War, Revolution, and the Butcher Shop Window in Parisian Visual Culture, 1871-1882

Allison Deutsch

During what Rebecca Spang has called the ‘expansion of the edible’ experienced when Prussia laid siege to Paris in 1870-1871, the city’s foremost printmakers and caricaturists focused on shop window imagery and raised the theme of cannibalism to manifest the discomfort of dietary change (Spang 1992, p. 766). My paper focuses on printed images that blurred the boundary between human and animal identities, centralizing how these slippages signified in relation to established constructions of gender. Compounded by the massive scale of the human butchery required to crush the revolutionary Paris Commune, the cultural construction of the virile Frenchman in his absolute difference from the ‘weaker’ sex and the animal kingdom was challenged. I will consider Gustave Caillebotte’s paintings of butcher shop windows in relation to the events of 1870-1871, which would long haunt French society. Posturing continuity between male and female, human and animal flesh, these paintings are provocatively read in relation to the crisis of such categories in 1870-1871, when questions of butchery, and the space and spectacle of the butcher shop window, took on special relevance in social life and visual culture.

In July 1870 France and Prussia went to war. France was defeated in less than a year. For the five months from September 1870 to January 1871, the Prussians laid siege to Paris, cutting off the food supply. Meat was rationed from early October. The poorest did without it, and were served meals in cantines municipales that the government set up for them. Middling Parisians consumed horse, rat, cat, and dog. The wealthiest had the opportunity to eat animals from the zoo. Elephants, yaks, thinoceros, bears and zebra from the Jardin d’Acclimatation, which served as a menagerie for foreign and rare animals, were shot and sold to upscale butchers. An elephant fetched the price of 27,000 francs—the equivalent of sixteen years of a male labourer’s wage—purchased by the proprietor of the Boucherie Anglais on the Boulevard Haussmann. Its flayed trunk provided the centrepiece of the shop’s display (Decraene et al. 2005, pp. 15-16). Those who could afford to eat unusual meat did so with a mixture of reticence and pride, eager to carry on the torch of haute cuisine by adaptation. A Christmas menu from Le Café Voisin was published in full in the Journal du Siège de Paris (26 December 1870, p. 354), the daily siege-time installment of Le Gaulois, and included as a main course Chat garni de rats rôtis sauce poivrade. Such gestures of alimentary audacity were construed as forms of patriotism and resistance, and below the listed courses the menu read ‘VIVE LA FRANCE’. As the reproduction of this menu indicates, those who did not eat such meals were kept informed in the press that flourished from unprecedented freedom and audience figures. 48 new papers cropped up that fixated on rationing measures as food became a locus of consciousness about the reversal of routine (Clayson 2002, pp. 163-193). While traversing taboo boundaries may have been amusing and exciting, it was also unsettling. This ambivalence was expressed in contemporary visual culture, especially in the large hand-coloured lithographs that were made in series and sold as single-sheet prints to be collected and bound by a middle class audience, including Draner’s Paris Assiégé, Faustin’s Paris Bloqué, and Moloch’s Paris Dan Les Caves.

