
H-France Review Vol. 5 (February 2005), No. 15

Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege (1870-71)*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. xxxi + 485 pages, 216 illustrations. \$55 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-226-10951-8.

Review by Jann Matlock, University College London.

At first glance, the framed window looks like a miniature curiosity cabinet. Scraps of metal and a box of sawdust, bullets and wisps of burned paper, bone fragments and tiny skulls are arranged methodically, attached to a board beneath glass, labelled by numerals keyed to items on a nearby list: “Numbers 2 and 3: Cartridges from Champigny found on December 2, 1870”; “Number 31: Rats eaten both at the same time on January 2, 1871”; “Number 55: Charcoal found in the intestines of a man burned on May 29, 1871.” About two feet wide and nearly a yard long, this makeshift display case offers up a private museum entitled “Vitrine de l’Année terrible”—“Display window of the Terrible Year.” Obtained in 1997 by the Musée d’art et d’histoire de Saint-Denis, the major French repository for materials related to the Paris Siege and Commune, the “Vitrine” dated July 15, 1871 provides a remarkable survey of the concerns evoked in other narratives of that year while it simultaneously underlines the challenges of representing the months between the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war in July 1870 and the repression of the Commune in May 1871.[1] Its presumed curator leaves a trace of his identity, “Nicolas Kohl,” through his “Butcher’s card” at number forty six, annotated with information that explains the presence of a macabre ossuary. The skulls and bones of rats, mice, a cat, and a dog testify to the desperation of individuals whose rations were “30 grams a day per person given out every 4 days after three hours in line in 12 degree [Centigrade] weather.” The punctilious labelling of items, by provenance as well as date found, suggests that Kohl had skills well beyond those of his official profession of *voiturier* (“carter” or “carriage-man”). The fifty-seven collected “objects” from the year that began with France’s declaration of war against Prussia in July 1870 offer a narrative of hunger, cold, and frustration but also—like all curiosity cabinets—of wonder with admiration and awe coexisting with horror.[2] In one blink, the viewer takes in the transformed reality of a year during which the unthinkable of war became daily life and in which thoughts of catastrophe dominated aesthetics down to the very bones.

Kohl’s “Vitrine” was likely one of the earliest attempts to give a coherent representation to this traumatic period in nineteenth-century history, and inspires Hollis Clayson’s extraordinary recent book, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under Siege (1870-1871)*, which reckons with the complexities of how Parisians confronted hardships and anguish as a devastating war erupted around them. Like Kohl’s work, Clayson’s history is conscious of the ways political and aesthetic representation intersect, of the resonant rhetorical strategies of visual and written texts, and, especially, of the power of examples to convey the experience of the quotidian while also evoking the strangeness of a period when Parisians, surrounded by Prussian armies, were deprived of what gives normalcy to lives: heat, light, food, entertainment, mail, and news. Unlike Kohl’s “Vitrine,” Clayson’s book treats the Prussian siege as a period deserving its own history separate not only from Franco-Prussian War battles but also from the Paris Commune. After the fall of Napoleon III in a war provoked in July 1870 for specious “diplomatic” reasons and waged because of the obstinacy of two European power-mongers, France had been declared—amidst much celebrating—a Republic. The Prussian army surrounded the French capital city in September for what turned out to be nearly four months, until the government gave way to a series of demands, including substantial financial reparations.

Clayson's book concentrates on those 133 days from the point of view of those remaining in blockaded Paris. The virtue of this choice emerges in three ways that make this study an example for future humanities scholars. First, by concentrating on a self-contained historical moment, Clayson is able to exploit a range of interdisciplinary sources and to problematize boundaries between high and low art, official and private artistic production, and even between modes of production—in this case, between the traditional press and caricature sheets that circulated in a topsy-turvy world where the methods of the underground press suddenly became the *modus operandi* for an entire city's media network. Second, by examining only art produced during the siege and its immediate aftermath, Clayson investigates the relationship between human experiences and artistic production in a way that opens up new pathways for thinking about subjectivity, politics, and aesthetics. Third, taking cues from the analytical tactics of micro-history (and from historians' employment of the mechanisms of Geertz's "thick description") [3], Clayson explores in depth a historical moment that was, despite its brevity, politically and socially momentous. She is thus able to challenge a myriad of assumptions about nineteenth-century cultural practices, to interrogate anew a series of categories ranging from "modernity" to the "flâneur," and to problematize the status of culture in relation to historical events.

