinct and the maternal influence belong to an early stage in development before a child assimilates into culture.256 Constructions of species and gender distinction, wherein women and animals have often been characterized alike, as further from rationality and closer to nature, work to repress these territories that threaten the male human in his Symbolic state. The body of the nude Olympia was seen to queasily mix animal and human,257 death and life, even female and male.258 As critics were fond of relating, the overwhelming public reaction to the painting was “fou rire,” spontaneous and visceral laughter in excess, an oral reaction that crushed or replaced language, and which Kristeva has theorized as a strategy for displacing abjection.259

257 In addition to those accounts linking the figure to well-hung meat, the nude was also compared to a gorilla or monkey in Cantaloube 1865; and Pierrot (perhaps the same author), “Une Première Visite au Salon”, Les Tablettes de Pierrot—Histoire de la Semaine (14 May 1865), pp. 10-11. Ernest Chesneau likened the nude’s hand to a toad in “Salon de 1865: Les Excentriques”, Le Constitutionnel (16 May 1865), pp. 1-2.
258 She was compared to a “Femme a la barbe” in Olivier Merson, “Salon de 1865”, L’Opinion nationale (31 July 1865); and Bouniol 1865. Clark discusses this perceived androgyny (2008 [1985], p. 132).
259 For references to “fou rire,” see Ernest Fillonneau, “Salon de 1865”, Le Moniteur des arts (5 May 1865), p. 2; Chesneau 1865; Deriège 1865; Flavio 1865B. Other notable
Zola’s Response

Zola knew these critical dynamics firsthand. Just months after writing “Une nouvelle manière,” his novel *Thérèse Raquin* was attacked in uncannily similar terms to the scandal that surrounded *Olympia*. In a *Figaro* front-page article of considerable rhetorical flair with the inflammatory title “Putrid Literature,” Louis Ulbach, writing under the pseudonym Ferragus, argued that the morgue had entered the contemporary French literary scene and from its privileged location in the arts was causing the French nation to degenerate like an infection of gangrene. Calling fiction’s latest characters “faisandé,” the author accused Zola of exemplifying this “violent literature” by singling out *Thérèse Raquin* for discussion. Ulbach and Zola were acquainted, and Zola may even have urged Ulbach to write his piece in order to stir up a sensation around his novel. If so, Zola appeared to want to align himself with the critical situation facing Manet. This would be unsurprising given the parallels that the novelist drew between their artistic projects.

*Thérèse Raquin* was written in the early months of 1867, at the same time that Zola was establishing his reputation as an art critic, having published “Une nouvelle manière” on the first of January in *La Revue du XIXe siècle*. Zola pitched *Thérèse Raquin* to the same journal in February, where it would have appeared when finished in June had the journal not been bankrupted in the meantime, and so the story was published serially in *l’Artiste* instead. The novel follows an adulterous love affair resulting in the murder of the unwitting husband, and the subsequent ruin and eventual suicide of the young lovers, Thérèse and Laurent, haunted by their guilt. Readers familiar with Zola’s defence of *Olympia* would have found many parallels in certain of Zola’s descriptions in that novel, chief among them a scene in the morgue when Laurent attempts to identify the body of his drowned victim.

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262 For example, Zola called him a fellow “naturalist” in “Édouard Manet” 1868.
One corpse brings Manet’s nude, which Zola had described as “a large pale spot on a black background,” and its reception to mind:

In front him were the ranks of grey slabs on which, here and there, naked bodies made spots of green and yellow, white and red. Some bodies kept their virginal flesh in the rigidity of death, while others seemed like heaps of bloody, rotten meat... Once, he saw a young woman of twenty, a working-class girl... her fresh, plump body was pale with very delicate variations of tint... You would have taken her for a courtesan lying on a bed if there had not been a black stripe on her neck, like a necklace of shadow: the girl had just hanged herself...

Ulbach focused upon this scene in his attack on Zola, explicitly linking Zola’s art to Manet’s: “[Zola] sees woman as M. Manet paints her, the colour of mud with pink makeup.” Complaining about the “screeching notes, the violent and purple blows of the brush,” Ulbach related Zola’s pen to a vicious paintbrush that attacked and left traces of bruising where it landed, creating lines of prose that screamed when put down on paper. This evokes the claim that Manet enacted violence upon his figure and upon art itself by affixing the broken body to the canvas. Like *Olympia*’s ability to infect, Ulbach wrote that *Thérèse Raquin* was contagious.

Zola’s defence of Manet in 1867 reads as an artistic manifesto applying both to literature and painting, and would be continued in his 1868 defence of *Thérèse Raquin* in the preface to its second edition. Zola treated *Olympia* more extensively than any other painting in “Une nouvelle manière.” Rather than focusing upon the “flesh and blood” of the supine female figure, he redirected attention onto Manet himself, so that the flesh in question was not hers but his: “this painting is truly the flesh and blood of the painter.”

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263 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 357: “Olympia, couchée sur des linges blancs, fait une grande tache pâle sur le fond noir...”

264 Zola 2004 [1867] pp. 71-73. See Buss’s discussion of these parallels in his Introduction, pp. xv, xxi. Orig.: “Devant lui s’alignaient les rangées de dalles grises. Ça et là, le long des dalles, des corps nus faisaient des taches vertes et jaunes, blanches et rouges; certains corps gardaient leurs chairs vierges dans la rigidité de la mort; d’autres semblaient des tas de viandes sanglantes et pourries... Il vit, une fois, une jeune femme de vingt ans, une fille du peuple... son corps, frais et gras, blanchissait avec des douceurs de teinte d’une grande délicatesse... on aurait dit une courtoisane vautrée, si elle n’avait eu au cou une raie noire qui lui mettait comme un collier d’ombre; c’était une fille qui venait de se pendre par désespoir d’amour.”

265 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 357.
Instead of the semantic disempowerment of the depicted body, Zola’s strategy worked with the captivating and commanding aspect of that painted body by substituting Manet’s body for it, thus neutralizing the figure’s threat while affirming Manet’s abilities as a painter. This formulation of painting as raw flesh, or “viande crue” as he had termed Manet’s painting the previous year, positioned *Olympia* as a statement of Manet’s unadulterated masculinity by relying upon the connotations of meat explored thus far. However, another metaphor appears in Zola’s essay to trouble this account by introducing male vulnerability and a female appetite for male flesh through the very figure that the nude *Olympia* was taken to represent: the prostitute or courtesan. Zola explained how Manet was drawn to painting at an early age as though seduced by a carnivorous, cannibalistic courtesan, in a passage especially revealing of the phantasmatic nature that the construction “Courtesan” had come to encapsulate:

... painting is... the grand Impure, the Courtesan always starving for fresh flesh, who must drink blood of [bourgeois parents’s] children, who clutches them, panting, to her insatiable lips. Here is an orgy, debauchery without forgiveness, a bloody ghost... at seventeen, Édouard Manet embarked as a novice on a ship bound for Rio de Janeiro. Without doubt, the grand Impure, the Courtesan always hungry for fresh flesh embarked with him and succeeded in seducing him... Upon returning, Édouard Manet belonged entirely to Infamy.

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266 Connotations that Jacques Derrida has theorized using the term carnophallogocentrism, arguing that “carnivorous virility”—the literal and symbolic importance of eating an animal, signifying an appropriation of its strength and a manifestation of power over it—has long been at the centre of the construction of male subjectivity in European culture. For Derrida, the carnivore is the key schema or image of phallogocentric structures. See *Points...: interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 255-287. See also Roland Barthes, “Steak and Chips”, *Mythologies* (trans. Annette Lavers, New York, 1972 [1957]), pp. 62-64.

267 Critics referred to her as both. Clark considers the difference between the prostitute and the courtesan paramount, arguing that the courtesan was what was representable of the prostitute (2008 [1985], p. 109). For the purposes of my argument it is enough that critics saw the nude body as in the role of being sexually for sale.

268 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 331-332: “... la peinture est pour eux la grande Impure, la Courtsiane toujours affamée de chair fraîche, qui doit boire le sang de leurs enfants et les tordre tout pantelants, sur sa gorge insatiable. Là est l’orgie, la débauche sans pardon, le spectre sanglant... à dix-sept ans, Édouard Manet s’embarqua comme novice sur un vaisseau qui se rendait à Rio-Janeiro. Sans doute la grande Impure, la Courtsiane toujours affamée de chair fraîche s’embarqua avec lui et acheva de le séduire au milieu des solitudes lumineuses de l’Océan et du ciel; elle s’adressa à sa chair, elle balança
This description appears at odds with Zola’s other privileged metaphor in “Une nouvelle manière” of the artist, Manet or Zola himself, as a disembodied scientific analyst. As Zola put it in his defence of Thérèse Raquin the following year:

I am in the same position as one of those painters of nudes who work untouched by a hint of desire, and who are quite astonished when a critic announces that he is scandalized by the living flesh in their paintings... The humanity of the models disappeared as it does in the eyes of an artist who has a naked woman lounging in front of him and who considers only how to put that woman on his canvas in all the truth of her form and colour... I wrote every scene, even the most passionate ones, with the pure curiosity of a scientist.  

Between these two passages lies a fundamental schism: a simultaneous claim for the dispassionate neutrality of the artist-scientist free from bodily desire, as well as his seduction and consumption by a feminized force. Ulbach confirmed the latter as his own perception of the naturalist author, whom he had already linked to Manet, when he claimed that Courbet’s Origin of the World (1866) could stand as a signpost for “putrid literature” as its “muse, genie, or oracle.” Despite being used as an insult by Ulbach, this is consistent with Zola positioning a sexualized female power behind Manet’s painting. Such a characterization of predatory, devouring femininity had a long history. Common slang for the vagina included “la bouche d’en bas,” and in a less literal manner, the mouth and the vagina were considered analogous and even connected. We have seen that prostitutes, often accused of possessing insatiable sexual appetites, were also believed to be voracious eaters. Slang names for prostitutes included mangeuses d’hommes and mangeardes. Zola would

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amoureusement devant ses yeux les lignes éclatantes des horizons, elle lui parla de passion avec le langage doux et vigoureux des couleurs. Au retour, Édouard Manet appartenait tout entier à l’Infâme.” The trope of art as a mistress has a long history, as discussed in Lichtenstein 1987, pp. 77-87.

269 Zola, “Preface to the Second Edition”, Thérèse Raquin: “Je me suis trouvé dans le cas de ces peintres qui copient des nudités, sans qu’un seul désir les effleure, et qui restent profondément surpris lorsqu’un critique se déclare scandalisé par les chairs vivantes de leur oeuvre... L’humanité des modèles disparaissait comme elle disparaît aux yeux de l’artiste qui a une femme nue vautrée devant lui, et qui songe uniquement à mettre cette femme sur sa toile dans la vérité de ses formes et de ses colorations... j’en ai écrit chaque scène, même les plus fiévreuses, avec la seule curiosité du savant...”

270 He does not name the painting explicitly, but his allusion to it is unmistakable.

characterize his fictional budding courtesan Nana (1880) as a “man-eater” whose hearty appetite is a consistent feature of the novel, as it had been of her mother Gervaise in L’Assommoir (1877). The link between the femme fatale mythology and orality drew upon the overlapping associations of eating and sex, ingestion and intercourse. Zola was most explicit about this connection in L’Assommoir, as in a scene of Gervaise watching a blacksmith nicknamed Gueule-d’Or at work swinging a hammer: “Before she’d come in, while she was walking along the damp pavements in the twilight, she’d felt a vague longing for something tasty to eat; but now she was satisfied, as if Gueule-d’Or’s hammer blows had nourished her.”

Desire for food and for sex are vividly connected as Gervaise, “reveling in being shaken from head to toe” by the swinging hammer, finds her twin hungers sated visually. In the passage, Zola positioned the eye, mouth, and vagina as analogous orifices with overlapping appetites.

While Zola claimed to take no account of the subject matter of Olympia—“for you [Manet] a painting is a mere pretext for analysis. You needed a nude woman, and you chose Olympia, the first to come... What does it all mean? You don’t know, nor I”—the interpretation of painting that Zola adopted in order to channel those critical responses that suggested abjection associated with animalized and sexualized female flesh into a heroic male creative schema was precisely based upon the existence of the courtesan figure, the figure that the nude Olympia was taken to represent. Manet’s flesh and blood was staked out upon, and materialized in painted form as a result of, the body of the courtesan, whose body other critics also compared to flesh and blood: “faisandée,” “that disagreeable yellow that one sees in the old chickens on market stands,” “bloody flesh, raw, violent, bloody painting,” “unhealthy,” “nauseating,” provoking “indigestion.”

Despite his formalist

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272 Zola, L’Assommoir (trans. Margaret Mauldon, Oxford; New York, 1995 [1877]): “Au crépuscule, avant d’entrer, elle avait eu, le long des trottoirs humides, un désir vague, un besoin de manger un bon morceau; maintenant, elle se trouvait satisfaite, comme si les coups de marteau de la Gueule-d’Or l’avaient nourrie.”

273 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 359: “...un tableau pour vous est un simple prétexthe à analyse. Il vous fallait une femme nue, et vous avez choisi Olympia, la première venue; il vous fallait des taches claires et lumineuses, et vous avez mis un bouquet; il vous fallait des taches noires, et vous avez placé dans un coin une négresse et un chat. Qu’est-ce que tout cela veut dire? vous ne le savez guère, ni moi non plus.”

account of *Olympia*, Zola registered its subject when he personified Painting as a flesh-eating courtesan, in similar terms to how the figure of Olympia was described in 1865 and beyond. “[H]er greenish, bloodshot eyes appear to be provoking the public,” claimed one critic who associated the figure with animalistic blood lust and devouring femininity, as did others who claimed that her gaze could arrest and penetrate its prey.278 Victor de Jancovitz compared the nude to Satan.279 Others used the concept of a witch’s Sabbath, consistent with the black cat (the prototypical witch’s companion) to suggest unnatural appetites, among them the taste for human flesh.280 Cracks appear in Zola’s rhetoric as he introduced a different way of understanding the flesh of painting, where the flesh of the male painter-turned-painting was identified not as a statement of dominating masculine individuality, but as an offering to an insatiable female idol. The desire to paint robs the artist of his flesh and blood, which is digested into paint on canvas. The painting becomes both the artist’s body as well as a separate abject, animate material associated with bloodthirsty femininity. This process culminates in Zola’s *L’Oeuvre* (1886), the story of tragic painter Claude Lantier, Gervaise’s son and Nana’s half brother, whose uncontrollable desire to paint and irrational adoration of his painted female figure (conflated with the entire pictorial surface) leads to his suicide. The painting of a monumental nude, incomplete and ultimately unrealized, finishes off the passionate painter, whom Zola based on the artist Frenhofer in Balzac’s *Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu* (1831). Like Lantier, Frenhofer works maniacally upon a painting of a female figure that he is the only one to recognize as such, and which ends in costing him his life. Balzac and Zola could equate the desire to paint with the desire for the

275 Cantaloube 1865.
276 Drak 1865B.
277 Ego 1865.
278 These reactions climax in Paul Valéry’s 1932 description, which relies heavily upon Zola: “… Olympia, monster of banal love… inspires sacred horror… [She is] the Impure par excellence, whose function requires the untroubled and candid ignorance of all modesty. Bestial vestal devoted to absolute nudity, she makes one dream of all that hides itself and is preserved of primitive barbarism and ritual animality in the ways and workings of big-city prostitution,” in “The Triumph of Manet”, as discussed in Bataille 1955, p. 66; and Bernheimer 1989A, pp. 264-265.
279 Jankovitz 1865.
280 Pierrot 1865; Cantaloube 1865; Deriège 1865. On witchcraft and unnatural appetites, see Constance Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity”, in Howes 2005, p. 73.
female body because of the tradition linking female flesh to painted canvas. While Manet painted two women in *Olympia*, and Frenhofer and Lantier place monumental female figures at the centre of their “masterpieces,” the entire surfaces of their paintings were understood as feminized. By 1886 when he wrote *L’Oeuvre*, Zola’s attitude had changed from 1867, for Lantier is far from the powerful creative personality that Zola claimed of Manet. But already in 1867 the comparison of painting to a courtesan introduced ambiguities into Zola’s defence. Among them, what was the relation of the refined male artist to the materialized self of the painting, especially when that painting represented a working-class, naked woman, in the context of a longer tradition in which the surface of a painting was identified with the feminine? Was painting a courageous and purposeful act, or seduction without agency?

Zola’s language of taste, which could seem a facile metaphor used to dismiss the lightweight painting of artistic confectioners, has an underside in these broader metaphorics of ingestion and in the appearance of the glutton, quintessentially the gluttonous woman, that insatiable Impure. On the one hand, this understanding of painting as “the utterance of a heart and flesh,” a pained and personal sacrifice made for the feminine monster but also for the public, can be fitted within constructions for virile masculinity through the framework of sacrifice. Jacques Derrida has theorized carnivorism and sacrifice as two conditions of a carnophallogocentric regime, his term for the structure that produces and is

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282 Zola, “Adieux d’un critique d’art” 1866, p. 322. Zola’s account of art as a desperate activity shares underlying logic with Merleau-Ponty, who described art as an “inarticulate cry,” claiming that “it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible... something has moved, caught fire, which engulfs his body” (1960, pp. 141, 147). The phenomenologist especially admired chronically insecure and frequently critically maligned Cézanne, whom he believed “abandoned himself to the chaos of sensation” (1945, p. 63). The construction of the artist as compelled to create by outside forces, who gives “birth” to painting and may not even be aware of its significance, has been deconstructed and contested by feminist art historians since Linda Nochlin’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1971).
produced by European male subjectivity. He argues that subjects are forged through incorporation of the phallus, which takes many forms for Derrida, who suggests that animal meat, human bodies (consumed sexually), and language (passing through the mouth) might be charged with phallic significance. According to Derrida, hierarchies of subjects are consolidated in a violent dog-eat-dog world sustained by operations of sacrifice that extend all the way to the “chef d’état.” Even the leader must give of “himself” (I use himself purposefully in reference to the phallogocentric framework that Derrida describes), with subjects internalizing his words and actions such that the leader is “symbolically eaten himself.”

This schema is central to Catholicism, where Christ’s flesh and blood is imagined as literally consumed in the Eucharist. A sacrificial structure appears in Zola’s metaphor through which a painting is transubstantiated into the body and blood of its artist, and the male painter is associated with the animal strength of flesh and blood but also its surrender for public consumption. While Zola was vehemently opposed to the Church, he retained reverence for the one sacrificed in his secular reworking of a Catholic metaphoric manoeuvre:

[Manet] has produced very particular works, of a bitter and strong flavour, that hurt the eyes of people accustomed to other appearances. And now these people, without trying to explain why their eyes were injured, have insulted the young painter... Is not such a riot an interesting thing to study, and is not a curious, unbiased onlooker like myself right to stop in passing the mocking and noisy crowd, which surrounds the young painter and follows him with its boos? I picture myself in the street meeting a crowd of ruffians who follow Édouard Manet and throw rocks... the man was being stoned because he had outrageously desecrated the Temple of Beauty...

284 Zola, “Une nouvelle manière” 1877, pp. 329, 372: “Un jeune peintre... a ainsi produit des œuvres particulières, d’une saveur amère et forte, qui ont blessé les yeux des gens habitués à d’autres aspects. Et voilà que ces gens, sans chercher à s’expliquer pourquoi leurs yeux étaient blessés, ont injurié le jeune peintre... N’est-ce pas qu’une telle émeute est chose intéressante à étudier, et qu’un curieux indépendant comme moi a raison de s’arrêter en passant devant la foule ironique et bruyante, qui entoure le jeune peintre et qui le poursuit de ses huées? J’imagine que je suis en pleine rue et que je rencontre un attroupement de gamins qui accompagnent Édouard Manet à coups de pierres... on lapidait cet homme parce qu’il avait outrageusement souillé le temple du Beau.”
Manet’s *Jesus Mocked by the Soldiers* was hung with *Olympia* at the 1865 Salon, a poignant pairing in this context, and at the previous year’s Salon Manet had exhibited *The Dead Christ With Angels* (figure 24). Two such paintings of the tortured flesh of Christ surrendered to sustain human afterlife make relevant the other, religious context in which Zola’s language of tasting true flesh and blood was located. Most critics, however, saw Manet’s depictions of Christ not as representations of divine flesh, but of a body that was dirty or decomposing, as they had of the nude Olympia. A caricature of *The Dead Christ With Angels* expressed that sentiment through culinary metaphor (figure 25), where instead of limp with death, Christ is depicted as a drunkard leaning upon the serving tray held by an angel-turned-waiter. The caricaturist saw the white sheets upon which Christ rests as analogous to table linen, making the *Dead Christ* not unlike *Fish* on its tablecloth, and recalling the critical consensus that Manet painted his figures as though they were still life objects. Supported by the tray, Christ’s body rhymes visually with the carafe of wine that also rests upon it, the curved shape of his slumped form imitating the shape of that carafe in a literal evocation of the Eucharistic connection of blood to wine that is also a mockery of Manet’s treatment of its holy subject, deflating any notion of sacrifice or communion.

Challenges to Manet’s position within a schema of virile masculinity also became manifest when Zola directed the language of dissection at Manet himself, introducing further vulnerability into the body of the male artist. Zola opened “Une nouvelle manière” with the claim that “there is, for the critic, a penetrating joy in saying that he can dissect a being,” referring to Manet as the object of critical vivisection. In an 1866 *Figaro* article entitled “Causeries littéraires: un roman d’analyse,” Zola affirmed that the novelist-analyst “puts on the white apron of the anatomist and dissects, fibre by fibre, the human beast laid out completely naked on the slab of the amphitheatre.” This echoes the language of the “white apron” that Zola used earlier that year for “chefs” of the Academy, suggesting

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285 Ibid., p. 327.
286 Zola, “Causeries littéraires: un roman d’analyse”, *Le Figaro* (18 December 1866), p. 3. See also Zola’s preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin*, p. 4: “I have merely performed on two living bodies the analytical work that surgeons carry out on dead ones” — a continued claim for the dispassionate gaze of the author-physiologist toward the object of study. For a discussion of the literary appropriation of the anatomy metaphor, see Dorothy Kelly, *Reconstructing Woman: From Fiction to Reality in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (University Park, 2007), pp. 5-10; and Bernheimer 1989B, p. 214.
another underside to the allusions to cookery, a parallel discourse wherein the artist
butchers or dissects his model and the critic does the same to the artist.\textsuperscript{287} The idea of
author as anatomist was well established among writers at this time, used also in relation to
Balzac and Flaubert, and Ulbach, who had maligned Zola’s novels as “putrid literature,”
complained about its consequences:

I do not intend to restrict the domain of the author. Everything, even to the skin,
belongs to him: but to tear at the skin is no longer observation, it is surgery; and if
once in a while, by chance, an écorché might be indispensable to a psychological
demonstration, the écorché used systematically is nothing but madness and
deprivation.\textsuperscript{288}

Ulbach believed that the artist should engage in direct observation, but not the
“penetrating joy” that Zola described of probing beneath the skin. A line should exist
between the author and the surgeon, the pen and the knife. Otherwise, Ulbach contended,
the art would be “perverted,” “sick,” “violent,” “brutal”—overall, excessively embodied.
The intrusion of base corporeality into art was at the heart of Ulbach’s critique, and the
source of the ambivalence within Zola’s own critical operations. Continuing his article,
Ulbach complained that Zola’s characters were motivated only by their “physical
impressions,” their temperaments and the passions of their flesh. “\textit{A storm beneath the skull}
is a sublime spectacle; \textit{a storm in the kidneys} is a despicable spectacle,” he argued,
protesting that Zola’s fiction concerned only the struggles of the body, not the mind.\textsuperscript{289} By
theorizing painting as flesh, Zola positioned it as material and corporeal, something that
might be eaten or dissected like the artist himself, allowing for the intertwining of artist,
critic, and painting that Ulbach found to be nauseating and indecent. In this way, Zola’s
concept of flesh shares aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s use of the term, and Merleau-Ponty’s

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{287} Zola, “Le Jury” 1866, p. 265: “Naguère, c’était l’Académie des beaux-arts qui passait le
tablier blanc [to the next generation of painters] et qui mettait la main à la pâte [thereby
they ruined the next “batch” of painting].”
\item \textsuperscript{288} Ferragus 1868: “Je ne prétends pas restreindre le domaine de l’écrivan. Tout, jusqu’à
l’épiderme, lui appartient: arracher la peau, ce n’est plus de l’observation, c’est de la
chirurgie; et si une fois par hasard un écorché peut être indispensable à la démonstration
psychologique, l’écorché mis en système n’est plus que de la folie et de la déprivation.”
\item \textsuperscript{289} Ibid.: “\textit{Une tempête sous un crane} est un spectacle sublime: \textit{Une tempête dans les reins}
est un spectacle ignoble.” See also “Ce qui fait la puissance et le triomphe du bien, c’est
que même la chair assouvie, la passion satisfaite, il s’éveille et brûle dans le cerveau.”
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account of painting further challenges Zola’s other descriptions of the artist as detached from subject matter. Turning to painting to explore the intertwining of eye, body, and mind, Merleau-Ponty explained: “we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body.” This discussion of painting as transubstantiation evokes Zola’s understanding of artworks partaking of the flesh and blood of their artist, the product of blending Manet’s body with the world. “A work of art is never other than the combination of a man, the variable element, and nature, the fixed element,” declared Zola. Through the “flesh,” Merleau-Ponty argued for this same interconnection of the subject and the world. Because people and things are caught in and made up of the same flesh, Merleau-Ponty understood objects as part of the full definition of the human subject who encounters, uses, and experiences them. Since a painting is one of these objects sharing the same conditions of visibility and materiality as the person looking upon it, it comes to life as painting and spectator open out onto each other. Zola’s prose, in which a painting becomes animate, the very body of the artist with whom it shares the same materiality, suggests this exchange between artist or viewer and the painting itself—as did the many other accounts from the opposite side of the critical spectrum claiming that Olympia had a gaze of its own and was capable of attacking the viewer.

Merleau-Ponty’s “flesh” has had productive potential for feminism because it challenges the distinctions between subject and world, analyst and object of investigation, animate and inanimate—binary oppositions in which one term is privileged over the other, creating and sustaining the hierarchies that define and position certain subjects over

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292 Merleau-Ponty 1960, p. 125: “Things are an annex prolongation of itself [the body]; they are incrusted in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body. These reversals, these antinomies, are different ways of saying that vision is caught or comes to be in things... Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them.”
Zola’s notion of flesh, which also challenges such distinctions despite itself, can be similarly subjected to feminist reinterpretation. When artist and artwork are so easily elided, the gendered binaries discussed in the beginning of this chapter are destabilized. With the ingestion and dissection metaphors, the artist’s body emerges not as self-contained and whole, but as permeable, penetrable, and vulnerable, ideas that were powerfully associated with the feminine in nineteenth-century France and beyond. Insisting on Manet’s embodiment, on male corporeality, introduced ambivalence into Zola’s art criticism that Ulbach also sensed in Zola’s novels. The pervasive and longstanding association between women and corporeality, men and mental cognition also informed the gendering of the sensorium. Vision, audition, and sometimes touch held privileged status in eighteenth-century philosophy, while smell and taste were positioned as lower on a hierarchy, denigrated because their functioning requires proximity to the body that made it easy to align those senses with base corporeality and even, as Freud argued, with the instinctive workings of the animal kingdom rather than the “civilized” pursuits of Man. Women were understood as especially responsive to those senses that retained this association with the bodily and with a state of nature rather than culture. Women’s more


294 On the threat posed by male embodiment to the construction of male subjectivity in European culture, see Grosz 1995, pp. 32-42. On the specific ways that nineteenth-century French bourgeois men were expected to deny aspects of their corporeality, as through their form of dress, in order to defend against bodily vulnerability, psychic vulnerability, and feminization, see Tamar Garb, “Gustave Caillebotte’s Male Figures: Masculinity, Muscularity and Modernity”, in Garb 1998, pp. 35-39.

highly attuned sensory faculties, it was widely believed, made up for their perceived deficiencies in rationality, intellect, reflection, and moderation. As explored in the previous chapter, however, growing interest in literal “good taste” emerged alongside the burgeoning gastronomic culture of the nineteenth century. The balance between refined taste as an aesthetic and intellectual skill befitting the sophisticated bourgeois male, versus innate and irrational (and thereby easily feminized) appetite continued to be delicate. Zola worked to align Manet with refined bourgeois masculinity, as Barbey D’Aurevilly had done in discussing the artist as though he were an aged piece of meat. But as with Barbey D’Aurevilly, there is an unsettling element in Zola’s use of the sense of taste to describe Manet’s painting with its “bitter and strong flavour” that injured the eyes of viewers, consistent with his description of Manet’s painting as unpalatable raw flesh in opposition to the delicious treats proffered by Academicians. Describing Olympia, Zola went as far as declaring that violence was the very “accent” or “savour” of Manet’s work, in a striking summons of sound and taste to stand in for sight when the eye is bewildered:

At first sight, one only distinguishes two tones in the painting, two violently contrasting tones... this elegant abruptness, this violence of transitions... is the personal accent, the particular savour of the work...

By suggesting bitterness or acidity, Zola approached the consensus among critics who used alimentary metaphors of verjuice or unripe fruit to argue that Manet’s painting was in metaphoric as well as literal bad taste. By suggesting violence, Zola moved dangerously close to other assessments that also declared that Manet’s painting enacted brutality. As a result, Zola was forced to claim oxymoronically that Manet’s paintings had an “elegant abruptness,” that “there is bitterness and sweetness” in the first impression of

297 Zola, “Une Nouvelle manière” 1867, pp. 357-358: “Au premier regard, on ne distingue ainsi que deux teintes dans le tableau, deux teintes violentes... cette sécheresse élégante, cette violence des transitions... C’est l’accent personnel, la saveur particulière de l’œuvre.”
298 Ibid.: “...il a ainsi produit des œuvres particulières, d’une saveur amère et forte” (p. 329); “....une œuvre toute blonde, toute naïve, charmante jusqu’à la grâce, réelle jusqu’à l’âpreté” (p. 360).
299 Ibid., p. 351: “...il y a de l’âpreté et de la douceur dans le premier regard qu’on jette sur les murs.”
his works, a “sweet brutality,” the rudeness of which would be re-formed into delicacy as paintings were viewed/digested from an increasing temporal and spatial distance. Despite Zola’s explicit privileging of the dispassionate gaze of the critic/artist/analyst, the encounter with paint that he described in his account of *Olympia* was embodied and resistant to the penetrating eye. “At first sight, one only distinguishes two tones in the painting,” and “[m]oreover,” he continued, “all details have disappeared... if you want to reconstruct reality, you must move back a few steps.” Because of Manet’s simplification of details and suppression of half-tones, where “the eyes [of Olympia] are reduced to a few black strokes,” upon first sight, and especially close up, Zola contended that the viewer could perceive simply paint itself. It was only in stepping back that recognizable subject matter materialized. But even then, when the “facts” of painting offered themselves up, they still yielded no key to interpretive meaning. “What does it all mean? You [Manet] don’t know, nor I.” Little consolation for the reader, left with the same unease as critics who found *Olympia* resistant to language. Beyond this, Zola’s reader is unsure as to whether Manet was in good taste or serving unpalatable raw flesh, a refined gentleman or irreverent rebel, powerful mind or vulnerable body, detached analyst or impassioned lover, devourer of experience or a meal for the hungry courtesan called Painting.

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300 Ibid., p. 345: “... une brutalité douce, si je puis m’exprimer ainsi.”
301 Ibid., pp. 357-358.
302 It was in this same process of painting coming together for the viewer that Merleau-Ponty located Cézanne’s significance for phenomenology. Cézanne “shows the impression of an emerging order, an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes,” thus demonstrating the intertwining of “the senses” and “the understanding” (1945, pp. 64-65).
303 “Une nouvelle manière” 1867, p. 359.
When Gustave Caillebotte took up the theme of butchered meat in the early 1880s he centralized certain of these themes: the sexualization and gendering of meat, the violence of butchery and even of painting, the tenuous boundaries between masculine and feminine, human and animal identities, and the slippage between paint and alimentary material. These paintings looked backward to *Olympia*, and likely also to 1870-1871, a period of war, siege, and revolution that would materially transform as well as psychologically haunt French society, and when questions of butchery and the space and spectacle of the butcher shop window took on special relevance. In July of 1870 France and Prussia went to war, and Paris fell on 28 January 1871. From September 1870 to January 1871 the Prussians laid siege to Paris, cutting off the food supply. As horse, rat, cat, dog, even zoo animals were shot and sold, categories of edible and inedible became unfixed and newspapers that flourished from unprecedented freedom and audience figures fixated on food. The period’s most popular printmakers and caricaturists focused on shop window imagery and raised the spectre of cannibalism to manifest the discomfort of dietary change, as in representations of *étalages* of human body parts substituted for animal ones (figures 26-27). Kaiser Wilhelm was caricatured as a meat butcher (figure 28) and in Zola’s novel about the war written twenty years later, *La Débâcle* (1892), the soldiers’ battle cry is a repeated “À la boucherie!” The cultural construction of the virile Frenchman in his absolute difference from the “weaker” sex and the animal kingdom was challenged. Such anxieties were amplified by the Paris Commune. On 18 March 1871, a revolt led by working-class citizens forced Adolphe Thiers’s government to retreat to Versailles, and

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306 See especially the series of large hand-coloured lithographs sold as single-sheet prints which would have been collected and bound by a middle-class audience, including Draner [pseudonym of Jules Renard], *Paris assiégé*; Faustin Betbeder, *Paris bloqué*; Moloch [pseudonym of Alphonse Hector Colomb], *Paris dans les caves*. 
elections were held in the capital under the Paris Commune. Its material successes were short-lived, and on 21 May troops from Versailles entered Paris to crush the Commune during the “semaine sanglante,” killing some 30,000 men, women, and children. The aftermath ushered in a period of dejection and collective trauma in which the French feared for what they perceived as the degeneration of their nation. In the transformed circumstances of heightened anxiety that lasted well into the next two decades, arguments for vegetarianism that were based upon a purported link between carnivorism and aggression gained limited traction for the first time in the century. While it was not until 1892 that Zola addressed the events of 1870-1871 explicitly in novelistic form, in Le Ventre de Paris (1873) he chose a charcuterie as the central site through which to explore the recent past, and meat as the terrain over which questions of power and mastery were raised. Specifically in the scenes of animal butchery, the violence of 1848 (for the characters) and 1871 (for the readers) is implied. The most brutal of these descriptions occurs at the end of the novel under the imminent threat of armed revolution, as a mentally disabled young man named Marjolin slaughters animals with remarkable and disturbing efficiency: “Marjolin was going ever faster, enjoying the slaughter, crouching with gleaming eyes like a huge salivating mastiff… that huge blonde animal conducting his massacre…” The distinction between humans and animals is twice challenged, in the anthropomorphized pigeons subject to “massacre” and in the animalized butcher.

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307 This spark was a manifestation of long-held tensions in the Second Empire. For a detailed history see Adrien Rifkin and Roger Thomas, eds. Voices of the People: The Social Life of ‘La Sociale’ at the End of the Second Empire (London; New York, 1988), pp. 179-328.

308 On theories of degeneration see Robert Nye, Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France (New York, 1993), pp. 72-97. There is a large body of literature concerning the trauma of these years and their after-effects. See especially Peter Starr, Collective Trauma: The Paris Commune and its Cultural Aftermath (New York, 2006).


310 Zola 2009 [1873], p. 287, see also pp. 33, 182-183. Moreover, the dichotomy of male butcher versus butchered female flesh breaks down. Marjolin takes his orders from his lover and master, a young woman named Cadine who relishes her control over her “delicious little part of Les Halles, blond flesh available for whatever she wished” (p. 265). He is passive flesh to be animated by her wishes, and his state of mental disability resulted from a blow to the head by the most powerful character in the novel, the female charcutière Lisa Quenu. There is a substantial literature on the reorganization of gender roles during the Siege, when aspects of women’s daily lives became politicized, and especially the
In *Calf in a Butcher Shop* (figure 17), Caillebotte depicted the underside of a life-sized slaughtered calf suspended by splayed legs. Among the largest of his still lifes, painted on a canvas with dimensions that would typically have served for a full-length standing portrait, it was an ambitious project. The corpse drops from a wooden hanger in front of a freshly painted wall panel half covered by a starched and pleated white cloth, ensuring impeccable hygiene through the expensive décor of an elite establishment. The gutted animal is thoroughly cleaned and thoughtfully dressed for display. A garland of flowers and leaves, sculpted with thick impasto, hangs from the legs down to the severed neck, and a single, thickly painted pink rose projects outward from the flesh of the animal’s belly. With limbs stretching from corner to corner, the flattened calf dominates the close-up view, producing confrontation with the imposing body while eschewing further social or spatial context. Dominated by strident red, the palette departs dramatically from the muted colours of the artist’s better-known street scenes of the previous decade, in which critics consistently complained of his “large harmony of slate grey.”

