In my End is my Beginning
Dialectical Images in Times of Crisis
edited by Asia Benedetti, Angelica Bertoli,
Andrea Golfetto, Maria Novella Tavano

Facing Bonnard's *Le Boxeur*

Mario De Angelis
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Pierre Bonnard's *Le Boxeur* (1931) is usually considered as an intimist allegory of the painter's fight against his medium. Challenging this perspective, in this article I will explore the representational strategies and scopic regimes that the painting mobilizes, as well as the connections it establishes with Bonnard's public works, his (other) self-portraits, and some of Vuillard's. As I will attempt to demonstrate, drawing on texts by Fried, Stoichita, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan, this painting serves a site of 'figural incandescence' where the schizoid and irreconcilable forces that drive the artist's entire artistic enterprise come into the open, colliding upon the artist's body.

Keywords Bonnard. Self-portrait. Le Boxeur. Embodied reflexivity. Décoration.

1 Introduction

The second supplement to the *Catalogue Raisonné* of Pierre Bonnard's painted work, recently published by Henry and Jean Dauberville, offers among other things a collection of captivating photographs **[fig. 1]**. These images were taken in 1933, during the important retrospective *Oeuvres récentes de Bonnard* at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, which ran from June 15 to 23 of that year (Dauberville, Dauberville 2021, 23).

In addition to illuminating a previously obscure aspect of critical historiography – specifically, the manner in which Bonnard's works were presented in exhibitions prior to 1950 – these photographs hold

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni di *Venezia Arti* 8
e-ISSN 2784-8868
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-878-1

Open access
Submitted 2024-10-01 | Published 2024-12-11

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-878-1/002

further significance: they offer visual confirmation of a previously unverified[1] claim made by several sources (Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 42; Serrano 2021, 53, among others) – namely, that on this occasion, the painter exhibited a self-portrait for the first and only time in his life (aside from a few reproductions that appeared in art magazines between 1942 and 1947,[2] none of Bonnard's other self-portraits were ever exhibited during his lifetime; only two were sold,[3] while all the others remained hidden in his studio, only to be discovered after his death).[4]

The work in question is *Le Boxeur* of 1931 **[fig. 2]**. Appearing in many retrospectives and considered by leading critics like Yve-Alain Bois and Jean Clair as one of the most powerful and enigmatic self-portraits of the twentieth century, this painting is usually seen as an allegory of the painter's fight against his medium, where the intimist drift constituted by the self-portrait genre as a whole in Bonnard's practise reaches its acme. The catalogue entry of an important exhibition in 2006, for example, stated: "the fists and head are cast against the light, enveloped in a bloody shadow. The gaze – without glasses – appears absorbed in its struggle against painting" (Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 42). The same idea is echoed by Cahn (2001, 27), Serrano (2001, 27) and the authors of the important exhibition *Pierre Bonnard. Peindre l'Arcadie*, in which the

1 As the director of the Bonnard Museum observes in her essay for the exhibition *Face à face. L'autoportrait de Cézanne à Bonnard* (2021), although Barnheim-Jeune acquired the painting in January 1932, "il est curieux qu'aucun des comptes rendus – nombreux – que nous avons pu consulter ne font état de ce tableau engage" (Serrano 2021, 60). While the work is indeed listed among those displayed with the title *Le Boxeur* in the 1933 exhibition, the absence of any references to it in critical texts or related documents raised legitimate doubts about its actual presence in the exhibition. Nevertheless, the publication of the 1933 exhibition setup photographs effectively dispels any lingering uncertainties regarding this matter.

2 Building on Serrano's insightful account in the aforementioned catalogue essay, *Le Boxeur* was reproduced in the 1943 issue of *Le Point* dedicated to Bonnard. *L'Autoportrait à la glace du cabinet de toilette*, previously part of the J. Gould collection and now housed in the Centre Pompidou, was featured in 1944 in *Seize peintures de P. Bonnard*, prepared by André Lhote for Éditions du Chêne (repr. no. XIII). Bonnard's last self-portrait was included in Joachim Beer's book, written in 1944 but published later (*Pierre Bonnard, éditions françaises d'art*, Marseille, 1947, plate XXIV, 149). This work also appeared in the catalogue *Le Noir est une couleur*, published by *Derrière le miroir* in December 1946, and was subsequently featured in the Triton Foundation's catalogue, reproduced in *Arts de France* in 1946. Meanwhile, the earliest, unfinished, self-portrait from the 1920s was reproduced in the magazine *Formes et couleurs* while still and later in *Le Point* in 1943 (Serrano 2021, 54 fn. 3).

3 One of these works is *Le Boxeur*, which we are discussing, while the other is the selfportrait from 1938, acquired directly from the painter by Georges Wildenstein (Serrano 2021, 54 fn. 3).

4 In one the photographs Brassaï took in 1946 in the painter's studio and house in Le Cannet, just a few months before his death, we can see one of his last self-portraits leaning on a bench, in the background: *Portait du peintre à la robe de chambre rouge* (1942); cf. Brassaï, *La Palette de Bonnard*, ca. 1946, gelatin silver print, 29.5 × 22.5 cm, private collection, reproduced in Serrano 2021, 12).

Figure 1 Photograph of the installation view for *Oeuvres récentes de Bonnard* (Galerie Barnheim-Jeune, Paris, June 15-23, 1933)

catalogue record of the work, edited by Nicholas-Henri Zmelty, presents the painting as "a place where the painter's own existential struggle is exposed, a struggle that […] confronts man with his torments and the painter with the torments of his art" (Cahn, Cogeval 2015, 24; Author's transl.).

Turning then to a recently published and significant monograph, art historian Lucy Whelan interprets *Le Boxeur* as a 'Jansenist' image reflecting Bonnard's "chronic painterly indecision" (Whelan 2021, 134). Based on the observations that the painter seems "here engaged in a boxing fight that stands for the fight of painting itself", and that the face "evokes the muddy tone that accidentally results from mixing too many hues", the author concludes that the work serves both as an allegorical manifestation of Bonnard's desire for self-discipline in his work and an outlet for his struggle to achieve it (Whelan 2021, 133-8).

Despite the evocative nature of their descriptions, critics have yet to fully address some of the fundamental questions raised by this work. First of all, why did the sober and discreet Bonnard choose to exhibit this particular painting, rather than one of the way more conventional pieces he had created in the previous years? What debts and connections does it establish with the French and European tradition of self-portraiture and contemporary works by related artist like Matisse and Vuillard? But above all: how does *Le Boxeur* relate to Bonnard's other self-portraits and his public production, namely the large and colorful *machines* that brought him fame?

