LA NOURRITURE QU'ILS ONT DÉSIRÉÉ : FOOD CONSUMPTION AND CLASS IN BESIEGED PARIS, 1870-1871

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In *La Ventre de Paris*, a novel written by nineteenth-century French naturalist writer Emile Zola, the half-starved protagonist, Florent, escapes from prison and ends up in the wagon of a woman traveling to sell cabbages at the central market in Paris. Florent temporarily lives with his brother, Quenu, a *charcutier*. However, he becomes frustrated living among people who are more concerned with what to eat than with political change. His anger settles upon the central markets, which he calls the "glutted, digesting beast of Paris," as a symbol of middle-class laziness and their unquestioning loyalty to the government.[1] To Florent, the markets are a daily reminder of the excessive luxuries of Parisian bourgeoisie and the economic contrasts between those who buy and those who produce. Casting aside the political apathy adopted by his neighbors and embracing socialist views, Florent devises an insurrection. During weekly meetings at a neighborhood café to discuss politics with community members, Florent divulges desire for a new government that would consider working-class concerns. His plan fails when friends disclose his revolutionary plans to the police. Published in 1873, two years after the Siege of Paris and the Paris Commune, Zola's novel provides an example of how food consumption can illuminate underlying class frustration and antagonism.

The relationship between food consumption and class frustration has been an important part of the history of France. While elites prided themselves on developing an *haute cuisine* culture, which could be traced back to the famous chef Taillevent in the fourteenth century, the poor often struggled to meet subsistence needs. Hunger was familiar

[1] Emile Zola, *The Belly of Paris,* trans. Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1996), 182.

to the French even as their reputation for culinary excellence grew. Throughout the *Ancien Régime,* rural and urban citizens rioted for access to affordable food when prices increased or crops failed.[2] However, these levels of preindustrial starvation were virtually unknown to urban inhabitants by the nineteenth century. Though no longer starving, working-class families could not afford to indulge in extravagant delicacies and dined on much simpler fare. The rise of a middle-class in the nineteenth century made class issues in France infinitely more complex. With traditions of both starvation and gastronomic culture in Paris, it was not surprising that Parisians had unique reactions to food shortages during the 1870-1871 siege by the Prussian army. Even during a time of deprivation, class divisions in Paris during the siege became evident in food consumption and served as a point of class tension.

Scholars who study the 1870-1871 Siege of Paris often focus on military or political events and overlook the importance of food consumption as a separate social and cultural issue. Food, other than the utter lack thereof and increasing prices, does not seem to be studied to its fullest depth. Classic studies on the siege by Melvin Kranzberg, Alistair Horne, and Robert Baldick looked at food shortages, but without considering any lasting repercussions.[3] Since food is an integral part of everyday life, a study of what people consume and how they gain access to food provides insight into cultural mindsets and attitudes. Historians like Fernand Braudel and sociologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Mary Douglas insisted that food consumption must be analyzed to understand cultural values.[4] Yet, few modern historians have looked at food consumption during this tumultuous period. General studies on food consumption in nineteenth-century Paris by historians Jean-Paul Aron and Peter J. Atkins looked at urban food consumption, but made

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[2] George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848* (London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), 20-45, 108-121.

[3] See Melvin Kranzberg, *The Siege of Paris, 1870-1871: A Political and Social History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950); Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune 1870-1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965); and Robert Baldick, *The Siege of Paris* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964).

[4] Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, Volume I: The Structures of Everyday Life*. trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985), 104-228; For an overview of sociological approaches to studying food see: Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcotts, Anneke H. Van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993).

no attempt to analyze the effect of food consumption on class relationships.[5] Recently, Rebecca Spang argued that Parisian consumption of zoo animals during the siege was a form of gastronomic exoticism by the upper classes, but her study did not examine how lower-class individuals reacted to these types of indulgences.[6]

