

## Affect, Citation, and Rapt Looking in Manet's *The Old Musician*

In Édouard Manet's painting *The Old Musician*, six figures assemble in an indeterminate locale (Figure 1). Perhaps they have come in order to hear the musician, the older, bearded man who holds a violin in his lap, while plucking idly at its strings. One little boy, cross-eyed, wearing a dark jacket and pants, stares at the musician, expectantly. Yet the painting's other figures do nothing to indicate their expectation for a *concert champêtre*. The figures are not joined to one another by hand movements or by gaze; they engage in no action that might provide clues to their mood or their motivation for gathering in this place. On the surface of the canvas, every figure touches the one next to it, white sleeve brushing brown scarf, the musician's blanket-covered knee intruding upon the boy's black trousers, two shades of brown cloak, the musician's and the rag-picker's, skirting one another edge to edge.<sup>1</sup> Yet in the absence of any emotional tethering between the figures, this formal "contact" has the perverse effect of amplifying the sense that these figures have been forced together in apparently arbitrary fashion. Critics and art historians have provided different readings of this strange painting, from accounts of the painting's composition, to its iconography, to Manet's use of art-historical citations.<sup>2</sup> I want to focus instead on describing the affect of the little boy in white and tan, his face framed by a straw hat (Figure 2, detail of Figure 1). Affect describes a behavioral and emotional stance, in this case, the attitude towards the world expressed in a pose.<sup>3</sup> The little boy is perhaps the most obviously impassive, inexpressive figure in the painting. His static, symmetrical pose and resting facial features defy academic canons of gestural and facial expressions.<sup>4</sup> He appears utterly blank, a strange combination of openness, in the way he simply faces the viewer, and closure, in that despite his straight-forward self-presentation, he offers nothing to read. Yet affect provides a way into emotion outside of the more familiar discussion of the "expression of the

passions.”<sup>5</sup> Affect, as many of its recent theorists have argued, is inter-subjective: it unfolds and is performed through encounters with other subjects and objects.<sup>6</sup> The expression of Manet’s little boy is blank, but he bears an affect in that his pose assumes an emotional position in relationship to the environment and the figures that surround him.<sup>7</sup> The affective stance, while relational, does not effect a narrative goal, which was the conventional aim of the representation of the passions in history painting.

Period literature and criticism suggest several possible affects for Manet’s little boy.<sup>8</sup> Both of these possible affects emerge in discussions of the two sources that Manet cites in his creation of the figure: the Le Nain’s paintings of rural dwellers (Figure 3) and Antoine Watteau’s painting *Pierrot, dit Gilles* (Figure 4). Michael Fried has extensively discussed the meaning of these two citations, which he reads primarily as Manet’s effort to recuperate Watteau for a uniquely French kind of Realism.<sup>9</sup> I am interested, however, in the way the citations allude to the cited figures’ figural affects, particularly those affects that relate to the figures’ attitudes towards being pictured, a category of affects that I call “pictorial affects.” In his writings on the Le Nain, Champfleury (Jules Husson) characterized peasants as so exhausted that they entered painting only as entirely passive subjects, ignorant of pictorial conventions. Manet, I argue, cited this affect but also an additional affect borrowed from contemporary readings of Watteau’s *Pierrot*, who critics described as both complacent and sneaky. Yet it is to Baudelaire that we owe a description of the strongest affect that Manet’s little boy conveys. Read alongside Baudelaire, Manet’s figure is not impassive, but rather “fixed and ecstatic,” as he stares at something invisible to the viewer. His rapt gaze fixes on the character of modernity as visual aspect and supplement, an enticing but also unstable spectacle, which the figures in *The Old Musician* do their best to approximate. ‘Approximation’ is an important theme in this essay. Manet’s little figure is able to possess at least three different affects because he never fully inhabits any single

affect, but rather passes through different affects by way of approximation – a rough, cursory form of citation.<sup>10</sup>

I am aware that *The Old Musician* and its relationship to the Le Nain, to Watteau, and to Baudelaire, is well-trodden territory. What has been neglected, however, is an attempt to imagine the painting as the representation of affects related to the nature of being pictured and of visual experience in modernity. There has recently been an upsurge of interest in affect in the humanities, particularly in literary studies, but art history has been slow to pick up the relay.<sup>11</sup> I am interested both in the translation of affects described in text into visual appearance as well as the reverse: the reception and description of painted affects in contemporary texts. I am also interested in figures whose primary affect is directed at the pictorial event, the fact of being pictured. This becomes particularly significant when the pictorial affect lent to a figure is shown to have a relationship to the figure's class. What Manet is able to create, in the figure of the little boy, is a coincidence of affects ascribed to individuals of a particular class and affects related to the fact of being seen. At stake is the means by which socially marginal figures express their relationship to modernity and their desire to participate in its culture of visual spectacle. Together, word and image elucidate a historical landscape of image-related affect in which Manet's little Pierrot plays a significant role.<sup>12</sup>

### **Honest Misery**

During late 1840s and 1850s, the trio of seventeenth-century painters known as the Brothers Le Nain experienced a critical revival that coincided with the rise of progressive social movements culminating in the revolution of 1848.<sup>13</sup> The chief champion of the Le Nain was Champfleury, the prolific author who was one of the first critics to speak out in support of Gustave Courbet. By the late 1850s, however, Champfleury and Courbet were no longer close, and Champfleury had drifted into a new social circle, which included Charles Baudelaire and Édouard Manet.<sup>14</sup> In 1862, the same

year he painted *The Old Musician*, Manet included portraits of himself, Baudelaire, and Champfleury in *Music in the Tuileries*, a dandyish pendant to *The Old Musician* in which the best and the brightest of the Parisian intelligentsia were shown shoulder-to-shoulder in the fashionable park. Manet's interest in the work of the Le Nain was almost certainly inspired by Champfleury's own interest in the subject. While Champfleury's first work on the Le Nain was published in 1850, he studied and wrote about the brothers throughout the 1850s and early 1860s, with his last publication on the Le Nain appearing in 1865.<sup>15</sup> Throughout his texts, Champfleury insisted that the figures in the Le Nains' compositions were both serious and exhausted, an affect that he attributed to the miseries of rural life.

The three brothers Le Nain – Antoine, Louis, and Mathieu – were active in Paris during the 1630s and 1640s. Antoine and Louis died in 1648, the year of the founding of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, while Mathieu, an able pasticheur, died in 1677.<sup>16</sup> Yet the rise of the academic narrative of French art history tended to efface the contributions of these early Realists, whose works did not conform to the taste for noble, historical subjects.<sup>17</sup> Upon his re-discovery of the painters, Champfleury heralded their style as representative of naiveté and sincerity.<sup>18</sup> In his publication of 1862, *Les peintres de la réalité sous Louis XIII*, Champfleury makes a point of distinguishing the Le Nain's way of painting rural life from that of David Teniers, the seventeenth-century Flemish painter whose works were popular with French collectors. While Teniers offers “burlesque, almost *farvical*” scenes depicting peasants urinating, fornicating, and drinking, the Le Nain show peasants at home, posed quietly by the hearth, having finished a day of work and partaken of “a coarse meal.”<sup>19</sup> As Champfleury points out, the Le Nain never paint peasants at the tavern or the village fair. If someone drinks, it is because a few swallows of wine helps to restore “a part of his force spent in work.”<sup>20</sup> Peasants do not dance in bawdy fashion in the paintings of the Le Nain, but a few children gather around a musician and “lend an attentive ear to the simple music of

this naive flute.”<sup>21</sup> These children are serious, “almost grave.”<sup>22</sup> Quiet and “attentive,” “[they] do not want to trouble the rest of their grandfather who drinks.”<sup>23</sup> Along with men and women, children “smile gently, and through this smile pierces a sort of sadness.”<sup>24</sup> All this sadness and seriousness, Champfleury suggests, results from the conditions of rural living: “the work of the fields and a life constantly occupied cannot but lead to honest misery.”<sup>25</sup>

In Champfleury’s account, the people represented in the Le Nain’s paintings are exhausted, passive, resigned, and unsophisticated. Champfleury’s rhetoric permeated other contemporary accounts. Charles Blanc, responding to Champfleury’s championing of the Le Nain, included them in his *Histoire des peintres de tous les écoles*.<sup>26</sup> His entry on the brothers relies extensively upon Champfleury, but he does add his own insight in noting that the figures of the Le Nain are not in motion, but rather at rest, so humble and still that they do not even need to “tremble” (*gémissent*) when they ask for charity, because “one wants to give them [charity] without their even asking for it.”<sup>27</sup> Figures who do not tremble instead exhibit restful immobility: “their models are poor people; the characters that move on their canvases, or more so, that *rest* there, are men of the people” (my emphasis).<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Blanc does allow the peasants of the Le Nain a greater deal of acuity and social mobility than does Champfleury.<sup>29</sup> “Beneath the rags that cover them,” Banc notes, “the unfortunates of the Le Nain are full of health, intelligent and vivacious.”<sup>30</sup> Yet this description heavily qualifies the “health” and “intelligence” of the figures by calling them “unfortunates” and by emphasizing the layer of rags that must be peeled back before intelligence and vivacity emerge. As a rhetorical device, the coat of rags blunts and muffles the figures’ purported liveliness.

