POLITICS IN THE MARKETPLACE: THE POPULAR ACTIVISM AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE DAMES DES HALLES DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

by

Katie L. Jarvis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(History)

at the

UNIVERISTY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2014

Date of final oral examination: 5/15/2014

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:
Suzanne Desan, Professor, History
Laird Boswell, Professor, History
Mary Louise Roberts, Professor, History
Victoria Thompson, Associate Professor, History, Arizona State University
Anne Vila, Professor, French and Italian

© Copyright by Katie L. Jarvis 2014
All Rights Reserved

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes Parisian market women called the Dames des Halles as economic and political actors during the French Revolution. As crucial food retailers and the leading emblem of the people, the Dames stood at the heart of revolutionary politics. Through their daily trade, the market women negotiated the dual rise of democratic aspirations and a free market economy with striking dexterity. When revolutionary officials liberated the marketplace from corporate privilege and Old Regime regulations, they threw centuries of commercial and social relationships into disarray. I ask how the Dames and their neighbors crafted their own vision of revolutionary ideals while struggling with the drastic effects of marketplace reform. I argue that, among their modest stalls, the Dames invented a work-based notion of citizenship. Unlike nineteenth-century definitions of citizenship, the Dames did not predicate citizenship on formal institutions like the vote or delineate it by gender at the outset. Rather, the Dames imagined that they earned civic membership through their occupational work as traders, their patriotic work as activists, and their gendered work as mothers. The Dames harnessed these three types of useful work to legitimize their use of public space, petition the government for favorable price controls, protect their credit networks, and make other demands on the state. By asking how the revolutionaries created citizenship in its embryonic stages, this dissertation explores how individuals socially and economically integrated themselves into the body politic; how malleable ideas of gender played into foundational notions of democratic citizenship; and how individuals and the state continually rebalanced these elements in local and national frameworks.

As the Dames reconceptualized their identity, fellow revolutionaries scrutinized them and the role of the popular classes in the regenerated nation. Propagandists from across the political spectrum waged pamphlet wars by deploying the Dames' image and popular legitimacy. Theatre

directors even strutted fictional Dames across the stage to entice spectators at the box office. The Dames and the nation alike had high stakes in these constructions. Through the Dames' prominent image, the revolutionaries ultimately debated the problem that would consume the nation for decades – how to define popular citizenship.

Contents

Abstract		i
Acknowledgments		iv
Bibliographical Abbreviations		vii
Introduction		1
Chapter 1:	The Dames des Halles: Pivotal Merchants and Political Symbols, Old Regime – 1792	36
Chapter 2:	Regenerating Les Halles: Public Space, Particular Interests, and the Dames des Halles in the Revolutionary Marketplace	104
Chapter 3:	Political Capital: Reconstructing Money, Networks, and Social Identity in the Marketplace	147
Chapter 4:	Price Controls and Commercial Licenses: Creating Occupational Legitimacy in the Body Politic	201
Chapter 5:	Practicing Citizenship: The Dames' Legitimacy, Situational Activism, and Civic Work	272
Chapter 6:	Conducting Gendered Work: Inventing Citizenship as Citoyennes des Halles	336
Chapter 7:	Playing the Poissarde: Madame Angot, the Dames des Halles, and Political Influence, 1795-1804	398
Conclusion	Citizenship: Fruit of Labor	486
Works Cited		504

Acknowledgements

Almost everyday, it took the work of 750 market women to feed revolutionary Paris. A smaller but equally remarkable group of people sustained this dissertation, and it is my pleasure to thank them. Multiple institutions generously financed this project and I am grateful for their support. The Council for European Studies and the Mellon Foundation funded my pre-dissertation research trip. A Fulbright Dissertation Grant supported ten months of archival research in France. L'Institut Française d'Amérique, La Société des Professeurs de Français et Francophones d'Amérique, the Society for French Historical Studies, the Western Association of Women Historians, Phi Alpha Theta, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison History Department all enabled me to conduct additional research in Paris and write during the summers. The late Gerda Lerner continues to make her mark. Her Fellowship in Women's History financed my first write-up year. A Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Completion Fellowship allowed me to focus entirely on writing the following year. Assistance from the UW Vilas Conference Fund, the UW Department of History, and the University of Southern Denmark made it possible to present my work at conferences, receive valuable feedback, and engage in diverse conversations.

I have been extremely fortunate to undertake this project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I thank first and foremost my advisor Suzanne Desan, who has been an extraordinary mentor in every respect. Suzanne has read more drafts than I can count and still responds to each with piercing insights. Her questions clarify my complexities and complicate my clarity. She challenges me as a researcher and a writer, and our conversations have greatly influenced this work. Suzanne's contagious enthusiasm, intellectual generosity, and warm encouragement energize me as a scholar and a teacher. It has been a privilege to work with her. I am also indebted to Lou Roberts and Laird Boswell. Lou and Laird have read numerous proposals, written funding letters, and offered critiques of my first chapter. Lou's two gender history seminars spurred me to formulate some of my initial research questions. Her comments have enabled me to broadly contextualize my project. I am grateful for her genuine interest and upbeat support. During his modern France seminar, Laird's persistent pen guided me as I sharpened my writing skills. His knack for presentation helped me through several grant applications. I thank him for his pragmatism as well. Seminars with David Sorkin and Florencia Mallon allowed me to explore themes that informed this dissertation. I thank the UW Department of French and Italian for welcoming a wandering historian into their midst. Anne Vila's courses in eighteenth-century French literature and theater have especially influenced the cultural sections of this study. In her two seminars, she allowed me to marry history and literature in my first tentative analyses. Martine Debaisieux and William Berg were equally accommodating and assisted me in situating the genre poissard within a longer trajectory. During my Mellon/ACLS Fellowship, Susan Friedman and the UW Institute for Research in the Humanities generously granted me residency and office space. The Institute's weekly seminars created an environment for stimulating interdisciplinary exchanges. I thank the fellows, especially Henry Drewal, for offering feedback on my work in a collegial setting.

In Paris, my research benefitted from discussions with several people. I thank them for sharing their insights and leads. During my pre-dissertation research trip, Jean-Clément Martin, Dominique Godineau, and Lynn Hunt suggested archival paths of inquiry and fielded my earliest

questions. During my Fulbright research year, Pierre Serna granted me an affiliation with the Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française and permitted me to follow his seminars. After a difficult first month in the archives, Rachel Fuchs looked me in the eye and told me I would find the Dames' voices. I have appreciated her support since our first café. Steven Kaplan explained intricate socio-economic sources to me (over good bread, of course). Allan Potofsky shared his expertise on construction laws and brainstormed potential marketplace records. I appreciate continued conversations with Guillaume Mazeau about revolutionary images and their materiality. I had the great luck to arrive in Paris during the formative moments of the Groupe de travail autour du genre et des classes populaires. Anaïs Albert, Fanny Gallot, Anne Jusseaume, Eve Meuret-Campfort, Clyde Plumauzille and Mathilde Rossigneux-Méheust have shared their work and have given me fresh perspective on my own for three years. They have graciously juggled time zones and technology so that we can continue to collaborate, and they challenge me to consider new studies, theories, and methods. I am grateful for their friendship and intellectual solidarity. Clyde Plumauzille, partner in all things revolutionary, has been a spirited and generous friend. Our discussions have invigorated my work. Martin Balch has indulged our nerdy tangents and amazes me with his own computer geekiness.

I also thank those people with whom I enjoyed life outside the archives. I am grateful to the Groupe d'animation de Saint-Laurent for the accueil toujours chaleureux. They strengthened me with their friendship, invited me into their homes, and deeply enriched my life in Paris. Clotilde Angleys, dear friend, has shared my historical curiosities, explained cultural conundrums, and unraveled the mysteries of French musical notation. Romain Wenz, unofficial ambassador for all things Breton, has entertained me with his wit. His perceptive suggestions improved my introduction. I spent many wonderful meals and conversations with Karena Kalmbach and Stefan Notthoff during my predissertation research. They have continued to find me since then. Colocs Melissa Anderson, Erin Corber, Jim Coons, and Eric O'Connor along with Megan Barber and Elizabeth Churchich shared laughs, picnics by the canal, and archival advice. My WISP teammates gave me my weekly soccer fix, which is no small feat in Paris. I salute the footballeuses.

Conversations on this side of the Atlantic have crucially informed this dissertation as well. Victoria Thompson gave me valuable suggestions on my early foray into the marketplace, and I appreciated our follow-up discussions on public space. Jennifer Heuer is also interested in public utility and citizenship, and she has shared her stimulating ideas as well as theater references. I also benefitted from exchanges with Anne Verjus on citizenship and gender, Jacob Melish on women workers, and Jack Santino on popular festivals. Rene Marion was kind enough to reply to a laundry list of questions when I conceptualized my project on the market women. Paul Spagnoli and Virginia Reinburg sparked my love of French history at Boston College, where I first met the Dames in my undergraduate thesis. I am much indebted to the Paul and Ginny for encouraging me and engaging my ideas. Fellow conference panelists have provided timely food for thought. For their suggestions in particular, I thank Micah Alpaugh, Nimisha Barton, Claire Cage, Richard Hopkins, Kate Marsden, Katie McDonough, Meghan Roberts, and Laura Talamante.

A vibrant community of people has made Madison an intellectual and personal home for me. I have been lucky to work and live among these individuals for six years. I especially thank Jim Coons for his friendship, collegiality, and mentorship at nearly every stage as we worked on

our projects together. Katherine Eade thought through my proposal with me as we prepared for prelims. Skye Doney kept me company as we wrote and revised together. Jim Coons, Jeff Hobbs, Hunter Martin, and Eric O'Connor all read material at the core of chapter seven. The rest of Team France including Grace Allen, John Boonstra, Abby Lewis, Terry Peterson, and Jill Slaight rooted for me along the way and offered feedback on a talk on chapter five. Trailblazer Holly Grout gave me advice on integrating my research and professional plans. I appreciate the sincere camaraderie of Alex Allweiss, Alice Astarita, Charlie Cahill, Sarah Cushing, Geneviève Dorais, and Britt Tevis. Their openness, honesty, and understanding have bolstered me throughout this process.

Finally, I thank my family. My grandparents, Bernice Cook, Clyde Cook, and Florence Jarvis, have sustained this dissertation with frequent phone calls, shared meals, and love. Nana may have matched this work page for page in letters. All three will be happy to know that "my paper" has reached its current form. Research starts with questions, but questions come from curiosity. I thank my parents, Gay and David Jarvis, for encouraging my inquisitive appetite. My mother has listened to countless project updates, and our conversations have helped me to articulate my arguments. It has been a joy to share her enthusiasm for teaching. Her keen insights on this front have influenced my historical writing. My father has always given me perspective and reminded me to find balance. During the course of this dissertation, I realized that his creative visions and loving attention to detail inform my work more than I ever imagined. I owe him all my construction metaphors. My brother, Kevin Jarvis, sends me thoughtful encouragement and keeps me in stitches when we are together. My parents, along with my brother, have showered me with love, demonstrated time and again their unwavering faith in me, and supported my academic pursuits even while they sent me across states and continents. I dedicate this dissertation to them with profound gratitude, admiration, and love.

Bibliographical Abbreviations

AN	Archives nationales
AdP	Archives de Paris
AdPP	Archives de la Préfecture de police
AP	*Archives Parlementaires*
BHdV	Bibliothèque administrative de la Ville de Paris
BHVP	Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mitterrand
BnF Arsenal	BnF, Archives de la Bastille
BnF Arts du Spectacle	BnF, Département des Arts du spectacle
BnF Estampes	BnF, Département des Estampes
BnF Manuscrits	BnF, Département des Manuscrits
BnF Louvois	BnF, Département de la Musique
Carnavalet	Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Cabinet des arts graphiques

– Introduction –

Two years into the Revolution, on August 27, 1791, the Dames des Halles commanded the attention of the National Assembly. These Parisian market women had addressed the deputies several times before. They had spurred the National Assembly to relocate to Paris, had urged officials to abolish privilege, and had implored the state to protect the poor. During their 1791 visit, the Dames des Halles cut a radical path. At the bar, the Dames dissolved their religious confraternities which had formed the backbone of their group identity. "Today," the Dames brazenly swore, "we have no other corporation than the French, no other confraternity than the patriots, no other cult than that of liberty."[1] Invoking the patriotism of "the citizens of all classes," these food retailers positioned themselves as individual members of the body politic, rather than as an Old Regime collectivity.[2] They dismantled the intermediary body that had distanced citizens from the nation. One of the fish merchants asserted, "The (female) inhabitants of les Halles, for whom all politics, all refinements are foreign, do not know any other virtues than those of being useful and serving their fatherland."[3] The deputies enthusiastically applauded

[1] Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) Le29 1729 *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 août 1791* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791), 2. "Aujourd'hui nous n'avons d'autre corporation que les François, d'autre confrairie que les patriotes, d'autre culte que celui de la liberté." The same pamphlet describes how the confraternity of Saint Louis, which the marchandes de morue had composed, had donated their holdings of 3,000 livres on November 2, 1789. Yet, this 1789 donation was not recorded in the procès-verbal and the Dames asked the Assembly to retroactively acknowledge their 1789 gift as well; See also Archives nationales (hereafter AN) C 75, n°745, le 27 août 1791 which explains that the Dames' two confraternities were dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Saint Louis.

[2] BnF Le29 1729 *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 août 1791* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791), 2. "les citoyens de toutes les classes." The recent d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws of March and June 1791 dismantled the corporate world and opened a new chapter in associative identities for the Dames des Halles.

[3] J. Madival and E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860; recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés*, Series 1, Volume 29: 754, le 27 août 1791. There is a typo where "savoir" replaces "servir" in the published version *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 Août 1791*. "Les habitantes des halles, pour qui toute politique, tous rafinemens sont étrangers, ne connoissent d'autres vertus que d'être utiles, & de servir pour leur patrie."

as the Dames donated 1,500 livres in money, precious metals, and ceremonial ornaments to the nation.[4]

On this and many other occasions, the Dames des Halles firmly asserted their revolutionary citizenship and made demands on the state. Their bold interventions and trade in foodstuffs put them at the heart of politics. This work asks how the Dames recreated their civic identity and fraternal relations in the marketplace, while pursuing commercial interests. I argue that, among their modest market stalls, the Dames negotiated the dual rise of democratic aspirations and capitalism. At the crux of this volatile transformation, they built their civic membership upon the cornerstone of useful work rather than predicating it upon gender. As economic and political actors, the Dames forged their own path from subject to citizen.

Les Halles, the Parisian markets, were a lynchpin for public order and public opinion. Food politics played a pivotal role in the Revolution. The markets supplied the capital's 650,000 inhabitants with food everyday.[5] "Les Halles" most often referred to the central Parisian markets and an assortment of shelters that protected a staggering amount of trade. In 1789 alone, Parisians consumed 78,000,000 eggs, most of which passed through the central markets. There, the Dames des Halles (literally "women of the Halles") sold fruit, vegetables, fish, butter, and eggs in retail. In the thirteenth century, King Saint Louis had granted the Dames' predecessors permission to trade in les Halles as a form of paternal charity for poor women. Linked by shared privileges, the Dames maintained a quasi-corporate identity.[6] By the time of the Revolution,

---

[4] BnF Lc2 218, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 28 août 1791, nº 240, 974; AN C 75, n°745, 27 août 1791 details that "cette offrande mont à une somme de trois cent quatre vingt quatre livres en écus, quatre vingt livre en assignats... pour la nation de six cent livres est en étal de meubles d'église qui sont tous le scelle au St. Sépulcre."

[5] Sigismond Lacroix, ed., *Actes de la Commune de Paris pendant la Révolution*, Series I, Volume I (New York: AMS Press, 1974), viii.

[6] Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1994), 21, 162. Rene Marion's important dissertation remains the most detailed study of the Dames des Halles before the Revolution. Jehanne d'Orliac's survey of the Dames from 1181 to 1939 is short and

approximately 750 Dames des Halles hawked vegetables from stalls, approached customers with trays of fish, and bartered over vegetables under large parasols. Milling through the open square, winding among the pavilion structures, and darting in and out of shops perched against houses, diverse customers searched for the best price or a familiar Dame.[7] Without the Dames' retail services, the market would collapse.

The "Dames des Halles" most frequently referred to the retailers of the central market, but the term encompassed women selling in minor public markets as well.[8] Paris boasted several satellite markets around the city such as the Place Maubert and the Marché des Quinze-vingts. Due to their common occupation and socio-economic conditions, Dames from across these markets associated under the title the "Dames des Halles."[9] According to revolutionary legislation, a retailer had to be impoverished to secure a spot in the public marketplace and thus most Dames were rather poor. However, heritage, commercial networks, and a shared cultural milieu did more to delineate the group's identity than any legal apparatuses. The Dames relied on the same networks of suppliers, credit, and money. They traded resources, gossip, and insults with each other. The retailers took great pride in their heritage and stamped their collective

---

superficial. Although Dominique Godineau's crucial book on Parisian women analyzes how the Dames confronted the women's clubs, there is no comprehensive study of the Dames des Halles during the revolutionary period. Jehanne d'Orliac, *Dames de la Halle* (Paris: Eds. Frances, 1946); Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1988).

[7] Marion, "Community and Authority," 14-15. Fellow fishwives from the Place Maubert (another market) also made the trek across the Seine to supply themselves from the retailers of les Halles. Marion, "Community and Authority," 120.

[8] For example, the following cross-market petition was signed by representatives Dame Dupray of the Marché St. Paul, Reine d'Ongrie (Hongrie) of the Marché d'Aguesseau, Dame Genti of the Marché Quinze-Vingt, and Dame Doré of the central Halles. AN C 128, n°435, "Adresse de reconnaissance et de dévouement à l'Assemblée nationale, par les dames des divers marchés de la capitale." The revolutionaries usually referred to the central markets when using the singular "la halle." However, they also used "les Halles" to emphasize the several types of markets (vegetables, fish, cloth, etc.) that composed the central markets. In addition, "les Halles" could broadly refer to the central and satellite markets scattered across the city. I will use "Dames des Halles" to refer to the retailers who shared the identity across the markets, as the merchants themselves did in their petitions.

[9] The Dames were not an indivisible group, as no 750 people could be. The retailers did not usually present themselves under the title "Dame des Halles" on their own, but did so in the company of others. As a group, the Dames called their name to their advantage to evoke their numbers and shared identity.

identity with a trademark dialect. Pairing singular nouns with first person plural verbs as in "I are all equals,"[10] the Dames blurred the discursive boundaries between individual merchants and the wider group. The collectivity subsumed individual Dames, and a single Dame channeled the speech of the entire collectivity. At once individuals and members of a corps, the Dames mirrored the subdivisions among citizens and the body politic.

The French celebrated the Dames as the leading emblem of the people, which granted the market women exceptional political influence. During the Old Regime, the Dames represented the Third Estate during royal rituals including births, baptisms, and feast days. The Dames played the highly visible role of grateful subjects and showered the king with compliments. The king, in turn, recognized the Dames' crucial role in feeding his Parisian subjects. For centuries, Parisians easily recognized the Dames in literary, theatrical, and visual depictions. The Dames' repertoire of unique gestures, slang, and rituals was unmistakable and instantaneously familiar. At the outset of the Revolution, citizens continued to embrace the Dames as traditional representatives of the popular classes. The Dames des Halles – more than any other Parisian group – represented "the people."

During the Revolution, the Dames des Halles eagerly deployed their exceptional influence as the sovereign people incarnate. Just three months after the fall of the Bastille, during the October Days, the Dames led the march of women to Versailles to demand bread and revolutionary allegiance from the king. After pressuring the nascent National Assembly and rallying thousands of National Guards, the Dames triumphantly returned to Paris with the king himself. Because the revolutionaries feared food shortages and military sieges, the retailers became even more important. While reframing their legitimacy, tenaciously defending their

[10] BnF Lb39 9193 "Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rende à Paris et détail intéressant de la réception qu'il a faitte [sic] aux dames de la halles pour le ramener à Paris." (Imprimerie de Calais & Dubois), 5-6. "je sommes tous égaux."

interests, and indispensably supplying Parisians with food, the Dames would drive politics in new directions for over a decade.

This work offers a panoramic window into the Dames' world, from the calling of the Estates General in 1789 to Napoleon's coronation as emperor in 1804. By probing the depth and the breadth of the Dames' experience, I examine how fully the Revolution permeated their lives while asking how they influenced the course of the Revolution as economic and political agents. In les Halles, Parisians fashioned a body politic far from the austere, polished allegories of revolutionary artists. Even in its most optimistic form, the body politic was mutable, dynamic, and spattered with fish guts**.** My analysis radiates from this vibrant environment to ask how the Dames conceptualized citizenship and how others created this notion with them. Along with neighbors in the marketplace, legislators in the assembly halls, judges in the courtroom, and playwrights in theatres, the Dames grappled with the role of the popular classes in politics. Over the course of the Revolution, the retailers distanced their market permissions from the stain of charity to paint themselves as citizen workers. In particular, I argue that the Dames and other citizens used the refrain of useful work to debate their role in the regenerated body politic.

As the Dames negotiated their place in the nation, they molded foundational ideas of revolutionary politics and society. The stakes broached two salient issues. First, the Dames confronted the twin ascent of political and economic liberty. When the free market swept away their royal privileges, the Dames reconceptualized their commercial and civic identities in tandem. In order to defend their spots in the public markets, the Dames insisted that they formed part of the nation who owned the public space. They also responded to currency reform by casting aside the categories of the old corporate world and creating diverse alliances to petition the state. In their most precarious contest, the market women wrestled with new egalitarian price

controls that endangered the merchants' livelihoods. On the one hand, the Dames rallied democratic ideals to further their commercial interests. On the other, they legitimized their civic membership through their profit-oriented trade.

Second, the Dames invented a model of citizenship at its nascent stages. Historians have neglected the Dames since their activism did not dovetail with emerging forms of democratic citizenship such as participation in political clubs, voting, or advocacy through the press. This study, in contrast, challenges narrow definitions of citizenship and throws light on complex negotiations of political legitimacy. In particular, it illustrates how the Dames based their citizenship on useful work. They imagined their civic membership through their occupational work as traders, their patriotic work as activists, and their gendered work as mothers. The market women argued that they provided useful services to society. They concluded that work, rather than gender, primarily validated their citizenship and allowed them to make claims on the state.

While analyzing these pivotal revolutionary themes, I evoke the creative power of the revolutionaries.[11] I ask how the Dames and their fellow revolutionaries sought to imagine a new citizen, created unforeseen problems while they corrected old ones, pursued countless solutions in everyday life, and recast the fundamental relationships of society and politics in the process. The revolutionaries faced innumerable outcomes and possibilities. The Dames certainly had a far clearer view of what they struggled against than what would replace it. Citizens determined the

[11] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 12, 88. Hunt argues that the revolutionaries "consciously" endeavored to "reconstitute society and social relations" and that "members of society could invent culture and politics for themselves." By creating a new political culture, the revolutionaries also changed "la catégorie de ce qu'on appelle 'le politique.'" Lynn Hunt, "Relire l'histoire du politique," in *La Révolution à l'oeuvre: Perspectives actuelles dans l'histoire de la Révolution française*, edited by Jean-Clément Martin (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 121, 123.

course of the Revolution through piecemeal reactions.[12] As the Dames improvised in the marketplace, they gradually invented their place in the nation.

At the same time, the revolutionaries seized the Dames' image to navigate the profound anxieties created by a rapidly evolving and ambiguous social order. The revolutionaries found the genre poissard a convenient cast to give shape to these ideas. This Old Regime literary style sought to capture the daily lives of the Parisian popular classes, particularly the Dames des Halles, in a boisterous and often hyperbolic form. Revolutionary propagandists built from this heritage and deployed the Dames as emblems of popular sovereignty. In addition, playwrights, artists, officials, and fellow citizens projected their hopes and fears for the new role of the popular classes onto the Dames. While constructing fictional Dames, they debated what duties the popular classes owed the body politic and what rewards the popular classes should reap in return.

In order to analyze the intricate relationships among the Dames' economic interests, their political activism, and their depiction by fellow revolutionaries, I draw primarily from social and cultural evidence. To bring these diverse sources into dialogue, I read against the grain. In one direction, I dissect social sources from a cultural perspective. I examine price control legislation, court transcripts, and police reports to ask what ideas of the cooperative nation different groups advanced. In the opposite direction, I scrutinize cultural sources in a social light. I ask how commercial competition and consumer taste drove the content of theatrical performances that constructed the Dames' image. The Dames' social and cultural worlds mutually constituted one another.

---

[12] William Doyle, "The Outbreak of the Revolution, 1787-1789," in Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy, *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, Fifth Edition, (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 1.

Capitalism, Economic History, and Social Identity

While analyzing the Dames, my research reasserts the centrality of economics in revolutionary politics. The Dames enable us to probe how the corporate world disintegrated, examine how citizens created new socio-economic identities, scrutinize how democratic and free trade discourses played out in trade among citizens, and consider how work informed political legitimacy.

Since the collapse of the Marxist narrative and the rise of political culture approaches, many historians of the Revolution have hesitated to reconsider economic issues at the core of the revolutionary narrative.[13] Revisionists thoroughly dismantled the Marxist trajectory from feudalism to industrial capitalism. They so discredited Georges Lefebvre's neat Marxist explanation that socio-economic history also seemed to become uncertain terrain. Revisionists effectively fought fire with fire by addressing crucial themes of how classes formed, fractured, or did not exist using socio-economic evidence. Historians even questioned the ability to define class as an analytical category.[14] Ultimately, revisionist historians have acknowledged that class

---

[13] Albert Soboul defended the Marxist interpretation that "The French Revolution took the 'truly revolutionary path' from feudalism to capitalism." However, the revisionists began a sustained shelling of the Marxist interpretation of the Revolution after Alfred Cobban firmly drew the battle lines in 1964. The revisionists gradually won supporters, received reinforcements from the excitement and financial support surrounding the bicentennial, and sent in the cavalry with the linguistic turn. Some revisionists, like François Furet and Keith Baker, shifted the terrain to high politics and discursive analysis to frame their attack. Scholars have firmly bucked the revolutionaries from their neat Marxist route between feudalism and capitalism. Soboul, "The French Revolution in the History of the Contemporary World," reprinted and abridged from Albert Soboul *Understanding the French Revolution,* translated by April Ane Knutson (New York: International Publishers, 1988): 274-299 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates (New York: Routledge, 2006), 24. Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964). (Although Cobban did not publish his book until 1964, he had already challenged the Marxist narrative in 1954.) For the trajectory of revisionist scholar scholarship, see William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10-11; François Furet framed the revolutionaries' centralizing campaign as extending the absolutist impulses of the Old Regime. As a result, he maintained that the Terror was contained in the totalizing ideology of the General Will. His perspective turned the analytical lens from Marxist questions and wrested causal power from socio-economic antagonisms. Furet, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1978); Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[14] Notably, Alfred Cobban discredited the strict Marxist narrative by redefining the bourgeois "winners" of the Revolution as landowners, notables, and previous venal office holders. He argued that "the bourgeois of the [Marxist] theory are a class of capitalists, industrial entrepreneurs and financiers of big business; those of the French

movements may not have solidified along pre-industrial lines, but that individuals did reimagine their most discrete socio-economic associations throughout the Revolution.[15]

Without firm class delineations, how did the revolutionaries profoundly reconfigure the footings of socio-economic relations? One crucial way of analyzing the widespread change has been to scrutinize the collapse of the corporate world. From the 1980s through the mid-1990s, scholars studied how abolishing the guilds affected socio-economic relations and the world of work. On the one hand, they asked how relationships among artisans changed without

---

Revolution were landowners, *rentiers*, and officials... who all knew that they swam in the same element, and that without the pervasive influence of the social hierarchy and the maintenance of individual and family property rights against any interference by the state, their way of life, confined, unchanging, conservative, repetitive, would come to an end." "The Victory of Conservative Landowners" reprinted from Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, 416. In addition, Colin Lucas argued that pre-revolutionary notables and ambitious bourgeois actually emulated the nobility. These groups aspired to join the noble ranks rather than reject the social hierarchy. Thus, Lucas maintained that the notables, ambitious bourgeois, and nobles formed part of the same cadre of ruling elite in the last decades of the Old Regime. Schisms only occurred since the notables' and bourgeois' paths to social ascent dwindled. Frustration, rather than conflicting class interests, fueled the rupture on the eve of the Revolution. Colin Lucas, "Nobles, bourgeoisie and the origins of the French Revolution," reprinted in an abridged format from *Past and Present* 60 (August 1973): 84-126 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates (New York: Routledge, 2006), 33-50. Most studies of shifting social identity during the Revolution examine the absence or rise of class distinctions. Given the Revolution's strong Marxist historiography, this is not a surprising starting point. Yet from Albert Soboul, who studied the shared mentalité of the Parisian sans-culottes, to the revisionist Sarah Maza, who argued that there was no revolutionary bourgeoisie, historians cannot firmly grasp or reject class delineations. Soboul maintained that a "capitalist economy" was feasible by 1792 "which would necessarily transform the sans-culottes into a proletariat." Albert Soboul, "The Triumph of a New Bourgeoisie," reprinted from Albert Soboul, "Classes and Class Struggles during the French Revolution," *Science & Society* 17 (Summer 1953), 252-257, in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, 402; Soboul carefully qualified his position that "The sans-culotterie did not constitute a class, nor was the sans-culotte movement based on class differences. Craftsmen, shopkeepers and merchants, *compagnons* and day-labourers joined with a bourgeois minority to form a coalition but there was still an underlying conflict between craftsmen and merchants..."Albert Soboul, "The Sans-Culottes," reprinted from *The Parisian Sans-culottes and the French Revolution, 1793-1794* by Albert Soboul translated by Gwynne Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 18-22, in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, 251. Yet, similar to Albert Mathiez, Soboul maintained that, during the Revolution, "A new money bourgeoisie appeared in the forefront, made up of industrial leaders, and the directors of commerce and finance." Albert Soboul, "The Triumph of a New Bourgeoisie," reprinted from Albert Soboul, "Classes and Class Struggles during the French Revolution," *Science & Society* 17 (Summer 1953), 252-257, *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, fifth edition, 405; Sarah Maza's reading of the a nonexistent bourgeoisie directly refutes Albert Mathiez's argument that "The bourgeoisie alone had a well enough developed class consciousness to take and keep power." Albert Mathiez, "All Republicans Benefited" reprinted from "La Révolution française," in *Annales historiques de la Révolution* française 10 (1933), 19-24, in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, 395; Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[15] Gary Kates has observed that "recent scholars define class more in terms of specific professions and occupations with varied social interests than in terms of a solid group with political interests." Gary Kates, "Introduction," in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, 9.

confraternities or the right to organize as laborers. On the other hand, they asked if class antagonisms fueled conflict between artisans and former masters.[16] In other words, historians have dissected the world of craft labor to explore how horizontal and vertical socio-economic relations evolved on the ground.

Most recently, historians have shifted the focus of economic history from workplace relations to institutions, broad networks, and theoretical imaginings.[17] Since the turn of the century, historians who do study economic issues often do so to debate the Revolution's origins, to consider the deputies' economic philosophies, to examine the Revolution within global commercial networks, or any combination of the above.[18] Urban historians pose economic

---

[16] Recurring questions include how the sans-culottes united or did not unite over common socio-economic interests, how wage laborers clashed with or shared the aspirations of their masters, how the Le Chapelier and d'Allarde anti-corporation laws affected worker identity, and how opening trade to talent changed the commercial and occupational landscape. Liana Vardi "The Abolition of the Guilds during the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 15 (1988); Steven Kaplan, "Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot's 'Carnival,'" *Work in France,* edited by Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Michael Sonenscher, "Les sans-culottes de l'an II: repenser le langage du travail dans la France révolutionnaire," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 5 (1985); Gail Bossenga, "Protecting Merchants: Guilds and Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century France," *French Historical Studies,* 15 (1988); Michael Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Abolition of Guilds in France," *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996).

[17] For eighteenth-century Europe, emerging histories of banks, money, credit, ports, smuggling, and international trade along with a return to political economy have offered new entries on intricate socio-economic networks. For Britain, see: Steven Pincus, "Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 69, No. 1 (January 2012): 3-34; Christine Desan, "Making Money: The Invention of an Interest-Driven Engine to Create Liquidity," (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Social Science History Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 1-4, 2012)*;* James Livesey, "Free trade and empire in the Anglo-Irish Commercial Propositions of 1785," *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013): 103-127; Christopher Dudley, "Party politics, political economy, and economic development in early eighteenth-century Britain," *The Economic History Review*, 66 (2013): 1084–1100. For France see: Julie Hardwick, *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Rebecca Spang, "The Ghost of Law: Speculating on Money, Memory, and Mississippi in the French Constituent Assembly*," Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques* special issue on "Money and the Enlightenment" 31:1 (Winter 2005): 3-25; Rebecca Spang, "Money, Money, Money," *History Workshop Journal* 69 (Spring 2010), 225-233; Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[18] James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Charles Walton, "*Les Graines de la Discorde:* Print, Public Spirit, and Free Market Politics in the French Revolution," in *Into Print: Limits and Legacies of the Enlightenment, Essays in Honor of Robert Darnton,* edited by Charles Walton (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011); Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Michael Kwass, "The Global Underground: Smuggling, Rebellion, and the Origins of the French Revolution" in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective,* edited by Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson (Cornell: Cornell

questions in relation to state institutions and trade organizations. These historians ask how, after abolishing the guilds, the state ordered occupations, regulated commercial activity, and influenced labor markets.[19] Skirting the quotidian life of the urban popular classes, socio-economic historians have recently considered the peasants' revolutionary experience and sought to define the elusive bourgeoisie.[20] Historians have concentrated less on workaday socio-economic relations since early revisionists skirted the quintessentially Marxist topic.[21] However, I argue that cultural and social readings of everyday economic concerns offer new insights into the tissue of urban relationships.

University Press, 2013); Lynn Hunt, "The Global Financial Origins of 1789," in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*; Charles Walton, "The Fall from Eden: The Free-Trade Origins of the French Revolution" in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*; Lynn Hunt, "The French Revolution in Global Context," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, edited by David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gail Bosenga, "Financial Origins of the French Revolution," in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, edited by Thomas Kaiser and Dale Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Thomas Kaiser, "From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution: The Court and French Foreign Policy, 1787-1789" in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*; Steven Pincus is currently working on how capitalism emerged over the longue durée within the context of political economies. He uses an international comparative perspective. Steven Pincus, "Empires and Capitalisms: Competing Political Economies and Eighteenth Century Imperial Crises" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Social Science History Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 1-4, 2012); Nicolas Delalande focuses on philosophies of, governmental use of, and citizens' attitudes towards taxes since the First Republic. He treats the revolutionary roots of the modern tax system in the Introduction and Chapter 1. Nicolas Delalande, *Les batailles de l'impôt: Consentement et résistances de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2011).

[19] Allan Potofsky has framed questions regarding the collapse of the guild system and wage labor through the construction trades. By focusing in detail on Paris, he is able to explore how the state influenced workers' wages and the labor market for the building trades. Allan Potofsky, *Constructing Paris in the Age of Revolution* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Jean-Louis Harouel, "La question financière et ses rapports avec l'aménagement urbain," in *À Paris sous la Révolution: Nouvelles approches de la ville,* edited by Raymonde Monnier, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008); Anne Cochon, "Paris et les transports sous la Révolution," in *À Paris sous la Révolution*; Eric Szulman, "Les évolutions de la boucherie parisienne sous la Révolution," in *À Paris sous la Révolution*.

[20] For the most recent collective work on the bourgeoisie debate, see Jean-Pierre Jessenne ed. *Vers un ordre bourgeois?: Révolution française et changement social* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007) ; For the peasants see Jean-Pierre Jessenne, "Une Révolution sans ou contre les paysans?" in *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, edited by Michel Biard (Éditions Tallandier: 2010).

[21] In one of the rare recent studies, Claire Crowston has analyzed how networks of "moral credit" from the Old Regime continued to inform relations among merchants and clients during the Revolution. Clare Crowston, "Moral Credit beyond the Old Regime: Making a Case for Continuities," (paper presented at the annual meeting for Western Society for French Historical Studies, November 10-12, 2011). See also Clare Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

By studying the Dames des Halles, I argue that economic issues crucially informed daily interactions among citizens. However, rather than clearly delineating socio-economic identities, the Dames' case illustrates how specific economic issues sent different fractures through society. To gain special market spaces, the Dames situated themselves among indigent citizens. Yet, the Dames splintered into two competing interest groups when a shelter-renter's monopoly gave some Dames advantages at the price of others. More frequently, the Dames responded to economic issues in similar ways. For example, when the deputies reformed occupational taxes, their tax brackets redrew shared fiscal interests. In order to secure favorable tax rates, the Dames aligned themselves more closely with propertyless workers than with large merchants.

Citizens reacted situationally and reconceptualized their socio-economic identities in the moment. I contend that these fissures created pliable socio-economic relations rather than solidified classes. Like revolutionary artisans so thoroughly studied, the Dames des Halles responded to revolutionary legislation to create new socio-economic associations and to surpass corporate divisions. Alliances were often rooted in the marketplace, yet they were not necessarily class-based.[22] For example, when the National Assembly issued a new currency in denominations far too large for retail trade, it inadvertently created new interest groups within the marketplace. The Dames used the same small denominations as other merchants such as cobblers and craftsmen such as carpenters. These groups, previously separated by occupational corps, all held a vested interest in the same local system of promissory notes. In addition, the Dames' brokers could only collect payment from the retailers in these smaller bills. Therefore,

[22] Since I am not arguing that the Dames emerged from the Revolution as part of a well-defined class, I use the term "popular classes" to broadly describe their socio-economic milieu. I intend to emphasize the limited economic resources of the group while avoiding a strictly Marxist sense of class-consciousness based on the categories of a pre-industrial society. The Dames' position as retailers and consumers illustrate that popular classes were not a mass block. They even had divided interests in subsistence issues, which historians usually highlight as a source of cohesion. Deep fissures remained in any fermenting class-consciousness, regardless of how class might be delineated. By using "popular classes," I also seek to avoid to pejorative cultural shades often attached to the term "lower classes."

the brokers joined forces with the Dames to protect their fragile monetary networks. As productive citizens, the Dames and their allies demanded that the state protect their monetary networks.

Since the Dames were an occupational group, evolving economic theories influenced attitudes towards their role in the nation. During the Enlightenment and final decades of the Old Regime, the physiocrats had defended the free market. They reasoned that all riches came from the land. Thus, they invested their economic faith in property and agriculture. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, elite merchants argued that commerce was a societally-oriented public service rather than an avarice-ridden enterprise.[23] The shifting perspective challenged the physiocrats' veneration of agriculture as more beneficial than commerce. These commercial attitudes could valorize the Dames' trade as productive individual work.[24]

If their commerce served society, the Dames could argue that their economic activity and political activity were one and the same during the Revolution. The Dames concretely demonstrate one of the ways in which Abbé Sieyès expanded the category of useful work in 1789. In order to validate the Third Estate as the nation, Sieyès insisted that any occupation that benefited the body politic was legitimate labor.[25] Therefore, he included services such as commerce, professional occupations such as medicine, and even parish clergy under the rubric of

---

[23] Amalia Kessler argues that this reconceptualization dovetailed with the shift from mercantilist regulation to free market attitudes. Amalia Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 3. Kessler also demonstrates how the risks of negotiability became acceptable in the later half of the eighteenth century because merchants argued the exchanges benefited society more than the risks they created. See page 226.

[24] Much scholarship on women and work during the eighteenth century has focused on female work within the family economy. In contrast, the revolutionaries defined commercial work in ways that focused on individual initiative and ambition. This atomization dovetails with the notion of a revolutionary citizen as an autonomous individual. A recent group of scholars proposes to move beyond the family economy for studying female work during the eighteenth century. See Nina Kushner and Daryl Hafter, eds., *Enterprising Women in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, forthcoming in 2014).

[25] Jacques Guilhaumou paraphrases Sieyès's philosophical writings to explain "'L'étape décisive [of the formation of the Nation] est celle où 'l'association,' issue de 'l'acte libre de volonté' constitutif de la nature humaine, se situe sur le terrain de 'l'engagement réel,' là où 'tout individu s'engage et s'oblige lui-même envers les autres.'" *Sieyès et l'Ordre de la Langue: L'invention de la politique moderne* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 2002), 85.

socially useful work. The Dames provided a commercial service to Parisians by subdividing goods for small-scale trade. Thus, their trade qualified as productive work.[26] We should not discount the Dames' political imaginings as insincere because profit motivated them. On the contrary, the Dames' ability to successfully integrate self-interest and collective interests under the umbrella of useful work made their vision of citizenship especially powerful.

The revolutionaries changed their guiding economic principles with factional shifts, and the market women strove to adapt to new commercial contexts. The Dames continuously sought to legitimize their work as compatible with the body politic. In the eyes of the revolutionaries in 1789, a free market would advance the aims of the moral economy. Done well, the liberated market would generate a more perfect moral economy because it was regulated by voluntary individual participation rather than state coercion.[27] During the radical phase, the deputies increased state regulation of the market. But they did not interpret their economic controls as intentionally coercive measures. Rather, they presumed that their regulations like price and wage controls mirrored perfect fraternal relations among citizens. The Dames insisted

---

[26] While defending their utility as working citizens, the Dames reinforced Sieyès's efforts to unhinge productivity from the labor rooted in the land, as the physiocrats defined it. Catherine Larrère notes that, in order to valorize work not connected to the land, Sieyès "efface la distinction entre valeur d'échange et valeur d'usage." That is, productive labor could come from the exchange of services not connected to land-based resources. Catherine Larrère, "Sieyès, lecteur des physiocrates: droit naturel ou économie?" in *Figures de Sieyès*, edited by Pierre-Yves Quiviger, Vincent Denis, and Jean Salem (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008), 203; William Sewell has illustrated how, during the Revolution, attitudes towards work also reflected transition from corporations to autonomy in labor. This mirrored how new autonomous citizens interacted in society with one another and how the state defined their fiscal obligations. Since work often provides a service or a good, it provides a means of integrating the individual worker among other members in society. William Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What is the Third Estate?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 148-149.

[27] Charles Walton has argued that in 1789, "From the perspective of free market republicans... if citizens were to be empowered and markets freed, the masses would have to be trained to think about their interests and duties in a new way. Securing both free markets and a more democratic government would require nothing less than moral regeneration." "*Les Graines de la Discorde:* Print, Public Spirit, and Free Market Politics in the French Revolution," in *Into Print*, 161; Haim Burstin paints another vision of the moral economy in revolutionary form. He describes efforts to find the fair balance between work and wages as a "une sort d'économie éthico-politique." Burstin argues that by providing wages for patriotic labor like military service, the revolutionaries no longer calculated compensation merely "de la justice et de l'équité morale, mais du patriotisme et de la citoyenneté." The new moral economy categorized political work as wage labor. Burstin, "Travail et citoyenneté en milieu urbain sous la Révolution," in *Citoyens et citoyenneté sous la Révolution française*, edited by Raymonde Monnier (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2006), 268.

that, as retailers, they played an important role in this reciprocal equation. The Directory swung back towards a liberal market economy through commercial republicanism. According to James Livesey, post-Terror republicans believed that "intensive modern commerce promised to provide the basis for independent citizens.... [I]n the modern republic the citizen's work, rather than their voice, would be their central contribution to the common good." All citizens would need to rely on one another to fulfill functions that they could not personally pursue. Autonomous citizens would seek cooperative commercial relationships based on "universal rules of justice and equity."[28] These configurations integrated the Dames as individual citizens within a cooperative nation and legitimized their autonomous trade in foodstuffs as a valuable work.

How did the Dames navigate this transition from a protectionist, Old Regime marketplace, to a liberated, semi-capitalist one? As indigent retailers, the Dames occupied a precarious position. They toed the precipice of economic failure with neighborhood credit as their only safety net. They were perched between state protectionism as poor citizens and what is usually considered bourgeois commercial interest as traders. Thus, the Dames teetered at the intersection of corporate privilege and democratic desires. The former gave them space in the market; the latter gave them substantial political legitimacy to make demands on the state. The Dames selectively deployed the principles of free market reform, even while its proponents condemned the welfare measures that the Dames relied on.[29] The Dames railed against rivals'

[28] James Livesey, "The Political Culture of the Directory," in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter McPhee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 337-338; Elsewhere, Livesey explains, "The force of the republican argument derived from its protection of the moral autonomy of the citizen. The democratic institutions of the republic stabilized the beneficent effect of commercial society." James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, 81.

[29] Free market proponents feared that welfare made individual citizens economically dependent. This reliance robbed them of their free and autonomous will, which was ideologically sacred. To uphold their marketplace advantages, the Dames recast themselves as the deserving, productive poor rather than dependent recipients of charity. In the eighteenth century, the Dames began to avoid certain occupational vocabulary to shake connotations of charity. For example, they referred less frequently to their market spots as "places Saint Louis" which recalled the king's original beneficence. Marion, "Community and Authority," 24, 71.

commercial privileges, even while their own livelihood depended on special economic exceptions and a corporate system that validated charity. During the birth pangs of free market experiments, the Dames oscillated between the moral economy dependent on local circumstances and a liberated market ensconced in the body politic and national regulations.[30] The Dames complicate the tendency to depict merchants as the willing bourgeois motors that readily propelled free market initiatives.

The Dames throw crucial light on how the revolutionaries negotiated the tensions between democratic aspirations and burgeoning capitalist attitudes on the ground. I use "capitalism" to describe an economic ethos that supports free commerce, investment opportunities, and individually-centered fiscal responsibilities. These financial components complemented a bourgeois culture that celebrated autonomy and rejected privileged corporations.[31] With striking dexterity, the Dames moved among the discordant logics of social equality and economic liberty, even juxtaposing them without eliding contradiction. In fact, the Dames' ability to effectively harness conflicting elements points to their conceptual mastery. On the one hand, the Dames demanded that the state protect its indigent citizens by granting them exceptional market spaces. The Dames defended their particular interests by pointing to the reciprocal duties between the paternal state and working citizens. On the other hand, they denounced a renter of parasols who held a monopoly on these crucial shelters in les Halles. The

[30] Philippe Minard contends that the bourgeoisie could benefit from certain "regulations." According to Minard, it is overly reductionist to assume the bourgeoisie would categorically oppose state economic interventions. Echoing Jean Bouvier, Minard he argues the effects of regulation rest on the "rapports entre les entrepreneurs et l'État." Philippe Minard, "L'héritage historiographique," in *Vers un ordre bourgeois?*, 26.

[31] I define capitalism similarly to Colin Jones and William Sewell as a set of attitudes favorable to diverse entrepreneurial endeavors and dovetailed with liberal individualism. Jones and Sewell conceive of capitalism as more connected to cultural and economic attitudes than a predetermined economic path. The notion diverges from the Marxist definition that firmly links capitalism to the development of an industrial society. Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and social change," reprinted in an abridged format from *The French Revolution and Social Change*, ed. Colin Lucas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 69-118 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*; William Sewell, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*.

Dames condemned the monopoly as an Old Regime privilege. They insisted that such an unjust economic arrangement could not exist in a liberated nation and free market. While confronting these issues, the market women exercised their newfound civic prerogatives to make claims on the state. As citizens, they petitioned their representatives and infiltrated the assembly halls. The Dames demanded that the state defend their interests. The Dames illustrate how salient discourses of capitalism and democratic egalitarianism permeated the popular classes.

Although the Dames' modest stalls were far from the polished salons of economic debate, they demonstrate just how far the ideas of economists and philosophers infiltrated the general population or were perhaps informed by it. It is highly unlikely that any literate Dames read an economic treatise in their lifetimes. They do not cite Rousseau, Sieyès, or Locke. Yet, their remarkable agility in maneuvering among logics of economists and social contract theorists suggests that, even at the start of the Revolution, these theoretical discourses were deeply entangled with everyday practice. Here in les Halles, through the most meager exchanges in the capital, market women drew on strands of welfare state logic, proposed their own interpretation of a recently liberated market, and molded the ideas of social compact theorists to their commercial advantage. While pursuing their self-interests, the Dames engaged in acrobatics of free-market principles and social egalitarianism.

Gender and Citizenship

Economic relations permeated political imaginings. I argue that les Halles, as a space of public exchange among citizens, became a microcosm of the body politic in 1789.[32] Along with

[32] Victoria Thompson has demonstrated how the French negotiated the morality of women in public, debated the cultural value of female work, and constructed women's role in society through female market women during the nineteenth century. See especially the chapter "Policing the Free Market" in *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 86-129.

the Dames, Parisians worked out the Revolution on the ground of the marketplace through their everyday exchanges. According to political ideals, merchants and consumers would negotiate in a transparent environment. The revolutionaries insisted that the principles that oriented social and political relations should also apply in les Halles. Trade ideally reproduced fraternal relations among citizens through discrete, personal transactions. As Dames sold to clients, brokers secured food from countryside suppliers, and consumers haggled over what constituted just prices, the revolutionaries negotiated how to create fraternal relations in one of the most basic, repetitive, yet foundational forms of workaday life: daily trade.

Les Halles presented an optimistic canvas for revolutionary reform, but it also bristled with friction between citizens and commercial uncertainty. Here, citizens confronted the fundamental tensions of revolutionary politics: How could the indivisible General Will and particular interests coexist? How could citizens reconcile individual interests with public interests while buying fish, bartering with promissory notes, and claiming public space to display their goods? And where was this sovereign, Rousseauian Will truly located if the mass of bodies crammed into les Halles far outnumbered those neatly seated in the nearby National Assembly? The question of locating sovereignty was tightly knotted to defining citizenship.

The Dames des Halles offer us a new perspective on gender and citizenship in particular. Historians, political scientists, and philosophers rightly emphasize how the French Revolution created a foundation for democracy in modern Europe.[33] However, some scholars of gender also point to the Revolution's potentially dark underbelly – the revolutionaries legally cast citizenship

[33] I acknowledge that democracy in Europe, as in other parts of the world, has taken various forms. Indeed, it is a central argument of this work that the revolutionaries themselves contested the meaning of democracy. Therefore, I assume Lynn Hunt's broad definition of democracy as "the continual struggle over the boundaries of citizenship." As they attempted to negotiate, define, and practice citizenship, the revolutionaries laid out the contours of these enduring debates. Lynn Hunt, "Afterword," in Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch, eds. *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 213.

as male while banishing women to the domestic sphere. The argument, as most forcefully articulated by Joan Landes, Joan Scott, Carole Patemen, and Genevieve Fraisse, discerns a gendered divide between the masculine public sphere of politics and the feminine private sphere.[34] Proponents of this analysis maintain that Rousseauian discourses of the Enlightenment, the threat of sexual dedifferentiation, and the contradictions of democratic universalism drove a firm wedge between masculine and feminine domains.[35] Discursive analyses along these parameters define citizenship in its most formal sense as the right to vote, to own and keep arms, and to politically participate through institutions like political clubs and assemblies. These scholars read the Revolution from the contemporary finish line of the longue durée to ask how female citizenship cleaved from male citizenship. Such an interpretation insists that the Revolution ultimately excluded women from politics.

In contrast, other historians demonstrate how women intervened in the public sphere despite limitations on their citizenship.[36] Many studies have explored the various ways in which women reconceptualized their traditional roles in subsistence, religious, and familial arenas in the context of the Revolution.[37] Harriet Applewhite, Darline Levy, Olwen Hufton, Carla Hesse, Christine Fauré, Dominique Godineau, Laura Talamante, and Lisa DiCaprio among others, have pointed to the explicitly political actions of women, which influenced the very institutional

---

[34] Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la Raison: la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989); Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[35] Lynn Hunt initially took the stance that male revolutionaries feared sexual dedifferentiation and thus sought to exclude women from citizenship. Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[36] Before the ban, female political clubs formed an obvious parallel to male models. It is not surprising then, that scholars have paid an extraordinary amount of attention to the central Parisian societies. Marc de Villiers spearheaded studies of female clubs nearly a century ago with *Histoire des clubs des femmes et des légions d'amazones* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1910); See also Marie Cerati, *Le Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1966).

[37] Marie-France Brive, ed., *Les Femmes et la révolution française: actes du colloque international, 12-13-14 avril 1989*, 3 volumes (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1989-1991).

politics that legally excluded them. By studying demonstrations, women's clubs, and public discourse, these historians highlight how women participated in the Revolution and asserted their place in the nation.[38] These histories portray women's history during the Revolution along vectors of agency and action.

Some agency-centered studies argue that, as "a period of crisis," the Revolution "opens the political terrain to [women]."[39] Although this approach seeks to illustrate that women undercut the barrier between public and private actions, its vocabulary echoes the barrier's very existence. The crisis framework creates two analytical obstacles. First, such a perspective risks assuming that all women identified as women before any category like class, religion, or political faction. It assumes that gender consistently acts as the primary marker in women's identities regardless of circumstance. The interpretation conflates women as historical actors with woman as a concept reinvented by the revolutionaries.[40] Second, the crisis thesis limits historians to arguing that female political activism was either resistance-based or an accident born of

---

[38] Harriet Applewhite and Darline Levy, eds., *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Darline Levy and Harriet Applewhite. "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris," in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution,* edited by Sara Melzer and Leslie Rabine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Carla Hesse*, The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, Katherine Streip trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Christine Fauré, "Doléances, déclarations et pétitions, trois formes de la parole publique des femmes sous la Révolution." in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, n°344, 2006. 5-25; Laura Talamante, "Les Marseillaises: Women and Political Change during the French Revolution, 1789-1794," PhD diss., UCLA, 2003; Lisa DiCaprio, *The Origins of the Welfare State: Women, Work, and the French Revolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

[39] This type of women's history approach has remained more prevalent in France than in current Anglo-Saxon studies. For example, see Martine Lapied, *"*Histoire du Genre en Révolution," in *La Révolution à l'oeuvre: Perspectives actuelles dans l'histoire de la Révolution française*, edited by Jean-Clement Martin (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 77; Martine Lapied, "Une absence de Révolution pour les femmes?" in *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, 304. "période de crise" "leur [to women] ouvrent le champ du politique."

[40] Elisabeth Guibert-Sledziewski categorizes this analytical binary as women as "subjects" (actors) versus woman as "object" (a construct). Elisabeth Guibert-Sledziewski, *Révolutions du Sujet* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), 64-65.

extenuating circumstances. The latter perspective portrays women as coming out of hiding.[41] It creates room for female actors by arguing that the environment changed. A conditional opening unleashed women's agency to act politically. The crisis gave them exceptional agency to politically assert themselves in ways that would become exclusively male rights. This includes the right to own and keep arms, to protest, and to vote. However, such a formulation gives the sense that, during the Revolution, someone forgot to lock the backdoor to the edifice of citizenship. It assumes that citizenship already existed as a construction or, in the very least, that the revolutionaries had drafted a blueprint and ordered materials. In short, the crisis framework asks how women *entered* into citizenship rather than how they *crafted* multiple interpretations. The analytical danger lies in applying a homogenous definition of citizenship to a situation in which the historical actors have yet to reach a cohesive consensus themselves. It is especially treacherous if we predicate a hard and fast definition upon a male-female divide.

Gender scholars who focus on political culture have rejected the division between political public and domestic private domains. Consequently, they have opened room to consider the revolutionaries' creative energies.[42] Dena Goodman maintains that feminist interpretations of those like Joan Landes have neglected Habermas's nuanced spheres with multiple components,

---

[41] In this vein, literary scholar Annie Smart studies "civic motherhood" as the *citoyenne's* primary role throughout the eighteenth century. She argues that the "home is the site of both domestic and civic virtues." Smart also maintains that "When we [scholars] declare that *citoyennes* do not exist or that women are excluded from civic identity, we make two assumptions: first, that political right is a necessary – and almost sufficient – condition for citizenship, and second, that only actions in the public sphere can be considered civic." Although she politicizes the private, Smart maintains the sphere dichotomy. Annie Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 3,6; Martine Lapied argues that "La Révolution provoque une politisation de l'espace privé" including "préoccupations considérées comme 'légitimes' pour les femmes," which created new room for women to maneuver. She also separates these "traditional" female concerns from "pratique politique," which she paints as institutionally based. Martine Lapied, "Une absence de Révolution pour les femmes?" in *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, 304.

[42] For a summary of trends in the historiography of women and gender during the Revolution until 2000, see Suzanne Desan, "What's after Political Culture? Recent French Revolutionary Historiography," *French Historical Studies*, Vol 23, No. 1 (2000): 187-192; For pre-1990 work on women's rights and citizenship, see Karen Offen, "The New Sexual Politics of French Revolutionary Historiography," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1990).

locations, and participants.[43] Other scholars have breached the public/private divide by drawing on Lynn Hunt's argument that the revolutionaries forged a malleable political culture that affected everyday life. Since the family formed the smallest collective unit of socio-political organization, it proved fertile ground for questioning the politics of gendered relations in the most personal ways.[44] Suzanne Desan demonstrated how the political infiltrated the supposedly private realm of familial relations through legislation on marriage and inheritance. At the same time, individuals drew on revolutionary ideals of equality to recreate their domestic relations in the courtroom.[45] Jennifer Heuer examined a longer trajectory to ask how the family linked the individual to the nation from 1789 to 1830. Through issues like the emigration, Heuer traced how the family did or did not mediate an individual's personal duty to the nation. In doing so, she mapped out the evolving contours and political significance of the family throughout regime changes.[46] Anne Verjus has uniquely argued that domestic sphere was built into the very model of the contract as a functional "political necessity." She maintained that the father represented the political needs of all male and female dependents. Thus, she argued that revolutionary citizenship in 1792 was not inherently sexist. Rather, it was predicated upon the conjugal unit and political autonomy created by personal property.[47]

---

[43] Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime." *History and Theory*, 31:1 (1992): 8-9, 15, 19. Goodman argues, "In attempting to construct an opposition between a male public sphere and a female private one, Landes has collapsed Habermas's fundamental distinction between the public sphere of the state and that of the private realm." This idea of the two spheres has more in common with Philippe Ariès's initial Annaliste ideas of "private life" than with Habermas' Marxist political version of public opinion, which began in the private sphere since it was beyond the public state. Ariès concludes that the family became the center of the public sphere after 1800.

[44] Suzanne Desan, "The French Revolution and the Family," in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter McPhee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 481. Lynn Hunt has also pointed out that the revolutionaries may have hesitated to see women as a "political category" because such no close parallel existed during the Old Regime.

[45] Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[46] Jennifer Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[47] Anne Verjus, *Le bon mari: Une histoire politique des hommes et des femmes à l'époque révolutionnaire* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 26-28. "comme une nécessité politique." See also her discussion of the "patriarchal paradigm" in Anne Verjus, "Gender, Sexuality, and Political Culture," in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter

Vibrant work on gender has greatly advanced our understanding of how women and men experienced the Revolution, how social relations shifted, and how the revolutionaries reconstructed political culture. Nonetheless, the women's history and political culture contingents convincingly unhinged the private/public dichotomy because they too used expansive analytical categories in response. Their ambitious studies portray either vast thematic trends among women or amalgamations of scattered female examples. For example, Dominique Godineau's magisterial study of how Parisian women participated in the Revolution is an especially impressive overview of women and politics. By taking all popular-class women as her subject with special attention to the militant ones, Godineau depicts the many ways in which women participated in the Revolution. Yet, because women of the popular classes are too heterogeneous to track as a cohesive group, these portraits appear as compiled snapshots. Only by zooming in on the female clubs can Godineau demonstrate how militants imagined a *sustained* form of political practice.

Historians of gender and the Revolution have begun to move away from the analytical terrain of public and private spheres as well as large subjects, like the family, that encompass large swaths of society. Instead, these scholars have turned their attention to place or group-anchored subjects. And those who have continued to examine broad social categories have channeled them through specific case studies. Jennifer Heuer has asked how potential soldiers

---

McPhee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 203. I, like Verjus, do not see citizenship as an a priori masculine category. However, Verjus justifies this conclusion by illustrating that all men could not have full electoral privileges. Thus, she equates full citizenship with voting. As such, her definition of citizenship is more institutionally based than my own. William Sewell also demonstrates how property acted as the prerequisite to formal citizenship for men in 1792. The deputies defined those who were economically dependent as "passive." They separated "passive" citizens from "active" citizens who could vote and fully participate in institutionalized politics. William Sewell, Jr. "Le Citoyen/la Citoyenne: Activity, Passivity, and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship." in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture: The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, edited by Colin Lucas, Volume 2, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988). In his reading of Sieyès, Sewell gives the following three part formula for citizenship 1789: A citizen is "(1) a French national (2) who is the head of a household and (3) performs useful work." William H. Sewell, Jr. *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*, 149.

portrayed their paternal and military duties as complementary roles in the nation.[48] Claire Cage and Kathryn Marsden have traced the sexual politics of the Revolution through priests and nuns whom the deputies released from their vows.[49] Clyde Plumauzille has analyzed how citizens, legislators, and the police treated prostitution during the Directory to confront a contradictory system of "moeurs."[50] Anne Verjus, Denise Davidson, and Lindsay Parker asked how the Revolution affected families but they remain acutely immersed in the letters of one or two households.[51] By considering more discrete topics, historians have trained gendered lenses on the specificities of different contexts. Instead of examining huge categories that potentially encompass all men or women, this splintered approach allows historians to explore how gender shifts according to circumstances. Such topical precision sharpens the diversity of the revolutionary experience.

My analysis intervenes in the contested historiography of gender and democratic citizenship in two crucial ways. First, it insists on exploring the multiple and potentially contradictory ways the revolutionaries invented citizenship from the outset. Citizenship did not come with a blueprint; the revolutionaries sketched it as they went along. If we only consider the institutional attributes of citizenship, such as the right to vote, to bear arms, or to participate in political clubs, we project our current definitions back upon the revolutionary model. In doing

---

[48] Jennifer Heuer, "The Limits of Martial Masculinity? Revolutionary Veterans as Citizens and Family Men," (paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, Cambridge, MA, April 4-7, 2013).
[49] Claire Cage, "'Celibacy is a Social Crime': The Politics of Clerical Marriage, 1794-1799," *French Historical Studies 36:4* (Fall 2013), 601-628; Kathryn Marsden, "Married Nuns in the French Revolution: The Sexual Revolution of the 1790s" (PhD. diss, University of California-Irvine, in progress).
[50] Clyde Plumauzille, "La nouvelle publicité de la prostitution dans le Paris révolutionnaire: information, marchandisation et banalisation d'une transgression sexuelle (1789-1799)," in *Le Genre entre transmission et transgression,* edited by Lydie Bodiou, Marlaine Cacouault-Bitaud et Ludovic Gaussot (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).
Clyde Plumauzille, "Tolérer et réprimer: prostitués, prostitution et droit de cité dans le Paris révolutionnaire (1789-1799)," PhD. diss, Université Paris I, 2013.
[51] Anne Verjus and Denise Davidson, *Le Roman conjugal. Chroniques de la vie familiale à l'époque de la Révolution et de l'Empire* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2011); Lindsay Parker, *Writing the Revolution: A French Woman's History in Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

so, we miss the opportunity to probe the myriad ways the revolutionaries conceptualized citizenship in its embryonic stages. Many of these notions of citizenship challenged its legal gendered divisions. In the case of the market women, the Dames considered useful occupational work to cut across gendered boundaries and form a crucial component of citizenship. Thus, I argue that free market reform, state regulation, and the resulting socio-economic changes deeply influenced how the Dames and others articulated their citizenship.

Second, my work cuts a new pathway in current scholarship by decentering gender in the formula of citizenship. As long as we use gender as the question of socio-cultural differentiation, we can only arrive at gender as the answer for political delineation. Thus, if we are to glean perspectives on citizenship in which gender is not primary, we must step away from gender as our principal vantage point. In order to understand how historical actors invented citizenship from other angles besides gender, we cannot immediately cast them as "male" or "female" citizens. We must allow other vectors to assume the driver's seat, ask how situational realities change the principal pillars of citizenship, and *then* inquire where gender fits into this dynamic matrix of political identity. The Dames des Halles allow us to analyze how individuals socially and economically integrated themselves into the body politic; how malleable ideas of gender played into their notion of citizenship; and how individuals continually adjusted the balance.

Understanding the relationship between gender and citizenship fundamentally relies on how one defines citizenship. Revolutionary citizenship took many forms, and one could hold several simultaneously. According to Gail Bossenga, in its most basic legal form, citizenship could be a status that denoted inclusion in a system of rights and privileges, as it had during the Old Regime. Similarly, Michael Walzer argues that citizenship can denote membership in or

rejection from the body politic.[52] Yet, this approach makes it difficult to classify individuals who are included in some ways (such as having civil liberties) but excluded in others (such as lacking the right to vote). Harriet Applewhite privileges agency to divide citizenship into a receptive-creative dichotomy. Drawing from Sieyès, she explains: "Civil rights... guaranteed the protection of one's person, property, and liberty were enjoyed by all the inhabitants of a country, while political rights allowed one to contribute to the formation of public authority, a direct application of the political power."[53] Suzanne Desan integrates a cultural element to distinguish three dimensions of citizenship: legal citizenship associated with "civic rights" and juridical rights or standardized laws that apply to members; cultural citizenship which delineates individual roles within a "moral" community; and institutional citizenship which allows individuals to express their sovereignty via "formal" forums in which they "participate in public politics." [54]

For the revolutionaries, the relationship between rights and duties of citizenship was up for debate. The two unnervingly coalesced due to linguistic ambiguity. "Droits" could cut both ways as rights and claims: the "droits" of citizens denoted civil rights (what the state owes the individual) but "droits" also referred to taxes (what the individual owes the state). The *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* could have easily been a list of fiscal obligations. "Droit" could also carry moral connotations. It could mean "jurisprudence," and it

---

[52] Gail Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime" *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Spring 1997), 217, 221. Bossenga paraphrases Michael Walzer.

[53] Harriet B. Applewhite, "Citizenship and Political Alignment in the National Assembly," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, 50. Individuals had various duties that corresponded to different aspects of citizenship. In what Gail Bossenga calls its "juridicial" nature, citizenship enables individuals to also make "legal claims on the state." While the state may grant individuals rights, it also demands that the citizens fulfill certain duties to the nation through fiscal support and civil service. These aspects especially highlight the reciprocal nature of the political contract between the sovereign citizen and the state. Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime," 218, 222.

[54] Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, 48; See also Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch, eds., *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, especially Philip Dawson, "Introduction," xiii-xxi, and Pierre Rétat, "The Evolution of the Citizen from the Ancien Régime to the Revolution," 3-16.

could assume social virtues when used to describe a person.[55] Individual rights, participatory duties, and moral intent all fell under the same discursive umbrella.

When the French deputies famously banned female political clubs in 1793, the National Convention limited how women could practice institutional citizenship and denied them the civil right to politically assemble. In effect, the deputies distinguished male from female citizenship and male rights from female rights. Yet, the Dames des Halles continued to intervene in politics. What should have been a legislative blow to the Dames' capacity to politically participate as women did not shake their sense of legitimacy. Why did the Dames not protest the detrimental laws? And why did they regard the restrictions as inconsequential to their citizenship?

I argue that the Dames des Halles remained unfazed by the new male definition of legal citizenship because the Dames did not base their sovereignty on primarily gendered or institutional scaffolding. For the Dames, citizenship was not a static concept. They constantly justified why their demands merited attention, sometimes as sovereign citizens, but never as *a priori* citizens by default. The Dames rarely appealed to universal, inalienable, or innate individual rights that we associate with modern citizenship. For the Dames, only the Old Regime held totalizing categories of arbitrary privilege. Instead, they viewed revolutionary citizenship as contingent and temporal.[56] It was earned and continually renewed. When the Dames declared that they did "not know any other virtues than those of *being useful* and *serving* their fatherland," they articulated their vision of participatory citizenship: Individuals joined the body politic

---

[55] "Droit," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.

[56] The Dames' vision of citizenship sharply contrasts with Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite's tableau of militant Parisian women who "grounded their action in universal claims" and whose campaign for "recognition as citizens... necessarily identified them as subjects of universal rights." Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite, "A Political Revolution for Women? The Case of Paris," reprinted from *Becoming Visible: Women in European History,* edited by Rennate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Weisner, Third Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 266-291, in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, Fifth Edition, 345, 346.

through work that served society.[57] In other words, the Dames viewed citizenship as a set of societally useful practices that validated one's inclusion in the body politic. And this membership legitimated one's right to make demands on the state in return.

This analysis probes how the Dames invented citizenship along three axes of useful work: occupational work, civic work, and gendered work. By serving society in these veins, the Dames created a political contract with the government and legitimized their ability to make claims on it. Although the Dames did not receive full institutional rights, they insisted that the state fulfill its reciprocal duties in other ways. The Dames demanded that the government fairly regulate the market, defend patriotic families, and assist the poor, among other things. And, as citizens, they insisted that they could make these demands not *through* their representatives as sovereign conduits, but directly *on* their representatives who acted as the hand of the state. The Dames throw into relief how the revolutionaries understood, negotiated, and created the idea of citizenship at its malleable inception

This study opens by establishing the Dames' political centrality as traditional representatives of the Third Estate and commercial centrality as pivotal traders in les Halles. Literary precursors from the Old Regime genre poissard colored how Parisians would perceive the retailers in person and on the page during the Revolution. Consequently, Chapter 1 exposes the cultural groundwork of the genre poissard as a springboard for revolutionary propaganda.[58] It asks how the revolutionaries seized and reshaped the Dames' legitimacy as symbols of the

---

[57] *Archives parlementaires*, Series 1, Volume 29: 754, le 27 août 1791, "ne connoissent d'autres vertus que d'être utiles, & de servir pour leur patrie" (my emphasis).

[58] Most studies of the genre poissard exclusively concern cultural representations of the poissardes. They neglect to ask how the living models and their fictional counterparts continually built off of one another. The principal literary study of the genre is A.P. Moore, *The Genre Poissard and the French Stage of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1935).

people early in the Revolution from 1789 to 1792.[59] I analyze how rival parties appropriated the Dames' gritty authenticity and deployed the Dames to embody emerging notions of popular sovereignty.[60] Propagandists spotlighted the influence that the market women derived from their trade. Therefore, this chapter also explores how municipal and national officials relied on the Dames to feed the vulnerable capital. In print and in flesh, the Dames linked the state and the subjects who became citizens.

Chapter 2 analyzes contests over the use of les Halles as the revolutionaries revised economic policy. I argue that the Dames staked out their place in the regenerated public as they sold from the public earth of les Halles. The market women enacted new practices of citizenship to defend their trading places and access to crucial shelters. While petitioning the municipal government and bringing suits through the revolutionary judicial system, the Dames employed protectionist and free market discourses simultaneously. They seized the novel language of citizenship to mark the earth as national property, to lambast monopoly-holders as privileged leeches, to appeal to the state's paternal duties, and to secure exceptions based on their work's public utility. In short, the Dames began to shape their place in the body politic as they justified their personal profit on public space.

After the deputies overhauled the currency system during the winter of 1789-1790, the Dames, their suppliers, their clients, and other merchants relied on new promissory notes for everyday trade. Chapter 3 examines how currency problems spurred these market actors to create innovative alliances that cut across former corporate boundaries. I argue that, in responding to

---

[59] For a partial list of pamphlets and analysis, see Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792* (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991).

[60] The Fronde was the last time the genre poissard became deeply politicized before the Revolution. In the context of these civil wars, the pamphlets were known as Mazarinades. See Jeffrey Merrick, "The Cardinal and the Queen: Sexual and Political Disorders in the Mazarinades." *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1994): 667-699.

new currency concerns, Parisians formed new socio-economic associations on the ground before the deputies legally dismantled the corporate world. Vegetable merchants aligned with carpenters to demand new denominations, retailers joined forces with brokers to protect shared promissory notes, and clients and merchants rallied to support overlapping lines of credit. On this new scaffolding, the Dames and their allies spurred the state to protect the monetary networks of its productive, and therefore most sovereign, group of citizens.

Using twin crises of food and finance, Chapter 4 asks how the Dames projected their marketplace utility beyond les Halles. It argues that the police, legislators, and judges collaborated in inventing the Dames' political role while codifying their occupation. In particular, price controls called the Maximum threatened to bankrupt the Dames in 1793. Objecting with their fists in the streets and their voices in the assembly halls, the Dames protested that they traded fairly, provided crucial services, and met their responsibilities within an interdependent body politic.[61] In place of pro-consumer price controls, the Dames and market police advocated for a cooperative system that balanced separate ceilings for wholesale trade, retail trade, and daily wages. In addition to negotiating price controls, the Dames legally integrated their trade within the body politic by purchasing commercial licenses called the Patente. From 1796 to 1798, these occupational taxes gave the Dames personal responsibilities to nation and fiscal contracts with the state.[62] In effect, the Dames established political contracts

[61] In 1793, the Dames held precarious ideological and commercial stakes in the factional battles between the Montagnards and the Girondins. The Montagnards supported strict price controls. The Enragés, the Montagnards' radical supporters, vilified merchants as greedy parasites. Their Girondin opponents were more sympathetic towards free market policies. The Girondins were more inclined to defend merchants as citizens whose trade served the public good.

[62] As the justice of the peace records reveal, many Dames attempted to dodge these fees. However, the Dames formed fiscal contracts with the nation by securing these licenses. Even if the patentes were an economic burden, tax performed a crucial ideological function.

with the nation as citizen-workers.[63] Strikingly, the Patente cast the Dames as independent workers unlike all male wage laborers. Thus, the Dames' work gave them legal, commercial, and cultural autonomy, which the revolutionaries viewed as the ideological prerequisite for free choice and civic membership. The Maximum and the Patente provided powerful avenues to conceptualize the Dames' citizenship via their occupational labor.

Chapter 5 examines how the Dames invented citizenship through political activism, their second axis of useful work. It seeks to understand how the Dames reconceptualized their Old Regime position as representatives of the popular classes and interacted with revolutionary political institutions. The Dames framed their sporadic interventions as a civic duty (though self-interested). Then, they pressured the state to fulfill its paternal obligations towards its working citizens. Whether seeking aid in subsistence crises, sanctioning the deputies' constitutional reforms in song, or shunning the king after he fled France, the market women's public displays or powerful silences sent searing political messages. However, the Dames' potential force, sheer numbers, and unpredictable activism caused some revolutionaries to view the Dames' civic work with ambivalence.

Chapter 6 analyzes how the Dames framed gendered work as a patriotic duty, constituting their third axis of citizenship. If the Dames were the symbolic daughters of Old Regime charity, they offered hope as republican mothers for the nation. The Dames appealed to their maternal positions to evoke familial understandings of the body politic. They compelled the government to support the wives of soldiers, defended prisoners who missed wet-nurse payments, and spanked counterrevolutionary nuns who miseducated their children. Therefore, the Dames

---

[63] William Sewell asserts that the revolutionaries believed "the nation was constituted by useful work – either private or public – and by the citizens who performed that work." Sewell adds, "Moreover, ... all useful work, whether menial or distinguished, was a contribution to the well-being of the nation. Only *idleness* was to be despised." William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the old regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 80, 81.

presented themselves as beneficial traders as well as female defenders of their communities. The market women embraced gendered work as component of their citizenship without restricting their citizenship to gendered roles.

Although the deputies could disband the female clubs in 1793, they could not disband the Dames whose idea of citizenship lacked a formal structure. Yet, without a sustained mouthpiece, the Dames increasingly relied on their reputation to justify their political influence. As the revolutionaries vested new political organizations with representative powers, they challenged the Dames' identity as the most compelling voice of the people. Consequently, cultural depictions of the Dames created, reinforced, and undermined their legitimacy. These cultural constructions proved especially potent after the Terror and the suppression of popular politics.

By scrutinizing box office listings, juxtaposing printed reactions, and tracking intertextual plotlines, Chapter 7 asks how Parisian playwrights and spectators engaged in commercial and artistic dialogue to construct the Dames' theatrical counterparts. Then, it considers how the revolutionaries used these characters and plays to debate popular citizenship.[64] When the revolutionaries liberated the theater from Old Regime restrictions, they thrust playhouses into the cutthroat world of commercial competition. Theatre directors strutted fictional Dames across the stage to entice spectators in box office wars from 1794 to 1803. Amidst quick changes in fortune and in the wake of the Terror, wildly popular plays featured social-climbing Dames who rose

[64] By supporting some plays to the detriment of others, Parisians actively informed how playwrights represented the shifting social world. I insist that Parisian theater-goers wielded creative influence over the Dames' theatrical doubles Emmet Kennedy argues that Parisians could voice their opinions through ticket sales even when they could not vote in political assemblies. Emmet Kennedy, "History of the Problem and the Method of Solving It," in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris, Analysis and Repertory*, edited by Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 5. In his study of the "bas-fonds" in the nineteenth century, Dominique Kalifa maintains that representations inform the collective consciousness more than they reflect a "real" social world. He argues that, "Les imaginaires sociaux décrivent la façon dont les sociétés perçoivent leurs composants – groupes, classes, catégories -, hiérarchisent leurs divisions, élaborent leur avenir. Ils produisent et instituent le social plus qu'ils ne le reflètent." Dominique Kalifa, *Les Bas-Fonds: Histoire d'un imaginaire*. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2013), 21.

financially and languished culturally. I ask how, in the playhouses, the Dames became a dynamic vessel for confronting the disquiet caused by social mobility and its corresponding political fallout.[65] Although the theatrical Dames lacked bourgeois cultural refinement, the redeeming nature of their occupational labor formed a constant thread across plotlines.[66] This unwavering consistency from the outbreak of the Revolution to the crowning of Napoleon suggests that, regardless of cultural ambiguities, a broad swath of revolutionaries accepted work as the primary duty of the popular classes. Work formed the cornerstone for their membership in the body politic. However, the French continued to contest what the popular classes should gain in return for their service. Like a cart caught in the mud of les Halles, Parisians remained mired in the vexing questions of 1789: What did it mean to be a member of the revolutionary body politic? And did all individuals have the capacity to be equal citizens?

Through the Dames, Consulate playwrights even probed the ultimate limits of a universal people. As Napoleon's armies marched across continents, the Consulate plots questioned the dream of exporting the supposedly universal Revolution to a global citizenry. Flung to far-off countries, one fictional Dame, Madame Angot, repeatedly misunderstood foreign cultures by assuming that they functioned like France. Through these adventures, the fishwife symbolized

---

[65] Lynn Hunt has maintained that the revolutionaries went to the theater to confront the "the uncertainty and anxiety" of a new social order, "to see some representations of everyday social existence," and "to form new perspectives on society." Lynn Hunt, "La visibilité du monde bourgeois," in *Vers un ordre bourgeois?*, 373. "l'incertitude et l'anxiété," "pour voir des représentations de l'existence social quotidienne," "former de nouvelles perspectives sur la société;" Denise Davidson makes a similar argument in order to explain why melodramas appealed to spectators of all socio-economic backgrounds, even though they were billed as lowbrow entertainment in the Boulevard theatres. She maintains that "A desire to observe different social groups so as to comprehend one's position in society" propelled melodrama ticket sales at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Denise Davidson, *France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 186.

[66] The social shortcomings of the nouveau riche characters illustrated that financial capital and cultural capital were not congruent. A fictive Dame could financially ascend into middling ranks by acquiring wealth without elevating herself to bourgeois cultural standards. When referring to a cultural milieu, I use bourgeois in the same vein as the French themselves used it within play scripts and in the sense of the *drame bourgeois*. "Bourgeois" in this cultural sense did not correlate to a distinct class, nor did it refer to the literal definition of an urban-dweller. It gestured to a person's "natural" propensity for certain cultural practices, tastes, and comportment, rather than a corresponding set of material trappings. Thus, from a cultural perspective, the fictive Dames could not escape their popular roots.

how the Revolution failed abroad. She doubly erred while attempting to infiltrate high society in exotic lands. Madame Angot, the very French Revolution, and the popular classes looked equally ridiculous across the backdrop of Constantinople and Malabar. Whereas the living Dames had advanced a notion of the worker-citizen that was potentially universal, the universal Revolution found its limits embodied by a fictive Dame.

The Dames des Halles occupied the epicenter of revolutionary politics because they spoke to its most fundamental, complex, and often contradictory issues. The Dames wrestled with new egalitarian social and political endeavors while straddling free market and controlled economic models. The Dames and fellow citizens worked out the Revolution on the ground of les Halles as they asked how fraternal relations assumed commercial forms. While they traded fish, fruits, and vegetables with fellow citizens, they advanced their vision of the body politic. Within and beyond the marketplace, the Dames wrestled with imagining citizenship in its nascent stages. Rather than predicating citizenship on formal institutions or delineating it by gender, the Dames invented a work-based citizenship. Legislators crafted this notion of work-based citizenship in tandem with the Dames as they reformed charity requirements, created occupational licenses, instituted price controls, and delineated commerce on public domain. In addition, other revolutionaries used the Dames' image as a conduit to debate the role of the popular classes in politics. In pamphlets, plays, and illustrations, the revolutionaries projected their aspirations as well as their social anxieties onto the Dames. Since reception, profit, and popularity dictated the shape of these material creations, they reveal shifting attitudes towards the Dames' political legitimacy, the redemptive nature of work, and, ultimately, the myth of a universal citizen.

The Dames became a cultural, social, and political touchstone of French hopes and fears from 1789 to 1804. In a sea of variables dictated by political tides and economic tempests, one undercurrent remained constant: individuals earned some type of civic inclusion through useful work. However, in regard to the popular classes, the revolutionaries disagreed what form this work should take and how this inclusion translated to institutional citizenship. Such ruptures fueled heated contests, not the least of which the Dames and the revolutionaries negotiated among the stalls of les Halles.

– Chapter 1 –

The Dames des Halles: Pivotal Merchants and Political Symbols, Old Regime – 1792

On the evening of October 5, 1789, the king and his ministers huddled anxiously at the royal château in Versailles. Nearly three months had past since the fall of the Bastille, but the king's capital threatened to implode under new political pressures. Outside his apartments, a deputation of five women from the Parisian markets trudged up the marble stairs. Their rain-soaked clothes weighed heavily upon them as they followed Jean Joseph Mounier, the president of the National Assembly, into the king's private rooms. Noble advisors and delicately carved chairs trimmed a decadent green table that stretched out before the women. The château's opulent frescos discordantly framed the ragged visitors; to most onlookers, the poor petitioners would seem especially out of place. One of the women, Louison Chabry, approached the king with the "grievances [doléances] of the women & of the people," echoing the political language of the Third Estate. The seventeen-year-old fell on her knees before the monarch, lamented that the capital could not procure bread, and soon fainted from her exhaustion.

Just as Louison Chabry had depleted her resources, so too had Paris run through its reserves. Earlier that morning in Paris, hundreds of Dames des Halles had abandoned their market stalls, gathered at the city hall, and demanded that local officials solve the capital's dire bread shortage. When municipal representatives could not alleviate the crisis, several hundred Dames and their allies vowed to appeal directly to the king for aid. To do so, they marched 12 miles to Versailles with nearly 6,000 Parisians. Now, several hours later, the monarch ordered brandy to revive Louison and offered her wine in a "large golden goblet." Louison implored the king to send food, and added that a crowd of Parisian women impatiently awaited his response at

the palace gate. The king embraced her and promised to send bread. Then, he entrusted Louison with written declarations to reassure her comrades below.

Instead of relying solely on a court messenger, a royal official, or a representative from the National Assembly seated next door, the king deployed Louison and some Dames des Halles to deliver his message to the city of Paris. He quickly summoned royal carriages to carry 40 women back to the capital. Returning at 3:00am, the triumphant Dames des Halles presented the frazzled Parisian mayor and municipal government with the king's letter. Before the Commune, the Dames relayed the monarch's promise to provision his faithful subjects. [1]

Why did the Dames des Halles audaciously assume the king would listen to them at Versailles? Why did the king receive the Dames in his most private rooms? And why did the king not only admit some market women, but deputize them to deliver his promise of bread to the capital? The Dames' dual importance – as economic and political actors – clarifies these extraordinary moments from the October Days. In an economic vein, the Dames held a vital commercial role as food merchants in the primary Parisian markets. Since the thirteenth century, the king and municipal officials relied on the Dames to feed the capital. In a society that judged the government by its ability to assure subsistence supplies, food equaled politics. In a political vein, the Dames acted as traditional representatives of the Third Estate. During royal rituals such as feasts, baptisms, and military victories, the market women symbolically represented the popular classes. The Dames used their exceptional influence to present the king with bouquets and petition him at his court. Therefore, the Dames' crucial role as food merchants and as the

[1] This account draws from: Sigismond Lacroix, ed., *Actes de la Commune de Paris pendant la Révolution*, series I, vol I (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 173; Deposition CLXXXIII (Louise-Margueritte-Pierrette Chabry, dite Louison), Deposition CLXXXVII (Françoise Rolin), and Deposition CCLXXXI (Sieur Elie-Josephe de Miomandre de Châteauneuf) of the subsequent investigation ordered by the National Assembly. *Procédure criminelle instruite au Châtelet de Paris, sur la dénunciation des faits arrivés à Versailles dans la journée du 6 Octobre 1789*, vol. I (Paris: Chez Baudouin, 1790); Leclerq gives the estimation of 6,000 marchers: Henri Leclercq, *Les journées d'octobre et de la fin de l'année 1789* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ane, 1924), 54. "doléances des femmes & du peuple," "eaux spiritueuses," "grand gobelet d'or."

most widely recognized mouthpiece of the people put them at the heart of revolutionary politics. During the march to Versailles, the Dames predicted the king would receive them and the king, in turn, channeled his message through the Dames with good reason. In 1789, the Dames held the keys to subsistence and sovereignty.

This chapter establishes the Dames' commercial centrality as pivotal traders in les Halles as well as their political centrality as traditional representatives of the popular classes. It begins by explaining how the Dames acquired their identity and commercial privileges through the king's benevolence. Next, it illustrates how the capital's food markets would collapse without the retailers' services. Then, it situates the market women within les Halles as a vibrant urban space. Parisians built the marketplace upon intricate neighborhood networks while government authorities embedded political significance in these relations. As the Dames participated in state initiatives in and beyond the marketplace, they solidified their own influence.

For centuries, Parisians had acknowledged the Dames' economic importance and had readily accepted them as the leading emblem of the people. One particular Old Regime literary style primed readers to digest the retailers in print since the seventeenth century. This style, named the genre poissard after fishwives, sought to capture the daily lives of the Parisian popular classes, particularly the Dames des Halles, in a boisterous and often hyperbolic form.[2] Parisians instantly recognized the Dames in text and easily identified them in images. During the early years of the Revolution, the Dames endured as the most recognizable, dominant, and powerful symbol of the people. Consequently, this chapter also asks how propagandists used the Dames as mouthpieces and coopted their popular sovereignty. From the Estates General to the fall of the

[2] Most studies of the genre poissard exclusively concern cultural representations of the poissardes. They neglect to ask how the living models and their fictional counterparts continually built off of one another. The principal literary study of the genre is A.P. Moore, *The Genre Poissard and the French Stage of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1935).

king, propagandists channeled a spectrum of contradictory positions through the market women.[3] As opponents like Royalists and Fayettists battled each other in pamphlet wars, they armed themselves from the same arsenal. I analyze how rival parties appropriated the Dames' gritty authenticity and deployed the Dames to embody emerging notions of popular legitimacy.[4]

The range of political opinions that pamphleteers and artists channeled through the Dames suggests that the merchants were not factional markers but sovereign markers. Poissard propaganda confirmed that the Dames had privileged access to heart of sovereign sentiment. The pamphlets embraced the Dames' traditional role as the mouthpiece of the popular classes and artists cast them in the role of leading citizens. Thus, in print and in flesh, the Dames linked the state and the subjects who became citizens.

The dual stability and flexibility that the revolutionaries perceived within the Dames' image created a complex reputation for the living Dames. While the Dames and their culture informed the content of the poissard pamphlets, the resulting propaganda influenced how others understood the Dames in turn. Notably, the Dames' printed image circulated farther than the market women themselves. Alternative encounters with fabricated "Dames" conditioned police, government officials, and citizens as they interacted with the actual market women. The living and the fictive Dames coalesced into a fluid reality. From 1789 to 1792, the market women held great power in the street and on the page. Their economic and political centrality readily evolved into revolutionary influence. The Dames' essential roles situated them at the crossroads of the Old Regime and the regenerated nation.

---

[3] Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792* (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991).

[4] The Fronde was the last time the genre poissard became deeply politicized before the Revolution. In the context of these civil wars, the pamphlets were known as Mazarinades. See Jeffrey Merrick, "The Cardinal and the Queen: Sexual and Political Disorders in the Mazarinades." *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1994), 667-699.

Occupational Identity and Importance

Under the Old Regime, the king recognized that internal order depended upon a well-maintained food supply.[5] Therefore, Les Halles played a central role in the Parisian political strategy of the Old Regime. Any non-grain good that entered the capital city had to first pass through les Halles so that officials could regulate its distribution. This was no small feat during the eighteenth century: Wholesalers annually sold 350,000 sheep, 120,000 calves, 80,000 cattle, and 40,000 pigs at les Halles, just to cover the meat industry.[6] The Dames des Halles most often sold fruit, eggs, butter, cheese, and fish in the market.[7] In 1789 alone, the dietary intake of Paris included 78,000,000 eggs, many of which passed through the Dames' hands.[8] The king relied on the Dames and other merchants to maintain the stomachs and thereby the political contentment of his capital city.

Since les Halles provided the critical function of provisioning Paris, it naturally became the site for other essential activities that bolstered the crown. Royal officials used the market square to publically punish criminals since it was "one of the *most* public spaces" of Paris.[9] Milling through the open triangle square (marché de carreau), winding among the pavilion structures (halles), and darting in and out of shops connected to bordering houses (Piliers des Halles), customers from a mélange of social backgrounds mixed with retailers from other

---

[5] Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1994), 151. Rene Marion's ambitious dissertation on the communal and economic position of the Dames des Halles during the Old Regime remains the most developed work on the time period.
[6] David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 101. Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, Trans. Marie Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 243.
[7] Marion, "Community and Authority," 133.
[8] Marion, "Community and Authority," 162.
[9] Marion, "Community and Authority," 12.

markets as they searched for the best price or a familiar merchant.[10] By sharing the same space with markers of royal authority, interacting with individuals of various social and geographical backgrounds, and recalling the king's favor, the Dames des Halles symbolized the union between the royal capital and the king himself.

The Dames' privileged relationship with the monarch and their market permissions dated back to the Middle Ages and France's saint king, Louis IX. Records first mention the market women in 1361. According to legend, Saint Louis distributed post-mortem special spaces in the central Parisian market "in alms to poor women, widows, orphans, and marriageable daughters." The state also granted owners of these "places Saint-Louis" the title of *regratières*, which permitted them to sell their own goods, usually food or flowers, in limited quantities and subjected them to the regulations of the wholesalers and the guilds.[11] Women fortunate enough to receive a place Saint-Louis and a "*lettre de regrat*" became the first Dames des Halles. Gradually, the places Saint-Louis lost their original charitable intention as women passed along their place titles to relatives or friends regardless of their economic position.[12] Through generations of trading and living in les Halles, the Dames established themselves as an enduring force in the marketplace and their local community.[13]

Over several centuries, the title of "Dame des Halles" broadened beyond the central markets. By the time of the Revolution, Parisians considered women retailers from satellite

---

[10] Marion, "Community and Authority," 14-15. Fellow fishwives from the Place Maubert (another market) made the trek across the Seine to supply themselves from the retailers of Les Halles. Marion, "Community and Authority," 120.

[11] Marion, "Community and Authority," 21, 23 35. By law, all wholesalers were forced to bring their goods to the central markets at the start of each day. There, guild members would regulate a bid and lottery system to set the daily price and distribute the goods to retailers. *Regratières* functioned as the smallest-scale retailers. However, owning a *place Saint-Louis* would give any small merchant an advantage over those who had no stable territory in the market.

[12] Marion, "Community and Authority," 23, 68-69.

[13] Marion, "Community and Authority," 58-59. By the end of the seventeenth century, ¾ of the regratières who held places Saint Louis were parishioners of St. Eustache (the church connected to La Halle) while 1/3 of the total market women lived in houses directly attached to the piliers des halles (bordering arcades and shops).

markets as "Dames des Halles" also.[14] The market women themselves expressed this shared identity when retailers from the Marché St. Paul, the Marché d'Aguessaux, the Marché Quinze-vingts, and the central Halles collectively addressed and praised the National Assembly as "Dames des Halles."[15] By 1789, at least 750 of these Dames sold fruit, vegetables, butter, fish, eggs, and occasionally flowers across Parisian markets.

The Dames' communal authority depended in large part upon their image and reputation, and their name contested or bolstered their influence. [16] For more than four centuries, Parisians referred to the female retail merchants as "Dames" and "poissardes" simultaneously. "Poissarde" in the feminine form literally meant "fishwife" or "fish merchant." But, in the broadest sense, "poissard" and "poissarde" could refer to any male or female member of the popular classes. Historian Jehanne d'Orliac explains that the Dames des Halles were "poissardes, even those who did not sell fish, because of the sauciness of their language laced with crude words, and because of their colorful insults directed at the difficult buyer."[17] Contemporaries employed "Dame" or "femme" (woman) as a respectful title, whereas "poissarde" and "harengère" evoked the lowly nature of the market women's dialect, culture, and social position. "Harengère" also evoked the Dames' profession: it could mean a woman who sold fish like herring, often by shouting. Tellingly, no masculine counterpart existed for this occupational word, a rare French occurrence.

---

[14] This slip likely occurs in part because "halle" refers to structures that cover and protect the market. Thus "halles" could be present in other Parisian markets (usually named after locations such as Marché Saint-Germain or Marché Saint-Martin). The central market was referred to as Les Halles.

[15] Archives nationales [hereafter AN] C 128, nº 435, "Adresse de reconnaissance et de dévouement à l'Assemblée nationale, par les dames des divers marchés de la capitale."

[16] Marion, "Community and Authority," 220.

[17] Jehanne d'Orliac, *Dames de la Halle* (Paris: Éditions Frances, 1946), 19. "'poissardes, mêmes celles qui ne vendaient pas du poisson, à cause de la verdeur de leur langage émaillé de mots crus, et de leurs pittoresques injures adressées à l'acheteur difficile." The generic term "poissarde" readily evoked the Dames. While interpreting the title to the 1789 pamphlet *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. les électeurs, qui ont été à Versailles*, all citizens would understand the central "poissardes" as Dames des Halles. Bibliothèque nationale de France [hereafter BnF] Lb39 7354, *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. les électeurs, qui ont été à Versailles, pour solliciter l'amnistie des gardes-françaises*. Given the subject matter, the pamphlet is likely from 1789. Ouzi Elyada also estimates that the pamphlet was published near the time of the event that is the subject.

Figuratively, "harengère" could also mean "a woman who pleases herself by quarrelling and verbally abusing others."[18] Therefore, critics condescendingly hurled "poissarde" and "harengères" to insult the Dames.[19]

The linguistic nuances among the Dames' titles mirrored how the populace could simultaneously regard the Dames with respect and ambivalence. While describing how the Dames congratulated Louis XVI on the dauphin's birth in 1781, Madame Campan, the queen's lady in waiting, carefully recounted, "'Wanting to distinguish these female merchants from the poissardes who always made a disagreeable impression on him, the king gave a great meal to all these women [the female merchants].'"[20] By distinguishing women merchants from poissardes, Madame Campan and Louis XVI consciously distanced the Dames des Halles from a too gritty image of the rabble. In Madame Campan's eyes, the women had acted with decorum while visiting the king and thus merited the title "Dames."

The Dames des Halles often presented themselves as a cohesive group, but it is impossible to delineate definitive boundaries for their identity in the waning days of the Old Regime.[21] Although the Dames framed their identity as an occupational group, they did not constitute an official corporation and many of their economic "privileges" actually involved "tolerated disregard for regulations."[22] However, the Dames united under the rules and customs

---

[18] "Harengère" was so closely associated with the Dames des Halles that the 1798 academy dictionary gives "Les harangères de la halle*"* as the example in context. In addition to the literal and figurative definitions, it gives proverbial sayings as well which blend the occupation and character traits associated with the word: "Crier comme une harengère. Dire des injures comme une harengère. Parler comme une harengère." "Harengère" in 1798 in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois, "une femme qui se plaît à quereller & à dire des injures."

[19] "Poissarde" is a fishwife. "Poissard" refers to the dialect, culture, or literary genre associated with the fishwives. "'Voulant distinguer *ces marchandes des poissardes* qui lui [the king] faisant toujours une impression très désagréable, le roi fit donner un grand repas à toutes ces femmes [the Dames des Halles].'" Marion, "Community and Authority," v, 2, 7.

[20] As quoted in Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 121.

[21] Marion, "Community and Authority," 154.

[22] Marion, "Community and Authority," 153.

of a common market and neighborhood.[23] Although they had at least two religious confraternities, the Dames functioned without a formal organizational structure within the central markets. As potential competitors, the market women had to address economic and personal rivalries within their communities. Yet, the shared identity of the Dames des Halles, based primarily upon their occupation, public image, and custom, overrode the entropic tendencies of a collective identity that lacked a central structure. [24]

Even though they did not have a guild, the Dames' market positions afforded them a great deal of public occupational independence that most Parisian women did not have. Women retailers sold the majority of groceries in Les Halles. Women who did not have their own place often ran their husbands' stalls if they belonged to a foodstuff guild. Les Halles widows frequently took over their husbands' businesses.[25] Ironically, when Louis XVI reestablished the guilds beginning in 1775, he opened all the corporations to both sexes; yet, he undermined female economic authority for those occupations that did have women-only guilds by abolishing them.[26] However, the Dames skirted these restraints through their exceptional independence. Moreover, through daily trade, the Dames came into contact with a wider group of Parisians and stretched their substantial influence beyond les Halles.

For the capital, the Dames' occupation as retailers was not a matter of convenience; it was a matter of logistical necessity. They acted as the lynchpin between countryside suppliers

---

[23] Richard Cobb argues that the police emphasized difference among outdoor trades by assigning every métier a unique badge. Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 25.

[24] As David Garrioch explains "in terms of sociability and solidarity... the division here is between those who belonged to the local community and those who did not. It is a difference in the way of life, in the attitudes and in forms of behaviour." *Neighbourhood*, 254.

[25] Marion, "Community and Authority," 114, 202, 112, 205.

[26] Steven Kaplan, "Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot's 'Carnival,'" in *Work in France*, Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 211; David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). 67. Before Turgot closed the guilds, at least six corporations had been exclusively female at different points, including "the dressmakers, linen weavers, midwives, makers of floral bouquets, flax makers, women's hairdressers, and sellers of women's fashion clothes."

and common consumers. Take the fish market for example: While the capital slept in the early morning hours, country wholesalers arrived with carts creaking under the weight of cod, salmon, mackerel, herring, and other fish. They navigated cramped streets and aimed for the geographical heart of Paris – les Halles. In order to regulate trade, municipal law stipulated that all wholesale transactions had to occur within these central markets. The fish suppliers could not legally circumnavigate les Halles to trade elsewhere. Thus, the central markets acted as the fulcrum for food distribution.

Since space was at a premium, the fish wholesalers could not park their carts at the market and sell their goods themselves. Nor could the countryside suppliers stay for the consumer market and have enough time for the homeward journey. Rather, they needed to discharge their fish and leave the city center before other vehicles and people clogged the congested streets. Consequently, six usually female brokers called factrices bought the catch from the suppliers and paid a lump sum for their fish.[27] Then, under the watchful eye of police inspectors, the factrices subdivided the fish into smaller lots. The retailers bid to set the daily price and the factrices sold to over 100 Dames. The factrices kept individual accounts with the Dames and provided them with purchasing credit at various interest rates. Next, in the same

[27] I have constructed this three-paragraph narrative to describe how the fish market functioned on the eve of the Revolution. I assembled the details from the following sources: Archives de Paris [hereafter AdP] $D.Q^{10}$ 482 Marée à la Halle (Commerce de la) Enquête sur la compagnie Vison, an VII-an IX, n°3353, L'administration Centrale du Département de la Seine au Directeur du Domaines Nationales, signed Picard Paris, le 28 Pluviôse an 7 de la république française; AdP $D.Q^{10}$ 742, Papiers Lenoir (Halles et marchés: Recherches particulières classées par établissement et la nature de marchandises) Dossier: Halles et marchés d'approvisionnements et du factorat dans les marchés, questions d'administration et réformes proposés (1807-1836); AdP $D.Q^{10}$ 742, Papiers de Lenoir, Dossier: Personnel des Halles et Marchés (Nets et Brouillons 1828-1841); AdP $V2F^{4}$ 9, Halles, poisson and divers, le 19ième siècle, Dossier: n°19 Vente en gros du poisson; AN F^{7} 7745^{a}, dossier n°40, "Arrêté du préfet de police sur le commerce des beurres, fromages, et oeufs à Paris" (an VIII); AdP $D.Q^{10}$ 742, Papiers de Lenoir, Subdossier: Personnel (Nets), Service; AdP $D.Q^{10}$ 743, Papiers de Lenoir, Dossier Octrois, Mélanges et feuilles numérotées éparses, subfolder: Octrois, volaille; AdP $D.Q^{10}$ 743, Papiers de Lenoir, Dossier: Dépouillement d'un travail fait l'an 6 par M. Gansouard, Commissaire de la Comptabilité Nationale, sur les taxes et produits des droits d'entrée de Paris sous le régime de la Ferme Générale; Archives de la Préfecture de Police [hereafter AdPP] D^{B} 515, Préfet de Police, "Ordonnance concernant le Commerce des Fruits Légumes, Herbages, Fleurs en bottes et Plantes usuelles" le 2 décembre 1816; Marion, "Community and Authority," 19; Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Les Halles de Paris et leur Quartier (1137-1969)* (Paris: École Nationale des Chartes, 2009), 100-101.

market space vacated by the wholesalers, the Dames took up their assigned places and spread out their acquired lots to sell in retail.

Finally, at the peal of a bell, the consumer market started. Parisians found a familiar Dame with whom they had credit or jostled for the lowest price among the market women's shouts. The small marketplace accommodated an astonishing amount of trade in this fashion. From 1781 to 1786, the Dames and their business partners sold an average of 3,409,158 livres of fish per year. By 1790, the sum total of fresh and salt-water fish sales in les Halles rose to 4,960,000 livres.[28] Thus, at 1790 prices, the Dames channeled the equivalent of 4,464,000 small cod, 2,678,400 large cod, or 70,857,000 smoked herrings to consumers![29] Of course, in reality, the Dames and other retailers sold a variety of fish at different prices, but these benchmark figures attest to the sheer scale of the fish market. The other central markets of les Halles, such as the fruit and vegetables market in Innocents, followed a similar system by 1789. Thus, the Dames' meager individual businesses enabled Parisians to buy small quantities of fish, fruit, vegetables, butter, and eggs to feed their families. However, collectively, the Dames, brokers, and wholesalers distributed enormous amounts of food to the capital. Without the Dames' essential role, the police could not entice wholesalers to undertake their journey, could not monitor food quality and prices, and could not ensure common citizens daily provisions.

During the decades preceding the Revolution, royal officials undertook a massive project to geographically reorganize the central markets. As Paris grew and market activity increased,

---

[28] 5,000,000 francs (des ventes de la marée) + 1,200,000 francs (ventes de Poisson d'eau douce) / 1.25 = 4,960,000 livres. Calculations based on AdP D.Q[10] 742, Papiers Lenoir (Halles et marchés: Recherches particulières classées par établissement et par nature de marchandises) Dossier: Statistiques des Marchés de Paris.

[29] I have used the 1790 base prices from the 1793 price control legislation to calculate these quantities. Cod costs 120 livres per barrel of 108 small fish or 200 livres per barrel of 108 big fish. Smoked herring costs 70 livres per barrel of 1000. AdPP D[B] 387 "Tableau du maximum des Denrées et Marchandises, Stipulées dans l'article premier de la Loi du 29 septembre 1793, l'an II de la République Française."

les Halles became overcrowded and unable to meet the demands of the city.[30] Officials took the first steps to alleviate the congestion of the central markets by building a separate grain market at the nearby Hôtel des Soissons in 1762.[31] Then, officials confronted the overstressed Innocents Cemetery, which acted as another principal space in les Halles. Here, the living bartered for vitals above the dead. In 1780, the graveyard literally exploded from the pressure and the underground remains burst into the cellars of neighboring houses.[32] As a result, the government relocated the corpses and designated the space for the new flower market and the Marché aux poirées (herbs and vegetables) in February 1789. [33] The state also funded the construction of a special halle for the fish market a few blocks north, just to the northeast of the place des Halles.

These modifications created distinct spaces for goods that required different types of shelter, distribution chains, and regulation.[34] The police hoped that the new organization would ameliorate traffic that clogged the city center, and would facilitate closer surveillance over marketplace transactions. On the eve of the Revolution, the Dames des Halles no longer worked in close proximity to their comrades who sold different goods. For example, the fish retailers moved to the northern market section that was separate from the Dames who sold fruit, eggs, and butter. However, the Dames did not falter in maintaining a unified public image that transcended how officials spatially separated markets by goods.[35]

---

[30] Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 221.
[31] Garrioch, *Neighbourhood*, 215.
[32] Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris,* 206
[33]Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Les Halles de Paris et leur Quartier (1137-1969)*, 101; Mary Durham Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles: Institutional Changes for Women of the People during the French Revolution," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett, eds. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 11.
[34] Marion, "Community and Authority," 89.
[35] Most primary sources and secondary work on early modern Paris use the title "Dames de la Halle" to refer to the market women. However, during the revolutionary period, their title is a misnomer since it is predicated upon a compact market arrangement located in a single halle. Of course, this false appearance of occupational unity benefited the retailers as they sought to present themselves as a strong and unquestionably established group in the revolutionary political sphere. In order to evoke merchants across the various markets, I have chosen to refer to them as the "Dames des Halles."

In addition to its role as "the stomach of Paris," les Halles also controlled the pulse of the public urban space.[36] The market functioned as a prominent interface for exchange, fusing social, economic, political, communal, and religious aspects of life in one space.[37] St. Eustache, the neighborhood church, bordered the market so closely that food carts could spray its walls with debris. It housed at least two of the Dames' religious confraternities and acted as a neighborhood rallying point.[38] Just beyond the church's long Gothic shadows, the royal pillory stood in the middle of the market where Old Regime criminals publically atoned for the sins.[39] When they revolutionaries created a new judicial system, they created a new local seat directly in this market space. Here in les Halles, criers announced royal decrees during the Old Regime and proclaimed the Constitution during the Revolution.

The Dames des Halles derived part of their popular influence not only from their occupational authority, but from their neighborhood prominence. From 1791 to 1795, the Marché des Innocents section (which included Les Halles) had the second highest population density of all the Parisian sections at 555 inhabitants per 1,000 square meters.[40] A strong contingent of prostitutes' residences mixed with the apartments of the Dames des Halles and other merchant families.[41] The retailers' husbands were usually employed as unskilled or skilled workers.[42]

---

[36] Émile Zola famously labeled les Halles "the stomach of Paris" in his novel set in the marketplace during the 19th century. Zola, *Le Ventre de Paris,* 1873.
[37] If one considers Joan Landes' definition of Habermas' public sphere as one without strict "distinction between family, civil society, and state," and one conceptualizes the political along the early modern lines of order and subsistence, then the market place functions as the most widely accessed arena in the public sphere. Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 5.
[38] Marion, "Community and Authority," 106. Many occupational bodies had confraternities during the eighteenth century. Confraternities like that of the Dames des Halles fused occupational association and collective religious practice. Both aspects constituted important elements of the *marchandes'* identity.
[39] Marion, "Community and Authority," 15.
[40] George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 242-243.
[41] Arlette Farge, *La Vie fragile : violence, pouvoirs, et solidarités à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), 188.
[42] Garrioch, *Neighbourhood*, 115, 119.

Amidst the odors of goods, the character of the neighborhood rested upon customs of the marketplace that regulated both economic exchanges and interpersonal behavior.[43] Exclamations in argot slang filled the air as merchants unabashedly hailed the same customers or haggled over a price. A striking frankness governed marketplace relations. Neighbors' brazen assessments and comments could incite violence[44] or could trigger complaints of defamation, which was an especially detrimental crime for one's business reputation. For example, Citoyenne Lecureaux, a Dame des Halles, complained to the Justice of the Peace that Citoyenne Prieur slandered her daughter by calling her a "maquerelle." The insult cleverly conflated occupational and gendered overtones. The masculine "maquereau" was a mackerel, a type of fish. However, the feminine version, "maquerelle," meant a brothel madame. The slur doubly condemned the daughter as a slippery merchant and a sexually-corrupt woman.[45] The Dames des Halles tenaciously competed for customers, but for the most part, a communal working and living environment tempered moments of daily discord.[46]

Parisians recognized that the Dames' general mood and the "public and political order" of the capital depended upon the economic and neighborhood conditions.[47] If the retailers were upset by inadequate food regulations or neighborhood disturbances, the tranquility of the capital could be in danger. Therefore, although the Dames des Halles constituted a minority group in Les Halles[48] and although the neighborhood itself was only one of 48 Parisian sections, the highly-charged nature of the market space affirmed their importance as representatives of the

---

[43] Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 16-19. See also Garrioch's argument that "community interaction... conforms to certain unwritten rules which do not apply to outsiders." Garrioch, *Neighbourhood*, 5.
[44] Marion, "Community and Authority," 218.
[45] AdP D.4 U[1] 28 Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, An V and répertoire des actes de Bureau de Paix (1792-an VIII); 7 thermidor an V, n°351.
[46] Marion, "Community and Authority," 237.
[47] Marion, "Community and Authority," 264.
[48] Marcel Reinhard, *Paris pendant la Révolution* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1962), 104. Reinhard argues that as a result of this minority, the Dames des Halles had little control over market prices.

Parisian popular classes. Old Regime and revolutionary police understood that food and public space drove urban politics. Les Halles stood at the nexus of both.

The Leading Symbol of the People

Although the Dames solidified their local prominence in their neighborhood interactions, they became the most widely recognized symbol of the people through their privileged relationship with the king. Due to the Dames' centuries-old tie to Saint Louis, the Dames held a special connection with the king and played the role of grateful subjects in royal rituals. Aside from occupation, this political relationship formed the most integral part of their collective identity.[49] The king originally fostered this relationship by dispatching high royal officials to Les Halles. After the construction of Versailles, the Dames des Halles began to travel to the king's château on special occasions. The Dames des Halles brought the monarch gifts, such as flowers or food. As representatives of the Third Estate, they would often recite or sing a compliment on behalf of the king's subjects. The relationship between the Dames and the monarchy politically benefited the king: the Dames offered a micro-model of the king's paternal benevolence and radiated his authority in public spaces.[50] The royal administration openly favored the Dames des Halles in order to keep them content, stabilize the markets, and ensure the retailers' dutiful role in the royal relationship.[51]

Under a regime in which public ritual modeled the body politic,[52] the Dames des Halles represented the popular classes. Take, for example, a 1781 Versailles banquet celebrating the birth of the dauphin. As the people incarnate, a Dame des Halles addressed Louis XVI: "Sire, if

[49] Marion, "Community and Authority," 262-263.
[50] Marion, "Community and Authority," 261, 8.
[51] Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 34.
[52] Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 62. "la nation entière."

heaven should give a son to a king who regards *his people* as his family, *our* prayers and *our* wishes have been asking for it [a son] for a long time."[53] The delegation of Dames proceeded to fete Louis XVI with a special song reflecting their tripart relationship based on royal paternalism, bread, and political honor: "Do not fear dear papa / To see your family grow / The Good God will provide for it / Make Versailles overflow with your family / Where there are a hundred Bourbons, / There is bread, laurels for all."[54] On feast days and royal celebrations, the Dames des Halles showered the king with compliments and bouquets as symbols of their approval.[55] Their privileges extended beyond favored positions at the court; they could also use the king and queen's boxes at public events, such as performances at the Comédie Française.[56] Thus, ritual and privilege served as the public means through which the Dames des Halles enacted and maintained their legitimacy as popular representatives.

Each ritual included the possibility for the Dames des Halles to deviate from the monarchy's wishes while maintaining their nearly naturalized popular legitimacy.[57] After acting as popular representatives for centuries, the market women could temporarily transgress their ritual script without rupturing their political influence. By 1789, the Dames des Halles had developed a strong enough tradition as ritual representatives of the popular classes that this

---

[53] As quoted in Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 121. "Sire, si le ciel devait un fils à un roi qui regarde *son peuple* comme sa famille, *nos* prières et *nos* vœux le demandaient depuis longtemps" (my emphasis)

[54] The spelling discrepancies in the song reflect the author's attempt to capture the characteristic *poissard* pronunciation of the Dames des Halles through phonetic transcription. As quoted in Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 121. "Ne craignez pas cher papa / D'voir augmenter vot'famille / Le Bon Dieu s'y pourvoira / Fait z'en tant que Versailles en fourmille. / Y eut-il cent Bourbons chez nous, / Y 'a du pain, du laurier pour tous."

[55] Marion, "Community and Authority,"258, 256.

[56] Orliac, *Dames de la Halle*, 21. Marion, "Community and Authority," 293.

[57] I have extended Rene Marion's argument that "while old-regime privilege intended to preserve divisions between orders, the privileges of the women of les Halles transversed contemporary social distinctions and chipped away, mainly symbolically, at those boundaries." "Community and Authority," 325. On the role of ritual during the Old Regime, Joan Landes argues that "the absolutist court functioned as a vast visual and theatrical spectacle, a machinery whose royal retinue functioned to authorize the king's superior and indivisible power." *Women and the Public Sphere*, 18.

image was no longer entirely contingent upon the king's complicity in the pact. Consequently, the Dames maintained some legitimacy even if they did not act in accord with the king.

The Dames des Halles publically reacted against the king on multiple occasions and illustrated their keen understanding of their political power. In a 1645 conflict over a parish priest vacancy at Saint Eustache, the Dames des Halles blocked the archbishop's appointee from entering the church and insisted on an alternative candidate. They roused such a popular following that the king's archbishop had no choice but to concede.[58] In addition, the market women often sided with the Parlement of Paris during national conflicts. During the Fronde and again during the attempts at fiscal reform in the eighteenth century, the Dames ran to the Parlement's defense out of fierce local pride.[59] The Dames invoked the duty of the king as their paternal protector, but used threats to enforce his obligation. During the riots over the mysterious disappearance of Parisian children in 1750,[60] the Dames des Halles spoke of using their ritual route to Versailles to "'tear the King's hair out" if he did not defend their children from the police whom many suspected orchestrated the kidnappings.[61] Thus, the kings failed to completely subjugate the Dames des Halles to royal authority. Instead, the market women drew upon their traditional position as popular representatives to punctuate their customary practice with independent political action.

The sporadic disagreements with the monarch before the Revolution were all minor spats compared to the political audacity of the Dames des Halles in August of 1787. Reacting against the king's dismissal of the rebellious Parlement of Paris, the Dames des Halles boycotted their

---

[58] Marion, "Community and Authority," 260-261.
[59] For a discussion of the relationship between Parisians and Parlement see Colin Lucas, "The Crowd and Politics between the Ancien Régime and Revolution in France," *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988): 421-457, 440.
[60] See Farge's explanation of the tensions between the police and the populace in *La vie fragile*, 87.
[61] Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 87.

traditional trip to Versailles and refused to bring a bouquet to the queen on the Feast of the Assumption. Moreover, they tried to avoid the king a week later on the Feast of Saint-Louis. Such a consciously impudent decision to snub the monarch on his feast day could have resulted in a political disaster. However, the police coerced the Dames into fulfilling their ritual obligation in honor of Louis XVI and all his predecessors.[62] The Dames' potential insolence deeply angered the court.[63] When the king finally released Parlement from exile in October 1787, the Dames des Halles once again asserted their political independence. They drew from their ritual repertoire to offer the returning magistrates bouquets as a token of their respect.[64]

Thus, in the centuries preceding the Revolution, the Dames des Halles established their authority in the marketplace, bolstered their political salience through ritual practice, and, most importantly, established their image as leading representatives of the people in the eyes of French society. Moreover, the Dames des Halles had so much success in consolidating their political authority that they could temporarily rupture their ritual relationship with the king without losing their popular legitimacy. Such flexibility endowed the Dames des Halles with great maneuverability. However, writers who deployed the genre poissard challenged the Dames' capacity to control their image and influence. These textual representations of the Dames added another dimension to their public image.

Political Poissardes: Popular Representatives in Propaganda

Before flood of revolutionary propaganda, the French most frequently encountered the genre poissard in literary form. The genre spanned from brief dialogues to poems and

[62] Marion, "Community and Authority," 310-316. Marion dates the Feast of the Assumption as August 20; however the correct date is August 15. The confusion probably stems from Hardy's August 20 journal entry in which he recounted the event.
[63] Marion, "Community and Authority," 317.
[64] Marion, "Community and Authority," 316.

vaudevilles. Rising out of the seventeenth-century forms of the burlesque genre, Italian Theater, parades, and Theater of the Fair, the genre poissard focused on "la basse nature" (the low nature) of the Parisian streets. The style reveled in the volatile relations among lower-class characters such as fishwives, porters, seamstresses, ragpickers, and ferrymen.[65] Unlike writers such as Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne, whose "realist" style spotlighted societal relations and probed lower classes conditions, most authors composed poissard works for entertainment by mimicking and parodying the popular classes. In particular, writers exploited farce, parroted the rough dialect of les Halles, and focused on "the sly-naïve reactions of the popular mind" to create comic scenes and plots.[66] Jean-Joseph Vadé mastered both elements – realism and parody – to launch the genre to its Old Regime zenith in the 1750s. Contemporaries hailed Vadé as the "Corneille des Halles" for his ability to imitate the unrestrained quarrels, foul language, and the market women's butchered expressions.[67] The genre found an audience at all levels of society.[68]

By portraying fabricated Dames des Halles, the genre poissard provided fictional points of contact between the public and the market women. As literary scholar A. P. Moore, historians Carla Hesse, Rene Marion, and Ouzi Elyada have noted from various perspectives, the Dames des Halles and their literary counterparts coalesced in the popular imagination.[69] The geographical specificity of les Halles as well as the poissard characters' lower social positions linked poissard works and the Dames.[70] Despite the potentially pejorative connotation of

---

[65] A.P. Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 1, 6, 3.
[66] Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 45, 4.
[67] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 121, 126, 141.
[68] Chapter 7 of this work explores the genre poissard in theater where it is easiest to track audience reception.
[69] Rene Marion, "Community and Authority," 288; Carla Hesse*, The Other Enlightenment*, 22; Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792* (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991); Ouzi Elyada, ed., *Lettres bougrement patriotiques de la Mère Duchêne suivi de Journal des Femmes, 1791* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris/EDHIS, 1989); Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 5, 25, 178-179.
[70] See, for example, how the following author situates his male and female characters within the marketplace: BnF, Arts du spectacle Ra4 659, Augustin de Piis, *Le Bouquet du vaudeville, ou Dialogue d'un charbonnier et d'une poissarde sur la naissance de Mgr le Dauphin* (Imprimerie de Chardon, 1781).

"poissarde," the French most readily associated the word with the Dames and the Parisian markets, its most famous models. Even poissard characters who wandered outside of les Halles gestured to the marketplace as a benchmark for their identity. For example, in *Les Citrons de Javotte* (1756), merchant Javotte, a poissarde, ventures north of the marketplace sell her fruit. As a customer inspects her "lemons" (which creates a typical thematic double entendre), Poissarde Javotte attests to their quality by linking them back to the central markets. Javotte insists they "are the most beautiful of les Halles."[71] The genre incorporated the culture, dialect, work, and political traditions of the Dames des Halles, thereby synchronizing fictional situations and characters with the living marketplace.

Old Regime propagandists occasionally built from the literary genre poissard to appropriate the market women in pamphlet form for political purposes. Since the mid seventeenth century, pamphleteers assumed that the poissarde on the page could speak to her counterparts in the street. Beginning during the Fronde, authors used poissard characters to strike against Cardinal Mazarin. These "Mazarinades" highlighted the Dames' privileged position with the king and cast them as legitimate protectors of the people.[72] In addition to the Mazarinades, other pamphlets depicted the Dames freely commenting on current events while trading in the marketplace.[73] During the Paris famine of 1649, a pamphlet titled *Les Menaces des Harengères faites aux Boulangers de Paris, à faute de Pain* deployed an imaginary market woman's warning: "If you want, I will go with you to seek vengeance / On all the bakers that cause the

[71] BnF Z Le Senne-4329, Anne Claude Philippe de Pestels de Lévis de Tubières-Grimoard, *Les Citrons de Javotte. Histoire de Carnaval* (Amsterdam, 1756), 5. "sont les plus beaux de la Halle."
[72] Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 43. See also Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Éditions Aubier Montaigne, 1985) and Jeffrey Merrick, "The Cardinal and the Queen: Sexual and Political Disorders in the Mazarinades," *French Historical Studies*, Volume 18, No. 3 (Spring 1994): 667-699.
[73] Even church leaders, ensconced in the world of universities, harnessed a carnivalesque form of poissard propaganda. They used the fishwives' association with Lenten dietary practice to resist Jansenist attacks against the Church. Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, 19.

famine, / Selling wheat and flour at too high a price."[74] A century later, at least one pamphleteer used poissarde characters to encourage patriotic sentiment during the Seven Years War. The *Dialogue entre deux poissardes, sur la prise du fort Saint Philippes* circulated after the French victory in the Mediterranean in 1756. The two poissarde characters clearly do not understand the military implications of the battle. Margot invites Catherine to drink but confesses, "You'know weal theez machine th' th' English have... th'calls it.... Whatz it called? The Fort Tulip... ip? I'know [we conjugation] weal th't'it finishes in 'ip.'"("t'scais ben ste machine q'avoint l's Anglais….. qs'appele la…. Q'ment dit-on ça? L'Fort tulipe…..ipe ? j'savons toujou ben q'çà fini en ipe.") Nonetheless, the two poissardes understand that the victory would affect their business since the British had stifled the fish supply. Margot observes that "the English would no longer be able to sustain the war of the sea."[75] Even the most baffled poissardes could derive patriotic satisfaction from trouncing the British. The pamphlet sought to rally popular support for the war.

Pre-revolutionary propagandists created the precedent of incorporating the living Dames' ritual duties in their works to create compelling scenes. One pamphleteer drew from the Dames' roles in royal festivities to craft a 1774 pamphlet feting the king's coronation and rallying around the new queen. The title *La Joie des halles, conversation entre Madame Giroflée, Marchande Bouquetière, Madame Saumon, Marchande de la marée, & Monsieur Jacquot-la-grosse-patte*, *Marinier, sur le Joyeux Avénement du Roi à la Couronne* suggests that the poissard group conveys a communal opinion. Inside the pamphlet, the group toasts the entire royal family.[76] Similarly, *La Joie de la Nation*, celebrated the dauphin's birth in 1781. The fictional scene opens

[74] Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 52. "Si tu veux avec toy j'irons tirer vengeance, / De tous ces boulangers qui causent la famène, / Vendant à trop haut prix le bled et la farène."
[75] BnF Lb38 682, *Dialogue entre deux poissardes, sur la prise du fort Saint Philippes* (1756), 1. "t'scais ben ste machine q'avoint l's Anglais….. qs'appele la…. Q'ment dit-on ça? L'Fort tulipe…..ipe ? j'savons toujou ben q'çà fini en ipe." "les Anglais n'tateriont pu guerre de la mer."
[76] BnF Lb39 6234, *La Joie des halles, conversation entre Madame Giroflée, Marchande Bouquetière, Madame Saumon, Marchande de la marée, & Monsieur Jacquot-la-grosse-patte*, *Marinier, sur le Joyeux Avénement du Roi à la Couronne* (De l'imprimerie de D'Houry, 1774).

with merchants Margot and Mlle Fontages, who have characteristically spread out their goods before them. A courier arrives with the happy news that the queen has given birth to a male heir. Each poissarde tries her hand at crafting a traditional song to praise the new dauphin. Delighted, the market women promise to bring the Dauphin "the Poissardes' compliment."[77] The scene seeks to rouse the same enthusiasm in the reader. Thus, Old Regime propagandists periodically turned to the Dames' political clout in pamphlets.