Even the pale flesh of the calf’s skin, with only a very thin varnish (if varnished at all) to reveal the rough application of pasty paint, is tinged with flecks of acidic yellow, blue, and green.

Carcasses were not unusual subjects of contemporary painting. Rembrandt’s *The Slaughtered Ox* (figure 29, 1655), then in the Louvre, served as an example for similar scenes by artists including Antoine Vollon, François Bonvin, and Victor Gilbert. In paintings by those artists, Rembrandt’s legacy manifested itself in typically dramatic chiaroscuro revealing massive carcasses in courtyards of butcher shops or back rooms of markets, where the power of the daunting, dead animal still commands respect as well as implies the strength of the brawny butcher. Caillebotte’s carcass is conspicuously out of

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step with this tradition. It is not located in a slaughterhouse, but an upscale shop, reflecting contemporary changes in abattoir policy. Baron Haussmann planned to separate cleansed urban spaces from the violence and stench that he believed accompanied a slaughterhouse. Public abattoirs were centralized in a complex named La Villette in 1867, which Haussmann situated in the outlying Northeastern nineteenth arrondissement. La Villette instituted greater distance between butchering and purchasing, for shopkeepers bought directly from the slaughterhouse and resold their goods in retail fashion in the city centre.

With its elaborate window dressing that feminizes the body, Caillebotte’s calf highlights this distance, not only from messy slaughterhouse practices but from the animal’s identity before its transformation into meat. The garland hangs like a necklace indicating freshness and attracting the passer-by’s attention. Combined with the rose inserted into the belly like a corsage, as might be seen in portraits of women such as Renoir’s La Loge (1874), this window dressing creates a visual pun on the toilette that turns the animal’s lower body into a grotesque décolletage, an area of the female body sometimes referred to as viande in contemporary argot. The skin of the calf’s stomach hangs down like breasts, tinged with blue and green and thereby suggestive of decomposition—one critic complained that Caillebotte’s blue and green colouration upon bodies made his portraits appear “cadaverous and tortured.” Veal was common slang for a youthful prostitute (and the rose a well-established symbol of virginity), and one whose flesh was thought particularly likely to carry venereal disease, invoking the mutually inflecting debates around meat-borne and sexually transmitted diseases. Zola studied the dictionaries of la langue verte, or the bawdy slang associated with the working classes which included these connections between meat and human flesh, and exploited them in Le

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316 Lee 2008, pp. 273, 275, citing Delvau 1850, p. 365; see also Choux 1881, p. 354. On the rose, see Delvau 1850, p. 333. Zola refers to fifteen year old Nana in these terms in L’Assommoir, p. 348: “elle avait poussé comme un veau, très-blanche de chair, très-grasse.”
Ventre de Paris when he described the proprietor Lisa Quenu in her charcuterie: “Along the line of marble and mirrors ran hooks from which hung sides of pork and rolls of larding fat, and Lisa, with her strong neck, her round hips, and her swelling bosom, in side views, looked like a trussed-up queen in the midst of lard and raw flesh.”³¹⁷ The hanging meat, contorted and tied with string, is reflected in the corseted flesh of the woman beside it. The description is ambivalent, dehumanizing and brutalizing the body (Lisa is later described as “dubious meat that had been dressed for the window”)³¹⁸ at the same time as acknowledging its power.

The sex of Caillebotte’s calf is male. Females were typically kept for reproduction and milking.³¹⁹ Whether or not the average viewer would have been aware of this, the limp tail hanging between the animal’s legs is suggestive of the male anatomy, and given the associations between oxen in paintings like Rembrandt’s and virile masculinity, the spectre of emasculation lurks within the image. At a moment when the “feminization” of Frenchmen and French society as a whole was perceived as a pressing social problem, in the wake of military defeat and fears about a decrease in the birth rate and the “masculinity index,”³²⁰ the hermaphroditism of this corpse may have constituted a significant statement. It has been well established that Caillebotte broke with gendered norms of representation in many of his portraits, nudes, and street scenes.³²¹ Man at his Bath (figure 30) was painted around the same time, perhaps even concurrently, as Calf in a Butcher Shop. This unconventional depiction of a male bather seen from behind appropriated a common pose

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³¹⁷ Zola 2009 [1873], p. 71. Orig.: “Tout le long des marbres et des glaces, accrochés aux barres à dents de loup, des porcs et des bandes de lard à piquer pendaient; et le profil de Lisa, avec sa forte encolure, ses lignes rondes, sa gorge qui avançait, mettait une effigie de reine empâtée, au milieu de ce lard et de ces chairs crues.”

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 212.


and context for female nudes rather than male. The potential feminization of this figure was emphasized by its orientation; because the buttocks are penetrable they may be symbolically associated with femininity. As Tamar Garb has argued, the ovular pink shadow with its “fleshy pink brushstrokes” at the top of the buttocks suggests the unseen anus or a vagina, further infusing sexual indeterminacy into the painting. Caillebotte’s cross-dressed calf brings these themes of sexual uncertainty and potential penetration to a brutal climax. The body is made up like a cocotte, cut up and exposed to a piercing, prolonged gaze that is implied by the painting’s uniform finish. The rose adds another level of signification for those viewers aware of same-sex prostitution practices; Norma Broude has argued that Caillebotte was among this contingent. For male prostitutes dressed as women, often underage, a single rose sometimes served as a method of signalling sexual availability under the disguise. The symbol was drawn from the slang name for anus, rosette. Caillebotte’s painted rose proves especially provocative in this context. Its petals are rendered with the thickest impasto of the painting, and the dark centre literally recedes like an orifice into the swirling, built-up pink strokes around it. Located between the “breasts” of the creature, in the general region where a vagina or anus would be found on the animal, the rose may be read as a displaced depiction of either, and hermaphroditism or travesty once again come to mind.

If Calf in a Butcher Shop resists the association in a painting like Rembrandt’s of the male body with the ox, neither does it associate the female body with tasty flesh. The metaphor verges too close to literal flesh and blood. The effect is similar to the famous moment in Le Ventre de Paris when Lantier relates having once created a repulsive window display at the Quenu charcuterie: “I carefully placed the colours in an astonishing still life bursting with colour... It was both barbaric and very fine… that was my masterpiece. I’ve never done better.” Lantier “paints” with raw meat in a transfiguration

322 Garb 1998, pp. 24-53 (quote p. 51). Lee 2008 suggests that the male figure’s stance in this painting bears resemblance to the splayed limbs of the calf in Calf in a Butcher Shop, though I find their shared feminization the more compelling link.
323 Broude argues that gay availability is a major theme in Caillebotte’s street scenes (2002, pp. 117-174).
325 Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 209-210. While there is no evidence that Caillebotte read this novel, his letters indicate familiarity with contemporary fiction, as in a letter to Monet
of flesh and blood into representation. He calls this his “masterpiece,” the same language that his author used to refer to *Olympia*. In *Calf in a Butcher Shop* the two “masterpieces,” *Olympia* and the meat display, collide. In both, pale flesh is set off against a white sheet, and a curtain and wall block the eye from moving back into deep space. The pink flower in the nude’s hair is paralleled in the pink rose decorating the calf, amongst other flowers found in the gifted bouquet and the calf’s garland. Both bodies with their attributes of femininity, blooms and jewellery, are placed within a context in which they are understood as commodified. But there are obvious limits to the similarities between these bodies, and if Caillebotte had *Olympia* in mind it was more in the spirit of Cézanne’s *A Modern Olympia* (1873-1874) which exposed and interrupted the rituals of paid sex that were implicitly staged in *Olympia*, for *Calf in a Butcher Shop* plays out the critical response to Manet’s nude figure as animalized, disempowered flesh. The nude’s flexed hand is satirized in the calf’s limp tail, her impertinent gaze obliterated by decapitation and the body hung up for ridicule. Instead of closed legs and shielding hand that deny access to the genital “scar” or “wound,” as contemporary literature sometimes called the vagina, in Caillebotte’s painting the limbs are pried apart and painfully flattened to expose the gaping open chest and genital region, evoking the body splayed out on the anatomy table, on the butcher’s block, or in the morgue. Torn ligaments exposed, skin pulled back tightly to reveal the interior, the corpse resembles a human écorché, calling to mind the critical assertion that Manet flayed his models with his brushes. The strokes representing the calf’s body interior and severed neck criss-cross like stitches or sutures, building up the surface of the canvas at the same time as they cut into the body depicted. These thick strokes of opaque red pigment resemble coagulated blood, a crusty wound. The viscous paint comes across as an organic substance, the stuff of both animal and human bodies, both prone to decomposition. The carcass is not appealing but appalling, which calls into question the role of the artist who was expected to elevate and flatter the subject, particularly when that

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326 Lee briefly compares the *Calf* to *Olympia* insofar as both represent flesh for sale (2008, p. 290).

327 Delvau 1850, p. 92; Choux 1881, pp. 46, 249.
subject was a woman. Critics were horrified by what they perceived as Manet’s refusal to do just that with his model Victorine Meurent. As Zola quipped sarcastically: “If, at least, M. Manet had borrowed M. Cabanel’s rice powder puff and made up the cheeks and breasts of Olympia a bit, the young girl would have been presentable.” Caillebotte’s calf, on the other hand, is dressed up for show and painted in bright colours that have been called “oddly festive,” “gay,” and even “confected.” Instead of Olympia’s sheets, which had seemed unclean to commentators who reacted both to the thickness of brushstrokes in disparate tones as well as the questionable morality of the environment, Caillebotte painted a starched white linen so fresh that it verges on icy blue.

The connections posed in relation to Olympia between morgue bodies, raw meat, female figures, and abject painterly materiality would become central to how Impressionist painting was discussed—both because of Manet’s understood status as a forefather to the group, as well as Olympia’s infamy in its time and beyond that generated, sustained, and diffused the terms of the painting’s criticism from 1865 onward. Caillebotte’s paintings should also be placed within the context of those debates. The link between Olympia and Impressionist paintings, and the ability of both to produce nausea, were set out clearly in Camille Delaville’s review of the 1880 Impressionist Exhibition: “Since Manet’s Belle Olympia, we have seen so many colours that have been kicked and punched onto canvases, so many arms disconnected from bodies, so many unbalanced figures... that we are a little disgusted with it.” Delaville perceived a direct link between Manet’s “violent” painting,

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328 Druick argues that Calf in a Butcher Shop satirizes the artist’s aspirations to elevate the subject (2002, p. 212).
329 Zola, “M. Manet” 1866, p. 291: “Si, au moins, M. Manet avait emprunté la houppe à poudre de riz de M. Cabanel et s’il avait un peu fardé les joues et les seins d’Olympia, la jeune fille aurait été presentable.”
332 Michael Fried, “Caillebotte’s Impressionism”, Representations (66, Spring 1999), p. 34.
333 For example, see Jancovitz 1865; Gautier 1865.
334 Delaville, “Chronique parisienne: Débauche de peinture”, La Presse (2 April 1880), pp. 1-2: “Depuis la Belle Olympe, de Manet, nous avons vu tant de couleurs collées sur des toiles à coup de pied et à coup de poings, tant de bras non attachés aux corps, tant de figures sans équilibre, tant de prairies vert paon, tant de fleuves indigo, tant de braves gens
which abused the canvas as well as the figures, and Impressionism. This was not unique.
The same critical language used to characterize the supine Olympia was applied to female figures painted by Renoir, Degas, and Gauguin, which were compared to raw meat in an advanced state, *faisandé*, from the mid 1870s into the 1880s. At stake were related complaints concerning subject matter and technique. Impressionist painting was sometimes called the school of the *tache*, denoting patches of colour that were seen to brutalize the subject, especially disturbing if the subject was female. Together with the common complaint that Impressionists saw as though through blue, green, and violet-tinged glasses that discoloured human form, Impressionist bodies were through to resemble dead and decaying bodies, whether human or animal. The quintessential caricature of an Impressionist painting was a portrait of a decomposing woman, as in an 1877 series by Cham to be discussed further in my Conclusion, and it was predictably female figures upon whom these debates played out. Not only was the painter expected to treat a female portrait subject with particular tact, but as discussed, the surface of the canvas and material of paint, which were seen to be over-emphasized in Impressionist painting, were associated

campés dans leurs cadres comme des bonshommes d’Epinal, que nous en sommes un peu écoeurés.”

with the feminine. The feminizing of Impressionism as a movement will be a major subject of the following chapter, but it suffices here to say that criticism of Impressionist morgue or meaty bodies related not only to the mottled look of the depicted figures, but to the paint itself which was of such insistent organic materiality that it might itself be liable to decompose. Clotted across the surface of the canvas, the oil-suspended medium was identified as a substance that might change over time and create nausea, so that in one of Cham’s caricatures of *Le Peintre impressionniste* (figure 31) the artist complains that he borrowed his colours from the morgue but unfortunately could not express their odour, implying that a painter might literally borrow organic material. The theme of decomposition also related theoretically to an understood goal of Impressionist painting, the decomposition of light into “raw” prismatic colour which was often described as so harsh that it damaged the eye of the critic, recalling those similar discussions of Manet’s painting as attacking the eye with its forms and tones. The language of decomposition used to describe prismatic Impressionist colour should be read alongside the other critique that Impressionist colours shared the tones of rotting objects or could themselves deteriorate like hanging meat, for at stake in all instances was the ability of the paint to endanger the viewer’s body, damaging the eye and provoking nausea.

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337 Frédérique Desbuissons has traced the theme of rotten painting in Salon criticism (2013A), mainly in the late 1850s through the 1870s, arguing that the metaphors relate to the inevitable decomposition of alimentary material in order to debase art (usually painting) and challenge its claims to temporal endurance and continuing value. While these themes carry into decomposition metaphors in Impressionist criticism, this is territory unexplored by Desbuissons and functions somewhat differently, relating to the decomposition of light and colour that was widely understood to characterize Impressionist technique. Themes of
This side of Impressionist criticism, which relied upon the comparison between figures and paint to rotten material to threaten an embodied viewer, is at odds with the dominant art historical reading of *Calf in a Butcher Shop*. Douglas Druick argues that *Calf in a Butcher Shop* “suggests the ironic detachment of the Baudelairian flâneur.”\(^{338}\) Stephen Eisenman claims that the painting manifests “detachment from the lives of animals and circumstances of their death... [an] absence of irony or empathy.”\(^{339}\) Ruth Iskin contends that “[t]he detached viewpoint connotes the anonymity of the metropolis.”\(^{340}\) Mary Morton and George Shackelford argue that Caillebotte painted the corpse as though “recording his amusement at the fastidious adornment of the dead meat... the artist responded to the humour of the found scene, most likely unintended by the vendor, much as snapshot photographic artists would when similarly provoked in the twentieth century.”\(^{341}\) Finally, Paula Young Lee maintains that “Caillebotte has not painted meat but the conventions of public display, conventions that neutralized these raw parts of all meaning except their viability inside a capitalist economy.”\(^{342}\) While the painting is strikingly matter of fact, I see no reason to insist that it implies a detached optical experience or “cool visual analys[i]s”\(^{343}\) of a simply “found” scene—even if detachment were an uncontested or mandatory aspect of flânerie. Instead the painting challenges its viewer, requiring time to decipher its subject and orientation and implying an extended look with its uniform resolution. It provokes a visceral shock once these are understood, for in reversing the progression of *Olympia*’s critics, causing a dead male animal to resemble a female figure


\(^{340}\) Iskin 2007, p. 177.

\(^{341}\) Mary Morton, Camille Mathieu, Galina Olmstead and George T. M. Shackelford, *Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter’s Eye* (exh. cat., Washington D.C., 2015), p. 188. For a counter-opinion, see Michael Fried, who contends that Caillebotte looked back to the “bodily” realism of Courbet and initiated a “physical,” “material” Impressionism, such that a work like *The Yerres, Effect of Rain* (1875) “so insistently evoke[s] the passage of time that the viewer’s experience of the painting manifestly involves a protracted, absorbed, and embodied act of contemplation” (1999, p. 31).

\(^{342}\) Lee 2008, p. 287.

\(^{343}\) Iskin 2007, p. 177.
rather than converting sexually-coded female flesh into an animalized corpse, Caillebotte exposed the violence of those operations through which bodies might be reduced to meat, literal or metaphorical, as well as registered the common comparison between his colleagues’ painting of female figures and meat. His mimicry of the processes through which women and carcasses were commodified and dressed to be tasty draws the act of consumption, sexual or alimentary, into question and conflict.344 The paint material that approaches sculptural in its rendering of flowers (in 1879 one critic claimed that the utility of Caillebotte’s paint work was to keep colour merchants in business) further insists upon the disturbing facticity of the corpse that it depicts as well as of the paint itself.345 The impasto endows the painting with a heightened presence, its own threatening embodiment, and its matte finish does not suggest that a polished window separates the viewer from this carcass seen at close range. Sometimes regarded as the ultimate nineteenth-century surface, the vitrine was frequently represented as subject matter in painting or signified at the level of the paint by fused strokes covered in a thick layer of varnish (sometimes covered in glass for exhibition) that could be seen to substitute the canvas surface itself for the shop window.346 Caillebotte offered no such filter separating the viewer from the physicality of his tacky paint or depicted corpse.

The artist emphasized the brutality of the scene to an even greater degree in the contemporary Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue (figure 18), where less expensive products are more straightforwardly presented suspended from slick metal instruments. A life-sized severed calf’s head is hooked through its nose. Another ear to the right suggests a line of such decapitated heads. On the left an ox tongue ripped so roughly from the mouth as to include the entire back of the throat also hangs from a metal hook. As in Calf in a Butcher Shop the orientation of the objects is difficult to stabilize, and body parts do not have secure identities. Especially the tongue and mangled connective tissue of the throat take

time to recognize as such, as the top half of the organ is a bravura jumble of electric pigments, and the bottom half suggests not just a tongue, but also a leg or indeed, a penis. The decapitated head, signifier of reason and rationality, hangs next to a severed phallic object, and so the two crucial sites upon which male theorists located their essential difference from women are shown massacred and hung up for mockery—poignant imagery in the wake of military defeat against the Prussians, in which Caillebotte had fought in the Garde Nationale Mobile de la Seine, and civil war. Both of Caillebotte’s paintings might be suggestively placed alongside Siege imagery in which butcher shop étalages presented human corpses to record the discomfort of trespassing upon dietary taboos as well as the violence to human bodies enacted on the battlefields. It is tempting to read Calm in a Butcher Shop as a Marsyas figure flayed for his hubris, the stripped carcass of French pride.347 Both paintings, like certain of these 1870-1871 lithographs that depict wealthy or powerful individuals butchered and for sale (figures 26-27), also raise questions of class relations that came to such an explosive head during the Commune. The shop window was a site of economic, visual, and alimentary consumption. An upscale establishment’s vitrine was a poignant symbol of bourgeois ingestion, both of culinary treats, that double here as defeated bodies, and of city space, in the newly constructed shops of “cleansed” Paris after the suppression of the Commune. In this context we might wonder whether Caillebotte’s paintings looked back sympathetically to the crushing of the working class and swallowing up of neighbourhoods traditionally associated with it by opulent apartment buildings.348

347 I am indebted to Professor Anne Green for this suggestion when I presented a paper drawn from this material to the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes at their 14th annual conference in Paris, April 2016.

348 Julia Sagraves explores potential Republican themes and suggestions of Caillebotte’s identification with the working class in her essay “The Street,” in Distel et al. 1995, pp. 88-101. For an alternative reading, in Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution (Princeton, 1995), Albert Boime argues that Caillebotte and colleagues participated in the conservative political and cultural reclamation of Paris for the bourgeoisie in the aftermath of 1870-1871, recoding public space in their paintings for the privileged while making it appear available to all. Boime argues that Caillebotte’s work, especially Young Man at his Window (1875), restores patriarchal order to the Paris streets. These still lifes may complicate Boime’s account because I see them as problematizing the elite butcher shop display rather than celebrating it, highlighting instead of obscuring violence and troubling rather than reinforcing gender distinction.
Ultimately, a social historical interpretation of these paintings can only be extended so far, given the insistent painterly qualities of the dismembered bodies that float as shifting signifiers of violence and flesh. In *Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue*, the tongue and throat include confetti-like flecks of blue, yellow, orange, and pink, in thick impasto. The calf’s right ear contains garish orange, vibrant pink marks the severed neck, and blue ripples surround that wound. The background is painted in strokes in all directions, heavily worked, lending the space solidity and humidity that simultaneously immobilize the body parts while causing the entire composition to vibrate with the multicoloured flecks of paint infusing it. This background changes in overall tonality from darker blue at the top to lighter grey below. This is not easily understood as an effect of light, since the meat is shown uniformly illuminated, thus endowing the background with an aspect of unreality that makes depth impossible to determine despite the row of metal hooks that should stabilize the composition. The top row of hooks coincides with the upper edge of the painting, a common strategy in Caillebotte’s still lifes, giving the illusion that the meat hangs from the frame and thereby breaks into the viewer’s space. Presented in a dream-like background, the indeterminate forms with their intense colours are removed from the everyday reality of a butcher shop window, and questions as to what animals and body parts these are, where the viewer is positioned in relation to them, or whose view is suggested are left unsettled.

This painting in particular, but also *Calf in a Butcher Shop*, lends itself to interpretation within Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of painting and lived experience. The phenomenologist described space as a dense, tactile tissue in which all objects are enmeshed. Any painting, one could argue, literalizes such an understanding of space by using thick paint material to stand for air and atmosphere. The world in painting can only be such a tactile world, where all objects depicted are made of the same “flesh,” oil paint.

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350 Michael Fried has considered *The Floor Scrapers* (1875) and *The Luncheon* (1876) in relation to Merleau-Ponty’s concept of lived perspective (1999, pp. 14, 29). Fried’s use of phenomenology, and his contention that Manet (at least in the 1860s) and Caillebotte were invested in a corporeal, materialist practice, have made his arguments important for me. I have wanted to move beyond his overriding framework of theatrical/absorptive with protracted discussions of particular works and a more extensive use of Merleau-Ponty.
But a painting that depicts flesh in its viscous objecthood, its materiality shared with the fleshy background and its identification deferred, devoid of overt narrative that would project the picture into the Symbolic rather than the phenomenological realm, is particularly amenable to Merleau-Ponty’s framework. Merleau-Ponty was drawn to Cézanne because he argued that the painter denaturalized human relationships to others, to other objects, and to the environment: “[Cezanne’s] people are strange, as if viewed by a creature of another species... the frozen objects hesitate as at the beginning of the world. It is an unfamiliar world in which one is uncomfortable...” Caillebotte’s scenes of butcher shops arrest the viewer in the moment of contemplation of these surprising products. It is not just the butcher’s window dressing that invests the bodies with significance beyond the day’s dinner, but also the unexpected colours and projecting paint that propel the objects into the realm of the uncanny, familiar in their life-sized scale but strange in their insistently painted reality, motionless suspension, and absence of context. Without middle or backgrounds, the foregrounded objects are demanding and aggressive, outside of the “air of propriety and discretion” that, Merleau-Ponty believed, resulted from the taming imposition of geometric perspective upon painted objects. Without such a perspective to create a world “dominated and possessed” by the viewer’s eye, Caillebotte’s paintings are

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351 Jacques Lacan used the term Symbolic to name the linguistically-structured conventions and laws of society. The Symbolic Order is the third stage in Lacan’s schema of human development, which begins with the Real, when the subject is enmeshed in the material world without a sense of separation between the body and external objects. For Merleau-Ponty, the symbolic operations of narrativity and the construction of “meaning,” even if just the naming of objects, deters from the immediate experience of those objects. In Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty describes his goal as moving outside of the analytical mode and reawakening to the “experience of the world before it enters our discourses” (1962 [1945], pp. viii-ix). In “Cézanne’s Doubt,” he argues that too often viewers, “forgetting the viscous, equivocal appearances, go through them straight to the things they present,” rather than lingering in the opaque encounter with material (1945, p. 68).  
352 Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 66.  
353 Paul Mantz complained that Caillebotte’s “aversion pour la hiérarchie aboutit à des résultats singuliers,” directing the artist toward a portrait by Eugène Vidal in which a beer glass “reste discrètement au second plan avec la modestie qui sied aux accessories. Quelle leçon pour M. Caillebotte!” See “Exposition des oeuvres des artistes indépendants”, Le Temps (14 April 1880), p. 3.
not so easy to digest. They demand not the supposed blasé sophistication of a flâneur’s casually roving eye, but a spectator paralyzed by the subject and the painting as an object, who as in Merleau-Ponty’s discussions of paintings as prolongations of the viewer’s body feels a connection to the androgynously gendered painted bodies made of common organic material. This reading returns to the flâneur a body vulnerable to disgust, anxiety, and violence.

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354 Merleau-Ponty 1952, p. 87.
355 Merleau-Ponty 1960, p. 125. Merleau-Ponty assumed a universal subject, and thus an ungendered body. My discussion of these paintings has been an effort to centralize gender within an account of phenomenologically orientated viewing.
CONCLUSION

Interrogating the flesh of painting, whether the narrative construction in Zola’s defence of Manet or the material-laden surfaces of Caillebotte’s paintings of raw meat, alongside Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the flesh provides an opportunity to challenge established readings of Zola’s criticism and Caillebotte’s (and Manet’s) painting. In Merleau-Ponty’s fleshy world subject and object are intertwined and sensory experiences are mutually inflecting and reversible. Zola described a similar situation in which Manet’s paintings were inseparable from the painter’s body and experienced through the eye as well as the mouth, with their bitterness and sweet savour. The metaphor of painting as flesh broke down the boundaries between bodies to allow for a merging of male and female, as evident when Zola saw Manet’s body in Olympia as well as in the more subtle moments when Zola described Manet as dissected by the critic or consumed by feminized Painting.

Caillebotte’s paintings of animal flesh signify productively in relation to Zola’s 1867 defence, wider tropes of Impressionist criticism, and the transformed circumstances following l’année terrible. They posit continuity between the viewer and the viewed and between male and female, human and animal flesh in ways that speak to the crisis of such categories in 1870-1871, a crisis that would be heavily debated in mutually inflecting social, political, and scientific discourses for decades to come. A phenomenological approach to these paintings highlights such moments of ambiguity and reversibility by focusing attention on the specificity of the paintings and their potential effects on the body of the viewer, rather than imposing upon them the established narrative of Caillebotte’s still lifes as depicting the “unstable, fleeting, momentary” perspective of the mobile flâneur who cavalierly glimpses curiosities, as one recent exhibition of Impressionist still life has characterized Caillebotte’s work in this genre. Such accounts neutralize the arresting qualities of paintings that merge sexes, conventions for gendered display, and even species, as well as frankly display their means of representation. Calf in a Butcher Shop and Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue offer ingestion as a theme just as Zola proposed it as a metaphor for viewing. Whether the male artist is devoured by ravenous Painting, or the subject matter or materials of a painting suggest that a viewer could consume them, or the viewer identifies

with the organic materiality of the paint and raw flesh that it depicts, fictions of artistic or spectatorial detachment cannot hold.
CHAPTER THREE: *La Peinture Confectionnée*

INTRODUCTION

In Jean Béraud’s *La Pâtisserie Gloppe* (figure 32, 1889), groups of women, children, and one man choose and nibble upon cakes, are served alcoholic beverages, and converse with one another. Young and old, the figures are elegantly attired from towering hats to gloved fingers. Even an obedient black poodle sporting a jewelled collar forms a coordinated accessory to its owner, whose black velvet jacket and tufted dress trimming resemble her pet’s *coiffure*. Like the bonbons, ready-made clothes for sale in department stores by the 1860s were known as *confections*. Both types of confections were linked through gender, for both were considered to be made for, and even synonymous with, that avatar of feminine fashionability, the *Parisienne*. The previous chapter addressed the figuration of the female prostitute and the processes of decomposition and dismemberment written into descriptions of the venal body in literature and art criticism. This chapter considers the construction of the *Parisienne*, a broad category that included sex workers of a certain youth and income, but was understood in different terms. The prostituted body was routinely broken down through description, judged analogous to diseased and decaying meat. But the *Parisienne* was instead built up, confected, as her body was subsumed into discussions surrounding confectionary that had been formulated with her in mind. In this chapter I will explore the ways in which paintings, pastries, and *Parisiennes* were characterized in similar ways and thought to resemble one another.

Béraud’s painting itself parallels the treats represented within it, the pastries as well as the confected women. The artist depicted shimmering surfaces including mirrors, polished floors, and gilded decorations through glinting white highlights covered in a thick layer of varnish that make the canvas surface shine like a glazed pastry. The painting’s intimate scale (38 x 53 cm.) contributes to its status as a precious object, to be handled and possessed like the miniature desserts held by the figures within it. With its sharp relief and

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357 Béraud contributed illustrations to fashion magazines for relatively easy profit, and designed meal invitations for the same purpose. See Groom et. al. 2012, p. 83. Some of Béraud’s dinner invitations are conserved in the BnF, Département des estampes et de la photographie, Collection R. Braun.
consistent overall focus, the painting is designed to suggest that its surface acts as a window through which a real environment is viewed. Like the gilded glass case on the counter toward which the little boy reaches, a reliquary for alimentary consumption, the painting is itself like a little jewel box offering a glimpse of diminutive treats through its glassy surface. Béraud’s crystal clear articulation of contemporary urban scenes achieved a compromise between the modern life subjects of certain artists that he admired, including Manet, Caillebotte, and Degas, and the stylistic tendencies associated with Academic standards.\footnote{358} This made Béraud’s paintings widely popular, leading Henry Houssaye to remark in 1883: “Impressionism receives every form of sarcasm when it takes the names Manet, Monet, Renoir, Caillebotte, Degas; every honour when it is called Bastien-Lepage, Duez, Gervex… Jean Béraud.”\footnote{359}

Visual analogies also exist between the tiny figures in La Pâtisserie Gloppe and the displays of bite-sized desserts that they sample, as in the affinities between the ruffled pink fabric in the hat of the dog owner and a row of strawberries lining a tart behind her. Her friend across the table wears a biscuit-coloured skirt painted in thick strokes, the sweep of Béraud’s paintbrush functioning like a loaded pastry brush. The hard edge of that skirt appears incised with a knife, as though she has been cut out of dough herself, a gingerbread woman. If such a comparison seems exaggerated or strange today, it was common in the nineteenth century.\footnote{360} We recall that Zola began his passionate defence of Manet’s painting in 1866 by denigrating “the sweets of the fashionable artistic confectioners, sugar-candy trees and pastry houses, gingerbread gentlemen and ladies made of vanilla cream,” turning the Salon itself into a “candy shop” of “sickening sweetness,” a Pâtisserie Gloppe for painting. Zola admired artists who dispensed with the trimmings, those pictorial conventions that were synonymous with good quality, in order to present a more “sincere” version of the contemporary environment filtered through individual temperament. That sort of painting was summed up by Zola’s fictional artist Lantier in L’Œuvre as the

\footnote{358} In his early career Béraud was praised by Zola and Huysmans for his subjects. See Patrick Offenstadt et al., Jean Béraud, 1849-1935: The Belle Époque: A Dream of Times Gone By: Catalogue Raisonné (Köln, 1999), pp. 10-12.
\footnote{359} Henry Houssaye, L’Art francais depuis dix ans (Paris, 1882), p. 35.
\footnote{360} For art criticism comparing figures to gingerbread cookies, see Stop, Le Journal amusant (13 and 27 June 1874); Cham, Le Salon pour rire (Au bureau du Charivari, 1873); See further examples in Desbuissons 2014.
“humble carrot” pulled straight from the earth, in opposition to the cheaply appealing “tartine,” a miniature cake, cookie, or slice of bread, items associated with women and children. Throughout the century, an abundant literature on diet upheld Brillat-Savarin’s conviction that “friandise, the preference for light, delicate foods, confitures and pastry, etc” is “for women, and men who resemble them.” Because women were believed to crave sugar, consumption of dessert as well as afternoon tea was primarily relegated to the female domain. Béraud’s painting depicts what is for the most part a space of female sociability. When men dined together dessert was sometimes skipped, apparently a sensible decision given the warning issued in an 1881 behavioural guide for young adults: “friandise makes man sensual, difficult and dishonest,” choosing with “affectation” and “preferring what pleases him to what is useful.” A man who ate sweets, the guide cautioned, might become more like women, identified with sensuality, caprice, and love of pleasure.

The connection between the reception of painting and a voracious appetite by “grown-up children” who “stuff themselves” was not unique to Zola, but was widely shared with other commentators and caricaturists, especially the prolific Bertall, who had also illustrated the 1848 edition of Brillat-Savarin’s Physiologie du goût. While Zola and Bertall had opposing taste in painting, both used comparison to dessert to accuse artists of

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361 Brillat-Savarin 1848 [1825], p. 121.
362 Eugène Boursin explained that “[p]astry has always been a part of dinners meant for women, children, and the elderly” (1865, p. 202). We might speculate as to whether these connotations of sweets informed Mary Cassatt’s choice not to represent any of the alimentary accompaniments to The Tea (c. 1880), her painting of two women seated in a drawing room before a prominently placed silver tea service, or Lady at the Tea Table (1883-1885).
pandering to the (female) masses through idealized subject matter. For example, in 1865 Bertall depicted a fashionable family group standing before *Le Jeu de loto* by Charles Chaplin, a painter widely acclaimed for his representations of women and children (figure 33). The female spectator exclaims favourably: “To see Chaplin after Courbet is delicious. I feel as though I am leaving the tripe-seller to enter into my confectioner’s shop.” Bertall commonly poked fun at Chaplin in these terms, as the preferred portrait painter of women whose “pistachio” pigment evoked confectionary.\(^{365}\) Bertall continued to ridicule female reception by mobilizing the widely held stereotype that women were impulsively and uncontrollably drawn to material goods. He repeatedly represented a woman’s response to painting as physical hunger, reinforcing the association made by Zola of reception as a ravenous appetite for pooling milk and cream, whether figurative or literal. In 1869 Bertall depicted a weary woman holding a Salon catalogue and complaining to her male companion: “As for me, Monsieur Arthur, all this tires me, it makes me want a bite to eat \[ça me donne envie de casser une croûte\], here Bertall played off of the derogatory term *croûte* to name a painting that had darkened, dulled, or dried out over time\(^{366}\). Should we go to the buffet?” (figure 34). Arthur was the nickname commonly given to a prostitute’s or courtesan’s male client, and therefore this female figure would have been particularly associated with her bodily impulses.\(^{367}\) Once in the buffet, Bertall’s women continue to associate painting with food, namely confectionary. In *Au Buffet* from the same year (figure 35), the waiter asks a woman seated with her male companion what she prefers for dessert, to which she replies: “Waiter, I only want one thing, the strawberry tart and Madame Muraton’s cakes.” When the server reminds her “that will be a bit expensive,” she responds, “[i]t makes no difference to me, it’s the gentleman who pays.” The *Parisienne* craves the strawberry tart as well as a still life painting by Euphémie Muraton, and for her

\(^{365}\) For example, see Bertall, *Promenade au Salon de 1870, Le Journal amusant* (28 May 1870), p. 1.

\(^{366}\) Littré 1873-1874, T.1, p. 917. For further discussion of the term see Lewis 2013-2014, p. 40; and Desbuissons 2013A, p. 94.

\(^{367}\) On the nickname Arthur, see Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia, 2010), p. 31. See also Bertall’s caricature in *Le Journal amusant* of 28 May 1870 (p. 3), in which a woman’s most “substantial criticism” is that nothing whets the appetite like viewing painting.
they are conflated, “one thing” to be ordered in the same building and paid for by her partner.

These clichéd aspects of female desire are not realized in Béraud’s painting. Demure in sombre coloured and respectable dress, there is little room to question the demeanour of the women represented, and not even the servers engage in seductive outward address. But while the figures do not “stuff themselves like famished people,” Zola’s description of painted figures made of gingerbread, spun sugar and pastry is appropriate to them. Painted in sharp relief and with hard edges, Béraud’s miniature Parisiennes appear wooden and doll-like despite such transient gestures as biting into pastries, an unconventional pose more likely found in the graphic arts than in painting. 368 Béraud was widely criticized as “a painter of dolls—that is, of Parisiennes,” 369 so much so that he proclaimed four years before undertaking this painting: “Enough of women coming out of the Opera, walking into a brasserie, listening to a monologue in a drawing room or watching a play from their stage-box... I think I have depicted every aspect of woman. There is nothing left for me to do in that respect.” 370 Impatient with the constrained conventions for picturing fashionable female society, Béraud knew that he risked building a reputation as a specialist in an arena that made concessions to vulgarized public taste, and whose paintings could be understood as commodities especially desirable to bourgeois women. His paintings would then be no better than other attributes of the Parisienne on display, such as her dress or her meal. The unflattering spectre of the market for clothing and accessories was often introduced into art criticism to the same end as the comparison to food, to denigrate painting by aligning it with arts perceived as lower on a hierarchy.