This characterization of peasant affect also had consequences for pictorial affect, the affective stance of the figure towards the pictorial event in which it finds itself. The most obvious similarity between the figures of the Le Nain and Manet’s little boy is the way that many of the Le Nain’s figures look at the viewer. Generally, a figure that looks at the viewer is read as expressing

sentience, awareness, a certain kind of representational *savoir-faire*. Leon Batista Alberti, for example, had counseled painters to include one figure that looked outwards at the viewer and pointed out those things in the work that were most interesting.<sup>31</sup> Yet if we take Champfleury's account of the figures' affect seriously, then for the figures of the Le Nain, this looking back suggests only a very deadened awareness of the pictorial process, as if the figures, exhausted, assume no agency in their visual appearance, having only dragged themselves, after a long day in the fields, into the presence of the painter. Rather than take interest in their own representation and its possible stakes, they submit to the painter, wishing, the whole time, that they could go to sleep. From their isolated position in the countryside, the peasants are naive to the meaning, and to the advantages, of representation. They do not know how to pose themselves in a flattering manner; they are denuded of pictorial sophistication.

In many cases, Champfleury's reading of affect in the paintings of the Le Nain seems forced. In *Old Piper*, for example, the painting that Reff has persuasively suggested as Manet's source for *The Old Musician*, two boys listening to the flute player look at the viewer (Figure 2).<sup>32</sup> The boy with the longer, wavy hair smiles engagingly, the taller boy, in a red cap, does not smile but nevertheless looks alert, one eyebrow even slightly raised in an expression of curiosity and interest. While an eighteenth-century print after the painting, which Champfleury knew, shows the taller boy with a somewhat more muted affect, his description of the work's paint-handling in his catalogue suggests that he had also seen the painting in person (Figure 5).<sup>33</sup> In both the print and painting, the little girls in either corner do seem rather "grave" and the old flute player plausibly exhausted, but the two boys are far more sentient and lively than allowed for in Champfleury's account of timid, tip-toeing children, afraid to disturb their weary grandfather.

These inconsistencies reflect the deterministic stance of Champfleury's views on the rural poor, as well as his inclination to identify an affect that would portray French peasants as politically

inoffensive. Characterizing peasants as simple souls, passive and fatigued, was one of the discursive tropes of Realism, particularly in the years after the failed Second Republic and Louis-Napoléon's coup d'état.<sup>34</sup> By the 1860s, when he published his second and third works on the Le Nain, Champfleury no longer saw Realism as an instrument of revolution, exposing the harsh conditions of rural life, but rather as the expression of "the timeless arts and ideas of the people."<sup>35</sup> Realism in this vein became a hymn to the popular and naive arts, which were in fact better served by keeping peasants in the countryside than by introducing them to the corrupting tendencies of the city. Tired and motionless peasants were not likely to try to change their lot in life, by rebellion or even by simple aspiration.<sup>36</sup> These "poor people" (*pauvre gens*) were also safely distant, both geographically, and, in the case of the Le Nain's peasants, temporally.<sup>37</sup> As a result, this kind of mythologizing erected a cordon sanitaire between the city and the countryside. The critics could look at the peasants, but the peasants were too tired to look back.

It is possible to read many of the affects ascribed to the figures of the Le Nain in Manet's little boy. It is possible to suggest, for example, that the boy looks, but does not see. He fixes his gaze on a spot past the viewer, as if he has been summoned to pose, but is too tired to look back. His shoulders are slumped, his expression serious. He is disengaged from the other figures, too exhausted even to acknowledge his friend's gesture of an arm thrown about the shoulders. He has more serious things on his mind: how to find food, his need for rest, the days of toil that await him. Thus he cannot find the energy to pose in any dandified fashion, to point one foot as if beginning a dance, in imitation of the rag-picker. Because of his fatigue, his interest in the pictorial process, his engagement with his appearance as it will be captured by the painter, is minimal. He surrenders his agency and just stands there. In fact, this figure more closely corresponds to the affect of Champfleury's description of the Le Nain's figures than some of the figures actually painted by the Le Nain, including the pair of little boys in *Old Piper*. In his slumped shoulders, vacant gaze, his too-

big white shirt and torn pants, the little boy in *The Old Musician* approximates Champfleury's characterization of peasant affect. Yet Manet continues to build up this texture of approximated affects by turning the figure of the little boy towards the winsome ironies of the eighteenth century.

### **A Mask Fine and Naive**

The boy's shoulders are slumped, but they are also set; one hand hangs loose, but the other is clenched. He is unaware of the pictorial process, yet he holds himself straight as if he is aware. These are a few of the doublings of this figure, which enable the figure to approximate a range of affects. On the side of an affect of intention and alertness lies Manet's other major figural citation: Watteau's figure of Pierrot. In 1860, Watteau's *Pierrot, dit Gilles*, was exhibited at the Galerie Martinet on the fashionable Boulevard des Italiens, in an exhibition devoted to the "École française ancienne."<sup>38</sup> The Galerie Martinet was one of the nodes of the art world during the early 1860s, when it staged historical as well as contemporary exhibitions. Manet exhibited there in 1861 and in 1863, when *The Old Musician* appeared alongside paintings like *Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume* and *Boy with a Sword*.<sup>39</sup> In 1860, *Pierrot, dit Gilles* elicited a good amount of commentary by critics who acknowledged the painting's unusual qualities: its large size and the corresponding largeness of its central figure, a naive character who did not usually perform a starring role.<sup>40</sup> The painting depicts the stock theatrical character Pierrot, a naive, clownish valet whose loose white tunic, long pants, and straw hat signal his origins in the rural peasantry.<sup>41</sup> In their responses to the paintings, the critics cast Pierrot as complacent and self-satisfied, but also as knowing – as aware that his idleness defied conventional expectations for pictorial activity.

In the reviews, the critics attribute two kinds of affect to Pierrot. On the one hand, he is triumphant but vacant, the center of attention, but content to do nothing more than stand still and enjoy the spotlight. For Léon Godard: "as for [Gilles], he does not look, he does not think, he lives,

and he is satisfied. [...] He is sure of himself, sure to please, because he pleases himself.”<sup>42</sup> (Several of the critics mistakenly refer to Watteau’s figure as “Gilles,” which was a generic name for a naive clown.) Théophile Gautier notes that Gilles seems conscious of the “apotheosis” Watteau has bestowed upon him, by painting him as if he were a hero of history painting, an “Achilles” or an “Ajax”: “one would say that this comic personage is conscious of this apotheosis, because he keeps very precisely to the exact center of the tableau.”<sup>43</sup> Paul de St. Victor (Paul Bin) speaks of triumph and transfiguration: “he takes pleasure in the radiant clarity which bathes him, which lifts him up, which seems to illuminate him from within.”<sup>44</sup> These characterizations waver between describing Pierrot as vacantly self-satisfied and Pierrot as more than vacant – as a fool, but a conscious fool. For Pierrot to bathe in the “radiant clarity” that Watteau shines upon him is to manifest a level of consciousness, an awareness that he is being pictured, and that the picturing is in some way luxuriant.