At the call of the Estates General, a tidal wave of propaganda washed over France in ways that citizens had never before experienced. The political turmoil and public debates created a new print culture. Pamphlets, newspapers, and cheap images proliferated in print shops and the hands of hawkers. Peddlers trucked printed material throughout the nation. Clubs and wealthy individuals subscribed to several publications. Publishing took resources and individuals with disposable capital produced the most printed material. However, writers directed their political work at multiple audiences, including the poorest segments of society.[78] Poissard pamphlets became a very popular conduit that enticed a broad spectrum of readers.

Revolutionary poissard pamphlets were part of an emerging subset of propaganda centered on popular characters and crafted with street slang. The Père Duchesne, the pipe-smoking, eternally swearing sans-culotte became the most famous character of this sort. Fictional Dames continued to be effective propaganda mediums for similar reasons. The poissard pamphlets reflected the political belief that the popular classes had an exceptional ability to tap into natural truths. Even while depicting the popular classes an uneducated or confused state, writers depicted them as consciously or unconsciously discerning reality. Societal dressings or

---

[77] BnF Arsenal GD 23459, *La joie de la nation: dialogue sur l'heureuse naissance de monseigneur le Dauphin entre Bruletout, Dragon; Margot, Poissarde: Frisotin, Garçon Perruquier, et Mlle Fontanges, Marchande de Moses au S. Esprit par un clerc de procureur* (Paris: À tous les coins de rues, 1781), 13.

[78] Lynn Hunt, "Engravings" in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy, Fifth Edition, (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 276.

political posturing did little to sway poissard characters in political pamphlets. In fact, without the dissembling tools of culture, the popular classes could be the most qualified to access and freely communicate these truths.

However, pamphleteers who relied on these stereotypes deployed them carefully: these brash traits could also expose the Dames to criticism as unrefined citizens.[79] The Dames' dialect ran roughshod over the deputies' attempts to standardize and polish an official language fit for all French citizens. Frank evaluations could slip into crude commentary; authentic sentiments into uncultured reactions; humorous expressions into uneducated errors; bold attacks into buffoon-like attempts; and unapologetic opinions into potential violence. However, from the grievance cahiers to the fall of the king, the great number of poissard pamphlets indicates that the advantages in deploying the fictive Dames outweighed the risks.

Although political writers occasionally appropriated the image of the Dames des Halles for over a century before 1789, nothing compared to the fury with which propagandists turned to the poissard character in the new print culture.[80] From 1789 to 1792, Parisian audiences eagerly bought and devoured poissard pamphlets. In September 1789, the newspaper *La Chronique de Paris* announced that the poissard pamphlet *Cahier des plaintes & doléances des Dames de la halle & des marchés de Paris, redigé au grand salon des Porcherons, pour être présenté à MM. les États-Généraux* had reached its eleventh edition! Despite originally appearing at the calling of the Estates General, the new eleventh edition even adds recent events that had occurred since the fall of the Bastille. The newspaper attributed the pamphlet's enormous success to its brilliant poissard style. It had "that [quality] of gaiety, & did not lack salt. It's [the pamphlet] a joke by a spirited man who perfectly succeeded in assuming the tone and bawdy turns, & who, while

[79] Marion, "Community and Authority," 288.
[80] Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 340.

joking, lets some hard truths escape."[81]

Over 50 revolutionary pamphlets that relied on the figure of a counterfeit Dame survive in the archives. These political pamphlets added another dimension to the living Dames' image: they bolstered the market women's legitimacy by appropriating their identity, but also limited the Dames' control over their own representation. Ouzi Elyada has analyzed 41 of these free-standing (not serialized) poissard pamphlets. Nearly half of Elyada's source base dates from 1789 alone.[82] Most of these pieces were onetime publications and independent of one another.[83] All of the 1789 political pamphlets were pro-revolutionary, although different political factions used them to pursue different goals. The Duc d'Orléans commissioned poissard pamphlets to critique the monarchy and the moderate Fayettistes used the same techniques to reduce anxiety and promote order in the capital.[84] By 1790, however, right-wing propagandists began to appropriate the Dames' image. These conservative pamphlets accounted for 8 of 11 works that year. By the time that poissard political pamphlets petered out in 1792, a broad swath of writers had profited from poissard techniques. In his survey, Ouzi Elyada classifies 16 pamphlets as center, 15 as right, and 10 as left.[85] Why did pamphleteers from diverse factions like royalists, Fayettists, and Orléanists all find the Dames to be a powerful political tool? And how did they harness the market women in propaganda?

---

[81] BnF Lc^2 218, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XVI, le 8 septembre 1789. "Il a celui de la gaieté, & ne manque pas de sel. C'est une plaisanterie d'un homme d'esprit qui a parfaitement réussi à prendre le ton & les tournures grivoises, & qui, en plaisant, laisse échapper de dures vérités."

[82] Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792* (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991), 3. Elyada did not include the following potential series in his tallies: *Dialogues entre une poissarde et un fort de la Halle*, *La Gazette des Halles*, *Finissez Donc Cher Père*, *Le Gouter de la Courteilles*, *Journal des Halles*, *Le Groupe Sire Jean ou Club du Savatier*, and *Le Club des Halles*. Elyada, *Presse populaire*, 11-14.

[83] Elyada, *Presse populaire*, iii. "exprimaient leurs avis sur les affaires du temps, en argot populaire parisien, mêlé de blasphème et de juron comme le 'sacredieu' ou le 'ventrebleu.'"

[84] Elyada, *Presse populaire*, iii, iv. "pour calmer et discipliner le peuple de Paris." In this vein, Elyada attributes the *Gazette des Halles* to Fayettiste propaganda. By analyzing the publication details, I have argued that the Dames des Halles commissioned the series.

[85] Elyada, *Presse populaire*, 3. Of the poissard pamphlets Elyada has document, the following reflects the total pamphlets by year: 1789- 19 pamphlets, 1790- 11 pamphlets, 1791- 6 pamphlets, 1792- 4 pamphlets.

Pamphleteers assumed that poissard characters could appeal to all of society and transcend the socio-economic divisions of a vast audience. The fictive Père Duchesne articulated the Dames' great political authority. He observed, "They are good devils... & the great majority of people allow themselves to be directed by their influence."[86] To win the heart of Paris, revolutionary pamphleteers attempted to construct support through the characters of les Halles. In poissard dialect, the editor of the *Journal des Halles* explains his mission: "I imagined [we conjugation] in our manner of seeing to have printed one [newspaper] that people of our station can hear without needing to have studied nor needing knowledge of Latin. The *journal des halles* appeared to us our way; it's for it [this purpose] that I chanced [we conjugation] an issue in order to see if one will be able to latch on to it. I warn [we conjugation] in advance that I will say [we conjugation] all that I will have [we conjugation] on our heart."[87] Since the pamphlet's audience was likely illiterate, it is unclear if the style of *Journal des Halles* would greatly augment exposure. However, the announcement did coopt the popular classes conceptually as members of its audience and allies. And it touted the marketplace as the most conducive point to transmit its message.

Some pamphleteers wrote dialogues with a fictive Dame who stood in for the audience. These pamphleteers took an explicitly educational approach in which readers learned the "correct" political opinion alongside a fictive market woman. These tracts most frequently assumed the form of poissard dialogues. They usually presented an opening question, a

---

[86] BnF NUMM- 42495, Jacques-René Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle, & des Bouquetières du palais-royal, au sujet du beau discours qu'elles ont fait au roi* (Paris: Imprimerie de Tremblay, 1791)*,* 7. "Elles sont bonnes diablesses... & la grand majorité du peuple se laisse conduire par leur influence."

[87] BnF Lc2 2382, "Petit mot d'avis en passant. Lettre du général La Pique aux dames de la Halle," in *Journal des Halles*, n° 1, juin 1790, 1-2. "J'avons imaginé dans notre manière de voir d'en faire imprimer un que les gens de notre état puissant entendre sans avoir besoin d'avoir fait leur études ni de savoir le latin. Le journal des halles nous a paru notre fait; c'est pour la que j'en hasardons un numéro pour afin de voir si on pourra y mordre. J'avertissons d'avance que je dirons sans gêne tout ce que j'aurons sur le cœur."

conundrum, or a misconstrued notion that is then debunked over the course of the exchange. In a 1791 conservative dialogue set in a cabaret, a "Dame de la Halle" functions as a stand-in for the audience. She drinks with an old city gatekeeper, a ferryman, a roofer, and a carpenter.[88] They discuss various political topics and learn the truth (according to the pamphleteer) of revolutionary politics. Within the ensemble of "pupils," the Dame des Halles shows increasing "comprehension" along this conservative slant. The Dame learns that revolutionary journalists are plotting to "assassinate" aristocrats with "regiments of bandits." Her troubled reaction becomes the metaphorical substitute for the response of the popular audience. She also speaks on behalf of the other previously uninformed neighbors who listen alongside her. The narrator leaves the scene convinced that, "the people, that one thought to have tricked," now understood on the true situation. The people saw the revolutionaries' treacherous lies through the eyes of the fictive market woman.[89]

Poissarde characters allowed revolutionary pamphleteers to harness the power of a sovereign, honest, and spontaneous voice to support their political demands. The *Avis important d'une dame des Halles pour la diminuation des vivres* illustrates the rhetorical power of deploying a poissarde character. The author frames his pamphlet as a record of the "impromptu [discourse] of Madelon Friquet." In her spontaneous and heavily accented speech, Madelon forms the perfect picture of a "charming poissarde." As Madelon speaks to the neighbors gathered around her, the narrator observed, "They judge her to be a good patriot capable of

[88] If the café was a site for the political education of the bourgeoisie, the cabaret was the alcohol-infused counterpart for the popular classes. The cabaret setting fused together components of oral speech, unfiltered frankness, and dialogue in a single environment.

[89] BnF Arsenal GD-9001, *Dialogue pas mal raisonnable, entre un ancien commis de barrière, un passeur, un couvreur, un charpentier et une Dame de la Halle*, 12, 13. An unknown hand has marked the copy janvier 1791. "le peuple, que l'on croit tromper," "un régiment de bandits."

inspiring generous sentiments in others."[90] The author portrays the exaggerated poissarde as silly yet cunning; she demands that her listeners pay for her opinions with drinks. The author-witness attests that "our beautiful Oratress possesses to the highest degree the art of making herself heard."[91] Tackling food issues, she demanded new, affordable prices for bread, wine, meat, and rôgomme (cheap brandy). Madelon was an influential force because of her identity as a Dame des Halles, her oral skill as a poissarde, her familiarity with the subsistence trade, and her frank, unplanned speech.

Pamphleteers from across the political gamut sought to capitalize on the Dames' central position in reshaping politics. Writers relied on a common image of the Dames' regardless of divergent factional messages. The Dames provided a flexible medium: one that could be bent according circumstance or opinion, but never lost its authoritative power or recognizable form. The poissardes' capacity to reach across the factional spectrum attests that writers could manipulate the political position of their poissardes without sacrificing their principal legitimacy as popular representatives. In the eyes of poissard pamphleteers, political stance acted as a malleable secondary trait. Pamphleteers used the fictional Dames as influential vessels of popular legitimacy.

The pamphleteers who deployed imposter Dames also drew from their reputation as communal protectors to give moral teeth to their political, economic, and social arguments. In the 1789 *Motion des harengères de la Halle,* the fictive Dames des Halles send a petition to the Estates General. They frame their request by claiming that they would not have to intervene if their representatives had accomplished anything. The "harengères" acknowledge that they are of

[90] BnF Lb39 9028, *Avis important d'une dame des Halles pour la diminution des vivres* (Paris: De la Cloye), 3, "ils la jugerent bonne patriote à capable d'inspirer aux autres des sentiments généreux."
[91] BnF Lb39 9028, *Avis important d'une dame des Halles pour la diminution des vivres*, 7, "puisqu'il faut rendre témoignage à la vérité, je dirai donc que notre belle Orateuse possédoit au dernier degré l'art de se faire entendre."

the "rabble" proper, but insist that the term is better used for "the dogs of Parlement in this nobility" who prefer dipping in the royal coffers rather than actually serving the king.[92]In this case, the pamphleteer assumes that the Dames' reputation as guardians of their community could strengthen his message. In *Cahier des plaintes et doléances des Dames de la Halle*, another 1789 pamphleteer complained that the elite clergy squandered the money of the Church and did not serve the poor. Citing the great expense of sacraments and the dangers posed to local girls whom the clergy seduce, the author used the poissardes' voice to intertwine economic grievances with collective moral rebuke.[93]

Before the king attempted to flee the Revolution in 1791, pamphleteers also played upon the public's knowledge of the special relationship between the Dames des Halles and the monarchy to latch their hopes and concerns onto the just king.[94] One 1789 propagandist created a counterfeit poissarde to demand that the state regulate food prices. His poissarde figure confidently asserted that the king would protect the people from hoarding enemies.[95] In the 1789 dialogue *Les Poissardes à la Reine*, a pamphleteer manipulated the Dames' special relationship with the monarch to fashion his message as a poissarde's address to the queen. This, in turn, cloaks the message as popular sentiment. His poissarde asserts, "Madame, I will desire [we conjugation] as much as you to be able to r'give you our flowers and th' gentle name o'*Queen of the French*; I'see [we conjugation] ev'n twenty million o'hearts all ready to fly b'fore yer own."("Madame, j'désirons autant qu'vous d'pouvoir vous r'donner nos fleurs et l'doux nom

---

[92] BnF RES- YE- 3065, *Motion des harangères de la Halle* (Paris: 1789), 1. The BnF lists the publication date as 1791, but from its content, it must have been published in 1789. "canaille" "ces chiens d'Parlemens Dans c'te Noblesse."

[93] *Cahier des plaintes et doléances des Dames de la Halle et Marchés de Paris, Rédigé au grand salon des Porcherons, le premier dimanche de Mai, pour être présenté aux Messieux les États-Généraux, Avec des augmentations sur la nouvelle du premier samedi du mois de Juin, au sujet du pain* (1789), reprinted in *Réclamations de Femmes, 1789,* (Paris: Côté femmes éditions, 1989)*,* 71-75.

[94] BnF RES- YE- 3065, *Motion des harangères de la Halle*, 2. "Le peuple avec l'Roi d'accord."

[95] *Avis important d'une Dame des Halles pour la Diminution des vivres* (Paris: Chez LaCloye, Librarie à L'Orme Saint-Gervais, 1789), reprinted in *Réclamations de Femmes, 1789* (Paris: Côté femmes éditions, 1989), 87.

d'*Reine des François*; j'voyons mêm vingt millions d'coeurs tout prêts à voler au d'vant du vôt'.")[96] Just as the poissarde character acted as a ritual representative before the queen, the pamphleteers outfitted her as a ritual mouthpiece for the popular classes in the pamphlet.

Many pamphleteers deployed poissard characters to paint a concept as so self-evident that a simpleton could understand it. Some pamphleteers created self-deprecating speakers who, even in their naïveté, were able to arrive at what the author sees as obvious political conclusions. Pulling the strings of his poissard puppets, one pamphleteer had his market women wonder: "all these things there, do they not see them everyday? One does not have to be a great diviner everyday."[97] Revolutionary pamphlets developed this tactic from the Old Regime. A fictive prerevolutionary fishwife succinctly describes the paradox: "Although I only are a Dame des Halles, I value [we conjugation] our price [worth] like anoth'r, & I have been [doing so]. Lawd-have-marcy, little edu-broken [not very educated]; but, like the statue [proverb] says, the herring barrel always smells of herring." ("Quoique je ne soyons qu'une femme de la Halle, je valons notre prix comme une aute, & j'ons été. Guieu-marci, un peu éducassée ; mais, comme dit staute, la caque sent toujours le harang.")[98] Although she is unable to string together an "educated" sentence in proper French, the poissarde still lucidly assesses the situation before her.

Situational satire could heighten the effect of self-evident truths. In the *Réclamation de toutes les poissardes avec un petit mot à la gloire de notre bonne Duchesse d'Orléans*, a fictive

---

[96] BnF Lb39 2089, *Les Poissardes à la Reine* (Paris: Imprimerie P de Lormel, 1789), "Madame, j'désirons autant qu'vous d'pouvoir vous r'donner nos fleurs et l'doux nom d'*Reine des François*; j'voyons mêm vingt millions d'coeurs tout prêts à voler au d'vant du vôt'."

[97] *Premier dialogue entre une poissarde et un fort de la Halle,* 16. "Je nous présentons, comme ayant plus droit que personne, par notre travail, d'être entendues, à que les sueurs que je répandons pour faire vivre la Noblesse & le Clergé." "toutes ces chose-là ne s'voyant elles pas tous les jours? N'faut pas ête grand sourcier tous les jours." "toutes ces chose-là ne s'voyant elles pas tous les jours? N'faut pas ête grand sourcier tous les jours."

[98] BnF HP-750, *Lettre de Marie Bon-bec harangère de la halle à l'auteur des 'Reflexions occasionées par la Conférence d'un franc maçon et d'un profane.'* "dépitée de note Corps, pour aller compliment Sa Majesté," "Quoique je ne soyons qu'une femme de la Halle, je valons notre prix comme une aute, & j'ons été. Guieu-marci, un peu éducassée ; mais, comme dit staute, la caque sent toujours le harang."

market woman reflects, "Ah ! Dame I'm only a Poissarde, but it's that, us, we see very clearly all the following consequences."[99] In this revolutionary pamphlet, the poissarde denounces the Salic Law, which she humorously thought concerned salt. However, an educated scribe explained that the law meant that all French monarchs must be male. The poissarde asserts that the poor can reason as well as the rich and anyone can see that there are great French women such as the Duchesse d'Orléans and Sainte Geneviève. Therefore, the poissarde concludes that the kings should at least take French queens. In an unsubtle attack on Marie Antoinette, the poissarde argues that French kings should not look "abroad" for wives.[100] The lowliest poissarde, could easily, albeit humorously, discern political truth. Surely, the amused reader would agree.

In addition to seizing the Dames' popular legitimacy and casting their messages as self-evident, propagandists capitalized on the Dames' reputation for frankness to justify making their points without inhibition. [101] The posturing writers embellished their work with assertions such as "We are frank poissardes, and we are going to divulge everything, which will come to you by mouth."[102] Or they punctuated the poissardes' commentary with a sharp "take it or leave it."[103] By using the Dames des Halles, the pamphleteers depicted their commentary as curt and pure.

---

[99] BnF MFICHE Lb39- 2352, *Réclamation de toutes les poissardes*, 5. "Ah ! Dame j'nétions qu'une Poissarde, mais c'est que j'voyons ben clairement toutes les suites des conséquences, nous."
[100] BnF MFICHE Lb39- 2352, *Réclamation de toutes les poissardes*, 5-8. "L'Etranger."
[101] The Dames had a long-established reputation for their frank and free speech. A revolutionary reprint of Montaigne's works noted his desire to speak honestly, like the market women. In the sixteenth century, Montaigne admired the direct transparency of the poissard dialect: "Eloquence injures things, which diverts us from the self. As with clothes, it's pusillanimity of wanting to mark oneself in some particular and archaic way.... Why may I not make use of those [ways of speaking] that serve [those of] les Halles of Paris?" Michel de Montaigne, *Essais de Michel de Montaigne,* Volume 1 (Paris: Chez Jean Serviere et Chez Jean-François Bastion, 1793), 221. "L'eloquence faict inure aux choses, qui nous destourne à soy. Comme aux accoustrement, c'est pusillanimité de se vouloir marquer par quelque façon particulière et inusitée….Puisse-je ne me servir que de ceulx qui servent aux halles à Paris ?"
[102] *Cahier des plaintes et doléances des Dames de la Halle et Marchés de Paris, Rédigé au grand salon des Porcherons, le premier dimanche de Mai, pour être présenté aux Messieux les États-Généraux, Avec des augmentations sur la nouvelle du premier samedi du mois de Juin, au sujet du pain* (1789), reprinted in *Réclamations de Femmes, 1789* (Paris: Côté femmes éditions, 1989), 71. "Je sommes de franches poissardes, et j'allons vous dégoiser tout ce qui vous viendra à la bouche."
[103] BnF MFICHE Lb39 2352, *Réclamation de toutes les poissardes, avec un petit mot à la gloire de notre bonne Duchesse d'Orléans* (Paris: Chez Guillaume, junior, 1789), 8. "prenez-en ou en laissez."

The Dames spoke organically and did not mince words. Therefore, they could appear to transcend squabbling politics. Thus, the image of the unabashed fishwife allowed pamphleteers to introduce an element of straight-talk, marked by reinforcements of "Here are the sincere vows that the Harangères make."[104] Such declarations were tinged with the popular validation of "our way of thinking."[105] After reproducing the Dames' 1789 compliment praising the municipal government, one pamphleteer reminded his readers, "One must not forget that these couplets are the fruit of a sentiment, not an ordered work, not an exact production composed by a hired pen."[106] As living actors and fabricated tools, the Dames' frank speech unapologetically cut to the heart of any issue.

Because humor operated outside the rules of correct political discourse, a comedic message was not constrained by these rules but could still catch others transgressing them.[107] Poissard pamphleteers embedded messages within linguistic humor. The author of *Harangue des Dames de la Halle aux citoyens du faubourg Saint-Antoine prononcée par Ma. Engueule, le 26 juillet 1789* constructed a fake poissard address by the Dames des Halles to celebrate the fall of the Bastille, rally support for Necker, and unmask counter-revolutionary plotters. The fictive Dames explain that they agreed to go to the commission "vous faire une émotion pour à celle fin de parlet raison aveuc voux." ("to make you an emotion (or revolt) in order to this end speak reason wieth yous.")[108] The mangled speech substitutes an "émotion" in place of a "motion" and

---

[104] BnF RES YE 3065, *Motion des harangères de la Halle*, 2, "Voila les sincères voeux Qu'les Harangeres font."
[105] *Cahier des plaintes et doléances des Dames de la Halle et Marchés de Paris,* 67. "notre façon de penser."
[106] BnF Lb39 7354, *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. Les électeurs qui ont été à Versailles pour solliciter l'amnistie des Gardes Françaises* (1789), "il ne faut oublier que ces suplets sont le fruit d'un sentiment, non un ouvrage de commande, non la production exacte & compassée d'une plume mercenaire."
[107] However, the genre's farcical elements revealed a lingering tension between the entertainment value of the poissardes' culture and the Dames' capabilities as intelligent political players. Rene Marion, "Community and Authority," 288.
[108] BnF Lb39 6294, *Harangue des Dames de la Halle aux citoyens du faubourg Saint Antoine prononcée par Ma. Engueule* (1789), 1. The date on the pamphlet itself is 1786, but the content reveals that the correct date should be 1789.

then quickly puns on "raison" as "cold-headed and rational" but also alluding to "right and correct." While the pamphleteers' Dames mispronounce their words, they inadvertently gesture to their emotionally-driven authenticity and earnest intentions.

Because poissard humor often rested on crude elements, some propagandists balked at embracing the Dames' serious political authority. Yet, even those who viewed the Dames with ambivalence acknowledged the power of their humorous exaggerations. A 1791 caricature of three poissardes appears to satirize the potentially irrational political clout of the Dames and the popular classes. In "Les Parques Nationales Parisiennes" ("The (Female) National Parisian Fates"), three fishwives crowd around Pétion, the new Parisian mayor, at the edge of the marketplace. Pétion is trapped in a barrel, which had perhaps held the merchants' herring or cod. Each of the three poissarde "Fates" holds a spool of thread and their fish. The poissardes have looped their threads over a lantern post and attached a sword that dangles over Pétion's head. Punning on the mayor's name, the caption reads "Fart ["Pet"]... Asshole Go... since you [familiar] do not want to give us anything to drink, we are going to cut your Cord. By the well intentioned [the three women], for his reception as Mayor October 18, 1791."[109] The caption suggests that the poissarde Fates have determined Pétion must die because he did not offer them drinks at his inaugural celebration. By labeling the poissardes as "well-intentioned," and thus not quite adequate, the artist critiques their capacity as rational actors. He also questions market women who measure justice by libations.[110] Nonetheless, by depicting them as "fates" the artist uneasily acknowledges the power of the Dames' cheeky speech and influence. Moreover, the

[109] BnF Estampes P22731 "Les Parques Nationale Parisiennes." The caption reads: "Pet., Merdeux Va..... puisque tu ne veux pas nous donner pour boire, nous allons filer la Corde. Par les biens intentionnées, pour sa réception de Maire le 18 octobre 1791."
[110] BnF Estampes P22731, "Les Parques Nationales Parisiennes," "parolles (sic) de ces Dames."

Dames could determine the political destiny of powerful figures. The humorous image bursts with condescension but acknowledges the influence of the Dames' oral traditions.

Pamphleteers could also draw on the Dames' productive occupation to legitimize their characters as contributing citizens. A fictive Dame justified her 1789 argument by declaring, "I present us, as having as much right as any person, by our work, to be heard, by the sweat that we shed to support the life of the Nobility & the Clergy."[111] The fictive Père Duchêne professed that he admired the Dames because of their occupational service. In a serial pamphlet from 1790 or 1791, the Père Duchêne directly addressed the "intrepid female merchants of the Halles." He explains that it's "you that (sic) I esteem and that I love, because you (sic) are excellent patriots, and because you sell what is the most essential to life and not useless trinkets."[112] Explicitly articulating the pamphleteers' persuasive goals, the Père Duchêne warns the Dames that the aristocrats will soon attack Paris with a counter-revolutionary army. He proposes that a "regiment of dames de la halle" follow him "in order to go guard the royal family." In this way. the Père Duchêne illustrates how the Dames' occupational work, that protects Parisian families, dovetails with the Dames' civic work to protect the royal family in a military sense.[113]

Pamphleteers highlighted the Dames' trade to further augment their moral authority as productive citizens. From this elevated vantage point, writers' poissarde characters could critique those who leeched off of the rest of society. In a pre-1792 dialogue, four "dames de la halle" educate one another on current events. Manon l'écailleuse asks Mère Saumon, "Explain to us

---

[111] BnF MFICHE Lb39 1229, *Les trois poissardes, buvant à la santé du Tiers-État,* 9. *Premier dialogue entre une poissarde et un fort de la Halle,* 16. "Je nous présentons, comme ayant plus droit que personne, par notre travail, d'être entendues, à que les sueurs que je répandons pour faire vivre la Noblesse & le Clergé."

[112] The revolutionaries used "Duchêne" as an alternative spelling for "Duchesne." BnF Lc2 513, Le Père Duchêne, *Je suis le véritable père Duchêne, foutre*, n°8 (Paris: de l'imprimerie du véritable père Duchêne), 2, "intrépides marchandes des halles, vous que j'estime et que j'aime, parce quevous (sic) êtes d'excellentes patriotes, et que vous vendez ce qui est le plus essentiel à la vie et non des brimborions inutiles."

[113] BnF Lc2 513, Le Père Duchêne, *Je suis le véritable père Duchêne, foutre*, 1, "régiment des dames de la halle," "pour aller garder la famille royale."

this word [aristocrat]." Mère Saumon instructs her comrades that "it's like one would call those who want all the profit, without the hardship, [they are] no more nor less like these hornets who steal the honey that the bees have gone to great pains to make; they pretend to have everything, the properties, the privileges, the special places, the honors, the distinguished titles... they want us, on the other hand, to pay for it all, and [they] spit on us down below as [they did] in the past."[114] The fake retailer implicitly evaluated the aristocrats' societal worth in contrast to the Dames' contributions. By comparing the two, Mère Saumon invites the readers to find the aristocrats deficient as citizens. The pamphleteer spotlighted the Dames' useful work to attack parasitic aristocrats and gain a moral edge.

Revolutionary pamphleteers who tried to completely assume the identity of the Dames des Halles relied on a mixture of *poissard* dialect, style, and form to create convincing personae. The authors leaned on the unique *poissard* conjugations and sayings to embellish their phonetic transcription of the dialect. Often they employed the customary oral forms of the Dames des Halles such as compliments or songs. The *Motion des harangères de la Halle* is composed completely of rhyming *poissard* couplets while the *Avis Important d'une Dame des Halles pour la Diminuition des Vivres* closes with a song which invokes the paternal protection of the king in a fashion similar to the true Dames des Halles.[115] One 1790 pamphlet tellingly labeled "from the Press of the Halles" maintained that it recounted the meeting of the sectional club without prejudice. To lend credence to its "transcription," the editor warned that sensitive ears might be

---

[114] BnF Lb39 8416, *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle: Mme Saumon, La Mère Gogo, la mère Écorche-Anguille et Manon L'Écailleuse*, 3. "Expliquez-nous ce mot [aristocrate]," "c'est comme qui diroit ceux qui voulont avoir tout le profit, sans avoir le mal, ni plus ni moins que les frêlons qui s'emisont du miel que les abeilles avont tant de peine à faire; ils prétendont avoir tout, les biens, les privilèges, les places, les honneurs, les dignités... ils voulont au contraire nous faire tout payer, nous cracher dessus comme par le passé."

[115] *Motion des harangères de la Halle*, The BnF lists the publication date as 1791, but from its content, it must have been published in 1789; *Avis important d'une Dame des Halles pour la Diminution des vivres*.

jarred by crude poissard expressions that followed. Nonetheless, the editor insisted that readers would find the text's authenticity embedded in its rough speech:

> It was necessary to conserve the terms and tenor of the speeches and discussion that had been pronounced by the Members of the Club. Moreover, one feels that it is not necessary at les Halles to search for a pure diction, an undefiled style. He who renders public the Session of the Club, was simply copyist, and faithful narrator of what he heard in the place of the same Assembly. One will be able to see that, if the [correct] style does not find itself at the Club des Halles, at least the good sense and the true interests of everyone begin to be well-recognized there and discussed with wisdom.[116]

The "copyist" insisted that the speeches' rough edges and its authentic sentiments were tightly intertwined.

Just as the poissard dialect could be used to glorify or denigrate the living Dames, writers criticized one another for misusing or badly reproducing poissard dialect in an attempt to copy the market women. Much later in the Revolution, the republican *L'Ami du Peuple ou Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés* weighed in on the dispute between two other newspapers by evaluating their poissard language. In January 1797, the editor observed, "By saying that *le Miroir* [royalist journal] writes in the style of the Halles, *Le Censeur* [moderate journal] gave it [*le Miroir*] too much honor. The citoyennes of the Halles [the Dames des Halles] have a natural spirit, some pleasant repartees that one never finds in *le Miroir*, the style of Bridel resembles the clucking of a turkey, and his jokes resemble grimaces of an ape." The editor defended the Dames' speech as honorable while highlighting the botched poissard prose to condemn the *Miroir.* The *Miroir* failed to master the dialect and appropriate the sovereignty of even the lowest class.[117]

---

[116] BnF Lb39 9542, *Le Club des Halles établi à l'instar de celui des Jacobins à la nouvelle Halle ci-devant le charnier des innocents* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie des Halles, 1790), i-ii. "il a fallu conserver dans les termes et teneur les discours et discussions qui ont été prononcés par les Membres du Club. D'ailleurs, on sent que ce n'est pas à la Halle qu'il faut chercher une diction pure, un style châtié. Celui qui rend public la Séance du Club, a été simple copiste, et narrateur fidèle de ce qu'il a entendu dans le lieu même de l'Assemblée. On pourra voir que, si le style ne se trouve pas au Club des Halles, du moins le bon sens et les vrais intérêts d'un chacun commencement à y être bien connus, et discutés avec sagesse."

[117] BnF Lc2-828, *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés*, nº284, 15 nivôse an V, le 5 janvier 1797, 4, "*Le Censeur* [journal] dit que *le Miroir* [journal] écrit dans le style des Halles, il lui fait encore beaucoup

Neither the left nor the right held a monopoly as the most effective appropriators of the Dames' popular legitimacy. Since the Dames traditionally represented the Third Estate, it would seem that left-leaning pamphleteers could most easily assume their voice. However, conservative pamphleteers and royalists also used the Dames to appeal to notions of sovereignty and win supporters of various backgrounds.[118] For example, the author of the counter-revolutionary *Grande motion des Halles* contends that his list of grievances originated in the marketplace. His leitmotifs of "We don't want any more of your [insert revolutionary reform]" and "We want our [insert Old Regime counterpart]" drive a litany of demands. This list spotlights the popular voices of les Halles who supposedly compose the "we."[119] The writer appropriates the full weight of his popular speakers from les Halles. They assert, "We demand it with all the power which belongs to the sovereign people."[120]

Juxtaposing two pamphlets from the left and the right effectively illustrates how pamphleteers manipulated the Dames' pliable political capital. The fictive Dames retain stable traits across both pamphlets despite their divergent political opinions. In the 1790 *Le Divorce, Dialogue entre Madame Engueule et Madame Saumon harangères, et M. Mannequin, fort de la halle*, the poissard characters praise the virtues of divorce. Madame Saumon argues that "For virtu' it's necessary't'be free,/ Th' choice that'one makes by one's self is th' only good one."[121] Madame Engueule seconds her friend and laments that an unwilling betrothed daughter is a

---

d'honneur. Les citoyennes de la Halle ont un esprit naturel, des réparties plaisantes qu'on ne trouve jamais dans le Miroir; le style de Bridel ressemble au gloussement d'un dindon, et ses plaisanteries aux grimaces d'un singe."

[118] Robert Darnton discusses how the monarchy itself resorted to hiring pamphleteers to stir popular support in its favor at the end of the Old Regime. All sides joined the battle for public opinion because it also carried legitimizing power. Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 202. See also Keith Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[119] BnF Lb39 10208, *Grande motion des Halles* (1791), 5. "Nous ne voulons plus de votre [insert revolutionary reform]," and "Nous voulons nos [insert Old Regime element]."

[120] BnF Lb39 10208, *Grande motion des Halles* (1791), 6, "nous le demandons avec tous le pouvoir qui appartient au peuple souverain."

[121] BnF RES YE 3069, *Le Divorce, Dialogue entre Madame Engueule et Madame Saumon harangères, et M. Mannquin, fort de la halle* (1790), 3, "Pour la vertu faut zêtre libre,/ L'choix qu'on fait soy même est l'seul bon."

"poor child that'one tyrannizes."[122] Jean Mannequin, the male voice of the pamphlet, agrees that the threat of divorce would beneficially force spouses to attend to each other's needs.[123]

In contrast to the liberal dialogue on the benefits of divorce, the 1792 pamphlet *V'là c'qui s'est dit passé à la halle* appropriates the Dames' influence in dialogue form to advance conservative goals.[124] The scene opens on a marketplace argument between "Brissotin" and Madame Patureau, a fruit retailer in les Halles, who receives support from fellow fish merchants Commère (a gossip) Luce and Commère Marie. Brissotin attempts to take advantage of the poissardes by low-balling the price for peaches. His deceptive haggling quickly expands into a national metaphor in which the Jacobins abuse the popular classes by failing to provide for them. Commère Marie contrasts the parasitic Jacobins with "our' good king." She asks, "Is it not him [the king] who ord'red some grain to be bought from almost two thousand places besides here'in order that we didn't lack?"[125] Brissotin replies by insulting the royalists but Madame Patureau quickly turns on him: "Speak like that, eh! Morning [false oath], don't say bad things about the Royalists, otherwise you will have to pay us arrears. Learn here that we are Royalists and are prouwd. ("Parles donc eh! mâtin, n'dis pas du mal des Royalistes, autrement tu arras à faire à nous. Apprend que nous en sommes & de fieres.)"[126] Pulling the strings on his merchant characters, the pamphleteer attacks the Jacobins and protests that the king provided far more to his people.

---

[122] BnF RES YE 3069, *Le Divorce, Dialogue entre Madame Engueule et Madame Saumon harangères, et M. Mannquin, fort de la halle,* 2. "pauvre enfant qu'on tyrannise."
[123] BnF RES YE 3069, *Le Divorce, Dialogue entre Madame Engueule et Madame Saumon harangères, et M. Mannquin, fort de la halle*, 4.
[124] BnF Lb39 5296, *V'là c'que s'est dit et passé à la Halle. V'là la grande dispute entr'un Jacobin et des marchandes de fruits*. Since the group discusses presenting a bouquet to the king, the pamphlet has to be before August 10 1792. And it must be after April 1791 since Mirabeau is dead. Since the characters talk about hoping the Germans arrive before winter, it must be early 1792.
[125] BnF Lb39 5296, *V'là c'que s'est dit et passé à la Halle,* 7. "not' bon roi, est-ce qui n'a pas fait ach'ter du bled jusqu'à deux mille lieuses d'ici pour que je n'manquissions pas."
[126] BnF Lb39 5296, *V'là c'que s'est dit et passé à la Halle,* 9-10, "Parles donc eh! mâtin, n'dis pas du mal des Royalistes, autrement tu arras à faire à nous. Apprend que nous en sommes & de fieres."

Like the liberal pamphlet on divorce, the conservative pamphlet relies on the transparent, frank, pragmatic, and unapologetic outlook of the poissarde characters to deliver its message. In this way, the two pamphleteers took the Dames as the same instrument: they acknowledged the same essential parts, workings, possibilities, and limitations. The pamphleteers built from shared assumptions about the Dames ands their neighbors. However, the pamphleteers composed different songs with on their shared instrument. The two played the Dames to promote drastically different political perspectives.

Writers from opposing factions relied on the fictive Dame Mère Saumon to transparently discern truth and educate fellow Dames. Her name echoed the merchants' trade in fish and the Dames' relationship with the king since the salmon symbolized royal fish.[127] The left-leaning 1791 pamphlet *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle* featured Mère Saumon in dialogues which praised revolutionary reform. The pamphlet wove together patriotic education and labor as equally productive forms of work. Mère Saumon explains to three other Dames des Halles that, since she inherited enough money to retire from commerce five months ago, she has attended the National Assembly to educate herself on political affairs. This knowledge lends weight to her opinions and she lectures her friends, "It is necessary to be a good citoyenne, & put one's instruction before one's pleasure."[128] She invites the Dames and the readers to "listen to me" so that she can explain the Assembly's work to them.[129] Mère Saumon proceeds to explain how the "good angels" of the National

---

[127] Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, 22, 26. Other popular poissard characters include Mère Jèrôme and Mère Duchêne (wife of the Père Duchêne of pamphlet lore). The Dames des Halles sometimes brought salmon to the king since it was a valuable fish.

[128] BnF Lb39 8416, *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle: Mme Saumon, La Mère Gogo, la mère Écorche-Anguille et Manon L'Écailleuse*, 2. There is no date but, from contextual clues, the pamphlet must have been published sometime before Mirabeau's death (April 1791). "Faut être bonne citoyenne, & mettre son instruction avant son plaisir."

[129] BnF Lb39 8416, *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle*, 3, "écoutez-moi".

Assembly have defended "the poor people."[130] She corrects neighbor Mère Gogo's misperception that the Dames' lives have not improved since the Revolution. Before the Dames have one last drink together, the three Dames impersonate a collective reader response. "All together" they implore Mère Saumon, "Promise us to return another day to teach us again all the beautiful things that the National Assembly does for us." Mère Saumon acquiesces and swears by the "faith of a poissarde." [131]

With opposite goals but similar methods, the narrator of the 1792 royalist dialogue series *Les Entretiens de la Mère Saumon* listens to Mère Saumon give lessons to her fellow "female merchants of les Halles." The pamphleteer gives flesh to the Dames by scattering a healthy dose of alcohol, obscenities, songs, and grammatical errors among his observations. His compelling details include the Dames' occupations, their participation in events like the October Days, and even previous political pamphlets. The narrator protests that he is not a writer, and he is only going "to repeat what I heard" in order to give it "to the Public."[132] In stark contrast to allegorical settings in which characters romantically gather "in the middle of a Garden" and are "seated on the grass," the narrator claims that he transcribed the lessons "in the middle of the Halle."[133] Huddling her fellow Dames des Halles around her, "old sage" Mère Saumon gives nine days of political lessons. Each lesson begins by a Dame posing a thematic question to Mère Saumon. For example, a lemon merchant asked "Learn-me therefore, Mère Saumon, what's that this-here Constitution? I don't understand too well wh't this-here word signifies..." Then, Mère Saumon

---

[130] BnF Lb39 8416, *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la* halle, 4, "bons anges," "le pauvre peuple."
[131] BnF Lb39 8416 *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle*, 8, "ensemble," "faites-nous la promesse de revenir un autre jour nous entretenir encore toutes les belles choses que l'assemblée nationale fait pour nous," "foi de poissarde."
[132] BnF Z Le Senne 5128, *Les Bienfaits de l'Assemblée Nationale ou entretiens de la Mère Saumon, doyenne de la Halle: suivi des vaudevilles* (Paris: Au Palais Royal, 1792) 6-7, "marchandes des Halles," "répéter ce que j'ai entendu," "au Public."
[133] BnF Z Le Senne 5128, *Les Bienfaits de l'Assemblée Nationale ou entretiens de la Mère Saumon*, 6, 11, "au milieu d'un Jardin," "assis sur le gazon," "au milieu de la Halle."

says she will respond and invites the Dame: "You will be able to judge it for yourself, listen."[134] Following this question-answer formula in each "session," Mère Saumon's insights run the gamut of critical political topics: the Constitution, the nation, the law, tribunals, liberty, the National Assembly, the National Guard, priests, and the revolutionary paper money. While defining and explaining these concepts, Mère Saumon casts the issues according to the pamphleteer's royalist perspective. Therefore, Mère Saumon (re)educates her listeners and the reader according to the author's conservative position. Like the 1791 liberal dialogues, she models how the pamphleteer wishes the popular classes would react.

Since French citizens could easily recognize the Dames in visual images just as well as in print, propagandists seized their rare dual power as a discursive mouthpiece and discernable marker. Illustrators eagerly appropriated the Dames in ways that echoed the written poissarde counterparts. Artists used the Dames or poissarde figures in order to visually represent the people. In this sense, the Dames brought more symbolic capital than situational precision and evoked more mythic qualities than realist detail. Like pamphleteers, illustrators drew from a common reservoir of gestures, subjects, titles, and captions to signal and harness the Dames' identity. Citizens encountered these images in consumer prints or posted about the city. Propagandists paired images of the Dames with pamphlet accounts to give faces to the text. For example, the hawkers at the Pont-Neuf and the Palais Royal distributed caricatures of the Dames spanking the counter-revolutionary nuns in 1791 along with a narrative pamphlet recounting the event.[135] Artists sold their prints at libraries, editors compiled them into series, and journalists

---

[134] BnF Z Le Senne 5128, *Les Bienfaits de l'Assemblée Nationale ou entretiens de la Mère Saumon,* 15, "doyenne," "Apprenez-moi donc, Mere Saumon, c'que c'est que cte Constitution? Je n'entends pas trop c'que signifie c'mot-là..." "tu pourras en juger toi-même écoutes."

[135] BnF Estampes P 22029. According to the BnF catalogue note, "On distribuait sur le Pont-Neuf et au Palais-Royal des caricatures avec un libelle portant le titre qui suit: *Liste de toutes les sœurs et dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames des Marchés de Paris, avec leurs noms."* Such a visual aid could explain, enhance, or perhaps even take the place of the text, especially for the illiterate.

attached them to newspapers. Some appeared as woodcuts in the press. The *Révolutions de Paris* commissioned event-based illustrations to supplement their reports.[136] Since literate and illiterate citizens could easily access visual material, artists dynamically drew from and contributed to the Dames' multidimensional reputation.

Images of the Dames came in a variety of formats and prices. The images could be black and white or bursting with color. One print nested a popular image of "Les Dames de Paris allant à Versailles" within a tricolor rosette to heighten its commemorative value.[137] Printers shrunk large prints into cheaper and more portable medallions. The revolutionaries were likely to encounter the same image in several formats. In the scene "Proclamation de la Constitution," the Dames are woven among masses of people listening to the decree in the marketplace. I found the depiction in three distinct forms. The first large print encompasses the entire marketplace; the second copy bears the same large image but in sketch form; and the third features the image rescaled to medallion size.[138] The small medallions are often so blurry and rudimentary, that one would need to have seen the larger versions to understand the smaller ones. Such a necessity speaks to the wide circulation and diffusion of a core group of illustrations.

The poissardes depicted in images mirrored the actual Dames' reputation as the mouthpiece of the popular classes. As the living inspiration for generic poissarde characters, the Dames remained closely associated with these images even if the artist did not explicitly connect the two. One medallion featured a popular woman with her hand on her hip while she clinks

---

[136] When jewelry thieves invaded the marketplace in 1792, the journal's artist realistically scattered the Dames among the terrified market goers who dodged the bandits. BnF Estampes P23880bis, "Évènement de 14 7bre 1792," from *Révolutions de Paris*.

[137] BnF Estampes P 21390, "Les Dames de Paris Allant à Versailles," "entrevue de Hyacinthe la Bégueule, Poissarde et Marchande de Bagatelles, du Marché de la Place Maubert avec le Roi, la Reine et les principaux d'État," "à nos travaux publiques."

[138] Archives de la Préfecture de Police D^A 23, The two large prints are entitled "Proclamation de la Constitution," while the medallion is labeled "Proclamation de la première Constitution." Since the latter bears the number 72 and implies the existence the second Constitution, it is likely part of a commemorative narrative series.

glasses with a lower class man. The caption reads: "I'are from the Third [Estate]." By conjugating verbs in the poissard style, honoring the Third Estate, and featuring a woman in a stance often assumed by the Dames, the medallion evoked the cultural ethos that the Dames exemplified.[139] A 1789 image featured a similar stereotypical poissarde riding on the back of a crawling royal Body Guard. He had allegedly trampled the revolutionary tricolor. Pulling back on his ears, the poissarde yells at the defeated Body Guard, "And well, J... F..., [implied expletive] will you say long live the nobility again?"[140] The figures reversed the iconic depictions of the First and Second Estate riding on the back of the Third. Thus, like the toasting medallion, the poissarde represented the Third Estate. Taking a cue from pamphleteers, artists used generic poissarde characters to evoke popular sovereignty and justice.

Visual depictions acted as a middle ground between poissardes in pamphlets and the actual Dames in the street. Images of the Dames and stock poissardes drew from an iconography of dress and comportment that overlapped with their living inspirations. These commonalities rendered the visual figures recognizable and thus conceptually legible. The true Dames sported aprons, clogs, and floppy white bonnets. Viewers could also identify them from their positions in marketplace images, from their retail sale of foodstuffs, and from the occupational tools they carried with them such as baskets or trays.[141] Parisians could also detect the Dames through ritual behaviors such as the bouquets they held as a group. "La Journée à jamais Mémorable aux François" ("The Journée forever memorable to the French") depicts Louis XVI festively arriving at the Parisian Hôtel de Ville after the fall of the Bastille. Since the point of view is a distant,

---

[139] BnF Estampes M 99968, "J'sommes du Tiers"
[140] BnF Estampes P 21379, "Eh bien, J… F…, dira-tu encore vive la noblesse," (London: 1789). Détachée du pamphlet intitulé: *Acte de contrition de M.M. les Gardes du corps de Sa Majesté Louis XVI ou les Cartes rabattues,* orné d'une gravure en taille-douce. (BnF Lb39 2415).
[141] Musée Carnavalet, G 27952, "Les Dames de la Halle partant pour aller chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789." In this drawing, one of the Dames still carries her marketplace basket on her back.

somewhat aerial shot, the faceless figures are barely discernable. In the center, a group of people with raised bouquets awaits the king. They stand in a privileged space divided from the masses by lines of guards. The written key confirms the viewer's immediate suspicion: the flower-carrying group is a contingent of Dames des Halles.[142] The rudimentary visual markers are enough to easily distinguish the women as the welcoming delegation of citizens, symbolizing the approving people.

Whereas pamphleteers could fashion a lone "market woman" character (marchande) to convey popular sentiment, I have not found a single image that depicts a "Dame" without the company of other Dames. Artists always clustered the Dames into groups. Thus, as a group in visual imagery, the Dames signaled the bodily presence of the collective sovereign people. An artist who depicted the Dames complimenting the king on the constitution huddled the merchants together despite the empty space in the room. The women eagerly lean forward, holding on to the person in front of them. This hodgepodge Conga line continues all the way to the lead Dame who presents a bouquet to the king, queen, and dauphin.[143] Similarly, a colored image portrays three Dames holding laurel branches and decked out in the revolutionary tricolors en route to praise the queen. One is gesturing in the direction of Tuileries while the other two excitedly follow. The woman in the rear holds the back of her foremost comrade's arm, pulling the three into a tight huddle.[144] Artists clustered the Dames together to draw from the market women's collective legitimacy and sovereignty.

As potent visual markers, the Dames offered propagandists an especially powerful way to reach illiterate citizens. In an oral culture, any individual could access the world of gesture and

---

[142] Carnavalet G 29383, "La Journée a jamais Mémorable aux François où Louis XVI Restaurateur de la liberté Françoise se rendit à l'Hôtel de Ville le 17 du mois de Juillet 1789." The key labels the group as "Des Dames de la Halle, présentant le Laurier, Simbol de la paix, à sa Majesté"
[143] Carnavalet G 2796, "Les Dames de la Halle félicitant leurs Majestés sur le commencement de la Constitution."
[144] BnF Estampes M 99485, "Les Dames de la Halle de Paris vont complimenter la Reine aux Tuileries."

could read detailed body language. Thus, the Dames and those who advantageously depicted them drew from a repertoire of physical poses to convey identity and meaning. One gesture in particular acted as a visual name badge for the Dames des Halles: a hand on the hip or "arms akimbo." Parisians likely made this omnipresent association because of the Dames' aggressive trading posture in les Halles. Alternatively one could derive the stance from their resting position while carrying goods, which gave them relief from the baskets and trays that they strapped to their backs. Illustrations in poissard literary works since the seventeenth century featured market women with hands propped on their hips. *Riche en Gueule ou Le Nouveau Vadé*, which was "dedicated to the Dames des Halles," included a fold out picture of several characters dressed for Carnival who passed through les Halles in a carriage. A Dame des Halles peers out disapprovingly from under her parasol where she is selling fruits and vegetables. She bends towards them, hands on hip, fist cocked in a ball, ready to spring forward.[145] Her posture suggests that she aggressively judges the revelers. With her arms akimbo, the Dames makes herself bigger, territorially claims more space, and assumes an erect position ready for battle.[146] Such corporal tenacity added weight to the messages that the Dames signaled in visual depictions.

Regardless of how the Dames' gesture-badge came into being, by the time of the Revolution, it was universally recognized. Since the hands-on-hip pose visually marked the Dames, but did not necessarily indicate a confrontational attitude, artists carefully tweaked small details to convey subtleties through body language. They swung the hand around the back, side, and front of the hip, outlined open fingers or closed fists, and carefully considered the height of

---

[145] BnF YE 32173, *Riche en Gueule ou Le Nouveau Vadé publié par un enfant de la joie et dédié aux dames des halles et marchés* (Paris: Quai des Augustins n° 9).
[146] For an explanation of the arms akimbo stance as body language, see Joe Navarro with Marvin Karlins, *What Everybody is Saying* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 120-128.

the hand placement to increase and decrease the threatening severity of the pointed elbow.[147] For example, a rosy allegorical image in which only soldiers hold weapons, depicts a peaceful and celebratory reconciliation between the king's royal Body Guards and the National Guards after the October Days.[148] A poissarde woman looks on with one hand on her hip and the other shepherding a child forward to watch see the scene. Although the Dame curls back her fingers of the hand resting on her hip, she appears more resolved and self-confident than aggressive. As she leans forward to guide the child, she unbalances herself and vulnerably leads with her chest, which suggests the absence of danger. Her hand-on-hip gesture visually marks her as a Dame without limiting the range of emotions and attitudes she can portray.

The hands-on-hip pose effectively denoted the Dames because artists could change its overtones according to situation, hand placement, and finger position. In the 1789 image "Le Roi Reçoit les Femmes de la Halle," one of the Dames in the middle of the deputation before the king holds her hand on her hip. However, the market woman's head is angled down and her frame takes on a slightly concave, expectant posture. The king holds both hands of the Dames' spokeswoman as they deliver their message. In this instance, the Dames' hands on hip pose did not suggest hostility towards the king but served as a graphic marker of identity for the delegation.[149] Other illustrations creatively formed the gesture-badge by painting the Dames gathering their aprons up to their hips. In the image "Vive le Roi! Vive la Nation!" ("Long live the King! Long live the Nation!"), four boisterous Dames hold their aprons forward of their hip in order to kick up their feet in celebration. They thrust colorful orange tree branches into the air, their agape mouths are singing and laughing, and colorful flower sashes and laurels encircle their

[147] A rigid elbow cocked out to the side is a sign of confidence and a means of claiming territorial dominance. Joe Navarro with Marvin Karlins, *What Everybody is Saying* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 119, 125.
[148] Carnavalet G 27982, "Journée Memorable du 6 octobre 1789." The caption reads: "Départ de Versailles pour Paris de Messieurs les Gardes du Corps et Gardes Nationales Parisiennes avec les Héroïnes Parisiennes."
[149] Carnavalet G 2796, "Le Roi Reçoit les Femmes de la Halle," (1789).

torsos. In the jubilant watercolor, there is no sense that the hand on hip pose indicates aggression. Rather, the hand placement signals the Dames' identity.[150] Another drawing depicts "thirty thousand souls" surrounded the king's carriage, but one easily picks out the Dames des Halles from several hundred tiny figures. Close to the royal carriage, four women walk with their hands on their hips. Yet, their aprons have already been hiked up and tied back for the march. The other masses of people who fill out the scene are men and women, yet no men have their hands on their hips. Since the pose does not serve a functional purpose and only a few women near the carriage assume it, the gesture appears to be a particular sign to indicate the Dames' presence.[151]

Ultimately, artists deployed the Dames within a matrix of visual depictions. The Dames des Halles were both a tool for the illustrator's political message and a product of them. As in pamphlets, artists drew on the Dames' popular legitimacy, frank reputation, humor, and reputation as representatives of the people. However, as multi-layered snapshots, visual images remained especially open to interpretation. Such malleability contributed to precarious nature of the living Dames' reputation and political influence. Visual representations of the Dames stood at the midpoint between the dynamic world of the embodied Dames and the textual world that described them or their likeness. However, some printed works exceeded appropriation of poissarde figures to completely conflate the Dames in the street and those on their page. The result created an increasingly complex image for the Dames and powerfully affected their political influence.

Political Influence: The Dames' Hybrid Image and Singular Reputation

[150] Carnavalet G 25375 "Vive le Roi! Vive la Nation!"
[151] Carnavalet G 27952, "Le Roi arrivant à Paris escorté de plus de trente mille âmes le 6 octobre 1789" There are no less than four Dames with their hands on their hip staring intently towards Versailles in another mass depiction called "Les Dames de la Halle partant pour aller chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789," "trente mille âmes."

Cultural constructions that mixed the fictive and living Dames supported, undermined, and transformed the market women's political authority. While rival propagandists drew from shared assumptions about the Dames, the market women relied on the same public image to legitimize their influence. Although disparate parties pulled the Dames' reputation in multiple directions, the living Dames remained the referential fulcrum at the center of the maelstrom. The revolutionaries consciously and unconsciously acknowledged the permeable boundaries between the actual Dames des Halles and their fictive counterparts. Poissarde stereotypes bled into daily life and informed how others interacted with the market women. Some propagandists explicitly mixed the living Dames and their fictive counterparts, which intentionally exploited their malleable reputation. Because the Dames did not attach themselves to formal institutional models, the Dames had especially limited avenues for delineating their public image. With the explosion of the press, the Dames realized that their political influence depended more and more on textual depictions. Consequently, the market women embarked on a proactive campaign to defend their reputation in print. They even dramatically seized their fictionalized selves as tools to shape and deploy their political influence.

In one particularly powerful blending method, propagandists recounted the political activity of the true Dames des Halles to form a base on which they built their own material. In this way, a pamphlet from the summer of 1789 similarly blurs the edges between fictional dialogues and the Dames' revolutionary activism by textually juxtaposing the two. In *Compliment des Poissardes de Paris, à MM. les électeurs, qui ont été à Versailles, pour solliciter l'amnistie des Gardes-Françaises, sortis de l'Abbaye Saint-Germain*, the author begins with an account of the 1789 visit of the Dames des Halles to Versailles to thank the king and the National Assembly for allowing the defected royal Gardes Françaises to join the ranks of the

new Parisian National Guard. The Dames went to Versailles and presented the electors with bouquets for supporting the guards and their revolutionary sympathies. The pamphleteer lauds the Dames' patriotic actions as self-directed and "the fruit of a sentiment."[152] Nonetheless, the pamphleteer supplements his account of the actual events with a stereotypical dialogue among multiple poissardes and a soldier. One fictive fishwife asserts, "I are Poissardes, it's true. There is well difference between his occupation [the French Guard's] and our own; but I want [we conjugation], like him, peace in our family."[153] The soldier confirms that his comrades are from the Third Estate like the poissardes. Therefore, rather than relying solely on the Dames' true actions to validate the French Guards' patriotism, the pamphleteer turned to a fictive dialogue to articulate and rationalize the Guards' good intentions. To the modern reader, the abrupt juxtaposition of two stylistically different sections seems disconnected. But in the author's view, the approaches naturally complemented one another. Each half derived its authority from the Dames – real or constructed.

In order to justify the October Days, some authors jettisoned the pretext of poissard characters. Instead, they entirely hijacked the Dames' identity by writing in the first person. One pamphleteer wrote a poissard song and insisted "that I were onl' some women," that is "the brave wom'n of the Halle" who marched to Versailles. The song excused the Dames' drastic actions since they had brought back laurels to Paris like warriors and intended "to mak' the happiness of France."[154]Another pamphlet, in heavy poissard dialect, claimed to be the *Justification des Messieurs et des Dames de la Halle de Paris, sur les crimes de l'exécrables*

---

[152] BnF Lb39 7354, *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. les électeurs, qui ont été à Versailles*, 2, "le fruit d'un sentiment."
[153] BnF Lb39 7354, *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. les électeurs, qui ont été à Versailles*, 4; "Je sommes des Poissardes, c'est vrai. Il y a bien différence de son métier [the French Guard's] au nôtre; mais je voulons, comme lui, la paix dans notre famille."
[154] BnF YE 35763 (13), *Chanson Poissarde: Leur arrive à Versailles, & leur retour à Paris avec le Roi & la Famille Royale*, 8. "qu'j'étions qu'des femmes," the "braves femm' de Halle" "de fair' le bonheur de la France."

révolution française, notamment de ceux des 5 et 6 octobre 1789, commis à Versailles, auxquels on les accusoit d'avoir pris part. These "Dames" proved their loyalty because, they protested that at the birth of the dauphin, "I were going to giv' him a compliment." As for the October Days violence, they insisted in song "When crimes are by brigands/ I yam always innocents."[155] These pamphleteers defended the October Days and the Dames by not only appropriating their language but also their first person point of view. The living Dames and the pamphleteers' copycats powerfully coalesced while depicting the Dames' actual activism.

Propagandists did not necessarily intend to deceive readers with poissard characters. Some writers even constructed poissards to defend the real market women. A February 1791 pamphlet by the fictive "Père Duchesne" remarkably deployed the poissard stereotype to buttress the reputation of the living Dames des Halles. In *Grande colère du Père Duschesne contre les jean-foutres de calmniateurs des Dames de la halle, & des Bouquetières du palais-royal, au sujet du beau discours qu'elles ont fait au roi*, the Père Duchesne rushed to rescue the Dames from their "slanderers." In response to the king's fleeing aunts, the Dames had directly addressed the king and requested that he force them to return. However, the Père Duchesne informed readers that "aristocrats" shunned the Dames' actions, saying, "these women get themselves mixed up in things that don't concern them, that they would do much better to sell their fish, rather than rummaging through the king's palace because of their preference [their privileged relationship with the king]."[156] The Père Dushesne pointed out that the aristocrats did not protest when the Dames brought them bouquets and compliments. He scolded the aristocrats who, on the contrary,

---

[155] BnF YE PIECE 4787, *Justification des Messieurs et des Dames de la Halle de Paris, sur les crimes de l'exécrable révolution française, notamment de ceux des 5 et 6 octobre 1789, commis à Versailles, auxquels on les accusoit d'avoir pris part*, "J'allions lui fair' compliment," "Quand des crimes des brigands/ Je sûes toujours innocens."

[156] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 5, "ces femmes se mêlent de ce qui ne les regard pas, qu'elles feroient bien mieux de vendre leurs poissons, plutôt que de fouiller le palais des rois par leur préférence."

"their [the Dames'] frank & hardy repartees had put joy in your hearts."[157] Père Duschesne warned his readers that the Dames were "the most patriotic women [who] continually move themselves to serve the Revolution and [yet] a thousan (sic) very sweet-talking and venomous tongues empoison [slander] their steps."[158] The pamphleteer's goal is twofold: the Père Duchesne defends the Dames des Halles against slanderers. And he aligns himself with the Dames' image as "the most patriotic women [who] continually make an effort to do service to the revolution."[159] Paradoxically, the Père Duchesne, a fictive poissard character, passed judgment on the Dames' real actions to defend their reputation. In doing so, the Père Duchesne bolsters his own status as defender of the Revolution and the popular classes.

Remarkably, the Père Duchesne pamphlet describes the Dames' real visit to the king and then integrated the Dames' actual speech nearly word-for-word into the pamphlet. Addressing the reader, the Père Duchense relays that the Dames implored him, as "a good patriot," to publish their royal request.[160] To fulfill his "promises" to the Dames, he reproduces what the Dames "pronounced." And, indeed, his transcription is nearly an exact replica of the Dames' address printed in the reputable journal *La Chronique de Paris*.[161] Following the true address, in his crude prose, the Père Duschesne exalts the Dames' linguistic style as equally laudable as their sentiment: "There it is, fuck, that which calls itself beautiful and good eloquence which comes from the bottom of the heart, that [language] that one makes in the crucible of the [French]

---

[157] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 6, "leurs reparties franches & hardies vous mettoient la joie dans vos cœurs."
[158] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 1-2, "les femmes les plus patriotes se remnent continuellement pour rendre service à la révolution, & mill langues venimeuses si prailent à empoisonner leurs démarches."
[159] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 1, "les femmes les plus patriotes [qui] se remuent continuellement pour rendre service à la révolution."
[160] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 3. "un bon patriote."
[161] *La Chronique de Paris*, nº50, le 19 fevrier 1791. For more on this event see Chapter 5.

Academy has no value compared to that."[162] Through a poissard character who narrated the Dames' real words, the pamphlet intentionally merged the worlds of the genre poissard and the living market women to defend the Dames' reputation.[163] While bolstering the Dames' political sentiments, the Père Duchesne validated their virtue as transparent poissardes. This praise also bolstered the poissard-masquerading pamphleteer.

Even newspapers that recounted current events occasionally deployed the genre poissard. Since these newspapers normally reported the news, governmental debates, political speeches, and economic developments, the poissard asides created a jarring contrast. These "poissardes" increased the Dames' fluid movement between construction and reality by framing fictive poissardes with "true" reports. Sometimes, newspapers made rare forays into the genre poissard to make a point. On 3 brumaire an V (October 24, 1796), the journal *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés* used a brief dialogue between "a Dame des Halles" and "her neighbor" to criticize deputies whom they deemed too conservative.[164] The poissard scene was an uncharacteristic but striking tactic for a newspaper that habitually used formal rhetoric.

Propagandists especially blended fiction and reality in the person (or persons) of Reine d'Hongrie. Reine d'Hongrie seemed to draw from the aura of a literary precursor named Margot, Reine de la Halle. Borrowing from the fictive fishwife, the real Reine d'Hongrie became the

---

[162] BnF NUMM- 42495, Hébert, *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle*, 4-5, "Voilà, foutre, ce qui s'appelle de la belle & bonne éloquence qui part du fond du cœur, celle que l'on font dans le creuset de l'Académie ne vaut pas celle-là."

[163] Hébert was the most famous and effective and author of Père Duchesne pamphlets. The populace freely conflated Hébert and the fictive Père Duchesne in ways that mirror the fluidity citizens perceived between the Dames and their poissarde counterparts. In May 1793, Prudhomme described how Hébert responded to interrogations during the purge of the Girondins by comparing Hébert to his fictional character: "Hébert répondit aux douze inquisiteurs avec toute l'énergie & la franchise du père Duchêne." Prudhomme also validated Hébert's poissard writings by insisting that they were based in popular truth: "il a répété en style populaire ce que depuis trois mois on dit à la barre de la convention avec les honneurs de la séance." BnF 8-Lc2-171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Les Révolutions de Paris*, n°202, du 18 mai au 25 mai 1793.

[164] BnF Lc2 828, René-François Lebois, *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés*, n°212, le 3 Brumaire an V, October 24 1796, "une femme de la Halle," "sa voisine."

most famous Dame des Halles during the Revolution.[165] Consequently, Reine d'Hongrie became a potent touchstone in the public imagination. By participating in the marchandes' collective petitions to the National Assembly, issuing invitations to the Dames' *Te Deum* masses, and leading the deputation to fetch the Comte d'Artois from Italy, Reine d'Hongrie achieved great notoriety.[166] Consequently, pamphleteers and the press alike borrowed her reputation in their publications.

Ten days after the fall of the Bastille in July 1789, the District of St. Joseph sent a deputation and militia commander to address Reine d'Hongrie. In les Halles, the deputation asked d'Hongrie and her colleagues to steer Parisians towards public tranquility and towards sustaining subsistence commerce. They even entrusted d'Hongrie with 300 livres "to the benefit of those unfortunate of the District who have a pressing need for aid." Clearly the officials of the District of St. Joseph recognized Reine's tangible political influence and the Dames' pivotal roles in ensuring trade. Therefore, it is not surprising that pamphleteers explicitly named d'Hongrie as a living Dame des Halles in their work.[167]

Since Parisians considered Reine d'Hongrie the "première Dame des Halles," appropriating her image not only meant coopting the legitimacy of the Dames des Halles in general, but that of their most recognizable leader. The 1789 poissard pamphlet *Le Roi d'Yvotot à la Reine d'Hongrie tenant sa cour plénière aux Halles de Paris* seized Reine d'Hongrie's reputation and played on her nickname as "queen."[168] Her fictive lover, "Roi [King] d'Yvetot,"

---

[165] See, for example, Reine de la Halle in BnF Arsenal BL 19584, *Étrennes aux Messieurs les Ribauteurs les Supplémens aux Écosseuses, ou Margot La Mal-Peignée en Belle Humeur, et ses qualités* (1759) , in *Recueil d'œuvres comiques et poissardes* (1756-60).
[166] See Chapter 5 of this work for Reine d'Hongrie's mission to fetch the Comte d'Artois from Italy.
[167] BnF Lc2- 80, *Journal de Paris*, n° 211, le 30 juillet 1789. "au profit des infortunés du District qui pourroient avoir besoin d'un secours pressant."
[168] BnF Lb39 8267, *Demande de la Reine d'Hongrie à M. le Directeur de la Comédie Française*, 3.

praises her as the "Sovereign of my heart" and as "the most lovable of Queens."[169] Continuing the metaphor, he describes her revolutionary virtues: "Your heart transmits its emotions to us. If you are angry, one sees clearly that you are angry: a strongly sonorous voice, a superb head, very sparkly eyes, bright blushing cheeks, cut by the most marked veins, the most rippling muscles; a magnificent throat, queen, to thus say, of all the charms of your person, and two querulous arms, pushed strongly upon two firm haunches."[170] Roi repeatedly refers to Reine's popular influence noting that "you speak & your orders are fulfilled."[171]He recalls the "confidence that the distinguished citizens [revolutionary officials] had to invest in you."[172] On a more tempered note, Roi tells her, "The most gentle, the most estimable [things] that Nature put in the heart of man, finds themselves in your own [heart]. Generous, humane, sensible, you are so without pretentions, without vanity, even without interest." Roi d'Yvetot concludes, "Certainly it would be necessary to idolize you."[173] Therefore, the pamphleteer encourages his readers to model themselves after Reine d'Hongrie, or at least in the way he describes her. Because she was a "true" model, a stylized Reine d'Hongrie could serve as a more powerful rallying point than an abstract ideal. Her living counterpart traded in les Halles and spoke on behalf of the market

---

[169] BnF Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie tenant sa cour plénière aux Halles de Paris* (Paris: Chez Debray), 4-5. This pamphlet has no date, but judging by the content, it is most likely from September 1789. Yvetot was a region in Normandy which claimed to be its own kingdom until 1555.

[170] The rest of Roi's description vividly depicts Reine's sway over the populace. It continues: "C'est ainsi, belle Reine, que, dociles à la Nature, vos regards, vos gestes, votre voix, vos mouvemens sont les interprètes non équivoques de votre courroux; & c'est alors que vos Sujets, frappés d'un son terrible, accourent, & se pénétrant de l'ardeur qui vous meut, l'ai retentit de leurs cris; les rues sont inondées de leur foule; elle s'augmente, se presse, comme a vague s'amoncelé & presse sur la vague. Votre organe tonne sur leurs sens, comme le tonnerre sur les nues. Les coupables sont consternés ; ils vous voient, ils vous entendent, ils ont vécu," BnF Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie*, 5-6. "Souveraine de mon cœur," "la plus aimable des Reines," "votre cœur à nous transmettre ses émotions. Si vous êtes en colère, on voit clairement que vous êtes en colère: une voix fortement sonore, une tête superbe, des yeux bien étincelans, un rouge vif, coupé par des veines plus marquées, des muscles plus gondolés ; une gorge magnifique, reine, pour ainsi dire, de tous les charmes de votre personne, & deux bras nerveux, fortement appuyés sur deux hanches fermes."

[171] BnF Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie*, 4, "vous parlez & vos ordres sont remplis."

[172] BnF Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie*, 8, "confiance que des citoyens distingués [revolutionary officials] ont dû mettre en vous."

[173] BnF Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie*, 7. "ce que la Nature a mis de plus douz, de plus estimables dans le cœur de l'homme, se retrouve dans le vôtre. Généreuse, humaine, sensible, vous l'êtes sans prétentions, sans vanité, même sans intérêt," "certes, il faudroit vous idolâtrer."

women. Yet, the fictive Roi clearly draws on characteristics salient in poissard pamphlets such as frankness, transparency, fervor, authenticity, and unpretentiousness. The pamphleteer calls on Reine to deploy her virtues and influence to calm Parisians' fears and promote public order.

Authors so effectively coopted Reine d'Hongrie that it is sometimes nearly impossible to discern the line between what Reine d'Hongrie may have actually done and what writers invented. This ambiguity made Reine a powerful tool as a printed figure. A January 1790 pamphlet entitled *Demande de la Reine d'Hongrie à M. le Directeur de la Comédie Française* maintains that it is a real letter to the Comédie. Reine d'Hongrie has "signed" the pamphlet which testifies that it was "Deliberated at our Palace of the Halles at 4 o'clock in the morning December 31, 1789." In the letter, Reine asks the director to play *Henri IV* so that everyone can rally around the king for the New Year. The letter incorporates the Dames' royal rituals but marries them to the revolutionary spirit:

> "I will assemble our ladies of honor, a'round, & all our Dames of the Palace, the nobles of our Court, there will not be a single aristocratic sympathizer [aristocraceux]. And at the instant when they [the actors] sing long live Henri IV, we will repeat it until we lose our breath & we will cry with all our force and beat our hands without even fearing that we skin them, because I don't have [we conjugation] any vanity since we are Democratesses [démocraçeuses]."[174]

Reine insists that the Dames will bolster the play's pro-revolutionary message by lending their applause and singing voices to praise the sympathetic Henry IV. She closes by asking for the actors to respond to her request by the end of the next day in the *Journal de Paris.* The printed pamphlet included Director Molé's supposed response on January 3, 1790. The Director confirmed that it was his troop's pleasure to perform the piece.

---

[174] BnF Lb39 8267, *Demande de la Reine d'Hongrie à M. le Directeur de la Comédie Française*, 2, "Delibrés à notre Palais des Halles à 4 heures du matin, 31 Décembre 1789," "Je rassemblerons nos dames d'honneur, d'atours, & toutes nos dames du Palais, les seigneurs de notre Cour, il n'y aura pas un seul *aristocraceux*. Et à l'instant où ils chanteront vive Henri IV, nous répéterons à perdre haleine, & nous crierons de toutes nos forces & batterons des mains sans craindre même de les écorcher, parce que je n'avons pas de vanité étant *démocraçeuses*."

Although I could find no mention of the request or performance in the *Journal de Paris*, the *Moniteur* reported that at the théâtre de la Nation on New Year's Day 1790, "The king's ordinary French comedians, will perfom today the 1st of January, *la Partie de chasse d'Henri IV*, requested."[175] It is plausible that, had the pamphlet been a fake written in hindsight, it would have more closely followed what was and was not published in the *Journal de Paris*. Whether or not the Reine d'Hongrie and the Dames were actually the party who demanded the play, whether they wrote the letter, or whether the pamphlet was written by an imposter after the performance to fit the events remain unanswerable questions. Only Parisians who attended the play and asked the Dames directly could know for sure. Since most Parisians would not have access to these sources, Reine d'Hongrie's demand hung in limbo between reality and fiction for its contemporaries. By using Reine d'Hongrie and the Dames des Halles, writers simultaneously turned familiarity and ambiguity to their advantage.

Even the police encountered the Dames des Halles through the blurred lens of poissarde stereotypes. Such instances reveal how pervasively fictive and living poissardes coalesced in Parisians' everyday relations. Strikingly, police used the names of poissarde stock characters to describe market women in their notes.[176] Confronted with "rude, audacious, insolent, and formidable"[177] and generally *poissard*-like characters, the police recorded an anonymous Dame under the popular literary name "Margot." Police Commissioner Dutrand even reported that one merchant had taken the name "Mère Duchêne" because "she ressembles the Père Duchêne in his

---

[175] *Réimpression de l'ancien moniteur: depuis la réunion des états-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat*, (Paris: Plon-frères, imprimeur-éditeur, 1854.) January 1, 1790, "Les comédiens français ordinaires du roi, donneront aujourd'hui 1er janvier, *la Partie de chasse d'Henri IV*, demandée."

[176] Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*. Trans. Katherine Streip (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[177] Reinhard, *Paris pendant la Révolution,* 104. "rudes, audacieux, insolents, et redoutables"

opinions and in the manner that she pronounces them."[178] Dutrand also used the stock name "Madame Saumon" to evoke the stubborn opinions and loud objections of another nameless fish merchant. He described her as a "fat margot, one of a number of them who bring shame to la Halle."[179] Although the police may have inadvertently blended the Dames and poissarde characters, they may have also intentionally redeployed these stereotypes to effectively convey their reports for their superiors. Since the genre poissard transcended the particularities of circumstance, the police used its elements as a familiar palette for painting recognizable scenes. The police reinforced the cyclical nature of the Dames' image by using poissarde stereotypes as reference points with their colleagues.

The boundary between fictive poissardes and their living models proved porous for civilians as well. Fournier l'Americain's memoires illustrate how strongly the genre poissard influenced his interactions with the Dames. During the 1789 march to Versailles he recounted how he "addressed five or six of these women who, with the name and outward appearance of poissardes, conceal moral qualities, and above all judgment, which always makes it possible for them to value sound advice." Fournier recalled that, to speak to them, he "stooped to their level of intelligence and borrowed the Père Duchesne's style."[180] Fournier converted poissard stereotypes into his October Days reality by depicting the market women as lucid judges, by assuming that they could rally the crowd, and by tempering his slang-filled address to them. Other contemporaries so easily conflated poissardes and the Dames that they flip-flopped between the two without batting an eye. Foreign diplomat Giuseppe de Lama described how,

---

[178] AN F^{1c} III Seine 27, Citoyen Dutard, Commissaire Observateur local pour le Département de Paris, 17 mai 1793. "elle ressemble au Père Duchêne dans ses opinions et la manière de les prononcer."
[179] AN F^{1c} III Seine 27, Citoyen Dutard, Commissaire Observateur local Pour le Département de Paris, 24 juin 1793.
[180] F.-A. Aulard, ed., *Mémoires secrets de Fournier l'Américain* (Paris, 1890), 27-35, reprinted in Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 46.

during the October Days, "the poissardes wanted to speak to him [the king]" but then described how "His Majesty received the delegates of the Dames de la Halle."[181] Lama mixed the general stereotype of "poissardes" and the living market women without distinguishing the two.

Without a formal organization, the Dames' political power was indelibly hitched to their reputation. But as Reine d'Hongrie's case and contemporary correspondence demonstrated, the Dames tenuously co-existed with their fictive counterparts. No one understood the stakes of this relationship better than the market women themselves. For the Dames, the tarnish or brilliance of their image determined their influence and legitimacy. Therefore, they proactively defended and recast their name in the public imagination.

As early as 1789, some Dames des Halles recruited law enforcement to help them police their reputation. Dames Lefevre, Doyen, Franc, Petitpas, and Bijou, fish and flower retailers, went to the bureau de police in October. They told police officials that they had seen posters in which "some Dames des Halles make public their sentiments of respect and veneration for the king and his august family." Not to be left out of this "public" recognition, Dame Lefevre and her four colleagues testified before the police that they shared the "same sentiments."[182] The police endorsed these Dames' claims by copying their words and request, which would be "rendered public by means of printing notices and posting them." Throughout the exchange, the Dames and the police assumed that the public acted as the ultimate judge of reputations. They implicitly acknowledged how false rumors could threaten the Dames. A short report of the

---

[181] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger. Correspondance du bailli de Virieu, ministre plénipotentiaire de Parme (1788-1793)*, edited by Emmanuel Henri Vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, le 12 octobre 1793, (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1903), 143, "les poissardes veulent lui [the king] parler," "Sa Majesté reçut les déléguées des dames de la Halle."

[182] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* Tome II, Du 17 au 24 octobre 1789, 6-7. "vendeuses de poisson ou de bouquets," "quelques dames des halles rendent publics leurs sentiments de respect & de vénération pour le roi & son auguste famille," "mêmes sentiments."

Dames' police visit in the journal *La Chronique de Paris* insisted that "public" libels were dangerous.[183]

After the October Days, the Dames complained that "slanderers, printers, & booksellers" who "only search to make money" caused "scandal" through their "indiscreet printed motions." The Dames demanded that the police prosecute these individuals. The police, in turn, asked the Dames to correct others who had been seduced by printed falsehoods and thus "dragged into error." In his paper *Révolutions de Paris*, Prudhomme colored the scene with genre poissard overtones. After the Dames insisted on their authentic sentiments, Prudhomme ironically wrote that the police "listened seriously to this diatribe in street dialect" but "answered in French." That is to say, the Dames, like fictive poissardes delivered an obtuse, linguistically butchered poissard address while the police, or bourgeois-esque figures, replied in "proper" French.[184] The reader senses that Prudhomme conflated public order with linguistic order and marked the police as guardians of both. Although the police had turned to the Dames for help, Prudhomme reminds the reader that the police, not the popular classes, ultimately directed the operations.

While the Dames decried profit-driven libel, they also combatted imposters who sullied their image. During a post-October Days visit to request *bonnes citoyennes* (good citizenesses) medals at the Commune, a deputation of Dames expressed "the most lively horror for the infamous libelers who use their pens to soil so many cherished names" such as LaFayette and Bailly. Before the municipal government, 240 Dames also arrived to "to reclaim against the indecency of these disgusting scenes, in which they protest that they didn't have any part." Since

[183] BnF Lc^2 218, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 55, le 17 octobre 1789, 219. "rendus publics par la voie de l'impression & de l'affiche," "à les rendre publics."
[184] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* Tome II, n° XV, Du 17 au 24 octobre 1789. "libellistes, imprimeurs, & libraires," "ne cherchent qu'à gagner de l'argent," "scandale," "motions indiscrètes," "entrainés dans l'erreur," "écouté gravement cette diatribe grivoise," "retournée en françois."

people mistook other questionable women for the Dames in public, the Dames sought to re-establish their reputation with an equally public gesture.[185]

In other instances, the Dames purged imposters by launching their own public relations campaign in print. Starting in May or June 1789, the Dames distanced themselves from alms-seekers who claimed to be Dames and harness their renown. The Dames feared that the imposters circulating through the streets stigmatized their reputation. The fake, money-grubbing Dames seemed unproductive, draining, and self-interested – the exact opposite of useful, virtuous, and community-minded citizens. *La Chronique de Paris* reported that the true Dames "had ordered that a formal disavowal of this shameful collection be published and posted. No, they have no hand in taking up this collection; but one makes use of their name in order to undertake it." Five months later, the Dames' posters had not stopped the con artists. The editor noted that the Dames des Halles needed "to denounce it" to restore their "honor."[186] The Dames' strategy of printing posters to strike down identity thieves attests to their confidence in the printed word's corrective power. It also reveals that the Dames perceived publications as strongly linked to their reputation.

In addition to reactive measures, the Dames demanded that a variety of political groups recognize their patriotic actions in print. By reprinting the Dames' words or actions under their own name, governmental bodies and political clubs certified the Dames' reputation. When the king's aunts fled Paris in 1792, the Dames des Halles gave a speech to the king on behalf of the Société fraternelle, a political club. The Dames offered the king their condolences and

---

[185] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 47, le 10 octobre 1789. "la plus vive horreur pour les infâmes libellistes qui souillent de leur plume tant de noms chéris," "réclamer contre l'indécence de ces scènes dégoûtantes, auxquelles elles protestent n'avoir point eu de part."

[186] Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris,* n° 291, le 18 octobre 1790, "ont fait publier & afficher un désaveu formel de cette quête honteuse. Non, ce ne sont point elles qui font cette collecte; mais on se sert de leur nom pour la faire," "honneur," "le dénoncer."

encouraged the aunts to return. After leaving the king, the Dames carried a written copy of their discourse to the municipal government. The Commune, in turn, applauded the Dames' initiative and ordered printers to publish their address to the king. The municipal representatives clearly thought that the Dames' speech should be disseminated as a patriotic model. The Dames and the Société fraternelle took premeditated measures to ensure broader exposure through the printed word.[187]

Some groups independently validated the image that the Dames wished to depict. A favorable text, like one provided by the *Journal de Paris* in July 1789, amounted to a third party endorsing the Dames. After the fall of the Bastille, the Dames des Halles from the Marché St.-Paul sent six colleagues to the Parisian Assembly of General Electors. The six market women offered the Assembly bouquets and sang an original air to fête the deputies, the king, and the French Guards (the royal infantry sympathetic to the revolutionaries). The Dames then asked the Assembly to print their compliment and song "as soon as possible" in the *Journal de Paris*, which complied. The paper used precious space to print the transcript word-for-word.[188] For a profit-driven newspaper, the space dedicated to the Dames' address represented a substantial down payment on readers' excitement and investment.

Yet, when the Dames asked other groups to reproduce their actions in print, they lost authorial control over their words. For example, the *Journal de Paris* titled the Dames' song "Chanson nouvelle chantée par les Dames députées du Marché St. Paul." In verse, the Dames attested that they created the song as a group and the entire marketplace supported it: "My dear comrades/ [we are] having a heart in joy./Our great Deputies today/ Have the glory." At first

[187] Sigismond Lacroix, ed., *Actes de la Commune de Paris,* le 14 février 1791, series II, volume II (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 569-570.
[188] BnF Lc2- 80, *Journal de Paris*, n° 33, 22 juillet 1789, "Extrait du Procès-verbal de... Assemblée générale des Électeurs, du 20 juillet 1789" "le plutôt possible."

glance, the masculine-plural adjective "chers" (dear) indicates that the "dear comrades" could also be male, and thus beyond the Dames' occupational group. However, since someone else transcribed the compliment and song that the Dames gave, the writer determined the gender of "comrades." One cannot aurally differentiate between its feminine-plural and masculine-plural forms. However, Secretary Duveynier's linguistic choice actually points to a crucial conceptual slippage. In the popular imagination, the Dames could easily speak on behalf of the wider populace and incorporate fellow citizens into their "we" without appearing out of place. And perhaps the Dames did intend for "comrades" to take a wider meaning. But the Dames possibly referred only to their group. The linguistic ambiguity that enables the two choices to co-exist illustrates how the printed word played into the Dames' representative flexibility.[189]

The Dames occasionally hired writers to transcribe, if not embellish and partly write, their public compliments. Parisian bookseller Siméon-Propser Hardy maintains that the Dames hired a poet named Sylvain Maréchal to convey their admiration for the Third Estate in 1789. [190] The Dames sang his commissioned song before their deputies. In his diary, Hardy emphasizes the power of the Dames' embodied performance. He recorded in his diary that "eight of the best-mouthed" sang their song. The Dames' compliment was ultimately printed as a standalone pamphlet.[191] In thanks for the song, the Third Estate extended a 300-livre gift to the Dames.[192] Perhaps what helped underwrite their expenses or signaled that the deputies assumed paternal

---

[189] BnF Lc2- 80, *Journal de Paris*, n° 33, 22 juillet 1789, "Extrait du Procès-verbal de... Assemblée générale des Électeurs, du 20 juillet 1789," "Mes chers camarades,/ Ayons le coeur en joie./ Nos grands Députés aujourd'hui/ Ont la gloire."

[190] *Compliment des dames poissardes à leurs frères du Tiers État* (1789) in Charles-Louis Chassin, *Les Élections et les cahiers de Paris en 1789*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1888-1889), vol. II, pp. 252-53, reprinted in Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

[191] BnF Lb3[9] 1635, *Compliment des dames poissardes à leurs frères du Tiers État* (1789). "huit des mieux embouchés."

[192] Charles-Louis Chassin, ed. *Les élections et les cahiers de Paris en 1789*, Volume III (Paris: D. Jouaust, Charles Noblet, and Maison Quantin, 1889).

responsibility for poor, patriotic citizens. In either case, the printed copy exposed the Dames to an audience beyond the Third Estate. The publication bolstered their reputation in a somewhat controlled textual form.

The October 1789 *La Gazette des Halles* presents the most striking evidence that the Dames were acutely aware of how printed representations, popular interpretations, and their fragile reputation depended upon one another. The Dames amazingly commissioned their own short series of poissard pamphlets to convey their sentiments. In effect, the Dames channeled their own opinions through fictive poissard counterparts modeled on their lived experience. The Dames consciously deployed a stylized imitation of themselves embedded within a print culture that surpassed their beings. To advance their own reputation favorably, the Dames embraced an if-you-cannot-beat-them-join-them attitude. And why not? Beneath the exaggerated shells of poissard stereotypes, the genre's efficacy ultimately attested to the Dames' influence.

Paradoxically, the Dames resorted to a powerful literary version of themselves to deliver their own pro-Revolution message after their march to Versailles. Like other pamphleteers, the Dames used the genre poissard to evoke familiarity, authenticity, and popular legitimacy. Shortly after the Dames fetched the king in October 1789, peddlers hawked *La Gazette des Halles* in the streets of Paris. The subtitle enticed readers with "dialogues mixed with songs, for those who love them." It clarified, "The mouth [within] speaks badly, but the heart [within] speaks well." The untrained mouths in *La Gazette* belonged to a poissarde and a poissard. These characters' rough edges and slang dialect animated the issue. Inside this particular issue, "fishwife" Catherine watched the king and praised him in the choppy poissard dialect. She sang: "Oh from'that, he'z the fath'r of all (*repeat)*/ It's in order to not make'jealous; (*repeat*)/ Every single one he loves,/ With a love that everyone returns back t' him all-the-same." ("Oh d'ça z'il est le

per' de tous. (*bis*)/ C'est pour ne pas fair' de jaloux; (*bis*)/ Tout un chacun z'il aime,/ D'un amour que l'on dit tout d'même.") When a "poet" walked by, Catherine and her friend implored him, "hey say Monsieu th'poetic-one, nightingale us [fashion us] thus a little air' in the mannar of verses, one says that you make some really beautiful [verses]."[193]

In an ironic twist, the fictive scene mirrored how *La Gazette* was truly produced. The Dames had hired a writer to compose a stereotypical image of themselves. Rather than issue a direct address, the Dames' writer developed a fictive dialogue and stylized their sentiments according to the genre poissard.[194] Thus, the Dames appropriated the genre poissard in the same exact way as other pamphleteers. The market women played by the unwritten rules of a written style: fictive dialogues anchored each issue, humorous encounters advanced topsy-turvy plotlines, characters often broke out into song, and stylized dialect denoted poissard characters. In the first 11-page issue, fish merchant Margoton is dressed up "in a nationau (sic) uniform." When Jérôme, another poissard character, greets her, she replies defiantly "Margoton! ah weal yes, it weal that you speak to her. It's when she sells her fish that she takes that-here name; bwut in this'moment from here forward, it's Valor; Tranche-Montagne [Immovable-Mountain]; Heart-of-King that I'call'meself.."[195] Margoton has taken the National Guard uniform in order to pretend to be Lafayette who is ill. She humorously tells Jérôme that she will drill the National Guard so that Lafayette's enemies will not notice his absence. Despite Jérôme's protests that she

---

[193] BnF Arsenal GD 11044, *La Gazette des Halles*, nº 2 (Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789), 7, 9. "Dialogue mêlé de chansons, pour ceux qui les aiment. La bouche y parle mal, mais le coeur y dit bien. Surtout quand il s'agit d'un Roi bon citoyen." "dialogues mêlé de chansons, pour ceux qui les aiment. La bouche y parle mal, mais le coeur y dit bien." "dialogues mêlé de chansons, pour ceux qui les aiment. La bouche y parle mal, mais le coeur y dit bien." "Dites donc monsieu l'poétiseux, rosignolez-nous donc un petit ir en magniere de couplets, on dit qu'vous en faites de si beaux."

[194] Literary scholar A.P. Moore concludes that the tenuous coexistence between the constructed poissardes and their living inspiration left the literary genre fluid without strong conventions. Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 5.

[195] BnF Lc2 2268, "Du brave La Fayette on connaît la valeur. En suivant ses drapeaux, on suit ceux d'un vainqueur," *La Gazette des Halles*, n° 1 (Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789). 3. "en habit nationau," "Margoton! ah ben oui, c'est ben à elle que vous parlez. C'est quand elle vend sa marée qu'al porte ce nom-là; mias dans c'moment ici présent, c'est la Valeur; Tranche-Montagne, Coeur-de-Roi que j'm'ppelle."

hand over the uniform so that he can join the ranks instead, Margoton insists that women can fight and that she can "serve her fatherland." She also hopes to express her gratitude to Lafayette with a compliment and kiss. Moreover, Margoton informs Jérôme that they must protect Lafayette's reputation from enemies whose "slanderous writings/ Attempt to make us believe in them [the libel]."[196] The pamphlet confirms the Dames' patriotism and ends in song praising Lafayette. Through its form and content, the pamphlet attests to how print influenced the living Dames' reputation.

The second surviving issue of *La Gazette des Halles* relied, like other pamphlets, on the assumed frankness of the poissard voice to transparently correct dissembling accusations. The issue's subtitle, "The mouth speaks there badley, but the heart speaks there well," gestures to how the reader should interpret the poissard dialogue. The issue defends the king as a "good citizen." Before sharing some rogomme (a crude brandy), poissardes Catherine and Javotte discuss the king. Again, the poissardes angrily protest how false printed libels threaten the good king's reputation. Catherine spits out her disdain for the slanderous words: "Oh go go; let it be! these duplicitous Aristocrats will soon have a foot in the nose as well as all the agents & these writings whose poisoned sheets are good for torching the ass of Monsieur Satan." To drive her point home, Catherine sings, "It's-as-many escaped from hell (repeat)/ Who are going to r'turn to Lucifer (repeat)/ Yes soon the sadness/, Is going to cede its place t'jubilation."[197] By publishing a fictive dialogue, the Dames literally bought into the genre poissard for their own political end of defending the king.

---

[196] BnF Lc2 2268, *La Gazette des Halles*, n°1, 8. "servir son pays," "écrits calomnieux/ Cheroient à nous en faire accroire."

[197] BnF Arsenal GD-11044, "La bouche y parle mal, mais le cœur y dit bien. Surtout quand il s'agit d'un Roi bon citoyen," *La Gazette des Halles*, n°2 (1789), 7. "bon citoyen," "Oh va va; laissez faire! ces trigauds, d'Aristocrats auront bientôt un pied d'nez, ainsi qu' tous les agens & ces écrivains dont les feuilles empoisonnés sont bonnes à torcher le cul d'monsieur Satan," "C'esont autuant d'échappés d'enfer, (bis)/ Qui vont r'tourner chez lucifer; (bis)/ Oui bien-tôt la tristesse,/ Va faire place z'à l'allégresse," "La bouche y parle mal, mais le cœur y dit bien,"

If *La Gazette des Halles* so closely follows other genre poissard models, how might we discern that the Dames commissioned the work instead of yet another group that appropriated their voice? It is tempting to attribute the series to propagandists as Ouzi Elyada does.[198] However, the evidence convincingly points to the Dames as the sponsors of *La Gazette*. The series offers a few clues to its origins. The two surviving issues are marked "printed at the expense of the Dames de la place Maubert." In contrast, pamphlets that seriously or farcically claim that the Dames composed them directly attribute authorship to them. The cumbersome and circumlocutionary "printed at the expense of the Dames" is rather exact for a fake line. In fact, the note slightly decenters the Dames by removing them from the byline.

The *Gazette's* publisher information further supports its authenticity. Unlike other poissard pamphlets that do not note a publisher or list a stock character such as Monsieur Josse or the Père Duchesne, the *Gazette*'s publisher line reads "from the printing house of N.H. Nyon, rue Mignon." Many poissard pamphlets chose a fictive press location that fits within the poissard ethos such as "pillars of les Halles" or somewhere in the marketplace neighborhood. However, rue Mignon held no such cultural attachment and was even located on the opposite bank of the Seine from the central Halles. But rue Mignon is located near the modern day intersection of Boulevard Saint-Michel and Boulevard Saint-Germain. The address is a mere .4 miles from the satellite market at the Place Maubert whose Dames supposedly paid for the pieces. This proximity conforms to the logic that the merchants would use nearby printers for their needs, just as most Parisians used notaries located in their neighborhoods.[199] In addition, a catalogue of printers from 1789 confirms that Nicolas-Henri Nyon did run a printing shop on the rue Mignon,

[198] Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire*, iv.
[199] BnF Arsenal GD-11044, *La Gazette des Halles*, n°2 (De l'Imprimerie de N. H. Nyon, rue Mignon, 1789); BnF Lc2 2268 *La Gazette des Halles*, n°1 (Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789), "imprimé aux dépense des Dames de la place Maubert," "de l'Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, rue Mignon," "piliers des Halles."

which had been a family business for several generations. Moreover, Nyon was an official "Printer of Parlement, Bailiwick of the Palace, of the constabulary, of the Admiralty, and of the Water and Forests of France."[200] In addition to governmental notices, some prints for private individuals such as Madame de Keralio have survived in the archives.[201] If all of these elements are taken into consideration, it is highly reasonable that the Dames did indeed commission *La Gazette des Halles* as its title page proclaimed. Not only did poissard pamphlets influence the living Dames' reputation, but the living Dames deployed the pamphlets' influence which was predicated on their own political model.

Conclusion

As economic agents, political actors, political symbols, and literary figures, the Dames des Halles occupied a unique nexus as a critical commercial force, as an influential social force, and as an intensely contested cultural construction. As retailers, the Dames provided the essential function of subdividing wholesale lots for Parisian consumers. Due to the limited market terrain, wholesale markets and retail markets depended on the same space. The Dames' purchases enabled countryside suppliers to quickly discharge their goods and leave the central halles. The Dames' retail service allowed for the consumer market to open. Food always equaled politics in Old Regime Paris, but in the superheated and volatile environment of the early Revolution, the Dames' work also underpinned public order. The market women fed the fragile nation. Thus, the Dames functioned as a lynchpin for subsistence in the instable capital.

---

[200] Augustin Martin Lottin, *Catalogue Chronologique des Libraires et des Libraires-Imprimeurs de Paris, Depuis l'an 1470, époque de l'établissement de l'Imprimerie dans cette Capitale, jusqu'à présent* (Paris: Chez Jean-Roch Lottin de S. Germain, 1789). Nyon is listed as "Imprimeur du Parlement, du Baillage du Palais, de la Connétablie, de l'Amirauté, & des Eaux & Forêts de France."

[201] BnF Lb39 7802 Louise-Félicité Guinement de Kéralio, *Observations sur quelques articles du projet de constitution de M. Mounier* (Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789). This pamphlet includes "Mademoiselle de Kéralio" in the byline. Carla Hesse judges the piece as an authentic piece by de Kéralio. Hesse analyzes Kéralio's works in *The Other Enlightenment*, p. 92.

The Dames' political centrality also stemmed from their role as representatives of the popular classes. Since Saint Louis endowed the women with their market spaces in the thirteenth century, the Dames acted as an emblem of the Third Estate in royal rituals. However, the market women gradually gained so much credibility, that they maintained their influence regardless of the king's support. After the opening salvo of the Revolution, Parisians easily accepted the Dames' substantial authority as the sovereign people incarnate. The Dames eagerly bolstered their position as the most prominent symbol of the people in the revolutionary politics.

During the Revolution, propagandists and artists attempted to appropriate the Dames' power. Especially from 1789 to 1792, pamphleteers and artists turned to the genre poissard to snare, endear, or disgust readers into agreeing with their point of view.[202] They relied on the Dames' reputation for frank and unfettered speech, their sharp observations, their communal authority, and their popular legitimacy to bolster diverse political goals. Thus, the Dames' lived experiences and their literary representation coalesced into one shared image. I argue that this mutable image formed the basis of the Dames' extrainstitutional legitimacy. Printed texts and illustrations tumbled about in readers' heads and, subjected to a host of entropic associations, reemerged mutated from the author's original intent. Thus, pamphleteers, artists, and citizens mutually constructed the Dames' influence by creating, comparing, and reinterpreting various depictions of them in poissard works.

Propagandists, Parisians, and the market women themselves drew from the vibrant malleability of the "Dames des Halles." Citizens could be cognizant of the flux between written figures and their living inspirations. They could discern the fictive nature of a pamphlet dialogue, listen to a Dame read a petition, or watch the Dames march to Versailles to fetch the king.

---

[202] The Dames des Halles gradually lost their centrality in revolutionary political pamphlets by 1793. Ouzi Elyada has found only four nonserialized poissard pamphlets published in 1792. Elyada, *Presse populaire*, iv, 3.

However, the public also unconsciously absorbed preconceptions that resulted from associating the fictive poissardes with their breathing models. Citizens' evaluations of fictive fishwives defined the true Dames des Halles and affected how the market women interacted with other citizens, groups, and institutions. Thus, the Dames' political reputation rested in part on printed gambles that they had little role in placing.

Nonetheless, the Dames did not completely reject these cultural constructions. Rather, the Dames accepted their tremendous valiancy, which in part, stemmed from their own power. Thus the Dames built from poissard tactics and redirected them for their own ends. The market women even embarked on a highly proactive campaign to cast their image in text and in action. They published a poissard pamphlet, assumed the names of powerful characters, and maintained that oral culture could still channel popular sovereignty. The Dames complicity joined the game to shape their political legitimacy via print. The retailers built from their pivotal role in the food supply and bolstered their reputation as the most widely recognized emblem of the people.

After 1792, new markers for the popular classes such as clubs and sectional assemblies offered the press fresh tools. Political institutions could increasingly claim to speak for the sovereign people. In addition, the fall of the king made the possible association between the Dames and the monarch less enticing in pro-revolutionary propaganda. Yet, as crucial traders and traditional representatives of the popular classes, the living Dames continued to wield tremendous economic and political influence. The market women stood at the heart of revolutionary politics.

– Chapter 2 –

Regenerating Les Halles: Public Space, Particular Interests, and the Dames des Halles in the Revolutionary Marketplace

On September 18, 1791, there was more commotion than usual at les Halles, the central Parisian food markets. National Guardsmen marched by retail merchants tirelessly hawking fruits and vegetables, mounted officials weaved among parasols and makeshift stalls, and patrols squeezed through the rare patches of space among Parisians buying food. Perched on the roof of storage facilities and leaning out of the neighboring windows, workers and residents surveyed the scene below. Their gaze rested anxiously on the decorated liberty tree where, amidst the excitement, a crier proclaimed that the king had accepted the first constitution. His signature endorsed the Revolution. The elated crowd cheered around the liberty tree, whose branches towered over the bustling commerce below.[1]

The tree was an apt rallying point; it marked the marketplace with the optimism of revolutionary regeneration. However, the physical intertwining of the symbol of the Revolution and the earth of les Halles proved far easier than negotiating their ideological relationship on the ground. Like the tree's torturous maze of roots, the revolutionaries' attempts to implement equality in the marketplace were fraught with knots and twists. As new marketplace contestations arose, officials revised Old Regime and revolutionary legislation alike. Legislators constantly reconsidered which path would best align revolutionary ideology and socio-economic practice in les Halles.

Moreover, merchants and consumers keenly understood that the regeneration of les Halles put their commercial positions and economic livelihoods at stake. Under their parasols

[1] Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes, M 100995, "18 septembre Proclamation de la première Constitution"; M 100996 "Proclamation de la Constitution Place du Marché des Innocens le 14 septembre 1791"; M 100997.

near the liberty tree, market women called the Dames des Halles celebrated the constitution. In the thirteenth century, King Saint Louis had granted the Dames' poor predecessors permission to sell foodstuffs in les Halles as a form of paternal charity.[2] Early in the Revolution, the Dames des Halles had forced the king's 1789 relocation to Paris by framing their demands as the will of the general populace. Yet, as the Dames claimed to represent the sovereign people, their individual interests lay spread out before them in the form of the fish, butter, eggs, vegetables, and fruit that they sold in retail. Although the revolutionaries considered les Halles a public space destined to benefit all citizens, the Dames' parasols and other merchants' shops dotted the space with particular commercial interests.

The French revolutionaries attempted to dismantle the entire system of socio-economic privilege underpinned by the Old Regime, including advantageous permissions and commercial monopolies in les Halles. As they regenerated the marketplace, the revolutionaries were forced to confront the complex paradox of particular interests on public domain.[3] During the Old Regime, the king owned all public domain since he alone constituted the public body. Consequently, the king accorded privileges and monopolies to individuals to use his domain, including the Parisian marketplace, for their own personal benefit. In 1790, the revolutionaries drastically changed this conceptualization of public domain by insisting it belonged indiscriminately to the nation and all its citizens.

When the revolutionaries reinterpreted the "public" in public domain as the nation rather than the king, they distinguished the revolutionary body politic from its Old Regime predecessor.

---

[2] Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1994), 21. Rene Marion's critical dissertation remains the most detailed study of the Dames des Halles before the Revolution.

[3] Throughout this chapter, I use the phrase "particular interests" to mirror the vocabulary of the revolutionaries whose portrayal of the citizen in society emphasized individual interests rather than private interests. The nuance of this terminology reflects the revolutionaries' assumption that "particular" refers to a discreet individual within the general will. In contrast, "private" would denote a clear disconnect between the individual and the public body politic, which would stress a governmental model based on a majority consensus of private interests.

Yet, the revolutionaries struggled to define the "public" without painting it as a negation of its royal precursor, especially after the 1792 collapse of the monarchy. Even if the revolutionary "public" was certainly negated past definitions, the question remained: what was it? As a concept, the public was caught up in the foundational imaginings of the state and its relationship to the body politic. Due to the public's malleable nature, various individuals deployed labels like "public good" or "public utility" to legitimize their ideas. One police official cynically noted that individuals often advanced a personal "project of public utility" under the "cloak of public good."[4] However, public utility also formed the cornerstone of sincere and diverse revolutionary endeavors. James Livesey has noted that constitutional monarchists, liberals, radicals, and Directorial republicans all used "utility" to justify their economic and political goals.[5] Yet, during the space of ten years, these groups pursued vastly differently economic projects and varied policies in les Halles. Since the "public" always legitimized "utility" in revolutionary programs, this chapter argues that debates over acceptable marketplace use reflect the evolving attempt to define and locate the revolutionary public. Merchants, consumers, and officials sparred, literally and figuratively, over this fundamental concept on the public domain of the marketplace. The revolutionaries questioned whether the public encompassed everyone in the body politic. Was the public located in the state or in the mass of individuals beyond the

[4] Archives nationales (hereafter AN) F^{12} 1266 "Rapport de Cen Bulliot Lacorée demeurait à Paris, fait passée au ministre avec sa lettre du 14 courant [14 Floréal an 8 ; May 4, 1800], des observations sur l'établissement d'une meilleur ordre dans les marchés de Paris ; et sur l'utilité que le Gouvernement peut en retirer sans les affermer, Observations et Avis." "projet d'utilité publique," "manteau de Bien public."

[5] James Livesey argues that "the emergence of a shared vocabulary of political economy between left and right, themselves terms generated from the revolutionary experience, organized around differing rationalizations of the utility of the community, understood as the aggregate of the happiness of the individuals that composed the community, denoted a revolution in political culture. 'Utility' was an abstract concept through which differing conceptions of the common good could be articulated and compete." However, I argue that the adjective "public" was just as malleable and value-laden as "utility." Since revolutionary utility is directed toward the public, debates over utility shed just as much light on its moving target. When the revolutionaries spoke of public utility, the inherently imagined, defined, and located the public. Utility was a mutable concept precisely because the revolutionaries intertwined it with their fluctuating interpretations of the public. James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 72.

assembly hall doors? With regard to public utility, could the public be abstractly represented by the treasury or was the public incarnate in individuals who used common resources?

To bring the public marketplace into accord with ideals of liberty and equality, the revolutionaries sought to banish exclusive privileges in the marketplace. When deputies and merchants offered different plans to transition the marketplace, their disagreements exposed serious vulnerabilities in the revolutionary project. If the regenerated marketplace was truly a public domain freed from the bondage of feudal monopolies, how could officials regulate the use of les Halles without shackling this new-found liberty? And if all citizens held equal claim to the marketplace, how could legislators allow merchants to use public space for particular interests without resurrecting the specter of privilege? As a staging center for the entire city's food supply, les Halles became an especially charged arena for such debates. Food commerce hovered near the precipice of disorder as revolutionary authorities attempted to reconcile competing visions of space in les Halles.

This chapter examines the economically crucial and conceptually volatile debates on the use of public space in the regenerated marketplace from 1789 through 1793. The revolutionaries tenaciously unleashed their reforming energies against Old Regime privileges without a clear vision of what system might replace them. I examine how governmental institutions like the Commune, the Department, and the Assembly battled for control of marketplace domain as each tried to consolidate its political power. I ask how les Halles became a site for working out revolutionary principles of equality and wrestling with the relationship between particular interests, public utility, and public space. Officials struggled to reform the crucial market without creating exceptional regulations; marketplace actors argued for particular rules within

supposedly national and universally-just laws. The interpretive space surrounding the marketplace risked dwarfing the sprawling 6,000 square meters of retail space in les Halles.[6]

The uncertain future of les Halles left much room for groups to advance their own interpretation of a regenerated marketplace.[7] As merchants struggled to justify their physical positions within the marketplace, they negotiated revolutionary ideas on the ground. This chapter takes as a case study the Dames des Halles as they navigated the tensions between particular and public interest. These poor retail merchants conducted their business from mobile or free-standing shops, stalls, parasols, counters, and baskets in the Parisian public markets.[8] By appealing to various nascent institutions, the Dames negotiated new modes of political practice. They also created notions of the regenerated public and fashioned its relationship to individual commercial endeavors. This chapter begins by examining how legislators redefined the public marketplace through piecemeal reform and how the Dames negotiated the fragmented evolution by pushing back against unfavorable decrees. The next section probes a major 1792 conflict among the Dames and parasol providers to dissect the fundamental tensions between public domain and particular interests. From 1789 to 1793, the Dames des Halles engaged in shifting discourses to defend their legitimacy in the revolutionary marketplace. In doing so, they negotiated their place in the public and the body politic on the ground of les Halles.

---

[6] I have only included the dimensions for the retail markets of the central Halles in this calculation. Innocents: 4000 m^2, Tonnellerie and a portion of rue Montmartre: 190 m; Pilliers: 18 m^2., Pointe St. Eustache: 185 m^2; Carreau des Halles: 1800 m^2; Rue Fromagerie: 258 m^2; right angle in front of the halle aux draps: 348 m^2; Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) $D.Q^{10}$ 39, Département de la Seine, Bureau des 3e & 4e arrondissements, "Les Droits qui se percevoient anciennement , qui se perçoivent actuellement ou se percevoir dans les différents communes de la République à raison des foires, marchés, &a." Lynn Hunt has convincingly argued that the Revolution permeated all aspects of daily relations through the "politicization of the everyday." Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 56.

[7] Suzanne Desan has used this socio-cultural model to examine how revolutionaries and aristocrats projected and worked out their various aspirations on land in Ohio. Suzanne Desan, "Transatlantic Spaces of Revolution: The French Revolution, Sciotomanie, and American Lands," *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 467-505.

[8] Franklin is right to emphasize that the Dames des Halles sold in *public* markets in his definition of "poissardes." Alfred Franklin, *Dictionnaire Historique des Arts, Métiers et Professions depuis le Treizième siècle* (Paris: Chez H. Welter, 1906).

Conceptualizing Public Space and Regulating Les Halles under the Monarchy

During the Old Regime, the king's domain alone constituted "public" domain. Since the king acted as the only sovereign body in the kingdom, he contained the "whole public reality of the political sphere" in his person.[9] Therefore, public domain could not exist apart from royal domain. While "public space" could refer to a location where the populace gathered, the label of royal domain stressed that the king owned the physical property.[10] Les Halles qualified as both public domain and a public space.[11]

The marketplace belonged to the part of the king's domain known as the *voie publique* or literally the "public way." The *voie publique* encompassed all the roads, highways, rivers, ports, squares, parks, places, and markets included in the king's domain. In order to collect revenue and oversee his vast *voie publique*, the king granted privileges of "little voierie" to nobles and officials. With these royally-sanctioned monopolies, nobles and officials could charge individuals to set up or rent structures related to commerce (like stalls and stands) on the *voie publique*, as well as regulate their use.[12]

In the thirteenth century, King Saint Louis (Louis IX) had begun the charitable tradition of giving poor widowed women and orphan girls permission to set up stalls and shops on the *voie publique*. As part of the royal domain, les Halles fell under Saint Louis's personal

---

[9] Marcel Hénaff and Tracy Strong, "The Conditions of Public Space: Vision, Speech, Theatricality" in *Public Space and Democracy*, Marcel Hénaff and Tracy Strong, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 15.
[10] The 1762 French Academy Dictionary defines "Lieux publics" ("Public Places") as "Les lieux où tout le monde a droit d'aller" ("the places where everyone has the right to go"). On the other hand, the dictionary links "l'autorité publique" ("public authority") to officials who act "sous l'autorité du Prince" ("under the authority of the Prince"). "Public," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th Edition (1762), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.
[11] Rene Marion argues that such a large number of the Parisians felt the king's influence through his pillory and food provisioning in the Old Regime market that it was "one of the *most* public spaces" in this dual sense. Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris," 12.
[12] BnF 4-Z Le Senne 2974, Perrot, "Voierie," in *Dictionnaire de voierie,* 438.

discretion. The Dames des Halles could trace their marketplace origins back to Saint Louis's initial act of exceptional benevolence.

By 1607, King Henri IV officially decreed that his agents could grant permissions to retail merchants in les Halles more widely on his behalf. Yet, in contrast to Saint Louis's original charitable goals, Henri IV intended to use his permission system primarily to regulate the chaotic and illegal usage of his *voie publique*. In exchange for permission to sell on the *voie publique*, Henri stipulated that the merchants' mobile shops must not block throughways. The proliferation of street-clogging stalls had sent his roads and markets sprawling out of control. Henri denounced this "kind of violation [was] all the more reprehensible as it became general by the liberty with which everyone allowed themselves to commit it." For Henri and his successors, "liberty" of the *voie publique* was incompatible with the nature of the *voie publique* not only because it produced chaos, but also because individuals needed the king's permission to sell on his public territory.[13]

Despite Henri IV's aspirations, by 1784 les Halles had lapsed back into a cobbled, congested, and dangerous state. Five years before the outbreak of the Revolution, Louis XVI conceived of his own project to tame les Halles once and for all.[14] Citing the incontrollable state of an overcrowded and dilapidated marketplace, Louis XVI drafted plans to raze most of les Halles and reconstruct many of the permanent market shelters. Louis XVI hoped to improve the

---

[13] Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter AdPP) D^B 258, Dossier : Voierie, Échoppes, Démolition des Échoppes & Maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, "Ordonnance du Bureau des Finances de la Généralité de Paris Concernant les Échoppes, "1 février 1776," (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1776). "espèce de contravention d'autant plus répréhensible qu'elle devenoit générale par la liberté avec laquelle chacun se permettoit de la commettre."

[14] For histories concerning the construction of physical structures and the neighborhood of les Halles see: Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Les Halles de Paris et leur Quartier (1137-1969)* (Paris: École Nationale des Chartes, 2009); Jean Martineau, *Les Halles de Paris des Origines à 1789: Évolution matérielle, juridique, et économique* (Paris: Éditions Montchrestien, 1960) ; Boudon, Françoise, André Chastel, Hélène Couzy, and Françoise Hamon, *Système de l'Architecture Urbaine : Le Quartier des Halles à Paris*. Tome I. (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977) ; M. Baurit, *Les Halles de Paris des romains à nos jours* (Paris: Chez M. Baurit, 1956); David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

circulation of provisioning traffic, organize sales by separating wholesale and retail space, and rebuild the dangerous over-stressed, 200 year-old halles which bent over Parisians and their goods.[15] He also aimed to streamline the intricate web of marketplace permissions and structures which had multiplied exponentially since the reign of Saint Louis. In May 1784, Louis ordered "the absolute demolition of sedentary & semi-sedentary Shops" in the Parisian region and ordered that their owners absorb the costs. He denounced the proliferation of makeshift sedentary and semi-sedentary shops and stalls which "resemble houses more than shops." The king lamented that the merchants caused chaos when they did not ask permission to build such structures on the *voie publique*. Unlike Henri IV who only sought to take stock of and redistribute permissions, Louis XVI recognized that he would have to completely reconstruct the physical marketplace. After the streets and markets had been razed, Louis demanded that any individual shop structures be "purely mobile." Merchants had to erect and remove their shelters from the *voie publique* each day.[16]

For over a century, Louis XVI and his predecessors had farmed out privileges of space regulation, structural upkeep, rent collection, and parasol placement in les Halles to special companies. Entrepreneurs paid annually for these privileges in the form of long-lease agreements called *baux emphytéotiques*. Holders of the *baux emphytéotiques* gained exclusive rights to construct permanent shelters or place parasols on the king's domain. Then they could rent these spaces out to the merchants of les Halles.[17] Retail merchants, including the Dames des Halles, depended on these parasols and structures to protect their goods and to conduct their business on

[15]AN Q^1 1183, "Lettres Patentes du Roi, qui ordonnent la construction d'une nouvelle Halle à la Marée à Paris, le 21 Août 1784" (Paris: Chez Simon & Nyon).
[16] AdPP D^B 258, "Lettres Patentes du Roi, Portant suppression des Échoppes de la Ville de Paris, 27 mai 1784" (Chez Simon, 1784) Dossier : Voirie, Échoppes, Démolition des Échoppes & maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, "la démolition absolue des Échoppes sédentaires & demi-sédentaires," "ressemble plutôt des maisons qu'à des échoppes," "en faveur des pauvres maîtres & veuves des pauvres maîtres."
[17] AN Q^1 1186, Quartier des marchés, "La Copie informe d'un arrêt du Consigne portant Bail Emphytéotique au profit de Jean Baptiste Doré," 30 septembre 1784.

a daily basis. By the 1780s, the king had fractured his public domain in the marketplace into so many rights and privileges that reconstructing les Halles became a logistical impossibility.[18] To tame the hundreds of individual leases and privileges scattered about the marketplace, the king ordered all individuals to surrender their titles and receive an indemnity.[19]

Louis XVI attempted to streamline the maze of the parasol lending and stall renting permissions into two new monopolies. He consolidated control over the destruction, reconstruction, upkeep, and rent of the physical structures under a *bail emphytéotique* to Jean-Baptiste Doré. In exchange for annual rent and a deposit to upkeep the pavement, Doré's company gained the exclusive 99-year right to construct the new halles, shops, and boutiques on the king's domain, and to rent out these spaces in les Halles.[20] To continue Saint Louis's precedent, the king ordered Doré, to rent parasols benevolently "in favor of the retail merchants, the [male] Détailleurs and [female] Detailleuresses, at all times."[21]

Despite the king's altruistic stipulations, the revolutionaries inherited a crucial public space powerfully centralized under one particular lease holder who, quite literally, razed the interests of others in the marketplace. The *bail emphytéotique* fell squarely on the divide between royal privilege and entrepreneurial contracts. After 1789, deputies and merchants scrambled to rearticulate their support or rejection of the king's modernizing plans for les Halles within the shifting political environment.

---

[18] AN Q^1 1183, "Lettres Patentes du Roi, qui ordonnent la construction d'une nouvelle Halle à la Marée à Paris, le 21 août 1784" (Paris: Chez Simon & Nyon).
[19] Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) $D.Q^{10}$ 1, dossier n°572. Picard, Réclamations pour la démolition d'échoppes dont il était propriétaire aux Halles. 1674-an III ; Bibliothèque national de France (hereafter BnF) F-21216 (31) "Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi, qui fixe l'époque à laquelle seront démolies les échoppes du parquet à la Marée, du Carreau du Pilori & du Marché aux Poirés" (Paris: L'imprimerie Royale, 1786) ; AN Q^1 1187 Les Halles, Renseignements sur divers places et échoppes, Bureau de Liquidation de Maisons et Échoppes à Paris, 1786.
[20] AN Q^1 1186 Quartier des marchés, "La Copie informe d'un arrêt du Consigne portant Bail Emphytéotique au profite de Jean Baptiste Doré" 30 septembre 1784. Doré paid a rent of 6,000 livres a year as well as a 120,000-livre deposit to keep up the pavement.
[21] AN Q^1 1183, "Lettres Patentes du Roi, qui ordonnent la construction d'une nouvelle Halle à la Marée à Paris, le 21 août 1784" (Paris: Chez Simon & Nyon). "en faveur toutes fois des marchands et des marchandes Détailleurs et Détailleuresses."

Reforming the Revolutionary Marketplace: Redefining Public Space and Legislating the *Voie Publique*

At the most fundamental level, the revolutionaries' reaction against Old Regime privilege provided the impulse to reform the marketplace, while the ambiguities of public space, liberty, and utility complicated the road to successful legislation. The revolutionaries resolutely unleashed their reforming energies against former abuses without a clear vision of what system might replace them. More than merely a rhetorical battle, the attack on privilege greatly affected the economic position of the popular classes. As the revolutionaries sought to create and define communal space through shifting interpretations of public, public utility, and liberty, their cultural acrobatics rearranged economic relations and reconceptualized physical space. Moreover, the contested concepts reconfigured the relationship between particular interests and public property in regard to commerce, and the role of the state within this relationship.

During the first years of the Revolution, officials and journalists claimed that regenerating the marketplace could rectify the damage that Old Regime privilege had inflicted on a naturally beneficial system. Many reformers longed to return to the idyllic moment when markets first appeared in society. In 1792, the Legislative Assembly analyzed the beneficial nature of centralized commerce. In his speech to the Assembly, Deputy Dufriche-Valazé argued that marketplaces first appeared because farmers lacked manufactured goods from the city and city-dwellers needed foodstuffs from the countryside. He naturalized the marketplace as the cornerstone of the social relations in primitive communities. Dufriche-Valazé concluded that "this institution was a natural order of human communications."[22]

[22] Dufriche-Valazé also maintained that "the establishment of the Halles dates from the first progress of society and from the foundations of cities." J. Madival and E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860; recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés,* jeudi 29 novembre 1792, Series I, vol. LIII, (Paris; Dupont, 1867-1875), 673. "L'établissement des

In the revolutionaries' imaginings, transparency and utility formed the basis for unadulterated market relations. The shackles of dues and overwrought permissions had harmed the merchants and underpinned the abusive power of the Old Regime. Journalist Prudhomme maintained that merchants had established the first fairs and periodic markets to escape the tariff burdens of the Old Regime. In biting prose, Prudhomme wrote that the merchants had been "pillaged and extorted by the henchmen of feudalism."[23] He was convinced that reformed marketplace legislation should be a pillar of the revolutionary project. If privilege was correctly purged from "our public markets," then, Prudhomme reasoned, "nearly anyone who wanted to [re]establish the Old Regime would not succeed."[24] For Prudhomme, a free and just marketplace provided an essential bulwark against counter-revolutionary agendas.

The deputies shared Prudhomme's reforming sentiment, but waited seven months after abolishing feudalism to directly address marketplace privilege. In March 1790, the National Assembly officially suppressed, without compensation, all dues and privileges concerning the entrance of goods and storing of goods in all fairs, markets, or halles.[25] In moving beyond the limits of feudal privilege, the representatives realized that they would have to do more than annul royally-endowed permissions. In order to reconcile the multiple dimensions of revolutionary project, the deputies would need to re-evaluate the entire balance of liberty, particular interests, and regulation within the marketplace.

---

halles date des premiers progrès de la société et de la fondation des villes," "Cet institut fut donc un ordre naturel des communications humaines."

[23] Prudhomme argued that merchants collaborated through periodic fairs and tried to escape the "oppressive" dues demanded by the nobles and clergy. He lamented that the strategy failed because the right to hold fairs fell prey to the trap of feudal dues again. Holding fairs became a "privilege accorded [to each city] at the price of money." BnF 8-Lc2-171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation* , Du 9 au 16 avril 1791, Tome XVIII, n°92. "étoient pillés et rançonnés par les suppôts de la féodalité," "oppressif," "privilège accordé [to each city] à prix d'argent."

[24] *Révolutions de Paris*, 23 au 30 juin 1792, Tome XII, n°166. "nos marchés publics" "presque aucun de ceux que voulut ouvrir l'ancien régime ne réussit."

[25] *Révolutions de Paris,* 13 au 20 mars 1790, Tome III, n°36.

Yet, the revolutionaries struggled to agree on a definitive meaning of "liberty" and "freedom" in the marketplace without taking the Old Regime system as the central point of contrast. Prudhomme advocated a radical laissez-faire policy in which the marketplace would not "follow any other law than the combined interest of sellers and buyers" since regulatory "mania is the plague of commerce." For Prudhomme and like-minded revolutionaries, upholding the political freedom of the individual meant honoring the free economic will of the individual as well.[26] Prudhomme feared that implementing state regulation in the marketplace would easily slide into the trap of privilege. Echoing the universalizing discourse of nature, he insisted that commerce "flourishes where it finds itself *free*: it is born completely and *naturally* there" (my italics).[27] Consequently, Prudhomme interpreted revolutionary liberty in the marketplace to be the freedom of two or more individuals to exchange goods.