In this study I add to the ongoing discussion of class issues during this time, a look at the diet of Parisian men and women during the 1870-1871 siege of Paris to determine if food consumption exacerbated divisions between upper-, middle-, and working-class individuals. In particular, I analyze Parisian meat consumption because working-class frustration increased as their access to meat decreased. Consumption of meat during the siege of Paris became a point of tension, as only select members of the upper class were able to maintain pre-siege consumption levels. Poor government planning and execution of food distribution ensured that maintaining pre-siege levels of food consumption would be nearly impossible for working-class families. Consequently, they directed their anger toward those who distributed food and those whose diets remained relatively unaffected by the privations. In order to explain those realities further, here I will pose the following questions: What were people eating during a time of restricted access to foodstuffs? Were class divisions evident in food consumption? If so, which people suffered most during the siege? Both published and unpublished memoirs that contain vivid, detailed lists of food purchases and observations about food consumption in Paris will be examined. These diaries illustrate the Parisian preoccupation with purchasing and eating meat. Popular artistic and satirical depictions of hunger and famine in Paris are used to reveal popular attitudes toward the distribution of food and food availability. Dietary improvements and increased availability

[5] Jean-Paul Aron, "The Art of Using Leftovers: Paris, 1850-1900," in *Food and Drink in History, Selections from the Annales Économiques, Sociétés, Civilisation*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, trans. Elbourg Forster and Patricia M. Ranum, vol. 5 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 98-107; Peter J. Atkins, "A Tale of Two Cities: A Comparison of Food Supply in London and Paris in the 1850s," in *Food and the City in Europe since 1800,* ed. Peter J. Atkins, Peter Lummel, and Derek J. Oddy (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 25-38.

[6] Rebecca Spang, "'And They Ate the Zoo': Relating Gastronomic Exoticism in the Siege of Paris," *MLN* 107, no. 4 (September 1992): 752-773.

of meat during the mid-nineteenth century increased working-class resentment because of the growing disparity in food consumption that occurred during the Siege of Paris.

Food Consumption before the Siege

To understand the shortages Parisians experienced, and their consequent frustrations, the Parisian diet before the siege must be analyzed. The most important component of the urban French diet in the nineteenth century was meat, both for its perceived dietary values and its role in defining social status. As Hans Teuteberg and Jean-Louis Flandrin pointed out, since meat was perceived as a primary indicator of status by the nineteenth century, contemporaries saw any change in its daily consumption as problematic.[7] After 1850, meat consumption in France increased in urban areas while vegetable and fruit consumption decreased. In France, pork and beef constituted the largest part of meat intake. Pork consumption totaled up to thirty-three percent of the French diet in the late nineteenth century and beef consumption equaled up to fifty percent.[8] Fresh meat was especially in high demand in Paris. In a comparative study of urban market culture, Roger Horowitz, Jeffrey Pilcher, and Sydney Watts showed that markets in Paris, New York City, and Mexico City remained adequately provisioned with fresh meat compared to many other urban areas in Europe.[9] The number of butchers increased in Paris after the abolition of registration in 1858 to meet the Parisian demand for meat. When taxes replaced price controls on food in 1863, the number increased again, with the total number of butchers tripling between 1856 and 1875.[10] Parisian consumers came not only to expect, but also to demand fresh meat in

[7] Hans Jurgen Teuteberg and Jean-Louis Flandrin, "The Transformation of the European Diet," in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present,* ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari. trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 447.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Roger Horowitz, Jeffrey M. Pilcher, and Sydney Watts, "Meat for the Multitudes: Market Culture in Paris, New York City, and Mexico City over the Long Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004): 1055-1083.

[10] Atkins, 29-36.

their diets. Since it was the most desired food item in the Parisian diet before the siege, it was not surprising that fresh meat continued to be the most desired commodity during the siege.

The demand for meat and the ability to purchase it was not confined to upper- and middle-class consumers in Paris.[11] Working-class families had access to meat at Parisian central markets at levels that far surpassed that of rural residents. While rural citizens dined on brown bread, cabbage, and potatoes, the average Parisian worker demanded meat, white bread, and wine as the main staples of his or her diet.[12] These items were increasingly available to working-class households by the late nineteenth century, though their ability to purchase them is debatable. Although more meat was available to working-class citizens, up to seventy-five kilograms of meat per resident during the late nineteenth century, many simply could not afford to consume as much as was available to them because of unemployment or underemployment.[13]

More affordable meat became available to working-class families when the first horsemeat slaughterhouses opened in 1866. During the 1850s, a number of studies blamed industrial workers' inefficiency in France on a lack of nitrates in their diets.[14] To maintain a competitive industrial output with other European countries, it was necessary to keep French workers healthy. Doctors believed diets which regularly contained meat would help workers become more productive, but affordability was problematic. To remedy this "social problem," Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hillaire began a campaign to legalize horsemeat for consumption.[15] He believed the legalization of horsemeat would make meat more affordable to working-class families. With the exception of several dinner parties thrown by

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[11] Leonard R. Berlanstein. *The Working People of Paris, 1871-1914* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 47.

