ALWAYS THE MUSE: JEANNE DUVAL AS A SIGNIFIER FOR WORKING WOMEN, EXOTICISM, AND MODERNITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Introduction

When gazing at Gustave Courbet's famous work *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life* (1854–55) (fig. 1), most viewers do not realize they are coming face to face with Jeanne Duval, Charles Baudelaire's longtime romantic partner and the inspiration behind some of his most famous writings. *The Painter's Studio* is a massive painting that shows a crowd of figures surrounding Courbet, who is hard at work in his studio painting a landscape. At his back, a nude model turns her head to watch Courbet paint. Facing Courbet, a young boy looks up to the artist while a white cat plays at his feet. The group of figures on the left side of the canvas includes, among many others, a clown, a beggar woman, a rabbinical figure, and hunting dogs. These figures represent what Courbet called "the world of commonplace life."[1] On the right side, Courbet includes recognizable figures, including the philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the critic Champfleury, and the poet Baudelaire. This group Courbet fondly calls "his friends, fellow workers, and art lovers."[2] In the background, paintings hang floor to ceiling on the walls, reminding the viewer that we find ourselves in the painter's studio. This visual reminder is helpful because despite the title, the image of Courbet working placed centrally in the middle of the composition, and the plethora of paintings on the walls, the scene does not look like any painter's studio recognizable to nineteenth-century viewers.

Although an artist might invite visitors to their studio, having upwards of thirty guests, including animals, patrons, beggars, clowns, and religious leaders, was not a regular or realistic occurrence. The figures appear strangely isolated and do not interact with each other or Courbet. The painting has been perplexing viewers for over a century, much to Courbet's delight, as he wrote in a letter while working on it: "It's pretty mysterious. Good luck to anyone who can make

[1] Linda Nochlin, *Courbet* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 153.
[2] Nochlin, 154.

it out!"[3] The painting does not depict a real day in Courbet's studio, but instead, as the title and unusual group suggests, an allegory. Courbet has left a complex system of signs to help the viewer understand the allegory of his "artistic and moral life." As art historians have discussed over the many years since its completion, his allegory is a complicated political and artistic manifesto. Courbet invites the viewer to make sense of the layered signs and "collaborate in the production of meaning" in *The Painter's Studio*.[4] Viewers continue to participate in making meaning from the monumental painting as it hangs in a prominent location in the Musée d'Orsay and sees thousands of visitors a year.

Although Courbet included almost thirty figures, he removed Jeanne Duval from the final composition. Courbet pictures a young Baudelaire, his close friend, poet, and critic, on the far right; his face buried in a book. This pose mirrors, almost exactly, a portrait of Baudelaire that Courbet painted in 1848 (fig. 2). Just behind Baudelaire, barely distinguishable from the green background, is an outline of Duval's figure (fig. 3). Courbet originally painted Duval next to Baudelaire, but he removed her before displaying the work at his self-staged Realism Pavilion in 1855.[5] Duval's silhouette has become more visible as the painting aged, especially after its restoration in 2014. Duval was Baudelaire's longtime partner and the inspiration behind some of his most famous poetry, including an extended cycle in *Les fleurs du mal*. She was a staple of Baudelaire's life and his circle for almost twenty years. Why, then, of all the figures in *The Painters Studio* would Courbet remove Duval?

Duval was a working-class, mixed-race woman who was a partner and muse to Baudelaire. Duval and Baudelaire were together, if episodically, for almost two decades, but

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[3] Quoted in Nochlin, 154.
[4] Nochlin, 161.
[5] Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 264.

after Baudelaire died in 1867, biographers quickly cast Duval as a *femme fatale* responsible for Baudelaire's downfall or removed her from Baudelaire's life altogether. Documentation of her life disappears after Baudelaire's death, and scholars cannot confirm her death date or burial location. Although we do not know precisely why Courbet removed Duval from the painting, Baudelaire and Duval did have a tumultuous relationship involving multiple breakups and reconciliations. Baudelaire's contemporaries and posthumous biographers either disparaged Duval or attempted to expunge her from Baudelaire's story, uncomfortable with the fact that Duval, a working mixed-race woman, to whom Baudelaire was not married, held such power over his life and work.

Scholars, writers, and artists often reference Duval's simultaneous absence and presence in *The Painter's Studio*. Duval's erasure from *The Painter's Studio* becomes an apt metaphor for researching her.[6] She is unsuccessfully blotted out of both the painting and the archive. Her traces are everywhere, yet she is nowhere to be found. In addition to Duval's outline in Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*, Duval was depicted by Édouard Manet in a painting known as *Baudelaire's Mistress*, and in several drawings by Baudelaire. Despite these well-known visual depictions of her and the famous extended cycle of poetry about Duval in Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*, Duval's own voice remains absent from the archive. Recent scholars have tried to recover her story. Robin Mitchell and Denise Murrell have tried to reclaim Duval's voice and agency from the archive. Mitchell argues that the continued demonization of Duval reveals France's desire to rid itself of Black bodies in the nineteenth century. Murrell reclaimed the identities of Black models in nineteenth-century artworks, resorting their agency as co-producers

[6] See Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (New York: Routledge, 1999); Lorraine O'Grady, *Where Margins Become Centers*, (Cambridge: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2015).

of meaning in the artworks for which they modeled. Even with these dedicated efforts, however, researchers have not found any letters, journals, or corroborated interviews.

The fact that Duval's contributions are missing from the archive represents a clear choice by Duval and Baudelaire's contemporaries not to preserve her story for future generations. Baudelaire's friends, including Charles Asselineau, Auguste Poulet-Malassis, and Théodore de Banville, preserved and published Baudelaire's work after his death, but, to our knowledge, did not include any of Duval's contributions. With our current understanding of the available materials in the archive, researchers only have the words and images of others to construct an understanding of Duval's ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Constructing Duval without her voice is speculative at best and risks further stripping Duval of her agency as we attempt to reconstruct her life through a twenty-first-century lens. Despite the lack of research on Duval, I have not dedicated this project to her recovery. Instead, I use what the archive does have to offer: the poetry, letters, written accounts, and, most notably for this project, images created by others that depict Duval. Investigating these objects as subjective elements of the archive reveals more about the creators than the subject. Although it cannot recover Duval's identity, this evidence can reveal important insights about what Duval represented in the nineteenth century and beyond. Although Courbet removed Duval from *The Painter's Studio* in 1855, Duval continued to inspire artistic output during her life. In this paper, I will analyze five visual depictions of Duval: four drawings by Charles Baudelaire and a painting by Édouard Manet. As a muse for Baudelaire and Manet, Duval inspired some of her lifetime's most significant literary and artistic contributions. My analysis reveals how Baudelaire and, later, Manet used Duval as an inspiration to explore their artistic ideas. These images show how Duval became a muse who signified nineteenth-century ideas about women, exoticism, and modernity. Just as Duval was a signifier of the

exotic, modern, and sexual for Baudelaire and Manet, her signification evolves to evoke Black women's erasure, marginalization, and loss throughout history for contemporary artists and writers.

Duval's Biography

Jeanne Duval's life is poorly documented. Biographical research about her life is challenging for several reasons: she was known by multiple names, came from a working-class family, and moved frequently.[7] Characterizations by Baudelaire's friends, critics, and biographers are overwhelmingly critical, negative, and derogatory. François Porché, one of Charles Baudelaire's early biographers, openly asserts:

> Jeanne was a native of San Domingo. That is all we know of her origin, and even that is doubtful. But what does it matter? It is better thus. Whence she came, no one knows, and after Baudelaire's death, she disappears. Her beginning and her end are hidden in shadow.[8]

Even though Duval was Baudelaire's muse and life partner, Porché has no interest in learning more about her life. Duval was the inspiration behind some of Baudelaire's most famous works, but many of Baudelaire's biographers villainized her, inventing stories that make it difficult for scholars attempting to reconstruct her life to separate fact from fiction. Some Baudelaire scholars clearly resent that Duval, a working-class, mixed-race woman, played a significant role in Baudelaire's life. For example, A. E Carter viciously laments:

> The verse Baudelaire wrote to Jeanne Duval… is among the world's greatest erotic poetry. Thanks to this fact, a mendacious slut like Jeanne now occupies an unrivaled niche in literature and holds it on her own terms—as a strumpet, pure and simple.[9]

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[7] She was known by the surnames *Prosper*, *Lemer*, *Lemarie*, and the stage name *Berthe.*
[8] François Porché, *Charles Baudelaire*, trans. John Mavin (New York: Liveright 1928), 71.
[9] A. E. Carter, *Charles Baudelaire* (Boston: Twayne, 1977), 64. It is unclear what "terms" Carter believes Duval holds, considering she died poor and alone.

Carter, a Baudelaire scholar, is clearly uncomfortable with the place that Duval holds in Baudelaire's legacy. Although he wants to celebrate the poetry Baudelaire wrote about Duval, Carter objects to the fact that it gives Duval an important place in Baudelaire's story. Baudelaire scholars' resentment about Duval's place in Baudelaire's legacy introduces a contradiction common in Baudelaire scholarship, namely how to both celebrate *Les fleurs du mal* and degrade its principal subject. The stories and hearsay repeated in published works about Duval strip her of her agency and further the agendas of Baudelaire and his biographers. Mitchell argues that scholars should approach Baudelaire as "simply one voice—albeit an important one among others" when reconstructing Duval's life.[10] Mitchell's work in the archive uncovered contextual information about Duval's life, including her familial relationships, work history, and social circle. Although none of Duval's letters, corroborated interviews, or journals have been found, Mitchell's recent discoveries of rental documents, hospital notes, and documents from Duval's mother's funeral shed light on previously misunderstood portions of Duval's life. Mitchell's discoveries also remind us that the archive always offers the potential for future discoveries. I hope that the recent increased scholarly interest in Duval will continue to yield more archival discoveries. Here, I will outline Duval's biography as scholars currently understand it, based on the best available information. After discussing Duval's biography, I will elaborate on the archival challenges Duval's case presents.

Scholars believe that Duval was born in France around 1820. However, her exact birth and death dates have not been found. Some texts suggest that Duval's grandmother might have been from Saint-Domingue and of African descent. Duval's mother had ties to Nantes, but

[10] Robin Mitchell, *Venus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 107.

researchers have not been able to confirm if she was born or immigrated there.[11] Some scholars suggest that Duval's mother was a Nantes brothel worker, but precise information about Duval's early life is unclear.[12] Mitchell speculates that Duval's father and grandfather were "almost certainly white Frenchmen." Still, we know nothing else about them. No surviving documents indicate that she had any contact with either of them.[13] By contrast, rental and funeral documents recovered by Mitchell show that Duval maintained a lifelong relationship with her mother, establishing that Duval retained long-term family ties outside of her relationship with Baudelaire.[14]

Thanks to surviving theater advertisements and reviews of her performances, Duval's life becomes easier to chart beginning in the late 1830s when she worked as an actress in Paris. She was likely in her late teens when the photographer Nadar saw her acting under the stage name *Mlle. Berthe* at the Theatre du Panthéon in 1838. Duval continued to work intermittently over the next decade with various side roles in Paris theatres. In 1842, Duval performed a small part at Theatre du Panthéon when Baudelaire allegedly saw her deliver only one line: "Dinner is served, Madame."[15] Porché claims that the one line was enough to send Baudelaire into hysterics, as he became enamored with her voice and "its sweetly hoarse inflections, bestially caressing, and it was the contrast of the slim waist with those insolent haunches, just that, which obsessed him."[16] Porché characterizes Duval as having an almost animal sexuality that drew Baudelaire to her immediately. Baudelaire sent Duval flowers after the performance, and their romantic relationship began almost immediately.

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[11] Mitchell, 42.
[12] Denise Murell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 27.
[13] Mitchell, 42.
[14] Mitchell, 44.
[15] Quoted in Mitchell, 45.
[16] Porché, trans. Mavin, 70.

After meeting Baudelaire in the early 1840s, Duval gradually abandoned her work as an actress. In nineteenth-century Paris, acting was one of the only professions open to women without education or family networks to connect them to employment and marriage. Duval, for example, gradually stopped acting as her relationship with Baudelaire grew more serious. She likely took on roles in the theater out of necessity rather than passion for the performing arts. Despite her relatively short and unserious career, Baudelaire's biographers often specifically describe Duval as an actress.[17] This characterization was not only a way for biographers to understand Duval's working life but also citing her work as an actress was a coded way to associate Duval with sex work. Because acting literally put working women on the public stage, the profession was linked to prostitution. As such, Duval is, as Elizabeth Wilson writes, "invariably written off as a prostitute."[18] French anxieties about working women's ability to fabricate their emotions were well-established; in the eighteenth century, writers and philosophers already associated acting with prostitution.[19] Fears about the negative consequences that public, working women or *femmes publiques* would have on French society abounded in public discourse in the eighteenth century.[20] After the Revolution especially, the emerging public sphere denied women's participation by undercutting their virtue and linking them to sex work, as part of a larger effort to push women into the bourgeois domestic sphere. Baudelaire's biographers frequently cite Duval's career as an actress to imply or state outright that Duval was a prostitute, though no evidence exists that Duval ever worked as a prostitute. By linking Duval to prostitution through her acting career, Baudelaire's biographers cast her as a

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[17] It is unclear if Duval took on smaller roles by choice or by necessity, as larger roles were not available to her. Either way, she gradually abandoned the stage after meeting Baudelaire.
[18] Elizabeth Wilson, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 85.
[19] Mitchell, 44.
[20] Jill H. Casid "Commerce in the Boudoir" in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Melissa Hyde, and Jennifer Milam, eds. (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), p. 91.

dishonest, sexual deviant. Porché describes Duval as always in search of "a serious customer. Once she had scented good game, a well-to-do young man of family, it was for her—with her 'instinctive knowledge' to draw him into her den."[21] Carter similarly describes Duval's profession:

> She was playing walk-on roles in a Latin Quarter theater and earning extra money as a prostitute. Or, more accurately, she was a prostitute who did a little acting. The theater was good advertising; anyone who liked her on the boards had only to step round to the stage door after the performance, she was immediately available.[22]

Carter diminishes Duval's acting work by positioning it as secondary to what he interprets as her main profession, prostitution. Carter also implies here that Duval was "immediately available" to "anyone who liked her," which downplays the emotional connection Duval and Baudelaire shared for many years. As Carter would have known, after meeting in the theatre, Duval and Baudelaire began a turbulent and emotionally intimate relationship that lasted almost two decades.