While not aiming to exhaust these topics, my contribution seeks to initiate a critical examination of the historical and theoretical significance of *Le Boxeur*.

This undertaking involves, first and foremost, shedding light on two false or, at the very least, highly questionable assumptions that

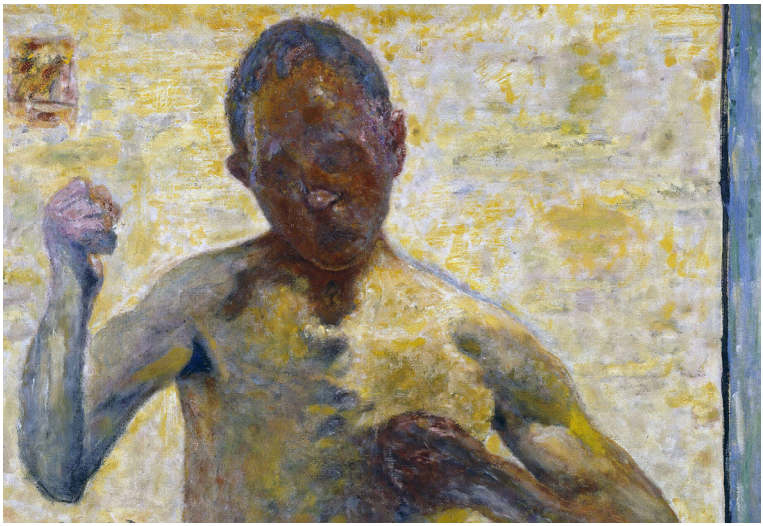

Figure 2 Pierre Bonnard, *Le Boxeur*. 1931. Oil on canvas, 54 × 74.3 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

the few existing critical accounts on Bonnard's self-portraits have taken for granted:

1. Self-portraiture for Bonnard is mostly a private exercise, secondary and disconnected from his 'public' production.[5]
2. *Le Boxeur* is a self-portrait like any other the painter created during his lifetime.

5 Bonnard's self-portraits are entirely absent from Georges Roque's 2006 influential book, *La Stratégie de Bonnard*. Similarly, only brief and general remarks are devoted to the subject by Stéphane Guégan and Isabelle Cahn, authors of the most up-to-date works on the painter's mature phase. Although intriguing insights can be drawn from the aforementioned monographs by Lucy Whelan (2021, 133-8) and Timothy Hyman (1998, 170-9), as well as from the quoted catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Face à face. L'autoportrait de Cézanne à Bonnard* (2021), self-portraiture remains an underdeveloped topic in studies dedicated to Bonnard. Their limited number – only 14 in total – and their haunting character, difficult to reconcile with the narrative of Bonnard as a mere *peintre de la joie* (a view still prevalent and echoed even in more recent exhibitions), likely contributed to the scant critical attention they received in the decades following the 1980s (this period, paradoxically, witnessed a growing critical reappraisal of the painter's work, yet the self-portraits remained on the periphery of these discussions). What remains lacking is a thorough inquiry into the exact relationship, whether thematic, iconographic, or stylistic, that these self-portraits establish with Bonnard's public works. This research will not be pursued here, due to space constraints and the need to focus on a single work that, in itself, poses equally intricate questions and challenges. Nevertheless, the analysis of *Le Boxeur*, with its liminal and oblique position in relation to the other self-portraits, may provide unprecedented insights for a re-evaluation of this genre within the broader framework of Bonnard's oeuvre.

In the following analysis, I will aim to demonstrate why these two assumptions must be reformulated. To this end, concerning the first point, the focus will shift from psycho-biographical and conceptual projections to the "structures of beholding" (Fried 1992; Marin 2001) and the scopic regimes the work activates. In other words, the painting will be approached as an iconic act rather than an allegorical entity – emphasizing what we directly see and experience in front of it, rather than what we know or may imagine about it. The second point, by contrast – the straightforward and uncritical identification of *Le Boxeur* as a self-portrait – merits immediate attention.

2 The Question of 'Genre'

Since at least the 1980s, all catalogue entries for the numerous exhibitions featuring *Le Boxeur* have regarded the work as a self-portrait, alongside others in the genre (cf. i.e. Régnier 1984, 163; Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 42; Cahn, Cogeval 2015; Serrano 2021, 75). This classification may be supported by the fact that, despite its depersonalized quality, the figure's features bear a distant resemblance to those of Bonnard as depicted in contemporary photographs. Moreover, the sidebar on the right suggests the painted surface as a mirror, a detail that – combined with the perceived aura of self-reproach and discouragement – may have reinforced the impression that *Le Boxeur* portrays no one other than the painter himself. While it is undeniable that this work 'closely' aligns with the self-portrait genre, it is equally important to emphasize the factors that complicate a straightforward identification of the work as such.

Firstly, and banally, the title does not explicitly identify it as such, something that instead happens in all of Bonnard's other self-portraits – 14 in total.[6] Although there is no definitive proof that Bonnard himself assigned the title, as with most of his works, we know he was aware of – and likely approved of – the name, since a 1942 letter from his bank manager, a reproduction of which is available for consultation in the Archives of Bonnard's museum in Cannes, informs him of a transfer of funds from the sale of the piece *Le Boxeur*, precisely, which had been held in deposit at Bernheim-Jeune (Bonnard 1942). Even if we assume that Bernheim-Jeune selected the title for the 1933 exhibition without consulting the artist (a scenario which seems highly improbable), we nevertheless know that Bonnard was fully aware of the title by which the work was being referred to.

6 This includes even allegorical and depersonalized works like *Autoportrait avec Barbe* (1920), which, despite its abstract qualities and depiction of the painter as a satyr in a riot of warm colors, clearly indicates its nature as a self-portrait (the striking coloristic resemblance between this work and *Le Boxeur* may have reinforced the inclination to view the latter as a mere auto-representation).

