

between the content of ideas and the formal construction of scholarly society, savants frequently chose the way of moderation, concentration on form" (p. 7), and then to drain their ideas out of their history to prove it, has the effect of dismissing their ability to be intellectually interesting, provocative, original, even sometimes outrageous. There are some wonderful historical portraits in Goldgar's book, but they just do not support the thesis she has chosen to promote with it.

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Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France. By *Thomas Crow*.
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. 364. \$40.00.

Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution. By
Albert Boime. Princeton Series in Nineteenth-Century Art, Culture, and Society.
Edited by *Jacques de Caso* and *Petra ten-Doesschate Chu*.
Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995. Pp. xv+234. \$39.50.

The Woman of Ideas in French Art, 1830–1848. By *Janis Bergman-Carton*.
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi+261. \$30.00.

"Yes! Long live the Revolution! Still! In spite of everything!" These are Courbet's instructions to the connoisseur, and Baudelaire's to himself, in 1865. They don't seem to me to have dated.¹

The birth of the modern (second) wave of the social history of art was bound tightly to the study, even the celebration, of revolution. From 1970, when members of an insurgent caucus taunted the annual conference of the College Art Association with a session in which slides of daily headlines of turmoil and struggle were counterposed to a monotone recitation of the papers delivered at the conference, young art historians rooted their battle for a "new art history" in studies of revolutionary upheavals. T. J. Clark's work on French artists after the 1848 Revolution, Carol Duncan's critique of the visual representations of a (shaken) patriarchy before and during the French Revolution of 1789, Gwyn Williams's empathic critique of a Goya torn between the necessity and impossibility of a Spanish revolution, all responded to and (often) championed art as an integral component of social and political emancipation.

More recent studies by participants in those academic battles frequently invoke the era in which their scholarship was born.² In his new *Art and the French Commune*, Albert Boime traces his political awakening (as a young scholar) to the campus rebellions of the 1960s, to the heady mix of antiwar struggles, Civil Rights, and the burgeoning feminist movement—and to his interest in the Paris Commune as exemplar of the issue of "decentralizing institutional control and distributing power more widely among the entire citizenry" (p. 20).

¹ T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1973, 1982), p. 161.

² See, e.g., Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in the French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1991), p. xvii; Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. xi–xiii.

In the two decades since the first rush of studies of revolutionary culture, both social history and the valorization of revolution itself have been called into question. Art historians have followed and been influenced by debates about the nature and historiography of the French Revolution. For many, social history—indeed, a historical perspective in general—has been replaced by an approach more heavily influenced by contemporary theories of literary criticism. The recent publication of three works devoted, in varying degrees, to the production and interpretation of art during revolutionary (or postrevolutionary) periods can, therefore, present a rare opportunity to examine the current state of the social histories of art and culture.

Tom Crow's *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* was a dense, meticulously argued examination of the manner in which contending factions sought to employ art and art criticism as ways to win support and legitimacy for their respective causes. It concluded with a searching critique of the painter Jacques-Louis David's role in the biennial Salon in the years just before the revolution of 1789. In a brief coda, sketching out David's career during the Revolution itself, Crow noted: "Within a few years [of the fall of Robespierre], he and others were at work reconstructing the capacity of art to address the public interest from its own distinct preserve. That reconstruction and its effects begin another phase in the public life of art."³

Emulation takes up more or less where *Painters and Public Life* left off; after retracing David's biography and career, Crow moves to the rivalries between David's students during the Revolution. This group is examined in the context of David's own family (his father was apparently killed in a duel in 1757) and as a broader "substitute family": "What follows is a history of missing fathers, of sons left fatherless, and of the substitutes they sought." He adds, "The sons in question were painters, and together they made a great project in art" (p. 2), constantly probing issues of filial relations and inheritance, all to be read against the larger drama of "the crisis and overturning of a whole social order, in which a king who embodied all patriarchal authority was put to death and a republic of equal male brothers proclaimed."

On the death of his student Drouais in 1788, David lamented, "I have lost my emulation." *Emulation* seeks to document what he meant by that, as well as the means by which his other students sought to replace Drouais as favored student and, eventually, as Crow points out, "peer and even master" in their own right. Crow provides a probing study of the rivalries between David's protégés (and would-be successors) for his favor and assistance. Here he does not simply record their contentions for David's favor but, far more critically, examines how their works form an ongoing (and sometimes bitter) discourse—repeating and modifying the motifs, subjects, and even techniques of their competitors.

In this careful and nuanced critique of the Davidian family of artists, several emerge in a dramatically new light. Drouais, dead of smallpox at twenty-five, is presented vividly as a painter driven to atone for a privileged and comfortable life by a self-presentation as a selfless ascetic—a self-image that "only the most well-favored could manage in a hierarchical society" (p. 29).