Aside from mentions of Duval's sporadic acting roles throughout the 1840s, much of the written, archival documentation that survives about Duval's later life comes from Baudelaire's correspondence, primarily letters he wrote to his mother, Caroline Aupick. Baudelaire wrote to his mother frequently, and his correspondence details the highs and lows of the relationship. Baudelaire often wrote his mother asking for money, usually promising that a big publishing or other career break was just around the corner.[23] Aupick made it clear in her letters that she adamantly disliked Duval. Aupick often blamed Duval for Baudelaire's poor financial situation, extravagant lifestyle, and lack of professional success. Baudelaire's hyperbolic tone in his letters

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[21] Porché, trans. Mavin, 71–72.
[22] Carter, 37.
[23] While Baudelaire was still in his twenties, his family placed the remainder of his inheritance in a trust controlled by his mother and stepfather. He had to ask them to access the funds.

to his mother suggest that he negatively exaggerated Duval and downplayed his own misbehavior to play to his mother's sympathies and cast himself in a more positive light. For example, in an 1852 letter to his mother, Baudelaire describes Duval:

> Once she had certain qualities, but she has lost them, and I myself have gained insight. TO LIVE WITH A PERSON who never shows any gratitude for your efforts, who thwarts them by being clumsy or deliberately spiteful, who only considers you as her servant, and her property, with whom it is impossible to exchange one word on politics or literature, a creature WHO DOES NOT ADMIRE ME, and who is not even interested in my studies, who would throw my manuscripts into the fire if that would bring her more money than my publishing them.[24]

However, Baudelaire occasionally admitted his culpability in their relationship struggles and his fondness for Duval in letters to Aupick, especially towards the end of Duval and Baudelaire's relationship. In an 1856 letter to his mother after a temporary breakup with Duval, Baudelaire expresses his commitment to Duval, despite their recent rupture and frequent arguments:

> This woman was my sole amusement, my only pleasure, my only companion, and in spite of all inward shocks of a stormy relationship, the thought of a permanent separation had never clearly entered my mind. I've used her and abused her! I've taken pleasure in torturing her, and now I've tortured myself.[25]

Duval suffered a stroke in 1859, after which she entered the *Maison Municipale de Santé*, where Baudelaire provided her financial support. In a letter to Duval from 1859, Baudelaire wrote that he "did not want her to be without money even for a day."[26] Baudelaire continued to write to his mother about Duval during this time, telling her that only his concern for Duval kept him from suicide.[27] In 1861, Duval had begun living in Neuilly with a man whom she told Baudelaire was her brother. This news deeply disturbed Baudelaire, who disapproved of Duval's

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[24] Quoted in Therese Dolan "Skirting the Issue," *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (1997), 613. Dolan's translation, Baudelaire's emphasis.
[25] Quoted in Enid Starkie, *Baudelaire*, (New York: New Directions, 1958), 283.
[26] Dolan, 613.
[27] Dolan, 613.

living with another man whom he did not feel was working to support the household. The last physical contact between Duval and Baudelaire was sometime in the early 1860s. Despite the end of their physical relationship in the early 1860s, Duval remained in Baudelaire's memory for the rest of his life. He evoked her memory in poems such as "A Hemisphere in Her Hair," published in 1862, and "The Desire to Paint," published in 1863.[28] Baudelaire also drew a pen sketch of Duval from memory in 1865.

Written documentation of Duval's life almost wholly vanishes after Baudelaire's death in 1867. After her stroke in the late 1850s, Duval's health continued to deteriorate. Nadar claims he saw her walking on crutches in the streets of Paris in 1870.[29] The singer Emma Calvé describes an alleged visit with Duval between 1870 and 1878 when Duval "lived in a modest abode, somewhere in Batignolles."[30] Calvé recounts that Duval read from some of Baudelaire's letters she had saved. Calvé claims that Duval was protective of the letters and quotes Duval as saying: "These are my relics, I sold some of them, as I am not rich, but these here, the first ones and the last ones that he wrote me, will follow me into the coffin!"[31] Unfortunately, none of these letters have been found. If Calvé's account is true, Baudelaire also held an important place in Duval's memory. Either way, Calvé's story speaks to the public perception of the couple as irreparably bonded. Duval likely died sometime in the 1870s.

Despite repeated cycles of breakup and reconciliation, the pair were public and well-established between 1842 and the early 1860s. Although Baudelaire's letters and contemporary accounts documents the emotional turbulence of their relationship, they clearly cared for each other and chose to be together for almost twenty years. The pair were part of a lively circle of

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[28] Dolan, 613 "Une hemisphere dans une chevelure" and "Le désir de peindre."
[29] Mitchell, 48.
[30] Mitchell, 48.
[31] Quoted in Mitchell, 48.

artists and writers in northern Paris and lived an openly bohemian lifestyle that went against the bourgeoise morality of the period.[32] Baudelaire's biographers often blame Duval for Baudelaire's bohemian lifestyle, resorting to racist and sexist tropes to explain Duval's bad influence over Baudelaire. Biographers connected Baudelaire's heavy drinking to Duval: "Jeanne grew old very quickly. But illness, alcoholism, debauchery, the precocious decrepitude particular to women of her race may suffice to explain this physical degradation."[33] Others tried to distance Baudelaire from Duval, characterizing their relationship as unserious or not emotionally intimate. Edmond Lepelltier claimed, "Baudelaire never really loved this black drunken woman."[34] Carter resorts to blaming Baudelaire's ignorance for devoting so much of his life to Duval, claiming that "Baudelaire never realized [Jeanne's indifference] even when he had the evidence before him."[35] Clearly, Baudelaire's biographers wanted to cast Duval as an overall negative presence, resenting the fact that he devoted twenty years of his life to a working-class, mixed-race woman.

Duval's Race

After France abolished territorial slavery in 1848, a small Black population began to take root in Paris. Paris' northern districts, in particular hosted a blend of migrant workers, avant-garde artists and writers, the bourgeoisie, and the *demimondaines* who served and entertained them. All these groups lived nearby and mingled in public spaces.[36] Denise Murrell describes that Paris' Black population lived mainly in the ninth and seventeenth arrondissements, where Baudelaire and Duval lived and worked.[37] Despite, or more likely because of the racial mixing in

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[32] Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1.
[33] François Porché, *Baudelaire: Historie d'une âme*, (Paris: Flammarion: 1944), 78.
translation my own "Jeanne fut vielle très vite. Mais la maladie, l'alcoolisme, la débauche, la décrépitude précoce particulière aux femmes de sa race peuvent suffire à expliquer cette déchéance physique."
[34] Quoted in Mitchell, 122.
[35] Carter, 35.
[36] Murrell, 10.
[37] Murrell, 9.

Duval's neighborhood, Duval was often the site of anxieties about racial mixing. While Duval's exact racial identity remains unknown, she was either half or one-quarter Black. Baudelaire's circle described her as both "a real negress" and "not very Black," showing their anxiety to classify Duval, who did not fit neatly into any established racial type.[38] Contemporary accounts refer to Duval interchangeably as a "*mulâtress*," a term used to describe a person with one white and one Black parent, and "*négress*," a term used to describe Black women. Considered slurs today, these terms were popular in the nineteenth century.[39] Nadar, who met Duval in the 1830s, described her as "a negress, a real negress, at least a mulatress, without a doubt."[40] However, some of the literature refers to Duval as a "creole," a term used to describe people of any race who were born in the colonies, which "register[ed] the anxiety occasioned by contact with a non-European 'elsewhere.'"[41] In other words, calling Duval creole exoticizes her. No matter what term they used, Baudelaire's biographers and contemporaries almost always specifically note Duval's non-whiteness. Racializing Duval was a way to other her and to associate her with the exotic and the non-European. Racializing Duval also allowed Baudelaire's biographers to degrade her by associating her with racist ideas established during slavery.

Although Duval's relationship with Baudelaire meant that she transcended racial and social expectations by living with an upper-class white man, she was consistently the target of racial prejudice and animosity. Duval and Baudelaire were publicly censured and were not welcome in all public spaces as a mixed-race couple.[42] Baudelaire's circle was, according to Marc A. Christophe "not at all enthusiastic" about Duval. After Baudelaire's death, they were

[38] Ernest Prarond and Nadar quoted in Mitchell, 122–123.
[39] See Anne Higonnet's Introduction to Murrell's *Posing Modernity* for an extended discussion on the terms.
[40] Nadar quoted in Mitchell, 123.
[41] Pollock, 267.
[42] Murrell, 65.

quick to reveal their true feelings about her, which often involved negative characterizations of her race. Anxieties about racial mixing in a post-slavery and metropole led French audiences to revert to racist characterizations established during slavery. Baudelaire's biographers frequently deployed the trope that Black or mixed-race women were "naturally more lascivious than European women" and enjoyed "ascendancy over white men" when discussing Duval.[43] These characterizations, often propped up by pseudo-scientific justifications, implied that Black or mixed-race women had the sexual power to turn seduction into possession over white men.

Baudelaire's biographers degraded Duval by perpetuating pseudo-scientific representations of Black women's sexuality created during slavery and continued during the colonial period. Duval's critics hypersexualized her, falling back on racist tropes to argue that her race or supposed connection to the Caribbean meant she possessed a deviant sexuality that gave her power over Baudelaire. Baudelaire's biographers repeatedly returned to Duval's race and sexuality, relying on these pseudo-scientific tropes to argue that Duval sustained her relationship with Baudelaire thanks to her insatiable sexuality.[44] By reducing Duval's status to a sexual one, these biographers negate the emotional and mental companionship the couple had for almost twenty years. Carter, for example, reduces Duval's entire identity to her sexuality, asserting, "Jeanne represented pure sex … No ripple of intellect or passion disturbed the pure lines of her sin or the moody reverie of her face."[45] Despite some critics' obsession with

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[43] Justin Girod de Chantrans, *Voyage d'un Suisse dans les colonies d'Amérique*, Pierre Pluchon, ed. (Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1785), 153: "[C]es femmes, naturellement plus lascives que les Européennes, flattées de leur ascendant sur les Blancs, ont rassemblé, pour le conserver, toutes les voluptés dont elles sont susceptibles. La jouissance est devenue pour elles 1'objet d'une étude particulière, d'un art très recherche et nécessaire en même temps avec des amants uses ou dépravés, que la simple nature ne peut plus émouvoir, et qui ne veulent pas renoncer à ses bienfaits."
[44] Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 118.
[45] Carter, 64.

degrading Duval, they could not ignore her. Duval was a significant part of Baudelaire's life, as evidenced through both his published and unpublished writing.

If Baudelaire's extended cycle of poetry about Duval in *Les Fleurs du mal* is, as Baudelaire scholars have asserted, "among the world's greatest erotic poetry," then Duval, his subject and poetic inspiration, was his muse.[46] However, Baudelaire's biographers remain hesitant to give Duval the status of "muse." Philosopher Étienne Gilson claims that no woman, "probably least of all his dark-skinned Venus, wielded [sovereign power] over his work."[47] Hesitancy to give Duval the status of Baudelairean muse certainly stems from biographers' resentment that a working-class, mixed-race woman did, in fact, wield "sovereign power" over Baudelaire and his work. Despite the breadth of writing about Duval by Baudelaire, his contemporaries, and his biographers, Duval's life was poorly documented. Documentation of Apollonie Sabatier's life offers a foil for Duval's case. Sabatier was the famous white courtesan who was Baudelaire's friend and perhaps briefly his romantic partner after his split with Duval. Sabatier also inspired several poems in *Les fleurs du mal*. Although Sabatier is a relatively minor muse for Baudelaire compared to Duval, her life is well-documented, and Baudelaire scholars characterize her in a positive light. As Christophe aptly describes "Ironically, we know more about mme. Sabatier – the white Venus with whom Baudelaire had a short-lived platonic relationship – than Jeanne Duval."[48] Significantly, Sabatier is one of the figures included Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*, whereas Courbet painted Duval out of the composition. Although Sabatier and Duval were both working women who entertained and inspired bohemian

[46] Carter, 64
[47] Étienne Gilson "Baudelaire and the Muse" in *Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 67.
[48] Christophe, 428.

men as members of the *demimonde*, Sabatier's whiteness secures her place in Baudelaire's archive.