An interdisciplinary *tour de force*, Clayson's study introduces not only the temporality of the best historical analysis but also the analytical acumen of the most astute cultural criticism. Her most impressive contribution, also in some ways like Kohl's "Vitrine," is to give a visibility to this extraordinary moment in history. One can only hope that Clayson's work will stimulate further interdisciplinary studies constructed out of brief historical templates, whether in her home discipline of art history or in cultural history, literary studies, dance history, music history, and so on, since she provides a powerful model. Particularly suggestive is the equilibrium she achieves between, on the one hand, traditional methods of visual analysis and careful source-based history and, on the other, theoretically sophisticated inquiries informed by new historicism, poststructuralist rhetorical reading, and gender studies. With the pedagogical imperative of the best demonstration through example, Clayson shows precisely how one can marry close reading of cultural objects to rigorous historical research. Clayson reminds us splendidly, for example, that modernity cannot just be a matter of form. Content, context, and reception gain here a new vigor as touchstones for what Clayson has previously promoted as a "materialist" art history.[4] I'll return later to Clayson's theoretical positions, both in this book and in other writings, for I think that one of the book's most important contributions is its invitation to reflect on possible directions in humanities scholarship.

Scholars of Europe who are looking for a new perspective will find much pleasure here, for this is a beautifully produced and seductively well written book that makes three quite down-to-earth contributions to nineteenth-century visual and historical studies. First, it gives the lie to the long held assumption that no art of note was produced during the Terrible Year, and even less during the siege of Paris. Secondly, it shakes up the official story of nineteenth-century art by offering up over 200 works that have almost never been analysed anywhere before, and it gives to some of these works readings that are so breathtaking in their detail and so joyful in their exploration of paradoxes that one can only hope that scholars inside and outside the official field of art history will take a cue from Clayson's approach to reading texts. And thirdly, it puts both the art and the traumas of the siege into their rightful place at the hinge between the lavish, corrupt world of the Napoleonic Second Empire and the hiccupping progress toward democracy that culminated in the liberalized Third Republic. Clayson makes readers wonder, if for late nineteenth-century history as well as for art, the entire Terrible Year has long been the proverbial elephant in the parlor, enormously present but not discussed, transforming France in radical ways. Indeed, Clayson's book makes us take a second look at more than a few unmentionable animals—the kind eaten by Nicolas Kohl during the hungry days of winter 1870-71, the hybrid bodies of caricature spanning the obscene to the wittily profane, and even the sacred cows of nineteenth-century art history ranging from history painting to Manet and Degas.

Clayson reopens the archives on a period that has been roundly neglected for decades by every field of the humanities. With the rare exceptions of Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau's fine book on the Franco-Prussian war, which gives a good context to the siege, and Rebecca Spang's astute study of written testimony on the siege food crisis, little has been written about the months between July 1870 and February 1871—and no book-length English-language study of any aspect of the siege itself has appeared in decades.[5] The Commune, that other “period” of the Terrible Year, has recently fared better, receiving exciting treatments by Gay Gullickson and Alice Bullard in studies that broach new aspects of the social and intellectual history of the era, by Jeannene Przyblyski in a series of smart articles on photography and the Commune, and by Bertrand Tillier, whose 2004 book explored the legacy of the Commune from its immediate caricatural output through to the first decade of the twentieth century.[6] Clayson's book dazzles not only because of its demonstration of the significance of this moment in French history—a period of only a few months that saw the radical transformation of the Napoleonic Second Empire into a tentative democracy even as the French nation hovered on a precipice in a war that culminated in 150,000 French deaths. Clayson's book also triumphs because it demands that we rethink a series of problematics relating to nineteenth- and twentieth-century representation.