The twin discourses of the Salon as a pâtisserie and a boutique of confections pour dames manifested in caricature that also helped to produce the connection. In 1869 Bertall

370 Jean Béraud, “Explication des ouvrages exposés au Salon de peinture”, La Vie parisienne (27 June 1885), p. 366: “Assez de femmes qui sortent de l’Opéra, qui entrent dans une brasserie, qui écoutent un monologue dans un salon ou une pièce dans leur avant-scène, qui dansent dans un bal public, qui relèvent leurs jupons pour traverser une rue, ou qui quêtent à la porte d’une église. Je crois avoir représenté la femme sous tous ses aspects. Il ne me reste rien à faire dans ce côté-là.”
mocked Eugène Villain’s *Un dessert, nature morte* by altering the composition to privilege one towering brioche and renaming it *À la Renommée de la brioche* (figure 36). At least one pastry shop of the same name was well known, featured in guidebooks to Paris as well as in contemporary prints.371 The text describing Villain’s concoction reads as an advertisement: “Villain’s brioche is a monument of high artistic pastry. What dough [*pâte*], what butter, what crust [*croûte*]!!! This painter’s brioches are always fresh, always warm in tone, and yet his talent is stale.” Crafting *haute pâtisserie*, it seemed, was not the same as possessing skill in painting, and Bertall relied upon the overlapping lexicon between painting and pastry to accentuate this point. In addition to *croûte*, *pâte* was defined in Émile Littré’s *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1874) as a term in painting to describe a thick mass of colours, what would now be called impasto.372 The same trope of Salon caricature mimicking advertisements emerged in relation to women’s clothing. Along with *pâtisseries*, department stores placed promotions in the press. Stop targeted a painting in the 1872 Salon by representing only an elaborate dress and hat on a stand with the title: “Maison Lazerges (modes et confections).—Toilette de demi-saison, garniture, linge.—Chapeau assorti.—Prix modérés.—Affranchir” (figure 37). As with Bertall, Stop positioned the artist as maker of garnished confections, this time referring to clothing, moderately priced and therefore at even greater remove from the precious and unique status of a beaux-arts object. Both Bertall and Stop compared painting to cuisine or couture respectively to imply that paintings, particularly those depicting sumptuous still life or fashionable society, were also commercial goods, marketable and popular, associated with and encapsulated in the image of a dressed up and made up *Parisienne*.

Despite his professed boredom with painting *Parisiennes* in 1885, Béraud did not conceal the commercial and female-dominated nature of the Pâtisserie Gloppe, although his painting of the shop was not exhibited until forty years after its completion. The luxurious setting of the Champs-Élysées establishment is a feast for the eyes. Gilded chandeliers hang above shining floors. Columns and arches are reflected in the grand mirrors, edged in


372 Littré 1873-1874, T.3, p. 1002.
gold, which cover the walls to enlarge the space. A mirror reflects the shop’s *vitrine*, large panes of glass with lettering advertising the patisserie, underscoring the commercial setting in which figures consume their snacks while on display to each other, to those outside the space, and to the viewer. “Lèche-vitrine,” the French term for window-shopping, translates as licking the window.\(^{373}\) In this case that window to be licked, the plate glass of the Pâtisserie Gloppe, coincides with the surface of the painting itself, often called a “licked” canvas if it displayed a slick surface sheen of varnish covering tiny strokes. At stake in these overlapping terms are the embodied, erotic aspects of looking at the luxury goods on display, whether the painting as an object or the tasty treats (whether bite-sized pastries or appetizing *Parisiennes*) seen through its glassy surface.\(^{374}\) Eroticized looking raises an alternative model of spectatorship lingering beneath the painting-as-pastry trope, which defies any sense of looking as cerebral or detached.\(^{375}\) While Zola referenced female appetite most explicitly in his metaphor for visual pleasure, male desire was ever-present in the margins. Alimentary consumption provided the link between the consumption of paintings and of bodies, a vocabulary that applied to both and which implicated the male viewer and consumer. This side of “delicious” painting was made clearer in caricature that poked fun at the male viewer in addition to his female counterpart. In his caricature of Jules Lefebvre’s *Rêve*, shown in the 1875 Salon, Stop transformed the cloud or wave upon which a nude reclines in the original into a serving dish, and the frothy substance supporting her into meringue (figure 38). The caption reads: “A man dreams that in eating *œufs à la neige*

\(^{373}\) See Tamar Garb’s discussion of this term and its implications for eroticized looking in relation to James Tissot’s *The Shop Girl* (1883-1885). Garb argues that the griffon carved into the wooden table, with its long curled tongue hanging out of its mouth, symbolizes the embodied pleasure of looking at an object of desire, whether commercial goods, packaged femininity, or a glass-covered painting itself. See “James Tissot’s ‘Parisienne’ and the Making of the Modern Woman” in Garb 1998, pp. 105-108.

\(^{374}\) On the productive parallels between *vitrine* and picture plane, see Ibid.; Rifkin 2000, pp. 43-86; D’Souza 2006, p. 136.

\(^{375}\) This has been a central theme in feminist art histories of the nineteenth century, especially in relation to semi-naked bodies displayed at the theatre, ballet, and dance hall. See Tamar Garb’s discussions of phallic looking at the ballet in *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Seattle, 2008), pp. 20-25; Griselda Pollock’s descriptions of the flâneur’s “covetous and erotic” gaze (1988, pp. 50-90); and in relation to the gaze directed at paintings of unclothed female bodies, Lynda Nead’s discussion of the intertwining of the “aesthetic” gaze of contemplation and the desiring gaze that incites action (1992).
[meringue with a milk and egg sauce] he finds under his tooth a small woman to bite.”

Lefebvre’s nude, Stop joked, was excessively delicious, suggesting saccharine sweetness and too-obvious sexuality. While the painting’s title presumably referred to the woman’s sleep, Stop implied that it actually related to a man’s sexual fantasy. Similarly, when Cham parodied the 1874 Salon as well as the political debate over sugar tariffs, the figure of a woman literally embodied the precious, sweet substance (figure 39). A male sculptor carries his Salon submission on his back, a bust of an elegant Parisienne. Unbeknownst to him, a top-hatted gentleman follows behind, his tongue outstretched and grazing the sculpture’s neck. The text explains: “Exhibition submission. M. Pouyer-Quertier following the busts to ensure that they are not made of sugar.” Augustin Pouyer-Quertier was the finance minister known for his protectionist policies. He had recently delivered three speeches to the National Assembly on the “sugar question,” and argued for a duty to be placed on sugar in order to raise revenue for a government still reeling from the heavy Franco-Prussian War indemnity. In a statue of a woman potentially moulded out of sugar, Cham punned on the construction of the Parisienne as “refined” as well as appetizing, as the lecherous minister extends his tongue to lick her, which also suggests an overzealous handling of the sugar question.376 Once again this calls to mind the critical language of the licked canvas (or vitrine), used to suggest the smooth surface of a painting, its eroticized appeal, and the gleam of commodified luxury goods.

If the artist-as-confectioner analogy was used by Zola and others to target artists associated with l’art pompier, the metaphor could be pushed further. As the double meaning of pâte as impasto as well as pastry or dough suggests, such a conflation

376 We can speculate that a sugar duty was also a symbolic gesture in the wake of the Terrible Year, a move away from perceived excesses of the Second Empire that could be encapsulated in confectionary or its ally, the Parisienne. Gloria Groom has argued that the Parisienne took on special significance directly following 1871 because the construction came to personify the decadence retrospectively imposed upon Second Empire culture. A conservative Salon jury in the early 1870s called for art that was “serious” and “patriotic,” a turn away from representations of the pleasures and products of 1860s society. See Groom et al. 2012, pp. 124-126, 237; and Paul Tucker, “The First Impressionist Exhibition in Context”, in Moffett et al. 1986, pp. 93-117. In proposing a Salon submission of a Parisienne made of sugar, Cham invoked sculpture that may have read as doubly inappropriate, and art criticism that compared painting to pastry may have been especially pejorative in the 1870s.
encourages engagement with paint material, expanding the meanings attributed to paint by proposing that its properties and application invoke the ingredients and processes of the pâtissier. The migrating language signifies productively, therefore, in relation to paintings that commentators such as Zola, Bertall, Stop, and Cham expressly meant it not to characterize, by artists who emphasized matière and facture. Allusions to alimentary products associated with dessert, including cream, sugar, fruit, and butter, were actually widely used by critics of the Impressionist Exhibitions in order to describe the material and technique of those exhibiting, whether to imply sensual appeal or disgust. Jules Vidal opened his review of the 1886 Impressionist Exhibition by using such an analogy to pit Salon painters against Impressionists:

We have seen Salon painters whose contempt for this art [Impressionism] manifested from the first steps up the stairs; at the entry door these men experienced nausea. Eternal argument between those whose cuisine is à l’huile or au beurre, who impose the arbitrary theory of their tastes.  

Vidal compared all painters to chefs who prefer different ingredients, punning off of the fat-suspended medium of oil paint. We assume that the Salon painters are “des gens dont la cuisine est à l’huile,” given the order in the sentence structure as well as the implication that Salon painters use conventional supplies, while Impressionists innovate with materials of different consistency that could cause the disgust that Vidal discerned in the body language of non-Impressionist artists. Unlike oil, butter goes rancid quickly, making it easy to imagine viewers who “experienced nausea” when confronted by canvas surfaces possibly prone to decomposition. I will argue that from this angle, taken more literally than figuratively, the appearance of shared materiality between painting and pastry or confectionary produced effects at the level of the visceral and phenomenological, once again implicating an embodied viewer and precluding those frameworks of aesthetic detachment that were the implied converse and corrective in Zola’s and Bertall’s descriptions of the preponderantly female confusion between paintings and foodstuffs. The

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377 Vidal 1886: “Nous y avons vu des peintres du Salon dont le mépris pour cet art se manifestait dès les premières marches de l’escalier; au tourniquet de la porte d’entrée ces messieurs avaient des nausées. Eternelle querelle des gens dont la cuisine est à l’huile ou au beurre qui imposent la théorie arbitraire de leurs gouts.”
previous chapters have raised the metaphorical potential of viewing as ingestion in art criticism, and the ways that such an understanding of spectatorship challenged the position of a detached artist or viewer. This chapter considers more closely how the parallels between artist and chef, paint and food, were figured in paint.
CONFECTED SUBJECTS OF CAILLEBOTTE AND MONET

Gustave Caillebotte’s *Cakes* (figure 40, 1881) and *Langouste à la Parisienne* (figure 41, 1880-1882), and Claude Monet’s *The Galettes* (figure 42, 1882), raise other possibilities for the artist-confectioner metaphor which remain connected to gender, commodity culture, and the broader debates surrounding confectionary. In the early 1880s Monet and Caillebotte dedicated sustained attention to still life, even painting some of these together. These works have received less art historical attention than their figure paintings. To begin, *Cakes* shows an assortment of pastries, slightly under life-size, on a marble counter. Most of these—éclairs with coffee and chocolate icing, fruit *tartelettes*, and a Saint-Honoré cake (front, centre)—rest on silver racks atop porcelain plates edged in gold. Given the variety of *gâteaux*, the complexity of the recipes, the marble counter, and the identical presentation, the display is set in an upscale patisserie. The label on the leftmost cake, with gold script too vague to decipher, confirms that it was baked commercially. It is likely plum cake, a dessert fashionable at the time because it was identified with England and the ritual of teatime.\(^{378}\) The Saint-Honoré cake, named for the patron saint of bakers, was an easily recognizable Parisian speciality.\(^{379}\) None of the cakes have been cut, no knives or cutlery suggest their imminent consumption, and most could not be picked up like the bite-sized desserts depicted in *La Pâtisserie Gloppe*. Seen close-up and from above, the view often chosen by cookery books to communicate the most information about the decorated surfaces, the viewer is in a position to scrutinize the eye-grabbing *étalage* or interior display. Without any indication of social life or details of the space to distract from the undisturbed organization of the cakes, yet unmarred by bites or missing slices, time stands still, allowing for protracted contemplation of pattern, form, and colour. Shapes are repeated in the circles of tarts, plates, and bloated cream puffs lining the Saint-Honoré, set off by the long rectangular counter, ovular éclairs, or the pointed tips of the diamond-shaped tarts and triangulated plum cake wrapper. The cakes are shown at uniform resolution, implying a gaze that moves slowly and deliberately across the canvas,


taking everything equally into account. This tendency for uniform resolution was common to Caillebotte’s production and it irritated critics who were used to a range of conventional pictorial solutions to make hierarchies within the scene apparent. Here the eye lingers with no clear path through the painting, the dimensions of which would normally have been associated with landscape.

As the viewer studies the painting, peculiar aspects emerge. The table supporting the cakes is disconcertingly tilted upward. Michael Fried has suggested that the exaggerated perspectives in so many of Caillebotte’s street scenes and figure paintings create vertigo that introduce the bodily register into the viewing experience, and his observation is appropriate to this painting in which the cakes and fragile porcelain are ready to slide off of the slippery, ice blue counter. The dark background has a surprising gravitas, and the colours of the cakes are more muted than in the artist’s still lifes of butcher shops. The blue and grey tonalities of the background, table, and plates contribute to a chilly austerity that is at odds with the sumptuousness and easy pleasure that such a subject would seem to promise. Without a definitive viewing position, signifiers of social life, or further context, the cakes occupy the ambiguous, temporally suspended space of Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue. Despite the shop setting, and the attendant connotations of a flanêur’s roving eye, the painting challenges the expectation of a world of “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent.”

That phrase of Baudelaire’s runs through to the recent catalogue entry cited previously, which maintained that Caillebotte’s still life paintings seem unstable, fleeting, momentary, disjointed, and therefore apparently authentic. If this display appears unstable with its up-tilted perspective, that instability catapults the cakes into a space other than or exceeding the shop window. Rather than “disjointed,” the forms are, in fact, carefully arranged and painted at a uniform resolution implying a long look, through which their actual identity as painted objects manifests inescapably. The

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381 Size 20 paysage format. See Callen 2000, fig. 24, p. 15.
382 Fried 1999, p. 14. For a review that complains of Caillebotte’s up-tilted surfaces off of which depicted figures or objects are likely to slide, see Mantz 1877, p. 3.
crusts and plates become borders to the play of pigment that is sometimes only barely representational, as in the lower left tart filled with short strokes of black, deep orange, dark green, and burgundy that extend in all directions. The top of the brioche is painted in a burnt shade that blends into the background, expressing the fact that the bread and the wall are made of the same substance, oil paint.

The materiality of that paint suggests the actual surfaces of the cakes and their attendant sensations in a different manner than illusionism. In the white centre of the Saint-Honoré, comprising a mixture of pastry cream lightened with whipped cream, the paint is thick and pasty. The impasto was perhaps smoothed down with a palette knife in the same manner as icing would have been applied. One critic of the Impressionist Exhibition of 1882 complained that the artists on show painted with “dessert knives” rather than brushes.385 The matte density of the represented cake absorbs light, making the paint appear powdery and chalky, with affinities to the pastel medium in which Caillebotte sometimes worked as well as the surface of a meringue. This is also true of the marble table, in which opaque white paint is mixed with blue and purple to create a dry surface. Critics noticed that this paint constitution and handling imparted a fine, powdery veil over the subject. An evocative assessment of *Paris Street, Rainy Day* (1877) in the upmarket journal *L’Art* explained: “all the umbrellas are open, and rain is no longer falling. What did fall is not rain, it is something like flour or powdered sugar that was sprinkled all over the pavement, umbrellas, everything, with equal and regular perfection.”386 *Farineux* [floury] was sometimes used as a term in painting to describe a dull grey tone.387 Another critic asserted that Caillebotte had painted snow, not rain, thereby picking up on the “frosted” impression.388 Both responded to the generous amount of white paint mixed into the grey of the umbrellas, the beige of the paving stones, and the green of the sidewalk. Supporters and detractors alike commented upon an overall dullness of colour and atmosphere resulting

386 Léon Mancino (quoting letter from P. Noel), “La Descente de Courtille”, *L’Art* (9, 1877), pp. 68-71: “... ce qui est tombé n’est point de la pluie, c’est quelque chose de blanc comme de la farine ou du sucre en poudre, qui a tout saupoudré, pavés, parapluies, avec une égalité et une régularité parfaites.”
from this practice, and Caillebotte’s paintings were repeatedly compared to a chalkboard. In asserting that the artist had powdered his canvas “with equal and regular perfection,” the critic from L’Art reacted to the carefully ordered forms depicted in the picture, the synchronized geometry of the architecture or matching umbrellas.

Like many of his colleagues, Caillebotte’s varnishing practices are difficult to establish, but some of his paintings, at least, were left unvarnished. Varnish could yellow over time, change the colours of the pigments, transform the soft tactility of paint, and create a surface lustre that obscured the hard-won light effects represented within the painting. While the vast majority of Impressionist paintings have been varnished by now due to the preferences of dealers, collectors, and museums, Cakes has a matte finish that indicates that little if any surface coating has been applied to it. The thick, pasty paint suggests raw dough, its chalky aspect a dusting of powdered sugar, its rough surface the flaky texture of puff pastry (called pâte, like thickly applied paint). In tilting the marble counter vertically to create spatial overlap between table-top and canvas, both of which are decorated with cakes, the marble comes to stand in for that canvas. Caillebotte painted Cakes on a grey-primed canvas which peeks through the strokes at the bottom, and so his choice to represent a grey marble table covered in loose veining heightens the equivalence between the table-top and the canvas itself, as the latter may have looked in its beginning stages flecked with exploratory marks. The shape of the marble table is like that of a canvas stretched over beams and ready for painting. The opaque paint material stops the eye at the surface of a work that eschews spatial recession with its monochromatic background, thereby centralizing the manual activity of painting as well as the shared textures of paint and pastry. Together with Caillebotte’s choice to privilege the rigid pictorial structure of repeating patterns and shapes of cakes to the exclusion of figures or further context,

Caillebotte’s confection overlaps with the baker’s, suggesting a comparison between the materials and processes of the painter and pâtissier as well as the possibilities and limitations of paint to suggest the latter’s work.  

Monet’s *The Galettes* (figure 42, 1882) is a more casual arrangement bearing many similarities to *Cakes*. Monet admired Caillebotte’s still lifes, contending that they were “worthy of the greatest successes of Manet and Renoir.” In 1882 Caillebotte and Monet shared a Paris studio, although Monet was based outside of Paris in Poissy. That year, Monet left Poissy for one of his painting trips to the Norman coast. Disappointed by bad weather in Dieppe, he travelled to Pourville and stayed in the inn and restaurant *À la Renommée des Galettes*. The name referred to the culinary specialty of Paul Graff, who ran the hotel with his wife Eugenie Lavergne. In addition to landscape painting, while there Monet worked on portraits of each proprietor and a still life of the celebrated galettes.

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391 On Caillebotte’s identification with artisan labour, see Sagraves 1995. Despite the derogatory comparison of artist to pastry chef, pastries were not uniformly perceived as frivolous, feminized objects demonstrating crass commercialism and artistic conventionalism. Marie-Antoine Carême, the first celebrity chef, was best known for his spun-sugar architectural centrepieces and claimed pastry to be a branch of architecture. The art of the pâtissier was of widespread public interest, and displayed at culinary exhibitions. Pastry was exhibited in the “artistic” as opposed to the “trade” category, a jury judged submissions based upon the quality of the visual presentation, and sculptural confections might be presented in glass vitrines, as in the woodcut engraving *Exposition culinaire, aspect de la salle du buffet* in *l’Art culinaire* (2, 1884), pp. 18-19. I stress the seriousness of professional French pastry and confectionary because its association with frivolity continues, as in the following passage from Richard Brettell, *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890* (exh. cat., New Haven, 2000), p. 170: “Like Manet, Renoir painted little keepsakes for his friends – portraits of dogs, small portrait heads, tiny still lifes, and nudes. These confections were never intended to be read as serious works of art; they are pictorial bon-bons, and their gestural style made them all the more personal… They demonstrate his belief in the non-mechanical and personal nature of art: they could have been painted only by him.” Such language is out of sync with how confectionary was understood at the time. When Zola and others compared art to pictorial bonbons, they meant it to characterize painting that was instead excessively marketable, embarrassingly over-refined, the product of the meticulous processes taught in the ateliers of Academicians which effaced any sign of the individual artist’s hand.  

Those three paintings remained with Graff and Lavergne directly after they were finished, and Monet borrowed the *Portrait of Père Paul* (figure 43), as the chef was known, and *The Galettes* for his solo show at Paul Durand-Ruel’s Paris gallery in 1883.

In *The Galettes*, two oversized fruit tarts rest upon wicker racks. *Galette* names a circular puff pastry covered in a thin layer of fruit slices and baked. On the surface of each “Normand tart,” shown in full due to Monet’s up-tilted perspective, apple slices (a regional specialty) are laid out in a pinwheel arrangement and surrounded by a pastry crust turned up around the edges and imprinted with similar patterning. A knife rests in the foreground and vial of orange liquid has been identified as cider, but also suggests a sauce to be served with the dish. The setting is less formal and commercial than *Cakes*. This was a dessert more easily made at home, and without the variety depicted in *Cakes*, or the long marble table, it appears staged in a domestic context. The wicker trays are a more rustic presentation than Caillebotte’s gold-edged porcelain, and even taking into account the exaggerated perspective, they are different sizes. This variation contributes to the sense that the *galettes*, and perhaps the trays too, were handmade. The perspective in *The Galettes*, however, is similar to *Cakes*, a downward view at the surface of the tarts and the worked materiality of paint. The tablecloth is thickly painted in frothy whites set off by pink, yellow, blue, and violet patches. It rises around the knife that sinks into it, like a sea upon which the *galettes* float on their wicker rafts, perhaps inflected by the cliff and ocean paintings that were Monet’s main focus while in Pourville. Even more than in *Cakes*, the table-top takes up nearly the entire canvas and comes to stand in for it, covered in pasty streaks. Warm amber, caramel, chocolate, and burnt orange tones echo through the vial, the tarts, the racks, and even the signature. These circular forms appear as glowing orbs, “lanterns… with a lively brightness that battles with the light of day,” in the words of Monet’s friend and later biographer Gustave Geffroy describing the *galettes*. Geffroy called the pastries “gilded” or “golden,” pointing to a radiant warmth of tone reminiscent of


the heat given off by a tart taken straight from the oven (he also called the *galettes* “très cuite[s]”) cooling on a wicker rack, a process metaphorically figured in the waiting time for a finished painting to dry, when the surface structure and design of cake or painting set.\footnote{Gustave Geffroy, “Chronique: Claude Monet”, *La Justice* (15 March 1883), p. 2: “la galette très cuite, dorée, croustillante, fait songer à l’immortelle brioche de Chardin.”} Georges Grappe, another early critic of the painting, called the tones “rissolés,” a word that translates only imperfectly as cooked and browned.\footnote{Grappe 1911, p. 66.} Even the tablecloth picks up these golden tones, as in the yellow shadow of the curved glass container. With such resonance of colour, that vial of dense orange material doubles as a pot of viscous paint into which a brush could be dipped to create the cakes and trays, as the chef would have painted the *galettes* with butter, sugar, and sauce. *Sauce* was also common atelier jargon for the early stages of paint preparation or the dilute reddish-brown colour used to establish tone upon the canvas.\footnote{Callen 2000, p. 219. See the term in Thomas Couture, *Conversations on art methods* (New York, 1879 [1867]), p. 7. Couture was fond of culinary turns of phrase, comparing himself to “true gourmand” dispensing “intellectual champagne” to his students and readers (p. 16).} The knife, which draws such attention with its abrupt colouration, exceeds its role and suggests the paintbrush or palette knife, placed next to the circular wicker trays that also evoke wooden palettes.\footnote{This recalls the sub-genre of still life, the painting of the artist’s attributes. Chardin painted several works on this theme. Monet’s *galettes* were compared to Chardin by Geffroy and by Grappe, who argued that “[s]ince Chardin, no one has executed more beautiful still lifes” (1911, p. 66).} The structure of consecutive circles, pies upon trays upon table, suggests that each culinary-turned-painterly confection is framed. The *facture* further evokes the products of *pâtisserie*. The caramelized surfaces of the apples, the brittleness of wicker, or the crustiness of puff pastry are proposed in the rough, caked surface of dried oil paint with its matte finish. As implied by the currency of the term *croûte* in the beaux-arts lexicon, *pâte feuilletée* [puff pastry] is a compelling analogue for a painting, composed of layers from the support, to the glue size, the priming preparations, the many strokes in the paint layers, and the coloured glazes and varnish that were standard practice if not favoured by Monet or Caillebotte. In *The Galettes*, layers of impasto [*pâte*] create a richly textured crust comparable to the strata of puff pastry [*pâte feuilleteée*], formed of layers of dough held together by butter, and calling to mind Vidal’s humorous
declaration of Impressionist peinture au beurre. Perhaps this was the meaning inferred when Grappe called the painting “ce ‘feuilleté’ aux tons rissolés.”\(^{400}\) The quotation marks around “feuilleté” imply that Grappe used the term self-consciously to do more than just identify the confection, but to linger upon the flaky qualities of the dish as well as the encrusted paint representing it, particularly when followed by his metaphor of paint that was cooked and browned as a pastry was baked.

While the surface of The Galettes is not “licked” in the conventional use of the term to describe tiny strokes shimmering with varnish, critics nevertheless borrowed that language to discuss Monet’s individual brushstrokes if not surface fini. Speaking of the figures in his Boulevard des Capucines (1873), shown in the first Impressionist Exhibition, Louis Leroy famously coined the term “tongue-licking” to characterize the loaded Impressionist brushstroke.\(^{401}\) For Leroy, the materiality and application of Monet’s strokes suggested oral sensation, and such a model of viewing was sustained in other criticism of Monet’s work through the 1870s and 1880s. For example, Charles Canivet objected to the setting sun in Soleil couchant sur la Seine, effet d’hiver, shown in the 1882 exhibition: “one thinks simply of a slice of tomato stuck onto the sky and is quite astonished by the violet light it casts on the water and the riverbanks.”\(^{402}\) Canivet responded to the jarring effect of the sun, its bright colour standing out against the more subdued tones of the sunset, as well as the impasto of its surface, projecting like a soft and juicy vegetable. But Monet, Canivet argued, was:

... foremost a marine painter. He has all sorts of them. I recommend two in particular, Une marée basse, of the cliffs of Fécamp, and the Mer du haut des falaises. This one is especially sweet. It looks like whipped cream, but cream of a greenish-purple. With a bit more whipping, only a few turns of the hand, it will

\(^{400}\) Ibid. Similarly, Geffroy emphasized that the galettes were “très cuite, dorée, croustillante,” thereby drawing attention to the same cooked, browned, and brittle surface that is paralleled in the texture of dry paint (1883).

\(^{401}\) Leroy 1874, pp. 2-3: “Seullement veuillez me dire ce que représentent ces innombrables lichettes noirs dans le bas du tableau?”

\(^{402}\) Jean de Nivelle [Charles Canivet], “Les peintres indépendants”, Le Soleil (4 March 1882), p. 2: “Quant au Soleil couchant sur la Seine, on dirait tout simplement d’un rond de tomate collé sur le ciel, et très étonné de voir qu’il produit, dans le fleuve, et sur ses bords, des reflets violets.” See also the comparison between this sun and an orange in La Fare, “Exposition des impressionnistes”, Le Gaulois (2 March 1882), p. 2.
overflow into coloured mousse [*mousse colorée*, a pun on the double meaning of *mousse* as foam or a whipped dessert].

Gaston Vassy had used striking similar language to describe the same cliff and ocean paintings two days prior in *Le Réveil*:

Monet, whose talent as a colourist is indisputable, has painted some cliffs made out of raspberry and currant ice cream, whose realistic melting is thoroughly impressive. You want to eat them with a spoon. Underneath, there is another canvas in green ice cream that turns out to be a raging ocean.

Like Canivet, Vassy found that the consistency of the too-bright paint resembled softening ice cream, the cliffs like a scoop melting in the sun and pooling at the bottom into the ocean where colours blend. Such mockery was ambivalent, for it suggested visual, and by extension visceral, pleasure in looking, something appealing and mouth-watering in the creamy paint, reflected in the not entirely sarcastic comment that Monet’s “talent as a colourist is indisputable.”

While Canivet and Vassy used similar language to Zola and others who denigrated Academic practice as confectionary in the 1860s, which carried into the ensuing decades (Huysmans referred to Cabanel’s “*Vénus à la crème*” in 1881, for example) those commentators related their critiques foremost to subject matter or to surface finish. Unsurprisingly, sentimental images of women and children were easily belittled by comparison to dessert or to dairy products that were believed to be especially

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405 See Desbuisson’s argument to the same end in relation to Stock’s caricature of Courbet’s *La Vague* as a slice of cake on a serving knife (2014, pp. 119-120).

well suited to female and infant constitutions. In a caricature of the 1872 Salon, Stop transformed Jean-Baptiste Chatigny’s *L’Enfant et l’agneau* into a culinary dish with the title “*The Child And The Lamb*, plate of cream which only asks to be whipped up” (figure 44). Stop implied that the sentimentality of the subject made it sweet, a painting that would appeal to women in particular. Its potential to be “whipped up” suggests that such paintings were easily executed for a ready market. But in Canivet’s and Vassy’s reviews, the paint itself was compared to sweet cream, applied in thick strokes that resemble tongue lickings themselves.

It is worth including the next lines from Vassy’s review: “There is also a *Woman in a thicket* [*Femme lisant dans un jardin*]. One can tell immediately that the unfortunate model has been dead for some time, because she has begun to decay. Depressing effect [*Effet navrant.*]” Following directly from the comparison of Monet’s landscape painting to sweet cream, the identification of his female figure with decay hits an unsettling note. Melting ice cream gives way to a decomposing figure, a progression from the bright hues of raspberry and currant to the morbid tones of rot, and the eventual decomposition of ice cream, already changing its shape and disintegrating into formless puddles, is close at hand. The final phrase “*Effet navrant*“ evokes the title of *Soleil couchant sur la Seine, effet d’hiver* shown that year. Punning off what was perceived as a quintessentially Impressionist tendency to include *impression* or *effet* in a painting’s title, Vassy suggested that *Effet navrant* was in fact part of the painting’s title, and thereby a statement of intention from an artist seeking the disconcerting impression of decomposition. In this way, the critique was linked to what had by this time become a trope, that Impressionist painting appropriated colours and models from the morgue and even attempted to capture the smell of such nauseating subject matter, implying that the materials used to depict rotting

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407 F. Rouget, *Hygiène alimentaire, traité des aliments, leurs qualités et effets, le choix que l’on doit en faire selon l’âge, le tempérament, la profession, la saison et l’état de convalescence* (Toulouse, 1866), p. 107. In the 1877 edition he more explicitly addressed female diet, p. 41. Milk and cream were also considered contributors to female beauty, believed to whiten the skin both through their consumption (Boursin 1865, p. 344) and their application directly to the face. See Morag Martin, *Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce, and French Society, 1750-1830* (Baltimore, 2009), p. 20.

408 See also Desbuissons’s discussions of rotting painting in 2013A and 2014.
subjects would best capture this effect if putrifying themselves. The potential decomposition of Impressionist material and the queasiness it could produce was interwoven into the comparisons to alimentary products, as in M. de Thémines assessment of Monet’s same 1882 cliff paintings: “It is these supposed landscapes that throw the visitor most off balance. It’s an orgy of rocks in the colour of the most intense raspberry, emerald-green skies, and waves of ripe cherry [cerise-tournée].” For this reviewer, the colouration invoked seasickness, disturbing the viewer’s balance. Cerise-tournée translates awkwardly. While tournée could be used to describe ripening fruit, it was a term most often used to name food that had “turned,” or started to decay, characteristically used in relation to dairy products like milk or cream that had soured. Designating the painted waves as fruity or creamy introduced the possibility of decomposition, and the colouration of the painting, pushed to the extreme [d’un ton de framboise exaspérée], was over-ripe and potentially disgusting.

Comparing paint to fruit or cream suggests another source of nausea, that of eating too much of a sweet dessert. The review of the 1877 Impressionist Exhibition quoted in the Introduction to this dissertation combined bad dietary choices with motion sickness to explain the destabilizing effects of the painting exhibited:

It is impossible to stand more than ten minutes in front of some of the most sensational of these paintings without straight away evoking the memory of seasickness. One involuntarily thinks of a certain lunch eaten before embarking on a beautiful spring afternoon, a lunch composed of raspberries and cream cheese, which could not stand up to the whims of the waves.

Written several years before the common comparison of Monet’s pitching waves to pools of cream, the review nonetheless suggestively united the nausea experienced in staring at surprising patches of vibrant colour, matter out of place which did not seem to

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409 On the fact that this had already become a trope by 1886, see Jules Desclozeaux, “Chronique: Les Impressionnistes”, L’Opinion (27 May 1886), p. 2-3. See further discussion in the Conclusion to this dissertation.
410 M. de Thémines, “Beaux-Arts: L’Exposition des ‘indépendants’”, La Patrie (7 March 1882), pp. 2-3: “Ce sont des prétendus paysages qui déroutent le plus le visiteur. C’est un débauche de rochers d’un ton de framboise exaspérée, de ceils émeraude, et de vagues cerise-tournée.” While Monet is not named, he is clearly implied.
411 Littré 1873-1874, T.4, p. 2277.
412 Bariolette 1877.
accurately depict a stable landscape, and the queasiness of overindulging in dessert at lunch.\textsuperscript{413} At stake in all of these allusions to food were the visceral effects of viewing paint material in obtrusive colours and projecting swirls that took on an animate life of its own.

Monet painted the \textit{Portrait of Père Paul} (figure 43) alongside the portrait of Paul Graff’s artistic creations.\textsuperscript{414} In the portrait, Graff is shown from the bust up wearing a chef’s jacket and professional hat. He looks away, appearing wistful or weary. This work is far less finished than \textit{The Galettes}. Monet described it in a letter to Durand-Ruel as a “curious \textit{esquisse},” a term for a smaller scale oil sketch for a final composition.\textsuperscript{415} While in \textit{The Galettes}, the surface is encrusted with thick paint layers, different areas of the \textit{Portrait of Père Paul} are painted to widely diverging degrees. Monet left expanses of the putty-coloured canvas visible, especially in the coat, where grand sweeps of thick white paint mingle with more dryly brushed passages of blue-violet. At the bottom of the canvas the body dissolves into broad strokes indicating rough outlines of the jacket, sometimes projecting off the canvas. In those loose streaks smeared like finger-paints across the barely representational schema of the chef’s coat, left in this state of mid-process, manifests the full potential of paint to congeal and coagulate on the surface of the canvas, the swirling white pigment applied like the flipping of whipping cream and recalling Canivet’s comparison of Monet’s handling to whipping with “a few turns of the hand.” The canvas conjures up the working surface of a pastry chef after having rolled out dough, with lines of flour and bands of paste left from sticky fingers, in the unfinished state before the counter is cleaned or a picture is brought to completion. Graff may have rolled out his dough on a piece of canvas patted down with flour,\textsuperscript{416} a clean surface for his \textit{pâte}, the same surface

\textsuperscript{413} See also Havard 1881, p. 2: “C’est toujours la même ensemble réunion d’ouvrages mystérieux et troublants, enfermés dans des cadres aux formes et aux nuances invraisemblables, allant du vert pistache au rose pommade écoeurant.” On the destabilizing effect of “matter out of place”, see Mary Douglas, \textit{Purity and Danger; An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo} (New York, 1966).
\textsuperscript{414} For \textit{The Galettes}, Monet used a standard size 25 canvas popular for portrait painting.
\textsuperscript{416} Conversely, a canvas for painting might be prepared using flour. The size, a thin layer of glue used to protect the canvas and stabilize its fibres, sometimes included flour to produce
upon which Monet’s pâte would depict the chef’s pastry in The Galettes. In that painting the handmade tarts and highly wrought background share common materiality and handling, suggesting and even celebrating continuity between the making of pastries and of paintings that was sometimes derided in Impressionist criticism. Mocking the collector Eugène Murer, a pastry chef whom Monet and others would later accuse of taking advantage of their precarious financial positions to acquire art at unfair prices, the pseudonymous Tout-Paris joked:

Nothing is funnier that seeing this man in his white apron, with a baker’s cap, leaving his shop and merrily heading toward the atelier of one of these chefs of Impressionism, from where he never leaves without carrying a more or less sizeable canvas. “I make the dough [pâte],’ this young cook told us recently, ‘and the patron buys the crusts [croûtes].”