Several of the critics also ascribe a sly, ironic trickery to Pierrot. For Gautier, Gilles “looks at the viewer with this astonished and winking eye, half spiritual, half naive, his lips puckered in a sneering pout; nose to the wind, with the calm impertinence of a type on the outside, who has nothing else to do but trouble the action of the play with gags and tumbles.”<sup>45</sup> The Goncourts give Pierrot “a mocking look that seems to play dumb,” while “the eye is lively; the nose is a nose to the wind, artful and sly, the mouth is small, nicely arched, pinched at the corners; an irony and a joke seems to flutter on his lips and tickle them.”<sup>46</sup> From William Burger (Théophile Thoré): “Here is Pierrot in all his beauty, Pierrot in all his size [...] well at ease in his floating white costume, his face, malicious and smiling, framed by the halo of his soft hat.”<sup>47</sup> St. Victor characterizes Pierrot’s affect as a combination of both artfulness and naiveté: “what a comic life in this mask that is artful and silly, saucy and naive, placid and mocking!”<sup>48</sup> Given that Pierrot does nothing but appear and stand still, his ticklish irony and his calm impertinence must be read as generated by the consciousness that

by doing nothing, he is getting away with quite a lot. Namely, in his lily-like inactivity – St. Victor calls him “the lily of the scripture, [who] neither spins nor toils”<sup>49</sup> – Pierrot defies pictorial conventions that dictate that a figure of this size and prominence ought to be engaged in a meaningful activity. His ironic smile, directed at the viewer, suggests his complicity in exactly what Thoré-Burger declares: that “the subject means nothing in the arts [...] Watteau has the right to make a masterpiece out of a Gilles.”<sup>50</sup> According to the critics, Pierrot’s affect reveals his awareness that he is not an expected subject for a “masterpiece.” His affect then, is pictorial, in that he expresses an attitude of ironic duplicity towards the conventions of the image in which he appears.

In the little boy in *The Old Musician*, Manet clearly cites Watteau’s Pierrot through the round straw hat flipped back to frame a round, unsmiling face, the white blouse and the arms held close to the body, the oversize pants. Manet cites those features of Pierrot, including his awkwardness, his frontality, his plainness of dress, which had most conveyed the figure’s oddity as a choice of subject. Fried is right to point out that Manet must have done this in part in order to reassess the relationship between the Le Nain and Watteau, in particular to claim Watteau for the realist French tradition for which the Le Nain served as figureheads.<sup>51</sup> As important, however, was the way that the citation of Watteau complicates the figure’s affect, by suggesting that the inexpressive figure could also be read as wise to the ways of picturing. Manet’s figure does not smile or wink or appear tickled, but neither, in fact, does Watteau’s Pierrot. Like Watteau’s Pierrot, Manet’s little boy manifests consciousness in relation to the pictorial character that he presents, namely through the way that he appears stiff, embarrassed, and uncomfortable in his clothing. He has the rigid look of a teenager caught at the movies with his mother. His entire posture, an exaggerated performance of disinterest and nonchalance, suggests pained self-consciousness. The little boy’s self-awareness is not ironic, rather it is sulky, pouting, but it is nevertheless an expression of activity, of desire, of awareness that he is being pictured. The previous affect, of Champfleury’s exhausted peasant child, has not

disappeared. Rather, the additional citation of Watteau's Pierrot elucidates the plurality of the figure's affect, in that he is both vacant with fatigue yet also, at the same time, hyper-aware of the fact that he is posing in order to be seen. Manet allows him to be both.

Manet re-worked the affect of the little boy's inexpression in order to articulate his [Manet's] turn away from previous manifestations of Realism.<sup>52</sup> In particular, he manifests his ambivalent commitment to Champfleury's depiction of rural figures as too exhausted to attend to the process and the stakes of pictorial instantiation. Manet wants his figures to manifest pictorial consciousness, because his Realism aims to stage encounters between the painted subject and the viewing subject, and thus, in this particular case, between the poor child and the (privileged) urban viewer. The citation of Watteau's Pierrot presents the possibility of duplicity and irony as concomitants to a figure's pictorial awareness, in the sense of a figure's ability to pretend to ignorance and naiveté – to *faire la bête*. This is true, the re-working of the Le Nain citation implies, regardless of the class of the figure. Manet was perhaps the first nineteenth-century French painter to understand that visual duplicity was an equal opportunity endeavor. The poor could masquerade as well as the rich. In a painting like *The Old Musician*, overloaded with recognizable types, with citations from the art of the past as well as citations from a mythologized repertoire of urban types – ragpickers, gypsies, street children or *gamins* – Manet places a figure who inhabits the appearance of his type with a tortured wink of adolescent protest. Thus he suggests that Realism, or at least his kind of Realism, trades not in ethnographic characterization, but in typological dissimulations and approximations, the currencies of urban life.<sup>53</sup>

### **Encounters with the Other Side**

Many of Manet's pictorial interests, in modernity, in duplicity, in identity as a complex texture of performance and cosmetic, were shared by the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire.<sup>54</sup> In

1862, Manet and Baudelaire saw each other and conversed on a regular basis.<sup>55</sup> It is no surprise, in this light, that Baudelaire's contemporary work offers the representation of a figure whose affect illuminates some of the oddities and ambivalences of Manet's little boy. Baudelaire's figure was also a child: a child looking raptly at the city. This child, no matter his class, is filled with wonder by the visual spectacle of modernity. As Baudelaire suggests, the child is innately adapted to the conditions of spectacle, because the child's imagination is content with fleeting aspects and quick glimpses, which the child uses as the fragmentary foundation for imagining wholes. The child does not need to hold or touch things, he only needs to see. As a result, the child structures his existence around an economy of visual delight, to which he desires his own existence to conform. The child wants to become as spectacular as the sights that ravish him. Looked at alongside Baudelaire's description of childish wonder, the affect of Manet's little boy moves from pictorial consciousness towards the expression of desire for pictorial life.

Manet's little boy looks at something, and this looking has made him still, immobile. Baudelaire also described immobile children, ones who were occupied with gazing at fantastic, colorful, glittering things. In a famous passage in *The Painter of Modern Life*, a little boy watches his father get dressed:

It is by this deep and joyful curiosity that we may explain the fixed and animally ecstatic gaze of a child confronted with something new, whatever it be, whether a face or a landscape, gilding, colors, shimmering stuffs, or the magic of physical beauty assisted by the cosmetic art. A friend of mine once told me that when he was quite a small child, he used to be present when his father dressed in the mornings, and that it was with a mixture of amazement and delight that he used to study the muscles of his arms, the gradual transitions of pink and yellow in his skin, and the bluish network of his veins. The picture of external

life was already filling him with awe and taking hold of his brain.<sup>56</sup> (Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne [London: Phaidon, 1964], 8)

The child's gaze is "fixed and animally ecstatic" and it gravitates towards flashy, ornate surfaces and beautiful colors. Baudelaire emphasizes the child's tendency to be amazed by cosmetic simulations rather than nature; the child is impressed by "*the picture* of external life" (my emphasis), by life translated into representation.<sup>57</sup> The child prefers landscape to nature, cosmetic beauty to natural beauty, gilding to gold. This particular child, Baudelaire indicates, goes on to become a painter. The sight of the father's muscles and veins does not arouse an interest in anatomy – the child does not become a doctor. Instead, the child fixates on recreating the colorful aspect of his father's arms.<sup>58</sup> He emulates the visual experience rather than the thing itself. By choosing to become a painter, the adult remains childlike, prioritizing fantastic visual experience over tactile realities.

In the short essay, first published in 1853, "Morale du Joujou," Baudelaire explores in greater detail the child's visual apprehension of the world.<sup>59</sup> The narrator describes two spectacles of toys, the *féérique* spectacle of the room filled with toys at the house of Madame Panckoucke, and the window display of a toy store, through which the narrator (now an adult) "walks his eyes."<sup>60</sup> The ocular landscape of the toy store, with its "blinding burst of colors," its bizarre and fantastic shapes, "so perfectly represents childhood's ideas on beauty."<sup>61</sup> The child's imaginative aptitude is such that there is no difference for him between a perfectly mimetic toy, like a porcelain doll, and the "primitive" and inexpensive toy, like the "the flat polichinelle, moved by a single string," which is "an image as approximating as possible with elements as simple as possible, as cheap as possible [...]."<sup>62</sup> The "flat polichinelle" is the simple kind of toy that tends to belong to poor children, Yet these "approximating" or "approximative" images create no "less reality in the spirit of the child"<sup>63</sup> than a more expensive toy:

This ability to content the imagination attests to the spirituality of childhood in its artistic conceptions. The toy is the first initiation of the child to art, or more so it is for him the first realization, and, a riper age achieved, perfected realizations will not give his soul the same warmth, nor the same enthusiasm, nor the same faith.<sup>64</sup> (Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 583)

For the child, visual experience is sufficiently arousing, and from a few sketchy marks, from a few glimpses of a crinoline wafting by on the Boulevard, the child's imagination constructs an entire world. From a single wooden polichinelle, an entire circus could be born. Manet appreciated exactly this kind of artistic capacity. Several times, Manet used a polichinelle as a playful form of self-portrait, which suggests a possible allusion to Baudelaire's "primitive" "polichinelle plat, moved by a single string," the inexpensive toy of the poor child.<sup>65</sup>

For Baudelaire, a poor child was forced to become even more capable of imaginative play than a rich one. Obligated to remain on the other side of the toy store's glass, the poor child developed a heightened ability to play with the visual aspect of things he could not touch. Indeed, one of the particular features of the modern city was the way that the poor child was suddenly introduced to a huge range of visual stimuli, none of which he could possess, but none of which he would have even seen in the countryside. The child's creativity, but also his desire, was heightened by such encounters.