Duval's Archival Absence

Although researchers have made great strides in establishing key details about Duval's life, recovering Duval's voice through the archive has proven nearly impossible. Baudelaire's contemporaries and biographers purposefully excluded Duval's contributions. More importantly, however, the archive was not designed to hold her contributions. At its most basic level, an archive is a place where societies preserve their documents and other materials of historical significance. People often think of museums, libraries, or archives as places where careful historians preserve repositories of documents, manuscripts, and images that make up the historical record of society. Sometimes, scholars refer to the archive as also including published books, articles, and other media, while others reference the archive as including everything currently available in digital format.[49] Generally, the archive's collection of materials dictates legitimate sources, objects, and methods of study. Whatever definition of the archive we choose, the contested definition of the word archive reveals that the archive is not a neutral space. In his 1995 book *Archive Fever,* Jacques Derrida argued that "nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive.'"[50]

Archive Fever was one the first scholarly attempts to theorize the archive. Derrida uses a psychoanalytic approach to understand the human desire to collect, organize, and preserve a historic record. Although some scholars contest Derrida's psychoanalytic analysis of the archive, his *Archive Fever* introduced the idea that the structure of the archive determines what will be

[49] Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines" *Libraries and the Academy*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2004), 10.
[50] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 90.

archived.[51] If the archive's creators design it to hold paper correspondence, for example, paper correspondence is what will be preserved for posterity. An archive created to hold paper will preserve exchanges between people who communicated mainly via letters, like Baudelaire and his mother, while exchanges between people who communicated mainly via face-to-face conversation, like Baudelaire and Duval, will not be preserved in the archive. In this case, the official record of the archive is not structured to hold Duval's contributions. For example, Duval's performances in the theater are forever lost to history, while Baudelaire's poems about her have been in print for over one hundred years. In this way, the archive itself shapes history and memory. Derrida calls this "archivization."[52] The concept of archivization helps us to understand the limited and conditional nature of the archive as its creators shaped it using is shaped by the technology available to its creators. In Duval's case, although scholars have not found her letters, journals, or corroborated interviews, Duval appears in contemporary written accounts, as the subject of Baudelaire's poetry, in biographies of Baudelaire, and in visual depictions.

As she appears in Baudelaire's archive, Duval was a vehicle for expounding his literary and visual ideas about sexuality and exoticism. Well-established literary analysis of Baudelaire's poems shows he uses Duval to explore repeated themes in his poetry. P. M. Pasinetti describes how the Duval poems do not reveal biographical information about Baudelaire and Duval's lives or relationships but instead represent a fanciful narrative constructed by Baudelaire. In the poems, Pasinetti argues that Baudelaire had "already invented himself into character."[53]

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[51] Carolyn Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001). Steedman argues that Derrida does not understand what archival research is actually like and criticizes his argument as being too metaphorical.
[52] Derrida, 17.
[53] P. M. Pasinetti "The 'Jeanne Duval' Poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal*" *Yale French Studies* no. 2 (1948), 112

Additionally, Pasinetti's analysis of the poems' imagery shows how they express "longing towards exotic lands."[54] Beatrice Stith Clark shows how Baudelaire uses olfactory associations like Duval's smell to connect her to non-European, exotic locations.[55] Edward J. Ahearn articulates how in the Duval cycle of poems, she "opens up the poet to another world – exotic, far removed from the nineteenth-century urban civilization."[56] Ahearn shows how in *Les fleurs du mal,* Baudelaire uses imagery of tigers, snakes, cats, and other animals to evoke an "exotic voyage."[57] Baudelaire had traveled outside of France as a young man. In 1841 Jacques Aupick, Baudelaire's stepfather, sent him on a trip to Calcutta, India, hoping the voyage would provide some perspective for the budding dandy. The trip made an impression, and the themes of sailing and exotic destinations appear in poems he wrote shortly after returning to Paris.[58] Literary analysis of the Duval cycle of poems in *Les fleurs du mal* shows how Baudelaire constructed an imagined narrative, using Duval as inspiration and instrument to explore his interest in the non-European.

Both Baudelaire's written and visual representations of Duval reveal his complicated attitude toward her. In poems from *Les Fleurs du mal* he casts Duval as an exotic, beautiful, enthralling muse. In "Her Hair," he describes Duval's hair as evoking "Africa: torrid; Asia: languorous."[59] In "The Jewels" Baudelaire writes that the image of Duval wearing only jewelry is a display "slave girls might use in kingdoms of the Moor."[60] Baudelaire writes that Duval

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[54] Pasinetti, 114.
[55] Beatrice Stith Clark, "Elements of Black Exoticism in the Jeanne Duval Poems of 'Les Fleurs du Mal,'" *CLA Journal* 14, no. 1 (1970), 68.
[56] Edward J. Ahearn "Black Woman White Poet: Exile and Exploitation in Baudelaire's Jeanne Duval Poems" *The French Review* 51, no. 2. (December 1977), 215.
[57] Ahearn, 215.
[58] In *Les Fleurs du mal:* "The Albatross," "Man and the Sea," "Exotic Perfume", "The Beautiful Ship."
[59] Charles Baudelaire*, Les Fleurs du mal*, trans. Aaron Poochigian, (New York and London: Liveright Publishing, 2022), 189, "La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique."
[60] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 187, "Qu'ont dans leurs jours heureux les esclaves des Mores."

"advanced and urged me more than demons could."[61] In "The Beautiful Ship," Baudelaire uses a ship as an extended metaphor to describe Duval's allure and beauty.[62] Other times, however, he writes that Duval was a "demon" and "vampire." In "The Vampire" Baudelaire writes "you monstrous thing, you bind me as tight as manacles bind a criminal."[63] In "Lethe" he writes "my destiny from now on, and my bliss, will be to suffer like an innocent and doomed convict, a docile martyr."[64] As Marc Christophe asks: "Was Duval Baudelaire's Black Venus or Baudelaire's Demon?" Baudelaire, his contemporaries, and Baudelaire scholars have consistently cast Duval as the cause of Baudelaire's problems. Although Baudelaire's biographers have played an important role in crafting this sentiment, Baudelaire himself often blamed Duval for his suffering, especially in letters to his mother. Baudelaire had a complex and mercurial attitude towards Duval as a life partner. As a poetic and artistic inspiration, however, Baudelaire used Duval to explore similar ideas throughout his career. Baudelaire's ideas about modernity, women, exoticism, and sexuality were sparked and kindled by Duval. Through drawing and poetry, Duval functioned as an inspirational basis for Baudelaire to explore his literary and artistic ideas.

We do not have any of Duval's letters, journal, or interviews; we have Baudelaire's written and visual depictions of Duval to construct our contemporary understanding of her. The fact that Duval's voice is absent from the archive represents a clear choice by Baudelaire's archivists including Charles Asselineau, Auguste Poulet-Malassis, and Théodore de Banville, to omit her voice and her story for future generations. The objects preserved in any archive

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[61] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 187, "s'avançaient, plus câlins que les Anges du mal."
[62] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 217, "Le Beau Navire."
[63] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 31, "Infâme à qui je suis lié Comme le forçat à la chaîne."
[64] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 32"À mon destin, désormais mon délice, j'obéirai comme un prédestiné; martyr docile, innocent condamné."

represent a chosen group of objects saved for posterity because those who held political and social power deemed them significant. Postcolonial scholarship, in particular, has illuminated how the creation and interpretation of the archive lead the researcher toward a desired interpretation of history. As Michel Lynch argues:

> The archive is never 'raw' or 'primary,' not only because the paper trail is the product of a selective sorting operation, but also because it is originally laid down to create a trail of evidence that leads future investigations along a carefully chosen path.[65]

The archive became one of colonialism's knowledge-producing products that, alongside museums and universities, used recording, collecting, and documenting practices to bolster colonial authority and legitimacy. Given Duval's close relationship with Baudelaire, who was already famous in his lifetime, and her public life, the lack of documents concerning her life is more than an accidental loss or misplacement sometime in the last two centuries. Instead, such an omission shows Baudelaire biographers' clear choice to remove Duval's contributions.

Feminist and postcolonial scholars like Linda Nochlin and Edward Said have shown how the archive reflects the aims of its creators.[66] While some scholars see the archive as presenting a clear window to understand the past, feminist and postcolonial approaches position the archive as offering only one subjective view of history. Scholars like Nochlin and Said view the archive as distorted and incomplete, often omitting the perspectives of women, people of color, and colonial subjects. This subjectivity enters the archive not just at its moment of creation but also at its interpretation. No matter how complete a collection of documents might be, the historian's intervention also requires interpretation. As Hayden White argues, crafting a historical narrative

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[65] Michael Lynch, "Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives and Paper Trails," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (May 1999), 69.
[66] Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," ARTnews (January 1971); Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

from archival information introduces another layer of subjectivity.[67] Although the archive is a priori a collection of documents, historians create meaning through narrative. Historian Carolyn Steedman has described this task as reading "for what is not there: the silences and the absences of the documents always speak to us."[68] Additionally, as Rebecca Munford has argued, Duval produces meaning through her invisibility to the historian, who brings out Duval's agency through her absence from the archive.[69]

The archive is a constructed, subjective, and limited resource. Yet, the archive structures how we can understand and speak about the past. Thus, when researchers attempt to reconstruct Duval's existence using the available materials, they are left to repeat the opinions and observations of Baudelaire, his contemporaries, and his biographers. As Hal Foster has argued, the archive "supplies the terms of discourse."[70] Duval is only present in the archive through the depictions and writing of others, and we are only able to understand her as she was constructed by Baudelaire and his contemporaries. This pattern punctuated Duval's biography with hearsay, exaggeration, and mythology. Even many twenty-first-century articles continue to state that Duval had emigrated to France from Haiti, despite the fact that people living during her lifetime recognized that Duval had always lived in France.[71] Furthermore, biographers have repeated and exaggerated the same stories that Baudelaire's contemporaries told about Duval over the centuries. This game of academic telephone means that Duval goes from being called a "sphinx" in one of Baudelaire's earliest biographies to a "mendacious slut" in a biography from the

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[67] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 5.
[68] Steedman, 1177.
[69] Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers: Angela Carter and European Gothic*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 102.
[70] Hal Foster, "Archives of Modern Art," *October* 99, (Winter 2002), 81.
[71] Franklin Sirmans "Les Fleurs Duval" in *ArtNet* (November, 1998). Sirmans, describing Lorraine O'Grady's *Flowers of Good and Evil* project says, "Duval's words also tell the story of O'Grady's mother, Lena, who emigrated from Jamaica to Boston in the 1920s, almost 100 years after Duval emigrated from Haiti to Paris in the 1830s."

twentieth century.[72] Duval's absent voice in the archive makes it difficult, if not impossible, to recover her agency authentically. The urge to "recover" Duval from art history is understandable. Through the fragments left behind in the archive, the drawings, the poems, and the retold myths, Duval holds a co-presence, present and absent, visible and invisible. In all of Baudelaire's drawings of Duval, her face is clearly articulated, and she looks directly at the viewer. We can see her, but only as Baudelaire constructed and remembered her.

The researcher witnesses the loss of Duval as they find her. As with the trace left behind in Courbet's portrait, we only have the interpretations left by others to reconstruct her. As Whitney Davis argues, the art historian cannot "bring back" figures like Duval, as they have already been lost to history. As Whitney Davis describes: "To have the history of art as history – acknowledging the irreparable loss of the objects – we must give up art history as a bringing-to-life, as a denial of departure."[73] Despite the traces left behind, Duval has "departed," and yet, we remain open to discovery. As Mitchell's recent archival discoveries have shown, the archive continues to yield the opportunity for new discoveries, which enables Duval to become a signifier of an absent presence. Duval still carries the potential to change the archival discourses that have shaped her.

Duval as a Character in Baudelaire's Exotic Narrative

As argued above, Baudelaire's archive, including the drawings, poems, and letters he wrote about Duval, tells the reader more about their creator than their subject. Understanding how scholars have characterized Duval based on their interpretations of the archive reveals their anxieties about Duval's place in Baudelaire's legacy. Although we cannot know what Duval

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[72] Porché, 71; A.E Carter, 64.
[73] Whitney Davis, "Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History" in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

thought about her relationship with Baudelaire, an analysis of Baudelaire's drawings and writings about her can reveal what she represented to him. Baudelaire's drawings and poems show how he used Duval to explore his artistic and literary goals.

There are four known drawings of Duval by Baudelaire. Several other drawings of women by Baudelaire might be portraits of Duval or inspired by her, but only the four discussed here are securely identified as portraits. Although Baudelaire did not receive artistic training and never described himself as a visual artist, he often drew for his friends or added drawings to letters. In addition to the drawings of Duval, many of Baudelaire's other drawings survive, including self-portraits, portraits of friends, and some genre scenes.[74] Baudelaire's drawings are generally well-executed sketches. Comparing Baudelaire's self-portraits with photographs from the period proves that he was capable of faithfully rendering a likeness in his ink drawings (fig. 3 and fig. 4).