[12] Ibid., 46, 55; Eygeb Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914,* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 142.

[13] Berlanstein, 46-48.

[14] Daniel W. Gade, "Horses," in *The Cambridge World History of Food, Volume 1,* ed. Kenneth M. Kiple and Kriemhild Conee Ornelas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 543-544.

[15] Kari Weil, "They Eat Horses, Don't They?: Hippophagy and Frenchness, *Gastronomica* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 44-46; Daniel W. Gade, 543.

Saint-Hillaire to encourage the legalization of horsemeat, the French upper class refused to indulge in horsemeat consumption though they sanctioned it for working class households.[16] Horsemeat thus became popular among urban lower-class families. By 1872, over 150 slaughterhouses appeared to meet the demand for horsemeat.[17] Working-class desire for and consumption of meat grew tremendously during the 1860s. When the siege began in 1870, meat was the most desired part of the daily diet. The legalization of horsemeat allowed working-class families to adhere to popular social beliefs about the necessity of meat for nutritional value and allowed them some small degree of social status for having meat in their diets.[18]

Setting the Stage for Failure

Government miscalculations about the number of people who migrated to Paris for protection from Prussian troops in early September created food distribution problems during the siege. The outlook for France was grim when Prussians took Sedan and captured Napoleon III in mid-September. On 6 September 1870, Vice-President of the Republic and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jules Favre declared France would not surrender or negotiate with the Prussian army, knowing that Paris would soon be under siege. [19] As the Prussian army moved toward Paris, provincial guards who protected outlying forts were called upon to protect the capital along with the National Guard. Nearby suburban residents were called into the city for protection. By 18 September, the Prussian army reached Paris and the following day Paris was cut off from the rest of France. Though the government realized

[16] Weil, 46-48, 50.

[17] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 142.

[18] Roger Horowitz, Jeffrey M. Pilcher, and Sydney Watts, "Meat for the Multitudes: Market Culture in Paris, New York City, and Mexico City over the Long Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 4 (October 2004), 1059; Hans Jurgen Teuteberg and Jean-Louis Flandrin, "The Transformation of the European Diet," in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present,* eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari. Trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 445-447.

[19] Kranzberg, 20.

provisions would be needed for the siege, they erroneously based their calculations on an 1866 census. Based on this census, they estimated provisions were necessary for 1,500,000 people for three months. However, this number did not account for suburban dwellers, foreign visitors, or the Mobile guard as shown by a census at the end of December, which determined that the population in Paris totaled over 2,500,000 people.[20] With over one million people thus under-provisioned tensions quickly surfaced.

Even before the siege began, working-class men expressed fear that the government would not guarantee equal access to food if a siege occurred in Paris. Working-class groups devised a food distribution plan to ensure access to all residents in the city. On 14 September, a group of men suggested to the Central Committee of Workers that the government expropriate all foodstuffs and take charge of fair and equal distribution.[21] Their proposal was rejected. Food distribution was left to the butchers, bakers, and grocers within each municipal district. George Haussmann's structural changes to the city in the 1850s and 1860s divided Paris into twenty *arrondissements*, or districts, each of which had their own mayor, *boucherie*, and *boulangerie*. These individual food distributors charged exorbitant prices to people who attempted to hoard food for the inevitable months ahead. However, many working class families simply did not have the money to hoard food. Most working-class families bought food from street merchants, cafes, or at the markets daily since working-class housing lacked storage space.[22] By late September, the government was forced to set price maximums, much like had been done in response to the food riots of the *Ancien Régime*.

The creation of price maximums became a disincentive for butchers to sell their merchandise, which immediately affected working-class access to meat. By late September, it was increasingly difficult to obtain meat at the fixed prices. Henry Labouchère, a former

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[20] Ibid., 42-43.