In contrast, the Third Estate electors for the Parisian neighborhood of Saint-Gervais advocated a commercial liberty which would allow the individual to freely choose his/her own role in market transactions while maintaining social privilege. Paradoxically, these electors argued that nobles should be able to participate in commerce, including retail, without forfeiting their titles. [28] Whereas Prudhomme viewed marketplace privilege as the lynchpin in the entire system of socio-economic hierarchy, the Saint-Gervais electors sought to suppress economic prescriptions while upholding social distinctions. In a shackled marketplace, the social privilege of nobles as well as the social disadvantages of merchants could block venues for "free" economic activity.

---

[26] *Révolutions de Paris*, du 9 au 16 avril 1791, Tome XVIII, n°92. "suivre d'autre loi que l'intérêt combiné des vendeurs et des acheteurs" "manie est la peste du commerce."

[27] *Révolutions de Paris*, du 23 au 30 juin 1792, Tome XII, n°155. "fleurit où il se trouve *libre*: il naît tout *naturellement* là" (my italics) Under the Old Regime, nobles could not participate in ventures in retail commerce. Such a speculative occupation was deemed dishonorable and below a noble's social station.

[28] *Archives Parlementaires* (hereafter *AP*), 5: 312. "D'instructions pour MM. les électeurs nommés par l'assemblée du tiers-état, tenu en l'église de Saint-Gervais, commencé le 21 avril 1789, rédigé par MM. les commissaires nommés par le procès-verbal dudit jour."

When the revolutionaries purged the market of Old Regime permissions and institutions, they also destroyed the only regulatory system in the marketplace. However, since many people shared the same physical space and used market structures, officials could not follow Prudhomme's extreme laissez-faire model. Rather, officials needed to pursue new modes of regulation in accord with revolutionary ideals or recast old approaches to remove the tarnish of the Old Regime. To accomplish these goals, they conceptually divorced utility from privilege. In December 1789, representatives from Bretagne presented the case that customs and marketplace dues collected in the king's name, rather than for the personal benefit of nobles, must be qualified as "extractions," not "privileges." They argued that such dues were "more like taxes than feudal rights," were "useful to the public," and were payment to use the king's domain. In a similar vein in Brittany, nobles had built the halles and market structures that played a crucial role in sheltering and storing foodstuffs. Their Assembly deputies argued that nobles should continue to lease their structures on the king's land and that rent revenue would offset the costs of construction and upkeep. [29] The nobles deployed the discourse of public utility to dodge the stain of privilege and defend their private enterprises.

A March 1790 law suppressing marketplace dues and permissions attempted to begin the legal process of divorcing useful ownership from privilege. In doing so, the National Assembly also standardized rules for market structures across France. After all, if the "public" remained constant across the nation, must not the state uniformly regulate equivalent domains? The deputies separated the ownership of physical structures in the marketplace from the dues on domain and commercial activity. The National Assembly decreed that the buildings and halles would "remain the property of those to whom they belonged." Therefore, nobles and

[29] *AP,* 9 décembre 1789, 10: 479. "Observations relatives au droit feudal de la province de Bretagne sur les droits féodaux supprimés sans indemnité, et projet d'évaluation des rentes et droits qui ont été déclarés rachetables," "plutôt des impôts que des droits féodaux."

entrepreneurs could continue to rent out their structures in the marketplace but they could not charge rent for the earth. The ground remained public domain.[30]

Since revolutionary notions of liberty in the marketplace favored a democratization of space that was originally noble or royal domain, revolutionary reform extensively engaged in the reconceptualization of public domain and public space. As the revolutionaries abolished feudal privilege, different groups and individuals forfeited their property to the nation. Therefore, public domain no longer meant royal domain. The sovereignty of the nation created a new political public and with it, an innovative idea of public domain. Representatives drew the distinction between national domain, which belonged to the national government, and public domain, which could belong to the nation, departments, or municipalities. In November 1790, the National Assembly decreed that "the national domain… encompasses all the land property and all the real or mixed rights, which belong to the nation" whereas "all the portions of a national territory which are not susceptible to the title of private property, are considered to be dependents of public domain." The revolutionaries decentralized the king's domain, but the ambiguity over how the public would own the domain led to institutional contests to claim it. Public domain could include national domain as well as communal property like the marketplace (which belonged to municipalities) and all other forms of the *voie publique*.[31]

Through their August and November 1790 decrees, the National Assembly irrevocably delineated the marketplace and the *voie publique* alike as "public domain." The vast domain of the *voie publique* included not only the marketplace but also the roads, squares, and bridges

---

[30] *Révolutions de Paris,* 13 au 20 Mars 1790, Tome III, nº36. "resteront dans la propriété de ceux auxquels ils appartenoient."

[31] *AP,* 8 novembre 1790, 20: 328; *Révolutions de Paris*, du 13 au 20 novembre 1790, Tome VI, n°71. "le domaine national… s'étend de toutes les propriétés foncières et de tous les droits réels ou mixtes, qui appartiennent à la nation," whereas "toutes les portions d'un territoire national qui ne sont pas susceptibles d'une propriété privée, sont considérées comme des dépendances du domaine public." The National Assembly gave the police jurisdiction over order and tranquility in what they called "public places." These charges included the *voie publique* and the markets. The Assembly also charged the police with surveying foodstuffs "for public sale." *AP*, 16 août 1790, 18: 112.

within the capital. In this sense, the revolutionaries redefined the primary attribute of public domain through the parameters of utility rather than by ownership alone. In the emerging logic, the revolutionaries posited "public domain" primarily as a *communal* space which proved *useful* to multiple segments of the society and which any governmental branch could regulate. The shift transformed how individuals understood their membership in the public and their access to the *voie publique*.

However, since the right to use the *voie publique* no longer emanated from the king's graces, the revolutionaries found it difficult to balance legitimate competing interests in public space. While trying to prevent religious groups from conducting ceremonies and processions through the streets in February 1792, the Legislative Assembly asserted that the *voie publique* "belong[s] to the public, that is to say, equally and at all times, to all citizens… [It] must therefore always be free to all and for all; but it ceases to be free, if an individual or a particular society ha[s] the right to divert it, even momentarily, to the destination of the particular usages which it would make it [exclusively] their own."[32] Because all French people equally composed the "public," every individual streaming across the *voie publique* held equal personal ownership there. Simply put, individuals shared ownership of the public domain with their fellow citizens. The state should merely administer the domain and ensure just access.

Avoiding New Privilege in les Halles: Regulating and Negotiating Public Space

From 1790 to 1792, the revolutionaries faced the double challenge of detaching regulation of the *voie publique* from the stigma of feudalism and from accusations of limiting

[32] *AP,* 10 février 1792, 38: 382. "La voie publique … appartient au public, c'est-à-dire, également et en tout temps, à tous les citoyens; elle doit donc toujours être libre à tous et pour tous ; mais elle cesserait de l'être, si un particulier ou une société partielle avait le droit d'en détourner, même momentanément, la destination à des usages particuliers et qui lui seraient propres" ; The Parisian municipal government seconded the Assembly's sentiment in August of 1792 when it reiterated that "the voie publique belong[s] to all, no one can dispose of it for their particular advantage." It thus needed to remain "free" and accessible. BnF Lc^2 218, M-13554, L.1.1-MFM 1792 07-12, Bobine 7, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, 1 septembre 1792, (Paris: Chez La Grange), "la voie publique appartenant à tous, nul peut en disposer pour son avantage particulier."

liberty. The deputies and merchants alike tackled a major tension in the revolutionary project within public space: How could a society abolish privilege in the name of freedom but then establish a new regulatory system in the name of this liberty? Working out the administrative and regulatory details governing everyday marketplace interactions provided a physical space to involve all segments of society. The populace and their representatives negotiated how to reconcile the multiple discursive threads of revolutionary ideology and put them into practice.

Along with their deputies, the Dames des Halles contested the reform of market space and shelters. The Dames des Halles and other merchants drew on new forms of political practice like petitions as well as old standards of collective activism such as destroying resented property. Some Dames signaled their displeasure by blatantly disregarding police orders to vacate spaces for reconstruction or to improve traffic circulation. When the police hauled the boldest offenders before judges, the Dames skillfully defended their interests through revolutionary interpretations of public space. Depending on ownership, the market shelters could be a blessing or a necessary evil for the Dames' small businesses. On the one hand, the Dames and other merchants tore down halles owned by private companies who charged high rates, which some merchants paid as their only option. The merchants protested that owners of permanent shelters exploited public space. On the other hand, retailers protected their own makeshift stalls and shelters from destruction. The king and Assembly had planned to raze these mobile structures in order to clear and reconstruct les Halles. In addition, the Dames' personal claims to space often conflicted with one another. While officials attempted to avoid new privilege but enforce regulations, the Dames also reinterpreted public space.

Since the reconceptualization of the *voie publique* legitimized individuals' use of public domain, Parisian merchants found new ways to frame their commercial interests and to defend

their right to sell on the *voie publique*. When Parisian police commissioners visited retail merchant Marie Leroy and her stall in June 1792, they inquired whether her structure impeded the Passage des Variétés. Other merchants had complained about the cumbersome location of her stall. The fruit seller replied that her commercial activity did not "disturb the voie publique" and that other people would attest that she did not block her neighbors. Leroy defended her selling on the *voie publique* not in terms of her personal rights. Rather, she spoke of how her commercial use of communal space affected her neighbors' own equal access to the public space.[33]

Paradoxically, the *voie publique* explicitly facilitated commerce and other forms of "public utility;" but the revolutionaries feared that particular interests, including those merchants using stalls, could potentially undermine the "terrain belonging to all the citizens."[34] Retail merchants precariously straddled the tensions among particular use, communal ownership, and accessibility in public space.[35] Before the justice of the peace, Citoyenne Beau, a fruitière, challenged how fellow fruitière Aimée Capet sold on public domain. Beau complained that Capet had set up her stall on the Pont au Change (a bridge) "blocking the *voie publique* there." In

[33]AdPP AA 88, piece 34 old numbering system, piece 376 new numbering system, Dossier: Butte des Moulins, Janvier 1792-octobre 1792, "Le procès-verbal des commissaires de police, 4 juin 1792," "gener la voye publique."
[34] *AP,* 10 février 1792, 38: 383. "utilité publique," "terrain appartenant à tous les citoyens."
[35] Liberty in commerce encompassed more than defining and using public space, yet the revolutionaries could not escape grounding their reforms in the context of physical space and structures. In February 1791, the deputies opened commerce by abolishing entrance taxes to cities, or taxes on moving goods between two territories. They also loosened the constraints on occupational choice by calibrating taxes based on the type of *patente* (or economic license) that an individual bought. Under this system, the deputies maintained that "it will be free to all citizens to conduct any commerce, or to exercise any profession, art or trade that he finds good." Yet, in order to create a graduated scale, the deputies decided that the size and value of one's commercial property would dictate, along with income, the level of tax contribution. For the Dames des Halles and other retail merchants who sold in mobile stalls, under parasols, or in the open air of the streets and markets, the lack of permanent occupational structures or personal property initially exempted them the tax. Because mobile retail merchants like Marie Leroy and Aimée Capet did not pay taxes based on private commercial property, the police found it difficult to regulate commerce on the *voie publique* and in the public markets. See Chapter 4 for a further discussion of the patente. *Révolutions de Paris,* du 19 au 26 février 1791,Tome VII, n°85, p. 358; *Révolutions de Paris*, du 13 au 20 novembre 1790, Tome VI, n°84, p. 311. "il sera libre à tout citoyen de faire tel commerce, ou d'exercer telle profession, art ou métier qu'il trouvera bon."

addition, Beau testified that a carriage wheel nearly crushed her in the resulting bottleneck. The multiple uses of the *voie publique* inevitably conflicted with each other.[36]

Even in marketplaces where the *voie publique* primarily served commercial interests, trade logistics necessitated that several merchants employ the same space during different times of the day. The police constantly juggled the minutia of commercial permissions on the shared domain. Monitoring the *carreau de la halle* where butter and eggs were sold, Inspector Baude tried to enforce the divide between wholesalers' priority to use market spaces in the morning and retailers' prerogatives for the rest of the day. On February 1, 1799, however, he could not move a sharp-tongued retailer and her daughter from the wholesalers' morning places. The offending Citoyenne Duval refused to vacate the spot until "the others [retailers] pull out [also]." In this fashion, Citoyenne Duval only imagined the equal division of the *voie publique* within the context of rival retailers. By focusing on what she perceived to be the unfair advantage of other retail merchants who disregarded the same rule, Duval disregarded wholesalers' valid claims as members of the public to use the space.[37]

Since many people shared the same physical space and market structures, officials could not follow an extreme laissez-faire model that complete liberty might imply. As in the cases of Citoyennes Leroy, Capet, and Duval, the commercial interests of the retail merchants often conflicted with the interests of other merchants who sold on public domain and with consumers who used the *voie publique* for transport. As members of the regenerated public, all groups held theoretically equal claim to public property in the revolutionary schema. Thus, officials needed

---

[36] AdP D.4 U[1] 29, Justice de Paix du 4[ème] Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, Dossier: Police: Vendémaire, Pluviôse et Prairial, an VII, Citoyenne Beau against Aimée Capet, 1 vendémaire an VII (September 4, 1799), "y gênant la voie publique."

[37] AdP D.4 U[1] 29, Justice de Paix du 4[ème] Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, Dossier: Police: Vendémaire, Pluviôse et Prairial, an VII, Inspecteur Baude against Citoyenne Duval et sa fille, 13 pluviôse an 7 (February 1, 1799), "les autres [retailers] se retiroient [also]."

to pursue new modes of regulation in accord with revolutionary ideals or recast old models to remove the tarnish of the Old Regime. Marketplace regulation became an inevitable laboratory for confronting the internal contradictions of the revolutionary project on the ground.

Les Halles in particular became a crucial space for implementing the revolutionary project as the revolutionaries struggled to reimagine ownership, rent systems, and legitimate use of market space. Parisian officials, merchants, and consumers realized the symbolic importance of regenerating the most critical marketplace in the nation. According to both Old Regime and revolutionary notions, les Halles qualified as a "public place" but the shifting formulations behind these notions critically underpinned even similar reforms to modernize the environment.[38] One police spy underscored the importance of this ideological shift when he reported that "the people" in les Halles demanded, "Give us some Butter, some Vegetables and they will give to us by reason what was given to us in times past by Fanaticism."[39] The theoretical reform behind the administration of les Halles was intertwined with the tangible results of such action. Old Regime problems like urban congestion and reconstruction obstacles continued to plague the marketplace. However, officials had to confront these issues using revolutionary ideology and a political structure that ambiguously divided jurisdiction among the Commune, the Department, and the nation.

Les Halles functioned as an essential and influential node for involving Parisians in revolutionary regeneration. Merchants and consumers forged their relationship to the revolutionary project through daily provisioning and rights to public space on municipal property. On a local level, merchants and consumers held a distinct stake in les Halles through

[38] BnF 4-Z Le Senne 2974, Perrot, "Halles," in *Dictionnaire de voierie,* 221. "place publique."
[39] AN F^{11} 205, Mémoires, lettres, pétitions adressés au Comité de salut public et relatifs aux subsistances et au maximum an II-an IV, 7 ventôse an II. "Donnéz (sic) nous du Beurre, des Légumes et nous feront par raison, ce que nous faisons autrefois par Fanatisme."

their municipal affiliation. In December 1789, the National Assembly approved legislation which clarified that not only did the king's markets now qualify as public property, but specifically "the [structures of the] Halles belong[ed] to the communities of their place and location."[40] In 1791, the Commune made les Halles the ultimate communal "public place," when it decreed that any vehicles arriving to Paris must drive directly to les Halles for sale if they lacked an advance contract with an individual consumer.[41] By 1793, the National Convention (previously the Legislative Assembly) went one step further by forbidding all wholesale exchange outside of the marketplace and ruled that provisioning could only take place "in the *republic's* markets and halls" (my italics).[42]

In order to overturn feudal economic abuses and regenerate relationships in les Halles and the body politic, the revolutionaries had to reform the regulatory system of the *voie publique*. On the one hand, the revolutionaries overhauled the right to collect dues on the *voie publique*, which they associated with Old Regime privilege. On the other, they refashioned limitations on the use of the *voie publique* in response to centuries-old socio-economic concerns. Since 1784, Doré, the holder of the *bail emphythéotique* for les Halles, had rented out subdivided places to merchants at his discretion.[43] In November of 1789, the municipal government reformed the rents for marketplace permission based on the "place." They directly correlated the merchants' rent to the actual plot of earth on which they sold in les Halles. Under such a calibration, the deputies bypassed sweeping claims to privilege over marketplace property and materially assessed public space to legitimize its rational, and thus, just use. In this reorganization, the

[40] *AP,* 22 décembre 1789, 10: 725. "les halles appartenir aux communautés des lieux de leur situation."
[41] AdPP D^B 387, "Municipalité de Paris par le Marie et Les Officiers Municipaux. Extrait des Délibérations du Corps Municipal." 26 mai 1791 (Paris: Lottin, 1791).
[42] *AP,* 30 avril 1793, 13: 634. "dans les marchés et halles de la république."
[43] BnF 4-Z Le Senne 2974, Perrot, "Voierie," in *Dictionnaire de voierie,* 438. "petit voierie."

Dames des Halles would pay a flat rate of 6 sols per day to use public space.[44] The National Assembly confirmed the Commune's intentions in August 1790 and reiterated that since "the feudal regime and seigneurial justice had been abolished" no individual could claim to be the singular owner of or collect permission dues on the *voie publique*.[45] Therefore, it appears that the Dames des Halles and other retail merchants ceased to pay rent for their places on public *earth* in 1790. However, approved individuals like Doré could still rent *structures* to use on the *voie publique*. The earth of the public domain and the structures built upon it remained distinct types of property.

Despite reforming the dues and rent on market space, the municipality soon found itself backpedaling to renew "the old rules & ordinances" on the timeless subject of congesting and endangering the *voie publique*. The Commune clarified that "the public liberty does not give to any citizen the right to do what harms others," such as obstructing passage through the streets, parking carts in undesignated areas in the marketplace, creating opportunities for accidents, and, in the case of putrid makeshift stalls, endangering Parisians' health.[46]

Yet, merchants' habits proved resistant to even revolutionary articulations of old concerns. Police in the Arsenal section reported that they could not persuade retail merchants to

---

[44] BnF 4-Z Le Senne 2974, Perrot, "Place," in *Dictionnaire de voierie*, 343 ; AdPP D^B 387, Assemblée des Représentans de la Commune de Paris, Comité de Police, "Affiche du samedi 14 novembre 1789" (Paris: Lottin l'aîné, 1789).

[45] BnF F-23631 (891), "Lettres Patentes du Roi, sur un Décret de l'Assemblé Nationale, du 26 Juillet 1790, relatif aux droits de Propriété & de Voyerie sur les chemins publics, rues & places de villages, bourgs ou villes, & arbres dépendans," 15 août 1790 (Paris: Chez Nyon, 1790), 1. "le régime féodal & la justice seigneuriale étant abolis."

[46] Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris (hereafter BHVP) in 8°, #10 073 (T. II, n°57). "Municipalité de Paris par le maire et les officiers municipaux, Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal. Du samedi 24 septembre 1791 (Paris: imprimerie Lottin l'aîné et JR. Lottin, 1791), 2-4. "les anciens règlemens & ordonnances" BHVP in 8° 10 073 (t. II, n°59) Municipalité de Paris par le maire et les Officiers-Municipaux, Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal. Du lundi 3 octobre 1791, "Arrêté sur les échoppes et étalages fixes et mobiles," (Paris: Lottin l'aîné & J.R.-Lottin, 1791), 2. "la liberté publique ne donne à aucun citoyen le droit de faire ce qui nuit aux autres;" During the previous system, the king had similarly charged voyers (collectors of dues on the *voie*) with the responsibility of regulating dangers which might have been caused by structure on the *voie*. See BnF F-23675 (99), Parlement de Paris, Arrêts de Règlement du Parlement de Paris, "Concernant les Droits de Voierie, des 21 juillet & 27 août 1779." (Paris: Imprimerie de Ph. D. Pierres, 1779), 9-10.

relocate their stalls from the streets to the marketplace. Instead, "complaints, insults, and menaces" met their repeated efforts. The police could not move a dense line of Dames des Halles who sold fish, fruits, and vegetables from their customary street locations. Marguerite Tripière obstinately occupied the entire corner of the rue St. Paul and the rue St. Antoine and refused to change her position, while another fish merchant and her commercial tools clogged up the entrance of the rue St. Paul. The Dames cried so loudly in protest that the police gave up in fear of triggering "a general uprising in Paris." The commissaries reported that the neighboring sections experienced the same problems.[47] Ultimately, officials faced the same challenges that Henri IV had encountered two centuries earlier concerning the excesses of liberty on the *voie publique*. Henri IV had interpreted these transgressions as attacks on his own authority and property, whereas the revolutionary officials believed that troublesome merchants misinterpreted the motivating factors of liberty in the marketplace.

The National Assembly and the king continued his crusade to clear and enlarge les Halles in 1790. The king issued a decree ordering those who had surrendered immobile structures (including houses) to redeem their compensation within three months or lose all claims to royal indemnities.[48] Although it aimed to increase circulation, decrease accidents, and regulate use of the *voie publique,* the king's plan temporarily stifled the options for shelter available to the Dames des Halles and retailers. The shortage prompted departmental administrators to request quickly that the National Assembly pressure the private owners of halles to rent their permitted structures. In the very least, the municipality could buy the private halles so that no shelter lay

[47] AdPP AA 68, Commissaires de police (Arsenal), 5 novembre 1791, "Procès-verbal de transport du commissaire de police de la section de l'Arsenal, dans toutes les rues et places de la section, afin de mettre à exécution les arrêtes de la Municipalité des 3, 14, et 29 octobre." "plaintes, injures et menaces," "un soulèvement générale dans Paris."
[48] AdPP D^B 258, Dossier : Voirie, Échoppes, Démolition des Échoppes & maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, "Arrêt du Conseil d'état du Roi, qui ordonne que les Propriétaires de maisons & échoppes supprimées à Paris, remettront leurs titres à M. le Contrôleur général, pour être procédé à la liquidation de indemnités qui peuvent leur être dues, par MM. les commissaires du conseil commis à cet effet, 8 aout 1790."

empty. The Commune could then collect rent on the structures (but not the earth) from merchants to repay the former owners.[49]

Due to the suppression of makeshift shops, retail merchants had no practical remaining option apart from renting permanent shelters from companies contracted under the Old Regime. By 1790, the Paris police ordered that the leased hangars built for fruit and vegetable commerce in the old Grain Halls be destroyed. The police anticipated that it would free the *voie publique* for open commerce; the merchants would no longer have to rent sheltered spaces to use the marketplace. However, the king had granted Doré's company the privilege to build fruit halls and collect fees there. Doré's company refused to move quickly and demolish its structures. In his journal, *La Chronique de Paris*, Condorcet lamented "the cupidity of a privileged company, sustained by the old police," which refused to follow the judgment of the revolutionary police. Condorcet reported that one of the fruit hangars had collapsed on four playing children and that they must be removed immediately.[50]

After waiting three weeks for Doré to take responsibility, a group of fruit merchants took direct action. They accused Doré's company of grossly overcharging merchants to use the shelters. The merchants protested that his shelters constituted "a monument of usury on public property." Instead of paying to use the hangars, the merchants clamored that they "must have full *liberty* to install themselves" (my emphasis). Determined to rectify the problem, they marched to the fruit halles to smash the structures that they had been forced to rent. There, the merchants and supporters restated their goals by imitating the order of a political assembly. With hammers in hand, the merchants attentively listened as an "orator" addressed the crowd. He asked if they intended to destroy the shops that promoted usury, crippled "liberty," and were owned "by the

[49] *AP,* 9 août 1790, 17: 692.
[50] *La Chronique de Paris*, le 23 mai 1790, nº143. "la cupidité d'une compagnie privilégiée, soutenue par l'ancienne police."

old agents of despotism." The crowd responded "yes," the "public deliberation" closed, and the razing commenced. The group even enlisted the help of the National Guard to impose order and limit crowds by closing off nearby roads. The merchants quickly reduced the hangars to rubble.[51]

A pamphlet describing the destruction juxtaposed corrupt privilege and revolutionary justice to describe how "the people" demolished the structures. The author asserted that the fruit hangars in les Halles "had been built by the greedy intentions of people favored by the agents of despotism" but that "the vigilance of patriotism" would not allow the remnants of privilege to continue. Far from seeing the merchants' actions as disorderly or extralegal, the pamphlet specified that blocking the roads in fact "distanced the malintentioned and the brigands who run after groups to excite turmoil and to strike up discord." The pamphleteer reported that the merchants saw their actions as coinciding with citizens' public interest. They even celebrated when Mayor Bailly, a revolutionary figurehead, arrived on the scene. The author closed his pamphlet by earnestly insisting that "the citizens of the capital always respect the laws, individual liberty, and legitimate properties." In the eyes of the pamphleteer, the merchants skillfully employed revolutionary concepts of liberty, order, sovereignty, public good, and anti-privilege attitudes to legitimize their popular movement. [52]

Retail merchants in other Parisian halles also grew frustrated with their shelter options, which took up valuable market space as well as their money. In May 1791, a National Guardsmen burst through the police commissioner's door to report that the Dames des Halles of the marché de la Place Maubert had also taken matters into their own calloused hands. The

---

[51] BHVP in 8°, #959 739 "Démolition totale des harangues de a halle, faite hier au soir par le peuple" (Paris: LL Girard). From contextual clues, I date this pamphlet in late May or June 1790. Records of the event do not leave clues as to who was among the mixed group of merchants. "un monument d'usure sur la propriété publique," "doivent avoir pleine liberté de s'établir."

[52] BHVP in 8°, #959 739 "Démolition totale des harangues de la halle, faite hier au soir par le peuple," "ont été construites par de vues cupides de personnes, favorisées par les agens de despotisme," "a éloigné les mal-intentionnés et les brigands qui courent auprès des groupes exciter l'effervescence et allumer la discorde," "les citoyens de la capitale respecteront toujours les loix, la liberté individuelle et les propriétés légitimes."

enraged "fishwives" had already torn down the stalls there and were threatening to march to the nearby marché Saint-Germain to continue their destruction. The gatekeeper of the abbey that sheltered the market rushed to secure the grill. Given the Dames' grievances, he hoped to protect the abbey's shops from similar demise.[53]

In light of the conflicts over the stalls and the shops, the Parisian municipal assembly negotiated how to regulate and legitimize merchants' use of the marketplace. In October 1791, the Commune declared that "the right to occupy the *voie publique* [including the markets] whose use belongs to all, but whose exclusive use does not belong to anyone" must not be "abus[ed]" by "false ideas of liberty." Municipal representatives reasoned that individuals could not erect permanent market structures on "the common terrain."

However, the Commune simultaneously recognized that retail merchants like the Dames de Halles earned their meager livelihood through using public space for particular commerce. The majority of retail merchants who sold on public domain rather than from boutiques were poor. As long as the merchants did not act "contrary to… public interest," the Commune decreed that indigent citizens could sell fruits, vegetables, and herbs from mobile structures if they did not disrupt the *voie publique*. To qualify for this special charitable permission, the individual had to live in Paris, be a parent, be infirm or over 50, and be impoverished. The Parisian permissions for indigent retail merchants stressed a contract between the individual and the city in order to gain exceptional permission to occupy public space. The Commune's concessions throw into relief the paternalistic responsibilities of the state that the municipality reconfigured within the

[53] AdPP AA 166 Luxembourg, 1791 à An III, Procès-verbal des commissaires de police, 10 mai 1791, "Déclaration concernant les troubles causés au marché de la place Maubert par les poissardes qui ont abattu les échoppes et paraissent disposées à en faire autant dans le marché Saint-Germain."

revolutionary framework.[54] For the Dames, their claims to marketplace permissions as members of a privileged group could be challenged under the new rules. However, they could still appeal as indigent individuals.

The Commune's tolerant policy echoed one National Assembly member's acknowledgment that it was "important to leave to the poor" retail merchants "the means of living" by selling on public domain.[55] Although the national and municipal representatives did not use faith-based justifications as had Louis XVI and the kings before him, they continued to perceive the state's special responsibilities towards the poor. However, the fine line between exceptional charitable permissions and Old Regime privilege on the *voie publique* created major obstacles in the revolutionaries' marketplace legislation.

Nonetheless, before the indigent merchants could seek the special charitable permissions, the old semi-sedentary shelters still needed to be destroyed to uphold the king's 1784 ordinance. Only then could the reconstruction of les Halles continue. The Commune's future exceptions and clarifications for indigent merchants did not resolve the conflict over shops already slated for destruction in accordance with the 1784 decision. On October 21, 1791, twenty-eight retail merchants selling from stalls outside the Tuileries chateau petitioned the municipal assembly to save their makeshift shelters. The merchants explained that they used to have shops outside the chateau of Versailles, but had moved to Paris to follow the king and his court. Unlike the fruit merchants of les Halles who had been forced to rent hangars from Doré's company if they wanted permanent shelters, the retailers at Tuileries appear to have built their *own* immobile

---

[54] BHVP in 8° #10 073 (t. II n°59), "Municipalité de Paris… Du lundi 3 octobre 1791." "le droit d'occuper la voie publique dont l'usage appartient à tous, mais dont la jouissance exclusive n'appartient à personne," "abuse[d]," "fausse idées de liberté," "le terrain commun," "contraires… à l'intérêt public" For a discussion of charity in the marketplace during the Old Regime see Marion, "Community and Authority."

[55] *AP,* 17 février 1791, 23: 230. "important de laisser aux pauvres," "revendeurs et revendeuses," "les moyens de vivre."

shelters to avoid rent. The Tuileries merchants appealed to the Commune through the discourse of poverty and the revolutionary state's paternal responsibilities. The merchants maintained they had been "reduced to the most awful indigence" when they relocated to Paris. They testified that "a great number of poor working mothers" bought their daily meager supply of meat from their stalls for modest prices. Recalling the deputies' "justice" and "kindness," the merchants framed their request as "founded on humanity." In addition, the merchants confronted the representatives' renewed concerns over public space: they asserted that their shops did not block or disrupt the *voie publique* and they locked them at night to ensure public safety.[56]

Similarly, the male and female retailers on the quais de l'Infante et de l'École feared that officials would force them to tear down their shelters in accordance with the king's reconstruction project. They defended their personal stalls by addressing the Legislative Assembly in October 1791.[57] The merchants began by reassuring the deputies that "Obedience to the law is indisputably the duty of all good citizens." But when the merchants attempted to broach their concerns, the national deputies shouted down the orator and ordered that the Department directors deal with the municipal issue.[58] Undeterred, the merchants submitted a petition to the municipal assembly as well as the department directors. In order to escape the exceptional appearance of their request, the merchants linked their demand to the plight of "more than 60,000 citizens" who would also suffer if the shops were suppressed. They painted themselves as "citizens also inseparable from [the goals of] good order and public tranquility" who would secure their shops at night so as to guarantee the safety of the populace. The

---

[56]AdPP D^B 258, Dossier: Voirie, Échoppes, Démolition des Échoppes & Maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, a filed partial copy from *Actes de la Commune,* 21 octobre 1791, p. 295-296. "réduits dans la plus affreuse indigence," "un grand nombre de pauvres ouvriers de mères," "votre justice et vos bontés," "fondée sur l'humanité."

[57] The Legislative Assembly succeeded the National Assembly on October 1, 1791.

[58] *AP,* 18 octobre 1791, 34: 268.

merchants firmly integrated themselves in a wider public. Like the Tuileries merchants, they highlighted their "sad situation," but with a twist of revolutionary guilt. The merchants boldly declared that, since the Old Regime officials had benevolently tolerated their stalls, "they flattered themselves to find the current magistrates to have at least as much humanity and justice as the magistrates of the old government." In essence, the merchants challenged the deputies to have at least as much generosity as their Old Regime counterparts. Moreover, the merchants boldly hinted that generosity was intrinsic to the revolutionary spirit.[59]

In response to the retail merchants' clamor and in dialogue with advice from the Department, the Commune granted the semi-sedentary, makeshift shops a stay until April 1792, the following spring. The Department recognized that immediately destroying the structures before winter "would reduce to misery a considerable number of indigent families who did not have any other resources to survive." The effect would also increase the number of citizens who relied on the state for aid and survival, thereby overwhelming the system. The Department justified their suggestion as "prudent and humane," and therefore compatible with the aspirations of the revolutionary government. [60] The Commune agreed with this reasoning and ruled that the total destruction of the stalls would be delayed until April 1792.[61] (After this time, the indigent merchants would surrender their makeshift structures and seek state-condoned shelter permissions.) Commune officials expressed their desire "to favor, as much as public interest can allow it the least fortunate class of merchants of the capital." In their decision, the officials

---

[59] AdPP D^B 258, Dossier: Voirie, Échoppes Démolition des Échoppes & Maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, a filed copy from *Actes de la Commune*, in éclaircissements of 21 octobre 1791. "citoyens aussi inséparable du bon ordre et de la tranquillité publique," "ils se flattent de trouver chez les magistrats actuels au moins autant d'humanité et de justice que dans les magistrats de l'ancien gouvernement."

[60] AdPP D^B 258, Dossier: Voirie, Échoppes Démolition des Échoppes & Maisons dans différents lieux de Paris et démolition du Bâtiment du Pilori, copy from *Actes de la Commune*, in éclaircissements in éclaircissements of 29 octobre 1791, Letter from the Directory of the Department of Paris to the Municipal Assembly concerning the marchandes quais de la Ferraille, de l'infante et de l'école, 445-446. "à charge à l'État," "réduirait à la misère un nombre considérable de familles indigentes qui n'ont d'autre ressources pour subsister."

[61] *AP,* 3 novembre 1791, 34: 622.

recognized that free retail commerce in public places competed with the rent-paying boutique businesses, which the street merchants often blocked.[62] Therefore, the representatives stipulated that any mobile structures which congested the streets, disturbed the *voie publique*, and measured over 28 pouces would be immediately destroyed. In addition, the Commune stressed that the extension on the mobile shops until April 1792 only applied to poor retail merchants who did not have "the means to conduct their Commerce in Boutiques."[63]

Endangered retail merchants who could align their interests with state priorities for public space and within revolutionary discourses fared much better than those who attempted to protect their structures through the remnants of privilege. Like the other retail merchants in October 1791, the Dames des Halles who sold fish in the Saint-Germain market submitted a petition to protect their stalls and commercial space. The king's reconstruction project stipulated that three guardhouses would replace their spaces. The female merchants pleaded their case at the Legislative Assembly in terms of the past; they argued that alternative spaces existed for the guardhouses and that it would be an "injustice to deprive them of places that they have occupied since time immemorial." The merchants submitted the same mémoire to the Department for consideration. Yet, possibly because the merchants articulated their request in terms of exceptionality and past tradition rather than framing their interests within the anti-privilege revolutionary project, the assemblies did not take great interest in their predicament nor act with any urgency. The Saint-Germain Dames failed to integrate themselves into the legitimate public.

---

[62] Sigismond Lacroix, ed., *Actes de la Commune de Paris pendant la Révolution*, 29 octobre 1791, series II, vol. VII (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 425. "favoriser, autant que l'intérêt public peut le permettre la classe la moins fortunée des marchands de la capitale."

[63] BHVP, in 8° #10073c (tome II n°68), Municipalité de Paris Par le Maire et les Officiers Municipaux, "Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal Du vendredi 4 novembre 1791…" (Paris: Lottin l'aîné et J.R Lottin, 1791). "le moyen de faire leur Commerce en Boutique."

After three months in limbo, their petition simply disappeared unresolved from the administrative record trail.[64]

From 1790 to 1792, the Assembly and the Commune remained firm in their plan to reconstruct les Halles and reconceptualize marketplace permissions. To do so, however, officials had to negotiate new definitions of privilege, liberty in commerce, public utility, and public space with the indigent merchants of the capital. The Dames des Halles and other retail merchants felt the weight of the modernizing campaign most immediately as the police cracked down on their makeshift stalls which blocked the *voie publique* and the government outlined new parameters for indigent marketplace permissions. The reform greatly increased the pressure on the Dames' only alternative for affordable shelter and markers of space – mobile parasols. With their stalls leveled and the stakes raised, the Dames navigated revolutionary ideology on the ground to vie for the invaluable parasols and the legitimacy to use the space they protected.

The Battle of the Parasols: The Dames des Halles Stake out Revolutionary Ideology in the Marketplace

This section takes the major conflict over parasols in les Halles as a case study to examine in depth how the Dames, shelter-renters, and officials negotiated public space and particular interests on the ground. The revolutionary state initially regulated how retail merchants occupied open space by tying their permissions to the parasol-renting companies contracted by Louis XVI. In his 1787 construction project, the king had not only granted a *bail emphythéotique* to Doré to rebuild the old halles, but he had also emptied the adjacent cemetery

[64] AN F^{12} 1239, Dossier: Foires et Marchés, Paris 1705-an II. "Lettre du procureur Gen. Syndic du dept. de Paris relative à une demande présenté par les femmes du Marché au poisson de l'abbaye St. Germain pour la considération de leurs places, malgré la construction proposée de 3 Corps de gardes, 16 octobre 1791"; "Lettre de M. Roederer, procureur général syndic du Département au président du Comité du commerce, accusant réception du mémoire présenté à l'Assemblée nationale par les Dames du marché aux poissons de la ci-devant Abbaye-de-Saint-Germain…" "injustice de les priver des places qu'elles occupaient de tems immémorial."

of Saint-Innocents. From this cleared cemetery, the king created an official open-air market in what had already become a bustling place of trade. In order to regulate mobile shelters in this new market space, the king granted Hyacinthe Ignace Joseph Courvoisier a *bail emphytéotique* for the new Innocents marketplace. Under the terms of the lease, Courvoisier gained the exclusive right to rent and place parasols for Dames des Halles who qualified for charitable privileges as outlined in the king's 1776 royal edict. This edict had given permission to "poor women widows and orphaned girls" to sell on the king's *voie publique*.[65] By the eve of the Revolution, the vast majority of retail merchants, who did and did not meet these specific 1776 charity requirements, continued to rely on the parasols to protect their foodstuffs. In the regenerated marketplace, several merchants questioned the legitimacy of a parasol company which derived its monopoly from an Old Regime *bail emphytéotique*.

As revolutionary officials attempted to sort out the complexities of the old *bail emphythéotique* with a multilevel government rather than a king, institutional battles began over marketplace territory. Should the Commune, the Department, or the Assembly protect the public and its domain in les Halles? The Dames and other retailers appealed to each institution along with revolutionary tribunals to defend and advance their marketplace interests. They worked with nascent institutions and developed new forms of political practice to negotiate access to shelters and space. In various arenas, Courvoisier's parasol-renting endeavor and the merchants'

[65] AN E 2653, fol. 33, 74; AN X^{1b} 9084 See "Lettres patentes" 8 février 1789 for the reference which indicates that the 1776 edict must serve as the parameters for the special permissions. The quote and explanation of 1776 qualification requirements appear here : AdPP, D^{B} 258 "Ordonnance du Bureau des Finances de la Généralité de Paris Concernant les Échoppes, 1 février 1776. " (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1776). "en faveur des pauvres femmes veuves & des filles orphelines". Hoping to use the Saint-Innocents space for wholesale and retail markets at different times in the day, the king granted Courvoisier the exclusive right to rent and place parasols and other movable commercial accessories to merchants in 1787. The 99-year *bail emphytéotique* stipulated that the Dames des Halles and other retail merchants could only use these mobile shelters from 8:00 or 9:00 am until 10:00 pm, depending on the season. In 1789, the king did allow Courvoisier to construct two rows of sedentary shelters covered by canvas "to add to public utility," but the vast majority of retail merchants, who did and did not meet charity requirements, continued to rely on the parasols to protect their foodstuffs.

desires to freely occupy the marketplace set into motion conflicting discourses of privilege, particular interests, public space, and public good.

As the revolutionaries unpacked these concepts, the Dames des Halles felt the tangible consequences in the form of economic survival. The efforts to promote uniformity in the marketplace by regulating rent and standardizing charity requirements challenged the Dames' claims to Old Regime exceptionality, tolerance, and particular economic resources. As a member of the public, each merchant held equal claims to personal ownership of public domain. Revolutionary legislation stressed individual accountability for retail commerce. It required individuals to seek personal permissions to use stalls and limited their ability to commercially improvise on the *voie publique*. Thus, the Dames encountered obstacles in deploying local resources, personal relations, and their former quasi-corporate identity to their benefit.

In addition, the Dames des Halles held high stakes specifically in the disputes over parasol renting. Since most did not own sedentary shelters in les Halles, the Dames and other retail merchants relied heavily on rented parasols as the only affordable shelter available in parts of the market. Parasols acted as the linchpin for many retail merchants' livelihoods. They granted the retail merchants more or less habitual spots in the marketplace and protected their goods so that their meager businesses could remain economically viable.[66] I take the Dames' activism concerning these parasols as a case study to inquire how retail merchants deployed and informed revolutionary concepts in the marketplace. The Dames' strategic attacks during the parasol debate forced the revolutionaries to question the nature of privilege, the composition of the sovereign public, the responsibilities of the state towards its citizens, and the socio-cultural value of retail merchants in the revolutionary imagining.

---

[66] BnF LK7 31662, "Adresse à M. le Maire de Paris, ou à son lieutenant, pour les marchands merciers-fripiers-tailleurs, et autres habituellement attaché au marché des SS Innocens." (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Hérault, 1790).

As Courvoisier marshaled his parasols into rank in les Halles, some retail merchants decided to wage a battle against his privileged company. Courvoisier's exclusive lease limited merchants' claims to public space. At the same time, his contract with the king explicitly favored renting parasols to Dames who met the 1776 charity requirements as "poor widows and orphaned girls" over others. (For the sake of brevity, I will refer to the qualified Dames as the "edict Dames.") In its most basic form, the ensuing parasol conflict pitted one set of particular interests against another over the use of public space. A division emerged within the Dames' own ranks and they interpreted revolutionary ideology differently according to their own interests. On one side, the edict Dames defended Courvoisier's lease and their special advantage in the market. They stressed the legality of revolutionary contracts that confirmed royal permissions. On the other side, non-edict Dames argued that competition between parasol-providers would benefit all indigent merchants and help destroy the monopolistic privileges of the Old Regime. The non-edict Dames and their supporters maintained that the unrestricted use of parasols in the marketplace dovetailed with revolutionary conceptualizations of public space and liberty. To gain the upper hand, the Dames des Halles, other retail merchants, and their corresponding allies drew on the intricate nuances of revolutionary ideology. This section analyzes Courvoisier's attempt to defend his privileged contract and probes the Dames' various interventions as they reframed their respective interests.

Even before the legislative debate on the *baux emphytéotiques*, lessee Courvoisier rushed to get his exclusive parasol-renting rights confirmed in April 1790.[67] Initially, the municipality thought that well-aligned parasol placement could help bring order to the Innocents market, which "alone can contribute to the advantage of all." The city officials hoped to guarantee that

[67] AN E 2653, fol. 33, 74; X^{1b} 9084 "Lettres patentes" 8 février 1789, 14 mars 1789, 21 avril 1790.

the markets could be provisioned, and encourage "the safety of the *voie publique*."[68] The parasol-renting system offered municipal officials a way to check les Halles from slipping into disorder.

Nonetheless, merchants and officials soon disputed whether *baux emphytéotiques* like Courvoisier's could continue in a society purged of privilege where royal domain became national domain. And, if so, they questioned how the *baux emphytéotiques* could be brought into accord with revolutionary ideology. The National Assembly needed to erase any lingering threats of privilege, ensure that the legitimacy for using public domain originated in the nation, and give municipalities the legal tools to employ this public space. In August 1790, the National Assembly proclaimed that since the feudal system was abolished, no individual could claim to be the singular owner of or collect permission dues on the *voie publique*.[69] To banish the shadow of privilege, all holders of royal *baux emphytéotiques* would have to submit their contracts for reappraisal. Revolutionary officials would not consider the leases just and valid until they confirmed the agreement.[70] Additionally, the Assembly repositioned the sovereign nation, rather than the king, as the source of legitimizing authority in public space. The deputies stipulated that "since the *baux emphytéotiques* make a true alienation, they are not reputed to have been made legitimately, and by consequence the buyers will not be held to their terms, until they [the leases] have been analyzed and *re-vested* with all the solemnities required by law, by place, and

[68] BHVP in 4° 131912, Municipalité de Paris, Département de police. "De par le M. le Maire, M. le lieutenant de Maire et MM les Conseillers, Administration règlement provisoire, pour le Marché des SS Innocents," 2 mai 1790 (Paris: Lottin l'aîné & Lottin, 1790). "seul peut contribuer à l'avantage de tous," "la sûreté de la voie publique."
[69] BnF F-23631 (891),"Lettres Patentes du Roi, sur un Décret de l'Assemblé Nationale, du 26 juillet 1790, relatif aux droits de Propriété & de Voyerie sur les chemins publics, rues & places de villages, bourgs ou villes, & arbres dépendans," 15 août 1790 (Paris: Chez Nyon, 1790), 1. "le régime féodal & la justice seigneuriale étant abolis,"
[70] *Révolutions de Paris*, 10 juillet 1790, Tome IV, n°52. Prudhomme is reporting on the session of 27 June 1790.

location" (my italics).[71] The king, not the nation, had alienated the public domain, so any private contract on that land required reevaluation by representatives of the revolutionary public.

Despite the Commune's initial confirmation of Courvoisier's lease in les Halles in April 1790, he had to resubmit his lease to the National Assembly to use public domain in accordance with the August 1790 legislation. The Assembly confirmed Courvoisier's exclusive right to place parasols in the marketplace but flattened the other privileges originally attached to the king's agreement. The deputies insisted that Courvoisier reduce the price of all of his shelters to 4 sols per day "without distinction of person." The indigent Dames des Halles who had qualified for privileged treatment under the king's strict 1776 charity edict and Courvoisier's original contract effectively lost their exclusive claims to special prices, places, or priority to parasols in les Halles. The National Assembly guaranteed the equality of all retail merchants at the expense of the edict-qualified Dames. Frustrated with what seemed like a tiny issue, one deputy declared, "It is unbelievable that one comes to busy the National Assembly with the parasols of the Halles of Paris." He demanded that the issue be passed on to the Department, which in turn passed the issue back to the municipality. [72]

Responding to the Assembly's intervention, the Commune now reasoned that les Halles had been consolidated into the *voie publique* and, as such, belonged to the municipality rather than the nation. The Commune representatives explicitly asserted that the public domain of the marketplace belonged to the public of the municipality rather than the nation. The municipal government criticized Courvoisier's business with an anti-privilege discourse and condemned his particular ownership in a space destined "to the public use of the inhabitants." In contrast, the

---

[71] *AP,* 9 août 1790, 17: 696. "comme les baux emphytéotiques rendement une véritable aliénation, ils ne sont réputés avoir été faits légitimement, et par conséquent les acquéreurs ne seront tenus de leur entretien, qu'autant qu'ils auront été précédés et revêtus de toutes les solennités requises par la loi, du lieu de la situation."
[72] *AP,* 6 mars 1791, 23: 710. "sans distinction de personnes." "Il est incroyable que l'on vienne occuper l'Assemblée nationale des parasols des halles de Paris."

National Assembly had backed Courvoisier and viewed the indigent Dames des Halles as the overly privileged party in the royal arrangement. Therefore, the Assembly had standardized parasol rates for all merchants as a democratizing measure. However, the municipal representatives attacked Courvoisier's exclusive monopoly (now legally backed by the Assembly) to rent parasols as the source of corruption. Consequently, the municipal representatives emphasized their paternal responsibility to guard against "speculation which could disrupt commerce and could be a considerable charge on the most useful and least wealthy inhabitants of Paris."[73] Differently interpreting the revolutionary matrix of privilege, utility, public space, and charity and defending their administrative turf, the municipality refused to reconfirm Courvoisier's lease.

The new phase in the parasol controversy exposed potential divisions in the Dames' expansive concepts of occupational, economic, and cultural collective identity. Although some of the indigent Dames des Halles fit the 1776 edict requirements for the king's charitable privileges, better-off retailers across the Parisian markets did not. Other Dames only fit the Revolution's more expansive definition of indigent as outlined in the Commune's October 1791 legislation that stressed residency, parental status, health, age, and need. Still others met neither condition.[74]

When another parasol provider, Sieur Thibault, challenged Courvoisier's legal hegemony in the marketplace and officials debated the terms of Courvoisier's lease, the minute legal

---

[73] *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, 29 octobre 1791, series II, vol. VII, 427. "à l'usage public des inhabitants." "spéculation qui pourrait gêner le commerce et être une charge considérable sur la class la plus utile et la moins fortunée des habitants de Paris."

[74] Regardless of these legal divisions, all the Dames des Halles had shared a collective identity driven by occupational and cultural cohesion, which they expressed throughout the early years of the Revolution. See, for example, a petition by the "Dames des Halles," signed by members of nearly all the major Parisian marketplaces. AN C 33, n°285, Assemblée nationale, 31 décembre 1789, "Adresse présentée à l'Assemblée nationale par une députation des marchés de Paris pour la féliciter de ses travaux."

distinctions among the Dames exploded into conflicting interests.[75] Courvoisier's royal contract had stipulated that he rent his Innocents parasols in favor of the Dames who met the 1776 edict requirements. In contrast, the National Assembly changed the terms of Courvoisier's contract. The Assembly ordered Courvoisier to treat all retail merchants equally when it confirmed his lease in March 1791. Despite the Assembly' orders, it appears that Courvoisier still favored the edict Dames and those Dames in their close circles. Therefore, the non-edict Dames stood to profit from competition between multiple parasol providers.

The slight differences among the Dames' various legal positions revealed the great potential to reimagine notions of charity and public space. The Dames' different interpretations highlight how revolutionary discourses surrounding these concepts remained malleable. While both groups of Dames drew on nuanced discourses of poverty and state responsibility in the ensuing conflict, they conceptualized privilege very differently. On the one hand, the royal edict-supported Dames stressed the legality of Courvoisier's lease in the courtroom. These Dames argued that Courvoisier's contract upheld their justly-sanctioned (rather than exploitive) privilege in the Innocents market. On the other hand, the non-edict Dames played down their exceptionality from the tribunes of the assembly halls. The non-edict Dames bolstered their case by positioning themselves within the patriotic "peuple," attacking privilege as a relic of the Old Regime, and aligning themselves with public interest in the pliable trinity of particular interest, public interest, and communal space. As the Dames fought over parasol placement, they staked out claims to revolutionary legitimacy in the marketplace, both ideologically and physically.

---

[75] For the particular interests of other retail merchants also affected by the parasol issue see: "Adresse à l'Assemblée nationale, pour les marchands forains et autres de la Halle de Paris, dont l'emplacement du cimetière des Innocents fait partie, renvoyée au Comité de commerce et d'agriculture le 14 novembre 1790" reprinted in *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, 29 octobre 1791, series II, vol VII: 450-451 and BnF Lk7-31662, "Adresse à M. Le Maire de Paris pour les Marchands-Fripiers-Tailleurs, et autres habituellement au marchés des SS. Innocents" (Paris: Impr. de Herault, 1790); Throughout the records, pamphlets, and petitions on the parasol issue Thibault, Thibauld, and Thibaut all refer to the same parasol renter.

The issue came to a head in May 1792 at the sectional assembly of the Marchés neighborhood. Thibault, the bootleg parasol provider, had been offering his alternative services since 1790 to some merchants' benefit but much to Courvoisier's chagrin. The merchants saw their shelter options dwindle as the grace period to destroy their makeshift shops expired. At the sectional assembly, the non-edict Dames and other retail merchants insisted that the government abolish the "privileges which accord certain citizens the exclusive right to place parasols." Deploying revolutionary interpretations of public space, the sectional assembly agreed with the non-edict Dames and concluded that "the halles, markets, as well as the other public terrains destined to the usage of all must be a communal Property exempt from particular prerogatives."[76] The sectional assembly circulated their petition to the 47 other Parisian sections and submitted their complaint to the Commune.

On the same day as the sectional assembly, the non-edict Dames began their multi-visit crusade to the Legislative Assembly (previously the National Assembly). The non-edict Dames strove to end Courvoisier's lease and enable other shelter providers to rent parasols in the Parisian markets. The non-edict Dames attempted to spotlight their cause and proved their patriotism through a series of donations. On their first visit, they gave 320 livres "to the fatherland" and asked "that it please the Assembly to put on the order of the day very soon the report on their petition against the privilege which the particular individual [Courvoisier] enjoyed, renter of places and parasols in the Innocents market."[77] The Assembly passed the Dames' petition on to its Commerce Committee for evaluation. Nonetheless, the deputies

---

[76] AdP VD* 8, #912 and BnF Manuscrits Nouv. Acq. Fr. 2651, fol 187 "des Privilèges qui accordent à certains Citoiens le droit exclusif de poser des parasols." "les halles, les marchés, ainsi que les autres terrains publics destinés à l'usage de tous doivent être un Propriété communale exempte de tous les prérogatives particuliers."

[77] *AP,* 5 mai 1792, 43: 8. "à la patrie" "que l'Assemblée veuille bien mettre très prochainement à l'ordre du jour le rapport de leur pétition contre le privilège dont jouit le particulier, locataire des emplacements et des parasols sur le marché des Innocents."

demonstrated that they approved the Dames' donation by giving them "the honorable mention in the minutes." The non-edict Dames appeared at the Assembly for a follow-up visit on May 21, 1792. They again offered a "tribute" of their revolutionary fidelity and pledged to make the same offering twice a year to support the war. In addition, they turned in nonofficial coinage which had circulated in the markets in competition with the revolutionary currency. Despite the "losses" that they would suffer as a result, the Dames proclaimed, "let this money no longer be a privilege of our exclusion."[78] Their supplemental donation again proved their patriotic intentions and support of the Revolution. By merging their own money with that of the national treasury, the Dames bypassed the stigma of greedy merchants pursing their particular economic interests.

In order to bolster their position within the framework of revolutionary discourse and distinguish themselves from Courvoisier's allies, the non-edict Dames and their supporters attempted to frame Courvoisier and the edict Dames as perpetuators of Old Regime favoritism. During their second visit to the bar of the Legislative Assembly, the non-edict Dames bluntly stated that they did not make any claims to privilege, but rather associated themselves with the wider public of the nation.[79] Between their visits, parasol rival Thibault appeared at the Legislative Assembly himself with his employees and some supportive rag merchants. They bluntly demanded "the abolition of privileges and the liberty to sell goods by mobile display in the markets of Paris."[80]

Meanwhile, in the neighborhood tribunal, Thibault and 220 supportive merchants of les Halles and their lawyers pursued legal action against Courvoisier and 122 edict-approved Dames des Halles and their lawyers. Therefore, two groups under the influential title of "Dames des Halles" appeared on opposing sides of the legal dispute. The court case became even more

[78] *AP,* 21 mai 1792, 43: 641. "tribute" "que cette monnaie ne soit plus un privilège à notre exclusion."
[79] *AP,* 21 mai 1792, 43: 641.
[80] *AP,* 18 mai 1792, 43: 534. "l'abolition des privilèges et la liberté de l'étalage sur les marchés de Paris."

complicated as the city prosecutor intervened. The Commune asked their prosecutor to step in to protect the municipality's interest in the contested marketplace that it claimed to control. The prosecutor's addition brought the number of people involved to 544 interested parties, 5 lawyers, and 1 very nervous sectional commissioner. Courvoisier argued that the revolutionary government had already confirmed his lease on numerous occasions and that legitimized his exclusive permission to rent parasols in the marketplace. The edict Dames protested that since the National Assembly had initially approved of Courvoisier's lease based on his original contract with the king, they too maintained privileges in the Innocents market due to their relationship with Courvoisier. After two months of debate and analysis, the Commune's prosecutor contended that Courvoisier and the edict Dames failed to defend their interests along revolutionary principles. He dramatically concluded, "The French constitution established that there is no longer for any party of the nation nor any individual any privilege nor exception to the common right of all the French people … The new laws suppressed all tolls in the public markets, it is without regard to the laws that Sir Courvoisier and Company and the intervening women of les Halles want to maintain a privilege."[81] In effect, the prosecutor's decision dovetailed with Commune's challenge to the Assembly. Despite this municipal ruling, the Legislative Assembly alone possessed the ability to rescind their confirmation of Courvoisier's lease.

However, the fall of the monarchy on August 10, 1792 provided a new political landscape and a more suitable primer for the non-edict Dames' requests. The Parisian neighborhood sections organized the revolt to overthrow the king and a new municipal

[81] AdP D.Q[10] 1392, Dossier 3048 Innocents (Marché des) "La Constitution française établit qu'il n'y a plus pour aucune partie de la nation ny aucun individu aucun privilège ni exception au droit commun de tous les français qu'il n'y a plus ny jurandes ny corporations de professions arts et métiers. Les nouvelles loix ont supprimé tous droits de péage dans les marchés publics, c'est au mépris de les loix que le Sr. Courvoisier et Compagnie et les femmes de la halle intervenantes veulent faire maintenir un privilège."

government emerged stronger than before. The insurrectional Commune harnessed the sections' patriotic fervor to mobilize networks of resources, claim the sovereignty of the people, and dominate politics in the capital. Virtually powerless and with no constitutional monarch, the Legislative Assembly called for elections to establish a new National Convention and a Republic. Parisians began to eagerly strip all signs of royalty and privilege from the city.[82] Although the Assembly found its power much reduced in the face of the Commune's claim to legitimacy, the free-market inclined Girondin deputies steered the Assembly through the interim before the Convention convened in late September.[83] Panic over the war, counter-revolutionary plotters, and fallout over the August 10 uprising fueled massacres of prisoners in early September.[84] The Girondin deputies, while supporting the August 10 uprising and never condemning the violent purge of early September, became acutely aware of the instable landscape and the sections' fear-fueled potential.[85]

In this environment, on September 12, 1792, the non-edict Dames des Halles returned to the Legislative Assembly. They pled their case against Courvoisier's lease for the third time. In their petition, they deployed their own discourses of privilege, poverty, the paternal responsibility of the state, and their own equality. The Dames declared that "the exclusive privilege of the parasols" "cannot remain under the reign of liberty and of equality, [it] would

---

[82] F. Braesch, *La Commune du Dix Août 1792: Etude sur l'histoire de Paris du 20 juin au 2 décembre 1792* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et C[ie], 1911), 428.

[83] The Girondins took August 10 as a sign of popular support for their party. 394 The Girondins' defense of the free market later became a major point of contention with the Montagnards who agitated for economic controls. Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 4.

[84] Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection*, 7.

[85] Braesch, *La Commune du Dix Août 1792*, 392. Slavin argues that the Girondins "applauded the September massacres until they realized that indignation over them could be utilized as a weapon against their enemies." Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection*, 7. Patrice Higonnet argues that although the Girondins and the Montagnards were both of bourgeois stock, the Girondins became wary of popular violence first in the fall of 1792 because they came to power first. On the other hand, the Montagnards, as the minority group, were more willing to continue to draw from sans-culotte support. Higonnet also demonstrates that the Girondins were more likely to be sons of businessmen than Montagnards who were more frequently the sons of lawyers. I would argue that this divide made the Girondins more inclined to support free market policies. Patrice Higonnet, "The Social and Cultural Antecedents of Revolutionary Discontinuity: Montagnards and Girondins," *The English Historical Review* 396 (1985): 516, 526.

always weigh on the most numerous and most indigent class of the capital, if you do not prevent it [the privilege] from crushing it [the class].” In this interpretative twist, they undermined the other Dames’ exclusive claims to indigent privilege as articulated by the 1776 edict in two ways. First, the non-edict Dames stressed that a wider and needier class existed which Courvoisier’s lease harmed. Second, the non-edict Dames denounced parasol privileges as contrary to revolutionary equality. “In the name of humanity,” the Dames also asked “the fathers and representatives of the people” to erase “the traces of privilege against which the female merchants of les Halles have protested all along.”[86] By extending their concern to all of humanity and evoking the representatives’ paternal responsibilities, the non-edict Dames transcended the appearance of particular interest. Instead, they prevailed as steadfast revolutionary protectors *against* the threat of Old Regime privilege.

Swayed by the arguments of the non-edict Dames, spurred by the collapse of the monarchy a month earlier, and bolstered by both municipal support and Girondin free-market sympathies, the Assembly swiftly terminated Courvoisier’s lease. It concisely proclaimed that “under the reign of Liberty, one does not know how to suffer [such] an establishment.”[87] The king’s recent arrest had crystallized the stark divide between the Old Regime and the Revolution. Journalist Prudhomme keenly summarized the issues at stake in the parasol conflict when he reported to his readers that the Assembly had annulled “an abusive lease, which makes a public place a particular property.”[88] Such an arrangement could not exist in republican imaginings. Consequently, the Assembly could no longer challenge the Commune’s logic that Courvoisier

---

[86] AN C 167, n°411 ; *AP,* 12 septembre 1792, 51: 578. “le privilège exclusif des parasols” “ne peut subsister sous le règne de la liberté et de l’égalité, [it] peseroit encore sur la classe la plus nombreuse et la plus indigents de la capitale, si vous ne vous empêcher pas l’anéantir.” “Au nom de l’humanité,” “les pères et représentatives du peuple” to erase “les traces de privilège contre lequel les marchandes des halles réclament depuis tout de temps.”
[87] AN C 163 n°377, 12 sept 1792, “sous le règne de la Liberté, on ne sauroit souffrir un établissement”
[88] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* du 15 au 22 septembre 1792, Tome XIII, n°167, “un bail abusif, qui fait d’un lieu public une propriété particulière.”

was the source of privilege. The non-edict Dames des Halles and their allies won because they successfully navigated the dispute between new competing institutions, they turned the radicalization of politics to their advantage, and they skillfully deployed revolutionary discourses to claim legitimacy. The non-edict Dames presented themselves as members of the regenerated public who had equal rights on public domain. They best negotiated the powerful subtleties of particular interest, public interest, and communal space in the marketplace.

The revolutionaries' attempt to define and regenerate les Halles exposed the complex negotiation of particular interests in a regenerated public space. As the revolutionaries attempted to erase privilege by controlling the *voie publique*, regulating commercial shelters, and reforming marketplace rights, they worked through the often-contradictory elements of the revolutionary project. Revolutionary officials and retail merchants reconceptualized economic relations, ideas of communal space, theories of public good, the relationship between particular interests and private property, and the responsibilities of the state towards its indigent citizens. The Dames des Halles worked out the tangible consequences of these debates on the ground as they struggled to survive economically. The non-edict Dames successfully configured a matrix of malleable discourses to appropriate revolutionary legitimacy in the eyes of the state. With the birth of the Republic, the revolutionaries definitively located the public in equal citizens. What, at first glance, seemed to be a negligible dispute over parasols in les Halles actually struck at the heart of the revolutionary paradox. In its most basic form, the contest pitted one particular interest against another over the use of public space. The battle exposed competing visions of particular interest, public interest, and communal space. The Dames des Halles negotiated these fundamental contradictions from under their parasols as they advanced their interpretations of a regenerated marketplace.

– Chapter 3 –

Political Capital: Reconstructing Money, Networks, and Social Identity in the Marketplace

Revolutionary regeneration affected more than the use of the voierie and public domain in les Halles. In order to shore up the collapsing financial system, the deputies created a revolutionary currency called the "assignat" during the winter of 1789 and 1790. In theory, the deputies derived the assignat's value from biens nationaux or the properties that the new regime acquired and sold. By tying the assignat currency to the value of the biens nationaux, the deputies hoped to tackle the debt and establish a firm monetary footing. The government initially only printed assignats in large denominations of 1000, 300, and 200 livres.[1] To provide enough small bills to facilitate trade, the National Assembly allowed public and private groups to issue a complex web of assignat-backed promissory notes. As they bartered with these numerous notes in the marketplace, merchants and consumers reassessed their faith in the assignat and local monetary communities. Ironically, the assignat encumbered trade between provincial suppliers and capital merchants who relied on different networks of promissory notes. In short, the assignat created and restricted systems of credit, changed the power dynamics of trade, and affected commercial alliances. As legislators overhauled the nation's monetary system, wholesalers, brokers, retail merchants, and consumers directly engaged in currency reform as they traded in les Halles.

Revolutionary officials did not originally consider the transactions in les Halles in mind while conceiving the monetary reform, but the realities of everyday commerce eventually forced the deputies to pay special attention to monetary grievances in les Halles. The subsistence trade's complex credit hierarchies underpinned the survival of retail merchants and the populace alike.

---

[1] S.E. Harris, *The Assignats* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 24.

While merchants from les Halles used promissory notes backed by Parisian enterprises, provincial merchants viewed outside guarantors and nonlocal networks with suspicion. The assignat's ability or inability to circulate among the Dames des Halles, other retailers, and consumers ultimately influenced the assignat's success and failure within the capital and its provincial supply networks.

Due to their low-volume commerce, the Dames des Halles were among the first to acutely experience the shortcomings of the large-denomination assignats. Consequently, the Dames demanded that the nation create or bolster exchange "caisses" to provide usable denominations and serve their trades' needs. Parisian banks such as the Caisse Patriotique, the Maison de Secours, and the Caisse de Commerce exchanged large assignats or other holdings for practical currency in the form of smaller promissory notes called *billets de confiance*. Merchants could even ask the Maison de Secours to liquefy their household assets in exchange for promissory notes. The caisses' billets de confiance permitted trade to continue and formed a monetary network in les Halles. If a Dame sold Neufchâtel cheese for 4 sols or .2 livres per brick, for example, the smallest assignat of 200 livre proved beyond impractical for her everyday transactions.[2] However, she could use billets de confiance from the caisses to conduct her business within a local monetary network.

In order to protect their interests in small bills, the Dames des Halles allied with Parisian retail merchants across occupations to petition governmental agencies to defend their access to available, reliable, and practical currency. The Dames des Halles, their fellow merchants, and consumers held substantial power in the success of monetary reform because they chose which currency to accept or deny in their daily transactions. Therefore, the National Assembly had to

[2] Archives de la Préfecture de Police, D^B 387,"Tableau du maximum Des Denrées et Marchandises, Stipulées dans l'article premier de la Loi du 29 septembre 1793, l'an II de la République Française."

coopt the populace in order to enact monetary reform on the ground. However, the Dames and the popular classes experienced serious economic hardship while transitioning to the assignat. As officials discredited or outlawed promissory notes, they repeatedly tore apart the Dames' monetary networks, reconfigured local credit networks, and undercut the innovative systems of small change that enabled commerce in the capital.

In response, the Dames and other retail merchants forced the National Assembly to consider how monetary notes concretely affected workaday trade and commercial relations among merchants. The concerns over practical currency permeated the relationships that upheld the Dames' supply lines of good-based trade. The Dames and their factrices (brokers) intervened on each other's behalf to form vertical alliances in the supply chain. If the Dames did not have sufficient small bills, they could not buy their modest quantities from the factrices. The factrices, in turn, could not subdivide their wholesale supply enough for sale to retailers. Nor would provincial wholesalers unconditionally accept Parisian promissory notes from the factrices.

Because merchants across occupational divides shared the same need for small change to conduct their trade, the assignat encouraged diverse groups a broad spectrum of trades and corporations to unite in the face of mutual monetary obstacles. The Dames des Halles formed horizontal alliances with other retail merchants across trades that participated in common confidence networks. Horizontally-allied merchants relied on the same enterprises to emit promissory notes in practical denominations.

As the deputies reformed the assignat, they unintentionally compelled the merchants to cast aside corporate boundaries in favor of alliances rooted in shared monetary networks. Even before the anti-corporate wrecking ball of the d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws obliterated formal guild structures in February and June 1791, the assignat posed challenges that discouraged

occupational seclusion and fostered collective political activism within local monetary communities. The Dames and other merchants navigated their relationship with the nascent nation and repositioned themselves vis-à-vis one another through their experiences with the assignats. The assignat did not create *new commercial* relations between merchants. Rather, the assignat exposed *shared monetary* concerns (like the need for small change or stable exchange rates) that had been more dormant during a period with a more established and standardized currency. Although local communities had long bartered with unofficial parchment notes or informal IOUs to combat small change shortages, the all-encompassing nature of the deputies' monetary overhaul undercut the sustainability of informal systems.[3] Initially, the state tried to deploy existing local monetary networks to its advantage by permitting private exchange caisses to subdivide large assignats. Yet the deputies' centralizing attempts amplified the interdependency of the *local* credit networks bloated with unstandardized promissory notes.

This chapter asks how monetary reform encouraged different occupational groups to form political alliances. Therefore, it analyzes how citizens become cognizant of shared commercial identities not necessarily bounded by the divisions of the corporate world. This chapter does not and cannot judge the "defunctness" of the guilds in an economic, political, or social sense before their demise in 1791. The major historiographical inquiries on the corporate world have explored three central threads.[4] One contends that the guild system protected and encouraged the common welfare of its members and that its privileges were not "arbitrary."

---

[3] Thomas Sargent and François Velde, *The Big Problem of Small Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 203. For example, Angers merchants circumvented a 1577 shortage by conducting trade with their own parchment notes which each merchant marked with the symbol that identified their silverware.

[4] Jacques Revel situates this original binary within a wider historiographical tendency in studies of the Revolution in which the Revolution "désigne un avant et un après dont les signes seuls sont inverses." (designates a before and an after whose signs alone are inverted) In this sense, the Revolution acts as a simplistic switch in major historical changes. Jacques Revel, "Présentation," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. 43e année, N. 2, (1988): 296.

Rather, "Each body or community legitimately organizes 'for the profit and good of all.'"[5] In order to analyze burgeoning class identities in a Marxist vein, other historians have also asked how antagonistic relations between journeymen and their masters were on the eve of the Revolution.[6] Some have concluded that the conflicts between masters and journeymen drove the Revolution forward as a social engine.[7] A final group of historians portray the guild system as a phoenix that first rose from the ashes of Turgot and spawned trade-specific chameleons. Then the malleable offspring changed shades to adapt to evolving commercial realities particular to each specific occupation and workshop, and underwrote the language of various political associations.[8] This chapter is less concerned with potential Old Regime rivalries or corporate

---

[5] Revel puts F. Olivier-Martin, R. Mousnier, and E. Larousse in this category. "Présentation," 295. "Chaque corps ou communauté organise légitimement 'pour le profit et le bien de tous.'"

[6] Historians who have pursued this line of inquiry include Jean-Claude Perrot, Joshen Hoock, and Simona Cerutti, Jacques Revel, "Présentation," 298.

[7] George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967). Rudé points to the number of master/journeymen conflicts in the months prior to the passage of the Le Chapelier law as a sign of growing discontent. Liana Vardi goes so far as to contend that "conflicts between masters and journeymen as well as between dependent and independent artisans caused the [guild] system to totter within the first weeks of the Revolution." Liana Vardi, "The Abolition of the Guilds during the French Revolution," in *French Historical Studies* 15 (1988): 717. But Michael Sonenscher has argued that the number of disputes, which arose from myriad opportunities for conflict in boutiques, was not unusual for the eighteenth-century. Sonenscher, "Les sans-culottes de l'an II: repenser le langage du travail dans la France révolutionnaire," in *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 5 (1985): 1094. Nonetheless, Fitzsimmons argues that the Spring 1791 conflicts put exceptional pressure on the National Assembly to confront the workers' corporations since the d'Allarde law undercut the masters' recourse to guild privileges. Michael Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Abolition of Guilds in France," *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996): 152.

[8] Gail Bossenga has argued that "The guilds, in other words, were not simply disintegrating but were being transformed into organizations suited to the needs of an internationally oriented commercial bourgeoisie. The redeploying of the corporate system… both helped to reinforce proletarianization in production and to stifle commercial competition made possible by the enormous expansion of trade in the eighteenth century." She also maintains that the guilds may have been inefficient producers of goods on the eve of the Revolution, but they were not anachronistic in that they still successfully protected their members' commercial interests by adapting to changing circumstances "Protecting Merchants: Guilds and Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century France," *French Historical Studies,* 15 (1988), 695, 703. Michael Sonenscher and William Sewell pioneered this nuanced interpretation. William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Sonenscher, "Les Sans-Culottes de l'an II,"1985. Jacques Revel, "Présentation," 297. Fitzsimmons points out that the cahiers contained few grievances against the guilds at the beginning of the Revolution and that their continued existence proved to be more of a political and ideological problem rather than an unsustainable socio-economic system. "The National Assembly and the Abolition of Guilds in France," *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996): 34. Vardi, on the contrary, insists that "The Assembly did not examine the potential uses of the guild system. It swept away an outdated institution, which it associated with disgraceful privileges, and it did so not in order to create heaven on earth, but to align itself to economic realities." "The Abolition of the Guilds During the French Revolution," 717.

stagnation than with the ways in which revolutionary legislation created new commercial realities that inadvertently spurred new or recast old associations. Nonetheless, it considers corporate identities as an important springboard for assessing the significance of political cooperation in response to the assignat.

The assignat encouraged citizens to rethink commerce-related associations, necessitated new political alliances, and threw guild and trade taxonomies into play before the deputies moved to do so legally or fiscally. I argue that the associations and identities that merchants formed in reaction to assignat legislation changed the fabric of commercial, and therefore socio-economic, relations. Therefore, monetary reform created new "special interest" groups, which threw off classifications delineated by the corporate world. Merchants who shared networks of confidence and the need for usable currency forged horizontal alliances among different trades and vertical alliances within trades. Such associations crossed socio-economic boundaries. For example, retail merchants across trades had a vested interest in small change because they were connected to the point of sale. But shopkeepers and master-artisans who sold their own goods also needed small change to pay workers' wages.[9] Finally, wholesalers, brokers, and retailers of the same good could only efficiently trade if their monetary networks overlapped. Before and after the guilds' end, monetary reform unintentionally reordered commercial society, associations, and representative legitimacy. As the citizens with common commercial interests teamed up, they inadvertently formed groups that foreshadowed the commercial and fiscal categories that the government implemented in the *maximum* (price controls) and the *patente* (commercial licenses).

Monetary reform encouraged classification and socio-economic ordering predicated on utility and commercial interests, not necessarily on economic prowess or occupational

[9] Sonenscher, "Les sans-culottes de l'an II," 1089.

boundaries. In les Halles, promissory note networks and the need for small change united the Dames des Halles and their popular class customers. In this way, the revolutionary monetary situation redrew the lines between merchants and the popular classes, and gave rise to new high-stakes coalitions. The Dames des Halles harnessed the logic of revolutionary pillars of patriotism, work, and utility to appeal to their representatives. The Dames reasoned that if they could not sell their goods for lack of usable currency, they could not adequately provision Paris. The Dames' brokers insisted that "*20 thousand souls* of the most indigent classes" depended on the survival of the fish trade alone.[10]

Merchants found the new system of monetary backing irrevocably enmeshed with questions concerning their socio-cultural position in the nation. Although the physical realities of the assignats dictated the feasibility of monetary exchange in les Halles, the demands from the Dames and their colleagues for policy exemptions, their requests for reform, their emergency appeals, and their offerings of cooperative concessions ultimately concerned wider questions of the responsibilities of the citizens and the state. The merchants' calls prompted citizens to reflect on the utility of merchants to society, the fragile link between merchants' patriotic duty and personal commercial interests, and the position of the nation as arbiter in small trade dynamics. While the Dames asked their representatives to consider their monetary needs through the lens of public utility, both citizens and the state contemplated the duties of each individual as a working citizen. These debates greatly affected the Dames' claims to sovereignty as members of the productive popular classes and stood to influence their political legitimacy beyond the assignats. Chapter four examines the full ramifications of the Dames' identity as citizen-workers. For the

[10] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, annexe le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 726 "mémoire présenté au département" by the 5 factrices, "le commerce de la marée tient l'existence de *vingt mille âmes* de la classe la plus indigente."

purposes of this chapter, we explore how the Dames' self-fashioning as productive members of society enabled them to confront monetary difficulties created by the state.

Within the framework of monetary regeneration, the revolutionaries discussed whom the new system must benefit, who belonged to the sovereign people employing the system, and how the indigent members of the nation fit into this scheme. The revolutionaries moved away from the religiously-spurred Old Regime charity ideals while considering how monetary reform would affect the poor. By 1793, the revolutionaries believed that "charity, oriented upon the spiritual salvation of the donor rather than the material well-being of the recipient, was both an affront to humanity and the basis of tyranny."[11] The revolutionaries demanded that the poor prove that they merited the attentions of the state. The state would assist the poor if they demonstrated their desire to be productive members of the body politic.[12]

While negotiating the adverse effects of monetary reform, the Dames and their allies appealed to the humanity and paternal responsibilities of the state toward its productive, and therefore most sovereign, working citizens.[13] In this light, legislators viewed the currency obstacles of the *working* indigent citizens like those of the Dames des Halles, rather than the completely indigent, as worthy of special consideration. During the conflicts over the assignat, the Dames increasingly abandoned Old Regime models of charity, which had given them their original marketplace advantages. Rather than seeking profitable monetary legislation or the

---

[11] Colin Jones, *Charity and Bienfaisance: The Treatment of the Poor in the Montpellier Region, 1740-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 166.

[12] Although the legislative discussions explicitly concerning state welfare did not directly address monetary reform, the attitudes towards the poor and their work informed both strands of policy making. Alan Forrest argues that "the Revolution consistently decried the concept of charity, seeing the government's role as one of intervention to help those members of the community who were unable to starve off poverty by their own efforts." Without recourse to Church-financed charity, the Dames and other merchants held even higher stakes in the monetary reform which hindered or enabled their business "efforts." According to Forrest, nearly all non-state assistance had collapsed by the mid-1790s. Alan Forrest, *The French Revolution and the Poor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981). ix, 84.

[13] Lisa DiCaprio argues that, for the revolutionaries, the "rights of citizenships" underpinned secular welfare from the centralized state. Lisa DiCaprio, *The Origins of the Welfare State* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2007), 9.

state's economic favors through spiritual justifications, the Dames actively presented themselves as an integral, if sometimes exceptional, component in national credit networks and revolutionary monetary systems. The Dames appealed to their poverty for preferential treatment or economic exemptions, but highlighted their civic patriotism to demand monetary reform. The Dames argued that the poorest citizens stood to lose the most turbulent currency legislation.

The assignat problems opened the door for the Dames des Halles to consolidate their position as the political mouthpiece of the deserving poor on a wider level. Poverty endowed the Dames with the credibility to represent an entire socio-economic swath of the population. In the vein of destitution, the Dames consolidated their own exceptional privilege as well as broadened their power to politically subsume needy citizens into their representative reach.

While creating situational coalitions, the Dames extended their ability to politically represent diverse groups based on shared grievances triggered by revolutionary reform. This chapter argues that monetary reform had unintentional effects on Parisian monetary networks which spurred merchants to form alliances across corporate world. Assignat-triggered alliances foreshadowed how the state later classified merchants based less on occupation and more on purchasing power, selling power, and capital. The Dames were also able to retain the trappings of exceptional socio-economic treatment through appeals to revolutionary charity and augmented their political influence as ambassadors of poor citizens.

This chapter first analyzes how the revolutionaries incorporated currency into the revolutionary project. Next, it examines how Dames des Halles used the assignat and various substitutes in their commercial transactions and in local credit networks. This chapter then probes how, in light of various currency obstacles, the Dames and their allies challenged the deputies to rethink the practical goals of monetary reform. Finally, it asks how Dames' monetary

activism forged, strengthened, and recast associative identities which ultimately underpinned their claims to political legitimacy as representatives for commercial and indigent classes.

Currency as a Choice and a Political Act

The National Assembly used the sales and anticipated-sales of biens nationaux to back the assignats. The deputies hoped this new currency would stabilize trade and mitigate the national debt. Officials envisioned the paper assignat notes as an "equivalent to the issue of circulating land."[14] Therefore, revolutionaries who bought into the assignat system affirmed the Revolution's just ownership of the biens nationaux. They invested their financial faith in the National Assembly. From the assignat's inception, the deputy Cernon predicted that the new currency would indeed "give to all citizens an equal interest in maintaining and defending it [the Constitution]."[15] As citizens passed assignats from one hand to another, the currency became a ubiquitous symbol of the Revolution. The deputies insisted that the notes should properly bear the hallmarks of the nation. Officials even revised the markings according to the political environment.[16] The currency held so much patriotic capital that artist David portrayed Marat sending an assignat to a war widow in his death tub.[17] During Marat's final moments, the assignat visually signaled his revolutionary dedication.

On a more quotidian level, each time a citizen made a sale or a purchase in les Halles, he or she *chose* whether to accept assignats or not. Citizens personally assessed the assignat's value

---

[14] S.E. Harris, *The Assignats*, 12.
[15] Jean Morini-Comby, *Les Assignats: Révolution et Inflation* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925), p 17. "donneront à tous les citoyens un égal intérêt à la [the Constitution] maintenir et à la défendre."
[16] Rebecca Spang, "Making Money in Revolutionary France," History Group Seminar, The University of London Institute in Paris, October 14, 2010; Jean Morini-Comby, *Les Assignats: Révolution et Inflation* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925), 48. To bring the assignat into accord with the monarchy's collapse in August 1792, the legislators redrafted the money's insignia.
[17] Thomas Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 166. Crow argues that the virtuous war widow is present through Marat's letter and donation to contrast with the vicious Corday whose murderous work is alluded to by the bloody knife.

and illustrated their faith in the nation's land holdings. More frequently, citizens decided to accept or decline assignat-backed promissory notes rooted in local credit confidence systems. The assignat reserves of private caisses theoretically backed such promissory notes or *billets de confiance*. For example, beginning in May 1791, one private Parisian company called the Caisse Patriotique issued their own subdivided billets de confiance, which they guaranteed with their large-denomination assignat holdings.[18] Yet, not all merchants eagerly accepted the substitute tender. A month after the Caisse Patriotique opened, Journalist Prudhomme lamented that it was impossible to force any merchants to take its notes and that the merchants' refusal damaged confidence in an already fragile system. He suggested that willing merchants encourage trade by marking their boutique with a sign declaring "here one takes as payment bills of the Caisse Patriotique."[19] While the merchants chose which form of payment they would accept, they implicitly evaluated revolutionary monetary reform schemes as well as the government's ability to regulate private speculation.

Parisian merchants continued to distinguish different forms of currency based on their confidence throughout the Revolution.[20] In March 1796, the government issued currency called "mandats" to bolster the failing assignat system, but the Dames des Halles viewed these notes with even greater suspicion. In April, the Commissaire de Police complained that "at the Halles of Paris one will not sell at all if they hear [the customers] mention the Mandat, [the merchants especially] won't consider it for the purchase of food, all the male and female merchants cry at once all of their foodstuffs' prices in two amounts, one in assignats and the other in silver." The

[18] Jean Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1946), 82.
[19] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 11 juin 1791, n°162. "ici on prend en paiement les billets de la caisse patriotique."
[20] In times of prior monetary instability, merchants had often explicitly, if illegally, stipulated the form of money attached to business contracts. Thomas Sargent and François Velde, *The Big Problem of Small Change*, 329. In 1541, the king had outlawed, without much success, individualized valuations of currency during singular transactions, 206.

police commissioner reported how "the Coalition [of female merchants] becomes General" to team up against unfortunate customers who attempted to pay with mandats. Consequently, the marchandes would either collectively attack the "poor holder of republican Money" or drive him/her under a barrage of insults to the justice of the peace. Flustered and intimidated, the police commissaire requested an armed guard to protect mandat-holders in the marketplace.[21] By accepting or rejecting mandats, assignats, promissory notes, and metal, the Dames and other merchants boldly continued to signal their monetary trust or reticence through each exchange. They thereby personally intervened in currency valuation within local monetary networks.[22]

However, the Dames des Halles recognized the highly symbolic and charged political nature of currency. When the non-edict Dames turned over old tender to the National Assembly during the parasol controversy, their gesture of monetary alignment indicated their deference to the deputies. The Dames' submission at once illustrated their patriotism and their support for Assembly's currency projects. In this way, they called the old coinage that they donated "a double emblem."[23] Along similarly symbolic lines, the Dames sought the National Assembly's permission to create their own modest donation caisse in January 1790. The bouquet-selling Dames of rue Neuve-des Bons-Enfants spoke on behalf of all the Parisian Dames des Halles, asking "to establish a patriotic caisse in their hands, which they would deposit into the general caisse." The Dames insisted on creating their own donation caisse, literally "in their hands," before depositing their donation in the national treasury. Their financially superfluous request

---

[21] Archives nationales F^{11} 1185, Approvisionnement de Paris. Correspondance from the Commissaire de Police de la Section de Brutus au Ministre de l'intérieur, nº 8254, le 9 floréal l'an 4 (April 28, 1796) "aux halles de Paris on ne vend point entendre parler de Mandat aucunement pour l'achat des Comestibles, tout (sic) les Marchands et Marchandes crient a tue (sic) cette toutes leurs denrées a (sic) deux prix savoir en assignats ou en argent." "la Coalition [of female merchants] devient Generale" "pauvre porteuse de Monnoye républicaine".
[22] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 11 juin 1791, nº162, 647.
[23] J. Madival and E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860; recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés,* le 21 mai 1792, au matin, Series I, Volume 43, (Paris; Dupont, 1867-1875), 641, "un double emblème."

reflected their assumption that monetary networks operated in a local context. Accordingly to the Dames' logic, the origin of the tender contributed to its value. The Dames viewed currency as both a decentralized and a national phenomenon in this framework. When they would eventually unify the two caisses, the Dames would physically and figuratively merge their funds and goals with those of the nation.[24]

Unlike micro-credit networks in which individual parties could work out their accounts in civil court,[25] billet de confiance networks depended far more on the *collective* confidence of the local community. While questionable currency circulated through the marketplace, monetary distrust caused prices to fluctuate. The fallout from even minor currency problems – like isolated counterfeits – dangerously resonated through entire commercial networks like les Halles. Therefore, when Citoyenne Roudelle, a Dame des Halles, accused another, Citoyenne Fasche, of being "made of lead [a deceiving person], a thief, a maker of false assignats," seven other Dames des Halles lined up to testify before the Justice of the Peace. Most disputes that citizens brought before the Justice of the Peace involved four witnesses or less. In this case, the number of witnesses signaled how deeply the insults affected the community. Fasche's individual honor and credit were at stake, but so too was the stability of the local monetary network. [26] Potential counterfeits threatened to corrupt the entire system of trade. The assignat's growing pains heightened the interdependency of fragile commercial exchanges.

---

[24] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires,* le 23 janvier 1790, au soir, Series 1, Volume 11: 295. "établir une caisse patriotique entre leurs mains, qu'elles verseront dans la caisse générale." Rebecca Spang also argues that communities continued to focus on their personal confidence in individuals who issued assignat-backed promissory notes despite the national monetary system. Individuals continued to concentrate intensely on local confidence networks to conceptualize and evaluate national currency. Rebecca Spang, "Money and Liberty in the French Revolution," (Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Western Society for French History, November 12, 2011).

[25] Julie Hardwick has studied civil court cases in the seventeenth century to conclude that individuals participated in "litigation communities" to forge familial credit in local networks. Julie Hardwick*, Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[26] Archives de Paris, D.4 U^1 28, nº357, Justice de Paix, Citoyenne Fasce contre Citoyenne Roudelle, le 12 thermidor an V (July 30, 1797). "une Plombeuse, une voleurd (sic), une faiseuse de faux assignats."

Creating Usable Currency: The Caisses and the Promissory Note System

Since the government initially only printed assignats in denominations of 1000, 300, and 200 livres, exchange caisses played a vital role in allowing trade under the sum of 200 livres to continue.[27] Run by municipalities, societies, and private companies, the caisses issued their own billets de confiance of small denominations backed by their assignat holdings. Some caisses made a profit by charging a fee for the conversion.[28] This decentralized system of small notes mixed public trust in national assignats with confidence in local purveyors of credit. While using promissory notes, citizens had to have confidence in the equity of the biens nationaux as well as in the security of local monetary networks. The assignat banknotes and the corresponding billets de confiance attempted to decouple currency from any intrinsic metal value. The assignat and promissory note system appealed to financial companies: since "convertible tokens are interest-free IOUS," the caisses could speculate with their own promissory notes.[29] In contrast to the private billets de confiance, the assignat had partially liquefied backing (in the form of national land already purchased) and backing from tangible assets (in the form of land yet-to-be-sold). Therefore, the state issued assignats to take advantage of the interest-free component of the IOU formula. In contrast, the *billets de confiance* from exchange caisses were supposed to have liquefied backing in the form of assignat reserves. The direct conversion of assignats into billets de confiance was not supposed to provide the private issuer with interest-free loans, which could encourage speculation. Rather, the government granted private exchange companies the ability to

[27] S.E. Harris, *The Assignats*, 24.
[28] F. Hincker, "Billets de Confiance," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, Albert Soboul, ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006) 123-124
[29] This definition of exchange tokens comes from Thomas Sargent and François Velde. For more on shifting monetary doctrines in early modern Europe, especially those concerning banknotes, see Thomas Sargent and François Velde, *The Big Problem of Small Change*, 330-331.

circulate their own billets de confiance on par with their assignats reserves. By directly converting assignats to billets de confiance, caisses and their clients could use their money in denominations below the "small" 200 livre assignat note.

The exchange caisses provided essential services for retail merchants in les Halles and elsewhere who dealt transactions valued far below the available assignat denominations. Retail merchants, brokers, wholesalers, and consumers traded billets de confiance to carry out daily trade. The assignat system brought into relief the shared interests among the various groups in les Halles whose access to the notes enabled or crippled their commerce. It quickly became evident that the new currency system relied too heavily on large denominations to meet the demands of everyday exchange in the markets.

A royalist pamphleteer attacked the inadequacies of the assignat system in 1791 by drawing on the Dames' image. In a convincing dialogue, poissardes Martinet and Margoton find themselves trapped with a 25 livre assignat which they are unable to practically subdivide. After they pay for their dinner at a guinguette with the 25 livre note, the owner replies that he does not have smaller denominations. Consequently, he refuses to give Martinet and Margoton their change. In the rough dialect of les Halles, Martinet complains of the "misery" caused by the paper money. She protests that "now, if I are (sic) hungry, it will be necessary to go two leagues [to the guinguette] in order to have dinner."[30] Another customer laments that he could only exchange his 25 livre note for smaller sous by paying 3 livres for the conversion.[31] The pamphleteer easily illustrated how the lack of small assignats weighed most heavily on the popular classes.

---

[30] BnF Lb39 9938, "Grand événement arrivé à un patriote de la Halle, à cause de l'échange d'un assignat. Grande difficulté à ce sujet. Formation d'un club aux Halles," 4. This pamphlet is undated, but since it discusses the king's sanction of the constitution and other National Assembly projects, we can assume that the pamphlet dates to 1791. "misère," "à présent si j'avons faim, faudra faire deux lieues pour allé dîné."

[31] BnF Lb39 9938, "Grand événement arrivé à un patriote de la Halle, à cause de l'échange d'un assignat," 8.

In September 1790, the sectional assembly of les Halles sent a petition to the Committee of Finances demanding "the establishment of a patriotic caisse for the exchange of 25 livre bills." The section pointed out that the circulation of billets de confiance in 100 livres and 50 livres denominations had not sufficed. The citizens of les Halles also argued that the markets required a smaller denomination of 25 livres which their proposed caisse would exchange without "discrimination" or an interest-based conversion fee.[32] In 1790, the Dames would still have to sell 25 pounds of fresh butter from Chartres, 55 white herrings, or 146 cheese bricks from Neufchâtel to equal just one 25 livre note.[33] However, any assignat subdivisions would facilitate their credit networks.

The assignat difficulties quickly united a diverse spectrum of merchants in les Halles who faced the similar currency problems. The merchants' responses to challenges posed by monetary reform cut sharply across the traditional boundaries of activism by occupation. Rather than petition the state as distinct trade groups, the merchants framed their requests for exceptional monetary legislation by referring to their collective public utility and the nation's wider interests. The merchants cast aside their representative units of the corporate world to petition as a new socio-economic entities tied together by common currency demands. Following the precedent of the Halles section petition, more citizens presented their monetary grievances to the Assembly.

In September 1790, only nine months after the assignat's birth and five months before the deputies launched their attack on occupational corporations, 93 various merchants from across

---

[32] Archives nationales (hereafter AN) D VI 8, n° 70, « Délibération de la section du Marché-des-Innocents, réclamant une émission suffisante d'assignats pour le remboursement de la dette exigible, émission qui comprendrait un certain nombre de petit billets de 100, 50 et 25 livres, et l'établissement d'une caisse patriotique pour l'échange des billets de 25 livres, to the committee of finance ," le 9 sept 1790, "l'établissement d'une caisse patriotique pour l'échange des billets de 25 livres."

[33] I calculated these examples based on the survey of 1790 prices that the Department assembled to prepare the Maximum. In 1790, fresh butter from Chartres was 1 livre per pound, a barrel of 120 white herrings was 55 livres, and cheese from Neufchâtel was 2 livre 5 sols per dozen. Archives de la Préfecture de Police, D^B 387,"Tableau du maximum Des Denrées et Marchandises, Stipulées dans l'article premier de la Loi du 29 septembre 1793, l'an II de la République Française."

Paris, the majority of whom worked in retail, signed two petitions to the National Assembly shortly after the sectional assembly's deliberation in les Halles. The merchants demanded that the National Assembly permit the Caisse d'Escompte to emit 30 million livres in smaller assignat denominations. Although the merchants individually signed the two petitions, by the time they drafted the second petition, they corralled their signatures under the collective title "the retail merchants of Paris." Moreover, they began to use the language of a cooperative body. They referred to their first petition as a request which they had signed "in harmony with many of our colleagues" and that they responded to "the general difficulty, which makes itself felt in *all branches of trade.*" (my emphasis)[34] Although mostly retailers, the merchants lacked similarities beyond the commercial predicament they encountered. Nonetheless, the monetary situation compelled them to imagine and talk about themselves using the language of a definitive, if expansive, community.

The merchants asked the Assembly to extend their emergency plan of issuing 200 and 300 livre assignats to a Caisse d'Escompte (exchange bank) to be converted into smaller, and more practical, billets de confiance. The merchants testified that "the rarity of small bills" greatly harmed retail commerce and, consequently, trade as a whole. The merchants reasoned that circulating more small notes would rectify the potentially "fatal" "stagnation" of commerce.[35] The merchants explained that, in order to sell their goods, they had to give credit to clients who said they could not make purchases because they lacked small notes. However, customers dodged repaying the merchants when their credit came due and used the excuse that they lacked

[34] "Seconde lettre des marchands en détail, de Paris, à MM. les administrateurs de la caisse d'escompte. Paris, le 14 septembre 1790." Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires,* le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume 19: p. 6. "les marchands en détail de Paris," "la gêne générale qui se fait sentir dans *toutes les branches de commerce*." (my emphasis)

[35] "Pétition adressée à l'Assemblée nationale par plusieurs commerçants en détail, de Paris, et renvoyée par elle au comité des finances." Ont signé: MM. Berthellemot, Degland, Briot, Brunet, Bigeon, et quatre-vingt-huit autres dont les signatures sont à la minute, Reprinted in Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires,* le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume 19: 4. (the caisse d'escompte), "la rareté des petits billets."

the appropriate denominations.[36] Even before the 1791 Le Chapelier law wiped away the remaining vestiges of the corporate world, the merchants understood that their mutual monetary interests surpassed occupational divisions and they organized themselves accordingly.

The retail merchants highlighted how their practical currency requests stemmed from personal yet patriotic interests, how their trade underwrote the stability of the frail revolutionary economy, and how their commerce ensured the physical survival of the populace by maintaining the food supply. The retail merchants asserted that, regardless of the treacherous impact of monetary reform on their business, because it "was turning for the advantage of the Revolution, they had supported it with courage and patience."[37] In their second petition to the Assembly, the merchants noted that the exchange caisses had given "a just preference" to National Guardsmen who were traveling through the provinces by distributing small notes to them, but that this patriotic policy contributed to a shortage of such notes in Paris.[38] Therefore, the merchants made a case for new exceptions based on their own unique "service" to the nation. They insisted that since monetary obstacles to their trade directly affected "the interest of commerce" and "public safety," their occupational concerns were intricately connected to the "question of public good."[39]

In their survey of the small change situation, the administrators of the Caisse d'Escompte had difficulty talking about the group of petitioners who did not belong to any firm corporate body. In their report to the National Assembly, the Caisse administrators awkwardly referred to

---

[36] "Pétition adressée à l'Assemblée nationale par plusieurs commerçants en détail, de Paris, et renvoyée par elle au comité des finances," *Archives Parlementaires,* le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume 19: 5.
[37] "Pétition adressée à l'Assemblée nationale par plusieurs commerçants en détail, de Paris, et renvoyée par elle au comité des finances," *Archives Parlementaires,* le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume 19: 4, "tournait à l'avantage de la Révolution, ils l'ont supportée avec courage et patience."
[38] "Pétition adressée à l'Assemblée nationale par plusieurs commerçants en détail, de Paris, et renvoyée par elle au comité des finances," *Archives Parlementaires*, le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series 1, Volume 19: 5.
[39] "Seconde lettre écrite par MM. les administrateurs de la caisse d'escompte à M. le président du comité des finances." Reprinted in Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series 1, Volume 19: 6, "l'intérêt du commerce" "la sûreté publique," "question du bien public."

the retail merchants as "actionnaires," or members of a commercial/trading company, and discussed their identities in an ambiguous sense.[40] Without being able to explain specifically why, the Caisse officials reported that "their [the actionnaires'] patriotism and their personal interest are sure guarantees of their acquiescence to an operation useful for the public, and which can become useful for them too." The administrators reported that they had no way to "take their [the actionnaires'] vow on this assumption, in a general assembly, because the convocation of actionnaires does not appear to us either prudent or without inconvenient aspects."[41] Officials hesitated to assemble hostile petitioners who could act aggressively, but they also seemed confused as to how to interact with such a heterogeneous group by Old Regime standards. The retail merchants did not have any standing corporation to which the government could respond. The merchants' shared commercial interests and monetary networks alone united the traditionally disparate group of retailers. Nonetheless, the merchants' persistent cooperation and collective language points to their evolving associative identity that surpassed established trade divisions.

The Assembly's Committee of Finances agreed with the administrators of the Caisse d'Escompte that more small notes would be "useful" to commerce and would help shore up quickly faltering systems of credit.[42] As a result of the merchants' appeals and the Committee of

---

[40] The 1798 French Academy Dictionary defines "actionnaires" as "subst. Celui ou celle qui a une ou plusieurs actions dans une Compagnie de commerce. *Les Actionnaires de la Compagnie des Indes*." "Actionnaires," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), Project ARTFL, http://artflproject.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.

[41] "Seconde lettre écrite par MM. les administrateurs de la caisse d'escompte à M. le président du comité des finances," *Archives Parlementaires*, le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series 1, Volume 19:7. "Leur [the actionnaires'] patriotisme et leur intérêt personnel sont de sûrs garants de leur aquiescement à une opération utile pour le public, et qui peut le devenir à eux-mêmes," "prendre leur [the actionnaires'] vœu à cet égard, en assemblée générale, parce que la convocation des actionnaires ne nous a paru ni prudente ni sans inconvénients."

[42] "Seconde lettre écrite par MM. les administrateurs de la caisse d'escompte à M. le président du comité des finances," reprinted in Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume 19: 6, "utile."

Finances's recommendation, the National Assembly issued the 30 million more assignats to circulate in smaller denominations as billets de confiance.[43]

The End of the Corporate World and New Forms of Collective Petitioning

The d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws of February and June 1791 opened a new chapter in associative identities and collective petitioning for the Dames des Halles and other merchants. Before 1791, occupational corporations were economic, political, and legal units. In fact, prior to a 1789 law that reorganized municipal administration, guilds had formed the basic building blocks of the city governments.[44] As markers of legal entities, corporate bodies like guilds and confraternities continued to interact with the state during the early Revolution. In hierarchical trade disputes, guild masters squared off against their journeymen in court. In other instances, guilds sued one another and solicited the state to protect and consolidate their commercial privileges. Within the context of tax reform in February 1791, the deputies passed the d'Allarde law which abolished the guilds and proposed an open commercial license system in its place. Under the regenerated system, each citizen could freely pursue any occupation he/she chose as long as the citizen bought the appropriate *patente* or commercial license. The deputies reasoned that the guilds had endowed a few individuals with special legal privileges at the expense of others' occupational liberty. But no institution apart from the state should regulate and impose restrictions on a trade.[45] In June 1791, the deputies disavowed the other half of the corporate trade equation by outlawing confraternities and forbidding workers to assembly as an

[43] "Projet de décret présenté par le comité des finances," reprinted in Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 16 septembre 1790, au matin, Series 1, Volume 19: 7.
[44] Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Abolition of the Guilds in France, "150.
[45] Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Abolition of the Guilds in France,"149.

occupational group. In this way, workers would be unable to collectively organize against their now isolated masters.[46]

When the deputies outlawed the guilds and all occupational corporations, merchants looked beyond these corporate bodies as cohesive for group action and as default intermediaries with the state. Citizens had to reconfigure their political alliances to maintain strength in numbers within the new legal framework. By dismantling the guilds and banning corporate bodies from submitting collective petitions, the deputies indirectly encouraged merchants cooperate across trade and occupational boundaries. However, it should be noted that not all merchants readily abandoned the corporate system to forge new cross-occupational alliances. Gail Bossenga has argued that, unlike in Paris, the merchants of Lille sought protect their commercial interests ad integrate revolutionary principles into their guilds rather than jettisoning corporate bodies.[47]

As a result of the Le Chapelier law, Parsian merchants' political alliances had to transcend the specter of privilege or the coercive special interests that the deputies had tried to jettison. The deputies had feared that guilds divided society by special interests.[48] Occupational corporations also acted as mediating bodies and could prevent individual citizens from directly interacting with the state on their own terms. Such entities created an ambiguous threat to the general will by underscoring special interest groups within the supposedly indivisible nation. However, when the Dames des Halles joined forces with their brokers, other merchants, or consumers, they transcended charges of corporate identity. The Dames portrayed themselves as mouthpieces of the indigent classes in order to broaden their legitimacy without breaking the

[46] Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Abolition of Guilds in France,"152.
[47] Gail Bossenga, *The Politics of Privilege: Old regime and Revolution in Lille* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[48] Vardi, "The Abolition of the Guilds during the French Revolution," 715.

restrictions on collective petitioning. The Dames bolstered their monetary demands by linking them to the concerns of the popular classes, arguing for exceptional treatment through the revolutionary discourse of the deserving, working poor, and insisting on the primacy of the Parisian monetary networks in the nation's survival. Citizens used such heterogeneous alliances to protect their common commercial interests such as the need for small change or to protect local caisses and confidence networks. Through innovative alliances that traversed the corporate world, merchants influenced revolutionary monetary reform, protected their workaday trade, and ultimately reconfigured socio-economic relations before *and* after the d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws.

Commercial and Political Alliances: Crashing Confidence, Monetary Networks, and Socio-economic Identities

By April 1791, the waves of monetary confusion that pulsed through les Halles and other markets threatened to collapse the bankers' commerce along with economic networks that traversed different regions. Promissory notes maintained their value based on consumer confidence in the signature of the original issuer as well as trust in the signatures of the notes' successive holders. With the proliferation of different issuing caisses, denominations of notes, and various coinage, backing signatures became less and less familiar to users as the billets de confiance travelled through networks of trade away from their place of origin.[49] Since the wholesalers came from the provinces to supply les Halles, the gradual loss of trust in non-local promissory notes directly affected the ability of the Dames des Halles, their factrices, and other retail merchants in les Halles to secure their supplies.

[49] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 17 avril 1791, au matin, Series 1, Volume 25 : 172-174.

In May 1791, a private company established the Caisse Patriotique and appeared poised to offer some critical relief to the practical note shortage. Its services quickly became indispensable for the Dames des Halles and other merchants. Until April 1791, the smallest assignat denomination had been 50 livres. Although the government planned to begin printing 5 livre denominations in May, it could not keep up with the soaring demand.[50] Therefore, the Caisse Patriotique issued assignat-backed notes in 5, 10, 20, and 25 livre denominations to alleviate the small change shortage in Paris. In order to facilitate the Caisse Patriotique's vital project, the National Assembly decreed that caisses that printed and circulated billets de confiance under 25 livres would not have to pay the stamp tax for the paper.[51] The exchange service proved to be so popular that the Caisse Patriotique initially had to set a limit on 50 livres per person. Even then, caisse administrators could barely keep up with the intense demand of people flocking to their door.[52] In order to encourage individuals to use its other banking services three months later, the Caisse Patriotique offered to waive denomination exchange fees for anyone who opened a bank account. *La Chronique de Paris* announced that the Caisse Patriotique would continue to respond to the great need for small change and it even "will incessantly emit notes of 50 sols" (50 sols = 2.5 livres)![53] However, in exempting the exchange caisses from stamp taxes, the government inadvertently gave billets de confiance "a quasi-official air." In the popular imagination, the assignat notes and the *billets de confiance* became more interdependent and less recognizable as distinct entities.[54]

---

[50] S.E. Harris, *The Assignats*, 26.
[51] "Décret sur les billets de confiance," 19 mai 1791, in Georges Depeyrot, ed., *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution (1789-1803)* (Paris: Maison Florange, 1996), 95.
[52] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, "Instruction sur la caisse patriotique," *La Chronique de Paris*, le 26 mai 1791, Supplement au nº146.
[53] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 5, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, Supplement au n° 231, le 19 aout 1791, "émettra incessamment des billets de cinquante sols."
[54] Jean Morini-Comby, *Les Assignats: Révolution et Inflation* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925), 38, "un air quasi officiel."

The company that ran the Caisse Patriotique created it primarily with the capital's working classes in mind. *La Chronique de Paris* reported that the Caisse Patriotique strove to "relieve the artisan's and worker's demands of primary necessity," that is, to provide them with small change to enable their everyday trade. Therefore, the Caisse Patriotique privileged retail merchants like the Dames des Halles and other workers during the practical currency shortage. The Caisse's mission also stressed the patriotic value of the Parisian working population and equated their needs with those of the wider public. *La Chronique de Paris* asserted that the small note shortage was "becoming each day more troublesome for the laboring classes of citizens, it is pressing to bring a remedy to this public unhappiness; & and an aid… becomes a duty for the good citizens."[55] The Caisse Patriotique fulfilled this "duty" by specifically catering to the working popular classes while earning their profit. Therefore, the Caisse Patriotique supported labor and laboring individuals to spotlight its useful and patriotic intentions.

The Caisse Patriotique's focus on the popular classes reflects how different substitutes for the assignat, such as billets de confiance or coins from different societies, circulated within various trade networks. As caisses printed different denominations of billets de confiance to meet the needs of certain groups, the revolutionary monetary system became a touchstone of associative identity for individuals who traded at similar economic levels. Although the assignat backed all of these subsystems, it helped to expose previously latent group identities by revealing common monetary needs and socio-economic circumstances. As the deputies implemented currency reform and the populace responded to the assignats with promissory note systems, the

[55] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, Supplement au N°146, jeudi 26 mai 1791, "Instruction sur la caisse patriotique," le 26 mai 1791. To complement the goals of the Caisse Patriotique, another caisse opened in July 1791 to exchange 5 livre assignats for small monnaie. Its services were so popular that the caisse restricted each individual to exchanging one 5-livre assignat for smaller change per day. Jean Morini-Comby, *Les Assignats: Révolution et Inflation* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925), 56. "soulager l'artisan & l'ouvrier dans leurs besoins de première nécessité," "devenant chaque jour plus pénible pour la classes laborieuse des citoyens, il est pressant de porter remède à ce malheur public; & un secours … devient un devoir pour les bons citoyens."

revolutionaries unintentionally subdivided the population into socio-economic segments delineated by the shared denominations they used in mutual trade. Therefore, the assignats tied the Dames des Halles more closely to their brokers, their wholesalers, and their consumers at the level of physical markers of exchange. The assignat consolidated political interests vis-à-vis monetary policies. The quest for small change forged horizontal associations among the Dames des Halles and other retail merchants of different trades as was evident in their September 1790 petition for 25 livre denominations.

The Maison de Secours: Contending with Counterfeits and Negotiating Solutions in Local Monetary Networks

In the similar vein of relieving the currency shortage, the Maison de Secours catered to the needs of the Dames des Halles and other Parisian retail merchants by offering to liquefy tangible assets. This caisse provided merchants the much-needed opportunity to turn their possessions into capital, and it offered them "secours" by acting as a proxy service. Despite the name's charitable overtones, the Maison de Secours conducted its business for profit. In March 1791, the newly-established Maison des Secours began "to accept furniture and household items in order to facilitate their prompt sale."[56] However, the Maison de Secours truly became a major player in the Parisian monetary market when it, like the Caisse Patriotique, began to emit its own billets de confiance as small change in the fall of 1791. The Maison de Secours maintained that the exchange services responded to "the solicitations of the public, notably the heads of manufacturing and the Dames des Halles." As early as November 1791, the Maison de Secours supplied the Dames des Halles, other retail merchants, and their customers with small notes for

[56] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II (Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Sociales Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1941), 73-74. "recevoir des meubles et effets mobiliers pour en faciliter une vente prompte."

everyday commerce.[57] Yet, within a month, counterfeit billets of 40 sols marked with the Maison's name circulated throughout the city.[58] The Maison's billets de confiance and their assignat backing became a pivotal and volatile component in the relationship between the Dames des Halles, who dealt primarily in the billets, and their provincial suppliers, who loathed the Parisian system of confidence.[59]

Despite the state's best intentions, the monetary confusion only became amplified as different societies issued more and more promissory notes to provide subdivisions of the large assignat billets. Many caisses attempted to take advantage of the opportunity to speculate. In the capital alone, Parisian merchants and consumers navigated a maze of billets de confiance issued by 63 distinct societies.[60]

Moreover, counterfeiters began to profit more and more readily from copied billets de confiance. Counterfeit billets of the Caisse Patriotique, which varied from the originals in color and signatures, circulated through the markets in November 1791.[61] A marchande de légumes, Michelle Feuillerade, and Barthélemy Bureau, a jardinier fleuriste, faced criminal charges for using a fake billet copied from the Caisse Patriotique. The billet was marked as 20 livres but was misleadingly tinted yellow, which corresponded to a different amount.[62]

---

[57] Elphège Boursin and Augustin Challamel, "Maison de Secours," *Dictionnaire de la Révolution française: Institutions, hommes et faits* (Paris: Jouvet et Cie, 1893), 458. The small Caisse Lefèvre, Lesage et Cie which opened to exchange assignats for small money coins on 29 May 1792, also justified its establishment as a response "aux sollicitations du public, notamment des chefs des manufactures et des dames de la Halle." Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 158.

[58] Jean Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française*, 83.

[59] For example, deputies from Chartres arrived at the Legislative Assembly in February 1792 to complain that the populace was worried by merchants who came to town with only Parisian billets de confiance, mostly from the Maison de Secours. Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 85.

[60] F. Hincker, "Billets de Confiance," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, Albert Soboul, ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006) 123-124.

[61] Jean Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française*, 82.

[62] AN Z^3 85, 28 décembre 1791- 30 avril 1792, "Procédure instruit au 5^e Tribunal criminel contre Barthélemy Bureau et Michelle Feullerade."

In les Halles especially, the small change shortage compounded the problem of counterfeit currency. When Dame Robert, a marchande de légumes, attempted to repay her 25-livre debt to Dame Maillot, another marchande de légumes, she partly paid the sum with billets of 50 sols marked as the Caisse Patriotique. Dame Robert relied on such small denominations to conduct her modest trade. Dame Maillot immediately noted that the billets were counterfeit and delivered them to the Justice of the Peace. However, Dame Robert testified that other marchandes had already circulated the billets as practical money. The police, therefore, would have to unravel a monetary community to uncover the counterfeits' origins.[63]

A few months later, more forgeries rocked the volatile currency situation in les Halles. A counterfeit fiasco related to the Maison de Secours in name, if not always in action, began to undermine the trust in commercial networks between the provinces and les Halles. In January 1792, a printer in les Halles named Libarre decided to take advantage of his tools to produce 150,000 counterfeit livres in the form of 2 livre notes under the mast of the Maison de Secours.[64] Just around the corner from the fruit market, the police discovered his stockpile of false bills and learned that some Dames des Halles had knowingly circulated the counterfeit currency. To avoid possible detection in open trade, these Dames used the counterfeit bills to buy fruit and vegetables from their suppliers from the countryside under the cover of night.[65] Two weeks later, *La Chronique de Paris* praised the provincial wholesalers, "who bring us the fruits and vegetables that we need," but warned them that the Maison de Secours itself could be involved in currency duplicity. The journal decried that the Maison itself inconsistently used colors corresponding to different denomination amounts. Parisian retail merchants could take advantage

[63] Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) D.4 U^1 23, nº413 Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, Procès-verbal : Dame Robert contre Dame Millot, 20 décembre 1791.
[64] Jean Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française*, 83.
[65] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 6, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 13 janvier 1792, nº 13. Bouchary attests that the police arrested some implicated Dames des Halles along with the printer.

of provincial wholesale merchants who, potentially unable to read, relied on color to recognize the notes' values.[66]

The looming failure of the Maison de Secours threatened both the supply and sale vectors in the Dames' trade networks. Consequently, the Dames des Halles offered to the deputies to incur losses on the Maison's over-extended billets in order to prevent the entire collapse of the promissory notes on which they so heavily relied. Their proposition reveals how some Dames understood the dynamics of the revolutionary monetary experiment through their transactions. Their plan also illustrates their locally-centered theories of the valuation of tender. When the Maison de Secours nearly fell into bankruptcy and newspapers reported that its director fled the city during the night, Femme Gond of the Palais Royal neighborhood appeared at the bar of the Assembly. She offered a proposal on how to save the Maison's monetary system that had made trade feasible for les Halles merchants.[67] While buying her supplies from the Dames des Halles, Femme Gond had discussed a collaborative solution to the setbacks caused by the Maison's imminently-defunct notes. Gond proposed to the Dames that they continue to use the Maison's notes for trade with their customers and among each other, but that they reduce the face value of each note by two liards with each successive exchange. Each Dame would gradually absorb the losses through successive transactions until the billets de confiance were completely phased out of their monetary network. Apart from the Maison's billets, few other small change options existed, and the other forms available would prove far from sufficient to fill the enormous void.

---

[66] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 6, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 29 janvier 1792, nº29. In November 1791, counterfeiters had used the same tactic of switching green and red paper for false bills of 5 and 20 livres which they marked as belonging to the Caisse Patriotique. Bouchery, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs,* 82. "qui nous apportent les fruits & les légumes dont nous avons besoin."

[67] AN C 147, n°218, "Lettre de la femme Gond, veuve Boulliaud, au président de l'Assemblée législative, représentant que les craintes manifestées par elle à M. Camus, lors de l'établissement de la Caisse patriotique, se réalisent malheureusement, et rapportant la conversation qu'elle a tenue la veille avec beaucoup de femmes de la Halle, au sujet de la banqueroute de la Maison de secours et du départ du sieur Guillaume, ainsi que le moyen qu'elle avait proposé pour ramener à 20 sols la valeur des billets de 40 sols, en faisant supporter à chaque détenteur une perte de 2 liards, qui serait indiquée par une barre au verso du billet," le 31 mars 1792.

Therefore, Dames des Halles remained willing to use the Maison's notes so as not to lose the complete value of their billets while shifting to other forms of assignat-backed tender. The Dames agreed to mark each billet with small bars to track the reduction of each note's value. In doing so, the Dames participated in physically reconstructing the capital held by the billets and inscribed their revaluation on the notes during each marketplace transaction. The Dames with whom Femme Gond consulted promised to keep circulating the Maison's notes until they could be withdrawn and replaced by the 10 sols coins frantically produced by the Parisian sections. Femme Gonde observed that Dames supported this strategy since "they would be able to still live; that would be better than nothing at all."[68]

Transforming Local Monetary Networks into National Communities: Reigning in the Caisses and Small Change Assignats

It is evident that the Dames, like all citizens, affected revolutionary currency reform through their collective confidence in the government's system. However, the Dames played an equally crucial role in the monetary projects by using private assignat-backed currency entangled in *local* credit systems. Each transaction in les Halles involved more players than a Dame, a broker, and a consumer; the assignat and its corresponding socio-economic networks of promissory notes became essential factors at the negotiation table. The Revolution permeated trade relationships and collective imaginings through the assignats, and every exchange in les Halles became inadvertently charged with the various hopes and fears associated with revolutionary regeneration. How could citizens best participate in stable, honest monetary transactions? How could these trades mirror how citizens cooperated in a transparent society

[68] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 31 mars 1792, Series 1, Volume 41: 104 "elles pourraient toujours vivre; qu'il valait mieux cela que rien du tout."

writ-large, across regional confidence networks? The serious crisis in billets de confiance that the Dames des Halles and the popular classes felt in 1792 forced the Assembly to debate what the long term goals of their monetary reform should be. Faced with the possible collapse of the means for barter in the capital, the deputies increasingly considered workaday implications of revolutionary currency and the tensions mounting between regions because of subnetworks of credit. Theoretically, the deputies considered the money's role in resolving the national debt and its place in the social contract between citizens and the state.

The confusion of coin sous, leather sous, and note sous from the Old Regime, new caisse-issued billets de confiance, and counterfeit notes threatened to overwhelm everyday retail trade in Paris. On behalf of the Extraordinary Committee on Finances, Deputy Cartier-Douineau testified that the National Assembly had to produce "a money useful to the people," whose meager transactions still fell far below the smallest 5 livre assignat in circulation. He attested that speculative strategies of the private caisses crippled retail merchants and their customers who needed stable small change. Therefore, in December 1791, Deputy Cartier-Douineau convinced the Assembly that it could only prevent abuse by issuing official assignat billets of 10, 15, and 50 sous (.5, .75, and 2.5 livre respectively).[69] Practical assignat denominations would decrease Parisian's reliance on the caisses. Moreover, if individuals could redeem assignats for billets de confiance in small sums, it would discourage the caisses from over-extending their holdings. However, the National Assembly took a long time to put their plan into action.

Paradoxically, the merchants of les Halles bristled at the Assembly's idea to directly issue assignats in small denominations. According to the *Annales monarchiques*, the merchants feared that their billets de confiance from the Caisse Patriotique and the Maison de Secours would "no

[69] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 12 décembre 1791, au matin, Series I, Volume 36: 37
1 livre = 20 sous =240 deniers "une monnaie utile au peuple."

longer enjoy any confidence, or any credit." The merchants shrewdly worried that the government would also be unable to replace the sheer amount of small change put into circulation by the Caisse Patriotique and the Maison de Secours.[70] Yet, due to problems of authentication, over-distribution, forgery, and the local valuation of the billets de confiance, the deputies preferred the assignat, provided that it could be circulated in denominations practical for small scale trade.[71]

As the government attempted to address the usable change shortage by supplying more assignats, the billets de confiance began to quickly lose esteem as a cooperative system and increasingly appeared as a troublesome rival system to the official currency. Immediately following the near collapse of the Maison de Secours, the National Assembly decreed that the municipal governments must audit the accounts of the private caisses, that these caisses could no longer print new billets de confiance, and that only caisses directly run by the municipalities could emit new billets de confiance.[72]

Unfortunately for the Dames des Halles, the Maison de Secours earned top honors as most over-extended offender and egregious rival to the assignats. Nevertheless, the Assembly needed the cooperation of the Dames and the working classes to reign in the threatening Maison billets and throw their confidence behind small change assignats for everyday trade. Despite the major confidence setbacks in the late winter of 1792, the small change from the Maison de Secours remained critical to enabling exchange between les Halles and the provinces, as well as within the markets themselves. Therefore, the Maison and their customers faced a major

---

[70] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 28-29. "ne jouiront plus d'aucune confiance, d'aucun crédit."

[71] S.E. Harris, *The Assignats*, 25- 26. Many of the Parisian caisses issued far more billets de confiance than they could back. The Caisse Patriotique had a reserve of 5 million assignats in April 1792, but they had issued 17.5 million livres in billets de confiance.

[72] "Décret sur la vérification des caisses patriotiques ou de secours," 30 mars 1792, in *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution*, Depevrot ed., 174-175.

challenge when, in April 1792, the government intervened to prevent the Maison from emitting more notes than their assignat holdings. The worried Assembly ordered the Maison de Secours to stamp all their circulating bills to ensure their backing. Due to the large numbers of Parisians who relied on the Maison's credit system, the mayor of Paris implored the populace to only seek reimbursement for their old notes gradually. At the same time, the continued influx of counterfeit billets marked with the Maison's name widened the devastating gap between the company's holdings and their promissory notes in circulation.[73] The future of the Maison de Secours and their billets de confiance looked bleak. However, the state was not yet poised to offer an alternative monetary network that would not decimate popular systems of credit.

The Caisse de Commerce: Shared Monetary Interests of Merchants and the "Deserving" Poor

The Dames' other recourse to tradable notes, albeit in 25 livre denominations, relied on the Caisse de Commerce. In December 1791, the National Assembly allowed a network of privately owned offices called the Caisse de Commerce to act as a discount bank "to favor the merchants and the artisans."[74] Rather than make direct change for larger assignats, the Caisse de Commerce advertised that it would encourage trade "by facilitating ways private individuals could put into value [liquefy] their effects that they could not circulate [trade]." Merchants often sold their goods on credit, but this left them with little cash to pay their own debt and buy new supplies. Therefore, the Caisse de Commerce offered to buy all solvable belongings, including contracted debts owed by clients to merchants, for a "modest tax" of 6 percent per year. In return, the Caisse issued their own redeemable billets de commerce that the merchant could

[73] Jean Bouchary, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française*, 84.
[74] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome I, 105. "favoriser les marchands et les artisans."

immediately use as tokens in trade.[75] Bypassing usury and heavy speculation, the Caisse de Commerce promised "to feed, to animate, and to fortify all the ramifications of agriculture, of industry, and of commerce."[76]

In early February 1792, the Caisse de Commerce advertised that it would focus new energy on assisting small-scale merchants, specifically "the Resellers, the Women of les Halles and others." The Caisse positioned these services specifically within the discourse of charity. The owner of the Caisse de Commerce announced that because the Dames de la Halle and others "often cannot do anything without immediate assistance, the Caisse loans itself to their needs, less by [commercial] interest than by charity [bienfaisance]." The Caisse de Commerce offered to make moderate loans to the retail merchant as well as exchange their clients' credit for the Caisse's billets. The Dames considered these options a godsend because if their customers defaulted on their accounts or did not pay their debts on time, the Caisse de Commerce, rather than the Dames, absorbed the financial ramifications. The owner of the Caisse de Commerce asserted that if his company "on their [the Dames des Halles and retail merchants] behalf experiences some losses, it expects them, and this article [service] is calculated less on profit."[77] No doubt, the Caisse de Commerce hoped to rally public opinion in its favor and to expand its business. However, its special attention to the Dames des Halles and other poor merchants' financial difficulties reveal how they interpreted charity. The director of the Caisse de Commerce believed that its actions were laudable, not because it indiscriminately offered charitable services

---

[75] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome I, 106-108. "en facilitant aux particuliers le moyen de mettre en valuer des effects qu'ils ne peuvent faire circuler" "taux modique"

[76] Archives nationales, D VI 1, "Prospectus, Caisse de Commerce" (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de la Veuve Hérissant), 1, "alimenter, vivifier, et fortifier toutes les ramifications de l'agriculture, de l'industrie et du commerce."