The most-well known drawing of Duval by Baudelaire is in the Musée d'Orsay's drawings collection held in the Louvre's Cabinet des Dessins. The drawing titled *Portrait de Jeanne Duval* is a three-quarter length, three-quarter profile view of Duval, drawn in ink on paper (*fig. 5*). Auguste Poulet-Malassis inscribed the work on the upper right side, "drawing by Baudelaire 27 February 1865."[75] Auguste Poulet-Malassis (1825–1878) was Baudelaire's publisher and friend who owned the drawing after Baudelaire's death.[76] The drawing also has an inscription at the bottom center in Latin written by Baudelaire that reads "in search of someone to devour."[77] Although Poulet-Malassis dated the drawing to 1865, when Duval and Baudelaire

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[74] Musée d'Orsay, *Charles Baudelaire: manuscrits, dessins, photographie acquisitions récentes de l'État, 1988* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1989), p. 13.
[75] "*Dessin de Baudelaire 27 fev. 1865*"
[76] Portrait de Jeanne Duval." Musée du Louvre. Musée du Louvre, December 17, 2022. https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl020231297#.
[77] "*quaerens quem devoret.*"

were separated and both were in poor health, Duval appears as young and beautiful. Baudelaire presumably drew her from memory in the last years of his life. The inscription "in search of someone to devour" introduces a dangerous side of the beautiful woman. This Latin phrase comes from the First Epistle of Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."[78]

Baudelaire took the most care in depicting Duval's face and left the remainder of the drawing rather loose. She glances sideways at the viewer, raising her eyebrows slightly. Her large eyes are deeply set, topped by heavy lids, and heavily contoured to create the appearance of eyeliner. Her nose is small and framed by a beauty mark on her cheek. Her lips are slightly pursed. Her dark, wavy hair, which Baudelaire wrote about extensively in *Les fleurs du mal*, is shoulder-length and tied back with a ribbon that sits in a bow on top of her head. She wears a hoop earring. Her dress has a high neckline with a collar tied with a ribbon. The bodice is tightly fitted and highlights Duval's large breasts. A belt cinches her small waist, and a skirt, rendered only by a few lines, falls loosely around her hips. We only see one of her arms because of the three-quarter view, and Baudelaire drew it somewhat awkwardly. It sticks out from her body at a strange angle, and she has no hand. It seems he struggled with this portion of the drawing as what should be white space between Duval's arm and torso is hatched in messy dark pen lines, perhaps to correct misdrawn contours. Baudelaire used a cleaner version of the same hatching technique around the opposite side of the figure, rendering a shadow on the part of Duval's body that faces away from the viewer. Although the general quality of the work is sketchy, Baudelaire has taken care to depict several critical features of the drawing: Duval's eyes, her hair, her

[78] 1 Peter 5:8 "*Sicut leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret.*"

breasts, and her tiny waist. Other parts of the drawing, including her arm and hips, appear almost untouched.

Baudelaire depicted Duval in a similar pose in another drawing of Duval sent to the painter Paul Chenavard (1807–1895). This drawing, held in the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, is titled *Vision céleste à l'image de Paul Chenavard* (fig. 6). The drawing is not dated and is difficult to date precisely as Baudelaire and Chenavard corresponded throughout the 1850s and into the 1860s.[79] It also has an inscription in Baudelaire's hand that reads "Celestial Vision for the use of Paul Chenavard."[80] The work has been cut out from its original sheet and pasted onto a new backing. It is unclear what Baudelaire intended the original "use" to be. In this portrait, Duval turns to look face the viewer while her body remains in a three-quarter profile. This drawing highlights Duval's figure again, as the profile view shows her large breasts and small waist. Again, Baudelaire has drawn one arm extending out of the frame with no hand. Although Duval looks directly at the viewer, half of her face remains in shadow, rendered with similar pen lines as the 1865 drawing. Her eyes are the focal point of her face, outlined with thick contours and framed with thick, arched brows. Her dark hair frames her face, tied loosely in the back, while the front strands create two curtains that part to reveal her eyes. The most notable difference between the 1865 drawing and the Chenavard drawing is that the Chenavard includes color ink. Baudelaire used red and tan ink to add color to Duval's face and clothing, using black ink for her hair and the thick contours. Her face is a light tan with red circles on her cheeks, bright red lips, and a dull red brushed on her eyelids. Baudelaire also used red ink to add color the Duval's dress. Over the colored ink on her face, Baudelaire has covered her with

[79] Joseph C. Sloane, "Baudelaire, Chenavard, and 'Philosophic Art.'" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 13, no. 3 (1955), 285–99.
[80] "Vision céleste à l'usage de Paul Chenavard."

shadow lines. The left side of her face is dark, and only the white of her eye is visible. Light seems to hit the right side of her cheek, revealing the only part of the drawing not covered in the shadowy pen lines. In this drawing, Baudelaire also highlights Duval's eyes, hair, breasts, and tiny waist. In the Chenavard drawing, he also takes care to show her youth through rosy cheeks and her tan complexion by using colored ink.

In another drawing dated between 1858 and 1860, Baudelaire drew Duval with a much greater economy of line (fig. *7*). Using a few essential contours, he again draws her face and bust. In this drawing, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France collection, Duval's body directly faces the viewer while she turns her face away at a three-quarter view. Her ample bust and small waist are dramatic even in a frontal view. Baudelaire highlights her large eyes and arched eyebrows using thick ink contours. She wears hoop earrings. Her hair is pulled back and tucked behind her. Still, Baudelaire used a dark contour to outline the volume of Duval's curls that frame her head almost like a halo. She wears a simple collared top with a bow, a very similar costume to what she wears in the 1865 portrait. The drawing is in the center of the page, surrounded by notes in Baudelaire's hand. Unlike the inscriptions on the other two drawings, these notes do not seem to correspond to the image. The unrelated notes, coupled with the fact that the drawing is simple and loose and not addressed to a specific viewer, suggests that it was a simple sketch intended for Baudelaire himself.

Lastly, in *Portrait de Jeanne Duval* (fig. 8) Baudelaire makes similar artistic choices. The drawing, sold at auction in 2012 to a private collector, also has an inscription added by a previous owner that reads "Drawing by Ch. Baudelaire."[81] In this drawing, Baudelaire has only depicted Duval's face, omitting her body entirely. In this simpler work, Baudelaire has used an

[81] "Dessin de Ch. Baudelaire" ArtCurial, *Writer's Drawings: Pierre and France Belfond Collection, Paris*, (14 February 2012), lot no. 9.

economy of line to render a simple likeness of Duval's facial features. Although he does not depict her body, Baudelaire has outlined her huge eyes with thick contours and framed by dramatically arched eyebrows. Her small nose and pursed lips are created with dark contours and shaded with lighter pen strokes. Baudelaire showed her hair covered with a headscarf that dramatically frames her face. Her bangs peek out of the front slightly, suggesting that despite the large, sturdy scarf, Duval's wild tresses cannot be contained. Significantly, the headscarf also connects Duval to exoticism. Headscarves, like the one Duval wears in this portrait, originated with enslaved women in the French colonies and had come to signify exoticism in the metropole in the nineteenth century.[82] Although this drawing is simpler than Baudelaire's other portraits of Duval, he still highlights her eyes and hair while linking her to the exotic with the headscarf.

As we have seen, in each of the portraits of Duval, Baudelaire takes care to highlight the same physical features, her eyes, hair, breasts, and small waist. Uncoincidentally, Baudelaire focuses on the same physical attributes in his poems about Duval. In "The Beautiful Ship," he writes about Duval's breasts, "Your breasts push out whatever dress you wear, triumphal breasts much like a fine armoire."[83] In "To a Creole Lady," he describes her thin waist, "Much like a huntress, she is tall and thin. Her smiles are calm; her glances, unafraid."[84] He closes the same poem by describing her eyes, "you'd draw, inside the shadows of your groves, a thousand odes from poets whom your eyes, your giant eyes, had left more servile than your slaves."[85] Baudelaire also explicitly made note of his recommendation of black eyeliner for women in *The*

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[82] Murrell, 50. Murrell also suggests that the headscarf could be an asset for stage actresses who used its association with the exotic to entice audiences.
[83] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 57, "Ta gorge qui s'avance et qui pousse la moire, ta gorge triomphante est une belle armoire."
[84] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 228, "Grand et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse, Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assures."
[85] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 228, "Vous feriez, à l'abri des ombreuses retraites/Germer mille sonnets dans le cœur des poètes/Que vos grands yeux rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs."

Painter of Modern Life.[86] Baudelaire describes the alluring effect of black eyeliner: "its black frame renders the glance more penetrating and individual, and gives the eye a more decisive appearance of a window open upon the infinite."[87] Duval's hair was the subject of entire poems. In "Her Hair," Baudelaire describes Duval's hair as a "dark sea" containing "whole worlds half-dead and very far away."[88] In "A Serpent Dancing," Baudelaire writes about "the depths of your curls that smell of oil and ancient scent."[89] These physical attributes highlight Duval's beauty and sexuality while tying them to exoticism. By associating Duval's physical beauty with ships, faraway destinations, hunting, dark seas, and serpents, Baudelaire both exoticizes and sexualizes her. In both his poems and drawings, Baudelaire synthesizes Duval's physical beauty with memories of his own travels to India, allusions to exotic literature, and references to the Caribbean. Even though Duval herself had lived in France for her entire life, Baudelaire uses Duval as a basis for exploring the exotic in his work.

In his drawings, Baudelaire highlights and even exaggerates consistent physical features to create almost a caricature or character of Duval, as she is cast in his poetry. Instead of representing Duval faithfully and intimately as he knew her through his written word and drawn images, Baudelaire uses her to signify romantic, abstract ideas about faraway places. He not only highlights the same physical features in his drawings but also represents Duval as eternally youthful and idealized. Analysis of only four simple drawings reveals that Baudelaire was interested in exploring sexuality, femininity, exoticism, and modernity in his work, themes typically associated with *Les fleurs du mal*. These drawings, like the poems they illustrate, are a

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[86] Charles Baudelaire, trans. Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1970).
[87] Baudelaire, trans. Mayne, 34.
[88] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 189, "noir océan" "tout un monde lointain, absent, Presque défunt."
[89] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 192. "Sur la chevelure profonde aux âcres parfums."

place for Baudelaire to expound his literary and artistic ideas. Visual analysis of these images and poems tell us very little about who Duval was or what her and Baudelaire's relationship was like. Instead, they reveal far more about Baudelaire's creative output. Duval's presence in Baudelaire's archive, visually and textually, is mediated by his exotic, sexual, and modern imaginary.

Duval as *Baudelaire's Mistress*

Just as Baudelaire used Duval as a tool to express his own literary and artistic ideas, Édouard Manet used Duval in 1862 portrait *Baudelaire's Mistress* (fig. 10) to work out key artistic ideas that would become some of the most important of his career, most notably in *Olympia* only a year later. *Baudelaire's Mistress* shows Duval in the last years of her life, just before her final breakup with Baudelaire. *Baudelaire's Mistress* is the only known painting of Duval, and significantly, it is the first reclining woman painted by Manet. The painting is thirty-five and a half inches by forty-four inches, and there is also a watercolor sketch of the painting, held in the Kunsthalle, Bremen. Manet wrote the inscription "Mistress of Baudelaire, reclining" on the stretcher of the canvas. *Baudelaire's Mistress* was in Manet's studio when he died and is in his studio's posthumous 1883 inventory. During Manet's lifetime, the painting was exhibited only once at the Galerie Martinet in 1865 under the title *Au Divan*.[90] When exhibited in 1888 at the gallery of La Revue Indépendante Félix Fénéon described the work as "ennobled with strangeness and with memories … the fabled mistress of Baudelaire, the mercurial and pained creole Jeanne Duval."[91]

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[90] There is no known commentary on the painting from the 1865 exhibition.
[91] Félix Fénéon, *Œuvres plus que complètes*, ed. Joan Halperin (Geneva and Paris: Libraire Droz, 1970), 102. "Anoblie d'étrangeté et des souvenirs, une autre toile montre l'historique maîtresse de Baudelaire, la fantasque et douloureuse créole Jeanne Duval. Près d'une fenêtre où flotte le blanc des rideaux, elle s'anonchalit, pareille à une idole et à une poupée."

The painting is off-putting and generally strikes viewers as unusual. Scholars and critics have referred to it as "ugly," "strange,"[92] or "oddly stiff."[93] Duval reclines with her feet up on a dark green sofa, leaning back and facing the viewer. A dark wall covered with a lace curtain flattens the dark interior space. A horizontal wooden edge creeps into the composition on the far left of the canvas, perhaps the frame of a mirror or painting, the leg of an easel, or the edge of a piece of furniture. Duval rests one hand on the back of the couch, and the other sits in her lap, holding a green fan.[94] The hand she places on the back of the couch is disproportionate to the rest of the figure. The unrealistically large hand is one of the most jarring elements of the work. X-ray analysis shows that Manet tried to rework this portion of the painting. Duval faces the viewer with a blank expression, contributing further to the work's uncomfortable tone. Her eyes, which Baudelaire had taken such care to depict in his drawings, are sunken, dark, and empty. Her cheeks have a light rosy tint, and her mouth is closed and expressionless. Her hair is loose, and her dark curls fall behind her shoulders. Manet has rendered her skin in pale taupe color, hardly capturing the luminous skin described by Baudelaire in his poems. Duval's skin color in this portrait contrasts with other examples from Manet's contemporary *œuvre*. Duval's skin is not the stark white of *Olympia* model Victoire Meurent or the rich, deep brown Manet uses to paint Laure in *Olympia* (fig. 11) and *La Negress* (fig. 12). By contrast, Manet painted Duval's skin as a light tan. In his choice of pigment color for her skin, Manet references Baudelaire's writing about Duval, where he casts her as a "Creole lady." Duval's sickly pallor, sunken eyes, and elongated fingers in the painting also evokes poems like "carcass," where Baudelaire describes her, as all of us, inevitably approaching decay.[95] The most striking part of the picture, however,

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[92] Dolan, 611.
[93] "Jeanne Duval: La Maîtresse De Baudelaire." Kunsthalle Bremen. https://bremen.museum-digital.de/object/101.
[94] This gives the painting its alternate title "Lady with a Fan."
[95] Baudelaire, trans. Poochigian, 194–95.

is Duval's voluminous white skirt that dwarfs her body and the couch on which she sits. Manet creates the huge, layered skirt by adding white pigment to and leaving areas of bare canvas. The bodice of her white dress features light purple stripes and a thin strip of black ribbon bordering the collar. She wears coral earrings, a cross necklace, and a black bracelet. Manet has rendered her shoes with light dabs of black paint, and most of her legs are not visible beneath the massive skirt.