This kind of encounter is the theme of "Les Yeux des Pauvres," a prose poem in *Le Spleen de Paris*, written by 1862, but unpublished until 1869.<sup>66</sup> In this poem, Baudelaire presents an impoverished family stumbling upon a spectacle of Parisian luxury. In this set-up, Baudelaire plucks the Le Nain's peasant from his miserable, honest hearth and drops him down in the middle of the

city. As the narrator and his girlfriend relax at a “sparkling” new café, a poor family stops in front of the café and gazes at the spectacle of gas lights, gilded mirrors, expensively-dressed women, and decorative statues offering plates of fruit, game, and pâté.<sup>67</sup> Baudelaire’s description of the café emphasizes color, surface, and light, “the walls blinding with whiteness, the tablecloths dazzling in the mirrors, the golds of the railings and cornices,” all the elements that contribute to the brilliance of the visual spectacle, which is the only thing the poor family, clothed in rags and composed of a father, an infant, and a *petit garçon*, is able to consume.<sup>68</sup> While the family stares at the café, the narrator stares at the family and observes the serious, fixed gazes of all three family members. “These three faces were extraordinarily serious, and these six eyes contemplated fixedly the new café [...]”<sup>69</sup> The father is impressed, but he is also “tired” (*fatigué*) having already moved, with age, towards the somnolence that Champfleury ascribes to the figures of the Le Nain. The eyes of the little boy, however, exclaim: “How beautiful it is! How beautiful! But this is a place where the only people allowed to enter are those that are not like us.”<sup>70</sup>

Of all three members of the family, it is the middle child, likely about the age of Manet’s Pierrot, who considers what it would mean to try to participate in what he sees. His admiration veers towards hostility and resentment, but the fixed and focused manner of his looking has immobilized him. The narrator is deeply moved, but his mistress, annoyed, cries: “Those people are intolerable to me with their eyes open like *portes cochères!*”<sup>71</sup> The mistress reads the family’s affect as open, empty, blank. Yet this blankness corresponds to the fact that these eyes, which have nothing of what they see, have become avid screens, which attempt to record every bit of the spectacle. It is a blankness that approaches, that pushes forward as evidence of desire.

This characterization suggests another way to read the fixed, serious stare of Manet’s Pierrot. The figure bears the affect of Baudelaire’s staring child, a little angry, a little bitter, but overall still desirous. His body is rigid not with fatigue, but with concentration, as he looks, not at the viewer

who critically examines his raggedy attire, but at the spectacle of the Boulevard. While his right hand is relaxed, his left draws itself into a fist, as it picks tensely at a crease in his pants. His lips press into a small, hard, line. His arms press against his sides, his shoulders are not slumped, but rigid. There is determination, desire, and also the bitter knowledge of not being 'like them.' His lack of expression, which might have been read as blankness, signals an avid openness to that which he absorbs visually.

This reading of the boy's affect is supported by what inferences are possible about the situation of the figures of *The Old Musician* on this odd patch of dusty earth. Iconographic investigations have identified the model for the 'Old Musician' as Jean Lagrène, a 'gypsy' who lived in the Batignolles, a district to the east of the Gare Saint-Lazare, where Manet had just taken a studio.<sup>72</sup> The man wearing the incongruous combination of a tattered brown cape and a top hat was perhaps based on the rag-picker Collardet, whose figure Manet cites from his own, earlier canvas, *The Absinthe Drinker*, which was rejected from the Salon in 1859.<sup>73</sup> Ragpickers and gypsies both lived in "Little Poland," a shantytown in the Batignolles.<sup>74</sup> In 1861, Little Poland was 'pierced' by the Boulevard Malesherbes, one of the Baron Haussmann's new radial avenues, which ran from the church of the Madeleine in central Paris to the old fortifications.<sup>75</sup> Even after the piercing, however, maps show the area around the Boulevard Malesherbes as sparsely settled.<sup>76</sup> These figures, perhaps, gathered in the ruins of Little Poland, are poised on the edge of the Boulevard, with its straight shot to the heart of fashionable Paris.<sup>77</sup> Picking absently at his pants legs, "animally ecstatic," Manet's little boy gazes at the boulevard.

In this group of texts, Baudelaire identifies the child as the serious consumer of the spectacular aspect of modernity. The fixed immobility of his pose reflects the focused, studious character of his looking. In that the affective set expresses an attitude towards the world, it also constitutes an expression of judgment.<sup>78</sup> This frozen figure, so stiffly concentrated, conveys a judgment of rapture. Yet the child's affect is multiple, divided between his face, which looks at the

boulevard in the distance, and the orientation of his body, which faces the pictorial surface, the viewer, and the painter. Champfleury might have read this frontal pose as an expression of pictorial innocence, in that the child does not know how to comport himself suavely. In light of Baudelaire's description of a child's rapt affect, however, this pose can also be read as a demonstration of pictorial awareness and pictorial commitment. The pose is not elegant, but it is a pose intentionally struck, an acknowledgment of the fact of being pictured. The child's pose acknowledges that like the spectacular world he admires and studies, he too presents a visual aspect. Thus he grudgingly, but knowingly, offers himself as a surface to be pictured, while his eyes look elsewhere.

### **Approximations of Life**

Through his citation of art historical precedents and contemporary *belles lettres* texts, Manet wove a texture of affective possibilities for his little figure. The figure's pose and costume approximate affects of honest fatigue, of pictorial self-consciousness, and of rapt, bitterly desirous looking. Manet had descriptions of these affects at his fingertips, in the form of texts written by his friends and as reviews of the exhibition at the same gallery where he exhibited. He created a figure who could be read as inhabiting a range of possible affects, a figure that was just open enough to approximate different affects, and just closed enough to never resolve into a single expression. However, through the larger composition and iconography of *Old Musician*, Manet does gesture towards moral assessment. Manet does not whole-heartedly endorse his little Pierrot's appreciation of spectacle as the currency of experience. In the way that Manet paints his figure, in the way that he situates his figure amongst other figures, he critically evaluates the object of the boy's desire.

As a creature of urban spectacle, the little boy wants to look at brilliant, bizarre surfaces, simple approximations from which he can weave a rich imaginative tapestry. In the National Gallery, where *The Old Musician* hangs, the little boy can look at just such a surface in the form of another

painting by Manet, *Masked Ball at the Opera*, a far smaller canvas that shows the Paris opera, the seats cleared for a ball, densely packed with men in dark evening dress (Figure 6).<sup>79</sup> This painting epitomizes Manet's ability to both glamorize and critique the world he painted. The crowd glistens in elegant black, punctuated by the glossy cylinders of the top hats, the triangles of freshly pressed white shirts. The dark mass is broken by flashes of color, mostly worn or carried by women: at the far left edge, a woman's hat decorated with red and green ribbons, a *grisette* wearing bright blue silk culottes fringed in gold and tied with a red sash, an orange supported by a woman's gloved hand, a v-shaped patch of a woman in a rose and gold jacket. Manet has rendered the crowd as almost a single surface, the undulating outer wall of a snaking mass; bodies do not emerge from the crowd, only patches of color that flicker like reflections on a surface. Manet paints the ball at the opera like a toy-maker constructing his flat polichinelle – by creating “an image as approximative as possible [...]”<sup>80</sup> Thus Manet includes in *Masked Ball at the Opera* a vivid red and green polichinelle, cropped in half by the left edge of the frame, his leg splayed and arm raised in a gesture that mimics the jumping-jack movement of a toy pulled by a string.<sup>81</sup> The polichinelle, “joujou primitif,” stands as the figural guardian of a “primitive” world of approximation, suited to the naive ecstasy of a child.<sup>82</sup>

Under close scrutiny, however, all the glamor falls away, the floor is littered with crumpled bits of paper, a dance card, a discarded mask, the crowd is hot, faces flushed with drink, hands reaching where they should not. Manet performs and then deconstructs the child's imaginative process: first the transformation of approximating elements into a fabulous image, a brilliant enamel patchwork, then its dissolution into a picture of shabbiness. Looked at just a little bit differently, or a little bit longer, the approximative image bares the poverty of its elements. Thus *Masked Ball at the Opera* is both a tribute to and an admonition of the child's way of looking. By first seducing and then disillusioning, by moving constantly back and forth between glamour and grit, the painting reads as resolutely ambivalent in relationship to its subject.