Secondly, the image lacks the defining features of the traditional genre: the artist neither contemplates himself nor attempts to explore his identity as a painter (there are no tools of the craft of painting like brushes and palettes, like in some of his previous or other traditional and contemporary works from Chardin, Manet, Picasso and Vuillard).[7]

Above all, however, it is the very mechanics of the image that compel us to re-evaluate its classification. Considered the interplay between the title, the figure's features, and the modes of depiction, I would argue that more than to the plain self-portrait, this painting bears a closer resemblance to one of its 'ancestors': what Stoichita calls the "disguised self-portrait", where the autobiographical nature of the work is implicitly suggested, rather than unequivocally affirmed (Stoichita [1997] 2015, 233). Originated in the Middle Ages and flourished during the Renaissance, this proto-genre reached its peak in the early sixteenth century with daring masterpieces (or details of masterpieces) such as Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* (1606-10) in the Borghese Gallery e and Michelangelo's Saint Bartholomew in the Sistine Chapel's *Last Judgment* (1537-41) – it is notable that in the latter's sagging, monstrous skin, James Hall have intuitively recognized a connection to *Le Boxeur*.[8]

This is, of course, not the only instance where a twentieth-century artist depicts himself in disguise or assumes the guise of another figure, whether historical or typological. However, what distinguishes *Le Boxeur* from works like Ensor's *Autoportrait au chapeau fleuri* (1883-88) or Beckmann's *Selbstporträt als Clown* (1921) is that in these cases the artist employs disguise as a transformative commentary on their own identity. The disguise here enhances the artist's process of self-analysis and self-definition, as their titles make clear – something that, for the reasons mentioned earlier, is not exactly the case with *Le Boxeur*.

Like the deformed figures of the aforementioned old masters, whose concealed identities were soon revealed,[9] this work seems to operate on a subtle yet decisive ambiguity – a palpable tension

7 Consider Chardin's *Autoportrait au Chevalet* (1775-79), Manet's *Autoportrait avec Palette* (1878) – two works we will revisit later –, Picasso's 1908 painting bearing the same title, and Vuillard's *Autoportrait avec Waroquy* (1889).

8 "In The Boxer (1931), he is a flat-faced homunculus throwing his emaciated arms around in a tantrum; Michelangelo's self-portrait as the flayed skin of St Bartholomew was first identified as a self-portrait by the psychoanalytically inclined Italian physician Francesco La Cava in a booklet published in 1925. For La Cava, Michelangelo was a near-suicidal tragic hero who veered between 'Dantesque anger' and 'infantile timidity'. It is a good description of Bonnard in these self-portrait" (Hall 2014, 228).

9 For Caravaggio's work see Bellori [1672] 1976, 255 quoted in Stoichita [1997] 2015, 233; for Michelangelo's see Hall 2014, 228.

between the artist's need for 'first-person' involvement in the image and a contrasting desire to distance his historical persona from it as much as possible.

Added to this ambiguity is a kind of dismissing of the iconographic tradition from which it derives: *Le Boxeur* differs radically from the works of other painters and photographers who have explored theme of boxing around the same time or earlier – consider, to make only some examples, John Hamilton Mortimer's *Portrait of Jack Broughton* (1767), Géricault's *Boxeurs* (1818), or August Sander's photographs such as *Der Boxer Heinz Heese* (1929). To my knowledge, *Le Boxeur* is truly unique in early contemporary visual culture for its portrayal of a wounded and vulnerable masculinity through an activity deeply associated with 'macho' imagery. To conclude this point, rather than fitting neatly within a single genre, *Le Boxeur* inhabits an interstice between three: the portrait of the artist by himself, the typological iconography of the fighting boxer and the 'moral' allegory. While the work draws upon elements from each of these categories, it ultimately resists classification within any one of them.

3 Structures of Beholding: A Few Proposals

The figure's eye sockets are barely discernible, appearing more like recesses carved out of a red-brown pictorial welter flecked with orange and purple. In a face marked by minimal detail, the eyes become a site of near-complete indeterminacy (both directional and emotional). Together with the strong bodily agency, this characteristic brings *Le Boxeur* closer to the self-portraits of a prominent figure within the recent French realist tradition: Gustave Courbet. In his book on the master of Ornans, Michael Fried observed:

> Until now I have presented Courbet's self-portraits of the 1840s […] as the work of a painter who, far from desiring simply to reproduce his outward appearance, to analyze his character or personality, or to record the external signs of various transient inner states, found himself compelled to seek to express by all the means at his disposal his conviction of his own embodiedness. […] The devaluation of the sitter's gaze, in fact the frequency with which Courbet portrayed himself with eyes closed or all but closed, are, I have suggested, expressions of that emphasis on the body as experienced from within rather than as observed from without. (1992, 78)

A little further on, Fried also highlights Courbet's ability to draw attention to the proximity of the sitter to the surface of the painting

and, by extension, to the beholder – sometimes to the point of breaking what Fried terms the "ontological impermeability of the pictorial surface" (59). [10]

Turning back to *Le Boxeur*, it is striking to observe that it exhibits, to a remarkable degree – perhaps even more so than Courbet's self-portraits, or at least more explicitly – the qualities that prompted Fried to regard Courbet's entire artistic endeavor as "an enterprise that has for its primary aim the accomplishment of a quasi-physical merger between painter, beholder, and painting" (218): what the critic calls the "emphasis on the body as experienced from within rather than observed from without" (78) here borders on the limits of bestial catatonia. By charging at himself – yet without ever meeting his own gaze – the figure remains ensnared in a solipsistic loop that precedes self-recognition, immersed in a kind of introjective bodily ecstasy.

Reinforcing the sense of a human figure deeply attuned to its own inner sensations are the preparatory drawings Bonnard made in the months leading up to the creation of the work: I refer to two sketches in the painter's diary, dated 27 and 30 November 1931, along with a 1930 drawing preserved at the Musée Marmottan in Paris **[fig. 3]**. When observing these drawings, the anecdotal identification of the figure as a boxer is even weaker than in the finished work. They seem more like the result of 'proprioception tests' – attempts by the painter to capture sensations in motion, exploring the extensibility of limbs and the flexibility of the body. In this sense, these drawings also evoke a piece by Cézanne, *Nu de jeune baigneur* (1876), which Bonnard owned and from which he created a lithograph.

In addition to reconsidering Courbet's influence on Bonnard, which has likely been underestimated,[11] these observations may allow us to extend Roque, Hyman, and Whelan's insights into the role of the body in both the creative process and the reception of the post-Impressionist painter's artistic enterprise as a whole.[12] It is indeed surprising to realize how, although reinterpreted and internalized through his own sensibility, almost all the 'quasi-corporeal merger' techniques

10 By this expression Fried means the ability of Courbet and others to deny the the painting's "standing as an imaginary boundary between the world of the painting and that of the beholder" (1992, 59).

11 Encouraging further inquiry into Courbet's influence on Bonnard is the observation that Bonnard's *La Source* (1916) can be interpreted as an intertextual inversion of Courbet's painting of the same name. This refers specifically to the 1868 version, which was exhibited in Georges Petit's gallery on 9 July 1919, and later became part of the Louvre's collection (cf. des Cars, de Font-Réaulx, Tinterow, Hilaire 2007, 386) – therefore Bonnard was likely aware of it. In Bonnard's composition, all elements of Courbet's work are subverted: the natural setting is transformed into a domestic interior; the nude figure, previously seen from behind, is now oriented toward the spectator; and the jet of water that flowed from behind the model now cascades from the model toward the viewer.