Scholars have suggested several theories to explain the work's strangeness and the disconcerting effect of the pose, disproportionate body parts, pale skin, blank stare, and flattened interior space. Notably, some scholars have claimed that *Baudelaire's Mistress* does not depict Duval even though the inscription "Mistress of Baudelaire, reclining" is written on the stretcher of the canvas in Manet's hand. Given that Baudelaire and Duval's final breakup occurred in the early 1860s, and the painting is dated to 1862, Jean Adhémar argued that the painting did not depict Duval. He suggested the painting could be of another casual mistress Baudelaire met after his breakup with Duval.[96] However, more current scholarship convincingly argues that, given the intensity and long-term nature of Baudelaire and Duval's relationship, Manet would not have executed a portrait of any other women in Baudelaire's life in the early 1860s.[97] Additionally, given the tumultuous nature of Duval and Baudelaire's relationship, Manet may not have known the current status of their relationship while he worked on the painting. Scholars have also questioned the date of the work, with Paul Jamot and Georges Wildenstein dating the painting to 1864 in the 1932 catalogue raisonnée. However, scholars, including the curators at the Museum

[96] Jean Adhémar, "A propos de *La Maîtresse de Baudelaire* par Manet (1862), un problème, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CII (November 1983), 178. See also Herni Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1994, 400 for doubts about Duval's identity in the portrait.
[97] Dolan, 613.

of Fine Arts Budapest, where the painting is held, generally agree that the work dates to 1862, just after Baudelaire and Duval's final rupture.

Other theories about why the work is so unusual include that it was a sketch for what would be a completed work, easily negated by its large size and exhibition during Manet's lifetime.[98] Others speculate that Manet was depicting an uncomfortable Duval in poor health after her stroke, but her relaxed, reclining posture hardly conveys discomfort.[99] Some connect the awkward pose as a reference to photography, but this theory is still unable to account for the disproportionate body parts in the painting.[100] Griselda Pollock argues that Duval never sat for the work and that it is "not a portrait." [101] Whether the work was painted from life or not, Manet clearly identified it as a portrait of its subject by titling the work "Baudelaire's Mistress" with the inscription on the back. Scholars have also suggested that Manet intended *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume* (1862–63) to be a pendant work to *Baudelaire's Mistress*, an assertion easily negated by the provenance of the two paintings and the slightly later dating of the Spanish work.[102]

I suggest an alternative reason for the painting's strangeness, namely that Manet was using this portrait of Duval to work out both the reclining pose and the Baudelairean aesthetics that would become so significant in Manet's later work. *Baudelaire's Mistress* is Manet's first

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[98] That the work was exhibited by Manet during his lifetime contradicts claims that the painting is either incomplete or a sketch for a final work that was never finished.
[99] Susan Strauber, "Suffering in Silence: Disease and Disability in Manet's Early Portraiture" in *Seeing and Beyond: Essays on Eighteenth- to Twnety-First-Century Art in Honor of Kermit S. Champa,* Deborah J. Johnson and David Ogawa, eds. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005).
[100] Larry L. Ligo "Baudelaire's Mistress Reclining and Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume: Manet's Pendant Portraits of his acknowledged Mistresses Baudelairean Aesthetics and photography," *Arts Magazine* (1988).
[101] Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 276.
[102] "*Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume." Yale University Art Gallery. https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/34123.* While *Baudelaire's Mistress* remained in Manet's studio until his death, *Young Woman Reclining in a Spanish Costume* was a gift to the photographer Nadar. It was sold at Auction in a sale of Nadar's art collection in 1895.

painting of a reclining woman. Manet would revisit this pose throughout his career, most notably in *Olympia*, his 1863 painting of a reclining nude prostitute who looks unflinchingly at the viewer. *Olympia* is named for its subject, a nineteenth-century courtesan modeled by Victoire Meurent, who reclines naked on a chaise. The composition is modeled after Titian's sixteenth-century *Venus of Urbino*, a sensual nude made to celebrate a fertile and loyal marriage. Olympia, representing the opposite of a faithful wife, receives flowers from a satisfied customer, carried in by her maid, modeled by Laure. A black cat arches its back at the foot of the bed, and the ruffled sheets reference the recent action.

Olympia infamously caused an uproar after Manet showed it at the 1865 Paris Salon. The painting was controversial because the work clearly depicted a modern prostitute in an uncompromising realist style. Art historian T.J. Clark calls *Olympia* "the founding moment of modern art."[103] Manet's flat, realist style combined with the shocking subject matter caused a scandal at the 1865 salon. *Olympia* came to define Manet's career. In the early 1860s, Manet responded to Baudelaire's call to "paint modern life" by depicting contemporary subjects in a modern environment. In *Olympia* this was especially shocking as it called attention to contemporary sex work. I argue that in *Baudelaire's Mistress*, Manet uses Duval as a test subject for the reclining pose, its associations, and its mechanics. The strangeness reveals a glimpse into Manet's process, as the work represents an idea not quite realized. Tracing Manet's treatment of reclining women throughout these early works shows how he came to present a Baudelairean aesthetic in *Olympia*.

Comparing *Baudelaire's Mistress* to *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume* (fig. 13), Manet's second reclining woman painting reveals how Manet crystalized this pose and its

[103] Clark, 79.

associations with the pose before taking it on in *Olympia* in 1863. *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume* shows a young woman in a Spanish-style costume reclining on a tufted couch in an ambiguous interior space. The work was a gift to a member of Manet and Baudelaire's circle, the photographer Nadar. The signature includes a note that reads "to my Friend Nadar."[104] Manet used the Spanish costume in several works from this period including *The Spanish Singer* (1862), *Lola de Valence* (1862) and *Spanish Ballet* (1862). The Spanish costume evokes a kind of exoticism despite its European origin. Nineteenth-century French audiences saw Spain as backward, intellectually inferior, and almost non-European, even though it was (and is) France's neighbor.[105] Nineteenth-century French audiences saw the Spanish as a "pure-blooded race" whose origins were more closely tied to Arabic rather than Greco-Roman foundations. Spain was both European and not, both close to France and still an exotic other.[106]

In *Baudelaire's Mistress,* the dark green couch that Duval reclines on is indeterminate and difficult to understand spatially. While Duval's huge hand grips the back of the couch, the other disappears into her skirts. The dress hides most of her figure, and her facial features are hard to distinguish. In *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume*, by contrast, the couch is carefully defined, down to its tufted upholstery, tasseled fringe, and wheeled feet. The model rests one hand casually on the front of the couch and lifts the other above her head, leaving a fan tossed at her feet. Because she wears pants, her figure and pose are clearly illustrated. Her facial features are more precisely rendered than Duval's in *Baudelaire's Mistress*, but her eyes are still depicted as loose black dots. The viewer still can't distinguish where the reclining woman is looking; in *Olympia,* Manet will decide it is, uncompromisingly, right at us. In *Reclining Young*

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[104] "À mon ami Nadar."
[105] Carol Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 94.
[106] Armstrong, 94.

Woman in Spanish Costume, Manet includes a cat playing with oranges in the bottom right corner. There is also a cat in *Olympia,* replacing the loyal, relaxed dog from Titian's original composition. Baudelaire famously wrote to Manet asking about the painting: "A cat, really?"[107]

In both works, Manet renders the tactile textures and fabrics in the women's spaces. In *Baudelaire's Mistress*, Duval's hand rests on the back of the couch, grazed by the lace curtain behind her. Her huge skirts take up most of the composition. In *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume,* Manet carefully details the intricacies of the layered Spanish costume. By focusing on the textures in both works, Manet makes the scenes picturesque while also rooting them in a modern environment. The tactility creates a sumptuous, alluring quality across both works, making the image feel real. As opposed to contemporary works by Jean-Léon Gérôme that use tactile detail to create imagined documentary scenes of the Orient, Manet grounds the viewer in a modern setting.[108] Overall, *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume* shows Manet achieving greater comfort with the reclining woman pose. Manet defines the furniture, figure, pose, and features more clearly in *Reclining Young Woman* than he does in *Baudelaire's Mistress*. However, he keeps some aspects of the pose consistent across both paintings; both figures cross one foot over the other, rest one hand on the couch and lean back. He gives both women a fan, but in *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume,* he adds the cat and the Spanish dress. Across both works, Manet obscures the woman's gaze, an aspect of the pose he does not refine until *Olympia*.

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[107] T.J. Clark, "Olympia's Choice" in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 85. The cat is a layered reference, not only contrasting the resting loyal dog in Titian's painting, but also a not-so veiled quotation of Baudelaire's poetry. It's also (perhaps most notably) a fairly direct sexual innuendo, as the French word "chatte" for cat has the same double meaning as the English word "pussy."

[108] Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," Politics of Vision (New York: Routledge, 1989), 33–59. Nochlin offers an extended discussion of Gérôme's faux-documentary Orientalist œuvre.

In *Baudelaire's Mistress*, Manet references Baudelaire's writing, showing that he is experimenting with how to apply Baudelaire's ideas about painting modern life in his work. As Therese Dolan demonstrates in her 1997 article "Skirting the Issue: Manet's Portrait of "Baudelaire's Mistress, Reclining," Manet depicts Duval wearing contemporary fashion, exemplifying the modern ideal that Baudelaire celebrated in his writing. Baudelaire repeatedly referenced the importance of including contemporary fashion in painting, imploring painters to depict fashions they saw on the streets of Paris rather than copy pastiches of period costumes depicted in paintings at the Louvre. For Baudelaire, modern fashion represented true beauty and importance. Following Baudelaire's suggestions, Manet does not historicize Duval. Instead, Manet paints her wearing the fashionable crinoline, a flexible steel hoop covered with fabric to create a voluminous skirt. In his poem "The Beautiful Ship," Baudelaire specifically describes Duval's "wide skirts."[109] Like many popular fashions through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, critics associated the crinoline with licentiousness, low intelligence, and financial irresponsibility. Courbet's *Young Ladies of the Banks of the Seine* (1857) infamously depicts two "fallen" women half-asleep and clad in the white crinoline sleeping on the grassy banks of the Seine. Nochlin describes how these women represent sexual availability, the whiteness of their garments offering an "ideal symbolic field on which to inscribe acts of degradation."[110] The whiteness of the skirts offered a visual depiction of purity from which young women could fall. Although the massive skirt in *Baudelaire's Mistress* seems exaggerated to twenty-first-century viewers, the crinolines were actually quite large, as seen in an 1858 photo of Countess Castiglione (fig. 14). Dolan argues that the painting also references popular caricatures of women wearing the large skirts, most notably Empress Eugénie, who also wore the large

[109] Baudelaire, trans. Aaron Poochigian, p. 57 "ta jupe large."
[110] Nochlin, 176.

crinoline (fig. 15). The crinoline was popular among fashionable women and, like many aspects of nineteenth-century Parisian life, appeared in widely circulated prints of daily life. By painting Duval in crinoline in 1862, Manet places her squarely in a modern Parisian scene and casts her as the quintessential, fashionable *demimondaine*.

The *demimondaine* was a woman who occupied the "*demi-monde*" or half-world. This term was derived from an 1855 play by Alexandre Dumas fils. The *demi-monde* was the part of society occupied by wealthy men and the women they kept to entertain them. Dumas characterized this world as a dangerous threat to marriage and other tenants of bourgeoise morality. For men, the *demi-monde* meant a world of drinking, partying, lavish spending on fashions, women, and gambling. For women, it meant being a *demimondaine*, essentially a courtesan or high-class prostitute who moved in these circles and received money from men to live comfortably. *Demimondaines,* or modern courtesans, were an established part of nineteenth-century Parisian life. Since at least 1800, when Napoléon created an office of the *préfet de police* to address prostitution specifically, prostitutes had been a fixture of Parisian life.[111] By the 1830s, their number and visibility had risen dramatically, an unintended consequence of Paris' modernization and industrialization. By the Second Empire (1851–70), a different kind of prostitute, the *demimondaine* or courtesan, who emulated the fashions and refined postures of the upper classes, began to proliferate in visual and written descriptions. Texts, like Dumas' play, warned against the dangers of these women and expressed discomfort about the blurred social boundaries presented by these working women who portrayed themselves as bourgeoise. Courtesans reshaped social life of the nineteenth century and were, unsurprisingly, popular subject matter among artists, writers, and critics who strove to depict contemporary life.[112] The

[111] Clayson, 1.
[112] Clayson, 7.

modern *demimondaine* allowed the artist or writer to capture the increasing commodification of contemporary life, alienation from genuine social connection, and fleeting, unstable nature of modernity. As such, she was an ideal subject matter for the painter of modern life.