[21] Ibid., 46-47.

[22] Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Routledge, 1978), 138; Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability among the French Working Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 90-93; Jean-Paul Aron, 99-103.

Member of Parliament from England, remained in Paris through the duration of the siege and kept a journalistic account of his observations. Labouchère noted that meat was impossible to obtain at the tariff price unless one was accompanied by a guard.[23] Despite the proclamation on 27 September by Minister of Agriculture and Commerce Joseph Magnin allowing five hundred oxen and four thousand sheep sold to butchers at a price that enabled them to make a twenty percent profit, many citizens found butcher shops remained closed or only opened every fourth day.[24] However, the closed doors affected some less than others. Upper- and middle-class individuals who purchased extra food before the maximums faired better than working-class families who were forced to wait for butcher shops to open in order to feed their families, and that at prices beyond their means. Decreased access to meat at butcher shops sparked resentment toward anyone able to obtain meat.

Social distinctions were immediately evident and people came to identify continued access to meat with wealth. Edmond Goncourt, a French writer and co-founder of the *Académie Goncourt*, kept a journal which included an account of his experiences during the siege. In his journal, Goncourt acknowledged that while the closed butcher shops caused him concern about provisions, he believed restaurants would still have meat readily available for those who could afford the increasing prices. Members of the middle- and upper-classes purchased meat in restaurants, a luxury that almost no working-class family enjoyed during the siege. On 28 September, Goncourt grimly noted, "On every street the butcher shops are without a scrap of meat, their grills close and inside curtains drawn, a sinister sign of famine."[25]

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[23] Henry Labouchère, *Diary of the Besieged Resident in Paris, Reprinted from the "Daily News," with several new letters and preface,* 2nd ed. (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1871), "September 27, 1870 entry Gutenberg Project," http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1926 (accessed February 23, 2008).

[24] Adolphe Michel, *Le Siège de Paris 1870-1871 avec un aperçu des évènements qui ont précédé et suivi le siège, depuis la déclaration de guerre jusq'aux préliminaires de Paris de Versailles* (Ed. Librairie A. Courcier Paris), 44-46; E. Dentu, *Journal du siège par un bourgeois de Paris 1870-1871* (Libraire de la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs dramatiques et de la Société de Gens de Lettrés, 1872), 27 September 1870 entry, 68; E. Dentu, 28 September 1870 entry, 75-75.

[25] Edmond Goncourt, *Paris under Siege, 1870-1871: From the Goncourt Journal,* ed. and trans. George Baker (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 28 September 1870, entry, 86.

Working-class families responded to the butcher shops' closed doors with demonstrations. Goncourt watched a mass demonstration of women railing against the corruption of butchers and grocers. Women picketed outside closed shops demanding food and shouting that the poor suffered while the rich continued to fatten themselves.[26] Working-class families quickly became aware of discriminations in their neighborhoods, as it became apparent meat was available for those who could pay extra. Popular depictions of grocers and butchers emerged characterizing them as fat and greedy people who selfishly kept starving people away from the goods to which they possessed sole access.[27] Those who appeared to have easy access to meat were viewed with suspicion. Labouchère pointed out that people who waited in lines for meat branded those already carrying meat home as a greedy aristocrats.[28] Even in the first month of the siege, working-class resentment grew toward the government for refusing to handle distribution of provisions, aristocrats who seemed unaffected by the privations, and middle-class grocers, butchers, and bakers who they perceived as greedy.

Troubled Times

In early October, commodities pricing including those of vegetables, fish, and poultry rose at the central markets. Food items not subjected to government price fixation were sold to the public at prices that increased daily. Green beans, which cost 30 centimes before the siege, rose to 1 franc 50 centimes on the first day of October and then to 4 francs 50 centimes by the ninth day.[29] Prices at the central markets also continued to rise on meat

[26] Ibid., 27 September 1870, entry 80-84.

[27] "Les Comestibles. Ah! S'il savoient avec quot je fais mes conserves de boeuf!" in *L'Illustration*, J.F. Decraene, *La nourriture pendant le siège de Paris 1870-1871: exposition dossier réalisé a partir des fonds du siège et de la Commune de Paris* (12 November 1870), 11.