It is amusing for this reviewer to visualize the pastry chef carrying paintings under his arm like loaves of bread, to which they are analogous. The review puns upon the word chef, used to name the leader of a school of painting or a restaurant. The Impressionist atelier becomes like a bakery and vice versa, a comparison underlined by Murer’s imagined elision between the identities of pastry chef, art collector, and Impressionist painter, all working with pâte to make croûtes. The review mocks Murer as much as the painters, all of whom overestimate their status. In The Galettes as well as Cakes, however, such a comparison between chef de cuisine and chef de l’impressionisme is not posed as ridiculous. Rather than signifiers of the frivolous or superficial, Monet’s galettes are a smoother surface. Certain grounds, or the layers applied over the glue size, included flour and eggs. See Callen 2000, pp. 51-54.


Tout-Paris, “La Journée parisienne: Impressions d’un impressionniste”, Le Gaulois (24 January 1880) p. 2: “Et rien n’est plus drôle que de voir cet homme en tablier blanc, le bonnet du mitron sur la tête, quitter sa boutique et se diriger allègrement vers l’atelier d’un des chefs de l’impressionnisme, d’où il ne sort jamais sans emporter une toile plus ou moins grande.—C’est moi qui fais la pâte, et c’est le patron qui achète les croûtes, nous disait dernièrement le gâte-sauce de maison.”

Monet was no stranger to the processes and products of French cuisine. A passionate gourmand, he kept cooking journals and wrote recipes based on his preferences. See Claire Joyes and Jean-Bernard Naudin, Monet’s Table: The Cooking Journals of Claude Monet (New York, 1989). Monet’s friend James Abbott McNeill Whistler was a dedicated chef,
unexpectedly monumental, darker in life than in reproductions, imposingly large, their physical weight intimated by the dense strokes of impasto through which they bulge like the swollen vial or the bloated strokes of the tablecloth. They are poised to fall into the viewer’s space, along with the knife presented by its pointed end rather than its handle.

Although not a dessert, Caillebotte’s *Langouste à la Parisienne* (figure 41, 1880-1882) is an elaborate confection with a strikingly similar composition to *The Galettes*. In both, an iron-lined tablecloth covers an upward-tilted table. A boat of sauce occupies the upper left corner, balanced by cutlery in the lower right, and a round platter rests between them. The dish in Caillebotte’s painting, a larger-than-life depiction of the recipe *langouste à la Parisienne*, requires removing the meat from the tail of a *langouste* (a shellfish resembling a small, spiny lobster), slicing the meat and dressing it with salt, pepper, oil, and vinegar, and mounting the empty shell upon a diagonally cut piece of bread so that it rises at an angle. The meat slices are then reassembled atop the ascending tail with layers of vegetables, mayonnaise, and truffles. In the painting, the dish and mayonnaise sauce are ready to be eaten, but without an accommodating server to slice and distribute pieces among the still neatly stacked plates, the viewer is not invited to imagine participating in its consumption, which would disturb the chef’s artistic transformation of the *langouste* to the point of bare recognition, framed by golden edges. That frame depicted around the silver dish is not obviously edible, nor accounted for by contemporary recipes. Baring resemblance to the pared-down designs for painting frames favoured by Caillebotte and his colleagues, it is as though the artist isolated the dish as a finished artistic product. Indeed, far from Lantier’s humble carrot, this was an example of haute cuisine so renowned that Wilhem I, Alexander II, and Otto von Bismark dined upon it at the elegant Café Anglais while touring the 1867 Exposition Universelle at a meal that remains famous for its

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and the painting press sometimes discussed the parallels between professions, as in “Lettres de Londres: L’exposition internationale des inventions”, *L’Art moderne* (20 August 1885), p. 281.

exorbitant tab. So sophisticated was its preparation that it featured in culinary exhibitions for decades. Amusingly, a popular attraction at the 1910 concours culinaire was a competition to prepare a langouste à la Parisienne the fastest. Both its appearance at the Café Anglais dinner and in culinary exhibitions indicate the longstanding popularity of the recipe as an icon of national cooking over four decades. Unlike Monet’s country galettes, this dish was associated with the urban centre (à la Parisienne), one of the preparations upon which France had built its reputation as leader in culinary art. Both examples also point to the skill required in the painstaking assembly of the “clever architecture of this dish,” in the words of one admiring commentator of the recipe in 1893. With characteristic interest in geometric patterning, Caillebotte drew attention to its intricate construction by showing each overlapping round of shellfish decorated with specks of truffles and vegetables.

The langouste sits upon a dense white tablecloth that once again holds affinities to the canvas upon which Caillebotte’s own artistic rendering is composed. Infused with complementary colours, blue and orange, purple and yellow, the tablecloth is unabashedly a painterly surface and its grain, which can be seen through and around certain strokes, elides the woven materials of tablecloth and canvas. Draped over rectangular beams, starched and resilient as it retains the peaks of ironing, the tablecloth is like a coarse canvas waiting to be stretched. This reinforces the impression that the langouste on a dish parallels the work of art upon a canvas, its flesh painted with sauces (oil and vinegar, mayonnaise) and taches of coloured food. These slices of langouste are represented through a thick application of creamy paint with the consistency of the mayonnaise that would coat them in reality, and the paint doubles as the food it represents, suggesting the potential for decomposition. Given the yellowed colour of the langouste flesh perhaps the dish already has begun to turn, or possibly the paint has yellowed with age. In either case, alimentary

422 Anonymous, “Chronique Parisienne, La 27e exposition de cuisine”, La Croix (15 April 1910), p. 5. See also the woodcut engraving by Tézier of a langouste à la Parisienne from the 1889 concours culinaire, by chef M. F. Lamaestre (specified as “élève de M. Victor Morin”), in L’Art culinaire (16-17, 31 August-15 September 1889).
material and paint material are further connected as substances that change over time, and imagining Caillebotte painting a real *langousté à la Parisienne* before its decomposition evokes the frantic competition to literally assemble the dish in the 1910 culinary exhibition. The silver sauceboat holds the viscous mayonnaise, but the mass of thick green, yellow, and cream-coloured strokes do not blend, and leaping off the canvas they announce their identity as oil paint as well as create the nauseating impression that perhaps this mayonnaise, too, has gone off. The tonalities in the sauce are also those used to depict the food covering the base of the silver plate, and so like the cider or sauce in *The Galettes*, the mayonnaise doubles as the pot of paint into which the brush could be dipped to create legible representations. However, in this area at the base of the dish, probably depicting hard-boiled eggs and minced vegetables mixed with mayonnaise and topped with truffles, the materiality of paint continues to be privileged over clarity of representation, and the area is foremost a swampy mass of pigments. The head of the *langousté* is hidden by lettuce and one long, spindly antenna emerges from the greenery to cut diagonally across the picture plane. This element hovers threateningly over the cutlery, jarring like the black knife in *The Galettes*, revealing the identity of the shellfish while also making it strange with one antenna and not two. Easily overlooked within the composition, its inclusion throws the studied elegance of the dish into question with its evocation of the natural world and denial of the symmetry of the rest of the preparation. Exaggerated in scale, reduced to one instead of two, seeming not to belong to a body from which its connection is obscured, the antenna emerges from the painting like a paintbrush whose feathery end coincides with the profusion of soft lettuce leaves. The multiplied stacks of plates, spoons, and *langousté* slices emphasize repetition. The recurring work of the painter, invoked by the strokes that are visible one by one along the bottom edge of the tablecloth, is echoed in the continuous work of the chef who makes short-lived *chef d’œuvres*. And yet, *Langousté à la Parisienne* both is and represents a unique object pulled from the stream of repetition, a transformation of an animal that was rare to see and rarer to taste. Modernizing the lobster commonly depicted in seventeenth-century Dutch still life to the vogues of

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424 See Roland Barthes’s description of “ornamental cookery,” a category to which this recipe belongs, which disguises the “primary nature of foodstuffs, the brutality of meat or the abruptness of sea-food” under the smooth coatings of glazes, sauces, creams, icing, and jellies (1972 [1957], pp. 78-80).
contemporary French cooking. Caillebotte highlighted the artistry of the French chef as well as of his own hand in a painting with dimensions exceeding his ambitious painting of *Fruit Displayed on a Stand* (1881-1882), shown in the Impressionist Exhibition in 1882. Such identification between painting and cooking, explored here and in *Cakes* and *The Galettes*, fractures the artistic boundaries upon which the derogatory painter-as-confectioner metaphor was built. It also challenges the viewing position of sophisticated detachment from the rivers of milk and cream described by Zola, for the paintings demand a viewer who might experience appetite or disgust through the visual. In this way, the productive parallels between professions puts pressure upon those art historical accounts of Caillebotte’s still lifes as taking no more than a connoisseurial perspective of interchangeable consumer items glimpsed casually for their aesthetic qualities.

425 Caillebotte also painted a more conventional view of a whole cooked lobster, *Still Life with a Lobster* (1883).
CONFECTIONARY AND THE FEMALE BODY

Responses to Impressionist painting that suggest desire or disgust through allusion to the culinary are inseparable from the gendering of subject matter, paint material, and of Impressionism as a movement. Of the works discussed so far these dynamics are best explored through Langouste à la Parisienne, a striking example of how debates about art, food, fashion, and femininity mingled. It is an evocative dish in name and form. While it was common for recipes to demarcate origin (cèpes à la provençal, etc.), Parisienne had special significance because of the iconic figure of the Parisienne in French culture and abroad. The Parisienne was a cultural type invented in the early decades of the nineteenth century to describe a woman who resided in Paris, where she collected those clothes, articles, and cosmetics in which French industry excelled, and where she could be seen to best advantage soaking up the magnificence of the surroundings while also contributing to their glamour. A woman who could be called a Parisienne was not necessarily haut bourgeois. In fact, a source of great anxiety for male writers was the difficulty of discerning social class, masked as it might be by clothing and accessories, because the apotheosis of Parisian femininity as a cipher of sophistication coincided with the invention and promotion of department stores and “confected” goods. Stores such as Le Bon Marché (1849) and Le Louvre (1855) continually expanded so that an unprecedented number of items could be bought in the same location, which also included amenities such as a buffet, art gallery, and reading room. With these stores, the latest fashions were within reach of a greater proportion of the population. While the wealthiest largely continued to have clothing made to measure, a growing number of middle and working-class women participated in the market for less expensive ready-to-wear [confectionné] apparel. The invention of the Parisienne in visual culture was closely related to department store advertising, for their catalogues joined a trade in fashion plates and magazines that circulated imagery of the chic Parisienne in Paris, into the provinces, and abroad, and allowed for clothing and accessories to be ordered from the capital.

The figure of the Parisienne became a symbol of the successes of modern Paris and its culture, personifying the perceived achievements of French style and displaying the refinement of French social mores. An “eroticized spectacle” attracting admiring and
desiring gazes, she was the ultimate accessory for her male companion.\textsuperscript{426} She was also a favourite subject for painters, both those “fashionable artistic confectioners” that Zola disdained as well as Manet and the Impressionists.\textsuperscript{427} Monet was so invested in the accuracy of the clothing worn by his female models that his studies for the ambitious and never completed \textit{Luncheon on the Grass} include changes reflecting rapidly shifting trends.\textsuperscript{428} In one study (figure 45, 1865-1866) the artist endowed sumptuous still life objects and dresses, both attributes of the fashionable society depicted, with rhyming patterns. A woman’s long orange skirt, gathered up by thick bands of brown ribbon descending from her waist, echoes the form of a meat pie on the ground. Both orange-brown surfaces are embellished by stripes that radiate from a circular centre, edged decoratively by ribbons of dough or fabric (ruban named the ribbons on clothing as well as the “[b]ande de pâte dont on entoure certaines pâtisseries”).\textsuperscript{429} Like the pie that rises from a white plate upon a white fabric picnic cloth, so too the coloured layer of the woman’s dress rests on an ample white skirt spread out in a circle on the ground around her.\textsuperscript{430}

The comparison between confected women and culinary creations was facilitated because both were understood as national products. Such conviction informed the bombastic claim from the trade journal \textit{L’Art culinaire} for professional male chefs:

\begin{quote}
Woman in France is recognized among all the other women from civilized countries; it is impossible to mix her up. The game birds of France have a taste, an aroma of superior quality to that along the Rhine and of other nations... France is the blessed country, the holy land of liberty and the grave of all barbarity. Succulent fruit, delicious vegetables, delicate butcher’s meat and the artistic cradle of culinary arts.\textsuperscript{431}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{426} Garb 1998, p. 84. On the production of “woman-as-image,” and the structures of psychic and commodity fetishism underlying imagery of eroticized femininity, see Solomon-Godeau 1996, pp. 113-150.


\textsuperscript{428} Groom et al. 2012, pp. 92, 100-105.

\textsuperscript{429} Littré 1873-1874, T.4, p. 1776.

\textsuperscript{430} Amusingly, the comparison between pork pie and female fashion was already established. The type of hat shown in Renoir’s contemporary \textit{Lise} was called a porkpie style because of its resemblance to the same. See Groom et al. 2012, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{431} Berte Ainé, “La France et l’art culinaire”, \textit{L’Art culinaire} (compilation of issues from 1883), p. 143: “La femme en France est reconnue parmi toutes les autres femmes des contrées civilisées; il est impossible de la confondre. Le gibier de France à un goût, un
This forms part of a plea by the author, a fellow professional chef, to protect French alimentary products and recipes from the “adulterating” influences of other cuisines. The statement about the Parisienne seems incongruous to what is otherwise an elaboration of the merits of French cooking. It is included as an analogy, impying that the Parisienne symbolized French culture as did its cooking. Both, the author believed, were unique in the world. Balzac had made a similar point earlier in the century when he wrote in Cousin Bette (1846): “[t]he courtesan... is a dish by Carême [the first celebrity chef, best known for his elaborate desserts], with its condiments, spices, and elegant arrangement.” As in women’s fashions, France was an internationally acknowledged leader in culinary art, a profitable industry and source of national pride among those able to experience it. Traditions of haute cuisine had even been maintained in substituted form during the Siege of Paris. For example, a Christmas menu from the upscale restaurant Le Café Voisin was published in full in the Journal du siège de Paris, the daily siege-time installment of Le Gaulois, and included as the main course Chat garni de rats rôtis sauce poivrade. Such gestures of alimentary audacity were construed as forms of patriotism and resistance. Below the listed courses the Café Voisin menu read “VIVE LA FRANCE.” With defeat in 1871, as had also been true in 1815 following Napoleon’s defeat, the respective enemies were caricatured as spending their final days in Paris dining and packing foodstuffs to take home with them (figure 46). Universal Exhibitions glorified the industries of food and clothing design and manufacture, and like clothing and fashion accessories, cuisine was exported through cookery books as well as French chefs who went to work in hotels, restaurants, ocean liners, and well-to-do households abroad.

In this context, langouste à la Parisienne takes on further significance. The dish was associated with the capital (à la Parisienne) and was an icon of French cooking, just as

fumet d’une qualité supérieure au gibier d’outre Rhin et autres nations. La France est la contrée bénie, la terre sainte de liberté et le tombeau du toutes les barbaries. Les fruits succulents, les legumes délicieux, la viande de boucherie délicate et le berceau artistique de l’art culinaire.”  
432 Cited in Ferguson 2003, p. 8.  
434 On the Napoleonic defeat see Spang 2000, p. 179.
the Parisienne was regarded as a similar national symbol. But the two were perhaps even more closely aligned than this. The name of the dish may have derived not just from the geographical origin of the recipe, but also from the resemblance of the dressed lobster to the dresses worn by Parisiennes. The overlapping rounds of langouste create semicircles that evoke the frippery of fashion, those pleats, ruffles, and buttons that may be seen in fashion plates as well as paintings, as in the dress worn by the female figure in Renoir’s The Swing (figure 47), a painting that Caillebotte purchased. In Renoir’s painting a woman stands on a swing in a park setting, attended by two men and a child. She wears a formal princess-style dress, a fashionable cut with no waist seam to interrupt its long, slender line, embellished by a row of bows down the front. These forms are echoed in the preparation of the shellfish, where the slim, elongated shape is punctuated by dots of truffle like the garniture on a dress or buttons trailing down its back. The overlapping rounds of flesh resemble flounced layers on a dress, which often extended into tail-like trains, or the crinoline cages of descending hoops meant to keep a skirt expanded. By this time the crinoline was giving way to a bustle of similar construction, fabric mounted on hoops called the queue d’écrevisse. Usually translated as a lobster tail bustle, écrevisse is closest in meaning to langouste. This bustle was so named because it shaped a woman’s body to resemble a curving shell, and seen from the back, its pleats bear striking similarity to the tail fin (figure 48). “Lobster red” was a popular colour for women’s fashions, and would have contributed to the comparison.

The dish langouste à la Parisienne suggests another aspect of a woman’s lingerie, the corset. The woman wearing the type of dress represented in Renoir’s painting would have had her body formed by a cuirass corset, a longer style creating the tall, slim figure required of a dress that held tightly down the hips. Langouste à la Parisienne, designed with architectural support to stand up on its plate, has a rigid structure like the upright posture demanded of tightly laced stays. The lobster’s shell is an exoskeleton and the corset

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435 Critics widely associated Caillebotte with up-to-date fashions in his paintings. See Lepelletier 1877; Jacques, “Menu Propos”, L’Homme libre (12 April 1877); Enault 1876.
functioned as one as well, moulding women within its rigid brace. Expensive models could be made from whalebone stays and were sometimes known as “whalebone bodies,” thereby providing a more literal link between the corseted woman’s body and aquatic life that was not lost on contemporary commentators.\textsuperscript{438} The affinities presented in the lobster tail bustle, the vogue for lobster red dresses, and the shell-like corset were the subject of humour in the English weekly satirical magazine \textit{Punch, the London Charivari}. In an 1876 caricature, a woman wearing a dress made of a gigantic lobster shell complete with a fork hairpiece stands with her back to a mirror in an elegant domestic setting (figure 49). A caption reads: “Mr. Punch’s Dress Designs (After Nature). Costume du Soie—Robe en Homard [A Suggestion for Tight Dresses].” Because the dress name is given in French, the implication is that the dress is, or is inspired by, French couture, which in this context is literally related to French cuisine. In the “Suggestion for Tight Dresses,” the caricaturist satirized the trend for close-fitting skirts hugging a woman’s legs, confining and masking her body like a rigid shell.\textsuperscript{439} That the dress was designed “After Nature” connects dressmaking with painting, for the postscript “d’après nature” named the practice of representing a scene or model that the artist had in front of him or her. Mr. Punch, the pun goes, literally drew from nature, constructing his dress not from textiles but from members of the natural world. More metaphorically, attention is drawn to the “shell” of the Parisienne, her carefully arranged, seductive surface appearance.\textsuperscript{440} The comparison of dress to aquatic armour suggests that fashionable clothing was its own kind of social armour.\textsuperscript{441} In the words of Octave Uzanne, an \textit{homme de lettres} with a particular interest in

\textsuperscript{438} Groom et. al. 2012, pp. 99, 126-127.

\textsuperscript{439} See Lynda Nead’s discussion of Victorian fashion satire in \textit{Punch}, specifically in relation to the crinoline, in “The Layering of Pleasure: Women, Fashionable Dress and Visual Culture in the mid-Nineteenth Century”, \textit{Nineteenth-Century Contexts} (35:5, 2013), pp. 489-509. Nead’s attention to the embodied pleasures that fashion offered some women, as well as the haptic visual pleasure that paintings of the sumptuous textiles could produce for the spectator, provides an important counter-narrative to the male perspective on women’s fashion that I am following in this section.

\textsuperscript{440} On this “outer shell of tantalizing desirability” that created anxiety about the woman disguised underneath, see Garb 1998, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{441} See Iskin’s discussion of this “social armour” making the Parisienne “invulnerable” in relation to Manet’s \textit{In the Conservatory} (1878) (2007, pp. 211-222). Iskin cites L. de Fourcaud’s description of Manet’s \textit{Spring} (1881), a depiction of a Parisienne: “As a soldier
women’s fashion: “[d]ress for women is… her offensive armour, her harmonious palette.” While attire attracted a gaze, arranged as a painter composed colours and forms, its tight laces and intricate packaging could be seen to rebuff touch. Such fashions turned the worldly physicality of flesh into an unyielding, sculptural casing that appealed to the eye, even if the phallic gaze that it inspired implicated the bodily desires of the one looking. In the late 1850s, Théophile Gautier described how apparel for both men and women had altered the perception of human bodies:

Clothing, in modern times, has become for man a kind of skin which does not separate by any circumstance and which sticks to him like the coat of an animal, to the extent that the real shape of the body has been completely forgotten. Anyone who has some acquaintance with painters, and happens to enter a studio when a model is posing, has a half-unconscious feeling of surprise mingled with disgust at the sight of this unknown creature, the male or female amphibian posing on the table.443

Amphibian indeed. Without shaping devices, the human body would appear as grotesque as a sea creature, a comparison that several critics seized to express their disgust at Degas’s series of pastel female nudes shown in the Impressionist Exhibition in 1886, seen to be shockingly unidealized and unposed.444 But dressed up à la Parisienne, a woman, or even a sea creature, could become a seductive spectacle, as in a humorous story about a political gathering in the upmarket arts journal La Revue illustrée. When the all-male company is served a langouste à la Parisienne, one member of the party exclaims:

carries his rifle, so she shoulders her grey parasol… This woman is a Parisienne of today,” Le Gaulois (4 May 1884).

443 Gautier, De la mode (Paris, 1858): “Le vêtement, à l’époque moderne, est devenu pour l’homme une sorte de peau dont il ne se sépare sous aucun prétexte et qui lui adhère comme le pelage à un animal, à ce point que la forme réelle du corps est de nos jours tout à fait tombée en oubli. Toute personne un peu liée avec des peintres, et que le hasard a fait entrer dans l’atelier à l’heure de la pose, a éprouvé, sans trop s’en rendre compte, une surprise mêlée d’un léger dégoût, à l’aspect de la bête inconnue, du batracien mâle ou femelle posé sur la table.” Cited in Simon 1995, p. 158.
We admire the clever architecture of this dish, the art with which the slices of lobster overlap, gently stretched out on a bed of Russian salad and bathed in unctuous waves of blond mayonnaise... [sic.] and champagne continues to flow, and eyes shine, and faces flush, and the interview becomes more animated. The citizen mayor no longer thinks of defending himself, he embarks on his theories, he exposes his campaign plan, he reveals his projects, his large projects, which would make Saint-Denis the leading city in France... [sic.].

This is a remarkably sexualized description. The langouste stretches across a bed, bathing in creamy, blonde, semen-evoking sauce. The inclusion of ellipses twice in the passage insinuates that the reader should construct this image mentally and linger upon it. In the lines directly following the men at the table are aroused and seduced, in step with the nineteenth-century understanding of shellfish and truffles as aphrodisiacs. As heat rises into their faces, the once-guarded mayor exposes himself (along with his “large” projects) in the well-trodden narrative of influential men divulging professional secrets to lovers. The interplay between alimentary and sexual consumption, and the relationship of both of these to vision, is raised. If the connection between looking and consuming was central to the visual economy of modernity, as has been a central theme of feminist art historical scholarship, metaphors of eating linked the concepts of visual and sexual pleasure and exposed the corporeal urges and agitation integral to both.

Given the wider connections between the dish and confected femininity, we might read Caillebotte’s Langouste à la Parisienne, like Calf in a Butcher Shop, as wry commentary about a culture of display bordering on the absurd, where a calf or a langouste

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445 Brisson 1893, p. 26: “L’apparition d’une langouste à la parisienne interrompt cette apologie de la liberté de conscience. Nous admirons la savante architecture de ce plat, l’art avec lequel les tranches de langouste se superposent, mollement étendues sur un canapé de salade russe et baignées des flots onctueux d’une blonde mayonnaise... Et le champagne continue de ruisseler, et les yeux brillent, et les teints se colorent, et l’entretien s’anime. Et le citoyen maire ne songe plus à se défendre, il se lance dans les théories, il expose son plan de campagne, il dévoile ses projets, ses grands projets, qui doivent faire de Saint-Denis la première ville de France...”


must be dressed for dinner just like the men, but particularly, these paintings insist, the women who eat them. Because the subject matter of *Langouste à la Parisienne* and *Calf in a Butcher Shop* is at first difficult to decipher, both paintings raise common questions: what lies beneath the disguise? How is the physicality of bodies, whether of shellfish, calf, or woman, revealed and concealed, and what is at stake in this metamorphosis of raw to confected, fleshy to constrained? And yet, the pot of viscous, acidic yellow and green mayonnaise is far from the sumptuous blond waves of the condiment in the description from the *Revue illustrée*, almost as if to demonstrate the extent to which appetite is linked to vision, for the sauce is distinctly unappetizing. So too is the swampy base of the dish, where representation breaks down into its material elements. The rising curves of the eggs are ready to burst like bubbles in the muck, floating like disembodied eyes. With skinny legs curled and emerging from the dish and the stubborn antenna cutting across the picture plane, there is no easy equivalence between desirable femininity and mouth-watering meal as in the *Revue illustrée*, nor containment of the physicality of bodies or paint material.

There is just one known contemporary critical assessment of *Langouste à la Parisienne*, written when it was exhibited for the first time in 1888 in Brussels. The pseudonymous critic called the painting “violent [truculente]” arguing that it was “flaming extraordinarily, dazzling [éblouissant, also translates as blinding, and linked to a woman’s appearance in the Littré] like a monstrance.” Whether or not the reviewer intended for his (or, somewhat less likely, her) strongly worded prose to be read in these terms, such language recalls the anxious debates explored in the previous chapter in which male authors expressed their fear that underlying the “dazzling” appearance and surface seduction of the courtesan figure lay a devouring femininity that threatened the viewer’s body, blinding and manipulating it. Caillebotte’s painting interrupts the seamless transition in the *Revue illustrée* from viewing to physical appetite, and between alimentary and sexual consumption. Just as the recipe *langouste à la Parisienne* denatures a *langouste* through the practices of haute cuisine, Caillebotte’s *Langouste à la Parisienne* denaturalizes a culture that fed upon it. As in *Calf in a Butcher Shop*, the painting takes up the connections

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between sexualized and commodified women—Parisiennes, prostitutes, courtesans—and decomposing meat or threatening sea monster in literal and nauseating form.

If still life sometimes inspired anxiety about repellent or dangerous femininity, Renoir’s female figure in The Swing (figure 47) caused Gaston Vassy to visualize unappetizing cuisine rather than ice cream, the metaphor he would later use for Monet’s marine paintings. Disturbed by the loose strokes of different colours representing dappled sunlight upon the body, Vassy exclaimed: “the effects of sunlight are combined in such a bizarre way that they exactly produce the effects of grease stains on the figures’s clothing.” The reference to grease stains is closely related to the painterly tache, which Vassy had privileged in the same article to describe Impressionist practice. He described Monet’s The Turkeys (1877): Imagine a large green tache, dotted with other white taches that are the necks, and that represent the famous turkeys.” The tache had been enshined by Zola in the 1860s to discuss Manet’s abrupt juxtapositions between different planes of colour. Zola argued that Manet saw in terms of taches, coloured patches that might belong indiscriminately to a human face or an inanimate object, and that the artist transferred them to canvas with sincerity and simplicity—in other words, with the unmediated empiricism so central to Zola’s 1860s positivist style. When seen from an adequate distance, Zola explained, Manet’s taches endowed his paintings with striking relief, and thus created the effect of the modelling that the system of taches eschewed. Subsequently in the 1870s and 1880s the term became associated in a predominantly derogatory manner with the loose, separate strokes of paint and coloured patches characteristic of Impressionist practice. The term had entered the Littré by 1874 as a “term in painting: mass of colours

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449 Vassy 1877, p. 2: “Malheureusement, à côté de ces jolies toiles, il y a la Balançoire... Et, dans la Balançoire, les effets de soleil sont combinés d’une façon si bizarre qu’il produisent exactement l’effet de taches de graisse sur les habits des personnages...” [describing Les Dindons] Figurez-vous une grande tache verte, semée d’autres taches blanches qui ont des cousins, et qui représentent les fameux dindons.” See also the reactions to Renoir’s Etude. Torse, effet de soleil (1876) as decomposing meat in Wolff 1876; and Enault 1877.

450 On the history of the concept of the tache, which was well established prior to Zola, see Sjåstad 2014, pp. 45-65. La tache translates imperfectly as a mark, stain, spot, patch, blot, blotch, daub, and more (p. 12).

without connection, without harmony. Critics of the Impressionist Exhibitions often considered a shared reverence to the “famous ‘taches” to be the fundamental link between the painters participating, and Impressionism was commonly called “the school of the tache.” “[O]nly the pure tache exists,” argued Léon Mancino in *L’Art*; “[h]ow do they make light and sun? With taches, always taches… long live the pure tache!”

The primary definition of the word, however, was a stain, a dirty smudge or smear, frequently associated with grease. The association between the *tache* of greasy oil paint and that of the kitchen was suggested in Léon Lagrange’s review of the 1864 Salon discussed in Chapter One, in which Lagrange connected the *tache* to a *roux*, meaningfully associating it with the edible as the base of a sauce that, like a painting full of visible *taches*, required completion. This connection informed the use of the word in an article from the culinary journal *La Salle à manger* in 1865. Aimed at an audience of both sexes, the journal followed the Salon and consistently published articles on how the arts of the kitchen and the atelier were connected. It is not surprising therefore to find that an article profiling the Breda district’s *crèmeries*, a type of low-end restaurant, drew upon the language of painting in its description:

To accurately paint the interior of a *crèmerie* on Breda street, one must have the brush of Courbet. The slavishly brutal materialism established by the grand priest of reality would benefit from the scene... I repeat: Courbet would be in his preferred element there, and could make a masterpiece... Let us firstly discuss the master or more likely the mistress of this abode, because (will we never know why?) it is always a woman who is at the head of these sorts of establishments... By consequence of her multiple functions [dishwashing, childcare, shopping, serving, etc.], this maid assumes a spongy nature, she absorbs all of the grease and the dirt in the house. Her dress is stained with spots [*taches*] of many colours, her hands are covered in coal, and her hair frolics over her shoulders with an abandon that is charming from the point of view of art, but dangerous from the point of view of the

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452 Littré 1873-1874, T.4, p. 2126.
453 Havard 1882.
455 Mancino 1877, p. 68.
456 Littré 1873-1874, T.4, p. 2126. See also the subsidiary discussion of *tache d’huile*. 

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food that she presents to you. Strictly speaking (this is said without a pun), this is not a woman, but an ambulant spot [tache] that everyone fears and tries to avoid without succeeding.457

Courbet, associated here with vulgar subject matter and crass materialism, is called upon to depict the dirty environment with his indiscriminating brushes. As has been discussed by Frédérique Desbuissons, Courbet’s paint was frequently compared to food in order to express disgust with its physicality.458 After having invoked the painter, the crèmerie and its proprietress are described through a painterly visual analysis. The female owner, “from the point of view of art,” becomes so stained by the taches of grease around her that she actually transforms into one large spot of it, a life-sized tache that moves about the restaurant as customers recoil. Like a painter’s canvas, which had long been theorized as a feminized surface, her body and clothing absorb the multicoloured grease marks. She is the equivalent of Courbet’s painting. Both are oily chefs d’oeuvres of filth and indecency. It is, predictably, a woman (“will we never know why?”) who comes to embody the painterly tache. Despite the author’s performative ignorance, there are a number of reasons for this. First, the description relies upon the fact that women cooked in most households and low rung guesthouses, and here the woman as tache is related to the meaning of the nearly identical word tâche, to task or work. On another level, the tache was synonymous with touch (and likewise suggested in the similar words tache and touche), the material remainder of a body coming into contact with sticky fingers and

457 Anonymous, “Paris-Restaurant: Crèmeries du quartier Bréda”, La Salle à manger (3, 20 January 1865), p. 18-19: “Il faudrait, pour peindre exactement l’intérieur d’une crèmerie de Breda-Street, le pinceau de Courbet. Le matérialisme servilement brutal érigé en système par ce grand-prêtre de la réalité y trouverait largement son compte... Je le répète: Courbet serait là dans son élément de prédilection, et pourrait faire un chef-d’oeuvre... Parlons d’abord du maître ou plutôt de la maîtresse du logis, car (saurait-on jamais pourquoi?) c’est toujours une femme qui est à la tête de ces sortes d’établissements... Par suite de ses fonctions multiples, cette bonne devient d’une nature spongieuse, elle absorbe tout ce qu’il y a de graisse et de poussière dans la maison. Sa robe est maculée de taches omnicolores, ses mains sont gantées de noir animal, et ses cheveux folâtrent sur ses épaules dans un abandon charmant au point de vue de l’art, mais dangereux au point de vue des mets qu’elle vous présente. A proprement parler (ceci soit dit sans calembour), ce n’est pas une femme, c’est une tache ambulante que chacun redoute et cherche à éviter sans pouvoir toujours y réussir. Tout le monde s’en plaint, excepté de dégraissier.”

458 Desbuissons 2008, pp. 252-258.
Tactile experience was commonly associated with women who, it was widely believed, made up for perceived deficiencies in rationality, intellect, and moderation with more highly attuned sensory faculties. Whether rocking a cradle or fingering the material in a draper’s shop, women’s routines and supposed proclivities were seen as more connected to the tactile while men were more often aligned with the powers of sight. Touch could be conceived as “nurturing, seductive, dissolute in its merging of self and other,” while sight more likely signified detachment and self-containment, those qualities that authors like Zola worked so diligently to attribute to the allied figures of artist, author, and scientific analyst. Finally, the identification of the female body with slimy, unruly matter in La Salle à manger was connected to the longstanding philosophical connection between women and the raw materials of nature, the female body conceived as passive matter to be formed and made meaningful by a masculine organizing force. Sartre’s discussion of an uncontrollable feminine “viscous,” what Julia Kristeva would name the abject and theorize as feminized (rather than identify, like Sartre, as feminine) also rested upon this tradition.

Littré’s primary definition of tache is “a mark that dirties, that spoils,” and a tache d’huile is listed as figurative for something that “is spreading, like a disgrace that continues to increase.” These negative associations of the tache as an unsightly mark that spoils a surface, which tends toward getting out of control and does not respect boundaries, were exploited by Impressionism’s critics when they used the word. Reading the tache of art criticism alongside the description of the personified tache in La Salle à manger suggests that the term had gendered significance in the discourses of art, too. The feminizing of Impressionism as a movement has been well established by feminist art historians. In its broadest terms, the understood aim of the painters called Impressionists was to capture immediate sensory experience and translate it to canvas unmediated by such factors as past art or training. Certain critics argued that this process was passive, unintellectual,

459 The similarities of the words tache, tâche, and touche are mentioned in Sjåstad 2014, p. 12; and Rubin 1994, p. 200.
462 Littré 1873-1874, T.4, p. 2126: “Marque qui salit, qui gâte... tache d’huile, tache causée par l’huile, et qui tend toujours à s’agrandir. Fig. Cela fait tache d’huile, c’est une flétrissure qui va toujours en augmentant.”
unimaginative, and merely concerned with the superficial. In other words, Impressionism seemed particularly appropriate for women painters, who were understood to be more sensitive to fleeting “impressions.” In addition, the bright colours and broad strokes used to suggest light effects and atmosphere, as well as figures, discomfited many viewers who saw drawing and compositional planning sacrificed to an “orgy of the palette.” This sexualized language used to describe colour, which was a staple trope of Impressionist criticism, was symptomatic of a longstanding connection between colour and the feminine in art theory. The Impressionist tache was the ultimate manifestation of colour without line, freed from drawing and independent of form, disrupting the order of a painting. Insistently physical, tied to the artist’s hand, Impressionist mark-making could be seen to be sensual and decadent, qualities that were associated with the feminine and cut across debates about women’s “nature” as well as their appetites for food, clothing, even sex. Undisciplined material, essentially out of control like the 1860s female Salon-goers that Zola described as ravenously hungry for paintings-cum-confections, for Impressionism’s

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465 I have found the tache productively read alongside Georges Didi-Huberman’s concept of the pan, signifying a patch of painting “that interrupts ostensibly, from place to place, like a crisis or a symptom, the continuity of the picture’s representational system. It is the accidental and sovereign outcropping of a deposit, of a colored seam: it makes meaning, with violence and equivocation, as a wound on white skin gives meaning—gives gushing-forth—to the blood that pulses below. It self presents its material cause and its accidental cause, namely the very gesture, the touch, the intrusion of the paint” (2005 [1990], p. 266). This metaphor of the pan as a wound upon skin raises a similar potential for a painting to take on corporeal presence, with the ability to act upon the embodied viewer who is disturbed by overdetermined patches of opaque material that Didi-Huberman also describes as a “stain” upon the painting.
critics in the ensuing decades the *tache* in painting was nothing more than ambulant grease. Like the proprietress of the *crèmerie*, it would be better stabilized and avoided.