Baudelaire dedicated an entire section of "The Painter of Modern Life," written in 1860 and published in installments starting in 1862, to prostitutes, encouraging the modern painter to depict them. Baudelaire's description of these *demimondaines* could almost be describing *Baudelaire's Mistress*:

> They display themselves in hopeless attitudes of boredom, in bouts of tap-room apathy, almost masculine in their brazenness, killing time with cigarettes, orientally resigned – stretched out, sprawling on setees, their skirts looped up in front and behind like a double fan, or else precariously balanced on stools and chairs.[113]

Here, Baudelaire makes specific note of the couch, reclining pose, and large skirts that Manet paints in *Baudelaire's Mistress*. By painting Duval with attributes like the skirt, couch, and reclined pose, Manet responds to Baudelaire's call to paint a *demimondaine*. By painting a *demimondaine*, Manet figures modernity and its layered associations of social alienation, commodification, and ephemerality. Manet also figures modernity by painting modern life and depicting Duval in a strange and off-putting way. Baudelaire says, "What in fact gives these works [of prostitutes] their value and, as it were, sanctifies them is the wealth of thoughts to which they gave rise – thoughts however which are generally solemn and dark."[114] Baudelaire acknowledges that depictions of these working women will be strange and uncomfortable. Their importance comes not in their aesthetic value or their inherent beauty but in the reflection these images encourage in the viewer. Modernity is, after all, as Baudelaire describes, "often weird,

[113] Baudelaire, trans. Mayne, 38.
[114] Baudelaire, trans. Mayne, 38.

violent, and excessive," and its depictions should be as well.[115] This explains the strangeness of *Baudelaire's Mistress*. Manet is painting the *demimondaine* as she gives rise to these "solemn and dark" conditions of modern life, outlined by Baudelaire. *Baudelaire's Mistress* shows Manet working out how to capture a Baudelairean aesthetic in an image of a courtesan or *demimondaine*.

Manet would revisit the theme of the nineteenth-century courtesan in *Olympia*. In his chapter "Olympia's Choice," T. J. Clark thoroughly traces the critical responses to Olympia, including Manet's crestfallen letter to Baudelaire after the opening, "They are raining insults on me," and Baudelaire's tough-love response, "Do you think you're the first to be placed in this position?"[116] Clark argues that Olympia's layered references to modern sex work, class, and, specifically, working-class women made it jarring to contemporary viewers.[117] Duval, a working-class actress linked to sex work in her lifetime, offered a logical starting point for Manet as he worked out a significant pose and its associations in the early 1860s. Baudelaire himself linked actresses to courtesans in "The Painter of Modern Life:."

> These reflections concerning the courtesan are applicable within certain limits to the actress; also for she too is a creature of show, an object of public pleasure. … If in one aspect the actress is akin to the courtesan, in another she comes close to the poet.[118]

Although critics and art historians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries continue to see *Baudelaire's Mistress* as strange, nineteenth-century salon critics employed similar terms to describe *Olympia*. They described *Olympia* as sickly, awkwardly posed, and poorly executed.

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[115] Baudelaire, trans. Mayne, 41.
[116] Clark, 82.
[117] Clark's thorough chapter barely mentions Laure, the Black maid carrying in the flowers, a fact he acknowledged in the revised opening in later editions of his book.
[118] Baudelaire, trans. Mayne, 37.

Even during Manet's lifetime, the combination of subject matter and style linked Manet's painting to Baudelaire. Critic Jean Ravenel described *Olympia* as a:

> Painting of the school of Baudelaire, freely executed by a pupil of Goya; the vicious strangeness of the little *faubourienne*, a woman of the night from Paul Niquets, from the mysteries of Paris and the nightmares of Edgar Poe, Her look has the sourness of someone prematurely aged, her face the disturbing perfume of a *fleur du mal*; her body fatigued, corrupted, but painted under a single transparent light.[119]

This description of *Olympia* links her to Baudelaire, prostitution, and low-class status. It also describes her as sickly, aged, disturbing, and corrupted, leading to the overall strange and disconcerting effect of the work for Ravenel. This is not unlike the critical interpretations of *Baudelaire's Mistress* that describe it as ugly, strange, or oddly stiff. Again, this work shows how Manet was capturing a Baudelairean aesthetic in an image of a courtesan or *demimondaine*.

Manet not only evoked Baudelaire's writing by painting Duval as a quintessentially modern *demimondaine* but also by painting a portrait of Baudelaire's muse, Manet references Baudelaire's poetry. It is no coincidence that Manet paints Duval as his first reclining woman. Manet, a well-read friend of Baudelaire, was well aware of the exotic, feminine, and modern associations that Baudelaire had established about Duval in his poetry. In this way, Manet was, like Baudelaire, using Duval as a vehicle to explore his artistic ideas. Duval became part of the blend of references, including contemporary prints, art history, politics, criticism, poetry, and modern life, that went into creating Manet's *œuvre* of the early 1860s. Manet makes it clear that three elements are essential about the work in the inscription he wrote on the back: the association with Baudelaire, the reclining pose, and the designation of "mistress," which linked Duval to sexuality. Manet identifies the work as a portrait of Baudelaire's mistress instead of an anonymous woman or model because of the associations Duval brought to the work. Baudelaire

[119] Quoted in Clark, 88.

had established her as an exotic, sexualized, modern woman, while critics associated her acting career with sex work. By clearly identifying Duval as the sitter, Manet is not so much painting a portrait that captures Duval's psychology but an homage to the ideas expounded by Baudelaire and a sketch of the artistic ideas that would come to fruition in *Olympia*. Although this is labeled as a portrait of Baudelaire's Mistress, Duval's face is barely visible. In contrast to contemporary paintings of Meurent and Laure, whose likenesses are clear, it is the title that identifies Duval as the mistress of Baudelaire. Especially when put in contrast with Baudelaire's drawings, which focus on Duval's face, the title further proves that Manet never intended to paint a portrait of Duval's likeness but instead an expression of the ideas he had read in Baudelaire's writing.

Duval, Always the Muse

Just as Duval was a foundation on which Baudelaire could explore his poetic and artistic ideas, Duval was a vehicle through which Manet could explore his artistic goals. Although Duval is often cited as the inspiration or muse behind *Les fleurs du mal*, my analysis shows she also inspired and prefigured significant visual works in the nineteenth century, including *Olympia*. In visual depictions, Duval becomes the site of men's creative processes. The images reveal that Baudelaire and Manet used Duval to explore ideas about modernity, women, and exoticism. These images do not communicate anything about Duval's ideas, thoughts, feelings, or lived experiences. However, both Baudelaire and Manet use Duval to explore and reinforce their ideas about her sexuality, purported association with the Caribbean, and race.

Through her representations by Baudelaire and Manet, Duval becomes a signifier of modernity, the nineteenth-century exotic, and the working woman or *demimondaine*. Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson's discussion of semiotics and art history is useful for understanding how Duval's significations evolve though different contexts, interprets, and senders. Simply,

semiotics is the study and theory of signs and sign-use.[120] The signifier is a physical form that represents an abstract idea in the mind of its viewer. As Bal and Bryson state, the basic tenants of semiotics, although established from linguistic studies, contribute significantly, if slightly differently, to the study of art. They argue that visual signs are understood through their "framing," their historical, social, and contemporary contexts. However, the context for a sign's interpretation is not neutral or static but instead constantly changes based on the sign's interpreter. Duval, for example, was an ideal test subject for Manet to begin exploring the reclining woman pose because Baudelaire had made her the container for a complex system of signs. Through his poetry, Baudelaire had made Duval the signifier of the exotic, the courtesan, sexuality, and modernity, with its social alienation and commodification. Manet easily tapped into these associations in *Baudelaire's Mistress* and continued exploring them in *Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume* and *Olympia*. Duval, in Baudelaire's writing and drawings and Manet's painting, is not depicted as herself, a living woman with thoughts, feelings, and desires of her own, but instead is represented as a signifier of modernity. She is an eternal muse, allowing men to create significant works of art inspired by her likeness. Although this interpretation may suggest that Duval is powerless, as Rebecca Mumford reminds us, the muse wields power. Although Duval could not control how artists responded to her, she could control how they perceived her. Duval plays a significant part in constructing her meaning, as it would be interpreted for centuries after she was drawn, painted, or written about.

Duval continues to be a muse for artists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the 1980s, author Angela Carter reimagined Duval's life in a short story, *Black Venus*. In Carter's

[120] Mieke Bal and Normal Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders," The Art of Art History, Donald Preziosi, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 243.

version of the story, Duval leaves Paris for the Caribbean after Baudelaire's death.[121] Contemporary artists like Marlene Dumas, Lorraine O'Grady, and Maud Sulter have continued to create works about Duval's legacy. Dumas painted portraits of Baudelaire and Duval for her 2021 series "Spleen de Paris" based on Baudelaire's poetry (fig. 16 and 17). Dumas draws parallels between her critique of modern society and Baudelaire's commentary on nineteenth-century modernity.[122] O'Grady created collaged diptychs of Baudelaire and Duval, drawing parallels between Duval's story and O'Grady's mother's immigration from Jamaica to Boston in the 1920s (fig.18).[123] In 2022, Sulter photographed herself as Duval in a series titled *La Chevelure,* inspired by Baudelaire's poem of the same name (fig. 19). Sulter described the project, saying:

> I'm interested in absence and presence in the way that particularly Black women's experience and Black women's contribution to culture is so often erased and marginalized. So that it's important for me as an individual, and obviously as a Black woman artist, to put Black women back in the center of the frame.[124]

Sulter's words capture how in these contemporary works, Duval is used to explore how women, specifically Black women, have been erased from the archive of cultural production. Just as Duval was a signifier of the exotic, modern, and sexual for Baudelaire and Manet, her signification evolves to evoke Black women's erasure, marginalization, and loss throughout history for contemporary artists and writers.

Although Courbet removed Duval from *The Painter's Studio* in 1855, Duval continued to inspire artistic output during her life. As a muse for Baudelaire and Manet, Duval inspired some

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[121] Angela Carter, *Black Venus* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985).
[122] Devorah Lauter, "'Desperation Befell Me': The Elusive Painter Marlene Dumas on the Struggle to Paint Throughout a Year Marred by Tragedy," *Artnet News* (2 November 2021), https://news.artnet.com/art-world/marlene-dumas-profile-2028304.
[123] Franklin Sirmans "Les Fleurs Duval" in *ArtNet* (November 1998). Sirmans, describing Lorraine O'Grady's *Flowers of Good and Evil* project says, "Duval's words also tell the story of O'Grady's mother, Lena, who emigrated from Jamaica to Boston in the 1920s, almost 100 years after Duval emigrated from Haiti to Paris in the 1830s."
[124] National Galleries Scotland, *La Chevelure*, 2022, https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/74453.

of her lifetime's most significant literary and artistic contributions. The contemporary examples discussed above show how Duval is still a muse for today's artists and writers. Almost one hundred and fifty years later, Duval continues to inspire artists of our time to comment on our current moment. Duval's erasure from *The Painter's Studio* is often interpreted as a metaphor for systematic archival erasure and loss. While Courbet's removal of Duval does speak to the archival challenges her case presents, her ghostly "reappearance" also represents Duval's reemergence in recent scholarship and creative works. Although the archive was not designed to hold Duval's contributions, Duval's presence continually impacts it.

Images

Figure 1. Gustave Courbet. *The Painter's Studio, a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*. 1854/1855. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

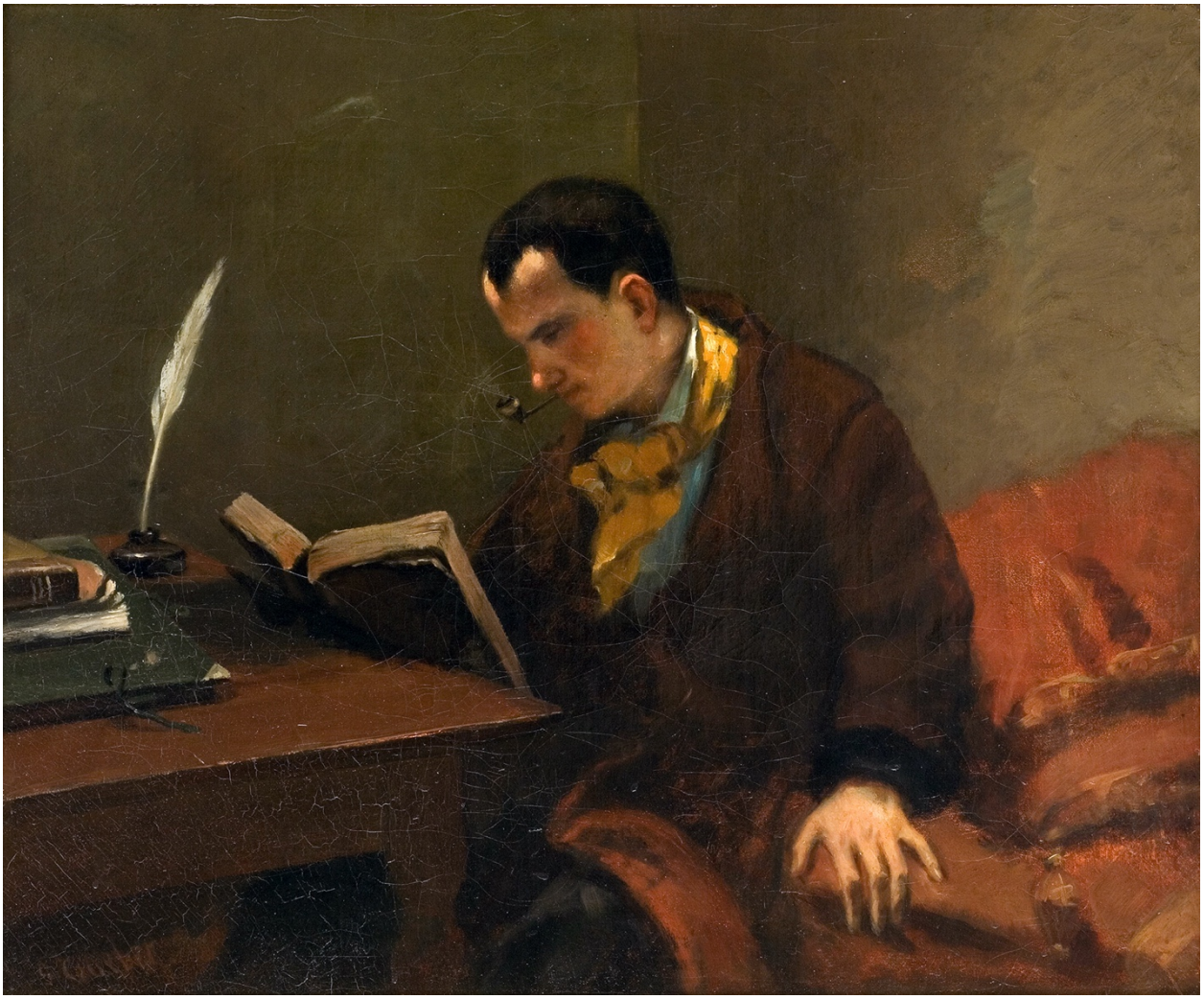

Figure 2. Gustave Courbet. *Portrait of Charles Baudelaire*. 1848. Oil on Canvas. Musée Fabre, Montpellier