[28] Labouchère, 8 October 1870 entry.

[29] E. Dentu, 121-122; Joseph-Andre Vignix, *Livre de mémoire souvenirs et observations Remarquables avec refflexions,etc.* 21 January 1871 entry, unpublished journal, 1869-1871, McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, box 1, folder 9.

products unaffected by the government's maximum prices, such as pork and other types of non-red meat. Horsemeat, the primary meat in the diet of working-class citizens, was also not subject to price maximums. By 4 October, ham cost up to 7 francs a kilo, rabbits cost 11 francs, eels up to 15 francs, and geese as much as 24 francs each.[30]

As access to meat was cut off by price inflation, working-class political fervor grew. Some lower-class and lower middle-class men turned to begging and stealing to provide for their families since their wages could not cover basic food items that previously had been a regular part of their diet. On 5 October, a group of five thousand National Guards, mostly comprised of working-class men, marched to the Hôtel de Ville and demanded the election of a municipal Commune. On 8 October, another group of demonstrators organized by the Central Republican Committee declared their intention to elect a municipal Commune, but their declarations were ignored.[31] Labouchère observed that these men took no violent action, simply asking for a government that represented their interests as well as those of the bourgeoisie.[32]

By mid-October, much of the red meat supply was exhausted and the government instituted a rationing system for beef, mutton, and horsemeat. The government divided meat into lots for each *arrondissement* determined by the number of inhabitants. Each adult was to be sold one hundred grams of meat per day by their local butcher at the fixed prices. The tax on horsemeat was set at 1 franc 80 centimes a kilo for net and sirloin, 1 franc 40 centimes for bottom round, sirloin, and silverside, and all other pieces 80 centimes a kilo.[33] In some parts of Paris, it could take up to six hours to obtain meat, while in other *arrondissements* there was scarcely a wait.[34] It was likely that wealthier districts were more efficient in distributing meat, affirming working-class beliefs about the wealthy as preferred clientele.

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[30] Labouchère, 1 October 1870 entry; Adolphe Michel, 54-59; E. Dentu, 121-122.

[31] Baldick, 49-52.

[32] Labouchère, 8 October 1870 entry.

[33] Adolphe Michel, 139.

[34] Labouchère, 25 October 1870 entry.

Restaurants were asked to only serve one meat dish per client, but few restaurants followed these rules for customers willing to pay for the luxury.[35] By mid-October, horsemeat became a regular item in not only lower-class diets, but also middle- and upper-class diets. Though horsemeat was initially legalized for the working-class diet, middle- and upper-class families did not protest the change. Several restaurants incorporated horsemeat into their menus since beef supplies were nearly exhausted, but most tried to pass it off as beef. Upper-class fears about being "tricked" into eating horsemeat diminished when faced with the possibility of a meal without meat.[36] Even Goncourt knowingly ate a horsemeat sold under the guise of beef at his favorite restaurant.[37] The prospect of a meal without meat dismayed upper-class men who saw a diet of vegetables as only acceptable for women or children. Goncourt claimed that only women could survive on a meatless diet, and that he did not intend to try one.[38]

As food prices increased, many working-class men joined the National Guard for a guaranteed income and a fixed ration of food, though these guarantees did not silence their frustrations. On 6 September, the government increased the number National Guards in Paris to ninety thousand men and guaranteed an indemnity of one and a half francs for men who joined.[39] Most men who responded were working-class men. When not on duty, they also had the luxury of consuming extra calories in the café. Working-class men often replaced their morning meal with a glass of brandy because alcohol was available at a cheaper price than prepared food.[40] However, by October, the rumblings of revolution continued to grow among working-class men. Labouchère observed several thousand working-class men outside the Place de l'Hôtel calling for the election of a Commune and

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[35] Horne, 181.

[36] E. Dentu, 8 October 1870 entry, 121-122.

[37] Weil, 47; Goncourt, 1 October 1870 entry, 90.

[38] Goncourt, 9 October 1870 entry, 99.

[39] Robert Tombs, *The Paris Commune 1871* (New York: Longman, 1999), 45.