12 See Roque 2006, 93-112; Hyman 1998, 158-70; Whelan 2021, 35-61.

Figure 3 Pierre Bonnard, *Homme Nu (autoportrait, étude pour le boxeur)*. Ca. 1930. Pencil on paper, 24.3 × 15 cm. Private collection. © Collection de Bueil & Ract-Madoux, Paris

identified by Fried in Courbet's work are also present in Bonnard's mature oeuvre, encompassing interior scenes, landscapes, and nudes: as in *Courbet's Les Cribleuses de Blé* (1853) and *Les Casseurs de pierres* (1849), respectively, Bonnard's oeuvre also feature figures depicted from behind that serve as "surrogates" of the painter at work in front of the canvas (Fried 1992, 152) – see *La Glace du cabinet de toilette* (1908) and *La Terrasse à Grasse* (1912) –[13] as well as objects

13 About the woman with her back turned in *Les Cribleuses de blé* (but similar remarks are also made about *L'Après-dînée à Ornans* and *La Source*), Fried writes: "thus for example it's possible to see the central, kneeling female figure as a surrogate for the painter-beholder by virtue of her posture (analogous to though not identical with his posture when seated in a chair before the picture), her orientation (facing into the picture and so roughly matching his), and the character ofthe effort she is putting forth (concentrated, physical, requiring the use of both hands). The seated, drowsy sifter plucking bits of chaff from a dish can also be considered such a surrogate; in fact I would go further and propose, by analogy with the Stonebreakers, that her relative passivity, subordinate status, and place in the composition make her a figure for the painter-beholder's left hand holding his palette in distinction to the kneeling sifter understood now as representing specifically the painter-beholder's right hand wielding a brush or knife" (Fried 1992, 152). Looking at a painting such as Bonnard's *La Glace du cabinet de toilette* (1908), it seems evident that the female figure seen from behind functions as what Stoichita would call a 'filter-character' – a figure who simultaneously guides our view within the image (specifically here, the reflection) while at the same time obstructing part of it, much like what occurs in some of Caillebotte's works, such as 1875 *Intérieur* (Stoichita [1997] 2015, 52). Yet, beyond this function, it also seems clear to me that this figure serves as a surrogate for the painter at the canvas, in the sense that Michael Fried describes. The nude figure mirrors the painter's own position as seen in photographs, standing with a *chiffon* in hand (even the circular shapes of the basins and other toiletry utensils in the foreground recall the spots of colour on the palette). In this sense, the painter is both inside and outside the painting, just as the model is both inside and outside the mirror. If one may speak here of a painter-beholder, our identification with this figure unfolds in a manner more perverse and elusive, I believe, than in most of Courbet's works, where such identification, though difficult to spot consciously, remains direct, instinctive, and unmediated. In *La Glace du cabinet de toilette*, full empathic or bodily identification is thwarted by two key elements: first, by Bonnard's use of the mirror, or rather by the transpositional incoherence (or visual paradox) it creates. If we truly occupied the model's position in front of the mirror, we would see ourselves from the front, not from behind. Second, the spatial construction and point of view are misaligned with the model's gaze within the painting, which is elevated and shifted to the right – completely incompatible with the perspective from which we, as spectral observers, are invited to witness the scene. Similarly, our point of view conflicts with that of the face of the figure seated on the sofa. This is not only because our perspective is elevated and positioned closer to the mirror, but also because, were we to occupy her place, it would be impossible not to see the naked person directly in front of us – not in the mirror, but in the 'real' world. Another intriguing case is that of *La Terrasse à Grasse* (1912) where the figure in the lower right corner functions as both an implicit self-representation of the painter and a surrogate for the artist standing before the canvas. However, rather than 'doubling' the painter in front of his free-standing canvases attached to the wall, as in famous contemporary photographs showing Bonnard at work, the figure seems instead to evoke the contemplative moment preceding the actual act of painting – the moment when the artist, seated, 'reflects and dreams', as he himself confided to his nephew, Charles Terrasse, within the ecstatic silence of the atelier. It is the moment when he attains a state of complete passivity, allowing space for memory to surface and unfold. This process of recollection, its layering and gradual unfurling, is mirrored in the overlapping planes of vegetation within

or gestures that subtely reference the tools and craft of painting – the oil early study *Intimité* (1890) and the famous *La table devant la fenêtre* (1934-5), where the back of the chair visually interlocks with the wooden slab of the window to form the outline of an easel, ambiguously denouncing the external view as a painting-within-a-painting.[14] But above all Bonnard is a master at undermining the "ontological impermeability of the picture surface", as one can easily realise by looking at two works like *Le Grand Nu Bleu* (1924) and *Dans la salle de bains* (1940). By disavowing 'separatist' interpretations, what we have just examined reveals the porous relationship in both style and intent between *Le Boxeur* and the other renowned works Bonnard created for sale and public display **[figs 4a-b]**.

4 The Pellicle of Being

Given the strongly haptic dimension of the pictorial workmanship and the encaustic fusion between figure and background, we might assert that in *Le Boxeur* to the proprioceptive aura transitioning from the preparatory drawings to the finished work "respond" something like a proprioception of paint itself. In other words, the work exhibits a deliberate focus on what Louis Marin has termed the reflexive opacity of medium, that power – always present but varying in discernibility – by which the medium 'presents' itself while re-presenting something (cf. Marin 1992, 60). From this perspective, some details take

the composition. Here too, Stoichita's reflections on the 'system-of-filters' offer a valuable lens for understanding the shift from the realist paradigm still present in Caillebotte and Courbet: in *Intérieur*, the female figure acts as the first layer of a 'system-of-filters' that obstructs our ability to see what she sees. In *La Terrasse à Grasse*, instead, the painter literally 'steps aside' to allow the viewer to confront nature's deflagration, unnaturally rendered as a monstrous and dense accumulation of self-evident pictorial substance.