Clayson divides her study into four major sections: a two-chapter introduction, “Paris under Siege,” that sets the stakes for her analysis via the “Binant series” of thirty-six large paintings showing events of the siege; a series of chapters, “Trapped: The City Transformed,” that deal thematically with major concerns evoked by popular prints (studied in relation to public and private art production) during the months between September 1870 and January 1871; a series of chapters, “The Artists' War,” that consider the production during this same period by several major artistic figures; and a study of the artistic legacy of the siege via two works from the following decade, “Commemorating the Siege in the Aftermath of the Paris Commune.” The list of questions that fuel her book might seem overwhelming if she did not use it so effectively and if she did not justify so well the range of problematics to which it points. Among the questions it raises include, for example, “[H]ow was the change in material circumstances linked to cultural production? What were the conduits? Moreover, absent an imagery of the war in some cases, how can the impact of the siege upon those artists be measured? How are the mediations between circumstances and representations to be adequately and persuasively characterized in a study of radically altered conditions? Does war necessarily generate a specific structure of mediation, and if so, what is it?” (p. 8) In order to reflect on the “sociocultural history of Paris under the Prussian siege” (p. 9), Clayson's study turns on two theoretical concepts that her work does much to enrich: everyday life and trauma, the former derived from Henri Lefebvre and the latter owing much to the work of Kaja Silverman and Elaine Scarey as well as to a series of analysts of twentieth-century wars such as Jay Winter, Denis Hollier, and Ken Silver.

Clayson's terminology positions her as influenced by the interdisciplinary scholars of the journal *Representations* as she steadfastly makes a case for what she calls the “embeddedness of cultural representation” (p. 9). She then goes on to make three surprising decisions about how to broach such representations. First, although her study expands the frontiers of traditional art history by taking seriously all kinds of prints—from caricatures to news “illustrations”—and sketches, she nevertheless gives a pride of place to the productions of six relatively well known artists. Second, she argues that these studies are *not* case studies. Clayson argues against the exemplarity of the wartime production of the artists she analyzes, using her decision “to challenge the ubiquitous but casual use of the nomenclature of the case study in present-day interpretive studies in the humanities” (p. 11). This decision has an interesting polemical value but, I think, tends to undercut the significance of Clayson's accomplishment by suggesting that the wartime period should be read as exceptional—and not necessarily in conjunction with contiguous moments in culture and history. Third, Clayson sets out to examine the “impact of the siege on individual identity as well as artistic output” with the exciting result that she is able to locate through specific artists' changing vision a mutating rhetoric (p. 8). This has as

its more surprising correlate Clayson's attempt to think about "the psychological 'share' in art making alongside the institutional, political, and social elements of causation" (p. 10)—a decision that should stimulate debate about how to reintroduce the concept of individual "agency" (p. 7) into studies of art or literature.[7] While I am not always convinced by the results of this latter decision (Clayson's reading of Rosa Bonheur's siege painting through an optic of the artist's personal writings [pp. 284-302], verges too much for my taste on an attempt to determine the artist's "intentions"), most of these "individual artist" chapters give such a compelling new perspective on specific works that the artists' overall production will require a new look. Particularly smart were Clayson's readings of three works by Édouard Manet, *Effet de neige, Montrouge* (28 December 1870), *La Gare du chemin de fer de Sceaux* (28 December 1870), and *Queue devant la boucherie (siège de Paris)* (circa 1870-71), and two large watercolors by Henri Regnault, the young salon painter whose death in the war had a lasting impact on the aesthetic account given of the period. Clayson's study of three portraits she believes Degas created during the war is, moreover, nothing short of riveting even if she has more fragile evidence here for many of her assertions about when and under what circumstances these works were created (pp. 309-18).

What makes Clayson's close readings in these sections so impressive does not diverge from what is equally compelling in her likewise detailed analyses of popular prints in part two ("Trapped"): Clayson pressures the works at all levels to render possible meanings, weighs the formal means through which these works stage their representations, and shifts the work under examination into a new perspective by placing it in relation to one or more other works (a move that literally transforms the optic for reading, for example, Manet's *Queue devant la boucherie*). She does this with a keen eye to the way representation works in relation to a historical moment, but also with careful reflexion on precisely how we know what we think we know about what happened. Unlike John Milner's *Art, War and Revolution in France 1870-1871* which does as many things wrong[8] as Clayson does right, Clayson does not expect the art (or the eyewitness accounts) she studies to provide a transparent history of the siege. While Milner runs through a cursory (and positivist) textbook account of what happened during the whole of the Terrible Year, events he claims are illustrated by the art he drops into his margins, Clayson puts her faith in her readers' ability to work out background stories for the period in question either by using secondary sources or by turning to contemporary accounts, both copiously detailed in her useful footnotes. Her study, therefore, works historically much more scrupulously to analyze both the legends about this period and the representations through which those legends were forged. From Spang's "'And they Ate the Zoo,'" to which Clayson attributes "ma[king] the scales fall from [her] eyes" (p. 376 n. 9), the art historian seems to take an important cue, treating the eyewitness accounts of Paris besieged as representations that convey ideologically loaded narratives and cultural obsessions of, for example, national identity, gender, and class politics. Clayson also astutely pays attention—especially given the pressure-cooker environment of a city sealed off from incoming and outgoing influences—to how representation and reality developed permeable boundaries with certain stories so frequently repeated those stories came to seem as real as events themselves. Insightfully, Clayson sets out to put the ordinary back into the exception that was Paris under siege. She looks closely at how a rhetoric of extraordinary circumstances, such as eating zoo animals, an activity that touched only a tiny fragment of the city's wealthiest population, as Clayson powerfully elucidates, has clouded perceptions of the impact of the Terrible Year. By enabling us to see the rich texture of representations through which Parisians recreated themselves during the siege, Clayson ultimately creates a case study of another kind—of art in relation to social upheaval.[9]