If the dress worn by Renoir’s swinging maiden seemed greasy, Caillebotte’s “dress” literalizes that grease with its dressed slices of sculpted *langouste* flesh. But while in those towering slices food as well as oil paint appears to be disciplined, contained and locked into place as would be the tightly corseted flesh of the *Parisienne*, the unruly strokes that project from the canvas in the mayonnaise and base of the dish, the loose marks defining the front edge of the table, or the “dazzling” colouration of the shell distinguish this painting from certain of Caillebotte’s 1870s works that critics had appreciated for what they saw as his rejection of the *tache* in more precise drawing and subdued colouration.466 If *Langouste à la Parisienne* retains some of the rigorous geometry and tighter draughtsmanship that had informed such opinions the decade before, the painting also displays the potentiality of *matière* to break out of those boundaries.

The language of food, as it emerged to describe the materiality of paint, was marked by ambivalence that stemmed in large part from gendered understandings of both. Paint might be compared to powdered sugar or ice cream, foods associated with female tastes that were themselves inseparable from the feminizing of Impressionism as a movement. Such was the case when Huysmans found Berthe Morisot’s work “charming” but overly tentative, and complained: “[a]lways these unsound vanilla *œufs à la neige* served for a dinner of painting!”467 Huysmans critiqued Morisot by drawing upon the language used more broadly to denigrate Academic painting as superficial and saccharine. *Oeufs à la neige* is a temperamental dessert, made of fluffy meringues always on the verge of collapsing into the custard sauce upon which they float, making the dish a compelling analogue for painting perceived as “unsound” (Huysmans also asserted that Morisot’s

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466 Even Huysmans appeared weary of the *tache* when he praised Caillebotte in 1880 in “L’Exposition des indépendants en 1880” (in Huysmans 1883, p. 98): “Ici, comme dans ses autres œuvres, la facture de M. Caillebotte est simple, sans tatillonnage; c’est la formule moderne entrevue par Manet, appliquée et complétée par un peintre dont le métier est plus sûr et les reins plus forts. En résumé, M. Caillebotte a rejeté le système des taches impressionnistes qui forcent l’œil à cligner pour rétablir l’aplomb des êtres et des choses.”

467 Huysmans, “Appendice”, in Ibid., pp. 261-277: “Toujours la même,—des ébauches expéditives, fines de ton, charmantes même, mais quoi!—nulle certitude, nulle œuvre entière et pleine. Toujours les inconsistants œufs à la neige vanillés d’un dîner de peinture!”
paintings showed “no certainty, no complete and solid work”). Whether the glossy surfaces of Chaplin’s portraits or the organic swirl of Monet’s sherbet paint, each analogy to the culinary is evocative in its own right, and lends new dimensions to the work that it described. But together, these allusions to cookery migrate, and draw attention to the ways that other language used to characterize Impressionist painting signified in relation to the culinary even when the words do not appear connected to cuisine. The tache emerges as itself liable to inflection by the lexicon and experience of the kitchen and its contents, opening the space for a phenomenological encounter with paint material and offering an underside to the more obvious references to food within art criticism. Paint may have suggested powdered sugar, cream, and meringue, but its comparison to grease was more prevalent and less ambiguous. The former metaphors proposed pleasure and appetite even when used to poke fun at Cabanel’s, Monet’s, or Morisot’s practice, and by extension raised the parallel discussions of the confected Parisienne in all her mouth-watering, desire-inducing glory. The latter metaphor of greasy, undisciplined material instead coincided with anxious descriptions of what lay beneath the Parisienne’s seductive exterior or inside the lobster’s rigid shell, the amorphous amphibian without the skeleton of fashion or the scaffolding of masculine reason to hold her in place, little more than a succulent, spineless mass.
CONCLUSION

When Zola, Bertall, Stop, and Cham compared a painting to pastry or confectionary, they depended upon the connection of those products to bourgeois women who were understood to have difficulty differentiating between sweets and paintings, desiring both with unmanageable appetites. To call a male artist a pastry chef was to tauntingly align his paintings with vulgarized female taste and superficiality. However, the artist-confectioner metaphor offers other possibilities when we consider that the artists Zola admired explored such metaphors themselves in paint, destabilizing the frameworks of gender objectification upon which Zola relied for his polemics and Bertall, Stop, and Cham depended for their humour. Pushed further than Zola or these caricaturists, the metaphor of artist as maker of confected goods did not necessarily reinforce hierarchies of arts or established constructions of gender. Instead, in paint, identification between different forms of art and consumption could undermine those categories.

This conflation achieves another level of significance in terms of painting. Oil paint proved particularly rich in its ability to move from a highly finished, lickable surface easily analogized to a glazed pastry, to a more insistent physicality that could stimulate the appetite with creamy textures and fruity colours, or provoke disgust through those same qualities. In certain paintings by Caillebotte and Monet, paint displays materiality that was sometimes appealing, as suggested in comparisons to powdered sugar or ice cream, but which always retained the possibility of the repulsive, carrying with it associations of the decomposition of organic material, the smelly, greasy smears of oils left over in the kitchen. This transition was at stake in Baron Grimm’s assessment of the 1877 Impressionist Exhibition for Le Figaro, in which the connections between paint, cream, and even cheese are explored to striking effect:

[T]he exhibition is of a collection of canvases freshly painted, on which one had spilt waves of cream in pistachio, vanilla, and currant flavours. Such is the first impression experienced by the visitor. He feels enmeshed in a vortex of fresh colours in which he cannot distinguish anything. Once this feeling dissipates, his eye grasps the subject exposed before him and immediately the second impression arrives... It is a great surprise and a profound discouragement... seen from close or far, from the front or the side, he sees nothing in these canvases that speaks to his mind. If he has an impression, it is only for his eyes and it is cruel. It attracts and
hits the eye like the odour of a cheese shop attracts and hits the sense of smell. It is exactly the same thing. In all of these canvases, there is not a single elevated idea, not a creation, not even an inspiration...  

This is an extraordinary piece of criticism that struggles between the visual and the visceral, the mind and the body, the profound and the profane. Grimm sets up these value-laden dichotomies and strains to keep them separate. The first impression is of paint material itself, fresh and colourful, evoking delicious creams. It is a sensual experience in which the eye cannot distinguish form and the senses intermingle, a pleasurable albeit disorientating experience. Then the second impression arrives. The viewer regains his bearings (the prose genders him male) and the eye penetrates the material and identifies the subject, but is disappointed that the only experience offered is a superficial appeal to the eye and not to the mind. Expressed is the understanding of Impressionism as a lightweight art of mere appearances and surface effects, an art addressed primarily to the eye that stops short of engaging the intellect. Of course, this sits strangely alongside the first impression described, in which the eye is baffled amidst somatic confusion, and the final image, in which the paintings capture and overpower the gaze in “exactly the same” manner as the sharp odour of ripe cheese upon the nose. Whether the first or second impression, the experience that Grimm describes is visceral. He admits to the sensual appeal of these canvases, but quickly works to contain and control that aspect, as the eye orientates itself and the mind becomes able to assess the work in relation to concepts like the “elevated idea,” “creation,” or “inspiration,” all of which are found to be sorely lacking. However, even at this second stage when reason and aesthetic judgment appear to triumph, the

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468 Baron Grimm, “Lettres anecdotiques du Baron Grimm: Les Impressionnistes”, Le Figaro (5 April 1877), p. 1: “Vue dans l’ensemble, l’exposition impressionniste ressemble à une collection de toiles fraîchement peintes, sur lesquelles on aurait répandu des flots de crème à la pistache, à la vanille et à la groseille. Tel est le premier sentiment qu’éprouve le visiteur. Il se sent entraîné dans un tourbillon de couleurs fraîches, où il ne distingue rien. Une fois cette sensation dissipée, l’œil finit par saisir le sujet qu’on expose devant lui et il subit la deuxième impression... c’est une énorme surprise et un profond découragement... regarder de près, ou de loin, de face ou de côté, il ne voit dans les toiles accrochées au mur rien qui parle à son pensée. Si impression il y a, elle est toute pour les yeux et elle est cruelle. Elle attire et frappe la vue, comme l’odeur d’une boutique de fromages attire et frappe l’odorat. C’est exactement la même chose. Dans tous ces tableaux, il n’y a pas une idée élevée, pas une création, pas même une inspiration...”
pungency of the paintings, whose odour derives from the decomposition of organic material, destabilizes the critic whose senses are attacked by the canvases that Grimm also calls “unhealthy.” The vortex of colours that seem not to represent anything at all “from close or far, from the front or the side,” colours that turn from fresh to fermenting and which demand to be smelled as well as seen by a visitor forced to moved around them, threaten the viewer’s body in terms similar to how Paul de Charry would sum up Caillebotte’s submissions to the Impressionist Exhibition three years later: “one passes before these works of nothing at all with as much nausea as when one finds a fly in a plate of cream.” What is so destabilizing is the feminine, invoked at every stage of Grimm’s passage as that against which the male viewer struggles. Painted with sweet cream, appealing to the body that it attracts and then abuses, Grimm’s account is linked to the feminizing of Impressionism as a movement that was sensually decadent and called for an embodied viewer at the expense of a cerebral one. The paintings therefore were suited to a female viewer more identified with her bodily instincts, best produced by a female artist better equipped to render them, and were gendered female themselves as undisciplined piles of creamy and pungent colour run riot. Because oil paint had a long tradition of association with the feminine as colour incarnate and raw material to be shaped by the artist, the ways that it signified also call to mind how female bodies were described, in a dichotomy between freshness and decay, the flawless surfaces of figures moulded by clothing and faces covered with a powdered finish and the amphibious body beneath that always threatened to break out of its boundaries, emit its secretions, and change over time. This is not so far from Zola’s insistence that a painting was itself flesh, for in descriptions of paint material as raspberry cream or kitchen grease, the female body was sometimes implied. The *tache* was connected to that body as unruly, viscous material outside of the carapace of a corset or painterly form.

Through comparisons to food, critics betrayed their attraction or repulsion toward paint material and attempted to channel it into productive categories for art criticism. By taking these analogies seriously we can better understand how Impressionist painting

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disrupted critical practice, and thereby challenge both those nineteenth-century assessments like Grimm’s that claimed that Impressionist painting was solely for the eye, as well as art historical interpretations that have focused upon those assertions of opticality without attending equally to the counterstatements in which they were often enmeshed, Grimm’s text being a fitting example. Attending to the comparisons between Impressionist painting and the culinary also extends inquiry into the gendering of the movement. The feminizing of Impressionism was linked not only to the judgement that Impressionism was merely for the eye, but that it was also for the body. Allusions to the alimentary, especially to cream and sugar, connoted a female viewer who would relish such foods. But the comparisons also implicated the female body itself, so often described in terms of creamy deliciousness, fruity freshness, and abhorrent greasiness. Through such prose the paintings took on a feminized presence as they became not just flesh, but female flesh.  

This is an extension of the work of feminist art historians who have shown that the surface of a painting was discursively feminized and paint analogized to cosmetics. I have relied upon Garb 2007, pp. 1-17; Garb 1998, pp. 114-143; Garb 1990, pp. 57-66; Lichtenstein 1987.
CHAPTER FOUR: “CABBAGES OR OTHER HOUSEHOLD VEGETABLES”

INTRODUCTION

There was a sea of vegetables between the rows of pavilions from pointe Saint-Eustache to rue des halles. At the two intersections at either end the seas grew higher, completely flooding the pavement. Dawn rose slowly in soft grays, colouring everything with a light wash of watercolours.471

Relying upon the language of painting, Zola described sunrise at the central Paris food market Les Halles in Le Ventre de Paris. For Zola, vegetables were the most spectacular aspect of the marketplace. Long-winded descriptions of them introduce Les Halles to the reader as well as to the protagonist Florent who arrives before daybreak when suppliers from the countryside and small-scale gardeners from the environs of Paris arrived to sell their products to shopkeepers and stallholders. Florent does not recognize the Haussmannized district or the newly built iron market. As the sun rises he is starving, “nearly at his last breath, here among the cabbages.” Trying helplessly to locate a familiar part of the neighbourhood he continually returns to the vegetable “walls of bundles and bunches.” The imposing iron columns of the market shed transform into a forest of “thin vines wrapping around his legs” as even the architecture becomes organic. In the heart of Paris, the delirious ex-convict “thought he was sitting on a hillside in the country.” Fresh produce holds myriad meanings in the novel. For emaciated Florent it begins as nutrition. A dirty carrot on the pavement is irresistible, and he gazes longingly at a peddler filling cups with steaming cabbage soup that magnifies his distress. Aspiring modern life painter Claude Lantier meets Florent in this moment of deprivation, but for the artist, the primary significance of the vegetables, and of the picturesque soup vendor, is aesthetic. “Ah, what beautiful vegetables this morning!” Lantier exclaims upon meeting Florent. “I came down very early this morning, looking for the rays of a beautiful sunrise landing on the

471 Zola 2009 [1873], p. 28. Orig: “C’était une mer. Elle s’étendait de la pointe Saint-Eustache à la rue des Halles, entre les deux groupes de pavillons. Et, aux deux bouts, dans les deux carrefours, le flot grandissait encore, les légumes submergeaient les pavés. Le jour se levait lentement, d’un gris très-doux, lavant toutes choses d’une teinte claire d’aquarelle.”
cabbages.” It is Zola, of course, for whom the market and especially its vegetables held this visual appeal. Their variations in colour and shape lent themselves to the novelist’s “accumulations of objects, his colourful descriptions of all varieties of foods, in which he indulges with so much love,” as Berthe Morisot’s mother described the book to her son-in-law Eugène Manet. For Morisot such descriptions were uninteresting, and she wrote that the novel gave her indigestion, a term that she used ironically given that in the novel, in an act of defiance against bourgeois consumption, Lantier describes having once arranged a grotesque Christmas display in a charcuterie window that he hoped would give potential customers indigestion with violent colour contrasts and overabundance of meat products. Lantier’s real and unrealizable aspiration is to make a large-scale painting of *Les Halles*. Instead, it is Zola who creates a grand portrait of the marketplace.

As Lantier’s insolent attempt to interrupt capitalist consumption indicates, food assumes political importance in the novel as well. This is particularly the case for vegetables, most notably cabbages, mentioned thirty-six times, more than any other food. Florent plans a revolution against the “Fats,” or the self-satisfied bourgeoisie revelling in its accumulated material comforts. The masses of food become symbolic of violent revolution as a mountain of “hard and compact” cabbages *choux* are compared to metal balls, suggestive of bullets, and “gigantic cauliflowers *choux-fleurs*” are compared to cannonballs. Written shortly after the Commune, the implications of such an uprising would have been close at hand. Lantier also mobilizes vegetables as symbolic of revolution, but an artistic variety. In *L’Oeuvre* (1886), as we have seen, the painter claims another significance for Florent’s dirty carrot eaten straight from the ground: “The day will come when one single original carrot,” a carrot “studied directly, painted naively,” will

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472 Quotes in this paragraph from Ibid., pp. 34, 34, 32, 27, 18 respectively.
“start a revolution.” As Lantier expounds upon the still lifes of vegetables, lingering upon cabbages, the humblest of them all and a staple food of the peasant, Zola suggested that both self-consciously modern painters and naturalist authors found beauty in everyday reality, even in a subject as unassuming as a cabbage.

Sixteen years after the novel was published to widespread acclaim, Camille Pissarro completed a watercolour of a covered passageway between the same pavilions, now entitled *Le Marché Les Halles* (figure 50, 1889), the same year that he made a series of drawings chronicling the disasters of urban capitalism. Pissarro painted food markets for over twenty years, mainly in the towns of Pontoise and Gisors near to where he lived. Zola was among Pissarro’s earliest supporters and described the painter in terms similar to Lantier’s aspirations, as a revolutionary whose work could be characterized by its naïveté, straightforwardness, and simplicity, terms widely applied to Pissarro. For Pissarro himself, an anarchist who believed in the social and political potential of aesthetic acts, Florent’s political revolution and Lantier’s artistic one were linked. Late nineteenth-century French anarchists opposed large governments in favour of small-scale cooperatives that they hoped would more fully respect the rights of individuals. Rural communities were believed to provide a model for this, an alternative to the modernization that had transformed Paris for the worse by creating sharp class polarization under capitalism. It was characteristic of the movement to idealize the potential of the countryside and the dignity and health, moral and physical, of those who worked it. The political significance

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475 Zola 1886, pp. 46-47.
476 For example, see Zola, “Lettres de Paris: Autre correspondance”, *Le Sémaphore de Marseille* (29 April, 30 April, 1 May 1876), p. 1: “M. Pinarro [sic.] est plus révolutionnaire encore que M. Monet. Chez lui, les notes prennent une simplicité et une netteté plus naïves.”
of vegetables in *Le Ventre de Paris* was made possible by the link between those foods and the countryside, with attendant associations of rural life and labour. Overflowing with vegetation, the market emerges as a point of contact between city and country. Gardeners such as the heroine Madame François, who delivers vegetables to *Les Halles* before daybreak, make possible these garden plots reassembled beneath the soaring iron shed. Claiming not to be “made of sugar,” Madame François is described as “a robust healthy plant that had grown the same way as her vegetables in the garden,” while the two other main female characters, Lisa the charcutière and the Norman, a fishmonger, appeared “like dubious meat that had been dressed for the window.” These women are aggressive and violent. They deal in dead corpses and are compared to them, and Zola sets up a dichotomy between the tainted female flesh of the city, compared to raw meat, and the fresh and hearty female bodies of the countryside, compared to vegetables.

My last two chapters have raised typologies of specifically Parisian femininity. Sex workers were imagined as formed in relation to the deplorable morality festering in the city streets, and Paris was a famous capital of the trade. *Parisiennes*, of course, were defined by their city *par excellence*. These Parisian types were formulated alongside the non-Parisian, including the agricultural worker broadly known as the *paysanne*. The previous two chapters have traced how those urban constructions of femininity were analogized to food, and examined how art criticism interacted with female typologies and allied aliments.

Critical comparisons between artist and *boucher* or *pâtissier* related to subject matter as well as particularities of material and technique. Pissarro’s work was discussed differently. An early biographer Adolphe Tabarant recounted a story about the artist who struggled financially throughout his long career. In 1877 one of Pissarro’s patrons, the pastry chef Eugène Murer, devised a plan to raise money for the artist by raffling off one of Pissarro’s paintings in his patisserie. A young working-class woman won the draw, but when she rushed in to see her painting she was so disappointed with it that she asked for a Saint-Honoré cake instead, and Murer kept the painting. Whether the story is entirely credible, it illustrates a wider trend in Pissarro’s reception. Far from a fashionable *pâtissier*, he was

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478 Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 137, 212.
given another title by 1886: “Impressionist market-gardener, specializing in cabbages.”

At the time of the first Impressionist Exhibition in 1874, Jules-Antoine Castagnary complained in an otherwise supportive review that Pissarro “has a deplorable liking for market gardens, and does not shrink from depicting cabbages or other household vegetables.” The same year Louis Leroy fabricated a comical conversation between himself and a visitor bewildered by Pissarro’s paintings:

- [T]he Cabbages of M. Pisarro [sic.] stopped him in the passage, and he turned scarlet red.
- They are cabbages, I told him in a gently persuasive tone.
- Oh! The unfortunate things are so caricatured!... [sic.] I swear to never eat them again in my life.

The angry visitor purports to such physical revulsion that he pledges a lifelong loss of appetite before the unlucky subject, not unlike the intended audience of Lantier’s Christmas display, to be given indigestion through the visual. But as Françoise Cachin has noted, Pissarro showed no paintings of cabbages in 1874. When the vegetables appeared in later exhibited works, they would only ever be minor elements in agricultural landscapes, more prominent in the titles than the pictures. Yet in 1881 Louis Enault remarked again upon Pissarro’s “great love for cabbages” and in 1886, Marcel Fouquier claimed that Pissarro began his career painting only “squares of cabbages in a beam of light,” denigrating the artist’s spotlight on such undeserving subject matter. That same year Pissarro earned his title as “Impressionist market-gardener, specializing in cabbages” in Félix Fénéon’s *Petit bottin des lettres et des arts*. As indicated in *Le Ventre de Paris* when Zola characterized Lantier as an aspirant cabbage painter, the vegetable was an

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482 Leroy 1874: “les Choux de M. Pisarro l’arrêtèrent au passage, et de rouge il devint écarlate.—Ce sont des choux, lui dis-je d’une voix doucement persuasive.—Ah! Les malheureux, sont-ils assez caricaturés!... Je jure de n’en pas plus manger de ma vie!”
483 Cachin 1986, pp. 95-98.
important symbol within art criticism. In his defence of *Les peintres impressionistes* (1878), Théodore Duret explained that Pissarro was accused of painting cabbages to mock his vulgarity, his neglect of the ideal, and lack of elevated aspirations. The cabbage stood for boorishness of subject matter, bad taste, and low value. But “[w]hen the cabbages and lettuce of Pissarro’s gardens have grown up,” Duret declared, “one will discover style and poetry in them.”\(^{485}\) If Manet painted raw flesh, best reflected in the subject of a prostitute, and Academicians baked cakes just as they confected portraits of *Parisiennes*, Pissarro was said to harvest cabbages, and this, I will argue, was related to his represented *paysannes* as well as his technique and facture. Pissarro may not have painted many cabbages, but he specialized in female agricultural workers in French fields and towns by the early 1880s. I will focus upon Pissarro’s representations of food markets, in which female figures and vegetables are most often represented together and understood to complement one another, moving from a discussion that centralizes subject matter to one focused upon the material qualities of these paintings.

\(^ {485}\) Duret 1878: “Il est vrai qu’on vous dira que Pissarro a commis contre le goût d’impardonnables attentats. Imaginez-vous qu’il s’est abaissé à peindre des choux et des salades, je crois même aussi des artichauts. Oui, en peignant les maisons de certains villages il a peint les jardins potagers qui en dépendaient, dans ces jardins il y avait des choux et des salades et il les a, comme le reste, reproduits sur la toile. Or, pour les partisans du ‘grand art,’ il y a dans un pareil fait quelque chose de dégradant, d’attentatoire à la dignité de la peinture, quelque chose qui montre dans l’artiste des goûts vulgaires, un oublie complet de l’idéal, un manque absolu d’aspirations élevées, et patati, et patata...Lorsque les choux et les salades des potagers de Pissarro auront vieilli, on leur découvrira du style et de la poésie.”
VEGETABLES AND VENDORS AT LES HALLES

In his review of the Impressionist Exhibition in 1882, the year that Pissarro showed several market scenes and a series depicting large-scale peasant women in country settings, Alexandre Hepp gave the following glowing assessment:

Impressionism is no longer given over to a prejudice for greens and yellows, to raspberry-coloured horizons, to waves of vanilla ice cream... [Pissarro’s] submission is superb. Grey weather, effects of the setting sun, tall grasses, vast prairies and in these settings, paysannes with health blooming on their cheeks and grace in their robustness; true women of Millet, women of the fields, who do not take from the sleepy landscape melancholies of the Parisienne, rustic without awkwardness, vigorous without coarseness... This walk through Impressionism gives you nostalgia for plein air, the seductive and picturesque sights; the landscapes that unfold along the walls have adorable freshness. The Impressionists have found their way—the open sky. One breathes with them by mouthfuls; they make an idyll of work and take the raw poetry of reality. Pissarro and Sisley are the masters—clumsy men who do not know how to sell and who I like. 486

Hepp sets up two related dichotomies, between raspberry and vanilla creams and grey weather upon darkening landscapes, and between melancholy Parisiennes and healthy paysannes. At stake is the “naturalness” shared by the country setting and the “women of the fields” whose health blooms spontaneously like the vegetation surrounding them, versus the acculturated woes of Parisiennes better suited to “raspberry-coloured horizons, to waves of vanilla ice cream” than to the “raw poetry of reality.” As opposed to the frivolity of the excessive colourism that Hepp associates with raspberries or vanilla ice cream, the latter a luxury item due to the necessity of ice and imported flavour, Pissarro

486 Alexandre Hepp, “Impressionnisme”, Le Voltaire (3 March 1882), p. 1:
“L’impressionnisme n’en est plus aux verts-jaunes de parti pris, aux horizons framboisés, aux nuages en bombe glacée à la vanille... [Pissarro’s] envoi est superbe. Temps gris, effets de soleil couchant, hautes herbes, vastes prairies et dans ces décors, des paysannes qui ont la santé fleurie sur les joues, et la grace dans la robustesse; vraies femmes de Millet, femmes des champs, qui ne prennent pas aux paysages ensommeillés des melancholies de Parisienne, rustiques sans gaucherie, vigoreuses sans grossièreté... Cette promenade à travers l’Impressionnisme vous donne des nostalgies de plein air, des visions séduisantes et pittoresques; ces paysages qui se déroulent le long des murs ont des fraîcheurs adorables. Les impressionnistes ont trouvé leur voie—le grand ciel. On respire avec eux par bouffées; ils font l’idylle du travail et prennent la poésie toute crue dans la réalité... Pissarro et Sisley sont des maîtres—des maladroits qui ne savent pas vendre et que j’aime.”
offers “raw” French “freshness,” evoking the vegetables grown in the countryside, and air so salubrious as to be inhaled by the mouthful. The exhibition space transforms into this wholesome country setting that revives the viewer walking through it. The paintings produce “nostalgia,” the longing for an idealized setting produced through the filter of memory, reverie, art, and literature. The “masters” of these effects are Sisley and Pissarro, whose connection to these landscapes is so strong that they cannot succeed in the urban art market’s circuits of financial and institutional exchange. The painters are discussed as humble labourers like the “rustic,” “robust” paysannes.

As is well known, these constructions of nature are best appreciated as reactions to contemporary Paris, a fantasy of a redeeming countryside functioning as an antidote to conditions of the capital perceived as the locus of disease, overcrowding, dubious morality, jaded sophistication, and psychic alienation. Where this dichotomy was articulated it betrayed strain, having little to do with actual circumstances of the country or encounters with the peasantry. These stereotypes manifest in Zola’s female characters. Madame Francois is a thirty-five year-old widow from Nanterre who provides a strong contrast to the dames de la Halle, those vendors who worked in Les Halles and lived in the neighbourhood like the Norman, whose coarse manners and powerful body, with its pungent odours opposed to the fresh smell of vegetables, intimidate and nauseate sensitive Florent. Madame Francois invites Lantier and Florent to her cottage where the men are refreshed. “Look,” exclaims Lantier while surveying her garden, “there’s a stump of cabbage I recognize. This is at least the tenth time it has sprouted back in that corner by the apricot tree.” Florent is described in relation to the same cabbage stalk, “resuscitated in the countryside like the cabbage that Claude said kept sprouting back from the ground.” The female agricultural worker, represented here by Madame Francois, could function as a screen onto which male intellectuals, authors, and artists projected their fantasies about

488 Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 210-212.
femininity set amidst a reviving countryside that was itself feminized and rendered maternal.489

Reactions to the female figures painted by Pissarro and his colleagues in Impressionist exhibitions very often unfolded along the same lines as Zola’s text, creating a dichotomy between the robust and healthy women of the country, associated with the natural, and the sickly and the sordid flesh of Parisian women, corrupted by the artifice of modern urban life. A general review of the Impressionist Exhibition in 1879 supplies the flavour of these debates:

Visit to the impressionists, alias independants. Mixture of the excellent and grotesque. This impression gathers before a canvas representing a green woman, literally green, the green of rotten meat [viandes corrompues]:
– Hum! Extremely advanced [avancée], this particular woman!
– It must be the portrait of an oratrice for the women’s congress.490

No particular work has been identified as the one to which this exchange refers, recalling the terms of similar assessments of Renoir’s paintings of women shown in 1876 and 1877.491 The review blends the common criticisms of Impressionist taches as brutalizing, especially when applied to the female body, and colouration as too dedicated to blue and green, with social commentary about the contemporary feminist movement. In 1878 the International Congress for Women’s Rights was held in Paris to coincide with the Exposition internationale. The congress proclaimed adult women the equals of adult men, and passed seven resolutions, among them arguing for the freedom to divorce and

489 The connection between women and nature is posed and interrogated in Sherry B. Ortner, “Is female to male as nature is to culture?”, Feminist Studies (1:2, Autumn 1972), pp. 5-31. It has also been a central theme of feminist art history. See especially Tamar Garb, “Painterly Plenitude: Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s Fantasy of the Feminine”, in Garb 1998, pp. 145-177; Garb, “Renoir and the Natural Woman”, Oxford Art Journal (8:2, 1985), pp. 3-15; Griselda Pollock, “The Ambivalence of the Maternal Body: Re/drawing Van Gogh”, in Pollock 1999, pp. 41-63. Jules Michelet was among the most influential nineteenth-century figures to promote this ideology. See especially La Femme (1860), in which Michelet argues that women’s bodies are connected to a natural setting with its plant life, and that both exist to revive and nurture children and men.
490 Nazim 1879: “Visite aux impressionnistes, alias indépendants. Mélange d’excellentes et de grotesques choses. Recueilli cette impression devant une toile représentant une femme verte, littéralement verte, d’un vert de viandes corrompues:—Hum! rudement avancée, cette pariculiére!—C’est sans doute le portrait d’une oratrice du congrès feminin.”
491 Enault 1876; Leroy 1877.
equivalent treatment of the sexes under law for the same crimes. The word *avancée* was used in the exhibition review to suggest meat in an advanced state, *faisandé*, as well as that which was progressive, as a leader of the women’s congress would have been considered by her feminist peers. The contemptuous joke relates to a feminist being understood as corrupted [corrompu means both rotten and corrupted] by culture and education, making her unnatural, the opposite of the robust, healthy, “fresh” women of the countryside who were insistently characterized as animalistic in their simplicity and timeless, instinctive habits. The paintings of Pissarro “leave a comforting impression, the opposite of that left by Degas,” asserted Alfred Paulet in 1886, the year that Degas showed a group of pastel female nudes that were also compared to rotting meat and identified as quintessentially modern bodies.492 “Pissarro sees a healthier side, more refreshing to the eye” by focusing on the “robust peasant,” Paulet continued.493 The same year, Jean Ajalbert praised Pissarro’s depiction of “*paysanne* types” with “the red, full cheeks and moist lips of healthy woman... these women of the country, the breadth of their shoulders, the ample size of their hips! They are not from the Batignolles, their sweat is of the soil! Rustic beauties, whose health exults...”494

Pissarro’s most highly finished painting of *Les Halles* helps to demonstrate why contemporary commentators associated his figures with this fantasy of hospitable nature and robust figures belonging to it. *Le Marché Les Halles* includes two types comically and symbolically opposed to one another, inflected with caricatural simplification and amplification of social difference, the *Parisienne* and the vegetable vendor.495 The central

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492 Assessments combined in Fèvre 1886: “M. Degas nous dénude, avec une belle et puissante impudeur d’artiste, la viande bouffée, pâteuse et moderne de la femelle publique.”
494 Jean Ajalbert, “Le Salon des impressionnistes”, *La Revue moderne* (20 June 1886), pp. 385-393: “Puis, M. Pissarro a dessiné des types de paysannes... [describing *Cueillette de pommes*] elle a les joues rouges, pleines, et ces lèvres humides de femme saine!... Et ces campagnardes, leur carrure, l’ampleur des hanches! Elles ne sont pas de Batignolles, elles suent la terre! Beautés rustiques: leur santé exulte...”
495 For a discussion of Pissarro and caricature, and the comic rapprochement that the artist sometimes set up between market women and wares, see Joachim Pissarro, *Camille Pissarro* (New York, 1993), pp. 203-211. Because it is usually assumed that Pissarro did not make significant paintings of *Les Halles*, *Le Marché Les Halles* has received no sustained art historical analysis. Two related studies exist, *Study of a Man Seated in an*
female vendor of loosely painted leeks and cauliflower is shown in profile in the foreground, positioned on the same side of the table as the viewer. She is framed by the towering ceiling of the new market shed, constructed between 1854 and 1888 to answer Napoleon III’s desire for “big umbrellas, nothing more.” Pissarro admired the construction, calling it an “interesting” building “whose proportions give it character.” In the watercolour the artist pried open and flattened out the structure to allow the viewer to better appreciate it. The vertical format emphasizes the scale of the shed, resisting the panoramic perspective shared by Zola’s literary representation of Les Halles—Pissarro called Zola’s novels “a bit too photographic”—as well as most other contemporary visual representations of it. The market was a popular subject among juste-milieu realists including Jean Béraud and Victor Gilbert. Béraud’s Les Halles (figure 55, 1879) and Victor Gilbert’s Carreau des Halles (figure 56, 1880), both depictions of the vegetable market, are arranged horizontally.

Interior (figure 51) and Study for a Market (figure 52), as do two other watercolours of Les Halles fish market also from 1889, Le Marché aux Halles, Paris (figure 53) and The Market Place [Un coin des Halles] (figure 54). Richard Thomson is the only art historian to suggest that these may be part of a conceived series on Les Halles, in Camille Pissarro: Impressionism, Landscape and Rural Labour (New York, 1990), p. 73. In the mid-1890s Pissarro may have hoped to return to the theme, and considered renting an apartment overlooking the market. See the correspondance in Jo Ann Wein, “Pissarro’s Market Women: the Imagery of Social Relations in an Industrial Society”, Unpublished PhD Dissertation (City University of New York, 1990), p. 206. Wein’s thesis is the most comprehensive source on Pissarro’s market scenes, but does not consider any of Pissarro’s paintings of Les Halles.


Letter to Lucien, 28 December 1885, in Ibid., p. 48. Pissarro’s letters indicate that he read at least five of Zola’s novels (La Faute de l’Abbé Mouret, L’Assommoir, Au Bonheur des dames, Germinal, and L’Oeuvre), and although he leaves no comment on Le Ventre de Paris, he does reference the dramatic adaptation of the novel performed in Paris in 1887 in a letter to Lucien dated 17 March 1887, in Ibid., p 102.
Instead, Pissarro’s composition has more in common with Monet’s paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare such as *The Gare Saint-Lazare: Arrival of a Train* (figure 57), shown in the 1877 Impressionist Exhibition. Both paintings are set at the far end of a shed that peaks at the top of the image and opens out onto Haussmannian apartment buildings beyond. Pissarro made changes to the structure and operation of *Les Halles* that facilitate the comparison. His scene takes place under the pitched roof at one end of the covered boulevards connecting the twelve pavilions, a space where food was not actually sold. Nor did the structure include the thin, freestanding columns at the end of this covered corridor, which are central to Pissarro’s image, but similar columns are visible at the far right of Monet’s painting. Both the *Gare Saint-Lazare* and *Les Halles* were built from materials manufactured at the Joly foundry at Argenteuil and shared structural qualities based upon their common circulatory function. The open spaces and permeable walls facilitated and signified the fluidity of people and things travelling through them. Just as railway cars arrived and departed from the shed, at *Les Halles* streams of products from the countryside, often transported by rail, arrived each morning to be dispersed by the end of the day. Given the changes made to *Les Halles* and the location of activities within them that visually link the market with a railway shed, in *Le Marché Les Halles* Pissarro suggested the status of the iron market as a juncture between city and country, a significance that Zola had also developed. It is a vision of exchange that appears more optimistic than in Monet’s painting, a surprising fact given that most scholarship on Pissarro’s market scenes has argued that the artist neglected this Paris market and was hostile to it. One possible reason for this perception is that Monet’s figures are smaller, often subsumed into the columns around them and dwarfed to a greater extent than is true in any of Pissarro’s paintings of *Les Halles* (figures 53-54) by the structure as well as the

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For example, Richard Brettell argues that Pissarro’s markets in Pontoise and Gisors are “the opposite of this huge, centralised (and government-controlled) urban market [*Les Halles*]” in *Pissarro’s People* (exh. cat., Munich; New York, 2011), p. 224. Ruth Iskin contends that Pissarro’s representations of urban markets are unanimously hostile, with figures dwarfed by the structure and smaller crowds signifying the anonymity of the city market (2007, p. 150). *Le Marché Les Halles* also challenges art historical interpretations that consider city and country as opposed poles in Pissarro’s art, for here, at least, they seem happily reconciled. For example, see John House, “Camille Pissarro’s Idea of Unity”, in Lloyd 1986, pp. 31-32.
imposing black trains. By contrast, the figures in Pissarro’s watercolour are complemented by their surroundings. A large crowd offsets the dehumanizing effect of metalwork, and the architecture corresponds to the people within, most particularly to the bourgeois woman across the vegetable counter who is associated visually with the structure. Her soaring hat with its frothy protrusion of tulle seems about to lift off of her head, erect with an architectural construction analogous to the ironwork and painted in the same dark blue colour. Her scaffolded form with its harsh angles of waist, shoulders, and neck, and her spindly arms positioned directly below the thin columns, supports the affinity between this modern woman and the modern space. While the vendor is also complemented by the structure, framed by the rounded central arch that also echoes the curves of her body, she is more easily associated with her wares than her environment. Her floppy white headscarf suggests the softer, organic shape of the leaves covering the cauliflowers with which her hand merges in watercolour, a hand set amidst rounded orange forms of other loosely-defined vegetables to which it corresponds. Her upturned nose is snout-like, suggesting a connection to a country setting with livestock. In Monet’s painting, the clouds of steam supplant the role of natural clouds within the painting, a manifestation of technology displacing nature only to recreate it in industry’s image. It is an ambiguous view of modernity, majestic but also intimidating. The smog-filled atmosphere is represented by a heavy application of dense paint. In *Le Marché les Halles*, the crystal clear spring day painted in transparent washes of watercolour creates a very different effect, one of clarity and visual ease that is reflected in the attitudes of the figures within. When Zola chose to describe the vegetables between the rows of the *Halles* pavilions upon which “[d]awn rose slowly in soft grays, colouring everything with a light wash of watercolours,” he relied upon the softness and light touch that are possible in watercolour, so well suited to gentle first rays of sunlight gathering strength. Nothing could be further from the harshness of gas light, the light of modernity that illuminated the pleasures and perils of its nightlife, than the soft natural light of dawn, the hour linked to new beginnings and innocence that is also invoked in the sea of vegetables fresh from the soil of the French countryside. Through a medium allied to water and a palette of earth tones tied to the organic, *Les Halles* emerges as a privileged space because of its connection to the country, which required that Pissarro reconfigure established stereotypes about the space and its vendors.
The *dames de la Halle* were prominent figures in popular culture. Unlike most areas of commerce, *Les Halles* was identified as a female-dominated space where women were registered as independent merchants and frequently the breadwinners for a family. Authorities were historically invested in their approval, granting them privileges and accepting them as representatives of the “people” of Paris. This did not sit well with nineteenth-century commentators such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a foundational anarchist whom Pissarro much admired and studied, and who was staunchly opposed to the concept of a female professional. “No government dared rid the Paris market of the privilege of these women,” Proudhon complained, for “it was said that they bring revolution in their skirts.” The *dames de la Halle* were known for having quick wit and temper, dishevelled appearances, and foul mouths. Proudhon went on to argue that they were “plus terribles que leurs maris,” inspiring fear and awe that masculinized them, according to the normative notions of femininity and masculinity that Proudhon promoted. For Proudhon, a woman who occupied any other position than dutiful wife and mother was afflicted with a “mania” which would “separate her heart and spirit from her sex.”