14 These examples represent only a fraction of the countless instances in which Bonnard subtly thematizes his own artistic means and processes. It is precisely this obsessive recurrence of such 'clues' that justifies a more detailed examination of the hypothesis that views Bonnard as an 'incestuous' painter par excellence, if we understand this term as James Elkins defines it in *What Painting Is* ("In painting, incest becomes a theme whenever the paint refers to itself. Increasingly, that moment seems to occur in every painting: self-reflexivity is endemic in modernism, and it is not possible to imagine an interesting work that does not in some measure speak about itself", 2000, 145). Consider, for instance, the poised nib resting on the white sheet in the renowned *La Fenêtre* (1925), where the abrupt cascade of spatial construction in lived perspective appears to arrest and 'converge'. Placed almost 'within reach' of the viewer, through these surrogates of brush and canvas Bonnard seems to invite the viewer to 'inscribe' him/herself into the painting, thereby engaging with the curious visual rebus represented by its elements. Similarly, Bonnard's repeated suggestion of the blank canvas is evoked through the depiction of the tablecloth, most vividly in the late painting *Fruits sur une nappe rouge* (1943). To further consolidate these observations, we encounter the direct – yet always concealed or camouflaged – representation of the painter's palette, most clearly discernible resting on the chair in *La Fenêtre ouverte* (1921).

on an unprecedented value: first of all, the small square in the top left corner – a sort of reproduction in *abîme* of the painting before us, poised between pure color and potential meaning. This 'tâche' bears something of the "burst", of the "sovereign accident" (2005, 251-2) that Didi-Huberman attributes to the red thread in Vermeer's *Lacemaker* (1665), though where Vermeer's fil rouge embodies a delicate "rebellion of the hand over the eye", borrowing Deleuze's words (2023, 104; Author's transl.), here we encounter a kind of analytic-recursive persistence – a trace of the effort exerted by free pictorial matter in its journey of 'becoming-picture' (see how the protruding matter threatens to spill beyond the barely discernible borders of the square). In this respect, this Stain/Form, which 'shouts' its own ambiguity, becomes almost a literal transposition of Bonnard's reflections in his private notebook: "L'art abstrait est un compartiment de l'art" / "L'abstrait est son propre départ" (Bonnard 2019, 56).[15]

A second detail that attracts our attention is the painter's hand. Jutting forward with an almost antinaturalistic prominence, the figure's left hand recalls Manet's hand at work *Autoportrait avec palette* (1878). Drawing from Stoichita's analysis of this painting in his essay "Vaporisation et/ou centralisation" from *L'Effet Sherlock Holmes*, one similarly senses here a "chaos of pictorial matter" where the boxer's hand dissolves into a formless mass of paint, making it impossible to discern individual fingers or anything resembling flesh. However, in contrast to Manet's self-portrait, where, as Stoichita writes, "having reached the end of his own hand at work, the painter preferred to succumb to the task of representing himself" (Stoichita 2015, 64-6; Author's. transl), here Bonnard appears to focus less on the inherent difficulty and paradoxical nature of self-representation and more on the contracted, tense quality of the hand – its immersion in colour and solvent during the act of creation. In this respect, it is important to note that the left hand was indeed the one stained with paint during the creation of the work, as Bonnard – being right-handed – typically worked with both brush and rag simultaneously. As he recorded in his diary: "Le pinceau d'une main, le chiffon de l'autre" (Bonnard 2019, 57).[16]

What has just been observed invites us to reconsider the point made in the first paragraph: although *Le Boxeur* lacks explicit references to the act of painting (brushes, palette etc.), everything in it implicitly refers to the painting 'process' – the tactile contact of the painter with his substance, the emphasis on the constitutive

15 These two notes are part of the undated reflections that Bonnard selected in the autumn of 1946 for the special issue of the magazine *Verve* (*Couleur de Bonnard*, 5(17-18)), which was published just a few weeks after his death in 1947.

16 This note is also one of those selected by the painter for the special issue of the magazine *Verve*.

Figure 4a-b Pierre Bonnard, *Le Grand Nu Bleu*. 1924. Oil on canvas, 101 × 73 cm. Private collection (left); Pierre Bonnard, *Dans la salle de bain*. Ca. 1940. Oil on canvas, 90.1 × 60.3 cm. Private collection (right)

properties of the medium and, given what we have just seen, the gesturality of painting itself. The Boxer's right hand ventures toward – or perhaps returns from – its journey to the canvas, coinciding with both the surface of the painting and the mirror. In contrast, the left hand remains closed in on itself, completely saturated with paint, 'as if' gripping a palette or rag.

Before proceeding further, two additional points deserve attention: the singular mode of depiction of his left hand at work had already been explored by Bonnard a year earlier in his self-portrait *Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même*. This self-portrait, as is well known, was created by Bonnard after he had seen Chardin's *Autoportrait au Chevalet* (1775-79) the exhibition *J.B.S. Chardin* at the Galerie du Théâtre Pigalle in October 1929 (Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 40). In Chardin's painting, the artist firmly grips his working tool – a red pastel – which he prominently displays, almost offering it to the viewer. Bonnard's swirling mass of lines and aqueous matter in *Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même* – the work was executed in gouache and pencil on paper – can

thus be interpreted as a negative counterpoint to Chardin's proud gesture, a notion supported by the fact that many other elements in Chardin's work are likewise inverted or subtly reinterpreted in reverse in Bonnard's (from the light sources to the orientation of the figure, via the clothing and the chassis of the painting seen from behind; the latter, in particular, visible only for a small portion on the right in the foreground in Chardin, slips to the left in Bonnard, passes behind the painter and is enlarged out of all proportion, merging with the raw support itself).[17] Affirming the enduring significance of this expedient – painting the hand as an active force on the verge of surpassing the retinal dimension of self-representation – is its reappearance, radicalized, in a self-portrait from 1940, where Bonnard, now unmistakably intent on depicting himself, once again adopts a boxer's stance.

The second point to consider is that Bonnard's public oeuvre includes several depictions of female figures whose hands are enveloped in gloves or cloth, as seen in *Nu au gant bleu* (1916) and *Le Gant de Crin* (1942). In these works, the hand is transformed into a cohesive, projecting pictorial element, formally akin to the gestural entities we have been examining. In this light, it is not far-fetched to perceive in this detail a veiled reference to the 'chiffon', much like the subtle allusions to brush and canvas present in the aforementioned works. Furthermore, at least to a certain extent, the recurring motif of Marthe's washing her own body, prominent in the 1930s and 1940s, can be interpreted as a symbolic surrogate for the act of painting itself, given the relationship between a semi-liquid substance and the embodied, reflective experience of one's own seeing and touching body.

In a note from *Le Visible et l'invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The flesh is a mirror phenomenon and the mirror is an extension of my relation with my body. Mirror = […] extraction of the essence of the thing, of the pellicle of Being or of its "Appearance" (To touch oneself, to see oneself, is to obtain such a specular extract of oneself) I.e. fission of appearance and Being – a fission that already takes place in the touch (duality of the touching and the touched) and which, with the mirror (Narcissus) is only a more profound adhesion to Self. (1968, 255-6)

17 The authors of the quoted 2006 catalogue were the first to observe a formal coincidence between the pristine expanse of 'virgin paper' on the left side of Bonnard's self-portrait and "the back of a painting" (Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 40), as suggested by a sketch resembling the grid typically found on the reverse side of a canvas affixed to its support.