In *Old Musician*, the boy's fixed and ecstatic gaze, while it rouses him from apathy and animates him with desire, also leads to a perilous kind of existence. Manet paints this fragility into the boy's figure through the deeply approximative fashion in which he represents him. Manet accomplishes this visual approximation through two means. The first is his way of painting, whereby the dark grey streaks that cover the boy's shirt and pants allude simultaneously to dirt, to shadows, and to creases in fabric. Beneath the knot of fabric with which he holds up his too big pants, resides the most striking of these brownish grey patches, an irregular oval with a pointed tip, a visual bruise. Below, on right leg of the pants, another bruise, lighter in color, but punctuated at its base by two narrow, darker lines, which form a "V" shape, pointing towards the ground, which is the overall direction of this sagging assemblage. Manet only lightly illuminates the separation of the pants legs below the knees. The viewer must look hard to perceive the boy's legs as slightly bow-legged, bending outwards to reveal a lighter patch of earth. Otherwise, the boy's pants resembles a burlap sack, which the artist has cast over the figure, not bothering to delineate the legs. Just above the right arm-pit, three short dashes of grey paint: again, these marks could represent a series of small creases in the fabric or three small tears. On his left-shoe, a blob of dark black – where Pierrot's pink ribbons were – stands up strangely, yet without indicating what it is. Along the left-side of his cheek, a curving stroke of brown falls like a greasy lock of hair, a smear of dirt, or simply a shadow, making this round face appear, in certain lights, gaunt. These details emerge under scrutiny. Few viewers would mistake this figure for something glamorous, akin to the flashy figures at Manet's masked ball (although this is not to forget that these figures themselves "flash" between glamor and grubbiness). Yet, by a stretch of imagination, which the painting's citation forces us to make, the figure is also Watteau's Pierrot, who is considerably more richly attired. By the same process that the figures at the masked ball are taken, at first, for authentic specimens of splendor, Manet's little boy is taken for Watteau's Pierrot.

In addition to painting in the approximative manner, Manet includes in the painting a reference to one of the approximative social practices of urban life. This is the rag-picker in his tattered brown cape and top hat, sitting, or rather floating, on a ledge of grass on the right-hand side of the canvas.<sup>83</sup> Rag-picking has been frequently evoked in descriptions of the character of modernity; it has a suggestive relationship to modern urbanity, in that it was both an industry that thrived in the city and in that its practice lends itself towards metonymical poetics, since a ragpicker harvests not wholes, but only bits and pieces.<sup>84</sup> Rag-picking was a healthy industry in nineteenth-century Paris. In addition to the men and women who rifled through Parisian trash bins at night, putting their findings into great baskets or sacks worn on their backs, rag-picking also included sizeable 'ateliers,' where workers sorted through the piles of cloth, paper, and scrap metal.<sup>85</sup> It is clothes, the fruits of the rag-picker's labor, that serve as the medium of approximation in *The Old Musician*. The girl holding the baby wears a tattered blue skirt; the hem of the musician's cape, the absinthe drinker's *serape*, and the coat of the 'Wandering Jew' are all frayed. Yet these tattered clothes are not the plain clothes of peasants. The girl's skirt, painted in a spectrum of blues, aquas, and greens, could be made of layers of transparent tulle. The speckled scarf of the 'Wandering Jew' also presents a complexity of ornament that points towards the urban bazaar and readymade, patterned fabrics. Finally, the rag-picker's top hat has been lifted from one of the denizens of the *Masked Ball at the Opera* or the fashionable Tuileries (it could be a direct transfer from the mass of top hats included in Manet's contemporary painting, *Music in the Tuileries*). The rag-picker is the artist behind these touches of pattern and color, which ornament the tones of homespun plainness and which distinguish Manet's palette from that of the Le Nain. The ragpicker brings to this muddy outpost and its inhabitants the tattered scraps of a glittering world and allows them to assemble surfaces for themselves that approximate the picturesque, the canonical (figures of Watteau, of the Le Nain, of Velazquez).

Thus Manet's little boy practices, already, in his own surface, approximation as a medium of pictorial life. He is triumphant, because he has received a costume in which he can successfully approximate a figure who is far more richly dressed. His figure troubles, however, in that this approximation takes pains to advertise all its shortcomings. Its indeterminacies – bruise, crease, grease – are lively and assertive. This get-up is an approximation of what clothes, in the world to which the little boy aspires, are supposed to be – well-fitted, flattering envelopes for the body. There are moments when it feels like a cruel gesture on Manet's part, the gift of a costume that both elevates and shames its subject. This is especially cruel given the evident pictorial intention that the little boy expresses. He has taken pains to arrange his clothes, to tuck his shirt into his pants and to gather his pants by tying them into a knot at his waist. There is a world poignancy in this lump of cloth, which he presses to his side with his arm, as if he is still afraid his pants will not stay up. His sleeves, as well, are too long and threaten to slide over his wrists and hide his hands (a traditional feature of Pierrot's costume), so he holds his arms tightly at his sides, maintaining both pants and sleeves against gravity's downward slouch. He seems to want to hold himself still against the flimsiness of his surface, against its threat to flutter away, to fall back into rags. Despite his manifest desire to be anywhere but this patch of earth, the little boy is nevertheless careful of his appearance, as if he knows that without this rude approximation of clothing, he would possess no pictorial surface at all, no virtual presence.

### **The Soul in Rags**

Raphael, as pure as he is, is a material spirit ceaselessly searching for the solid; but that bugger Rembrandt is a powerful idealist who makes one dream and guess at what is beyond.

The former composes creatures in an untouched and virginal state – Adam and Eve; - but

the latter shakes his rags before our eyes and tells us of human suffering.<sup>86</sup> (Baudelaire, “Salon de 1846,” *Oeuvres complètes*, 2:421)

The child begins with an instinctual faith in the sufficiency of the surface. Yet as Baudelaire acknowledges, there comes a moment when many children decide to tear open a toy in search of its “soul.” In the throes of this “first metaphysical tendency,” the child rips open the toy and finds nothing, no ‘inside.’ He cries: “but *where is the soul?*”<sup>87</sup> The “metaphysical” tendency evinces a depth model of existence: the belief that something must lie beneath the surface. Baudelaire does not pass judgment on the child’s desire to find the soul of his toy, yet his admiration for the child’s instinctual faith in approximations suggests that the metaphysical path is not always desirable.<sup>88</sup> Painting, like the toy, like the flat polichinelle, has no inside. A child who tried to rip open a painting would also find nothing. Again, Manet builds this ontological superficiality into his figure of the little boy. The boy’s pants are closed by way of flaps overlapping cloth. Manet renders this area evasively. The pants are not quite closed, but it is not completely clear what they open upon. Where the two pieces of fabric do not quite meet below the waist, Manet offers a long, narrow strip of gray, bracketed on either side by his characteristic dark, signboard-like outlines. This gray, perhaps, represents the tails of the too-big shirt, which has been tucked into the pants. Thus the open breech reveals nothing but more fabric. No body, no inside, and finally, no gender awaits, only another layer of fabric. So much for Charles Blanc’s belief that “beneath the rags that cover them, the unfortunates of the Le Nain are full of health, intelligent and vivacious.”<sup>89</sup> Manet, instead, paints a figure whose rags, like the paint out of which the rags are made, have nothing underneath.

While his figure might face forwards, this little Pierrot’s affect is anything but straightforward. Rather, it is layered and patched and constantly shifting, torn between the flimsiness of the costume and the determined set of the mouth and gaze. At different moments, he is all of the

things I have described: naive and innocent, sullen and envious, enraptured and desirous. As a painter, Manet specialized in such complex, constantly changing affects, which reflected the flickering, apparitional nature of modern visuality. As such, the modern affect emerges in relationship to pictorial self-consciousness, reflecting a sense of life as something constantly in the process of picturing itself, being pictured, and showing itself as a picture. All the little boy's affects have something to do with the pictorial process. Affect manifests as a set towards the world, a statement of oneself in relationship to others, a platform through which interaction is performed. The affect of Manet's little boy is set towards painting and what it offers him, from the colorful and radiant spectacle of a painted canvas to the painted surface upon which he appears, a surface that will bear him into the spectacle he so admires.