This "world turned upside down by war" (p. 4) emerges in Clayson's nuanced thematic studies, of Paris in the dark, the militarization of ordinary life, fluctuating gender roles, and the food crisis, issues that in turn inform the chapters on individual artists during the war and on the legacy of the siege. Clayson's study is richly illustrated, but its brilliance derives from the fact that she treats every visual text as deserving analysis on its own terms. This is why I would have liked to see a slightly different handling of the figures in the book: the prints deserve to be larger than the size of a postage stamp (see p. 69 or p.

142) and every caricature caption should, ideally, be reproduced in the original French *and/or* translated somewhere in the book, either in the margin next to the image or, for example, in the list of figures. This is all the more important when the figures are so small and when the original materials are so rare.[10] Similarly, the editors might have reduced the white space around many full-page color paintings in order to afford them more detail (for example, p. 93 and p. 311). For all these quibbles, I commend University of Chicago Press for doing a lovely job with this book, for providing a rich archive of illustrations and especially an impressive quantity of color figures, and for giving the book a manageable format. One can look forward to its appearance in paperback so that it may be adopted for course use since students in several fields (art history, history, critical theory, literary studies) will find much here to stimulate debate and future research.

Clayson's thought-provoking handling of her visual material becomes all the more compelling when her book is positioned in the broader context of the artistic output of the siege year. This is possible through a site at Clayson's home institution, Northwestern University, where she has participated in research that has led to a substantial number of works from a collection of 1500 visual works of the year 1870-71 (both the siege and the Commune) being made available online.[11] Two things might nevertheless have facilitated future research on this period. Clayson's book suffers from the absence of a bibliography, too often a casualty of these publishing-crisis years; a short annotated bibliographic essay might have substituted for a complete list of works consulted, although I think the book deserves the additional twenty pages that a traditional bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources, might have entailed.[12] The book also needed more background on how the world of printmaking worked in the year 1870-71. Although connoisseurs of the Terrible Year may have been aware that most prints from this moment did not appear in the press, I spent quite a few days poking around the Bibliothèque Nationale trying to figure out the larger context into which were published the prints chosen by Clayson before her footnotes led me to a list of prints in an obscure nineteenth-century catalogue and clarified to me that most of the popular prints of the siege were published as free-standing *feuilles* or in portfolios of loose prints.[13] Given that the prints often appeared in dossiers of twenty or more images with legends and no other text whatsoever, I also wondered if Clayson might have given some attention to the way the sets of images produced narratives—or even their own peculiar form of eyewitness history. How did these series work as a narrative body to build their stories? What transformations in Paris did they emphasize and which others did they ignore? How did their gags change over the course of a series—or did the way the humour worked evolve at all? How did these series function differently from those by the same authors during peacetime where the interplay between the newspapers' commentary and their prints often bolstered the humour of the series?

Clayson's research demonstrates how much work needs to be done on the relationship of popular prints to more traditional forms of painting and sculpture, both for France and for other nineteenth-century European countries.[14] Although the siege's printmaking production is particularly exceptional within the history of the long nineteenth-century,[15] Clayson's tenacious search for the breadth and depth of the production of this period is instructive for studying other historical moments as well. Clayson's work is also important because the very exceptional nature of the prints produced during the siege and Commune would have an impact on art for the remaining decades of the century, just as this troubled year would continue to resonate long after the "Bloody Week" of May 1871. She argues, "Though the art of the siege opened a parenthesis rather than causing a rupture in the history of nineteenth-century visual representation, once its distinctive forms and obsessions have been confronted, the subsequent history of French art acquires a new look" (p. 9). Clayson has operated in this book as though her studies will indeed tell us something new and exemplary about how Paris saw itself (as well as about how Paris was seen). And, as numerous historians of Paris have reminded us, how Paris mirrored itself to the world had much to do, from the eighteenth century through to the twentieth, with the very possibilities for Western Culture in all its manifestations.[16] Clayson makes several major breakthroughs in her book in this domain. These include, first, her invitation to leave behind two

