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Marilyn Brown, *The Gamin de Paris in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture: Delacroix, Hugo, and the French Social Imaginary*. New York and London: Routledge, 2017. xiii + 152 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$155.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-138-23113-9; \$27.48 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-315-31596-6.

Review by Suzanne Singletary, Jefferson (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University).

In her illuminating account, Marilyn Brown shines a spotlight on the largely overlooked and even marginalized figure of the child, specifically the revolutionary street urchin, the *gamin de Paris*, a ubiquitous figure in French nineteenth-century visual culture from the French Revolution through the early days of the Third Republic. In chronologically oriented chapters, Brown traces the ever-changing significance of the *gamin de Paris* within the French “social imaginary,” vacillating between the *enfant du peuple* and the *enfant de la patrie*, and morphing in synchrony with fluctuating political circumstances. The volatile position of the *gamin de Paris* within the “political, cultural, social, and psychic discourse” (p. 1) of the nineteenth century is compellingly elucidated by Brown to reveal not only shifting visual guises but also the unstable political conditions that shape the construction of powerful ideologies. Brown interprets the paradigm shift in the discourse relative to children from the French Revolution to the 1830 overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty as the result of the demise of patriarchal, monarchical structures and the rise of industrial capitalism. Using, as a case in point, Delacroix’s magisterial *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) that includes two *gamins*, Brown argues that the *gamin de Paris* became “archetypically linked in visual culture with repeated, recycled imagery of revolution...[and]...positioned somewhere between a ‘myth’ and a ‘site of memory’”(p. 2). The romanticized image of the Paris street urchin—memorably conjured in the character of Gavroche, Victor Hugo’s street boy in *Les Misérables*—and its representation in visual culture became entwined with notions of revolution, reform, and masculine bourgeois identity, despite his decidedly working-class, outsider status.

Brown sets the stage for a nuanced analysis of the fluctuating meanings of the *gamin* in her first three chapters, which unpack the origins of this figure in the writings on education by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and their ramifications in the Revolution of 1789. This period initiated a vacillation between “ideals of the educated boy and the street boy as emblem of ‘the people’” (p. 8) that permeated the nineteenth-century social imaginary. In chapter one, Brown applies a psychological prism, arguing that a significant shift within the family dynamic mirrored socio-political upheavals and aligned the boy with *la mère*, concretized in images of small boys nursed by the allegorical Marianne, thereby undermining patriarchal rule but solidifying fraternity. Legends of child hero-martyrs such as Joseph Bara—represented by Jacques-Louis David in an eroticized death scene—and Agricol Viala accrued long afterlives, along with their identifying drum and cockade attributes. Chapter two maps the contradictory attitudes towards children, outlining the clash between progressive education laws (mandating compulsory, free primary education for all classes) and the inhumane industrial exploitation of children, despite child-labor reform that designated childhood as a protected stage of development. Increased legislation and institutional surveillance further undercut paternal authority, strengthening the child’s status as *enfant de la patrie*. In chapter three, the recurrent political upheavals that dogged the nineteenth century are fashioned in the social imaginary as the collision between paternity rooted in a repressive and hierarchical power structure and fraternity,

signifying equality and republicanism, dramatized in Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The *gamin de Paris* straddled both sides as an emblem of fraternity, but also as a ward of the state.

In chapter four, Brown foregrounds Delacroix's innovative depiction of the *gamin de Paris* in *Liberty Leading the People*, contextualizing his approach and illuminating its radical nature through telling comparisons. For example, though typically being cast as a subsidiary character in popular prints--several are reproduced and analyzed--in his painting Delacroix assigned a leading role to the *gamin de Paris*. Similarly, when included in modern history genre paintings, *gamins* are predictably upstaged by their elders, as seen in Hippolyte Lecomte's *Combat de la Porte St Denis, le 28 juillet* (1830), where two street urchins are placed on the periphery and are overshadowed by the tumult of battling adults. The centrality of Delacroix's pistol-wheeling *gamin*, positioned directly to the right of Liberty, introduced a prominence that, while atypical in visual culture, was rampant on the battlefield as street urchins noticeably took up arms in the Revolution of 1830.

