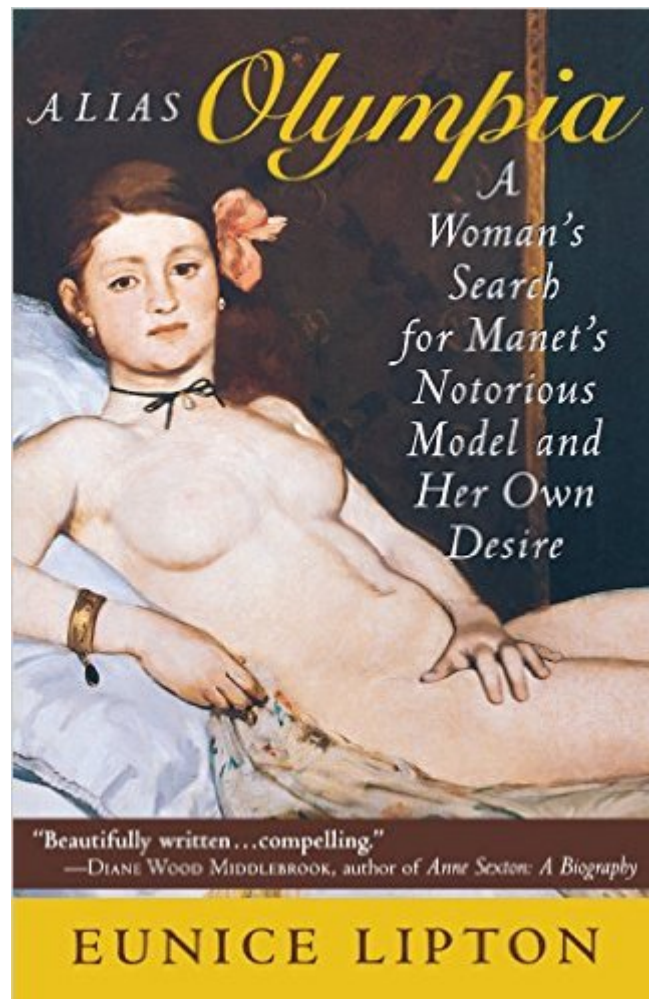


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Alias Olympia: A Woman's Search For Manet's Notorious Model And Her Own Desire



Synopsis

Eunice Lipton was a fledging art historian when she first became intrigued by Victorine Meurent, the nineteenth-century model who appeared in Edouard Manet's most famous paintings, only to vanish from history in a haze of degrading hearsay. But had this bold and spirited beauty really descended into prostitution, drunkenness, and early deathâ•or did her life, hidden from history, take a different course altogether? Eunice Lipton's search for the answer combines the suspense of a detective story with the revelatory power of art, peeling off layers of lies to reveal startling truths about Victorine Meurentâ•and about Lipton herself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My girlfriend was going to do a musical about Victorine, so she spent years researching the subject, and offered Eunice Lipton 300 pages of research for free. Imagine our surprise to read the book's first edition and find out that she had characterized my girlfriend as someone with a drinking problem. There was a LITTLE PROBLEM with that. My girlfriend has been a lifelong TEETOTALER and had never met Eunice! The book fails to describe Victorine, and it never delved into her COMPETENCY as an artist. It also doesn't mention enough famous works by famous artists that Victorine modelled for, so don't stop there when it comes to research.

A very entertaining and insightful story of Ms. Lipton's relationship with her mother and life in general, wrapped around her research on Victorine Meurent. As noted by other reviewers, if you're looking for a biography of Victorine, this isn't it (really because there isn't enough factual information

known about her for a biography), but it's still more informative than "Paris Red". As a story of a woman coming of age in the second half of the 20th century, it's a wonderfully written and provocative.

I suspect that this is a book one either loves, as I do, or just doesn't resonate with, like those who give it a poor review. I have read it three times, and know that I will read it again. So little is actually known about Victorine Meurent, who was an artist herself and wanted to be part of the inner circle of painters of which Manet was a leader. But being a woman was the first strike against her, and needing to earn a living kept her from being able to devote herself to painting full time. I truly appreciate Eunice Lipton's attempt to give her a story of her own, without idealizing her, or making her into a victim, or giving her a persona only as she relates to Manet. As much as was possible in the life she had to inhabit, she lived her life on her own terms. I read somewhere that she actually had one of her paintings exhibited in an art show of some credibility and that is proof of her perseverance and talent. If she were a man, I believe the 'mythology' surrounding her would be quite different.

'Well, I'm a redhead now, and people are saying, "You know, you look like Victorine." 'Perhaps I do.' Oh please. Elsewhere Lipton slips into the 'voice' of the model Victorine Meurant and seems to allege that she was an undiscovered or overlooked genius -- this in a time when such female artists as Suzanne Valadon, Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot achieved reasonable, lasting success. But most of the book is autobiography, telling Lipton's side of her first divorce or how she was unjustly fired from Hunter College, and so on. It's dreadful.

Lipton seems reluctant to deal with the facts she can recover. Instead, she prefers to create a fiction which is more of a projection of her own neurosis than anything which is supported by her sources. All the primary sources agree that Victorine Meurent was a destitute alcoholic for some time before she dies, but Lipton prefers to imagine her as a proto-feminist heroine. She seems so blinded by her own prejudice that she can only lash out at anyone who presents her with information which paints Victorine in less than favorable colors. For a more balanced view of the same material, find a copy of Otto Freiderich's *Olympia: Manet and the Paris of his Times*.

Very entertaining book. A mystery explored. Interesting blend of art history and detection. I read the book with no particular expectations. I think the people who did not like the book perhaps had too

many preconceived ideas about the book and were disappointed when they did not find what they expected. I am not a professional in the field. just enjoyed a good read.

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