[77] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome I, 109. "les Revendeurs, les Femmes de la Halle et autres." "souvent ne peuvent rien faire faute de secours momentanés, la Caisse se prête à leur besoins, moins par intérêt que par bienfaisance." "à leur [the Dames des Halles and retail merchants] égard éprouve des pertes, elle s'y attend, et cet article est calculé en moins sur les bénéfices."

to a poor population, but because the Caisse's financial assistance allowed the merchants to continue to work, which was a source of productive virtue.

In the month following the counterfeit debacle that sullied the Maison de Secours, the Dames des Halles felt their other small change options and credit resources slip away as the public began to lose confidence in the Caisse de Commerce. On 19 February 1792, the Dames des Halles addressed the Legislative Assembly to defend the reputation of the Caisse de Commerce. Unlike requests made by other groups in the assembly hall, the secretary recorded the Dames' intervention with a heightened sense of urgency. Other citizens "solicited" favors or "offered" gifts to the Assembly, but the Dames "captur[ed] the attention of the Assembly," and even bypassed the Comité de Commerce which they should have first addressed.[78] Reminding the deputies that that Dames des Halles were "the friends of liberty," their orator extended their patriotic endorsement to the Caisse de Commerce. The Dames deplored the efforts of "thousands of enemies" to discredit the Caisse de Commerce and petitioned the Assembly to publically support and supervise the Caisse.

In the Dames' address, their orator insisted that "humanity" had always needed such a socially-just caisse, but that it had taken a "beneficial revolution" to enable its creation. The Dames emphasized how the Caisse de Commerce provided crucial exchange services, increased the circulation of trade tokens, and charged a reasonable discount interest rate to the popular classes. The Dames framed their defense by linking poverty and the "honest souls." Without evoking spiritual tropes associated with their plight, the Dames painted their role as the virtuous recipients of the state's paternal responsibilities.[79] The Dames asked the Assembly to consider

[78] AN C 143, nº 158 "Proces-Verbal de la séance [of the National Assembly] du Dimanche 19 février l'an 4 de la liberté," le 19 février 1792.
[79] According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), "charity" was "L'une des trois Vertus Théologales. Amour par lequel nous aimons Dieu comme notre souverain bien." In this sense, by recognizing their

how, without the Caisse de Commerce, greedy financial societies hoped "to attach themselves to the footsteps of the unfortunate to milk its blood until the last drop."[80] The Dames illustrated that they did not have a unique interest in the Caisse; rather, they appealed on behalf the common interests of the entire impoverished population, merchants and consumers alike. In light of revolutionary legislation, these shared monetary challenges created new economic associations and delineated shared vectors of identity between the Dames des Halles and the popular classes. The Dames used these common monetary concerns to extend their representative legitimacy.

In the same appearance at the Assembly, the Dames des Halles justified their value to the nation by citing the utility of the working classes and their just need for the Assembly's protection. The Dames maintained that the Caisse de Commerce underwrote their useful citizenship by allowing them to liquefy the credit that they extended to their clients and by relieving the dire small bill disadvantages of the indigent classes. The Dames dovetailed the National Assembly's productive and merit-based vision of citizenship with the Caisse's own goals. The Dames asked the legislators, "to come to the help of the laborer, the artisan, the merchant, not demanding any other guarantee than probity and talent; is it not to give a free boost to industry and to furnish to everyone the facility to occupy the post in the State where his/her capacity calls him/her, such is the purpose of this Caisse."[81] In its report of the Dames'

---

paternal responsibility to the popular classes without external motivation, the deputies quite literally substitute the well-being of citizens as "notre souverain bien." "réclam[é] l'attention de l'assemblée, "les amies de la liberté," "milles ennemis," "humanité," "révolution bienfaisante," "les âmes honnêtes." "Charity," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.

[80] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 19 février 1792, Series 1, Volume 38: 652.
See also Archives nationales C 143, nº158. According to Bouchary, *Le Courrier des 83 départements* accused the Caisse de Commerce of tricking people by repaying 2/3 of their redeemed billets with billets de confiance of other caisses. In addition, it speculated that the director of the Caisse de Commerce had sought out the Dames des Halles to persuade the Assembly to protect his weakening business. Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. Tome I, 112. "s'attacher sur les pas de l'infortuné pour sucrer jusqu'à la dernière goutte de son sang."

[81] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 19 février 1792, Series 1, Volume 38: 655 "venir au secours du laboureur, de l'artisan, du commerçant, n'exiger d'autre garantie que la probité et le talent; n'est-ce pas donner un

visit, *La Chronique de Paris* noted the redeeming capacity of work, regardless of an individual's socio-economic position. The journalists stressed that the Dames sought to protect the monetary interests of "the indigent but active part of the people."[82]

The Dames des Halles astutely argued that, thanks to the Caisse de Commerce's advantageous services for the poor, they could efficiently carry out their work, which ensured "ease and peace reigning in our families." This environment enabled them to nurture "children of the fatherland" who would be useful through their own work. The Dames told the deputies that they raised productive children sensitive to revolutionary values, who "satisfied with the honest gain that they take from their labor, already envision vice with horror."[83] The Dames assured the Assembly that for the deputies' benefit, they brought up "some virtuous wives and laboring men." These children would serve the fatherland through their labor as well as military services. Similarly, *La Chronique de Paris* directly credited the Caisse de Commerce with granting the Dames the monetary emancipation necessary to raise families useful to the nation: "Becoming free, they [the Dames] promise to raise their children as citizens, & to teach them to enrich with one hand the state by their work, & to hold with the other [hand] the sword which must defend it."[84] In the Dames' schema, the benefits the nation would reap from hard-working citizens constituted the return on the state's protection of the poor's monetary interests. For the Dames des Halles and the popular classes with whom they shared economic interests, monetary

---

libre essor à l'industrie et fournir à chacun la facilité d'occuper dans l'État le poste où sa capacité l'appelle, tel est l'institut de cette Caisse."

[82] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 20 février 1792, nº51. On the National Assembly session of 19 February 1792. "la partie indigente, mais active du peuple."

[83] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 19 février 1792, Series 1, Volume 38: 655. "l'aisance et la paix règnent dans nos familles" "enfants de la patrie" "satisfaits du gain honnête qu'ils retirent de leurs travaux, envisagent déjà le vice avec horreur."

[84] BnF Lc^2 218, Bobine 4, Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, le 20 février 1792, nº51. On the National Assembly Session of 19 February 1792. [vous], "des épouses vertueuses [and] des hommes laborieux" "Devenues libres, elles promettent d'élever leurs enfans en citoyens, & de leur apprendre à enrichir d'un main l'état par leur travail, & à tenir de l'autre l'épée qui doit le défendre."

obstacles stood to preclude political freedom ideologically *and* in workaday transactions. Thus, the Dames' access to the usable assignats and promissory notes to conduct their trade held political purchase beyond the stalls of the marketplace.

Expansive Commercial Identities: Parisian Merchants Unite Across Trades

Following the Dames' early lead, other retail merchants formed horizontal alliances across occupational boundaries to bolster the Caisse de Commerce, which the Legislative Assembly was investigating.[85] In June 1792, 48 citizens from a wide array of occupations signed a petition attesting to the "utility" of the Caisse de Commerce which provided small denominations and liquefied merchants' assets. Among the multifarious supporters of the Caisse de Commerce's monetary network, the deputies would find four beverage sellers, a wholesale supplier of the merchant marine, a painter of buildings, a secondhand clothes merchant, a baker, two master fan makers, a National Guard commander, and an old lawyer.[86] The petitioners fervently defended the Caisse de Commerce by arguing that it was the only company that "which gives even the artisan, the merchant, the manufacturer, and all classes of citizens a way to find help and some resources." Like the Dames des Halles, these merchants perceived their families' well-being as inextricably entangled in the Caisse de Commerce's economic services for the popular classes. If the representatives took exceptional legal measures to protect the Caisse de

[85] In an effort to stop caisses from rampantly issuing billets de confiance which far surpassed the value of the biens nationaux and caused the assignat to inflate, the Legislative Assembly had begun to pull some "paper money" from circulation in March 1792. However, the petitioners argued that since the billets of the Caisse de Commerce were ""billets, lettres de changes, et autres titres à terine, et non sur les assignats," they should not have to retract their critical billets de confiance from circulation. AN D VI 1, "Pétition adressée par des marchands à l'Assemblée législative en faveur de la Caisse de commerce" (sent to the Committee of Finances to write a report), le 19 juin 1792.

[86] The full list of 48 citizens who signed the collective petition included: 12 only labeled "marchand," without a title, or illegible; 1 négociant fournisseur de la marine; 1 entrepreneur de bâtiments; 6 négociants; 5 limonadiers; 1 dirigeant; 2 marchands merciers; 2 épiciers; 1 marchand orfèvre; 1 peintre en bâtiments; 1 marchand Tourneur; 1 marchand fripier; 1 marchand d'avoine; 1 boulanger; 1 cordonnier; 1 tenant hôtel garni; 1 coquilles; 1 courtier de changes; 1 ancien avocat; 1 commandant de la garde nationale; 1 gendarme national près les tribunaux; 1 marchand fourreur; 2 maitre éventailliste; 1 maitre charpentier.

Commerce, the merchants promised, "We will not cease repeating to our children that it is one of the benefits of the constitution, made from your love for the Public happiness."[87] The secular tenor of the merchants' exceptional demands and constitutional "benefits" [bienfaits] did not rob them of emotional appeal.

When the Legislative Assembly scrutinized the Caisse de Commerce again one month later, the merchants responded by further augmenting their cross-occupational collaboration and solidifying their strength in numbers. The deputies lifted the freeze on the accounts of the Caisse de Commerce, but ordered that it show the municipality the securities that "it presents to the public for the reimbursement" of their billets.[88] This August 1792 decision contributed to a rush on the Caisse and left its directors nearly "ruined & dishonored." In the face of quickly dwindling monetary resources, the retail merchants convinced more colleagues to craft a second petition to the Legislative Assembly to protect their local monetary network. In addition to some of the original petitioners from June, the merchants recruited allies from more varied backgrounds.

The 57 merchants who joined forces to sign the second petition cut sharply across positions in the chain of supply and sale, former guild hierarchies, and trade divisions. Although 19 merchants followed their name with only "merchant," did not list their occupation, or left only illegible traces, the remaining 36 petitioners paint a diverse picture. Retail merchants such as the two grocers and the two beverage sellers participated, but so did two brokers or wholesale merchants of nonfood goods who needed practical currency. Artisans from across the former

---

[87] AN D VI 1, "Pétition adressée par des marchands à l'Assemblée législative en faveur de la Caisse de commerce" (sent to the Committee of Finances to write a report), le 19 juin 1792, "met à même l'artisan, le marchand, le fabriquant et toutes les classes de citoyens de trouver secours et des ressources," "Nous ne cesserons de répéter à nos enfants que c'est un de les bienfaits de la constitution, fait de vôtre amour pour le bonheur Public."
[88] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. Tome II, 175. "il présente au public pour le remboursement."

guild hierarchies reinforced the list. A master mason, a master locksmith, and a carpenter signed the petition alongside a small hardware merchant, a cobbler, and two joiners/finish carpenters. The Caisse de Commerce supported merchants across the entire spectrum of trades. Consequently, the building entrepreneur passed the pen to four haberdashers, the two jewelry merchants teamed up with a printer, and the two wine merchants partnered with a merchant wigmaker.[89] The four haberdashers who count among the petitioners may have well had elite merchandise networks across France with rich clientele,[90] while the wine merchants likely had local Parisian buyers. In contrast with the former corporate system, their collective political and economic quest looked like a hodge-podge alliance. However, challenges to the common monetary community encouraged merchants to reimagine their associative identities while reacting to revolutionary commercial reform. The merchants stressed the popular support for the Caisse which "has for it the merchants of the capital, the national militia, the Dames des Halles, the merchant butchers, and bakers."

The merchants' collaborative strategy reveals that they were acutely aware that other occupational groups faced similar monetary predicaments. The citizens' various alliances allowed them to assemble and petition in ways that subverted the rules of the Le Chapelier law against collective petition by trade. Moreover, the merchants repeatedly joined forces with and referred to other trade groups, like the Dames des Halles, who made similar requests. These actions reflected a sustained consciousness of shared socio-economic interests and common assumed forms of political legitimacy. In this way, the assignats provided the popular classes

[89] The complete list of petitioners included: 19 marchands, no title, or illegible; 4 marchands merciers; 2 marchand épiciers; 1 horloger; 2 négociants; 1 vernisseur; 2 cordonniers; 2 marchands de vin; 1 marchand papetier; 2 marchands bijoutiers; 3 marchand tailleurs; 1 drapier; 2 tabletiers; 2 menuisiers, 1 marchand aubergiste; 1 voiturier; 1 imprimeur; 1 entrepreneur de bâtiment; 2 marchands limonadiers; 1 entrepreneur; 1 marchand perruquier; 1 marchand quincaillier, 1 maitre maçon; 1 maître serrurier; and 1 charpentier.
[90] Gail Bossenga, "Protecting Merchants: Guilds and Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* Volume 14 (Autumn 1988): 702.

with new venues for dialogue, cooperation, and cohesion that surpassed the occupationally-bound identities of the older corporate orders. In the case of the Caisse de Commerce, the merchants who explicitly privileged the Dames des Halles as supporters demonstrated how other retail merchants recognized, identified with, and deployed the Dames' political capital.[91] The retail merchants discursively privileged the Dames as titular representatives of all the retail merchants in the nation's capital. The petitioners believed that by sharing monetary grievances and socio-economic circumstances with the Dames, their requests gained symbolic teeth in the assembly halls. Such socio-economic consciousness transcended the divisions of the former corporate world. Through everyday practice, monetary challenges also encouraged the popular classes to reconceptualize, how to commercially realign society based on purchasing capital and economic power. The merchants' organic alliances foreshadowed how the radical Republic and the Directory would come to classify members of society for tax and commercial purposes.[92]

In a similar fashion to the Dames' previous intervention, the merchants who wrote the August 1792 petition maintained that the *collective* sovereignty of the popular classes unified them and legitimized their request. The merchants argued that the Caisse de Commerce played a pivotal role in protecting the "people" by defending monetary "equity" within the nation. Since they associated the "people" with commerce and industry, the merchants underscored their assumption that "the people" implied a class composed of working citizens. In such an

[91] AN D VI 1, "Pétition des marchands & Entrepreneurs de Paris" from the [National Assembly] Séance du matin du 26 août 1792, With the note: "Renvoyée au Comité des Finances par Décret pour faire son rapport mardi prochain."
[92] Chapter 4 explores how revolutionary laws like price controls (called the maximum) and business licenses (called patentes) commercially delineated society in new ways and repositioned merchants in the body politic. As a result, the maximum and the patente also changed the Dames' shared interests with other groups. As the state reclassified commercial society, it changed the Dames' associational identities and representative legitimacy by extension.

arrangement, the merchants rhetorically yet cautiously asserted their sanctioning authority as sovereign citizens by telling the deputies "we will bless your [favorable future] works."[93]

The Maison de Secours: Monetary Exemptions for Productive and Indigent Citizens

The Legislative Assembly dealt a further blow to Parisian merchants' collective interests when it recalled all Parisian billets de confiance to replace them with assignats of 10 and 15 sous denominations.[94] Although the Assembly hoped to reduce the number of promissory notes of different origins to stabilize confidence, the plan once again strained the networks of small change in the capital. The decree made it painfully evident that the Dames continued to trade extensively with the weakening Maison de Secours notes. In October 1792, the Dames des Halles from the Halle à la marée submitted a petition to the National Convention protesting that they conducted their commerce with "only" the billets from the Maison de Secours. The Dames complained that they seemed to be "nearly the only victims" of the Maison's financial debacle, which would discredit their emitted billets. Deputy Louis Legendre noted that "the majority of rich individuals" paid for their food from les Halles with billets from the Maison de Secours and the Caisse Patriotique. He also observed, in contrast, that the countryside suppliers hesitated to accept these discredited notes from the Dames des Halles as payment for their supplies. Legendre argued that such a dire situation merited the attention of the Convention, but the Convention decided to send the petition to the municipality since the Maison de Secours was primarily a Parisian establishment. The Dames started shouting in the wings at the unfavorable

[93] AN D VI 1, "Pétition des marchands & Entrepreneurs de Paris" from the [National Assembly] Séance du matin 26 août 1792, "nous bénirons vos [favorable future] travaux."
[94] Louis Joseph Hullin de Boischevalier, *Répertoire, ou Almanach historique de la Révolution française*, Volume 2 (Paris: Lefort, 1793), 373. "Du 14 septembre 1792. Les billets de confiance émis dans les 48 sections de Paris, seront échangés contre des assignats de 10 et 15 sous, et ne pourront plus alors, sous aucun prétexte, être remis en circulation." "Décret du 14 septembre 1792," in *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution*, Depeyrot, ed. 225. The National Assembly ordered each of the 48 Parisian sections to set up their own bureau of exchange.

motion. Despite their initial agreement to have their petition read, they now demanded to speak directly to the Convention. Deputy Osselin, who actually supported the Dames' petition, asked that the President order the Dames to leave in order "that the citizens learn to yield to the law."[95]

When the Convention responded to the Dames' petition, they not only judged the predicament of the Maison de Secours, but also who deserved their direct attention and why. The Convention dismissed the Dames because the deputies viewed the Dames' problem as a municipal financial issue. Moreover, the Convention did not agree with the Dames' claims to exceptional consideration due to their precarious occupational situation.[96] The law superseded the Dames' needs. William Scott has argued that the revolutionaries frequently upheld special interests, like that of the poor, as long as the members belonged to an oppressed group. However, if the demands of special interest would give the collectivity an advantage over another interest group, the special interest could no longer be legitimate.[97] With regard to the Maison de Secours, the Dames demanded highly localized exceptions whose benefit they did not convincingly extend to the popular classes as a whole. Thus, in an abrupt about-face, the Assembly evoked the sovereignty of the law before the sovereignty of a single occupational group, even if it were from the popular classes.

In response, the Théâtre Français section and Luxembourg section raised the ideological stakes concerning the indigency bound up in the Dames' request. The sections reported that they had sent their own representatives into the markets in order to encourage "the people" to remain confident in the billets of the Maison de Secours. Rather than asking the Convention to consider

---

[95] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 18 octobre 1792, au soir, Series 1, Volume 52: 567, "presque seules victimes" "la plupart des riches" "que les citoyens apprennent à fléchir devant la loi."
[96] "Décret du 11 octobre 1792," in *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution*, Depeyrot, ed., (Paris: Maison Florange, 1996), 230.
[97] William Scott, The Pursuit of 'Interests' in the French Revolution: A Preliminary Survey," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3(Spring 1996): 816. Scott quotes Sieyès's pamphlet *What is the Third Estate* to show the basic contrast: "All classes of the Third are linked by a common interest against oppression by the privileged."

the particularly difficult position of the Dames, they asked the Convention to think of "the indigent class of citizens." The poorest swath of the population relied on this monetary subsystem to buy their essential food. Deputy Birotteau noted the letters' similarity to the Dames' petition and reasserted that the national treasury could not bail out private caisses. Deputy Marc Julien protested and asked the Convention how they could ignore the pleas of the indigent classes. He cried, "We are the representatives of the poor, we are the fathers of the people who have been victims of the cupidity of the rich for a long time, we owe them help." His appeal gave the Convention pause.[98]

Deputy Julien's remarks opened a dispute over how to define the "peuple," who should be included in the political definition, and where the legitimizing source of its sovereignty originated. The debate that unfolded took into account socio-economic circumstances and confronted the potential conflicting interests between poor Parisians and their provincial counterparts. While Deputy Julien maintained that "you [the deputies] have made sovereign the interests of the people," the President sought to correct him and inadvertently exposed the fundamental quandary in Rousseauian ideology: where to locate the general will. The President countered, "There are no longer any sovereigns in France; but one sole sovereign, the people." Nonetheless, Julien asserted that the Convention must pressure the rich to pay a "patriotic contribution [tax]." He argued that this would generate enough revenue to back the Maison's promissory notes which were vital to "the unhappiest class." Deputy Brunel responded to Julien's proposal that while his commitment to "the poor" was admirable, his solution would unjustly tax "the people" who lived outside of Paris. Brunel convinced the Convention that Julien "was not foreseeing that by exhausting the resources of the State in favor of the people of

[98] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 19 octobre 1792, Series 1, Volume 52: 569-570, "la classe indigente des citoyens" "Nous sommes les représentants des pauvres, nous sommes les pères du peuple depuis longtemps victime de la cupidité des riches, nous lui devons des secours…"

one commune, one brought the biggest prejudice against the people from other parts of the Republic."[99]

Subsistence Trade and the Popular Classes: The Dames des Halles as Cornerstone for Vertical and Horizontal Alliances

Contrary to the National Convention's conclusion, the Maison de Secours's notes impacted more than the Dames des Halles and their shared interests with other Parisian merchants. The billets de confiance also underwrote the extensive provincial supply network that served the capital. For retail merchants in les Halles who lacked an individual contract with a wholesaler from the countryside, factrices and facteurs served as intermediaries who granted the Dames pre-sale credit and sold them foodstuffs for their retail trade. As a monetary link between provincial suppliers and Parisian retail merchants, these brokers became highly sensitive to assignat reform and public confidence in local promissory notes. During the Revolution, the government heavily relied on the factrices in the Halle à la marée to distribute goods wholesale in the market, guarantee supplies from the countryside, and order commercial transactions, despite the fact that the state did not commission their regulatory responsibilities.[100] The factrices' services ensured the Dames' supplies, their access to credit, and their livelihood.

From within the currency networks created by the diverse caisses and note denominations, the factrices recognized that the deputies' Parisian reform posed a crisis for the Dames. At the same time, the factrices also sharply felt how their provincial suppliers distrusted

[99] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 19 septembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 52: 570, "vous [the deputies] en [les intérêts du peuple] avez faits des souverains," "Il n'y a point de souverains dans la France ; mais un seul souverain, le peuple." "contribution patriotique." "la classe la plus malheureuse." "ne prévoit pas qu'en dilapidant les ressources de l'État en faveur du peuple d'une commune on porte le plus grande préjudice au peuple des autres parties de la République."

[100] Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter AdPP) D^A 24, Caisse de la vallée et de la Marée, in Dossier nº301: Poissons et huîtres, caisse de la marée, organisation du service de la caisse de la marée (The documents are from the 1830s).

Parisian notes. A provincial wholesaler might have difficulty recirculating Parisian billets de confiance in the countryside where other caisses underwrote local monetary networks. In addition, since the most powerful wholesalers dealt in larger quantities of goods and money, assignats in denominations of 50 livres or higher proved far more financially secure and portable. Therefore, the factrices straddled two monetary subnetworks delineated by socio-economic position and region. On the one hand, their clients, such as the Dames, operated on a modest scale within Parisian monetary networks. On the other hand, the factrices' provincial suppliers conducted business on a larger scale within the countryside's own note and confidence networks. To balance their precarious accounts, the factrices dealt not only in assignats and promissory notes, but also in social capital.

The association between the Dames des Halles and their factrices was one of the vertical alliances within trade groups that the assignat difficulties encouraged. By the end of October 1792, the factrices could hear the death bell crescendo for the Maison de Secours's over-extended billets and the other varieties of small change with which the Dames paid. Wholesale fish suppliers complained to the Commune that they received death threats if they refused the Maison billets as payment, which led to concerns over provisioning the capital.[101] Although the Convention attempted to pull the Maison's billets from circulation, the Dames continued to pay the factrices for their supplies mostly with these notes. The Comité de finances announced that 2,936,063 livres of the Maison's billets were still in use. Even more disconcerting, the Maison's reserve deficit combined with that of the remaining Parisian caisses could total around 5 million livres.[102] The Dames had agreed to take losses on the unstable and over-printed billets de

[101] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 113. Bouchary calls the merchants who complained to the Commune on 24 October 1792 "marayeuses." This appears to be the female form of "mareyeurs" or the usually male wholesalers of fish.
[102] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 116.

confiance of the Maison de Secours in the spring of 1792. However, by the fall, the Dames could not financially survive if the deputies refused to offer national support to the make up the deficit difference. Likewise, the Dames could not conduct their meager trade if the deputies pulled the Maison's entire supply from circulation without issuing enough assignats in small denominations to replace it. Due to the assignat and billets de confiance, the Dames and the factrices found their incomes dangerously entwined across vertical hierarchies of trade on a mass scale, rather than on an individual basis. Suppliers, wholesalers, brokers, and retail merchants easily recognized that, unlike bankers, none would profit from currency speculation or inflation. If their shared monetary systems collapsed, so would all of their livelihoods.

To protect their own trade, the factrices intervened on behalf of the Dames, but contextualized their requests as a campaign to help all indigent citizens. On November 6, the factrices petitioned the deputies to ask that "the poor no longer be victims of the Maison de Secours."[103] Nonetheless, the Legislative Assembly forbade any public or private caisse from printing any more billets de confiance and ordered municipal governments to remove all caisse notes, including those of the Maison de Secours, from circulation. To emphasize the termination of the billet de confiance system, the deputies even instructed the municipalities to publically burn the tokens.[104] However, the Assembly heeded the factrices' appeal to consider the radical effects that their action would have on the popular classes. The Assembly ordered the departments and communes to cover any deficits created by caisses that had issued billets de confiance in denominations below 25 livres but did not have enough assignats to reimbourse all

[103] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, 6 novembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 53: 207. "les pauvres ne soient pas victimes des maison de secours."
[104] Louis Joseph Hullin de Boischevalier, *Répertoire, ou Almanach historique de la Révolution française*, Volume 2 (Paris: Lefort, 1793), 372-373. "Du 8. novembre 1792. Vérification de l'état de situation des caisses des corps administratifs et municipaux, compagnies et particuliers qui ont émis des médailles, billets de confiance, patriotiques, de secours et autres. Le jour de la publication du présent décret, toute émission desdits billets cessera, et les planches qui ont servi à leur fabrication seront brisées. Ce décret a été scellé le 9 dudit mois."

of their emissions. The representatives explained that the addendum arose *"out of duty"* (my emphasis) and "in order that the portion of people who are the least fortunate not fall victim to the insolvability or to the guilty maneuvers of people who emitted them."[105] The deputies agreed to make an exception for the popular classes. The factrices could not appeal for leniency for the Dames as a singular group, but the Dames could benefit as members of a nation-wide indigent class who used small change networks.

Although the deputies' final stipulation benefited all, and not just Parisian, citizens, the deputies did appear to grant the Parisian poor privileged treatment. Yet, the deputies only gave special consideration to Paris because it affected all of the nation's monetary networks. Influenced by the elevating crisis of small change and the factrices' appeal, the deputies begrudgingly advanced one million assignats to the Department of Paris to alleviate the critical shortage that would result from the recall of promissory notes below 25-livres. The factrices, the Dames, and petitioners had convinced the deputies that the poor merited special attention in the monetary crisis. The merchants successfully argued that monetary networks radiating out from Paris upheld the nation's economic wellbeing. Therefore, the Parisian system deserved extraordinary support. While vehemently insisting that municipal debts and the debts of the private caisses "cannot in any case form a debt charged to the Republic," the National Assembly acted out of moral "duty" to protect the Dames and the popular classes. These paternal measures, moreover, fulfilled the political responsibilities of the state towards its working citizens who participated in trade.[106]

---

[105] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 8 novembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 53: 318 *"du devoir"* (my emphasis) and "afin que la portion du peuple la moins fortunée ne soit pas la victime de l'insolvabilité ou des manouvres coupables des personnes qui les ont émis."

[106] "Décret concernant les billets au porteur, billets de confiance, patriotiques, de secours, etc.," 8 novembre 1792, *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution*, Depeyrot ed., 237-240. The Assembly's difficulty in separating the treasuries of the Republic and those of the departments and municipalities reveals how entangled financial relationships became despite the deputies' desires to maintain a distinction. It also reveals the centrality of the

As the Convention implemented its assignat-only currency policy, the monetary problems continued to foster vertical alliances across trade hierarchies. The Convention failed in its pledge to advance emergency funds to the Commune to exchange the Maison billets that the factrices turned in for assignats. Enraged, the five factrices wrote a letter to the Minister of the Interior threatening to halt their broker services, as they had once already, if they continued to bear the burdens of the Parisian small change crisis. In their letter, the factrices brazenly threatened to send the Dames who wanted to buy supplies to the minister's house: "Thus you can foresee it that tonight, perhaps at 3:00 in the morning, his house will be assailed by 3 or 400 women [Dames des Halles] who need to work; because we are firmly decided to not sell any merchandise at all and to refuse the billets."[107] Minister Roland negotiated a temporary stay on the provisioning crisis. Nonetheless, the Dames des Halles understood that their factrices' fundamental monetary needs dovetailed with their own.

In early December, the Dames des Halles returned the favor to their factrices and defended their shared interests concerning the Maison notes. Ironically, the decree that favored the exchange of small change from billets de confiance into assignats had capped the amount at 25 livres per day, per person, creating an insurmountable obstacle for the factrices who dealt in large quantities of money but received payment from the Dames in small denominations.[108] A deputation of Dames spoke at the bar of the National Convention to demand that governmental authorities continue to reimburse the factrices for the Maison notes that the Dames paid them.

---

capital's concerns in the entire nation's monetary system. "ne peut dans aucun cas former une dette à la charge de la République,"

[107] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 122. The quote is from factrice citoyenne Rigaud's (or Rigault) 15 November 1792 letter to the Minister of the Interior. *Le Courrier des 83 départements* reprinted the inflammatory ultimatum. "Ainsi vous pouvez le prévenir que cette nuit, peut-être à trois heures de matin, sa maison sera assaillie par 3 ou 400 femmes [Dames des Halles] qui ont besoin de travailler; car nous sommes bien décidées à ne point vendre les marchandises et à refuser les billets."

[108] "Mémoire présenté au département" by the 5 factrices, in *Archives Parlementaires*, edited by Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, annexe le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 726.

They observed that, because their factrices could not exchange more than 25 livres of notes per day, "their position becomes as deplorable as our own." The Dames testified that they paid each of the five factrices 500 to 700 livres in the form of Maison notes each day. In addition, the Dames complained that they could not wait in line 4 hours per day to exchange the Maison notes that they received from their customers into 25 livre assignats to pay the factrices. The factrices notified the government that since the provincial wholesalers would not accept the Maison notes, they could no longer sustain the commerce at les Halles without alternative options for note exchange.[109] Although the Dames and the factrices occupied different positions in the commercial hierarchy, their common monetary network encouraged sustained political collaboration across these levels.[110]

Given the deputies' reluctance to accord special monetary privilege to Paris, the Dames des Halles framed their complaint as integral to the wider "interests of the people" and one of the deputies' benevolent duties. During their December visit, the Dames asked the deputies "to turn towards them [the Dames] their paternal regards and to steal a moment in favor of the public thing." They asked their political fathers to consider how their commerce "procures for more than 20,000 families the means to subsist." Moreover, the Dames reminded the Convention that they were not the aggressors but "victims of the villainy of a man [the director of the Maison de Secours], who in the eyes of the Constitutional Assembly, abused the public confidence." In this way, the Dames called on the deputies to do their patriotic and paternal duty. The Dames hitched their occupational interests to the very survival of 20,000 individual families under the protection

[109] "Mémoire présenté au département" by the 5 factrices, in *Archives Parlementaires*, edited by Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, annexe le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 726. "leur position devient aussi déplorable que la nôtre."
[110] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 724.

of the national family.[111] The Dames shared the same assumptions of women workers in state-sponsored spinning workshops who agitated to support their families. They insisted on what Lisa DiCaprio has called "the obligation of a secular republic towards its citizens."[112]

In a parallel mémoire, the factrices asserted to the Department of Paris that their exchange demands amounted to no less than "the provisioning of the capital and public tranquility." Without help, food supply chains could collapse and bring about "an insurrection and the largest disorder."[113] The Dames and the factrices welded their immediate commercial concerns to a more expansive socio-economic utility which served the "interests of the people" and the peace-keeping state alike. Such utility once again reinforced the reciprocal ideological contract between working citizens and the state's responsibilities towards the popular classes. In light of the urgent provisioning situation and faced with the Dames' and the factrices' compelling logic, the Convention decreed that the factrices could exchange their Maison notes for assignats directly with the Department of Paris, thereby circumventing the 25-livre limit.[114]

In their December petition, the factrices merged Old Regime overtones of charity with revolutionary ideas of state responsibility to the working indigent population. They too asked the department to recognize that "the commerce of the marée contains the existence of *20 thousand souls* of the most indigent class." (their emphasis). The factrices evoked Old Regime notions of spiritually-driven benevolence by describing the poor population as "*20 thousand souls*" rather than people or citizens. However, rather than demand direct assistance or charity for indigent

---

[111] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 724, "intérêts du peuple," "tourner vers elles leurs regards paternels et de dérober en leur faveur un moment à la chose publique." "procure à plus de 20,000 familles les moyens de subsister," "victimes de la scélératesse d'un homme qui, sous les yeux de l'Assemblée constituante, a abusé de la confiance public."

[112] Lisa DiCaprio, *The Origins of the Welfare State* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2007), xii.

[113] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, annexe le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 726 "mémoire présenté au département by the 5 factrices, "l'approvisionnement de la capitale et la tranquillité publique." "une insurrection et le plus grand désordre."

[114] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 10 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 748 "intérêts du peuple."

individuals, the factrices asked the Department to support "commerce" and working citizens by granting them exceptional permission to exchange Maison notes.[115] The factrices operated within the revolutionary mentality that evaluated the societal "worth" of the indigent classes primarily through the lens of their beneficial labor. The authors of the 1789 Third Estate cahier of Saint Eustache, the parish overlooking the Halle à la marée, had made the very same assumption when they requested a "manner to employ the able-bodied beggars, while occupying them in a manner useful for them and for the State." Like the factrices, the authors imagined that work, rather than religiously-motivated charity, would benefit both parties in the social contract.[116]

The way in which the Dames and their allies protected their monetary systems and the officials' reactions to their demands reflect how the revolutionaries reconceptualized the worthy poor and their place in the body politic. The Dames and other indigent merchants transformed their identity from indiscriminate recipients of Old Regime charity to worker-citizens who earned their sovereignty through public utility and thus merited assistance in the revolutionary imagination. Within this framework, the Dames argued that their monetary networks deserved special protection and exemptions.

Conclusion

The practical problems that the Dames des Halles faced during the formative years of the assignat overflowed into arenas surpassing occupational concerns. Monetary reform created and reinforced axes of association and categories of collective identity within the former Third

---

[115] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, annexe le 9 décembre 1792, Series 1, Volume 54: 726 "mémoire présenté au département" by the 5 factrices, "le commerce de la marée tient l'existence de *vingt mille âmes* de la classe la plus indigente."

[116] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, "Cahier du tiers-état du district assemblé dans l'église de Saint-Eustache, à Paris, le 21 avril 1789," Series 1, Volume 5: 312 "manière d'employer les mendiants valides, en les occupant d'une manière utile et pour eux et pour l'État."

Estate. The challenges of small change and the local nature of confidence networks increased horizontal associations among the Dames des Halles and other merchants in the capital. The assignat also reconfigured systems of credit and exposed shared interests. Shared monetary networks made the vertical levels of trade increasingly interdependent. The collaborative efforts of the Dames and their factrices attested to these close bonds. As the Dames formed political alliances across the horizontal and vertical divisions of the former corporate world, they created new associative identities and representative legitimacy.

The Dames also justified their currency demands by emphasizing their utility as working citizens. This depiction dovetailed with how the revolutionaries conceptualized virtuous citizenship. The Dames and the popular classes evaded belittling images of the indigent populace by eschewing Old Regime notions of spiritually-motivated charity while still using their indigent status to unabashedly seek economic exceptions. Through the disputes over the assignat, the Dames negotiated their powerful position as a mouthpiece for the vast indigent population.

Since the Dames acted as critical food suppliers for Paris, their occupations bolstered their economic and symbolic capital in revolutionary monetary networks. Due to the vast web of promissory notes that the monetary reform unleashed, the Dames re-examined their position in trade networks and reworked their financial collaborations. Officials needed the cooperation of the populace to implement their monetary reform on the ground. Since failed monetary reform in the capital could devastate the entire nation's commercial networks, the Dames' Parisian influence greatly affected the entire assignat project.

In March 1793, the Convention decreed the promissory notes could no longer circulate as legal tender as of 1 April.[117] The Convention attempted to put the caisse disaster definitively

[117] Louis Joseph Hullin de Boischevalier, *Répertoire, ou Almanach historique de la Révolution française*, Volume 2 (Paris: Lefort, 1793), 374. "Du 8 mars 1793. Les billets de confiance émis tant par les corps administratifs ou

behind them by convicting the directors of the Maison de Secours of fraudulent activity and publically burning their billets de confiance.[118] Unfortunately for the deputies, some Parisian billets de confiance lingered beyond their deadline. While the Convention hoped that their new assignat-only strategy would streamline the chaos of systems of confidence, credit, and denominations of tender, the billets de confiance had already shed light on potential economic commonalities and political alliances among occupational groups within the former Third Estate.

The Assembly's early attempts to establish the assignat encouraged citizens to cooperate innovatively across trade identities and to address shared monetary challenges. Even before the d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws, the Dames and other groups reached across the boundaries of the corporate world. After the deputies outlawed the guilds and trade associations, the Dames and their allies continued to use these cross-occupational alliances to maintain their strength in numbers but avoid charges of illegally petitioning as a corporate body. Collaborations that started as economic alliances quickly solidified into political alliances that formed around monetary concerns and emphasized work's valorizing nature. These pro-labor attitudes easily carried into the sans-culotte movement, which gained significant ground in the capital when the Parisian billets de confiance collapsed. Assignat reform exposed shared interests in monetary networks, fostered new markers of identity, and encouraged political collaboration vertically across trade hierarchies and horizontally across occupational boundaries. These associative shifts held crucial ramifications for the activism of Dames des Halles who, through these affiliations,

---

municipaux, que par les compagnies ou particuliers, seront nuls et de nul effet au 1er avril prochain." The revolutionaries did not attempt to partially reestablish a metallic standard until the fall 1796. S.E. Harris, *The Assignats*, 215.

[118] Jean Bouchary, *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, Tome II, 130. 143. Nonetheless, the Commune still received another advance from the National Convention in late May 1792 to exchange the remaining 636,473 livres 10 sols unofficially lingering in circulation. (See page 143).

could effectively broaden their representative powers to their new allies and could convincingly augment their claims to political legitimacy.

– Chapter 4 –

Price Controls and Commercial Licenses: Creating Occupational Legitimacy in the Body Politic

On February 28, 1794, les Halles looked strangely empty. Parasols normally cluttered the marketplace and protected the Dames' businesses. This afternoon, however, the space lay eerily open and devoid of goods. That morning, like the day before, the Dames des Halles had pillaged grocers' boutiques. The Dames had desperately sought goods like sugar, coffee, oils, and soap. For days, they had protested that prices soared beyond their reach. But this time, the Dames vehemently booed the patrols sent in to break up the looting. The police resolved to disperse the recalcitrant retailers. They folded up the Dames' parasols and removed the foodstuffs that the market women sold beneath them.[1]

However, around 5:00pm, the obstinate Dames flooded back into the marketplace. They defiantly sang and danced until an armed force arrived on horseback. Undeterred, the Dames openly mocked the police. Then, the retailers taunted the flustered force by running from one end of the market to the other. The Dames threw sharp insults over their shoulders as hooves clattered behind them. Les Halles soon resembled a giant wave pool of merchants, horses, and frustrated police officers futilely crashing back and forth across the open space.[2]

At the moment of the Dames' demonstration, the National Convention was struggling to stabilize the subsistence trade. To Parisians, the deputies seemed to be failing in most respects. Describing the Dames' protest, a police officer noted that "exorbitant prices" greatly taxed the popular classes. However, another incredulous commissioner contended that counter-revolutionary agents had fanned the Dames' resentment with "perfidious suggestions." But a

[1] Archives nationales (hereafter AN) AF^{IV} 1470, "Extrait des rapports et declarations reçus au Bureau de surveillance de la Police," le 26, le 27, et le 28 février 1794.
[2] AN AF^{IV} 1470, "Extrait des rapports," le 27 février 1794.

third colleague discerned how political and economic concerns became inextricably intertwined in the disturbance. He astutely flagged the high stakes: "The unhappy people cannot possibly wait any longer, in spite of their patriotism… they judge the Convention severely and bitterly reproach [the deputies] for wasting precious time arguing and slandering one another, and they demand that the hoarders be stopped and that the Convention lower the price of basic foodstuffs."[3] Despite implementing two price control programs by the marketplace showdown of February 1794, the National Convention still grappled with passing a third reform. Factional politics and inadequate resources stymied their efforts.

From May 1793 to December 1794, the deputies' ideological struggles and the populace's economic plight put food at the center of popular politics. War, inflation, and shortages battered the nation. The Revolution seemed on the verge of collapse. Responding to the dire circumstances and pressure from poor Parisian sans-culottes, the National Convention crafted three versions of price controls called Maximums. In the Spring of 1793, the Convention placed the first maximum on grain and flour to lower the price of bread. However, Jacobin deputies gradually drove through price caps on most goods from fish to wood. They also capped workers' wages. The Jacobins hoped that the limits would check inflation, make food affordable for all citizens, foster trade between rural and urban areas, and ensure that provisions reached the revolutionary armies. Despite their best intentions, the deputies neglected to create separate price limits for wholesale and retail trade, and threatened to destroy the Dames' livelihoods.

Although the deputies passed the Maximums to respond to exceptional threats, they maintained that the emergency system reflected ideal socio-economic relationships. By capping

[3] AN AF^{IV} 1470 "Extrait des rapports," le 26 au 28 février 1794. "des suggestions perfides," "il est impossible que le malheureux puisse attendre plus longtemps, malgré son patriotisme, aussi juge-t-il très sévèrement la Convention, lui reprochant avec amertume de consumer un temps précieux à se disputer et se calomnier, et demande que les accapareurs soient réprimés et qu'elle fasse diminuer le taux des denrées de première nécessité."

prices and wages, the Jacobins insisted that Maximum mirrored how traders and workers naturally depended upon one another. Yet, questions remained for the revolutionaries: Was the entire nation divided into two groups – merchants and consumers – which were necessarily at odds over prices? How could social equality underpin economic relations among citizens but also legitimize merchants' profits? Could democratic aspirations exist alongside profit-oriented trade?

Consequently, while the Dames and fellow citizens argued for favorable subsistence policies, they defended more than their economic survival: they articulated competing visions of societal relations within the regenerated body politic. The Dames' advocates defended their trade and arguing that retailers served society. In effect, subsistence regulation delineated socio-economic categories and embedded them within the body politic. As the deputies put a price on food, they put a price on retailers' occupational worth to nation.

When the Thermidorians dismantled the Maximum in late 1794, the representatives did not reject retailers' occupational utility along with Jacobin policies. Instead, they solidified the new socio-economic order that began with the abolition of the guilds in 1791 and which the Jacobins continued with the Maximum. Directory legislators explicitly formed fiscal contracts with retailers, including the Dames, by forcing them to buy annual licenses. This revolutionary license system, called the Patente, legitimized retailers' work. While crafting the Patente, officials traced fiscal categories on their political imaginings. They eschewed old corporate delineations while erecting new scaffolding for occupational taxes. Officials opted for measuring sticks of income, property, and work-based autonomy. Seeking to generate revenue in 1796, the Directory expanded the Patente system to include more autonomous workers like the Dames des Halles. However, it excluded all dependent wage-laborers, who were usually men. Given this

contrast, how did the Dames' patente affect or reflect their occupational legitimacy? How did the market women rethink their socio-economic identity, fiscal responsibilities, and political duties to seek the most advantageous brackets? And how did the deputies and the revolutionaries reorient work, autonomy, and citizenship in the body politic through the lens of the Patente?

Drawing heavily from the National Convention's decrees, police reports, and justice of the peace records, this chapter argues two things. First, it argues that the hard-pressed deputies rationalized the Maximum and the Patente as extensions of cooperative relationships within the body politic. While instituting the General Maximum, the deputies reasoned that reciprocal exchange between merchants and workers naturally guided interactions among free citizens. Nonetheless, the police revealed to the deputies how the Maximum, theorized in the assembly halls, failed in the marketplace. To survive a system that discounted their retail businesses, the Dames reacted to the Maximum's occupational categorization in legal and illegal ways. The Dames' resistance and police observations compelled the deputies to endorse retailers' crucial role. To levy taxes and finance the struggling nation, the legislators had to order society through revolutionary notions of occupational freedom, autonomy, and duty. They debated how the Patente could measure each citizen's commercial productivity and economic prowess to balance the nation's resources. The Dames integrated themselves into this new license system as independent commercial agents. Before their neighborhood justices of the peace, they asserted or protested their tax brackets by appropriating the deputies' logic.

Second, this chapter argues that, when confronted with twin crises of food and finance, the Dames, their advocates, and officials recreated retailers' role in the body politic. During the Maximum, the Dames battled for their economic survival and simultaneously defended their occupational utility in a regenerated society. By providing retail services to fellow citizens, the

Dames could prove their patriotism against charges that merchants were greedy counter-revolutionaries. The police also articulated the Dames' trade according to the Jacobin vision of a cooperative body politic, thereby bolstering the ways the Dames could claim occupational legitimacy. Through reports, petitions, and marketplace maneuverings, the Dames and the police influenced how the deputies recategorized merchants as essential traders in the final Maximum of March 1794. Yet, even after the Thermidorians abolished the Maximum, retailers maintained their hard-won reputation as productive citizens. The 1796 Patente solidified the Dames' civic legitimacy as commercial agents. The tax reform forced the Dames to secure a patente to conduct their personal retail trade. This equation demanded remuneration based on the nature of the Dames' work rather than their use of public space. By the patente's criteria, the Dames' useful work offered them a basis for autonomous fiscal citizenship. Thus, the Maximum and the Patente profoundly affected how the Dames could recreate their socio-economic identity, invent their citizenship through their work, and make claims on the state.

Subsistence Problems and the First Maximum

From 1789 to 1791, it appeared that the National Assembly's policies of economic liberalism had lowered bread prices, but foreign war, civil war, the sugar crisis, and the devaluation of paper money soon threatened to send prices sky-rocketing.[4] Sugar prices soared in Paris in 1791. Although sugar, unlike bread, was not a central component in the revolutionary diet, the Dames and popular classes felt the effects of the sugar crisis. One papal correspondant observed that "this denrée [sugar] has become a primary necessity, because there is not a cobbler, a washerwoman, a poissarde who does not take each morning a large bowl of café au

[4] Albert Mathiez, *La vie chère et le mouvement social sous la Terreur* (Paris: Payot, 1927), 26.

lait."[5] After France declared war on April 20, 1792, "the poissardes" and their neighbors contended with new obstacles to trade. War complicated provisioning and reduced the nation's external supplies.[6] The deputies faced the critical problem of funneling food to French armies within the country and abroad while continuing to feed large urban centers like Paris. In this charged environment, banks exploited the *billets de confiance* system to speculate on the assignat, which led to spiraling inflation and pushed prices higher.[7]

In this difficult context, food and its relationship to the body took on new political overtones. In April of 1793, one deputy called for a *carême civique* [civic Lent] to fix the meat shortage and public opinion called for a similar measure during the following February.[8] Although neither of these proposals went into effect, they illustrate how citizens considered sacrificing their physical bodies to society as a political act. The label of "carême" infused the proposition with religious connotations and evoked its transcendent nature. "Civique" highlighted the communal, patriotic goal in the midst of war. Citizens and their representatives viewed the supply and prudent use of foodstuffs as a responsibility shared by individuals and the state. During the following Catholic Lenten season, some revolutionaries argued that one truly sacrificed one's body by conscientiously eating only the most plentiful foods. This, they maintained, contrasted with Catholic fasting that artificially inflated the price of fish and created

---

[5] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 31. "Cette denrée [sugar] est devenue de première nécessité, car il n'y a pas un cordonnier, une lavandière, une poissarde qui ne prenne chaque matin une grande écuelle de café au lait."
[6] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 116.
[7] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 530. For a thorough analysis of the assignat and the billets de confiance in les Halles, see Chapter 3.
[8] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 498; AN F^{11} 201, Siret, 3 ventôse an II (February 21, 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum (sept 1793-mars 1794)*, Volume 1 [Collected and reprinted from *Bulletin trimestriel de la Commission de recherche et de publication des documents relatifs à la vie économique de la Révolution* , v.2 (1907). p.67-231],1910, p. 180.

hardships for poor consumers.[9] Instead of restricting food to recall the vulnerable human condition, the revolutionaries turned dietary regulation into an empowering patriotic tool.

Similarly, self-depravation became a sign of political virtue. Bolstered by patriotic spirits as well as alcoholic ones, women in a cabaret on rue Dominique refused to let aristocrats deter them during bread shortages. They exclaimed, "The aristocrats are waiting for an uprising, but, as much as the Seine flows and as we will have bread, we will be republican [women], and we are f***ed for being it." They punctuated their resolve, which nearly guaranteed hunger, with cries of "Long live the Republic!"[10] Despite the populace's intermittent stamina during food crises, supply shortages and high prices posed the biggest threat to the revolutionary government. Citizens, especially the sans-culottes, considered alleviating food problems a principal duty of the state.

By May 1793, the Jacobins had already agitated for increased attention to prices and the food supply. Months before the National Convention passed the first Maximum, Robespierre insisted with a nod to subsistence issues that "the most fundamental law of society is… that which guarantees the means of existence to every person; every other law is subordinate to this one."[11] In February of 1793, fellow Jacobin Chaumette delivered a likeminded speech on behalf of the Paris Commune to the National Convention. Before the deputies, Chaumette argued, "In order to live free, it is necessary to live." He lamented that the Parisian poor were unable to do so because of the chasm between their wages and the exorbitant prices of basic necessities. Foreshadowing the premises of the Maximum, he asked only that the Convention restore "this

---

[9] AN W 112, Rapport de Perrière, 12 ventôse an II, 2 mars 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume V.
[10] AN W 112, 6 ventôse an II, 24 février 1894, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume IV. "Les aristocrates s'attendaient à quelque soulèvement, mais, tant que la Seine coulera et que nous aurons du pain, nous serons républicaines, et nous sommes foutues pour l'être." "Vive la République!"
[11] As quoted in Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789-1799*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 110.

healthy ratio" between wages and prices. Chaumette noted that success would rally the poor to revolutionary causes.[12]

The Commune itself had already established some limited price controls on bread in September 1792.[13] In light of the war, wives of military volunteers from Paris petitioned for relief from soaring bread prices. Military wives from Versailles followed suit. In February 1793, Citoyenne Wuaflard spoke on behalf of the Parisian wives to protest that while "they are sorry to watch their husbands, [and] their relatives leave for the frontiers, they are [simultaneously] frightened by the maneuvers of the hoarders." The women argued that if their families made sacrifices to protect the nation, the Convention must protect them in return. The nation could repay military families by stabilizing the food trade.[14]

When the Convention began to seriously debate price controls in the late winter and early spring of 1793, some deputies worried about limiting the free market. Economic liberalism had greatly informed the National Assembly's projects since the deputies abolished the corporate system in 1791. Many Girondin deputies feared that implementing price caps would betray their revolutionary principles, including liberty of commerce. They maintained that price regulation would resurrect Old Regime privilege by favoring certain groups over others. Price limits recalled the monarchy's protectionist policies. The Girondin deputies dreaded a slippery slope in limiting commercial freedom, but they also understood that their Jacobin counterparts and vocal Parisian sans-culottes would overwhelm them if the two cemented their alliance over price controls.

---

[12] As quoted in Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 160, "pour vivre libre, il faut vivre," "cette salutaire proportion."
[13] A. Chéruel, "Maximum," in *Dictionnaire historique des institutions, mœurs et coutumes de la France* (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1855), 758.
[14] Mathiez, *La vie chère,* 146, 185. "elles ont le regret de voir partir leurs maris, leurs parents sur les frontiers, elles sont effrayées des manoeuvres des accapareurs."

Although Parisian sans-culottes supported Jacobin regulations in Spring 1793, the Jacobin deputies still strained to distance price controls from accusations of shackling liberty. Deputy Brissot, a Girondin, had already attacked the Jacobins as "'disorganizers who wish to level everything: property, leisure, the price of provisions, the various services to be rendered to society.'"[15] But, in reality, the Jacobins' attitudes toward price control were more complex. Even Danton, a Jacobin deputy, could not ignore the haunting affront that price controls posed to physiocrat (free-market and pro-agriculture) sensibilities. Danton unsuccessfully proposed that farmers freely set their prices, but the price of bread would be fixed. Then, he reasoned, the state could make up the gap between the price of bread and working wages with "a tax on the rich."[16] The Jacobins found themselves frequently backpedaling to explain how emergency controls, implemented in dire circumstances, corresponded to transcendent revolutionary principles.

As assignat inflation continued to drive up prices and France saw no reprieve from war in the near future, Parisian sans-culottes pressured the Jacobins to issue price controls on basic necessities. These pro-price control sans-culottes belonged to a radical political group called the Enragés. As the vanguard for wage-laborer interests, the Enragés formed the volatile backbone of the Jacobins' popular support. Ultimately, the Enragés forced the Jacobins to overcome any lingering misgivings towards regulating the free market. In order to maintain popular backing against their Girondin rivals, the Jacobins uneasily supported Enragé demands for price caps on food.

On May 3, 1793, the National Convention took its first definitive step toward price controls by establishing a Maximum on grain and flour. The two-month old civil war in the Vendée had further shaken French confidence in internal supply networks. The deputies hoped to

---

[15] As quoted by Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789-1799*, 109. The quote comes from Brissot's *Appel à tous les républicains de France* in October 1792.
[16] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 174. "une contribution sur les riches."

find a just price for grain and flour by directing each department to fix its own maximum. Officials would average prices in the department from January to May 1793 to derive their local price.[17] But the Enragés sought to extend these price controls to other foodstuffs as well. Doing so would decisively tip the balance of trade in the wage-laborer's favor. In late May, the Parisian sections surrounded the Convention and forced the Jacobin deputies to purge the first wave of uncooperative Girondin deputies.

Each time the deputies passed one of the three Maximum programs from May 1793 to March 1794, they reconfigured the constellation of economic relations among the Dames des Halles and their fellow citizens. The Dames' commercial interests merged and diverged with different socio-economic groups with each version of the Maximum. Since the first Maximum of May 1793 only applied to grain and flour and the Dames sold neither of these foodstuffs, the Dames experienced the first Maximum solely as consumers. Therefore, they shared the same commercial interests as other members of the popular classes, including the wage-laborers who were their own customers. Peasants resisted the constraints of the decree which encouraged grain to leave their regions. But, as buyers of bread, the Dames confronted the high bread prices in solidarity with other city-dwellers.[18]

Nonetheless, the sans-culottes were far from satisfied with a maximum on grain-products alone. Suspicion of hoarders gripped the capital in the summer of 1793. In June 1793, Enragé leader Jacques Roux called for a maximum on all basic necessities, including key foodstuffs, before the National Convention. He flipped the basis of economic liberalism on its head by

---

[17] Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) 8-Lc2-171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation* , Du 4 au 11 mai 1793, Tome XVI, n°200.

[18] LeMarchand states that the Maximum proved difficult to enforce because many departments remained committed to economic liberalism and would not force agricultural laborers to comply with the new regulations. G. LeMarchand, "Maximum," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005), 730.

arguing that "the liberty of commerce is the right to use and to put to use and not the right to tyrannize and to prevent use."[19] His speech, of course, echoed popular suspicions that greedy merchants hoarded goods and gouged prices. By early August, journalist Prudhomme, in his *Révolutions de Paris,* echoed the need for a maximum on the foodstuffs beyond the cereal trade.[20] The war continued the intensify throughout August, and although the *lévée en masse* called on all able men to remedy the troop shortage, the deputies still lacked a comprehensive plan for stabilizing the subsistence trade.

On September 5, the Parisian sections converged on the Hôtel de Ville, and a large crowd of citizens marched to the Convention to drive through the sans-culottes' demands for extensive price controls.[21] Chaumette once again spoke on behalf of the Commune and the sans-culottes. Despite the efforts of "the domestic enemies of the State," who tried to corrupt the people, Chaumette insisted that the people of Paris would not trade "its sovereignty for a morsel of bread."[22] However, he demanded that the Convention act in the people's favor by creating a revolutionary army to requisition food from the countryside. After gaining an honorary acknowledgment and admittance, a wave of citizens flooded into the empty spaces of the assembly hall. Some waved signs among the deputies proclaiming, "War on the tyrants, war on the aristocrats, war on the hoarders."[23] During the uprising, the sans-culottes successfully

---

[19] As quoted in Mathiez, *La vie chère,* 217. "La liberté du commerce est le droit d'user et de faire user et non le droit de tyranniser et d'empêcher d'user."
[20] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, du 20 juillet au 3 août 1793, Tome XVII, nº211.
[21] Caron, ed. *Le Maximum général,* 8.
[22] *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur: seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la Révolution française depuis la reunion des Etats-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat*, Volume 73, 7 September 1793, nº520 (Paris: Henri Plon), 411. The *Moniteur* says that it is reporting on the National Convention session of 4 September 1793, but this is incorrect. The session covered actually occurred on September 5, 1793. "les ennemis domestiques de l'Etat," "sa souveraineté contre un morceau du pain."
[23] *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur,* Volume 73, 7 September 1793, nº520, 411. The Convention session of 5 September 1793. "Guerre aux tyrans, guerre aux aristocrats, guerre aux accapareurs."

pressured the more-moderate Jacobin deputies to pursue far-reaching price controls.[24] The National Assembly finally capitulated to popular demands to extend the Maximum to most foodstuffs and goods. To keep the entire economy in balance, the Jacobin deputies noted that they would create corresponding price caps on wages.

Moreover, on the same charged day, the National Convention created policing mechanisms to enforce these new controls and exterminate internal enemies of the Revolution. The revolutionary armies, in particular, would act as the arm of the Convention to smoke out counterrevolutionary hoarders, enforce the Maximum in the recalcitrant countryside, and ensure supply lines for the capital, major urban centers, and French troops.[25] Collectively, these measures cemented Parisian subsistence politics as the cornerstone of national legislation. The revolutionaries formed the scaffolding for the Terror in the process.

The Terror heightened tensions as the National Convention attempted to stabilize inflation and the food supply during the following three weeks. By September 12, the Committee of Public Safety warned the Minister of the Interior that merchants no longer obeyed the grain Maximum in les Halles. This was doubly problematic since the capital was already under emergency provisioning regulations.[26] The Parisian sections again petitioned the National Convention on September 22 to protest their desperate position. They lamented the delay in expanding the Maximum to other foods and wages. Finally, on September 28 and 29, 1793, the

---

[24] Soboul argues that Robespierre was most interested in maintaining a "balance of social forces" during the summer of 1793. The Jacobins did not want to extend the Maximum to other goods beyond bread until the Parisian sections forced them to do so. Albert Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793-1794*, trans. Remy Inglis Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 60.

[25] For more on the revolutionary armies, see Richard Cobb, *The People's Armies*, trans. Marianne Elliott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[26] AN BB^3 81^A fol. 299, 12 sept 1793, "Délibération du Comité de salut public du Département de Paris."

National Convention passed their symbiotic program of price controls on foodstuffs and wages which they called General Maximum.[27]

The General Maximum: A Holistic Project for the Body Politic

Dire circumstances forced the deputies to revise the troubled Maximum law three times from May 1793 to March 1794. Urban food shortages, counterrevolutionary conspiracies, civil war, dwindling supplies for French troops, and tremendous pressure from Parisian sans-culottes spurred the National Convention to pass the Maximums. However, as the deputies crafted the three maximums to respond to extraordinary circumstances, they had to articulate and legitimize these laws within their vision of a cooperative body politic. Therefore, the Jacobin deputies based each reform on the fundamental belief that economic relationships among citizens mirrored the political responsibilities of each citizen to society writ large. Despite the Enragés' pro-worker rhetoric, the National Convention insisted that it did not implement the Maximum to correct antagonistic economic relationships between merchants and consumers. On the contrary, the Jacobin deputies viewed the Maximum as a collaborative effort by all parties to restore the natural balance of trade upset by enemies of the Revolution. The Maximum marked the universal expression of the just price. The popular classes often established a "just price" to sell goods during the food riots of the Old Regime. When the revolutionary populace continued the practice by pillaging some Dames, police spies clothed the old practice in new rhetoric as "patriotic incursions."[28] Nonetheless, the Jacobins maintained that such battles between merchants and consumers were not inevitable. Rather, they argued that consumers and merchants shared common interests in a heavily interdependent society.

---

[27] Caron, ed. *Le Maximum général*, 9.
[28] AN W 112, Rapport de Charmant, 10 ventôse an II, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume 5, "incursions patriotiques."

Although, by their own acknowledgement, the Jacobin deputies would not have issued a Maximum if prices and supplies had been consistent, they insisted that the exceptional measure corresponded to their transcendent republican ideology of the General Will. The Jacobin deputies maintained that the Maximum would foster the virtuous commercial relations that good citizens were already inclined to pursue. Ideally, if the Maximum was all-encompassing and denoted a role for each party involved in the chain of supply and demand, then it would not prove advantageous to any particular group. Rather, the Maximum regulations would spur producers, merchants, and consumers alike towards a collective economic good. As a result, subsistence legislation outlined punishment for merchants who violated price regulations as well as for merchants who tried to abandon their commerce. The controls reinforced the assumption that each merchant, like the Dames, fulfilled their political duties to the nation through their useful work.

To circumvent the apparent conundrum of limiting free commerce, the Jacobin deputies claimed that the Maximum advanced a common social good, did not favor one particular group, and was only a temporary articulation of a universal truth. On the eve of the General Maximum, police informant Roubaud warned that the law "must be beneficial… without which there would result a continual and dangerous brawl between the buyer and the seller."[29] Ideally, the Maximum did not pit merchants against consumers. Rather, the supporters of the Maximum assumed that, if well-intentioned, both groups held mutual interests in the food supply. The Jacobin deputies insisted that the Maximum was merely an extraordinary and transitory measure in response to enemies' machinations. The Maximum commission reported, "In normal times prices are formed naturally by the reciprocal interests of buyers and sellers. This balance is

[29] AN F^7 3688^3, Roubaud, 28 septembre 1793, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des Agents secrets*, Volume 1, 233. "doit être bienfaisante… sans quoi il en résulterait une rixe continuelle et dangereuse entre l'acheteur et le vendeur."

infallible." However, the Convention justified the price controls as an exceptional tactic. The Maximum would restore the natural balance, which the nation's enemies had intentionally upset.[30] In this way, the deputies maintained that merchants and consumer-workers were not fundamentally at odds with one another. If each citizen fulfilled his/her commercial role in the subsistence trade as a civic duty, then the nation would collectively benefit. Although the sans-culottes vehemently demanded price controls, the Jacobin deputies felt uneasy about blatantly contradicting laissez-faire ideology to advantage the consumer alone.[31] Their anxiety manifested itself in the optimistic vision for a holistic maximum that covered products *and* wages.

The General Maximum included all foodstuffs of "first necessity" and fixed their price by calculating their 1790 price, subtracting the customs duties and taxes of 1790, dividing that number by three and then adding the third to the original price from 1790. To take an example which dictated the Dames' sales: fresh butter from Chartres cost 1 livre per pound in 1790, of which 3 sous 6 deniers were the duties and taxes from 1790. Minus the duties and taxes, it cost 16 sous 6 deniers. The third to add would then be 5 sous 6 deniers, making the 1793 Maximum on fresh butter from Chartres 1 livre 2 sous per pound. Likewise for the Dames' fish, a barrel of 108 salted small cod cost 120 livres in 1790, but since there were no duties and taxes on fish, the 1793 Maximum was 160 livres per barrel.[32] The General Maximum also included cheese and, although eggs and vegetables did not make the original list, they were quickly added. The Dames principally traded in these foodstuffs.

The National Convention decreed that workers would uphold their fraternal responsibilities in this economic partnership by adhering to the price caps simultaneously set on

---

[30] As quoted in R.R. Palmer, *The Twelve who Ruled* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 70. Speech by Committee of Subsistence in the National Convention on September 29, 1793.
[31] Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes*, 253 and Palmer, *The Twelve who Ruled*, 70.
[32] Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter AdPP) DB 387 "Tableau du Maximum des Denrées et Marchandises, Stipulées dans l'article premier de la Loi du 29 septembre 1793, l'an II de la République Française."

salaries, wages, and day labor. The deputies ordered each commune to calculate the Maximum on wages by fixing them at 150% of their 1790 rates.[33] Worker and merchant alike had to remain conscious of the entire body politic while earning a living. Each component in the equation should then work in tandem to combat inflation and supply difficulties. If the proportions were carefully calculated, there should be no intrinsically antagonistic relationship between the Maximum on prices and salaries. The two elements should work in sync.[34]

Although it envisioned the Maximum as a society-wide enterprise, the Convention gave teeth to its project by the regulating individual economic behavior. Parisian police quickly began to enforce the General Maximum on 13 October 1793. The Convention built punishments into the Maximum legislation which made commercial participation in the subsistence trade a patriotic duty and a legal obligation. The Maximum compelled merchants to conduct their business and to do so in particular ways. On the one hand, anyone who sold *or* bought above the Maximum would be put on the list of suspects. On the other hand, the Convention gave municipalities the power to imprison for three days "the workers, the producers, and different kinds of laborers who refuse, without legitimate causes, to do their work."[35]

Battered by war and the unrelenting demands of the Parisian sections, the National Convention desperately declared a "revolutionary" government until the peace on October 10, 1793. This emergency state gave the government new latitude for enforcing the Maximum. On October 28, 1793, the Convention decreed, "The merchants and the wholesalers who, since the

---

[33] "Décret qui fixe le maximum du prix des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité. Du 29 septembre 1793," reprinted in Caron, ed. *Le Maximum Général*, 33.

[34] Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) D.1 U3 35 "Arrêté du 29 octobre 1793 qui fixe le maximum du prix des Denrées en marchandises de primière nécessité, publié le 22 du 1 mois de l'an 2 de la rep." All food goods were to be included according to the National Convention's October 2,1793 decree. AdPP DB 387 "Décret de la Convention Nationale, du 2 Octobre 1793, l'an second de la république Françoise, qui comprend tous les Comestibles dans la Loi du maximum."

[35] "Décret qui fixe le maximum du prix des denrées et marchandises de première nécessité. Du 29 septembre 1793," reprinted in Caron, ed. *Le Maximum général*, 33, "les ouvriers, les fabricants et différentes personnes de travail qui se refusaient, sans causes légitimes à leurs travaux."

law of the Maximum, would have ceased or would cease their production and their commerce will be treated like suspect persons."[36] Farmers surrounding Paris had already faced the ultimatum to produce grain for the requisitions or lose their grain and be arrested as "public enemies."[37] Even under extreme circumstances, the deputies continued to use holistic rhetoric to conceptualize the Maximum. In the midst of crisis, individuals' commercial work and physical labor became crucial legal as well as patriotic duties.

The General Maximum delineated culturally legitimate and illegitimate ways of making a profit by stressing the transparency of commercial transactions. Since the first Maximum of May 1793, merchants could only sell grain and flour inside public markets instead of cutting private deals.[38] The Convention followed this decree with a July 1793 law that stipulated that merchants must expose their wares "daily and publicly." At the same time, the deputies made hoarding a crime against the public that could result in capital punishment.[39] With the fall General Maximum decrees, the Convention ordered that no new markets could be created in Paris so that police could regulate transparent markets.[40] When the police caught individuals in violation of the Maximum, they confiscated their goods and remedied the situation by publicly selling them on the Carreau de la Halle (open market square). For example, police caught Citoyenne Michel Roger, a Dame des Halles, with a basket of 820 eggs that she was selling above the maximum, along with 10 cheese bricks, 40 cheese wedges, and a small duck. After the police confiscated her goods and detained her, they sold her supplies in les Halles to benefit of the Commune's

---

[36] "Décret relatif au compte à rendre de l'exécution de la loi du maximum pour les denrées de première nécessité. Du 7 brumaire an II (28 octobre 1793)," reprinted in Caron, ed. *Le Maximum Général*, 40. "Les marchands et marchands en gros qui, depuis la loi du maximum, auraient cessé ou cesserait leur fabrication et leur commerce seront traités comme personnes suspectes."
[37] Mathiez, *La vie chère,* 465, "ennemis publics."
[38] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation* , Du 4 au 11 mai 1793, Tome XVI, n°200, 313.
[39] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 252, "journellement et publiquement."
[40] Decree of 18 vendémiaire an II (September 4, 1794). Jean Tulard, ed., *Almanach de Paris: de 1789 à nos jours*, Tome II. (Paris: Encyclopaedia universalis, 1990).

public treasury.[41] Revolutionary officials insisted that every aspect of cooperative trade took place on public land, in between members of the public, and under the public eye.

In les Halles, the populace as well as the police monitored transactions. The transparency of any exchange implicitly legitimized the economic advantages incurred by the participating parties. After one consumer bought eggs from a woman above the Maximum, "patriot" listeners urged him that "it was his *duty* to take this woman to the first revolutionary committee."[42] When one woman insulted a fruitière who she thought demanded a exorbitant price for a crate of onions, they came to blows in front of a crowd. But the crowd pegged the complaining consumer as the unreasonable party and the police arrested the buyer. The onlookers marked the commercial dispute as fundamentally political by cheering the police with cries of "Long live the Convention and the Republic."[43]

In order to increase the transparency of trade and lower the price of goods, the General Maximum also emphasized that goods should pass through as few hands as possible. Jacobin officials and the public reasoned that the fewer people there were involved in the chain of commerce, the less room there was for price manipulation, hoarding, or counter-revolutionary plotting. However, in practice, goods often passed between many parties in the long route from farmer, fisherman, and producer to their consumers. Commissaire Dufourny (a Dantonist) recognized that the Jacobins' ideal of few intermediaries could only exist as a mirage. Disgusted, he said that the sans-culottes unfairly believed that "'the man who speculates in foodstuffs for profit is a useless middleman, dangerous and guilty, a genuine monopolist, an enemy of

---

[41] AdP current code: VD* 40; old system: D.389, # 6800

[42] The italics are my emphasis. AN F^7 3688^3, Deuxième rapport de Pourvoyer, 7 nivôse an II (27 December 1793), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des Agents secrets*, Tome II, 41. "il était de *son devoir* de conduire cette femme au premier comité révolutionnaire."

[43] AN F^7 3688^3, Bacon, 22 nivôse an II (11 January 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des Agents secrets*, Tome II, 297. "Vivent la Convention et la République."

society.'"[44] Nonetheless, in the General Maximum, the deputies completely discounted the existence of several intermediary agents who transported and subdivided goods. Unfortunately for the Jacobins, the food trade followed far more complex webs. The shortcomings wreaked havoc on the Dames' livelihoods.

Forgetting the Retailers: The Maximum Challenges the Dames' Occupational Legitimacy

Despite the General Maximum's holistic vision of the body politic, the law fell apart because the deputies neglected to subdivide the subsistence trade into its myriad parts. The Maximum prices completely ignored transport costs. Therefore, producers and wholesalers could not recover trucking costs to sell goods at any distance from their place of origin. Since no region, especially Paris, grew all of its foodstuffs or produced all its essential goods, the inability to recoup transportation costs could crush trade networks. In addition, the law did not set different prices for wholesalers, brokers, and retail merchants. If cultivators or wholesalers already sold their goods at the Maximum prices, brokers and retail merchants could not raise the price to make a legal profit. The Maximum not only threatened the Dames' profits but stood to erase the Dames' occupation altogether. Due to these serious omissions, the perfectly symbiotic transactions that the Maximum aimed to promote among cultivators, merchants, and consumers remained impossible.

Consequently, the Dames des Halles found themselves in a precarious position. As consumers, the Dames still benefited from price controls on important foodstuffs that they did not sell. However, the price controls simultaneously prevented the Dames from reselling at a profit if their wholesalers already sold to them at the maximum. Thus, according to the General Maximum categories, the Dames could not be exclusively cast as merchants or consumers in

[44] As quoted on September 1, 1793 in Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes*, 60.

their socio-economic relations. Confronted with a dismal food supply and the skyrocketing cost of food, the Dames had to articulate their fragile ideological positions, economic roles, and social responsibilities to defend their livelihoods. In order to protect their occupations as retail merchants and to legitimize their profits, the market women and their defenders underscored how their trade benefited the public. As autonomous citizen-workers who served society, the Dames highlighted their utility to make commercial demands on the state. Ultimately, the legal distinctions built into the Maximum spurred the Dames to defend their commercial interests, their relationships with other socio-economic groups, and their occupational roles within revolutionary discourses.

Barely a month passed before the general public and the deputies realized the serious miscalculations in the General Maximum program that did not stipulate separate wholesale and resale prices. Journalist Prudhomme noted that the deputies' legislation "was not general enough" and failed to specify whether the price caps applied to wholesalers, retail merchants, or both. He testified that, because wholesalers already sold their supplies at the Maximum, the Parisian "small retailers" hovered on the verge of collapse.[45] For example, the Dames and other retailers who bought goods like brie cheese from wholesalers at the Maximum price of 57 livres 13 sous 4 deniers per dozen, could only subdivide and resell brie at an equivalent price of no more than 57 livres 13 sous 4 deniers per dozen. The General Maximum clamped a vice on the Dames' retail trade. If they followed the law, the Dames would play a zero sum game in les Halles.

On 11 brumaire an II (1 November 1793), deputy Barère presented a report to the National Convention in which he "denounced" the Maximum since the cultivators and

[45] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation* , du 7 au 14 brumaire an II, Tome XVII, nº213, 158-159, "n'étoit pas assez générale," "petits détaillants."

wholesalers benefited at the retailers' expense.[46] Barère urged the deputies to conceptualize the Maximum fully as a society-wide project by subdividing commercial roles. He argued that "the law of the Maximum should cover each useful chain of producers, of technicians, of manufacturers, of producers, of wholesalers, of merchants, and of retailers." Without these proper subdivisions, Barère declared that "commerce, so useful, so beneficial, so necessary in this revolution of liberty thus became a kind of miserly tyrant that one had to enslave to make it useful."[47] He complained that retailers and the sans-culottes lost the most in the current equation. Barère explained that if the deputies reformed the Maximum and compensated the retailers' losses, they would create "a sort of everyday commerce, more within the reach of the poor citizen, of the laborer, & of this class of good republicans who buys & lives from day to day."[48]

In order to correct the Maximum's deficiencies, Barère successfully convinced the National Convention to conduct a study for a tiered Maximum. The proposed reform would allow the wholesaler to add 5% to the price of his original purchasing and transport costs. Then, it would allow retailers like the Dames to double the percent to 10 so that they, too, could make a 5% profit.[49] The National Convention charged the new Commission of Subsistence and Provisioning with drawing up extensive tables by region for all merchandise from clothing to wood, and butter to fish. These tables would include: "1° the production price of the merchandise

---

[46] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 433.
[47] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, du 7 au 14 brumaire an II, Tome XVII, nº213, 164. "La loi du maximum devoit couvrir chaque chaîne utile de producteurs, de manipulateurs, de manufacturiers, de fabricans, de magasiners en gros, de marchands et de détaillans," "le commerce, si utile, si bienfaisant, si nécessaire est donc devenu dans cette révolution de la liberté une espèce de tyran avare qu'il a fallu asservir pour se le rendre utile."
[48] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, du 7 au 14 brumaire an II, Tome XVII, nº213, 165.; "une sorte de commerce usuel, plus à portée du citoyen pauvre, du manouvrier & de cette classe de bons républicains qui achète & vit au jour le jour."
[49] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 433.

in 1790, 2° the Price of transport, 3° the profit of the Wholesaler and of the Retailer."[50] The Convention alerted the nation that the reformed Maximum on foodstuffs would be calculated and applied by the end of brumaire (mid-November).[51] But in reality, the Commission took three months to conduct their study and Parisians waited an additional perilous month for the Convention to publish it! The committee did not submit their proposal to the Convention until 6 ventôse an II (February 24, 1794). Even then, the reformed Maximum did not take effect in Paris until the police posted the new wholesale and retail prices on 5 germinal an II (March 25, 1794).[52] Therefore, the Dames' trade fell into complete ruin or hovered on the precipice of collapse for five long months between September 1793 and March 1794.

Commercial Tensions and Political Judgments: Merchants, Aristocrats, and Counterrevolutionaries?

Despite the Jacobins' efforts to create a holistic General Maximum in the fall of 1793, the Parisian sans-culottes did not see a symbiotic balance among the merchant, worker, and farmer. The Enragés and the Hébertists (radical activists) lobbied relentlessly for price controls to secure affordable food for wage-laborers.[53] In their view, the Maximum should ultimately serve "the people," whom they interpreted as consumers, not merchants. For example, the Gardes-

[50] AN AF^{II} 42, (subdossier: AF^{II} 333); Caron, *La Commission des Subsistances de l'an II: Procès-verbaux et Actes*, p XIII ; See also "Décret relatif au compte à rendre de l'exécution de la loi du maximum pour les denrées de première nécessité. Du 7 brumaire an II – 28 octobre 1793" reprinted in Caron, ed. *Le Maximum général*, 40.
[51] AdPP DB 387, "Décret de la Convention Nationale, du 7e jour du 2e mois de l'an second de la République," "Relatif au compte à rendre de l'exécution de la Loi du Maximum pour les Denrées de première nécessité," "1° du prix des marchandises en fabrique en 1790, 2° du Prix du transport, 3° du bénéfice du Marchand en gros et de celui du Marchand en détail."
[52] Pierre Caron divides the General Maximum into two periods divided by the 6 ventôse an II (February 24, 1794) reform. However, police reports reveal that the reformed General Maximum was not posted and enforced in Paris until 5 Germinal II (March 21, 1794). Therefore, I use the latter as the turning point for my analysis of changing socio-economic relations. In addition, the month delay caused confusion, which inflamed marketplace tensions and generated discussion of the reform within the capital. Pierre Caron, ed. *Le Maximum général: Instruction, recueil de textes et notes* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1930), 3.
[53] Soboul argues that the concern over subsistence and consumption was the common denominator in the sans-culottes' political concerns. Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes*, 43.

Françaises section petitioned the Convention to demand that farmers and retailers consider their foodstuffs "'as being goods placed in their trust for which [they are] to render an account to the Republic.'"[54] As the pressures of war and the Terror bled into the Maximum's shortcomings, Parisians conflated economic suspicions with political suspicions.

On the one hand, Parisians quickly judged the Dames and other merchants according to their occupation. The Enragés, and then the Hébertists, violently accused merchants of hoarding and of harboring aristocratic sentiment. In the fall of 1793, Deputy Collot d'Herbois expounded to the Convention: "It is time for you to deliver a last blow against the aristocracy of merchants. It is this aristocracy that has checked the progress of the Revolution and prevented us thus far from enjoying the fruit of our sacrifices." He demanded that price-gouging merchants be considered suspect.[55] Likewise, in the street, one client admonished that the Dames of the marché Saint-Germain "were aristocrats who sell [food] so expensively."[56] Dames, like one vegetable marchande in the marché Saint-Germain, risked being called "aristocrats" if they set their prices too high.[57] Police spies and the populace used vocabulary that ambiguously conflated the Dames, wholesalers, and aristocrats. Commissioner Baron noted, "People loudly complained against les grosses marchandes de la Halles" and their greed.[58] Yet, "grosses marchandes" could mean fat (rich) merchants, but "marchand en gros" literally meant "wholesaler." Any show of wealth did not go unsuspected. One inebriated marchande from les Halles inadvisably displayed

[54] As quoted in Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes*, 53. The section presented their petition on February 17, 1793.
[55] As quoted in Palmer, *The Twelve who Ruled*, 68.
[56] AN F^7 3688^3, 28 nivôse an II (17 January 1794), Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III (Paris: Libraire Ancienne Honoré, 1943), 3, "c'étaient des aristocrates qui vendaient si cher."
[57] AN F^7 3688^3, Breton, 28 nivôse an II (17 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 3.
[58] "On a beaucoup crié contre les grosses marchandes de la Halles."

her husband's rich possessions. Since she claimed to make only 15 livres per day selling fruit and fish, she drew accusations of aristocratic payoffs.[59]

On the other hand, Parisians did not inevitably pigeonhole the Dames as greedy merchants. The Dames who sang the victories of the French armies in the public markets appeared as exceptionally good patriots. After the revolutionaries retook Toulon from the British and French royalists in late December, police observer Mercier happily reported that "The women of the Halle are charming and gay; they sing the praises of the Convention."[60]

Firm lines between patriotic consumers and greedy, aristocratic merchants could not be drawn in practice. The Dames also felt the shortcomings of the Maximum as consumers of other goods like bread and meat. The Dames who sold marlins above the Maximum at 40 sols a piece protested that they had to make a meager profit. If not, they could not afford to buy any meat for themselves from the butchers.[61] Like other consumers, the Dames railed against wholesalers who, anticipating a higher Maximum, hid their goods.[62] Fish and apple marchandes who could not procure sugar from a grocer in the faubourg Saint-Marceau publicly lambasted the grocer until a National Guardsman arrived. The Guardsman asked the Dames, in their capacity as "good republicans," not to stir up the crowd. He then embraced the angriest woman. Apparently satisfied that the guard had publicized the injustice and validated their patriotism, the remaining marchandes kissed the guard back while crying, "Long live the Republic."[63]

---

[59] AN W 112, Rolmi (illegible), 18 ventôse an II.
[60] AN F^7 3688^3, Mercier, 6 nivôse an II, 26 décembre 1793, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur : Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 14. "Les femmes de la Halle sont d'une gaîté charmante; elles chantent les louanges de la Convention."
[61] AN W 191, Prévost, 11 pluviôse an II (30 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 238; AN W 191, Prévost, 11 pluviôse an II (30 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 238.
[62] AN W 191, Mercier, 22 pluviôse an II, (10 février 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*, Tome VI (Paris: Libraire Klincksieck, 1964), 30.
[63] AN F^7 3688^3, Bacon, 14 niviôse an II (3 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 151, "bonnes républicaines," "Vive la République."

Even while selling goods at barely sustainable prices in les Halles, some Dames frowned upon hoarding consumers whose greed deprived their Parisians neighbors of supplies. In the vegetable market, a Dame scoffed at one consumer who struggled to carry her many purchases: "Put them in your petticoat. Are you afraid of spoiling them? Go, you [informal "you," potentially an insult] will not use them, we will be dead of hunger before they are used up. Do you not see that we already lack everything in Paris; turn your eyes on the market and you will be convinced of what I am telling you."[64]

Alongside other consumers, the Dames could jeer at hoarders at the Revolutionary Tribunal. There, the Dames occupied the galleries with wage-earners and clients and shared their disdain for the suspects. Police observer Monic reported that, because the Dames could secure little to sell at the market, they often went to the tribunal with their free time. In the winter of 1793-1794, the Dames sat alongside workers in attendance to pass public judgment on the suspects.[65] With limited means to make money in the marketplace, some Dames even used the proceedings as an alternative commercial space to eke out a few sous. While the tribunal judged counterrevolutionary hoarders, the Dames peddled fruit to fellow spectators in the galleries.[66] Nonetheless, the Dames usually shared the concerns of vulnerable consumers condemning wealthy hoarders.

Seemingly mismatched alliances surprised police in les Halles. In February 1794, after a Dame sold some fish to a wealthy man's cook at a high price, she joined in the chorus of the complaints against gluttonous consumers. Police spy Perrière reported that he was astonished

---

[64] AN W 112, Harivel, 1 ventôse an II (19 février 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 212, "Mets les dans ton jupon. Aurais-tu peur de la gâter? Va, tu ne l'useras pas, nous serons morts de faim avant qu'il soit usé. Ne vois-pas que déjà nous manquons de tout à Paris; jette les yeux sur le marché et tu sera convaincue de ce que je te dis…"

[65] AN F^7 3688^3, Monic, 21 niviôse an II (10 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur : Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 291-292.

[66] AN W 191, Pourvoyeur, 12 pluviôse an II (21 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 257.

that "the female merchant [Dame] was herself enraged with the expensive and delicate provisioning of these happy mortals since she must have gained a lot from it; but it's apparent that she was thinking about Equality."[67] As poor consumers themselves, some Dames politically and economically sympathized with wage laborers' plight, even if the Dames might benefit commercially. Nine days later, Perrière overheard a similar conversation. A Dame shared her clients' lament that the price of meat, vegetables, butter, eggs, and carp fluctuated so rapidly. The retailer explained that the instability resulted from "sad effects of the maximum." "Deprivations for some, exactions for the others," she sighed, "voilà the effect of prohibitive laws."[68] The Dames struggled to overcome the reductive binary pitting merchants as aristocratic hoarders versus consumers as victims.

Because the Maximum established one indiscriminant "merchant" category, the Dames could easily acquire the stereotype of hoarding, counterrevolutionary merchants. Although support for the General Maximum certainly constituted a political statement and Parisians more readily equated consumers as "citizens" than merchants, the Dames illustrated that supporting the Maximum was only one component of revolutionary allegiance. Even after the Convention passed the equivalent of a commercial death sentence and dismissed the Dames' pleas to allow them to buy supplies before consumers, most of the Dames continued to support the Revolution. The retailers separated economic discontent from counter-revolutionary sentiment. On 14 ventôse an II (March 4, 1794), police commissioner Grivel reported with pride and great interest that:

---

[67] AN W 191, Rapport de Perrière, 29 pluviôse an II (17 février 1791), reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume IV. "la marchande fût elle-même en colère de la provision chère et délicate de ces heureux mortels, puisqu'elle devait gagner beaucoup portant; mais c'est qu'apparemment elle pensait à l'Égalité."

[68] AN W 112, Rapport de Perrière, 6 ventôse an II, 24 février 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, Volume IV, "tristes effets du maximum." "Privations pour les uns, exactions pour les autres," "voilà l'effet des lois prohibitives."

> Yesterday the majority of the citizenesses of the Halle, while setting up in the places that they occupy in the market, found circulars and anonymous letters, in which the authors told them that one must not suffer the cruel oppression exercised by the Convention, that it was necessary to return to one unique head [of state] and to displace the 700 tyrants who reign arbitrarily in his [the king's] place, that, in order to bring an end to the unhappiness that consequently devastates all, we exhort the Dames de la Halle to rise up and go, with 1,200 [Dames], to the National Assembly in order to eradicate tyranny and the tyrants.

The Dames grew enraged over the counterrevolutionary sedition and brought the inflammatory pamphlets directly to the police.[69] Ironically, Grivel praised these "citizenesses" the very day before the police detained 200 of them in St. Eustache for commercial violations. The Dames' economic attitudes certainly informed their political attitudes. However, the Dames' political sentiments could never be simply derived from their economic experience.

The public often held retail merchants in higher moral esteem than their wholesale counterparts, which yielded some political advantages for the retailers. In January 1794, Commissioner Pourvoyeur reported that "the people" in his section primarily blamed the food problems on "the rich merchants, brokers, farmers, etc., who only desire the unhappiness of the people."[70] At the National Convention, the Défenseurs de la République (a club with Enragé sympathies) labeled wholesalers and financiers as "the aristocracy of fortune."[71] The section Bonnes Nouvelles petitioned the Convention to ask that no wholesalers be admitted to public office and that all citizens buy from the retailers.[72] The section's requests highlighted how

---

[69] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 14 ventôse an II (4 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Tome I, 199. "Hier la plupart des citoyennes de la Halle, en se rendant aux places qu'elles occupent au marché, trouvèrent des lettres circulaires et anonymes, dans lesquelles on leur disait qu'on ne devait plus souffrir la cruelle oppression exercée par la Convention, qu'il fallait revenir à un chef unique et se défaire des 700 tyrans qui régnaient arbitrairement à sa place, que, pour mettre fin aux malheurs qui accablent en conséquence, on exhortait les dames de la Halle de se lever et d'aller, au nombre de 1,200, à l'Assemblé nationale pour extirper la tyrannie avec les tryans."

[70] AN W 191, Pourvoyeur, 8 pluviôse an II (27 jan 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 184, "le peuple," "les marchands riches, négociants, [and] fermiers, etc qui ne désirent que le malheur du peuple."

[71] Mathiez, *La vie chère,* 170, "l'aristocratie de la fortune."

[72] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 560.

revolutionaries could be suspicious of wholesalers who dealt in large quantities outside the market, but less suspicious of retailers who (ideally) sold in public view in smaller quantities.

The legislative blunder which failed to create distinct wholesale and retail prices produced two diverging socio-economic relationships for the Dames: First, the Maximum highlighted how retailers and consumers shared an interest in lower wholesale prices. As consumers of foodstuffs themselves, the Dames had common grievances with consumers over food shortages, hoarding, and high prices. Second, the Maximum's over-simplified "merchant" category forced the Dames to engage in illegal or creative maneuvers to eke out any profit. This impossible position simultaneously put them at odds with consumers and perpetuated the image of price-hiking retailers.

Navigating Economic Survival through Legal and Illegal Means

The severe shortages, escalating prices, and broken Maximum during the winter of 1793-1794 created a pressure cooker for the Dames. Moreover war, revolt, and the Terror superheated the relationship between politics and food. The market women found themselves commercially and ideologically trapped. When the Convention stalled in creating retail price controls, the deputies unintentionally hindered the Dames from legally legitimating their businesses. To stay in the black, the Dames wildly vacillated between legal and illegal trade between October 1793 and March 1794. Their illegal strategies and simultaneous calls for reform exposed the contradictions inherent in the Maximum.

While waiting for the deputies to separate wholesale and retail prices, the Dames developed a host of illegal strategies to survive economically.[73] Most simply, they ignored the

[73] Merchants and consumers regularly engaged in degrees of illicit trade that informed marketplace relations. However the Dames' illegal maneuvers in the winter of 1793-1794 explicitly responded to the crisis that the

Maximum. By January 1794, police informant Le Breton wrote that the *revendeuses* no longer rigorously observed the Maximum.[74] Police spy Dugas seconded his account and observed that "the maximum is only a joke for all the female merchants."[75] Many Dames des Halles forced suppliers from the countryside to sell them food at the Maximum, but then resold the food at higher price to mostly well-off customers. It seemed like a tiered maximum would benefit all parties involved.[76] In the marketplace, police commissioner Grivel painted the Dames as "obstinate, often insolent, resellers" who forced mothers and cooks to either pay above the Maximum or return home with "empty hands."[77] His colleague Siret lamented that the Dames' price hiking was doubly disheartening for those who received assistance from the state. He noted, "One has seen more than one female citizen from this indigent class who, seeing the welfare of the sections, makes much more expensive the charity intended to relieve the poor."[78]

The Dames also tried to conduct their business beyond the grasp of marketplace surveillance. If retailers could procure their supplies earlier in the chain of trade, they could bypass their brokers' cut. Some Dames des Halle halted food-toting peasants outside the city en route to les Halles. The populace called on police to stop this unregulated trade and steer the

---

Maximum produced. Moreover, the revolutionary officials attempted to make market trade transparent in order to reject these irregular relationships. Anne Montenach's study of seventeenth-century markets underscores how marketplace actors often participated in "illicit and licit trade" in tandem. This created an "économie parallèle" that diverged from official regulations but remained embedded in the licit economy. Anne Montenach, *Espaces et pratiques du commerce alimentaires à Lyon au XVIIe siècle* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2009), 15, 18.

[74] AN F^7 3688^3, Le Breton, 20 nivôse an II (9 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 271.

[75] AN W 191, Dugas, 9 pluviôse an II, (28 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, p. 193 "le maximum n'est qu'une plaisanterie pour toutes les marchandes."

[76] AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, 12 ventôse an II (March 2, 1794)

[77] AN F^7 3688^3, Grivel, 13 et 14 nivôse an II (January 2, 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 106. "revendeuses obstinées, souvent insolents," "les mains vides."

[78] Siret, 3 pluviôse an II (January 22, 1794) as reprinted in Ernest Leroux, ed., *Commission de Recherche,* 142, "On a vu plus d'une citoyenne de cette classe indigente, qui vit des bienfaits des sections, faire meilleure chère de bienfaisance destinée à soulager les malheureux."

supply carts directly to the marketplace for public sale.[79] The police accused wholesalers who, under the cover of night, struck deals outside of les Halles of engaging in "liberticide traffic."[80] Some retailers smuggled food in the opposite direction out of the marketplace to resell at higher prices. The police caught some merchants sneaking butter out of the public Halles to private, rich clients.[81] The Dames extended their businesses temporally as well as geographically. One fruitière complemented her daytime business with secret trade at night.[82] Still other Dames manipulated neighborhood-based quotas. In March 1794, five fish merchants plotted to collect the pork rations for the decade (the revolutionary week) multiple times from different sections. These Dames speculated that they could make some resale money from the dubious venture.[83] The popular classes grew frustrated with the Dames' maneuvers that, according to one police agent, burdened "the people alone."[84]

The Dames des Halles keenly felt the great economic disadvantage that the General Maximum inadvertently imposed. They did not hesitate to air their own economic frustrations as political grievances. Four weeks after the decree, police spy Prévost reported the Dames' incredulity and anger. He wrote to his superiors that "the women of les Halles [the Dames des Halles] say that the Maximum had been made by some evildoers in order to provoke civil war; others [say] that those whom one calls republicans are the dregs of the people."[85] In December,

---

[79] AN W 112, Mercier, 1 ventôse an II (19 février 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 212 ; AN W 112, Prévost, 18 ventôse an II (8 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*, Tome V (Paris: Libraire C. Klincksieck, 1958), 166.

[80] AN W 174, Rapport de Bacon, 9 Germinal an II, 29 mars 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume VI, "trafic liberticide."

[81] AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, Grivel, 20 ventôse an II (March 10, 1794).

[82] AN W 191 Pourvoyeur, 30 pluviôse an II (18 février 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 194.

[83] AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, Rolin, 21 ventôse an II (March 11, 1794).

[84] AN W 191, Pourvoyeur, 5 pluviôse an II (24 janvier 1794) as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, p. 134 "le peuple seul."

[85] AN W 174, Prévost, 28 octobre 1793, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur : Rapports des agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*, Tome VI (Paris: Libraire Klinckscieck, 1964), 267. "Les femmes de la Halle

the spice dealers complained in the markets that, without the promised Maximum reform, they could not pay their suppliers nor make a profit.[86] In fact, police observer Grivel noted that many of the merchants who sold at the feeble Maximum actually lost money. The ever-deteriorating supply shortage only worsened the situation.[87] After a particularly scarce week in January 1794 in les Halles, the Dames bitterly protested that they would not be able to pay their rent for their market spaces.[88] By February 1794, the Dames des Halles loudly complained that they could not secure anything to sell regardless of the price. Police reporter Prevost noted that the few fruitières who did procure food had completely abandoned the marketplace. Instead, they peddled their goods directly at well-off customers' houses.[89] The insufficiencies of the General Maximum's merchant categories combined with growing food shortages drove the Dames' businesses to the brink of collapse.

The state further challenged the Dames by catering to consumers between November 1793 and March 1794. In an effort to circumvent hoarding and price gouging, first the Commune and then the National Convention attempted to remove intermediary layers of exchange among citizens in the marketplace.[90] They increased consumer access to goods from the countryside by giving consumers direct access to wholesalers. However, the government's strategy pushed the Dames even farther into a corner. In November, the Parisian section Mucius Scevola

---

disent que le maximum a été fait par des malveillants pour exciter à la guerre civile ; d'autres [say] que ceux qu'on appelle républicains est la lie du people."

[86] AN W 174, Prévost 5 décembre 1793, Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 304.

[87] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 27 Frimaire an II, 17 décembre 1793, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 272-273.

[88] AN W 191, Prévost, 5 pluviôse an II, 24 janvier 1794, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, p. 135

[89] AN W 191, Prévost, 16 pluviôse an II, 4 février 1794, as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 328.

[90] Grivel or Siret observed on 26 nivôse an II that, under the current system, denrées had already experienced price hikes by three parties before the public had access at les Halles. Grivel or Siret, 26 nivôse, an II, Ernest Leroux, ed., Ernest Leroux, ed., *Commission de Recherche et de Publication des Documents Relatifs à la Vie Économique de la Révolution,* Bulliten Trimestrial (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1907), 129-130.

successfully petitioned the Commune to decree that "the citizens" could buy their food in les Halles before retail merchants could secure their own supplies.[91] In other words, the Commune's concession undermined the Dames' occupation and their supplies. Savvy Parisians hesitated to buy from a retailer who potentially hiked prices when they could buy from a subdividing wholesaler more likely to sell at the Maximum. By January 1794, the police appear to have inconsistently enforced the Commune's order of trade by allowing some retailers to buy supplies before consumers. One government observer reported that if "the public alone would be admitted to provision itself" before the retailers, that "it would be very advantageous for the indigent class." Due to fallout from the Maximum, the Dames risked being conceptually excluded from the "public," being inaccurately divorced from the "indigent class," and losing the means to sustain their businesses.[92]

By ventôse an II (February 1794), the butter and egg shortage was so critical that the police feared that the popular classes would erupt if the Convention did not provide any relief.[93] The Dames had contributed to this shortage by participating in the black market to save their businesses. This time, the police gained permission from the National Convention to block retailers from buying supplies until "the Citizens had been provisioned."[94] In doing so, they painted the consumer as the citizen but excluded the Dames from the same category. Police commissioner Grivel observed that the consumer-first policy was the only way to prevent the Dames from forcing wholesalers to sell at the Maximum, but then selling to consumers above the

---

[91] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, du 15 au 22 brumaire an II, Tome XVII, nº214,196.
[92] Grivel or Siret, 26 nivôse, an II (Jan 15, 1794), reprinted in Ernest Leroux, ed., *Commission de Recherche*, p. 129. "le public serait seul admis à s'approvisionner," "il serait très avantageux pour la classe indigente," "public," "classe indigente."
[93] AN F^{11} 205 Mémoires, lettres, pétitions adressés au Comité de salut public et relatifs aux subsistances et au maximum an II-an IV, report on Paris, 8 ventôse an 2
[94] AN F^{11} 205, 7 ventôse an 2, Extraits des Rapports de la Surveillance de la Police à la Mairie, "les Citoyens ont été pourvus."

Maximum themselves. He warned that the Dames committed such "excesses" as using "invectives, cries, and violence." In addition they deprived the marketplace of goods, which they brought to private homes and sold at double and triple the Maximum. Grivel testified that the women blatantly ignored the recent regulations and castigated their defiant illegal transactions as "uncivic conduct."[95]

The tension among the police, the Dames, and the Convention had reached a breaking point by late February. On 8 ventôse an II (February 26, 1794), the Dames entered the halls of the National Convention. They testified that they could only make a profit by selling above the Maximum. However, the Convention refused to grant them legal permission to sell at a higher price.[96] In addition, the Dames protested that the Commune had forbidden them from buying *any vegetables at all* to resell! The marchandes protested that "this measure will deprive two thousand families the means to subsist." Echoing the balancing theory behind the General Maximum, Deputy Cambron defended the Dames: "It is necessary that the committee of public safety and that [committee] which is occupied with the law of the Maximum research how to reconcile the supply of the markets, with a guarantee of profit for the poor women who have no other means to live apart from the commerce in vegetables." The Convention decided to pass the petition to the Parisian police.[97]

Yet, the market police cast the Dames' requests in a suspicious light: "The women, who call themselves citizenesses of the Halle and who are not it [citizenesses of the Halle], have tried,

---

[95] Grivel, 15 ventôse an II, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Vol 1, 200-201, "excès," "les invectives, et les cris, et la violence," "La conduit incivique."

[96] Grivel, 15 ventôse an II, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 200-201.

[97] *Archives Parlementaires*, séance du 8 ventôse an II (26 février 1794), Series I: Volume LXXXV, (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1964), 509-510. "cette mesure priverait deux mille familles des moyens de subsister," "il faut que le comité de salut public et celui s'est occupé de la loi du maximum recherchent le moyen de concilier l'approvisionnement des marchés, avec l'assurance, d'un bénéfice pour les femmes pauvres, qui n'ont d'autre ressource pour vivre que le commerce des légumes."

through the favor of this name, to fool the Convention." With no legal way to sustain their business, the Dames continued to ignore the Commune's original order to allow consumers to buy goods from wholesalers first. Police commissioner Grivel took safeguards against the Dames' "recalcitrant spirit" and disregard for the law. He brought an armed force to les Halles to underscore his point. Unfazed, the Dames still broke the Maximum and the order of sale in the marketplace. Les Halles erupted in chaos. Grivel reported that the Dames unleashed "a great tumult and much trouble and disorder." The confrontation between the Dames and the commissioner only ended after the police managed to arrest 200 of the Dames and hold them in a revolutionary timeout in the church St. Eustache.[98]

Despite the clean legalistic divides that the General Maximum drew between merchants and consumers, continued volatile prices, the logistical necessity for retailers, and the precarious food supply repeatedly exposed the Maximum's failure. In order to economically survive, the Dames turned to legal and illegal measures. The retailers appealed to the Commune and the Convention to protest being cut out of the chain of sale. However, in order to survive, the Dames drew heavily on illegal strategies by selling above the Maximum, circumventing supply regulations, and selling outside of the market. The police expected the Dames to act as communally-minded citizens and did not tolerate their illegal maneuvers. Nonetheless, the police observed how the Maximum failed in the marketplace. Consequently, they pointed out the Maximum's flawed logic to the deputies. The very police that arrested Dames for illegal sales became the Dames' principal advocates.

[98] Grivel, 15 ventôse an II, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 200-201. "Ces femmes, qui se disent les citoyennes de la Halle et qui ne le sont pas, ont essayé, à la faveur de ce nom, de tromper la Convention," "esprit recalcitrant," "un grand tumulte et beaucoup de trouble et de désordre."

The Police: The Dames' Partners in Reform

Although the Dames directly appealed to their representatives to protest the disadvantageous Maximum, legislators and officials most frequently relied on police reports to examine marketplace problems. Police commissioners in les Halles revealed how the Maximum succeeded or failed on the ground through daily intelligence. While reporting how the Dames and others reacted to the Maximum legislation, the police unveiled the General Maximum's deficiencies. The commissioners offered pragmatic suggestions for reform based on what transpired in the marketplace. Succinctly put, they exposed holes in the deputies' idealistic views of trade. The commissioners recognized the complexities of supply, distribution, prices, and public opinion. The police urgently validated retailers' essential role in provisioning the populace, even while chastising the Dames' illegal activities like selling above the Maximum or outside of the marketplace.

The police sought to convince the deputies that by defending retailers' commercial interests they would defend consumers' interests by extension. For example, the police noted that when the Dames bought butter in les Halles but then had to flee the markets to sell to rich customers at a profit, they deprived poor families of foodstuffs.[99] The commissioners implicitly backed the Dames' own assertions that they provided a useful public service. Along with the Dames, the police legitimized retailers' profits and carved out a role for retailers in the body politic.

In les Halles, police observers played a vital role in assessing how the Maximum succeeded or failed in everyday trade.[100] The Minister of the Interior ordered at least 18 police

[99] Archives nationales (hereafter AN) W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, Grivel, 20 ventôse an II
[100] For an overview of the *commissaires de police*, their instructions, their attitudes, and their observatory practice, see: Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 14-26.

commissioners inform on "'the particular events and circumstances of all kinds that can characterize the general sentiment, [and to] indicate abuses, or announce troubles.'" Of these informers, Grivel, Siret, Roubaud, Bacon, Prévost, Le Breton, Dugas, Mercier, Pourvoyer, Harivel, Monic, Perrière, and Charmont reported on food supply and trade conditions. These officials surveyed their territory almost daily. Writing from neighborhood cafés and offices, they sent reports to the Minister of the Interior and the Provisionary Executive Council.[101] These administrators ultimately funneled the information to the deputies and committees like the Commission on Subsistence.

The observers' reports on how the Maximum worked in practice influenced the deputies' avenues for reform. The Commission on Subsistence praised commissioners Grivel and Siret in particular as prolific marketplace spies who gave "the most advantageous information on commerce, agriculture, the sale of animals, on the Maximum and on the manner of provisioning Paris." The Commission offered their "'highest praise of their reports'" complete with "'letters of gratitude.'"[102] Grivel, a Jacobin, interpreted the situation on the ground for Jacobin deputies in the assembly halls. Grivel fearlessly voiced his opinions to his superiors and condemned what he saw as unbalanced price controls. He urged Jacobin officials to be moderate and fair in designing the maximum prices and wages for wholesalers, retailers, and consumers alike. Grivel pushed back against consumers who sought to deny merchants a means to profit just as much as he denounced merchants who made traded illegally. While observing the Dames and their neighbors in les Halles, Grivel became convinced that the Maximum could only succeed if it advanced a

[101] As quoted by Pierre Caron, "Rapports de Grivel et Siret, Commissaires Observateurs Parisiens du Conseil Exécutif Provisoire sur les subsistances et le maximum," *Bulletin d'histoire économique de la Révolution*, Bulletin Trimestriel, (Pairs: Imprimerie Nationale, 1907), 67. "'les événements particuliers et les circonstances de toute espèce qui peuvent caractériser le sentiment général, indiquer quelques abus, ou annoncer quelques trouble.'"
[102] As quoted in Caron, "Rapports de Grivel et Siret, Commissaires Observateurs Parisiens du Conseil Exécutif Provisoire sur les subsistances et le maximum," 69. "les renseignements les plus avantageux sur le commerce, l'agriculture, la propagation des bestiaux, sur le maximum et sur la manière d'approvisionner Paris." "le plus grand éloge de leurs rapports" complete with "lettres de remerciements."

holistic program of economic trade. These exchanges, he argued, must be based on fraternal relations among citizens.

While assessing Dames' behavior, the police proposed realistic strategies to reform the idealistic Maximum. During the winter of 1793-1794, Commissioner Grivel complained multiple times that the deputies would do well to heed his advice and immediately enact a separate maximum for wholesalers and retailers. Otherwise, he warned, the city would run out of provisions. Rejecting the deputies' theory-based venture, Grivel insisted, "Experience, finally, confirms the truth of my observations and my calculations. Let one therefore take experience as a guide."[103] Some of Grivel's colleagues directly interacted with the Dames to collect insider information. In one report, Commissioner Bacon revealed, "I chatted with different women [Dames] of the Halle that I know." The Dames alerted him to a week-long conspiracy to deprive Paris of meat supplies.[104] Police commissioners often contemplated the Dames' occupation and measured how they reacted as retailers to subsistence regulation. Even while criticizing the Dames' illegal or questionable maneuverings, the police frequently supported the retailers' critical role in provisioning the city. As a result, the commissioners suggested reforms that would explicitly take prices for retailers into account. In this way, the police validated the Dames' occupational utility and legitimated their role in the body politic.

As the populace waited for the Convention to pass a reformed Maximum with separate wholesale and retail limits, the entire system of public trade seemed ready to collapse. Skyrocketing prices on the black market greatly eroded relations among the Dames, their clients, and other merchants. Commissioner Grivel already saw the writing on the wall by mid-

---

[103] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 20 frimaire an II (10 December 1793), 255, Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, "L'expérience, enfin, confirme la vérité de mes observations et de mes calculs. Qu'on prenne donc l'expérience pour guide."

[104] AN W 191, Bacon, 14 pluviôse an II (2 février 1794), Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 279, "j'ai causé avec différentes femmes de la Halle que je connais."

December. He insisted that only a tiered Maximum with an "honest profit" for wholesalers *and* retailers could restore commercial relations.[105] Meat and grain shortages increased the demand for other food like vegetables, which the Dames sold.[106] Although the police had already bypassed the Dames to directly distribute butter by mid-ventôse (early March 1794), the daily queues of women consumers grew increasingly agitated.[107] Women repeatedly pillaged carts of butter and eggs in the markets across the city, and fed-up wholesalers vowed not to return.[108] Consequently, food supplies became even scarcer. On 21 ventôse (March 11, 1794), several women beat one woman so severely during a butter sale dispute that the police evacuated her from les Halles on a stretcher. She later died from her wounds.[109] The Dames did not fare better selling eggs. The egg shortage actually traced its roots back to the grain shortage: peasant suppliers who could not procure enough grain to feed their chickens sold them as meat or ate them.[110]

The domino effect continued as the Dames who sold fish felt the tremors from the butter crisis. Clients passed by the Dames' stalls asking, "What would we do with our fish, we don't have any butter to prepare them with."[111] And, although the popular classes might find a "morsel of butter" to cook salted herring and vegetables, retailers had trouble selling their good supplies of salmon and pike that were more expensive to buy at wholesale and thus unaffordable for most

---

[105] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 20 frimaire an II (10 decembre 1793), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur*: *Rapports des agents secrets,* Tome I, "bénéfice honnête."
[106] AN W 112, Pourvoyeur, 4 vantôse an II (22 février 1794) reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des Agents Secrets,* Tome IV, 283.
[107] AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, 19 ventôse an II.
[108] AN W 112, Dossier 4, Rapports Polices, Bouchiseuche, 17 ventôse an II.
[109] AN W 112, Dossier 4, Rapports Polices, 21 ventôse an II.
[110] AN W 191, Grivel, 21 pluviôse an II (5 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum (sept 1793-mars 1794)*, Tome II, [reprinted from *Bulletin d'histoire économique de la Révolution*, v.11 (1920-21), p. 371-427], 384.
[111] AN W 112, Perrière, 18 ventôse an II (8 mars 1794), "que ferions-nous de nos poissons, nous n'avons pas de beurre pour les accommoder."

Parisians in retail.[112] By late March 1794, the marketplace system was so desynchronized that when, with good luck, supplies did arrive from the countryside, they sometimes converged in quantities too large to sell. To the police's chagrin, the Dames had to throw out rotting fish. Since they arrived in large waves, the Dames could not sell them all.[113]

While the National Convention took four months to issue the reformed General Maximum, or the third Maximum, the police monitored how citizens in the marketplace discussed various options for revision. Although they did not always understand the intricacies of the chain of supply, many Parisians did have some awareness of delicate balance between affordable prices for consumers and high enough prices to entice rural suppliers to the city. By mid-March 1794, a police commissioner reported that many citizens called for each section to provision its own inhabitants rather than funneling foodstuffs through les Halles. These citizens hoped to prevent people from buying from multiple merchants in different secondary markets and then hoarding goods. However, the commissioner noted that despite their good intentions and creative proposals, these citizens did not realize that such a measure "would reduce all the female merchants in boutiques of the Halle to begging."[114] Grivel applauded an anonymous citizen's observation that the new Maximum must, like the government, rest on "the unity, the right and *the duty* of each citizen to rally to public good."[115]

Grivel agreed that the entire Republic would benefit if the Convention reformed the Maximum since all levels of trade and regions were intertwined. The commissioner used his months of police scouting to offer practical solutions based on trade in les Halles. He related his

---

[112] AN W 112, Rapport de Dugas, 12 ventôse an II, 2 mars 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume V, "morceau de beurre."
[113] AN W 174, Rapport de Béraud, 6 Germinal an II, 26 mars 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume VI.
[114]AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, 21 ventôse an II (11 mars 1794), "réduirait à la mendicité toutes les marchandes boutiquières de la halle."
[115] Grivel, 13 ventôse an II (3 mars 1794), reprinted in Leroux, ed., *Commission de Recherche*, 192. "l'unité, le droit et le devoir de chaque citoyen st de concourir au bien de la chose publique."

sometimes unsolicited opinions to the Provisionary Executive Council and the Commission on Subsistence, which oversaw the Maximum.[116] In his reports, Grivel argued that price caps set below the intrinsic value of goods stifled production and circulation, thereby ultimately harming, rather than protecting, the consumer. Each component in the chain of supply and demand needed to work cooperatively.[117] Despite the legal Maximum on salaries, for example, Grivel noticed that workers' wages had nearly tripled. This gave workers an unfair advantage over merchants in buying food. He emphasized that the "the law, like justice, must be impartial." The reformed Maximum needed to recognize that "all citizens are children of the Republic, all compose part of the people; therefore, one must not suffer by allowing certain classes and certain individuals to give themselves advantages at the detriment of other classes and other individuals."[118] In addition, Grivel urged his superiors to destroy the "moral barriers" which separated the French municipalities and stunted the circulation of supplies. He encouraged the government to "to recall them all to the spirit of fraternity which must animate them and unite them."[119] Grivel hoped to convince officials that a price and wage system that accurately evaluated all parts of trade would naturally complement society's moral fibers.

Police observers and the public most frequently suggested reforming the Maximum while carefully considering commercial relationships beyond the final merchant/consumer exchange. Like the deputies, police informers and the public understood that price controls would affect all

---

[116] Pierre Caron, "Rapports de Grivel et Siret, Commissaires Observateurs Parisiens du Conseil Exécutif Provisoire sur les subsistances et le maximum," *Bulletin d'histoire économique de la Révolution*, Bulletin Trimestriel, (Pairs: Imprimerie Nationale, 1907), 67, 69.

[117] AN F^{7} 3688^{3}, Grivel, 22 nivôse an II (11 janvier an II), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Tome I, 124.

[118] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 28 nivôse an II (17 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Tome I 132-133. "la loi, comme la justice, ne doit point avoir de partialité," "tous les citoyens sont enfants de la République, tous font parti du people; il ne faut donc pas souffrir que certaines classes, certain individus se privilégient e s'avantagent d'eux-mêmes au détriment d'autre classes et d'autres individus."

[119] AN W 191, Grivel, 21 pluviôse an II (5 février 1794), "barrières morales," "les rappeler toutes à l'esprit de fraternité qui doit les animer et les unir."

citizens. In January 1794, commissioner Siret noticed that public opinion demanded that the deputies adjust the Maximum, but that the citizens could not agree on a reform strategy. In order to find a solution, he argued that the public had to "put aside all particular interests and only occupy itself with the general interest." Siret maintained that the deputies needed to find a just "ratio" between the price of goods and their intrinsic value, that the price must benefit merchants and consumers alike, and that the deputies gradually diminish maximum prices to shake out hoarders. He also advocated punishing workers who tried to organize to force up the Maximum wages. He maintained that workers' productivity was connected to "sobriety and morals."[120] Like Grivel, Siret advanced a holistic project for the Maximum, which took into account the economic responsibilities of the entire body politic.

Under such a cooperative revolutionary scheme, the Dames and other retailers would provide crucial services to wholesalers *and* consumers. Grivel lamented that the police arrested one Dame des Halles who bought 100 eggs at 20 livres and was trying to resell them at the reasonable price of 100 eggs for 25 livres. He argued that the retailer must be able to make some meager profit because she filled a valuable position upon which consumers and wholesalers depended. If the egg supplier from the countryside had to sell his own eggs in Paris, he would not be able to sell as many across multiple districts, he would not be able to leave Paris quickly in the morning to return to his farm, and he would have to pay to park his cart and horse in the capital. The wholesaler would then have to sell his eggs at a high price to compensate for these new expenses and loss of time, which would harm the consumer. Therefore, the retailers deserved a profit to justly compensate their time spent on trade that benefitted suppliers and

[120] Siret, 3 pluviôse an II (22 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Leroux, ed., *Commission de Recherche*, 141-142. "mettre de côté tous les intérêts particuliers et ne s'occuper que de l'intérêt général," "la sobriété et les mœurs."

consumers.[121] Observer R.J. noted that the Dames sold mostly to rich clients at exorbitant prices in order to make their money. Rather than deny retailers room for profit as the General Maximum stood, he reasoned: "It would be much better for the rich as well as for the poor, if the maximum price was augmented, because the former [rich] would pay less than they pay [now], and with this security in price the others [the poor] would obtain these foodstuffs which [currently] they cannot have at all, it is infinitely preferable to pay a little more for the objects of necessity than to be absolutely deprived of them."[122]

By March 1794, it was abundantly clear that the Convention needed to release the reformed Maximum as soon as possible. Neither merchants nor consumers could survive without a maximum that distinguished wholesale prices from retail prices. Against the backdrop of an unpredictable marketplace, a police observer in les Halles painted the "image of desolation" which occurred during a crush:

> What is certain, it's that les Halles resembled a battlefield; one heard the cries of young women and pregnant women who felt themselves pressed in the most sensitive places; the children were on the verge of suffocating in the arms of their mothers, unleashing lamentable screams; the [market] guards, covered in sweat, hurt with their arms those whom they intended to protect: one woman had her wrist cut in this manner; another woman thought her eye had been punctured by a halberd.[123]

Two days later, on 5 Germinal an II (March 25, 1794), officials finally published the reformed Maximum. In sum total, Parisians weathered the General Maximum's deficiencies for six months

---

[121] AN F[11] 201, Grivel, 7 pluviôse an II (26 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Vol 1, Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Tome 1, 144-145.

[122] AN W 112, Dossier 4: Rapports Polices, R.J., 19 ventôse an II (9 mars 1794), "Il vaudroit bien mieux pour le riche et même pour le pauvre, que le prix fixé par le maximum fut augmenté, car le premier payeroit moins qu'il ne paye, et l'autre avec ce sureroit (sic) de prix, obtiendroit ces denrées qu'il ne peut avoir en tout, il est infiniment préférable de payer un peu plus cher les objets de nos besoins que d'en être absolument privé."

[123] AN W 174, Rapport de Perrière, 3 germinal an ii, 23 mars 1794, reprinted in *Paris pendant la terreur*, volume VI. "Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que la Halle ressemblait à un champ de bataille; on entendait les cris des jeunes femmes et des femmes enceintes qui se sentaient foulées à l'endroit le plus sensible; les enfants prêts à étouffer dans les bras de leurs mères, poussaient des cris lamentables; les gardes, couverts de sueur, blessaient de leurs armes ceux qu'ils en voulaient protéger: une femme a eu le poignet coupé de cette manière; une autre a pensé avoir l'œil crevé d'une hallebarde."

until the Convention decreed the third Maximum. The police's reports and the Dames illegal maneuverings worked in tandem to convince the National Convention to implement its Maximum reform as soon as possible. Moreover, the six-month crisis demonstrated that retailers were essential in facilitating trade. The fiasco legitimized the Dames' work as a pivotal service to the nation.

The Third Maximum: Economic Responsibilities, Commercial Utility, and a Specialized Body Politic

The March 1794 reform of the General Maximum finally sharpened the legal, commercial, and cultural distinctions between wholesale merchants and retail merchants. The deputies' third Maximum enabled the Dames to once again legally make a profit. By then, some Dames had completely lost their ability to trade as retailers.[124] As a fixture of the Jacobin program, this third Maximum only stayed in effect until 24 December 1794. Nonetheless, it justified retailers' roles and profits in a regenerated nation of interdependent citizens. For the Dames des Halles, the Maximum encouraged them to forge multiple associations with different socio-economic groups and to appeal to diverse sources of legitimacy. The three maximums cast the Dames into instable categories as merchants, consumers, or some mix of the two.

The original spirit of the General Maximum intended for the price controls to be a society-wide enterprise bolstered by complementary, not antagonistic, roles between wholesalers, retailers, cultivators, and worker-consumers. Despite increasing tensions between

[124] By January 1794, Commissioner Monic reported that the number of Dames des Halles who attended the revolutionary tribunal swelled because they had nothing to sell and therefore had much free time. Commissioner Prévost similarly observed that some fruitières complained that they simply had nothing to sell. Respectively: AN F^{7} 3688^{3}, Monic, 21 nivôse an II (10 January 1794), as reprinted in Pierre Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur, Rapports des agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*, Tome II (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard, 1914), 291-292. AN W 191, Prévost, 5 pluviôse an II (24 January 1794), as reprinted in Pierre Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur, Rapports des Agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*, Tome III (Paris: Libraire Ancienne Honoré, 1943), 135.

merchants and consumers by March 1794, many Jacobins still supported the General Maximum's cooperative ethos. At the tribune on 26 ventôse (March 16, 1794), Robespierre rallied to protect the merchants from blanket accusations of evildoing. He argued, "If the merchant is necessarily a bad citizen, it is evident that no one can sell anymore; therefore this natural exchange which enables members of society to live is ruined and by consequence society is dissolved." Robespierre maintained that the nation's enemies fueled this misinterpretation of merchants' value in order to weaken the country.[125] A merchant could actually prove his/her revolutionary worth through the public service inherent in his/her work. Since the wholesalers usually sold in quantities too large for the general public to buy, consumers paid higher unit prices to retailers in exchange for practical quantities. Robespierre was right to fear that wage laborers did not comprehend these intricate levels of trade and pricing factors. According to police agent Mercier, the public did not witness how high retailers had to bid to secure goods from the wholesalers.[126]

When Deputy Barère finally presented the reformed Maximum to the Convention, he acknowledged that retailers held little power over major buying and selling factors. Barère argued that excessive numbers of intermediary agents, who conducted their trade hidden from the public gaze, actually posed the biggest threat to the consumer. These "parasites" would have no role under the third Maximum. Rather, Barère insisted, in open trade among commercial parties, "the secret of commerce will be known, [and] the operations of industry will be divulged."[127] Trade between consumers and retailers in the public marketplace formed the most

---

[125] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 561, "Si le marchand est nécessairement un mauvais citoyen, il est évident que personne ne peut plus vendre; ainsi cet échange naturel qui fait vivre les membres de la société est anéanti et par conséquent la société est dissoute."
[126] AN F^7 3688^3, Mercier, 19 nivôse an II (8 janvier 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 255.
[127] Quoted in Mathiez, *La vie chère,* 562-563, "le secret du commerce va être connu, [and] les opérations de l'industrie vont être divulguées."

transparent step. Such an exchange paralleled the ideal relationships among all citizens whose occupations differently contributed to public utility.

Thus, the third Maximum finally acknowledged the retailers' work as crucial for society. In 1795, when officials once again decreed that consumers could purchase directly from wholesalers before retailers could buy any supplies, economist St.-Aubin rushed to the retailers' defense. Even though he wrote his physiocrat tract to respond to a post-Maximum subsistence crisis, he gives insight into the basic services that retailers provided throughout the Revolution. St-Aubin defended retailers' usefulness for consumers. Consumers who waited in long lines before wholesalers in the morning lost valuable working time. The wages they lost actually made the sum cost of buying from wholesalers more expensive. Wholesalers set their prices in bulk and would not want to sell individual quantities to consumers. Nothing could stop rich consumers from buying more than their fair share and then reselling, as illegal retailers, in smaller quantities and higher prices. Citing the proverb "an onion merchant should know all about his scallions," St-Aubin maintained that retailers, who navigated everyday trade logistics, rather than governmental officials, best understood the economic intricacies of the subsistence trade. The government would do well to allow the retailers to conduct their useful trade.[128]

Police posted the reformed regulation in Paris on 5 Germinal an II (March 25, 1794). The third Maximum finally endorsed retailers' occupations by providing for an additional 5% profit for retailers on top of wholesale profits. For example, a wholesaler could sell 100 stock fish (like cod) to a Dame des Halles at a maximum of 54 livres 10 sous. The Dame could then sell the fish

[128] Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris (hereafter BHVP) #962985, in 8º, Camille Saint-Aubin, "Marchand d'oignons devroit se connaître en ciboules, ou Application de cette maxime à plusieurs articles d'un arrêté du comité de Sûreté générale concernant la vente des comestibles à la halle et aux marchés, rendu le fructidor, sur le rapport de la commission administrative de la commune de Paris," (Paris: Imprimerie de Pougin, 1794-1795), "un marchand d'oignons devroit se connaître en ciboules."

at a maximum retail price of 60 livre per 100 cod.[129] The Dames could finally pursue their livelihood once again through legal means.