502 Ibid., pp. 101-102. Proudhon had passionately argued for the sanctity of the home and the role of the mother within it in *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l’église* (Paris, 1858) a book of great importance to Pissarro, who wrote to Lucien that it “must be read from beginning to end… [e]very young man ought to read it…” (letter dated 8 July 1891, in Rewald 1943, p. 179). In some forty pages of virulent prose in the middle of that book, Proudhon attacked the right and potential of women to benefit society as anything other than subservient wives. As he put it, given their inferior minds and bodies there could be no reason for women to exist at all outside of the context of the couple, where a man could grant a woman her only useful function as “a passive being, a receptacle for the seed that man alone produces, an incubator, like the earth for grains of wheat” (pp. 339, 443). There is a vast literature on Proudhon’s anti-feminism, mounted by feminists in his own time. See Juliette Lambert, *Idées anti-Proudhoniennes sur l’amour, la femme et le mariage* (Paris, 1858); Jenny P. de Hericourt, “Proudhon and the Woman Question”, *Revue philosophique* (1856) and *La Femme affranchie: réponse à MM Michelet, Proudhon, E. de Girardin, A. Compte et autres novateurs modernes* (Brussels, 1860). For secondary sources on
public life, he therefore argued, would be found “odious and ugly” by men. This gender ambiguity was also represented visually, as in Béraud’s Les Halles (figure 55) where a figure in a dark blue skirt and brown shawl barters over radishes with a top-hatted bourgeois man. This figure is dressed like the female vendors in skirt and headscarf, yet has a well-articulated beard and moustache. Salon criticism further vulgarized these market types and seized upon gender ambiguity. In Stop’s revision of Aristide Bourel’s L’écorcheuse des raies, shown in the 1875 Salon, a woman gutting rays in the original is transformed into a grotesque masculinized figure wielding a blade—the same strategies that demonized the Communardes in 1871—entitled L’écorcheuse des Halles centrales (figure 58). The text, “Or the death of M. Alphonse, tragedy in a painting,” suggests that this dame de la Halle is a threat not only to fish but also to men.

A subsidiary dame de la Halle type emerged alongside this masculinized figure, a hyper-sexualized cipher of unruly femininity, most likely a fruit or flower seller. Zola’s impassioned description of fruitière La Sarriette is exemplary, paraphrased here because it is several pages long:

The locks of her curly hair fell over her forehead like wild grass... she had hung cherries from her ears... Her mouth was lipstick red from the currant juice as though she had been painted and perfumed with some cosmetic... The apples and pears were in piles as regular as architecture, tall pyramids with the flushed colour of developing breasts... This was where La Sarriette lived, in an orchard... It was she, it was her arms and her neck, that breathed life into the fruit... You could imagine that the cherries had been placed in the stall one by one with kisses from her lips, that the peaches had fallen from her bodice... She had let her own blood run into the veins of the red currants. The heat of this beautiful woman excited the fruit that came from the earth, and they made love on a bed of leaves in the moss-spread nooks of the baskets.  

Proudhon’s anti-feminism, I have relied on Claire Goldberg Moses, French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (Albany, 1984); Garb 1985; Hutton 1987.  
504 Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 232-234. Orig.: “Ses cheveux frisottants lui tombaient sur le front, comme des pampers... Elle s’était pendu par gaminerie des guignes aux oreilles... elle avait la bouche rouge, une bouche maquillée, fraîche de jus de groseilles, comme peint et parfumée de quelque fard de séraïl... Les pommes, les poires s’empilaient, avec des régularités d’architecture, faisant des pyramides, montrant des rougeurs de seins naissants... La Sarriette vivait là, comme dans un verger... C’était elle, c’était ses bras, c’était son cou, qui donnaient à ses fruits cette vie amoureuse... Ses lèvres avaient posé là une à une les cerises, des baisers rouges; elle laissait tomber de son corsage les pêches soyeuses... elle
La Sarriette, named after the herb savoury, is so closely identified with her fruit that there is no distinction between them. Her stall becomes an orchard in which the attributes of nature are more delicious and appealing than those of culture. She has her own cosmetic of viscous crimson juice, jewellery of ruby-red cherries, _coiffure_ of wild grasses, and bodice of peaches. But even as she is subsumed into an idyllic natural setting, her representation there depends upon the processes that constitute the _Parisienne_, rituals of costuming and making up.\(^{505}\) The end of the passage is overtly sexual, as La Sarrette’s heat arouses the fruits and she is aroused by them. Such characterizations of alluring young _dames de la Halle_, perceived to be difficult to contain and control, contributed to the urgency for architectural renovation and legislative reform of the market in the nineteenth century. Fear of prostitution among market women, as well as the tendency to associate all forms of female commerce with the sex trade, informed the perceived moral emergency of the area.\(^{506}\)

Pissarro’s vendors in _Le Marché Les Halles_ do not fit these established representations, but seem curiously anodyne. Dilligently engaged in the tasks at hand, their bodies are depicted as simplified masses and they are not rendered sexually appealing or aggressive. Silence reigns in the space, for there is no visible display of buying and selling, particularly striking given that the defining characteristics of the market in popular culture were riotous sounds and crudity. In front of the secondary vendor, four nearly identical working-class female figures bow their heads respectfully, even reverentially, given how the space suggests aspects of the nearby church of Saint Eustache. Pissarro changed the rounded arches of _Les Halles_ to pointed, creating a clerestory level reminiscent of cathedral...
design. Pissarro was raised as a Jew and avoided religious imagery in his work, part of his antipathy to art that he described as “sentimental.” However, critics often referred to the religiosity of his figures, a fitting response to *Le Marché Les Halles* with its setting, symmetry, and vendor officiating from a counter positioned like an altar at which the shoppers conve. Filled with light and air, these are model working conditions in which two classes meet but no unsavoury confrontation occurs. This is especially noteworthy given that Pissarro was concurrently working on his *Turpitudes sociales* [Social Disgraces], an album of twenty-eight pen and ink drawings given as a pedagogical gift to his English nieces to convince them of the necessity of anarchist principles. In the album, Pissarro depicted the havoc wreaked by capitalism upon the urban working poor and demonized the city. Urban architecture is shown to be claustrophobic, the Parisian poor starving, and the working conditions dehumanizing and dangerous, especially for women. As in *Le Ventre de Paris*, the battle between rich and poor is conceptualized as the “war of the thin against the fat,” as Pissarro captioned one drawing. In *The Beggar* (figure 59), an impoverished man accompanied by his shrunken son looks out at the viewer with one hand outstretched and the other holding an upturned hat, a receptacle for the coins he is sure not to receive. He stands in front of a charcuterie with its display of boar’s head and hanging legs of meat, which emphasize the cruelty of poverty through the practices of butchery and carnivorism. So charged a symbol during the Siege, the étalage continued as an interface for class tension. The window is aimed at the passengers of the carriage passing in the distance, not the father and his son whose backs turn to it. Viewers see it all, the human misery that must be looked past in order to appreciate the display of legs of meat that are thicker and healthier than the Parisians in front of them. The violent hashing of the pen across the figures brutalizes them, erasing their identities in a process that parallels their marginalization as social outcasts invisible to the bourgeois passengers. By contrast, in the vegetable market in *Le Marché Les Halles*, women work in comfortable conditions of plenty, and the gentle watercolour washes and lightly coloured palette diverge dramatically.

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507 For example see a letter to Lucien, 8 July 1891, in Rewald 1943, p. 178.
508 For a characteristic example see Rivière 1877, pp. 1-4, 6.
509 See the drawing of a sewing workshop that Pissarro titled the “prison” of Saint-Honoré and appended the sarcastic text: “It is organized as a boarding house, it is very paternal!” Discussed in Hutton 1987, pp. 32-61.
from the pointed jots of the wiry brown pen. The vegetable market stands for something other than the charcuterie, despite the fact that in popular culture *Les Halles* actually functioned as a symbol of the modern and of modern capitalism and was vilified by Proudhon, a thinker so well respected by Pissarro.\(^5\)

To contemporary urban viewers Pissarro’s figures would not have belonged to *Les Halles* but to a country setting, the cultural construction of “*paysannes* with health blooming on their cheeks and grace in their robustness,”\(^6\) a generalized peasant type associated with simplicity of manner and costume, wholesomeness, hearty good health, and simple good looks. All of the working-class women in the painting resemble one another, with generalized features, brown buns and green or blue dresses. So many similar figures suggests their interchangeability, echoed in the repeating heads of cauliflower. The two vendors behind the table, but for minor differences in attire, reflect each other in a way that evokes the composition of Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (figure 60, 1882), with its mirror reflection of the saleswoman behind a counter and a right-hand male figure who is also present in Pissarro’s watercolour. If Pissarro perceived himself responding to the theme of the female vendor as imagined by an artist he greatly admired, he offered a more redemptive version. He replaced the potential alienation of urban labour suggested by the barmaid’s blank stare with communal work in solidarity, as well as rejected Manet’s still life of gleaming commodities reflected in the artfully packaged femininity of the *Parisienne*. Leeks and cauliflower, like cabbages, would have been perceived as humble foods of the French countryside. Unlike La Sarriette’s exotic fruit, the pearly white *choux-fleurs* are a chastier form of a floral bouquet, a “natural” alternative to the artificial decorations of a bourgeois woman’s hat, clothing, or flesh. The newly picked vegetables

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\(^5\) Zola personified *Les Halles* as an obese, belching giant—language he would borrow to describe the department store in *Au Bonheur des dames* (1883)—that created complaisant petit bourgeois stallholders and shopkeepers whose only concern about the government is that it is “good for business.” In the novel, socialism cannot hold at *Les Halles*. Within art criticism, allusions to food markets were used more generally to suggest crass commercialism. Edmond About’s assessment of the 1868 Salon is typical: “Aujourd’hui, dans le coin d’une bâtisse à plusieurs fins, qui n’est ni une serre ni une halle, mais qui participe des deux, on improvise une exhibition simultanée des beaux-arts et des beaux légumes, entre un concours de chevaux carrossiers et une exposition des fromages sans doute” (1868).

\(^6\) Hepp 1882.
connote innocence, which lies behind Zola’s use of them as the backdrop for descriptions of playful sexuality, rather than the steamy setting of La Sarriette’s more fully developed appeal. Among the first sights to capture Florent at the market is:

A young farm girl of about sixteen, wearing a blue linen coat and cap, [who] climbed up on the cart and was up to her shoulders in cabbages. She began tossing them one by one to someone hidden in shadow below. Every now and then the girl would slip and disappear in a cabbage avalanche. Then her pink nose would be seen sticking out of the green and she would be heard laughing as the cabbages were tossed...

The teenager is bathed in cabbages from which her red nose emerges as well as the sound of her laughter, for her work is amusement to her. Understandably it is a female character submerged in a cabbage avalanche, for like La Sarriette lost among her fruits, the scenes stage the connection between femininity and nature, but of two different varieties. Whereas fruits have the sensual appeal of being sweet and ready to consume immediately, vegetables are typically tougher and sharper in taste when raw, and require cooking. This allowed them to stand for a chaster form of sexuality, not quite ripe but budding, the sexuality of ever-deferred possibility rather than fact. Between being part of the landscape and desirable food, connected to their collection in the fields as much as their consumption at the table, raw cabbages, cauliflower, or leeks issue as many tactile as taste associations. These associations will be central to the following section, for Pissarro’s critics and supporters alike relied upon the tactile and taste qualities of raw vegetables in order to characterize his painting. Pissarro’s label as an Impressionist gardener and of his works as his harvested vegetables depended upon a shared vocabulary used to describe his female peasant figures and the wares that they brought to market, relating to freshness, robustness, and health. Interrogating how Pissarro’s subject matter was linked to vegetables in critical

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512 Zola 2009 [1873], p. 15. Orig.: “Une petite paysanne de seize ans, en casaquin et en bonnet de toile bleue, montée dans le tombereau, ayant de choux jusqu’aux épaules, les prenait un à un, les lançait à quelqu’un que l’ombre cachait, en bas. La petite, par moments, perdue, noyée, glissait, disparaissait sous un éboulement; puis, son nez rose reparaissait au milieu des verdures épaisse; elle riait, et les choux se remettaient à voler...” In the novel, piles of cabbages also provide the setting for the discovery of a baby and the location where two adolescents explore their developing sexuality. Like the cabbage stalk that constantly renewed itself in Madame Francois’s garden, cabbages signify fertility and birth as well as naïve sexuality in the novel. See also Michelet’s take on the chaste connection between women and plants (1860, pp. 104-105).
discourse provides insights into how those comparisons functioned, were sustained, and migrated onto the material qualities of Pissarro’s paintings as objects.
VEGETABLES IN PISSARRO’S CRITICAL RECEPTION: TASTE AND TOUCH

In this exhibition there are works of real value and exceptional flavour. If the fourteen artists in the catalogue had been willing to pick over and severely limit their output, instead of displaying [étaler, usually used to describe merchandise hung for sale] their shipment of fresh and rotten merchandise to the public, the exhibition on the avenue de l’Opéra would have been a success... 513

In this review of the 1879 Impressionist Exhibition, the anonymous critic compared the painters to shopkeepers or market vendors displaying foods of unequal quality to the viewer/consumer. Some fresh, others rotten, the review set up a dichotomy widely used to describe Impressionist painting. If Degas’s and Renoir’s paintings of female figures were sometimes compared to rotting meat, Pissarro’s work was most often analogized to fresh vegetables. The characterization of Pissarro’s paysannes, as well as the landscapes to which they were seen to be connected, as fresh and healthy migrated onto Pissarro’s paintings themselves, understood to be endowed with tangible benefits to the embodied viewer. When supportive critics described his paintings as vegetal, whether explicitly comparing them to cabbages or describing them as “fresh” and “raw,” they set up a model of viewership analogous to eating a healthy meal and relied upon the nourishing potential of the landscape, its products, and indeed its paysannes. From the opposing side, Pissarro’s unfavourable critics used the same connection between his paintings and vegetables in order to argue that the work was weak, meagre, and lacking in substance, as well as bitter and sharp, potentially dangerous to the viewer’s eye and body. Because these comparisons depended on the materiality and facture of Pissarro’s paintings as well as his subject matter, but were understood to characterize his production generally rather than being tied to any particular work—as we have seen, he did not display paintings that featured cabbages prominently, making the cabbage a symbol of his output rather than a transparent

513 Anonymous, “Exposition de peinture par un groupe d’artistes dissidents”, La Petite République Français (13 April 1879), pp. 2-3: “... il y a dans cette exhibition des oeuvres d’une réelle valeur et d’une saveur exceptionnelle. Si les quatorze artistes qui figurent dans le catalogue, au lieu d’étaler aux yeux du public toute leur cargaison de marchandises fraîches et avariées, avait été bien inspirés pour faire un triage sévère dans leurs productions, l’exposition de l’avenue de l’Opéra obtenait un success...”
description of it—this section first traces these critical tendencies and then brings them to bear on oil paintings.

When the connection between Pissarro’s painting and cabbages emerged in 1874, the viewing experience was linked to alimentary consumption. Louis Leroy imagined a guest offended by Pissarro’s cabbages whose reaction was indigestion, as he promises never to eat another cabbage in his lifetime. Well into the next decade this connection between looking and consuming was exploited by critics of Pissarro and his colleagues to describe tones perceived to be “raw,” or unmixed (versus “le cuisinage des couleurs, le truc des mélanges et des fondues”\textsuperscript{514}) as well as pictures that seemed to be unfinished, and thus uncooked. The comparison to the vegetable world was most often used for Pissarro and Monet, linked as landscape painters. In order to complain that Monet’s landscapes shown in 1877 appeared composed of haphazard daubs of unblended colours, Bertall described them as “raw like the leaves of young lettuce,”\textsuperscript{515} calling to mind Théodore Duret’s defense the following year that “[w]hen the cabbages and lettuce of Pissarro’s gardens have grown up one will discover style and poetry in them.” At stake in Duret’s review was the progressive development of Pissarro’s work as well as the softening of public opinion over time. Taking Bertall’s critique a step further in the same year, Louis Leroy changed the title of Monet’s \textit{Femme dans la prairie} (1876) to \textit{Femme dans la salade}, which he described as “a spectacle as refreshing as watercress to the health of the body.” Leroy began his review by comparing the colouration of Renoir’s portrait of actress Jeanne Samary leaning forward provocatively to “vanilla, red currant and pistachio: a portrait to eat with a spoon!”\textsuperscript{516} Leroy

\textsuperscript{514} Paul Adam, “Peintres impressionnistes”, \textit{La Revue contemporaine: Littéraire, politique et philosophique} (v. 4, April 1886), pp. 541-551: “Le coloris des impressionnistes les plus avancés devient tout scientifique. Méprisant le cuisinage des couleurs, le truc des mélanges et des fondues, ils obtiennent la teinte par une simple juxtaposition des tons…”

\textsuperscript{515} Bertall, “Exposition des impressionnistes”, \textit{Paris-Journal} (9 April 1877), pp. 1-2: “Ses paysages, ils sont nombreux, sont bavocheux, crûs comme les feuilles de jeunes laitures…”

\textsuperscript{516} Leroy 1877: “Cette coloration impressionnante tient à la fois de la vanille, de la groseille et de la pistache: un portrait à manger à la cuillère!… Montrez-lui plutôt la \textit{Femme dans la salade} de M. Monet (n. 94). C’est un spectacle rafraîchissant comme le cresson, la santé du corps.” See the similar assessment by Charles Bigot the previous year in “Causerie artistique: L’Exposition des ‘intransigeants’”, \textit{La Revue politique et littéraire} (8 April 1876), pp. 349-352: “… M. Renoir peint avec une sorte de crème dans laquelle il délaye tour à tour du rose, du jaune, du bleu, du violet.” Bigot referenced those “crèmes
explicitly contrasted Renoir’s confectionary tones composing the delicious figure to the healthy salad offered by the landscapists, Monet and Pissarro foremost among them. Unsurprisingly, just as it was Renoir’s portrait of a woman that Leroy presented as appetizing, it was a female figure in a landscape that warranted the title “woman in the salad,” with the same sexual undertones of women as available to be possessed and consumed. Stop’s 1875 caricature of Jules Lefebvre’s Rêve (figure 38) discussed in the previous chapter comes to mind, in which “[a] man dreams that in eating oeufs à la neige he finds under his tooth a small woman to bite.” Such comparisons between paintings and vegetable meals continued, in references to “raw” colours thrown together into a “salad” and “landscapes as acidic as plates of sorrel.” As the indication of acidity suggests, the comparison to vegetables was powerful as a critique, both for its metaphorical potential as well as its literal ability to evoke the multi-sensory. Metaphorically, the connection named impoverished painting, relying upon the association of a vegetable diet with poverty. In Le Magasin des demoiselles, for a female readership, a review of the 1879 Impressionist Exhibition opened:

jaunes, violette, orangées, qu’il [Renoir] décorait du nom de portraits” in his review the following year for the same journal in “Causerie artistique: L’Exposition des impressionnistes”, La Revue politique et littéraire (28 April 1877), pp. 1045-1048.


It is an economy that the poor have long discovered! Those who cannot buy meat are forced to be vegetarians [légumistes]. But I doubt that those with a better lined purse would stand under the banner of this little phalanx.\footnote{Vte de Saint-Leu, “Causerie: Les Indépendants”, Le Magasin des demoiselles (25 April 1879), p. 40: “Eh mon Dieu, c’est là une économie que les pauvres ont depuis longtemps découverte! Ceux qui ne peuvent pas acheter de viande sont bien forcés d’être légumistes. Mais je doute que ceux dont la bourse est un peu mieux garnie aillent se ranger sous la bannière de cette petite phalange...”}

Those without the resources to exhibit elsewhere become Impressionists, whether those resources related to their financial positions or their skill and training as painters. The word légumiste was meant to sound strange, as the word for vegetarian was végétarien, an established category though not at all a popular one. For this reviewer, the exhibition was a poor showing. The reference to vegetarianism probably also related to the quantity of landscape painting exhibited. As discussed in Chapter Two, Baudelaire criticized certain landscape artists in his \textit{Salon de 1859} as being “trop herbivores.” Such commentary was connected to the contemporary bias against landscape painting, still not overcome by the time of the Impressionist Exhibitions, as fragmentary and partial, deficient in “the essential quality of art,” as Charles Blanc put it.\footnote{Blanc 1867, cited and discussed in DeLue 1998, p. 727.} Like a dinner of salad, landscape painting was seen to lack the substance to satisfy the diner/viewer. Henry Havard relied upon the same logic when he summed up the 1881 Impressionist Exhibition of art that was “not robust, rather badly nourished...”\footnote{Havard 1881: “[Impressionism is] art nouveau assez peu robuste, assez mal nourri, qui cherche sa voie...”} For Havard, the painting was scrawny and weak. Another critic deemed the following year’s show “nothing but an exhibition of lent:—Lean, lean, very lean!”\footnote{Meurville, “Exposition des indépendants”, Gazette de France (21 March 1882), p. 2: “...après tout, ce n’est qu’une exposition de carême:—Maigre, maigre, très maigre!”} Puny painting was again analogized to paltry food.

Such comparisons to vegetables also moved beyond the metaphorical, used to describe viewing as an embodied experience that could be dangerous and damaging to the organ of the eye. An anonymous reviewer claimed that the exhibition in 1877 “gives vertigo! the pale white and green blind visitors. When you enter into the room, you blink,
and begin to tear up as if you were peeling onions.” White and green, the colour of young onions, as though the paintings not only make visitors blink with their harsh colours but give off a chemical irritant like alliums that cause the eye to automatically protect itself by producing tears that obscure its ability to see. The paintings sting and create vertigo, and they end in being sensed rather than seen. Another critic later complained of Pissarro’s “violent colouration, where the most discordant tones collide and make you squint...” The colours are aggressive; like a blinding sun they attack the eye which cannot do its proper job of looking. The Impressionists “have forced the dose, and served us indigestible things, this garish assembly of tones in collision that shock our vision,” admonished a critic of the 1879 exhibition in the same terms. Raw tones were compared to indigestible food and the destruction of the eye. The discussion of a “dose” raised the language of medicine and the broader concern that Impressionist painting was not healthy, although such criticism mostly arose in relation to those paintings analogized to rotting flesh rather than fresh vegetables. “Their figures resemble pensioners of the Morgue... it is

524 Enjoiras, “Causeries artistique: Exposition des artistes indépendants”, L’Intransigeant (12 April 1881), p. 3: “Quant à M. Pissarro, il a multiplié ses Études; mais je ne puis admettre ses colorations violentes, où les tons les plus discordants se heurtent et font cligner l’œil.”
525 Rachael DeLue argues that Pissarro represented the relationship of sight to embodiment in his landscape painting from the 1860s and 1870s, emphasizing the “difficulty and duration of vision” (1998, p. 718). I have taken up her claim that Pissarro’s critics did not describe his paintings as exclusively addressed to sight, and that his paintings make the viewer aware of his or her own body as it struggles to penetrate the surfaces with a gaze that is quasi-tactile. My discussion extends these insights by considering the evocation of taste in the criticism, arguing that later paintings do not just disrupt vision but were seen to threaten vision and the body (as in those assessments that claimed painting as unhealthy). Central to my own interests are the gender politics at stake in what DeLue describes as Pissarro’s embodiment within his painting.
526 de la Leude 1879, pp. 65-66: “...mais à l’instar des disciples de Zola en littérature, ses imitateurs ont forcè la dose, et nous ont servi ces choses indigestes, ces assemblages criards de tonalités heurtées qui choquent notre vision.”
not healthy to see such things,” complained Marius Vachon characteristically in 1876. Before these “unhealthy curiosities,” remarked Bariolette in his memorable 1877 assessment, it was impossible not to experience “the memory of seasickness” and a certain lunch of strawberries and cream cheese that had not stayed down during the voyage. Such critiques, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, related to the subject matter (usually female figures) as well as the nauseating materiality of the paint in its organic facticity that evoked the slimy surfaces of decomposing meat or the curdles of clotting cream. Beneath the critical comparison to dairy products, as in the above assessment of seasickness and the unfortunate choice of strawberry and cream cheese lunch, lurks the possibility of decomposition of time-sensitive foods as well as the nausea of eating too much of them. This side of the comparison between paint and alimentary products also manifested in relation to Pissarro, for the threshold between freshness and decay could never be stabilized. “Try to make M. Pissarro understand,” urged Albert Wolff in 1876, “that the sky is not the colour of fresh butter.” On the one hand, the freshness of the butter is emphasized here, associated with the country setting in which it was produced, not unlike the perennial comparison to cabbages. Yet even insisting upon its freshness implied the possibility of the opposite, which Bertall exploited the following year when he accused Pissarro of being especially dedicated to “a certain uniform blue mixed with a raw green, the look of which is painful for the eyes and which calls to mind the worm-eaten colouration of Roquefort cheese.” Such prose positioned Pissarro’s material-laden

527 [Marius Vachon], “Carnet de la journée”, La France (4 April 1876), p. 2: “Leurs personnages ressemblent à des pensionnaires de la Morgue... Ce n’est pas sain de voir pareilles choses.”
528 Bariolette 1877.
529 Albert Wolff, “Le Calendrier parisien”, Le Figaro (3 April 1876), p. 1: “Faites donc comprendre à M. Pissarro que les arbres ne sont pas violets, que le ciel n’est pas d’un ton beurre frais.”
530 Bertall 1877, pp. 1-2: “L’impression produite sur le spectateur quand on entre dans ces galeries, est celle d’un certain bleu uniforme mêlé d’un vert crû dont l’aspect est douloureux pour le regard et qui rappelle la coloration vermoulue de fromage de Roquefort... Une salle particulièrement meublée des œuvres de M. Pezzaro, un paysagiste primitif, est tout spécialement vouée à ce bleu particulier, qui plane, du reste, sur tout le reste de l’exposition, comme un drapeau et un signe maçonnique.” In her discussion of the trope of rotten painting in Salon criticism, Frédérique Desbuissons explains that the comparison to cheese was established in Second Empire caricature in order to raise smell, a
canvases as pungent, creamy, lumpy and full of worm-eaten craters (another critic complained that Pissarro had invented “painting in relief” with mountains and valleys).\(^{531}\) This caused distaste, for certainly nobody eating Roquefort would want to imagine it as infested with worms, as well as pain and soreness of the eye unaccustomed to the intense tones of vivid green.\(^{532}\) Without a layer of varnish to set or preserve the paint, its pastel-like softness threatened to change over time. By contrast, if by the 1870s it had already become a trope that Impressionist painting threatened the body of the viewer and provoked nausea with its literal and metaphorical bad taste,\(^{533}\) Pissarro was selected by his supporters as the antidote to this problem, the breath of fresh country air that would restore health to the viewing body as his scenes were discussed as literally materializing before the visitor.\(^{534}\)

The question of health or infirmity, robustness or malnutrition that was adopted to describe Pissarro’s figures as well as his paintings also inflected discussions of the artist himself, who was consistently compared to the peasant figures in his works, a fellow “Impressionist market gardener” to repeat Fénéon’s title. The comparison arose not just from subject matter, but facture and technique that were points of consistent interest among critics who used a number of analogies to describe the typically thick application of unvarnished paint. From the first Impressionist Exhibition, Pissarro’s canvases were

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \(^{531}\) André 1882, p. 3.
\item \(^{532}\) Jean Paul Sartre’s existential philosophy appeared in Chapter One to connect the eye to the body through the concept of the viscous and the visceral response to it, here appropriate to critics who expressed nausea when viewing paint material. I have found Sartre’s concept of alimentary intuition, that the yellow of a lemon carries its acidity and when eating a lemon we also taste its colour, productive in relation to these discussions of the sharpness of greens and blues that caused critics to reference bitter salads or pungent onions (1992 [1943], p. 186). Sartre’s concept of alimentary intuition is discussed in Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1948], pp. 59-63, because of its affinities to Merleau-Ponty’s argument that the senses are encrusted within each other. This is a rare moment when Merleau-Ponty discusses taste, a sense generally neglected in his theorization of the connection between sight and touch.
\item \(^{533}\) Related is a series of caricatures implying that the paintings could cause damage to the unborn babies of pregnant women. See Cham, “—Madame! cela ne serait pas prudent. Retirez-vous!”, \textit{Le Charivari} (16 April 1877); and PIF, “Croquis par PIF”, \textit{Le Charivari} (11 April 1880 and 23 May 1886).
\item \(^{534}\) Two particularly good examples are Huysmans, “L’Exposition des indépendants en 1881”, in Huysmans 1883, pp. 225-257; and Gustave Geffroy, “Chronique artistique: L’Exposition de Camille Pissarro”, \textit{La Justice} (2 February 1892), p. 1.
\end{itemize}
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identified as dirty and gritty, as though the artist had used soil and sand to create 
belaboured images. Privileged adjectives for describing Pissarro’s paintings would be 
“dirty,”

“rough,”

dull,” and “monotonous,” qualities evoked by comparing the 
works to tapestry, 

cotton or wool, plastered walls, pastels, or soil itself. Such 
connections linked Pissarro to agricultural as well as artisan labour, implying or sometimes 
explicitly stating a link between the painter and his peasant figures as well as between the 
materials of painting and the materials of a country landscape, its soil and sand, vegetation 
(cabbages, lettuce) and animal products (butter, cheese). In 1880 George Japy wondered 
“with what he paints. A trowel, undoubtedly?... [sic.] It [his paint] is thickened and grainy 
as though he added sand to his colour.”

Charles Ephrussi further developed the 
correlation the following year:

A descendent of the great Millet, steeped like him in the poetry of the earth, and 
like him soaking his brush in the sap of country life... There is in these paintings of 
country life an echo, as it were, of the hardships and travails of toiling in the fields;

535 Leroy 1874. See also Richard Schiff, “Pissarro: Dirty Painter”, in Karen Levitov and 
Richard Schiff, Camille Pissarro: Impressions of City & Country (exh. cat., New Haven; 
536 Marc de Montifaud, “Exposition du boulevard des Capucines”, L’Artiste (1 May 1874), 
pp. 307-333; Goetschy 1880.
537 Arthur Bagnières, “Exposition de peinture par un groupe d’artistes, rue Le Peletier, II”, 
L’Echo universel (13 April 1876), p. 3; George Japy, “Les Impressionnistes”, Le Soir (3 
April 1880), p. 3; Huysmans 1883 [1881].
538 Bagnières 1876; C. E., “Exposition des artistes indépendants”, La Chronique des arts et 
de la curiosité (16 April 1881), pp. 126-127; Gustave Geffroy, “L’Exposition des artistes 
indépendants”, La Justice (19 April 1881), p. 3; Paul Mantz, “Exposition des oeuvres des 
artistes indépendants”, Le Temps (23 April 1881), p. 3; La Fare 1882.
539 Bagnières 1876; Albert Wolff, “Quelques Expositions”, Le Figaro (2 March 1882), p. 1; 
540 Ephruissi 1880, pp. 485-488; C. E. 1881; Huysmans 1883 [1881].
541 Elie de Mont., “L’Exposition du boulevard des Capucines”, La Civilisation (21 April 
1881), p. 2; Huysmans 1883 [1881].
542 Gonzague Privat, “L’Exposition des artistes indépendants”, L’Événement (5 April 
1881), pp. 2-3; Nina de Villars [Villard], “Variétés: Exposition des artistes indépendants”, 
Le Courrier du soir (23 April 1881), p. 2; Ph. Burty, “Les Aquarellistes, les indépendants 
et le cercle des arts libéraux”, La République française (8 March 1882), p. 3; Fichtre 1882; 
Sallanches 1882; Gaston Vassy, “L’Actualité: Les Peintres impressionnistes”, Gil Blas (2 
543 Japy 1880: “Si ce n’était une indiscrétion, je lui demanderais avec quoi il peint. Une 
truelle, sans doute?... C’est empâté et grenu comme s’il ajoutait du sable dans sa couleur.”
M. Pissaro’s [sic.] brush is like a spade painfully turning the earth. The expression is strong and intense, but the craftsmanship harshly monotonous and excessively uniform. No skill, little freedom in handling, but vigour and sentiment.\textsuperscript{544}

Painting becomes like planting or harvesting vegetables, its materials compared to soil or sap, its workmanship connoting awkwardness. Pissarro wields a brush or palette knife as the worker grasps a spade, suggesting heavy handedness and repetition. The Parisian ideology of agricultural toil as salubrious, dignified, and difficult, but also tedious and brainless, manifests. Sometimes the correspondence of painter to peasant moved beyond the metaphorical, as in an anonymous 1886 review:

He [Pissarro] lives in the heart of Normandy, on a farm that he cultivates himself and which nourishes him with the products of the ground that he tills. When the harvest has been good and the work of the fields leaves him free, Pissaro [sic.] takes up his brushes, looks around him and sets down on the canvas the coarse existence of those rustic beings and things that he raises himself...\textsuperscript{545}

Such erroneous conflation between peasant and painter—despite financial insecurity the Pissarros led a bourgeois life, and the only farm they could boast of was Julie Pissarro’s kitchen garden—perpetuated the phenomenon whereby Pissarro was described

\textsuperscript{544} C. E. 1881: “... voilà le domaine de M. Pissaro [sic.], domaine qu’il exploite en héritier du grand Millet, pénétré comme lui son pinceau dans le suc de la vie des champs, mais sans atteindre aux sereines harmonies du maître incomparable. M. Pissaro voit le paysan tel qu’il est, massif, lourd, épais, hétébé et stupide, vraie bête de somme, non sans quelque noblesse cependant, car la terre qu’il retourne sans cesse lui a communiqué un peu de son éternelle beauté... Aussi cet émiettement de la lumière rend-il la facture pénible, empesée, cotonneuse. Il y a dans ces tableaux de la vie rustique comme l’écho des peines et des fatigues du rude laboueur des champs; le pinceau de M. Pissaro semble une bêche qui remue péniblement la motte de terre. L’expression est forte et intense, mais le métier est d’une âpre monotone et d’une uniformité excessive. Pas d’habileté peu de franchise dans la main, mais de la vigueur et du sentiment.” Pissarro was not the first to be characterized this way. Anthea Callen has discussed the connection between “worker/painter, troweller/realist, earth/pigment” in relation to Courbet and Jean-François Millet through to Pissarro and Cézanne in \textit{The Work of Art: Plein Air Painting and Artistic Identity in Nineteenth-Century France} (London, 2015), pp. 105-157.