To demonstrate the discomfort of dietary change, printmakers suggested cannibalism in a variety of ways. One was the slaughter of family pets, with pets representing an intermediary ground between animal and friend. Draner’s Paris Assiégé includes a print entitled Les comestibles, in which a dog looks up at its dejected male owner while his wife wipes away tears [Fig. 1]. Between the couple a hunting trophy retains only antlers, suggesting that no animal is without culinary potential. The man explains to his pet: ‘My poor Médor, I will be forced to eat you to preserve your poor daddy’. The dog resembles his owners.
its white, brown, and black spotted fur matches the colours of the woman’s hair and clothing, while the drooping jowls, interlocked gaze and matching upright posture of the dog and its ‘daddy’ visually associate the two. Draner mocked this fellow, for his rotund belly implies that the decision to eat his pet/child was too hastily made. When Faustin took up this theme in *Paris Bloqué*, he made the association between pet and owner more explicit, along the lines of an established gendered connection [Fig. 2]. A bourgeois woman in her kitchen cradles a cat and reminds her cook: ‘You know Fricando? He is not to be touched!’ He replies: ‘Oh I know this one well Mami’zelle Rose, he is exactly the colour of your hair.’ The cook has previously compared woman and cat, a familiar pair in contemporary culture from Baudelaire’s poetry to popular slang. The text suggests that the cook not only finds the cat appetizing, but its owner as well, which points to another staple trope of Siege representation: the connection between female flesh and food. As is well known, women had long been metaphorically constructed as tasty, and alimentary consumption provided a barely-veiled metaphor for sexual consumption that relied upon the parallels between eating and sex, processes that break down the boundaries between bodies and the appetites for which could be considered analogous. In Siege caricature women might be figured as ‘dessert’, as in Draner’s print *Bread Rationing* [Fig. 3]. Here, a dapper officer with pointed shoes and coiffed moustache asks the waiter at an upscale restaurant for a cabinet particulier, the small private rooms infamous for harboring illicit liaisons. Apropos of a sign on the wall instructing diners to bring their own bread, given rationing measures keeping the restaurant from supplying it, the waiter asks whether the gentleman has indeed brought a baguette. ‘Yes’, the officer answers, ‘bread and dessert’, referring unambiguously to the elegantly dressed Parisienne on his arm who points to herself with her middle finger and to the bread with her index, as though acknowledging the bread and the pudding. Along similar lines, women might be targeted for their ability to produce milk at a time when that, too, was scarce. In *Milk* [Fig. 4], Draner represented a woman nursing her baby outside a closed crèmerie. A uniformed man holding a pail asks slyly: ‘Tell me, little mother, if you’d let me have a little, just to cloud my coffee a bit?’ Draner implied that this woman, excessively made up and coiffed—and whose ‘virtue’ as a result was understood to be in question—might just be the sort to cede to the request. As these bawdy jokes indicate, the Siege offered potential for many of the rules organizing daily life to be temporarily suspended, whether the conventions for polite discussion or the practice of sending infants to the countryside to be wet-nursed.
Meat, however, was the most common analogue for female flesh in these caricatures. Once again, this was not unique to 1870-1871. Dictionaries of la langue verte, or the lewd slang associated with the working classes, noted vulgar uses of viande as the genital region or as a sexually available woman, and connected the brothel to a butcher shop selling human meat (Delvau 1850, pp. 66, 368). In one of Faustin’s lithographs, a corpulent woman on a stage dressed in a low-cut dress from which her breasts appear ready to burst raises her skirt to reveal her calf to a group of soldiers [Fig. 5]. One of them reaches out to stroke her leg, remarking to his friend: ‘What do you say Patrice? A handsome pot-au-feu’. A poster overhead explains that this woman from Dijon is displayed because of her weight, an alleged 800 kilos, and a prominently placed pink guitar is hung next to her to rhyme visually with her curvaceous figure. The queue to visit streams out of a door where an employee dangles a shoe on a cane to drum up customers for the spectacle. Exploited is the fetishistic attachment to women’s ankles and legs, which were usually covered, and their comparison to appetizing meat. Faustin’s print of La belle Dijonnaise has much in common with an earlier hand-coloured etching by Louis François Charon entitled The Curious in Rapture, representing ‘La belle Hottentote’ [c. 1815, Fig. 6], a woman born in present-day South Africa who was exhibited in London and Paris as the Hottentot Venus, fascinating scientists and the public because of the size and shape of her body, namely her buttocks and genitalia. After Saartjie Baartman died of an infection, her body was dissected by Georges Cuvier and displayed at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris. Charon’s print shows the British reaction to the semi-nude Baartman (or perhaps another woman, for Baartman’s display set precedent for these sorts of spectacles) posed on a pedestal, from the perspective of the French. A kilted Highland soldier reaches out to touch her buttocks, exclaiming ‘Oh! What roast beef!’ while a kneeling woman inspects her lower legs. Roast beef signified for the British as pot-au-feu did for the French, both were dishes associated in symbolic representation with the nation. Charon mocked the Scottish soldiers as much as the African woman. Their desire to touch, and their short kilts exposing their own legs, were meant to highlight their very un-French vulgarity.

The clearest difference between the two prints, Faustin’s and Charon’s, is that in 1871 it is a French woman who has fallen into this demeaned position, and French soldiers who are depraved enough to queue and salivate over it, their impropriety reflected in protruding facial features.
to procure them rations, but when the line was composed of ‘honest women’, would they too be corrupted by their company or their circumstances of need and desire? The self-display theatricalised by the central figure is related to her location outside a Boucherie Hippique. Her comically enlarged buttocks resemble the form of the horse she waits to purchase, further emphasizing that her body, like the bodies inside the shop, is on the market. The comparison of female to animal flesh is here shown to be dangerous because which women’s bodies could be considered in this way had to be strictly policed, and in times of hardship, ‘honest women’ were exposed to the flesh market. Yet no woman shown here is guiltless, which is the meaning behind the title Les Bucheries, which suggests more than one sort of butchering occurring. The older woman’s attempt to cut down the younger is its own form of carnage.