Crow deftly plays Drouais off against Girodet, the rebellious offspring of a prominent family and most likely to succeed Drouais as David's favorite. Crow's Girodet is a significant revision of the elegant decadent portrayed in earlier social histories. In a chapter entitled "Rebel, Rebel" (David Bowie summoned to the cause of Girodet!), Crow examines Girodet's actions as a French student unhappily transplanted to the French Acad-

³ Tom Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1985), p. 258.

emy in Rome just as tensions reached a peak between France and European monarchies (including the papacy). His Girodet is a militant revolutionary, denouncing the king as "Louis the Sneak" and the head of the Academy as an aristocratic puppet. In this context, Girodet's sensual *Endymion* is not a mere aristocratic retreat from political art but a deliberate challenge to and reversal of the macho athleticism of his rivals' male nudes.

Crow's critique of the art of a generation of young artists during the Revolution in terms of a complicated familial rivalry is powerful and convincing. It is thus all the more important to note what such an approach excludes. The Revolution itself sometimes gets short shrift, but to emphasize this would be to do little more than lament that Crow did not write a different book. Rather, it is important to note how the book's careful tracing of the ways in which its subjects quoted, revised, and reversed each other imposes a less obvious set of exclusions. Crow acknowledges, for example, that David had briefly taken on female students, for which he was sharply rebuked by the Academy (p. 2). He argues that "this exclusion only confirmed an increasing masculinization of advanced art," in which young (male) artists were pressed increasingly to mold their art "into a single-sex frame of reference." That brief acknowledgment marks the effective end of any discussion of women as artists in the text. A very real tendency in the art of the period is thus converted into an absolute. Excluded are not only David's female contemporaries (including Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, a committed republican) but also the generation of younger women artists such as Nanine Vallain. (Largely excluded as well are those male students of David whose work fits less easily into the pattern of emulation/competition; we learn a great deal about the dismally untalented Hennequin, e.g., while David's faithful follower Jean-Baptiste Wicar remains in the shadows.)

The exclusion of female artists from consideration lends itself to a narrowing of the ways in which the openly (indeed, triumphantly) patriarchal imagery of David and his students is critiqued. To be clear, the problem is not one of commission: the manner in which Girodet is played off against his rivals, for example, is extraordinary—precise, clear, and convincing. The issue is omission: the marginalization (or exclusion) of women in the images is not defended, but neither is it problematized. One result is that the imagery itself sometimes seems less strained, less problematic than it should be.⁴

Albert Boime's *Art and the French Commune* sets out boldly to restore the Paris Commune of 1871 to the role of a pivotal event in French history, the "other" moment of modernity" (pp. 3–4) in French life, short-lived but stamping the Impressionist era with a set of priorities, issues, remembrances (and, sometimes, artful lacunae). Boime notes that the Impressionists as a group were of a generation that "had a stake in the rebuilding of Paris and seized the moment to establish their careers." Their successors, the welter of successor groups that emerged in the mid-1880s, experienced the Commune only as a "childhood trauma." As adults, they set out to revive the quest for Utopias (left or right), dominated by a pursuit of harmony and order (pp. 7–9).

For Boime, the art of the Impressionists remains the art of a newly dominant *haute bourgeoisie*, recoding "the remaining places and traces marking the previous dissolution of hierarchical structures," aiming at "the elegant and fastidious taste of the refined bourgeoisie bent on the rare and exquisite object" rather than the plebeian interest in

⁴ A number of studies have attempted to fuse Crow's work on Davidean imagery with a pointed critique of neoclassical gender assumptions: see, e.g., Erica Rand, "Depoliticizing Women: Female Agency, the French Revolution, and the Art of Boucher and David," *Genders* 7 (Spring 1990): 47–68; see also Doris Kadish, "Inclusion and Exclusion of Femininity in David's *Marat assassiné*," *Rethinking Marxism* 3, nos. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 1990): 202–17.

self-representation (as a means of securing a social space) (pp. 34–35). This art is directly comparable to the “consumer spectacle of the department store, where the poor may look but not touch.” By contrast, Boime selects the work of Seurat (especially the monumental *Grande Jatte*) to typify the work of the next generation of artists, a group “social and political riposte” to the memories of the defeated Commune (see pp. 140–79). For Boime, the *Grande Jatte* is not a satirical look at the bourgeoisie at leisure but a personification of harmonious existence, aimed at depicting the possibilities of human existence in a world freed from oppression and misery.

The very clarity and precision of Boime’s book opens it to simultaneous attack from a variety of directions. Every chapter abounds in assertions that can (and sometimes should) be challenged: Boime can read class affiliation and political orientation, for example, not as starting points for a critique of an artist’s work but as simple mechanisms for decoding intent. At times, Boime reads onto the work he examines a “flat,” straightforward decoding that undercuts some of the peculiar inner and external tensions of the artists of the period. Thus, Boime finds it ironic that the wealthy Edouard Manet mocked the regime’s fête of June 30, 1878, while the young (and poorer) Claude Monet succumbed to delirious enthusiasm (p. 138). That surprise stems from the fact that Manet is a more “moderate” artist than the Impressionists, as shown by his refusal to quit the Salon and join in the Impressionist group shows. The responses of Manet, Monet, and their colleagues to the events of the 1870s, however, are far more complex than any single action or commitment can indicate. From the outset, Manet’s stance of irony and deadpan sarcasm stood aloof from contemporary enthusiasms about the new, Haussmannized Paris. To expose the hollow celebrations of a republican regime from which he had gradually become estranged is not ironic, but entirely in keeping with his actions and beliefs from the suppression of the Commune until his death. In like manner, the blanket assessment of the generation of artists following the Impressionists as the rebirth of Utopian dreams and aspirations does not touch on the bitter differences between them—or on the openly reactionary nature of some of the dreams in question.⁵