In the difficult weeks following the third Maximum, public opinion split on the fairness and effectiveness of the reform. While some Parisians objected to the third Maximum because it raised prices for consumers, many critiqued the reformed Maximum as a violation of the law's own holistic goals: that is to say, that it gave an advantage to one group over another. Consumers protested that the third Maximum unreasonably doubled the price of butter from Isigny. Others complained that only the rich would be able to buy meat since the poor sans-culotte could not afford the new prices.[130] These critiques maintained that the inequities upset the equilibrium necessary to make subsistence trade a cooperative society-wide enterprise. On the one hand, some individuals complained that the Maximum was "very advantageous" to provincial suppliers and "absolutely to the advantage" of merchants.[131] On the other hand, wholesalers complained that the third Maximum was "much less favorable [to them than to] to retailers."[132] Marketplace suppliers moaned that the transport costs were still too high for them to profit from their sales.[133] Many consumers viewed legal retail prices as unnecessarily inflated and believed the reform

[129] Example from AdPP DB 396, Commerce de la Marée, Lois, ordonnances arrêtes, 14 vendémiaire an III (October 5, 1794), Maximum de la Merluche.
[130] For example, see respectively: AN W 174, Charmont, 6 Germinal an II (26 Mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 128; AN W 174, Bacon, 7 Germinal an II (27 Mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 141.
[131] AN W 174, J.B.B., "Observations du 5 germinal" (25 mars 1794); AN W 174, Pourvoyeur, 6 germinal an II (26 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 134, "très avantageux," "absolument à l'avantage."
[132] AN W 174, Perrière, 7 Germinal an II (27 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 151 "beaucoup moins favorable qu'aux détaillants."
[133] AN W 174, Grivel, 6 Germinal an II (26 mars 1794).

catered "to the profit of merchants."[134] Others doubted that the new prices could encourage more supplies.[135]

Parisians who viewed the reform with optimism hoped that the new tiered prices would bring balance to the subsistence trade. Since the third Maximum took into account the multiple parties involved in the trade, Parisians hoped the measures would increase the amount of supplies flowing into the city. In this way, the third Maximum would fulfill the General Maximum's initial aspirations. Police commissioners like Charmont reported that groups who gathered around the decree posters sighed that the high prices would at least encourage the provincial suppliers to bring their goods to the markets again.[136] Others noted that although butter prices seemed a bit expensive, they would be satisfied if they attracted the wholesalers and their provisions again.[137] If the third Maximum finally put production, transport, commerce, and wages in appropriate ratios, Parisians hoped that it would be "the despair of all of the enemies of the Republic."[138]

The perfect Maximum would consider the economic responsibilities of all citizens in the body politic, correct subsistence problems, and strengthen fraternal bonds. Fortunately for the Dames' commercial survival and political legitimacy, the third Maximum recognized the productive role of retailers in this equation. While reforming a system that supposedly reflected natural economic relationships, the Dames, the deputies, and the police had successfully couched retailers' work within the Jacobin body politic. The reform endowed the Dames with

---

[134] AN W 174, Charmont, 9 Germinal an II (29 mars 1794), as reprinted in *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 188.
[135] Prevost reported that one group of citizens said the Convention decreed useless prices on nonexistent goods "pour nous amuser." AN W 174, Prévost, 8 Germinal an II (28 mars 1794), "au profit des marchands."
[136] AN W 174, Charmont, 5 Germinal an II (25 Mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 96.
[137] AN W 174, Monic, 5 Germinal an II (25 Mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 110.
[138] AN W 174, Charmont, 4 Germinal an II (24 Mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 76. "le désespoir de tous les ennemis de la République."

occupational legitimacy and culturally validated their profits. The Third Maximum solidified retailers' commercial responsibilities as patriotic duties.

The third Maximum only lasted eight months. By the end of its first month of application, the police could barely enforce sale at the reformed prices in les Halles. Police already had to guard les Halles with 8 patrols of 50 men each to keep order during potentially volatile butter sales.[139] In floréal an II (April/May 1794), the Commune could not control wage laborers who kept demanding salary increases. Despite reminding the workers that their labor was "necessary to public existence" and threatening them with punishments if they failed to work, the municipal government caved to the sans-culotte-controlled sections. Workers received a higher maximum on wages but the maximums on goods did not budge. Without symmetrical increases to price and wage caps, officials undermined the theoretical basis of the Maximum.[140]

Ultimately, after the fall of the Jacobins and their Enragé supporters in July 1794, the Thermidorians dismissed the Maximum as a radical project that limited economic freedom. They repealed the reformed Maximum entirely and declared liberty of commerce on 24 December 1794.[141] This decision caused the assignat to depreciate severely and catapulted food prices again. A pound of butter, which cost up to 3.5 livres before the deputies revoked the third Maximum, cost 14 livres by mid-July 1795! The price of a single egg doubled from 4 sous to 8 sous by April 1795.[142]

Nonetheless, the Dames culturally, if not commercially, survived a great ideological challenge to their occupation's worth. By condemning counter-revolutionary sedition, sharing

---

[139] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 569.
[140] Mathiez, *La vie chère*, 591, "nécessaire à l'existence publique."
[141] "Décret contenant proclamation sur l'abolition des lois relatives au maximum. Du 9 nivôse an II – 29 décembre 1794," as reprinted in Pierre Caron, ed. *Le Maximum Général*, 126.
[142] Schmidt. *Paris pendant la Révolution d'après les rapports de la police secrète 1789-1800,* Tome II*,* 282.

consumer concerns, and responding to patriotic appeals, the Dames illustrated that their discontent with economic legislation did not constitute their attitude toward the Revolution as a whole. Despite accusations to the contrary, commercial frustration did not automatically translate into counter-revolutionary sentiment. The retailers attempted to dodge the political and literal mud flung at rich merchants. At the same time, the Dames did not idly watch their businesses collapse. They called on their deputies to defend poor consumers like themselves and their retail trade. When the deputies failed to reform the General Maximum for six months, the Dames took illegal and creative measures to protect their businesses.

In order to seek redress from the National Convention, the Dames protested that retailers usefully served the Parisian consumers. The police, as agents of the state, often defended law-abiding retailers as pivotal commercial agents. Their on-the-ground experiences in les Halles highlighted the shortcomings of the General Maximum. Police observers in particular compelled the deputies to pass the third Maximum. The Dames, the police, and the retailers' supporters interpreted and defended retail trade within the framework a cooperative body politic. If the *Encyclopédie* had described retailers as "more convenient than necessary" in 1753,[143] the revolutionaries' experience from 1793 to 1794 convinced them otherwise. In the third Maximum, the deputies confirmed that retailers like the Dames not only served public good – they played an essential role in trade and the body politic.

[143] Bruno Blondé and Natacha Coquery note the same definition in the 1730 *Dictionnaire universal de commerce*. "Introduction," in *Retailers and consumer changes in Early Modern Europe: England, France, Italy, and the Low Countries*, edited by Bruno Blondé, Eugénie Briot, Natacha Coquery, and Laura Van Aert (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2005) "plus commode que nécessaire."

The Patente: Fiscal Contracts and Legitimate Work

Although the Thermidorians dismantled Jacobin subsistence policies like the Maximum, fiscal concerns forced them to delineate society according to their own socio-economic imaginings. In the wake of the Terror, foreign war, civil war, and rampant inflation, the Directory struggled to generate sufficient revenue. Turning toward direct taxes, the Directorial deputies reformed and implemented a commercial license system, called the Patente. In 1791, the Legislative Assembly had speculated how it could administratively categorize merchants to subvert the old corporate ordering of the body politic but still draw occupational taxes to finance the state. During the Old Regime, the state generated occupationally-based revenue by charging corporations and individuals for special privileges and offices. Therefore, when the revolutionaries demolished bastions of privilege like the guilds in 1791, much of the fiscal system also disintegrated into the rubble. As a solution, the deputies decided to grant individuals patentes, or permissions to conduct their trade, in exchange for annual taxes. Beginning in 1791, the Legislative Assembly envisioned taxing property-holders with select occupations. Due to logistical difficulties, the Assembly abandoned the project in 1793.

However, locked in the fiscal crucible of 1795, the Directory revived the Patente to finance the state. To raise even more funds in 1796, the deputies extended the Patente's reach to include nearly all independent workers, even those without property. While reforming the occupational license system, the legislators created commercial subdivisions similar to those articulated by the Jacobins in the third Maximum. Like the Jacobins of 1793-1794, the Directorial deputies legally distinguished between wholesalers and retailers in 1796. In doing so, the deputies confirmed retailers' crucial services and legally endorsed their occupation. Furthermore, the Patente created innovative fiscal contracts between individual retailers, like the

Dames, and the permission-granting state. If paying taxes to the nation constituted a fundamental civic duty, then a fiscal system organized by occupation and autonomy enabled the Dames to further understand their citizenship through their work.

The Patente debates, definitions, and regulations reflected evolving opinions concerning merchants' value to society. While inventing classifications and negotiating their individual brackets, the revolutionaries considered how to define and encourage liberty in commerce, how to use public utility to determine the value of different trades, and how to fiscally organize occupational groups. The patente system broached the role of work in the relationship between the citizen and the state. Moreover, by repeatedly defining work and fiscal duties within evolving revolutionary ideologies, the patente delineated new identity groups. These socio-economic categories cut across previously disparate occupational corps.

When the Convention required the Dames to buy occupational licenses from the state in 1796, the Dames consciously navigated the socio-political ideals that underwrote their tax levels. In the courtroom, they obtained or objected to their patentes. In light of police surveillance and judicial regulation, the Dames stressed different components of their identities to fit into the most advantageous brackets. While securing patentes, the Dames negotiated their responsibilities to the nation as well as the state's obligations to the working poor. They demanded fiscal leniency from the nation due to the fragile nature of their businesses. Yet, they affirmed their right to conduct their trade on public space. Moreover, as personal patente holders, the market women could claim autonomy as productive citizens. Thus, the license system created fiscal contracts between the state and the Dames as citizen-workers. Like the Maximum, the Patente forced the Dames to forge new work identities in response to the legal divisions. Both validated the Dames' occupational service to the body politic.

In 1791, the Legislative Assembly conceived of the patente in tandem with their work to dismantle the corporate world and abolish occupational privileges. In February and March, the Legislative Assembly crafted legislation to requisition the guilds' property, assume their debts, reimburse their titles, and incorporate the holdings into the *biens nationaux*.[144] A few months earlier, in the fall of 1790, revolutionary officials had attempted to institute an *impôt personnel* based on occupation and had separated merchants into six tax brackets. However, the Patente radically challenged the corporate forms that mediated taxes and occupational permissions.[145] In February 1791, Deputy d'Allarde of the Comité des contributions publiques brought a plan for the Patente before the assembly hall. He presented the Patente as a way of reorganizing the *impôt personnel* in order to suppress the guilds, destroy their monopoly over labor practices, and erase their "exclusive" advantages. D'Allarde contended that the revolutionaries could only throw off the guilds' "tyrannical privilege" if they overhauled the fiscal system which depended on it.[146] Therefore, step one of the Patente decree abolished the fiscal privileges for guild office-holders.[147]

By destroying guild fee structures and forbidding corporations from mediating permissions between individuals and the state, the patente emphasized a work-based political contract between each citizen and the nation. At the climax of his patente speech, d'Allarde argued that "the faculty to work is one of the first rights of man." He asked his fellow representatives to agree with Turgot, the 1776 anti-guild controller-general, that work was "'the

---

[144] *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur*, nº48, 17 février 1791, Tome VII, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1861), 399-400. This issue reports on the National Assembly session of 16 February 1791.
[145] J. Madival and E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860; recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés,* le 23 septembre 1790, au matin, Series I, Volume IXX, (Paris; Dupont, 1867-1875), 181. This impôt personnel categorized merchants without regard to the type of good they sold.
[146] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 15 février 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 202. "privilège tyrannique."
[147] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 2 mars 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 638.

first property, the most sacred, the most imprescriptible.'"[148] The state, he argued, should protect individuals' ability to pursue any occupation of their choosing. D'Allarde reasoned that this personal freedom would benefit society writ-large. When choosing their occupation, citizens would naturally gravitate toward the work or commerce others demanded.[149]

The Patente, the deputies hoped, would promote liberty in occupations and commerce by tying state permissions directly to individual taxes. It would erase the maze of commercial privileges and defend the freedom to work on ideological and practical levels. Article VIII of the Patente legislation clothed the project with a moral air by evoking each citizen's occupational agency. As long as each citizen secured a patente through governmental authorities, the article proclaimed "it will be *free* for any citizen to conduct any commerce, or to exercise any profession, art, or trade that he will find *good*" (my emphasis).[150] For citizens who chose to be merchants, the patente tax streamlined or even nullified other marketplace fees that could weigh heavily upon them.[151] Since traveling merchants paid one fee under the patente to conduct their business anywhere, the license system granted them geographical freedom in commerce.[152] In sum, the patent gave citizens more occupational choices, expansive commercial opportunities, increased mobility, and provided new guidelines for delineating their identity as workers.

In order to measure the graduated fees of individual patentes in 1791, the Legislative Assembly debated how to best gauge the fiscal responsibilities of each worker. The Assembly

---

[148] *Moniteur*, nº48, 17 février 1791, Tome VII, 396. The discourse is from the National Assembly session of 15 February 1791. Dallarde quoted Turgot's Edict of 1776. Thomas Bassy, *Work and Wages* (Read Books, 2009) originally published 1872, p. 2. "privilèges exclusifs," "la faculté de travailler est un des premiers droits de l'homme., "la première propriété, la plus sacrée, la plus imprescriptible.'"

[149] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 15 février 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 203.

[150] Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, du 12 au 19 février 1791, Tome VII, n°84, p. 311. Prudhomme is reporting on the National Assembly session of 16 February 1791.

[151] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 2 mars 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 629. "il sera *libre* à tout citoyen de faire tel commerce, ou d'exercer telle profession, art ou métier qu'il trouvera *bon*."

[152] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, du 19 au 26 février 1791, Tome VII, n°85, p. 355. The report follows the National Assembly session of 17 February 1791 and "the suite du décret sur les patentes."

first attempted to analyze the rental value of individuals' property, which citizens would have to report annually to local officials.[153] Officials assessed the proportional tax based on "the rental value of the dwelling." Without acknowledging a specific occupation, the deputies considered this the "only approximate measure of the importance of commerce."[154] Since the Assembly had shunned the corporate divisions of society, it decreed that individual patentes must not include "the designation of any profession." However, the deputies streamlined these confusing occupational permissions in September 1791. While still avoiding profession titles, the reformed patente denoted three tax brackets that also considered individuals' property: the *demi-patente* (the half patente), the *patente simple* (the simple patente), and the *patente supérieure* (the superior patente). The deputies specified the graduated commercial rights and fees associated with each level.[155] Municipal officials calculated the graduated categories based on variables such as economic clout, the goods produced or traded, and commercial and personal property.

Rather than reflecting the citizen's specific occupation, the 1791 patentes signaled each individual's economic power and permission from the state to work. The license underscored every citizen's occupational liberty. Municipal governments granted patente permissions to residents on a case-by-case basis. Posters in les Halles notified merchants that the patente required them to estimate the value of their residence, workshops, stores, and shops before municipal authorities in exchange for the ability to exercise nearly any "profession that will

---

[153] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 2 mars 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 629-630.
[154] *Moniteur*, nº48, 17 février 1791, Tome VII, 397. Deputy d'Allarde addressed the Assembly on 15 February 1791in the name of the Committee on Public Contributions, "la valeur locative de l'habitation," "seule mesure approximative de l'importance du commerce."
[155] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, du 24 septembre 1791, Tome IX, n°115, p. 556. Prudhomme reports on the National Assembly session of 17 September 1791. "la désignation d'aucune profession."

please him/her."[156] Through the patente, merchants annually renewed their fiscal contract with the state.

However, when officials first enacted the patente in 1791, the Dames des Halles did not have to pay the tax. Since the Assembly primarily wanted to open up the labor market rather than restrict it, the Assembly acknowledged that even a graduated tax might surpass the means of some citizens like the Dames. While the deputies exempted poor retailers, they hesitated for fear of creating another privileged group. Deputy Aubry-du-Bochet summed up the general sentiment: "At its core, this [exemption] article is an indirect privilege; but it is just to favor the indigent class, which can only subsist on the product of their retail."[157] In order to avoid "augmenting the price of the poor's consumptions," the deputies completely excused from the patente "those who sell vegetables, fish, or who display their goods in the markets and the streets."[158] Even though the property-less Dames des Halles did not require a patente according to the 1791 law, their very exemption reshaped their collective identity.

The Patente's ideological justifications and reclassifying mechanisms profoundly influenced the environment in which the Dame des Halles conceptualized their collective occupational identity. On June 17, 1791, the deputies delivered the final blow against the corporate world in the Le Chapelier law. The legislation amplified the economic stranglehold which the Patente had placed on the guilds and barred occupationally-based associations entirely. The law prohibited individuals of "a same state or profession" from gathering into committees, keeping collective records, or forming rules concerning their occupation. In this way, neither

---

[156] AdPP D^B 389 Dossier Marché, Pendant la révolution (affaires diverses): Poster: 9 octobre 1791, Loi Relative aux Patentes (suite à la loi du 3 mars 1791); loi du 2 september 1791; loi du 17 septembre 1791. "profession qu'il lui plaira."

[157] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 17 février 1791, Series 1, Volume XXIII: 230. "Au fond, cet article est un privilège indirect; mais il est juste de favoriser la classe indigente qui ne peut subsister que par le produit de sa revente."

[158] *Moniteur*, nº48, 17 février 1791, Tome VII, "augmenter le prix des consommations du pauvre," "ceux qui vendent les légumes, le poisson, ou qui étalent dans les marchés et les rues."

groups of workers nor groups of employers could maintain the socio-economic privileges they had held under the Old Regime. Moreover, the law forbade all government bodies from receiving "addresses or petitions under the name of a state or profession" or replying to such advances. Citizens could only appeal to the nation as individual workers, without the banner of occupational associations. After Le Chapelier law banned workers' associations, the Dames voluntarily dissolved their confraternities in August 1791 and consequently surrendered the only institution that bound them together. Combined with the Patente legislation, the Le Chapelier law greatly changed the ways in which the Dames des Halles could economically and politically identify themselves before the state.[159]

However, in March 1793, the deputies abandoned the Patente's occupation-based fees. Instead, the Convention consolidated the former fees that taxed property into the *contribution mobilière*.[160] The Patente was supposed to have generated 23 million in revenue a year, but only brought in 6 to 7 million with a collection price tag of 800,700 livres.[161] Moreover, 60 of 80 departments asked the deputies to extend their collection deadlines or reduce their regional assessment.[162] The Patente had turned into a logistical nightmare. In April 1793, Deputy Fauré made a speech at the National Convention decrying the exemptions for the smallest merchants who owned no property. He argued that wholesale and retail merchants made few sacrifices for the Republic. Fauré lamented, "It is necessary that we have farmers, manufacturers, workers, physical laborers [literally "men of hard effort"]; and it's only in order to distract themselves from the most useful work that a mass of people abandon these professions to become

---

[159] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes : Département de Paris "Loi Relative aux Assemblées d'Ouvriers & Artisans de même état & profession, donné à Paris le 17 juin 1791," "un même état ou profession" "adresses ou pétitions sous la dénomination d'un état ou profession."
[160] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 21 mars 1793, Series 1, Volume LX: 386.
[161] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 21 mars 1793, Series 1, Volume LX: 379
[162] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 21 mars 1793, Series 1, Volume LX: 372

merchants, resellers, second-hand clothes dealers, cabaret owners, and it's in order to win all at ease and without hardship and without difficult work." Therefore, Fauré urged the Convention to require all merchants to pay for patentes.[163] Despite Fauré's objection, the majority of the deputies did not consider the merchants' position unfair or opportunistic.

Yet in July 1795, the debt and war weighed heavily on the state. Desperate for revenue, the Directorial deputies reconsidered the Patente's potential. During the fiscal reform of 4 Thermidor an III (July 22, 1795), the legislators reinstated the Patente. Once again, working citizens would have to pay an occupation-based as well as the property-based fee for their patente. Yet, when the deputies reinstated the patente fees in 1795, they upheld the original 1791 terms in regard to the Dames des Halles and other poor merchants. The law continued to exempt ambulant merchants who sold in public spaces without a fixed boutique.[164]

Until August 1796, the Dames had experienced the effects of the patente culturally, through their exclusion, but not fiscally. While exempting the Dames, the deputies had categorized them according to revolutionary criteria of work, public space, and financial duty to the nation. However, the patente reform of 6 Fructidor an IV (August 23, 1796) drastically reconfigured the Patente requirements. In light of the persistent debt problems, the Conseil des Cinq-cents decided that all citizens must contribute to the state since all benefited from the Republic. The Conseil decreed: "Each citizen must push themselves to come to the aide of the public thing, according to his/her faculties; let not agriculture alone bear almost all the burdens of the state [owners of large farms often incurred heavy patente fees], and let commerce and industry contribute as well because of the protection that is granted to them and the advantages

[163] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 24 avril 1793, Series 1, Volume LXIII: 284. "II nous faut des agriculteurs, des manufacturiers, des ouvriers, des hommes de peine; et ce n'est que pour se soustraire au travail le plus utile qu'une foule de gens abandonnent ces professions pour faire les marchands, revendeurs, fripiers, cabaretiers, et c'est pour gagner tout à leur aise sans peine et sans travail pénible."
[164] *Moniteur*, nº309, 9 thermidor an III, Tome XXV, 308. The report concerns the session of 4 thermidor an III.

that they receive from the system." Since the 1796 patente did not exclude poor and property-less working citizens, the Dames no longer escaped the fiscal demands of the Patente.

By forcing the Dames and other ambulant merchants to pay for a patente, the state formed a direct contract with each Dame who contributed to the "public thing" and financed the "public treasury." The Commune had campaigned since 1792 to show how "public contributions" defended the fatherland from enemies. In fact, the municipal government considered taxes as part of the oath of "fidelity to the Law."[165] During the Patente debates, Deputy Vernier of the Committee of Finances maintained that "our fiscal contributions [are] the first and the most sacred of all debts for true republicans."[166] Thus, as the Dames supported the nation through their personal earnings, the Dames fulfilled their fiscal duties as individual citizens. These fiscal definitions of citizenship surpassed gendered notions of citizenship. Thus, the 1796 patente gave the Dames autonomous claims to citizenship based on an economic, rather than gendered, contract with the nation.[167] The revolutionaries viewed tax obligations as so central to citizenship that the Minister of the Interior publically had to clarify in 1797 that paying the Patente did not guarantee the right to vote.[168]

Notions of fiscal responsibility and citizenship went hand in hand. The August 1796 Patente schema organized citizens into eight classes based on occupations with similar incomes. Officials then subdivided each class into five levels according to the size of the residents'

---

[165] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Par le maire et les Officiers Municipaux, Avis Concernant les Patentes publié le 10 avril 1792, du Jeudi Avril 1792," "chaque citoyen doit s'empresser de venir au secours de la chose publique, à raison de ses facultés ; qu'il n'est pas juste que l'agriculture support presque seule les charges de l'état [by incurring heavy patente fees], et qu'il convient que le commerce et l'industrie y contribuent aussi en raison de la protection qu'il leur accorde et de l'avantage qu'ils en retirent." "chose publique" "trésor public" "contributions publiques" "fidélité à la Loi." " Par le maire et les Officiers Municipaux, Avis Concernant les Patentes publié le 10 avril 1792, du Jeudi Avril 1792."

[166] Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives Parlementaires*, le 21 mars 1793, Series 1, Volume LX: 371, "nos contributions [are] la première et la plus sacrée de toutes les dettes pour les varies républicaines."

[167] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République."

[168] *Moniteur*, nº117, 27 nivôse an V, Tome XXVIII, 525. He was referring to the right to vote in primary assemblies.

municipality. Each working citizen paid a *droit fixe*, which directly corresponded to his/her patente class. Patente holders also had to pay a variable *droit proportionnel* based on their property holdings. The deputies assumed that wealthier merchants would have more commercial and personal property. Combined with the *droit fixe,* the *droit proportionnel* on personal property would further graduate the license taxes. As ambulant merchants, most of the Dames des Halles qualified for the eighth and lowest patente class.[169]

In this 1796 version of the Patente, the deputies only exempted wage earners, public officers, and small farmers who worked their own earth. The wage laborers did not have to pay on the account that they worked for someone else. These groups contrasted with the Dames des Halles and other small merchants whom officials recognized as independent, and therefore liable, citizens.[170] A year later, the Parisian Bureau Central reiterated that *all* merchants must pay annually for a patente. The Parisian municipal government instructed police inspectors to especially inspect ambulant merchants' patentes in order to guard against illicit trade in les Halles.[171] Thus, the Patente mediated the contract between the Dames des Halles and the nation, as well as between the Dames and their local community.

The Patente challenged the corporate system by creating new classes of merchants and by dictating that the merchants would interact with the state without intermediary bodies. By assessing the Dames individually for patentes, officials made them legally independent commercial agents. Therefore, the Patente allowed the Dames to enter, as autonomous agents,

---

[169] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République."
[170] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République."
[171] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes : "Le Bureau Central du Canton de Paris aux Commissaires de Police, et aux Contrôleurs et Inspecteurs sur les Ports et dans les Halles et Marchés," Nivôse an 7, "Pour assurer l'exécution des Loix des Patentes."

into a *personal* political contract with the state predicated upon their own work. The Dames contributed to public utility by supporting the nation through their own taxes.

The fiscal arrangement assumed reciprocal political obligations. When the legislators passed the 1796 reform, they stipulated that "the patentes will be personal, and can only serve those who have taken them." The representatives made an exception for the marital unit. Husbands and wives who lived together and participated in the *same* commerce or occupation only needed one patente under the husband's name. [172] Thus, Citoyen Boullanger, épicier en gros, sent his wife to the police to defend his patente for their business.[173] However, the Dames des Halles most often conducted their commerce independently of their husbands' trade. In their circumstances, the Patente stipulated that both the wife and husband pay for their own patente if each "exercises a particular profession, under his/her personal name." Although only one partner would be responsible for paying the *droit proportionnel* derived from their residence, officials granted personal patentes to both spouses based on their independent occupations. [174] When the police summoned Citoyenne Bouchard, a marchande de marée, to prove that she had paid her patente, her husband accompanied her in the courtroom. Although her husband was also a marchand de la marée, they conducted their business independently of each other. Therefore, Citoyenne Bouchard directly addressed the judge to secure her own patente. The couple's similar occupations did not have any impact on Citoyenne Bouchard's personal commercial permission

[172] AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République," "les patentes seront personnelles, et ne pourront servir qu'à ceux qui les auront prises."
[173]Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) D.4 U^1 29, Justice de Paix du $4^{ème}$ Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, No number, le troisième jour complémentaire an V.
[174]AdPP D^B 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République," "exerce une profession particulière, sous son nom personnel."

and fiscal duty. For the Dames des Halles, the Patente reinforced an autonomous work-based identity.[175] It bolstered their civic inclusion legitimacy as citizen-workers.

The 1796 patente gave most Dames des Halles more fiscal responsibility, and thus claims to autonomy, than male wage earners. The patente legislation of 1796 only exempted "workers working in the Workshops or Boutiques of those others who employ them."[176] According to officials' logic, wage earners who worked under the direction of others could not be independent agents. Directory officials assumed that only economic independence could underpin political autonomy. A few Dames des Halles, like Citoyenne Thabaroie, did sell on behalf of another individual. As a result, this marchande de légumes did not have to secure her own patente when she appeared before the justice of the peace.[177] However, the majority of the Dames des Halles did require a patente based on the self-governing nature of their work. Therefore, the Patente functioned as a sign of individual economic agency and self-sufficiency. In contrast to male and female wage laborers, the Dames des Halles held more substantial claims to work-based contracts with the nation. The Patente strikingly legitimized the Dames as autonomous citizen-workers.

Since municipal officials granted patentes on the condition that the holders would also follow police regulations and fulfill their financial obligations towards the revolutionary state, negligent Dames found themselves explaining their transgressions before the local justices of the

---

[175] AdP D.4 U^{1} 28, Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien, Section Marché des Innocents, n°20, 7 thermidor an 5, Commercially-active widows also received autonomous patentes including the droit proportionnel by default. The Justice of the Peace called one marchande de modes, Citoyenne Veuve Millot, to pay the fixed taxes for her patente as well as the proportional taxes for the property that she held as a widow. AdP D.4 U^{1} 28, n°160, 12 fructidor an V.

[176] AdPP D^{B} 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes: "Le Bureau Central du Canton de Paris aux Commissaires de Police, et aux Contrôleurs et Inspecteurs sur les Ports et dans les Halles et Marchés," Nivôse an 7, "Pour assurer l'exécution des Loix des Patentes;" "ouvriers travaillant dans les Ateliers ou Boutiques de ceux qui les mettent en œuvre."

[177] AdP D.4 U^{1} 29, n°288, 7 vendémiaire an VI.

peace.[178] In les Halles neighborhood, Judge Nicolas Alexandre Herbault (also Herbauls) held his court directly in the Batiment de la halle aux draps.[179] The police commissioners summoned derelict merchants like Citoyenne Tenaille, a fruitière in les Halles, before the judge to defend their violations. Citoyenne Tenaille had been unable to present her patente to police in the marketplace, but she brought her patente to the courtroom to prove that she legally conducted commerce.[180] On the other hand, a fruitière named Citoyenne Fastielle let her patente expire before renewing it. Consequently, Judge Herbault ordered that she pay the standard court appearance fees of 3 livres for consuming the nation's resources. Considering that Citoyenne Fastielle had only paid 10 livres for her annual patente, the fee was a heavy penalty.[181] The neighborhood justices of the peace and the police worked hand in hand to uphold the patente laws. The license system required the Dames des Halles to consider their work as part of an individual contract with the state with economic *and* judicial ramifications. To secure a patente, the Dames participated in the process of legally classifying themselves in a post-corporate world.

The Dames des Halles staked out their commercial identities according to public space to qualify for the cheapest patente bracket after the Directory reform. Citoyenne Veuve Lalouette, a revendeuse, appeared before the justice of the peace to prove that she sold only in the streets and, therefore, owed only the *droit fixe* of the eighth class. She saved 20 livres in annual taxes by successfully reclassifying herself.[182] A frutière named Citoyenne Berdaut quite literally negotiated her commercial identity with the police. When they demanded she pay fees for a sixth-class patente, she retorted that she had already offered to pay them the smaller 10-livre fee

---

[178] AdPP D^B 374 Marché de Paris, couverts; Dossier Marchés interlopes: Commissionnaires aux abords des Halles, "loi du 2 mars 1791."
[179] AdP D.4 U^1 29, n°266, 2 vendémaire an VI. The juges de paix maintained jurisdiction over citizens who violated or contested the patente throughout the entire Revolution.
[180] AdP D.4 U^1 28, n°151, 12 fructidor an V.
[181] AdP D.4 U^1 28, n°153, 12 fructidor an V.
[182] AdP D.4 U^1 28, n° 53 17 thermidor nn V.

for an eighth-class patente. She swore that she was "only a retailer in the Streets or under a mobile shelter, and not in a boutique." Consequently, she belonged in the lowest class.[183] Fellow fruitière Citoyenne Saint Beuve presented herself as "only an ambulant reseller" to the judge. She pleaded with the court to forgive the amend that she had incurred by refusing to pay for a higher patente. Beuve highlighted her weak economic position by requesting a delay on her patente payment.[184] In a similar fashion, a marchande de marée named Citoyenne Gagnery defined her occupational identity by spotlighting her commerce on public space rather than on private property. She asked the court to re-evaluate and lower her tax level. Gagnery swore that she "only sell[s] on a place under the shelter of a parasol and not in a Boutique."[185]

As officials grouped merchants by their property use, they classified the Dames des Halles with other, formerly disparate, actors in the marketplace. Due to their different market spaces and types of trade, female butchers did not consider themselves Dames des Halles. However, like the fruit and fish retailers, Citoyenne Haucot, a butcher, claimed that she belonged to the lowest patente since, she too, "only sells under eves, and not in a boutique."[186] Likewise, ambulant Dames found themselves in the same patente class as male frutiers who sold from stalls in the marché aux poirées.[187]

Mitigating the Patente's initial 1791 goal of disrupting corporate identities, Directory officials returned to noting each individual's profession in 1796 as a way of approximating his or her economic prowess. The reform sharpened the Dames' internal trade divisions. For example, the Patente guide stipulated that revendeuses pay 30 francs for a patente of the sixth class,

---

[183] AdP D.4 U[1] 28, nº 168, 12 fructidor an V, "n'est que revendeuse par les Rues ou sous échoppe, et non en boutique."
[184] AdP D.4 U[1] 28 nº161, 12 fructidor an V.
[185] AdP D.4 U[1] 29, nº266, 2 vendémaire an VI, "ne vendre que sur place sous vu parasol et non dans une Boutique."
[186] AdP D.4 U[1] 29, nº330, 7 vendemiaire, an V.
[187] AdP D.4 U[1] 28, nº 59, 17 thermidor an V.

marchands de poisson frais et salé pay 20 francs for a patente of the seventh class, and ambulant merchants pay 10 francs for a patente of the eighth class.[188] This classification system increased the Dames' incentive to self-identify as ambulant merchants and qualify for the lowest bracket.

Whereas the Dames frequently identified themselves explicitly as "Dames des Halles" in addresses, petitions, and pamphlets, I have not located a single marchande who identified herself as a "Dame des Halles" in the patente records. To secure the best patente, the Dames defined themselves before judicial officials primarily by the Patente's modes of categorization. The absence of the title "Dame des Halles" suggests that the patentes did spur the marchandes to abandon recourse to their traditional rights or exemptions. Moreover, the Dames helped to redefine one another by serving as witnesses in patente hearings. If a marchande disputed her patente assessment, her neighbors could testify as to the type of commerce that she conducted. When Citoyenne Veuve Lalouette filed for a patente of the ambulant eighth class even though she was a revendeuse (sixth class), her neighbors testified that she did, in fact, only sell in the streets.[189] The Dames actively labeled one another according to the occupational categories of the Patente instead of through their traditional collective identity.

Revolutionary officials' concerns for the poor working population further complicated how to classify the Dames des Halles. Directorial legislators juggled their wish to encourage the poor to work without unnecessary burdens and their desire to compel each citizen to finance the state. Deputy Martineau had argued in 1791 that patente fees would overwhelm the poorest workers. He praised "the honest indigent man" who worked to survive and cautioned that the

[188] AdPP D^{B} 389, Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes, "Loi Portant établissement d'un droit de patente pour l'an V, du 6 fructidor, an IV de la République."
[189] AdP D.4 U^{1} 28, n° 53, 17 thermidor, an V.

Patente would encourage "vagabondage" rather than useful labor.[190] Taxing the poorest class would be counterproductive. When Directorial officials required all merchants to pay the patente in 1796, the Justices of the Peace invented new ways to show leniency. In practice, they granted the poor grace periods for their patente payments. The judge in les Halles took pity on Citoyenne Maillot, a poor marchande de fruit who defaulted on her patente. He dismissed her fine and gave her 10 days to pay the police the patente fee.[191] In October 1797, the Directory enabled struggling citizens to formally appeal for a lower patente class on the basis of "modest trade or particular burdens."[192] In 1799, the state further expanded this latitude to consider the patente-holder's familial situation. Officials instructed the police in les Halles to take note of "a state of misery or distress, apparent by a large family."[193] Although the Directorial Patente demanded that all individuals fulfill their fiscal duty to the state, officials also considered what the state owed poor citizens in practice.

By 1798, the representatives decided that the poorest workers had been taxed beyond their means. They abolished the *droit proportionnel* based on property for all merchants below the fifth class. As a result, the merchants of the lower classes only paid the *droit fixe*, which could not surpass 30 francs.[194] However, officials also re-evaluated the worth of commerce based on the type of good sold. As a result, officials completely excused any food merchants in the

---

[190] *Moniteur*, nº49, 18 février 1791, Tome VII, 405-406. "L'honnête homme indigent" who worked to survive and cautioned that the patent would encourage "vagabondage."
[191] AdP D.4 U^1 28, nº237, fructidor an V.
[192] AdPP D^B 389 Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes : "Code de Patentes ou recueil Méthodique, des lois des 6 Fructidor an IV, 9 Frimaire an V, 11 Germinal an V, et 7 Brumaire an VI, sur les Patentes, 'A l'usage de toutes les Administrations centrales et municipales, des juges de paix, des commissaires du Directoire exécutif et des Contribuables de la République, imprimé par ordre du Département de la Seine' an VI," "modicité de commerce ou charges particulières."
[193] AdPP D^B 389 Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes: "Le Bureau Central du Canton de Paris aux Commissaires de Police, et aux Contrôleurs et Inspecteurs sur les Ports et dans les Halles et Marchés pour assurer l'exécution des Loix des Patentes," Nivôse an 7, "un état de misère ou de détresse, apparent par une nombreuse famille."
[194] AdPP D^B 389 Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes: From les Régisseurs de l'Enregistrement et du Domaine national, le 24 Brumaire an 7, circulaire nº1417, "Patentes de l'an 7. Loi de 1er bumaire an 7, et instructions pour son exécution."

lower classes from paying the patente. The reform exempted "ambulant sellers in the streets, in places of passages, and in the common markets, of fruits, vegetables, butter, eggs, cheese and other foodstuffs." Therefore, as ambulant *food* retailers, the Dames des Halles no longer had to buy a patente to conduct their commerce. Yet, they no longer had autonomous fiscal contracts with the nation as citizen workers. In the 1796, Directory officials categorized the Dames as productive members of the nation who owed taxes. In 1798, legislators reclassified the Dames as financial dependents of the state once again.

In addition, officials re-established the family, rather than the individual, as the basic fiscal unit of measure in the 1798 reform. If husband and wife both qualified for a patente and held their goods in common, they would only pay the fees of the higher class.[195] The new patente system privileged the household as the basic fiscal unit. This change dovetailed with the civil legislation of the late Directory. Officials took the nuclear family as the primary building block in the body politic. At an individual level, the Dames no longer had a fiscal contract with the state in which they staked out their autonomy as a contributing citizen.

While crafting the Patente legislation and securing individual licenses, the revolutionaries dismantled corporate privilege, wrestled with the role of liberty in commerce, and questioned the fiscal responsibilities of the working citizen towards the state. The Patente of 1791 initially released the Dames des Halles from paying taxes based on their commerce. Yet, rather than referencing the Dames' traditional economic privileges, the deputies legitimized the exception through new fiscal categories. As officials formed the parameters for tax brackets, they

[195]AdPP D^B 389 Dossier Révolution, Droits d'entrée, Contributions, Patentes: : From les Régisseurs de l'Enregistrement et du Domaine national, le 24 Brumaire an 7, circulaire nº1417, "Patentes de l'an 7. Loi de 1er bumaire an 7, et instructions pour son exécution," "vendeur[s] en ambulance dans les rues, dans les lieux de passage, et dans les marchés des communes, de fruits, légumes, beurre, neufs, fromage et autre menus comestible."

encouraged the Dames to rethink their occupational identity according to new legal markers rather than corporate categories. The patente legislation highlighted similarities across trade divisions and situated the Dames within a wider group of workers.[196]

While constructing the Patente, the deputies jettisoned corporate divisions as they had done while debating the voie publique and the marketplace. Instead, the deputies reinforced the categories of fixed or ambulant merchants while they constructed the Patente. The deputies originally combined all "the male and female retailers, selling in the streets, halles, and public markets" into one group based on their use of public space rather than by the traditional boundaries of trade or good type.[197] According to the Patente, retail merchants without fixed commercial property became a legal occupational class in its own right for the first time. The Patente continued to delineate the merchant class in ways similar to the Maximum – wealthy wholesalers occupied a higher tax bracket than their poor and property less retail counterparts.

When the Dames des Halles began to pay for occupational licenses in 1796, they dexterously represented themselves to the police and the justices of the peace through the Patente's parameters. The marchandes sought the lowest tax bracket possible by deploying new legal categories of commerce and property. In addition, the Dames pleaded for leniency on fines by emphasizing that their industry. The 1796 Patente allowed the Dames des Halles to claim legitimacy as autonomous citizens whose trade not only directly contributed to public utility, but fiscally supported the nation. The Patente was especially important for the Dames des Halles because it marked them as self-directed, independent agents who entered into a partnership with the state as working citizens.

---

[196] For examples of how the Dames fostered their legitimacy as representatives of the popular classes among other vectors besides their occupation, see Chapters 4 and 5.

[197] BnF 8-Lc2-171, Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, du 19 au 26 février 1791, Tome VII, n°85. Prudhomme reports on the National Assembly session of 17 February 1791 concerning the patentes. "les revendeurs et revendeuses, vendant dans les rues, halles et marchés public."

Unlike women who shared an occupation with their husbands or those who did not work at all, the Dames des Halles could point to their patentes as proof of their occupational pact with the nation until 1798. Three years after the deputies outlawed women's political clubs in 1793, the Patente bolstered the Dames' position in a political contract predicated upon individual agency and work. The 1796 Patente legally underwrote the Dames' perpetual claims to citizenship via public utility. When officials restructured the Patente in 1798, they lifted the financial burden from the backs of the poorest food merchants. The fragile nature of the Dames' livelihood combined with their crucial role as food merchants led the deputies to fiscally excuse them from the Patente. However, they paradoxically robbed the Dames of autonomy as citizen-workers who fiscally supported the nation. Even for the few powerful Dames who sold from permanent boutiques, the reform eliminated their independent connection with the state if they were married. Like other Directory legislation, the 1798 Patente recentered the working family as the basic socio-political unit. In the 1798 Patente, male heads connected the family to the state. Husbands mediated their wives' civic and fiscal duties.

Conclusion

The twin crises in food and finances forced the revolutionaries to pursue the Maximum and the Patente as emergency strategies. Although motivated by necessity, the deputies ideologically justified their tactics. Officials couched the Maximum and the Patente in idealized visions of a free and cooperative revolutionary society. Yet, the innovative programs did not always correspond to the realities of the marketplace. Before their representatives, the police, and the justices of the peace, the Dames jockeyed to fit their everyday trade within new occupational categories. On the one hand, the Dames reinterpreted their commercial identities to gain

advantageous economic positions. On the other, the market women contested socio-economic classifications that did not work in their favor. By complying with, deviating from, or protesting the legislation, the Dames influenced how the deputies revised or enforced the Maximum and the Patente. In doing so, the market women informed how fellow revolutionaries conceptualized retailers' roles in society. In addition, the Maximum and the Patente compelled the Dames to imagine new occupational identities in the post-corporate world. Such associations extended the Dames' representative legitimacy to diverse groups. Simultaneously, in casting aside corporate structures, the regulations made individuals personally responsible to the state. Thus, they also underwrote the Dames' citizenship as autonomous workers.

While officials passed economic legislation, they implicitly judged the social utility and, consequently, the political legitimacy of various occupations. Price controls demanded that the revolutionaries ask whether merchants could politically justify their profits. Did merchants usefully serve fellow citizens? Or did gluttonous merchants pander to rich clients and prey off vulnerable worker-consumers? In short, how could egalitarian impulses assume economic forms in the marketplace? As the deputies put a price on food, they put a price on merchants' occupational value to the nation. Consequently, the Dames and their supporters fought unfavorable aspects of the Maximum by asserting that retailers indispensably served society. By petitioning their representatives and complaining to the police, the Dames demanded that the state reform the Maximum to consider their crucial retail businesses.[198] However, to survive within the marketplace, the Dames bent the deputies' decrees to their economic advantage or disregarded them all together. Ultimately, the Dames, the police, and the National Convention all engaged in the third Maximum reform which ultimately legitimized retailers' work. By the end

[198] Pushed to their economic breaking points after the General Maximum, the Dames advocated for more price regulation that would carve out a place for retailers. This sharply diverged from how the Dames used free market principles to justify capitalist competition among parasol renters in 1792.

of the Maximum reform in March 1794, it was clear to all revolutionaries that the Dames provided essential services to the nation. By including separate retail limits in price controls, the revolutionaries legitimized retailers' work.

Only a few short months after the final Maximum, the Thermidorians and the Directory overturned much of the Jacobins' socio-economic programs. Although they abolished the Maximum, the Directorial deputies did not dismiss the role of retailers. In 1795, the Directorial deputies swung back toward free market economic politics, but continued to recognize the Dames' work as useful and legitimate. The 1796 Patente further legitimized retailers' essential occupation in the cooperative body politic. By codifying retailers' fiscal responsibilities, the deputies distanced the Dames' identity from privilege and charity. Building from the commercial delineations of the Maximum, the revolutionaries continued to reflect upon retailers' unique positions and acknowledge their commercial centrality via the Patente.

In both the Maximum and the Patente, the revolutionaries conceptualized the Dames' civic inclusion by drawing on socio-economic categories, rather than drawing primarily on gendered categories. The Maximum spotlighted the type and quantity of traded goods to create separate rules for wholesalers and retailers. The 1796 Patente further outlined the Dames' commercial and economic independence by requiring each retailer to secure this/her own commercial license. In short, the tax combined political notions of autonomy with economic notions of autonomy. Unlike all dependent workers, the Dames had to secure patentes for their trade. Therefore, in contrast to male and female wage laborers, the Dames des Halles held more substantial claims to work-based contracts with the nation. Since the fiscal system created individual commercial permissions, the Patente autonomized and atomized the Dames' civic identity without predicating it on gender.

Each commercial exchange in the revolutionary marketplace, no matter how modest, expressed social relations and political responsibilities among the citizens involved. Therefore, as the Dames sold food to their neighbors and agitated for favorable tax brackets, they advanced their own economic and political vision of social relations. The Dames, the police, and the deputies grappled with the Dames' political duties as retailers. Through the Maximum and the Patente, these groups legitimized the Dames' position in the nation by rooting their citizenship in their occupational utility. Food and financial crises created opportunities for the Dames to redefine themselves within shifting economic systems and, by extension, within the body politic. By the end of the Directory, the Dames, officials, and fellow citizens had confirmed the centrality of retailers' work and had firmly embedded it within revolutionary imaginings.

– Chapter 5 –

Practicing Citizenship: The Dames' Legitimacy, Situational Activism, and Civic Work

On October 8, 1789, nine Dames des Halles unexpectedly appeared during the municipal government's session. Madame Lardin and her eight colleagues asked city representatives for the floor to prove their loyalty to the Revolution and public order. The scene was laden with a sense of déjà vu. Earlier that week, a similar deputation of Dames des Halles, had descended on the Hôtel de Ville to demand bread from Commune officials. When the Commune could not supply them, hundreds of market women resolved to march twelve miles to the king's chateau in Versailles. After dragging two canons through the pouring rain, the Dames begged the king to send bread and then infiltrated the National Assembly to reiterate their grievances. After morning chaos that left two royal guards headless, the women returned to Paris not only with bread, but with the king himself, several military units, and the National Assembly's promise to follow suit.

Two days later, the mud could have barely dried on Madame Lardin's wooden clogs as she stood before city officials. She voiced the Dames' fear that the public might conflate them with women who were moved "to the most violent excesses" during the march to Versailles.[1] Two-hundred-and-forty of her retailer colleagues filed a similar complaint at the police bureau.[2] Madame Lardin testified that the Dames wished to actively work with the National Guard to keep order, especially regarding the suspect women. [3] The Dames had already enforced "public

---

[1] Sigismond Lacroix, ed., *Actes de la Commune de Paris pendant la Révolution*, series I, vol II (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 214-215, 223. According to Lacroix, there are no surviving copies of this address. "aux excès les plus violents"

[2] BnF Lc^2 218, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLVII, 10 octobre 1789.

[3] *Actes de la Commune*, series I, vol II: 214-215, 223. After the march to Versailles, *La Chronique de Paris* described how the Dames devoted, "tout leur pouvoir à maintenir la paix... si nécessaires au bonheur de a capitale & de tout le royaume." *La Chronique de Paris*, n° LI, 13 octobre 1789.

tranquility" by seizing women who extorted money in citizens' homes.[4] The municipal representatives responded that the market women's "patriotism" moved them. They posted 1,000 copies of the Dames' address around the city "so that the name of these *bonnes citoyennes* [good female citizens] would be forever consecrated in *public* consciousness."[5] Mayor Bailly also honored the Dames' civic behavior by sending the Dames' address to the king.[6]

Amidst lively applause, the municipal representatives reinforced the Dames's "patriotism" with "marks of esteem."[7] Unpinning his tricolor from his hat, Mayor Bailly offered it to the head of deputation. In turn, she cut it into pieces to divide among her colleagues.[8] According to one journal, the officials channeled the public's gratitude: "They rose from their seats to gather around them [the Dames], to see them, to thank them."[9] The Dames refused an "honorary [monetary] recompense." They protested, "One does not need a reward for doing his or her duty." The representatives voted to inscribe the Dames' names on a bronze plaque instead.[10] Finally, municipal officials promised to strike patriotic medals for the market women.[11] Turning to the Dames, mayor Bailly explained, "This medal is the recompense for your good conduct at moments when so many people made their conduct reprehensible. The title

---

[4] The marchandes brought the offending women to the police. M. Godard, *Exposé des Travaux de l'Assemblée-Générale des Représentans de la Commune de Paris, Depuis le 25 Juillet 1789, jusqu'au moi d'Octobre 1790, époque de l'organisation définitive de la Municipalité,* fait par ordre de l'Assemblée (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné, 1790), 84.

[5] *Actes de la Commune*, series I, vol II: 214-215, 223. According to Lacroix, there are no surviving copies of this address. "aux excès les plus violents," "pour que le nom de ces bonnes citoyennes fût consacré à jamais à la reconnaissance publique."

[6] M. Godard, *Exposé des Travaux de l'Assemblée-Générale des Représentans de la Commune de Paris,* 84.

[7] M. Godard, *Exposé des Travaux de l'Assemblée-Générale des Représentans de la Commune de Paris*, 84, patriotisme," "marques d'estime."

[8] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLIX, 11 octobre 1789.

[9] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLVII, 10 octobre 1789, "on s'est levé pour les [the Dames] entourer, les voir, les remercier."

[10] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLVII, 10 octobre 1789 "récompense honorifique," "on n'a pas besoin de récompense pour faire son devoir."

[11] *Actes de la Commune*, series I, vol II: 215. "donnaient dans ce moment une nouvelle preuve de leur patriotisme, de leur amour et de leur fidélité pour le meilleur et le plus chéri des Rois, qu'ils [the representatives] les exhortait à continuer à contribuer par leur exemple au rétablissement du bon ordre et de tranquillité de la capitale..."

bonne citoyenne, of which it bears the imprint, will recall to you without cease the duties that this title imposes on you."[12] According to municipal receipts, the four silver medals that the Dames received were a lavish gift. The cost of each medal could supply a marchande with 28.4 days of bread![13] The Commune politically invested in the Dames through their symbolic and financial generosity.

But what did it mean to be a "bonne citoyenne?" What did the Dames and the Commune mean by "duties"? Like two sides of a compact, the medal bore the title on one side and the city's coat of arms on the other.[14] The medal emblematized citizenship as a mutual exchange between citizens and the state. The Dames practiced citizenship through their civic conduct or "duties." In return, the state recognized the Dames' useful service to the body politic and was indebted to them. Thus, the Dames could make demands on the state. In this case, the merchants demanded that the state defend their honor, which affected their commercial livelihood and political influence. But the Dames could also demand that the state intervene in the marketplace and protect their socio-economic interests, as we have seen in the previous chapters. The bonnes citoyennes medal mirrored the compact of reciprocal duties between citizens and the state.

---

[12] *Actes de la Commune*, series I, vol III, January 1790, "Cette médaille est la récompense de votre bonne conduite dans des moments où tant de personnes ont rendu condamnable la leur. Le titre de *bonne citoyenne*, dont elle porte l'empreinte, vous rappellera sans cesse les devoirs que ce titre vous impose."

[13] Archives de Paris D.24-26 (current call # VD* 3), Piece # 222, p. 70. "13e fournitures et ouvrages divers concernant la Maison commune, les diffèrentes administrations Municipales, excepté la Mairie, les fêtes Publiques et autres objets cy," The Commune paid M. Durvivier 25 livres 8 sous for 4 medals. Thus, one medal cost 6 livres 7 sous. If we use the August 1789 Paris bread price of 3 sous per retail pound (Albert Mathiez, "Étude critique sur les journées des 5 & 6 octobre," *Revue Historique*, vol. 67 (1898) 6 livres 7 sous can buy 42.7 pounds of bread. In 1789, the average person consumed 1.5 pounds of bread per day (Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, trans. R.R. Palmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 102). Therefore, one medal could purchase 28.4 days of bread rations for one individual; *La Chronique de Paris* reports that, later in the month, some Dames des Halles complained that only 10 of them obtained a medal and these Dames were taunting others. Although the medals could serve to foster relations between the revolutionary government and the Dames, the distinction could also divide groups. *La Chronique de Paris*, n° LVIII, 22 octobre 1789.

[14] BnF Estampes M 98953 "Médaille aux bonnes citoyennes le 8 octobre 1789, donné par la commune de Paris." BnF M 99487 depicts a larger version of the medal; The Commune had given a medal the sympathetic French Guards in a similar fashion. On August 7, 1789, the Commune voted to give gold medals to the French Guards which cost 50 livres each. They labeled theses medals with the "prix de patriotisme." BnF Lc2 171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, n° IV, du 2 au 8 août 1789.

I argue that the Dames des Halles invented citizenship along three axes: occupational work, civic work, and gendered work. As Chapters 1, 2, and 3 have illustrated, the Dames frequently referenced how their commerce served public utility and how their autonomous work supported the social body. Through their occupational work, the Dames formed personal contracts with the body politic as they navigated new commercial and fiscal regulations. In effect, they established political contracts with the nation as citizen-workers.[15] In many aspects, their work gave them legal, commercial, and cultural autonomy, which the revolutionaries viewed as the ideological prerequisite for free choice.

This chapter examines the second axis of the Dames' citizenship: civic activism. I argue that, in their eyes, the Dames *earned* and *enacted* citizenship by defending the collectivity. As the market women sporadically intervened in different issues, they framed their actions as civic responsibilities that they undertook on behalf of the body politic. The petitioned the king as "faithful subjects," and called on the National Assembly as "representatives of the French nation of which we have the honor of being part."[16] The Dames maintained that they spoke for the sovereign people, protected the poor, and spurred the state to fulfill its reciprocal obligations towards its citizens. The Dames often intervened over issues concerning foodstuffs and their position as members of the popular classes. Subsistence issues were especially charged because they fused the state's duties, citizens' survival, and notions of equality. In addition to buttressing

---

[15] Abbé Sieyès's logic in *What is the Third Estate?* enables the Dames to claim political legitimacy through their work. Moreover, the Dames extend work beyond Sieyès's plane of occupational labor to consider all forms of active societal engagement such as civic work and gendered work. William H. Sewell, Jr. *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What is the Third Estate?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994),148-149. Pierre Rétat illustrates how the revolutionaries used "citizen" as a hyphenated adjective to denote patriotism or "social utility." Rétat, "The Evolution of the Citizen from the Ancien Régime to the Revolution,"13.

[16] BnF Lb39 7744, *Récit exact de ce qui s'est passé hier à Saint Geneviève par les Dames du Marché Saint Martin ; & de-Là à l'Hôtel-de-Ville; avec Compliment prononcé au Roi par Mlle Bourbau, âgée de 17 ans au nom des dames du Marché Saint Martin ; Et la réception agréable de la part de Sa Majesté*, signé Lebois (Imprimerie Ballard) 5, 6, "vos fidèles sujets"; AN C 48, n° 476; *Archives parlementaires*, Series I, Volume XXI, le 30 décembre 1790, 719, "représentants de la nation française dont nous avons l'honneur de faire partie."

the interests of their fellow citizens, the market women even asserted that they defended the very Revolution itself. The Dames pressured the royal family to support the Revolution and exposed counter-revolutionary plotters in the marketplace.

For similar reasons, other groups seized the Dames as important symbols to debate the nature of popular citizenship and advance diverse factional agendas. As a group without a formal political structure, the Dames seemed to give a natural face to the sovereign people and organically embody the General Will. Their occupation as retailers made them crucial players in food politics, especially from 1789 to 1794. Since the Dames frequently intervened in public arenas to pursue their interests and shape their citizenship, other revolutionaries could easily latch on to their image. They spun the Dames' activism it to their political advantage in newspaper accounts, pamphlets, and artistic renderings.

By changing the targets of their civic activism, the Dames reimagined what constituted the state. Since the meeting of the Third Estate, the Dames assumed that new political bodies as well as the king must fulfill the duties of the state. Therefore, they appealed to the Commune, the National Assembly, and the king without contradiction. However, after the king attempted to flee the Revolution in 1791, the Dames began to distance themselves from the monarch. By the time of the king's execution in 1793, the Dames had completely invested in revolutionary institutions as embodying the state. Although factions shifted and the government mutated, the Dames assumed that their role as representatives of the sovereign people remained constant. They also continued to assert that individuals enacted citizenship through civic work. Thus, while the Dames reimagined which actors played the role of the state in the compact between the government and citizens, they did not reconceptualize the reciprocal nature of the partnership.

This chapter analyzes how the Dames imagined they could channel sovereignty through activism. Since the Dames responded to political issues on a case-by-case basis, they adjusted their tactics according to circumstance. Building from their traditional political practices, the Dames sought to carve out space as popular representatives within a new system of revolutionary structures. By revamping their ritual repertoire from the Old Regime, the Dames could negotiate with the state as citizens yet maintain their exceptional political autonomy. They presented bouquets to revolutionary officials who acted in their favor and invited politicians to their patriotic *Te Deums*. In addition, the Dames appropriated revolutionary forms of activism. They petitioned the Commune to improve conditions in the marketplace and intermittently collaborated with sectional assemblies**.** To harness popular legitimacy and validate their own influence, the Dames relied on public display. Under the gaze of their fellow Parisians, the Dames engaged with other groups and institutions but remained outside their organizing structures. They acted as revolutionary heroines in national festivals, took oaths with National Guardsmen, but never formed a political organization of their own.

This chapter also asks how the Dames conceptualized the reciprocal duties between citizens and the state along with the corresponding rights that such a relationship entails. As the Dames crafted petitions, issued compliments, and publically demonstrated, they advanced their vision of participatory citizenship. They claimed to defend their interests, their families, and their nation through a contract discourse. Using this lens, I broach why the Dames were intermittently disgusted with the revolutionary government, especially during the fall of 1793 and the winter of 1793-1794. I contend that the Dames grew angry over economic regulations among other challenges, but that their irritation did not reflect counterrevolutionary sentiments. On the contrary, the Dames grew frustrated precisely because they accepted the premises of the

reciprocal political contract. And, in this relationship, the state failed to fulfill its duties. The Dames expected the state to support their interests as payment for serving the body politic.

Finally, the Dames could only speak in the assembly halls if the deputies admitted them, could only demonstrate in the street if the public watched them, and could only change marketplace conditions if the police paid attention to them. While episodically intervening, the Dames relied on how fellow citizens accepted or rejected their legitimacy and their ideas of citizenship. Some revolutionaries used the Dames as popular figureheads or cited their exemplary actions, while others regarded their demonstrations with ambivalence or feared that plotters manipulated them. Both perspectives recognized the Dames' potent influence over national politics. This chapter insists that the dual nature of the Dames' activism – public and embodied – was crucial to their understanding of citizenship, which refused to be incorporated into formal institutions. Since the market women claimed to act on behalf of public rather than private interests, they framed their interventions as civic work. Thus, the Dames practiced and negotiated citizenship through their situational activism.

Creating the Legitimacy to Intervene: Endowing Ritual Traditions with Revolutionary Meaning

The Dames drew from their patriotic reputation to publically legitimize officials who acted in their favor. During the Old Regime, the Dame had presented compliments to the king during royal celebrations and acted as ritual symbols of "the people." For feast days, royal sacraments, and military victories, the Dames rallied around the king, sang his praises, and adorned him with bouquets. Since Saint Louis had originally given the Dames their marketplace

spaces, the Dames annually travelled to Versailles to celebrate the feast day.[17] Every August 24, the Dames extended the saint king's popularity and paternal benevolence to his ancestor Louis XVI. The Dames also offered the king what they described as "the homage of our hearts" every New Year.[18] The king may have reciprocated with monetary gifts to the market women.[19] Since the 1614 meeting of the Estates General alone, the Dames and their ancestors had offered at least 350 formal addresses, mostly to the king or members of the royal family.[20]

During the Revolution, the Dames held great political authority because they claimed to embody the sovereign people just as they had symbolized the Third Estate during the Old Regime. Parisians acknowledged the marchandes' exceptional representative power and privileged relationship with governmental bodies. The Dames reflected the tensions between seemingly organic and formal modes of representation. While in Paris, German playwright Friedrich Ferdinand Augustus von Kotzbue was struck by how the revolutionaries lionized the "fish-women" and their grand reputation. Kotzbue was so impressed that he copied a description by the *Journal de Paris* in his diary:

> The [National] Assembly received their [the Dames'] wishes with satisfaction as the voice of the people. It is known, that the *Dames de la Halle* have often stepped forward in this revolution, and always full of patriotism. Their character, at all times prone to independence, their freedom of speech, which was even pardoned at a time when little was pardoned, must naturally give them a distinguished zeal for liberty.

---

[17] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n°111 du 20 au 27 août1791.
[18] AN C 128, n°435 "Adresse de reconnaissance et de dévouement à l'Assemblée nationale, par les dames des divers marchés de la capitale." no date but likely 1789 by contextual clues.
[19] During the Revolution, newspapers accused imposter Dames des Halles of presenting bouquets and compliments to rich individuals to extort them for a monetary "gift." *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 294, le 21 octobre 1790. During the October Days, the king also gave the initial deputation of women money as a sign of his paternal benevolence. "l'hommage de nos coeurs."
[20] If the Dames paid a minimum of two annual visits to the king for the Feast of Saint Louis and the New Year, they gave the king 350 compliments. However, this number is only the minimum since it does not include variable visits for other rituals such as royal baptisms, marriages, the queen's feast day on the Assumption, and military celebrations.

According to Kotzbue, the *Journal de Paris* commented that the elite could no longer patronize or belittle the Dames. The Revolution endowed the market women with even more authority as "the voice of the people."[21]

The Dames imbued their traditional practices with new meaning during the Revolution.[22] The Dames complimented the electors who worked in Versailles with an address and a song in early July 1789. The Dames explicitly compared their offering to their Old Regime rituals to distinguish the two: "We will not be able to laud you, neither with gold, nor with incense, nor with laurels: these belong only to an esteemed monarch: but we laud you with flowers." Yet, the pamphleteer who reproduced the scene reminded his readers that the song derived its authority from the Dames' legendary frankness. Under the compliment, he wrote, "One must not forget that these verses are the fruit of a sentiment, [they are] not an ordered work, not an exact production composed by a hired pen."[23]

The Dames used compliments and public display to recast old political relationships, form alliances with new officials, and carve out a position in the evolving body politic. In March 1789, the Dames des Halles visited the representatives of the Third Estate. Their representatives were preparing for the first meeting of the Estates General since 1614. On the eve of the Revolution, the Dames gave a compliment to their "frères," the electors, who would present the Third Estate's grievances to the king. In their address, the Dames carefully but provocatively downplayed the social hierarchy of the Old Regime by claiming that "birth" resulted from

---

[21] Friedrich Ferdinand Augustus von Kotzbue, *Sketch of the Life and Literary Career of Augustus Von Kotzbue with the Journal of His Tour to Paris At the Close of the Year 1790*, translated from the German by Anne Plumptre, December 31, 1790, (London: C. Whittingham, 1800), 303.

[22] Katie Jarvis, "Crafting a Revolutionary Identity: The Political Practice of the Dames des Halles, 1789-1791," (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 43-62.

[23] BnF Lb39 7354 *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. Les électeurs qui ont été à Versailles pour solliciter l'amnistie des Gardes Françaises*, 2. Ouzi Elyada dates this pamphlet to early July 1789. "nous ne pourrons vous encenser, ni avec l'or, ni avec de l'encens, ni avec des lauriers: ceci 'appartient qu'à un Monarque estimé: mais nous vous encensons avec des fleurs," "Il ne faut oublier que ces couplets sont le fruit d'un sentiment, non un ouvrage de commande, non la production exacte & compassée d'une plume mercenaire."

"chance." They simultaneously exalted the monarch and their estate by singing that the original king "was a soldier" who came "from the Third Estate." They professed their loyalty to the king as usual, but also asserted a political role for themselves and Third Estate. They sang: "We defend, we love with zeal / We serve the State, / Let it always be faithful to Louis, / The Third Estate." The Dames charted their notion of civic representation as a reciprocal alliance. Citizens and representatives would publically fashion this relationship and it would underpin the state. The Dames told their electors, "we come to glorify ourselves in your eyes of the choice that was just made in our favor, in naming you, by the public voice, in order to support the interests of a People of which you are members."[24] The market women situated themselves as organs of the popular classes and took ownership of their electors. In delineating these relationships, the Dames positioned themselves as a conduit of political power from the people to the state and vice versa.

The Dames used similar tactics to forge their political relationship with the commune. On July 20, 1789, the Dames of the Marché Saint-Paul brought a bouquet to the new municipal committee. The marchandes complimented the committee on "the divine zeal which animates you, [through which] you bring hope for the end of *our* miseries."(my emphasis) The Dames juxtaposed the "you," indicating the officials, with "our," meaning the general public. The market women positioned themselves as an organ of an expansive people, rather than as mouthpieces of the Third Estate alone. Thus, the representatives were responsible to the Dames as members of the nation. The Dames followed with a song that celebrated "the three Orders

[24] BnF Lb39 1635 *Compliment des Dames poissardes à leurs frères du Tiers-État avec des couplets*, 2, 4. Ouzi Elyada dates the pamphlet to March 1789 and classifies its political position as moderate. "naissance," "hazard," "fut un soldat," "du Tiers-État," "Défendons, aimons avec zèle, / Servons l'État, / Qu'à Louis soit toujours fidèle, / Le Tiers-État," "nous venions nous glorifier à vos yeux du choix qui vient d'être fait en notre faveur, en vous nommant, par la voix publique, pour soutenir les intérêts d'un Peuple dont vous êtes membres."

reunited." They called listeners "my dear comrades" and labeled the representatives "our great Deputies."[25]

Similarly, the National Assembly received a deputation of Dames des Halles from across the city markets who spoke "aloud [vive voix] from sincere devotion" on behalf of the wider public. Calling the deputies "braves defenders of French liberty," Dame Dupray of the Marché St. Paul, Reine d'Ongrie (Hongrie) of the Marché d'Aguessaux, Dame Genti of the Marché Quinze-vingts, and Dame Doré of the central Halles declared that they hoped "the end of your works will be that [the end] of our misery and the dawn of our Happiness."[26] Merchant Dupray even composed a patriotic song to praise officials. She used frequent possessives in her lyrics to attach the Dames to various groups singing of "King, Citizens, & Soldiers/ O'r fath'r, our close friends, our brothers." The Dames portrayed themselves as judges of officials' "works": "I're vary happy about them." ("J'en somm' ben contens.") In their song, the Dames directly asked fellow citizens to follow their lead: "Swear, all lik' we will swear/ To be faithful to the Nation."[27] In addition, the pamphlet version of Merchant Dupray's song is labeled, "Approved by Monsieur the Mayor of Paris." The market women situated themselves among the popular classes, allied themselves with revolutionary bodies, and asserted a new vision of a politically reborn France.[28]

---

[25] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, 20 juillet 1789. "le divin zèle qui *vous* anime, [through which] vous fait espérer la fin de *nos* misères," "les trois Ordres réunis," "mes chers camarades," "nos grands Députés."

[26] AN C 128, n435, "Adresse de reconnaissance et de dévouement à l'Assemblée nationale, par les dames des divers marchés de la capitale." "les trois Ordres réunis," "mes chers camarades," "nos grands Députés," "vive voix du dévouements sincères," "braves défenseurs de la liberté français," "la fin de vos travaux sera celle de nos misère et l'aurore du notre Bonheur."

[27] BnF Microfiche M-12884, Mme Dupray, *Chanson des Dames des Marchés Saint Paul; des Quinze-vingts, la Halle & d'Aguesseau* (n.p.)(The BnF catalogue gives the year of publication as 1785, but this must be incorrect since it discusses the Third Estate, and the meeting of the Estates General, and General Lafayette. The correct year is likely 1789.) "Roi, Citoyens, & Soldats/ Notr' per', nos amis, nos frères," "ouvrages," "J'en somm' ben contens," "Jurer, tout comm' nous jurons,/ D'être fidèle à la Nation," "Approuvée par M. le Maire de Paris."

[28] BnF Lc2 80, *Le Journal de Paris*, n°33, 22 juillet 1789, *La Chanson nouvelle chantée par les dames députées du même marché*.

Despite their carefully delineating between the Old Regime and the Revolution, the Dames' sporadic sanctioning did not venture far from their ritual forms of political practice. After the fall of the Bastille, the recently dismissed minister Necker returned to Paris amidst much pomp. With "cries of joy," the Dames presented the popular minister with flowers to demonstrate how he had won their "hearts." To top it off, they enthusiastically showered the hand of Necker's wife with kisses.[29] Three days after the Bastille fell, the king arrived in Paris. A sketch of his welcome into the city includes the Dames des Halles in the written key who, unlike spectators cordoned off by royal troops, held a place of honor ready to greet the royal carriages with bouquets. They presented him with "the Laurel, Symbol of peace."[30]

Ritual gestures allowed the Dames to reimagine their civic communities. At the end of August 1789, the Dames du Marché Saint Martin, as well as those of the central Halles held *Te Deums* and formed processions in honor of St. Geneviève. They thanked the city's patron saint for "preserving us from imminent danger." At the same time that the Dames du Marché Saint-Martin brought a bouquet to offer to St. Geneviève, they brought one for Lafayette as well. Their gesture framed both as protectors of the city. The Dames then invited Lafayette to pray to St. Geneviève as well, and assured him that "all our parents & our friends join themselves to you." The military protector joined the religious guardian to watch over an approving revolutionary community, mediated by the Dames at this instance.[31]

In the early years of the Revolution, the Dames reaffirmed their role as the cohesive glue between the monarch and his people. In August 1789, 40 Dames dressed in white, gathered

---

[29] BnF Lb39 2085 *Entrée triomphante de M Necker à l'Hôtel-de-Ville, accompagnée du compliment de M. le marquis de la Fayette & de M. Bailly, maire, suivie de la réponse de M Necker, & de la présentation du bouquet des poissardes.* (Paris: Chez Cressonnier, 1789?); Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, nº III, 26 juillet au 1 août 1789.
[30] Carnavalet Histoire G 29383, "La Journée à Jamais Memorable aux François où Louis XVI restaurateur de la Liberté Françoise se rendit à l'Hôtel de Ville le 17 du Mois de Juillet 1789" "le Laurier, Simbole de la paix."
[31] BnF Lb39 7744, *Récit exact de ce qui s'est passé hier à Saint Geneviève par les Dames du Marché Saint Martin,* 5-6. "nous préserver du danger imminent," "tous nos parens & nos amis se joignent à vous."

bouquets, and marched to Versailles to praise the king. Spokeswoman Mademoiselle Bourbau told the king they were gladdened by "the friendship of our Monarch." She positioned the market women as the guarantors of public support by speaking on behalf of "your faithful subjects." The Dames promised to use their influence on behalf of the king and reassured him, "we will not cease to appeal on your behalf, & on behalf of your venerable descendants."[32] In doing so, they reiterated the eternal nature of their legitimizing powers. Moreover they offered to protect the king, but made it contingent upon his revolutionary support.

The Dames used their political traditions to comment on explicitly revolutionary issues like the Constitution. In August 1789, the Dames secured another audience before the king and defaulted to their ritual forms again. They complimented the king in verse and congratulated him on the start of the Constitution.[33] The monarch welcomed the Dames who called him "our dear man, our good close friend" while affirming his continued position as "our father."[34] The Dames also redirected their traditional gestures at revolutionary officials. The following Spring, the Dames presented Representative Barnave with a patriotic bouquet of flowers for his new office as president of the National Assembly. A drawing depicts the exchange as it unfolded in the street, before a carriage. There is no air of a formal presentation; the Dames only command the attention of those directly surrounding Barnave. The flexibility of patriotic compliments allowed the Dames to forge political relationships in a variety of settings.[35]

---

[32] BnF Lb39 7744, *Récit exact de ce qui s'est passé hier à Saint Geneviève par les Dames du Marché Saint Martin ; & de-la à l'Hôtel-de-Ville ; avec Compliment prononcé au Roi par Mlle Bourbau, âgée de 17 ans au nom des dames du Marché Saint Martin ; Et la réception agréable de la part de Sa Majesté*, signé Lebois (Imprimerie Ballard) 5, 6, "l'amitié de notre Monarque," "vos fidèles sujets," "nous ne cesserons de solliciter pour vous, & pour vos vénérables descendans."

[33] BnF Estampes QB-1 (1789-10-08) –FOL "Les Dames de la halle félicitant leurs Majestés sur le commencement de la Constitution," eau-forte, 1789 or 1790.

[34] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° IV, 2 au 8 août 1789, compliment given on 7 August 1789. "notre cher homme, notre bon ami," "notre père."

[35] BnF Estampes M 100435 "Les femmes de la halle donnant à Mr Barnave un bouquet et le compliment sur son patriotisme." "bouquet du roi," "somme considerable," "souscription patriotique."

As the revolutionaries invented new models of political practice, some officials even imitated the Dames' ritual gestures. On August 25, 1789, the first Feast Day of Saint Louis during the Revolution, the new Parisian municipal officials and National Guardsmen travelled to Versailles to compliment the king. They replicated Dames' annual ritual to express the nascent nation's unity. The revolutionary officials and militia brought a metaphorical "bouquet for the king" composed of a "considerable sum" from their "patriotic subscriptions."[36]

Parisians exploited the line that the Dames straddled between ritual symbols and revolutionary representatives. The Dames eagerly accepted the advantageous position. In March 1791, the Jacobins planned festivities for the upcoming Carnival. They dispatched deputations to invite "My Dames de la Halle, the faubourgs Saint-Antoine, [and] Saint-Marceau, the Cordeliers club, the twelve apostles of the Bouche de fer, the Palais-Royal, etc." The Jacobins invited "all the patriots to use all of the most engaging means to make at least the entire royal family dance." The Jacobins listed the Dames first, no doubt, because of the market women's ritual relationship with the king. Since they wanted the royal family to participate, they increased their odds by dispatching the Dames who could draw from ritual relationships and new popular sovereignty. The Jacobins also acknowledged the Dames as a political group by juxtaposing them aside political clubs.[37]

In contrast, the Dames des Halles halted their public flattery to disapprove of officials. After the king attempted to flee the country in June 1791, the Dames signaled their discontent and abandoned him. The day after the citizens of Varennes caught the royal family, the Dames marched through the National Assembly with the National Guard, the Forts de Halle, with some

---

[36] BnF Lb39 2239, *Bouquet du roi: Pour le 25 août 1789* (Versailles: De l'Imprimerie Royale, 1789.

[37] François-Alphonse Aulard, *La Société des Jacobins: Receuil de documents*, Volume II, March 2, 1791 (Paris: Librairie Jouaust,1899), 157. "mesdames de la Halle, les faubourgs Saint-Antoine, Saint-Marceau, le Club des Cordeliers, les douze apôtres de la Bouche de fer, le Palais-Royal, etc." The Jacobins invited "tous les patriotes à user tous les moyens les plus engageants pour faire danser au moins toute la famille royale."

inhabitants of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in order "to swear an inviolable patriotism."[38] One month later, the Dames refused to offer the king his ritual compliment and bouquet on the Fête St. Louis, his feast day. A British observer noted that the obstinate Dames sacrificed their "annual gift of a hundred louis" that the king usually offered during the visit.[39] When five Dames went to perform the traditional ceremony without their colleagues' approval, the other Dames strongly castigated the rogue merchants. They feared that the entire group was inadvertently associated with this appearance, which would tarnish their patriotic image.[40] Instead, of singing songs in the royal palace, the Dames visited the National Assembly in the following months. Before the deputies, they professed their loyalty to the Constitution while omitting the king. After the flight to Varennes, the Dames channeled their symbolic sanctioning power towards revolutionary bodies.[41]

Even after the Dames deserted the king and he met the guillotine, the Dames presumed that they would keep the high cultural and political status that they forged during the Old Regime. In October 1796, the "citoyennes de la Halle" went to wish Dupont, a historian deputy, a good start to the *republican* New Year. Chasing them away, Dupont angrily told them that he only considered January 1 the New Year. Infuriated by the insult to the revolutionary calendar and the personal slight, the Dames ironically retorted that "one [did] not treat them in this manner when they went to Versailles, and that he was an aristocrat." The Dames had imbued traditional forms of practice with new meaning. In the Dames' reply, Versailles and aristocrats held positive and negative connotations simultaneously. They clearly did not think that their

---

[38] *AP* II: IV, 22 juin 1791, 610. "jurer un patriotisme inviolable."
[39] Stephen Weston, Letter XXXIX, August 1791 in *Letters from Paris During the Summer of 1791* (London: J. Debrett, Piccadilly, and W. Clarke, 1792), 225.
[40] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° 111 du 20 au 27 août 1791.
[41] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° 119, du 15 au 22 octobre 1791, reporting on the October 9, 1791 session of the National Assembly.

compliment reflected a timeless factional marker or eternal aristocratic loyalty. They were celebrating the republican New Year, after all. Yet, the Dames assumed that the cultural decorum surrounding their display would remain unchanged.[42]

The Dames maintained that they could pass judgment on behalf of the people into the Consulate. After an assassin attempted to blow up Napoleon's carriage in front of the opera house, the Dames praised Napoleon and spoke in the first person plural to praise the his patriotism. The distraught market women lamented, "What unhappiness, if we had lost him! It's [he's] a good citizen; he has not yet wronged anyone; he has only done good; one wants to prevent him from giving us [the French] peace."[43] Clearly, the Dames did not interpret regime changes as consequential to their representative powers.

Materializing a Political Contract

During the Old Regime, the Dames had expected the king to care for his subjects like a paternal father. Usually this meant providing food for the population. However, as sovereign citizens, the Dames were able to make more diverse types of demands (supplications) and compel (not implore) the state to fulfill its reciprocal compact with citizens. In addition, the revolutionaries fractured political power across multiple governmental bodies, which gave the Dames leverage appeal to different arms and strategically forge their notion of citizenship.

Since the Dames imagined citizenship as a mutual contract with the nation earned through work, they did not hesitate to make reciprocal demands on the state. If officials

---

[42] BnF Lc2-828, *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés*, n°190, le7 vendémiaire an 5 "on ne les traitent pas de cette manière quand elles allaient à Versailles, et qu'il étoit un aristocrate."

[43] François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris sous le consulat: Recueil des documents pour l'histoire d'esprit public à Paris*, Volume 1, 25 vendémiaire an IX, 17 octobre 1800, (Paris: L. Cerf, 1903), 729. "Quel malheur, si nous l'avions perdu! C'est un bon citoyen; il n'a encore fait de mal à personne; il n'a fait que du bien; on veut l'empêcher de nous [the French] donner la paix."

neglected these desires, needs, or duties, the Dames critiqued them. Since the Dames did not have a sustained, official organization, they reacted to issues in a piecemeal fashion. On the surface, the Dames appeared to act sporadically. From intermittently petitioning government bodies to publically spanking counter-revolutionary nuns, the Dames demonstrated according to shifting concerns and circumstances. Nonetheless, this issue-driven activism adhered to their conceptually coherent schema of citizenship: individuals constantly practiced citizenship by continually engaging in the body politic.

The Dames des Halles understood the body politic as a set of dynamic, reciprocal, and – above all – contingent relationships. If the Dames performed useful work as citizens, they expected their representatives to do the same. They demanded that their representatives focus on pragmatic duties rather than frivolous embellishments. Subsistence issues formed an especially powerful touchstone for negotiating the political relationship among the state, the Dames, and the people. In 1793, the Dames protested that deputies foolishly debated a new calendar when, the retailers argued, "it was more urgent to address grain and flour, which was lacking without end in the capital."[44] The market women similarly complained about how officials neglected their purpose in 1795. Among their shops the Dames grumbled that "it would be much preferred if they [the deputies busied themselves with lowering the prices of principle foodstuffs [denrées] rather than giving useless and costly festivals."[45] If neglect was unacceptable, intent to harm was far worse. The Dames also accused the government of considering using force against French

[44] Prévost, le 13 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI (Paris: Libraire Ancienne Honoré, 1943), 252, "c'était plus urgent de s'occuper des grains et farines qui manquèrent sans cesse dans la capitale." Some of the Dames from the marché des Quinze-vingts also continued to observe Sunday rather than the new revolutionary décade. Despite consumer complaints, these Dames refused to sell on Sundays, which, one declared, "Je n'oublierai jamais." AN W 191, Harivel, 9 Pluviôse an II (January 28, 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 194.

[45] François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume III, 9 août 1795, (Paris: Librairie Léopold Cerf, 1899), 149. "il voudrait mieux s'occuper de faire baisser les denrées que de donner des fêtes inutiles et dispendieuses."

citizens rather than military enemies. Despite the overwhelming debt in 1797, the Dames charged the government with having "enough money to make troops descend on Paris."[46] The Dames demanded that the government fulfill its compact duties by striving to protect citizens, and certainly not by harming them. The retailers and their representatives continually negotiated a political partnership fraught with opportunities to collapse.

The October Days of 1789 demonstrates how citizens and the state balanced the complex components of this compact. When the revolutionary government could not provide bread for Parisians in the fall of 1789, the Dames felt that the state had failed to fulfill its responsibilities towards its citizens. The dearth of bread and anxiety over plots threatened to collapse the nascent nation. Yet the government could not provide subsistence or psychological relief. Rumors swirled that troops were approaching Paris to squash the Revolution, fear of hoarders heightened the bread crisis, and the press speculated on counter-revolutionary plots to move the king. The situation grew particularly terse in September when, in dispute with the National Assembly over a royal veto, the king refused to formally accept the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Then, in early October, the king's royal Body Guards held a banquet at Versailles that scandalized the capital. Parisians believed that the Body Guards trampled the patriotic tricolor underfoot. Pamphlets maintained that the queen and her court handed out black and white cockades for the Bourbon and Hapsburg dynasties respectively.[47] Rumors spread that, amidst renditions of the monarchical "Oh Richard, Oh my king!", the evening degenerated into a

[46] AdP D. 34 (current call VD* 46) #402, Bureau Central, Rapport Général de la Surveillance, 18 thermidor an V. "assez d'argent pour faire marcher des troupes sur Paris."

[47] *Le Mercure de France* points out that the Body Guards' white cockades were a regular part of their uniform. The white cockade marked their service to the Bourbons. Prudhomme reprinted the report: Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XV, 17 au 24 octobre 1789, "Défense des Gardes-du-Corps, compte rendu par le *Mercure de France*, des journées des 5 & 6 octobres.

royalist orgy. The thought of counter-revolutionary influences corrupting their benevolent king terrified Parisians.[48]

On October 5, 1789 the Dames drew from their traditional roles and revolutionary legitimacy to intervene directly. Leaving the marketplace, they sought to protect their community from famine and mounting counter-revolutionary threats. The Dames first went to the Hôtel de Ville to ask their municipal representatives for bread. When the commune officials failed to supply them, the Dames gathered other women and several militiamen to march to Versailles. If the municipal government could not honor its paternal obligations towards its good citizens, they hoped the king and the National Assembly would. Through heavy rain, the Dames dragged two canons and other hodge-podge arms to the chateau twelve miles away. There, the Dames drew upon their ritual relationship with the king to request an audience. The king promised the Dames that he would send bread to Paris. The marchandes also presented their grievances to their representatives in the National Assembly hall. General Lafayette and the Parisian National Guard finally arrived in Versailles that evening. The Dames, other marchers, and the Parisian militia spread out to find shelter for the night.

Slow, formal means of petitioning and debate could not keep up with the impatience of thousands of citizens gathered at the château. By the next morning, crowds found their way into the chateau's courtyards and the scene deteriorated into chaos. Around fifteen people died in the confusion, two Royal Body Guards lost their heads, and Marie Antoinette fled her bedchamber to

[48] Katie Jarvis, "Allez, Marchez Braves Citoyennes: A Study of the Popular Origins of and the Political Reactions to, the October Days of the French Revolution," (bachelor's thesis, Boston College, 2007). For more details on "Ô Richard, Ô mon roi!" and the banquet, see Pierre Dominique, *Paris enlève le roi: octobre 1789* (Paris Librairie Académique Perrin, 1973), 83; Laura Mason, "Oh Richard, Oh, My King!" *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/622.

collapse shaking into her husband's arms.[49] In order to appease his citizens, Louis appeared on his balcony with Lafayette and the queen. Addressing the crowd as "my children," he promised to relocate to Paris.[50] National Guardsmen offered their tricolors to the Royal Body Guards to celebrate. The October Days, the collective name for the events, experientially crystalized the symbolic compact. The Dames set out for Versailles under the assumption that a patriotic king must protect his citizens. The Dames proved their point when they returned to Paris with the entire royal family in tow.

On October 6, the Dames returned to Paris not only with bread, but with the king himself, several military units, and the National Assembly's promise to follow them to Paris soon. The Dames had forced the Commune, the National Assembly, and the King to uphold their responsibilities in their political contract. The Dames defended their community by demanding that officials address subsistence issues, and they defended the nation by securing the king's loyalty to his capital and the Revolution.

Journalists recounted the October Days with a sense of communal ownership over the Dames. They described them as "our French [women]" and "our brave amazons."[51] *La Chronique de Paris* used the Dames to evoke patriotic and popular female citizens in contrast to aristocratic plotters. The editor asserted that "les *Dames de la Halle* have thwarted the plans of the *Dames du Palais*" (his emphasis), who participated in the scandalous royal banquet.[52] A pamphleteer credited the loud women vendors ("harengères") with propelling the October Days.

---

[49] Historians disagree on the number of people who died but the Comte de Montgaillard and Jules Michelet each estimated that around 12 died. As cited in Marc de Villiers, *Reine Audu: Les Légendes des journées d'octobre* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1917), 224.

[50] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XIII, 3 au 10 Octobre 1789 ; Musée Carnavalet, Histoire PC 007, Chemise C, G 27973 87CAR 037NB, "Le Roi paroisseant au Balcon donneant sur la Cour de marbre: dit Mes enfans j'irai à Paris mais à condition que ce sera avec ma femme et mes enfans," "mes enfans."

[51] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XIII, 3 au 10 octobre 1789, "nos françoises," "nos braves amazones."

[52] *La Chronique de Paris*, nº XLVII, 9 octobre 1789. "les *Dames de la Halle* ont déjoué les projets des *Dames du Palais.*"

He lauded them as encapsulating the underlying virtues of the poor people: "The women of the people hide great character which shows itself when needed" which was only hidden by "a neglected and rough education."[53]

During the October Days, the Dames situated themselves as the nexus between citizens and the state. The Dames had legitimized the exceptional march through popular sovereignty. The Dames also advanced their vision of how a reciprocal contract with the state should work. They used public display, communal participation, and revolutionary symbols to enact sovereignty and stage the union of the king and the nation. Images of the October Days in particular highlight the importance of unaddressed subsistence issues in motivating the march. They frequently cite calls for bread as a rallying point.[54] The drawing "Le Roi arrivant à Paris avec sa famille, escorté de plus de trente mille âmes" ("The King arriving in Paris with his family, escorted by more than 30,000 souls") depicts women joyfully touting bread on pikes alongside the royal carriage.[55] Another scene portraying the king's speaking from his château balcony claims that 20,000 National Guardsmen and 12,000 armed men and women complained about the lack of bread and implored the king to move to the capital. The engraver clearly places the Dames closest to the balcony, in an area falsely set apart from the general crowd and National Guardsmen. Using proximity to the king, the image depicts a visual hierarchy of political influence in which the Dames mediate the space between their fellow citizens and the

---

[53] BnF Lb39 2411, *Les héroines de Paris, ou l'entière liberté de la France par les femmes, police qu'elles doivent exercer de leur propre autorité*, (Paris: Knapen) "les femmes du peuple cachent un grand caractère qui se montre au besoin," "un éducation négligée & grossière."

[54] Carnavalet Histoire PC 010, Chemise D, G 26247, "La Journée Mémorable de Versailles, Le lundi 5 Octobre 1789, un Peuple immense d'hommes et de femmes, armé de Piques, d'épées, de fusils &c. sorti de Paris se porta à Versailles dans l'après diné, c'est du Pain qu'il nous faut et non des Loix, ont-ils dit à l'Assemblée Nationale. Sa Majesté revint à toute bride de la chasse, ou il étoit dès le matin, plusieurs Gardes du Roi ont été décollés, et 2 de leurs têtes apportées à Paris en triomphe, par ce même Peuple ami de la liberté."

[55] Johann Anton Otto, *Der Köenig köemt mit seiner Famille unter einer Bedeckung von mehr den dreißigtaud Menschen in Paris an den Oktober 1789*, (1815) reproduced in *La Révolution par la Gravure: Les Tableaux historiques de la Révolution française*, edited by Claudette Hould, Annie Jourdan, Rolf Reichardt et Stéphane Roy, (Vizille: Musée de la Révolution française, 2002), 131.

king and Lafayette on the balcony. The Dames become the physical and political nexus between the two sides of the political compact.[56]

Although the Dames drew from their ritual relationship with the king, they recast it in a revolutionary context. When the king at Versailles received a small group of Dames, *Les Révolutions de* Paris politically labeled them as a "deputation."[57] One of the speakers, Louison Chabry knelt before the king and implored him for bread. Louis embraced her and promised he would provide for Parisians.[58] The king gave each of the women 7 louis to show his goodwill and he explained it was the only immediate gift which he could offer them.[59] Since it was not a feast day, the New Year, or a royal celebration, the Dames technically had no traditional means of justifying their privileged audience. Yet, the assumption that the paternal king would and must protect citizens spurred the Dames to seek his help when the municipal government could not. When the Dames implored the National Assembly to act, the Dames did not merely address the deputies, they integrated themselves in the benches among them. A few brazenly approached the president's desk, others supplicated deputies on their knees, and many spoke freely and punctuated their demands with open gestures.[60] The Dames freely approached the Assembly as they traditionally did the king. They made parallel paternal demands on their legislators.

In addition, the Dames purveyed information to Parisians by sending a contingent back to the city to relay the king's promises. By doing so, they completed the representative cycle by

---

[56] BNF Estampes M 99442, "Vue du Château de Versailles à l'époque du 5 8bre 1789: Le Roi la Reine et Msr le Dauphin présentant au Balcon donnant sur la Cour des Miracles, La Garde Nationale de Paris et de Versailles au nombre de plus de 20,000 sans y comprendre plus de 12,000 âmes Hommes et Femmes armés de différentes armes, qui adressoient au Roi des plaintes sur le manque de pain dans la capitale, et priant le Roi de venir faire son séjour à Paris."
[57] *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XIII, du 3 au 10 octobre 1789.
[58] *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992),10; Jules Michelet, *Les Femmes de la Révolution*, (1855; Project Gutenburg, 2006), chapter V. Etext # 18738. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18738/; Carnavalet Histoire PC 007, Chemise C, G 27974, "Le Roi Réçoit les Dames de la Halle"; BnF Estampes M 99448: "Le Roi reçoit les Femmes de la Halle."
[59] Henri Leclercq, *Les journées d'octobre et de la fin de l'année 1789* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ane, 1924), 86.
[60] BnF Estampes M 99404, "4e évenément du 5 8bre 1789: Les Femmes Parisiennes siégant à l'Assemblée Nationale parmi les deputés."

delivering communal concerns to the king and then reporting his response to fellow citizens. In his *Revolutions de Paris* following the October Days, Prudhomme described how "the women of the people, principally the market women of les Halles and the workers of the faubourg S. Antoine charge themselves with the safety of the fatherland." Because of officials' "inaptitude in provisioning projects, and their indifference towards public dangers," Prudhomme legitimized the Dames' grievances as "just." He welded their subsistence concerns with the well-being of the nation. Thus, he validated the Dames' movement as civic activism in which the Dames logically followed the hierarchy of government responsibility. Prudhomme reported that the Dames understood the broad political significance of their actions. He reported that some royal Body Guards told the Dames the capital would be supplied if the king had full power, in other words no veto in the Constitution. Yet the Dames refused to trade bread for the "price of liberty." Prudhomme endowed the Dames with representative power, calling them "our French (women)" as he described how they led the movement to Versailles.[61]

In visual images, artists used the Dames as recognizable figureheads of the popular classes. In the voluminous depictions of the October Days, the Dames held symbolic cultural, political, and social meaning. Despite the presence of other Parisian or military actors, artists privileged the Dames in their drawings as the linguistic and political marker, representing the people's right to act. For example, the illustrations "Les Dames de la Halle partant pour aller chercher le Roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789," ("The Dames de la Halle leave in order to go find the King at Versailles on October 5 1789)[62] "Évènement du 5 octobre 1789: Les Dames de

[61] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XIII, 3 au 10 octobre 1789, 9. "les femmes du peuple, principalement les marchandes des halles et les ouvriers du fauxbourg S. Antoine se chargent du salut de la patrie," "inaptitude aux travaux de l'approvisionnement, et leur indifférence sur les dangers publics," "justes," "prix de la liberté," "nos françoises"

[62] BnF Estampes P21381 Berthault, "Les Dames de la Halle Partant Pour Aller Chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789"

la Halle et autres femmes partant de Paris pour Versailles (The Event of October 5 1789: The Dames de la Halle and other women leave Paris for Versailles),"[63] and "Départ des Femmes de la Halle pour Versailles" (Depart of Femmes de la Halle for Versailles)[64] employ the "Dames de la Halle" as a catch-all category to describe scenes which included the market women among hoards of other people. Artists used the Dames to textually and visually signal the sovereign people.

Parisians found "le peuple" at the heart of the march to Versailles, and the Dames, in turn, at the heart of "le peuple." Reflecting on the October Days, *Les Révolutions de Paris dédiées à la Nation* waxed poetically, "It was the people, of all ages, of all sexes, of all states, of all customs, but animated with one singular and same sentiment, very profound, very determined, very general, who went solemnly to Versailles..."[65] One of the most widely reproduced and surviving images of the October Days, "Événement du 5 octobre 1789: Les Dames de la Halle et autres femmes partant de Paris pour Versailles" ("Departure of the Dames de la Halle to go to find the King at Versailles"), depicts the marching masses leaving Paris. The engraver spotlights the Dames among the sweeping panoply of people. The merchants clearly play the leading role. The Dames are the only ones gesturing the way and moving forward. Three Dames have mounted a carriage to rally the riders and bystanders; the one on the roof raises a pike in determination. Another points forward with a child at her side. In the background, we see a man waving his hat and another applauding their actions. The women have arranged themselves into hodgepodge ranks but most have pikes like a rag tag army. They are also

---

[63] BnF Estampes M 99431, "Événement du 5 octobre 1789: Les Dames de la Halle et autres femmes partant de Paris pour Versailles"

[64] Carnavalet Histoire PC 007, Chemise C, G 27958, "Départ des Femmes de la Halle Pour Versailles"; Carnavalet Histoire PC 007, Chemise C, G 26246, "Pariser Poisarden sonst Fisch Weiber"

[65] *Révolutions de Paris,* n° 81, 22 au 29 janvier 1791, "Ce fut le peuple, de tous les âges, de tous les sexes, de tous les états, sous tous les costumes, mais animé d'un seul et même sentiment, bien profond, bien déterminé, bien généreux, qui alla solennellement à Versailles..."

dragging a canon while the National Guard, at the rear of the scene, stands at attention without intervening. The National Guard's response mirrored the secondary role they played "in order to support the women."[66] The direction of Guards' gaze demonstrates that their sympathies lie with the women. The artist drew two women who are easily identifiable as Dames des Halles in the center foreground: one stands in the characteristic pose with her hand on her hip and another carries her wooden basket on her back. The Dames serve as the motor for the march forward, act as leaders rallying fellow Parisians, and serve as popular figureheads for all the citizens depicted.[67] The visual imagery matched their political role.

Within the marketplace, the Dames insisted that the government's protective duties included maintaining supplies, ensuring reasonable prices, and keeping order. The merchants especially contested these responsibilities during the food shortages and price problems of 1793-1794. In February 1794, the Dames complained that hoarders immediately swept up foodstuffs as they entered the city. The Dames objected that the government's anti-hoarding decrees had no effect: "We know the underlying intentions of the Commune's decrees, but they [the decrees] are without execution; look at the eggs and the butter last sent by the commune of Merville: one sole section benefitted from them."[68] The police noted the Dames grew increasingly angry towards the government when they could not procure any goods to sell. The merchants scoffed, "Presently, the best of all that exists is [reserved] for the municipal administrations and for the revolutionary committees, voilà Liberty and Equality!" One Dame in particular resolved, "Fuck! It is necessary to write to our correspondents [suppliers] to not send anything, since all is

---

[66] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, nº XIII, 3 au 10 octobre 1789, "pour soutenir les femmes."
[67] BnF Estampes P21381, Berthault, "Les Dames de la Halle Partant Pour Chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789"; BnF Estampes M 99412 5, "5, 8bre Départ des Dames de la Halle pour aller chercher le Roi à Versailles."
[68] AN W 112, Hanriot, 8 ventôse an II (26 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 348 "Nous connaissons là-dessus les arrêtés de la Commune, mais ils sont sans exécution; témoin les oeufs et le beurre envoyés dernièrement par la commune de Merville: une seule section en a profité."

hoarded by people on the spot, and the miserable get nothing."[69] As the government allowed regulations to lapse in the marketplace, it undermined the Dames' livelihood. The Dames lamented that the state did not uphold its duties in the political contract.

If the state broke its half of the political contract in the marketplace, the Dames felt justified pursing exceptional or illegal measures. Among their stalls in September 1793, the Dames complained that soaring food prices could not last. A worried police informant heard the Dames resolve that "it would be necessary to provision themselves by force at the [lower] prices of 1789, and that [the Dames] would set the price, since the Convention has no regard for their misery."[70] By January 1794, the Dames took direct action. Around a dozen of them claimed to have a list of hoarding wholesalers and brokers. They hoped to drive down prices by pillaging and burning the hoarders' stores. The Commune and the Department dispatched police to prevent the popular justice.[71] Nonetheless, the Dames pillaged grocers and booed police patrols two months later in in March 1794.[72]

Similarly, the Dames violated parts of the Maximum, the price limits on foodstuffs, that they found unfair and scolded officials who tried to enforce it.[73] When the deputies originally passed the General Maximum in September 1793, they did not create distinct price caps for wholesale and retail sale. Therefore, if the Dames bought supplies in wholesale at the Maximum,

---

[69]AN W 191, Bacon, 27 pluviôse an II (15 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, 115. "A présent, tout ce qu'il y a de meilleur est pour les municipaux et les comités révolutionnaires, et voilà la Liberté et l'Égalité!" "Foutre! il faut écrire à nos correspondants de ne rien envoyer, puisque tout est accaparé par les gens en place, et que le malheureux n'a rien."

[70] AN F^7 3688^3 Rapport de l'observateur Roubaud, 21 septembre 1793, "il faillait s'approvisionner de force au prix de 89, et qu'elles feraient un tarif, puisque la Convention n'avait aucun égard à leur misère."

[71]AdPP AA 72 #2391, 20 janvier 1792, procés-verbaux des commissaires de police (Beaubourg).

[72] AN W 112, Rolin, 29 ventôse an II (19 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 422.

[73] AN F^7 3688^3, Le Harivel, 19 nivôse an II (8 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 251.

they could not raise the price to resell the goods in retail, which left them with zero profit.[74] After the Convention disregarded the Dames' pleas for different maximums for wholesale and retail, the Dames sought profit other ways. Some Dames illegally peddled their foodstuffs to customers' homes. Many Dames ignored the disadvantageous order of sale that allowed consumers to buy supplies before them.[75] The Dames condemned officials by deeming the policy "abuse" like those of the "Old Regime."[76] The sense of state-sponsored injustice augmented the women's "recalcitrant spirit." According to police reporter Grivel, they refused to "obey the law, nor to submit themselves to the decree of the municipal government."[77]

When the government neglected to ensure market supplies, it especially botched its paternal duty to protect the poor. In a dire moment in 1795, the Dames brought the Civil Commissioner with them to the agence des subsistances "to demand bread or death."[78] According to the Dames, the state's responsibility appeared rudimentary and clear-cut. The Dames pressured officials by insulting those who failed to uphold order and regulations. In 1794, fruit merchants affronted three peace-keepers whose neglect allowed one merchant to sell more butter than allowed.[79] And when insults did not work, they tried intimidation. In May 1795, "hunger and misery" led to "despair," according to the *Messager du soir.* Women of the popular classes planned to march to the Convention, inform their representatives of their suffering, and

---

[74] See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for a very detailed discussion of the Maximum and food politics from the Spring of 1793 to the Summer of 1794.
[75] Grivel, Extrait d'un rapport publié par Dauban, 15 ventôse an II (March 5, 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum (sept 1793-mars 1794)*, Volume 1[Collected and reprinted from *Bulletin trimestriel de la Commission de recherche et de publication des documents relatifs à la vie économique de la Révolution* , v.2 (1907). p.67-231], 160-162, OR 201.
[76] AN W 112, Charmont, 14 ventôse an II (le 4 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 65 "abus" like those of the "ancien régime."
[77] Grivel, 15 ventôse an II (le 5 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 160-162, 201, "esprit récalcitrant," "obéir à la loi, ni se soumettre à l'arrêté du corps municipal."
[78] AdP D.4Z 5, Paris au jour le jour journal de la police municipale (suite), Dossier : Germinal à Prairial an 3, 20 Germinal observatoire, p.362. "demander du pain ou la mort."
[79] AN W 112, Bacon, 4 ventôse an II (22 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 267.

bar them from leaving the Convention hall until they produced bread. The Dames awaited the sign to advance to Tuileries and march with the "women of the faubourgs" in front of the men.[80] In effect, the women strove to force the deputies to fulfill their contractual obligation by keeping them in their place of political work. The discontent Parisians expected the state to tackle food problems as a central duty. Several citizens illustrated the direct relationship by writing "Bread and the Constitution de 1793" on their hats.[81]

Testing the Contract: Economic Challenges and Political Loyalties

In order to challenge the shortcomings of subsistence legislation, the Dames shamed revolutionary officials by contrasting them with successful Old Regime precursors. In addition, the Dames' illegal commercial maneuvers flew in the face of revolutionary legislation. Yet, the Dames did not consider themselves counter-revolutionaries. Rather, they expressed frustration over what they perceived as the state breaking obligations to them as citizens. As Parisian workers succinctly put it in November 1795, "We want the Republic... but with it we want bread."[82] Historian Dominique Godineau astutely observes that the Dames' abrasive complaints "were manifestations of acute feeling against the present situation [especially food crises] rather than real counter-revolutionary sentiment."[83] The Dames were angry precisely because they believed in the contract of reciprocal duties between citizens and the state. Their disgust stemmed from their very commitment to the foundational responsibilities of the body politic. As

---

[80] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, 20 mai 1795, 735. The issue of *Messager du soir* from 2 prairial discusses about 1 prairial, "la faim et la misère," "désespoir," "femmes des faubourgs."

[81] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, 21 mai 1795, 736. "Du pain et la Constitution de 1793."

[82] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume III, 13 novembre 1795, 381. "Nous voulons la République... mais avec elle nous voulons du pain."

[83] Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, Katherine Streip trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); 254. Godineau also quotes K. D. Tönesson as noting that "we 'must not exaggerate the importance of these [the Dames'] royalist remarks, which rather than expressing true counterrevolutionary sentiments often resulted from a need to find particularly bold sentiments in order to express hatred of the existing regime." *The Women of Paris*, 325-326.

poor consumers and as retailers of foodstuff, the Dames' highest political stakes concerned food. After the fall of the king, the Dames used pliable monarchical labels to critique officials rather than assert a truly royalist ideology.[84] For example, some Dames insulted conservative deputies by calling them "aristocrats" in Brumaire an V (October and November 1796).[85] Yet, in light of the political uncertainty and food problems in March 1794, they also shouted "My faith! it would be better to have a king."[86] Alluding to the counter-revolution as a point of contrast was the ultimate blow to the government. However, political insults and sustained ideological loyalties were not the same.

The police acknowledged the pliable nature of the Dames' insults. Citoyen Dutard, a police observer, noted that "deprivation" steered the retailers' "opinion," and that "they would cry in unison long live the K[ing]" if the guillotine had not loomed large.[87] Likewise, another police reporter acknowledged that royalist remarks attacked the situation instead of indicating true ideological lines. Among clamors against high food prices in February 1793, he wrote to his superiors, "It is impossible that the unhappy can wait much more time, in spite of their patriotism, they also judge the Convention very severely, reproaching it with bitterness for consuming precious time disputing and maligning one another, and [they] demand that the hoarders be repressed and that it [the Convention] lowers the price of foodstuffs of primary necessity."[88] An exasperated Dame proved his point in March 1794. She could not procure any

---

[84] To call someone an aristocrat was to call them an anti-citizen since the two lay at opposite discursive poles. William Sewell has paraphrased Furet's argument to explain that the central discursive "network" pitted the "pure people's will" against the omnipresent " aristocratic plot.'" William H. Sewell, Jr. *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What is the Third Estate?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 26.
[85] BnF Lc2 828, nº212, *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés*, 3 Brumaire an 5, p. 4.
[86] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n°192, du 9 au 16 mars 1793. "Ma foi! il vaut mieux avoir un roi."
[87] AN F^{1c} III Seine 27, Citoyen Dutard, Commissaire Observateur local Pour le Département de Paris, 2 mai 1793, (Dutard sends his reports to the Commission of the Interior). "la privation," "opinion," "elles crieroient à l'unisson vive le R[oi]."
[88] AN AF^{IV} 1470, 26 & 28 février 1793, "Extrait des rapports et déclarations reçus au Bureau de surveillance de la Police, où se trouvent consignés les fait suivants." "il est impossible que le malheureux puisse attendre plus

fruit to sell. She complained in the marketplace, "In spite of the police and the surveillance of the commissioners, it is still necessary to fight with all one's strength, it's that which made me abandon the fatherland."[89] The Dame forfeited her loyalty to the nation because the state did not deliver on its subsistence responsibilities. The state broke the reciprocal contract with its citizen.

Even during the disastrous Maximum problems in the winter of 1793-1794 which forced some retailers out of business, the Dames showered the revolutionary armies with praise. Their utter hatred of the General Maximum did not reverse their loyalty to the revolutionary cause. Upon hearing news of the victory at Toulon, the women in les Halles "embraced each other while dancing there."[90] They even sang songs praising the Convention.[91] Although the Dames' discontent with the Maximum and other revolutionary policies did not directly translate into counter-revolutionary sentiment, they flung politically tinted insults without hestitating. The Dames' exasperation with officials demonstrates their belief in the contingent relationship between citizen and state. If one party failed, the other could take exceptional measures. The Dames' illegal maneuverings and disobedience fit within their ideological interpretation of the body politic.

Counter-revolutionaries tried to exploit marketplace discontent and turn Dames' large numbers against the government. In late February 1794, the Maximum problems had pushed food problems to the breaking point. Police observer Rolin recorded that, in their desperation, the

---

longtemps, malgré son patriotisme, aussi juge-t-il très sévèrement la Convention, lui reprochant avec amertume de consumer un temps précieux à se disputer et se calomnier, et demande que les accapareurs soient réprimés et qu'elle fasse diminuer le taux des denrées de première nécessité."

[89] AN W 112, Hanriot, 12 ventôse an II (2 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 32. "Malgré la police et la surveillance des commissaires, il faut encore se battre à toutes forces, c'est ce qui m'a fait abandonner la patrie."

[90] AN F^7 3688^3, Breton, 6 nivôse an II (26 décembre 1793), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 11. "s'y embrassaient en dansant."

[91] AN F^7 3688^3, Mercier, 6 nivôse an II (26 décembre 1793), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II. "Les femmes de la Halle sont d'une gaîté charmante ; elles chantent les louanges de la Convention."

Dames already "permitted themselves some not civic [unpatriotic] remarks."[92] Some unidentified conspirators tried to profit from the ire. The plotters hatched a master scheme to deploy Dames in markets across the city. On 1 ventôse an II (February 19, 1792), subsistence observer Grivel reported that the Dames found anonymous pamphlets in their market places. The circular raged that "one should not suffer the cruel repression exercised by the Convention, that it was necessary to reestablish a single head of state and to get rid of the 700 tyrants who were reigning arbitrarily in his place, that, in order to put an end to the unhappiness which oppresses as a result, one exhorts the Dames de la Halle to rise up and to go, in the number of 12,000, to the National Assembly in order to uproot tyranny with the tyrants."[93] Dames in neighboring markets beyond the central Halles found similar letters in their stalls.[94] However, police observer Grivel was happy to testify that "far from producing the effect that one had desired of it, [the pamphlets] enraged the citoyennes who found them." Despite detesting the Maximum, the Dames brought the inflammatory sheets straight to the police.[95] The plotters had attempted to draw on the Dames' numbers, influence, occupational difficulties, and geographical reach to stage their coup.

---

[92] AN W 112, Rolin, 7 ventôse an II (25 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 338. "se permettent quelques propos inciviques."

[93] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 14 ventôse an II (4 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 198-199."on ne devait plus souffrir la cruelle oppression exercée par la Convention, qu'il fallait revenir à un chef unique et se défaire des 700 tyrans qui régnaient arbitrairement à sa place, que, pour mettre fin aux malheurs qui accablent en conséquence, on exhortait les dames de la Halle de se lever et d'aller, au nombre de 12,000, à l'Assemblé nationale pour extirper la tyrannie avec les tyrans."

[94] AN W 78 , n°4, "Déclarations des citoyens de la Section des Marchés, reçues par Etienne Masson, l'un des juges du Tribunal révolutionnaire, en présence de Fouquier-Tinville, accusateur public," 23 ventôse an II; See also AN W 112, Bacon, 14 ventôse an II (4 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 61; AN W 76, "Lettre anonyme, en date du 9 nivôse, à l'adresse des citoyennes marchandes à la Halle," le 12 ventôse an II. Cited in Alexandre Tuetey, *Répertoire Général des sources Manuscrits de L'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*, Tome 11, (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle (Association Ouvrière), 1890), #70 and #71.

[95] AN F^{11} 201, Grivel, 14 ventôse an II (4 mars 1794), as reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum*, Volume 1, 198-199. "loin de produire l'effet qu'on s'en promettait, ont indigné les citoyennes qui les ont trouvées."

The "citoyennes de la halle," as Grivel called them, proved their revolutionary sympathies and national loyalty despite horrific subsistence challenges.

Officials tried to read the Dames' factional sentiments but the police had a difficult time linking circumstantial discontent and ideological lines. However, beneath the factional coloring, the Dames consistently expected that the state address their pragmatic concerns, especially those that impeded them from conducting their useful work and earning a livelihood. In March 1795, a police observer worried that the royalist agents had rallied the Dames to "a counter-revolutionary spirit."[96] Yet, only four months later, the bureau central flipped the political spectrum and painted the Dames as dangerously radical. The Dames listened to orators lambast the Convention for permitting the financial collapse since 9 thermidor an II (July 27, 1794). The new money, the mandats, did not work as well as the assignats for daily marketplace trade. The Dames were angered because they needed hard cash to conduct their commerce, just like workers who needed small denominations to receive their wages. From this report, the Dames aligned far more with pro-Jacobin agendas than royalist ambitions.[97]

Individual Dames enacted their political convictions through their personal trade. In February 1794, one police spy expressed surprise when the Dames complained among each other that the deputies' cooks paid large sums for fish and butter. The observer was puzzled that the Dames would object to a situation from which they profited commercially. This led the spy to conclude of one merchant that "apparently she was thinking of Equality." He approached the Dames, addressed them as "bonnes citoyennes," and implored them to not speak ill of their well-

[96] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume III, 10 mars 1796, 43. "un esprit contre-révolutionnaire."
[97] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume II, 5 juillet 1796, rapport du bureau central du 18 messidor, 295.

intentioned deputies.[98] As indigent retailers, the Dames' striking response signaled their investment in revolutionary notions of equality.

Indigent and Sovereign Citizens

The Dames recognized that their political legitimacy as mouthpieces of the indigent population rested upon their merit as useful, working citizens. If the populace viewed the Dames as passive recipients of charity, it would undermine their influence. Although many of the Dames des Halles were indigent, the revolutionary officials did not assume that the spiritual worthiness of the poor granted them a priori exceptions.[99] Rather, officials decided if the Dames deserved special consideration through their occupational productivity. For example, the Commission de Bienfaisance de la Paroisse Saint-Eustache provided the means for 400 poor women to learn sewing-related skills. The Commission defended the work-driven arrangement as a "precious establishment for the poor women of la Halle." Since the Commission used the phrase "women of the Halle" which often acted as a synonym for "Dames des Halles," it is highly likely that many were retail merchants. Although the welfare officials noted that 200 of the women directly received food, officials focused on giving the women an occupational advantage rather than parading them as the recipients of state charity.[100] In February 1794, the Dames petitioned the National Convention to demand that the reformed Maximum guarantee "a profit for the poor

[98] AN W 191, Perrière, 29 pluviôse an II (17 février 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 175. "c'est apparemment elle pensait à l'Égalité."
[99] See Chapter 2 of this work for more details on indigent retailers and citizenship.
[100] AN F^{17} 1692, in Procès-verbal du Comité d'instruction publique de l'Assemblé législative, 8 avril 1792, p. 178. "Lettre de la Commission de bienfaisance de la paroisse de Saint-Eustache au Comité d'instruction publique, et observations présentées au même Comité par le comité de la section des Postes, sur le sort des Filles-de-Sainte-Agnès, qui sont chargées d'apprendre la couture, la broderie, la tapisserie et autres métiers aux filles pauvres de la paroisse de Saint-Eustache, se trouvant hors d'état de payer un apprentissage, au nombre de plus de 400, dont 200 reçoivent la nourriture, établissement précieux pour les pauvres femmes de la Halle." Cited in Alexandre Tuetey, *Répertoire Général des sources Manuscrits de L'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*, Tome 6, (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle (Association Ouvrière), 1890), #1681. "femmes de la Halle."

women, who have no other resources to live than by the commerce of vegetables."[101] As they did during the Old Regime, the Dames understood that the state had a paternal duty to ameliorate conditions for indigent citizens. However, the Dames justified their requests by framing the state's reforms by their power to enable work. Demanding assistance from the state while retaining legitimacy as useful citizens was a difficult juggling act.

The Dames fought to protect their image from those who accused them of passively thriving on charity.[102] The stigma would undermine their membership in the body politic as productive workers. In 1790, Paris witnessed a number of incidents in which women, who claimed to be Dames des Halles, flattered wealthy individuals with bouquets and compliments and then asked for money. To defend their "honor," the Dames published a track against these imposters who manipulated people for alms. *La Chronique de Paris* complained that the attitudes of the Old Regime had inspired this solicitation. The journal contended that, out of fear of unpopularity, the Old Regime had treated "the female merchants of fish and the coal merchants, as representatives of the people."[103] But revolutionary society had recalibrated poor citizens' societal value based upon the work they contributed to society.[104] The journal concluded, "Today the Dames des Halles & the Dames du palais [probably Palais Royal], the male caterers and the female caterers, the courtisan & the courtisanes, &c. &c. are equal & all citizens. *Each one must live from his/her work*, & the municipality must treat like beggars all those who do not at all

[101] *AP* 1: LXXXV, 26 fevrier 1794, 510. "un bénéfice pour les femmes pauvres, qui n'ont d'autre ressource pour vivre que le commerce des légumes."
[102] Rene Marion notes that when rents began to be collected on the Dames' market spaces in the seventeenth century "A language of economy, not charity, raised the possibility that the privileges of les Halles market women could be reconceptualized along the lines of their ability to conduct commerce or their role in feeding the people of Paris" Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins, 1994), 69, quote on 72.
[103] *La Chronique de Paris*, 18 octobre 1790, nº291, 1161. "on'appelloit alors *peuple* que la classe condamnée à l'ignorance & aux travaux les plus durs," "les marchandes de poisson & les charbonniers, comme les représentants du peuple." According to *La Chronique de Paris*, the tradition of Old Regime charity "one only called the people the class condemned to ignorance and to the most difficult work."
[104] In addition, spiritual considerations and organizations no longer determined special treatment for the poor.

merit a salary, asking for money which can only be regarded as alms." (my emphasis).[105] The imposters who masqueraded as the Dames to seek alms undermined the Dames' legitimacy as worthy indigent individuals under the revolutionary rubric of useful work.

The Dames integrated their appeal as indigent citizens within a wider class of sovereign citizens whose labor earned them the state's protection. In revolutionary society, the working citizens of the Third Estate became the politically legitimate "peuple." In ventôse an III, Parisian police called on the government to improve bread supplies for the poor. The commissaire cited the ideological value of the working classes in addition to practical concerns for public order: "Although it is of the greatest importance and the greatest justice to come to the help of the indigent class which cannot procure for itself things of the most indispensible necessity... it is of the greatest importance, above all, to reassure this laboring and useful class."[106] Observer Monic employed the vocabulary of labor to refer to the Dames' occupation as well as their revolutionary activities. Without food supplies in January 1794, the Dames had little work. Monic reported that many Dames attended the revolutionary tribunal everyday since "these citoyennes do not know where to turn their industry." The Dames channeled the occupational labor they usually performed in the marketplace into attending the tribunals. For Monic, the *ideological* gap between occupational and political work was minute even if the practical divide was evident.[107]

---

[105] *La Chronique de Paris*, le 18 octobre 1790, nº291, 1162. "Aujourd'hui les dames de la halle & les dames du palais, les traiteurs & les traitans, les courtisans & les courtisanes, &c. &c. sont égaux & tous citoyens. *Chacun doit vivre de son travail*, & la municipalité doit traiter comme mendiants tous ceux qui n'ayant point mérité de salaire, demandent un argent qui ne peut être regardé que comme une aumône."

[106] AN AF/IV/ 1472, Commissaire Reports, Dossier: Frimaire an III: 24 ventôse an 3. "Cependant il est de la plus grande importance et de la plus grande justice de venir au secours de la classe indigente qui ne peut se procurer les choses de la plus indispensable nécessité... il est de la plus grande importance surtout de tranquilliser cette classe laborieuse et utile."

[107] AN F^7 3688^3, Monic, 21 nivôse an II (10 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 291-292. "ces citoyennes ne savent de quel côté tourner leur industrie."

Performing Citizenship through Public Display

The Dames created and deployed their image through public display. They participated in embodied politics, whose form was conducive to the economically marginalized. In the sectional assembly of les Halles, the police recorded how the Dames reacted to tribunal evidence as if they were part of the assembly vote. The Dames made known their opinion from the galleries as they "applaud[ed] loudly" from the galleries.[108] Without the restraints of institutional decorum or procedure, the Dames could intervene whenever and wherever they would be tolerated. They even emerged from the crowd to offer a verse when the king toured the Gobelins tapestry works.[109] The Dames also freely feted military personnel. One lieutenant changed the route of his troops' march because he was afraid of the disruption the Dames would cause with the "laurel crowns and carafes of wine" that they had prepared.[110]

The Dames used dress to visually signal their civic intentions. The Dames decorated themselves with festive symbols of victory such as garlands of flowers to celebrate the king's 1789 move to Paris. They waved apple tree branches while crying "Long live the king! Long live the Nation!"[111] A drawing illustrating three Dames en route to fete the queen depicts their bonnets with the national tricolor and their dresses with red and blue sashes (the colors of Paris).[112] The regalia signaled their intent and revolutionary support to onlookers.

On the other hand, the Dames judged their fellow Parisians' political attitude by their attire. During the dire marketplace shortages of March 1794, some Dames insulted "the citizens

---

[108] AN W 76, "Declarations de citoyens de la section des Marchés," 21 au 22 nivose an II. "applaudie vivement"
[109] Louis Gottschalk and Margaret Maddox, *Lafayette in the French Revolution: From the October Days through the Federation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 305.
[110] General de Maleissye, *Mémoires d'un Officier aux Gardes Françaises (1789-1793)* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit,), 26. "couronnes de laurier et des cruches de vin"
[111] BnF Estampes P21409, "Vive le roi! Vive la Nation ! Lang leeve de Koning ! Lang leeve de natie!" "Vive le roi! Vive la Nation!"
[112] BnF Estampes P-23748, "Les dames de la Halle de Paris vont complimenter la Reine aux Tuileries," Gravure à l'eau forte, anonyme, colorée,

who dressed nicely." The Dames chastised the women for wearing expensive clothes, which had "the collar of an aristocrat," while they neglected their fellow citizens. The Dames insisted, "One who has two skirts should give them to one [a woman] who does not."[113] In addition, the Dames encouraged others to critique their neighbors' political sentiment based on their outward appearance. The police recorded how "two citoyennes de la Halle" lambasted three Parisians who layered sans-culotte attire over "Old Regime" clothing. The Dames summoned other citizens around the suspects and invited them to communally unveil the "aristocrats disguised as patriots."[114] Dress marked one's inclusion or exclusion from the body politic. The Dames used clothing to visually orient their political projects, include others in them, and critique others who resisted them.

Through publicized presentations, the Dames continually sanctioned their allies and extended their influence to them. The Dames acquired an air of revolutionary formality by mimicking deputations, mirroring legislative rhetoric, and channeling deputized positions. The Dames took this mimicry to a powerful extreme in 1790. The Dames strikingly dispatched two merchants to Italy to cajole the king's brother, Monsieur d'Artois, from Turin back to Paris! They wished for the Prince, his pregnant wife, and his court to move back to France to celebrate the Festival of the Federation, or the first anniversary of the Bastille's fall.[115] Cities along the 360-mile route feted the Dames' arrival and patriotic mission. Printed accounts describe the two market women as a "deputation." Mindful of their image, the Dames chose their most famous member, Reine d'Hongrie, to lead the group. A pamphlet explained that Reine was "nearly

---

[113] AN W 174, Breton, 5 germinal an II (25 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 108, "les citoyennes qui sont vêtues proprement," "l'encolure d'une aristocrate," "celui qui avait deux jupons devait en donner à celle qui n'avait pas."
[114] AN W 112, Rolin, 25 ventôse an II (15 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 335, "Deux citoyennes de la Halle," "aristocrates déguisés en patriotes."
[115] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 182, le 1 juillet 1790, Artois was the future King Charles X. The paper attests that the Dames also wanted Artois to relocate to Paris before his wife gave birth.

always chosen by the Dames des Halles, to represent them, & to serve as an interpreter for their famed corps" because of her "spirit, sallies, and eloquence."[116] Reine d'Hongrie also held distinctive revolutionary capital since the public associated her with the fall of the Bastille and the march to Versailles. In other words, Reine d'Hongrie best exemplified the Dames' own practices and channeled popular legitimacy during the Turin trip.