When female viciousness and appetite are introduced, the imagery of women’s bodies as edible, and thereby passive and easily manipulated, becomes more complicated. Many caricatures from these months expressed the twin anxieties of trespassing upon dietary taboos and upsetting established gender roles by concentrating upon female ferocity and vulnerable male flesh. Cannibalism is a consistent theme in Moloch’s Paris dans les Caves, representing life underground, safe from invaders. In the aftermath of a fight between two women, only their lower halves remain [Fig. 9]. Their husbands enter the scene, and

understood to connote crudeness. Faustin directed his critique closer to home, and many other prints demonstrated anxiety about the effects of Siege lifestyle on Parisian men and especially women. In a lithograph entitled The Butcheries [Fig. 7], a member of the National Guard watches over a line of women outside a horse butcher. His outstretched arm collecting rationing cards comes uncomfortably close to a woman’s body that his open hand seems about to grasp, suggesting a less appropriate exchange. The hazards of women exposed for extended periods in public city space, dependent upon a male attendant, manifested in other similar images such as one depicting a lecherous guard in the Quartier Breda, a neighbourhood infamous for prostitution [Fig. 8]. Here the queue has devolved into a swarm of women flocking around the male figure and even stroking his body, while a caption reads: ‘The butcher shop delegate, and his seraglio’. In The Butcheries, that sense of suspicious activity is confirmed in the foreground, where a young woman with scandalously uncovered legs and hair holds out her rationing card while looking backward to gaze narcissistically at her exaggerated buttocks, accentuated with a bow. An older woman points at her and exclaims: ‘To be given a rationing card and queue suits these hussies. But for us, honest women, it’s a shame!!!’ This caricature, even more than the last in the Breda district, expresses the anxiety felt about women in public. Prostitutes could be expected to display themselves on the street and use their skills to persuade men
one exclaims to the other: ‘I told you not to leave our wives! For an instant they are left alone, they devour each other!’ If the men retain a sense of power in this image in relation to the fanatical behaviour of their wives, as the series progresses they lose their defences. In another print, a skinny man with blood-shot features explains to his terrified friend that as the fattest one, he should be sacrificed to nourish the rest [Fig. 10]. As consolation, ‘you can choose the sauce that you’ll be eaten with’. In a similar image [Fig. 11], a muscled figure in a bloodstained apron wielding a massive meat cleaver declares: ‘One of us must be eaten to sustain the rest, who volunteers?’ There is no distinction in either image between men and women—everyone is susceptible. This unnatural butchery also emerged in caricatures of shop windows filled with human body parts. Sometimes male or female features are shown, but usually limbs are sexless, sexual difference obliterated in death and by dismemberment [Fig. 12]. A similar trope emerged to express Parisian vulnerability to the Prussians, who were caricatured as human butchers. André Gill depicted Kaiser Wilhelm dressed as a Roman emperor in a bloodstained cloak carrying a set of kitchen knives slung about his waist, with the text ‘Who asked for a butcher?’ [Fig. 13]. The Kaiser is immense, muscled and without pity.


Fig. 9. Moloch [pseudonym Alphonse Hector Colomb]. Paris Dan Les Caves; Malheureux! Je t’avais bien dit de ne pas quitter nos femmes!, 1870-1871. Hand-coloured lithograph on paper.

Fig. 10. Moloch. Paris Dan Les Caves; Mon cher ami…, 1870-1871. Hand-coloured lithograph on paper.
March, troops sent by Thiers to remove cannons from Montmartre were forced to pass the morning there waiting for the horses necessary to begin the disarmament. In the meantime they socialized with the area’s working class inhabitants, who were dissatisfied with Thiers’ conservative Assembly. In defiance of Thiers’ exercise of power, these civilians protested the removal of the cannons and the soldiers joined them. By the afternoon the city had become so volatile that the government retreated to Versailles, and in its absence, elections were held in Paris for a new government known as the Paris Commune. Its material success was short-lived. On 21 May Thiers had gathered bourgeois and military support, and troops from Versailles entered Paris to crush the Commune during the ‘semaine sanglante’, killing some 30,000 men, women, and children. The aftermath ushered in a period of dejection and collective trauma in which

in his oversized clogs that suggest vulgarity as well as peasant strength, ready to kill well-heeled Frenchman like pieces of meat. The battlefield becomes the butcher’s block, where knives pointed at Frenchmen sharply reminded of their weakness in the midst and wake of military defeat, which would only be amplified by the circumstances of the revolutionary Paris Commune. On 26 February 1871, Adolphe Thiers, newly elected to lead the National Assembly, accepted peace terms with Prussia. On 18

