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Samuel Raybone, *Gustave Caillebotte as Worker, Collector, Painter*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020. xi + 243 pp. Bibliography and index. $130.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978150133994-3; $117.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978150133996-7.

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Gustave Caillebotte (1848-94) has long occupied an oddly unsettled place in the history of nineteenth-century French art. A talented artist in his own right, Caillebotte's identity as a painter was muddied by his simultaneous identity as a collector and benefactor of the Impressionists. A student of Bonnat's, Caillbotte worked in the Realist tradition, and when his submission of *Les Raboteurs de parquet* to the Salon of 1875 was rejected for its subject matter (Parisian working-class floor-scrapers) and disjointed perspective, he joined the second *Exposition Impressionniste* of 1876, exhibiting eight canvases that are today considered some of his finest works. But in many ways, and for many years, Caillebotte's status as a wealthy bourgeois *rentier* who financially supported his fellow painters, sponsored their exhibitions, and sometimes paid the rent on their studios (as was the case with Monet) eclipsed his standing as a painter per se: implicitly, perhaps, a painter who didn't need to sell his own work (but could purchase his friends' experimental canvases at inflated prices) wasn't really an *artist*. Despite some critical success, Caillebotte was frequently dismissed as a dilettante, and at his early death at the age of forty-six he was remembered for his stamp and his art collections, the latter comprising a controversial bequest to the French state of nearly seventy of the most important canvases by his friends and colleagues, including Monet, Cézanne, Degas, Sisley, Renoir, Manet, Pissarro, and Millet. Renoir, as his executor, could only convince the state to take fewer than half of the paintings which today form the core of the collection at the Musée d'Orsay.

Questions of artistic identity, legitimacy, and status were of course central throughout the century, as painters, poets, authors, composers, and other creators entered an increasingly competitive marketplace, and, as Bourdieu has shown us, contended for social, cultural, and economic capital.[1] Caillebotte occupied a liminal place in a number of worlds; never fully part of the Impressionist group as a painter, he was also deeply ambivalent about his class identity as an haut-bourgeois denizen of the elegant boulevards and *immeubles* of Haussmann's Paris. His work, in turn, often figures forth discomfort and the ambiguities of positions in space--both literal and psychological--as manifested in urban scenes (*Rue de Paris, temps de pluie; Le Pont de l'Europe; Rue Halévy, vu du sixième étage; Jeune homme à sa fenêtre; Boulevard Haussmann [1880]*), interiors (*Le Déjeuner; Jeune homme au piano; Intérieur, femme lisant; La Partie de bésique*), and portraits (*Autoportrait au chevalet; Portrait de Moneieur R; Henri Cordier*). Like the Impressionists, Caillebotte sought to capture the fleeting and fragmented nature of modern experience, but expressed this

Baudelairean sense of "le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent" in different ways: rather than the famously "fractured" brushstrokes and facture of Monet and company that led to the facetious label of "impressionisme," the painter of *Rue de Paris: temps de pluie* (1877) paired detailed and "realistic" style with distorted perspectival planes and elusive narrative compositions to reflect the anxious dislocations of *la vie moderne.*[2]

Samuel Raybone's new study, *Gustave Caillebotte as Worker, Collector, Painter*, seeks to situate Caillebotte's paintings within the "creative matrix" (p. 2) in which he produced them, bringing new emphasis to the connections between the roles of work and collecting in the painter's construction of his personal and artistic identity. Although Impressionism has long been associated with the boom in leisure activities for rich and poor alike during the Second Empire and Third Republic (think of Renoir's *Bal au Moulin de la Galette* and *Le déjeuner des canotiers*, Degas's paintings of horse races at Longchamp, Manet's *Bar aux Folies-Bergères*, Monet's sailboats, and later Seurat's *Un Dimanche après-midi à l'île de la Grande Jatte* and *Baigneurs à Asnières*), Raybone focuses instead on the idea--and ideologies--of work during this period. Following in the steps of Claire White and others, Raybone locates Caillebotte's career within the political context of the period, where "[t]o be a citizen of the Third Republic meant being a worker in a society of workers" (p. 3) as Republicans promoted an almost universal culture of work as the means to rebuilding national identity and class cohesion.[3] Rich or poor, from *le peuple* to *la bourgeoisie*, all (male) members of French society would be unified by the ideology of labor as a social and political duty. The specious nature of this fantasized equality, where the stockbroker's and the stone breaker's toils were to be considered equivalent, conjoined work and class within Third Republican ideology in complex and often vexed ways. Raybone, relying on Žižek's conception of ideology "as a set of representations which constitute social subjectivity," considers Caillebotte's relationship to himself and his society through this lens of ideology's "multi-layered structure" which "offers a way to think about the precise form of the relations between the subjective and the social, between the psychic and the symbolic—that is, conceiving of the full socio-subjective ramifications of the symbolic work of representation" (p. 3).[4]