decades of fuzzy ahistorical references to *flânerie* [17] and to think about the way gender roles of men and women in the streets shifted before, during, and after the weeks of the siege. Second, her study complicates the categories of traditional social histories of art by considering how structures of association beyond those of class affect the processes of representation (see p. 7). Third, her reading of the nationalism (and patriotism) evoked by the art of the siege points to the complexity of stories told about identity in times of crisis.

Clayson's book ultimately blows apart two myths—that wartime produces little of artistic interest, and that the siege represented a black hole in artistic production. Though the Terrible Year brought significant losses to the Impressionist circle, ranging from Bazille's death in November to a disruption in the networks that sustained other artists, Clayson shows that it also fueled new connections, transformed certain artists' preoccupations, and put politics in vital ways at the center of aesthetic concerns. Philip Nord has recently suggested ways we might reread the political stakes for the art labelled "Impressionist." Martha Ward and T. J. Clark have pointed to political questions engaged by Pissarro's work.[18] Here Clayson's analysis of Manet and Degas's wartime works, especially in the broader context of her analyses of the siege works of salon painters like Régnault and James Tissot and of state-commissioned monument sculptor Jean-Alexandre-Joseph Falguière, suggests ways of thinking about the way artists problematized the events of their historical experiences. Although Clayson gives Gustave Courbet a chapter for work that is more about theorising art than it is actually producing it, she is perhaps a bit too harsh with Berthe Morisot who seems to have done very little art-making during the months of 1870-1871 despite having courageously remained in Paris with her parents, husband, and brother-in-law (Edouard Manet) while her sister Edma fled in September with newborn Jeanne. Clayson apologizes for having been unable to give Morisot a chapter of her own (due to a paucity of visual materials relating to Morisot's siege experiences, p. 371), but I wondered if she had been more literal with this artist than necessary: for example, a section on Morisot could have taken shape not in part three ("The Artist's War") but in part four ("Commemorating the Siege"). Clayson's nuanced reading of Gustave Doré's *Le Berceau renversé* (pp. 66-67) suggests, for example, one way to look again at Morisot's paintings of the years after the Terrible Year, all the more so since Doré's work already troped a much-discussed 1833 Salon painting depicting a *bourgeoise* who got her comeuppance for leaving her child while she went partying.[19] In the Doré rewriting, the baby's cradle has been turned upside down by a Prussian shell, the family fortunes "reversed" by the death of its heir. In Morisot's 1872 *Le Berceau*, the mother's watchful gaze at her safely sleeping progeny becomes the subject of painting just as, indeed, women's reproductive behavior became more fervently policed by the state than at any other time in the nineteenth century.[20] While I hardly want to argue that Morisot's 1870s art is political art as such, I think one could take a cue here from Clayson's own strategies for reading Degas's 1875 *Place de la Concorde*, to consider further how this period's charged political atmosphere infused the works of artists, such as Morisot, who seemed otherwise less than explicitly touched by it.[21]

In a theoretical article published as part of a pathbreaking *Art Bulletin* series about new perspectives in art history, Clayson reflected on the responsibilities for the "materialist art historian" to "imaginatively reconstruct the past" and "reenact the lost connections." [22] There she flagged a set of "points of extreme difficulty" in negotiating the relations between art and history. In order to evoke the complexities of the way representation and the "real" interact, she cited historian Roger Chartier's reminder that "The representations of the social world themselves are the constituents of social reality." [23] Chartier's insistence on the potential transformative powers of texts accompanied a major shift in the humanities in the 1980s as it became possible, even necessary, to analyse the ways representations themselves participated in social change. While Clayson suggested a discomfort in her 1995 article with Chartier's work, which she characterized there as more radical than the kind of art history she advocated, in fact the book she published seven years later makes a strong case for paying as much attention to the ways representations create realities as to the way realities create representations.

In *Paris Under Siege*, Clayson demonstrates exactly how such an invitation to think about representation as a transitive process might bear fruit for art history as well as for history. Just as Lynn Hunt showed, taking her own cue from Chartier, how the “political culture of revolution was made up of symbolic practices, such as language, imagery and gestures”[24], Clayson makes a case here for thinking about how the political culture of war was constituted through visual representations as well as written narratives and other kinds of symbolic rhetoric.