Fig. 11. Moloch, Paris Dans Les Caves; C’est pas tout ça..., 1870-1871. Hand-coloured lithograph on paper.

Fig. 12. Taltimon, Boucherie Badingophamique, 1870-1871. Hand-coloured lithograph on paper. 22.6 x 35.7 cm. Lithograph on paper.

Fig. 13. André Gill, Qui Demande un Boucher?, 1870-1871. Hand-coloured process engraving on paper. 49 x 34 cm.
the French feared for the degeneration of their nation and the implications of such a civil massacre (Starr 2006; Ross 2015). Pertinently, arguments for vegetarianism that were based upon a purported link between carnivorism and aggression gained limited traction for the first time in the century (Crossley 2005, pp. 205, 241-246).

These events were addressed implicitly and explicitly in cultural production in the following decades. While it was not until 1892 that Emile Zola addressed the war and Commune in fiction in La Débâcle, in the Le Ventre de Paris [The Belly of Paris, 1873] he used food to suggest the experience of the recent past. Meat was the primary terrain over which questions of power and mastery were raised. The story follows Florent, who had been exiled for his alleged participation in the Revolution of 1848. Once back in Paris, he sees a stacks of blood-red flowers and radishes where he remembers piles of bleeding bodies (Zola 2009, pp. 12, 24, 35). He soon becomes part of a group that considers the Parisian bourgeoisie bloated and overfed, a metaphor for their complacency and self-interest. This group of men and one woman plot another revolution, but the words exchanged between them behind the closed doors of a café’s back room are less interesting than the alimentary allegories that prefigure and enact their discussions. Their empty words, platitudes that predictably turn out to be ineffective as the leaders are tracked down by the police before any plans come to fruition, are enunciated better in the matrix of the market. In the scenes of animal butchery, the violence of 1848 (for the characters) and 1870-1871 (for the readers) are implied (Ibid., pp. 33, 182-183). The most brutal of these scenes occurs toward the end of the novel, when armed revolution is imminent. Under Les Halles, a mentally disabled young man named Marjolin slaughters animals with remarkable and disturbing efficiency, while at the same time being characterized as an animal himself:

He moved the knife quickly between his fingers, grabbing pigeons by the wings, knocking them out with one blow on the head from the knife handle, then sticking the blade into the throat. The pigeons shuddered for an instant... Marjolin was going ever faster, enjoying the slaughter, crouching with gleaming eyes like a huge salivating mastiff... that huge blonde animal conducting his massacre... (Ibid., p. 287).

In the wake of 1871 Zola suggested continuity between human and animal identities, in the anthropomorphized pigeons subject to ‘massacre’—he also likened carcasses to ‘cadavers’, dead calves to ‘children’, and described animal heads in a basket as the result of ‘guillotines’ (Ibid., pp. 33, 183)—and in the animalized butcher who carries out this work. Beyond this, Zola scrambled conventional constructions for gendered behaviour. Marjolin takes his orders from his lover and master, a young woman named Cadine who relishes her control over her ‘delicious little part of Les Halles, blond flesh available for whatever she wished’ (Ibid., p. 265). He is passive flesh to be animated by

her desires, having been mentally disabled by a blow to the head by the most powerful character in the novel, the female butcher Lisa Quenu whose seat of command is a charcuterie in which she resembles a ‘trussed-up queen in the midst of lard and raw flesh’ (Ibid., p. 71).