[40] Haine, 93-94; Horne, 185; Kranzberg, 108.

the distribution of rifles.[41] The incident never grew violent. Nevertheless, on 31 October, after careful planning at the Café de Strasbourg, an insurrection led by the radical Louis-Auguste Blanqui took place.[42] Like the earlier incident, this was quickly put down without bloodshed the following day.

Working-class and lower-middle class women and children bore the responsibility of gathering food for their families by standing in queues. As Louise Tilly and Joan Scott pointed out, the most important task for women in industrialized France was the provisioning of foodstuff for their family.[43] Food was the single largest portion of the working-families' expenditures in France. While their husbands were at cafés, women waited in long lines for bread and meat. Goncourt repeatedly observed old men, women, and little girls waiting at butcher shops and "lines of starving women and children besieging the municipal canteens."[44] He also observed women growing ill from standing in queues outside the butcher shops and grocers in the bitter cold.[45]

Numerous artists captured images of women huddled together outside butcher or bakery shops.[46] Hollis Clayson argued that these depictions usually feature two distinct types of female queues: the well-dressed, orderly, and calm bourgeoisie lines or the disorderly, stressful lines of poor women with their crying children.[47] The frustration of working-class women involved the uncertainty of the queues. Waiting in line did not guarantee access to daily rations. This uncertainty fostered animosity toward middle-class grocers and butchers for their perceived cruelty, and for upper-class Parisians able to buy meat without depending

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[41] Labouchère, 8 October 1870 entry.

[42] Tombs, 48-49.

[43] Tilly and Scott, 137-138.

[44] Goncourt, October 20, 1870 , 114.

[45] Goncourt, January 2, 1871, 187.

[46] For example, see Joseph Felon's *Siege de Paris, 1870-1871: Rationnement de la Boulangerie* or Burt Smeeton's *La Queue aux boucheries municipales*. For detailed analysis on these images and other artwork by French artists about the Siege of Paris see: Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under the Siege (1870-71),* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[47] Hollis Clayson, *Paris in Despair: Art and Everyday Life under the Siege (1870-71),* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 182-183.

on ration cards.[48] Goncourt's attitude toward these queues was usually annoyance rather than sympathy. Lines of women and children annoyed him because they "repeatedly force me to get off the sidewalk."[49] The annoyance expressed by Goncourt shows how disconnected the upper class were from the plight of the poor during the siege.

By November, new types of meat appeared on the market at the same time that domestic pets began to disappear. Labouchère claimed that by 14 November, almost all *arrondissements* reduced the daily ration of meat to thirty grams per person.[50] Searching for ways to compensate for the decrease, cats, dogs, mules, and rats were added to the diet. Although an 1855 Parisian tax was created to limit dog ownership to useful dogs owned by the working class or to those who could afford to keep luxury dogs, the popularity of dogs as pets rapidly increased with the rise of the middle class. As early as 1856, a total of 75,286 dogs were declared as pets.[51] Many owners tried to save their pets as long as possible, but ultimately feeding them became impossible. Many cats and dogs were let into the streets to fend for themselves. When the horsemeat supply got low, these animals were an accessible option for working-class families to maintain a diet with some meat. By mid-November, it was acknowledged that these animals were being butchered openly, often in the poorer parts of Paris.[52] Many Parisians considered a diet of cats, dogs, and rats preferable to one without meat, especially with the rising costs of vegetables.

Upper-class individuals in Paris seemed to view the food situation with some amusement, though the working classes did not. Popular satirical depictions showed lines of people looking down sewers for rats like *La Queue pour la viande de rat* which appeared in the 8 December 1870 edition of *Le Charivari* and *Le Danger de manger de la souris est qu'ensuite votre chat*

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[48] Horne, 182.

[49] Goncourt, *Paris Under Siege,* 8 November 1870 entry, 142.

[50] Labouchère, 14 November 1870 entry.

[51] Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Pet-keeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 41-54.