\textsuperscript{545} Anonymous, “L’Exposition des impressionnistes”, \textit{La République française} (17 May 1886), p. 3: “Il habite, tout là-bas, au fond de la Normandie, dans une ferme qu’il cultive lui-même et qui le nourrit de produit du sol qu’il labourle. Quand la récolte a été bonne et que les travaux des champs le laissent libre, Pissaro prend ses pinceaux, regarde autour de lui et fixe sur la toile cette rude existence des êtres et des choses champêtres qu’il mène lui-même...”
like his depicted peasants, as “a robust and healthy artist,” humble, honest, and sincere.\textsuperscript{546} These connections between painting, figures, and artist coincide in Pissarro’s representations of women working at local markets in Pontoise and Gisors, the subject of many of his most ambitious canvases of the 1880s. \textit{The Pork Butcher} (figure 61, 1883) is among Pissarro’s first large-scale figural compositions and an early example of a market scene. It is also one of only five oils that he made of markets, among dozens in gouache, tempera, and watercolour. In the painting, a young woman wears a white apron and sleeves and leans forward over her charcuterie table at the Pontoise market. When the railroad arrived in Pontoise in 1863 the town entered the web of the Parisian market system, and its economy grew steadily to become renowned for grain, veal, and especially cabbages.\textsuperscript{547} The \textit{charcutière} carves a piece of meat and the top of her right hand echoes its flat, mottled beige surface. Appearing unaware of being watched, she is framed through the wooden beams of her stall. On the left, ribs of red meat hang from the foreground crossbeams and overlap with the striped dress of another working woman. Echoing the pattern of the dress, the ribs become part of her back in a painterly fusion of human and animal flesh and bone. Other hanging cuts of meat surround these women, whose skin is a similar dappled pink and cream colour, and whose bodies echo the curves of the raw flesh that emerge from behind them as though extensions of their bodies. The doe-eyed figure at the right stands before a large side of an animal that parallels the size and shape of her triangulated form, and one is reminded of the slang term \textit{vache} to denigrate lower class women perceived to be useful but unintelligent, simple and slow. The rosy-cheeked \textit{charcutière} stands before pieces of meat that correspond to her red-dressed body, continuing the shape of her arm or the line of her back, and the term \textit{veau} to name a younger woman is closer at hand.\textsuperscript{548} Pissarro wrote that he hoped this painting would have “a certain naïve freshness,” a telling phrase that suggests distance from the market activities from which he was largely separated by class and gender, as well as echoes the terms of contemporary critics of his

\textsuperscript{546} Octave Mirbeau, “Exposition de peinture (1, rue Laffitte)”, \textit{La France} (21 May 1886), pp. 1-2: “M. Pissarro est un artiste robuste et sain, pour lequel je professe une vive admiration.” See also Privat 1881.
\textsuperscript{547} Brettell 1990, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{548} Delvau 1850, pp. 364-365.
The concept of “naïve freshness” implies that the surroundings could be represented as crisp and clean, refreshing and salubrious, and Pissarro made the pork butcher substantially younger throughout the process of painting. Degas called Pissarro’s vendors “these angels who go to market,” which was also the consensus among critics who contrasted Pissarro’s female figures to Degas’s paintings of working women in the 1880s, paintings that probably informed Pissarro’s own growing interest in large-scale figure painting. In 1886, Alfred Paulet asserted that Pissarro’s paintings of country life:

... leave a comforting impression, the opposite of that left by Degas... M. Pissarro notes a healthier side, more restorative to the sight... He makes us see the robust peasant... and by instinct, without the effort of reason...

As noted, in 1886 Degas’s series of nudes created a stir at the Impressionist Exhibition. Compared to raw meat as well as ignoble animals including sea creatures, and widely understood to represent sex workers, they were seized as examples of degraded female flesh against which Pissarro’s supporters were eager to set off his healthier example, both in his choice of female figures—which in The Pork Butcher might also be analogized to raw meat, if fresh rather than rancid—as well as his technique, to which Pissarro’s desire for “naïve freshness” also referred. Through direct observation of the market during the sketching phase and a slowly built up application of paint in the studio, Pissarro hoped his process allowed for truth to the scene and his “sensation” in witnessing

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549 Letter to Lucien, 22 July 1883, in Rewald 1943, p. 37. His wife, though a shrewd housekeeper, wore her “black bonnet with the glittering sequins” and a silk dress to the market every week, and would be identified with the bourgeois figures that often appear in these works. Discussed in Wein 1990, p. 122; and Brettell 1990, p. 131.
552 Paulet 1886: “... toutes ses études sur la vie des champs sont des pages magnifiques et qui laissent une impression réconfortante, au contraire de celle de M. Degas. Ce poète voit la nature en robuste... M. Pissarro note un côté plus sain, plus vivifiant de la vision... Il nous fait voir le paysan robuste, solide au travail, dans la pleine journée, dans le plein soleil et la pleine lumière. Et cela d’instinct, sans effort de raisonneur, en poète.”
it. Paulet’s claim that Pissarro painted “by instinct, without the effort of reason” linked the painter to constructions of the natural and “naïve freshness” that his subject matter was seen to embody. For Paulet the artist possessed an innate gift independent of training, and the critic went on to call him “a very personal painter.” The Pork Butcher displays the dense application of matte paint, unvarnished in its time, for which Pissarro was known. The small multicoloured strokes layer and combine like stitches, evoking the comparison to a tapestry and of paint to swaths of wool.

A still-perceived connection between the labour of the women depicted and the painter himself have supported feminist art historical interpretations of Pissarro’s market scenes as displaying respect for and solidarity with the market women who are shown as particularized actors in contemporary economic life, peddling their wares to customers just as Pissarro displayed his own merchandise with the hope of its sale in the Paris art market. These accounts suggest an analogy between the market goods, the products of these particular landscapes depicted, and the paintings themselves, which were drawn from the motifs of that country setting and seemed to carry its materials. I would argue that such a connection should not be overstated. Critical assessments linking Pissarro to agricultural labour also depended upon demeaning and distorted characterizations of rural work, country life, and paysanne figures that are not entirely absent from Pissarro’s paintings, even when those paintings show powerful market women like the vendor in The Market Stall (figure 62, 1884), a tempera and watercolour representation of the same market and model as The Pork Butcher that Pissarro completed the following year. More assertive than in the previous year’s image, the vendor confronts a middle-class customer and her daughter or maid. The young charcutière leans over her display and dominates the canvas, and the viewer is positioned on her side of the counter. The older bourgeois looks ghostly in comparison to the health of the vendor, as signified by her pink cheeks and robust figure, as well as her younger companion, who is also pink-cheeked, whether the result of cosmetic rouge or the suggestion of healthy country air. The stallholder plants her fists

554 This was a favourite word of Pissarro’s with which he grappled throughout his career. “Sensation” signified his personal perception of nature, and the complexities of Pissarro’s understanding of the term are discussed in House 1986; Smith 1992; DeLue 1998, note 77, p. 735.

upon the display, asserting her property and standing her ground in a debate with the open-mouthed customer. The emptiness of the quickly receding ground draws attention to the strong contour line of the woman’s erect back and the palette, dark and subdued for Pissarro, contributes to the gravity of the exchange. But even here, where the charcutière is individuated by the purposeful pose, her crimson hand pressed down on the table with the weight of a hefty quadruped is contorted into a position that associates it visually with the forms and colours of the pieces of meat on the surface around it. Just as she is strong and healthy, so too is her meat, red like her uncovered hair and skirt, and flushed with blood like her cheeks. A saw on table indicates the strength required to cut the flesh that she sells. Its red handle suggests the act of gripping, next to a hand endowed with the animal power of the meat surrounding it, which is accentuated by its proximity to the idle gloved hands of the customer. Such attention to manual gestures points to the artist’s hand in creating the image, here made of pastel, that especially tactile medium to which even Pissarro’s oil paintings were compared. However strong the hands of the pork butcher, they are represented as literally ham-fisted, endowed with a very different sort of power that is secondary to the painter’s dexterity in the context of the image.

Pissarro’s attention to the working hands of his subjects was typical, making manual gestures a theme in his paintings just as tactility was a central subject of the artist’s reception. Comparisons between his paintings and cabbages, butter, and cheese not only evoked flavours but also textures, as did the comparisons of his paint material to sand, dirt, soil, and sap. Critics went as far as to argue that air itself was lacking in Pissarro’s country scenes, that even such purportedly optical phenomena as sunlight, or intangible substances like air and atmosphere, were transformed into dense material that could be touched and which obstructed vision, like the comparisons to the acidic, bitter, and sharp. As early as 1874 Marc de Montifaud described the surface of Pissarro’s submissions as a rough “envelope,” a tactile skin that obscured the subject matter within. Two years later Stéphane Mallarmé affirmed that the artist “does not fear the solidity which sometimes serves to render the atmosphere visible as a luminous haze saturated with sunlight,”

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Montifaud 1874: “...assez cru des tons; mais les terrains grassemment peints accusent des intentions sérieuses sous une enveloppe encore brute.”

Mallarmé 1876.
referencing a thickness of painted atmosphere that others described as “without air, without light, without the possibility of breathing.”\textsuperscript{558} “Air is absent,” complained another critic, who connected this to Pissarro’s painting “becoming heavier and more solid.”\textsuperscript{559} These and other assessments of Pissarro’s stifled scenes described the solidity of the thick paint built up like a tapestry of layers.

The work that best thematizes the gestures shared by peasant and painter, and the commentary comparing their materials and insisting upon the density of Pissarro’s paintings, is a work that Pissarro never showed but may have intended as a response to that same criticism. The year that Pissarro painted \textit{The Pork Butcher} he began a nearly life-sized representation of a male gardener, past middle age, sorting cabbages in Pontoise (figure 63). He continued to work on this relatively rare representation of a large-scale male peasant, now entitled \textit{The Gardener – Old Peasant with Cabbage [Le triage de choux]}, in at least two phases for the next twelve years and finally signed it “C. Pissarro/1883-95.”

The painting shows the gardener against a wall of cabbages, the most pronounced display of cabbages that Pissarro ever painted, that have been sorted and stacked to form a veritable architecture circumscribing the gardener’s position.\textsuperscript{560} The tiny, tangled strokes fortified over twelve years to represent these cabbages evoke those discussions of Pissarro’s paint surface as a masonry or plaster wall, which catches the viewer’s eye at the surface of a canvas that anyway resists recession with its background wall of cabbages. The cabbages shown in the middleground are painted strikingly differently, in broad brushstrokes that

\textsuperscript{558} Victor Champier, “La Société des artistes indépendants”, \textit{L’Année artistique} (Paris, 1882 [1881]), pp. 167-169: “...si M. Pissaro a créé un système, il en est devenu la propre victime, car ses tableaux sont des paysages fermés, sans air, sans lumière, sans respiration possible.” This is suspiciously similar to Paul Mantz’s assessment in 1881: “M. Pissarro, après avoir inventé son système, en est devenu la victime. Pas d’air, pas de lumière, pas de respiration possible dans ses paysages fermes.”

\textsuperscript{559} André Michel, “Exposition de peintures: Les Indépendants”, \textit{Le Parlement} (4 March 1882), p. 3: “Quant à M. Pissarro, sa peinture devient de plus en plus lourde et massive. L’air est absent.” See also Elie de Mont, “Cinquième Exposition des impressionnistes, 10, rue des Pyramides”, \textit{La Civilisation} (20 April 1880), p. 2: “M. Pissarro... se livre à une peinture lourde, épaisse, sans aucune transparence et sans le moindre souci de la vérité.”

\textsuperscript{560} Cachin references this painting in her discussion of Pissarro’s association with cabbages, but contends that any attempt to theorize what cabbages meant to Pissarro is limited because these were not a recurring theme in his work, but “merely an oft-repeated journalistic tag” standing for naturalism (1986, p. 97).
define vegetables that seem excessively large, confusing the perspective of the painting and once again resisting a conventional pictorial spatial recession whereby the relative location of objects in space would be established. Above the cabbage stack Pissarro presumably represented sky, although it also reads as soil, painted in a configuration of vibrating, multicoloured strokes. Huysmans claimed that Pissarro’s paintings “quiver in a powdery sunlight, in a vibration of air,” an evocative assessment in relation to this painting where spatial cues are fudged and space itself is represented as a thick skin of accrued paint, originally unvarnished and thereby sharing the powdery appearance of pastels.

The effect of the space represented along the upper edge of the canvas functions similarly to the grey space of Caillebotte’s Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue, in which hanging flesh is immobilized by an equally fleshy, tactile atmosphere vibrating with the worked materiality of flecks of paint. As in my discussion of Caillebotte, Merleau-Ponty’s perspective on painting, the “fabric” of the world and the “soil” of the sensible remains useful for exploring the effects of Pissarro’s work. It hardly needs repeating at this point that Merleau-Ponty described space as a thick tissue and imagined touch and vision as “encrusted” within one another. The crusted surface of The Gardener – Old Peasant with Cabbage is just such a tactile tissue into which all depicted objects are woven. Montifaud described the surface of Pissarro’s painting as an “envelope,” and other critics evoked a more literal envelope, claiming that a layer of fog seemed to sit on top of the pictures, a heaviness of atmosphere that was both represented within the paintings and also appeared external to them as an opaque screen through which the depicted subject was surprisingly

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561 Huysmans 1883 [1881]: “...tout cela frissonne dans une poudre de soleil, dans une vibration de l’air, uniques jusqu’à ce jour... Pissarro arrivant à rendre la vibration de l’atmosphère, la danse des poussières lumineuses dans un rayon, abordant franchement le grand jour, vous faisant douter de la vérité de tous les paysages qui semblent convenus en face de ces pulsations, de ces haleines même de la nature enfin surprises...” See also Fève 1886, in relation to Pissarro’s pointillism: “un ciel pointillé, moléculaire, comme déjà dans la couleur du précédent, mais quelle ondulation aérienne de la lumière, quelle diaphane, quelle soleil vaporisé, baignant légèrement ses paysages, comme ce coteau en pente douce où des verdures de tous les verts s’échelonnent, modifiées, fondues, presque décomposées par les combinaisons solaires.”

562 National Gallery of Art Documentation, Examination Report by the Conservation Department.

563 Merleau-Ponty 1960, pp. 125, 122 respectively.

difficult to see. “His paintings have the appearance of being enveloped in a coloured fog...[i]n looking at them, you find yourself instinctively wiping your eyes,” complained Henry Trianon in 1880, reaffirmed the following year in Nina de Villars’s assessment that “[a] sort of pink fog floats on the panel, without anything standing out prominently enough.”

Fog was a metaphor for the “decomposition” of light into physical coloured particles, opaque and velvety. It literalized the solidity of atmosphere in the depicted scenes as well as disrupted vision, so much so that the viewer wipes the eyes thinking that the painting is seen through moist clouds, not unlike the review comparing viewing to cutting raw onions, which also invoked a screen of water in the eye that disrupted viewing, drew attention to the physiological viewing body, and positioned the painting as having the capacity to act upon the spectator. The allusion to fog also related to reviews claiming that Pissarro’s paintings could transform into the landscapes depicted, causing the viewer to react in the same way as would be necessary to clear the eyes on a foggy day. Huysman’s appreciation of Pissarro’s paintings that “quiver in a powdery sunlight, in a vibration of air” leads to the claim that “at a distance, it’s the air that circulates, the sky that stretches boundlessly, nature itself that breathes...[as the painter captures] these pulsations, these breaths of nature finally caught surprised.”

Like Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions of the subject and the world opening out onto each other, each animating the other, Huysmans personifies nature and implies that the relation between the painter and the motif, and the viewer and the painting, is one of active exchange. Like the painter who travels in plein air to catch nature surprised and allow it to “hatch” (Huysmans’s term) upon the canvas, the viewer moves forward and backward until the scene materializes for the senses (“at a distance, it’s the air that circulates...”). Merleau-Ponty praised Cézanne for representing the process of perception,

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565 Trianon 1880, pp. 2-3: “Ses oeuvres ont l’air d’être enveloppées d’un brouillard coloré dont les étreintes confuses semblent se resserrer encore plus à chaque tentative qu’elles font pour en sortir. En les regardant, on se surprend à s’essuyer machinalement les yeux.”; Villars [Villard] 1881: “Le tout conçu dans les tonalités pâles du pastel. Une sorte de brouillard rose flotte sur ce panneau, sans que rien s’en détache d’une manière bien saillante.” See also Blémont 1876, pp. 2-3.

566 See also Delue’s description of the architectonic, asphyxiated paint surface of Pissarro’s Chestnut Trees at Louveciennes, Spring (1870) (1998, pp. 724-725).

567 Huysmans 1883 [1881].
the way that objects take form before the mobile eye and body.\textsuperscript{568} As is well known, Pissarro and Cézanne were close friends who often worked together in the 1870s, and it is unsurprising therefore that many of Merleau-Ponty’s insights regarding Cézanne are productively explored in relation to the older artist whom Cézanne once referred to as his teacher.\textsuperscript{569} References to Pissarro’s fog draw attention to the time necessary for the details of the painting to emerge out of the blurred, full surface, such as the knife that the gardener holds in his right hand to cut away the outer leaves of the cabbage that might easily go unnoticed by the hasty viewer. Disregarding pictorial conventions for resolution whereby the foreground objects would be sharper than those in the background, Pissarro defined the back wall of cabbages in more detail than the more broadly painted vegetables closer to the foreground, almost as if to demonstrate the actual workings of vision whereby when the eye focuses upon objects in the distance, those in closer proximity become blurred as they are sensed peripherally.\textsuperscript{570} The effect is to draw attention to the process of vision, a slow taking shape of the picture in which objects emerge and recede into textures. As Rachel DeLue has argued in relation to Pissarro’s 1860s and 1870s landscapes, the viewing experience becomes quasi-tactile as light, air and objects share the solidity of tiny woven strokes—or in the case of the middleground cabbages, thickly brushed streaks—that draw attention to the artist’s hand in the painting’s formation.\textsuperscript{571} Manual gestures are also central to the subject of the painting, a gardener whose hands are buried deep into the cabbage

\textsuperscript{568} Merleau-Ponty 1945, pp. 64-65; Merleau-Ponty 1960, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{569} In his article “Pissarro’s Doubt” (\textit{Apollo}, 136:369, November 1992, pp. 320-324), Joel Isaacson argues that Merleau-Ponty did not sufficiently acknowledge or explore Pissarro’s importance for Cézanne in “Cézanne’s Doubt”.
\textsuperscript{570} Merleau-Ponty 1952, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{571} Delue’s discussion of Pissarro’s “visual touching of slices of nature,” his desire to paint what it “felt like to see a slice of, be visually in, the world” (1998, pp. 726-728) is highly suggestive. Her discussion of the slow temporal unfolding of Pissarro’s paintings is persuasive, but how this relates to tactility remains abstract. I have grounded my analysis more firmly in phenomenology, which informs her discussion but remains implicit, and in contemporary criticism that commented upon the tactile qualities of the work and used metaphors of taste and touch to describe it. Those critical assessments that centralized Pissarro’s manual activity, comparing it to the work of a spade, trowel, or tapestry, bring out the concrete ways that contemporaries saw Pissarro’s painting as addressed not just to sight but to touch (as well as, I argue, to taste). So too does my interest in peasant hands as depicted in Pissarro’s paintings, which is outside the scope of DeLue’s focus on earlier landscape painting.
leaves to pull or cut off the floppy outer layers. The hands are painted in a tightly knit accumulation and they recede into the configuration of strokes just as they disappear into the wrinkled leaves of a cabbage. They lose their shape in a frenzy of back and forth marks, becoming thick, rounded forms analogous to the cabbage itself, suggesting a shared hardiness, rough texture, and veined appearance of cabbage and the calloused, cracked hands of a life-long gardener. The peasant plunges his hands into the vegetable while gripping a knife, analogous to the painter holding a palette knife, an instrument connoting Japy’s trowel or Ephrussi’s spade that Pissarro used often and especially in his early career, whose own hands would be dirtied with paint smeared across the rough surface of canvas as would the gardener’s with the sand and soil attached to the cabbage leaves.

In 1891 Pissarro joked about symbolist subject matter in a letter to his friend Octave Mirbeau:

Ah! Yes! The symbolists are really very surprising, when you come down to it. Maybe they don’t like cabbage because it isn’t so easy to make a succulent dish from it. Not everyone is capable of making a good cabbage soup with salt pork. Splendid, hmm? When it’s steaming.

Pissarro criticized the symbolists for departing too much from observation of the natural world, deriving their subjects from “religious, mystic, mysterious ideas” rather than reality. He suggested that making a good quality painting meant transforming raw ingredients, or the motifs of the natural world, into an appealing dish. The challenge would be greater when the ingredients were cabbages, Pissarro wrote cleverly, defending himself against those symbolists “who attacked my painting on the ground that I liked nothing but cabbages” by claiming greater value for paintings of cabbages, standing for the

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572 On Pissarro and palette knife painting see Callen 2015, pp. 159-210.
575 Letter to Lucien, 8 October 1896, in Rewald 1943, p. 296.
unassumingly subject seen directly, than of expensive aliments, denoting the obscure and esoteric. For Pissarro this statement also carried political weight. As Jo Ann Wein has argued, Pissarro saw “mysticism” as reactionary and opposed to economic and social equality. The cabbage, food associated with the poor, served as a social leveller and was thereby an appropriate anarchist vegetable. It also made a compelling symbol for what Pissarro understood as the objective of his practice, a progressive peeling away of the layers of experience, the fleeting, distracting, or superficially appealing or vulgar aspects, in order to arrive at an essence or core. Merleau-Ponty described the goal of phenomenology in similar terms, as flaking off the sediment of learned responses to and understanding of objects and stimuli to uncover a “primordial” encounter with the world that would free perception from “the rational tradition” with its “scientific operations” of meaning-making. Such an ambition can be read alongside Pissarro’s and colleagues’s (importantly, Monet’s and Cézanne’s) purported desire to forget the patterns of perception—which would lead to identifying objects rather than experiencing them as arrangements of forms, colours, and sensory qualities—as well as the history of art, which would encourage artists to take up established conventions for the representation of those objects. Pissarro expressed his desire for a more personal experience and depiction of nature as liberating the “sensation,” the moment of direct personal perception in the context of plein air. In his letters he described a search for “unity,” by which he hoped to distil the sensation into its essential characteristics in the studio in order to give the final painting greater stability and solidity. The artist wrote that the conceptual development of his idea of unity took place over thirty years, that he had begun to understand his sensations at age forty (1870), had formulated the notion of unity by age fifty (1880) but was unable to

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576 Wein 1990, p. 201.
577 This is set out Merleau-Pony 1962 [1945], pp. 56-58.
578 On this desire for “naïve” vision and its history in the nineteenth century, and a discussion of its relationship to phenomenology, see Joel Isaacson, “Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Impressionism, Plein Air, and Forgetting”, The Art Bulletin (76, September 1994), pp. 427-450. For Pissarro this quest was explicitly politicized—art that reflected and translated the artist’s genuine sensation expressed the liberty of the individual central to the anarchist project.
render it, and by age sixty (1890) began to see the possibility. 1883 to 1895 spans the years that Pissarro was working toward this goal, and so what better metaphor for the work of the so-called painter of cabbages than an aging and smocked male gardener alone amongst his cabbages, peeling away their outer layers to expose their hearts? As though jesting about his label as maraîcher impressionniste, Pissarro turned nearly the entire pictorial surface into a stack of cabbages. The figure standing before this vertical vegetal wall in the process of adding to it, upon whose smock Pissarro signed his name, is like the painter himself adding cabbages to the upright surface of the canvas. The cabbage stack that defies gravity brings to mind Gustave Caillebotte’s uptilted Fruit Displayed on a Stand shown in 1882 (figure 64). Despite the enormous distance between an upmarket urban display and Pissarro’s representations of markets and gardens, both artists were understood to identify (usually somewhat too much) with the forms of labour that they painted. In an anonymous 1882 cartoon relating to Fruit Displayed on a Stand, Caillebotte was caricatured as one of the floor scrapers he had painted in 1875. The text explains that the artist “today devotes himself to still life… in the way of millionaires. When he passes in front of a boutique whose display pleases him, he enters, covers it—the display—in gold, and brings it to his atelier to use as a model” (figure 65). Together with the reference to Caillebotte as a floor scraper, the caricature suggests that the artist not only appropriated the shopkeeper’s display, but further, identified with manual labour, lower on a hierarchy than the work of the petit bourgeois shop proprietor. Whether compared to a gardener, shopkeeper, or floor scraper, the implication was that neither Pissarro nor Caillebotte demonstrated sufficient artistic activity or innovation. Perhaps Pissarro was responding on some level to Caillebotte’s representation of succulent and expensive fruit in the marketplace with his own depictions not only of humble vegetables in Les Halles, but also of vegetables still located within the landscape and circuits of labour that produced them as available to be laid out on the market table.

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579 Letter to Esther Isaacson, quoted and discussed in House 1986, p. 16. See also a letter to Lucien, 14 May 1891, in Rewald 1943, p. 170.
580 In her book chapter considering Le Ventre de Paris alongside Pissarro’s and Caillebotte’s paintings of markets, consumer displays, and kitchen gardens, Ruth Iskin suggests that Fruit Displayed on a Stand may have motivated Pissarro to dedicate sustained attention to the market theme. See “Chapter 5: Nature and the Marketplace”, in Iskin 2007,
The Gardener – Old Peasant with Cabbage was not a public manifesto. Upon completion it remained with the artist and his family for forty years. It is strikingly different from the series of related portraits of peasant women made in the early 1880s, the majority of which show younger women resting rather than working, or the market scenes so far described, in which vendors tend to be youthful, idealized, and sometimes humorously associated with their wares. Such is the case in The Market on the Grand-Rue, Gisors (figure 66, 1885), one of only two oils that Pissarro made of the Gisors market. The painting is crowded with figures, tented stall roofs, and compressed apartment blocks with their sea of red chimneys. Framed by the triangle of one of the canvas stall coverings, a standing young woman in a white bonnet rests her chin in her hand, a pose implying consideration and reflection if somewhat belied by her simplified features. She stands before a large basket that echoes the form of her sturdy skirt, and is presumably looking for buyers for cabbages, two large examples of which emerge from the top of the basket and overlap suggestively with the posterior of a woman bending over behind them. The cabbages emerging from the skirt-like basket are visually associated with the bending woman’s buttocks, and she becomes the butt of a joke exchanged between men. Front and centre, the cabbages are the only product that can be seen for sale in a painting otherwise filled with human types. They stand metonymically for the other goods sold, as well as, the pictorial conflation of vendor and cabbages suggests, for the generalized female figures who offer them, with their solid bodies and cheeks flushed with the freshness of country air. The male figure in The Gardener – Old Peasant with Cabbage is less easily subsumed into reductive connections between the human and the vegetative, the result of

pp. 148-183. Despite the many differences between Pissarro’s and Caillebotte’s depictions of food displays that Iskin outlines, she argues that both artists centralized the anonymity of the urban marketplace, and that Caillebotte’s perspective is detached, clinical, and takes no enjoyment in the products which are presented merely as commodities. Throughout this dissertation I have argued for a return to the sensual complexity of Caillebotte’s still lifes, their anthropomorphic forms and the material excess in which the hand of the painter is inscribed. To my eye, Fruit Displayed on a Stand is a celebration of colour, form, and texture, where each well-articulated grape becomes the subject of visual delectation rather than a “cool visual analysis.”

Pissarro’s representational choices as well as the absence of a cultural and artistic tradition that had long linked women with the fertile earth and the forms of their bodies with its produce. Certainly the male peasant is identified with the cabbages that he holds against his body, but shown close up, aged, and physiologically individuated, he is especially psychologically compelling. The work brings to mind Monet’s *Portrait of Père Paul* (figure 43, 1882) representing an aging and ruminative chef painted in swirls of clotted colour that evoke the pastry craft and suggest that the derogatory painter-as-confectioner metaphor could be reclaimed in paint. It is *The Gardener – Old Peasant with Cabbage*, rather than the market scenes, that best supports an argument about the painter’s solidarity with peasant labour, as the gardener comes to stand in for the artist and even the viewer. Gazing intently upon the cabbage that he holds, the viewer likewise looks carefully at the wall of cabbages that are painted with a thickness that makes us feel that we too touch their swelling density, sense the coolness of their leaves, and even the bitterness of their taste in the bright green colours that dominate their representation. Many contemporary assessments unfolded along similar lines as critics described the sharpness of greens and blues, a quality that could be used to describe a flavour as well as a tactile sensation. But it was also in these instances that the connection between Pissarro and the “natural,” which would seem to elide the vast difference between the male painter and the typically female peasant and between the landscape and a pictorial representation of it, broke down. When critics described Pissarro’s and colleagues’s raw vegetal colours they were reacting not to the verisimilitude of the landscapes, but just the opposite, to the palette privileging blue and green and the technique of juxtaposing colours that appeared garish and unmixed, and that in these ways actually denaturalized the subject represented:

M. Camille Pissarro... knows Nature and the beings that inhabit it; but how to share with him his strange sense for colour? How to admit that all of existence appears to man as though through a rainbow? We have never seen like this, nothing of the kind offers itself to the view, certainly. M. Pissarro possesses some magical glasses whose virtue is to denature objects and make them appear under conditions inaccessible to other eyes.⁵⁸²

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The anonymous critic struggled with a paradox in 1886. On the one hand, Pissarro’s paintings evinced deep knowledge of the landscape and its inhabitants. On the other, the artist could see neither clearly, as though he looked through filtered glasses that coloured the setting as otherworldly, and recalling Merleau-Ponty’s praise for Cézanne making nature “unfamiliar.” The painter did not reproduce nature and he was not a “naturalist,” which François Cachin has argued was the implied meaning when Pissarro was called a painter of cabbages. “Try to tell M. Pissarro that the sky is not the colour of fresh butter,” Albert Wolff had urged. While that connection to butter as well as vegetables connected the materiality and colour of the paint to the country setting and the materials made and grown there, those connections actually served to expose the unnaturalness of Pissarro’s paintings, their idiosyncrasies. In this way, such criticism exceeded and actually contradicted what was so often its intention, to argue that Pissarro was the proper painter of the wholesome countryside because he understood it instinctively. Pissarro’s subjects, paintings, and personal identity were united with the “natural” in a cosy triad, but one that easily disintegrated as it was articulated. Instead, the painter could not be considered a peasant, male or female, for long because his self-consciously modern technique was incompatible with the understanding of the countryside and its habitants as somehow outside of time and disconnected from modernity. Painter of the natural or the unnatural; the fresh, robust, and healthy or pungent, paltry, and dangerous; an awkward and unlearned artist or a careful and deliberate one; at home in the timeless countryside and unable to navigate the Paris art world or the most dedicated member of a modern art movement—these are some of the tensions that emerge from a close reading of the most common metaphors used to describe Pissarro and his painting.

s’offre nulle part à la vue, et très certainem. M. Pissarro garde en sa possession quelque lunettes magiques, dont la vertu est de lui dénaturer les objets et les lui montrant sous un jour unaccessible aux autres yeux.” For a similar assessment of Pissarro’s “lunettes décolorantes” see Enault 1876.

583 Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 66.
CONCLUSION

In the opening pages of *Le Ventre de Paris*, Lantier dreams of painting a vendor of steaming cabbage soup, of the type Pissarro joked in 1891 was not easy to cook, or by extension, paint. Pissarro’s joke is germane, for Lantier cannot paint this scene, and walks away irritated by the appealing smell emanating from the model. Friction is set up between the visual and the full-bodied, as it is more generally in the contrast between Lantier’s aesthetic eye and Florent’s rumbling belly as the two see and smell the soup. For Lantier, painting the cabbage soup vendor is as difficult as finding someone to buy him a cup of it, for indeed the painter ends in an annoyed admission of appetite aroused by the smell, and in the first pages of a profoundly multi-sensory novel Zola suggests that the bustling marketplace bursting with food cannot be represented to the eye alone.\(^{584}\) Lantier’s aesthetic vision will always be connected to, and ultimately foiled by, his rumbling belly. The self-proclaimed best piece of art that he ever made—“that was my masterpiece. I’ve never done better”\(^{585}\)—was the display of meat in a charcuterie window, a visual spectacle that not only conceded but celebrated the connection between eye and body and was intended to cause nausea through the sense of sight.

Pissarro’s paintings were also understood as more than purely visual documents. Bitter and strong, sharp and biting, they were discussed as inducing indigestion and pain or granting ruddy good health. Many, like Castagnary, considered the paintings analogous to “cabbages or other household vegetables,” appropriate to the perceived banality and interchangeability of subject matter, the dense texture of compressed layers of paint strokes like cabbage leaves, and the bright colouration of paint that evoked the piercing acidity of vegetables. In such assessments paintings were encountered by an embodied viewer as well as understood to embody, varying, the peasant, the landscape, and its produce. And so the

\(^{584}\) Zola 2009 [1873], p. 26: Catching sight of the soup vendor and customers, “the passionate painter blinked his eyes, thrilled by the scene, looking for the best vantage point, working out the painting’s best composition. But the goddamn cabbage soup smelled impressive... Claude himself was overwhelmed by the pungent steam rising from someone’s spoon that struck him in the face. He tightened his belt... ‘It’s a funny thing, but have you ever noticed that you can always find someone to buy you a drink but there is never anyone who will pay for something to eat?’”

significance of the painter-of-cabbages trope moved beyond shorthand for a naturalist practice that shed light on the quotidian. It also stood for the shifting identity of Pissarro’s paintings and his materials, the confusion that they provoked with their unexpected colouration or thickened paint which did not sit easily within established notions of what Impressionist painters (commonly linked to naturalist authors, including to and by Zola) hoped to achieve with their landscapes, namely the faithful representation of varying conditions of nature directly observed. As ever, the analogy between paint and food emerged at moments of discomfort when categories were transgressed, when paint went unsublimated to representation and when the status of painting and the stability of its materials seemed in flux and at risk. The identity of the artist was perhaps at risk too. Widely identified as the painter of paysannes, if Pissarro’s exhibited paintings were going to embody peasant labour, it would be a peasant woman’s labour. This would help to explain the eloquent silence that generally met his displayed market scenes, which may have made that connection too close for comfort given the gender identities at stake. Those identities were restored in supportive critical assessments that focused on Pissarro’s masculinity explicitly and implicitly, in qualities linked to masculinity including sober strength and unceasing dedication, or retreated into approving assessments of his

586 I do not mean to imply that the diverse group of artists known as Impressionists had any single, easily condensed, shared goal, but that this was a widely held assumption that many contemporary critics used to make sense of the work and structure their reactions to it. For a discussion of how Impressionism was understood in general terms as well as the problems of definition, see Richard Schiff, “Defining ‘Impressionism’ and the ‘Impression’”, Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art (Chicago, 1984), pp. 14-21.

peasant women as healthy, simple, animalistic or even vegetative, as stupid as cabbages, as the popular saying went.  

588 For an especially good example of criticism that characterizes his female figures this way, see Adam 1886, pp. 541-551. The French phrase is “bête comme un chou,” as in Littré 1873-1874, V.1, p. 614.
CONCLUSION

Bertall’s full page, front cover print summing up the 1865 Salon in the _Journal amusant_ brings together unlikely protagonists (figure 67). In _Promenade au Salon de 1865_, a _Parisienne_ in evening dress sits before a mirror stroking her cheek as though posing for a portrait that materializes in the glass as she gazes at her reflected representation. Indeed, she is being painted all across the caricature, in which she functions as the canvas itself, the subject of painting, and the figuration of art. While the vessels resting before the mirror contain cosmetics, she holds a painter’s loaded palette as makeup is conflated with oil paint. This was a common strategy in Bertall’s imagery, expressed explicitly in the two figures applying paintbrushes directly to her skin and hair, dipped in pots of _blanc de perle_, a cosmetic to lighten the skin, and _rouge Vénitien_, a hair dye. The male figure, who resembles Bertall’s depictions of Cabanel (figure 68), stands for the popular Salon painter, while the older female figure takes up the role of family member or maid commonly represented at _toilette_ scenes assisting the younger charge. Here there is little distinction between them as they adorn the _Parisienne_, whose profuse dress transforms like her skin into a canvas upon which miniature paintings are already framed, just as within the frame of the mirror her artistic transformation is reflected back to her as nearly complete. A cherub, companion of Venus that Bertall commonly represented alongside Cabanel, Paul Baudry, and Charles Chaplin, works on one of these small paintings showing another _toilette_ scene. Disturbing the air of calm preparation while participating in the reverential treatment of the central figure, Olympia’s grinning maid offers a bouquet so large as to echo the ample skirt spreading across the bottom half of the image. This figure and the notorious black cat reappear on the following page in Bertall’s better-known caricature of Olympia as a cabinet-maker’s wife (figure 19). On the cover, as the maid presents the bouquet to the elegant _Parisienne_ rather than the _demi-mondaine_, we wonder whether the fashionable woman at her mirror is meant to represent Olympia cleaned up, along the lines

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589 The Introduction to Garb 2007 begins with a caricature by Bertall from 1870 in which a painter applies his brushes to a woman’s face. The conflation between paint and cosmetics is the subject of Garb pp. 1-17. For other examples by Bertall, see _Peintures pour l’exposition_ (Journal amusant, 18 May 1867) and _Promenade au Salon de 1869_ (Journal amusant, 15 May 1869).
of Bertall’s subsequent caricature inferring that Manet painted the figure prior to a much-needed bath, and made up, as in Zola’s sarcastic comment that the nude would have been presentable had Manet borrowed Cabanel’s powder puff to apply rice powder to her face and chest.\(^{590}\) Another artist works in the background, perhaps even Manet repainting the nude along acceptable lines. The outline of this sketchy figure indicates more conventional drawing. The head turns away and the hand supports it rather than shielding the genitalia. The forms of the body are fleshier, the contour lines rounded, so that this figure whose shoulder is being painted rhymes visually with the Parisienne directly below, whose shoulder also provides the supple material for the makeup artist’s brush.