How the representations of the Siege and the Commune ultimately constituted social reality in the years *after* 1870-71 remains beyond the scope of Clayson’s project, although the two chapters of part four (“Commemorating the Siege”) offer some ideas where this work would begin. Because of the brevity of the period Clayson studies here, her book will only *suggest* how the cultural products of the siege proved transformative—by tracing certain obsessions and thematics across the 133 siege days and by projecting, though a discussion of two aspects of the siege’s legacy, how the memory of this period was constructed. Thinking about how the art of the siege resonated beyond 1870-71 will therefore require crucial work ahead, both for the immediate aftermath of the Commune and its repression and for the decades that followed. Doing this will entail taking methodological cues from Clayson: reading closely the press of the 1870s, analyzing a broad range of popular prints in the caricature and fashion press, analysing the reconstruction of Paris public spaces, and considering how traditional salon art interacted with avant-garde practices. It should also mean looking more closely at an aspect of the siege that Clayson evokes only briefly, possibly for lack of visual materials—the growing discontent of the left with the Government of National Defense. Although Clayson provides an interesting analysis of the way the Binant series depicts the riot of 22 January 1871 (pp. 30-31), her collection of works tends to gloss over the stories of Parisians’ dissent since so many of them served (as she shows particularly well in her analysis of the Binant series) to bolster narratives of patriotism and sacrifice.[25] Just as Martin Philip Johnson’s study of associations in 1870-1871 suggests ways of reading the Commune’s politics through the groups founded in part during the siege period,[26] research remains to be done that would locate similar tensions boiling up at the margins of visual representations of Parisians’ siege sacrifices.

Clayson proposes a rich collection of subjects for future research that will surely delight students and foment exciting discussions about theoretical approaches as well as methodological practices of interdisciplinary art history. Among these are the relationship between photography and the siege, “the wartime transformations of the genres of cityscape and landscape” (p. 373), women’s political activism in relation to the subsequent idealizations of domesticity found in “Impressionist” painting and vilification of the *pétroleuse* in post-Commune prints, and the influence of wartime associations, official and casual, on peacetime communities (pp. 373-74). Trickiest among her suggestions for future projects, I think, is the highwire act through which she allows that she has proposed one kind of case study (of a city in war) but not another (these works are exceptions, she claims, not generalizable either in relation to individual artists’ works or in relation to the looser networks of communities to which the works belonged). While I am not sure I share Clayson’s reservations about the use of the case study in the humanities, I am nevertheless sympathetic to her wish to consider representational problematics at once for their exceptional quality and in relation to other concerns. One of the dilemmas that nevertheless emerges is how to determine the boundaries of for future studies that would seek to put Clayson’s best lessons into practice when the very exceptional circumstances of a besieged city, cut off from the world for four months, will not be replicated in the form of such literal frontiers of time and space. Perhaps the solution is to imagine that this study is itself bounded in certain artificial ways as well, more so than initially meets the eye.

Like Kohl’s “Vitrine,” Clayson’s book has selected what will best represent her period from extant examples and she gives a narrative to that period that arises from recurring concerns in the works she has studied. The dominant narratives, as she demonstrates, marketed Parisians’ ingenuity and courage,

insisting powerfully on their successful survival of the Prussian siege. Competing narratives tend to be silenced in wartime and their traces begin to emerge only after work such as Clayson's first enables us to understand the complexity of the central narratives. Clayson's research makes one look forward to a broader context for understanding wartime art, which will entail more studies like *Paris under Siege* that consider in depth the cultural history of other wartime periods—and especially those of colonialist wars. I am particularly eager to see explorations like Clayson's of less noble moments of soldiering by the nineteenth-century French: work needs to be done both on the representations sent back home and on those produced for local consumption by colonial settlers and conquered indigenous populations. [27] By bouncing one set of wartime works off another, as well as by looking at peacetime works in relation to wartime works, interdisciplinary scholars of history, art, and literature can begin to think about war in ways that include the everyday worlds of civilians as well as of soldiers, that focus on the living as well as the dead, and that see the wages of war in more than military terms. Clayson's *Paris under Siege* has ensured that we can never again read nineteenth-century art outside the narratives that marked its Terrible Years of war.