In other words, Raybone explores the vital question of "what it meant to work and be a worker" (p. 26) for an artist in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Acknowledging the imbrications of the very ideas of work and workers with "problematics related to class, society, masculinity, representation, and corporality" (p. 26), Raybone addresses these intersectional categories in his various chapters specifically in terms of Caillebotte and his *oeuvre*, but the larger question of the contemporary social definition of work and workers in nineteenth-century France as such remains a bit vague. Specifically, what is the Anglophone author invoking with these terms "work" and "worker"? And what were the social/symbolic valences and ideologies attached to these concepts in French and in France at the time? Work, as both a noun and a verb, has multiple translations in French, all with nuanced connotations that are flattened by the singular term in English. A quick look at the *Dictionnaire Littré* reveals twenty-four definitions for the noun *travail*, and twenty-six for the verb *travailler*. The most obvious translation of (male) worker--*le travailleur*--has seven definitions, while other options current in Third Republic parlance, including *l'ouvrier*, *l'employé*, and *le laboureur*, also communicate specificities not necessarily present in the single English term. While Raybone does spend time in the introduction and beyond expanding the idea of work vis-à-vis Caillebotte's construction of self to include painting as well as "yacht design, racing, collecting, representation, being represented" (p. 10), more attention to the historical and ideological context the artist was working within and against would have been welcomed.

Nonetheless, this dense and often revelatory text succeeds in its aim to analyze Caillebotte's paintings in relation to the myriad other "activities" he engaged in (horticulture, philately, yachting) "to better understand his fractured, alienated subjectivity" (p. 165). In part one, Raybone's opening chapter, "Work," presents readings of some of Caillebotte's most compelling images of men at work as reflections of the painter's identification of painting as work and the painter as a worker, opening up extremely fruitful ways of thinking about canvases such as *Les Raboteurs*, *Les Peintres en bâtiment*, and *Canotiers ramant sur l'Yerres*, as well as several self-portraits. Raybone observes "it was through legibly encoding signifiers of the process and labour of painting itself that Caillebotte articulated his alienation and attempted to construct the terms of its resolution," adding that the painter "came to identify work as containing the potential to reconfigure the class identity he found so troublesome" (p. 165). In chapter two, "Collecting," the author makes a mostly successful argument for considering the act of collecting a kind of work: referencing Susan Stewart's concept of collecting as "false labor," Raybone asserts that the amassing of a collection is "an ideological event" that constitutes "a microcosmic re-enactment of the phantasmic support of capitalist ideology in which production turns to consumption, the exchange economy into the economy of desire. By organizing and displaying the material fragments of their exterior world, collectors create and articulate a subjective identity, while simultaneously structuring their *jouissance*" (p. 49). [5] Caillebotte's exhaustive and influential stamp collection, assembled with his brother Martial in their shared apartment following the successive deaths of their father (1874), brother René (1876), and mother (1878), is attributed here, at least in part, to "the compulsion to repeat the trauma of bereavement in such a way as to master and control it" (p. 42). Moreover, Raybone contends, collecting was "part and parcel of classed performativity: just as work was conceptualized in terms of physical effort to reshape the material world, collecting utilized mental effort in bringing the power of wealth to bear upon the organization of objects and meaning" (p. 44). Caillebotte's collection of Impressionist paintings (in what would become *le legs Caillebotte*) served not only as a form of patronage for and camaraderie with his fellow artists, but also "became invested with the power to signify their owner, the site of a kind of displaced subjective identity" (p. 50).

Part two focuses on Caillebotte's stamp collection and its relation to several of his major works of 1877, arguing that this frequently overlooked aspect of Caillebotte's creative life played a significant role in the painter's development. Chapter three ("Philately and photography") contends that the illogical perspectives and narrative ambiguity that set *Rue de Paris, temps de pluie*, *Le Pont de l'Europe*, and *Les peintres en bâtiment* apart from other paintings of the period derived not from Caillebotte's interest in photography, as has often been claimed, but rather from his "his sustained exposure to a philatelic way of seeing and thinking" (p. 64). Raybone explains, "Caillebotte's dynamic play between surface and depth, plunging perspectives and lines of non-converging convergence recall the philatelic juxtaposition and serialization of discrete images, the putting together of fragments to form a whole," where the significance of the images is generated neither from the individual components nor from the whole, "but in the minute gaps between them and in the principles of their organization, in whose shadow these gaps are discernible" (p. 64). The "ethereal incongruity" characteristic of Caillebotte's figures who occupy these "unreal spaces" without interacting (p. 65), stages "a failed encounter between classes" in Haussmann's Paris and "the dialectics of fracture and totality that animated the Republican reaction to Communard class conflict" (pp. 64, 166). In essence, then, Raybone reads Caillebotte's dizzying juxtapositions of bodies and buildings in space--at once "real" and impossible--as patterned after the layout of stamps on the page of an album, thus a formal re-enactment of both

"the very processes by which the ominously atomized social organism that Caillebotte took for his subject had itself come to be" (p. 166) as well as the trauma of his own class alienation and personal loss. "Philately and Impressionism" (chapter four), expands this analysis to the connections between Caillebotte's canvases and the visual morphology of a stamp album (emphasis on surface, orthogonal organization, tension between detail and totality, iterations and variations on a motif). Highlighting the symbolic associations of stamps and the postal system itself as material and ideological manifestations of modernity, bureaucracy, and the discourses of order/disorder in the urban and the psychic spaces of Third Republic France, Raybone draws our attention to the ways in which Caillebotte "visually parsed and worked through his subjective relation to his social context" (p. 99). In these iconic paintings of 1877, bodying forth ambiguity, alienation, and isolation, the meaning produced through the tensions between form and content reveals "Caillebotte's relation to the central ideological problems of the 1870s and to the changed and changing consequences of the class of which he was part and of the work he did" (p. 98).