Figure 3. Gustave Courbet. *The Painter's Studio, a real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*. 1854/1855. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

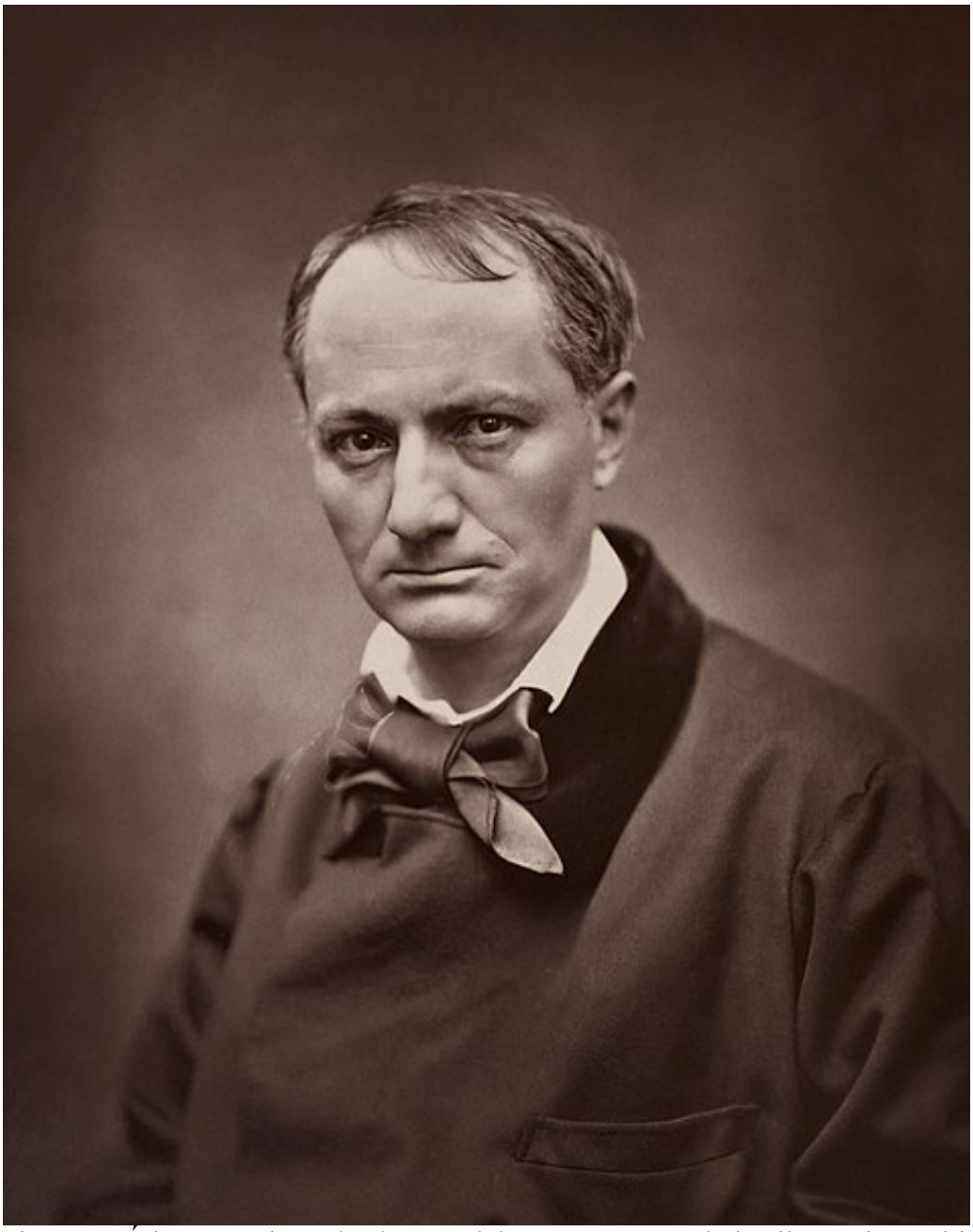

Figure 15 Étienne Carjat. *Charles Baudelaire*. c. 1862. Gelatin silver print. British Library, London.

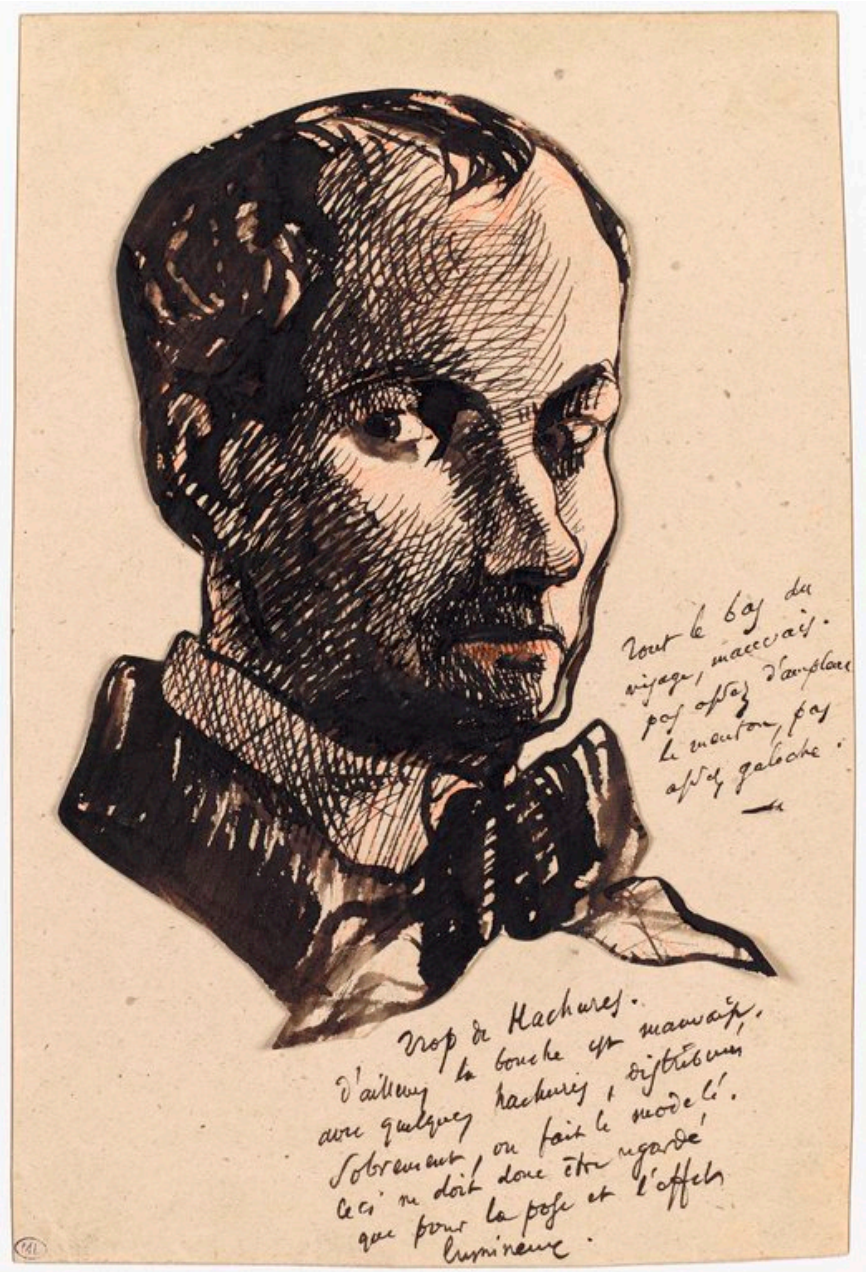

Figure 5. Charles Baudelaire. *Self-Portrait*. c. 1860. Ink on Paper. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 6. Charles Baudelaire. *Portrait of Jeanne Duval*. 1865. Ink on Paper. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 7. Charles Baudelaire. *Vision céleste à l'image de Paul Chenavard*. nd. Ink on Paper. Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

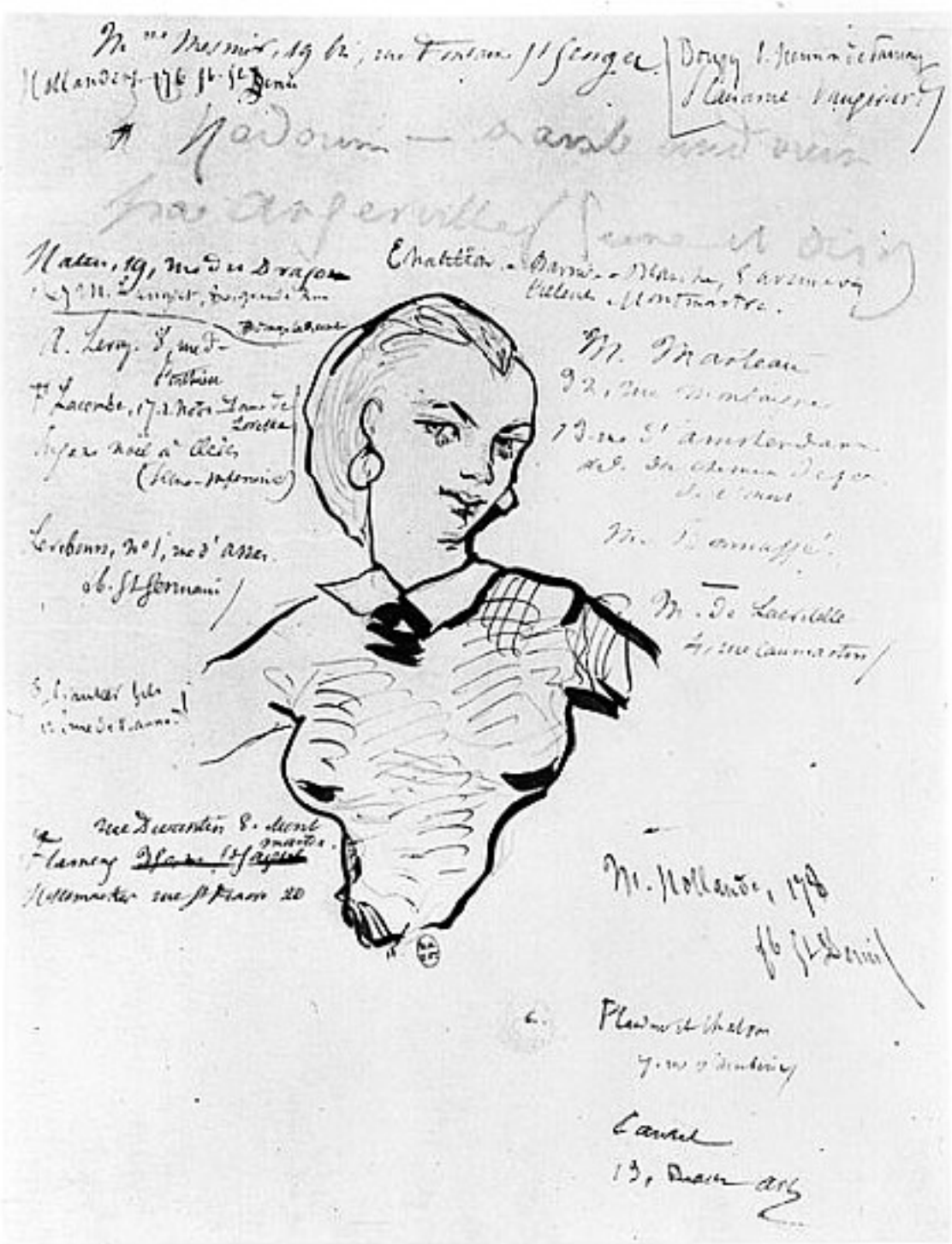

Figure 8. Charles Baudelaire. *Portrait de Jeanne Duval*. Ink on Paper. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Figure 9. Charles Baudelaire. *Portrait de Jeanne Duval*. nd. Pencil and Ink on Paper. Private Collection

Figure 10. Édouard Manet. *Baudelaire's Mistress*. 1862. Oil on Canvas. Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.