Nonetheless, objections raised to the central argument here do not detract from its strength or vigor; *Art and the French Commune* stands out in particular in its rejection of the tendency to obscure the trauma of the Commune’s defeat or the continuing impact of its ideas and hopes on generations of French women and men. Its uncompromising arguments can help to reinvigorate debates over the social role and nature of the arts in nineteenth-century France.

In a different way, so can those in Janis Bergman-Carton’s *The Woman of Ideas in French Art*. While Crow traces art during the Great Revolution, and Boime examines painting in the wake of the Commune, Bergman-Carton critiques a period between the two “successful” revolutions of nineteenth-century France, the overthrow of the Bourbons in 1830 and the final toppling of the July Monarchy in the European revolts of 1848. The eighteen years in question marked the emergence of the icon of the “woman of ideas,” the educated, intellectual woman who spoke out and acted to influence public opinion. She traces how the icon of the woman of ideas was caricatured, then domesticated, as part of a process of undermining the power and visibility of women—culminating in their “legal disenfranchisement after the failure of the Revolution of 1848”

⁵ As with Crow, Boime focuses exclusively on male artists. Berthe Morisot is cited as one of the eight key Impressionist artists at the beginning of the book but is cited only in passing thereafter. Mary Cassatt, born in the United States, cannot be fit into the schema of two generations of artists impacted differently by the Commune; she is absent entirely from the book. It would be interesting to examine later artists, especially Suzanne Valadon, in terms of Boime’s arguments.

(p. 2). Bergman-Carton eschews both the intricate, braided biographical narratives employed by Crow and the global focus Boime prefers. Instead, we are presented with the typologies emerging in the early July Monarchy, a close examination of Honoré Daumier's caricatures of "bluestocking" women, a parallel reading of image of the "woman and the book," and a concluding section on the woman of ideas as depicted in portraiture. Throughout, the goal is to trace the manner in which the woman of independent ideas and positions was first parodied as deviant opposition to male-constructed ideals, then stripped of both specificity and voice in the idealizations of academic painting and sculpture. Though the chapters seem loosely linked at first, the cumulative impact is powerful and compelling, particularly in the difficult-to-demonstrate ways in which the cumulative impact of dominant images, each seemingly innocent in itself, can shape popular consciousness. The examination of Daumier's prints of "Les Bas-Bleus" is especially fascinating in the manner it documents and critiques the dark underside of the era's leading satirist, whose fears of sexual revolution led him to fall back on the "aesthetic and psychological reduction of womanhood into angels and demons" (p. 95).

If there is a difficulty with Bergman-Carton's trenchant account, it is in the demotion of social and political factors to a backstage role. Dominant discourse on women—which Bergman-Carton peels apart with passion and precision—does not occur in a vacuum; nor are events (including the defeats of women after 1848) the results of discourse, however powerful or dominant. Women were not defeated simply because their opponents had the best pictures. Something more of the social and political nexus within which the imagery examined here was generated, of the factors which nurtured it, and the forces which did it battle, would make the account even more compelling.⁶

It is scarcely surprising that, in the current social and political climate, the open celebration of revolutionary cultural change that marked the genesis of the modern social history of art has been largely effaced. Boime's and Bergman-Carton's studies trace defeats—the aftereffects of a bloody counterrevolution, the marginalization and then the neutralization of the "woman of ideas." Crow's intimate study of a generation of young artists has as its backdrop the bureaucratization and taming of the revolution, the reign of Napoleon, followed by the Bourbon Restoration. Yet each author, in her or his own way, seeks to soften the impact of the defeats and disappointments they trace. For Crow, the Romantics offer a new vision of social emancipation: Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1819) confronted the Bourbon claim of victory over egalitarianism with a "non-hierarchical vision of common social purpose." Boime treats Seurat's *Grande Jatte* similarly, as crystallization of a new vision of social harmony through scientific and political progress. Bergman-Carton is the most pessimistic in her careful dissection of the manner in which the strains of the ostensible "revolutions" of 1830 and 1848 were eased through the construction of "grotesque and hideous womanhood" as a scapegoat. She offers as well, however, the example of George Sand, who denied the triumphant icon/myth of woman as passive muse through her self-invention as sphinx, embodiment of self-empowerment and authority. In muted form, all three continue the social-historical insistence that the dominated and oppressed in society will seek out new symbols of resistance and emancipation.

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⁶ See, e.g., the criticism of Lynn Hunt in Brian Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia, 1990), esp. pp. 99–103.