Below a caption reads: “Fortunate trend in painting and the arts: they increasingly take on the industrial, commercial character that they had heretofore lacked.” This text is expressed, as I have argued, in the collective production of the Parisienne, whether by the artists who paint directly upon skin and hair, or the painter in the background who dashes off a nude without even looking at a model. Popular Salon painting is here conceived to be synonymous with the Parisienne, packaged in ready-made garb and factory-produced powders and pigments, and operating as the preferred drawing room decoration. Painting itself takes on a corporeal presence at the same time as Woman is dematerialized, and both emerge as collectable commodities like the bibelots resting at the Parisienne’s feet, trinkets that simultaneously suggest parlor figurines and miniature artist’s atelier aids. With its overtones of the bourgeois salon and boudoir, this caricature represents both the state of the Salon de Paris as well as a new sort of “painter’s studio,” the antithesis of Courbet’s painting sharing that name (figure 2). Courbet self-styled country mannerisms associated with the landscape that he paints in that self-portrait give way to the refined Parisienne settled before her mirror also holding the artist’s tool. Adoring nude model and potential allegory of Truth in the Courbet becomes the admiring cosmetician and agent of artifice and deception in the Second Empire. Peasant boy turns to chubby putto as realism has decidedly lost out to idealism in the industrialized and commercialized artist’s studio, in which any aura of muscular male artistic creation has surrendered to the mesmerizing mirage of the Parisienne’s carefully crafted presentation which casts a kind of spell on those attending her. Within a dream-like setting where angels form part of the company, art

\(^{590}\) Zola, “M. Manet” 1866, p. 294.
has become superficial, analogous to the cosmetics and fabrics that transform a body into a phantasm, the corporeality of a woman into a captivating visual spectacle that may well be an optical illusion. The Parisienne functions here as “she” did in culture more broadly, as the antithesis of Manet’s figure of Olympia depicted by Bertall on the following page with a cloud rising from her dirty feet to imply a noxious stench.

Sixteen years later when Gabriel Liquier, pseudonym Trock, caricatured the Impressionist painter’s studio, he used a related strategy to denigrate the work of the artists exhibiting at 35 Boulevard des Capucines, but in order to ally Impressionist painting with smelly Olympia. Instead of implying that painting had become synonymous with seductive surfaces, Impressionist work was caricatured as appealing directly to a viewer’s body. In Chez un impressionniste (figure 69), eight male and female figures of varying ages work together on a monumental painting. Straddling the apex of a house painter’s ladder, a man rises above the rest and attacks the canvas with the energetic forward thrust of his entire body, and we assume that it is he who also insists: “It’s getting tight, my children! Hurry... or else my Odours of Paris will never be ready for the salon!” Once again, the arts have taken on an “industrial, commercial character.” Like Bertall’s transformation of a maternal figure at the toilette into a painter putting the finishing artistic touches on the younger woman, Trock turned the artist’s family into an army of brush-wielding painters at work, so that the title Chez un impressionniste signifies literally as the artist at home. As in Promenade au Salon de 1865, the status of the work of art is at stake, which is again undergoing a process of redefinition. With their ladder and caps like Caillebotte’s The House Painters (1877), this production lacks even the professionalism to distinguish sex and age, as the artist solicits the help of his small children and wife or mother. But here, unlike in Bertall’s terms in 1865, the artist is not devalued for his collusion in the apotheosis of the imagined Parisienne and her taste (whether aesthetic or gustatory, for as we have seen Bertall equated a woman’s desire for paintings and food, as in figures 33-36), but in a different vulgarization of painting, the representation of the smells of modernity. These eight painters work on an urban or industrial landscape complete with a steaming smokestack, calling to mind Monet’s series of railway sheds displayed in 1877 as well as Zola’s portrait of Les Halles in Le Ventre de Paris, to which Trock’s title referred. In that novel Zola narrated smell to a degree perceived by his contemporaries as shocking,
especially the descriptions of the nauseating odours of the marketplace and the female bodies that soaked in and oozed out the stench of cheese and fish surrounding them.\textsuperscript{591} Trock depicted the Impressionist painter as akin to Zola, capturing the smell of modern life issuing forth from the canvas like the smoke from the chimney, as in one of Zola’s descriptions of “the poultry market pushing a blast of hot air through its ventilation turret, a stench that poured out like soot from a factory.”\textsuperscript{592} The dubious artistic status of Impressionist painting is emphasized by the plural tense in French: “Dépêchons!... ou, sans ça, jamais mes \textit{Odeurs de Paris} ne seront prêtes pour le salon!” The unfinished painting is not one unified work (“jamais mon \textit{Odeurs de Paris} ne sera prêt”) but a collection of odours and “they” will not be ready for exhibition. This is not a painting in the traditional sense, Trock insisted with the grammar and the implication that the work could capture and emit various ephemeral odours, making it more like a microcosm of Paris than a representation of it, to be experienced viscerally rather than visually. Painting à la Zola, or à l’Impressionniste, calls upon body. It requires neither careful training nor a discerning eye, but merely sensate flesh, with the implication that even old women and children could therefore be Impressionist painters.\textsuperscript{593}

My dissertation is a call for a sensory turn in Impressionist studies and an exploration of the possibilities opened up by a set of questions that are not dominated by the customary privileging of visuality. I have asked how paintings were experienced by nineteenth-century embodied viewers as evidenced by first-hand accounts of their multisensoriality. I have explored how metaphor was mobilized to describe these encounters with art, and how cultural values were encoded in the metaphoric language of the senses. I have questioned how understanding of the sensorium and sensory experience was gendered, and what was at stake in acknowledging full-bodied responses to art as a result of it. Art criticism is a trove of information about perception, its social construction, and its

\textsuperscript{591} Pertinent scenes include Zola 2009 [1873], pp. 135-145, 235-241. For a discussion of Zola and scent, see Corbin 1986, pp. 205-208.
\textsuperscript{592} Zola 2009 [1873], p. 281.
\textsuperscript{593} Tamar Garb has shown how an understanding of Impressionism as requiring only a body receptive to sense impressions made it appear by the 1890s as especially appropriate to women artists (1990; 1993).
politics, which has made it a crucial component of the social history of art.\textsuperscript{594} My investigation into gustatory metaphors that were prevalent in nineteenth-century criticism of painting allows for a reassessment of Impressionism’s dependence on the eye, which alters our understanding of the work of these artists. Impressionism, I argue, was not received as an art of the purely optical, but as the work of painters so deeply invested in their contemporary reality that they wanted to capture its very scent. Conceiving of Impressionist painting in this way connects my dissertation to the ambition of what has been termed the “sensory turn,” to rewrite the sensual complexity of lived experience into history, without which our understanding of historical experience is impoverished. In this Conclusion I want to use the concept of decomposition, a constant reference point in the critical reception of Manet through to the Impressionists, to pull together once more the competing claims for self-consciously modern painting as excessively embodied or as exclusively optically oriented, and make a final case for the possibilities of turning our attention to the former and challenging the latter through a discussion of a contemporary film that brings these themes into the present.

The claim that self-consciously modern painting appealed to the body and not the mind was often accomplished by accusing Manet and the Impressionists of painting rotting flesh, whether human (usually female) or animal. This relied upon the nauseating taste, smell, and slimy surface of putrid material, sure to elicit a visceral response—one need only revisit Zola’s concluding description of the fetid body of the diseased Nana for confirmation. Cham’s 1877 caricature of the quintessential Impressionist painter, part of a series that he published in April and May and to which I referred briefly in Chapter Three, is a good example (figure 31). As with Trock, Cham’s subject was the painter’s desire to conjure smell. \textit{Le peintre impressionniste} shows an artist with palette in hand standing beside a portly gentleman who holds his canvas. The incredulous bon bourgeois, whose bodily relation to the work is staged as he grasps it, appears surprised that “these are the

\textsuperscript{594} As, for example, in T. J. Clark’s influential article “Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of \textit{Olympia} in 1865”, \textit{Screen} (21:1, Spring 1980, pp. 18–41), later incorporated in Clark 2008 [1985]. See also the volume edited by Michael R. Orwicz \textit{Art Criticism and Its Institutions in Nineteenth-Century France} (1994) for a variety of discussions concerning “the complex role that art criticism plays in negotiating the relationships between culture on the one hand, and a range of social and ideological formations on the other” (Introduction by Orwicz, p. 2).
tones of cadavers?” “Yes,” confirms the animated painter, but “unfortunately I cannot get across their odour!” Here it is not the smell of modern Paris that the painter hopes to express, but that of rotting flesh, which the painting may or may not represent. Speaking in 1886 one critic explained that “the old caricatures and jeers have been resuscitated about the Impressionist who only uses cadavers and drowned green tones, or who goes to the Morgue to choose colours for a landscape.” These longstanding allegations expressed the fear that Impressionist colour was suspicious because it migrated between categories more comfortably kept separate, as tones that might appropriately, if distastefully, be used to paint corpses were borrowed to represent landscapes. However, given the three other caricatures that Cham published on the occasion of the 1877 exhibition, all of which take women who appear to be decomposing as the subject matter of the parodied paintings, presumably the painting seen from the back is of a female figure. In another Le peintre impressionniste (figure 70), the unkempt artist explains to his model: “Madame, for your portrait there are certain tones missing from your face. Could you perhaps first spend a few days at the bottom of a river?”—this so that the painter could work from life, without having to abandon the direct observation understood as crucial to Impressionist practice. The cost is that if she acquiesced the painter would be working from death. In another Le peintre impressionniste (figure 71), the model complains upon first glimpse of her portrait that she looks to have been painted at the Morgue, and in another image from the series (figure 72), the police commissioner visiting the show “demands the address of the models in order to bury them at once, considering their state of putrefaction.”

If decomposition was so often used to describe and transmit a visceral experience of art, that language appeared to very different effect when it was used to explain the division of light into colour. Champions of Impressionist painting used decomposition as a scientific term within the Newtonian determination of colours as components of white light; they described light as “decomposing” into spectral colour. It is hardly a surprise by now that

595 Desclozeaux 1886, p. 203: “On a ressuscité les anciennes caricatures et les lazzis sur l’impressionniste qui ne se sert que de cadavre et de vert noyé, ou qui va choisir à la Morgue des couleurs pour un paysage.”

596 On the scientific understanding of prismatic colour and the connection between Impressionism and science as a means of defending the movement from feminization, see Broude 1991, pp. 110-180. For accounts of Impressionists decomposing light into colour,
Zola’s evaluation of Monet in 1876 pitted science against cuisine to characterize self-consciously modern painting versus outdated recipes:

These are no longer the cooked and browned landscapes of the romantic school, but a cheerful blond, a decomposition of light iridescent with all the colours of the prism... a protest against the gentlemen in *amadou* or in gingerbread of the École des Beaux-Arts.  

As usual Zola was not alone in positioning cookery as the opposite of science. Responding to the introduction of pointillism in 1886, Paul Adam explained: “The colour of the most advanced Impressionists becomes completely scientific. Contemptuous of cooked colour, the trick of mixtures and melts, they obtain shades by a simple juxtaposition of tones.” It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore how the myth of a scientifically-based optical art reached its apogee in relation to Georges Seurat and the Neo-Impressionists, but already by the mid-1870s a tension had emerged between the language of scientific decomposition of colour on the one hand, and on the other the purported decomposition of represented figures that so many believed to be its consequence. As I have shown throughout my four chapters, the latter was an overdetermined objection through which discomfort with aspects of paintings that could not be fitted within such a scientific schema manifested. These aspects included over-emphasized paint material, formlessness, and colour run riot, all of which were connected theoretically to female embodiment. It seems little surprise, therefore, that these elements and qualities were most debated in relation to paintings of female bodies. The return of the body repressed from frameworks of optical science surfaced in complaints about stinking,

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see for example Gustave Goetschy, who likened the painters to analysts who decomposed light as seen through a prism in “Exposition des artistes indépendants”, *Le Voltaire* (5 April 1881), pp. 1-2; and Edmond Duranty, who explained in his influential 1876 essay *La nouvelle peinture* that the painters “succeeded in decomposing the solar glare into its rays.”  

597 Zola, “Lettres de Paris” 1876: “Ce ne sont plus les paysages risolés de l’école romantique, mais une gaiété blonde, une décomposition de la lumière s’irisant de toutes les couleurs du prisme... C’est encore, d’ailleurs, la peinture claire et ensoleillée du groupe, une protestation contre les bonshommes d’amadou et de pain d’épices de l’École des Beaux-Arts.”  

598 Adam 1886, pp. 541-551: “Le coloris des impressionnistes les plus avancés devient tout scientifique. Méprisant le cuisinage des couleurs, le truc des mélanges et des fondues, ils obtiennent la teinte par une simple juxtaposition des tons...”
putrefying painted women materialized through corpulent strokes of colours borrowed from the Morgue, as both flesh and paint emerged as unstable organic matter that could provoke abjection in the no-longer detached observer and author. Colours themselves might emit odours, as Baron Grimm had argued when he complained that the work shown in 1877 “attracts and hits the eye like the odour of a cheese shop attracts and hits the sense of smell. It is exactly the same thing.” With the phrase “exactly the same thing,” Grimm did his best to insist upon the continuity of sense responses outside of the metaphorical, and his invocation of fermenting painting can be added to the fear that Impressionist works were rotten merchandise, as well as the slippage between the painted figures who needed to be buried tout de suite and the paintings themselves which could even perpetuate a contagion. “All this is dead and only demands to be buried,” urged Charles Bigot in 1877 to describe Pissarro’s paintings as objects. Bigot characterized paintings like the figures within them, and culinary analogies made this connection clearest.

In one corner, a pea-green woman, evidently in the last stages of Asiatic cholera, mowed at you from out of the shadows; in another, a female in sheet-iron, with a paper ruff around her neck, stared stonily from a background of raspberry cream. A poor young woman, very far gone with the jaundice, was shown wrestling with her fan in the depths of an opera box.

Moving easily between a decomposing female figure the colour of vegetables, to description of paint as raspberry cream, to another illustration of discoloured female flesh, this anonymous reviewer of the 1879 exhibition raised the connection between decomposing figures and potentially decaying painting across the terrain of the female

599 Grimm 1877.
600 Anonymous, “Exposition de peinture par un groupe d’artistes dissidents”, *La Petite République français* (13 April 1879), pp. 2-3: “... il y a dans cette exhibition des oeuvres d’une réelle valeur et d’une saveur exceptionnelle. Si les quatorze artistes qui figurent dans le catalogue, au lieu d’étaler aux yeux du public toute leur cargaison de marchandises fraîches et avariées, avait été bien inspirés pour faire un triage sévère dans leurs productions, l’exposition de l’avenue de l’Opéra obtenait un succès...”
601 For their contagious potential, see especially André Laroche, “Chronique du jour”, *Le Charivari* (5 March 1882), p. 2.
body and foods particularly associated with it, raspberry cream and later “chocolate-coloured skies.” Descriptions of Impressionist brushstrokes as smelly grease, painting *au beurre*, or as ice cream/whipped cream/raspberry cream are not as dichotomous as they first appear, as all served to emphasize paint material as a dubious, feminized substance appealing to the body, much like the tendency to describe Impressionist colour in sexualized terms as an orgy or debauchery.

That latter language, drawing on the longstanding association between colour and the feminine that lay behind the comparison of pigment to cosmetics in Bertall’s *Promenade au Salon de 1865*, also introduced strain into any argument for the scientific use of colour or the discussion of colour as a purely optical phenomenon. The concept of prismatic decomposition rested upon the evidence that colours could be separable and self-contained, and thereby “pure” as well as purified of associations that had led to their feminization, including instability, contingency, deception, excess, and unruliness.

But the multitude of critics who accused Manet and the Impressionists of creating orgies or debaucheries of tones resisted the former understanding of colour in favour of the latter, as did those accounts describing a ragout of colours mixed and stirred, a pungent *cuisine de peinture*. By now we are accustomed to that culinary language used to characterize “academic” painting, as in Adam’s claim that Impressionists were “[c]ontemptuous of cooked colour, the trick of mixtures and melts,” but the same language was used against Impressionist painting. For example, Armand Silvestre denigrated Morisot’s works in 1882 as “nothing more than delicious ragouts of colours,” relying upon the problematic blending of disorderly colour, even if the result was tasty rather than revolting. Nor was it just woman artists—whose materials and processes we might expect to be more often described in sexualized language or in terms relating to the kitchen, given the connections between sex, food, cooking, and femininity—who were accused of producing orgies of the palette and unfinished stews, sometimes at the same time.

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604 See note 464 for a list of pertinent examples of this sexualized language of colour. It did not originate here, but the quantity of such references used to describe Impressionist painting is striking.


606 Silvestre 1882, pp. 150-151: “Ses toiles ne sont plus que de délicieux ragouts de couleurs.”
Both were well-established metaphors and in either, the conception of the divisible, dematerialized, purely optical, and scientifically verifiable colours of a prism was deflated in the evocation of tones that physically rubbed up against each other or combined into edible mush, not painted from the perspective of a highly sensitive eye functioning as a prism but rather attesting to the irrational vision of a mental patient. “Impressionism is no longer biased toward greenish yellow, to raspberry horizons, to clouds in vanilla ice cream,” approved Alexandre Hepp in 1882, “the last representative of this hysteria of colour is M. Paul Gauguin.”

Hepp combined the uneasiness with blended [verts-jaunes], excessively bright colours [horizons framboisés] and with melting, creamy paint material, and positioned it within the perceptual experience of the subject rather than the practitioner of scientific analysis. Feminized foods together with a feminized illness rendered the painter anything but cerebral and detached, as did the flood of other descriptions of Impressionists working in states of drunkenness, hallucination, and malady, all conditions in which the body asserts its primacy over the mind.

The entry of an embodied artist and viewer signals erotic potential, and the relationship between the intrusion of the senses, the breakdown of the contemplative aesthetic gaze (if such a thing is possible at all), and sexuality requires further development. Gustatory metaphors linked visual and sexual pleasure, exposing this

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607 For example, in 1882 Henry Havard described an “orgie de la palette” that was nothing but a “preparation” for a “civet,” or a game stew. He ended his review with an aphorism of the famous food critic Grimod de la Reynière. For an example of how a reference to a painter’s cuisine could undermine theories of scientific colouration, see Maurice Hermel’s complaint about Georges Seurat in 1886B: “M. Seurat a l’étoffe d’un excellent artiste; on voudrait seulement qu’il étalât avec moins d’ostentation la cuisine de son art.”

608 Hepp 1882: “L’impressionisme n’en est plus aux verts-jaunes de parti pris, aux horizons framboisés, aux nuages en bombe glacée à la vanille; le dernier représentant de cette hystérie de la couleur est M. Paul Gauguin.”

609 Garb cites critical references to Morisot as nervous or hysterical, perceived symptoms of her unstable feminine “nature” (1990; 1993). Her male colleagues were also widely accused of mental illness.

610 In her work on the female nude, Lynda Nead argues that vision ceases to be cerebral when it functions as an incitement to touch, and she notes the breakdown of Kenneth Clark’s aesthetic vision when he describes the sexually explicit work of Géricault and Rodin as having “too strong a flavour” or the female nudes of the Fontanbleau School as possessing “a smell of stylish eroticism, impossible, like all smells, to describe, but strong as ambergris or musk” (1992, pp. 59, 86).
connection at the same time as it became buried within the established language of taste as aesthetic judgment. Descriptions of debaucheries of tones laid down on (we might even say ejaculated onto) canvas by artists in states of extreme sensual arousal are inseparable from reports of creamy and fruity colours spilled upon the canvas by painters hoping to capture the smell of the subject matter, probably female figures, with their perturbing *odor di femina*. The painter’s sensory intoxication became “contagious” as critics displayed traces of their own visceral responses to the “exceptional savour” of orgies of whipped-up raspberry tones that knocked them off balance, in paintings that were so often described as threatening their bodies and their eyes and challenging their claims to cool analysis. As one anonymous review put it in 1877:

... this [Impressionist] eye is sick... What a cacophony of sour, piercing, discordant tones! What a crude debauchery! What an orgy of blue, green, yellow and red [prismatic colours no less]! What blinding chaos! You would think that these men, stung by some tarantula, brushed their canvases frenetically with the contortions of the dance of Saint-Guy.

The painters’ bodies get in the way of their optical science within a gendered pathological discourse that was part and parcel of the feminizing of male Impressionist artists and their material. This may have become explicit in the 1890s when voices from the symbolist camp actually named Impressionism as a “feminine art,” but it was present from the first Impressionist Exhibition when painters were accused of producing a frenzied orgy of tones that looked like nothing so much as tongue-lickings, that asked to be tasted.

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613 See Camille Mauclair, “Le Salon de 1896”, *La Nouvelle revue* (I, May-June 1896), p. 342. Cited and discussed in Garb 1993. The symbolist critique of Impressionism should be situated within a context whereby the two were not necessarily understood by critics as opposed to one another. Richard Schiff has described continuities and shared prerogatives (1984).
and smelled, even heard (a “cacophony of sour, piercing, discordant tones” as above), but that challenged vision. “One must look at them while closing the eyes a bit” became the paradoxical understanding of how to make sense of their work, but “[o]ne can never close them enough,” quipped one critic who exploited the irony of visual representation that required vision to be veiled or distanciated.\(^614\) One writer described Monet and Pissarro as “the school of the \textit{Shattered Eye}” while praising Morisot for her delicate tones of “fresh butter,” invoking the smooth, fatty substance as a mild and soothing balm, with its address to taste and touch, to counter the aggressions of her colleagues against vision.\(^615\) Charles Bigot complained that the painting shown in 1882 “screeched, screams from these handsome golden frames. To damage and exhaust the eyes, would this be the formula of independent painting?”\(^616\) Bigot used noise to describe the violent tonalities, like another commentator who protested that one needed to plug the ears within the exhibition’s deafening “uproar of raw and shrill tones \([\textit{tons}, \text{which describe colour as well as sound}]\).”\(^617\) Far from being solely of and for the eye, as the paintings were said to damage vision, the other senses were poised as a crucial part of the encounter and even surrogates for visual experience. More work remains to draw out how smell and sound entered these discourses.

This, my dissertation has shown, was the context out of which Laforgue formulated his defence of the Impressionist eye as divorced from other sensory modes, and it is now easier to recognize Laforgue’s argument as constructive of a certain version of

\(^{614}\) Bernadille 1877: “Il faut regarder cela en fermant les yeux, dit un bourgeois indulgent.—On ne les fermera jamais assez.”

\(^{615}\) d’Olby 1876: “l’école de L’\textit{Oeil crevé}, appliqué à la peinture. Les objets sont vus comme à travers un prisme qui décompose la lumière en ses couleurs primitives.”


Impressionism rather than a widely accepted description of it. Tamar Garb and Norma Broude have shown that many derogatory critics seized such language used by Laforgue and many others, Duranty and Zola most influential among them, in order to agree that the Impressionist painter was “only an eye,” merely a passive receptor of fleeting impressions and thereby aligned with women who were understood as more sensitive to these. I have extended this argument, for Impressionists were accused of something even more problematic, of being not just eyes but bodies prone to sickness and appetites, and whose paintings bore the material traces of their embodiment as they attempted even to capture smell. The extent to which some self-consciously modern painting was aligned with visual experience has been over-estimated, whether by supporters from the 1860s into the 1880s who asserted the painters’ optical science, critics in the 1890s who used such a framework to denigrate the art as superficial, art historians in the mid-twentieth century who reprised the connection between opticality and science in order to position Manet and the Impressionists as founding figures in a modernist trajectory, or art historians from the 1980s up until today whose critiques of modernism continue to take as a given the ocular basis and bias of Impressionism as understood in its time and accepted by its painters and critics. Lost when nineteenth-century criticism is read through this lens is how in addition to discussing and, to be sure, often privileging the painter’s eye with its particularized vision, critics lingered upon their own multi-sensory responses as well as those of the artist “in the heat of sensory intoxication,” to repeat a memorable phrase from none other than Laforgue. The pervasive use of culinary language used to describe these artists and their work, even as embedded in texts such as Zola’s and Laforgue’s, which have been taken as founding documents for the alignment of self-consciously modern painting with scientific detachment and the singularity of the artist’s eye, demonstrates that it was not just the derogatory critics who drew attention to the bodies of the painters, the materiality of their strokes, and the sensory complexities of the encounter with art. More research is required to situate women painters within the context of these debates. At this stage it remains to be determined whether gustatory metaphors and the language of the sensorium operated significantly differently in relation to the critical reception of women artists, or indeed, how

\[\text{Garb 1990, 1993; Broude 1991.}\]
\[\text{Laforgue 1902.}\]
those artists themselves responded to such criticism or the stereotypes of female taste and appetite to which it corresponded.

Decentering the established narrative of Impressionism continues to be an urgent project despite three decades of revisionist literature. I complete this dissertation at the same time as an ambitious exhibition travels from Paris to Amsterdam on the theme of “Pictures of Prostitution, 1850-1910” (Musée d’Orsay, 22 September 2015-17 January 2016; Van Gogh Museum, 19 February-19 June 2016). Organized around representations of prostitutes, an unwieldy term used for women of radically disparate experiences from the wealthiest courtesans to the most desperate poor, few attempts are made to describe the lived experiences of these women (male prostitution is all but ignored). That the show does not include any painting by women artists is in its way less surprising than the absence of any accounts of sex work from the perspective of sex workers themselves. The exhibition demonstrates the risks of art history and curation that take as their subject a socially and temporally constructed femininity as it operated under the sign of prostitute or Parisienne, and as it was represented in painting by male artists or in texts by male authors, or indeed within masculinist discourse irrespective of whether men or women articulated it. On the one hand, those constructions of femininity become concretized as though they referred to real people rather than projections of fantasy. But at the same time, even when reified into authoritative categories that would seem to offer a lens into lived experience, the spectacular nature of the categories as constructed and imposed upon actual women, whether in the nineteenth century or in the repackaging of

621 I am thinking of Luce Irigaray’s contention in Speculum of the Other Woman (1974, p. 133): “any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the ‘masculine’.” This forms part of her argument that subjectivity constructed within masculinist discourse necessarily excludes women’s perspective, experience, and agency.
sexualized female bodies in such an exhibition, can easily obscure the circumstances of the lives of women to whom they purportedly refer. The narrative of modern painting as an art of the purely optical, concerned primarily with the visual spectacle surveyed by the eagle eye of the paradigmatically male artist/viewer/flâneur, denies corporeal incarnation except insofar as this viewer’s eye can be linked to his sexual desire. The commodified female body, Parisienne or prostitute, with its seductive surface, has stood as the ultimate figuration within this narrative since its inception. We recall that Zola personified Painting as a courtesan, a chimerical combination of Parisienne, prostitute, and cannibalistic demon in his prose. My discussion of the tensions within Zola’s articulation of the act of painting, in which the body of the male painter was imagined as at risk at the same time as his corporeality was denied in the apotheosis of the painter’s analytical eye, has shown the tenuousness of Zola’s ever confident assertions. Pushing on the fissures in statements like these from Zola, or equally from Baudelaire (who also described art as prostitution) and the many others who shaped the concept of the painting of modern life, works against the continuing propensity to conceive of the nineteenth-century city as a phantasmagoria, as was most famously suggested by Walter Benjamin, and which can in such terms only be occupied by ghosts.622 At stake in a sensory turn in Impressionist studies is a return to the body of artist, model, or critic that manifests in, but cannot be summed up by, painting. As a counterpoint to “Splendour and Misery. Pictures of Prostitution, 1850-1910,” the exhibition “Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity” (Musée d’Orsay, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, 2012-2013) displayed paintings of fashionably dressed men and women alongside examples of that clothing, instilling awareness of what it would have felt like to be ensconced in tight and heavy layers, poked and pinched by undergarments, or to navigate city streets with vision veiled by lace. Fashion studies has allowed art historians and museum visitors to reconstruct aspects of corporeal existence, and demonstrates the similar benefits for the discipline and outside of it of an exploration

of culinary culture, another aspect of historical experience gaining attention within an ambitious call to restore the practices of everyday life to historical inquiry.623

Within art history, a sensory turn in Impressionist studies has implications beyond Impressionist scholarship. In this dissertation I have returned to the detached connoisseur a body vulnerable to desire and disgust, but in so doing I also hope to have contributed to a more capacious understanding of what experiences we typically believe that paintings offer, creating space to interrogate embodied encounters with art in the present as well as in the past. While I have been concerned with the nineteenth-century artist and viewer, the significance of a project aimed at gaining insight into lived experience is restricted if the contemporary viewer’s share is ignored. It is often assumed that as technologies of representation have evolved and their viewers have become accustomed to a near suffocating stream of images of striking lifelikeness and shock-inducing effects, that audiences have become less sensitive to painting, a claim difficult to contest or to prove.624

It is a premise at the heart of Sam Taylor-Wood’s film *A Little Death* (2002), which jolts its viewer out of any pretense to aesthetic detachment, a framework as operative today as it was in the nineteenth century. In closing this dissertation, the film offers a new way of exploring the visceral effects that paintings could and can provoke as it breaks down the distance between the historical and contemporary viewer. It mounts a challenge to my arguments for multi-sensory nineteenth-century encounters with painting that have not yet explicitly implicated my own, for this is a work that challenges my ability to look at and write about it, calling the bluff to the pretence that art historical analysis can operate independently of the effects that artworks have upon the art historian.

*A Little Death* opens onto a familiar still life scene of a dead hare, its upper body resting upon a table it shares with a peach, with its leg nailed to a wall behind (figure

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624 This conception is implicit within a range of debates about visual culture and especially its regulation. For example, discussions about the nature of pornographic material often make distinctions according to media, where sexually explicit content is assumed to be more arousing in film or photography than in painting. See Nead 1992, pp. 46-55.
Among many others, Chardin and Manet painted nearly identical compositions. Over the course of the film a swelling community of maggots infests and consumes the hare as the peach remains curiously unchanged. The film was shot over some seven weeks, but in the edited video this period has been accelerated to elapse in four minutes. An upbeat musical score appropriate to a scene of wonder becomes increasingly powerful as the animal is progressively decimated, before slowing and simplifying in finale as the maggots disappear without remaining flesh upon which to feed. In addition to the aural, the film activates the viewer’s tactile sense from the start as the soft rabbit’s fur quickly becomes animated. From inside the chest something vibrates, and an area under the skin pulses across the belly. It grows, moving up into the foot and down to project outward under the skin of the face. As the belly bubbles its materiality morphs and the viewer cannot tell whether the fur is shaking violently or whether insects have emerged upon the surface, milling at warped speed in wave-like progression. The boundaries between interior and exterior of the body cannot be determined, a confusion of borders at the heart of abjection, nor is the distinction clear-cut between life and death. The hare moves with continually hatching bugs that grow aggressively in number until the body is no longer visible beneath or above them. Taste and smell are invoked in force at this stage. A burgundy stain spreads across the wall, presumably caused by the animal’s deliquescence, conjuring the rank odour of the putrid body. The hare has turned from potential human food to nourishment for swarming larvae, revolting the appetite. The viewer is nauseated, a response that does not permit sensory delineations but instead scrambles them. As bodies of hare and maggots intertwine, I experience the sensation of the insects crawling upon my own skin, and the body onscreen becomes inseparable from mine. Using modern technologies of representation to animate the “still” life genre, Taylor-Wood calls into question the experience of a painter in proximity to such material that emits strong smells and becomes prey to vermin, bringing to mind Manet’s process of painting raw Fish during the summer in Bologne, or Caillebotte studying Langouste à la Parisienne. The materiality of both of those paintings, as I have argued, simulates the textures of the foods represented and their

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625 See also Still Life (2001), a similar staging of a bowl of fruit filmed as it decomposes over nine weeks.
crusting or congealing over time, creating the impression that like the subject, the paint itself could go off.

The acceleration and subject of *A Little Death* make temporality the film’s central theme, which was also of paramount concern in the critical reception of Manet and the Impressionists. The film condenses weeks into minutes, and in so doing unfixes time from the steady progression of a clock, which the subject matter of a degenerating body corroborates. Decomposition is a process that unfolds at varying and unpredictable rates (evidenced by the peach), outside of the history of modern time-keeping being codified and standardized in the nineteenth century with its emphasis on regularized intervals and linear progression. The temporality of decomposition is that of organic processes felt and experienced in the changing body rather than watched in the movement of a clock’s mechanical hands. It is time that escapes attempts to bound it, that speeds up as maggots reproduce exponentially, that slows down when nausea arrives in waves to disturb the orderly delineation of sensory responses and progressive moments of viewing, and that repeats when the disturbing content is recalled. Like Taylor-Wood’s accelerated film, the canvases painted by Manet and the Impressionists were also understood to signify speed in condensed form, their final paintings bearing the material traces of the task to “Hurry!... or else my *Odours of Paris* will never be ready for the salon!,” as Trock and so many others summed up the Impressionist ambition to race against changing effects. These effects, however, were not reducible to the “flux of visual experience”—changes in light and atmosphere—which has been the assumption of Impressionist scholarship to date. For example, in his current book project *Painting Time: Impressionism and the Modern Temporal Order*, André Dombrowski argues that Impressionist paintings bear witness to the passing of the time of painting, each stroke a visual index of how long it took to apply it, which was inseparable from “industrial time’s regulatory power.”

626 I became aware of this project when Dombrowski delivered two Tomàs Harris Visiting Professorship lectures drawn from this material at University College London. These were entitled “Temporalities of Impressionism I: Monet and the Wreckage of History” (2 June 2015) and “Temporalities of Impressionism II: Painting at the Speed of Consciousness” (4 June 2015). The quotations from this sentence and the last are taken from Dombrowski’s description of the project for the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, published as “Painting Time: Impressionism and the Modern Temporal Order: How Quickening
Impressionist painters reacted to contemporary cultures of time measurement in the public sphere, and their paintings gained cultural significance within a society in which “time itself became fully quantifiable and its visibility recognized as a scientific...” I would argue that the temporality of decomposition, such a consistent reference point in Impressionist criticism, challenges both the relationship between Impressionism and industrial time and the understood ambition of Impressionist painters as capturing shifting optical effects only. Critics who claimed that Impressionist painting appeared to be decomposing insisted upon a temporality that was not regularized or scientific, and argued that the painters conveyed a range of somatic experiences, les odeurs de Paris.

At last, the cluster of maggots in A Little Death shrinks, revealing the hare’s body transformed into a petrified black surface surrounded by fallen fur. Light climbs up the wall as though at sunrise, and the subject matter takes on the metaphorical significance of regeneration. A new day dawns as old life has supported the new, providing the relief of such a narrative to contain the gut-wrenching within structures of meaning that manage the terror of abjection. A Little Death allows its audience to experience, however briefly, the panic inherent in the vanitas theme in painting that it restages in filmic form. Mortality usually exists as an abstract concept, understood and reflected upon but rarely felt. The responses of viewers involuntarily reacting to Taylor-Wood’s film, likely to include physiological symptoms of disgust including wincing, feverishness, agitation, and muscle tension, insist upon human vulnerability and the integration of sense responses. Decomposition, whether in the Taylor-Wood film or as a theme in the critical reception of Manet and the Impressionists, introduces this bodily register that cannot be made to submit to Symbolic frameworks. By mobilizing the disgust experienced when looking at potentially rotting paintings or putrefying female bodies within them (and as we have seen, the two were conflated), nineteenth-century art critics drew attention to the destabilizing effects of paintings that implicated the viewing body and its gustatory, olfactory, and tactile capacities, and that blurred those responses. Decomposition as a critical construct signified the resistance of this painting to categories of the aesthetic and the cerebral. Instead, critics


Ibid.
asserted an explicitly feminized domain of proximate sensations, visceral reactions, and corporeal contingency that fundamentally undermined frameworks of art and science premised on analytical detachment.
FIGURES

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