When Reine and her comrades passed through Dijon and arrived at Lyon, *Le Courrier de Lyon* marveled, "This heroine & her company honored some of our municipal officials with their kisses, they sang verses, & put in their compliments and discourses, this gaiety, this assortment of grandiose words which makes their reputation in Paris."[117] The Dames extended their familiar modes of public presentation to the commander of the Lyon National Guard and the General Municipal Assembly. The *Chronique de Paris* also noted that "they sang, embraced, and swore [oaths] according to their custom."[118]

The Lyonnais government was struck by the blend of official symbolism and popular initiative that enveloped the Dames' visit. Since Montmorin, LaFayette, and Mayor Bailly had signed the women's passports, the revolutionary government had implicitly endorsed the market women's bid as a popular mouthpiece.[119] In fact, a Lyonnais newspaper painted the Dames as the "[female] sovereigns of the Halle."[120] *L'Ami du Roi* concluded that "it appears that they are authorized" to go to Turin, but whether this legitimacy came from the nation, their fellow

---

[116] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rendre à Paris et détail intéressant de la réception qu'il a faitte [sic] aux dames de la halle pour le ramener à Paris* (Imprimerie de Calais & Dubois). The Festival of the Federation was an especially potent community celebration. The Dames worked alongside other citizen-volunteers to prepare the necessary structures on the Champs de Mars. Louis Gottschalk and Margaret Maddox, *Lafayette in the French Revolution: From the October Days through the Federation*, 541. "presque toujours choisie par les dames de la halle, pour les représenter, & servir d'interprête à leur corps illustre," "l'esprit, les saillies, l'éloquence."
[117] *Courrier de Lyon*, n°47, le 24 juin 1790, p. 392. "Cette héroine & sa compagne honorèrent quelques-uns de nos municipaux de leurs baisers, chantèrent des couplets, & mirent dans leurs compliments & discours, cette gaîté, cet assortiment de mots ronflants qui font leur réputation à Paris."
[118] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 182, 1 juillet 1790. "elles ont chanté, embrassé, juré suivant leur usage."
[119] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "July 2, 1790," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 8.
[120] *Courrier de Lyon*, le 24 juin 1790 n°47, p. 392. "souveraines de la halle"

merchants, or the revolutionary government was open to interpretation.[121] The commune of Lyon provided accommodations for the market women.[122]

The extensive welcome that the Lyonnais provided the Dames attested to the great reach of their political influence. For the most part, the Lyonnais lavishly celebrated the Dames and their goal to fetch Artois.[123] The city gave them the "places of honor" at a play performed just for them. The spectacle unfolded with a popular slant, complete with conversations between the parterre and the actors, and obscene songs against the clergy as a bonus. In the playhouse, the entire city participated in the Dames' visit. Such special attention bolstered their political power. Of the visit, one pamphlet reported: "They passed through the feasts, the balls, the spectacles, during their stay in this city; also they will never forget the Lyonnais, & they will not cease to sing their praises."[124] Reports of the Dames' actions doubled back along the Dames' path between Paris and the Provinces like political news. *La Chronique de Paris* reported on the Dames' stop in Lyon with great interest.[125] Earl Gower sent news to Britain of these "deputies of a different sort." He wrote that the Dames' quest in Lyon and Turin provided "much astonishment."[126]

Journalists colored the Dames' voyage in shades of officiality. The Dames used similar vocabulary to describe their goals. Whether satirical and begrudging or serious and celebratory, the labels testify to the Dames' sense of performative legality. Multiple reporters framed the

---

[121] *L'Ami du Roi*, n°XXXII, le 2 juillet 1790. "il paroit qu'elles sont autorisées"
[122] "Le continuateurs de Féron," *L'Ami du Roi*, n° XXXII, le 2 juillet 1790, p. 132, "places d'honneur," "étrangères," "Vive la nation, vive le roi, vive la reine, les princes et vivent aussi les aristocrates."
[123] The second day, the Dames nearly mistepped into the category of "foreigners" when they generically embraced aristocrats, crying "Long live the nation, long live the king, long live the queen, the princes and also long live the aristocrats." The Dames insisted that the aristocrats supplied bread to the populace. *L'Ami du Roi*, n° XXXII, le 2 juillet 1790.
[124] Départ de M. D'Artois pour se rendre à Paris, p. 3, "elles passèrent dans les festins, les bals, les spectacles, le séjour quelles firent dans cette ville; aussi n'oublieront-elles jamais les Lyonnais, & ne cesseront-elles de chanter leur louanges."
[125] *La Chronique de Paris*, 1 juillet 1790, n°182
[126] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "July 2, 1790," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 8.

Dames' trip to Turin as "a mission"[127] and spoke of "the envoys of the Dames de la Halle" and the "extraordinary diplomatic mission."[128] One pamphlet described how, "Our two ambassadors dressed in white, covered with ribbons of the nation, carried in their hands huge bouquets, traversing the streets of Turin surrounded by an innumerable crowd." When the two Dames entered Monsieur d'Artois's palace, they announced in their dialect that "I comes in the name of the good people o' Paris, to engage you to return to the middler o' the family."

The "ambassadors" encouraged him "imitate rather your brother, err dear king." They paused to explain, however, that "he wun't be err prince by heritage, I would has chosen him for his vartue." After all, Reine d'Hongrie reminded him, "I are all equal."[129] Before Monsieur d'Artois, the Dames testified that their legitimacy came from the people, qualified the king's authority as emanating from that people, and acted as brokers of relational sovereignty. Pamphlets noted that the Dames assured the prince of the "Parisians' satisfactory sentiments in his regard" and their visit "at least had to make known to him the dispositions of the people."[130] The Dames' public sanction renewed the civic compact between Monsieur d'Artois and his fellow citizens. Monsieur d'Artois applauded their discourse, embraced Reine d'Hongrie, held a magnificent meal in their honor, and dispatched them back to Paris. The Dames carried Artois's letter to the king, which promised his return.[131]

---

[127] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. D'Artois pour se rendre à Paris*, 2

[128] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. D'Artois pour se rendre à Paris*, 8, 5. "les envoyées des dames de la halle," "ambassade extraordinaire."

[129] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rendre à Paris*, 5-6. "Nos deux ambassadrices vêtues de blanc, & couvertes des rubans à la nation, portant dans leurs mains de gros bouquêts, traversèrent les rues de Turin entourées d'une foule innombrable," "que j'venons au nom du bon peuple d' Paris, v s' engager à revenir au milieur d' la famille," "ambassadrices," "imitez plutôt ton frère, not cher roi," "i n' s'rait pas not prince par héritage, je l'choisirions pour sa vertu," "je sommes tous égaux."

[130] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rendre à Paris*, 8. "satisfaction des sentimens des parisiens à son égard," "lui a du moins fait connoître les dispositions du peuple."

[131] BnF Lb39 9193, *Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rendre à Paris*, 7-8, 14. M. D'Artois had initially laughed when the Dames arrived. But his ultimate reaction shows that he understood the political gravity of the situation.

Like their voyage to Versailles to fetch the king, the Dames' trip to bring back his brother was splashed about in the press. The incident demonstrates how quickly journalists and propagandists seized upon the Dames' image, colored it according to their goals, and redeployed it to an audience wider than first-hand witnesses.[132] Thus, in order to protect their legitimacy and citizenship, the Dames had to join the game. They strove to protect what the public associated with their civic interventions.

Polishing Activism: The Dames Defend their Public Image

Since the Dames did not have a sustained institution to consistently represent them in public forums, the market women took pains to create, project, and protect their public image as other strewed it across about the print landscape. Their legitimacy and political authority precariously balanced atop their vulnerable reputation. In October 1790, the Dames distanced themselves from the imposters who stole their "nom" to forcibly collect alms. To protect their "honor," they officially denounced the fraud in print. According to *La Chronique de Paris*, the Dames "commissioned a formal disavowal of this shameful collection to be published and posted." The Dames hoped that the notice posted throughout the streets of Paris would combat the fraudulent schemers marring their reputation in the same streets.[133] The Dames took equal aim against journals that publicized false reports. In the wake of the October Days, multiple newspapers had incorrectly reported that Dames asked the queen to return all the effects of the Mont-de-Piété. This pawn-broking agency acted as a lending system for the poor. [134] The Dames,

[132] For a detailed discussion of how propagandists deployed the Dames in newspapers, pamphlets, and visual depictions, how these images impacted the Dames, and how the two sides were mutually constitutive, see Chapter 1.
[133] *La Chronique de Paris*, n°291, 18 octobre 1790. "ont fait publier & afficher un désaveu formel de cette quête honteuse."
[134] "Mont-de-Piété de Paris," in *Dictionnaire de la Révolution française: Institutions, Hommes & Faits*, edited by Elphège Boursin and Augustin Challamel (Paris: Librairie Furne, 1893); One such false report was in *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLVII, le 9 octobre 1789.

who had not pressured the queen, asserted that they "clamor against this false complaint."[135] Two weeks later, several Dames visited the comité de police and sought "legal punishment" of authors who wrote "injurious libels" and people who "make them public." Simultaneously, the Dames gave a "profession" of their "patriotic sentiments."[136] The Dames aggressively combatted bad publicity and defended their political influence.

In addition, the Dames carefully intervened in political forums to mold a favorable image via oral culture. They took advantage of acceptable forms of exposure to reinforce their good reputation. When they donated 130 livres to the National Assembly in June 1792, the Dames alluded to their reputation. They reiterated that "these vows are sincere; because we are known to love Liberty."[137]

Off the polished stage of the assembly halls, the Dames fought those who maligned them in the streets. Several Dames attacked a woman in the Saint-Germain market for calling them "aristocrats who sell [their food] so expensively."[138] The Dames even internally policed themselves to protect their group from reproach. In 1792, some Dames des Halles corrected other Dames who dishonorably manipulated loopholes in the monetary system. The opportunistic comrades had brought jewels from hard-pressed workers at an unfair rate. Other Dames forced

---

[135] BHVP 600056, Claude-François de Beaulieu, *Assemblée nationale. Séance et suite des Nouvelles de Versailles du 8 octobre 1789. Découverte d'un complot contre la liberté nationale. Réclamation des dames des halles et marchés contre des faussetés publiées contre elles* (Paris: Imprimerie de Seguin-Thiboust, 1789). "réclament contre cette affection."

[136] *La Chronique de Paris,* n° LV, le 17 octobre 1789. "la punition légale," "les libelles injurieux," "les rendre publics." "profession," "sentimens patriotiques."

[137] AN C 152, n°270; *AP*, t. XIV, p. 80, le 11 juin 1792 "ces voeux sont sincères; car nous sommes connues pour aimer la Liberté."

[138] AN F^7 3688^3, Bacon, 28 nivôse an II (17 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 3. "aristocrates qui vendaient si cher."

the offending Dames to repay workers the full sum for the discounted jewels.[139] The Dames' reputation was the basis of their livelihood and political legitimacy.

Legitimacy and Public Approval

If the Dames could keep their image from being soiled, they could lay claim to exceptional responsibilities as sovereign representatives. This included judging the very officials who were formally slated to serve the people. But such evaluations were complicated because the Dames exposed themselves to judgment in return. Thus, it was far easier to garner political influence by praising officials than by condemning them. When the Dames showered New Year's compliments on the National Assembly at the close of 1790, Madame Dupray of the Marché St. Paul described their praise as the "most sacred of our duties towards the august assembly of representatives of the French nation of which we have the honor of being part."[140] The representatives applauded them and bestowed the honors of the session upon them in return. [141] The deputies' reciprocal gestures sanctioned the Dames' informal representative power and completed the circle of public display.

Without approval for their sporadic interventions and sanctioning tactics, the Dames des Halles could not maintain their politic valiancy. Therefore, they welcomed reciprocal public praise that affirmed their legitimacy. In 1791, the Dames were "extremely flattered" by Abbé Royou's article in *L'Ami du Roi*. The Abbé glowingly described how the Dames visited the National Assembly to herald in the New Year. The Dames decided to bring Abbé Royou a

[139] Rapport du bureau central du 13 messidor an IV (July 1, 1796) reprinted in Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume III, 30 juin 1796, 286.
[140] AN C 48, n° 476 and *AP* I: XXI, 30 décembre 1790, 719; "plus sacré de nos devoirs envers l'auguste assemblée des représentants de la nation française dont nous avons l'honneur de faire partie."
[141] *La Chronique de Paris*, n°1, le 1 janvier 1791.

bouquet in gratitude. However, when the Dames arrived, he had left to take his patriotic oath. Now, the Dames affirmed his exemplary loyalty and patriotism in turn. [142]

The Dames' sanctioning strategy survived on a feedback loop of public display and affirmation.[143] In May of 1792, the Dames donated to the Legislative Assembly to support the war and assured the deputies of "notre patriotisme inaltérable." They promised to make the same offering twice a year for the duration of the war. By scheduling semi-annual donations, the Dames created a space for officials to publically confirm their patriotism twice a year.[144]

The Dames' tactics of building relationships through public sanction only worked if those on the receiving and observing end acknowledged their influence in turn. In 1797, the *Gazette nationale de France* noted how the Dames rooted their methods in Old Regime traditions, but relied upon favorable reception to guarantee their continued relevancy in a revolutionary context. With perfect symmetry, the journalist reported: "Today, the citoyennes de la Halle [were] eager to go compliment the republican hero [Napoleon] in the same spirit that the Dames des Halles of times past used to go compliment the good lords and bishops, the general turned them away honestly without giving them an audience." The Dames could only sustain political influence if others accepted their intermittent interventions within the new environment. In this instance, military darling Napoleon rebuffed their exceptional legitimacy.[145]

---

[142] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 3, le 2 janvier 1791. "extrêmement flattés"

[143] Historians like Daniel Gordon have argued that Habermas's public sphere (or public-private sphere as Dena Goodman would call it) found shelter in liberty of the press and of speech guaranteed by revolutionary legislation. Thus, there was always an arena to contest the state that the government could never control. The Dames do little to acknowledge a public sphere fractured between formal institutions and nonstate arenas and moved fluidly between the two. Gail Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime" *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Spring 1997), 230.

[144] AN C 149 n°252; *AP*, le 21 mai 1792, I: XLIII, 621.

[145] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume IV, 11 décembre 1797, 190. Quote from *Gazette nationale de France* on 22 frimaire an VI "Les citoyennes de la Halle d'aujourd'hui s'étant empressées d'aller complimenter le héro républicain [Napoleon] dans le même esprit que les dames de la Halle d'autrefois allaient complimenter les bon sires et les monsignors, le général les a fait éconduire honnêtement sans leur donner audience."

Appropriating the Dames as a Political Tool

Officials, the police, and pamphleteers tried to steer the Dames' activism to their advantage. They called on the Dames to lead popular movements. Parisians accepted the Dames as especially powerful actors in subsistence crises. During the sugar crisis of January 1792, journalist Condorcet appealed to Parisians to give up sugar. He reasoned, "Let the Dames swear it [to give up sugar] with enthusiasm, & let all of France imitate them." According to Condorcet, such a move would foil aristocrats who intended to cause chaos through soaring prices.[146] On 23 ventôse an II, the Commandant général of the armed forces encouraged the Dames to partner with local troops. He called on the group to protect the subsistence trade. He wrote to the city gatekeepers: "I like to believe that the virtuous republicans [the Dames] will be the first to establish tranquility. The [female] merchants of fish are beginning to do the policing themselves."[147]

Some revolutionaries spurred citizens to emulate the Dames. The market women could be a call to action in absentia. In March 1793, a police observer watched a Jacobin rally citizens. From a terrace, the speaker demanded that "the apathy of Jacobins be replaced by the energy of the women of 5 and 6 October 1789." He used the Dames to energize the listeners and galvanize their patriotic determination.[148] In October 1791, the National Assembly also singled out the Dames' patriotic fervor. In front of the assembly hall, the President told the Dames that

> When the nation was in irons, you were able to conserve a happy independence and one saw you often in their palaces [assembly halls] making the deputies hear the praise of Liberty. During the Revolution, you encapsulated the greatest energy accompanying your

[146] *La Chronique de Paris,* n° 26, le 26 janvier 1792, "Aux Parisiens & Parisiennes." "que les dames de la halle le jurent [oath to give up sugar] avec enthousiasme, & que la France entière les imite."
[147] AN BB^3 76, 23 ventôse an II, "Extrait de l'ordre du jour de la force armée de Paris." "J'aime à croire que les vertueuses républicaines seront les premières à établir la tranquillité. Les marchandes de poissons commencent à faire la police elles-mêmes."
[148] AN AF^{IV} 1470, "Feuille des Rapports et Déclarations faits au Bureau de surveillance de la Police, le 16 mars l'an 2 de la Républicque (sic)"16 mars 1793. "l'apathie des Jacobins soit remplacée par l'énergie des femmes des 5 et 6 octobre 1789."

> devotion to accelerating progress, accompanying your struggle against enemies [which] will continue to merit the eternal goodwill of your fellow citizens for your unique virtues.

The president cited "the example of a sublime passion which has animated your soul up until this very day." He acknowledged the Dames' exceptional actions, encouraged their patriotic initiative, and indebted their "concitoyens" to their "example."[149]

Political groups recognized that the Dames could legitimize their actions. In their official revolutionary history, the municipal government deemed the Dames a "class of *citoyennes* who from all time, exercised on the people a great influence, [who] also put itself at the head of the revolution."[150] To capitalize on that influence, others did not hesitate to put them at the head of commemorations. In February 1790, the Parisian National Guards held a ceremony to renew their patriotic oaths. The Dames des Halles led the official procession of battalions from the National Assembly to Notre Dame for the ceremony. While other civilians lined the street as spectators, the Dames marched ahead of the troops with flowers and tricolor ribbons.[151] A few months later at a private celebration, the Club of '89 eagerly welcomed the Dames and their political clout. After gaining admission to the banquet hall, the Dames implored the members, "On this day which recalls to us one of the most beautiful eras of the French nation, permit some *bonnes citoyennes* to make known to you their homage and respect." The Dames praised the club members and National Assembly for writing "une constitution que nous bénirons tous les jours

---

[149] AN C 139, n° 97; also *Procès-verbal de l'Assemblée nationale*, volume I, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1791) 172, 173 ; also, *AP* I: XXXIV, le 19 octobre 1791, 289. "Adresse des Dames de la Halle qui protestent de leur dévouement et de leur respect pour les décrets de l'Assemblée, avec réponse du président." "Lorsque la nation suit dans les fers, vous aviez su conserver une heureuse indépendance et on vous vit souvent dans leurs palais faire entendre aux députés les louanges de la Liberté. Pendant la révolution, vous avez enveloppé la plus grande énergie suit dans votre dévouement pour un accélérer les progrès, suit dans votre épreuve contre des ennemis continuera à mériter le bienveillance éternel de vos concitoyens pour vos virtus uniques," "l'exemple de un passion sublimes qui jusqu'à ce jour ont agité vos âme," "concitoyens," "exemple."

[150] M. Godard, *Exposé des Travaux de l'Assemblée-Générale des Représentans de la Commune de Paris, Depuis le 25 Juillet 1789, jusqu'au moi d'Octobre 1790, époque de l'organisation définitive de la Municipalité,* fait par ordre de l'Assemblée (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné, 1790), 82-83. "classe de citoyennes qui de tous temps, a exercé sur le peuple une grande influence, se mettoit aussi à la tête de la révolution."

[151] Louis Gottschalk and Margaret Maddox, *Lafayette in the French Revolution: From the October Days through the Federation,* 226.

de notre vie." Although the Dames spoke in a private room, the club members eagerly opened the window. The members excitedly relayed the Dames' compliments and "patriotic song" to the crowd outside the windows. The deputies flaunted the Dames' praises as popular approval and made it public to win more support. *La Chronique de Paris* further publicized the symbolic act by transcribing the visit word for word.[152]

Political opponents accused one another of coopting the Dames as a political tool to manipulate popular legitimacy. The *Révolutions de Paris* acknowledged the Dames' ritual power and reprimanded the Club of '89 for extending this "strategy." The editor wrote, "Old minister, old police wanted to make it appear that the public opinion favored one thing, they had women ready to play the role of dames de la halle.... The Club of 1789 enjoyed the same honors, one used the same ruse."[153] The newspaper called instead for open and frugal clubs where all revolutionnairies could meet in public. In a similar way, the Jacobins' rivals accused them of using the Dames as a theatrical prop. The opponent condemned the Jacobins for artificially staging politics: "What deliberation had been truly free? Did not one know who should speak, who would be applauded, who would be booed, who would be presented to the poissardes in order to receive bouquets, or delivered to the va-nu-pieds [rebels from the seventeenth century] and barkers of conspiracy in order to be menaced by the lantern?"[154] Coopting the Dames could be a useful political technique, but it could also bring charges of manipulation. Whether the

---

[152] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 172, le 21 juin 1790, "Dans ce jour qui nous rappelle une des plus belles époques de la nation française, permettez a de bonnes citoyennes de vous faire agréer & leurs hommages & leurs respects." "une constitution que nous bénirons tous les jours de notre vie," "chanson patriotique"

[153] *Les Révolutions de Paris*, Volume 6, n° 53, du 10 au 17 juillet 1790, "Fédération du 14 juillet." "stratagème," "ancien ministère, l'ancienne police vouloient faire, paroître que l'opinion publique se déclaroit pour quelque chose, ils avoient des femmes prêtes à jouer le rôle de dames de la halle.... Le club de 1789 a joui des mêmes honneurs, on a usé de la même ruse."

[154] Aulard, *Société des Jacobins*, Volume II, January 1791, 53-55. From a reported conversation by M. Hervé "Quelle délibération a été vraiment libre? Ne savait-on pas qui devait parler, qui serait applaudi, qui serait hué, qui serait présenté aux poissardes pour recevoir des bouquets, ou livré aux va-nu-pieds et aux aboyeurs de conspirations pour être menacé de la lanterne?"

revolutionaries embraced or condemned the Dames' interventions, both positions acknowledged the Dames' striking influence.

The Dames' political influence did not expire along with the king. The revolutionaries politically uncoupled the two. In 1793, only eight months after the revolutionaries executed the king, the National Convention harnessed the Dames' popular legitimacy during a 20-hour festival. It celebrated the first anniversary of the monarch's fall on August 10, 1792. Citizens and armed forces from across the French departments gathered in Paris and marched between four parade stations that narrated the Revolution.[155] The procession included an October Days stop that honored "the heroines" who marched to Versailles. At the foot of an arch depicting the events, including the heads of the two royal guards on pikes, the Dames sat atop canons. The president of the National Convention, Hérault de Séchelles, gave a speech to the citizen spectators.[156] He told Parisians and his fellow deputies that "these bronzes [canons], these mouths of fire that made the ear of the king hear thunder and augured the change of all destinies, rolled under delicate hands."[157] Combined with the arch's inscription that "they have chased the tyrant before them like a vile prey," Séchelles's account depicted the Dames' "courage" during the October Days as an anti-monarchical military offensive rather than a quest for bread.[158] In light of the king's recent execution, the revolutionaries deemphasized the Dames' original bread concern and located their virtue in how they militantly protected the nation. Moreover, the stop alluded to the two royal Body Guards who died. The revolutionaries used the Body Guards as surrogates of violence to cautiously commemorate beheading the king himself. After the speech,

---

[155] Marie-Louise Biver, *Fêtes révolutionnaires à Paris* (Paris: P.U.F., 1979), 185. See also Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 155.
[156] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger. Correspondance du bailli de Virieu, ministre plénipoteniaire de Parme (1788-1793)*, edited by Emmanuel Henri Vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, le 12 août 1793, (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1903), 466.
[157] As quoted by Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, 140-141.
[158] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger.* le 12 août 1793, 466.

Séchelles embraced the women and completed the symbolically erased the king by bestowing "civic *crowns*" on the Dames.[159] Then as the ceremony planner Jacques-Louis David had instructed, "[the Dames] will receive from the hands of the President of the National Convention a laurel branch, then turning their canons [that they originally dragged to Versailles], they will follow the procession, and still with a proud attitude, they will reunite themselves with the sovereign."[160] The Dames' ritually-born status as representatives of the people did not die with the king at the guillotine. The Convention used the Dames to enact the contract between the sovereign people and the nation.

Civic Militancy and Protecting the Nation

Besides acknowledging that the Dames protected the people's interests, Parisians also characterized the Dames as physically defending the nation. However, violence and disorder made the Dames particularly susceptible to critique.[161] Favorable *and* critical images depict the Dames carrying arms. A telling image entitled "La terrible nuit du 5 au 6 octobre 1789" ("The terrible night of October 5 and 6 1789) illustrates "poissardes armed with sabers" who, along with brigands, break into the queen's bedroom.[162] In contrast, a more favorable medallion showed the Dames with an impressive artillery stash including two canons, guns, pikes, scythes,

---

[159] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger*, le 12 août 1793, 466. "couronne civique"

[160] BnF 8 Le38 344, Jacques Louis David, Convention nationale, "Rapport et décret sur la fête de la Réunion républicaine du 10 août, présentés au nom du Comité d'Instruction publique," le 11 juillet, 1793 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1793). The report decreed that "elles recevront des mains du président de la convention nationale une branche de laurier, puis faisant tourner leurs canons, elles suivront en ordre la marche, & toujours dans une attitude fière, elles se réuniront au souverain." The report was printed by order of the National Convention and sent to the Departments and the armies.

[161] For a discussion of violent and nonviolent protests early in the Revolution, see Micah Alpaugh, "The Politics of Escalation in French Revolutionary Protest: Political Demonstrations, Nonviolence and Violence in the Grandes journées of 1789," *French History* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 336-359.

[162] BnF Estampes P21428 "La terrible Nuit du 5 au 6 Octobre 1789." Gravure anonyme... "poissardes armées de sabres"

halberds, and tridents.[163] Artists and pamphleteers also described the Dames in militaristic terms. One artist called the Dames' journey their "Versailles expedition."[164] Others championed the Dames as "an army of Amazons," with all of their classical qualities.[165] Still others touted the women as "the French heroines"[166] or "the heroines Paris."[167] Another pamphleteer enthusiastically proclaimed that Parisian women had won "the entire liberty of France." He implored them to remain on active, yet restrained alert, urging them "to charge themselves with policing respectably."[168] Revolutionary writers and artists explicitly praised the Dames' martial virtues.[169] In a newspaper advertisement, an engraver announced his commemorative stamp that he described as depicting their "bravery" and which he "dedicated to the women."[170] The *Révolutions de Paris* vividly described how the "courageous women" assembled "instruments of death" for the march. After gathering arms, the market women coopted military leaders by rallying the Volunteers of the Bastille. These renowned men had led the prison attack three months earlier.[171]

Rather than principally imagining the Dames as protectors of their starving nuclear families, the martial framework denotes them as protectors of the nation. Historians Darline Gay

---

[163] BnF Estampes P 21385 "A Versailles! A Versailles: ou la Journée du 5 Octobre 1789."
[164] Carnavalet, Histoire PC 007, Chemise C G 27983, "Retour des Héroines Parisiennes après l'expédition de Versailles du 6 octobre 1789," "expédition de Versailles."
[165] BnF Estampes M 99429 Guyot, "Arrivée des Femmes à Versailles le 5 Octobre 1789" (Paris: Chez Graveur et Md d'Estampes Rue S. Jacques n°10)
"une armée d'Amazones,"
[166] Carnavalet Histoire PC 007, Chemise C, G 27978, "Epoque du 6 octobre 1789, l'après diné à Versailles." "les héroïnes Françaises"
[167] BnF Lb39 2411, *Les héroïnes de Paris, ou l'entière liberté de la France par les femmes, police qu'elles doivent exercer de leur propre autorité*
[168] BnF Lb39 2411, *Les héroïnes de Paris, ou l'entière liberté de la France par les femmes, police qu'elles doivent exercer de leur propre autorité*, "l'entière liberté de la France," "se charger d'une police respectable."
[169] BnF Estampes M 99468, "Vue de la Lanterne de la Place de Grève: Le courage des Héroïnes Française passant le 6 octobre devant l'Hôtel de Ville et faisant porter devant elles les têtes de deux Gardes du Corps qui avaient eut l'imprudence de faire feu sur elles a leurs arrivées à Versailles"
[170] BnF Estampes M 99433, Ph. Caresme, *Dédiée aux Femmes: Bravoure des Femmes Parisiennes à la Journée du 5 octobre 1789, Paris* (Paris: rue de la Lune, n°38, 1789); advertised in *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XXIV du 19 au 26 décembre 1789. "dédiée aux femmes," "bravoure."
[171] *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XIII, du 3 au 10 octobre 1789. "ces femmes courageuses," "instruments de mort"

Levy and Harriet Applewhite have observed that the show of force propelled "the transformation of subjects into a militant citizenry identifying itself as the sovereign nation."[172] In the context of the October Days, I have found only one account that evoked a woman's maternal identity. The rhetorical shift solicited sympathy and outrage over an injured "mother of six children."[173] The French needed to defend mothers who would, in turn, defend children. However, the vast majority of images, pamphlets, and newspaper reports depicted the Dames as defenders of the nation by using military parallels.[174] Mothers protect families but armies protect nations. Thus, the revolutionaries painted the Dames in military terms not only to describe potential violence but to metaphorically cast them as defenders of the nation.

The Dames' forceful potential set a precedent that echoed throughout the Revolution. In 1790, the king traveled to St. Cloud and the revolutionaries feared that he would not return to Paris. Even though one pamphleteer explicitly instructed the Dames "do not bring yourselves, however, to absolutely any violence,"[175] he used militaristic imagery and conjured images of the October Days to later spur the Dames to fetch the king from St. Cloud. He praised their heroism during the October days when "you who were armed with pikes, guns, and even canons; you who led yourselves to Versailles; you who braved all dangers, to save your King and your fatherland from the peril which menaced it!..."[176] He implored them, "Virtuous Parisian [women]! Would you have already forgotten this heroism which made you so famous

---

[172] Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Applewhite, "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris," in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 85.
[173] *Révolutions de Paris,* nº XIII, du 3 au 10 octobre 1789. "mère de six enfans."
[174] Dominique Godineau points out that the author of the late 1789 pamphlet *Requête des Dames à l'Assemblée nationale* even appealed to the women's " 'martial courage' during the insurrectionary events of the summer and fall of 1789 to support demands for absolutely equal rights and an equal share of power for women as legislators, magistrates, ecclesiastic officers, and military officers." Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, 85.
[175] BnF Lb39 9451, *Adresse aux dames parisiennes. Le voyage à St. Cloud. Paris ou Le Service du Bout de l'An, Pour faire suite au Voyage de Versailles* (Paris: Imprimerie de J. Legueum, 1790). "ne vous livrez cependant point à aucune violence."
[176] BnF Lb39 9451, *Adresse aux dames parisiennes. Le voyage à St. Cloud*, 3. "vous ont armées de piques, de fusils et même de canons; qui vous ont conduits à Versailles; qui vous ont fait braver tous les dangers, pour sauver votre Roi et votre patrie du péril qui les menaçoit!"

and so commendable in the eyes of all other powers, and of which history will pass from age to age."[177] "For a second time make shine the courage, the honor and the independent virtue of the Parisian Amazons! Leave, go, find your King!"[178]

A year later, the revolutionaries framed the Dames in militaristic terms again. In February 1791, Parisians feared that the king's aunts would flee France with good reason. Newspapers accused the aunts of frequenting counter-revolutionary priests and planning to escape in spite of the great alarm it would cause.[179] By fleeing Paris, the royal family would condemn the Revolution. In addition, rich émigrés took money and jewels with them, which the Parisians feared drained the metallic money supply. For this reason, the Dames went to the aunts' country house in Bellevue and implored the aunts to remain in Paris. However, the aunts took fright at the imposing group of market women assembled at their home. The aunts rushed to take shelter with their nephew the king.[180]

Since the National Assembly stalled in preventing the aunts from leaving, the Dames directly appealed to the king. By February 1791 some of the Dames des Halles had become members of the Société fraternelle, a Parisian political club. A delegation of Dames addressed the king on behalf of the club.[181] They warned Louis that he would be responsible if his aunts escaped, especially since some of the princes already left. No one would forget it. The Dames conflated the royal family with the national family. Showering Louis with love like a "good

---

[177] BnF Lb39 9451, *Adresse aux dames parisiennes. Le voyage à St. Cloud*, 4. "Vertueuse Parisiennes! Auriez-vous déjà oublié cet héroïsme qui vous rend si célèbres et si recommandables aux yeux de toutes les autres puissances, et dont l'histoire transmettra d'âge en âge."
[178] BnF Lb39 9451, *Adresse aux dames parisiennes. Le voyage à St. Cloud*, 7. "Faites pour la seconde fois briller le courage, l'honneur et l'indépendance de la vertu des Amazones Parisiennes! Partez, allez, trouvez votre Roi !"
[179] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 56, le 25 février 1791.
[180] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger*, le 14 février 1791, 235-236.
[181] BnF Lb40 1245 *Discours adressé au roi par les dames de la Halle, membres de la Société Fraternelle, dont, le 14 Février 1791, elles sont venues donner lecture au Conseil-Général de la Commune, qui en a ordonné l'impression à la distribution* (Paris: Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné & J. R. Lottin, 1791), 3.

father," they attested to citizens' "chagrin that from all sides your [royal] family abandons you." By keeping the aunts in France, the Dames hoped to protect the body politic. They offered to cloak the aunts with their own popularity and grant them political absolution. They told the king, "We will fete them, sire, as soon as they appear beside your cherished person, & our love for you will wash over them." However, if his aunts "abandoned" him, the Dames assured him, "We, sire, your people, *we will take the place of your family*."[182] To complete the circle of sovereign representation, the Dames went the Commune to officially register their address to the king. The municipal deputies resoundingly applauded the Dames' patriotic initiative and ordered their speech to be printed.[183]

After the aunts nonetheless departed, the Dames attempted to halt the monetary, familial, and political attrition. When rumors swirled that the aunts would leave at midnight, the Dames took on military overtones and evolved from "deputation" to "detachment" in the public eye. *Le Creuset* reported that "a detachment of citoyennes de la halle... went to the home of the hero of two worlds" (General Lafayette) to demand that the commune and the National Guard intervene. But Lafayette and other officials did not arrive quickly enough.[184] An hour after the aunts left, the Dames ventured to the aunts' house in the outskirts of Paris and prevented their baggage from leaving.[185] Then, the Dames set their sights on Monsieur, the king's brother, at the Luxembourg palace. Due to the market women's ritual privilege, Monsieur was forced to admit

---

[182] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 50, le 19 février 1791. "bon père," "chagrin de ce que de tous côtés votre famille vous abandonne," "nous les fêterons, sires, dès qu'ils paroîtront auprès de votre personne chérie, & notre amour pour vous rejaillira sur eux," "nous, sire, votre peuple, *nous-vous tiendrons lieu de votre famille.*"
[183] BnF Lb40 1245 *Discours adressé au roi par les dames de la Halle, membres de la Société Fraternelle, dont, le 14 Février 1791, elles sont venues donner lecture au Conseil-Général de la Commune, qui en a ordonné l'impression à la distribution* (Paris: Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné & J. R. Lottin, 1791), 3.
[184] James Rutledge, *Le Creuset, Ouvrage Politique et Critique*, Tome I, n° XVIII, du jeudi 3 mars 1791 (Paris, 1791), 345. "un détachement des citoyennes de la halle," "chez le héros des deux mondes"
[185] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "February 25, 1791," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 63.

them. He swore to the Dames that he would not leave France as well.[186] Earl Gower, the ubiquitous British diplomat, described how the "troop of poissardes and the populace" then went with Monsieur to see the king and queen at Tuileries. Yet, trouble began when the palace guards opened the Tuileries gate for Monsieur and some of the crowd leaked into the courtyard as well.[187] The Dames continued to lament that rare metal money departed with members of the royal family which aggravated the "shortage of money." In response to the unintended infiltration, the Tuileries guards bolstered their watch, troops brought a canon, and General Lafayette arrived with the National Guard to no avail. The Dames and the crowd refused to disperse for three hours.[188]

Along with defending the national community, the Dames threatened to use violence to protect their neighborhood community. In July 1791, a member of the Gros Caillou section killed a chasseur of the Battalion de St. Eustache, the Dames' neighborhood militia. National Guard officer Gouvion quickly wrote to Mayor Bailly about the situation. Gouvion warned Bailly that they should move troops to Gros Caillou "in order to oppose the excesses to which the Femmes de la Halle allow themselves to be brought, having been led astray by false patriotism which spurs them to avenge the death of an unfortunate fighter of the Bataillion of St. Eustache who had been assassinated by an inhabitant of Gros Caillou." Gouvion informed Bailly that he would keep 120 men and some canons on hand at Tuileries in case there was any trouble. Gouvion

---

[186] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger*, le 28 février 1791, 248-249.
[187] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "February 25, 1791," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 64.
[188] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger*, le 28 février 1791, 248-249. Meanwhile, the king's aunts encountered many obstacles in their flight. The citizens of Moret stopped them. It took 100 troops and the mayor's men to force the city gate open so they could continue. Then, the inhabitants of Arnay-le-Duc momentarily retained the aunts because they did not have passports from the National Assembly. "disette du numéraire."

believed the Dames had good intentions, but feared they would disrupt the peace if they committed retributive violence.[189]

The Threat of Plotters and Ambivalence towards the Dames' Political Influence

Since the Dames acted with such force on their own accord, police and journalists feared that plotters could stir up trouble by agitating the Dames. Nervous police officials tended to conflate discontent over subsistence problems with counter-revolutionary movements. These fears acknowledged the Dames' potent influence. Parisians worried that the Dames could be swayed by schemes from across the political spectrum.[190] During subsistence problems, political opponents turned the Dames and the fear of plots into powerful weapons. The revolutionaries could associate the market women with their political enemies, blame the Dames for food trade problems, and then strike out against their rival factions by associating them in a plot.

In May 1796, *Le Miroir* used the Dames and fear of plots to strike out against both radicals and aristocrats, advocating for a moderate position. The journal concluded that Jacobins were sparking radical sympathy by marking foodstuffs with secret messages. In great detail, the journal explained how a market woman had sold a bundle of radishes to another woman with tracts hidden inside them. The radical pro-Babeuf titles included "the legion of police for itself," "the memories of a democrat," and "Does one owe obedience to the Constitution of '95?"[191] One month later, the same paper assumed that the ruckus caused by women fighting in les Halles

[189] BnF Manuscrits Mf 34833, Mss fonds français 11697, letters between Bailly and Gouvion dated 23 juillet 1791. "pour s'opposer aux excès auxquels les femmes de la halle se porteraient, ayant égarer par son faux patriotisme qui les engage à venger elles mêmes la mort du malheureux chasseur du Bataillon de S[t]. Eustache qui a été assassiné par un habitant du gros caillou."
[190] BnF Lc2 916, *Le Miroir*, nº80, le 1 Thermidor an IV, 19 Juillet 1796, p. 319.
[191] BnF Lc2 916, *Le Miroir*, 6 Prairial an IV, le 25 mai 1796, p. 98. "la légion de police à elle-même," "les souvenirs d'un démocrate," "Doit-on obéissance à la constitution de 95?"

would bolster aristocratic ambitions. The disorder might, it hypothesized, generate support to re-establish the monarchy.

During subsistence crises ripe for uprising, the officials of the dominant faction tried to disguise popular discontent as the work of troublemakers among the Dames. As the Maximum all but collapsed in March 1794, the pro-Maximum Jacobins quickly lost popularity within les Halles. With supplies dwindling, retailers abandoning their commerce, and tempers rising, Police reporter Rolin accused the Dames of acting like "perfect aristocrats" while being "paid to spy on citizens."[192] Near the increasingly empty marketplace, the judge of the neighborhood revolutionary tribunal reported that butter in les Halles had been stamped with the royal fleur de lys.[193] In response, the Jacobin Comité de sûreté générale seized foodstuffs illegally destined for rich houses rather than les Halles. The comité sent the confiscated supplies to the public market, reflecting the Jacobins' symbolic and material victory over conspiring aristocratic forces.[194] In May 1795, when Parisians revolted against the Convention over soaring food prices, the police called the high prices a mere "pretext" for plotters "to push to the most violent measures against the national representation [the National Assembly]."[195]

Sometimes, the revolutionaries depicted the Dames as plotters' tools because they held general ambivalence towards popular initiatives. Those who resented that the Dames had forced the king's hand framed the October Days as a plot. From this perspective, they refused to acknowledge that the Dames could act in their own right. When the National Assembly ordered the Châtelet (an Old Regime judicial body) to officially investigate the incident, some witnesses

---

[192] AN W 112, Rolin, 18 ventôse an II (8 mars 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome V, 168, "parfaites aristocrates," "payées pour épier les citoyens."
[193] AN W 78 n°3, "Déclarations de membres du Comité révolutionnaire de la section des Marchés, reçues par Gabriel Deliège, juge au tribunal révolutionnaire," le 21 ventôse an II.
[194] AN W 78 n°4, "Déclarations de membres du Comité révolutionnaire de la section des Marchés, reçues par Gabriel Deliège, juge au tribunal révolutionnaire," le 21 ventôse an II.
[195] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, le 22 mai 1795, le 3 prairial an III, "pousser aux mesures les plus violentes contre la représentation nationale."

hypothesized that plotters concocted a "project to rouse the Femmes de la Halle" and pay them off.[196] Pamphleteer Peltier penned a scathing assessment of the march. He concluded that false patriots conspired against the king, the march was "conjured to destroy us," and the people were pawns. He robbed the Dames of agency by viewing the event as a staged plot.[197]

Despite their frequent paranoia, the police had reason to fear that plotters might try to rally the Dames for their own ends. In February 1790, the Dames foiled one counter-revolutionary plot and even played detective before turning over their evidence to police. Dame Veuve Shubert recounted how a man had entered into Reine d'Hongrie's boutique and approached her colleagues a few days earlier. Dame Merillon testified that the man had promised them one louis each, hoping to bribe them "to buy a saber of wood or of white iron, and to go together to the lodging of M. Brillant [the National Guard captain], at the moment when the District and the Batallion would set out to march for the ceremony of the oath, and this moment, she would present him their sabers of wood mocking them." When a domestic appeared again in the boutique to confirm the scheme, Dame le Coq (the daughter of Reine d'Hongrie) played along in order to uncover more information about the plotters. Having disrupted the plot, the Dames submitted into evidence two sabers and a note with Monsieur Brilliant's address written in red ink. Sixteen Dames went to the police to explain their discovery. The Dames even took up watch in the cabaret across from Monsieur Brillant's house in order to warn him of the plot. The conspirators had hoped to disrupt the National Guard's oath to the nation. However, the Dames turned the tables to protect their vision of the revolutionary state.[198]

---

[196] *Révolutions de Paris*, n° XX, du 21 au 28 novembre 1789. "projet d'ameuter les femmes de la halle"
[197] BnF Lb39 2472, Peltier, *Domine salvum fac regem*, 21 octobre 1789, "conjurés pour nous perdre."
[198] AdP D.51-52, #474, p.45 et 47 (current call # VD* 47), "Procès-verbal de la déclaration faite par 16 femmes du marché Saint-Martin qu'un individu les a sollicitées moyennant argent à se rendre avec des sabres de bois ou de fer blanc chez M. Briffaut, capitaine des gardes nationales, pour lui proposer par dérision de se battre avec elles, au moment où le district et le bataillon se mettront en marche pour la cérémonie du serment," le 18 février 1790. "d'acheter du sabre du bois ou de fers blancs, et d'aller ensemble à la demeure de M. Brillant [the National Guard

Days before the king mounted the scaffold in January 1793, a royalist pamphleteer, De Salignac, hatched a plot to save the king. In a last ditch effort, he called on the Dames to lead the charge. He begged them:

> Citoyennes of Paris, women de la Halle, who every year brought bouquets to the queen, to the royal family, & from them received a welcome as gracious as generous, repair your past faults; bring Louis XVI back to his palace, this illustrious offspring of Saint-Louis, Charlemagne &Henry the Great... That Louis be delivered next Monday.[199]

The Dames ignored De Salignac's cry, but his plea reveals just how powerful he considered the market women to be.

Not all revolutionaries accepted the Dames' activism or public displays without ambivalence. Although the Dames bolstered officials' authority and legitimized them by publically sanctioning them, politicians and the king had a complicated relationship with the Dames. Since they could not firmly control the how the Dames intervened, the market women always presented some kind of wild card. As early as August 1789, the king showed anxiety over the Dames' upcoming visit for his feast day of St. Louis. The King's ministre de maison wrote to Parisian Mayor Bailly and implored him to limit the number of Dames traveling to Versailles. Fearful of the unpredictable nature of a massive visit, the minister asked Bailly to stop the Dames du Marché St. Martin from going. He wrote that the king wished to receive only the "Femmes de la halle" (in this sense, Dames of the *central* Halles) to prevent a "storm."[200]

Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries alike scoffed at the Dames' great independence when it threatened their control of politics. After the Dames whipped counter-

---

captain], au moment ou le District et le Bataillon se mettroient en marche pour la cérémonie du sermon, et ce moment, elle lui présenteraient leurs sabres de bois se moqueroit."

[199] The pamphlet, *Bréviaire des dames parisiennes pour la défense de Louis XVI* by De Salignac was quoted in Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n°185, du 19 au 26 janvier 1793. "Citoyennes de Paris, femmes de la halle, qui tous les ans portiez des bouquets à la reine, à la famille royale, & en receviez un accueil aussi gracieux que généreux, réparez vos fautes passées ramenez dans son palais Louis XVI, cet illustre rejeton de Saint-Louis, Charlemagne & Henri-le-Grand… Que lundi prochain Louis soit délivré."

[200] AN O^1 5000, fol. 400, "Lettre du Ministre de la Maison dy Roi à M. Bailly," le 20 août 1790. "femmes de la halle" (Dames of the central Halles), "orage."

revolutionary nuns in 1791, the Jacobin club spoke out against their spontaneous violence. They forbade anyone from "ordering the poissardes to whip the buns in their cloisters... under penalty of exemplary punishment!"[201] Even though the Jacobins did not approve of counter-revolutionary clergy, they feared the Dames' unbridled and independent actions. In contrast, M. Delaporte, resented the Dames' autonomy from his position as a royalist. During the fallout from August 1792, police found the old Intendant de la Liste Civile's private letters. Delaporte exclaimed to his allies that, when God judges the revolutionaries, "all the women will be shaved [guillotined]... finishing with the Dames de la Halle. These are women in love with independence and novelty, who have led men astray; they deserve the whip; let us shave them, & let us obey God."[202]

The Dames embodied the French polity before foreign officials in ways that bucked formal diplomatic relations between nations. The Dames' habit of public compliments proved occasionally vexing to the deputies. When the Dames brought a bouquet to the Tuscan diplomat in 1795, he took fright at the large number of market women crowded outside his door. Rather than feeling flattered, he reported their welcome wagon to the police.[203] The Tuscan diplomat did not understand the alternative form of popular sanction that the Dames deployed. By 1796, the Directory had cut off diplomatic conversations with Great Britain because war negotiations failed. Nonetheless, the Dames independently presented "their homages" to Lord Malmesbury, the British envoy. *Le Courrier républicain* hinted that curiosity may have spurred the Dames'

---

[201] Aulard, *Société des Jacobins*, Volume II, May 25, 1791, 456. Extrait des registres de l'Assemblée du manège et de celle des Jacobins Saint-Honoré, "ordonnent aux poissardes de fustiger les religieuses dans leurs cloîtres... sous peine de punition exemplaire!"

[202] As recorded in *Révolutions de Paris*, n° 169, du 29 septembre au 6 octobre 1792. "toutes les femmes seront rasées... finissant par les dames de la halle. Ce sont les femmes amoureuses de l'indépendance & de la nouveauté, qui ont perdu les hommes; elles meriteroient le fouet; qu'on les rase, & on obéit à Dieu."

[203] AN AF/IV/1472 Commissaire Reports, Dossier Frimaire an III, Paris le 8 Pluviôse l'an 3, Rapport Général de la Surveillance de la Commission de Police; See also Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, 27 janvier 1795, 429.

visit to Lord Malmesbury's house. Their ritual compliment served as a trusty pretense for entering. The journal reported that the Dames were surprised at the "human faces" they found because "one had often told them that the English were monsters." News of the unauthorized visit angered Jacobin deputies.[204] Since the populace recognized the Dames as cultural and political ambassadors of the people, their actions undermined the government's official diplomatic position.

Some revolutionaries suspected the Dames' opinions and considered their ulterior motives for intervening in politics. In October 1790, *La Chronique de Paris* warned "the newly elected" to ignore the Dames des Halles. They painted the Dames' compliments as tinged by financial motives; they might be asking for gifts.[205] In July 1793, police observer Dutrand wrote to the minister of the interior that, apart from the ones married to Jacobins, the Dames cursed and grumbled. However, he suspected that the specter of the guillotine and the revolutionary tribunal convinced them to hush their true political sentiments.[206] In 1794, the Dames drew the ire of police observer Pourvoyeur who wrote his superiors that children and some Dames disrupted the revolutionary tribunal. Fruit retailers had created a hiccup by combining their occupational work and their civic work. They had taken to hawking apples to spectators, which distracted citizens and judges alike.[207]

Due to the Dames' popular roots, some revolutionaries viewed them as too lowly to be part of formal politics. When the Dames des Halles arrived at Versailles during the October

---

[204] Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume III, 25 octobre 1796, 254. These quotes come from *Courrier républicaine*. "figures humaines," "on leur avait dit souvent que les Anglais étaient des monstres."
[205] *La Chronique de Paris*, n°294, le 21 octobre 1790.
[206] "Rapport de l'observateur Dutrand à Garat ministre de l'intérieur," in *Répertoire Général des sources Manuscrits de L'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*, edited by Alexandre Tuetey, Volume 9, le 23 juillet 1793, #712.
[207] AN W 191, Pourvoyeur, 12 pluviôse an II (21 janvier 1794), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 257.

Days, they took seats alongside their representatives during the night session. The Marquis de Maleissye recounted with disgust how the Assembly "did not believe that its dignity was soiled by letting the poissardes of Paris sit on its benches."[208] In January 1791, Earl Gower accused the French deputies of falling from civility by likening their comportment to les Halles. He wrote, "The violence of party is at present so great in the National Assembly that no terms of abuse are omitted by the speakers on either side, and the style of language which used to be confined to the markets, and therefore called *le langage des halles*, is now very frequently adopted in that place." [209] In the eyes of some, fish guts and rough-hewed jargon did not befit the august assembly halls.

Others dismissed the Dames as serious political actors, not because popular culture made them politically uncouth, but because they thought the popular classes were naturally dangerous. Reflecting back upon the October Days in December 1793, *The Kentish Register and Monthly Miscellany* equated the Dames' appeal to ritually upheld mischief. The editor wrote, "The fish-women of Paris, (called *Les Poissardes*, and sometimes *les dames de la halle*) had from time immemorial assumed the privilege of being the leaders of all political mobs.... It was impossible that these women, turbulent, violent and ferocious by nature and habit, and ever accustomed to wade through all the lowest links of profligacy, could pass for glorious an opening to mischief as was now presented."[210] Such conclusions discounted that the Dames' capacity to pursue their own political goals as peaceful, rational citizens.

---

[208] Général M. De Maleissye, *Mémoires d'un Officier aux Gardes Françaises (1789-1793)* (Paris: E. Plon Nourrit, 1897), 108. "ne crut pas sa dignité avilie en laissant siéger sur ses bancs les poissardes de Paris."
[209] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "January 28, 1791," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 53.
[210] "Letter IX on the French Revolution," December 1793, in *The Kentish Register and Monthly Miscellany, From August to December 1793*. Volume I (Canterbury: Simmons, Kirkgy, and Jones, 1792). The editor also complained about the courtesans, although he noted that "these ladies were hired, and their service paid for in money, they were rather to be considered as a body of useful light mercenary troops, than as faithful disinterested allies, like the *dames du halle* (sic), who acted purely from principle, through their innate passion for confusion and mischief."

In addition, the Dames' exaggerated actions and unique priorities could make them appear as less than serious political actors to some. In a summer 1793 parade, some soldiers could not contain their laughter at one Dame's exaggerated actions. A police reporter described how "a woman, all done up, a big lump of a Margot, of a number of those who bring embarrassment to les Halles put herself at the head of the parade behind the Calvary. The gendarmes laughed A Lot but they did not remove her because she had a [tricolor] cockade and a large bouquet." Therefore, the Dame remained at the head of the parade. In spite of the foolery of "Madame Saumon" (Madame Salmon), their superiors concluded that "this woman will have the right of equality."[211] For other revolutionaries, the Dames were too simple-minded to be important political players. In 1798, the assembly renamed the street with Napoleon's house "la rue de la Victoire" in order to celebrate the popular hero. The *Journal de Paris* reported with much dismay that some fruitières were only happy with this designation because people would stop asking them where Napoleon lived. Annoyed that the merchants did understand the profound gesture, the journalist asked dismayed, "The little peop'e of Athens, did they have more finesse and sensibility?"[212]

Conclusion

In 1789, municipal officials had maintained that Dames' *bonnes citoyennes* medals were not motivated by "interest nor vanity" but were born "pure & in good conscience."[213] In contrast, during Year II, some Parisians complained that club members were wearing medals and

[211] AN F^{1c} III Seine 27, Dutrand, le 24 juin an II. "une femme, toute dégouillée, grosse margot, d'une nombre de celles qui portent la hôte à la halle s'est mise à la tête du cortège derrière la Cavalerie Les gendarmes en ont ri Beaucoup mais ils n'ont eu garde la déplacer parce qu'elle avoit une cocarde et une gros bouquet." "Cette femme aura du droit de l'égalité."

[212] BnF MICR D-80, *Journal de Paris*, n° 109, 19 nivôse an VI (1798), 441. "Le petit peupe d'Athènes avoit-il plus de finesse & de sensibilité?"

[213] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° XLVII, le 10 octobre 1789, "l'intérêt ni de la vanité" but were "purs & vrais de la conscience."

"distinguishing themselves from other citizens." Despite the festival context, Parisians protested that the public markers "intended to resurrect distinctions" which was "contrary to equality."[214] In this context, the revolutionaries hesitated to embrace medals and exceptional political action. The shift overturned earlier attitudes on which the Dames' sporadic interventions had thrived. As the Jacobins streamlined political life through a new culture of symbols, festivals, spirituality, they began to standardize civic identity. These egalitarian impulses were also homogenizing impulses, which inherently challenged the Dames' traditional gestures, issue-driven interventions and exceptional influence as popular representatives. After the Terror, the Thermidorians greatly constrained powerful venues for popular politics such as the Parisian section. They continued to standardize formal political practice into state institutions, leaving less room for the Dames' exceptional maneuvers. The Dames' *bonnes citoyennes* medals could not grant them a unique status; in fact, even at the apex of Jacobin ideology, republicans thought citizens should glorify the general will rather than flaunt peculiarity. And after the Jacobins' demise, their opponents were leery to champion popular groups as leading citizens.

Because the Dames imagined citizenship primarily through societal engagement, they did not consolidate their power into a formal structure. In the early years of the Revolution, this flexibility granted the Dames leeway to intervene as they saw fit. Initially, the Dames' lack of sustained organization even made them immune to silencing attempts such as the closure of female political clubs. Ironically, the Dames' failure to integrate themselves into organized politics stunted their influence as the revolutionaries standardized modern democratic apparatuses. The Dames' traditional gestures and issue-driven interventions became less and less acceptable. Especially after the Terror, the revolutionaries increasingly recognized formal

---

[214] AN F^7 3688^3, Charmont, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 279, "se distinguaient des autres citoyens," "vouloir faire renaitre les distinctions," "contraire à l'égalité."

institutions as the carriers of sovereignty. Moderate legislators took fright at the violence that the popular classes had supported. The people with laurel wreaths were endearing; the people with arms were terrifying. With more stable political structures, the Dames as a link between citizens and the state appeared increasingly superfluous. The Dames maintained their symbolic capital as representatives of the popular classes, but with dwindling means to intervene in politics, their influence as independent actors declined over the course of the Revolution.

Regardless of regime changes, the Dames continued to craft their notion of citizenship via civic work. Through their activism, the Dames incorporated themselves into the revolutionary body politic in a public and embodied way. As citizens, they demanded that the government protect their interests. As traditional representatives of the people, they acted on behalf of the popular classes. They gradually divorced the source of their legitimacy from royal rituals and inscribed it within the sovereign people. After the king's execution, the Dames escaped being thrown out with the Old Regime bath water because they adjusted to various incarnations of the state. As long as they could claim sovereignty and make demands on the government, they could imagine a place as citizens. Parisians' excitement over or edgy ambivalence towards the Dames' activism attested to their continued political saliency, even if new representative institutions gradually mitigated the potency of their influence. Like their occupational work, the Dames' activism was voluntary and unmitigated. Like their occupational work, the Dames' civic work served other members of society and protected the nation. The next chapter will analyze how the Dames invented their citizenship through the nation's smallest political unit – the family. As women, mothers, wives, and daughters, the Dames performed gendered work that they deemed equally integral to their citizenship.

– Chapter 6 –

Conducting Gendered Work: Inventing Citizenship as Citoyennes des Halles

On December 29, 1789, the Dames des Halles entered the National Assembly to congratulate the representatives in light of the New Year. At the head of the deputation, Dame Dupré praised the representatives' diligent acts as "enlightened labors" and a "great work." She concluded, "What glory, in effect, what a triumph for those who compose this honorable list [of deputies], since our children will say... behold our fathers!"[1] Two years later, Dames again lauded the deputies' patriotism through a maternal lens. Their speaker attested, "What gentle satisfaction,.... what pleasure for a mother to say to her young children: Behold, voilà our benefactors; behold, voilà those who saved us." Like their fellow revolutionaries, the Dames des Halles frequently depicted the body politic as a national family. The Dames extended the role of paternal father from the king to the deputies and taught their children to admire these patriotic fathers. Thus, the Dames sanctioned the deputies' labor at once as revolutionary mothers and as representatives of the sovereign people. The Dames came "to bless" the deputies as one journalist noted.[2] The gendered duties of the state and its citizens achieved quasi-religious overtones. It is not surprising, then, that the Dames derived their political membership in part from their gendered and familial labors.

This chapter analyzes the Dames' third axis of citizenship – gendered work. The Dames intermittently appealed to their identity as wives and mothers while petitioning the state and demonstrating in the street. They sought financial services in order to raise patriotic children and

[1] Archives nationales C 33, n°285, and *Archives Parlementaires* I Volume 11, 31 décembre 1789, p. 56, "Adresse présentée à l'Assemblée par une députation des marchés de Paris pour la féliciter de ses travaux," "travaux éclairés," "grand ouvrage." "Quelle gloire, en effet, quel triomphe pour ceux qui composeront cette honorable liste [of deputies], puis que nos enfants diront... voilà nos pères!"

[2] BnF Lc^2 218, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, n°293, le 20 octobre 1791, "Quelle douce satisfaction,.... quel plaisir pour une mère de dire à ses jeunes enfans: Tiens, voilà nos bienfaiteurs; tiens, voilà celui qui nous a sauvé," "bénir."

asked for aid as military wives. They highlighted their civic virtue by strategically framing their gendered duties. By carving out a maternal role in their nuclear families, they defended their position in the national family. Consequently, they legitimized their membership in the body politic through their gendered duties and work.

Although the Dames considered gendered work to be a critical part of their citizenship, they did not view gender as the primary filter for delineating citizenship. That is to say, the Dames did not found their citizenship upon their identity as women. The Dames served society and earned their civic membership through gendered work, just as they did through occupational labor and civic activism. Gender was a crucial element of the Dames' citizenship but it was not the immutable starting point.

In addition, this chapter asks how others refracted the Dames' actions through gendered prisms, creating a spectrum of political legitimacy and illegitimacy. On the one hand, the market women and fellow citizens used gender norms constructively to invent space in the body politic for women and men. As the opening quotes illustrate, the Dames could draw on motherhood to justify their political action. The Dames brazenly defended their children from counter-revolutionary teachers and meted out public punishment. On the other hand, the Dames and the revolutionaries employed gender destructively to delegitimize individuals and exclude them from politics. They deployed malleable gendered tropes to cloak other concerns. In order to stunt pressure from the left in fall 1793, Jacobin deputies attacked radical a radical women's club. They did so by arguing that women were too emotional to resist plotters and those women who spent time in the clubs abandoned their own families. The same women's club supported price controls that ruined much of the Dames' trade and infringed on their neighborhood hegemony. The Dames challenged them as whores who neglected their households. In an ironic twist, the

highly outspoken Dames argued that their rivals were overly vocal women and cast them as female troublemakers like Marie Antoinette. Under the guise of correcting gendered transgressions, the revolutionaries incapacitated their opponents and advanced factional agendas. Gender cut both ways in legitimizing and delegitimizing female citizenship in general as well as the Dames' citizenship in particular. The Dames and the revolutionaries negotiated gender norms to invent multiple models of female citizenship.

In order to probe the various ways the Dames crafted citizenship through gendered work, this chapter begins with two case studies and concludes with a thematic synthesis. Both case studies examine intense ideological and physical conflicts between the Dames and other groups of women. Whereas Parisians used gendered ideals like patriotic motherhood to praise the Dames' violence in the first case study, the Jacobin deputies recoiled from the second case with a distinctly gendered backlash.

The first section examines how the Dames conflated spiritual and political worlds and sought to emerge as the most legitimate female protectors of both. At a grass-roots level, the revolutionaries viewed religion as a particularly female-dominated terrain. The Rousseauian woman, after all, instilled good morals in the family by carefully raising her children and in the nation by urging her husband to act justly in politics. In order to analyze these dynamics in detail, this section analyzes a 1791 demonstration in which the Dames spanked counter-revolutionary nuns. In March and April 1791, rumors flew that counter-revolutionary nuns sought masses with counter-revolutionary priests and aristocratic sympathizers. These nuns spanked their pupils, the Dames' children, for confessing to pro-revolutionary priests. Enraged, the Dames submitted the nuns their own "correction" in return. The market women dragged the religious women out of their convents, pulled aside their skirts, and cuffed them in full view of

the public. This case study examines how the confrontation recast ideas of female virtue and its relationship to the nation. As patriotic mothers, the Dames asserted that they protected their nuclear and national families from sterile plotting nuns. Journalists and artists deployed gendered ideals to praise the Dames and condemn the counter-revolutionary nuns. In this instance, the Dames' maternal duties to protect their children and civic duties to defend the nation appeared to be one and the same. They were complementary components of the Dames' citizenship. Few revolutionaries condemned the violence. In fact, as complicit spectators to the Dames' strikes, fellow citizens passed collective judgment, communally purged the nuns, and ensured national salvation.

The second section analyzes why the Dames clashed with the leading women's political club, the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires, in the fall of 1793. Amidst the start of the Terror and debate on the General Maximum, the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires attempted to force the Dames to wear tricolors and red caps. The market women interpreted the marks as emblems of their rival political faction. As a result, the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines threw punches, mud, and insults in the marketplace for two months. The National Convention responded to the conflict by banning all female political clubs. Consequently, historians often conclude that the deputies primarily put female citizenship on trial and rejected women from democracy. At first glance, this appears to be a reasonable conclusion. The deputies did frame the ban through heavily gendered language. The assumption has led historians to ask how the public evaluated the marketplace brawls from a principally gendered perspective.

However, by carefully tracing the contours of the conflict, this case study throws into relief other contests at play besides gender. Both the Dames and the deputies wittingly veiled

more crucial factional rivalries and socio-economic concerns under the façade of gender. Far from being irritated that the deputies would ban women from formal political institutions, the Dames instead cheered on their political opponents' demise. In searing irony, the Dames des Halles, the vanguard of revolutionary activism, petitioned the deputies to close one women's club, but abetted the termination of all instead. Nonetheless, the Dames did not view the monumental ban as detrimental to their citizenship. The Dames still conceptualized their citizenship through useful work including, though not predicated upon, its gendered components.

The concluding thematic section briefly illustrates how the Dames coupled gendered work to the two other axes of their citizenship: occupational work and civic work. The Dames demanded market reform so that they could make a profit and thereby feed their own families. By asking the state to protect its citizen-children and forgive wet-nursing debts, the Dames linked their nuclear families to the metaphorical national family. In doing so, they used their concrete work as mothers to integrate themselves into the abstract body politic. In addition, they deployed familial and gendered language to outline the state's duties to its citizens. By calling on the government to compensate military families, the Dames pursued their own interests and reminded the state to safeguard citizens who served the nation. The Dames modified their gendered, occupational, and civic appeals by circumstance, synthesizing their citizenship in various amalgamations.

Political Blasphemy and National Salvation: Defining Virtuous Women and Patriotic Motherhood

During the Revolution, the Dames des Halles wove together the city's religious and political well-being. When the Dames spanked the counter-revolutionary nuns in 1791, they did

so within the hybrid context of individual and national salvation. In a similar way, fellow revolutionaries painted the Dames as mothers who protected their children and as civic mothers who defended the nation from counter-revolutionary plotters. This section sets the scene for the Dames' intervention by describing how the Dames experienced religious reform since the beginning of the Revolution. Then it analyzes how the Dames clashed with the counter-revolutionary nuns. Since spirituality formed a cornerstone of feminine morality, this section then asks how the Dames rethought their spiritual and political communities in light of the king's flight and corporate reform. Finally it reveals how the Dames' local and national communities sometimes conflicted. These divergences made it impossible for the Dames to always act as the maternal protectors of both.

The Dames des Halles continued a mentalité of the Old Regime by not distinguishing between spiritual and civic aspects of their community. Four days after the fall of the Bastille, the Dames venerated Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris who had saved the capital from starvation and the Huns in the fifth century.[3] With food shortages and rumors of foreign troops descending on the capital, Parisians faced eerily similar anxieties in July 1789.[4] During a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving after the Bastille's fall, the Dames presented a bouquet to the saint's relics.[5]

Throughout the month of August 1789, Dames from across the Parisian markets married religious sentiment and revolutionary intentions by staging more processions and masses across the city. When the Dames of the marché Saint Martin hosted a *Te Deum*, they incorporated revolutionary and communal figures into their celebration. Musicians opened the procession

[3] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 11-12.
[4] Sluhovsky notes that Parisians often invoked Saint Geneviève to save Paris from foreign armies after her canonization. *Patroness of Paris,* 162.
[5] BnF Lc2-80, *Journal de Paris*, n°33, 22 juillet 1789.

along with a young girl crowned with flowers. Then, marching behind them, five Dames carried a large bouquet with trailing ribbons for Sainte Geneviève. A detachment of the National Guard carried weapons decorated with flowers and escorted the group.[6] After the Mass, the Dames addressed their monarch and General Lafayette. They told the king that "it's you, sacred Religion which enobles all of his [the king's] faculties." The Dames asserted that the "Peuple" had benefited from the recent political events, and that God had guided the king to benefit France.[7] They paraded through the city to commune with other citizens as a part of the same political and religious body. The Dames of the Marché d'Aguesseau repeated the gesture with a similar *Te Deum*. In the name of their colleagues, the daughter of Reine d'Hongrie and nine other market women sent out invitations requesting that attendants assemble at the Church Saint Philippe de Roule before marching 2.8 miles across the capital to the Church Saint Geneviève.[8] The Dames portrayed their religious ceremonies as civic action on behalf of the capital.

When the National Assembly seized and nationalized Church lands in November 1789, religious issues became more factionally divisive. The deputies intended to bolster the treasury and subordinate the Church to the state by lessening its political power. The Dames and other citizens further conflated political and spiritual realms after the legislation. In the eyes of the revolutionaries, good religion was patriotic; it supported the Constitution and defended the nation. Bad religion was counter-revolutionary; it marred political loyalties by prioritizing

---

[6] BnF Lc2 171, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris, dédiées à la Nation*, n° V, du 9 au 15 août 1789

[7] BnF Lb39 7744, *Compliment prononcé au Roi par Mademoiselle Bourbau, âgée de 17 ans, au nom des dames du marché S. Martin et la réception agréable de la part de Sa Majesté* (Paris: de l'impr. de P.R.C, 6), "C'est vous, Religion sacrée qui en anoblissant toutes ses [the king's] facultés."

[8] BnF Lb39 7758, Reine d'Hongrie, Mesdame Pluvinet, DeVille, Chevalier, Lefebvre, Lamy, Doute, Genet, Cochois, Baronet, *Lettre d'invitation des dames marchandes du marché d'Aguesseau, à un Te Deum* (1789). The other nine retailers included Mesdames Pluvinet, Deville, Chevalier, Lefebvre, Lamy, Doute, Genet, Cochois, and Baronet.

clerical allegiances to Rome before Paris. Bad religion risked "to plunge us in civil war."[9] Parisians viewed the struggle between citizens who employed religion to support the nation on the one hand and those who used religion as a counter-revolutionary weapon on the other as a battle between good and evil. Therefore, while the Dames defended their spiritual communities from counter-revolutionary sentiments, they also defended the moral well being of the nation. Political salvation was at stake.

Consequently, the Dames and other revolutionaries remained deeply religious while harboring anti-clerical attitudes towards religious persons with papal or royalist sympathies. Parisians like Marat embraced this distinction. In 1790, he had portrayed the Dames des Halles as revolutionary guardians of good religion. In his paper, he lambasted an aristocratic abbess who manipulated her patriotic subordinates. Marat wished to figuratively send the offending abbess "to the Tribunal of the Dames de la Halle."[10] The market women, no doubt, would correct the abbess and enlighten her about patriotic religion.

By nationalizing Church lands in 1789, the deputies began to legally integrate the Church and its possessions into the nation. Therefore, anyone attempting to distinguish the Church from the Revolution could be a counter-revolutionary. The revolutionaries believed that such dissenters stained the spiritual purity of the nation.[11] Then in the spring of 1791, the Dames vocally backed deputies implementing the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. These laws forced

---

[9] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger. Correspondance du bailli de Virieu, ministre plénipoteniaire de Parme (1788-1793)*, edited by Emmanuel Henri Vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, le 24 avril 1791, (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1903), 263. "nous plonger dans la guerre civile."

[10] Mita Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 161. Choudhury cites Marat's story. The exact quote can be found here: Jean-Paul Marat, "L'aventure singulière, ou l'évasion d'une religieuse de l'abbaye de Pautemon, pour se soustraire à la tyrannie des supérieures," in *l'Ami du people ou le publiciste Parisien,* n° 88, 5 janvier 1790, reprinted n *Oeuvres de J. P. Marat l'Ami du Peuple*, edited by A Vermorel (Paris: Décembre-Alonnier, 1869), 84, "au tribunal des dames de la halle."

[11] Michael P. Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Invention of Citizenship," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship,* edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 33.

Catholic priests and nuns to take an oath of loyalty to the new Constitution. Revolutionaries who supported the new legislation considered those who refused to take the oath to be counter-revolutionaries whose loyalties lay with the foreign Pope. Worse, oath-refusing priests might sympathize with the aristocratic forces that had controlled the Church under the Old Regime. Many Parisians could barely stifle their anger towards priests who insulted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.[12] In January 1791, Bishop Maury received an anonymous threat to take the oath or else "the poissardes will hang him from the lantern."[13] Then during the Holy Week in April, rumors surfaced in journals that "aristocrat-nuns" were secretly attending "good" Masses with priests who had refused the constitutional oath.[14] Gorsas, editor of *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, reported that nuns were summoning refractory priests who, in private sermons, compared the counter-revolution to Christ, the governmental assemblies to tyrants, and the Revolution to hell.[15] However insulting this was to the nation, things truly exploded when the disgruntled nuns spanked their pupils because they had confessed to an oath-taking priest. Unluckily for the nuns, their pupils happened to be the Dames' children.[16]

The backlash would be remembered in "posterity" as one giddy witness put it.[17] Fed up, the Dames des Halles literally took matters into their own hands and submitted the nuns to their own "correction." On April 6, they dragged the counter-revolutionary nuns out of the cloistered

---

[12] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 99, le 9 avril 1791.
[13] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger*, le 2 janvier 1791, 235. "les poissardes le lanterneront."
[14] George Granville Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "April 15, 1791," in *The despatches of Earl Gower, English ambassador at Paris from June 1790 to August 1792: to which are added the despatches of Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Monro, and the diary of Viscount Palmerston in France during July and August 1791*, edited by Oscar Browning (London: C. J. Clay and Son, Cambridge University Press Warehouse, 1885), 79; According to Gorsas, the nuns assemblies for "good" Masses from refractory priests finally stirred the women of the popular classes to collective action on April 6. BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, Antoine-Joseph Gorsas, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements,* le 6 avril 1791, 138-139.
[15] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 3 avril 1791, 138.
[16] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* n °92, du 9 au 16 avril 1791.
[17] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 3. "à la postérité."

convents into the public street. The Dames struck the nuns' bare rears with bunches of straw and brooms while spectators cheered them on from the sidelines. One pamphlet maintains that the Dames even spanked a handful of priests and monks whom they also found in the religious houses.[18] As the nuns prayed to endure the trial, the Dames des Halles chased them down with bundles of sticks raised in the air. They unveiled the nuns' naked bottoms, submitting them to the public gaze and communal judgment. The Dames boldly continued their rounds to several counterrevolutionary convents. The general public took delight in what an artist described as the "good lessons" that the "citoyennes" gave to nuns who had aided "fanatic priests." Most newspapers, pamphlets, and images which depicted the event assumed satirical or at least carnivalesque forms with sexual overtones. Citing an oft repeated statistic, one watercolor proudly documented the Dames' accomplishment of "621 buttocks spanked; Total 310 and a half asses" since, as another pamphlet thankfully explains, "the Treasurer of the Miramionnes order only had one buttock."[19]

By violently punishing the nuns, the Dames added a sense of communal purification and engaged in a battle between two competing discourses of "good" and "evil." On one side, the nuns thought they were defending the true religion, which the Dames persecuted. On the other side, the Dames believed that the nuns abused religion as a façade to desecrate the body politic. Public opinion seconded the Dames' logic. In the eyes of most fellow Parisians, the market women frustrated the nuns' schemes and saved the nation from political blasphemy. The

---

[18] BnF Ld[4] 7148, *Liste de toutes les sœurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés des différents Quartiers de Paris, avec leur nom, celui de leur Paroisse, & un détail très-véritable de toutes leurs aventures avec les Curés Vicaires à Habitués desdites Paroisses* (Paris: L'imprimerie de Tremblay, 1791), 2-4. "bonnes leçons"

[19] BnF Estampes, Collection de Vinck 3376, "La discipline Patriotique ou le Fanatisme Corrigé" watercolor, reproduced in Antoine De Baecque, *La caricature révolutionnaire* (Italy, Presses de CNRS et l'imprimerie Arti Grafiche Vincenzo Bona, 1988), 98-99. One of the Miramiones only had one buttock according to multiple accounts. The editor of the *Actes de La Commune* notes that the journals reported that she lost it in an "indecent" and unrepeatable "accident." "621 fesses fouettés; Total 310 culs et demie"; *Liste de toutes les soeurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés*, 8.

carnivalesque restored the solemnity of Lent. Images quoted Voltaire to call the nuns "these enemies of servants of God."[20] One journal noted that the "fanaticism" of the counter-revolutionary clergy had especially no place in the "holy week."[21] Similarly, one account reported that the leading "Dame-Citizen" shouted that the nuns had "dared" to choose the "house of God" for their mischievous activities.[22] The majority of the articles and illustrations refer to the spanking as a form of "Patriotic Discipline" or "Corrected Fanaticism."[23] Thus, the images depict the Dames making violent "corrections" on persons as well as broader ideological amendments. In their neighborhood convents, the Dames resurrected the patriotic religion supported by the Constitutional Clergy.

As citoyennes, the Dames des Halles intervened through a sense of maternal and civic duty. They protected their children as well as the nation from the nuns' counter-revolutionary scheming. One pamphleteer testified that the Dames had defended the body politic when the government could not. He argued, "This vengeance [of the people] is very useful, in as much as it acts when the law has no force."[24] Other accounts ironically emphasized the Dames' officiality and precision. *Les Révolutions de France* reported that "the Dames des Halles... held a National session at [the convents of] the Miramionnes, the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, and among the multitude of the Moustiers. Everything happened with great order. Each one was whipped in her

---

[20] BnF Estampes P22034, "Fait miraculeux arrivé à Pars l'an du salut de 1791, le six avril."
[21] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 3 avril, 137.
[22] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 6.
[23] One sees a similar motif and title in BnF Estampes P23562 "La Correction Républicaine." The image shows two French generals whipping the bare bottoms of the Duke of York and Cobourg with switches. The catalogue explains that it is an "allusion aux victoires des armées de Pichegru et de Jourdan sur les troupes anglaises et autrichiennes." Thus, the drawing figuratively uses individuals to reify the battles, but also depicts real violence. In a similar way, the images of the Dames whipping the nuns depict discrete violent "corrections" as well as a larger ideological one. The spectators' presence reinforces the later. The only other revolutionary image that I have encountered in which a woman is being spanked is Carnavalet, Histoire 8 Chemise C couleurs G 23922, "Une femme de condition, foutée pour avoir craché sur le portrait de M^{r} Necker." Three men spank the woman while men and women watch at the Palais Royal.
[24] *Liste de toutes les sœurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés*, 1. "cette vengeance [du peuple] est tres-utile, en ce qu'elle agit lorsque la loi est sans force."

own turn."[25] The engraving title "Patriotic Discipline" gives the sense of an official punishment.[26] By likening the Dames' judgment to a session of the National Assembly, presenting the chaos as ordered proceedings, and labeling their punishments as formally corrective, the accounts color the Dames' violent initiatives with a paradoxical sense of civic order and legitimacy.

Just as they did during other political interventions, the Dames relied on public display to convey and legitimize their message. The role of public display in the Dames' spanking spree was two-fold. First, by chasing the nuns from their closed houses into the "open streets," the Dames unmasked counter-revolutionary forces while they revealed the nuns' behinds. When one pamphleteer wrote that some of the bottoms saw the air for the first time in 26 years, he also implied that the Dames brought the counter-revolution (and the nuns' sexuality) out of a long-standing bastion of secrecy.[27] Second, the Dames enabled other citizens to scrutinize the nuns. According to the same witty pamphleteer, the Dames permitted "surprised spectators" to become part of the collective judgment by "making them see" the nuns.[28] The public display underwrote a collective, and therefore sovereign, judgment. Although the Dames alone carried out the violence, spectators participated through their legitimizing gaze. The *Liste de toutes les sœurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés* (*List of all the nuns and religious who*

[25] *Révolutions de France,* n°73, reproduced in *Révolutions de France et de Brabant par Camille Desmoulins*, edited by Gary Kates, (Frankfurt: Antiquariat und Verlag Keip GmbH, 1989), 355. "les dames de la Halles …. ont tenu une séance nationale aux Miramiones, aux filles Sainte-Marie, et dans une multitude de Moustiers. Tout s'est passé dans le plus grand ordre. Chacune a été fouettée à son tour."
[26] BnF Estampes, Collection de Vinck 3376, "La discipline Patriotique ou le Fanatisme Corrigé" watercolor, reproduced in Antoine De Baecque, *La caricature révolutionnaire* (Italy, Presses de CNRS et l'imprimerie Arti Grafiche Vincenzo Bona, 1988), 98-99.
[27] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 5.
[28] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 6.

had been whipped by the Dames of the Markets) described this dynamic between the Dames and the onlookers:

> It was truly a very-pleasing spectacle, to see each one of these good lively women of the markets to seize one of these sweet things, pull aside their skirts, and expose to the air their delicate posteriors on which, with their robust hands, our ladies applied redoubled strikes, the air resounded with the correction that these bigots had deserved...[29]

A journalist seconded the communal nature of the judgment asserting, "No part of the people is duped by their hypocrisy."[30] According to another account, the Dames even swatted the nuns "under the eyes of the police" who did not interfere.[31]

The image "The miraculous thing which happened in Paris April 6, the Year of Grace 1791" parodies the nuns' fate as well as the spectators' role of collective judgment.[32] The image depicts several Dames armed with switches who punish a bare-bottomed nun as other citizens gather around. The print pokes fun at the sisters' delusions of martyrdom by enshrining one nun's naked rear in a blinding halo of light. St. Benoit Labre descends from heaven carrying the monarchical fleur-de-lis and the papal proclamation, which forbade the clergy from taking the oath to the Revolution.[33] Emerging from the clouds, he places a floral crown upon the nun's beaming "saint behind," as the accompanying poem describes it. One of the Dames des Halles is taken aback by the descending saint, another falls on her knees praying, the one wielding the

---

[29] BnF Ld4 7148, *Liste de toutes les sœurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés des différents Quartiers de Paris, avec leur nom, celui de leur Paroisse, & un détail très-véritable de toutes leurs aventures avec les Curés, Vicaires & Habitués desdites Paroisses* (Pairs: Imprimerie de Tremblay), 3. "C'étoit vraiment un spectacle très-plaisant, de voir chacune de ces bonnes vivantes des marches saisir une de ses sucrées, leur trouser la cotte, & mettre à l'air leur postérieurs délicats sur lequel, avec leurs mains robustes, nos dames appliquoient à coups redoubles, dont l'air retentissoit, la correction que ces bigottes, avoient mérité…"[29]

[30] *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 99, le 9 avril 1791, "De Reims," "nulle part le peuple m'est dupé de leur hypocrisie"; *La Chronique de Paris* reported that the Dames des Halles of Reims had given "une leçon aux femmes de l'aristocratie" in early March 1791. The Dames mocked the aristocrats' spiritual pretentions by imitating them in the street. The newspaper depicted the action as an effective public judgment that "a beaucoup diverti les *spectateurs* & *corrigé* les dames [aristocratic]." (my emphasis) *La Chronique de Paris*, n° 60, le 1 mars 1791, p. 240,

[31] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 10 avril 1791, "sous les yeux de police."

[32] BnF Estampes P22034, "Fait miraculeux arrive à Paris l'an de salut de 1791 le six avril," "saint derrière."

[33] Saint Benoit Labre was a recent saint who appropriately embraced mortification.

switch appears unmoved, but most importantly for communal judgment, one spectator is using a spy glass for a better look at it all. The detail is intentionally humorous but it drives home the most important point: the Dames *publically* enacted their citizenship and embedded their activism within a wider collectivity.

Splashed about newspapers and pamphlets, and represented in at least five published drawings, the Dames' intervention left more than bodily marks. Pamphlets and images continued to publicize the act and involved an audience that reached beyond firsthand witnesses. The material sold well. Baudouin, the prolific and official printer for the National Assembly, even printed a *Grand détail concernant les dévots et les dévotes qui ont été fouettés par les dames de la Halle à Paris* (*Detailed description concerning the religious men and women who have been whipped by the Dames de la Halle at Paris*).[34] One could have easily interpreted Baudouin's government title as a subtle endorsement by the Assembly.[35] The printers of "smut" or the popular genres did not hold a monopoly on depicting the Dames' activism. An expansive public textually and visually reevaluated the Dames and the nuns in light of the demonstration.

Pamphleteers presented the news with a sense of pressing exactitude. This served to throw into relief the magnitude of the Dames' protest while rejoicing in its comical and exaggerated proportions. Pamphleteers delighted in the paradox of the Dames' political activism: it exposed the surprisingly porous boundary between formal political discourse on the one hand, and rough-hewn popular tactics on the other. The infamous *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier* (*List of Aristocratic and Anti-Constitutional Asses, who were whipped yesterday*) was an instant hit. Far from the sterile reports on government activity,

[34] Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris # 31 598 (n°2) in 8°, "Grand détail concernant les dévots et les dévotes qui ont été fouettés par les dames de la Halle à Paris." (Paris, Baudouin), most likely April 1791.
[35] Anne Simonin is currently leading a research team to digitize the 10,000 revolutionary decrees that Jean-François Baudouin printed.

the *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels* rejoiced in the topsy-turvey. It proclaimed that heads had been at the center of attention for the revolution but "yes, who would have ever thought that ASSES would dare put themselves at the fore of the fatherland, & would want their turn to figure into history."[36]

The *Liste* played with the inversion of order and chaos that allowed the "heroines of the Revolution" to pass "the judgment and punishment" as they saw fit on the counter-revolutionary nuns.[37] The author goes to great lengths to describe the physical appearance each group's exposed behinds. He categorically describes the "truly beautiful perspective" of the Miramionnes' behinds, the Récolettes' "pumpkins of Moses," the ugly, blackened, and soiled rears of the Sisters of Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Laurent, Sainte-Marguéritte, la Magdeleine, Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, and warns that the deceptively tanned and fleshy bottoms of the Filles du Calvaire could be mistaken as patriot rears but alas they are also soiled. The detailed list closes with an emphasis on the precision of the account by asserting that "an exact study" found that 621 buttocks were whipped.[38] Journalists complemented one-time pamphlets and sketches to extend the satire. They wrote tongue-in-cheek accounts alongside serious reports. Journalist Gorsas printed an erratum in his paper explaining that the treasurer of the Miramionnes contacted him and offered to prove that she did in fact have two buttocks. He asserted that he would amend the final count without requiring demonstrative evidence.[39] However, the juxtaposition of the Dames' carnivalesque demonstration with rational order does more than add a humorous

---

[36] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 2. "Oui, qui auroit jamais pensé que les CULS osassent se mettre de la patrie, & voulussent à leur tour figurer dans l'histoire?"
[37] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 4-5.
[38] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791), 7-8, "un relevé exact"
[39] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 12 avril 1791, 186-187.

dimension while evaluating the event. The contrast ironically highlights the sense of logic, justification, and even officiality within the Dames' action.

When the Dames des Halles "corrected" the nuns' counter-revolutionary sentiments, they implicitly waged a battle over patriotic motherhood. Parodies of the incident oscillate between the poles of saintly intentions and saintly appearances. The "true mothers" among the Dames des Halles force "saint women," who are not very holy after all, into compliance with a national spiritual community.[40] In the image "La Fanatisme corrigé ou La Discipline Patriotique" (Corrected Fanaticism or Patriotic Discipline), a Dame spanks a nun who is praying to a cross marked "obedience to the Law."[41] Trampled underfoot are three papers: "Bref de Pie XI," "Maniement de Msgr l'Archevêque de Paris," and "Actes d.. Apo..." (presumably the royalist newspaper *Actes des Apôtres*). These papers serve as the only masculine presence in absentia. The domineering Dame has forced the nun into a submissive position. The sister is bent over; her praying hands and tucked elbows protect her flanks while imploring God. The market woman's breasts hang out of her dress in close proximity to the nun's exposed rear. Like symbolic, if erotically charged, revolutionary allegories, the Dame's bare breasts hint at her "natural" rage as a mother against those who have poisoned her children. The Dame's fertile, reproductive parts sharply contrast with the nun's sterile lower half. The Dame mother feeds familial and political life; the nun can only produce fecal matter. As a general rule of revolutionary propaganda, caricatures with naked derrières are not meant to flatter.[42] Similarly, the pamphlet *Liste des culs*

[40] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* n °92, du 9 au 16 avril 1791, "les véritables mères," "saintes femmes."
[41] BnF Estampes M 1000570, "La Fanatisme corrigé ou La Discipline Patriotique," (Paris: Chez Villeneuve Graveur) caption: Administré dans la semaine de la Passion 1791. Par les Dames de la Halle. D'après un relevé exacte, il c'est trouvé 621 Fesse de fouettées; total 310 culs et demie, attendu que la Trésorie des Miramoines n'avoit qu'une seule fesse;" "obéissance à la loi."
[42] On caricatures and visual propaganda during the Revolution see: Antoine De Baecque, *La caricature révolutionnaire* (Italy, Presses de CNRS et l'imprimerie Arti Grafiche Vincenzo Bona, 1988).

Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels[43] puns on the word "culs" (asses). The word describes both the nuns' anatomy and evaluates their character. The caption of another illustration describes how the "citizen mommies" (the Dames des Halles) resolved to force the nuns to teach their children the new national catechism.[44]

Of course, the public exposure, carnivalesque tactics, and stinging critiques of the nuns were worked out in part through sexual dimensions as well. Since the nuns' virginity was supposed to reflect their spiritual purity, the revolutionaries could potentially usurp the nuns' moral authority through gendered inversions. During the eighteenth century, the French believed that feminine moral authority and sensibility were encoded in a woman's face.[45] Thus, the pamphlets undermined the nuns' feminine virtue by analyzing their character and counter-revolutionary intentions in detail from their behinds. The mere display of the chaste nuns' naked lower halves was enough to encode their bodies with the stigma of sexuality. One sympathetic man protested to a journal that the Dames "exposed half-nude the poor recluses to the vilest and the most enthusiastic libertines of the capital."[46] The *Liste* celebrates the destructive forces of these sexual undertones. The author concedes that one male citizen, momentarily caught up in the excitement, slapped some of the prettiest bottoms at the Daughters of the Precious Blood.[47]

However, on the whole, the accounts stress that the majority of the *direct* contact occurred between the Dames des Halles and the nuns. This physical separation of sexed bodies was crucial. Without male intervention, the Dames could invert the nuns' claims to bodily and

---

[43] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791).
[44] BnF Estampes 3494, "mamas citoyennes."
[45] Physiognomy was so important to self-presentation, that it drove wig-styling in the eighteenth century. See Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 631-59.
[46] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 10 avril 1791, 154.
[47] BnF Lb39 5505, *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791),

religious purity, while protecting their violent actions from lewd critiques. Nonetheless, the Dames' "small correction on women by women," as one paper called it, relied heavily on a sense of performance that encouraged spectators of both sexes to partake in collective judgment through their shared gaze.[48] In addition, two accounts carefully described the Dames as wielding "verges" against the nuns' naked rears. The word meant "switch," but it could also imply "penis."[49] The first newspaper used the word to mock a lone man's complaint that libertines plotted the spankings. The newspaper satirizes his objection that there were "women armed with *verges*" who "stripped" the nuns.[50] *Les Révolutions de Paris* defended the Dames' actions by characterizing them as "some strikes of *verges* given aptly and very decently to the nuns who let the sacred fire of patriotism extinguish within them."[51] Thus, the journalists portrayed the Dames as an extension of male authority to further taint the nuns' past chastity and stigmatize their current exposure. Undersexed or oversexed, the nuns maternally and politically failed in contrast to the Dames. The merchant mothers guarded their offspring and the nation from counter-revolutionary influences.

Yet, even some citizens who detested the nuns' religious treason looked ambivalently upon the Dames' drastic actions. *La Chronique de Paris* feared the "disorder" that such violence caused: "If they [these scenes] make the young people laugh & amuse the unoccupied**,** they disagreeably affect the sensible man, the honest citizen."[52] British diplomat Earl Gower interpreted the spanking spree not as an extension of the assembly halls, but as a sign of "the

---

[48]Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* n °92, du 9 au 16 avril 1791, "petite correction de femmes à femmes."
[49] The 1762 French Academy Dictionary defines "Verge" primarily as a "Sorte de petite baguette longue & flexible." However, the fourth and final definition is "Le membre viril," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th Edition (1762), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.
[50] BnF MFILM-8-Lc2-161, *Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements*, le 10 avril 1791, "femmes armées de verges," "dépouillent."
[51] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* n °92, du 9 au 16 avril 1791, "quelques coups de verges données fort à propos et fort décemment à des religieuses qui ont laissé éteindre en elles le feu sacré du patriotisme."
[52] *La Chronique de Paris*, nº 99, le 9 avril 1791, "désordres," "si elles font rire les jeunes gens & amusent les désoeuvrés, elles affectent désagréablement l'homme sensible, le citoyen honnête."

feeble state of police as well as of the Government."[53] One month later, the Jacobin Society in conjunction with Mayor Bailly posted signs that if anyone rallied the "poissardes" to whip the cloistered nuns, or insulted citizens wearing religious symbols, they would swiftly receive "the penalty of an exemplary punishment!"[54]

The Dames' bold initiative raised the recurring question: in what ways should citizens defend the fatherland? Was violence an acceptable mode? The Commune was not amused by the public correction, but hesitated to condemn the Dames' patriotic intentions. Peuchet, the chief of police, issued a statement declaring: "The latest disorders against the religious houses, against the individuals who live there, have a crude character and show a mindlessness unworthy of enlightened people." He insisted, "There exists a well-distinguished line of demarcation, in relation to social order, between individual acts of liberty and those of the public authorities."[55] On April 8, the municipal representatives decreed that no one could gather in the religious houses and forbade anyone "to commit any excess against whoever this may be."[56]

Despite the Commune's objections, the Dames did send a message and decisively bolstered the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in Paris. Mere days after the Dames spanked the nuns, 700 teachers of poor children lined up at the Commune to swear the patriotic oath.[57] The memory of the Dames' activism reverberated well into the Fall. In November, the Filles du Croix refused the oath and the Commune ejected them from their convent. However, nonjuring priests

---

[53] Levenson-Gower Sutherland, "April 15, 1791," in *The despatches of Earl Gower*, 79.
[54] "Extrait des registres de l'Assemblée du manège et de celle des Jacobins Saint-Honoré, fait le 25 mai 1791, Collationné et signé par les secrétaires du Manège et ceux des Jacobins, et affiché par ordonnance du sage Bailly, sous la présidence du sénateur La Rochefoucauld," reprinted in François-Alphonse Aulard, *La Société des Jacobins: Receuil de documents*, Volume II, May 25, 1791 (Paris: Librairie Jouaust, 1899), 456, "peine de punition exemplaire!"
[55] Peuchet's statement was printed in *Le Moniteur Universel,* jeudi 14 avril 1791, n° 104,le 14 avril 1791, Series I, Tome VIII, p 118.
[56] *La Chronique de Paris,* n° 101, le 11 avril 1791 "de commettre aucun excès contre qui que ce soit."
[57] *La Chronique de Paris,* n° 106, le 16 avril 1791. In Year II, the revolutionary government took a step further to insure that teachers were politically loyal to the nation. Teachers had to acquire a *certificat de civisme* from local officials before they could influence the minds of burgeoning citizens. Isser Woloch, "The Right to Primary Education in the French Revolution: From Theory to Practice,"140.

convinced the counter-revolutionary nuns to return to their posts and teach young girls. Upon hearing the news, the Curé de Saint-Paul panicked and wrote to the Director of the Department. He warned that it was urgent "to take rigorous measures for the sake of public tranquility. The poissardes' heads are heating up [underlined in the original]; a longer delay can have upsetting consequences."[58] The Dames clearly staked out what they viewed as unacceptable within their community and few doubted they would give teeth to their sentiments.

When the clergy and nuns sabotaged the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, they committed "sacrilege" in the eyes of citizens.[59] A few days after "correcting" the nuns, the Dames confirmed the high political stakes of patriotic religion when they suspected the king's spiritual intentions. In mid-April 1791, Parisian posters announced that the king was receiving communion from nonjuring priests alongside aristocrats. These plotters cajoled him to hinder the Constitution and support counter-revolutionary projects. Upon learning that the king was traveling to Saint Cloud for Mass. Parisians suspected that the king would be among these enemies of the Revolution. Therefore, crowds gathered at Tuileries to prevent the king from leaving for St. Cloud. Leading the cries, the Dames des Halles protested that the king "had at his home refractory bishops, he gives asylum at Versailles to refractory priests, the King himself is not complying to the law that he sanctioned; he escapes us [to Saint Cloud]."[60] Crowds successfully blocked the king from leaving Paris.[61]

---

[58] AN S 4688, 21 November 1791, Mémoire de M. Brugière, curé de Saint-Paul, au Directoire du Département, appelant son attention sur la situation critique de deux communautés, situées sur le territoire de sa paroisse." "pour la tranquillité publique de prendre des mesures rigoureuses. Les têtes poissardes s'échauffent [underlined in the original]; un plus long délai peut avoir des suites fâcheuses."

[59] *La Chronique de Paris,* n° 99, le 9 avril 1791, "sacrilège."

[60] Jean Loup de Vireau-Beavoir and Giuseppe de Lama, *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger. Correspondance du bailli de Virieu, ministre plénipoteniaire de Parme (1788-1793)*, edited by Emmanuel Henri Vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, le 24 avril 1791, (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1903), 263, "a chez lui des évêques réfractaires, il donne asile à Versailles à des prêtres réfractaires, le Roi lui-même est réfractaire à la loi qu'il a sanctionnée; il nous échappe [to Saint Cloud]."

[61] *Révolutions de Paris*, nº 93, du 16 au 23 avril 1791.

Two months later, in June 1791, the king unsuccessfully attempted to flee the Revolution. The fiasco shattered the union of religion, nation, and king. The trinity became more holey than holy. Vexed by the king's flight, the Dames further realigned themselves within the spiritual triumvirate. The corporation-busting Le Chapelier laws provided the perfect opportunity for a drastic step. On August 27, 1791, the Dames des Halles appeared before the National Assembly to dissolve their Old Regime confraternities dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Saint Louis, the king's ancestor who had granted their ancestors their first market spaces.[62] In doing so, the Dames distanced themselves from the disgraced king, joined the spirit of the Le Chapelier legislation, and strengthened their ties with the revolutionary body politic. The Dames positioned themselves within the expansive body politic, rather than within a private religious corporation.[63]

Throughout the Revolution, many of the Dames remained devoted to a resilient Catholicism that they molded to their political sentiments and incorporated into their neighborhood identity. The Dames des Halles maintained their religious zeal even during the radical phase, when citizens were the most anxious about old religious practices. They publically practiced their religion through public displays within the community. In May 1793, the Dames were unaware that the annual Fête-Dieu (Corpus Christi) procession would be allowed in the market. Consequently, the Dames did not prepare by closing their shops and decorating the passages. Police observer Dutrand found himself in the middle of at least a hundred celebratory gunshots as the Host passed through the marketplace. According to his report, "our citoyennes de

---

[62] BnF Le29 1729 *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 Août 1791* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791), 2. "Aujourd'hui nous n'avons d'autre corporation que les François, d'autre confrérie que les patriotes, d'autre culte que celui de la liberté." It also explains that the confraternity of Saint Louis, which the marchandes de morue had composed, had donated their holdings of 3,000 livre on November 2, 1789 without mention in the procès-verbal or an acknowledgement in any journal which they sought to rectify in this appearance; See also AN C 75, n°745, le 27 août 1791 which explains that the two confraternities are dedicated to the Virgin and Saint Louis; The recent d'Allarde and Le Chapelier laws of March and June 1791 dismantled the corporate world and opened a new chapter in associative identities for the Dames des Halles.

[63] BnF Le29 1729 *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 Août 1791*, 2. "les citoyens de toutes les classes."

la Halle" enacted the traditional solemnities as quickly as possible and "prostrated themselves on their knees" as the procession arrived. He concluded that the Parisians had sincerely missed their Catholic practices.[64]

Without flinching, the Dames also continued to distinguish anti-clericalism from anti-Catholicism as well as local religious apparatuses from foreign-controlled structures. The Dames practiced their Catholic religion again after the Jacobin program of national festivals disintegrated. When they learned of the recent "decree on the liberty of cults" in 1795, which loosened restraints on using churches, several Dames requested to have Mass said immediately at a church renamed Vertus.[65] Speaking of Theophilanthropy in 1797, police observer Le Tellier reported, "the women of the markets are the least tolerant."[66] Since this new deist, state-endorsed religion shared worship space with Catholic services, the Dames regarded it with hostility. [67] Yet, the Dames did not view their mutable Catholicism as incompatible with their position as "citoyennes," even when it competed with state-backed religious initiatives like Theophilanthropy.

The Dames' attack on the counter-revolutionary nuns makes it clear that they sought to spiritually protect the nation. They also filtered their religious practice through the lens of their local communities. However, the local and the national were sometimes at odds. In May 1793, the Dames appealed directly to their local curé of St Eustache, their parish church which bordered the marketplace. They asked him to lead a public procession. But the revolutionary committee refused to permit the curé to do so. When the Dames crowded around the curé's door

---

[64] AN F[1c] Seine 27, Dutrand, 30 mai 1793, "nos citoyennes de la halle," "se sont prosternées à genoux."
[65] François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, 24 février 1795, (Paris: Librairie Léopold Cerf, 1899), 497.
[66] AN BB 87 reprinted in Aulard, *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume IV, 20 novembre 1797, 402. "les femmes des marchés sont les moins tolérantes."
[67] Albert Mathiez's study of Theophilanthropy remains the most complete work on the subject. Albert Mathiez, *La Théophilanthropie et le Culte Décadaire, 1796-1801*. (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillère et C[ie], 1904).

to inquire about their request, he told them to go ask the revolutionary committee instead. The Dames, however, did not find his reply sufficient and forced him to lead a procession regardless.[68] In November 1793, the Dames complained that that no one said Sunday Mass at St. Eustache. They lamented that over 50 expectant parishioners had been turned away. They did not care that the new revolutionary calendar had abolished Sundays and did not think their Catholic practices challenged patriotic sentiment.[69] In May 1802, the Dames mourned when the Consulate reassigned their priest, Citoyen Delaleu, to another church. He was so popular among the local community that the Dames spoke of organizing a petition to reinstate him in their parish.[70] Throughout the Revolution and the Consulate, St. Eustache and its spiritual services formed an important aspect of the Dames' local identity. As maternal guardians of moral order, the Dames defended this neighborhood community when threatened. At times the Dames protected their families, local community, and national community simultaneously as they had in exposing the counter-revolutionary nuns. But at other times, the local and national spiritual communities uneasily jostled.[71]

As nuclear mothers and as civic mothers, the Dames integrated themselves into the body politic. Among their maternal duties, they morally and spiritually defended their children and the nation. Strikingly, when the Dames lashed out against the nuns, the municipality and a few citizens only scolded them for the disorder they caused. Most journalists and pamphleteers used

---

[68] AN F^{1c} III Seine 27, Dutrand, le 27 mai 1793.
[69] Prévost, le 27 brumaire an II (le 17 novembre 1793), reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI (Paris: Libraire Ancienne Honoré, 1943), 288.
[70] AN F^{7} 3830, Rapport de la prefecture de police, le 26 floréal an X, 16 mai 1802, reprinted in François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris sous le consulat: Recueil des documents pour l'histoire d'esprit public à Paris*, Volume III (Paris: L. Cerf, 1903), 62. At this time, Napoleon and the Consulate were assigning new priests throughout the capital.
[71] By studying the Department of Yonne, Suzanne Desan demonstrates how some citizens used revolutionary ideals and practiced their own lay Catholicism to oppose national policies that weakened the Church. Although these citizens were hostile to dechristianization measures, they were not staunch counter-revolutionaries. Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), See especially page 3 for the major dichotomies at play.

gendered language to praise the Dames who followed maternal instincts and to denounce the nuns who misled children. Most Parisians even endorsed the violent methods that the "citizen mommies" employed against women they deemed as degenerate from gendered and political perspectives. In contrast, when the Dames brawled with the women's club in 1793, the deputies mostly framed the violence in terms of destructive gendered disorder. The discrepancy is rather telling. It points to how gender could be a dynamic, fluid, and contingent component of citizenship instead of its immobile cornerstone.

Factional Battles and Gendered Wars: The Citoyennes des Halles Combat the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires

In the fall of 1793, the "citoyennes des Halles" clashed with the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires. Since the Dames unabashedly intervened in politics, fiercely defended their community, and strove to insure the nation's spiritual well-being, it initially seems puzzling that the market women locked horns with the leading women's political club. As the deputies declared the Terror in 1793, tensions grew over the eagerly anticipated General Maximum. The Citoyennes républicaines supported the Enragés, a sans-culotte bastion that defended price controls and the assignat. Both of these revolutionary reforms proved detrimental to the Dames' businesses.[72] In this context, the Dames began to view the tricolor and the red cap as Enragé symbols and greatly resented the Citoyennes républicaines who tried to force them on the market women. For two heated months, the two groups argued in the streets, fought in the marketplace, and submitted complaints to governmental bodies over who should and should not wear the revolutionary tricolor and red cap. It was a saga of the Dames, the women's club, and

[72] For a detailed analysis of how the assignat and the Maximum affected the Dames, see Chapters 2 and 3 of this work respectively.

the tricolored wardrobe. However, the stakes were much higher than revolutionary dress or even socio-economic policies. Through subsistence politics and turfwars in les Halles, the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines sparred over civic duties, relationships among citizens, and who authentically channeled sovereignty. In doing so, they expressed competing visions of citizenship at its most fundamental iterations.

Because the Dames vehemently rebuffed the Citoyennes républicaines' attempts to make all women wear the cockade, some historians have concluded that the Dames were too conservative to support radical republicanism and too traditional to support democratic female citizenship.[73] Since most Parisians took the tricolor cockade as a symbol of the Revolution, some citizens even surmised that the Dames were counter-revolutionary.[74] In contrast, many historians have depicted the Citoyennes républicaines as the zenith of women's revolutionary citizenship. Dominique Godineau examines the women's club as the most complete example of female citizenship by the modern standards of institutional politics. She juxtaposes the Citoyennes républicaines with other political clubs to highlight their militant status. Godineau analyzes the Société's relationship with the Jacobin club and other political societies, which appear as close male equivalents. Both were very vocal, collaborated with other clubs, created petitions, wrote speeches, and intervened in politics although the Citoyennes républicaines were more radical than the Jacobins. Godineau primarily examines the contest between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines to ask questions about female inclusion or exclusion from formal politics. Therefore, Godineau characterizes the Société's intense focus on socio-economic

---

[73] Shirley Roessler argues that although the Dames des Halles "recognized the need for change, they despised the Revolution." Shirley Roessler, *Out of the Shadows: Women and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution, 1789-1795* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 133.

[74] During time of the fights over the tricolor, police observer La Tour-La Montagne reported that "paid men" riled up women and that "some awful remarks" filled the market with "the language of counter-revolution." AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de l'observateur La Tour-La Montagne, le 19 septembre 1793.

demands (such as a strict Maximum) after September 1793 as a "retreat" from "politics" rather than perceiving the issues as *central* to the quarrel over citizenship.[75] By assuming the primacy of gender and marginalizing socio-economic agendas from politics, Godineau's account understates the crucial marketplace tensions that signal different notions of sovereignty, citizenship, and the body politic.

Yet, even accounts that consider commercial factors, political rivalries, or a combination of the two miss the heart of the dispute.[76] The Dames confronted the Citoyennes républicaines because of factional battles in which both sides articulated competing visions of self-interest and

[75] In a chapter tellingly titled, "Citizenship Denied," Godineau writes that after the Jacobins complained about the Société and the press decried its leader Claire Lacombe in September 1793, "the club abandoned the political terrain to intervene only on the issue of basic necessities, which until then had been merely secondary in its program of activity." 163. Godineau writes that, by late October, "The club's retreat into social questions was complete. The problem of basic necessities seemed to dominate not only the club's interventions but also its internal deliberations." 164. Yet, Godineau does not question the role of socio-economic interests in the sustained confrontations between the Dames des Halles and the Citoyennes républicaines. Rather, she over-reduces the conflict to the struggle to exclude women from formal politics, 166-170. After describing how the deputies banned the women's clubs, Godineau writes, "Thus officially ended all political activity specifically by women." 170. Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*. Trans. Katherine Streip (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[76] Patrice Higonnet characterizes the Société as militant female Jacobins, 94. He also interprets the club as a stand-in for a proto-feminist citizenship. He writes that, by the end of 1793, "the women's movement was broken." 16. Yet, Higonnet further emphasizes that factional reasons motivated the deputies. Since the Société was linked with the Enragés that the Jacobins attempted to purge in the fall of 1793, Higonnet argues that the closure was a "straightforward political strategy" and "the Jacobins also decided that the involvement of women in politics ran against nature's dictates." 56. Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Scott Lytle acknowledges that the Société greatly concerned itself with socio-economic issues since its founding in May 1793. He traces, in acute detail, how the Société was participated in factional disputes and positions them primarily vis-à-vis the other political clubs and parties. However, Lytle fails to acknowledge the socio-economic issues at play in the Société's brawls with the "poissardes." In his account, the recalcitrant Dames merely swoop in to beat up the Citoyennes républicaines because they resent the club's attempts to police their dress. Scott Lytle, "The Second Sex (September, 1793)" *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1955): 14-26; Olwen Hufton argues that, by closing the women's clubs "antifeminism was there; but the timing of the closure within the context of a concerted attack upon the Enragés and the use of market women who had been the targets of Roux's [a head Enragé] inflammatory exhortations to pillage suggest that more practical considerations were at issue." *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 37-38; Albert Soboul notes the close connection between the Scoiété's political surveillance of the Dames and their socio-economic surveillance of the Dames: "les dames de la Halle supportaient mal la surveillance qu'exerçaient les femmes patriotes, et spécialement les Républicaines-Révolutionnaires, sur les prix de vente des denrées" in "Un Épisode des luttes populaires en septembre 1793; la guerre des cocardes," *Annales historiques de la Révolution français* (1961): 52-55; For the growing ambivalence towards women's clubs in the countryside, where citizens felt the effects of the ban but did not directly experience the confrontation between the Dames and the Société, see Suzanne Desan, "'Constitutional Amazons': Jacobin Women's Clubs in the French Revolution," in *Re-creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, edited by Bryant T. Ragan Jr. and Elizabeth A. Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992) p. 30-35.

civic relationships. The two groups mainly disagreed over three pivotal issues: modes of civic participation, who composed the sovereign people, and what the purpose of socio-economic regulations should be. Ultimately, these issues were rooted in the economic terrain of subsistence politics.

First, whereas the Citoyennes républicaines embraced institutions and new democratic structures as the primary medium for exercising citizenship, the Dames held fast to their notion of extrainstitutional citizenship that individuals earned and practiced through useful work. Although they did not hesitate to use street tactics, the Citoyennes républicaines were much more interested in integrating themselves into sustainable political structures like the clubs. They held regular meetings, developed a rulebook to model parliamentary procedure, and dispatched representatives to other clubs to collaborate on petitions. The Citoyennes républicaines invested much meaning in state officiality and explicitly demanded new laws to correct their grievances. For example, they agitated to legally carry arms like male citizens, and asked for decrees to force women to wear the tricolor. When under physical attack the Citoyennes républicaines defended their club's regalia and immediately sought out the appropriate authorities to draw up an official report. In contrast, the Dames intervened sporadically and according to issue. The Dames asked for the state to address their grievances in any way possible, whether or not new laws were part of the solution. And although the Dames did use new forms of political practice like formal petitions, they were just as likely seek other options whether that meant showing up to the Commune uninvited, organizing "just" sales in the marketplace, or shunning an unfavorable official. Without an institution, the Dames practiced their citizenship in more diverse ways than the Citoyennes républicaines. However, it is important to note that neither the Citoyennes républicaines nor the Dames took gender as the initial organizing principle for citizenship.

Second, on the critical issue of the "people," the radical Citoyennes interpreted the "people" to be wageworkers and consumers. In their vision, the Citoyennes républicaines did not include merchants whose unchecked greedy interests they believed would starve workers. In contrast, the Dames viewed the "people" as members of the popular classes who served society through various types of useful work including commerce. Thus, the Citoyennes républicaines and the Dames held clashing interpretations of the sovereign people.

Third, both the Citoyennes républicaines and the Dames maintained that socio-economic regulations should assist the "people," but their different definitions caused major conflict. As the deputies crafted the Maximum in 1793, the Citoyennes républicaines imagined that the price caps should primarily protect the "people" (i.e. consumers) from gluttonous merchants since the two commercial parties had a fundamentally antagonistic relationship. The Dames, on the other hand, advocated for a maximum on wages, wholesale prices, and retail prices, which they claimed would enact ideal reciprocal relationships between consumers and merchants. This vision assumed that consumers and workers had an inherently cooperative relationship in the body politic and that both could be members of the sovereign "people." Thus, at the root of the fights between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines, opposing economic opinions manifested a more fundamental dispute: the Dames and the women's club imagined sovereignty, citizenship, and the body politic differently.

Although the contest expressed itself as a struggle over the tricolor cockade and red cap on the surface, these symbols expressed salient factional rivalries. The Dames were just as ideologically at odds with the Citoyennes républicaines in the streets as the Jacobins deputies were politically at odds with the women's club in the assembly halls. During the fall of 1793, the Jacobins contended with two political rivals. On their left were the Enragés and the Parisian

sans-culottes. The Enragés had backed the Jacobins early in 1793, but now the Jacobins resented increased pressure and began to backpedal away. The Enragés pushed the Jacobin deputies to seek more and more radical socio-economic policies. They also strongly advocated for the Terror to purge counter-revolutionary enemies inside France while French armies battled external enemies. On their right, the Jacobins continued to weaken the more moderate and free-market inclined Girondins. The Jacobins had purged major Girondin players in the Spring of 1793, but the Jacobins did not sentence the faction's most powerful leader, Brissot, until late October 1793.[77] The Jacobins took advantage of the continuous brawls between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines to strike the rival Enragés and play off the Girondins' irreversible demise. First, the Jacobins blamed the chaos on women's presence in politics and banned women's clubs like the Citoyennes républicaines in order to weaken the Enragés. Then, the Jacobins blamed the wave of violence on Brissot's accomplices at the moment of his trial. The Jacobins hoped to turn the straw men Girondins into a rallying post, thereby shielding their attack on the Enragés. Thus, the Jacobins pounced on the opportunity to ban the Enragé-affiliated women's clubs and weaken political rivals under the guise of gender and political crisis. Yet, crucial contests between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines created the opening.[78] In short, the struggle over the tricolor cockade and red cap became a political battle over socio-

[77] The Girondins also resented the disproportionate influence of the Parisian sans-culottes on national politics. The sans-culottes were able to directly pressure the deputies in contrast to their fellow citizens who lived outside of the capital. The Girondins sympathized with the latter group. Paul R. Hanson, *Contesting the French Revolution,* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 89. For more on the insurrection of May 31 to June 2, 1793, see Paul R. Hanson, *The Jacobin Republic Under Fire: The Federalist Revolt in the French Revolution* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 59-62.

[78] Darline Gay Levy and Harriet Applewhite sense this convergence as well: "The Jacobins, now firmly in control of the National Convention, seized the opportunity created by this clash between market women, concerned for the stability of their trade, and the Revolutionary Republican women, determined to escalate surveillance and enforce the terror." "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris," in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 95.

economic policies, factional hegemony, forms of female activism, and the location of sovereignty.

Although the Dames violently attacked the Citoyennes républicaines in September 1793, the Dames did not condemn all women's clubs nor did the market women necessarily oppose women participating in clubs. In fact, the Dames appealed to the state on behalf of some coed clubs.[79] The Fraternal Society of les Halles even drew its membership from among the Dames.[80] The Dames specifically detested the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires because it supported Enragé agendas. The sans-culottes backed this radical faction who advocated for tight price controls and monetary reform. As Chapters 2 and 3 have illustrated, these reforms nearly destroyed the Dames' businesses. Moreover, the Citoyennes républicaines held their meetings at St. Eustache, the Dames' beloved parish.[81] The club's anti-merchant agenda and intrusive appropriation of neighborhood space explosively combined in the eyes of the Dames. Thus, the direct rivalry between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines was also fueled by a turfwar and competition over local hegemony. The consequences exceeded concerns about the Dames' commercial livelihood. The Citoyennes républicaines threatened the Dames' political influence and popular legitimacy in les Halles and the capital itself.

In addition, the Citoyennes républicaines and the Dames jostled for the role of revolutionary watchdogs. Each group asserted that they could judge what made a "bonne citoyenne." Crucially, each group thought that they best exemplified this ideal. On September

---

[79] For example, see how some Dames des Halles offer an address to the king on behalf of the Société Fraternelle: BnF Lb40 1245 *Discours adressé au roi par les dames de la Halle, membres de la Société Fraternelle, dont, le 14 Février 1791, elles sont venues donner lecture au Conseil-Général de la Commune, qui en a ordonné l'impression à la distribution* (Paris: Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné & J. R. Lottin, 1791).

[80] Godineau, *The Women of Paris*. Until 1793, other coed clubs in Paris included the Fraternal Society of Nomophiles and the Fraternal Society of Minimes.

[81] Olwen Hufton also notes that the church's and thus the Société's proximity to the marketplace must have also irritated the Dames. *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, 36.

16, 1793, the Citoyennes républicaines petitioned the National Convention to demand that prostitutes be imprisoned because they were "dangerous" to society. They asked the state for a program to "regenerate" the prostitutes so that they could be "bonnes citoyennes and become mothers of families." Before the deputies, club members presented themselves as the authority on patriotic women. They asserted, "Legislators, it was up to the Citoyennes républicaines to frankly present some truths about our sex to you; it's up to you to deploy the proper ways to prevent these female beings from harming the Republic while harming themselves."[82] Certainly the presumption of the Citoyennes républicaines that they acted as leading spokeswomen miffed the Dames. The club's claims insulted the market women's traditional authority.

Despite their rivalry, why would not the Dames and the women's club both proudly wear the tricolor cockade? The Enragés had increasingly appropriated the tricolor and the red cap as emblems of their political positions. Thus, the cockade visually marked crucial ideological differences and factional divides. On one side, the Citoyennes républicaines agitated for women to wear the tricolor. On the other side, the Dames began to interpret the tricolor as the emblem for detrimental Enragé economic policies, hostile attitudes towards merchants, and the women who challenged the Dames' exceptional political influence. Therefore, the Dames no longer principally interpreted the tricolor as a national symbol as they had during the October Days two years earlier.

By 1793, the Dames had already become disillusioned with the Enragé-backed assignat and its failure as working currency. In the spring, the Maximum on bread began to draw lines on subsistence issues. Although the price cap on bread benefited the Dames, the Enragés' suspicious attitudes towards food merchants did not. In May 1793, Claire Lacombe addressed the Jacobins

[82] *AP* I: 74, le 16 septembre 1793, 284, "régénerées" "bonnes citoyennes et devenir mères de famille," "Législateurs, c'était à des citoyennes républicaines à vous présenter franchement des vérités sur notre sexe; c'est à nous de déployer les moyens propres à empêcher des êtres féminines de nuire à la République en se nuisant à elles-mêmes."

on behalf of the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires. She exhorted them, "Strike down the agitators, the hoarders and the egoistic merchants. There exists an awful plot to make the people die of hunger by raising the denrées [essential foodstuffs] to enormous price levels."[83] By the Fall of 1793, the debates over the General Maximum superheated the tensions between the Dames, whom the General Maximum would harm, and the Citoyennes républicaines, who strongly advocated for the price controls.[84] Parisian sans-culottes descended on the Convention on September 4, 1793 to demand further price controls and the government bowed to Enragé pressure. The deputies promised to create "a maximum price on all denrées of the most important necessity."[85] Unlike the Spring 1793 maximum on bread, the Fall 1793 Maximum would put price limits on the foodstuffs that the Dames sold. The Maximum had only affected the Dames as consumers in the Spring, but the General Maximum covered all of the goods they sold in Fall 1791. Worse yet, without separate price caps for wholesale and retail, the Dames would be unable to make a profit as retail merchants.[86]

The General Maximum further escalated the tension between Citoyennes républicaines and the Dames des Halles. During one of their meetings at St. Eustache, the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires boldly sent a deputation to the Croix-rouge to again ask, in part, for this "fixed price on all the denrées used by the *people*." (my emphasis)[87] In contrast to the Dames, when the Citoyennes républicaines spoke of "the people," they referred to consumers and workers. They excluded merchants from this category by default. The interests of

---

[83] Quoted in Albert Mathiez, *La Vie Chère et le Mouvement Social Sous La Terreur* (Paris: Payot, 1927), 202; See also Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, p. 16. "Frappez les agioteurs, les accapareurs et les égoïstes marchands. Il existe un complot affreux de faire mourir de faim le peuple en portant les denrées à un prix énorme."
[84] The Dames expressed their hostility towards Enragé policies by scorning *Père Duchesne* in November 1793. They bullied and shouted against colporteurs who were hawking the paper and other radical titles. Paul d'Estrée, *Le Père Duchesne: Hébert et la Commune de Paris (1792-1794)* (Paris: Librairie Ambert, 1908), 337.
[85] Mathiez, *La Vie Chère*, 369.
[86] See Chapter 4 for a detailed presentation of how the Maximum affected the Dames and how they responded.
[87] AN F^7 3688^3, Rossenville, le 22 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 171; see also Mathiez, *La Vie Chère*, 356. "taxe de toutes les denrées à l'usage du peuple."

the club's "people" were consumer interests. Consequently, the women's club even directly lambasted merchants.

The specter of new price controls created a pressure cooker for factional disputes. In the streets, these disagreements manifested themselves in battles over the tricolor. The National Convention had already decreed that all male citizens must wear the tricolor. The Citoyennes républicaines insisted that women also take the cockade as a sign of citizenship and the Dames refused to wear an emblem that they associated with the Enragés. It was the final straw.

Brawls broke out across the city between women who donned the tricolor and the Dames who rejected it. Fistfights and verbal assaults rocked the faubourg Saint-Germain in mid-September.[88] In les Halles, the Dames menaced women wearing the cockade and tried to frighten them from the marketplace. Tri-colored women, some of whom were Citoyennes républicaines, lashed out against those who rejected it. In response, the Dames "tore to pieces" the women with the cockade and threatened to thrash them again if they repeated their maneuvers.[89] The Dames shouted that "if someone insulted [even] one citoyenne who did not have a cockade, they would all seek revenge for her."[90] Both parties made good on their threats in les Halles, other marketplaces, and in public spaces. The Dames temporarily won the day in Saint-Germain. Observer Prévost reported that most of the women in the neighborhood had given up the tricolors for which they initially had enthusiasm. But tempers still ran high, especially in the central Halles. Police reporter Béraud observed that the cockade fistfights corresponded with marketplace problems like spiraling prices. After documenting the mêlées, he warned his

---

[88] Prévost, le 13 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 231-232.
[89] AN F^7 3688^3, Harivel, le 14 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 94; "étrillé."
[90] Prévost, le 18 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 233, "si on insultait une citoyenne qui n'avait point de cocarde, elles toutes la revancheraient,"

superiors, "The people, above all the women, [are] speaking a thousand horrors of the Convention, one cries against it, the [price of] denrées augment from day to day."[91] The brawls increased the urgency of the deputies to finish their Maximum legislation.

In response to the unrest that continued to spark, the Commune passed a decree that "the citoyennes who do not wear 'the venerable sign of liberty' [the tricolor] will no longer be admitted in the buildings, gardens, and public monuments." The municipal representatives hoped that this decree would reduce confusion, compel women to wear the tricolor as a national symbol like men did, and override local power struggles between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines.

Despite the Commune's decree, the Dames continued to interpret the tricolor as a political badge of Citoyennes républicaines and their Enragé allies. Police on the ground relayed the Dames' attitude that only prostitutes "and those [women] who go to the Jacobins who wear it." In this way, the Dames explicitly linked women who wore the tricolor, like the Citoyennes républicanes, to Jacobin politics rather than simply to the revolutionary nation. Police observer Prévost reported that the Dames suggested "citoyenne cards" replace the tricolor. The market women confirmed they would gladly carry "citoyenne cards" if the state issued them. [92] In this equation, the tricolor represented neither the nation nor a token of citizenship according to the Dames. In addition, the Dames' response illustrates that they assumed they were already citizens and that they brokered this relationship directly with the state.

The Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines tested the Commune's decree on the tricolor before the ink could set. The next day, tricolored women would not let tricolor-less

---

[91] AN F^7 3688^3, "Rapport de l'observateur Béraud," le 20 septembre 1793. "le peuple, surtout les femmes, disant mille horreurs de la Convention, on crie contre elle, les denrées augmentent de jour au jour."