[52] Advertisement for Boucherie at Rue des Halles, Siege of Paris Archival Material, McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern Library, box 1, folder 10, piece 2; E. Dentu, 13 November 1870 entry, 335-337.

ne coure après and depicted a cat jumping into man's throat to catch the mouse he swallowed.[53] These satirical depictions showed that the upper-class viewed the situation during the siege as slightly comical. In his journal, Adolphe Michel included a humoristic critique of a ten-course restaurant meal comprised of horse consommé, Salmis de rat with sauce Robert, cat stew, and dog shoulder.[54] Eating a rat in pâté or salmis form implied use of haute cuisine, and these animals were usually prepared for people who were able to purchase other food.[55] Eating rat or cat became fashionable among the upper-class, causing prices to rise until only the upper-class were able to afford to eat them. In November Labouchère claimed that serving donkey became fashionable at dinner parties and he developed a personal fondness for *ragout de chat*. The somewhat comical view of the new diet of rich Parisians is again noted by Goncourt in December, "Hunger is beginning and famine is on the horizon. Elegant Parisian women are beginning to turn their dressing rooms into hen houses."[56]

Working- class families were less amused by the prospect of meat disappearing from their diets because the elite fixated on the novelty of eating rat or donkey. These examples show that many upper-class individuals could still purchase lavish haute cuisine dinners and were not completely dependent upon their ration cards. Many restaurants purchased rationing cards from working-class families who could not even afford to pay government fixed prices, and sold them to their upper-class customers willing to pay high prices for the luxury of eating meat at a restaurant.[57] It is unlikely that working-class families were able to afford meat, which became popular among the upper class as they could not afford to eat in restaurants. Working-class access to meat continually declined through government mismanagement, middle-class greed, or elite appropriation of available avenues. In

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[53] Le Comte Amédée Charles Henri de Noé, *La queue pour la viande de rats*, lithographe noir et blanc sur blanc parue dans le Charivari du 8 Décembre 1870, Musée d'art et d'historie de St. Denis ; Le Comte Amédée Charles Henri de Noé, *Le Danger de manger de la souris est qu'ensuite votre chat ne course après*, lithographe, Musée d'art et d'histoire de St. Denis.

[54] Adolphe Michel, 262-265.

[55] E. Dentu, 335-337, 389.

[56] Goncourt, 8 December 1870 entry, 167.

[57] Kranzberg, 119-121.

November, the government called for a plebiscite and municipal elections. Radicals attempted to garner enough votes to overturn the government and put more radical leaders in charge of supplying food and housing.[58] Despite their efforts, they could not constitute a majority vote.

By late November and early December poor relief became increasingly important for working-class families who could not buy foodstuffs sold at government prices. Each mayor supervised poor relief in his district. By early December, 477,000 people depended on government assistance and municipal canteens to supply daily meals.[59] Despite the growing canteen lines, Labouchère continued to believe few people were starving. Food had never been bountiful before the siege, but most working-class families did not depend on government assistance to purchase basic subsistence needs. The lines outside municipal canteens became such a common part of Parisian everyday life that they began to appear in artwork. Clément August Andriuex's lithograph, *Une cantine national*, depicted a group of poorly clothed women holding their children holding their hands outside a municipal canteen with a few downtrodden older men waiting in the darkening background.[60]

Even the beloved white bread of the Parisians, which was not only a status symbol but a matter of pride, had largely disappeared by late November. For a city of people used to eating white bread daily, this presented a serious problem. White bread signified status. To eat *pain de seigle* or *pain noir* was "to lose social status or perhaps even national identity."[61] The government ordered the poor to be given ten centimes worth of bread by local bakers.[62] The meager quantities of food doled out by the government were all that most working-class families could expect by this time. Resentment toward people who could afford to eat in restaurants and those who controlled the food supplies grew.

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[58] Tombs, 49.

[59] Tombs, 52.

[60] Clément Andrieux, *Une Cantine municipale, janvier 1871*, lithographe in Decraene, J.F. *La nourriture pendant le siège de Paris 1870-1871: exposition dossier réalisée a partir des fonds du siège et de la Commune de Paris,* 28-29.

[61] Forster and Ranum, x.

[62] Labouchère, 15 November 1870.

