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book review of

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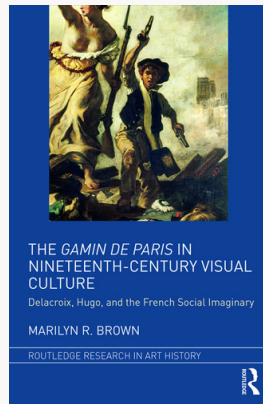
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Marilyn R. Brown,
The Gamin de Paris in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture: Delacroix, Hugo, and the French Social Imaginary.
New York: Routledge, 2017.
152 pp.; 24 color and 37 b&w illus.; notes, bibliography, index.
\$149.95 (hardback)
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As Marilyn Brown compellingly demonstrates, the politically charged, protean *gamin de Paris* haunted the French social imaginary, from the French Revolution through the early Third Republic, surfacing and resurfacing at different political moments in different guises, erupting across nineteenth-century visual and literary culture from Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (illustrated on the cover) to Victor Hugo and panoramic literature. Deploying the peripheral but symbolically central *gamins* in Delacroix's iconic canvas as a launching pad, she traces the shifting dialectic between the *gamin de Paris* as *enfant du peuple* (child of the people) and as *enfant de patrie* (child of the nation or fatherland), linking the paradigm shift between 1794 and 1830 to the new vision of childhood that emerged in the wake of the erosion of patriarchal authority and social structures and to the rise of industrial capitalism. Seeking to frame the *gamin de Paris* "in all its multiplicity, as positioned somewhere between a 'myth' and a 'site of memory,'" Brown aims "to historicize and destabilize a frequently universalized and formulaic masculine stereotype in the national imaginary so as to trace patterns of repetition and transformation in the construction of a bourgeois myth" (2, 5). Tellingly, there is no feminine counterpart to the *gamin de Paris*. Although the feminine form exists in the modern lexicon, it lacks the multi-layered, radical connotations of the *gamin des rues* (*gamin* of the streets) though Brown tantalizingly proposes Marie Baskirtseff's *The Umbrella* (1882–83) as an experiment in depicting a forthright girl of the people.

Images of children until recently have been marginalized and sentimentalized, which helps explain the paucity of art historical literature devoted to the *gamin de Paris* topos.^[1] One of the challenges is the difficulty of delineating and classifying the *gamin* as a distinct social type with which nineteenth-century commentators from Jules Janin to Jules Vallès also contended. The fluidity and instability of the *gamin* is evidenced in its multivalent visual manifestations, the evolving dialectic between issues of child labor and education, and its devolution from disruptive revolutionary insurgent to helpless social victim under the Third

Republic. In the first three highly condensed chapters, Brown establishes the combined socio-historical and psychological methodology for her close critical reading of visual representations and wide-ranging textual accounts of the *gamin de Paris* at key historical moments, which forms the core of the book. Brown's command of the vicissitudes of nineteenth-century French political history and primary sources, as well as recent scholarship across multiple disciplines, evidenced in the extensive bibliography and detailed note citations, is impressive. The first chapter traces the ancestry of the *gamin* to the Revolution of 1789 and the mythologizing of child martyrs, such as Joseph-Agricole Viala and Joseph Bara, whose depiction by Jacques-Louis David is the only image discussed, and to shifting family paradigms. Key attributes, such as the drum and cockade, which surface in these ur-images of the *gamin de Paris*, become part of collective memory and are reprised by later artists.

Chapters two and three are devoted respectively to the significance of the child of the people and the child of the fatherland in social history and in the social imaginary. Chapter two links the invention and development of the *gamin* archetype to the paradoxical status of children in which the romantic cult of childhood co-existed and collided with the unprecedented industrial exploitation of child labor, abandoned children, and vagrancy. During the nineteenth century, reforms in education, labor, and social welfare aimed at protecting children arguably shifted authority from family to state. Most of all, it was educational reform and mandatory free primary education that transformed children of all classes into children of the nation. In chapter three, Brown roots the *gamin de Paris* in the "family romance" of repeated cyclical revolutions, together with transformations within the family and shifting political metaphors. As patriarchal power devolved to the state and the bourgeois family emerged as the normative social ideal, the *gamin* became an unstable emblem of the contested principles of "fraternity," the "people," and the "nation." For Jules Michelet in *Le Peuple* (1846), the child took on mythical status as an interpreter of the people that was central to his romanticized ideal of collective heroism. In the social imaginary after 1848, the dualistic representations of the revolutionary *gamin* encapsulated the fundamental divide between the abstract political ideal of the sovereign people (the Freudian ego) and the threat and social reality of the insurrectionary rabble of the *peuple-émeutier* (rioters) (the Freudian id).

In chapter four, the longest in the book, Brown maps the propagation of the revolutionary *gamin* and the range of verbal and visual responses to the Revolution of 1830, focusing in particular on Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). Although I routinely teach the painting, her perceptive reading made me see it differently, enriching and complicating its multi-layered significance, notably the central roles of the *gamin* brandishing pistols and leading the charge, and the contrasting rendering of the other two, including the *gamin* at far left holding a paving stone. Brown argues that the two urchins, seen by contemporary critics as representing the people, function on multiple levels: as emblems of fraternity and the dualistic nature of the *gamin* as revolutionary hero, school boy, and more troublingly, part of the rabble constituting the *classes dangereuses* (dangerous classes), embodying both nation and people. Juxtaposing Delacroix's *Liberty* with Philippe-Auguste Jeanron's cute role-playing *Les Petits Patriotes* (The Little Patriots) from the same year and Jean-Victor Schnetz's *Fight for the Hôtel de Ville* (1834), an official government commission, underscores the powerful political and emotional forces unleashed in Delacroix's painting, which was purchased by the Interior Ministry but remained in storage until 1848. In the aftermath of 1830, the *gamin* was

variously gilded, as in Augustin Dumont's sculpture of *The Genius of Liberty* (1835) atop the July column, relegated to the past as in François Rude's *La Marseillaise* (1832–36), or tamed as in Emile Vanderbuch's vaudeville comedy (1836).