[92] Prévost, le 18 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome IV, 233, "et celles qui vont aux Jacobins qui en portent; qu'on leur donne des cartes de citoyennes, et qu'elles en porteront," "cartes de citoyennes."

women pass in the marketplace. Some Dames des Halles defended tricolor-less women from those vocal women who wore it. The Dames "tore to pieces" their tricolored opponents and threatened to thrash them again if they repeated their maneuvers.[93] At the Porte de Paris on September 18, forty Dames resolved to publically reject the Commune's tricolor decree. The Dames dispatched spokespersons to neighboring markets to organize their collective opposition.[94] In markets across the capital, the Dames directly confronted female supporters of the cockade. In the central Halles on September 20, the Dames even spanked the Citoyennes républicaines in the marketplace directly outside Saint-Eustache.[95]

Always anxious over public order, the National Convention felt threatened by the brawls among the Dames, the Citoyennes républicaines, and other women in early September 1793. Just days before the Commune passed their tricolor decree, the female members of the Société fraternelle de la section de l'Unité had demanded that the Convention itself pass a national law to force all women to wear the tricolor cockade. The club's female members wrote the petition. Thirty-three other clubs and general assemblies including the Jacobins and the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires signed the petition to bolster the request. The 34 organizations asserted to the Convention that the tricolor was a "revolutionary sign and that the citoyennes who share our works should equally share this advantage."[96] On September 20, 1793, the Paris police added their own request and asked the National Convention to outlaw those who "will rip off or profane the national colors."

---

[93] Prévost, le 19 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome III, 235. "Les citoyennes qui ne porteraient pas 'le signe vénérable de la liberté' ne serait plus admises dans les édifices, jardins, et monuments publics," "étrillé."

[94] AN F^7 3688^3, "Rapport du Cn (l'observateur) Bigeot, du 18 7bre, 2e an de la république, une et indivisible," le 18 septembre 1793.

[95] AN F^7 3688^3 "Rapport de l'observateur Rousseville," le 20 septembre 1793; See also AN ^{F7} 3688^3, Rapport de Dugar, le 20 septembre 1793.

[96] *AP* I: 74, le 16 septembre 1793, 284-285. "signe révolutionnaire et que les citoyennes qui partagaient nos travaux devaient également partager cet avantage."

In response to the Parisian police and club petitions, the National Convention finally joined the Commune on September 21 and decreed that "all women be required to wear the national cockade." It is critical to note that the Convention described the rosette as the "national" cocakde instead of the "tricolor." The Convention used the precise language to signal that the tricolor represented the nation and not any one party. Moreover, the deputies categorized any violence over the cockade or refusing to wear one a sign of counter-revolutionary intent. The Convention ordered the police to imprison women without the cockade for eight days. For a second offense, the police would label the woman a counter-revolutionary suspect. Then the Justice of the Peace would judge her political crimes. Still worse, any woman who ripped the cockade off another woman would face 6 years in prison. In an ultimately ironic twist, by making the offending woman judicially responsible for her actions, the Convention marked women as autonomous individuals responsible for their political actions. This seconded the Dames' and the Citoyennes républicaines' idea of personal citizenship for women. The deputies framed tricolor offenses as political crimes with political punishments.[97]

In their September 21 decree, the National Convention intentionally downplayed the factional issues by failing to acknowledge their existence. Instead of acknowledging its factional associations, the Jacobin deputies painted the cockade as a sign of "patriotism," defended the "national colors," and deemed wearing it "civic usage." Unlike the Dames, the deputies strategically appropriated the tricolor as a national symbol and overrode the Enragés. The Convention had to pass a decree on the tricolor to restore public order. But the Jacobins simultaneously placated their Énragé opponents by seconding the Communes decree, and robbed the Énragés of an ideological victory by characterizing the tricolor as a national symbol.

---

[97] *AP* I: 74, le 21 septembre 1793, 571-572. "arrachera ou profanera les couleurs nationales," "toutes les femmes soient tenus de porter la cocarde nationale."

However, the Dames and the women's club still saw the tricolor as a marker of local power struggles, community hierarchies, and the rallying point for Enragé economic policies. [98] The Convention's decree merely further enraged the Dames.

In the days following the National Convention's firm decree, fewer citoyennes came to blows over the tricolor.[99] Two days after the decree, most women had taken up the cockade as the law required. [100] Yet, the Dames des Halles did not slip into quiet complacency; on the contrary, they boiled with resentment. The Dames of the Place Maubert ripped women's tricolored bonnets from their heads and threw them in the mud amidst a barrage of insults.[101] The disgruntled Dames of the central Halles only restrained themselves for five days before they attacked a fabric merchant who was making tricolor bonnets. The market guard saved her from being killed. These Dames clearly viewed wearing the tricolor as a substantial political defeat. The police reported that the Dames asserted that "one had forced them to take the cockade, that one apparently wanted to force them [the Dames] to wear one of these sorts of bonnets in order to humiliate them, and that they were not duped by what one desired of them."[102] Reluctant women found ways creative ways to technically obey the decree by hiding the required cockade under ribbons, handkerchiefs, and other coverings.[103]

After the Convention officially passed the General Maximum, previous antagonisms between the Dames and the women's club intensified**.** When the Jacobin-led deputies finalized the price control plan on September 29, it was a turning point in the Dames' political alliances.

---

[98] *AP* I: 74, le 21 septembre 1793, 571-572.
[99] AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de Leharivel, le 22 septembre 1793.
[100] AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de l'observateur Rousseville, le 24 septembre 1793.
[101] AN F^7 3688^3, Observations du citoyen Rolin, le 21 septembre 1793.
[102] Prévost, le 25 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, 240, "on les avait forcées de prendre la cocarde, qu'on voulait les forcer à porter apparemment une de ces sortes de bonnets pour les humilier, qu'elles n'étaient pas dupes de ce qu'on désirait d'elles."
[103]AN F^7 3688^3, Beraud, le 29 septembre 1792, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 226.

Whereas police spies reported that the Maximum "brought great pleasure to the people,"[104] the atmosphere in les Halles was much more pessimistic. There, Parisians predicted that the Maximum would allow the counter-revolution to over take the capital in a week.[105] The Dames, no doubt, felt the sting that the Citoyennes républicaines launched their campaign for price controls directly under their noses at Saint Eustache. Merely a few paces away, in their cherished church, the Dames' political rivals lambasted merchants as greedy hoarders and indirectly advocated for their ruin. The market women were especially frustrated since the General Maximum legislation did not include separate prices for wholesale and retail trade. The Dames could not legally make a profit. To make matters worse, marketplace supplies dwindled in mid-October and the Dames complained that they could not secure any foodstuffs.[106] The flawed Maximum compounded with the dearth of supplies to send the Dames into what one spy called "the greatest consternation."[107]

Although the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires won their tricolor campaign in September, the Société encountered challenges of its own. On October 6, the Société révolutionnaire des hommes du 10 août appeared at the Convention to ask the deputies to close the club.[108] The Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires sent their own deputation the following day brazenly claiming, "Our rights are those of the *people*, and if one oppresses us, we will know to oppose resistance to the oppression."[109] Again, as they had with

---

[104] AN F^7 3688^3, Le Harivel, le 28 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 221; For more on the General Maximum see Mathiez, *La Vie Chère,* 377, "a fait un grand plaisir au peuple,"
[105] AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de Latour Lamontagne, le 28 septembre 1793.
[106] Prévost, le 17 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 256.
[107] Prévost, le 22 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 262. "la plus grande consternation."
[108] *AP* I: 76, le 6 octobre 1793, 170.
[109] *AP* I: 76, le 7 octobre 1793, 190-191. "nos droits sont ceux du peuple, et si on nous opprime, nous saurons opposer la résistance à l'oppression."

the Maximum, the Citoyennes républicaines depicted themselves as the voice of the sovereign people. However, other popular clubs and sectional assemblies increasingly claimed to fill the same role.

The bitter feelings between the Dames des Halles and the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires soon erupted over another symbolic article of clothing: the red liberty cap. The emblem visually endorsed the sans-culottes' politics even more than the tricolor. By extension, the red cap could be read as approval of price-fixing and other Enragé economic policies. On 13 October 1793, the Dames des Halles hurled invectives against a woman selling red caps.[110] Fearful that they would have to wear the red cap, the Dames protested that they already wore the cockade which was "enough" and that they refused to take up the Phrygian cap as well.[111] The contest over wearing the tricolor cockade evolved into another battle, intentional or unintentional, over wearing the red cap and the Enragé positions that it evoked.

In light of the recent tricolor dispute, the Dames and other Parisians assumed that the Citoyennes républicaines wanted to force women to wear the red caps. The Société's rulebook shows that the tricolor and the red cap had been part of the club's official regalia before round two of the brawls even began. The club's présidente donned and removed a red cap in order to bring meetings to order and to close them.[112] Therefore, while nonmembers suddenly viewed the présidente's red cap as an extreme statement, the gesture was actually part of the club's established procedures.[113] Yet, as economic tensions climbed, the symbol's ambiguity fueled another fiasco.

---

[110] Prévost, le 13 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 252.
[111] Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, 166. "assez"
[112] Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris, *Règlement de la Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris* (Paris, 179?); See also Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, 167.
[113] Godineau, *The Women of Paris*, 167.

On October 28, the Dames spectacularly clashed again with the Citoyennes républicaines in the marketplace and then again during the club's meeting in St Eustache. The conflict illustrated how the Dames equated the Citoyennes républicaines, the liberty cap, the cockade, and radical Jacobin policies. During the market, women whom the populace took to be Citoyennes républicaines attempted to force the red cap on other women. The quarrel ran rampant throughout les Halles as an estimated 6,000 women confronted one another. The women lashed out with violent insults and threats. Anti-red cap women, including the Dames, cried that they would only follow the laws of the state and not the arbitrary rules forced upon them by others.[114] Later that evening, the Citoyennes républicaines attempted to hold their club meeting in St. Eustache. However, a citoyenne spectator interrupted the session from the gallery by crying, "Down with the red cap, down with the [female] Jacobins, down with the [female] Jacobins, down with the [female] Jacobines & the cockade." The room disintegrated into disorder and the armed guard had to hold back the spectators in the tribunes. The Justice of the Peace entered and addressed the angry women in the galleries. He shouted, "Citoyennes, in the name of the law, silence; in the name of the law, I order you to be silent... Citoyennes, the red cap is not in question, you will not wear it at all, and you will be free to style your hair (and decorations) any way you deem fit." He dismissed the armed force, then asked the présidente of the Société to doff her red cap and give it to him. Finally, the Justice of the Peace declared that the Société's meeting was adjourned and all were free to enter St. Eustache as they wished.

Crowds flooded the church. They insulted the women and attacked their regalia. In order to "make one duly respect the face of liberty that the flag represents," a few Citoyennes républicaines took a stand in front of their symbols. One exclaimed, "Massacre us if you want, but at least respect the rallying point of the French." The Dames and other citizens beat and

[114] *AP* I: 78, Amar's Report, 9 brumaire an II, 30 octobre 1793.

dragged some of the club members. The more fortunate Citoyennes républicaines fled to seek sanctuary at the Section Committee.[115]

Aware of the gravitas that legal procedure carried, the Citoyennes républicaines insisted that the Section Committee immediately hear their testimony. They demanded that the Committee compose a procès-verbal to document their plight. However, an officer burst into the Committee's room and alerted the group that the market crowd was coming fast on their heels. He reported, "The heads are heated, the crowd is immense, one cries right now: *long live the republic*, down with the revolutionaries [meaning the radical Citoyennes républicaines]." The chant pegged the Citoyennes républicaines as enemies of the Republic and the Revolution. The cries echoed the Dames' sentiment that one could be a revolutionary citizen without supporting radical policies. The guard convinced Citoyennes républicaines that "the safety of the public & that of the section" required them to leave immediately. They escaped two-by-two through a secured passage. [116]

Like the women's club which had fled to the Section Committee, the Dames des Halles recognized the power of official institutions. They filed a formal complaint at the Commune the same day. The market women protested that the Citoyennes républicaines wanted to legally oblige women to wear the red cap just as they had with the tricolor. In response, municipal representative Léonard Bourdon asserted that the Citoyennes républicaines must be "held to keeping themselves within the limits of the law and to not troubling the public order by signs of

---

[115] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris,* n° 215, du 23 au 30 brumaire an II, le 13 au 20 novembre 1793 "à bas le bonnet rouge, à bas les Jacobines, à bas les Jacobines, à bas les Jacobines & la cocarde." "Citoyennes, au nom de la loi, silence; au nom de la loi, je vous ordonne de faire silence... Citoyennes, il n'est pas question du bonnet rouge, vous ne le porterez point, et vous serez libres de vous coëffer comme bon vous semblera." "bien à faire respecter la figure de la liberté, que représente le drapeau," "massacrez-nous si vous voulez, mais au moins respecte le point de ralliement des français."

[116] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, le 23 brumaire an II, "Les têtes sont échauffées la foule est immense; on crie actuellement: *vive la république,* à bas les révolutionnaires," "le salut public & celui de la section."

distinction."[117] Bourdon categorized the red cap as a *distinctive* emblem. The red cap polarized citizens and flew in the face of the supposedly homogenous General Will. Deeply affiliated with the Enragés, the red cap could not pass as a national symbol like the tricolor.

The next day, a deputation of cap-less "citoyennes" convinced the National Convention to directly address the conflict. At the bar, these petitioners testified that women wearing the red cap had invaded les Halles in order to force others to wear it. The petitioners blamed the turmoil on the red-capped women. The press labeled these suspected Citoyennes républicaines as "women claiming to be revolutionaries"[118] or those "calling themselves [female] Jacobins."[119] The spokeswoman for the petitioning citoyennes urged the Convention not to pass a law requiring the red cap for women. Even more damning for the Citoyennes républicaines, the cap-less citoyennes asserted, "You will certainly not ignore that the unhappiness of France was only brought about by a woman's voice [Marie Antoinette], we demand therefore the abolition of *their club*" (my emphasis).[120] The anti-cap citoyennes only asked the Convention to singularly disband the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires. The petitioners did not ask the deputies to dismiss all female political clubs as the Convention would later frame their

---

[117] Mathiez, *La Vie Chère,* 357. "tenues de se refermer dans les bornes de la loi et de ne pas troubler l'ordre public par des signes de distinction."

[118] From *Moniteur* reprinted in *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, 34. "femmes prétendues révolutionnaires"

[119] From *Journal de Paris* reprinted in *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, "se disant jacobines,"

[120] *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, The *Archives Parlementaires* singular wording of club reflects to official procès-verbal recorded in AN C 280, dossier n°761. However, some newspapers misprinted the quote so that it appeared that the women asked the Convention to close all female political clubs. The confusion may have arisen from the plural description of citoyennes réublicaines révolutionnaires and the single entity in which they were members. Or, the newspapers may have conflated the disconnect between the women's targeted appeal regarding one female club and the Convention's debate of all female clubs in response. "vous n'ignorez point que le malheur de la France ne soit qu'introduit (sic) que par l'organe d'une femme [Marie Antoinette], nous demandons donc l'abolition de *leur club*"

appeal.[121] The deputies passed the request to the Comité de Sûreté générale, charged with keeping public order, to review the problem.

When the Comité de Sûreté générale reported back to the deputies on October 30, the National Convention swiftly abolished all female clubs and decreed that all popular societies must be public.[122] Deputy Amar, a member of the Comité, proposed that women could attend club sessions to keep abreast of politics necessary to educate their children. But he asserted that women must not participate in them lest political tempers corrupt their morals. Moreover, Deputy Amar argued that excessive club attendance required women to "abandon" higher female duties and virtues like familial care. He contended that women had "greater concerns to which nature calls them" than "these useful and laborious duties" of political institutions.[123] According to Amar, nobles and priests could also manipulate women more easily than men. This resulted from women's lack of education and their natural weakness.[124] Women in formal politics could become vulnerable Achilles tendon of the Republic.

However, other deputies protested that women had the right to assemble. They could not, in good conscience, outlaw some clubs without outlawing all clubs on principle. To circumvent this problem, the deputies cited "public safety" and the "dangers" of the past days to declare a state of emergency. The government manipulated the circumstances to validate exceptional measures. Consequently, the Convention passed Deputy Basire's wording that "these

---

[121] Robert Blackman has examined conflicting reports of a speech by Mirabeau and how they reached audiences. Whether they were intentionally altered or not, these transcriptions allowed secondary audiences to variously interpret Mirabeau's speech. Robert Blackman, "Did Cicero Swear the Tennis Court Oath?" (paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, Cambridge, MA, April 4-7, 2013).
[122] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 49.
[123] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 50. "soins plus importants auxquels la nature les appelle" "ces utiles et pénibles fonctions."
[124] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 49.

associations [women's clubs] be forbidden, at least during the revolution."[125] Therefore, the deputies couched their decision as a temporary maneuver meant to serve public order instead of making a statement on individual's political rights. Moreover, the Convention ignored the women petitioners' initial parameters to disband *only* the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires. Instead, the deputies closed *all* female political clubs.

During the initial debate over the tricolor, some male revolutionaries had already questioned the relationship among the unrest, female citizenship, and Rousseauian gender norms. If women wore civic symbols, they would unearth fundamental ambiguities: How would these portable signs translate into political membership? Would these signs permit women to intervene in civic matters? And what other citizenship claims might it allow women to make? In this sense, those who wished to keep women out of formal political institutions feared the cockade would be a gateway to further civic inclusion. Police spy La-Tour-La-Montagne feared that troublemakers wanted to:

> inspire in women the desire to share political rights with men, when they [the women] will have the cockade, they [the troublemakers] say, they [the women] will want to vote in our assemblies, share with us administrative places, and this conflict of interests and of opinions, will produce a disorder favorable to our projects.[126]

He warned that the cockade could lead the women to misinterpret voting as "a natural right."[127]

Now, in October 1793, the Convention debated the issue of women in politics through gendered lenses. Deputy Fabre d'Églantine argued that the leaders of shady "coalitions under the

---

[125] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 51. "ces associations soient interdites, au moins pendant la révolution."

[126] AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de l'observateur La-Tour-La-Montagne, le 21 septembre 1793; Similarly, on 19 septembre 1793, Rousseville reported that he suspected that someone had bribed some women to call other women with the tricolor "les putains." AN F^7 3688^3, Rousseville, le 19 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 143. "inspirent aux femmes le désir de partager les droits politiques des hommes, quand elles auront la cocarde, disent ils, elles demanderont des cartes civiques, elles voudront voter dans nos assemblées, partager avec nous les places administratives, et de ce conflit d'intérêts et d'opinions, résultera un désordre favorable à nos projets."

[127] AN F^7 3688^3, Rapport de l'observateur La Tour-La-Montagne, le 22 septembre 1793, "un droit naturel."

name of institutions [the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires]... were not at all women occupied with the care of their households, inseparable mothers of their children, or daughters who work for their parents or take care of their youngest sisters; but they are a kind of errant knights: they are emancipated girls, female grenadiers who spread out everywhere and cause trouble in the city."[128] In other words, the Citoyennes républicaines' political activism was not legitimate because they were neither attached to other members of society or working for their families. Fabre d'Églantine denied their social utility and thus their civic identity.

Similarly, gendered fears about the weakness of women convinced some male revolutionaries that women would be especially susceptible to plotters. Police observer Prévost concluded that mere troublemakers spurred the violence among women at the St. Eustache meeting. He added, "It was humiliating for the masculine sex to see women wear the cockade and sow horror everywhere."[129] Deputy Fabre d'Églantine maintained that "our enemies" even strove to arm women because, although they did not know how to fire the weapons, the plotters could conveniently take them.[130]

Despite their gender-based arguments, the Comité de Salut public and the Convention used the red-cap incident to advance their own factional agendas. In a two-pronged attack, the Jacobin deputies continued to attack the more moderate Girondins on their right as well as strike against the more radical Enragés to their left. Two days after the showdown at St. Eustache, the Comité de salut public du Département de Paris reported that the Dames des Halles said they

---

[128] *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, 21. See also p. 33. "coalitions sous le nom d'institutions [the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires]... n'étaient point des femmes occupées de soin de leurs ménages, des mères inséparables de leurs enfants, ou des filles qui travaillent pour leurs parents ou prennent soin de leurs plus jeunes sœurs; mais c'est une sorte de chevaliers errants: ce sont des filles émancipées, des grenadiers femelles qui se répandent partout et causent des troubles dans la ville."

[129] AN F^7 3688^3, Prévost, le 29 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 270. "il était humiliant pour le sexe masculin de voir les femmes porter la cocarde et semer l'épouvante partout."

[130] *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, 21. See also p. 33. "nos enemies"

attacked the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires because "the revolutionary women [Citoyennes réublicaines] wanted to ask the Convention to decree that women be required to wear a red cap, and pants with pistols on each side." Despite the clarification on the Dames' motives, the Comité and the Convention posted 1,000 copies of their report around Paris, which informed the public that the brawl was "a maneuver of the partisans of Brissot and of his accomplices." The Comité de Salut Public maintained that the poster would "enlighten [correct] the public on the motive of the brawl."[131] The Jacobin-led Convention was in the middle of trying Brissot and the rival Girondins, whose fate had been all but sealed since the Spring. The Jacobin Convention and the Comité de Salut Public manipulated the source of the conflict between the Citoyennes républicaines and the Dames to superficially shift blame on the Girondins. The deputies turned the fight to their political advantage and made the Girondins the common enemy. Thus, the Jacobin deputies created a scenario in which they could win some support from radical Parisian sans-culottes. The Convention blatantly ignored the Comité's report that attributed the brawl to the Dames' rage over the red cap. The deputies removed the focus from the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines who struggled against one another.

In his final report to the Convention on the brawl between the Dames and the women's club, Deputy Amar concluded that the conflict on October 28 could have only been "a plot by the enemies of public interest," although some of the Citoyennes républicaines may have been motivated by "even an excess of patriotism." He added, "One would like, in this moment when

[131] AN BB^3 81^A fol 394, 8 brumaire an II, October 29, 1793, séance du matin, Extrait du registre des procès-verbaux et délibérations du Comité de surveillance du Département de Paris, Délibération du Comité de salut public du Département de Paris, "les femmes révolutionnaires vouloient demander à la Convention de décréter que les femmes fussent tenues de porter un bonnet rouge, et des pantalons et pistolets au coté." "c'est un manouvre de partisans de Brissot et ses complices," "détromper le public sur le motif de cette rixe."

one judges Brissot and his accomplices, to excite some [rebellious] movements in Paris."[132] The Convention banned all women's clubs on October 30, 1793. Brissot and 23 Girondins met their fate the next day.

When the Dames des Halles originally appeared before the National Convention, they had only requested that the Convention not pass a decree making them wear the red cap, which would ruin "the art of commerce." Next, they had asked the Convention to shut down the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires. They did not mention Brissot.[133] Yet, the sectional assembly of the Marchés neighborhood requested that all women's clubs be banned and not just the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires.[134] The Convention, the Department, and the sectional assembly had grafted their own internal agendas and party politics onto the Dames' dispute with the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires.

The Convention's decree reflects how the Jacobin deputies became anxious that Parisians associated the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires with their own club. It is telling that, for the anniversary of August 10 a few weeks earlier, the Jacobins had showcased the Dames' march to Versailles rather than encapsulating female citizenship through the women's club.[135] The Jacobin deputies had arrested Enragé leader Jacques Roux on the first day of the proclaimed Terror in early September. After the brawls over the red cap in late October, the Jacobins tried to distance themselves even more from the Citoyennes républicaines. Jacobin deputy Maribon-Montant told his fellow deputies that the Jacobins never discussed a red cap requirement because they had far more serious things to debate. He asserted, "It's therefore

---

[132] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 49 "un complot par les ennemis de la chose publique," "excès même de patriotisme," "On voudrait, dans ce moment où l'on juge Brissot et ses complices, exciter quelques mouvements à Paris."
[133] Mathiez, *La Vie Chère,* 357. "l'art du commerce."
[134] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 50.
[135] See the analysis of Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris" in *Rebel Daughters,* 94.

wrong that one calls these women Jacobines." He added that other Jacobin deputies could verify his claims. [136] By closing women's clubs, the Jacobins also weakened the Enragés' vocal allies.

During the same week in which the deputies banned women's clubs, the profoundly flawed General Maximum became unsustainable. The economic crisis further pinched the Dames' business as well as their ability to buy their own food. What little foodstuffs that did arrive at les Halles were sold at unattainable prices.[137] The retailers could not find any butter or eggs to sell.[138] The Dames des Halles complained that their potato suppliers from the countryside no longer came. With such scarcity, the suppliers feared that Parisians would pillage them. The police reported the Dames' lament that, if the situation continued, they "will not have anything more to sell and will die of hunger."[139]

Two days after the Dames confronted the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires, the National Convention ordered a study to create separate price limits for wholesale and retail trade. For a month, Parisians had felt the acute shortcomings of the price controls that did not differentiate between wholesale and retail trade. Deputy Barrère, while defending separate wholesale and retail maximums, highlighted the utility and patriotism of retail merchants like the Dames des Halles. He called them "this class of good republicans who buy and live from day to day."[140] His assessment divorced being a good citizen from being loyal to a certain political party. Instead, Barrère aligned citizenship with useful work and fair trade. It

---

[136] *AP* I: 78, le 8 brumaire an II, le 29 octobre 1793, 21. "C'est donc mal à propos qu'on nomme jacobines ces femmes-là."
[137] Prévost, le 1 novembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 274.
[138] AN F^7 3688^3, Prévost, le 30 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 272.
[139] Prévost, le 31 octobre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 273. "n'auront plus rien à vendre et mourront de faim."
[140] Mathiez, *La Vie Chère*, p. 433. "cette classe de bons républicains qui achète et vit au jour le jour."

seemed as if the Dames could reclaim their occupational worth, commercially survive, and defend their patriotism through the reformed Maximum.

Less than a week later, on 5 November, the former Citoyennes républicaines appeared at the National Convention to protest the decision to close their club. To no avail, they maintained that nearly all of their members were "mothers of families, wives of defenders of the fatherland." Boos and hisses drowned out their attempt to speak.[141] When the red-capped Citoyennes républicaines visited the Commune on November 17 to try their hand there, Chaumette undercut their appeal based on the Rousseauian vision of the domestic, moral wife. "Eh!," he declared, "Since when is it decent to see women abandon the pious cares of their households, the cradle of their children in order to come to the public place, in the tribunal, at the bar of the senate, in the lines of our armies, to fill the duties that nature gave men alone? To whom then did this common mother confide her domestic cares?" He argued that men could not resist women's amorous appeal and thus were at the mercy of their "despotism."[142] Chaumette concluded that such tyranny would be especially dangerous in politics.

Unlike the Citoyennes républicaines, the Dames des Halles did not depend on formal political institutions to channel their political activism. Therefore, the Dames' interventions appeared less transgressive by gendered standards and thus less threatening to republican unity. After the fallout from the red-cap brawls, Journalist Prudhomme urged his female readers:

> Citoyennes, be honest and industrious girls, tender and modest spouses, wise mothers, & you will be good patriots. True patriotism consists in fulfilling your duties, & to only valuing the rights assigned to each one, according to sex and age, & not carrying the cap

[141] Quote as recorded by *Journal des Débats et des Décrets* and reprinted in *AP* I: 78, 364, National Convention session of 15 brumaire an II, le 5 novembre 1793. See also Mathiez, *La Vie Chère*, 360. "mères de famille, de femmes des défenseurs de la patrie."

[142] Prudhomme, *Les Révolutions de Paris,* n°216, du 1 au 9 frimaire an II, le 21 au 29 novembre 1793, 274-275. "depuis quand est-il décent de voir des femmes abandonner des soins pieux de leur ménage, le berceau de leur enfant pour venir sur la place publique, dans la tribune aux harangues, à la barre du sénat, dans les files de nos armées, remplir des devoirs que la nature a départis aux hommes seuls? A qui donc cette mère commune a-t-elle confié les soins domestique?" "despotisme."

> & the pike, pants & pistols. Leave that to men, born to protect you & to make you happy. Keep your clothing analogous to your morals and your jobs; & always punish with courage, like you just did, all offenses which attempts to disorganize society, in swapping the sexes or in confounding them with indecency, & with anti-civic and perfidious intentions.[143]

Through their work, their occupational dress, and their lack of standing political organization, the Dames could fit, if marginally, into some republicans' interpretations of the good Rousseauian woman.

Strikingly, revolutionary officials and journalists were not the only ones to condemn the Citoyennes républicaines through gendered lenses. The Dames themselves skillfully hurled Rousseauian tropes to disarm the Citoyennes républicaines. When the Dames scorned citoyennes who wore the cockade in September, they asserted that "only whores and female Jacobins wear cockades."[144] In the marketplace, police reported that the Dames attacked cockade-wearers by arguing that "the cockade should be worn by men; that they [the women] should only occupy themselves with their household, and not with current affairs."[145] Of course, the Dames themselves ignored the latter two-thirds of their own "imperative" by trading in the marketplace and frequently intervening in politics. However, they understood how to maneuver within hegemonic discourses to disadvantage the rival Citoyennes républicaines. The Dames des Halles drew on normative gender ideals to undercut their adversaries' political agenda and influence, even while they bucked such restrictions in their own activism.

---

[143] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris* N°213 du septidi 7 brumaire au quartidi 14, an deuxième de la république (Paris: 1793), 151. Oct 28-Nov 4 "Citoyennes, soyez filles honnêtes & laborieuses, épouses tendres & pudiques, mères sages, & vous serez bonnes patriotes. Le vrai patriotisme consiste à remplir ses devoirs, & à ne faire valoir que les droits départis à chacun, selon le sexe & l'âge, & non à porter le bonnet & la pique, le pantalon & le pistolet. Laissez cela aux hommes, nés pour vous protéger & vous rendre heureuses. Gardez vos vêtemens analogues à vos mœurs & à vos occupations ; & punissez toujours avec courage, comme vous venez de faire, tout délit qui tendroit à désorganiser la société, en troquant de sexes, ou en les confondant avec indécence, & dans des intentions anti-civiques & perfides."

[144] Godineau quotes Guérin in *The Women of Paris*, 160.

[145] Prévost, le 25 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome VI, 241. "la cocarde devait être portée par les hommes; qu'elles ne devaient s'occuper que de leur ménage, et non des affaires du temps."

By using gendered norms to portray their opponents as female outcasts, the Dames elevated themselves to a higher moral ground and sharpened their political advantage. Moreover, the idea of citizenship as societal engagement rather than institutional membership resonated with the Dames' concept of gendered work. The Dames did not view the dismantling of the women's clubs as violating natural rights. For the Dames, citizenship and representative powers were contingent, not innate. The Dames believed they had stronger claims to authority than the Citoyennes républicaines. The club's Enragé agenda not only challenged the market women's livelihood, but also undermined the Dames' occupational service to the nation.

Unlike the Citoyennes républicaines, the Dames politically survived the closing of the women's clubs. The Commune clearly recognized the Dames' political influence because they continued to receive the market women despite decreeing that it would no longer admit deputations of women on 17 November.[146] Nor does the decree appear to have discredited the Dames in wider political culture. In the midst of the violent disputes, Charles-Henri d'Estaing, the head of the Versailles National Guard, drew on the Dames' patriotic reputation to defend his October Days actions. At Marie Antoinette's trial, d'Estaing testified, "[I] placed myself in the middle of the crowd of Parisians, and spoke especially to the citoyennes de la halle, who knew me, and who listened to me and treated me well." Immediately following the tricolor debacle, d'Estaing still called the Dames "citoyennes," assumed they held popular influence, and manipulated their presumed good intentions to prove his own.[147]

---

[146] Prudhomme, *Révolutions de Paris*, n°216, du 1 au 9 frimaire an II, The Commune decree was November 17, 1793.

[147] Prudhomme, ed. *Les Crimes des Reines de France Depuis Le Commencement de la Monarchie jusqu'à la Mort de Marie-Antoinette: Avec les Pièces Justificatives de son Procès* (Paris: Bureau des Révolutions de Paris, an II), "me placer au milieu de la foule des Parisiens, et parler spécialement aux citoyennes de la halle, qui me connaissaient, m'écoutèrent et me traitèrent bien."

At its core, the conflict over the tricolor cockade and the red cap expressed the struggle over locating sovereignty and claiming the authority to channel it. When, on September 13, the Commune ordered that "the citoyennes who do not wear the venerable sign of liberty will not be admitted in the buildings, gardens, and *public* monuments" (my emphasis),[148] they framed the tricolor as a public marker of membership in the body politic. After all, the public composed the nation and owned public domain. Within the degree's framework, citizens expressed their civic inclusion in the body politic and professed their loyalty to the nation through the tricolor cockade. In other words, citizenship was a public affair that was enacted before others. Such a performance-based notion of citizenship aligned with the Dames' vision of citizenship as continuous societal engagement.

The cockade issue also presented two competing locations of popular sovereignty. On the one hand, the Citoyennes républicaines believed that political clubs could act as legitimate organs of the people. The Dames, on the other hand, sought to bypass the Société's claims to representative authority by insisting that the people endowed governmental bodies with the sovereignty. Before the Convention's September decree enforcing the tricolor, one police observer reported that the Dames "show generally the deepest respect for the national representation... [The Dames] refuse to wear the cockade because the [initial] law that the Convention pronounced does not order it, they [the Dames] say, and let it be [the Convention's] decree and [they] will execute it."[149]

---

[148] Mathiez, *La Vie Chère*, 356. "les citoyennes qui ne porteraient pas le signe vénérable de la liberté ne serait pas admises dans les édifices, jardins, et monuments *publics*"

[149] AN F^7 3688^3, 21 septembre 1793, Rapport de l'observateur La Tour La Montagne, "témoignent en général le plus profond respect pour la représentation nationale... refusent de porter la cocarde parce que la loi ne l'ordonne point que la convention prononce, disent elles, et quelque soit son décret nous l'exécuterons." Observer Panetier also reported that, "les femmes voulant attendre le décret de l'Assemblée," refused to wear the cockade outside of Notre Dame. AN F^7 3688^3, Panetier, le 19 septembre 1793, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome I, 139.

By promising to obey the Convention, the Dames undercut the Société's attempt to assert its authority in the streets. The Dames did not like answering to a nongovernmental group that was theoretically their equal in politics. The market women felt especially threatened by a group of women who could challenge (if not potentially eclipse) their traditional role as representatives of the popular classes. Therefore, the Dames re-centered the source of legitimate authority on the government. The Dames might wear the tricolor if the representatives decreed it; they would not wear it if a mere political organization, like the women's club, attempted to force it on them. Nonetheless, the marchandes still regretted the deputies' decision to compel all women to wear the cockade. The Dames took the decree as a sign of defeat. The lost cockade battle humiliated the Dames and emboldened the Citoyennes républicaines.

In the second round against the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires, the tables turned. The Dames successfully backed the Convention as the leading voice of authority to undercut the Citoyennes républicaines and their detrimental subsistence agenda by association. The Dames and other women vehemently rejected the Société's calls for the red cap in the marketplace on October 28. The market women again protested that "they would obey the laws made by the legislators and the acts of the people's magistrates; but that they would not cede to the will and caprices of certain idle and suspect women." The Dames and their allies then cried "Long live the Republic, one and indivisible!"[150] If the Citoyennes républicaines were idle

[150] *AP* I: 78, le 9 brumaire an II, le 30 octobre 1793, 49. See Chapter 4 of this work for more details. The cockade resurfaced as a point of contention later in the Revolution. The ambiguity between the cockade as a factional or a national symbol continued to play a role in the confusion. In late November and early December 1794, some women refused to wear the cockade because the Jacobins had passed the law and they had been defeated. During the subsistence crises and popular uprisings of Prairial and Germinal an III, Parisian women once again ripped cockades off one another. In an attempt to bring order, the government created another law on 16 Prairial an 3 that any citizen who ripped the tricolor off another would be arrested. In this case, Parisians took the cockade as a symbol of the nation. However, in the eyes of many Parisian women, the deputies had once again failed to uphold their duties towards the populace. Consequently, they refused to honor the symbol of the nation and visually portray the reciprocal goodwill of their political contracts. Women tore the cockade off of one another crying that "elles ne porteroient plus de cocardes qu'elles n'ayant suffisamment de pain," and "on ne doit pas être Républicain quand on

and did not perform useful work, they especially could not be productive citizens in the Dames' eyes. Moreover, as merchants, the Dames believed that they formed part of the sovereign people which food regulation should fairly consider.

The Dames battled the Citoyennes républicaines for political hegemony in their local neighborhood, struggled to defend their legitimacy as leading female voices on the national stage, and strove to defeat advocates of commercial policies that threatened their businesses. Moreover, their cries revealed that the Dames supported the nascent republic but not the radical policies advanced by the Citoyennes républicaines and the Enragés. The contests between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines did not pit the counter-revolution against the Revolution. Instead, one vision of relations within the body politic squared off against another. The debate fundamentally resonated with the ambiguities of female citizenship, civic responsibilities in food politics, the definition of the people, and modes for expressing popular sovereignty. Despite articulating its decision primarily through gendered logic, the Convention manipulated the contests to serve party lines. The Jacobin deputies took advantage of the battle between the Dames and the Citoyennes républicaines to blame the more moderate Girondins and strike the more radical Enragés in one fell swoop.

The Dames supported the closure of the Société des Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires not because they believed women should be shut out of politics but because of

---

n'a pas de pain." Even in Spring 1795, the cockade continued to be a contested symbol in the performance of factional loyalty or citizenship. See Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, le 30 novembre 1794, 288; Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, le 3 décembre 1794, 293;; See also a March 21, 1795 report that "troublemakers" were telling women, "Citoyennes, si vous ne voulez pas passer pour Jacobines et être insultées, ôtez vos cocardes." Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire*, Volume I, le 21 mars 1795, 591; AN AF/IV/1472 Dossier Frimaire an II, 8 Germinal an III; Archives de Paris D.1 U^3 35, Laws sent by the Ministre de la Justice to the Tribunal du Commerce. Enregistrement des lois déposées au greffe, 16 prairial an III; AdP D.4Z 5 Paris au jour le jour de la police municipale (suite), Dossier: Germinal à Prairial an III, 26 Germinal, p. 370, p. 372; "elles obéiraient aux lois (sic) faites par les législateurs et aux actes des magistrats du peuple; mais qu'elles ne céderaient pas aux volontés et aux caprices d'une certaine de femmes oisives et suspectes," "Vive la République une et indivisible!"

factional and local rivalries. The Dames matched their physical mudslinging with rhetorical denigration. The Dames maligned the club members as outspoken women who abandoned their homes. Yet, the Dames only targeted the Citoyennes républicaines with their gendered insults, not all female clubs. The Dames themselves boldly intervened throughout the Revolution and often changed the course of politics, this very instance included. The Dames applauded when the Convention outlawed female clubs because the decree undercut their opponents, not because it excluded women from institutional citizenship. Moreover, the decree did not challenge the Dames' idea that one earned and maintained citizenship through productive work that served the nation. Indeed, the Dames even envisioned gendered work as a crucial category of useful labor. They appealed to these gendered duties to bolster their demands on the state and assert their citizenship.

Gendered Work, Occupational Labor, and Civic Activism as Complementary Pillars of Citizenship

Despite their conflict with the women's clubs, the Dames did not imagine discourses of gender, civic engagement, and labor as contradictory. In the Dames' vision of citizenship, their businesses as well as their familial, communal, and emotional work benefitted society. This final section illustrates how the Dames viewed their occupation and civic work as deeply intertwined with their gendered duties. The Dames depicted their work as republican mothers as profoundly connected to their family's labor for the nation. They maintained that they provided a moral and patriotic example for their children, raised children to serve the fatherland in the army or on the home front, and forged familial relationships according to revolutionary values.

The Dames nested their gendered roles in their nuclear families within the body politic. In 1793 the Dames loudly complained in les Halles after the state failed to compensate the "families of defenders of the fatherland." In exchange for sending their husbands to the frontiers to defend the nation, the state had promised to assist the market women's families. The Dames crafted a petition to protest that the state was neglecting their families despite the law that made it the state's duty.[151]

All fertile women held the potential for biological motherhood, but the Dames portrayed civic motherhood as a personal choice. Women autonomously integrated themselves into the body politic by deciding to embrace this duty. Since civic motherhood served society, the Dames could also make demands on the state to aid their moral or familial quests. During a 1792 monetary crisis, the Dames defended a defaulting bank by coupling it to their patriotic work as mothers. In order to fulfill their maternal duties, they testified that the bank's services facilitated the "ease and peace reigning in our families." The Dames affirmed that this security allowed them to nurture "children of the fatherland" who would then be useful through their own labor and military services. Before the National Assembly, the marchandes insisted they were raising industrious children sensitive to revolutionary values, who "satisfied with the honest gain that they take from their labor, already envision vice with horror."[152] The Dames assured the Assembly that, for the deputies' benefit, they brought up "virtuous wives and laboring men." A journalist reporting the event interpreted the relationship among the bank, the Dames' work, and their families in a similar vein. The journalist told his readers, "Becoming free, [the Dames]

[151] AN W 191, Prévost, le 21 janvier 1794, reprinted in Caron, *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets*, Tome II, 82, "familles des défenseurs de la patrie."
[152] *AP* I : 38, le 19 février 1792, 655. "l'aisance et la paix règnent dans nos familles," "enfants de la patrie," "satisfaits du gain honnête qu'ils retirent de leurs travaux, envisagent déjà le vice avec horreur."

promise to raise their children as citizens, & to teach them to enrich the state by their work with one hand, & to hold the sword which must defend it with the other [hand]."[153]

The Dames neatly tied their occupational work to the nation, their families, and their families' contributions to the nation. As merchants, their trade served society; as mothers, their commerce financially supported their families. The Dames could only provide useful work to the nation in this dual sense if the state provided them an environment in which to trade and profit. In March 1794, the fruit retailers of Saint-Germain "abandon[ed] their commerce" because regulations on prices and order of sale made it impossible to legally profit. The police noted, "They [the retailers] say that they cannot support their husbands and their children on the frontiers if one does not permit them to sell."[154] The Dames and their families could only contribute half of the useful labor in the reciprocal pact with the nation. They could not bear the brunt of the nation's economic hardships alone and support their nuclear families.

As working mothers on the edge of poverty, the Dames deployed familial metaphors to their socio-economic benefit. In August 1789, the Dames took up a collection throughout the city to free prisoners who defaulted on paying their "mois de nourrice" or wet-nursing fees.[155] Unlike their compatriots in the provinces, Parisian workingwomen often sent their children to wet-nurses. The state started to regulate the activity and monitor the payment of wet-nursing fees,

---

[153] *La Chronique de Paris*, n°51, le 20 février 1792. On the National Assembly Session of 19 February 1792 : [vous], "des épouses vertueuses [and] des hommes laborieux," "Devenues libres, elles promettent d'élever leurs enfans en citoyens, & de leur apprendre à enrichir d'un main l'état par leur travail, & à tenir de l'autre l'épée qui doit le défendre."

[154] Caron, *Paris pendant Le Terreur*, volume 5, Rapport de Le Breton, W 112, 15 ventôse an II (5 mars 1794), p. 94 "abandonnent leur commerce" because they could not make a legal profit. According to police, "elles disent qu'elles ne peuvent entretenir leurs maris et leurs enfants sur les frontières si on ne leur permet de vendre."

[155] *Procession solemnelle des dames fripières de la Halle, & des Marchandes du Cimetière des Innocents; Suivie du Compliment à M. De La Fayette* (Paris: Chez Gueffier, le jeune, De l'imprimerie de L. Jorry, 1789), from The French Revolution Research Collection (Micro Graphix), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k42486x, 2-3. "la déliverance des Prisonniers." "mois de nourrice."

and parents may have been detained for their debt.[156] To defend the debtors, the Dames stacked familial metaphors like Russian dolls. They appealed to General Lafayette to release the prisoners by integrating him into their familial metaphor. They called him the new "common Father of such a large family" and implored him to bring peace and order to Parisians, the "victims" of treacherous circumstances. Mimicking the parent-child relationship in question with the wet-nurse fees, the Dames flattered Lafayette, "We feel that your presence already resurrects happiness and joy in the heart of this multitude of Children [Parisians] by whom you are so tenderly cherished and so religiously adored."[157] The market women appealed to Lafayette, as an arm of the state, to fulfill his paternal responsibilities to them so that they, as parents, could then financially liberate themselves and perform their parental duties. Those imprisoned parents who already defaulted on their payment would be physically liberated as well and could return to their homes. The Dames easily aligned the prisoners' families, the familial body politic, and the state's continued paternal responsibilities.

Even during the Consulate, the Dames held Napoleon to the same paternal standards that they had applied to the king, the Assembly, and the Directory. In 1800, a Parisian sang in the street to rally support for Napoleon. The Dames des Halles silenced the man by surrounding him and drenching him in mud. Police reported that the market women complained against the government. In particular they asked, "Would not the continuation of the war prolong common

---

[156] P. Galliano, "Nourrices" in *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Marcel Marion (Paris: A Picard, 1923). J. Charpentier, "Enfants Trouvés" in *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime: royaume de France, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Lucien Bély (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996). Paris started to regulate wet-nurse activity and attempted to stifle the abuse of the Enfants Trouvés as intentional temporary care in 1769.

[157] BnF Lb39 7705, signé Lebois, *Procession solemnelle des dames fripierres de la Halle et des marchandes du cimetière des innocents, suivie du Compliment à M de la Fayette* (Paris: Imprimerie de la Jorry, 1789), le 18 août 1789, 3, "Père commun d'un si nombreuse famille," "victimes," "Nous sentons que votre présence fait déjà renaitre le bonheur & la joie dans la cœur de cette multitude d'Enfants [Parisians] dont vous êtes si tendrement chéri, si religieusement adoré."

misery and would [it not] deprive parents of their children?"[158] In the Dames' eyes, the protracted war tore apart families. Thus, Napoleon failed as the father of the collective French family because he did not protect nuclear families.

Throughout the Revolution, the Dames advanced the idea of the familial state in which citizens had gendered duties. As poor mothers, the Dames financially and emotionally sustained their family, which would then serve the nation. And as citizens, they held the state to its paternal obligations. The market women validated their demands on the state by playing the dual role of mothers and citizen-children. The Dames maintained that their gendered labor, commercial trade, and civic activism served the nation and earned their membership in the body politic.

Conclusion

In December 1793, the government convicted Jean-Jacques-Claude Vizon, a marketplace fish inspector, of counter-revolutionary activities. Along with his lawyer, the Dames ran to defend him at the National Convention. The market women legitimated their appeal based on gendered, occupational, and patriotic components of their citizenship. They proclaimed: "The women of the October Days, the mothers, the wives of so many volunteers armed in favor of liberty, would not raise their voice in favor of Vizon, if [he] were not a friend of liberty." They defended the inspector by founding their authority on their prior activism and on their position as mothers and wives. Among his "virtues," the Dames testified he was a "good citizen, good son" who provided for his elderly father "through his *work*." The Dames bolstered Vizon's paternalistic qualities by asserting that he was "a Benefactor, a father" to them as well. The Dames adeptly linked their request to the familial body politic and their occupational labor by

[158] AN F^7 3702, Ministère de la Police, le 11 frimaire an IX, le 2 décembre 1800, reprinted in Aulard, *Paris sous le consulat*, Volume II, 30; "elles se livrent à beaucoup de plaintes contre le gouvernement sur ce que la continuation de la guerre prolongeait la misère commune et privait les parents de leurs enfants?"

donating "to the children and to the wives of the Liberators of the Montagne Bridge," a recent battle where several soldier-fathers died. Although the Dames called their gift a "modest offering," they qualified that it was "part of the fruit of their painful savings." Finally, the Dames couched their demand as a right earned by their civic activism. They reminded the deputies: "Representatives of the People, they who have chased the tyrant from his hideout at Versailles have perhaps *acquired some rights* in relation to you: they dare ask for this right today [that their] wish will not have been heard in vain" (my emphasis).[159]

For the Dames des Halles, the discourses of occupational labor, popular sovereignty, and gendered duties worked hand in hand to construct their civic identity. The market women imagined that they practiced citizenship primarily through societal engagement. By serving society, they legitimized their demands on the state. The Dames believed that citizenship had gendered components but that it was not fundamentally determined by gender. Rather, individuals acquired and continued to enact citizenship through useful work. This diverges from institutional models of citizenship that assumed certain individuals had *a priori* rights inscribed on their sexed bodies. Thus, when the National Convention banned female political clubs in 1793, the Dames continued to intervene in politics unfazed by the ideological distinction. The restriction did not fundamentally challenge the Dames' notion of citizenship.

The Dames' confrontations with the counterrevolutionary nuns and the Citoyennes républicaines reveal that gender was a flexible component in delineating citizenship. In both conflicts, the Dames violently clashed with another group of women. While reacting to both, the revolutionaries consciously harnessed gender as a political tool rather than an immutable and

[159] AN C287, n°866 (pièce 3), signé de L-G Cahier, défenseur officieux de Vizon et défenseur gratuit des prisonniers indigents, Date: 7 nivôse an II (December 22, 1793). "Représentants du Peuple, elles qui ont chasé le tiran de son repaire de Versailles ont peut être acquis quelques droits auprès de vous: elles osent réclamer ce droit aujourd'hui leur vœu n'aura été entendu en vain."

fundamental marker of identity. However, the revolutionaries used different rubrics for evaluating the two confrontations. While the Dames spanked the nuns, the journalists, pamphleteers, and artists interpreted their strikes as primarily "corrective." As mothers and wives, the Dames guarded the salvation and political virtue of their children and the nation. In this case, most fellow citizens accepted the violence was a permissible conduit for the Dames' maternal duties.

In contrast, when the Dames brawled with the Citoyennes républicaines, the revolutionaries interpreted female violence as threatening to public order. Yet, even when the deputies debated banning female clubs, close analysis reveals that they were not primarily concerned with delineating gendered citizenship. Instead the deputies took advantage of the situation to undercut political opponents. At the same time, the Dames attacked rivals who threatened their commercial livelihood and local authority by sullying their feminine virtues. The Dames and the deputies shielded their factional motives through gendered tropes. Because the Dames framed their complaints against a *single* female club and because they enacted their citizenship outside of institutions, they believed that silencing the club would restructure power hierarchies but would not fundamentally redefine citizenship. But, as the conflict with the nuns demonstrates, the Dames still interpreted their own feminine duties as a crucial component of their citizenship.

While confronting counter-revolutionary nuns and fighting with the women's club, the Dames des Halles struggled to advance their own vision of female citizenship. In doing so, they attempted to safeguard their political influence. The market women drew on gendered work to validate their membership in the body politic while delegitimizing rivals. The Dames crafted their civic identity by fusing their service as wives and mothers, their utility as citizen-workers,

and their patriotism as defenders of the nation. In exchange for serving society, the Dames expected the state to respond to their needs. The Dames invented a notion of citizenship contingent upon societal engagement and practiced through occupational, civic, and gendered work.

– Chapter 7 –

Playing the Poissarde: Madame Angot, the Dames des Halles, and Political Influence, 1795-1804

On 13 Brumaire an VI (November 2, 1797), the journal the *Courrier des Spectacles* excitedly announced that the Ottoman ambassador would soon arrive in Paris.[1] The Turkish emissary sent a request ahead of his entourage: he demanded an audience with Madame Angot. He traced the footsteps of the top British diplomat and the French Directors down the Boulevard du Temple to visit the illustrious woman. The police could not help but repeat how one journal assessed her popularity: "For a long time now, one only speaks of Madame Angot, one only sees Madame Angot, one only laughs at Madame Angot."[2] When the Ottoman ambassador arrived for his meeting with the celebrity, mounted horsemen treated him to a show of equestrian feats. The Turkish emissary then entered into a "rich salon," decadently lit by candles for the occasion and waited for Madame Angot's valet to escort her. Parisians from all walks of life watched the scene unfold with great anticipation.[3]

Who was this leading lady of the Directory, who whipped Paris into a frenzy with her airs, whose wealth dwarfed that of rentiers, whose reputation preceded her, even abroad? Madame Angot was none other than a fictitious "newly rich fish merchant."[4] Much to the critics' distress, the Ottoman ambassador had requested to see an acclaimed play, but it was not a work

---

[1] Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 13 brumaire an VI (November 3, 1797), n°255. This issue announces that the Ottoman ambassador will come tomorrow.

[2] Archives nationales (hereafter AN) BB^3 85 Rapport du Bureau Central du 27 frimaire an V (December 17, 1796), Journaux: *Gazette nationale de France* du 27 frimaire reprinted as DCCCLXXIV in François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire: Recueil de documents pour l'histoire de l'esprit public à Paris*, Volume III (Paris: L. Cerf, 1898-1902), 634. "Depuis long-temps on ne parle que de madame Angot, on ne voit que madame Angot, on ne rit qu'à madame Angot."

[3] *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 13 brumaire an VI (November 3, 1797), n°255; le 14 brumaire an VI (November 4, 1797), n°256. "salon riche."

[4] AN BB^3 85, Rapport du Bureau Central du 27 frimaire (December 17, 1796), Journaux: *Gazette nationale de France* du 27 frimaire reprinted as DCCCLXXIV in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume III, 634. "marchande de marée enrichie."

by Molière or a glimmering jewel from the French canon.[5] No, the ambassador wished to see a bumbling fishwife, a Dame des Halles incarnate.

In at least 19 plays by multiple playwrights, the character Madame Angot achieved notoriety as the most popular parvenue during the Directory and the Consulate. With her new wealth, Madame Angot bought all the material trappings of high society but the corresponding refinement was sold separately. Across Parisian theaters, Madame Angot mounted the social ladder only to fall from grace again and again. Just as her "rich salon" was awkwardly entrenched in les Halles, Madame Angot could not escape her popular class origins. As a nouveau riche, Madame Angot reflected the revolutionaries' anxieties over the fluctuating social order. But by utterly failing to penetrate the bourgeoisie, she also confirmed social immobility. The Revolution reconstructed social order, but it swapped one hierarchy for another.

Unable to fit in anywhere, Madame Angot was an "original" in the eighteenth-century sense.[6] A fictional foreign character exclaimed, "She is unique in her kind! I have never seen such a European."[7] Parisians ascribed her near cultural autonomy. Playwright Antoine-François

---

[5] One critic bemoaned that *Madame Angot* and other "sottises" could not "faire honneur à la nation." Rather, he asserted that the genre "annonce aux nations étrangères que nous retombons dans ces tems d'ignorance." *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 18 germinal an VI (April 7, 1798), nº410. In 1798, the editor of *Le Censeur dramatique* expressed his disdain for "le goût délicat des têtes noires de la grande nation" who went to see Madame Angot. Quoted by Maurice Albert, *Les Théâtres des Boulevards (1789-1848)* (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1902), 165.

[6] "Original" could have a complimentary and a derogatory sense during the eighteenth century. Both meanings conveniently applied to Madame Angot. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois: "On dit ... figurément d'Un Auteur qui excelle en quelque genre, sans s'être formé sur aucun modèle, que *C'est un original. Les Anciens sont les vrais originaux qu'il faut étudier*. On dit par raillerie, d'Un homme qui est singulier en quelque chose qui le rend ridicule, que *C'est un original, un vrai original, un franc original, un grand original*." The two meanings can also be applied to Vadé, the father of Madame Angot's theatrical ancestors. In the 1799 play *Vadé à la Grenouillère*, Merville (a character) describes Vadé (the poissard playwright) by comparing him to the "originals" of les Halles: "on ne pourrait à la Halle/ Trouver son rival;/ Il a d'ailleurs, et c'est le principal,/ L'abord très-amical,/ Le ton très-jovial;/ Vous voyez que c'est au total/ Un franc original," BnF Yth 18672 Armand Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère, folie poissarde en 1 acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles* (Paris: Imprimerie au h. des Troubadours, An VII or An VIII), 29.

[7] This is Bromar's line in BnF Microfiche M- 5336 Joseph Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople: drame, tragédie, farce, pantomime, en 3 actes, orné de tous ses agrémens* (Paris: Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, 1800), 5. "Elle est unique dans son espèce! Je n'ai jamais vu pareille Européenne."

Ève Maillot explained in a preface to his first Angot play: "Madame Angot will have neither rhymes nor reason; she will speak as she is able to, provided that she gets a laugh."[8] When he painted Madame Angot as an independent agent, Maillot captured the prevailing attitude that this fictive Dame des Halles existed independently of any one plot. Unlike self-contained plays that offer momentary snapshots, Madame Angot provides a continuous window on how Parisians reconstructed their socio-political world over eight years.

From 1796 to 1803, Madame Angot roamed the popular imagination and transcended the confines of the Parisian stage.[9] Madame Angot permeated journals, almanacs, songs, and even a fashion periodical. Parisians even used her name in conversation to describe someone with foppish pretentions. Her transportable character blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction. In an 1803 blockbuster, the famous fishwife even repaid the Ottoman ambassador's real visit by theatrically joining the sultan in Constantinople. Describing a fictive soirée, one newspaper reported that Madame Angot's "dinner companions" discussed politics and waxed poetic: "Madame Angot is a woman of great merit! One would not even know how to doubt it, because everyone speaks of her, runs to her house; one fetes her, one speaks well of her, badly of her; one finds her everywhere."[10]

However, as much as Madame Angot became a cultural being in her own right, she remained connected to the genre poissard and the Parisian market women who served as her model. This chapter analyzes how Madame Angot offered Parisians a dynamic means of

---

[8] BnF, Z Rothschild-4589, Antoine-François Ève (known as Maillot or Demaillot), *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue, opéra-comique en 2 actes, joué sur le Théâtre d'Émulation* (Paris: Chez Barba, An V (1796), A2. "malgré de très-bons avis, je n'ai pu me résoudre à changer ces rimes maudites. Madame Angot n'aura ni rimes ni raison; elle parlera comme elle pourra, pourvu qu'elle fasse rire."

[9] Pierre Gobin identifies 19 plays with Madame Angot from 1796 to 1802. "C'était pas la peine..." in *Symbols, Myths and Images of the French Revolution: Essays in Honor of James A. Leith*, edited by Ian Germani & Robin Swales (Regina: University of Regina, 1998), 249.

[10] BnF Lc2 961, Antoine-François Ève Demaillot, *Les Soupers de Madame Angot ou le Contradicteur* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Madame Angot, 1797), 1. "Madame Angot est une femme d'un gran mérite! On n'en saurait douter, car chacun parle d'elle, on court chez elle; on la fête, on en dit du bien, du mal; on la trouve par-tout."

interacting with a "Dame des Halle." By hurling words from the page to the stage, playwrights and actors sought to channel the cultural ethos of les Halles. From the use of slang expressions, to heavily accented pronunciation and costumes, they used multiple strategies to breathe material life into their poissard characters. Spectators interacted with these bodily interpretations by singing during revamped popular airs and laughing at the action before their eyes. The sensory experience spurred Parisians to readily conflate theater and reality. Such vivacity encouraged Parisians to closely associate the Dames with Madame Angot and vice versa. When Parisians lauded or condemned Madame Angot's adventures, they indirectly but unavoidably judged the Dames. Thus, Madame Angot's "actions" strongly influenced the Dames' image. How did the rise of Madame Angot, fishwife par excellence, affect the living Dames' political influence during the Directory and the Consulate?

In addition, Madame Angot reflected far-reaching concerns about social hierarchies, political power, and even the supposed universalism of the Revolution itself. After the Terror, Thermidorian and Directory officials feared that the Parisian popular classes might continue to support "emotional" and radical politics. Officials cracked down on popular politics and demoted direct sovereignty. Therefore, poissard political pamphlets which championed the popular classes became less numerous. Yet, theatrical performances that incorporated the Dames' likeness became increasingly successful. During the Directory and the Consulate, shifting political climates, uncertainty over social hierarchies, and cutthroat commercial competition propelled theatrical content. These factors combined to inform Madame Angot's ubiquitous and reoccurring character. Consequently, what can Madame Angot's evolution from 1796 to 1803 reveal about changing socio-political attitudes? How did Parisians conceptualize the popular

classes within the nation after the Terror? How could Madame Angot gain rampant popularity across class lines if she was a touchstone for social anxieties?

This chapter argues that, through Madame Angot, playwrights and audiences pondered the rational capacities of the popular classes, considered their public utility, and debated their role in the nation. In the eyes of Parisians, Madame Angot committed two mortal sins: she foolishly aspired to transcend her class and she abandoned her useful work. Madame Angot upset the apple cart because she became perpetually useless while pursuing her hopeless social ambitions. Even worse by revolutionary standards, Madame had to be frivolous and dissembling to pursue her delusions. And she did not even master these qualities!

During the plays from the Directory, Madame Angot's prevailing goal is always to integrate herself into the *French* bourgeoisie. These plays transcend factional divides of Parisian elite during the Directory by taking "bourgeoisie" as a cultural category. Thus, the bourgeoisie that the fishwife attempted to infiltrate included old money as well as the nouveaux riches who ascribed to the same set of pretentious cultural practices. The former saw the opportunity to reassert social superiority after the Terror, and the latter strove to join them by aping or even outdoing their extravagance. From 1796 to 1800, playwright Maillot shunned Madame Angot's attempts to enter French bourgeois ranks. He deemed their foppish and fake culture as unworthy of honest citizens. Maillot celebrated the authenticity, transparency, and productive labors of the popular classes in contrast to a wasteful, posturing, and idle new elite. Thus, on the one hand, the popular classes found their intrinsic societal worth and culture buttressed in Maillot's plots. On the other hand, bourgeois spectators could retain some sense of superiority since, despite her new riches, the lowly fishwife was inherently incapable of infiltrating their ranks.

Playwright Joseph Aude changed the tenor of the Madame Angot plays during the

Consulate (1799-1804). By sending Madame Angot abroad to chase her dreams of social ascent, Aude removed French elites from the picture. Aude's Angot still hopelessly apes her social superiors, but she butchers the cultural decorum of foreign, not French, elites. Thus, Aude condemns Madame Angot's delusions alone. Unlike Maillot, Aude does not condemn the French bourgeoisie who are not even present. However, in the Consulate plots Madame Angot redeems herself in the same way as the Directory plays during the the final scenes. She swears to return to les Halles and pursue her useful work there as a fish merchant. By its absence, the French bourgeoisie remains unscathed and detached from the critique. The change in plotlines from Maillot's Directory blockbusters to Aude's Consulate smash hits suggests that playwrights and audiences hesitated to attack the Parisian elite by 1801. A new politico-cultural cadre was settling.

Nonetheless, all the Angot plays depicted productive work as a leading virtue of the popular classes. The Directory and Consulate plays shared the conclusion that useful labor redeemed individuals. While other critiques shifted, this principle remained the same. The consistency suggests that many revolutionaries agreed with the Dames' notion of earning membership in the nation through work. However, the French continued to contest how the popular classes should formally practice this political membership and what they should gain in return for their work.

In addition, the Consulate plays questioned the myth of the universal Revolution. Aude sent Madame Angot to Constantinople and Malabar where she repeatedly misunderstood foreign cultures by assuming that they functioned like France. Since she had experienced revolutionary reform, Madame Angot ridiculously supposed that all marriages were contracts, everyone could appeal to local justices, and that French social order found natural parallels in other societies.

Therefore, Madame Angot doubled her blunders. Not only did she fail to infiltrate the superior classes abroad, but she also exposed how the Revolution did not easily translate beyond the hexagon. Whereas the living Dames had advanced a notion of the worker-citizen that was potentially universal, the universal Revolution found its limits embodied by a fictive Dame des Halles.

This chapter first explores the Old Regime predecessors to Madame Angot. Then, in the context of revolutionary theater, it probes how contemporaries imagined fluid boundaries between poissard characters and their merchant models. It examines how the public and playwrights created Madame Angot's image through stiff box office competition. Next, it asks how this most famous "Dame des Halles" developed as a cultural actor on and off the stage.[11] It analyzes how Madame Angot emerged as a new *face* for the market women while the post-Terror suppression of popular politics rendered the actual Dames increasingly faceless. Finally, this chapter analyzes how, as contemporaries critiqued Madame Angot, they questioned the popular classes' capacity for rational action, debated the value of work, cast doubt on the Revolution's "universal" citizens, and challenged the living Dames' political influence.

Madame Angot's Theatrical Ancestors

Vaulted to the height of its popularity by Jean-Joseph Vadé in the 1750s, the genre poissard underwent intense politicization during the Revolution. Initially a literary style spanning from brief dialogues to poems and vaudevilles, the genre experienced a revival during the Revolution. As we have seen with the political pamphlets of Chapter 6, "poissard" could refer to any member of the popular classes. However, "poissarde" in the feminine form literally meant

[11] I use the phrase "cultural actor" to emphasize that Madame Angot's image, through the very façade of autonomy, had the ability to perform exceptionally potent cultural work on the Dames' own image.

"fishwife" or "female fish merchant." By using the title "poissarde" to label their characters, playwrights encouraged readers to associate their work with the Dames des Halles.

Throughout the eighteenth century, playwrights riffed on the rough and tumble lives of Parisian merchants and artisans, while admiring their frank speech, unrestrained comportment, and their impressive mastery of Parisian slang.[12] Most poissard stereotypes bantered in satirical dialogues or sang airs in the vaudevilles and parades of the streets and fairs.[13] Vadé's principal poem, *La Pipe Cassée, Poëme épi-tragi-poissardi-héroi-comique,* testifies to the colorful range of *poissard* emotions. Vadé celebrated the unrestrained quarrels of the popular classes and mimicked their foul language, their unique expressions, and their humorous mispronunciations.[14] Vade's scenes form loosely related "tableaux," more intent on creating a portrait than a detailed plot.[15] Most of the action in *La Pipe Cassée* centers on eating or drinking, and the physical display of emotions whether through an embrace or a slap. The dialogue is riddled with cursing,

---

[12] The poissardes had a long-established reputation for their frank and free speech. A revolutionary reprint of Montaigne's works noted his desire to speak honestly and directly: "L'eloquence faict inure aux choses, qui nous destourne à soy. Comme aux accoustrement, c'est pusillanimité de se vouloir marquer par quelque façon particulière et inusitée….Puisse-je ne me servir que de ceulx qui servent aux halles à Paris ?" Michel de Montaigne, *Essais de Michel de Montaigne,* Tome Premier (Paris: Chez Jean Serviere et Chez Jean-François Bastion, 1793), 221.

[13] A.P. Moore, *The Genre Poissard and the French Stage of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1935), 67, 78. The parades were often played on the balconies at theaters of the foires (fairs) to entice audiences. The poissard plays deployed stock characters such as the fish merchant desperately trying to marry off her child, the king's military recruiters who prowl the streets, the husband who perpetually flees his washerwoman wife, and enough neighbors to fill a bar in a corner of les Halles. Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 5. To create poissard songs, authors superimposed new lyrics on well-known melodies that audience members could easily repeat. Revolutionary playwrights would deploy this catchy and financially savvy tactic. Jean-Louis Jam has explored how music became a central means for mass participation in public festivals. Song acted as a unifying and educational agent that involved all citizens in the action. See Jean-Louis Jam, "Politique musical du Directoire," in *La République directoriale*, ed. Philippe Bourdin and Bernard Gainot, Volume 1 (Moulins : Imprimerie A Pottier S.A., 1998), 501, 504. In reference to Vadé, see Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 121, 141.

[14] Carla Hesse argues that poissard speech constituted the female "transgression of good style" for the popular classes while female *préciosité* functioned as its dangerously-educated and articulate counterpart among higher classes. Carla Hesse*, The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12.

[15] BnF, Rés. Yf-52, Jean-Joseph Vadé, *La Pipe Cassée, Poëme épi-tragi-poissardi-héroi-comique* in *Oeuvres poissardes* (Paris: Defer de Maisonneuve, An IV (1796)) ; A.P. Moore describes the scenes as "tableaux." Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 132.

creative use of "diable" (devil), and enough references to "culs" (asses) to make the "honnête homme" (honest man) of the *drame bourgeois* blush.

Living material inspired Vadé's plays and contributed to the vivacity of his characters. Vadé did not seek to create new characters; he sought to embody the realistic models he saw buzzing about him in les Halles.[16] Of Vadé's delivery, one contemporary marveled: "It was not at all an imitation, it was nature."[17] In a preface to his collected works, Vadé reminded all potential actors to pay special attention to performative elements from phonetically-transcribed lines to vocal pace.[18] In the challenging poissard pronunciation, sharply diphthongal vowels linked biting and percussive consonants among irregular conjugations. For example, in one fictional trip to see the king in "Varsailles," a Dame des Halles who means "J'y vais lui faire notre réverance," sings in poissard "J'allons l'y fair' not' réverance."[19] Since the Dames and their Parisian neighbors formed theater audiences, the plays that attempted the imitative feat had to be somewhat realistic.[20]

It is precisely this mixing which allowed the image of the living Dames des Halles to be worked out publically and orally on the stage as well as in the marketplace. The Dames des Halles and their literary counterparts coalesced in the popular imagination, with each angle repeatedly informing the other.[21] The geographical specificity of les Halles as well as the

---

[16] By the mid-eighteenth century, some bourgeois and noble circles began to learn poissard scenes by heart to perform privately for one another. Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 173. Vadé assumed his dialogues and songs would be represented in public as well as in private.
[17] BnF, Rés. Yf-52, "Note," in *Oeuvres poissardes*. "Ce n'étoit point une imitation, c'étoit la nature."
[18] BnF, Rés. Yf-52, Vadé, "Avertissement," in *Oeuvres poissardes*.
[19] Taconnet, *L'Impromtu des Harangères* (1754) verse printed in Moore, *The Genre Poissard*. It is difficult to grammatically and phonetically create an English equivalent. The translated meaning is: "Varseilles" is Versailles; "J'y vais lui faire notre reverance" is I am going there to show him our reverence; "J'allons l'y fair' not' réverance" is "I [we] go to hi' ther' to d' our reverence."
[20] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 178-179. More generally, Moore observes that "the onlookers could compare the *poissard* type in reality and the *poissard* type on the stage." Consequently, Moore argues that it is "quite difficult to draw a neat dividing line between unalloyed realistic observation and literary convention," 5.
[21] Rene Marion, "The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins, 1994), 288; Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, 22; Ouzi Elyada, *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes*

characters' social positions formed a direct link between poissard works and the Dames. Moreover, poissard plays reproduced the market women's traditions and rituals such as bouquet presentations or compliments during royal celebrations.[22] The plays theatricalized the Dames' own theatrics. In *Les Poissardes à la Reine*, a fictive Dame des Halles explains that she and her colleagues toast the queen to prove their sincere praise.[23] Similarly, the entire premise of Augustin de Piis's 1781 *Le Bouquet de vaudeville* rests upon the Dames' quest to compose a ritual compliment for the recently-born dauphin.[24]

On multiple occasions, the tenuous boundary between the Dames des Halles and their theatrical doubles collapsed entirely. On November 17, 1789, *La Chronique de Paris* reported that the Dames had mounted the stage during a representation of *Le Souper de Henri IV*. The journal described how "at the moment when one drinks to the health of the king, several among them [the Dames des Halles] mingled among the actors to sing the chorus with them. One of them [Dames] danced the minuet with M. Paillardel."[25] A similar exchange occurred in the comic opera, *Le Bouquet de Roi*. In the final scene, the scripted characters already include female merchants who offer bouquets to kings and gods. During this "homage," an actor directly invites the "Public" to participate with the actress-poissardes proclaiming, "The spectators/Become actors,/ Here without distinction."[26] Marie Antoinette even looked to the Dames when she performed private poissard plays with her friends. Louis Petit de Bachaumont, a noble and

---

de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792 (Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991); Ouzi Elyada, ed., *Lettres bougrement patriotiques de la Mère Duchêne suivi de Journal des Femmes, 1791* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris/EDHIS, 1989) ; Moore, *The Genre Poissard,* 5, 25, 178-179.

[22] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 203-205.

[23] BnF Lb39 2089, *Les Poissardes à la Reine* (Paris: Imprimerie P de Lormel, 1789).

[24] BnF Arts du spectacle Ra4 659, Augustin de Piis, "Le Bouquet du vaudeville, ou Dialogue d'un charbonnier et d'une poissarde sur la naissance de Mgr le Dauphin." (n.p., Imprimerie de Chardon, 1781).

[25] BnF Lc2 218 1789, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *La Chronique de Paris*, 17 novembre 1789, nº LXXXVI (Paris: Chez La Grange), 343.

[26] Given the date of the play, 24 August 1753, *Le Bouquet de Roi* was probably composed in honor of the king to celebrate his feast day of Saint Louis. BnF Arts du spectacle, Rf 13872 (1) *Le Bouquet de Roi, Opéra-Comique, en un Acte*, in *Oeuvres complettes de Vadé, ou Recueil des opéra-comiques, parodies et pièces fugitives de cet auteur... Nouvelle édition...* (Troyes : F. Mallet, 1797), 130. "Les Spectateurs//Deviennent acteurs,// Ici sans partage."

literary critic, said the queen summoned "the most consummate poissardes [the Dames des Halles] to rehearse and stylize the actors."[27]

The 1780 play, *Le Café des Halles* perhaps best represents the circle of exchange between the living and fictive poissardes. The play ran frequently during the early years of the Revolution.[28] Inside Madame Topette's café, a writer name Boulevard (a nod to the streets which housed popular theaters) searches for a Dame des Halles named Mère Jérôme. He hopes that she can give him a "real" story that he can then retell in his poissard works. Boulevard vaunts Mère Jérôme as his "source" for "some fine jokes, some happy repartees, some spicy metaphors and allusions, some comic accounts, some abrupt subject changes, some burlesque stories."[29] The scene captures the continual blurring of reality and fiction, of creation and representation, and of authenticity and imitation that characterized the genre poissard.

Although Madame Angot did not crash onto the scene until 1796, she could trace her ancestry through the poissard ethos to a few stock characters and themes. A.P. Moore and other literary scholars convincingly argue that Madame Engueule most directly inspired Maillot's Madame Angot. Born from the pen of Pierre Boudin in 1754, Madame Engueule was a distinctly French character rather than a *Commedia dell'Arte* character. The "newly rich poissarde" wants to acquire social prestige by marrying her daughter to a tax collector who lacks acumen. Madame Angot would hatch the same plan decades later.[30] The play revels in Madame Engueule's disputes and confrontational language. This fish merchant exudes raw emotion, banters frankly

---

[27] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 291. "Au moment où l'on boit à la santé du roi, plusieurs d'entr'elles se sont mêlées avec les acteurs pour faire chorus avec eux. Une d'elles a dansé le menuet avec M. Paillardel, & la fête s'est terminée par une ronde." Moore quotes the *Mémoires Secrets de Bachaumont*. "[les] poissardes les plus consommées [the Dames des Halles] pour exercer et styler les acteurs."

[28] See especially how frequently the journal *La Chronique de Paris* lists performances of *Le Café des Halles* during November and December 1789. BnF Lc2 218.

[29] Cailleau, *Le Café des Halles, Comédie en un acte* (Paris: Chez Cailleau, 1781), 13-14. The Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes staged this play for the first time in 1780. "des fines plaisanteries, des réparties heureuses, des équivoques & des allusions piquantes, des récits comiques, des coq-à-l'ânes, des histoires burlesques."

[30] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 236. "poissarde enrichie"

with her social equals, and protects her honor to the point of brawls.[31] Madame Engueule's name called attention to her defining characteristic: her mouth. In 1762, "gueule" referred to the mouth of an animal or "sometimes to a person out of bitterness," whereas "engouler" (engueuler) was a popular verb meaning "to take suddenly by mouth."[32] Her name signaled her vicious verbal attacks and her insatiable consumption. After Madame Engueule, authors continued to depict social-climbing poissardes with similar plots.[33]

During the Revolution, Vadé's popular characters and their light-hearted adventures continued to resonate with audiences.[34] In the preface to the an VI (1798-1799) edition of *Oeuvres Complètes de Vadé ou Recueil des Opéras-Comiques*, the editor praised Vadé and his Old Regime works through the revolutionary discourses of freedom and transparency: "He was

[31] BnF M-17318, Pierre Boudin, *Madame Engueule ou les Accords Poissards, comédie-parade, en un acte. Avec prologue et vaudeville* (A Congo: 1754).
[32] "Gueule" and "Engouler" in in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th Edition (1762), Project ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois. "quelquefois de l'homme par mépris," "prendre tout d'un coup avec la gueule."
[33] Moore also points to similarities with "*Les Raccoleurs* of Vadé, *Les milciens* of Anseaume, and Guillemin's *Enrôlement supposé.*" *The Genre Poissard,* 255. Fleury de l'Écluse, Vadé's contemporary, presented poissard tableaux in his 1755 dialogues *Le Déjeuné de la Râpée, ou Discourse des Halles et des Ports*. One scene depicts the daughter of "la Ango," a "frutière des halles," who had recently become wealthy by marrying an "agent de change." When she descends from her carriage to brag to her former merchant friends, she mispronounces words and botches sophisticated turns of phrase. In *Les Spiriteux Rébus de Mlle Margot la mal-Peignée, Reine de la Halle et Marchande d'Oranges* (1755) l'Écluse featured a feisty Dame des Halles so proud and recalcitrant that her marketplace disputes disintegrate into fistfights. (Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 149-154.) In an anonymous 1758 "ouvrage moral," Madame Javotte recounts how her own desire for riches caused her moral downfall. The stylized language and slang reveals the narrator's poissard origins. Wealth, vanity, and her ambition to become a coiffeuse fuel her spiraling plummet from grace. Mademoiselle Javotte's material desires eventually corrupt her sexual purity. BnF Arsenal Reserve 8-BL-35485, *Mademoiselle Javotte, ouvrage moral écrit par elle-même et publié par une de ses amies* (La Haye: Chez Jean Neaulme, 1758). In a 1775 two-part novel, Fr.-Ch. Huerne de La Mothe wove a tale that Madame Angot would echo. The title character Margot and her daughter are newly wealthy (like Madame Angot and her daughter would be). Margot's daughter explicitly uses the word "parvenir " to discuss their new state (page 31). Margot marries up from her position as a ravaudeuse by marrying a soldier. However, when he is away she keeps up her "commerce" with other soldiers. Margot embellishes her name with "des" and calls herself "comte." BnF Arsenal 8-BL-21306, Fr.-Ch. Huerne de La Mothe, *Histoire nouvelle de Margot des Pelotons; ou la Galanterie naturelle*, 2 parties en 1 vol. (Genève, 1775). Twenty-one years later, Madame Angot would seek to elevate her rank by marrying her daughter to a noble soldier although true refinery escaped her. She also insisted that her valet respectfully salute her as "Madame."
[34] Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 117.

gay, but of a frank gaiety, which is always the proof of *candor of soul and of spirit.* Also all the Works *breathe of liberty*, & have a character which distinguishes them" (my emphasis).[35]

Vadé's *Nicaise,* though written in 1756, was the tenth most performed play in Paris in 1792 at 51 representations.[36] Ultimately, six theaters staged *Nicaise* a total of 145 times during the Revolution.[37] In January 1792, the Théâtre du Vaudeville used *Nicaise* to launch its grand opening. Citoyen Léger lightly edited the play and added some vaudeville airs to Vadé's original piece. The *Journal des théâtres* reported that the embellishments were "well received" and that the reprised play stirred up the public's "fervor."[38] The central love triangle pits the rich Julien against lowly Nicaise. The former has "all that is [socially] necessarily, and fortune & tenderness" while the latter is an idiot of the popular classes who "doesn't have either deportment or [proper] language."[39] The rivals seek the hand of Angelique. Nicaise miserably fails at wooing Angelique: he asks her to guess the price of the bouquet that he gives her, he forgets the lyrics to his love song, and twists her arm while trying to gallantly kiss her hand. Worst of all, he accidentally allows Angelique to flee to Julien when he leaves to find a rug for their marriage bed. Nicaise, uncultured, of modest means, and the eternal naïf, is only a laughable challenge to the honest and polished Julien.

In addition to old poissard plays with minimal plot lines, the revolutionaries added new plays to the poissard repertoire. Before Thermidor, revolutionary poissard works like *La*

---

[35] BnF Arts du spectacle, Rf 13872, "Preface" in *Oeuvres complettes de Vadé*, 7. "il étoit gai, mais d'une gaieté franche, qui est toujours la preuve de la *candeur de l'âme & de l'esprit*. Aussi tous les Ouvrages *respirent la liberté*, & ont un caractère qui les distingue."

[36] Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen, eds., *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris, Analysis and Repertory* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 384. Four years later in June 1796, playwright Citoyen Amand-Gouffé rearranged the play again and added new airs for the Théâtre de la Cité-Variétés.

[37] Kennedy et al, eds. *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, 244.

[38] BnF 4-Lc2-308 (BIS), *Journal des théâtres,* January 31, 1792, nº XIV. "bien accueillis," "ferveur."

[39] BnF Arts du spectacle Rf 13920, Jean-Joseph Vadé, *Nicaise, opéra-comique en un acte et en vaudevilles... retouché par le C. Léger représenté... à Paris, sur le Théâtre du Vaudeville, le 18 janvier 1792* (Paris: Cailleau, 1793 version) 4, 10. "tous ce qu'il faut, et fortune & tendresse," "n'a ni maintien ni langage."

Politique à la Halle and *La Poissarde Ambassadrice* took on sharper political overtones and focused explicitly on contemporary circumstances.[40] This mirrored the trend analyzed in Chapter 6: authors deployed the Dames in poissard pamphlets, dialogues, songs, and almanacs to tap into their popular legitimacy. Written after the Terror, Jacques Demautort's 1794 play, *Les Marchandes de la Halle*, reflected the transition from Vadé's general tableaux towards the pointed critiques of contemporary society that the later Angot plays engaged. Demautort clearly linked social tensions resulting from war, food shortages, and changing fortunes to political issues like the republican virtues of work, honesty, and civic duty. *Les Marchandes de la Halle* has a more explicit moral dimension than *Nicaise*. The Théâtre du Vaudeville staged the piece 41 times, and the Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes, Comiques et Lyriques performed the work as well.[41]

The scene unfolds in a corner of les Halles and portrays a romantic rivalry between Fanchon and Suzon over an injured soldier named Eveillé.[42] Fanchon is a Dame des Halles who sells foodstuffs from under her parasol in les Halles. Her neighbor, Suzon, is a deceitful cabaret owner who cheats her customers by "baptizing" the *rogomme* (a crude brandy) she sells. Suzon spreads rumors that Fanchon is hoarding some of her food supplies instead of selling them to the first customer like the law requires. However, Fanchon and Eveillé are everything citizens should be in the aftermath of the Terror, and they bring hope for the new society. Eveillé has given his arm for the country and Fanchon gives her own food rations to a mother and child whose husband is in the army. A customer cook mistakes Fanchon's personal rations for the

---

[40] Listings for *La Politique à la Halle* and *La Poissarde, Ambassadrice* appear repeatedly in the 1789 spectacle announcements of *La Chronique de Paris*. BnF Lc2 218 1789.
[41] André Tissier, *Les Spectacles à Paris pendant la Révolution : Répertoire analytique, chronologique et bibliographique, De la proclamation de la République à la fin de la Convention nationale (21 septembre 1792- 26 octobre 1795)* (Genève: Droz, 2002), 445.
[42] "Eveillé" means brightened but can also refer to ignited love.

commercial stock that she must legally sell. When Fanchon refuses to sell the food to the cook, he runs to the police to rat her out. However, the mother and child arrive and reveal Fanchon's self-sacrifice. Consequently the police arrest the cook as a false denunciator, Suzon even admits that Fanchon is good, and the lovers marry.[43] Parisian audiences applauded the virtuous Dame des Halles who honestly conducted her work.

During the Directory and the Consulate, poissarde plays continued to blur the boundaries between fictional poissardes, their living models, and authors who evoked their "natural" habits. Revolutionary playwrights resurrected Vadé by making him a character among other characters from his own works.[44] The Théâtre des Troubadours first performed *Vadé à la Grenouillère* on 23 fructidor an VII (September 9, 1799). Audience members watched Vadé interact with a fish merchant, a bouquet merchant, and a fisherman. Nicaise even appeared alongside his creator. Vadé oscillates between observing the action and intervening in a plot of forbidden love. Laughing at a marchande de bouquet arguing with her bourgeois client, Vadé observes that the jargon was "so pleasing" that it inspired him to write another poem.[45] Julie, a petite-maîtresse, later compliments Vadé's authenticity: "You have so well seized the ton of les Halles in your works, you take it from the source."[46] Nanette, the blanchisseuse, confirms that in his farces "I recognize myself there and I laugh there with all my Heart."[47] At the denouement, the boundaries between theater and reality collapse completely. Vadé announces that everyone will go to the

[43] Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris (hereafter BHVP) #611 177, (n°7) in 8° Demautort, *Les Marchandes de la Halle, comédie en 1 acte, et en vaudevilles*, (Paris: Vaudeville, 1794).
[44] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 145-146.
[45] Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère,* 19-21. Vadé further sets himself apart as a spectator by whispering to the public, "Le combat va s'engager, tant mieux." "si plaisant."
[46] Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère,* 23. "vous avez si bien saisi le ton de la halle dans vos ouvrages, vous le prenez à la source."
[47] Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère,* 30. "j'my reconnais et j'y ris de tout mon Cœur."

foire St. Laurent, where a troop is performing *Nicaise*. Nicaise (who will be watching, in effect, the story of his follies that Vadé wrote) exclaims, "All the better, we will laugh there."[48]

Revolutionary Theater, Sensory Experience, and Audience Participation

If the Old Regime genre poissard blurred the division between the parterre and fictional characters, revolutionary theater further incorporated spectators as creators. As the deputies debated theater's political utility and commercially freed theaters, audiences became a more dynamic component on the revolutionary scene. The theater journal, *Le Censeur dramatique*, described the democratizing shift: "Ignorant or enlightened, each Spectator has, for his money, the right to boo or to applaud and, in a free State, above all, the exercise of this right is incontestable."[49] Citizens experienced plays in a collective setting and physically reacted to bodily portrayals unfolding before their eyes. Between 35,000 and 63,000 Parisians attended the theater at least occasionally. This accounts for 7 to 13 percent of the city's inhabitants.[50]

Historian Susan Maslan argues that "advocates of the theater... embraced theater's direct impact on the senses, as well as its communal dimension," which affected the spectator more than printed material.[51] Audience members reproduced their encounters in the theater by

---

[48] Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère* 53. "Tant mieux, nous y rirons."

[49] A.B. L. Grimod de la Reynière, *Le Censeur Dramatique, ou Journal des Principaux Théâtres de Paris et des Départemens,* Volume 1 (Paris: Au Bureau de Censeur Dramatique, 1797). Historians, notably Ravel and Robert Isherwood, have debated how theater regulation and spectator behavior affected political power during the Old Regime. Isherwood argues that the system of royal privileges allowed the king to use theater to augment absolutism, whereas Ravel has argued that the rabble-rousing parterre could be an early site of democratic rumblings. Jeffrey Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1999); Robert Isherwood *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); For more on the parameters of the historiographical debate see also James Johnson, "Review of The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791" *The Journal of Modern History*, 74:4 (Dec., 2002), 854-856. "Ignorant ou éclairé, chaque Spectateur a, pour son argent, le droit de siffler ou d'applaudir et, dans un État libre, sur-tout, l'exercice de ce droit est incontestable."

[50] Kennedy, "History of the Problem and the Method of Solving It," in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, 7. Kennedy cites Lagrave's statistics from his 1972 work.

[51] Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), vii.

mimicking the living medium. They sang songs in the street, visualized costumes and set designs through images, and gossiped about the quality of performances. The experiential nature encouraged songs, images, and gossip to circulate. These sensory interactions provided further vehicles for theatrical material to reach Parisians outside the playhouse. Ultimately, spectators' tastes, critics' quarrels, and censors' pens dictated box office success and failure. Moreover, the Madame Angot plays offered Parisians a vivacious and especially powerful alternative to the Dames des Halles who bartered in the markets and petitioned in the assembly halls.[52] Since the Dames did not represent themselves through any specific institution, their image remained particularly vulnerable to theatrical counterparts. Like the living Dames, these poissarde characters interacted with Parisians via oral and visual culture.

The revolutionaries considered theater a critical issue because it encouraged citizens to pass personal "judgment" and deployed representative tools crucial to politics.[53] Although the physical space between the stage and the parterre remained delineated, the cultural space between the stage, the salle, and the streets retained great fluidity. The Jacobins initially hesitated to embrace theater because actors misrepresented themselves to spectators. Theater threatened "transparent" relations and encouraged what first seemed like intentional duplicity.[54] However,

---

[52] Although theaters performed old poissard works, new poissard tales and Madame Angot's adventures counted among the more than 1000 new plays during the Revolution. Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts,* 21.

[53] Maslan argues, "The theater was an alternative space for developing the practices of participation, scrutiny, interpretation, and judgment that newly created citizens would put to use in the sphere of politics, as well as within theater." *Revolutionary Acts,* 3. After 1750, actors focused on fashioning a "*realistic*" character for spectators rather than channeling what felt internally authentic to the actor. Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies & Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 6.

[54] Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts*, ix. Robespierre especially disdained satiric genres. Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 83. After the deputies passed the Law of Suspects in September 1793, the police even arrested five major vaudevillists. (Mason, 86.) Eventually, the Jacobins embraced theatrical techniques such as song singing to enable citizens to participate in festivals and to buttress collective identity. (Mason, 121.) Jean-Louis Jam argues that music was central to the radical problem "surtout [pour] son efficacité unificatrice."Jean-Louis Jam, "Politique musical du Directoire," in *La République directoriale* , ed. Philippe Bourdin and Bernard Gainot, Volume 1 (Moulins: Imprimerie A Pottier S.A., 1998), 501, 504.

post-Terror officials worried more about sharp political plotlines than representative theory.[55] The Thermidorian reaction unleashed theatrical "pomp," artifice, and indulgent spectacle reminiscent of the Old Regime. While focusing on extravagance, playwrights shied away from current events but often retained contemporary settings.[56]

Unlike other mediums like print culture or still images, post-Terror theater introduced spectators to the subject material by bombarding multiple senses. The revolutionaries believed, especially after the materialism of the Enlightenment, that sensory experiences powerfully impacted individuals through physical interaction.[57] Moreover, individuals with weak fibers such as women or the popular classes could be especially sensitive to external stimuli. In a letter to the *Rédacteur* in the summer of year VI, August Hus confirmed the extent to which sensory input affected the popular classes: "Because common people were guided only by their senses, they were constantly in need of 'emblems, symbols, spectacles, music...; in short, all that speaks to the imagination, elevates the soul, and excites enthusiasm and the intoxication of courage, is necessary... to quench weak spirits and raise men to the heights of morality.'" Theatrical elements could easily change spectators' perspectives.[58] It rang especially true for the grandiose components of post-Terror theater.

With its exceptional power, theater could physically alter spectators as well. When the revolutionaries described how they felt for characters, they did not mean it in a figurative sense. Parisians defended poissard plays from critics' attacks by describing how the material pleasantly

---

[55] After 9 thermidor an II (July 27, 1794), the theater became an especially hot point of contention as those with conservative or elite opinions felt more comfortable making them publically known. A hodgepodge of individuals filled theater seats, including "a rowdy mélange of ex-revolutionaries, ex-nobles and nouveaux riches." James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 156.
[56] James Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, 156, 159.
[57] For an overview of eighteenth-century sensibility in its physical and moral dimensions, see Anne Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).
[58] Mason quotes a letter from August Hus to *Rédacteur*, 10 thermidor an VI (July 28, 1798). Mason, *Singing the French Revolution,* 202.

affected the body. One spectator lamented that Parisians who could not get tickets to the farces had no choice but to see the tragedy *Brébis* instead. He protested that the tragedy grated on the body and caused the dislocated spectators much "ennui": "When the dissonances, that they call chromatic, put their nerves in contraction they could not contain their discontent, and they cried that *this is not worth Cadet Roussel* [a poissard play]."[59] A letter to *Le Censeur dramatique* reported that people demanded why the journal did not review "the Spectacles that attract the crowd, such as *la Bohémienne* an *Mme Angot*? It seems to me that it would be more valuable than this *Mère coupable*, which gives me the vapors, and in which there is not the smallest word to laugh at."[60] When Parisians saw Madame Angot on stage, they felt and understood her presence materially. Such an encounter greatly influenced how they perceived her Dames des Halles counterparts.

Moreover, Parisians vividly experienced the Madame Angot plays as a collectivity. They evaluated her not as individual citizens, but spectators in a group setting. Crowd reactions formed a surround-sound for the spectator's viewing and it was hard to ignore the presence of several hundred neighbors packed into the playhouses. As the *Miroir* attested: "There is only one small disagreeable thing in madame Angot's house: these are overly strong odors and unpleasant exhalations that one breathes in her apartments; but one is well compensated for this small

[59] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 10 Frimaire an VII (November 23, 1798), an anonymous letter to the editor, n°647. "ennui": "lorsque des dissonances, qu'ils appellent du chromatique, mettent leurs nerfs en contraction ils ne purent contenir leur mécontentement, et s'écrièrent que *ça ne valoit pas Cadet Roussel* [a poissard play].

[60] Grimod de la Reynière, *Le Censeur Dramatique*, Volume 2, "Lettre aux Auteurs du Journal" Paris, le 5 nivôse an 6 (December 25, 1797). "le Spectacles qui attirent la foule, telles que *la Bohémienne* et *Mme Angot*? Il me semble que cela vaut bien cette *Mère coupable*, qui me donne des vapeurs, et dans laquelle il n'y a pas le plus petit mot pour rire."

contrariety by the pleasantness of madame Angot."[61] In the theaters, spectators became enveloped in the intermingling sensory experiences of the stage and of the communal salle.[62]

When audience members laughed at Madame Angot, they publically expressed their internal judgment and collectively responded to her moral lessons. Humor reinforced the audience's cultural cohesion by encouraging spectators to laugh at common points. Playwrights tuned into how spectators physically reacted, creating an endless feedback loop. As the prospectus to the *La Correspondance des Dames, ou Journal des modes des spectacles de Paris* attested, laughter entertained Parisians and instructed them in "utiles leçons."[63] One editor defended the genre poissard by insisting that the very laughter it provoked demonstrated its natural and moral qualities: "Everyone laughed at these tableaux; they were thus true since one recognized nature in them, they were thus agreeable, since they amused even those who did not want to be amused."[64] The *Journal des modes* argued that the playhouse could transform spectators: "It's at the Vaudeville (theater) that it was necessary to go to have recreation, to let one's self hang loose, and to laugh."[65]

---

[61] AN BB^3 85, Rapport du Bureau Central du 20 ventôse an V (March 10, 1797), Journaux, *Le Miroir* du 20 ventôse [an V] reprinted as CMLVII in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume III, 791. Il n'y a qu'un petit désagrément chez madame Angot: ce sont les odeurs trop fortes et les exhalaisons peu flatteuses que l'on respire dans ses appartements; mais on est bien dédommagé de cette petite contrariété par les gentillesses de madame Angot."

[62] Maslan argues that the communal experience "was central to the construction of revolutionary spectators' identities as cultural judges, as members of the public, and as constituent elements of sovereign authority." Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts*, 13-14.

[63] BnF MICR D-80, *Journal de Paris* reprinting the "Prospectus" from the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, le 1 floréal an VI (April 20, 1798) nº211. The full couplet is: "le plan que nous nous proposons/Est de plaire & d'instruire; Joignant à d'utiles leçons/ Le petit mot pour rire ."

[64] BnF Arts du spectacle, Rf 13872, "Preface" in *Oeuvres complettes de Vadé*, 8. He added that the genre's humor destroyed "la misanthropie." "tout a ri à ces tableaux; ils étoient donc vrai puisqu'on y a reconnu la nature, ils étoient donc agréables, puisqu'ils ont amusé ceux même qui ne veulent pas l'être."

[65] BnF Microfilm M-9678, *La Correspondance des dames, ou Journal des modes et des spectacles de Paris*, Volume I, 20 Ventôse an VI (March 10, 1799), nº2. "C'est au vaudeville qu'il faut aller se recréer, se délasser, et rire."

As a genre, vaudevilles were satires filled with humorous dialogues and "simple, catchy tunes" usually composed on well-known airs.[66] In the original *Madame Angot*, "lively lyrics sung to all the most popular arias" won over Parisian audiences.[67] A disgruntled art critic noted that songs lured audiences away from the classics to the Angot plays. He insisted that if the old theaters performed the classics well, "[neither] the cabal, nor the faux taste of the public will not make it prefer Madame Angot, or other plays in which the scene is in song."[68]

Songs not only added another dimension that the audience sensibly experienced; they provided another means for spectators to participate. The *English Spectator* described how "this desire to sing in concert with the actors is so dominant in France that, in the case of a well-known song... [the actor's] voice is covered by that of the entire audience."[69] In the Madame Angot plays, characters sing all the lessons. By singing the moral couplets to the tunes of common airs, the playwrights made the lesson instantly familiar, digestible, and transportable. The censors recognized the possible danger: the majority of Angot lines that they required authors to revise came from vaudeville couplets.[70]

In contrast to print material or even theatrical dialogue, songs spread more quickly, cost nothing to transmit, and could reach an illiterate audience beyond the playhouse.[71] Audiences

---

[66] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution,* 73. The public would often know the original title for the tune. Thus, the air could hold a double meaning if the title was skillfully paired with new lyrics.
[67] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 275.
[68] AN BB^3 91, Rapport du Bureau central du 11 vendémiaire an VIII (October 3, 1799), Journaux, *Journal de Paris* du 11 vendémiaire: "Théâtre-Français de la République," reprinted as MDCCCXXXVI in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume V, 749; Mason, *Singing the French Revolution,* 9, 218. The revolutionaries associated "song culture" with the popular milieu. In the genre poissard and Angot plays, songs reflected the popular nature of the subject material as well as the average spectator's social identity. After thermidor, elites increasingly feared popular singing as a sign of radicalism. As a result, Mason notes that "art songs, drinking songs, and war songs" replaced sharply political songs. Mason, 183. "la cabale, ni le faux goût du public ne lui font pas préférer Madame Angot, ou autres pièces dont la scène est en chant."
[69] Quote in the *Chronique de Paris*, October 19, 1792. Cited by Mason, *Singing the French Revolution,* 72.
[70] See, for example, the censor reports in AN F^7 3491 and AN F^7 3492.
[71] Mason, *Singing the French Revolution,* 2-3. The police attempted to regulate conflict within the playhouses by regulating patriotic (and partisan) songs. Mason, 157. In 1795, the Directory clamped down on political song singing in theaters by insisting that spectators and actors could only sing songs that were officially part of the given play.

even sang opposing political songs before plays. Much to the chagrin of the police, spectators flung the songs back and forth like grenades across the salle at the Théâtre du Vaudeville.[72] Songs heightened how spectators encountered the play's moral, they enabled citizens to repeat the performance elsewhere, and they carried political significance. Audience members experienced Madame Angot and other vaudevilles through witty couplets and other sensory elements.

Profit Wars: Playwrights and Spectators Construct Madame Angot

In 1796, Madame Angot made her commanding entrance on the revolutionary stage and, despite several attempts on her life in various sequels, stubbornly refused to surrender the spotlight for nearly a decade. Maillot's comic opera about a newly rich fishwife, tellingly titled *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, was an instant smash hit.[73] A widowed Madame Angot, a Dame des Halles, sought to consolidate her social capital along with her new economic capital by marrying her daughter, Nanon, into noble ranks. Of course, lest it be too simple, her daughter is in love with someone of more humble origins. Moreover, the targeted noble fiancé is not a noble after all. Rather, he is a petty tax collector who seeks to dupe Madame Angot for her daughter's dowry. Blinded by her desire to integrate into the social elite, Madame Angot easily falls into his trap.

---

[72] Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP) D.4Z 3, Les Spectacles de Paris sous le Directoire, Extraits des Rapports de la Police Municipale détruits dans l'incendie du 1871, reconstituées avec notes et appendices par G. Saint-Joanny (Archiviste de la Seine), le 21 au 24 nivôse an IV (January 11 to 14, 1796); le 4 vendémiaire an IV (September 26, 1795). In nivôse an IV, some musicians complained that soldiers struck them with the flat side of their sabers for playing the "wrong" political song. At the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 4 vendémiaire an IV, patriots shouted "Vive la République, à bas les 2/3" and attempted to drown out strains of the *Réveil du people*, the anti-Jacobin anthem.

[73] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*. The play took inspiration from the earlier poissarde stock character Madame Engueule. Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 269. When the Revolution realigned social hierarchies, playwrights seized upon the exceptional comic potential.

Hilarity ensues as Madame Angot tries to put on airs to elevate her social station and impress the impostor noble. Her boisterous faux-pas and mangled speech repeatedly betray her lower class background as a fish merchant.[74] When the fake noble's true identity is exposed, he tells Madame Angot: "It is true, madame, that I sought to deceive you, but your own folly is the cause."[75] Fed up but slightly humbled, Madame Angot allows her daughter marry her lover. She concedes in song, "Among us, we live without politesse/ We abjure the nobility/ To tell the truth, changing our name/ Would be a baseness/Children, forget forever/ This moment of weakness."[76]

Although many other playwrights used Madame Angot's character over the next seven years, Maillot constructed her enduring personality traits in *La Poissarde parvenue*. The marchande de morue was frank, sharp-tongued, gullible, prideful, and socially ambitious. Not even a minute into the play, Nanon complains that "the fixation of my mother for nobility" motived her arranged marriage.[77] Nanon later testifies, that, for her mother, "pride drives her more than any other sentiment."[78] While Madame Angot attempts to put on dissembling airs, her utter incapacity to be anything besides a poissarde renders her unintentionally transparent. Madame Angot's niece Bernard, a merchant as well, threatens to embarrass Madame Angot in the fake noble's presence. While Madame Angot tries to distance herself from her niece, her language betrays her inescapable origins in les Halles: "Une femme [referring to herself] *qu'est z'accoutumée* [qui s'est accoutumée] à vivre d'une certain façon, ne peut pas *fournier aux*

---

[74] For an extended analysis of *La Poissarde parvenue* see Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 268-275.
[75] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 38. "Il est vrai, madame, que j'ai cherché à vous tromper, mais votre propre folie en est cause..."
[76] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 39. "Entre nous, vivons sans façon/ Abjurons la noblesse/ A dire vrai, changer de nom/ Seroit une bassesse/Enfans, oubliez à jamais/ Un moment de foiblesse."
[77] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 6, "l'entêtement de ma mère pour la noblesse."
[78] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 26. "L'orgueil s'emporte chez elle sur tout autre sentiment."

[former des] sottises comme ces *guèpes*-là [guêpes], et pis c'est si bas, c'est si plat, d'aller reprocher qui l'on est, qui l'on n'est pas."[79] (I have added italics to emphasize her errors).

Madame Angot did not hide raw emotions or crude aspirations. In this way, spectators always knew Madame Angot's motives. Even foreigner characters, like the Ottomans in an 1800 play, recognized "her follies." The Ottoman perceptively evaluated her personality, "She likes titles, qualities, honors; she's a parvenue who is rich, prideful, and frank to excess."[80] Madame Angot left the audience and her fellow characters no ambiguity, which gave them a privileged vantage point from which to judge her actions.

Madame Angot had a near constant stage presence from her debut.[81] After selling the first play for only 36 francs, Maillot quickly wrote a sequel to tap into the excitement.[82] Within months, Madame Angot was stumbling across the stage in a second folly. Other copycats came fast on Madame Angot's high heels, and other playwrights and directors cashed in on the mania. From 1796 through the end of the Consulate, Madame Angot held an active place in the Parisian cultural imagination. Not counting any sequels or spin-offs, *La Poissarde parvenue* alone was performed at least 155 times. The play ran at five other theaters besides the Théâtre d'Émulation where Madame Angot was born.[83]

---

[79] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 34. "A woman [referring to herself] *that iz acustomed* [who has accustomed herself] to live in a certain way, cannot *furnish to* [form some] stupidities like these *wahsps*-there [wasps], and worse it's so low, it's so crude, to go about reproaching who one is and who one is not."

[80] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople,* 22. "ses folies." "Elle aime les titres, les qualités, les honneurs; c'est une parvenue riche, orgueilleuse, crédule à l'excès."

[81] See announcements for her first run: BnF V-28396, *Affiches, annonces et avis divers, ou Journal général de France*, le 1 Fructidor an IV (August 18, 1796), nº331. "Théâtre d'Émulation Auj. *Les Étourdis ; Madame Angot ; les fausse Infidélités*." There is some confusion in secondary sources over when Madame Angot premiered. Many scholars use the year 1797. However August 18, 1796 is the earliest date that I found Maillot's play listed.

[82] BnF Arts du spectacle 4-Y-2390, Laurent Pelly, "Autour de Madame Angot," in *L'avant-scène*, n°887 (1991), 39.

[83] Emmet Kennedy, "The Most Performed Plays of the Decade," in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, 154. Kennedy's performance statistics for the original *Madame Angot ou La Poissarde parvenue*: Théâtre de l'Émulation (Gaîté) (94); Théâtre Montansier (27); Théâtre de la Rue Antoine (1); Théâtre des Délassements-Comiques (14); Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes (8); Théâtre Lyrique des Amis de la Patrie (11); Total: 155 performances.

Spectators informed how playwrights portrayed Madame Angot by influencing the commercial success of different plots. The Le Chapelier law of 1791 freed Parisian theaters from the confines of royal permissions that had sanctioned only certain theaters and regulated genres. In the name of liberty, the National Assembly decreed that any theater could show any play they desired within copyright restrictions. Consequently, commercial incentives decisively drove theater in ways that Parisians had never experienced before. Unlike her Old Regime ancestors who were mostly stock characters, Madame Angot became a famous personality largely determined by spectator interest. In effect, Madame Angot was a crowd-sourced figure with a personal history. By buying tickets during the Directory and the Consulate, "the public was allowed to speak [even] when the ballot boxes were closed."[84]

By informing the commercial failure or success of certain Angot plots, Parisians directly had a hand in constructing Madame Angot's image *and* the Dames' image by association. Madame Angot crystalized the abstract image of the Dames des Halles into one character. Of course, playwrights constructed plots through their own pens. However, public opinion determined which portrayals would gain wide exposure and which would quickly flop and fade away. Through this profit-driven circle of production, spectators created the Dames' image instead of receiving it. The most prominent parallel to the living market women became more and more informed by chiefly commercial, rather than political, incentives.

Theater directors especially felt financially squeezed during the Directory. An unrestricted number of theaters combined with heavy inflation to create fierce commercial competition.[85] Starting in November 1796, just after Madame Angot's debut, a new poor tax

[84] Kennedy, "History of the Problem and the Method of Solving It," in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, 5.
[85] Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution*, 125, 236.

raised all spectacle ticket prices by ten percent.[86] Although directors could freely stage any play from the old privileged repertoire, tight competition spurred directors to invest in new plays to remain in vogue and attract paying spectators.[87] In October 1797, the *Courrier des Spectacles* observed that old French classics – *Le Misanthrope*, *Les Femmes savants* – would no longer fill a playhouse in contrast to *La Poissarde parvenue*.[88]

The Madame Angot plays proved to be an immensely profitable enterprise. Maillot reprinted his script for *La Poissarde parvenue* three times – in 1796, Year VIII (1799-1800), and Year IX (1800). His original cast was so tremendously popular that the credits remained the same over these five years. Maillot only edited the play once to keep up with the demand for sung couplets. The Year IX edition included 24 new airs and revised lyrics.[89] In 1797, *La Poissarde parvenue* was the sixth most performed play at 70 performances, while Maillot's sequel *Le Marriage de Nanon ou La Suite de Madame Angot* was staged 74 times and ranked fifth the same year.[90] Many Parisians could afford tickets to Madame Angot, which contributed to her popularity. Whereas a ticket to see a pillar from the French canon would set the consumer back 6 francs and 6 décimes, spectators purchased the best seats to see Madame Angot at 44 sous. At such a low price, one critic insisted that the fishwife "prostitutes herself each night to amateurs."[91] The *Correspondance des Dames* explained that the public embraced Madame Angot

---

[86] Officials renewed the tax every six months until 1809, at which point they raised the levy to 11 percent. The tax remained in effect until at least 1885. Donald Roy, *Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre, 1789-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[87] Maud Pouradier, "Le Débat sur la liberté des Théâtres: Le Répertoire en Question," in *Le théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, ed. Martial Poirson (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2008), 70.
[88] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 4 brumaire an VI (October 25 1797), nº246.
[89] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 1796 edition ; BnF Arsenal GD-13085 Maillot, *Madame Angot ou la Poissarde parvenue* (Paris: Chez Barbar, an VIII); BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 16230 Maillot, *Madame Angot ou la Poissarde parvenue* (Paris: Magasin de pièces de Théâtres, an IX (1800)).
[90] Kennedy, in *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*.
[91] For comparison, to see a parade or pantomime in 1785 at one of Nicolet's productions cost 12 sols at the most. Emmet Kennedy, "Taste and Revolution," in *Symbols, Myths and Images of the French Revolution: Essays in Honor of James A. Leith*, edited by Ian Germani & Robin Swales (Regina: University of Regina, 1998), 56. *Le Censeur*

because her humor distracted them from "the general misery."[92] Madame Angot made Ribié, the director of Théâtre d'Émulation, so rich that he moved the famous poissarde from the marginal theaters of the Boulevard into the great Louvois (where the illustrious Comédie Française used to perform).[93]

Maillot struggled to protect his proprietary character from a hungry pack of theatre directors looking to profit from the Angot mania. In 1797, he teamed up with Leblanc de Guillet and Antonio Blanc to compose vaudevilles for *La Suite de Madame Angot*. It was staged 116 times.[94] Contemporaries observed, "The comedy of *Mde Angot* already made all of Paris come running; the *Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mde Angot*, played at the Théâtre d'Émulation, did not attract any smaller portion of the world..."[95] When Maillot published the script for *La Suite*, he foregrounded his right to ownership and declared that people must seek his permission to stage it (presumably with royalties).[96] In November 1800, in *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas (comédie-folie en deux actes, mêlée de Chants)*, Maillot once more warned he would legally pursue those who attempted to stage his work.[97] However, Maillot's threats did little to stop Madame Angot from proliferating across various playhouses. Even if theaters did not stage his plays, playwrights freely headlined Madame Angot and her history in their own plots. By August 1798, the *Courrier des Spectacles* complained that directors situated

---

dramatique (1798) as quoted by Albert, *Les Théâtres des Boulevards (1789-1848)*, 165. "se prostitue chaque soir aux amateurs."

[92] BnF Microfilm M-9678, *La Correspondance des dames, ou Journal des modes*, Volume I, le 30 floréal an VII (May 19, 1799), n°16. "la misère générale."

[93] Ribié rented the Louvois building from Montasier, who owned the Théâtre des Variétés. Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution,* 266.

[94] Emmet Kennedy, "The Most Performed Plays of the Decade," 155. "La comédie de *Mde Angot* déjà fait courir tout Paris; le *Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mde Angot*, donné au Théâtre d'Émulation, n'a pas moins amené de monde..."

[95] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 12 ventôse an V (March 2, 1797), nº55.

[96] BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot.*

[97] BnF Arsenal 1GD-1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas.*

"these characters in all possible states." Despite this "bad taste," directors "were consoling themselves with a fortune."[98]

Playwright Joseph Aude threatened Maillot's hegemony the most in the Madame Angot saga. Whereas Maillot won over audiences during the Directory and one 1800 play, no one could rival Aude's success during the Consulate. Aude used another poissard figure, Cadet Roussel, to incorporate Madame Angot gradually into his own work. Cadet Roussel was originally a character in a 1792 song written by Gaspard de Chenu du Souchet. Picking up the character, Aude collaborated with Charles Tissot to write his first of five Cadet Roussel plays in 1793.[99] In October 1798, Joseph Aude harnessed Madame Angot's notoriety by linking the Madame Angot and Cadet Roussel traditions. In *Cadet Roussel barbier à la fontaine des innocents, folie en un Acte*, Aude recounts the adventures of Roussel who is opening his own barber stand in les Halles. His lover is Manon, whose name closely resembled Nanon of the Angot tradition and whose mother was also a marchande a la Halle.[100] The play attracted enough spectators for 114 representations and was the seventh most performed play in 1798.[101]

In 1799, Aude explicitly exploited Madame Angot by casting her in the supporting role of Manon's godmother in *Cadet Roussel misanthrope et Manon repentante*. To bolster his success, Aude secured Maillot's favorite actor, Corse, to play Madame Angot while Corse's wife played her goddaughter. Shown at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, the play parodied the drama

---

[98] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 5 fructidor an VI (August 29, 1798), n°547. "ces personnages par tous les états possibles." "s'en consolant avec la fortune."

[99] Joseph Aude's Cadet Roussel plays included: *Cadet Roussel ou le café des aveugles* (written with Charles Tissot, 1793), *L'école tragique ou Cadet Roussel maître de déclamation* (1797), *Cadet Roussel, barbier à la fontaine des innocens* (1798), *Cadet Roussel misanthrope et Manon repentante* (1799), *Cadet Roussel aux Champs Élysées ou la colère d'Agamemnon* (1801) Gérard Loubinoux, "Les figures du théâtre de Joseph Aude," in Les arts de la scène et la Révolution française, edited by Philippe Bourdin and Gérard Loubinoux (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 424-426.

[100] BnF 8-YTH-2459, Joseph Aude, *Cadet Roussel barbier à la fontaine des innocens, Folie en un Acte*, Joseph Aude, Mirabernet, (Paris: Chez Barba, 1802).

[101] Kennedy, "The Most Performed Plays of the Decade," 97.

Misanthropie et repentir, which was running at the Théâtre française.[102] Aude's version centers on a miserable misanthrope named Menu who secludes himself in a park pavilion. The pavilion's owner asks Menu to move so that he can set up a dinner party for Madame Angot, her good Samaritan goddaughter Magdeleine, and her family in the pavilion.[103] Vantador, one of Madame Angot's guests recognizes Menu as Cadet Roussel. After his failures in earlier plays, Cadet is completely disillusioned. Most recently, his wife Manon left him for his friend Blanchet, a commis de la marée who inherited a fortune. When Menu sees Magdeleine he realizes that she is actually Manon. The curtain starts to fall but Cadet Roussel interrupts and forgives the repentant Manon.

Aude truly threw down the gauntlet to Maillot when he finally cast Madame Angot as his titular character. Aude's *Madame Angot dans son ballon ou le Voyage aérien* took the fishwife to new heights of extravagance. Then, in May 1800 at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, Aude premiered *Au sérail de Constantinople*, which became the most profitable of all of Madame Angot's adventures. His extravagant sets and foreign settings mesmerized Parisians. Aude next enchanted Parisian audiences in 1803 with Madame Angot's fantastic 1803 follies in *Madame Angot au Malabar, ou la nouvelle Veuve*.[104] Aude also commissioned songwriters to give Madame Angot her own airs rather than use popular tunes. Aude spectacularly catapulted Madame Angot to her own musical kingdom. The parvenue even began to snub even the commoners' airs.

---

[102] According to Carlson it was "a parody of a recent tragedy by August von Kotzebue." *The Theatre of the French Revolution*, 25. In fact, the prologue includes five men discussing the original work. They hear that it will be parodied at the Théâtre du Vaudeville where the style will be changed to "le rire après les pleurs." BnF 8-YTH-2470, Joseph Aude, A. Hapdé, and J. Flan, *Cadet Roussel Misanthrope et Manon Repentante: folie en 1 acte* (Paris: Théâtre du Vaudeville, 1798), 8.

[103] BnF 8-YTH-2470, Joseph Aude, *Cadet Roussel Misanthrope et Manon Repentante.*

[104] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*; BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve, mélo-tragi-parade, en trois actes et en prose; A grand Spectacle, mêlée des Danses, marches, Chœurs, Pompe funèbre, Pantomime, etc.* (Paris: Chez Farges, 1803).

Parisians did not just vote for their favorite Angot playwrights like Maillot or Aude with their tickets. Just as they preferred some storylines to others, they decided which actor best embodied the fishwife that they imagined. During the carnivalesque celebrations of the Old Regime, cross-dressing poissardes appeared on stage and in print. [105] However, in the Madame Angot plays, the fish merchant was the only character played by an actor of the opposite sex. The fishwife slipped into complete parody in contrast with other "normally" sexed (i.e. non cross-dressing) characters that shared the stage. Playwrights layered an exaggerated performativity of gender upon an exaggerated performativity of class to set Madame Angot apart.[106] In *La Suite de Madame Angot*, the fishwife humorously wishes she were a male head of household: "Jarni (made-up exclamation), I'd'like to be a man for only twenty-four hours."[107] Of course, the audience understands the double entendre since a man plays Madame Angot and the plot must unfold within twenty-four hours. In *La Critique de Madame Angot au sérail*, several fictional spectators discuss the play they are about to see. An "audience member" wonders, "What will your Angot do? Her cross-dressing/ Will provoke perhaps an absurd frenzy/ The beautiful honor, my faith! That excites laughter!"[108] Spectators could hardly take the gender-bending Madame Angot seriously.

---

[105] Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment,* 19. When Marie Antoinette's court performed Vadé's *Princesse A.E.I.O.U.* in 1777, noble Bachaumont had noted, "Les hommes étaient habillés en femmes, et les femmes en hommes: c'était une dérision, une farce générale." Moore quotes the *Mémoires Secrets de Bachaumont*. Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 291.

[106] Rousseau feared that actors tricked audiences by convincing them to accept a fake persona. In this sense, Madame Angot could be considered doubly deceptive. According to Mary Louise Roberts, "To act was a form of prostitution aimed at seducing the entire audience." *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 54.

[107] BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot, comédie en prose et en un acte... représentée sur le théâtre d'Émulation* (Paris: Chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1797), 21. "Jarni, j'voudrais être homme seulement vingt-quatre heures."

[108] Joseph Aude, *La Critique de Madame Angot au Sérail, Pièce en un Acte et en Vers* (Paris: Chez Barba, 1817), 9. "Que fera votre Angot? Ses travestissemens/ Provoqueront peut-être un absurde délire,/ Le bel honneur, ma foi! Que d'exciter le rire!" Travestissements also implies "twisting," which can refer to Madame Angot's gender bending actions and cultural faux-pas.

No actor could rival how Labenette Corse portrayed Madame Angot, and several knockoffs failed for this reason. *Le Courrier des Spectacles* explained, "*Madame Angot* [*La Poissarde parvenue*], which had so much success at the Théâtre d'Émulation, owes all its vogue to the trivial and poissarde genres, and much more still to the extremely natural interpretation of M. Corse."[109] Corse's wife played other characters like Madame Angot's cousin in *La Poissarde parvenue* and her daughter in *Cadet Roussel*.[110] At the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, he brought the fishwife to life 237 times for *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople,* his longest run. Over the course of 7 years, Corse played Madame Angot so vigorously and so often that his contemporaries believed he sacrificed his health to the character.[111]

Theaters combined Madame Angot with other plays so that she shepherded in new works. After Maillot wrote *La Suite de Madame Angot*, he paired it with *La Poissarde parvenue* to boost the premier of *L'Artiste* on 9 Thermidor an V.[112] Similarly, the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes premiered *Madame Angot dans son grenier* and a large orchestra in order to stir up interest in a new administration.[113] The editor of the *Courrier des Spectacles* commented that Madame Angot's presence saved the horrible plot from financial ruin: "The name of Madame Angot is a

---

[109] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 21 ventôse an V (March 11, 1797). nº 64. "*Madame Angot* [*La Poissarde parvenue*], qui a tant de succès au Théâtre d'Émulation, doit toute sa vogue au genre trivial et poissard, et bien plus encore au jeu extrêmement naturel de M Corse."

[110] According to *La Correspondance des dames,* Corse's wife played Manon in *Cadet Roussel* "avec beaucoup de naturel." BnF Microfilm M-9678, Volume I, le 10 floréal an VII (April 29, 1799), nº12. Corse was so popular that the theater paid him 9 francs per performance. Gobin, "C'était pas la peine..." 248.

[111] Joseph Aude, *La Critique de Madame Angot au Sérail*. When Corse moved to the Ambigu-Comique in 1798, he brought Madame Angot's commercial magic with him. Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution,* 267; Actor St.-Albin played Madame Angot in Maillot's *Le repentir de Madame Angot ou le mariage de Nicolas* (1800) and actor Moessard performed the role in *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve* (1803) at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin. But no actor could rival Corse in portraying Madame Angot. See the cast list in BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou le mariage de Nicolas, comédie folie en deux actes, mêlée de chants* (Paris: Barba, an IX) and the announcement for *Madame Angot au Malabar* in BnF V-28300-28576, *Affiches, annonces et avis divers, ou Journal général de France*, le 12 brumaire an XII, November 4, 1803, n°42.

[112] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 9 thermidor an V (July 27, 1797), n°202.

[113] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 4 germinal an IX, (March 25, 1801), n°1486.

very precious talisman since it can prevent the failure of a rhapsody that is disgusting in its details."[114]

Playwrights multiplied Madame Angot's adventures and the number of Madame Angot plays in the capital proliferated. The daily spectacle announcements read like battle plans. Theaters shot Madame Angot onto their stages like warning shots across the bows of their competitors. In box office warfare, the foolish fishwife was a special weapon. Her sharp tongue, comedic personage, and cultural familiarity enticed spectators from one theater to the next.

Directors dispatched the leading lady in a theatrical tug of war. Madame Angot appeared on multiple stages simultaneously.[115] On 21 fructidor an VI, shortly after the Théâtre de la Cité-Variétés began playing *Le Voyage Aérien de Madame Angot*, the Théâtre d'Émulation quickly countered with *La Poissarde parvenue.* In a later rematch, the Théâtre de la Gaîté (formerly Émulation) played Maillot's *Madame Angot de retour de Constantinople* [*Le Repentir de Madame Angot*] on 25 nivôse an IX while the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique insisted on 26 nivôse that Madame Angot was still *Au Sérail de Constantinople* (Aude's play).[116] The two theaters sparred on and off for a month at which point the Théatre des Jeunes-Artistes joined the battle by premiering *Madame Angot dans son grenier*.[117] Threatened, the Théâtre de la Gaîté threw around its weight by staging the original *La Poissarde parvenue* again, lest citizens forget Madame Angot's origins.[118] The October 1803 premiere of *Madame Angot au Malabar* at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin (formerly l'Opéra) sparked a similar contest for spectators: The Théâtre de la Gaieté countered the second performance of *Madame Angot au Malabar*, as did the

---

[114] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 5 germinal an IX (March 26, 1801), n°1487. "le nom de Madame Angot est un talisman bien précieux puisqu'il eut préserver de la chute une rapsodie dégoutante par les détail."
[115] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 21 fructidor an VI (September 7, 1798), nº563.
[116] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 25 nivôse an IX (January 15, 1801), n°1417; le 26 nivôse an IX (January 16, 1801), n°1418.
[117] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 4 germinal an IX (March 25, 1801), nº1486
[118] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 5 germinal an IX (March 26, 1801), nº1487

Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes a day later.[119] For seven years, the Théâtre d'Émulation/Gaîté used the Angot plays to flex its commercial muscle and crowd out, or rather drain the crowd from, rival spectacles.