In the light of a painting like *The Old Musician*, Manet's taste for the febrile, heady stimulation of shifting appearances can be summarized by Baudelaire's praise of "rag-shaking." As Baudelaire suggests in his *Salon de 1846*, Raphael, "material spirit ceaselessly seeking the solid," is infinitely less modern than Rembrandt, who "shakes his rags before our eyes."<sup>90</sup> Rag-shaking expresses all the pride, vividness, and dynamism of a visuality of rags, of a pictorial world in agitated motion, of an insistent vehemence that maintains that rags tell a story of their own – nothing less than "human suffering" – and thus that they must be shown, not hidden. Manet's little boy, finally, is a rag-shaker, another version of the poor child in "Morale du Joujou," who "shakes, agitates, and rattles" his caged rat before the astonished and entranced eyes of a bourgeois child.<sup>91</sup> Manet's little boy shakes his rags in the intention with which he presents his raggedy garments to the viewer; he shakes through his affects layered like rags, shaking through the innocence of the Le Nain and the insouciance of Pierrot to arrive at the rapture of the *gamin*; he shakes with desire for what he sees in the metropolis of rags.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is George Mauner's observation. George Mauner, *Manet, Peintre-Philosophe: A Study of the Painter's Themes* (State Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Aside from Michael Fried's lengthy account and Theodore Reff's response, which will be considered in detail below, *The Old Musician* has received surprisingly little attention in Manet scholarship. On the iconography, see Mauner, *Manet, Peintre-Philosophe*, 46-78; Marilyn R. Brown, "Manet's 'Old Musician': Portrait of a Gypsy and Naturalist Allegory," *Studies in the History of Art* 8 (1978): 77-87; Anne Coffin Hanson, "Popular imagery and the work of Édouard Manet," in *French 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting and Literature, with special reference to the relevance of literary subject-matter to French painting*, ed. Ulrich Finke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), 133-163; Alain de Leiris, "Guérault and Chrysippos," *The Art Bulletin* 46, no. 3 (September 1964): 401-04. For a short account of the painting's composition, see Alan Bowness, "A Note on 'Manet's Compositional Difficulties,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 103, no. 699 (June 1961): 276-77.

<sup>3</sup> Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> On these canons and their use in the doctrine of France's Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture see Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 9-30.

<sup>5</sup> Affect should not be confused with *affetti*, which was a phrase used in seventeenth-century art theory to describe facial and gestural formulas for the representation of emotions, particularly those

---

used to illustrate history paintings. See the discussion in Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), 23-63.

<sup>6</sup> On the inter-subjective character of affect, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 23-45. See also Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 25-7. The contemporary upsurge of interest in affect is divided into two camps, those who follow the foundational work of Silvan Tomkins in pursuing a phenomenological and at times a neurological description of what affect is and literary and cultural theorists who use affect as a way to describe emotional structures of social expectations and their interaction with literary genres and political formations. For the former, see Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 4 vols. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1963). For the latter see the work of Lauren Berlant, especially Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick does both: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> For one approach to the expressive possibility of inexpression, see Lauren Berlant, “Structures of Unfeeling: *Mysterious Skin*,” *International Journals of Politics Culture and Society* 28 (2015): 191-213. Carol Armstrong has considered the pose in Manet’s figures as an index of the relationship of Manet’s figures to the studio. For a figure to pose is to reveal the studio practice (and studio play) that is the heart of her reading of Manet’s work. Carol Armstrong, “To Paint, To Point, To Pose,” in *Manet’s Le Dejeuner Sur l’Herbe*, ed. Paul Hayes Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 90-118.

<sup>8</sup> When scholars attribute affect to Manet’s figures, the consensus is generally that the figures express an affect of alienation, detachment, or blasé. T.J. Clark describes the affect of the barmaid in *Bar at the Folies Bergère* as “blasé” in the sense meant by Georg Simmel, as “impassive, not bored, not tired, not disdainful, not quite focused on anything.” T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of*

---

*Manet and his Followers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 253. This impassivity is assumed in order to conceal legible signs of class. For Simmel's characterization of blasé, see Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. Richard Sennett (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 47-60. Michael Fried reads the inexpression of Manet's figures as a by-product of Manet's effort to achieve an effect of "instantaneousness of seeing." Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 296-302.

<sup>9</sup> Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 23-135, 28-34 on the little boy in *The Old Musician*. This essay, "Manet's Sources," was originally published in *Artforum* in 1969. The initial publication of this essay garnered contesting response from Theodore Reff, "On 'Manet's Sources,'" *Artforum* 8, no. 1 (September 1969): 40-8. Carol Armstrong has offered another reading of the citations *The Old Musician*, arguing that Manet uses the painting as a kind of self-portrait of self-dispersion, inconsistency, and "the gypsy principle of his own personal museum." Carol Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 17-21.

<sup>10</sup> The approximation of affective expressions goes hand in hand with the way that Manet's style of painting characterizes inconsistently, unevenly, and changeably. Armstrong, "To Paint, To Point, To Pose,"<sup>112</sup> "Identity-as-alterity" and painted identities as always plural are recurrent themes in Carol Armstrong's discussions of Manet.

<sup>11</sup> A significant exception is Eve Meltzer, *Systems we have loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). For a testament to the very diverse understanding of affect within the world of art history, see discussions in James Elkins and Harper Montgomery, eds. *Beyond the Aesthetic and the Anti-Aesthetic* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 91-108.

---

<sup>12</sup> This is not in the least an attempt to examine what the painting makes its viewers feel. For an argument against the value of considering what painting makes viewers feel, see Todd Cronan, *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Meltzoff, "The Revival of the Le Nains," *The Art Bulletin* 24, no. 3 (September 1942): 259-86.

<sup>14</sup> On this relationship, including the dynamic with Courbet, see Therese Dolan, *Manet, Wagner, and the Musical Culture of their Time* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 103-44.

<sup>15</sup> Champfleury, *Essai sur la vie et l'oeuvre des Le Nain, peintres laonnois* (Laon: Imprimerie de Éd. Fleury et Ad. Chevergny, 1850); Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité sous Louis XIII, les frères Le Nain* (Paris: Renouard, 1862); Champfleury, *Documents positifs sur la vie des frères Le Nain* (Paris: J. Claye, 1865). On Champfleury's life and literary career see Émile Bouvier, *La Bataille Réaliste* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973). On Champfleury's interests in popular art forms, including faience and Épinal prints, see Luce Abélès and Geneviève Lacambre, eds. *Champfleury: L'art pour le peuple* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> On the Le Nain see the recent exhibition catalogue: C.D. Dickerson and Esther Bell, *The Brothers Le Nain: Painters of Seventeenth-Century France* (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2016). See also Jacques Thuillier and Michel Laclotte, *Les frères Le Nain* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1978). As Jacques Thuillier has argued, the "Realism" of the Le Nain marked a continuation of an "uninterrupted tradition" of peasant subjects, which the Le Nain interpreted in a compassionate, spiritual manner. Jacques Thuillier, "Histoire de la création artistique en France: Les Frères Le Nain et l'inspiration réaliste à Paris au temps de Louis XIII et de Mazarin," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 79 (1979): 649-76.

---

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Thuillier, "Histoire de la création artistique en France," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 78 (1978): 730-42. Nevertheless, all three brothers were early members of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, although Antoine and Louis died a few months after joining.

<sup>18</sup> As Sara Pappas has recently pointed out, Champfleury's Realism had several different characters, which he pieced together into a "quilt like tapestry of styles." Sara Pappas, "The Lessons of Champfleury," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 42, nos. 1-2 (Fall-Winter 2013-14): 51-73. Clark has pointed out Champfleury's inconsistencies as a Realist who was deeply disturbed by the behavior of the Revolutionaries in 1848. T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, (1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 53-69.

<sup>19</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 10-11: "burlesques, un peu farces," "un repas grossier." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. Yet the figures were not actually "peasants." See Neil MacGregor, "The Le Nain Brothers and Changes in French Rural Life," *Art History* 2, no. 4 (1979): 401-12. MacGregor points out that the peasants in the Le Nain's paintings are in fact quite well off, well-clothed and fed. He suggests that they were the prosperous tenants of farms owned by rich urban bourgeois.

<sup>20</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 11: "une partie de ses forces dépensées au travail."

<sup>21</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 11: "prêtent une oreille attentive à la musique simple qui sort de cette flûte naïve."