Brown's nuanced reading compellingly demonstrates that "the figure of the revolutionary urchin of 1830 achieved its visual apotheosis" in Delacroix's painting (p. 27). The artist places the viewer at eye-level with Liberty's foot, among the foreground corpses and squarely in the path of the marching insurgents. While the allegorical Liberty is the apogee of the triangle of bodies, the *gamin* leads the charge, his foot—not Liberty's—advancing first over the barricade into battle, his heroism inspiring the worker and bourgeois figures to the left who stare fixedly at the child rather than at Liberty. Brown also discerns the "erotic energy" of the dying young worker crouched below Liberty and spotlights the largely overlooked second *gamin*, shrouded in shadow on the left, both figures interpreted in nineteenth-century texts as symbolic of fraternity. This thorough parsing of the spatial and compositional elements in *Liberty* gains potency not only from the painting's obvious differences from contemporary depictions of *gamins*, but also from the way Delacroix encapsulated the multi-faceted meanings of the *gamin* as both *enfant de la patrie* and *enfant du peuple*. Purchased by the state, Delacroix's subversive painting remained in storage, hidden from view until the 1848 overthrow of Louis-Philippe. During the July Monarchy, images of the *gamin* in public art, such as François Rude's *La Marseillaise* (1833-36), were sanitized, domesticated, and non-threatening.

Chapter five follows the *gamin's* mutations in the social imaginary through the 1840s and culminating in the Revolution of 1848. Brown analyzes the visual and literary constructions of the *gamin* in panoramic literature, the burgeoning nineteenth-century genre that categorized individuals by social "types," identified through physiognomic characteristics that serve as a coded language to recognize not only classes and professions, but also character, morals and even criminal proclivities. Written by leading authors, including Balzac, and amply illustrated, *physiologie* texts proliferated between the 1830s and 1850s. The eight-volume *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840-42), an encyclopedic overview of "types," similarly pigeonholed individuals by posture, gesture, and costume. Myriad castings of the *gamin* ensued. Characterizations ranged from the archetypical *enfant de la patrie* as mnemonic symbol of *l'esprit français* and the French nation—as reformulated by Jules Janin in his essay "Le *gamin de Paris*," for *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*—to picturesque personifications of the *gamin* as vagabond, upwardly mobile *galopin industriel* (ragamuffin industrialist-cum-bourgeois *flâneur*), schoolboy, and workshop apprentice. Each stereotype contributed to the cumulative depoliticizing of the incendiary street urchin. Still the indomitable *gamin* was back on the barricades in 1848 both literally and in popular imagery. Honoré Daumier's lithograph *Le Gamin de Paris aux Tuileries* presents an insolent, coarse-featured youth occupying the king's throne, accompanied by the caption "Golly!..how comfortable I am here." Other caricatures by Daumier satirize middle-class fears of the revolutionary street urchins. In an ironic denouement of the revolutions of 1848, unemployed Parisian *gamins* were recruited as mercenaries to fight in the Mobile Guard against insurgents, a testimony to "a microcosm of a confused and shifting split in constructions of the 'people' divided against itself," (p. 69) and an immeasurable blemish on the image of the mythical, revolutionary *gamin de Paris*.