In addition to highlighting the mirror's potential for diffraction and de-figuring fragmentation, [18] this observation helps to contextualize and clarify remarks by critics who have described the figure in *Le Boxeur* as a 'body-without-skin' – for example, Cogeval described the torso as a "corps décharné abandonné sur un pan de peinture tel une carcasse" (Cogeval 2015, 32), while Hyman defines the head as a "red lump of raw meat" (Hyman 1998, 170).

However accurate, these descriptions fail to establish a latent connection that, in my view, is crucial to understanding the stakes of the work: the relationship between the painter's act of adding and removing layers of material from the support and the flaying of his own body. In this context, as Merleau-Ponty suggested, the mirror appears to be employed by the painter to "extract the essence of the thing", to strip Being – the Self – of its "pellicle" (1968, 255-6). Indeed, the artist's body implicitly manifests as a resonant surface that accommodates a matter that is always revocable – a threshold capable, like the canvas, of rendering perceptible the "two-sheet structure" of the visible world, using Gottfried Boehm's words (2009, 49). As is well known, the 'pellicle' serves as a historically operational metaphor for painting – Pontormo referred to the "little curl" (lett. "riciolino") rippling on the support.[19] But not only that: the concept of 'pellicle' is also a functional metaphor for the stratification of the Ego. As Didier Anzieu demonstrates in *The Skin-Ego*, every form of flaying – whether psychosomatic or symbolic, actual or imagined (or painted) – is symptomatic of a rift within the ego and a disjunction of touch from the other senses. Moreover, as the psychoanalyst underscores through an analysis of the Greek myth of Marsyas (and its contemporary incarnations), such laceration is invariably tied to a sacrificial dimension (1989, 45-54; 158-63). *Le Boxeur*'s emphasis on processual layering and the self-reflexivity, coupled with the unsettling presence of this faceless figure advancing toward us, stirs our anxieties of incorporation. It unveils appearance through the embodied 'fission' of the senses, making us feel – almost as if on our own skin – an echo of the painting's *tâche infinie*: the irrepressible effort to bring the artist's own body into play as a conduit of sentient resonances, thus – and only through this process – arriving to "express

18 If in *L'œil et l'Esprit* and earlier writings Merleau-Ponty had emphasized the fusional faculties of the mirror ("Quant au miroir il est l'instrument d'une universelle magie qui change les choses en spectacles, les spectacles en choses, moi en autrui et autrui en moi", Merleau-Ponty 1960, 17), in *Le Visible et l'Invisible* he appears more concerned with the analytical-recursive aspects of the mirror image, exploring its diffraction and fragmentation, as well as the symbolic and anthropological connections it bears with the other senses.

19 "E la pittura panno acotonato dello inferno, che dura poco et è di manco spesa, perchè levato ce gl'ha quello riciolino, non se tiene più conto" (Jacopo da Pontormo 1548, 324).

what exists" (Merleau-Ponty 1948, 23-5). In this context, a manuscript note by the painter dated 8 May 1936 acquires perhaps unprecedented significance: "Identité de l'individu: le caractère, les sensations d'ouïe et d'odorat. Conscience, le choc de la sensation et de la mémoire" (Bonnard 2019, 42).

5 The Picture as Tension Field

It is noteworthy that a certain disjunction between the senses, tied to the deactivation of the anxiogenic potential of modern life (Watkins 2001), was at play in the Symbolist sensibility *tout court*. Indeed, it must be emphasized that the confusion between figure and background was one of the hallmark characteristics of the Nabis movement and pictorial symbolism, coinciding with a purist conception of painting as a "surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées" (Denis [1890] 1920, 1). In this light, we recognize the *Nabis trés japonard* beneath the painter's mature 'skin', the artist who like his companions conceived expression as a mere "decorative entity", realized through the sole "harmony of form and color" (Denis [1895] 1920, 27; Author's transl.).

Considered in these terms, however, the confusion between figure and background stands in open contrast to the corporal agancy noted earlier. This is a crucial point, because in this contrast, or aporia, lies the stakes of the pictorial device that Bonnard began developing from 1910 onwards. Although we cannot fully explore this topic here, it is important to acknowledge, for the purposes of this essay, that Bonnard, as a perceptive collector of pictorial ideas, began in 1910 to incorporate key strategies of Nabis symbolism (but also from other pictorial systems and artistic languages) in order to re-signify them. By the 1930s, however, he no longer seemed interested, as he had been in his youth, in the simple leveling of representation for retinal pleasure and decorative purposes. Instead, his focus shifts toward 'setting against' or 'making react' – in an almost alchemical sense – this tension towards textile flattening with figures that are intensely attuned to their own internal sensations, yielding a highly physical treatment of space and postures. Broadly considered, we might say that in *Le Boxeur*, as well as in his more celebrated public works like *Grande salle à manger sur le jardin* (1934-35) and *Paysage du Midi et deux enfants* (1916-18), Bonnard orchestrates a controlled short-circuit between two opposing spectatorial regimes. This tension is not chaotic but leads to a new, unexpected balance. In this sense, rather than serving as an allegory of the painter's struggle against his own medium, *Le Boxeur* emerges as tensive battlefield where these two forces – embodiment and a sort of becoming-flat or coating of the visible – clash and 'come into the open'

It is primarily from this encounter and conflict, rather than solely from the neurophysiological laws he manipulates, that the perceptual slowing we experience before Bonnard's works emerges. Yet more crucially, it is from this very conflict that the unsettling potential of Bonnard's mature domestic scenes derives – that sense of encaustic layering, where life seems to still 'breathe' beneath the strata of pigment, much like the initial image or sensation continues to pulse beneath the sediment of memory. This is something Jean Clair had already intuited when he spoke of "silhouettes quasi-spectrales" or "fantômes décolorés" (1975, 61). By making the figure a thickened extension of the background, while simultaneously imbuing it with an intense degree of introverted bodily agency, Bonnard's 'chameleonism', as later Clair would call the same phenomenon (1984), revisits in fact one of the central aspects of the 'Uncanny' as theorized by Freud, following Jentsch: the unsettling doubt that arises "when an apparently animate being is really alive" and conversely, "when a lifeless object is not by chance animate" (Freud 2003, 168). In this respect, further deepening Clair's bio-naturalist suggestion, it may be beneficial to briefly refer to what Lacan in the *XI Seminar* wrote about animal mimicry and and its links to the deep structures of the Ego. Criticising the adaptation model, Lacan identifies the stakes of mimicry in the subject's insertion "into a function whose exercise grabs him" (1998, 100), distinguishing three "major dimensions in which this mimetic activity unfolds: "disguise, camouflage and intimidation" (99). Now, it is interesting to observe that, in this regard, the French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist elaborates on a note by the biologist Roger Caillois, in which the latter identifies in art, and particularly in painting, the "analogue [*sic*]"[20] of mimicry found in animals. While in sexual union and the struggle for life and death a "schisis of being" is articulated, in mimetic disguise – just as in painting for human beings – "the Being decomposes, in an extraordinary way, between its essence and its semblance" (107).