Part three brings Emile Zola into the conversation, contrasting the Naturalist author's approach to politics and aesthetics with Caillebotte's own. As an art critic, Zola played an early role in supporting Manet and the Impressionists, but was never a fan of Caillebotte's work, which he found "anti-artistic" and lacking expression of what he deemed the artist's "temperament," that is, an individual vision and sensibility.[6] Raybone tends to generalize Naturalism in ways that muddle Zola's understanding of the movement he launched, and indeed, what he terms "Naturalist painting" (works by Lhermitte and Bastien-Lepage) would not have been considered "Naturalist" by Zola, who used the term for the Impressionists (p. 109). Raybone's point in this pair of chapters--that Zola and Caillebotte had differing perspectives on the body, work, class, and representation--has undeniable merit but is too starkly polarized, reducing the author of *Les Rougon-Macquart* to an overly literal understanding of the positivist formulation of "race, moment, milieu."[7] In relying on a single novel (*L'Assommoir*) to delineate Zola's approach to the politics of work as manifested in classed bodies, Raybone elides Zola's famous inconsistencies and ambivalence about his own proclamations. This section would have profited from a close reading of "Le Roman expérimental," where Zola puts forth his theory of the social body and the naturalist novel, as well as a number of his other works in which laboring bodies appear, including *L'Oeuvre* (about a failed painter, modelled after his childhood friend Cézanne, and the destruction of his lover/model), *Nana* (about money, mobility, morality, and the demi-monde in Second Empire Paris), *La Bête humaine* (about the conflation of man and machine, set against the backdrop of sexual obsession, madness, and murder), or even *Le Travail.* The "objectivizing dispassion" that Raybone observes in *L'Assommoir* is as illusory and performative as Caillebotte's so-called realism: the author and the painter were similarly engaged in uncovering the fractures and dislocations of contemporary society in their individual genres and the gap between what Zola "says" and what Zola ultimately "means" is closer to those gaps between Caillebotte's form and meaning than this analysis would lead us to believe (p. 121). Raybone's assertion that Caillebotte's uncomfortable interiors and portraits "expose the fault lines of bourgeois sociability and subjectivity" (p. 136) could pertain equally to Zola's scenes set in suffocating parlors, dining rooms, and boudoirs (*La Curée* comes to mind, as does *Au Bonheur des dames*).

The final chapter, "Working as Caillebotte in Petit Gennevilliers," looks at the end of the painter's life, when he left Paris for the countryside, and at his late flower and garden paintings, which have received far less critical consideration than his Parisian canvases. Raybone brings together the many strands of his study, refuting Gustave Geffroy's claim that the artist had "délaissé la peinture pour se donner aux bateaux et au jardinage dont il raffolait." [8] Instead, he

argues, Caillebotte's suburban retreat was a "creative crucible…in which creative labours were cross-pollinated with renewed vigour" (p. 168). The almost abstract flower paintings and garden-scapes, Raybone concludes, "are in fact perfectly in line with the desires, anxieties, and processes" of the painter's earlier artistic production and his "attachment to the dynamics of work and collecting" (p. 151), thus, perfectly in keeping with Caillebotte's "enduring fantasy of *working* at art: a fantasy that led him to the false labor of collecting and the persistent and assiduous cross-pollination of his labours" (p. 168).

NOTES

[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York, Columbia UP, 1993).

[2] On "le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent," see Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne" in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois. 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-76) 2: 695. On "fractured" brushstrokes and the facetious nature of the label "impressionisme," see John Rewald, "The Impressionist Brush" in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 32.3 (1973-74): 2-56. The original source for the satiric term is Louis Leroy's review of the "Exposition des Impressionnistes" in *Le Charivari* (26 April 1874).

[3] Claire White, *Work and Leisure in Late Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture: Time, Politics and Class* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014). See also the collected essays in *The Labour of Literature in Britain and France, 1830-1910: Authorial Work Ethics*, Marcus Waithe and Claire White, eds. (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2018).

[4] Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994).

[5] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 151-69.

[6] Emile Zola, *Écrits sur l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 353.

[7] See Émile Zola, "Le Roman expérimental" in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mitterand, 15 vols. (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1968) 10: 1175-1203.

[8] Gustave Geffroy, "Notre temps: Gustave Caillebotte," *La Justice* (13 June 1894): 1.

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