During the repressive Second Empire of Napoleon III (1851-70) and the ill-fated 1871 Commune, the foci of chapter six, the *gamin de Paris* again morphed to embody divergent political and social ideologies. Armed with the presumed transparency of the camera, in 1851 Charles Nègre posed child chimney sweeps as quintessential laborers within the urban milieu; his photographs pointedly eschew either sentimentality or victimization. In *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (1858), Victor Fournel portrays the *gamin* as an ambiguous, amorphous monster and personification of Paris, lacking stable or noble allegiances and a by-product of “environmental forces that, from his birth, determine his ‘race’” (p. 75). Hugo’s controversial epic, *Les Misérables*, (1862) fashioned the paradigmatic *gamin* in the character of Gavroche, based upon panoramic literature, and a figure nearly indistinguishable from the city itself. For Hugo, Gavroche conjoined “people” and “nation,” an innocent whose victimization could only be ameliorated through universal education. Contemporaneous with the publication of Hugo’s novel, Edouard Manet included *gamins* in several works. *The Old Musician* (1861-62) includes two *gamins*—one, the sad clown or saltimbanque, is a stand-in for the artist—in a grouping of social misfits, “an ad hoc vagabond community” (p. 82), while *The Fifer* (1866) depicts a *gamin de Paris* incongruously dressed in the costume of the imperial guard. In his lithograph, *The Balloon* (1862), a crippled, impoverished *gamin* seated on a wheeled trolley is positioned center stage and in alignment with the titular balloon, injecting a jarring contrast to the well-heeled, middle-class crowd gathered to celebrate Napoleon III’s coup d’état. Through this juxtaposition, Manet exposes the underbelly of the Second Empire and sabotages the government’s optimistic message of progress and empire. In these images, Manet plays with the stereotypes of the *gamin*, both stating and subverting, reinforcing and destabilizing their meanings. While visual images of the revolutionary *gamin* largely disappeared during the Second Empire, the type reemerged on the barricades during the Commune and in popular illustrations, another instance of the ebb and flow of this indelible expression of the social imaginary.

Chapter seven traces the *gamin*’s trajectory from the Third Republic to the close of the century. Again, the heroic, revolutionary *gamin de Paris* finds himself transformed into several contradictory, diluted symbols—as a victimized child without political or social agency, needing the beneficence of the state to survive; or as the enterprising, socially mobile entrepreneur, palatable to the bourgeoisie; or as the recalcitrant schoolboy, inculcated with middle-class values via compulsory universal education. *Juste-milieu* painter Jules Bastien-Lepage offered Salon visitors naturalistically rendered, detailed images of *gamins*, such as the *Little Sleeping Peddler* (1881), that sentimentalized poverty and catered to middle-class audiences, as did Fernand Pelez’s more ambiguous but equally picturesque *A Martyr: A Violet Seller* (1884-85). Conversely, in an 1874 poster, Jules Chéret conjures the middle-class entrepreneurial *esprit* of a *gamin de la rue*, shown hawking government newspapers in true capitalist fashion. Likewise, Alfred Roll’s gigantic rendition of a raucously celebratory crowd, entitled *July 14, 1880* (1882), showcases the Paris street boy selling *cocardes*, or tricolor buttons, to happy Bastille Day revelers. In both scenes, the *gamin de Paris* is appropriated, sanitized, and commodified as an emblem of the republican government and a capitalist economic structure. Another ubiquitous genre portrayed schoolboys, such as in Marie Bashkirtseff’s *The Meeting* (1884), notable for its ethnographic approach. Finally, towards century’s end, the malleable *gamin de Paris* surfaces quite unexpectedly as dominant in illustrations of propagandistic colonialist literature and in the context of the *Revanche* movement to reclaim Alsace-Lorraine from Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. Paul Legrand’s *In Front of Detailles’s “The Dream”* (1897), portrays a group of intent schoolboys spellbound before a print of Detailles’s popular, propagandistic painting *The Dream* (1888), an unabashed celebration of war and nationalism intended to inspire militarism in these impressionable *enfants de la patrie* and future soldiers in the defense of France.

Brown’s study is a densely argued analysis that synthesizes wide-ranging literary and critical sources with a variety of graphic, painted, and photographic mediums, testifying to the ubiquity of the *gamin de Paris* within nineteenth-century culture. The author cogently charts the ongoing, nuanced, and shifting meanings of the *gamin de Paris* over the course of the century, as this enduring but malleable archetype vacillated between *enfant du peuple* and/or *enfant de la patrie* in response to major social and political upheavals. In the process, Brown offers new insights into iconic works, bolstered by a supporting cast of

numerous lesser-known, but telling, images. Brown definitively shows that during the nineteenth-century the dual faces of the *gamin de Paris* persisted as a recurring *topos* that “entered the collective social imaginary as [a] cultural and psychic site of memory” (p. 118). One wonders how the formidable *gamin de Paris* has escaped our notice until now.

Suzanne Singletary

Jefferson (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University)

[Suzanne.Singletary@jefferson.edu](mailto:Suzanne.Singletary@jefferson.edu)

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