<sup>22</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 11: "presque graves."

<sup>23</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 11: "[ils] ne veulent pas troubler le repos du grand-père qui boit."

<sup>24</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 11: "sourient doucement, et à travers ce sourire perce une sorte de tristesse."

---

<sup>25</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 12: “le travail des champs et une vie constamment occupée ne peuvent mener qu’à une honnête misère.”

<sup>26</sup> Charles Blanc, *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles: école française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Rénouard, 1865), 1:3 (each section devoted to an artist is individually paginated).

<sup>27</sup> Blanc, *Histoire des peintres*, 1:3: “on voudrait faire [l’aumône] sans qu’ils la demandent.”

<sup>28</sup> Blanc, *Histoire des peintres*, 1:3: “leurs modèles sont des pauvres; les personnages qui se meuvent sur leurs toiles, ou plutôt qui s’y reposent, sont des hommes du peuple.”

<sup>29</sup> Blanc forecasts that these solid peasants will appear a century later in the work of Chardin, another painter of quietness.

<sup>30</sup> Blanc, *Histoire des peintres*, 6: “sous les haillons qui les couvrent, les malheureux de Le Nain sont pleins de santé, intelligents et vivaces.”

<sup>31</sup> Leon Batista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (1956; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 78. This figure, with “an angry face and flashing eyes,” could also warn viewers away from the painting.

<sup>32</sup> Reff, “Manet’s Sources,” 43. Fried had suggested a different painting, the *Halte du Cavalier*, as a source for *Old Musician*. Fried, *Manet’s Sources*, 30-5. Reff’s alternative does seem more plausible, since the *Halte du Cavalier* does not seem to have been known to Champfleury or other amateurs at the time.

<sup>33</sup> Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité*, 95. He lists the title of the painting as *Enfants écoutant un joueur de flûte*. The painting was in the collection at Stafford House in London. Champfleury admires the “excellent empâtement et le puissant coloris,” which suggests an in-person viewing. He also notes the mezzotint after the painting, *Le Flûteur village*, by John Young, published in 1825 (100). He lists the print reproduced here, “gravé par Saint-Maurice,” under a different title, as “*Un père de famille*,”

---

but the description and the attribution to Saint-Maurice indicate that it is the same work (118). An etching after this print was published in Champfleury's *Les Enfants* in 1873.

<sup>34</sup> Meyer Schapiro has noted the growing conservatism of Champfleury's Realism. Meyer Schapiro, "Courbet and Popular Imagery: An Essay on Realism and Naïveté," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4, no. 3/4 (April 1941-July 1942): 164-91. On the always tenuous relationship between Realism as an aesthetic and radical politics, see Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (1971; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 45-50.

<sup>35</sup> Schapiro, "Realism and Naïveté," 188.

<sup>36</sup> On attributes like simplicity, timelessness and primitivism as used to characterize French peasants after the Second Republic, see Robert L. Herbert, *From Millet to Léger: Essays in Social Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 24-40, 50-6. Herbert also discusses urban anxiety about the status of the peasantry.

<sup>37</sup> The desire to maintain or to imagine a distance between the inhabitants of the provinces and Paris is one of the theses of Clark's account of the reception of Gustave Courbet's paintings during the Second Republic. Clark, *Image of the People*, 121-54. Courbet's paintings proved particularly threatening in that they represented the true social complexity of rural demographics, by showing more *petit bourgeois* than peasants.

<sup>38</sup> "Exposition de tableaux de l'école française ancienne, tirés de collections d'amateurs," cat. no. 269. At the time, *Pierrot, dit Gilles* was in the collection of Louis La Caze, who lent it to the exhibition. After his death in 1870, the entire collection went to the Louvre. See Guillaume Faroult and Sophie Eloy, *La collection La Caze: chefs d'oeuvre des peintures des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> He would also have a major retrospective at Martinet's in 1867. On the exhibition of 1863, in particular Manet's exploration of "Spanishicity," see Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 99-133. On the

---

critical response to the exhibition, George Hamilton Heard, *Manet and His Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 38-40. The exhibition, which included the works of other contemporary French painters, was reviewed in major periodicals, but Manet received very little notice. *The Old Musician* is not mentioned.

<sup>40</sup> The painting had also been exhibited in 1846, but it was not widely commented upon. On the early history of the painting, before and after it appeared in early nineteenth-century Paris in the collection of Dominique Vivant Denon, see Marika Takanishi Knowles, “Pierrot’s Silence,” *Silence. Schweigen. Über die stumme Praxis der Kunst*, ed. Andreas Beyer and Laurent Le Bon (Paris: Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, 2015), 133-46.

<sup>41</sup> For a history of Pierrot as a theatrical and literary character, see Robert Storey, *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978). On Watteau’s painting of Pierrot and its dissemination, see Judy Sund, “Why so Sad? Watteau’s Pierrots,” *Art Bulletin* 98, no. 3 (September 2016): 321-47.

<sup>42</sup> Léon Godard, “L’École Française du Dix-Huitième Siècle,” *Les Beaux Arts Revue Nouvelle*, August 15, 1860: “quant à [Gilles], il ne regarde pas, il ne pense pas, il vit, et le voilà satisfait. [...] Il est sûr de lui, sûr de plaire, car il se plaît à lui-même.”

<sup>43</sup> Théophile Gautier, “Exposition du Boulevard Italien: Ancienne École Française,” *Le Moniteur Universel*, September 5, 1860: “on dirait que le drôle a la conscience de cette apothèse, car il garde bien précisément le milieu du tableau.”

<sup>44</sup> Paul de St. Victor, “Exposition de Tableaux Anciens,” *La Presse*, August 14, 1860: “il se complait dans la clarté rayonnante qui le baigne, qui le soulève, qui semble l’illuminer en dedans.”

<sup>45</sup> Gautier, “Exposition du Boulevard Italien”: “regarde le spectateur de cet oeil étonné et clignant, moitié spirituel, moitié niais, la bouche plissée par une moue ricaneuse; le nez au vent, avec

---

l'impertinence calme d'un type en dehors, qui n'a rien autre à faire qu'à troubler l'action des pièces par des lazzi et des cascades."

<sup>46</sup> Jules et Edmond de Goncourt, "Exposition du Boulevard des Italiens: Tableaux de l'école française ancienne tirées de collections d'amateurs," *Illustrateur Universel*, July 29, 1860, 86-7: "une mine goguenard et qui semble faire la bête," "l'oeil est vif; le nez est un nez au vent, fin et malin, la bouche est petite, bien arquée, pincée aux coins; une ironie et un lazzi semblent voltiger sur ses livres et les chatouiller."

<sup>47</sup> William Burger, "Exposition de Tableaux de l'École Française Ancienne," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 5, September 1, 1860, 271-2: "Voici Pierrot dans toute sa beauté, Pierrot dans toute sa taille [...] bien à l'aise dans son blanc costume qui flotte, sa tête malicieuse et souriante encadrée dans l'auréole de son chapeau souple."

<sup>48</sup> St. Victor, "Exposition de Tableaux Anciens:" "quelle vie comique dans ce masque fin et niais, effronté et naïf, placide et narquois!"

<sup>49</sup> St. Victor, "Exposition de Tableaux Anciens": "le lys de l'Écriture, [qui] ne file ni ne travaille."

<sup>50</sup> Burger, "Exposition de Tableaux," 260: "le sujet ne signifie rien dans les arts [...] Watteau a le droit de faire un chef d'oeuvre avec un Gilles."

<sup>51</sup> Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 71-2.

<sup>52</sup> On Manet's transformation of "Realism" in *The Old Musician*, see Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 17-21.

<sup>53</sup> For an interesting account of the particular features of Manet's approach to Realism in this journal, see Nan Stalnaker "Manet's Realism in *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*," *Word and Image* 15, no. 3 (1999): 243-261. Stalnaker ascribes "causal Realism" to Manet, whereby the artist paints in such a way as to record his encounter with an object in the world (the cause).

<sup>54</sup> On the relationship between Manet and Baudelaire, see Heard, *Manet and his Critics*, 29-37. For a recent account of Baudelaire's aesthetics, particularly in relationship to modern forms of media, see

---

Marit Grotta, *Baudelaire's Media Aesthetics: The Gaze of the Flâneur and 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Media* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> For an account of this relationship during the early 1860s in relationship to another painting by Manet, his *Portrait of Baudelaire's Mistress, Reclining*, see Therèse Dolan, "Manet, Baudelaire and Hugo in 1862," *Word and Image* 16, no. 2 (2000): 145-62. Dolan also offers in this article an interesting comment on *The Old Musician*, which she juxtaposes with Hugo's representation of the urban poor in *Les Misérables*, also published in 1862 (156). While Hugo offers a picturesque and a complex narrative to engage the viewer, whereas Manet attempts to intentionally distance the viewer.