NOTES

[1] For a colour photo of Kohl's "Vitrine," see J.-F. Decraene, Bertrand Tillier, and Sylvie Gonzalez, *La Nourriture pendant le siège de Paris, 1870-1871*, Exhibition Catalogue, 17 September 2004 - 23 August 2005, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Saint-Denis (Saint-Denis: n.p., 2004). cat. 158, planche XI. Though obviously indebted to Clayson's research, her book is nowhere cited in this catalogue (or—at least as far as I could see—anywhere in the exhibition itself), an omission that deserves rectification.

[2] On curiosity cabinets see Joy Kenseth, *The Age of the Marvelous*, Exhibition Catalogue, Hood Museum, Dartmouth College (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 1991); and Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone, 1998). [3] See Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know about It," trans. J. and A. C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry*, 20/1(1993):10-35; Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and Aletta Biersack, "Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 72-96.

[4] Hollis Clayson, "Materialist History and Its Points of Difficulty," *The Art Bulletin*, 77/3 (September 1995):367-70.

[5] Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *1870: La France dans la guerre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989); Rebecca Spang, "'And They Ate the Zoo': Relating Gastronomic Exoticism in the Siege of Paris," *Modern Language Notes*, 107(1992):752-773. Two recent books by Bertrand Taithe also make smart contributions to aspects of the Franco-Prussian war, *Defeated Flesh: Welfare, Warfare, and the Making of Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), and *Citizenship and Wars: France in Turmoil, 1870-71* (London: Routledge, 2001). The classic sources on the Siege of Paris are Melvin Kranzberg, *The Siege of Paris* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950) and Robert Baldick, *The Siege of Paris* (London: Batsford, 1964).

[6] Gay Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Alice Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Moving Pictures: Photography, Narrative and the Paris Commune of 1871," in Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 253-78; "Between Seeing

and Believing: Representing Women in Appert's *Crimes de la Commune*, in Dean de la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 233-78; and "Revolution at a Standstill: Photography and the Paris Commune of 1871," *Yale French Studies*, 101(2001):54-78. Bertrand Tillier, *La Commune de Paris: Révolution sans Images? Politique et Représentations dans la France Républicaine (1871-1914)* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2004).

[7] On questions of subjectivity and artistic practice, see Clayson's reflections in "Materialist History and Its Points of Difficulty," pp. 367-371, esp. pp. 368-69.

[8] John Milner, *Art, War and Revolution in France 1870-1871: Myth, Reportage and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[9] Despite her refusal to allow that her analyses of individual artists are "case studies," Clayson nevertheless argues that her entire book "is both a case study and a critical account of a unique historical event" (p. 11).

[10] Many of the captions do appear in footnotes, but without an English translation; furthermore, finding the caption requires a search for the discussion of the figure in the text which leads to a note reference—all of which might have been avoided by having the list of figures include the captions in the original French and in English translation. [11] This site, entitled "The Siege and Commune of Paris", is connected to the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections in the Deering Library at Northwestern University. See <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/spec/siege/>. Most of the anonymous prints from this period have labels that make searching through them somewhat onerous and students wishing to work on the Commune or the Siege are obliged to sift through works from both periods—a state of affairs that one might wish rectified. According to curator Florence Goux, the Saint-Denis Museum collection is not yet fully catalogued and no portion of it is available online. One might hope that, in the future, the museum would make available online some or all of its print collection from this same period. Similarly, one might wish for a contemporary reprint edition (or simply a digitized edition on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's Gallica site) of Armand Dayot, *L'Invasion, Le Siège, La Commune, 1870-1871 d'après des peintures, gravures, photographies, sculptures, médailles, autographes, objets du temps* (Paris: Flammarion, n.d.).

[12] Although I am grateful that Clayson provides all citations from French in the original language in her notes, I would rather have had a bibliography than bilingual citations. The fact that Clayson occasionally cites English translations, such as for Théophile Gautier's siege memoirs, undercuts the logic of keeping other citations available in French.