When Gustave Caillebotte, Zola’s friend, took up the theme of butchered meat less than a decade later, he centralized certain of these themes: the sexualization of meat, the violence of butchery, and the tenuous boundaries between masculine and feminine, human and animal identities. In the early 1880s Caillebotte produced a group of still lifes whose subjects include stylized haute cuisine confections, the experience of a formal restaurant meal or dinner party, and the urban marketplace. These paintings stand out amongst the still lifes of his predecessors or contemporaries because they bring together the historically domestic world of still life and the commercialized circuits of display of contemporary Paris. Independently wealthy, Caillebotte had less need to sell his work than did his friends and Impressionist colleagues, which may have contributed to the striking subject matter and representational strategies that he chose. As is the case with

Fig. 14. Gustave Caillebotte. Calf in a Butcher Shop, c.1882. Oil on canvas. 144 x 74 cm. Private Collection.
War, Revolution, and the Butcher Shop Window in Parisian Visual Culture, 1871-1882

The massive form of the animal in Rembrandt’s painting highlights the power of which it was once capable, which still commands respect, as well as the strength of the butchers who cut, carried, and hung it. While the daunting beast and absent brawny butcher are reflected in each other, a female figure is diminutive in comparison.

Caillebotte’s calf, on the other hand, is located in an upscale shop, reflecting contemporary changes in abattoir policy. Baron Haussmann, charged with the wholesale reconstruction of Paris between 1853 and 1870, planned to separate newly renovated urban spaces from the violence and stench that he feared accompanied a slaughterhouse. Public abattoirs were centralized in a complex named La Villette in 1867, situated in the outlying nineteenth arrondissement (Claflin 2008, pp. 27-45). La Villette instituted greater distance between butchering and purchasing, for shopkeepers bought directly from the slaughterhouse and resold their goods in retail fashion in the city centre. Caillebotte’s calf highlights this distance—not only from messy slaughterhouse practices but from the animal’s identity before its transformation into meat—with its elaborate window dressing that feminizes the body. The garland hangs like a necklace indicating freshness and attracting the passer-by’s attention. The rose corsage creates a visual pun on the toilette that turns the sagging flesh of the animal’s stomach into breasts. Veal (Caillebotte’s painting is known as Veau à l’étal in French) was common slang for a young prostitute thought particularly likely to carry venereal disease, invoking the mutually inflecting debates around meat-borne and sexually transmitted diseases. However, the sex of Caillebotte’s calf is male; females were typically kept for reproduction and milking (Lee 2008, pp. 273-275). Whether the average customer would have been aware of this, the limp tail hanging between the animal’s legs suggests the male anatomy, and given the associations between oxen in paintings like Rembrandt’s and virile masculinity, the spectre of emasculation lurks within the image. The petals of the rose are rendered with the thickest impasto of the painting, and the dark centre recedes like an orifice into the swirling, built-up pink strokes around it. Located between the ‘breasts’ of the creature, in the region where a vagina or anus would be found on the animal, the rose may be read as a displaced depiction of either. At a moment when the ‘feminization’ of French society as a whole was perceived as a pressing social problem, in the wake of military defeat and fears about a decrease in the birth rate and the ‘masculinity index’ (the nineteenth-century terminology referred to the proportion of male citizens to female ones, Nye 1993, pp. 72-97) the hermaphroditism of this corpse may have constituted a significant statement.

If Calf in a Butcher Shop resists the association in a painting like Rembrandt’s of the male body with the ox, neither does it associate the female body with tasty flesh; the metaphor verges too close to literal flesh and blood, playing
The artist emphasized the brutality of the scene to a greater degree in the contemporary *Calf’s Head and Ox Tongue* [Fig. 16], in which a life-sized severed calf’s head hangs by a hook through its nose and another ear to the right suggests a line of such maimed bodies. On the left an ox tongue ripped so roughly from the mouth as to include the entire back of the throat also hangs from a metal hook. As in *Calf in a Butcher Shop*, the orientation of the objects is difficult to stabilize, and body parts do not have secure identities. Especially the tongue and mangled connective tissue of the throat take time to recognize as such, as the top half of the organ is a bravura jumble of electric pigments, and the bottom half suggests not just a tongue, but indeed, a penis. The decapitated head, signifier of reason and rationality, hangs next to a severed phallic object, both shown massacred—poignant imagery in the wake of military defeat, in which Caillebotte had fought in the Garde Nationale Mobile de la Seine, and civil war. Both of Caillebotte’s paintings are suggestively placed alongside Siege imagery in which *bucherie* étalages presented human corpses to register the discomfort of violating dietary taboos as well as the violence to human bodies being enacted on the battlefields. Both paintings, like certain of these 1870-1871 lithographs depicting wealthy or powerful individuals butchered and for sale [Figs. 12 and 17 show members of the French Imperial family that lost power in 1871], also raise questions of class relations that came to such an explosive head during the Commune. The shop window was a site of economic, visual, and alimentary consumption. An upscale establishment’s vitrine was a poignant symbol of bourgeois ingestion, both of culinary treats, that double here as defeated bodies, and of city space, in the newly constructed shops of ‘cleansed’ Paris after the suppression of the Commune. In this context we might wonder whether Caillebotte’s paintings looked back