<sup>56</sup> For the original French, see Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 2:690-91: "C'est à cette curiosité profonde et joyeuse qu'il faut attribuer l'oeil fixe et animale extatique des enfants devant le *nouveau*, quel qu'il soit, visage ou paysage, lumière, dorure, couleurs, étoffes chatoyantes, enchantement de la beauté embellie par la toilette. Un de mes amis me disait un jour qu'étant fort petit, il assistait à la toilette de son père, et qu'alors il contemplait, avec une stupeur mêlée de délices, les muscles des bras, les dégradations de couleurs de la peau nuancée de rose et de jaune, et le réseau bleuâtre des veines. Le tableau de la vie extérieure le pénétrait déjà de respect et s'emparait de son cerveau."

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Grotta's discussion of visual aspect of modern life as "kaleidoscopic," which is an analogy favored by Baudelaire. Kaleidoscopic vision is not objective but constructed, focused not on the thing and its function, but on its visual aspect. Grotta, *Baudelaire's Media Aesthetics*, 86-91, 100-02. Grotta also points out the way that Baudelaire ascribes this form of vision to children in "Morale du Joujou" (89-91).

<sup>58</sup> Armstrong discusses Baudelaire's "shifting of erotic interest from the body to its ornamentation to its rendering in paint – from signified to signifier" in his commentary on the work of Delacroix and in "The Painter of Modern Life." Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 114-33.

---

<sup>59</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:581-7. The essay was first published in *Le Monde littéraire*, on April 17, 1853. Baudelaire excerpted a small portion of the essay and included it in *Le Spleen de Paris* as “Le Joujou du Pauvre.”

<sup>60</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:582: “promener [ses] yeux.”

<sup>61</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:582: “éclat aveuglant des couleurs,” “représente si bien les idées de l’enfance sur la beauté.”

<sup>62</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:584: “le polichinelle plat, mû par un seul fil,” “une image aussi approximative que possible avec des éléments aussi simples, aussi peu coûteux que possible [...]”

<sup>63</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:584: “moindre réalité dans l’esprit de l’enfant”

<sup>64</sup> “Cette facilité à contenter son imagination témoigne de la spiritualité de l’enfance dans ses conceptions artistiques. Le Joujou est la première initiation de l’enfant à l’art, ou plutôt c’en est pour lui la première réalisation, et, l’âge mûr venu, les réalisations perfectionnées ne donneront pas à son esprit les mêmes chaleurs, ni les mêmes enthousiasmes, ni la même croyance.” By “realization,” I think Baudelaire refers not so much to the realization of art as to the realization in material form of the imagination’s visions. It is similar to what Théophile Gautier referred to as “réalisation plastique,” the plastic, material realization of mental images and ideas.

<sup>65</sup> Theodore Reff, “The Symbolism of Manet’s Frontispiece Etchings,” *Burlington Magazine* (May 1962): 182-7.

<sup>66</sup> By 1862, Baudelaire had completed most of the poems that would appear in 1869 in *Le Spleen de Paris*. “Les Yeux du Pauvre” was one of the six poems included in the fourth projected feuilleton to be published in *La Presse* under the title *Petits Poèmes en prose*. While the first three feuilletons appeared between August 26, 1862, and September 24, 1862, Arsène Houssaye declined to publish the fourth and final feuilleton. On the publication history of *Le Spleen de Paris*, see Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:1305-7.

---

<sup>67</sup> In her book on Parisian photography during the Second Empire, Shelley Rice has used this poem to illustrate the cross-class mixing engendered by Haussmann's Paris, as well as the increasingly scopical, optical nature of encounters. Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 32-7.

<sup>68</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:318: "les murs aveuglants de blancheur, les nappes éblouissantes des miroirs, les ors des baguettes et des corniches,"

<sup>69</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:318: "Ces trois visages étaient extraordinairement sérieux, et ces six yeux contemplaient fixement le café nouveau [...]."

<sup>70</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:318: "Que c'est beau! que c'est beau! mais c'est une maison où peuvent seuls entrer les gens qui ne sont pas comme nous."

<sup>71</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:319: "Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères!"

<sup>72</sup> Marilyn R. Brown, "Manet's 'Old Musician': Portrait of a Gypsy and Naturalist Allegory," *Studies in the History of Art* 8 (1978): 77-87. Lagrène had been injured while working in construction and subsequently made his money as an itinerant musician and model for artists.

<sup>73</sup> Anne Coffin Hanson, "Manet's Subject Matter and a Source of Popular Imagery," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 3 (1968): 63-80. Hanson cites A. Tabarant, *Manet et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), a not entirely reliable source, as shown by Brown in "Manet's 'Old Musician.'" Hanson insists, persuasively, upon the importance of the publication, between 1839 and 1842, of *Les français peints par eux mêmes*, as a repertoire of the popular type.

<sup>74</sup> Hanson, "Manet's Subject Matter," 70-2.

<sup>75</sup> See the etching by A.-Potémont Martial, *Destruction pour le boulevard [sic] Malesherbes*, 1861, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, VA-282 (3)-FOL. For a map of the pre-Haussmann neighborhood, on which the projected Boulevard is drawn, see the *Nouvelle carte topographique de toutes*

---

*les lignes et de toutes les stations des chemins de fer de Paris et de ses environs* (Paris: Blasiot, 1859), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, GE C-7362.

<sup>76</sup> A. Vuillemin, *Paris électoral. Décret du 29 décembre 1862* (Paris: Lannée, 1862), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, GE C-3737. On the physical character of the banlieu in the age of Haussmann, see T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 23-41.

<sup>77</sup> Clark has pointed out that by the time of the Second Republic, many peasants had already immigrated to the Parisian banlieus, becoming part of the indeterminate, neither peasant nor proletarian, *classes dangereuses*. The presence of former peasants in the banlieu further complicated the legibility of class identity. T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (1973; repr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 77-8.

<sup>78</sup> Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> For a detailed analysis of this painting, as well as iconographical information, see Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 75-94.

<sup>80</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:584: “une image aussi approximative que possible [...]”

<sup>81</sup> On Manet’s Polichinelle iconography, see Marilyn R. Brown, “Manet, Nodier, and “Polichinelle,”” *Art Journal* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 43-8. In 1871, Manet used the figure of Polichinelle to caricature Marshal MacMahon, the general in charge of the *semaine sanglante* that marked the defeat of the Paris Commune. See also Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision*, 85-6.

<sup>82</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:584.

<sup>83</sup> On the type of the ragpicker and the “type” as mythology, see Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, “Modernity and the Condition of Disguise: Manet’s ‘Absinthe Drinker,’” *Art Journal* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 18-26; Anne Coffin Hanson, “Popular imagery and the work of Édouard Manet,” 133-63, 141-5 on the image of the ragpicker.

---

<sup>84</sup> For a discussion of rags as a metaphor for nineteenth-century urbanity, particularly Walter Benjamin's, see the recent article in this journal, Alexandra Tranca, "From Pompeii to Paris: ghostly cityscapes and the ruins of modernity in Théophile Gautier and Eugène Atget," *Word and Image* 32, no. 3 (July-September 2016): 251-63.

<sup>85</sup> On the parallel society of the ragpickers and ragpickers as a representation of the "opacity" of the *populaire* see Molly Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 165-175. The rag-pickers resisted formal incorporation or regulation and instead lived by their own rules, forming parallel communities, opaque to government bureaucracies.

<sup>86</sup> "Raphaël, quelque pur qu'il soit, n'est qu'un esprit matériel sans cesse à la recherche du solide; mais cette canaille de Rembrandt est un puissant idéaliste qui fait rêver et deviner au-delà. L'un compose des créatures à l'état neuf et virginal, - Adam et Ève; - mais l'autre secoue des haillons devant nos yeux et nous raconte les souffrances humaines."

<sup>87</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 587: "mais où est l'âme?"

<sup>88</sup> This seems to be his opinion in his review of the Exposition Universelle of 1855, when he champions naiveté and wonder against the accumulation of facts and figures. Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 2:575-83.

<sup>89</sup> Blanc, *Histoire des peintres*, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 2:421.

<sup>91</sup> Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:585: "agaçait, agitait et secouait."