The most curious gastronomic event during the siege took place in early December, when many of animals at the Jardin d'Acclimation in Paris were killed and sold as food. It became increasingly impossible to feed these animals as the siege continued.[63] As Rebecca Spang pointed out, this meat was not distributed fairly by the government, but instead sold to the highest bidders. People were willing and able to pay for the exotic experience of eating zoo creatures. Officials spared monkeys due to some Darwinian sentimentalities, and saved large carnivorous animals hoping to use them as weapons against the Prussians.[64] Other animals were sold to butchers willing to pay the exorbitant prices and passed on to customers willing to pay for the exotic experience of eating kangaroo, bear, fox, swan, or bison. Kangaroo was sold for twelve francs a pound, and the leg of Australian sheep for forty francs - prices which were far beyond the reach those receiving a salary from the National Guard.[65] The most famous animals sold were the beloved elephants, Castor and Pollux.

By 1 January 1871, the meat supply was depleted and the bread supply needed to be rationed, despite government promises not to ration it. The lack of meat drove prices to unprecedented highs. Chickens that cost six francs before the siege cost fifty-five francs by January, and even cats and dogs were selling for twenty-five francs each.[66] Bakers stretched flour supplies by mixing rice and straw in with dark bread. Goncourt noted in January that most of Paris survived on coffee, bread, and wine, as even the despised vegetables were now too expensive. While white bread was still available at one shop on Rue Montmartre, common people were eating "bread fit only for dogs."[67] By mid-January, the government rationed the remaining bread supply, allowing 300 grams per day for adults.[68]

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[63] Spang, 768-769.

[64] Kranzberg, 63; Spang, 768.

[65] E. Dentu, 492, 581; Labouchère, 4 December 1870 entry.

[66] Vignix, 21 January 1871 entry.

[67] Goncourt, 7 January 1871 and 13 January 1871 entries, 190-195.

[68] Kranzberg, 130-137.

The siege officially ended on 31 January when French troops surrendered to the Prussian army. By the end of the siege, nearly all Parisians had experienced some level of hunger and deprivation. On 7 February, Parisians regained access to white bread. However, meat continued to be rationed until 11 February 1871, although prices were reduced.[69] The poor resented those who had not shared in their suffering. They felt Parisians had not shared the privations of the siege equally. Furthermore, they felt the government failed them. The patriotism which was supposed to have bonded Parisians together to withstand the siege disintegrated under the pressure of personal interests, unfair food distribution, and the lack of concern over the plight of the working-class.

Conclusion

Although the siege ended in January, working-class and lower-middle class frustration did not subside. Food shortages and unevenness of distribution clearly played an important part in the frustrations of the working class even after the siege. By some estimates, nearly forty-two thousand people died due to starvation, malnourishment, or the bitter cold due to shortages in heating.[70] The dead were most likely working-class individuals, as they suffered the brunt of the food shortages and often got ill in the bitter cold waiting for rations. It became apparent that working-class problems were not a primary concern of either the upper class or the government that they had supported. Before the siege, working-class families grew accustomed to eating meat in their diets and as their access to this "daily necessity" decreased, their anger increased. By the end of the siege, their enemies were not just Prussian troops, but also the government that was supposed to provide in return for

[69] Carte d'Alimentation Boucherie, VII Arrondissement, Siege of Paris Archival Material, McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern Library, box 1, folder 10, piece 3 and 4; *Carte des boucheries municipales du 18 arrondissement*, cat 140, in Decraene, J.F. *La nourriture pendant le siège de Paris 1870-1871: exposition dossier réalisée a partir des fonds du siège et de la Commune de Paris,* 51; Goncourt, 217-219.

[70] Baldick, 190; Tombs, 54.

their loyalty, upper-class men and women who trivialized their anxiety, and middle-class shop owners who profited off their misery.

Throughout the siege, the number of men who participated in Communist and other political clubs increased drastically as their calls to distribute food equitably failed. On 22 January, one of the most desperate days of the siege, radicals again called for the establishment of a Commune and were violently put down. Radical communard Louise Michel later acknowledged the working people of Paris felt betrayed by their government, "having been raked by machine-gun fire and then raked with assurances that the government did not intend to surrender."[71] Eventually, they would act upon the frustrations that had been building over the course of the Siege of Paris. Privations during the siege and the attitudes of those who were less affected created another reason for working-class radicals to unite in revolt as they did successfully on 26 March 1871, with the establishment of the Paris Commune.

[71] Bullitt Lowry and Elizabeth Ellington Gunter, eds., *The Red Virgin: Memoire of Louis Michel* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1981), 56-60.