Before moving to the conclusion, I believe it is crucial to underscore – as a prompt for future research – that not only the self-portraits Bonnard produced from 1930 onward, but also several portraits by Vuillard, reveal a progressive dulling of the model's gaze paired with a pronounced bodily agency and a distinctly haptic or processual quality in the painterly technique, often accompanied by metatextual references to the craft or the act of painting itself. Consider, for instance, the lesser-known yet highly intriguing

20 I quote the original text, emendated in the english translation: "dans ce qu'il s'agit, concernant les faits du mimétisme, il ne s'agirait de rien d'autre que l'analogue, au niveau animal de ce qui, chez l'être humain, se manifesterait comme art et nommément celui de la peinture" (cf. the available online version at `https://lacan-con-freud.it/lacanseminaires/s11_fondements.pdf`, 149).

Figure 5a-b Pierre Bonnard, *Portrait de l'artiste dans la glace du cabinet de toilette*. 1939-45. Oil on canvas, 73 × 51 cm. Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France (left); Pierre Bonnard, *Portrait de l'artiste à la lampe*. Ca. 1908. Oil on canvas, 68 × 41 cm. Private collection (right)

Portrait de l'artiste à la lampe (ca. 1908) **[fig. 5b]**, where the painter hold an elongated object in his hand and seems to act directly on the reflective surface. The tangible brushstrokes, or fine dust-like particles, grow denser and more concentrated toward the bottom right, precisely where the elongated object terminates, conjuring the processual illusion of a painting coming to life before our very eyes. Turning then to Vuillard, we might examine *Autoportrait au miroir de l'atelier* (1923-34) **[fig. 5c]** and *Autoportrait au miroir de bambou* (1890) **[fig. 5d]**. In the former, Vuillard's blind gaze stands in stark contrast to the golden jubilation of images surrounding the mirror's surface, yet simultaneously resonates with them, as both the painter's gaze and our own share the same indistinctness when perceiving these painted reflections and the paintings-within-painting. In the 1890 work, however, Vuillard used the self-portrait genre to create an even more radical representational paradox. While a full exploration of its theoretical complexities and connections to tradition is beyond the scope here, it is worth noting that is first and foremost the contradiction in terms represented by the general procedure of the self-portrait, the realisation of which presupposes a

Figure 5c-d Édouard Vuillard, *Autoportrait au miroir de l'atelier* (ou *Autoportrait de l'artiste se lavant les mains*. 1923-24. Oil on cardboard, 81 × 97 cm. Private collection (left); Édouard Vuillard, *Autoportrait au miroir de bambou*. Ca. 1890. Oil on canvas, 44.5 × 53.3 cm. Private collection (right)

more or less prolonged vision of the artist of himself, and the actual effigy before us, namely the image of the artist himself with his eyes closed. What we are looking at is an image that asserts its own nature as an "hypothesis" (Derrida 1993, 67). It is noteworthy how this effect is formally crafted by the contrast between the "deictic, iconic demonstrative" function (Marin 2001, 357) of the triple level of framing, on one hand, and the evanescence of the image's center on the other, where the painter with eyes closed retreat from both our and his own sight into a blurred mist punctuated by discernible brushstrokes.

It is precisely this semantic triangle – comprising self-reflexivity, the veiling of the gaze and embodiment – that Derrida illuminates in a book significantly entitled *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*:

> The spectator's performance, writes Derrida, as it is essentially prescribed by the work, consists in striking the signatory blind (frapper le signataire d'aveuglement), and thus in gouging out (crever) – at the same stroke – the eyes of the model, or else in

> making him, the subject (at once model, signatory, and object of the work), gouge out his own eyes in order both to see and to represent himself at work. […] If to draw a blind man is first of all to show hands, it is in order to draw attention to what one draws with the help of that with which one draws, the body proper (corps propre) as an instrument, the drawer of the drawing, the hand of the handwork. (Derrida 1993, 2, 5)

6 Conclusions

What has been discussed so far allows us to revisit some of the initial key questions, particularly why Bonnard might have chosen or consented to exhibit *Le Boxeur* over his other self-portraits, and how this work relates both to his other self-depictions and to the broader trajectory of his oeuvre. Starting from the latter point: as I have attempted to demonstrate, it is inaccurate to regard self-portraiture as merely a private or ancillary facet of the painter's oeuvre. Whether this genre represents, in essence, the 'hidden side' or the 'reverse' of his public production – as subtly hinted at by the latticework of the chassis sketched onto the blank canvas of *Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même* – this does not imply a path disconnected from his public endeavors. Instead, the bathroom and the mirror delineate the contours of an experimental sanctuary, an *hortus conclusus* where the painter feels liberated to surrender to his impulse to merge corporeally with both the work and the viewer – an impulse that, in his public works, is often tempered by the demands of patrons or his own cultivated discretion. It is not surprising then that of all the self-portraits made up to that time, Bonnard chose to exhibit *Le Boxeur*: as a "disguised self-portrait" (Stoichita [1997] 2015, 233) this work did not explicitly reveal Bonnard's historical persona as the author of his works, thereby maintaining the implicit or latent sense of participation that his other exhibited pieces suggested (or, using the painter's words, the oscillation "between intimism and decoration"[21] that he himself saw a suitable description of his enterprise).