Figure 11. Édouard Manet. *Olympia*. 1863. Oil on Canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 12. Édouard Manet. *La Negress*. 1862. Oil on Canvas. Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin.

Figure 16. Édouard Manet. *Reclining Young Woman in Spanish Costume*. 1862–63. Oil on Canvas. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

Figure 14. Pierre-Louis Pierson. *Countess Virginia di Castiglione*. 1858. Gelatin silver print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 17. Franz-Xavier Winterhalter. *Empress Eugénie Surrounded by Her Ladies-in-Waiting*. 1855. Oil on Canvas. Musée National du Château, Compiègne.

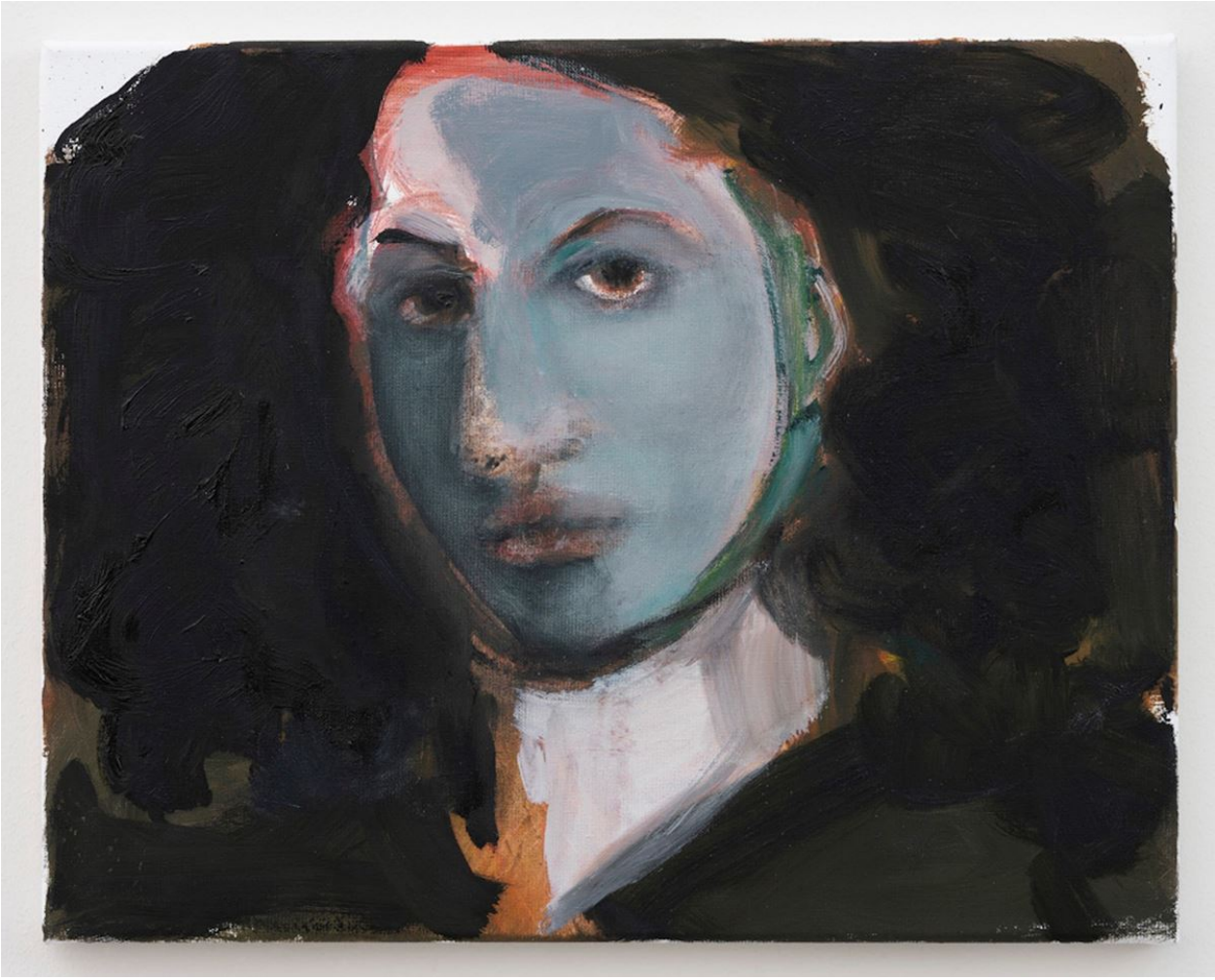

Figure 16. Marlene Dumas. *Jeanne Duval*. 2020. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection.

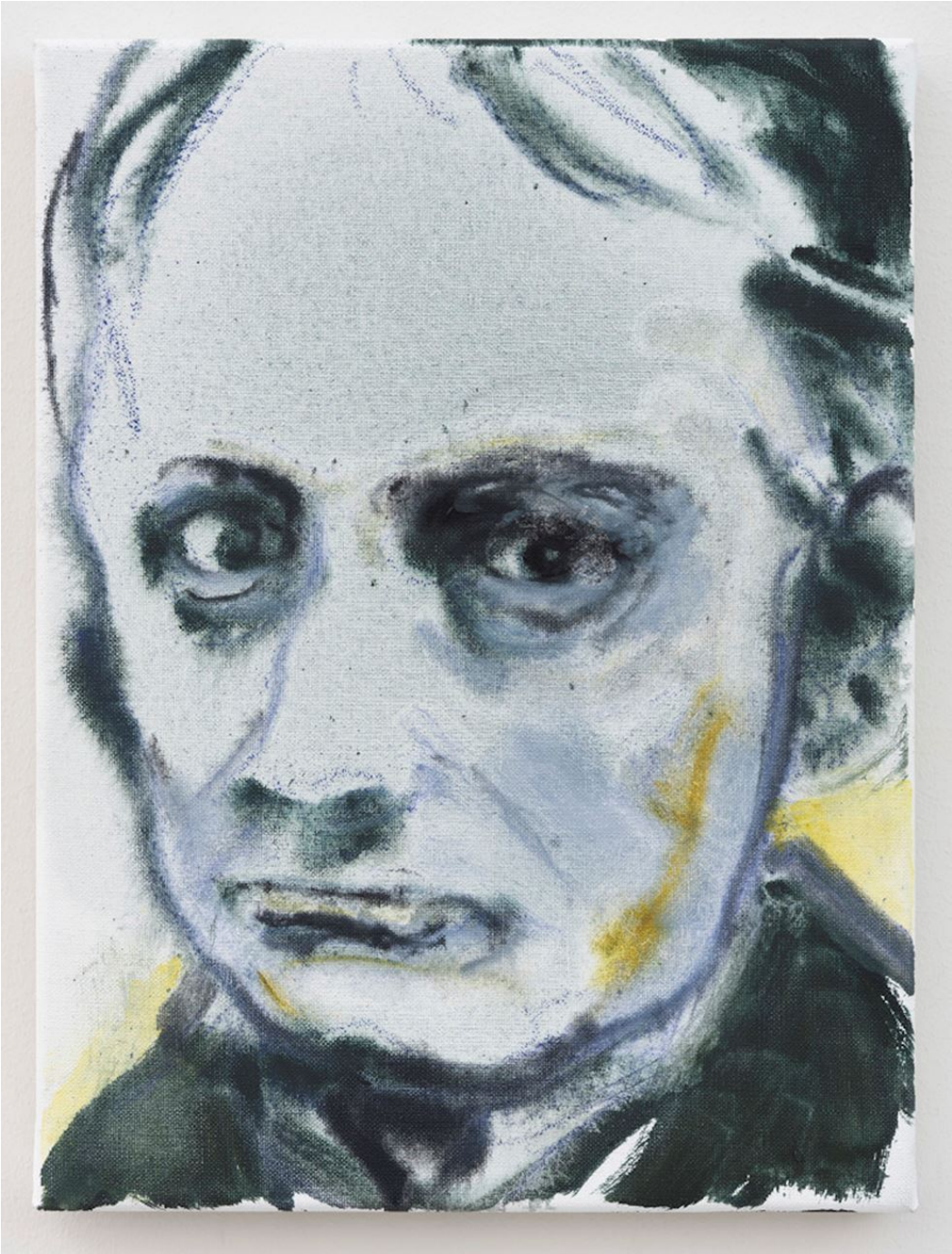

Figure 17. Marlene Dumas. *Charles Baudelaire*. 2020. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection.

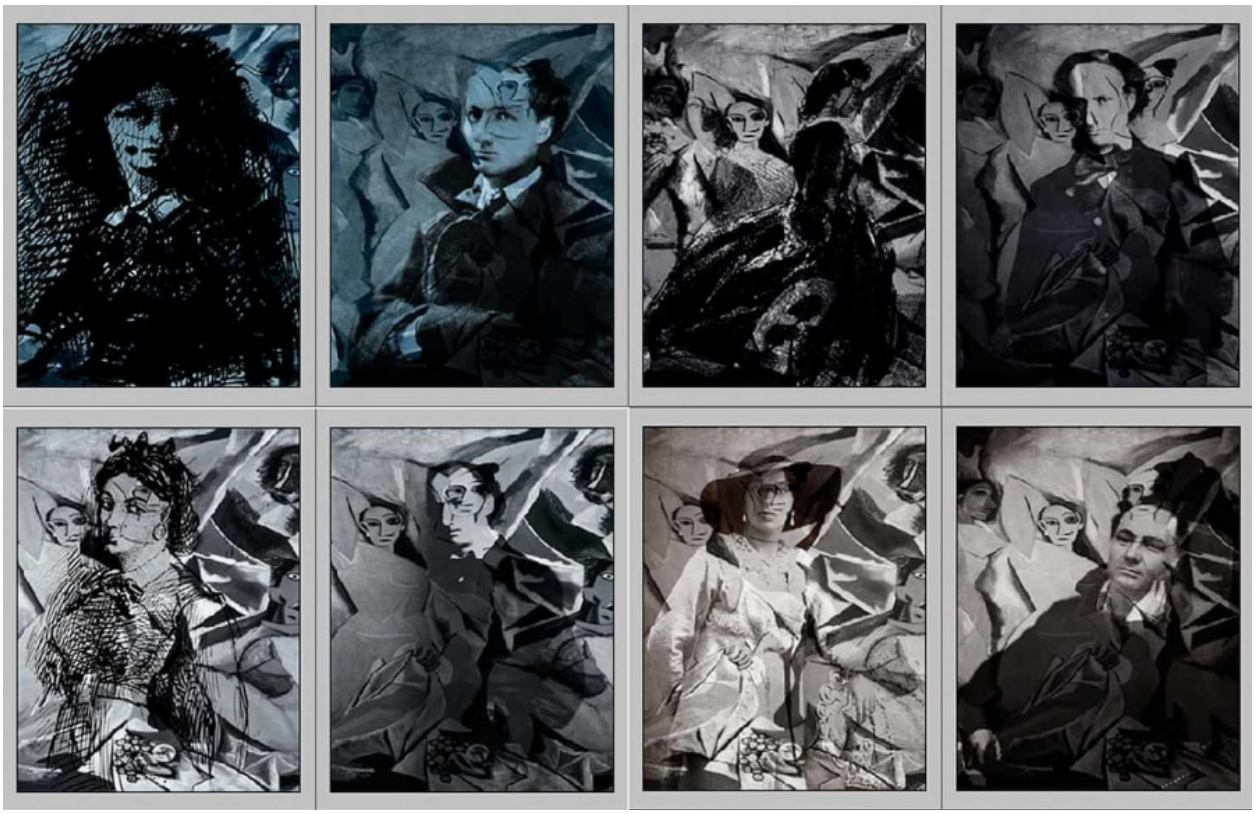

Figure 18. Lorraine O'Grady. *"Grey wall color study" for Flowers of Evil and Good* (four out of a total of 16 diptychs). 1998.

Figure 19. Maud Sulter. *La Chevelure*. 2002. Cibachrome prints. National Galleries Scotland.

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Personal Background	Shelby Bennett Born in Berlin, Germany Daughter of Melissa Mitchell and Michael Bennett
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ABSTRACT

Always the Muse: Jeanne Duval as a Signifier for Exoticism, Working Women, and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century

by
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Bachelor of Arts, 2019
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Jessica L. Fripp, PhD Associate Professor of Art History

Jeanne Duval (c. 1820–1871) was the famous poet Charles Baudelaire's longtime romantic partner and the inspiration behind some of his most famous writings. Duval and Baudelaire were together, if episodically, for two decades, but after Baudelaire's death in 1867, biographers were quick to cast Duval as a femme fatale responsible for Baudelaire's downfall or expunge her from Baudelaire's life altogether. Documentation of Duval's life is scant, and the archive contains no trace of her voice through journals, letters, or interviews. Yet, Duval's story continues to intrigue us. Contemporary artists and writers continue to produce work inspired by her.

So how can we understand Jeanne Duval, this understudied, ignored, and degraded partner and muse who inspired Baudelaire's poetry? In my thesis, I use visual depictions of Duval to investigate how she becomes a signifier for exoticism, working women, and modernity in nineteenth-century France. Through visual analysis of the only known depictions of Duval: four drawings by Baudelaire and a painting titled *Baudelaire's Mistress* by the famous realist painter Édouard Manet, my research uncovers how significant Duval was to Baudelaire and Manet's artistic output.