out the brutalities of the operations through which human bodies might be reduced to ‘meat’, literal or metaphorical. The artist’s mimicry of the processes through which women and meat were commodified and dressed to be tasty draws the act of consumption, sexual or alimentary, into question and conflict. The limbs are pried apart and painfully flattened to expose the gaping open chest and genital region, evoking the body splayed out on the anatomy table, on the butcher’s block, or in the morgue. The strokes representing the body interior and severed neck criss-cross like stitches or sutures, building up the surface of the canvas at the same time as they cut into the body depicted. These thick strokes of opaque red pigment, covered in little if any varnish, resemble coagulated blood, a crusty wound. The viscous paint comes across as an organic substance, the stuff of both animal and human bodies. The projecting impasto endows the painting with heightened presence, its own threatening embodiment, and its matte finish does not suggest that a polished window separates the viewer from this carcass seen at close range.

The artist’s mimicry of the processes through which women and meat were commodified and dressed to be tasty draws the act of consumption, sexual or alimentary, into question and conflict. The limbs are pried apart and painfully flattened to expose the gaping open chest and genital region, evoking the body splayed out on the anatomy table, on the butcher’s block, or in the morgue. The strokes representing the body interior and severed neck criss-cross like stitches or sutures, building up the surface of the canvas at the same time as they cut into the body depicted. These thick strokes of opaque red pigment, covered in little if any varnish, resemble coagulated blood, a crusty wound. The viscous paint comes across as an organic substance, the stuff of both animal and human bodies. The projecting impasto endows the painting with heightened presence, its own threatening embodiment, and its matte finish does not suggest that a polished window separates the viewer from this carcass seen at close range.
sympathetically to the crushing of the working class and swallowing up of neighbourhoods traditionally associated with it by opulent apartment buildings.

Ultimately, however, a social historical interpretation of Calf's Head and Ox Tongue can only be extended so far, given the insistent painterly qualities of the dismembered bodies that float as shifting signifiers of violence and flesh, uncannily familiar in their life-sized scale but also strange with their projecting pigment and flecks of acidic colour. And so my intention is not to argue that Caillebotte need have explicitly had the visual culture of the Siege or Commune in mind when he painted these canvases, but instead that their blending of male and female, human and animal flesh would have been especially disturbing in the context of a crisis of those categories initiated by 1870-1871, a crisis that would be heavily debated in mutually inflecting social, political, and scientific discourses for decades to come. This is to challenge the established art historical interpretation of Caillebotte's butcher shop windows. Calf in a Butcher Shop, for example, has been understood to 'suggest the ironic detachment of the Baudelairian flâneur' (Druick 2002, p. 220), to manifest 'detachment from the lives of animals and circumstances of their death... an absence of irony or empathy' (Eisenman 2013, pp. 168, 171). 'The detached viewpoint connotes the anonymity of the metropolis' (Iskin 2007, p. 177) by an artist who was 'recording his amusement at the fastidious adornment of the dead meat... responding to the humour of the found scene' (Morton et. al. 2015, p. 188). I see no reason to insist that the painting implies a detached optical experience or 'cool visual analysis' (Iskin 2007, p. 177) of a simply 'found' scene— even if detachment were an uncontested or mandatory aspect of flânerie. Such accounts neutralize the arresting qualities of paintings that privilege the ambiguity and reversibility that make Siege caricatures so compellingly ambivalent. Given that dietary conventions construct and maintain classed, gendered, and national identities, when they are upset more is at stake than dinner. If the instability of categories of edibility was addressed with humour, whether in caricature in 1870-1871 or, as has been argued somewhat less convincingly by art historians in relation to Caillebotte's painting, I propose that we consider the ensuing laughter in Julia Kristeva's terms, as a visceral reaction to the humour of the found scene. This reading undermines the viability of the prototypical detached flâneur figure with what has come to be known as his mastering male gaze, returning to him a body vulnerable to disgust, anxiety, and violence.

Works cited


Delvaux, A. (1850) Dictionnaire érotique moderne, Bâle: Karl Schmidt.


Works consulted