Indeed, Bonnard may have come to realize, perhaps upon completing the piece, that it was capable of clearly and directly communicating the "almost schizoid" nature of his artistic endeavor (Pagé, Munck, Michaud 2006, 42) – specifically, the underlying tensions and opposing forces at play within his pictorial device, forces

21 "Je flotte entre l'intimisme et la décoration. On ne se refait pas". Thus, Bonnard revealed to his friend, critic, and patron Georges Besson towards the end of his life. This statement is documented in a letter to his friend Pierre Betz, which appeared in issue 24 of *Le Point* magazine in 1943.

that contemporary critics and avant-garde artists struggled to recognize. In fact, as Georges Roque elucidates in the first part of his book (2006, 27-74), by the early 1930s, a prevailing opinion had emerged suggesting that onnard was merely the product of a "degenerate" Impressionism, a "pot-pourri d'indécision", as Picasso remarked (Gilot, Lake 1964, 338), a painter of bourgeois *joie de vivre*, unconcerned with the most pressing challenges of history. However, it was Zervos, with his openly hostile editorial published in *Cahiers d'Art* a few days after the painter's death (Zervos 1947), who, more than anyone else, was instrumental in shaping the critical (mis)fortunes of the painter before the 1980s:

> Dépourvu de nerf et faiblement original, il était impuissant à donner de l'essor à l'impressionnisme, en transfuser le sang dans une langue neuve […] En mettant ainsi son œuvre à la portée de leur pouvoir de pénétration et des possibilités d'excitation de leurs fonds de plaisir, il favorise leur propension à se suffire de l'acquis. […] Bonnard se garde bien de tourmenter les spectateurs. (Zervos 1947, 4)

One might reflect upon whether the exhibition of *Le Boxeur* could stand as an implicit, perhaps ironic, response to such critiques. Indeed, considering Zervos' acute critical insight, it is worth contemplating whether a direct confrontation with *Le Boxeur* and the other self-portraits – works he likely never saw – might have led him to reevaluate, and perhaps profoundly reconsider, his assessment of Bonnard's mature oeuvre. For our purposes, drawing upon Zervos's own words, it could be argued that *Le Boxeur* operates as a site of 'figural incandescence', uniquely revealing the mutual 'torment' that, beneath the apparent joyfulness of the whole, traditional scopic regimes of painting inflict upon one another, dialectically confronting and erupting 'on' the artist's own body.

Bibliography

Anzieu, D. (1989). *The Skin Ego*. Transl. by C. Turner. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

Besson, G. (1943). "Lettre à Pierre Betz". *Le Point*, 24.

Boehm, G. [1995] (2009). "Il Ritorno delle immagini". Pinotti, A.; Somaini, A. (a cura di), *Teorie dell'immagine*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 39-71.

Bonnard, P. (1942). *Manuscript Letter from M. Colliton (bank manager) to Pierre Bonnard*. January. Reproduction available for consultation at the archives of the Bonnard Museum in Le Cannet.

Bonnard, P. [1947] (2019). *Observations sur la peinture.* Préface de A. Lévêque; introduction de A. Terrasse. Paris: L'atelier contemporain.

Cahn, I. (2001). "Nouvelles acquisitions". *48/14 La revue du musée d'Orsay*, 27, 18-29.

Cahn, I.; Cogeval, G. (éds) (2015). *Pierre Bonnard. Peindre l'Arcadie = Catalogue d'exposition* (Paris, 17 mars-19 juillet 2015). Paris: Hazan.

Clair, J. (1975). *Bonnard*. Paris: Hazan.

Clair, J. (1984). "Les adventures du nerf optique". Régnier 1984, 62-70.

Cogeval, G. (2015). *Bonnard*. Paris: Hazan.

Dauberville, G.-P.; Dauberville, F. (2021). *Catalogue raisonné des aquarelles, gouaches, pastels, crayons de couleurs et lavis. 2e supplément du catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*. Paris: Dauberville Éditeurs.

Deleuze, G. (2023). *Sur la peinture*. Édition preparé par D. Lapoujade. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

Denis, M. [1890] (1920). "Définition du néo-traditionnisme". *Théories 1890-1910. Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique*. Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1-13.

Denis, M. [1895] (1920). "Préface de la IX exposition des peintres impressionistes et symbolistes". *Théories 1890-1910. Du symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique*. Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 25-8.

des Cars, L.; de Font-Rélaux, D.; Hilaire, M.; Tinterow, G. (2008). *Gustave Courbet = Catalogue de l'exposition* (Paris, octobre 2007-janvier 2008; New York, février-mais 2008; Montpellier, juin-septembre 2008). Paris: RMN.

Derrida, J. (1993). *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Transl. by P.-A. Brault and M. Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Didi-Huberman, G. (2005). *Confronting Images. Questioning the Ends of Certain Art History.* State College: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Elkins, J. (2000). *What Painting is*. London: Routledge.

Fried, M. (1992). *Courbet's Realism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Freud, S. [1919] (2003). *The Uncanny*. Transl. by D. McLintock. London: Penguin Books.

Gilot, F.; Lake, C. (1964). *Vivre avec Picasso*. Paris: 10/18 éditions, 338-40.

Hall, J. (2014). *The Self-Portrait: A Cultural History*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Hyman, Th. (1998). *Bonnard*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Lacan, J. (1998). *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fondamental Concepts of Psychoanalisis*. Edited by J.-A. Miller; translated by A. Sherdian. London; New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Marin, L. (2001). *On Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1948). "Le doute de Cézanne". *Sens et non-sens*. Paris: Nagel, 23-5.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1960). *L'œil et l'Esprit*. Paris: Gallimard.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Pagé, S.; Munck, J.; Michaud, F. (2006). *Bonnard. L'oeuvre d'art: un arrêt du temps = Catalogue d'exposition* (Paris, 2 février-7 mais 2006). Paris: Paris Musées & Ludion.

Jacopo da Pontormo [1548]. "Lettera a Benedetto Varchi", 18. *L'opera completa di Pontormo*, vol. 2. A cura di L. Berti. Milano: Rizzoli, 324.

Régnier, G. (éd.) (1984). *Bonnard = Catalogue d'exposition* (Paris, 23 février-21 mais 1983; Washington, 9 juin-20 août 1984; Dallas, 16 septembre-10 novembre 1984). Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou Éditions.

Roque, G. (2006). *La stratégie de Bonnard. Couleur, lumière, regard*. Paris: Gallimard.

Serrano, V. (2021). *Face à face. L'autoportrait de Cézanne à Bonnard = Catalogue d'exposition* (Le Cannet, 26 juin-3 octobre). Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale.

Stoichita, V.I. [1997] (2015). *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Metapainting*. New, improved, and updated ed. with an introduction by L. Pericolo. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers.

Stoichita, V.I. (2015). *L'Effet Sherlock Holmes. Variations du regard de Manet a Hitchcock*. Paris: Hazan.

Watkins, N. (2001). "The Genesis of a Decorative Aesthetic". Groom, G. (ed.), *Beyond the Easel. Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930 = Exhibition Catalogue* (26 June-9 September 2001). New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1-26.

Whelan, L. (2021). *Pierre Bonnard. Beyond Vision*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Zervos, C. (1947). "Pierre Bonnard est-il un grand peintre? Éditorial". *Cahiers d'art*, 22, 1-6.