Chapter five investigates the role of the *gamin* in panoramic literature and in the revolutions of 1848. Panoramic literature, which was informed by physiognomy and influenced by the popular *physiologies*, became an important source for novelists and artists. Janin's essay "Le gamin de Paris," published in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840), positioned the archetypal *gamin* as *enfant de la patrie* and as a "site of memory" for the French nation. Ranging from carefree apprentice to ragamuffin industrialist to vagabond, depictions of the *gamin* proliferated in prints and illustrations from the 1840s. With the 1848 revolutions, the *gamin* returned to the barricades in actuality and in popular imagery. Daumier's carnivalesque *Le Gamin de Paris aux Tuileries* (1848), its caption borrowed from 1830, depicts a coarse lower class child of the people insolently occupying the king's throne. After the February Revolution, the *gamin's* reputation was further tarnished with the formation of the Mobile Guard, which recruited unemployed youths and paid them to fight against the insurgents.

Chapter six analyzes the transformation of the *gamin* under the Second Empire and the Commune from naturalistic depictions of child laborers such as chimney sweeps to social victims in Hugo's *Les Misérables*, which drew on panoramic literature. In *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (1858), Victor Fournel, like Hugo, characterizes the *gamin* as the embodiment of the city, but frames him more negatively as a monstrous barbarian whose lot was determined by class and environmental forces beyond his control. In the early 1860s Edouard Manet repeatedly portrayed *gamins* in paintings such as *The Old Musician* (1861–62), which both acknowledged and subverted the myth. Images like *The Balloon* (1862), featuring a crippled boy in the foreground of an imperial *fête*, and *The Fifer* (1866), where the figure of the *gamin* merges with that of the national guard, problematize and re-mythologize the *gamin* as *enfant de la patrie*. If the *gamin* of the barricades had largely disappeared by the 1860s, he would resurface in popular illustrations during the Commune and in Alfred Roll's defiant *Execution of a Trumpeter* (1870).

The most dramatic devolution of the *gamin de Paris* occurred during the early Third Republic when the *gamin* was increasingly portrayed as a social victim devoid of political agency, as evidenced in Jules Bastien-Lepage's *Little Sleeping Peddler* (1881). Laws on child labor and universal education contributed to the loss of agency and victimization of the *gamin*. At the same time, naturalistic but sentimentalized depictions of school children and street urchins, such as Marie Baskirtseff's *The Meeting* (1884), adopted what could be characterized as an ethnographic approach. Depictions of the *gamin* as entrepreneur, such as Jules Chéret's 1874 lithograph, *Le Petit Moniteur*, *L'Ogresse*, also surfaced. Roll's patriotic apotheosis, *July 14, 1880* (1882), commissioned by the government and reproduced and widely circulated in schools, portrays an immense crowd commemorating Bastille Day, with a *gamin* turned entrepreneur at center stage, hawking tricolor *cocardes* (cockades). Here the insurrectionary *gamin de Paris* has been co-opted, domesticated, and commodified as an emblem of the Third Republic and the resurgent French nation. When the painting was exhibited at the 1882 Salon, responses were mixed, with critics finding it vulgar and overly exuberant, even hinting at the instability of the people whose solidarity it loudly celebrated. As the

nineteenth century drew to a close, the protean *gamin* popped up in new and unexpected guises, notably as a colonizer in the illustrations to Louis Boussenard's propagandistic colonial novels, and resurfaced in Paul Legrand's *In Front of Détaillé's 'The Dream'* (1897) in the guise of idealized schoolboys, gazing raptly at Détaillé's patriotic resurrection of triumphant French armies of the past, the most famous image of the Revanche.[2]

Brown's meticulously researched illuminating study of the trajectory of the *gamin* across the nineteenth century makes a compelling case for the centrality of the *gamin* topos in French visual culture and psyche and as a complex site of memory, confirming John Grand-Carteret's assessment of the *gamin de Paris* "as the most interesting being to study in modern society" (111).[3] In particular, it is the instability and dualistic nature of the *gamin* as child of the people and child of the fatherland that makes it such a powerful recurring symbol throughout the nineteenth century. Working from the perspectives of social and psychological history, Brown draws on a wide panoply of paintings, prints, and photographs, as well as panoramic and pedagogical literature, and ephemera such as plays and newspapers. The book moves the *gamin de Paris* from the periphery to the center of French visual culture as a potent and contested myth that bridged the gap between actuality and the social imaginary from the Revolution to the early Third Republic. In her perceptive critical reading of individual images Brown offers a compelling demonstration of the challenges and rewards of examining visual culture in relation to political events and the vicissitudes of history.

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[1] The most notable exceptions are: Anna Green, *French Paintings of Childhood and Adolescence 1848–1856* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), whose purview and focus differ, and Luce Abelès's exhibition, *Le Gamin de Paris* (Paris: Musée de l'Art et de l'Essai, 1985), catalog essay published in *Cahiers-Musée d'art et d'essai* 18 (1985): 2–16.

[2] The term Revanche refers to the movement in France to regain Alsace-Lorraine after its annexation in the Franco-Prussian War.

[3] John Grand-Carteret, *XIXe Siècle en France, Classes, mœurs, usages, costumes, inventions* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1893), 220–23.