[13] Details about the conditions of printmaking under the Siege come a bit late in the book, in Chapter 5, the third chapter heavily dependent on prints (pp. 114-15). To my mind, anyone working on this period will want a copy of this precious bibliographical source: Maurice Bauchart (pseud. Jean Berleux), *La Caricature politique en France pendant la guerre, le siège de Paris et la Commune (1870-71)* (Paris: Labitte, 1890). As Clayson explains in a footnote (p. 400 n. 2), most daily and weekly papers, most especially the Paris caricature press, folded shortly after the beginning of the siege. The major exception was *Le Charivari* which continued publishing through March 1871. Although these months, both of the siege and even more so of the Commune, were the source of an extraordinary outpouring of popular prints, in part because of the disappearance of Second Empire censorship and in part because of the exceptional events occurring in Paris. Access to these materials remains extremely difficult due to several factors. These include the fact that prints circulated outside of the usual networks of publishers and vendors; pressruns were often small; paper was fragile; and the better mechanisms of art preservation have not

always been afforded to works produced during this period. The reasons behind this last point are not always entirely explicitly political, though an implicit political story certainly emerges when one compares the conditions at the chateau in Vizille that houses the nationally-supported French Revolution collection with those at the locally-supported former monastery at Seine-Saint-Denis housing the Siege/Commune collection).

[14] The model for this research has long been James Cuno, ed., *The French Revolution and Caricature*, Exhibition Catalogue, Grunwald Center, UCLA, 1988 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Robert J. Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-century France* (Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 1989) and Raymond Gaudriault, *La Gravure de mode féminin* (Paris: Editions de l'Amateur, 1983) give solid indications about how to pursue further research. Other than Patricia Mainardi's recent *Husbands, Wives, and Lovers: Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), I know no other work than Clayson's that so impressively exploits the popular printmaking production of its period. Now that the Bibliothèque Nationale has managed to get most of its press collection on microfilm, research in this domain should be facilitated. A major further contribution to research would come from having some of the major caricature journals (*Le Charivari*, *La Vie Parisienne*) and fashion periodicals (*Le Journal des Dames et des Modes*) available online in digitized form through the BNF Gallica or via an American research collection like the Getty.

[15] These exceptions include the sudden disappearance of censorship (with Napoleon's surrender and the declaration of a Republic in September 1870); the peculiar circumstances in which Paris obtained and diffused news (balloons, carrier pigeons, and photographic technology permitting news to be relayed between the besieged city and those beyond as well as within its borders); a paper shortage that reduced the circulation of a print media; huge press runs of some prints and nearly confidential runs of others; the absence of certain artists from Paris and the rise in prominence of others; the changed means of production and marketing of prints.

[16] See, for example, T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Priscilla Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[17] Elizabeth Wilson has pointed out in *The Sphinx in the City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) that some of the early studies, especially that of Janet Wolff, on this subject are methodologically flawed; Priscilla Ferguson has argued in *Paris as Revolution* that we can best understand seeing in the city through giving a broad historical context to nineteenth-century depictions of *flâneurs*.

[18] See Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 139-89; Nord, *Impressionists and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); Martha Ward, *Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1996); and Timothy J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[19] I have discussed Pierre Vignon's *Retour du bal: Avis aux mères* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Troyes) in "Seeing Women in the July Monarchy Salon: Rhetorics of Visibility and the Women's Press," *Art Journal* 55/2 (Summer 1996):73-84.

[20] See Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 72-97.

[21] I also think Berthe Morisot deserves to be called by her first and last name and not “Madame Morisot” (this title would designate Morisot’s mother; Berthe was actually “Madame Manet”). It is time that (in English as well as in French) we dispensed with polite forms for designating women when we do not use them for men.

[22] Clayson, “Materialist History and Its Points of Difficulty,” p. 367.

[23] Roger Chartier, “Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories,” in Dominick LaCapra and Steven Kaplan, eds., *Modern European Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982), p. 30.

[24] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 13.

[25] She suggests that the audience for many of the pictures she discusses was likely to have been “soldiers and patriotic well-to-do women” (p. 369), a fact that might well explain the absence of heroic representations of dissent, working-class or otherwise. Further research is needed on which caricatures circulated the most widely and to what audiences, but this is likely to be a daunting period for reception study because of the unusual circulation practices for prints. It may only be possible to study what caricatures had the greatest staying power as, for example, those by Faustin that were even printed on commemorative dinner plates (exhibited at the Musée d’histoire et d’art de Saint-Denis).

[26] Martin Philip Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organization in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

[27] Roger Benjamin’s exploration of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Algiers represents a start in this domain. See his *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 249-274. On nineteenth-century wartime photography, see Jennifer Green-Lewis, “Framing the Crimean War” in *Framing the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

Jann Matlock
University College London
Jann.Matlock@wanadoo.fr

Copyright © 2005 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and its location on the H-France website. No republication or distribution by print media will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. ISSN 1553-9172