While some theaters attempted to build off of Madame Angot's prior adventures, others attempted to kill off the competition instead. Hoping to take advantage of the continuity among the Angot plays, some theaters attempted to silence the fishwife. The year 1797 witnessed five assassination attempts: *Les Amours de Madame Angot* (Dorvigny, Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes); *Le Père Angot ou le Mariage de Manon* (Théâtre Sans-Prétention); *La Fin tragique de Madame Angot* (Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes); *La Mort de Madame Angot ou la Journée des cloques* (Gaussier Saint-Amand, Théâtre Lazari); and *Encore madame Angot* (Théâtre des Délassements-comiques). Hoping to generate buzz and squash the competition from the Théâtre d'Émulation, the Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes parodied *Iphigénie en Aulide* in which Madame Angot tries to reclaim her spot in les Halles. However Margoton, another Dame des Halles, will not surrender her parasol and the two draw battle lines among their neighbors.[120] Theater censor Lessore balked at the violent topic whose "ideas pass all the limits of decency" and suspended the piece.[121]

Parisians rushed to defend Madame Angot from her assassins. On October 31, 1797, they protected the marked woman and shouted down *Joseph ou la Fin tragique de Madame Angot*.[122] Playwright François-Valentin Mulot wanted obliterate Madame Angot beyond all chance of resurrection and thus painted a particularly graphic death: Nicolas, her valet, describes how

---

[119] BnF V-28300-28576, *Affiches, annonces et avis divers, ou Journal général de France,* le 8 brumaire an XII (Octobre 31, 1803), n°38; le 10 brumaire an XII (November 2, 1803) n°40, ; le 11 brumaire an XII (November 3,1803), nº41.
[120] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 11 brumaire an VI, (November 1, 1797), n°253.
[121] AN FIV 1478, Bureau Central du Canton de Paris, Paris, le 15 brumaire, an VI de la République (November 5, 1797), rapport général de la Surveillance, Spectacles. "idées... passent toutes les bornes de la décence."
[122] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 10 brumaire an VI, (October 31, 1797), n°252.

Madame Angot slipped on her high heels and the pleats of her dress, which she wore according to "high fashion." Her attempt to climb the social ladder contributed to her fatal fall down steep stairs. Nicolas continues that, in her angry haste, Madame Angot's skull was shattered, her brains boiled on the cobblestone, and her blood stained the earth. To banish any lingering doubt, Nicolas exclaims, "She is no longer!"[123]

The firestorm surrounding *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot, Bagatelle Morale, mêlée de Chant* (publically known as *Le Mort de Madame Angot*) illustrates how playwrights, theater directors and spectators interacted to influence Madame Angot's image.[124] Profit and taste polarized how citizens perceived the play. Based on box office listings, it appears that the piece resulted from a theater slugfest between the Théâtre d'Émulation and the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes. Both playhouses performed vaudevilles, but starting in the fall of 1796, the Théâtre d'Émulation broke away from the pack with *La Poissarde parvenue* and then *La Suite*. Eager to attract spectators and exploit the moment, the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes premiered *Les Amours de Madame Angot* in March 1797.[125] The *Courrier des Spectacles* reported that the piece catered to the "desires of the public" and that the playwright Dorvigny, like others who mobilized Madame Angot, "is sure to live more comfortably."[126] The play temporarily won over Parisians, but critics concluded that the play paled in contrast to the original at Émulation.[127]

---

[123] François-Valentin Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot, Bagatelle Morale, mêlée de Chant* (Paris: Chez Geuffier, 1797), 44. "la mode." "Elle n'est plus! "

[124] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*.

[125] *Les Amours de Madame Angot* is by Dorvigny according to BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334 *Le Courrier des Spectacles,* le 30 ventôse an V (March 20, 1797), nº73.

[126] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 23 ventôse an V (March 13, 1797), nº66. "désirs du public," "est sûr de vivre plus à l'aise."

[127] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 21 ventôse an V (March 11, 1797), nº64; le 30 ventôse an V (March 20, 1797), nº73. Moreover, actor Delorde's solid interpretation of Madame Angot could still not rival the "redoutable" Corse at Émulation. *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 21 Ventôse an V (March 11, 1797), nº64. Despite the Théâtre des Jeune-Artiste's momentary victory in the battle of spectators, Émulation's *La Poissarde parvenue* and *Le Mariage de Nanon ou la Suite de Mme Angot* had far greater staying power.

After losing the initial battle, the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes took drastic measures by attempting to assassinate Madame Angot. The Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes premiered *Le Mort de Madame Angot* by François-Valentine Mulot on 9 brumaire an VI (30 October 1797). Then, the frenzy over Madame Angot had reached fever pitch when the Ottoman ambassador requested to see *La Poissarde parvenue* at Émulation five days later.[128] The Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes retaliated by performing *La Mort de Madame Angot* again on 16 brumaire an VI (6 november 1797).[129] Other theaters also tried to annihilate the fishwife in October and November 1797.[130]

This latest assault on their beloved Dame des Halles proved too much for Parisians who erupted in outrage. In his later preface, playwright Mulot acknowledged that, by critiquing Madame Angot, he had attacked one of the public's "sacred objects." He described how spectators coordinated to shut down the play as soon as it had been announced: "A thousand opposed whistlers came, that night, to faithfully fulfill their role, and prevented the peaceful judges from being able to pass judgment on this light production." In a way that evoked readers' imagined relationships with Rousseau, Mulot describes how Madame Angot's "good friends" booed and disrupted her death. The play became a battleground among audience members when those who criticized Madame Angot as a grotesque figure attended the next performance to applaud and "avenge the whistles of the day before."[131] Enraged, those spectators who supported

---

[128] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 13 brumaire an VI (November 3, 1797), n°255 announced the Ottoman ambassador would come the next day.
[129] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 16 brumaire an VI (November 6, 1797), n°258.
[130] The year 1797 witnessed five assassination attempts and 1799 revived one last ditch effort: *Les Amours de madame Angot* (Dorvigny, Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes, 1797); *Le Père Angot ou le Mariage de Manon* (Théâtre Sans-Prétention, 1797) ; *Joseph ou La Fin tragique de Madame Angot* (Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes, 1797); *La Mort de Madame Angot ou la Journée des cloques* (Gaussier Saint-Amand, Théâtre Lazari, 1797) ; and *Encore madame Angot* (Délassements-comiques, 1797). For the 1797 titles, see Gobin's list "C'était pas la peine...," 249; *La Mort de Madame Angot* (Théâtre Favart 1799).
[131] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot,* 7. "objets sacrés." "Mille sifflets apostes vinrent, le soir, remplir fidèlement leur rôle, et empêchèrent les juges paisibles de pouvoir prononcer sur cette production légère." "bons amis" "vengent des sifflets de la veille."

the endearing misfit made what Mulot deemed "false reports" to the police.[132] Because of the ruckus, the police suspended the play and resubmitted it to the censors the next day.[133]

Mulot defended his play by insisting that it defended "good taste" and morals, which Madame Angot systematically destroyed. Mulot despised how Madame Angot had stolen spectators from the "the premier theaters of the nation." Therefore, he imagined a piece with "an honest and gentle critique of our modern *Angots* who, under the trimmings of luxury, hide so clumsily the old habits of their early education, whatever care they took to cleanse them [the "Angots"] of them [their original manners]: be it of our true *Angot* so remarkable by her trivial kinds of gestures and expressions; be it finally, a natural consequence, of bad taste of those who make her their preferred mistress."[134] Mulot contrasted "our Angots" with "our true Angot" to criticize Parisian parvenus as well as the public's affinity for the foolish fishwife. In his eyes, good taste in theater corresponded to good social morals. The director of the Théâtre Jeunes-Artistes, had more commercial motives, no doubt: Madame Angot's lifespan dictated box office receipts.

The director of the Théâtre d'Émulation rushed to halt the killing spree and protect his most profitable character. The playhouse immediately countered rumors of Madame Angot's death with an Angot double-header a few days later. Émulation ran *La Poissarde parvenue* and *La Suite* to safeguard the fishwife.[135] The theater doubled proof of life for eager spectators. Parisians saved their beloved fishwife by flooding playhouses that set her adventures in the land

---

[132] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot,* 8. "faux rapports"
[133] AN AF^{IV} 1478, Bureau Central du Canton de Paris, Paris, le 15 Brumaire an VI, Rapport général de la surveillance, Spectacles.
[134] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*, 3-4. "premiers théâtre de la nation." "une critique honnête et douce soit de nos *Angots* modernes qui, sous les parures du luxe, cachent si gauchement les vieilles habitudes de leur éducation première, quelque soin que l'on ait pris d les en purifier: soit de notre *Angot* véritable, si remarquable par le genre trivial de ses gestes et de ses expressions; soit enfin, par une conséquence naturelle, du mauvais gout de ceux qui en font leur maitresse de préférence."
[135] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 12 brumaire an VI, November 2, 1797, n°254.

of the living. Madame Angot's resiliency reached epic proportions: Parisians repeatedly resurrected her after five different playwrights hatched assassination plots. Spectators, playwrights, and theater directors, all had a hand in creating Madame Angot through a mix of taste and commercial interests. The largest proportion of citizens threw their support behind the bumbling Dame des Halles. By 1797, spectators' concern over Madame Angot plotlines revealed a powerful and distinctive part of her character – Parisians imagined Madame Angot as a cultural being with a personal history that transcended individual plays.

An Intertextual Being: Parisians Construct a Transcendent Madame Angot

During the Directory and the Consulate, Madame Angot's adventures multiplied and so did their intertextual references. Parisians expected each plot to fit into the continuum of Madame Angot's personal history. The resulting matrix of characters, repeated conflicts, and recurring paradigms gave rise to an increasingly cohesive theatrical register, one that consistently parodied false promises of social mobility. By the end of the Consulate, hundreds of representations had cemented Madame Angot in Parisian culture. Moreover, Madame Angot emerged as a new *face* for the Dames des Halles while the suppression of popular politics rendered the actual market women increasingly faceless. Madame Angot's façade of autonomy bolstered her ability to perform cultural work and provide a rival embodiment to the living Dames. The Dames' image became consolidated into this transcendent poissarde figure.

As the struggle to protect or kill Madame Angot demonstrates, Madame Angot became a well-defined character with a continuous history and a distinct personality. As Madame Angot acquired power as a cultural figure, she inherently contributed to the living Dames' image since she drew her identity from the market women. The Madame Angot plays relied more and more

upon her specific persona and reputation. In effect, Madame Angot ceased to be a poissarde character *in* a comedy, she *was* the comedy. She was no longer a *character*, but a *cultural being*. Whereas Vadé had lifted vague poissard types onto the stage, Madame Angot boldly leapt from the stage to stage, free to roam the popular imagination as a persona in her own right. Authors even built her notoriety into their work. In *La Promenade de Madame Angot à la Grenouille*, one character tells her "I r'cognize yoo weal."[136]

By the spring of 1797, Madame Angot was no longer a poissarde persona but nearly a person. Playwrights quickly learned that spectators preferred plots that built from Madame Angot's other storylines rather than isolated plots. When one journalist reported that Madame Angot would play at the Théâtre Montasier, he simply wrote that she had been "transplanted from the Boulevards [street of small theatres] to the Palais-Égalité [neighborhood of major theatres]." For him, Madame Angot remained the same, but the venue changed.[137] Regardless of the theater, director, cast, or playwright, successful Angot plays integrated themselves in a metanarrative. Her household members made recurring appearances and the Angot plots repeated the perils of social climbing, depicted humorous festivities, and added a good dose of amorous intrigue. In addition, the Angot casts did not wear stock character masks from the *commedia dell'arte*.[138] Without a static mask, Madame Angot was one step closer to the dynamic Dames laughing in the parterre.

---

[136] BnF YE-16439, J-L. Cadot, *La Promenade de Mme Angot à la Grenouille; sa rencontre avec Jérôme* (De l'imprimerie de Madame Angot, à la Grenouillère). "J'te r'connais ben."
[137] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 8 ventôse an VII (February 26, 1799), n°735. "transplantée des boulevards au Palais-Égalité."
[138] Loubinoux, "Les Figures," 437. Loubinoux makes this point to demonstrate how Madame Angot relied on the actor's talent. Corse found the most success animating Madame Angot. Loubinoux inexplicably refers to Corse as "Gorsse" throughout the article.

Madame Angot's family formed an important part of her metanarrative. Nicolas, her faithful valet, played the idiot of the misfit household.[139] If Madame Angot did not betray her poissard origins, Nicolas's inability to acquire social graces certainly did. Madame Angot's daughter, Nanon is wiser than her mother. After Maillot's 1797 sequel, Nanon is perpetually engaged to her lover François who often proves the most perceptive character. Madame Angot's other daughter, Madame Dutaillis, has already married Monsieur Dutaillis, who is always spouting incorrect maxims and lessons from history. The couple shares Madame Angot's lust for wealth and social prestige. Finally, Mademoiselle Bernard is Madame Angot's outspoken niece who sells fish in les Halles. The audacious Bernard constantly reminds Madame Angot of her poissarde origins, much to her chagrin. Bernard acts as Madame Angot's foil, whom Madame Angot can only exclude kicking and screaming. Audiences even became attached to Madame Angot's lapdog, Bijou (jewel). When Madame Angot, Nicolas, and Bijou plummeted to the ground from her balloon in one play, the playwright neglected to explain Bijou's fate. The worried spectators, "with redoubled cries, demanded news of Bijou."[140]

Maillot first extended Madame Angot's history when he wrote *La Suite* as the sequel to his original play, *La Poissarde parvenue.* It debuted in March 1797. In the opening scene, Madame Angot says that she will not be fooled again by Girardière, the fake noble who duped her during her first adventure. After the failed marriage, Madame Angot promised Nanon that she could marry François, her lover. However, Bernard and François have seen Nanon secretly caring for a mystery child who calls her "mother." A mysterious letter suggests that it is Nanon's bastard child. Madame Angot becomes enraged at Nanon until she discovers that Nanon had

[139] Gobin argues that, as a character type, Nicolas can trace his roots back to the "sot médiéval." Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...", 251.
[140] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 20 fructidor an VI (September 11, 1798), nº562. "à cris redoubles, demandés des nouvelles de Bijou."

been caring for a child whose mother used to be a customer from les Halles but who fell into financial ruin. Of course, the fraudulent letter appears to have come from Girardière who wants to avenge himself from the first play. The spectator could not understand the relationships or the action in *La Suite* without cross-referencing the original *La Poissarde parvenue*. Even the cast remained the same with few additional characters.

Playwrights took note of the dynamics from earlier plays. For example, while Toupet (Madame Angot's hairdresser, of course) helps her pick out her wig in *La Suite*, Madame Angot says that she is too old to sport a young brown wig. Toupet insists that she is not too old to seduce men and that she still has some "conquests." This dialogue set up Madame Angot for love adventures in Constantinople and Malabar under the pen of another playwright.[141]

Several minor Angot plays appeared from 1797 to 1800 before Joseph Aude crafted the next blockbuster: *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*.[142] Aude picked up where *La Suite* left off. Madame Angot travelled to Marseille for the marriage of François and Nanon.[143] When they went off the coast to fish on the eve before the nuptials, pirates captured the household and brought them to the Constantinople. The pirates attempt to sell the group into slavery. Madame Angot does not comprehend the situation and causes so much trouble that the pirate can barely sell her. However, when Madame Angot realizes what is happening, she says that she can pay the ransom. Previously undesirable, the fishwife becomes a hot commodity. The traders ask the court to decide who will receive the ransom. But at the hearing, one of the Ottoman officials recognizes the famous Angot from his (real!) trip to Paris. When another character, Julie,

[141] BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot*. "conquêtes."
[142] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople.*
[143] In the Angot plays, printers and journals both referred to "Nanon" and "Manon" as Madame Angot's daughter. The inconsistency even pertains to same play.

inquires how the Madame Angot arrived in Constantinople, Julie recounts the places the poissarde has been in the plays after *La Suite.*[144]

The ambassador had told his sultan about *La Poissarde parvenue.* He tells his Turkish colleagues that they should take advantage of Madame Angot's natural foolery to stage similar spectacles for the sultan. They pretend to recruit Madame Angot into the sultan's harem because of her fame. Charmed by this social prestige that she does not quite understand, Madame Angot unwittingly plays the role of the foolish parvenue again. The Turks employ an actress to play an ex-pat poissarde and an actor to play a decoy sultan. For the hidden sultan's entertainment, these actors alternatively stir up Madame Angot's poissard rage and encourage her to put on refined airs. The ultimate coup arrives when the fake sultan throws his handkerchief to the ridiculous Angot, thus marking her as his favorite in the harem. But then cannons fire in the distance and an Ottoman accuses Madame Angot of conspiring with the enemies, which unhinges her completely. The Ottomans expose the play within the play to a bewildered Madame Angot. The sultan, thoroughly amused, gives her treasures and allows her to depart. Madame Angot thinks she has acquired an elite rank in Ottoman society but still wishes to return to les Halles, whose culture she understands.

Maillot countered Aude's success in November 1800 with *Le Repentir de Madame Angot, ou Le Mariage de Nicolas, comédie-folie en deux Actes, mêlée de Chants*. In order to place himself within the continuous trajectory of Madame Angot's metanarrative, which surpassed his own pen, Maillot introduces a new character so that Nicolas has to explain what happened during Aude's storyline in Constantinople. In essence, Madame Angot had become

---

[144] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople,* 37. Julie asks, "Dis-moi seulement une chose; comment que t'es venue ici? Est-ce par le coche d'Auxerre, ou le ballon de Rugiéri, ous-que tu montas l'an passé, qu'on crut voir dans les environs une grenouille dans le firmament." Moore suspects that the Théâtre de Favart's *Les trois Sultanes*, which portrayed a European woman in an oriental harem, influenced Aude. *The Genre Poissard*, 280.

such a powerful cultural figure, that Maillot no longer held creative authority over his own character. Maillot yielded to how the public would accept her persona. In *Le Repentir de Madame Angot,* Nicolas is in love with a country girl whom he met on the way back from Marseille. However, Bernard is engaged to Nicolas so she tells her neighbor Merluche, also a Dame des Halles, that she will have "marriage or revenge." Bernard divulges that she will disguise her clothing and her jargon to fool Nicolas into thinking she is the country girl. Bernard, Merluche, and a wigmaker will trick Madame Angot into signing a marriage contract with Bernard's real name although she will think it is for the other girl. The "Provençale's" higher social station convinces Madame Angot that she can break Bernard and Nicolas's prior engagement. The notary endorses her decision, says that only "petits gens" keep their word! Madame Angot gives 50,000 francs to the couple in the contract and makes her "cross." Merluche lifts Bernard's veil for a kiss with Nicolas and exposes her true identity. Madame Angot erupts in outrage, but Bernard says she will break the marriage contract if Nicolas is unhappy. Madame Angot then rallies on behalf of Bernard and tells Nicolas she is "a girl of honor" to offer this alternative. Nicolas is touched and he marries Bernard.[145]

Unfortunately for Aude, he had already started writing his next Madame Angot play when Maillot released his *Le Repentir de Madame Angot*. In addition, another theater had staged *Madame Angot au grenier*, which stipulated that Madame Angot lost her Turkish treasure in a shipwreck on her way back to France.[146] In order to respect Madame Angot's intermediary adventures, Aude had to do considerable backpedaling in *Madame Angot au Malabar ou La Nouvelle veuve*. When Aude released his play in November 1803, he first had to convince

[145] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas.* "mariage ou vengeance," "petits gens," "croix," "une fille d'honneur."
[146] The *Grenier* play is described here: BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 5 germinal an IX (March 26, 1801), n°1487.

spectators that Madame Angot was still abroad somehow. In the preface, Aude attested that the play "had been written and destined, for a long time, for the théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes." He attempted to position the action just before "her return to Paris," where he implicitly acknowledged *Le Repentir de Madame Angot* took place. In the very first line of the play, Nicolas asks, "So it's worse than in Turkey?" in order to position the action directly after *Au Sérail de Constantinople*.[147]

Aude's play depended on chronological continuity. According to Aude, Madame Angot believed she married a rich Indian trader named Millisard (a play on millionaire) before leaving Constantinople and then immediately travelled with him to Malabar. However, inspired by Angot's unconscious performance at Constantinople, Millisard has in fact deceived her so that he can bring her back to *Malabar*. There, Millisard hopes to put on a similar show for the Bramines and Gouverneur. Correzzi, a European trader in Malabar, is in on the plan. He tells l'émissaire: "Victory is ours. The illustrious Angot, wife of Milissard, her daughter, her son-in-law, her servant, all are going to serve as our entertainment." He explains, "I see the spectacle unfold. I believe that if she delighted Constantinople, by way of her conspiracy with Pacha Oglou, she will entertain Malabar by the way of sacrifice." The characters conspire to trick Madame Angot into thinking that Milliard died and that she has to commit sati as his widow.[148]

Once again, the entertainment comes from the play within a play wherein Madame Angot and her household are the only ones without knowledge of the play. Their cultural illiteracy serves as the driving force behind the humor: Madame Angot does not realize that the Indians are

---

[147] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve.* "a été fait et destiné, depuis long-tems, au théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes," "son retour à Paris," "C'est donc pire que dans la Turquie?"

[148] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve.* "La victoire est à nous. L'illustre Angot, femme Milissard, sa fille, son gendre, son domestique, tout va servir à nos amusements." "Je vois le spectacle d'avance. Je crois que si elle a réjoui Constantinople, par sa conspiration avec pacha Oglou, elle divertira le Malabar à l'approche du sacrifice."

trying to get her to purify herself and commit sati on the funeral pyre. They lure her to the flames by promises of eternal glory and honor. Madame Angot misinterprets her "immortality" to mean that the fire will not harm her. She throws herself on the fire but Millisard jumps out of the casket and sweeps her to safety. Madame Angot asks for a divorce to avoid future accidents, but Millisard reveals he deceived her with fake customs. The Indian governor gives Madame Angot gifts for her "courage" and says that she can leave for France tomorrow. After Constantinople and Malabar, Madame Angot concludes that is her last "folly" and she will stay in her place in les Halles.[149]

Despite being an independent cultural being with periodically extreme adventures, Madame Angot's plays had their roots in contemporary issues. She visited Constantinople when French scholars visited Egypt. She explored the new Museum at the Louvre. She commissioned her portrait. As she observed, hot air balloons were all the rage.[150] Out of the 23 balloons that the French owned in Year 7, she managed to secure a ride (though disastrous) with her usual extravagance.[151] While chasing the glitter of all things à la mode, Madame Angot also forged her quests across the backdrop of social instability.

Social Anxieties, Madame Angot, and the Dames des Halles

As a parvenue, Madame Angot joined the swelling ranks of the nouveaux riches following the Terror. A new elite of notables and bourgeoisie consolidated both economic and political power. In particular, Martyn Lyons points out that "the generals, the purchasers of *biens*

[149] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve.* "folie"
[150] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 247.
[151] Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 123. Madame Angot visits the Louvre and hires Joseph to paint her portrait in Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*.

nationaux and the army contractors" emerged at the forefront of the enriched elite.[152] Others enjoyed the wealth they acquired from speculating on the assignat. When the bourse reopened in January 1796, it provided an additional venue for the bourgeoisie to invest and profit.[153]

Madame Angot and the Parisian parvenus conveyed their new social prowess by displaying luxury. The nouveaux riches devoted enormous amounts of attention to exaggerated fashions. The male "Incroyables" (Incredibles) sported "large felt hats and colossal cravats," while female "Merveilleuses" (Marvels) wore transparent robes and blond wigs.[154] The Incroyables and the Merveilleuses became the mascots of the Thermidorian reaction. Decadent and showy, they rejected Jacobin austerity and despised popular politics. The Incroyables and the Merveilleuses unleashed social distinctions and cultural pretentions with a vengeance. Parisians drooled over turbans of Algerian, Egyptian, and Turkish varieties that graced the pages of the new fashion journal – *Le Journal des Dames*.[155] It is little wonder why Madame Angot kept her turban in her post-Constantinople adventures. The directorial elite returned to wigs with near-aristocratic enthusiasm. Madame Angot's hairdresser, Toupet, gives her a brown wig to wear to a masked ball at Tivoli. Toupet insists that the poodle puff that graces her forehead will adorn Madame Angot "à merveille" (in the fashion of the Merveilleuses).[156] Dressed to impress, the Incroyables and Merveilleuses attended 1,500 Parisian dance halls, watched grandiose outdoor spectacles, and explored the waterfalls at Tivoli. Madame Tallien, Napoleon's future wife Joséphine, and Madame de Staël held court over high society in their illustrious salons.[157]

---

[152] Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory,* 53.
[153] Jean Tulard, *Les Thermidoriens* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), 303-304.
[154] Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 143.
[155] Thierry Lemoine, Jérôme Douard, Jean-Marc Léri, and Aimée Fontaine ed., *Au temps des merveilleuses: la société parisienne sous le Directoire et le Consulat* (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 2005). See the plates on pages 143-146.
[156] BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot*, 1.
[157] Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 63-65.

Maillot gave Madame Angot her own salon in the dinner setting for his journal *Les Soupers de Madame Angot*.

Reeling from the austerity of the Terror, the directorial elite culturally distinguished the political change with pomp. However, some citizens accused the new elite of chasing Old Regime luxury. Historian Jean-Paul Clément summarizes the disdain: "Filled by nostalgia for the Old Regime, they [the parvenus] want to make themselves its imitators, copiers, 'apes.'"[158] Madame Angot and other parvenu characters exposed the similarities between the nouveaux riches and Old Regime elites to Parisian audiences. The censor struck a vaudeville verse that frankly assessed the new elites' shortcomings: "If the counts and the marquis/ Are no longer known in France;/ On the stage they are still admitted-/ one sees their impertinence/ our parvenus their successors/ are a bad copy."[159] A 1798 novel followed a naive parvenue protagonist who uncovers the shocking grossness of directorial society. Her social equals have mastered the new culture to advance their own prestige and "in order to mock one another."[160]

Many citizens expressed their anxiety over the changing fortunes that inverted social hierarchies and left the stars of the Old Regime penniless. The *Journal général de France* described the upheaval in April 1797: "Whereas the nouveaux rich displayed an unbridled luxury at Longchamp; the previously rich, the rentiers, the pensioners of the state, a crowd of men of all ages, of all estates, groaning, deprived of the most strict necessity." Due to these drastic changes

---

[158] Jean-Paul Clément, "Les Goncourts, historiens de la Révolution et du Directoire," in *Les Goncourts dans leurs siècle: Un siècle de Goncourt*, edited by Jean-Louis Canaes, Pierre-Jean Dufief, Robert Kop, Jean-Yves Mollier, (Villeneuve: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion, 2005), 60. "aspirés par la nostalgie de l'Ancien Régime, ils [the parvenus] s'en veulent les imitateurs, les copiers, les 'singers.'"

[159] The censor ordered the playwright to remove or revise these lines from *La mort de Cadet Roussel*. AN F^7 3491, Police, Théâtres, an IV- 1812, le 19 vendémiaire an 7 (October 10, 1798), Théâtre de la Cité. 'Si les comtes et les marquis/ Ne sont plus connus dans la France;/ En scène ils sont encor admis- /l'on vit de leur impertinence/ nos parvenus leurs successeurs/ sont une mauvaise copie."

[160] As quoted by Tulard from *La Dot de Suzanne, ou Histoire de Mme de Senneterre racontée par elle-même* (1798). Jean Tulard, *Les Thermidoriens* (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), 299. "pour se moquer les unes des autres."

in fortune, Parisian suicide figures spiked during the Directory.[161] Madame Angot's near self-immolation in Malabar appears even more foolish then, because it is not an act of despair. Rather, she is unwittingly killing herself to *gain* wealth and immortality. Her suicide attempt was a morbid inversion of the Directorial trend.

From 1796 on, the soaring popularity of the Angot plays echoed the bourgeois denial that the poissard classes could act as rational citizens. Thus, the genre poissard amplified the irreparable fault in the very foundation of revolutionary social relations: On the one hand, early revolutionary pamphlets imitated the frank poissard milieu as a source of uncorrupted sovereignty.[162] On the other hand, during the Directory, the Madame Angot plays exploited her hyperbolic buffoonery and condemned her futile attempts at social mobility. In addition, the revolutionaries evaluated how Madame Angot's intellectual and cultural inadequacies rendered her unfit for politics. Playwrights and censors refused to call Madame Angot a "Citoyenne," she failed as a universal citizen abroad, and she embodied elites' suspicions that the popular classes were not equipped to be serious political leaders. Since Parisians collectively crafted Madame Angot's image, their critiques keenly influenced the living Dames' political capital.

In order to purge Old Regime characters and hierarchies from society, directorial censors forbade the use of ranks and titles in theater. Like the revolutionaries, all theatrical characters

---

[161] The author continued, "Et tel est le degré de démoralisation, auquel sont parvenus les Français, que celui qui a dissipé dans les trois jours de course, des sommes énormes pour un amusement aussi fol que dangereux..." BnF 4-Lc2-70 *Journal général de France*, le 2 floréal an V (April 21, 1797), nº212; For an example of a rentier's published suicide note to his son, see BnF MICR D-80, *Journal de Paris*, le 15 Fructidor an IV (September 1, 1796). The rentier threw himself into the Seine. The *Journal de Paris* justified reproducing the letter with the following introduction: "Le directoire ayant prouvé dernièrement avec éclat, qu'il faut dire la vérité toute entière, & que toute vérité est bonne à dire, & qu'il ne faut sur tout par déguiser la souffrance des troupes, nous profitons de cet exemple pour donner une nouvelle preuve de la souffrance des rentiers." See also Dominique Godineau, *S'abréger les jours - Le suicide en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012); "Tandis que les nouveaux enrichis étaloient à Longchamp un luxe effréné; les ci-devant riches, les rentiers, les pensionnaires de l'état, une foule d'hommes de tout âge, de tous les états, gémissoient, privés du plus stricte nécessaire."

[162] On the Dames des Halles, the genre poissard, and revolutionary propaganda, see Chapter 1 of this work.

were to address one another as "Citoyen" or "Citoyenne."[163] In his notes on one play, the head censor instructed his employees: "let [authors] use the word 'Monsieur' only for valets, foreigners, ridiculous or odious characters.'" Odile Krakovitch, a historian of censorship concludes, "The term 'citoyen' must henceforth [the Directory on] designate dignified and estimable characters, revolutionaries."[164]

Madame Angot, however, appeared so exceptionally preposterous that the censors decided she did not pose a cultural threat. The "Madame" parvenue could never fulfill her title's social or political significance. Even while they censored the titles of other "silly people," I have not found a single instance where a censor stripped the poissarde of her title. When the censors reviewed *Madame Angot dans le ballon*, for example, they condemned all polite and noble titles except for "Madame" Angot. [165] The censors did not object to "Madame" Angot because the title highlighted her foolishness. Far from elevating her, "Madame" insulted the fishwife by pointing out her social failures. The censors' decisions served as official state condemnation of Angot's ambitions and political membership. The revolutionaries could not even imagine Madame Angot as a "citoyenne." Ironically, the fishwife insists on "Madame" or "Sultane" to mark her prestige, but they mar her instead. Madame Angot fails to see the double meaning that the word contained for spectators. One journal intentionally called Madame Angot "citoyenne" only to poke fun at

---

[163] Odile Krakovitch,"Le Théâtre de la République et la Censure sous le Directoire," in *Le théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, edited by Martial Poirson (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2008), 175.

[164] Quoted by Krakovitch, "Le Théâtre de la République et la Censure sous le Directoire," 180. "ne laisser employer le mot de 'Monsieur' que pour les valets, les étrangers, les personnages ridicules ou odieux.'" "le term du 'citoyen' ne doit désormais désigner des personnages dignes et estimables, révolutionnaires.'"

[165] AN F^7 3492, AN F^7 3491, Police, théâtres, Paris, an IV-1812, Dossier: Théâtre de la Cité, le 8 fructidor an VI (August 25, 1798), censorship report for *Madame Angot dans le ballon 1-acte.*

her. The editor ironically used the title to say "Citoyen Jean [probably Jean-Bart, a lower class stock character], scrape the dirt off my shoes; citoyenne Angot, open my oysters."[166]

In the context of social upheaval, Madame Angot represented two groups. On the one hand, she could never escape her identity as a fish merchant, a Dame des Halles. The bourgeois elite from across the political spectrum could interpret Madame Angot as the upstart figure of the popular classes who confirmed that the lower class could not handle cultural or political power. On the other hand, the popular classes could interpret Madame Angot as a symbol of the artificial nouveaux riches and the bourgeoisie's unfounded pretentions.[167] In this sense, the bourgeoisie appeared as a culturally homogenous group rather than one fractured by factional divides. Madame Angot's malleable social identity allowed Parisians to critique both classes, oversimplified though they were, in the social order of the Directory and the Consulate.

Madame Angot so encapsulated Directorial culture that a 1799 cartoon labeled her as one of the "Les Derniers Monumens de la République" (The last Monuments of the Republic.) "Pregnant with the future," Madame Angot stands before Napoleon who, poised with sabers as forceps, is ready for the birth. The image satirizes Napoleon's coup, but also points to the power of the parvenus during the Directory.[168] Contrary to the artists' suggestion that Napoleon might destroy this child, he was a parvenu in his own right and adopted many others into his own elite

---

[166] AN AF IV 1329, Rapport du Bureau Central, le 22 nivôse an VII (January 12, 1800), Rapport analytique des journaux, reprinted as LIX in François-Alphonse Aulard, *Paris sous le consulat. Recueil de documents pour l'histoire de l'esprit public à Paris*, Volume I (Paris: L. Cerf, 1903-1909) 89. "décrottez mes souliers; citoyenne Angot, ouvrez-moi des huîtres."

[167] BnF Arts du spectacle 4-Y-2390, Danielle Dumas, "Faire rire les Parisiens" in *L'avant-scène*, n°887 (1991), 39; Maurice Albert imagined that Madame Angot's contemporaries might depict her thus: "Elle personnifie toutes les parvenues de la France nouvelle, ces marchandes de marée, ... qui hier encore débitaient leur morue aux halles ... et qui aujourd'hui, mal décrassées, trop parfumées, étourdies de luxe et dépaysées dans la soie, encombrent le haut du pavé, promènent leurs jupes dans les ministères et tiennent en laisse nos Directeurs."[167] Albert, *Les Théâtres des Boulevards (1789-1848)*, 167-168.

[168] BnF Estampes P26733, Numéro de Vinck: 7400, tome 54, "Les Derniers Monumens de la République," Gravure à l'eau-forte, coloriée. "Grosse de l'avenir,"

cadre. Therefore, the nouveaux riches and Madame Angot remained salient figures during the Consulate.

Besides their anxiety over reversed fortunes, Parisians remained leery of the instability of their social positions. The new social order unhinged individuals' identities and rendered their social stations ambiguous. In *La Suite*, Madame Angot painted the confused scene: "But, Monsieur Toupet, see a little what the world is at present. Only intriguers, good god! It's that th' streets o' Paris crawls with them... and the young, and the old... and ruined people, and enriched people who one doesn't know from wher' they come. Dame! it's that I' see all that in my boutique... an' well! the poor like the rich, the credibles like the incroyables, I have not yet found among them one who is content... everyone critiques."[169] When François and Madame Angot suspect that the mystery toddler who visits Nanon is her bastard child, the question of origins is thrown into relief. The denouement reveals that Nanon has acted as a mother to the child only by her charity and "good sacred duties." The child belongs to a widow and former Rentière to whom Nanon used to sell fruit in les Halles. Because of a reversal of fortune, the Rentière became so poor that Nanon offered to aid her child. Nanon justified her actions insisting that social position varied and one day their roles might reverse again. She told the Rentière that her child "no longer has a fortune, give her some talents, and since all is variable in the world,

[169] Toupet observed that the instability would continue: "Toujours jaloux, chacun envie/ Pour soi-même le sort d'autrui." BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot*, 3. Later in the play, when Madame Angot insults Bernard by calling her a "p'tite poissarde," Bernard reminds her that citizens' fortunes quickly change. Bernard chastised Madame Angot and asked, "et encore qui sait d'ous' qui vient?" *La Suite de Madame Angot*, 14-15. "Mais, Monsieur Toupet, voyez un peu ce que c'est que l'monde d'à présent. Que d'intrigans, bon dieu! c'est que l'pavé d'Paris en fourmille... et des jeunes, et des vieux... et des gens ruinés, et des gens enrichis qu'on ne sait pas d'où qu'ça vient. Dame! c'est que j'vois tout ça dans ma boutique... eh ben ! les pauvres comme les riches, les croyables comme les incroyables, je n'en ai pas encore trouvé un qui soit content... tout le monde critique."

perhaps she will do for my own [children], what I do today for her."[170] The story of covertly aiding a child without a father echoes the 1794 plot of *Les Marchandes de la Halle*; however, the different causes for hardship reflect shifting cultural preoccupations. Whereas the patriotic motive of war had deprived the child of his father in the 1794 play, wealth and fickle fate threatened the child in *La Suite*. The latter play warns of fleeting fortune and social position during the Directory.

Perhaps reflecting her oft-noted middle age, Madame Angot seems to have short-term memory loss. While attuned to her personal history and relationships, she nonetheless repeatedly forgets the same lessons. Playwrights featured recurring plots that warned of the perils of social climbing, confirmed that Madame Angot could not escape her origins in les Halles, and lauded useful work as a socially valorizing. In order to find Madame Angot humorous, spectators had to share the conviction that Madame Angot acted outlandishly

La Poissarde parvenue clearly cautions against social ambitions and criticizes the bourgeoisie's foppery. Yet, Maillot attempted to disarm critics by insisting that although "one wanted to persuade me that I had had a moral goal," he did not have one. By explicitly raising the question in his preface, Maillot highlights his moral goals with a wink. Through a tongue-in-cheek objection, he twice affirms that "I don't have common sense."[171] However, if the perceptive reader interprets "common sense" through Maillot's own definitions, a double meaning emerges. First, in Maillot's 1784 play, *Figaro, directeur de marionnettes*, Suzanne criticizes Figaro's attempts to start his own theater: "I tell you that you don't have common

---

[170] BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640, Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot*, 29. "sacrés bons." "n'a plus de fortune donnez lui des talens, et puis tout est si variable dans le monde, peut-être fer-t-elle pour les miens, ce que je fais aujourd'hui pour elle."

[171] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, A2. "On a voulu me persuader que j'avois eu un but moral," "je n'ai pas le sens commun."

sense; all your life you have done foolish things, & all your life you will do so..."[172] Therefore, by positioning "common sense" near his supposedly nonexistent moral goal, Maillot signals that he will critique his character's foolish ambitions. Second, Parisian police reported that Maillot had published a pamphlet before 10 August 1792 called *Sens commun à la nation française*, a clear nod to Thomas Paine. According to the police, Maillot "was already demanding the abolition of the Monarchy."[173] Therefore, "sens commun" carried political weight as well, one which dismissed royal pretentions or perhaps the unfounded superiority of the new "noble" ranks. In his third Angot play, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot*, Maillot finally showed his hand. In an opening double entendre, the wigmaker tells the audience, "While listening to others, one instructs oneself."[174] Maillot and fellow playwrights did in fact present Madame Angot and her ever-growing fan club with recurring lessons.

As a parvenue, Madame Angot attempts to manipulate her material wealth to ape current and past high society although the setting is always contemporary.[175] Even though the plot occurs in 1796, Madame Angot depicts herself as entering into the "noblesse" by marrying her daughter to the fake chevalier. Throughout her adventures, Madame Angot emphasizes her appearance. She is often at her toilette fussing with her clothes that she hopes reflects high fashion and her social status. Her wigs play a central role since they were meant to complement a

---

[172] BnF Yth 7035, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Figaro, directeur des marionnettes, comédie en un acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles et d'Ariettes* (Paris, Chez Hardouin, 1785), 13. Représentée, pour la première fois, au Palais Royal, le 31 Décembre 1784, par les Petits Comédiens de S.A.S. Monseigneur le Comte de Beaujolois. "je te dis que tu n'as pas le sens commun; toute la vie tu as fait des sottises, & toute la vie tu en feras..."

[173] See mention of the pamphlet and its message in the police reports of 24 ventôse an III. AdP D.4Z 3, Les Spectacles de Paris sous le Directoire, Extraits des Rapports de la Police Municipale détruits dans l'incendie du 1871, 24 ventôse an III (March 24, 1795). "demandoit déjà l'abolition de la Royauté."

[174] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas* "en écoutant les autres on s'instruit."

[175] Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 362. Moore says that the parvenus "had the obsessing ambition to emulate their former masters."

person's physiology and innate social class.[176] It is little wonder, then, that the wigs look ridiculous on her. Merluche, a wise fish merchant in *Le Repentir*, points out to an unreceptive Madame Angot that "the habit does not make the monk."[177] Instead, Madame Angot insisted that acting "comme il faut" (as is proper) indicated an elevated social position. She instructs Nicolas how to speak pretentiously so that "one does not resemble the little people [of the lower classes]." She believes that the imposter fiancé must be a good chevalier due to his gallant speech "comme il faut."[178] Enchanted by his linguistic ornaments, Madame Angot remarks, "What noble and distinguished air!"[179] However, the only air that Madame Angot is full of is hot air, which becomes physically manifest in her later vanity-fueled balloon ride.

Along with the spectators, even the buffoon valet recognizes Madame Angot's material world is "a fantasy." After Madame Angot returned from Constantinople, her wigmaker is baffled when Madame Angot instructs him "Go ahead, kiss my hand. I am a proper sultane." Nicolas explains that she still considers herself the sultan's favorite and accordingly "likes to be flattered."[180] Madame Angot attempts to construct a material bubble fit for a sultane inside her house. Much to her distress, her house is still located in the middle of les Halles, and other poissardes enter to reveal the porous reality of her fragile airs. Referring to her fellow market women, Madame Angot sighs condescendingly, "There are certain people that it is necessary

---

[176] Madame Angot goes through two wigmakers in the course of *La Suite de Madame Angot* and *Le Repentir de Madame Angot*; For an overview on how the French interpreted wigs and physiognomy see Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* III, no. 3 (June 2006); See also the inutility of social disguise in Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux's *Le Jeu d'amour et du hazard* (1730). Although the valets and nobles switch costumes, the disguised nobles inevitably fall in love with one another and the disguised valets fall in love with one another, although no one knows their lover's true rank until the denouement; On the other hand, see the inability of riches and material trappings to produce noble character and honest relations in Abbé Antoine François Prévost's *L'Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1731).
[177] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 22. "l'habit ne fait pas le moine."
[178] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 10-11. "one does not ressemble the little people (people of the lower classes)."
[179] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 17. "Quel air noble et distingué!"
[180] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas.* 11-12. "une fantaisie." "Allons, baisez ma main. Je suis bonne sultane." "aime à être flattée."

(qu'il faut) to put in their place."[181] However, by then end of the play, Madame Angot once again feels humiliated. She confirms her lesson, "I'm mad for having made myself distinguished. I' feel wel' tha' it's a foolisch thing, and I' feel all ashamed about it!"[182]

Despite her material possessions, Madame Angot could not suppress her true poissard character. Her celebrated "gueule" (beak) betrayed her social origins by mangling phrases and channeling unbridled emotions. In *Joseph ou la Fin Tragique de Madame Angot*, painter Joseph noted how Madame Angot reveals her true poissarde colors when she becomes emotional: "When she is animated by one of the lively passions which neutralizes education,... they make everything revert to its natural state."[183] In *La Poissarde parvenue*, Madame similarly lets her pretentious airs lapse when Bernard draws her rage: (with anger, et completely in poissarde): "V'la it's not still' a bootiful fruit of nature, to come insolate [insult] the world, you [informal] understand that all that I have is mine, it is not at all owed to any other person, and all your bad-mouthing would not rob me of as much as one straw." ("V'la ti pas encor un biau fruit de nature, pour venir insolenter le monde, apprends que tout ce que j'ai est à moi, ça ne doit rien à personne, et toutes tes médisances ne m'ôteroient tant seulement un fétu.")[184] Ironically, Madame Angot often slips into a poissard dialect when she is arguing with someone who has evoked her popular origins. In *Constantinople*, Madame Angot rails against the poissarde actress

---

[181] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 40. "Il y a des certaines gens qu'il faut mettre à leux place."

[182] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 43. "J'suis fachée d'avoir fait ma distinguée. J'sens ben qu'c'est une sottice, et j'en-suis toute honteuse!"

[183] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*, 16. In the same play, Toinette (Angot's goddaughter) hides in a room describing how Madame Angot, "avec fureur, tombe sur moi, me meurtrit de coups, m'arrache les cheveux, et me dit tous les injures du monde: toutes ses anciennes expressions lui sont revenues, et elle me les prodigue sans pitié," 41. "Quand elle est animée par une de ces passions vives qui neutralisent l'éducation,.. [it] font reprendre à la nature tous ses droits."

[184] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 32-33; Gobin points out that the violent arguments fit within the "mini-tradition" of the genre poissard. Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine..." 251. (avec colère, et tout-à-fait en poissarde): "V'la ti pas encor un biau fruit de nature, pour venir insolenter le monde, apprends que tout ce que j'ai est à moi, ça ne doit rien à personne, et toutes tes médisances ne m'ôteroient tant seulement un fétu."

who, in the sultan's court, highlighted Madame Angot's lower-class background: "What's that which is th's creature? Some little peopl' lik' that in a show lik' this'one'here." ("Qu'est-ce que c'est que c'te créature? Du petit peupe comm' ça dans un sallon comm' s't'ici.") [185]

Madame Angot's poissard outbursts function as incontrollable outbursts of social authenticity. For example, the supposed attack on the city during the play-within-a-play at Constantinople instinctively jolts Madame Angot from her Turkish airs to panic in poissard: "Queu qui gnia donc? Qu'est-ce que est arrivé?" ("What's there then? What happened?") [186] This sharp shift and other vacillations in affected language signaled to the audience that Madame Angot spoke honestly, without artifice or dissembling strategy.

However, Madame Angot is not even conscious of her linguistic incompatibility. She constantly butchers words with humorous results. By prompting the audience to laugh, Madame Angot's tongue undermines her social and political credibility. For example, instead of permitting one of her neighbors "to communicate" information, Madame Angot tells her, "You will excommunicate me it."[187] When describing another character, Madame Angot accidentally confuses "inducation" with "education" and thus criticizes herself: "[She is] a little crude, but what do you want? This one doesn't have much inducation."[188] Madame Angot's poissarde language threatened to exclude her from the body politic. In the 1794 *Les Marchandes de la Halle*, Fanchon, the virtuous Dame des Halles chastises her neighbor Suzon for her crude dialect: "Cease the poissard tone,/ Of which one will'lose usage./ In the republic, has wha'one says,/

---

[185] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 36. "Qu'est-ce que c'est que c'te créature? Du petit peupe comm' ça dans un sallon comm' s't'ici."
[186] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople,* 259. "Queu qui gnia donc? Qu'est-ce que est arrivé?"
[187] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 35. "communiquer" "Tu m'excommuniqueras ça."
[188] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 27. "[She is] un peu grossière, mais que voulez-vous? Ca n'a pas t'en d'inducation."

Yes, all jargon will be forbidden,/ On will have but one heart and spirit,/ One will have only one language."[189]

Madame Angot and Nicolas also unveil their humble backgrounds through their lack of bodily control. Nicolas has to pull on Madame Angot's dress to prevent her from strangling Nanon, Bernard, and others in her fits of rage.[190] The idiot valet rarely enters or exits the stage correctly. He turns in pirouettes to follow people, trips over chairs, and, much to Madame Angot's dismay only doffs his hat "ridiculously."[191] The material trappings of social rank cannot mask their popular gestures and unpolished comportment. The dirt of the marketplace seems to have conditioned Madame Angot's physiological responses. When the parvenue faints, she refuses the fake chevalier's rose-water and instead asks for some uncultured "eau-de-vie." The alcohol promptly revives her, but demonstrates Madame Angot's visceral identity as a poissarde.[192]

Spectators and other characters studied Madame Angot in order to condemn her social climbing.[193] Within her plays, Madame Angot frequently encounters individuals who know her as a celebrity. In *Le Repentir*, several Parisians recognize her. They crowd around her

---

[189] BHVP #611 177, (n°7) in 8° Demautort, *Les Marchandes de la Halle*, 18. Lest anyone think this was a pro-Jacobin play, the message is clearly about building a peaceful republic in the wake of the Terror. One character condemns the cook for falsely denouncing Fanchon. With a nice anti-Jacobin jab, he exclaims, "Aujourd'hui on n'incarcère plus sans raison." Police noted that the salle erupted in applause and the actor repeated the couplet in response. AN F^{1C} III Seine 14 signed Barbarin and Therouenne, Rapport du 18 frimaire an III (December 8, 1794), Esprit public, Spectacles reprinted as CXXXIII in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume I, 300; In 1798, a theater critic lamented that the "seul mérite" of a poissard play "seroit si chaque personnage parloit le langage qui convient à son état." Madame Angot was not interested in securing approval in this respect. The critic was disappointed in *Deux Cent Livres* (an opéra-poissard by Guillemain) whose main character is Plumet, a fort de la halle. BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334 *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, 24 pluviôse an VI, (February 12, 1798), nº356. "cessez le ton poissard,/ Dont ou perd'rez l'usage./ Dans la république, a c'qu'on dit,/ Oui, tout jargon sera proscrit,/ On n'a qu'un coeur et qu'un esprit,/ On n'aura qu'un langage."

[190] For example, *La Suite de Madame Angot.* Madame Angot orders Nicolas to hold her back and prevent her from choking Nanon. Madame Angot suspects that Nanon has a bastard child. BnF Arts du spectacle P89/4640 Maillot, *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot*, 26.

[191] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 13. "ridiculement."

[192] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 33; Albert, *Les Théâtres des Boulevards (1789-1848),* 164.

[193] Laurent Pelly summarizes the parvenu Madame Angot as "représentation du jeu social par le jeu théâtral," in BnF Arts du spectacle 4-Y-2390, Laurent Pelly, "Autour de Madame Angot," in *L'avant-scène*, n°887 (1991), 39.

commenting, "V'là mamee Angot," and study her appearance. They note her deteriorating condition after her exotic travels. Madame Angot has to slap them away to get some space.[194] Likewise, Madame Angot appeals to the people when the Ottomans accuse her of treason. She throws herself at the feet of the sultan and pleads, "It's not me, I am incapable of it, monsieur the sultan. The people are for me, you will see it well', [they] demand there my grace." In this case, "le peuple" references Madame Angot's theatrical popularity and invites the spectators to judge the parvenue's conduct.[195] To her fellow "citizens" and to theater audiences, Madame Angot's attempted social climbing proves hilarious. Yet, when Madame Angot "corrects" her unfounded ambitions and acknowledges her poissarde roots, she endears herself to the cast and to spectators.[196]

Once a Dame des Halles, always a Dame des Halles

While Parisians judged Madame Angot, they implicitly colored their views of her living counterparts. Thus, spectators could extend the morals from the famous fishwife's adventures to the Dames des Halles. Since Madame Angot was a fish merchant, les Halles acted as a defining marker of her identity and a cultural grounding. Les Halles connected Madame Angot's adventures to the material realities of the marketplace and the Dames des Halles who served as her model. Although the parvenue traded her merchant bonnet for a bourgeois wig, les Halles and the Dames retained a physical and metaphorical presence in her adventures. In Constantinople, Madame Angot beat back the insult that her hands "still smell of cod." Les

[194] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 35.
[195] Gérard Loubinoux quotes *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople in* "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance dans le théâtre de Joseph Aude," in *Le théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, edited by Martial Poirson (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2008), 252; Loubinoux, "Les figures," 428. "Ce n'est pas moi, j'en suis incapable, monsieur le sultan. Le peuple est pour moi, vous voyez ben, y demande ma grâce." "est née sur le carreau de la halle."
[196] Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 252; Even her enemies acknowledged that, although Madame Angot let herself be lured away by riches, "son coeur est bon." Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*, 7.

Halles were inescapably engrained in her pores, even if the tale unfolded thousands of miles away. Madame Angot and company tied their heritage to les Halles, cited its physical structures, used it as a frame of reference in Paris and abroad, and accepted the lesson that they must return to their position there.

Madame Angot's crew traced their heritage through les Halles to explain their identity. In Malabar, Nicolas explains that Nanon "was born on the square de la halle."[197] He assumes that this detail suffices to introduce her to the Indians.[198] For Nicolas, les Halles form his entire geographical world. Across the Mediterranean, he reports to a Turkish official that he is originally from the "province" of Vaugirard. But when pushed farther, Nicolas reveals that his "province" is just outside les Halles. Nicolas protests that the official knows nothing, "How do you not know where that Vaugirard is, in leaving the Halle, you take the Croix-Rouge, then the street Cherche-Midi, and then... you are there."[199]

The physical structures of les Halles even order the mental world of Madame Angot. Her boutique is directly attached to her house and ties her to the marketplace even after she retires. Spectators learn that her deceased widow's first name was Eustache, a gesture to the church towering over les Halles.[200] When Le Bramine suggests the immortal position that Madame Angot will attain by committing sati in Malabar, she interprets his description in relation to her marketplace house:

> Le Bramine: Oh ! The last and glorious voyage that you are going to make. It will leave your name dear and august in Malabar, your memory immortal and your family honored. You are going to have a lodge among the stars.

---

[197] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,* 3. "sentiront toujours la morue."
[198] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,* 3.
[199] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 9. "Comment vous ne connaissez pas où qu'est Vaugirard, en sortant de la halle, vous prenez la Croix-Rouge, puis la rue du Cherche-Midi, et puis... vous y êtes."
[200] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 31.

> Madame Angot: How does he say that? a lodge?... thank you, my child ; I have my lodging in the street de la Cossonnerie [in les Halles]; I have always had my home and all my furnishings there : Dutaillis [her son-in-law] takes care of them, I will find all that is necessary in arriving there.
>
> Le Bramine: Eh! Search no longer for anything; you are going to possess everything. You will no longer have a fatherland: it is beneath the sun.
>
> Madame Angot: It is true that I have it [access to the sun] first hand. I live in the fourth [arrondissement], three rooms on the ground floor, [there is] no house in front of ours.[201]

Madame Angot uses les Halles as her default filter to process things that she does not understand. Lost by her bombastic son-in-law's historical references, she interrupts his tale about Cleopatra and Augustus to ask "Auguste, the maître-d'hôtel who is next door?" He gently informs her, "No, he was the most famous general of the Athenians."[202] Even abroad in Constantinople, Madame Angot and Nicolas reply to the judge's questions through the narrow lens of les Halles:

Broamar: Eh well, your name?	Mme. Angot: Suzanne Canillet, widow Angot,
Broamar: Your profession?	Mme. Angot: Cod merchant.
Broamar: In what country?	Mme. Angot: Pfff! In what country! At the Halle.
Broamar: In which hall?	

[201] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,* 21.
> Le Bramine: Oh! Le dernier et glorieux voyage que vous allez faire. Il laissera votre nom auguste et cher dans le Malabar, votre souvenir immortel et votre famille honorée. Vous-allez avoir une habitation dans les astres.
>
> Madame Angot: Comment qu'il dit ça? une habitation!... merci, mon enfant; j'ai mon logement rue de la Cossonnerie; j'y ai toujours eu mes meubles: Dutaillis [her son-in-law] en a soin, je trouverai tout ce qu'il faut en arrivant.
>
> Le Bramine: Eh! Ne cherchez plus rien; vous allez tout posséder. Vous n'avez plus qu'une patrie: elle est au-dessus de soleil.
>
> Madame Angot: Il est vrai que je l'ai de la première main. Je demeure au quatrième, trois pièces de plein pied, pas de maison devant chez nous."

[202] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue,* 15. "Auguste, le maître-d'hôtel d'ici à côté?" He gently informs her, "Non, il étoit le plus fameux général des Athéniens."

At this moment Nicolas incredulously exclaims, "Ah! How stupid they are, in th's city! Are thar two Halles?" After igniting the judge's anger, Nicolas gives up in frustration: "It's done, I'm shutting up. I do not only know where's the Halle." Madame Angot and her company use les Halles as their cultural point of reference throughout her adventures.[203]

Despite her inability to view the world without les Halles as a filter, Madame Angot desperately tries to distance herself from the marketplace. Madame Angot scolds the Dame des Halles who rents her old stall, "Stay in your boutique." She protests that the merchant sullies her household and sputters, "Pouah! I don't wan' any more seafood."[204] The ghost of Jeannot, Madame Angot's brother, returns in another play to warn her that "pride... it's an evil thing." He exhorts her to remedy her folly and return to her natural position in les Halles: "Ah! Renounce all of these trinkets which do not suit an old fish merchant."[205] In *Constantinople*, Madame Angot's desire to return to the marketplace indicates that she has abandoned her social ambitions and has embraced her authentic identity. Leaving for France, she declares, "Ah! If I arrive in one piece, I do not want to leave the Halle. I am cured from my delusions of grandeur; one is only well' in his/her social position [état]."[206]

Work, Social Utility, and Citizenship

---

[203] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 8. "Ah! Qu'ils sont donc bêtes, dans c'te ville! Est-ce qu'i gni en a deux de halles?" After igniting the judge's anger, Nicolas gives up in frustration: "C'est fini, je me tais. J'ne sais pas seulement ous' qu'est la Halle."

Broamar: Eh bien, ton nom?	Mme. Angot: Suzanne Canillet, veuve Angot,
Broamar: Ton état?	Mme. Angot: Marchande de morue.
Broamar: Dans quels pays?	Mme. Angot: Tiens! Dans quel pays! À la Halle.
Broamar: Dans quelle halle?	

[204] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas*, 38. "Reste à ta boutique." "Pouah! Je n'veux plus d'marée."

[205] Mulot, *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot*, 31-32. "orgueil... c'est une vilaine chose." "Ah! Renonce à tous ces colifichets que ne conviennent point à une ancienne marchande de poisson."

[206] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 48. "Ah! Si j'arrivons à bon part, je ne veux pas quitter la Halle. Je suis corrigée des grandeurs; on n'est ben que dans son état."

For Madame Angot, returning to les Halles did not merely imply that she should return to her natural social position. It also signaled that she should return to her useful trade in the marketplace. Playwrights chastised Madame Angot and other parvenu characters for their unproductive lives. By neglecting her work, the parvenue ignored her principal societal duty. Work, above all, valorized the popular classes in revolutionary society. Without a useful role, Madame Angot exiled herself from the body politic at home and abroad.

Critics of the nouveaux riches argued that they corrupted culture with their vanity and failed to contribute to society with their idleness. In a telling 1797 article titled "L'Honnête Parvenu" ("The Honnest Parvenu"), Charles Mullot recounted a dialogue between the author and his friend Alpice "who had the unhappiness of becoming very rich." Alpice had found great success as a négociant, but he became disgusted by his social equals whom he deemed "fripons!" Alpice does not find merit in not working: "How should I enjoy, in my new state of life [état], this flowered health, which was at another time the recompense of my active and laboring life? Useless to society, the ennui devours me." After his lament, Mullot instructs him, "Leave this scandalous train, do not at all be ashamed to become again, by your commerce, useful to society." Mullot confirms that work will usher in a new stage of virtue. "L'honnête parvenu" recognizes that he can only fulfill his societal duty to his fellow citizens by working.[207]

Maillot and Aude touted the utility of labor in their non-Angot works as well. Therefore, one can judge Madame Angot's behavior by Maillot and Aude's own standards. In a 1789 political pamphlet *Argumentum ad hominem, à l'auteur du Domine salvum fac regum*, Maillot argued that each citizen should "draw the most honnest part possible of the talents that nature

[207] BnF 4-Lc2-70, signed Charles Mullot, *Journal général de France*, le 8 prairial an V (May 27, 1797), n°248. "qui a eu le malheur de devenir fort riche." "Comment jouirois-je, dans mon nouvel état, de cette santé fleurie, qui étoit autre fois la récompense de ma vie active et laborieuse? Inutile à la société, l'ennui me dévore..." "Quittez ce train scandaleux, n'ayez nulle honte de redevenir, par votre commerce, utile à la société."

endows them."[208] Likewise, in his 1795 paper *L'Orateur plébéien,* Maillot urges the deputies "to work for their [the people's] happiness." As for the populace's political responsibility, he argued since "everyone being obliged to partake in commerce in order to live," the deputies must prevent "the spirit of greed, of egoism, of theft from introducing itself." Everyone must actively contribute to the Revolution's "true goal," which according to Maillot was "the common happiness."[209] In the preface to *Cadet Roussel aux Champs-Elysées*, Aude disapproves of able-bodied citizens who languish about and try to be opportunistic. He writes, "I was always seeing, on the surface of France, thousands of actors and authors without vocation [a job], when they have arms, force, and there are so many heaths to weed and clear."[210] Maillot and Aude's convictions discredit Madame Angot through her idleness and her foppish, unsustainable social pursuits. For them, Madame Angot cannot be a useful citizen because she has abandoned productive work.

Fanchon, the heroine Dame des Halles in the 1794 play *Les Marchandes de la Halle* provides an illuminating foil to Madame Angot. In contrast to the showy parvenue, Fanchon sells food from under her parasol and donates her own rations to a poor child. Fanchon earns her reputation as a virtuous citizen through her honest work and self-sacrifice. She protects herself against a cook who accuses her of illegal trade by evoking the integrity that comes from working in les Halles: "But [as a] citoyenne of the Halle/ I am sheltered from suspicion." She adds, "From

---

[208] BnF Lb39-2474, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Argumentum ad hominem, à l'auteur du Domine salvum fac regem* (1789), 12. Due to the content, I date this pamphlet to late October, November or December 1789. "tirer un parti les plus honnête possible des talens que la nature leur aura accordé."

[209] BnF 8-Lc2-2635, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *L'Orateur plébéien ou le Défenseur de la République par une société d'écrivains patriotes*, nº1 (Paris: Imprimerie de *L'Orateur plébéien*, 1795), 4, 6. Maillot announced his plans for the journal one month after the royalist insurrection in Paris and Napoleon's whiff of grapeshot. It sheds light on Maillot's Jacobin-leanings the year before he produced Madame Angot. "travailler à son [the people's] bonheur." "chacun étant obligé de faire le commerce pour vivre," "l'esprit d'avidité, d'égoïsme, de vol s'introduise." "vrai but," "le bonheur commun."

[210] Quoted in Loubinoux, "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance," 257. "Je voyais toujours, sur la surface de la France, des milliers d'acteurs et d'auteurs sans vocation, quand ils ont des bras, de la force, et qu'il y a tant de landes à défricher."

the good examples of their mothers,/ Here, the daughters have profited/ At the Halle, honor, probity/ Are hereditary virtues." Fanchon's father likewise defends her honor by evoking her occupation: "At the Halle honestly/ Fanchon conducts her commerce." The denouement integrates Fanchon's work into a republican triad along with family and patriotic sacrifice. Fanchon enourages her father-in-law to live with them "in order to encourage us to work," to which he replies, "Very good, my daughter! The people o' the Halle are laborous and courageous, it's that wh'ch makes a' republicain." Fanchon sings the final vaudeville "to the Public" and concludes, "That in a republic, The author applies himself/ To display some civic traits in the scene/ The object unique, In the republic, It's that everyone/ Works for the common good." Fanchon effectively proved her citizenship and societal utility through her moral work.[211]

Five years later, *Vadé à la Grenouillère* illustrated that work also ennobled citizens during the Directory. Closely tracing Madame Angot's arc, a marchande de marée wants her daughter to marry a prestigious suitor although her daughter is in love with a poissard man. The daughter Nanette (whose name resembles Nanon) attempts to remind her mother: "Be very certain, my mother,/ That the poor laborer/ Is much less closer to misery/ Than so many lazy rich people (repeat)."[212] Nanette echoes the lesson of the Angot plays: riches without good character mean nothing. Rather, work redeems individuals regardless of fortune.

At the beginning of most plots, Madame Angot not only hopes to abandon her work in les Halles, but she seeks to avoid being associated with the crude market in any form. In *La Poissarde parvenue*, Madame Angot prepares for the ennobling marriage while singing, "Adieu

---

[211] BHVP #611 177, (n°7) in 8° Demautort, *Les Marchandes de la Halle*, 29, 33, 36. "Mais [as a] citoyenne de la Halle/ Je suis à l'abri des soupçons." "De bons exemples de leurs mères,/ Ici, les filles ont profité/ A la Halle, honneur, probité,/ Sont des vertus héréditaires." "à la Halle honnêtement/ Fanchon fait son commerce." "pour nous encourager au travail," "Bien, ma fille! Les gens d'la Halle sont laborieux et courageux, c'est là c'qui fait l'républicain." "Q'en république, L'Auteur s'applique/ A mettre en scène quelques traits civiques/ L'objet unique, En république, C'est que chacun/ Travaille au bien commune."

[212] Gouffré, *Vadé à la Grenouillère*, 5. "Soyez bien certaine, ma mère,/ Que le pauvre laborieux/ Est bien moins près de la misère/ Que tant de riches paresseux (bis)."

then for life/display tables and aprons."[213] However, other poissard characters remind Madame Angot of her previous occupation since they commonly enter through her boutique, which is attached to her house.[214] In Constantinople, Madame Angot hilariously protests going to the slave market because she "no longer works." She does not realize that her captors will trade *her*.[215] Ironically, the pirates can barely sell the troublesome Madame Angot who made her living trading in les Halles.[216]

Madame Angot's Dame des Halles neighbors criticized her for not working. After the Sultan's riches had enchanted Madame Angot, Bernard argued that "she forgets that she owes her most beautiful days to her father and to work in the Halle." Bernard frowned upon Madame Angot's luxurious pursuits and predicted that she would return to work under her "little umbrella with a large cloth."[217] Merluche, another Dame des Halles, contrasted the utility of her work against Madame Angot: "I'are living from the fruit of our' work, it's true... I get up at a good hour, I always toil, I spend little... I conduct myself well, and whatever will be will be."[218] When Madame Angot protests that she earned her fortune, Merluche responds that "work and happiness alone are necessary."[219] Without working in les Halles, Madame Angot could not be a virtuous member of the popular classes, productive member of society, or a legitimate citizen.

Stage Left and Stage Right: Maillot and Aude Animate Politics

---

[213] BnF Z Rothschild-4589 Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 12. "Adieu donc pour la vie/ Banquets et tabliers."
[214] Madame Angot's eldest and pretentious daughter advises her to purge the word "boutique" from her vocabulary. BnF Z Rothschild-4589 Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 30.
[215] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 10. "ne travaille plus."
[216] Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 260.
[217] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 5. "elle oublie qu'elle doit ses plus beaux jours à son père et au travail de la halle." "petite pluie abbat grand vent."
[218] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas*, 21. "J'vivons du fruit de not' travail, c'est vrai... Je me lève de bonne heure, je trime toujours, je dépense peu... je me port bien, et vogue la galère."
[219] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 39. "il ne faut que du travail et du bonheur."

Maillot and Aude achieved great success with their Madame Angot plays. By respecting her metanarrative, company of characters, and major personality traits, both playwrights reaped commercial rewards. This chapter has demonstrated how nearly all Madame Angot plays depicted useful work as a redeeming virtue of the popular classes. Maillot and Aude built on this assumption but differently deployed Madame Angot according to their personal political goals. Maillot sought to critique Madame Angot and the French bourgeoisie, whereas Aude only condemned the fishwife. Reading Madame Angot across their political opinions and prior works sheds light on why they used certain narrative frameworks, how they assumed spectators would interpret and critique Madame Angot, and what conclusions they intended the audience to draw from the action on stage.

Maillot wrote left-leaning political tracts for much of his life and unleashed his sharp tongue early in the Revolution.[220] Before citizens overthrew the king in 1792, Maillot pushed to eradicate the monarchy as "common Sense to the French nation."[221] The National Convention and later the Committee of Public Safety dispatched him as a representative on mission to arrest suspects and monitor counter-revolutionary activity.[222] Due to his Jacobin ties, the police arrested Maillot after 9 thermidor an II.[223] To distance himself from the Terror, he directly appealed to the public opinion in *A-F. Ève-Démaillot à ses concitoyens*. He protested that the

---

[220] As a political activist and intermittent government official, Maillot intervened in the revolutionary scene well before Madame Angot. He was born in Dole in 1747. First a soldier, next a deserter, and then a comedian in Hollande, he began his pre-revolutionary political career as a commissionaire there. Before the Revolution, he published sporadic avant-garde commentaries. In 1787, he wrote *Le Patriote isolé ou réflexions sur l'assemmblée des Notables*, which the police categorized with "ouvrages hardis lors qu'il n'y avoit encore en France que pas d'écrivains qui osassent traiter les matières politiques." AdP D.4Z 3, Les Spectacles de Paris sous le Directoire, Extraits des Rapports de la Police Municipale détruits dans l'incendie du 1871, 24 ventôse an III (March 14, 1795): la police et la censure; Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 246; BnF Arts du spectacle 4-Y-2390, André Camp, "Editorial by André Camp" in *L'avant-scène*, n°887 (1991), 1.

[221] BnF Ln27 7287, Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *A-F. Ève-Démaillot à ses concitoyens* (7 months after 9 thermidor an II ~March 1795), 2. "Sens commun à la nation française."

[222] AdP D.4Z 3, Les Spectacles de Paris sous le Directoire, Extraits des Rapports de la Police Municipale détruits dans l'incendie du 1871, 24 ventôse an III (March 14, 1795): la police et la censure.

[223] BnF Ln27 7287, Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *A-F. Ève-Démaillot à ses concitoyens*.

police arrested him unjustly "as an enemy of the republic," but in reality he was working in Toulon "occupied with your happiness" far away from the Parisian guillotines.[224]

The police released Maillot in May 1795, but he did not abandon his Jacobin inclinations during the Directory.[225] In October 1795, in *Les Subsistances du peuple ajournées*, he acknowledged that the Maximum had failed. However, he pleaded with the newly established Directory to create price controls to relieve the "misery of the people."[226] In November 1795, nine months before he penned the first Madame Angot play, Maillot began a Jacobin journal with Leuliette called *L'Orateur plébéien ou le Défenseur de la République par une société d'écrivains patriotes*.[227] In the prospectus, Maillot reiterated, "I had defended the cause of the people, and persecution had been my share." Therefore, he offered his journal as "a rallying point... It's a tribune open to republicans, in order to there invoke the sacred rights of the people."[228]

---

[224] Maillot told his fellow citizens that he would illustrate "Le contraste qui règne entre mes opérations justes et humaines qu'il [the Committee of Public Safety] approuvait d'une part, tandis que de l'autre s'exécutaient en son nom sur la surface de la république des atrocités dont frémira l'histoire. " Maillot, *A-F. Ève-Démaillot à ses concitoyens,* 5. "comme ennemi de la république," "occupé de votre bonheur"

[225] Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 246.

[226] BnF Lb41 4621, Maillot, *Les Subsistances du people ajournées*, The pamphlet is written sometime after 4 Vendémiaire an 4 (October 1795). Maillot insisted that officials could achieve a natural balance if they took into account the amount of numéraire in circulation as well as food prices. "misère du peuple."

[227] Claude Bellanger et al. *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française: Des Origines à 1814*. Tome 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), p. 528 Since the Directory feared a royalist revolt more than the threat from the left, it paid for 3,000 subscriptions. The journal lasted six months until Germinal an IV.

[228] BnF 8-Lc2-2635, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *L'Orateur plébéien,* "Prospectus." Maillot says the first number will appear le 21 brumaire an IV (November 12, 1795); Much like Madame Angot, Maillot refused to remain silent or temper his political opinions after the Directory. The Napoleonic police considered his egalitarian views dangerous and imprisoned him. Maillot became ill in 1813 but the police refused to transfer the spitfire. The Prefect of the Police reported that moving Maillot would be dangerous: "il n'a d'autre occupation que de bavarder de politique fort inconsidérément, et tient même des propos qui échauffaient les esprits de ces compagnons." In 1814, Maillot wrote "Guide des Prisons de l'Empire," to condemn his detainers. Maillot died shortly after. Archives de la Préfecture de Police (Hereafter AdPP) E^A 68, Dossier 20 Démaillot, Ève, Prison de Sainte-Pélagie, Paris, November 12, 1813, signed Estorn; Most of the secondary sources I have encountered list Maillot's death as July 18, 1814. (For example, see: Joseph-Marie Quérard, *La France littéraire ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Volume 3 (Paris: Firmin Didot père et fils 1827-1839), 47.) However, I found a request dated July 15, 1815 from Maillot to move to the Dubois hospice, which suggests that he lived at least another year. AdPP E^A 68, Rapport du 2^e Division, 3^e Bureau, n^o 67, 835, Préfecture de Police, July 15, 1815. Gobin asserts that Maillot died in 1815. "C'était pas la peine..." 246-247. "j'avais défendu la cause du peuple, et la

When Maillot wrote *La Poissarde parvenue* in 1796, he inscribed the fishwife within his genealogy of humor as a political weapon. For example, in October 1789, he wrote *Argumentum ad hominem* to respond to Peltier's *Domine salvum fac regem*. The latter pamphlet had asked the French to rally around their king and argued that the Dames had forced him to move to Paris against his will during the October Days. He lamented that the king lost his independence to the market women. Maillot responded to Peltier's disgusted "to the devil with the King of the Halles"[229] with wit. Maillot warned that "some gaieties will be all that I would oppose against this odious production."[230] Maillot attacked Peltier with a tirade of insults at Peltier. The barrage closely resembles the cadence of insults that Madame Angot would later throw in her poissarde disputes: "The ministers trembled, you [Peltier] add: nasty liar! You alone must pale in tracing this tissue of horror... little Erostat!"[231] Parisians sometimes misinterpreted Maillot's humorous barbs. In Ventôse an III (February-March 1795), Marat's supporters denounced Maillot for his representation of Marat alongside kings in his play *Le Congrès des Rois*. However, the censor explained that these spectators misunderstood the style of Maillot's critique. His "comedy" actually humiliated the kings through the "burlesque genre." Contrary to complaints, his farce did not privilege kings by making them central characters; the genre enabled Maillot to criticize them.[232] Maillot would use similar techniques with Madame Angot.

Before *La Poissarde parvenue*, Maillot had already explicitly critiqued social climbers and elite foppery. Maillot did not find merit in wealth but in honest comportment. During the Old

---

persécution a été mon partage." "un point de ralliement... C'est une tribune ouverte aux républicains, pour y plaider les droits sacrés du peuple."

[229] BnF Lb39-2474, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Argumentum ad hominem*. "au diable le Roi des Halles."

[230] BnF Lb39 2473, Jean-Gabriel Peltier, *Domine salvum fac regem* (Sur les bordes du Gange: October 21 1781). "quelques gaités seront tout ce que j'opposerait à cette odieuse production."

[231] BnF Lb39-2474, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Argumentum ad hominem*, 1,7. "Les ministres ont tremblé, ajoutez vous [Peltier]: menteur exécrable! vous seul deviez pâlir en traçant ce tissu d'horreur.. petit Erostat!..."

[232] AdP D.4Z 3, Les Spectacles de Paris sous le Directoire, Extraits des Rapports de la Police Municipale détruits dans l'incendie du 1871, 24 ventôse an III (March 14, 1795): la police et la censure. "comédie," "genre burlesque."

Regime, Maillot wrote an 1784 play called *Figaro, Directeur des marionnettes, comédie en un acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles et d'Ariettes*. Figaro unsuccessfully attempts to turn a profit by establishing his own puppet theater. Ultimately, Figaro observes that he became "well rich... of the benefits from my masters, & then fell again." He learns the lesson that changing one's class is useless. Instead, he concludes, "We never quit our frank gaiety, this philosophy, of the people if you will, but the most agreeable." Twelve years later, Madame Angot would echo the sentiment in her own lessons.[233] During the Directory, Maillot warned in *L'Orateur plébéien* that the Republican constitution must fear "two powerful enemies, interest and pride."[234] However, Maillot looked no further than his own pen for a remedy. He praised the theater as an arena where citizens could be moved by moral lessons. He attested to the power of "republican plays and the repeated civic songs" which "reanimated public spirit and will heavily influence opinion."[235]

Despite Madame Angot's levity, Maillot's Directory plays clearly offer weighty political commentary when one reads the fishwife alongside his other works. Maillot's plays do not caution individuals against social advancement because any citizen is inherently inferior to another. Rather, Maillot denounces social climbing because he detests all forms of artificiality and frivolity. Maillot's Angot plays are a call to live transparently and work honestly. He finds these virtues in the popular classes. By upholding the frank poissard characters as the most authentic personalities in his plots, Maillot elevates their culture as the most venerable in the

---

[233] BnF Yth 7035 Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *Figaro, directeur des marionnettes*. "bien riches... des bienfaits de mes maîtres, & retomber ensuite." "ne quittons jamais notre franche gaité, cette philosophie, du peuple si l'on veut, mais la plus aimable."

[234] BnF 8-Lc2-2635, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *L'Orateur plébéien,* le 14 frimaire an IV (December 5, 1795), n°8; Maillot ran the report of a citizen who observed a nouveau riche and his decadently dressed lover. The citizen lamented that the parvenu was an old wholesaler who "parle de la détresse du peuple et il s'engraisse de son sang." BnF 8-Lc2-2635, signed "C," *L'Orateur plébéien*, 11 frimaire an IV (December 2, 1795), n°6. "deux puissans ennemis, l'intérêt et l'orgueil."

[235] BnF 8-Lc2-2635, Antoine-François Ève Maillot, *L'Orateur plébéien*, le 11 pluviôse an IV (January 31, 1796), n°35.

revolutionary society. From his other works, we know that Maillot embraces heightened emotions. The crassness of the popular classes does not deter him; on the contrary, it speaks the plain truth without dissembling or posturing. For Maillot, Madame Angot offers a paradoxical lesson. By ascending the social hierarchy, Madame Angot exposes the entire social order as a false construct. The higher one climbs, the more frivolous and dissembling the culture becomes. The popular classes lived the most honest lives. Therefore, Maillot condemns Madame Angot's personal pretentions to ascend from the popular classes as well as the pretensions of the bourgeois class that the market woman attempts to infiltrate.

Joseph Aude had more experience than Maillot as a playwright and moved in privileged circles. He wrote over 30 works during the Revolution and the Empire.[236] Before the Revolution, Aude worked for the ambassador to Naples and Palermo. In this post, he earned the title Chevalier de Malte. Aude then served as a secretary to the famous naturalist the Comte de Buffon.[237]

In most of his Consulate plays, Aude explored pacifism, fear of the unknown, or the foolery of the nouveaux riches as central.[238] Aude especially studied how new wealth encouraged members of the popular classes to become egoistic. Yet, unlike Maillot, Aude failed to condemn the bourgeoisie for their extravagant lifestyle. In the preface to *Cadet Roussel au Champs-Elysées*, Aude evoked his "maxim" for writing plays: "It is necessary to paint the street with the colors of mud." However, he concluded, "It is difficult to be true in certain genres, without being repulsive!"[239] Thus, Aude depicts popular culture as inherently inferior. He totalizes an entire

[236] Loubinoux, "Les figures," 420.
[237] Loubinoux, "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance," 251. Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 247.
[238] Loubinoux, "Les figures," 420.
[239] Loubinoux, "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance," 249. "Il faut peindre la rue avec les couleurs de la boue." "il est difficile d'être vrai dans certains genres, sans être repoussant!"

class of poissard characters in one condescending sweep. Moreover, he determines what is "true" for any individual based upon that person's class.

Maillot and Aude's Madame Angot plays from 1800 and 1803 are deeply connected to the cultural shift of the Consulate.[240] The Napoleonic police greatly suspected Maillot's anti-Napoleon and pro-Jacobin political leanings. Consequently, Maillot moved repeatedly moved in and out of prison during the Consulate and the Empire. He wrote his last Madame Angot, which critiqued the bourgeoisie one last time, in the early days of the Consulate. In contrast, Aude painted Madame Angot in ways that supported the attitudes of the Napoleonic notables. Social positions became redefined according to wealth, merit, and honor. Therefore, Napoleonic social hierarchies became more fixed and the lines between classes less permeable. Aude focused his critical spotlight on Madame Angot and drove box office sales with extravagant scenes. During the Consulate, theater productions, like other displays of wealth, became more spectacular. When Aude dispatched Madame Angot abroad to Constantinople and to Malabar, he framed the parvenue within a "geopolitical fantasy" which made the flashy productions even more extraordinary.[241]

Nonetheless, depicting mere attempts at upward mobility during the Consulate was more threatening than during the Directory. Therefore, Aude sends Madame Angot overseas to extract her from Parisian society. Madame Angot's social aspirations are less dangerous abroad. In Constantinople and Malabar, Aude condemns her social ambitions. Aude does not criticize the foreign cultures in which Madame Angot finds herself. Rather, Madame Angot is foolish for thinking that she could escape her lowly social station through wealth. Because Madame Angot learns her lessons abroad as the sole buffoon, Aude absolves French society from critique. Aude

[240] Pierre Gobin, "C'était pas la peine...," 247.
[241] Loubinoux, "Les Figures," 422. "géopolitique fantaisie."

encouraged spectators to judge Madame Angot rather than the bourgeois culture outside their Parisian playhouse.

Therefore, Maillot and Aude focus their commentary differently although they both deploy Madame Angot. For Maillot, Madame Angot replicates the same folly of empty social pretentions present during the Old Regime. Spectators adore Maillot's Angot because she always acknowledges her mistake and confirms the value of her social origins. Maillot critiques the foppery involved in attempts at social mobility as well as the superficial elite culture in which such ridiculous comportment and posturing is required. The measuring stick for authentic or "true" action did not change with social station. For Aude, in contrast, the problem is that Madame Angot does not belong to the elite caste, never will, and never should. Therefore Aude critiques the concept of mobility as a possibility. The bourgeoisie and other elites escape Aude's plays unscathed. According to Aude's Angot, individuals culturally belonged in certain classes.

Maillot and Aude filled their Angot plots with mises-en-abymes (layered perspectives) that fellow characters turned into spectators but left Madame Angot in the dark. However, the nuances in their plays-within-a-play reveal the different foci of their critiques. Maillot's poissard characters use plays-within-plays as a strategic device. They deceive other characters to pursue personal goals. As such, only the spectators and a few accomplices are aware of the fiction. In *La Poissarde parvenue*, the fake noble "distributed" "the roles" to his friends to play. The fake noble uses the mise-en-abyme to dupe Madame Angot. He aims to restrict knowledge of the "play" to as few individuals as possible so that he is not caught.[242] Similarly, in *Le Repentir*, Bernard pretends to be the provincial woman that Nicolas fancied. Bernard hopes to use the mise-en-abyme to convince Madame Angot to sign the marriage contract without reading the names. She recruits fellow Dame des Halles, Merluche, to fool Madame Angot and instructs her

[242] BnF Z Rothschild-4589, Maillot, *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue*, 10.

"play your role."[243] Maillot condemns Madame Angot for taking the bait of the plays-within-plays. He criticizes her decision to indulge her ambitions, but he does not portray her as a pure spectacle that amuses other characters.

In Aude's plots, the plays-within-plays act as mere entertainment for other characters like the sultan in Constantinople or the governor in Malabar. Thus, during the Consulate, Madame Angot becomes *wholly spectacle* at once as a theatrical phenomenon in Paris but also within Aude's storylines themselves. Madame Angot consolidates the transportable satire within her character to the point where others cannot interpret her as anything but a spectacle. By the end of *Malabar*, Madame Angot fails as a regenerated citizen. Rather, she highlights the impossibility that one can truly transform one's social position, especially during the Consulate.

Aude's techniques also reflect how French society transitioned into the social attitudes of the Empire that reconsolidated social hierarchy and systems of rank. Aude's play-within-a-play magnifies Madame Angot's absurd actions. Her unconscious performance reinforces the artificiality of her posturing. Despite the foreign locations, Madame Angot is the exotic character on display for the natives of Constantinople and Malabar. In Constantinople, Bramen exclaims that Madame Angot "will entertain his highness." He added that "she is truly singular, original!"[244] Her natural exceptionality will provide the humor for the play. The Turks know the set-up is a play, but Madame Angot plays her role without even knowing it. She provides the entertainment whereas the harem plotline provides a framework for her foolish actions. The Ottomans hire an actress from Nantes to play a poissarde and act as Madame Angot's rival. The two vie for power within the sultan's harem. When planning the humorous confrontation, a Turk

[243] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 29. "joue ton rôle."
[244] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 21. "divertira sa hautesse." "elle est vraiment singulière, originale!"

notes the actress has seen Madame Angot in France and "speaks rather well her grotesque language."[245] In this sense, the poissard dialect does not come naturally for Julie. Madame Angot's ways appear so outlandish that Aude needs a specialist to play her counterpart. Thus Madame Angot appears to be a crass exception in French society. For Aude, the fishwife does not fit in anywhere. She is the "other" in France and abroad.

In *Malabar*, Aude heightened Madame Angot's folly by intricately ornamenting her adventures. When Madame Angot prepares for the purification rituals, the scene setting is telling: "The girls carry garlands, some presents, and the two bramines the book of law, the boys, some instruments, one of them, a big cypress tree. March, honors rendered to Madame Angot, who is growing impatient with all this stuff."[246] The plot concerning Madame Angot's sati was so outrageous, the journal *Affiches, annonces et avis divers* confessed that it could not find the lesson under all the extravagance. However, it reported that the parterre applauded the piece and called "ecce homo" for the playwrights to present themselves. If Parisians called for Aude as Pontius Pilate, he most certainly crucified Madame Angot. Aude did not mock the practice of sati or the riches of the Indian elites. Aude did not criticize the Muslim and Hindu cultures for the use of harems or the ritual of sati. He did not punish the characters who intentionally misled Madame Angot. Rather, Aude blamed Madame Angot for not understanding foreign traditions and being lured by social prestige under any cloak (or turban!). Rather, Madame Angot alone learned the moral to remain among her poissarde neighbors.

As Parisians exoticized Madame Angot's character, she lost any remnants of credibility that she may have had in French culture. As playwrights reduced her to spectacle, the Dames des

---

[245] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 21. "parle assez bien son grotesque langage."
[246] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle veuve*, 11. "Les filles portent des guirlandes, des présens, et les deux bramines le livre de la loi, des garçons, des instruments, l'un d'eux, un grand cyprès. Marche, honneurs rendus à Madame Angot, qui s'impatiente de tout cela."

Halles became indirectly reified into entertainment. Like their celebrated counterpart, the Dames were alienated from French and foreign culture. At the end of Aude's plays, Madame Angot wants to return to les Halles, but in fact, she cannot find her niche in Paris. She is a free-floater, an outsider in France and abroad.

A Universal Revolution?: Madame Angot's Cultural Illiteracy

If Madame Angot could not fit in as a member of the French popular classes, she certainly could not fit into the foreign elite. Madame Angot proved her folly in part through her cultural illiteracy. Besides her valet, her pretentious eldest daughters, and her son –in-law, everyone is smarter than Madame Angot in her adventures. Spectators had to be more "learned" or familiar with other cultures than Madame Angot in order to appreciate her humorous actions. While in the Sultan's harem, Madame Angot wants to give her faithful Nicolas an honor. She suggests to one of the Turks that Nicolas could be the head eunuch. At this terrifying suggestion, the Turk whispers the perquisite to Madame Angot out of earshot of the audience. In order to laugh at Madame Angot when she recoils in horror, the audience already had to know that Nicolas would not enjoy his reward.[247] Monsieur Dutaillis's double entendre in the following play "accidentally" reminds the audience of Madame Angot's naivety. He tells Nicolas and her, "You are still very happy to have returned [to France] with all your *members*..." (my emphasis).[248] Madame Angot consistently proves her cultural illiteracy among the French bourgeoisie as well as among foreign elites. Madame Angot is not a universal citizen; she is a universal failure.

[247] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 41.
[248] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas*, 7. "Vous êtes toujours bien heureux d'être revenus [en France] avec tous vos *membres*…" (my emphasis)

By repeatedly embarrassing herself in Constantinople and Malabar, Madame Angot and Nicolas demonstrate that they cannot master other cultures by imitating them. In Constantinople, Madame Angot copies the Turkish officials who cry "Allah! Allah! Allah!" by chanting "Alla, alla, nothing! The synagogue of the rue Beaubourg." Nanon runs damage control for her mother's naïve behavior. She explains that her mother does not know the rules of the country.[249] In Malabar, Nicolas marvels, "Whaht kind of nation of Iroquois it's then: to burn the living and the dead." While Nicolas expresses his disdain for an "uncivilized" group he exposes his own cultural deficiency by calling them the wrong "Indians."[250] Moreover, Madame Angot insists on aping the Ottoman "aristocracy" upon her return to France. In Paris, the foppery that the harem inspires becomes doubly out of place (socially and geographically). After their voyage, Madame Angot and Nicolas unsuccessfully use snippets of foreign culture in Paris. Nicolas stumbles around swearing by "St. Mahomet" while Madame Angot ridiculously instructs him to do "all as you have seen at the home of the grand-Mustapha." However, when an opportunity to drink arises, Madame Angot proudly points out that she rises above the Ottoman elite: "I am a good Turkish woman, me, I do not forbid wine."[251]

While abroad, Madame Angot demonstrates that she understands the new legal procedures and institutions that the Revolution established. However, her attempt to use this knowledge in Malabar exposes the Revolution's presumed universality as a façade. Madame Angot demands to address "the Department" so that she can see her sequestered husband.[252] She responds to officials' questions as if she were filing a legal report and hopes to see the police

---

[249] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 16. "Alla, alla, riens! Le synagogue de la rue Beaubourg."
[250] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,*28. "Queu nation d'Iroquois c'est donc ça: brûler les vivans et les morts."
[251] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 12-13. During the insurrection against the French in Cairo in vendémiaire an VII, Muslim inhabitants saw the French as "heathens" because they drank wine and were uncircumcised. Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory*, 212. "tout ce que tu as vu chez le grand-Moustapha." "Je suis bonne turquoise, moi, je ne défends pas le vin."
[252] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,* 12.

"commissaires." At the crucial moment when Madame Angot finally understands that the Indians expect her to commit sati, she wants to object before the Justice of the Peace.[253] Her requests, perfect by revolutionary logic, look absurd in the context of Indian culture. Madame Angot's ridiculous assumptions reveal that the Revolution may not be so universal or transportable after all. Revolutionary cornerstones appear incompatible with foreign cultures. Revolutionary institutions were not transposable across nations. However, even the Ottomans in Constantinople and Indians in Malabar are able to discern culture, high society, and social pretenders upon first encountering them. Therefore, *authenticity* rather than revolutionary institutions become the transcultural vector in Aude's plays. Authenticity could be used as a universal measuring stick to judge humans from different places. Unfortunately, Madame Angot, with all of her posturing, aping, and theatricality, fell short of the mark for universal legitimacy.

Since Aude sent Madame Angot to exotic locations, the Angot plays pose the question of what foreign environments Parisians could imagine. Some of the spectators would have been exposed to the foreign settings through literary precursors. In the eighteenth century, the French became increasingly fascinated by orientalism. In 1704, Antoine Gallard translated *Mille et Une Nuit*s which recounted stories from Syria.[254] Literate audience members might be familiar with Lady Montagu's *Letters* from Turkey and the inverted exoticism of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters.* Voltaire set his 1732 drama *Zaire* in the Ottoman Empire. Before Madame Angot ever thought to pay her own ransom or join the sultan's harem, this Christian woman was to marry the sultan and negotiate ransom for Christian slaves.[255]

---

[253] BnF Arts du Spectacle Rf 18636, J. Aude and L. Lion, *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve,* 24.
[254] Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies, Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770- 1870* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).
[255] Aude himself explicitly refers to Voltaire in *Cadet Roussel aux Champs Élysées ou la colère d'Agamemnon.* Loubinoux, "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance," 256.

The most striking parallel to Madame Angot's moral lessons in Constantinople comes from *Candide*. In Chapter XXVII, Candide travels to Constantinople where he pays ransom to the sultan for an old woman's freedom (Cunégonde). Soon after Candide meets a provincial old Turk called "le bon Vieillard," (the good old man) which contrasts with Angot characters who call the poissarde "vieille" (old). The old Turk tends his garden without worrying about what happens in Constantinople. He tells Candide, "I never inform myself of what is going on in Constantinople; I content myself with sending fruits there from the garden which I cultivate." Although the old Turk is not rich, he contends that "work distances us from three great evils, ennui, vice & need." Candide remarks to his friends that, "This good old man appears to be to have made himself a life preferable to that of the six Kings with whom we had the honor of supping." Therefore, Candide concludes, "It is necessary to cultivate our garden."[256] The perceptive spectator may have been struck by how the plot of *Constantinople* parallels *Candide*: the location, the ransom, the old woman, the sultan, the elite kings, and even retail food commerce. Regardless of whether spectators consciously connected Madame Angot to Voltaire's satire, the moral conclusions dovetailed. One should shun riches, pretentions, and exotic fantasies. Wealth did not bring happiness. One could only prove his/her societal utility through honest work. In this sense, Madame Angot returns to les Halles from Constantinople to "cultivate her garden." And those Halles were inextricably associated with the market women who worked there.

Upstaged: Madame Angot and the Living Dames' Political Demise

[256] Voltaire, *Candide ou l'Optimisme* (1st edition, 1759), 288-291. "jamais je ne m'informe de ce qu'on fait à Constantinople; je me contente d'y envoyer vendre les fruits du jardin que je cultive." "le travail éloigne de nous trois grands maux, l'ennui, le vice & le besoin." "Ce bon vieillard me parait s'être fait un sort bien préférable à celui des six Rois avec nous avons eu l'honneur de souper." "il faut cultiver nôtre jardin."

While playwrights recycled Madame Angot and she infiltrated other arenas of culture, her character repeatedly exposed audience members to another model of the Dames des Halles. The very precise occupational and locational attributes of Madame Angot's character as a fish merchant from les Halles unmistakably pinned her as a Dame des Halles. She became the one sustained *face* for the Dames during the Directory. Solidifying the criteria for a convincing Madame Angot, in turn, limited the market women's defining characteristics. By conditioning, reacting to, and consolidating audience reception, the theatrical mania surrounding Madame Angot affected the Dames' ability to portray themselves as serious political actors. Moreover, Madame Angot escaped the confines of the stage to infiltrate popular literature and printed material as a cultural point of reference. By the end of the Consulate Madame Angot came to represent the consummate parvenue, which then extended to the Dames des Halles. Madame Angot greatly affected the image of the Dames des Halles because their identity was not consolidated in any living individual or singular institution. For Parisians, the fictive fishwife offered the most continuous and recognizable image of the Dames des Halles.

Within merely five months after her début, Madame Angot's name had become synonymous with the image of the "parvenue." Parisians recognized her as a marker for the nouveaux riches. By January 1797, Madame Angot was salient enough to act as a general insult. *L'Ami du Peuple* tried to clear the name of one apothecary, Citoyen Goupil (the Father-in-Law of a member of the Bureau Centrale) from his daughter's scandalous behavior. The paper reported that Goupil was "indignant above-all with the insolent luxury of his daughter, of which the indecency of dress and manners balanced in part those of *madame Angot.*" He stopped speaking

with her to disassociate himself from her "faults."[257] In his memoires, the comedian Fleury saw Madame Angot walk among his contemporaries. He wrote, "I knew well the Angot family; it was everywhere, it had taken all the good positions in society; it possessed great amounts of capital…"[258] In May 1797, *Le Miroir* connected Madame Angot to the very real Parisian parvenus. Under the header "great plot," the editor warned, "Madame *Angot*, if you do not guard against her, will cause your ruin.... New *Pâris*, they can burn with desire for her.... I know that you would never miss all the *Angots*; that our most beautiful hôtels are populated with them.. the throne of *Angots* cannot rest vacant. Their pretenders put themselves in the ranks... Revolutions are so à la mode! they are so profitable to so many people! *Watch yourselves, Parisians!*"[259]

Parisians described the stylized comportment of those around them by referencing Madame Angot. *Le Moniteur*, reporting on a soldiers' trial, conveyed his oratory style by comparing him with the fishwife's affected speech: "He clipped Nearly all his words, that he only kept half of; and he spoke the language of politics, like madame Angot."[260] *Le Miroir* snidely reported that Madame Angot would be proud to see a parade in which "many ridiculous and ignoble figures made the spectators laugh."[261] In July 1799, one journalist characterized a group of parvenus as "drinking strong liquors, [who] were protesting, with the graces of Madame

---

[257] BnF 4Lc2-828, *L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes* persécutés, le 17 nivôse an V (January 6, 1797), n°286. "indigné sur-tout du luxe insolente de sa fille, dont l'indécence du costume et les manières balancent en partie celles de *madame Angot*."

[258] As quoted in Moore, *The Genre Poissard*, 275-276: "J'ai beaucoup connu, la famille Angot; elle était partout, elle avait pris toutes les bonnes positions de la société; elle possédait les grands capitaux…"

[259] BnF Lc^2 916, Beaulieu and Souriguières Saint-Marc eds., *Le Miroir*, May 29, 1797, nº394. "grande conspiration," "madame *Angot*, si vous n'y prenez garde, causera votre ruine.... Nouveaux *Pâris*, ils peuvent s'enflammer pour elle.... je sais que toutes les *Angots* ne vous manqueraient pas ; que nos plus beaux hôtels en sont peuplés... le trône des *Angots* ne peut rester vacant. Leurs prétendantes se mettraient sur les rangs.... Les révolutions sont si à la mode ! elles sont si profitables à tant de gens ! *Garde à vous, Parisiens!* "

[260] "République française, Haute Cour de Justice, Vendome, le 29 germinal an V" in *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur: seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la Révolution française depuis la reunion des Etats-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat*, Volume 28, le 4 floréal an V (April 23, 1797), nº214 (Paris: Henri Plon). "Il a estropié Presque tous les mots, qu'il 'a retenus qu'à demi; et il a parlé le langage de la politique, comme madame Angot."

[261] AN BB^3 86, Rapport du Bureau central du 26 germinal an V (April 15, 1797), Journaux, *Miroir* du 26 germinal reprinted as CMXCIII in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume IV, 63. "beaucoup de figures ridicules et ignobles ont fait sourire les spectateurs."

Angot" that France needed a king.[262] A 1797 pamphlet even took Madame Angot as its author in order to assess the style of playwright Chénier's recent plays. The "Madame Angot" pamphleteer concluded of Chénier's Madame Angot character: "Her pure style: I applaud her *fire*.... it is correct, but it lacks some verve."[263]

Madame Angot fused the action onstage, the parterre, and life outside the playhouse. In Constantinople, the reality of the Turkish ambassador's visit to Paris crosses over into the fictional plot. Some Ottomans recognize Madame Angot as "the ridiculous person" whom he met in Paris and that the Grand-Vizir had "laughed in bursts at his account" upon his return.[264] In images, Madame Angot appeared as an exaggerated cartoon alongside realistic figures. An artist who depicted the sultan throwing his handkerchief to Madame Angot portrayed her as grotesque exception among other well-proportioned figures.[265] Madame Angot attained such independence from the stage that a serious guide to Parisian fashion included a drawing of Actor Corse in her costume. With her hands aggressively posed on her hips and tightly clutching her moneybag, Madame Angot sported a heavy frock, a severe black apron, and a comically oversized bonnet.[266] However, some citizens expressed anxiety over conflating the fictional fishwife so freely with arenas offstage. On 5 Germinal an IX (March 26, 1801), the *Courrier des Spectacles* lambasted an actor for continuing to speak like Madame Angot with audience members after the play. The

---

[262] Le 1 thermidor an VII (July 19, 1799): Journaux: *Clef du Cabinet* du 3 thermidor, reprinted as MDCCLXXII in Aulard, *Paris pendant la réaction thermidorienne et sous le Directoire,* Volume V, 641. "buvant des liqueurs forts, protestaient, avec les grâces de Madame Angot"

[263] BnF 8-YE Piece-3852, *Réponse de Madame Angot à la Deuxième Satyre Pancrace-Chénier*, (Paris: De l'Imprimerie du Journal des *Rapsodies*, 1796). The pamphlet even contains a "note de l'Éditeur" to explain some of Madame Angot's ambiguous phrases. "Son style pur: j'applaudis à son *fire*;... il est correct, mais il manque de verve."

[264] Aude, *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople*, 20. "la ridicule person" "rit aux éclats du récit"

[265] BnF Estampes P26735, Numéro de Vinck: 7401, tome 54, "M…me Angot au Sérail" (Chez Bonneville, Rue St Jacques, N°195). Gravure à l'eau-forte, coloriée.

[266] BnF, Estampes, Microfilm B1247, *Costumes Parisiens de la fin du 18eme Siècle et du Commencement du 19eme, Ouvrage Commencé le 1er Juin 1797*, an 7 (Paris: au bureau du "Journal des dames", 1797-1821), image nº 133. This multi-volume guide ultimately included 411 example images of shoes, headgear, accessories, clothing, and hairstyles.

journal deplored his behavior, which enabled spectators to interact with Madame Angot, as an "abuse."[267]

Beyond the theater, Maillot deployed Madame Angot as a framing device for his 1797 paper *Les Soupers de Madame Angot ou le Contradicteur*. Much less inflammatory than his prior *L'Orateur plébéien*, this paper reported on legislative debates and news with far fewer editorials. Printed at the "Printing shop de Madame Angot," the preface to the first edition took the form of a dialogue. The scene is set at Madame Angot's salon where, like a cross between an Enlightenment salonnière and Directorial socialites like Madame Talien, she hosts a dinner during which her guests discuss current events. Their journal will be honest and impartial. They decide to start their own journal will address the true people "suffering" and not those from spectacles! Ironically, this move discounts Madame Angot as a theatrical character and paints her as a living agent apart from the stage. However, Madame Angot provides the reader with the familiar setting of her salon.[268]

During the Consulate, Madame Angot frequented the pages of humorous almanacs and collections of puns.[269] These works portrayed her as a fictional character but also endowed her with creative agency as an author or as living model for the material. These strategies breathed life into Madame Angot off the stage. In the Year VIII (1799-1800) *L'Esprit du bon vieux temps, ou à bas les calembours de Jocrisse et Mme. Angot*, Madame Angot had her own entry and also appeared in the preface. The author recounts a scene in which a poissarde "that represents to us so well madame Angot, was being harassed by a poet, in order that his muse addressed some

---

[267] BnF MFLIM Z-5297-5334, *Le Courrier des Spectacles*, le 5 germinal an IX (March 26, 1801), n°1487.
[268] BnF Lc2 961, Maillot, *Les Soupers de Madame Angot*. The "Contradicteur" attends these meetings and he asserts that it is his job to scrutinize political statements. Madame Angot's guests decide to form a club of "bonnes gens... de gens du peuple." The Contradicteur reports the news.
[269] Old Regime almanacs used poissard stock characters. Like the poissard plays, the almanacs often provided lyrics for songs to be sung to traditional airs and popular tunes. See for example: BnF Arsenal Magasin 8-BL-12126, *Almanach poissard, ou étrennes grossières, inutiles, mais plaisantes et agréables, contenant plusieurs chansons grivoises des ports et des halles,...* (A la Rapée: Giroux, 1757).

verses at him."[270] By subscribing at 12 francs per year, Parisians could receive a monthly volume of *Le Testament de Madame Angot ou Le Fonds du sac de ses calembours* in 1802. The work uses Madame Angot as a mascot to imply its humorous content. The series contained a pun on the "nouveau riche " and three puns on a "poissarde" which underscored their stupidity. For example, one poissarde believes a trio at the Opera is robbing spectators by singing simultaneously to quickly finish.[271] In his 1803 collection of puns, Georges-Louis-Jacques Duval referred to Madame Angot as an "illustrious character" but also spoke of her "immortal masterpieces," thus portraying her as an author of puns.[272] However, the almanacs reflected Madame Angot and the Dames' dwindling political influence since they used Madame Angot as a completely irrational and humorous device.

As a singular, familiar figure, Madame Angot acquired great cultural and symbolic capital as representative of the Dames des Halles. Madame Angot doubled the Dames des Halles on stage before the gaze of the Parisian populace and offstage in their cultural imagination. It is little wonder that contemporaries directly mixed Madame Angot and the living Dames.[273] In 1826, literary critic Julien Geoffroy recounted that Maillot "took" spectators "to the place Maubert or to Porcherons; one would see there in original several *Madame Angot*, of which the

---

[270] BnF Y2-33172, *L'esprit du bon vieux temps, ou à bas les calembours de Jocrisse et Mme. Angot: Compilation d'Anecdotes, Bons mots, Facéties, Saillies, A-propos, Naïvetés, Épigrammes, Calembours, Aventures du dix-septième siècle* (Paris: Chez Favre, an 8). "que nous représente si bien madame Angot, harceloit un poëte, pour que sa muse lui adressa des vers."

[271] BnF Rf 16240, *Le Testament de Madame Angot ou Le Fonds du sac de ses Calembours* (Paris: Chez Barba, an X-1802) "Un nouveau riche qui voyait que la terre produisait tout ce qu'on voit dans le monde, s'imagina après avoir acheté une superbe terre de faire casser pour mille écus de gobelets et de porcelaines pour en semer les morceaux et en faire une récolte." See also the May 29 entry "la poissarde": "Une poissarde était à l'opéra le jour que l'on donnait *gratis* : quand elle entendit chanter un trio, elle se retourna vers sa commère et lui dit : tiens, vois tu ces chiens-là, parce que c'est aujourd'hui *gratis*, ils chantent trois à la fois pour avoir plutôt fini," 96.

[272] BnF Ln27 8522, Georges-Louis-Jacques Duval, *Calembours de l'abbé Geoffroy, faisant suite à ceux de Jocrisse et de Mme Angot ou les Auteurs et les acteurs corrigés avec des pointe* (Paris: Imprimerie de Brasseur Ainé, 1803). "illustre personnage" "immortels chefs-d'oeuvres,"

[273] In contrast, for how the revolutionaries constructed images around dead figures see Guillaume Mazeau, *Corday contre Marat: Deux siècles d'images* (Versailles, Editions Artlys, 2009).

Sir Corse, with all his talent, is still only a bad copy."[274] The *Chronique de Paris* juxtaposed a discussion among popular woman with an address to a nouvelle riche whom the editor calls "Madame Angot" in May 1797. The "trois femmes du peuple" discuss the old rentiers who are starving to death. The next section criticizes "idiots" parvenus who "do nothing for the public good (la chose publique)." As an example he cites "some madame Angot" whom he saw "get up livid from the rich canopy, who had surprised herself by moving [up] from her house to a humble display table among the market counters of the rue aux Ours [a street known for luxury goods]."[275]

The 1796 pamphlet *Détail de l'événement arrivé à Madame Angot, en sortant d'une Société de Théophilanthropes* combined poissardes, Madame Angot, a theophilanthropy temple, and the theater all in one playful account. The author told his readers that he recounted the event to make them laugh. He explained, "Everyone knows madame Angot, because she is the subject of all conversations; in truth she is happy to have all a people consider her." He added, "She has much merit and that she has the friendship of all her fellow citizens." The author witnessed the scene at a theophilanthropy service. Madame Angot, with her long dress, entered with Nicolas and her family, to the applause of the congregation. However, "a troop of poissardes" also came to the service and shouted at Madame Angot when she did not acknowledge them. Madame Angot, who did not want to associate herself with the poissardes, became angry and stormed out of the temple. The author completed the trajectory to the theater. He explained that Madame

---

[274] Julien L. Geoffroy, *Cours de littérature dramatique, ou Recueil par Ordre de Matières Des Feuilletons de Geoffroi, précède d'un notice historique sur sa vie et ses ouvrages, seconde édition,* tome sixième (Paris: Pierre Blanchard, 1825), 78. "à la place Maubert ou aux Porcherons; on y verrait en original plusieurs *Madame Angot*, dont le sieur Corse, avec tout son talent, n'est encore qu'une mauvaise copie."

[275] BnF 4-Lc2-2661, Jardin, *Chronique de Paris. Ci-devant Courier républicain*, le 19 floréal an V (May 8, 1797), n°51; For a description of the Rue aux Ours in 1787 see Mélane Waldor, *La Rue aux Ours* (Bruxelles: Imprimerie Scribe Teomen et comp., 1837), 6-8; "sots" "ne font rien pour la chose publique." "quelque madame Angot" "se lever furibonde du riche canapé qui s'étonnoit de succéder chez elle à l'humble banquette du comptoir de la rue aux Ours."

Angot and her family "returned to the Boulevard [of playhouses], everyone followed them, they entered the spectacle, where they waited for them to put on the play of madame Angot."[276] In his humorous scene, he author rendered the lines between the theater and the streets, the fictional characters and the living poissardes indistinguishable.

In the final scene of *Le Repentir*, Maillot makes Madame Angot interact with the Dames des Halles, whose world she so desperately tried to escape. The fish merchant who rents Madame Angot's boutique articulates the play's moral: "Each one to his place, if not, one mocks us." Madame Angot admits her folly and says she is ashamed of her ambition. Her son-in-law announces that "all the forts [porters] and dames de la halle" have arrived to congratulate Madame Angot. They enter to sing as a chorus: "Honor to Madame Angot,/ For her repentant pride;/ Honor to madame Angot, Who recognized her fault." Madame Angot replies to the "dames de la halle," "Big thanks, my goodd friends,/ I am yo'r very-humble servant." In this scene, the theatrical "dames de la halle" represent the public and the popular classes on stage. Madame Angot says they will do three tours of the market and she will drink with "our dames" to get over her foolishness. In this way, Madame Angot reintegrates herself among the honest, working Dames des Halles.[277]

---

[276] BnF Ld188-9 ,Joseph Hayard, *Détail de l'Événement Arrivé à Madame Angot, en Sortant d'une Société de Théophilanthropes: Sa Grande colère à ce sujet* (Paris: Imprimerie de P.A. Allut, 1796); This author is anti-Jacobin. He also wrote a pamphlet in which he says that the French have endured "7 years of pain and misery." He maintains that these trials are about to pay off with peace if the revolutionaries prevent the Jacobins from rising to power again. Consequently, the pamphlet must date from 1796 or 1797. BnF Lb42 2361 Joseph Hayard, *Prenez garde à vous, les Jacobins relèvent la tête, ils seraient plus dangereux que jamais*. "Tout le monde connaît madame Angot, car elle est le sujet de toutes les conversations; en vérité elle est heureuse d'avoir tout un peuple pour la considérer." "elle a tant de mérite et qu'elle a l'amitié de tous ses concitoyens." "une troupe des poissardes" "retournèrent au Boulevard, tout le monde les poursuivirent, ils entrent au spectacle, où les attendaient pour y jouer la pièce de madame Angot."

[277] BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3), Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 43-45. "chacun à sa place, sinon on se gausse de nous." "tous les forts et les dames de la halle" "Honneur à madame Angot,/ De son orgueil repentent;/ Honneur à madame Angot, Qui reconnait son défaut." "Grand merci, mes bonnes amis,/ Je suis votr'très-humble servante."

Conclusion

On stage and in print, playwrights and spectators forged Madame Angot over the course of eight years. As a cultural being, Madame Angot became pure spectacle. Whereas pre-Directory authors imitated the Dames' world to create poissard types, humorous scenes, and general evocative *tableaux*, Madame Angot consolidated the comedy into her own famous *persona*. The fishwife's powerful influence rivaled her living counterparts in the parterre. From the Directory to the Empire, this "woman à la mode"[278] grew more and more ridiculous. Despite her new money, she could not escape her station. She foolishly attempted to climb into the bourgeoisie but always fell back into the mud of les Halles. Citizens could not take Madame Angot seriously. The revolutionaries also condemned Madame Angot because she did not work to support the nation. Her wealth carried no merit. However, this did imply that the popular classes could carve out a role in the nation through useful work. Madame Angot, however, did not meet major cultural criteria for citizenship – she was dissembling, irrational, and unproductive.

While Maillot's early Angot plays condemned Madame Angot *and* the pretentious class that she aspired to join, Aude's plays from the Directory ridiculed Madame Angot alone. Madame Angot confirmed the failure of the radical Revolution; she exposed social mobility as a façade. Maillot's Angot confronted the uncomfortable ambiguities of a new elite born of the supposedly anti-privilege Revolution. Aude's Angot skirted these embarrassing hypocrisies by avoiding France altogether. Both Maillot and Aude agreed that Madame Angot could redeem herself by returning to work in les Halles.

---

[278] BnF Lc2 961, Maillot, *Les Soupers de Madame Angot*. "la femme à la mode."

Playwrights could not satiate Parisians' voracious appetite for Madame Angot. By applauding the celebrated fishwife's failures, the popular classes could critique the dishonesty, foolish extravagance, and unfounded pretentions of their social superiors. But by laughing at Madame Angot's naivety, the popular classes also bolstered an image that undercut their own political credibility. The popular classes supported useful labor as the *principal* quality that could redeem Madame Angot as a productive citizen. Yet, the bourgeoisie saw useful work as Madame Angot's *only* redeeming quality and *only* option. For the bourgeoisie, the lowly poissarde was incapable of contributing anything further to society. The bourgeois notables assumed that, as an irrational member of the popular classes, Madame Angot did not have the capacity to transcend her station and participate in politics. Nonetheless, both groups assumed that the popular classes earned civic virtue through work. However, their opinions differed on how this translated to formal political participation. The question of what the state owed the popular classes remained unresolved as well.

Madame Angot's evolution paralleled the dwindling political influence of the Dames des Halles. Before the Terror, the Dames des Halles cast themselves as sovereign representatives of the popular classes. But during the Directory and the Consulate, Parisians encountered the celebrated Madame Angot more often then the living Dames. The revolutionaries conflated the fishwives in the theater, in print, and in the streets. The Dames des Halles could not disassociate their image from Madame Angot. As the most famous face of the Dames des Halles, the theatrical poissarde undercut the Dames' political legitimacy. "The first woman o' the halle" did not contribute to society through useful work.[279] She was not a productive citizen. Her social ambitions propelled her folly. She could not be a serious political actor. Consequently, she

[279] Merluche tells Madame Angot "on peut bien dire que t'es la première d'la halle." BnF Arsenal 1GD- 1187 (3) Maillot, *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou Le Mariage de Nicolas,* 39. "La première d'la halle."

battered the Dames' claims to citizenship. As Madame Angot's popularity soared, the Dames des Halles began to function more as social placeholders than as the mouthpiece of a sovereign *peuple*. The Dames gradually lost the great influence they had wielded in the early Revolution. As the Thermidorians, the Directory, and the Consulate suppressed popular politics, they increased the disparity between the ubiquitous Madame Angot and the Dames who had no standing representation. Battered by Madame Angot's reputation and by limited civic institutions, the living Dames des Halles lost much of their political legitimacy by end of the Consulate.

While the Dames des Halles found their political credibility gradually drained, representations of the foolish Madame Angot continued into the Empire and beyond. For an 1817 revival of *Constantinople* at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, Aude wrote a new introductory skit. The scene unfolds outside of the playhouse where "spectators" discuss the play that they, and the audience, are about to see. Pierre Angot, a commissioner of the fish market in les Halles, hates that they are portraying his grandmother (Madame Angot) in the play. Pierre Angot angrily sputters that the play misrepresents her "true" life story, but his fellow spectators convince him that her fame will help him advance in government posts. Ambitious like his grandmother, Pierre Angot agrees to go "see my grandmother jump." The "illustrious fruit merchant" exists as a theatrical shell, even to her grandson. Madame Angot had become pure diversion.[280]

Although the Dames des Halles resumed some of their political rituals under Napoleon, they never reclaimed the great influence they had achieved in the early Revolution. Madame Angot, in contrast, had found wild success on the stage for eight years. Parisians became personally attached to this false Dame by getting to know her family, becoming complicit

[280] Aude, *La Critique de Madame Angot au Sérail*. "voir sauter ma grand-mère." "illustre orangère."

spectators in her adventures, and resuscitating her through the box office sales. The Dames could not rival Madame Angot's powerful place in the public imagination. During the Directory and the Consulate, Madame Angot decisively stole the living Dames' cultural and political spotlight. Ultimately, the constantly duped Madame Angot won what she always wanted but never achieved - the last laugh.

– Conclusion –

Citizenship: Fruit of Labor[1]

On August 15, 1852, the Dames skipped their daily commerce in the central markets. Instead of bursting with the usual fruits, vegetables, eggs, butter, and fish that shuttled among the women, les Halles overflowed with 6,000 cookies, 20,000 pieces of fruitcake, 50,000 frozen desserts, and 60,000 servings of flavored water. Dragging the Dames' shelters to the side, municipal workers erected a temporary dance hall and rigged the Innocents fountain to brilliantly illuminate the square. Parisians were preparing to celebrate the "Feast of Saint-Napoleon."[2] Prince-President Louis Napoleon had seized the presidency through a coup d'état eight months earlier, and he hoped to shore up his political power by reinstituting the feast day. But, rather than spotlighting the Bonaparte Prince-President, the official program attested that the "ball will be offered to [in honor of] the Dames des Halles on the spot of the Innocents Market."[3] Anticipating the occasion, the Theatre de Vaudeville performed a new play featuring the iconic and perpetually entertaining market women. Its fictive orange merchant kicked up a fuss preparing for the ball. Asserting, "Never does my head speak without my heart," the poissarde encapsulated the Dames' beloved reputation for straight-talk.[4] On the day of the celebration, the living Dames and 20,000 Parisians crammed into the marketplace to eat, drink, and dance.

---

[1] The Constitution of 1793 and the Constitution of 1795 qualify the "fruit de son travail" as an individual's property. This dissertation has illustrated how the revolutionaries also conceptualized work in ways that surpassed economic possession. Useful work, in its occupational, civic, and gendered forms, could be the cornerstone of citizenship as well as ownership.

[2] "France: Preparation for the Great Fete," *New York Daily Times* (New York), August 28, 1852; "France: The National Fete in August," *New York Daily Times* (New York), September 15, 1852.

[3] Bibliothèque nationale de France [hereafter BnF] Estampes Reserve FT4 QB 370 (132), "Programme Complet et officiel des Fêtes et Cérémonies qui vont avoir lieu dans Paris le 15 Août 1852, à l'occasion de la Fête de Saint-Napoléon," (Paris: Boucquin, 1852). "bal sera offert sur l'emplacement du marché des Innocens aux dames de la halle."

[4] BnF Yth 304 Clairville and Adolphe Choler, *Le Bal de la Halle*, (Paris: Beck Libraire, 1852), 1. "Jamais ma tête N'parle sans mon coeur."

Songwriter Louis-Charles Durand published a "Homage to the Dames des Halles" to complement the festivities. He praised the retailers in verse: "Women of the people with frank smiles, From our markets joyous queens. Honor to the sovereign Dames of the Halles of Paris!"[5]

The Dames seemed to float timelessly above the highly charged mass of political symbolism. Crimson drapes decorated with golden Napoleonic eagles and trimmed with flower garlands drew one's gaze from the floor of the market up ten grand arches whose keystones bore the inscription "Vox populi, vox Dei."[6] The message could not be clearer. August 15 was also the Feast of the Assumption, the day when the market women would bring bouquets to the queens of the Old Regime, the day when they would they would give voice to the Third Estate at Versailles. Louis Napoleon, like his emperor uncle, hoped to appropriate the date's strong religious and political overtones by focusing on the dubious Saint Napoleon. After the tumultuous French sampler of empire, monarchy, and republic, Louis Napoleon insisted that the festival would "bring together all minds in a common sentiment of national glory."[7] The careful staging implied that the market women did not earn their sovereignty because of any action, but because they were timeless representatives of the people. However, in their idyllic reach back in time, the festival planners of 1852 grossly oversimplified the complex ways the Dames and others imagined citizenship during the Revolution.

Despite their special connections with the state in 1789 and their Old Regime ritual roles, the revolutionary Dames des Halles did not build their citizenship primarily on institutional scaffolding. The Dames did not imagine that the neatly-seated representatives of the National

---

[5] BnF YE 7180 (508) Louis-Charles Durand, "Les Dames de la Halle: Hommage aux Dames des Halles" (Paris: Impr. de Beaulé, 1852), "Femmes du peuple aux francs souris, De nos marchés joyeuses reines, Honneur aux dames souveraines Des halles de Paris!"

[6] BnF YE 970 (47). Léon Guilleman, "Les Aventures de la mère Caquet-Bon-Bec au bal des dames de la halle. Chansonnette comique" (Paris: E. de Sote, 17 août 1852). The placard reprinted the *Moniteur*'s description of the ball.

[7] Sudhir Hazareesingh, "A Common Sentiment of National Glory": Civic Festivities and French Collective Sentiment under the Second Empire," *Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 2 (June 2004): 280.

Assembly channeled the General Will alone. Nor did they found their civic membership on other apparatuses like the vote or political clubs. Nor did the Dames locate citizenship as an a priori right inscribed on sexed bodies. Instead, to the Dames in les Halles, the pulsing body politic smelled like rotting fish, tasted like ripe fruit, and felt like soft butter. It sounded like creaking carts and shouting porters. It took the form of merchants and consumers haggling over food and negotiating relationships with fellow citizens. It presented itself in mass demonstrations as Parisians secured bread for their community. It became flesh while carrying the king to Paris and lobbying officials over public space. It crystallized in the ink of petitions to protect common interests. And it took the shape of mothers' breasts and guiding hands as they raised children for the fatherland. According to the Dames, one earned citizenship by serving society through useful work. And this occupational, civic, and gendered work allowed individuals to make demands on the state in return.

The Dames des Halles negotiated the ambiguities of citizenship while it was conceptually developing. They intervened in exceptional ways that both harnessed the legitimacy *and* challenged the primacy of formal politics. Scholars who argue that the social contract was predicated upon the male citizenship justly assert that the deputies denied women institutional citizenship. However, the Dames illustrate how women were not conceptually written out of the contract, nor was it contingent upon their exclusion. At the core of their cooperative vision of the nation, the Dames insisted on reciprocal duties between the citizen and the state. The Dames could petition the Assembly to adjust price controls, could insist on support for soldiers' wives, and could demand that officials correct libel that smeared their reputation and livelihoods, precisely because the Dames believed they had earned the support of the state in exchange for

their useful work. The Dames did not reject the social contract model that formed the cornerstone of modern democracy; they embraced it, reinterpreted it, and deployed it for their own ends.

Ultimately, the Dames' vision of citizenship based on useful work, which included but did not hinge on gender, did not win out. The Napoleonic Civil Code consolidated legal and judicial power in male heads of households in 1804.[8] The Code outlined the shift toward a public/private dichotomy in nineteenth-century politics and culture. However, I have argued that the discourses of 1789 did not predetermine or inevitably distill citizenship into the vote for property-holding men. Rather, the revolutionaries experimented with multiple pathways to citizenship. Moreover, the logics of these different definitions were not resolutely incongruent. Rather, the potency of the Dames' influence suggests that market women hit upon salient and enduring components. The Dames' notion of citizenship powerfully aligned with three revolutionary tenets: it had the potential to be universally applicable, it took autonomous individuals as the starting point for citizenship, and it oriented individuals' actions towards the collectivity. The last tenet mastered the critical, yet elusive, logic of the General Will. That is to say, it reconciled particular interests and individual actions with public good and the indivisible body politic.

First, the Dames' vision of citizenship could be universal. Since any individual could become a member of the nation through useful work, the Dames' notion of citizenship could apply to anyone.[9] Diverse types of work created a uniform measuring stick for civic virtue without homogenizing citizens. There is no denying that the Dames had exceptional

---

[8] The Civil Code "sought to promote an honor-based, patriarchal family rooted in male authority and the defense of familial property." Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004), 314.

[9] Sophie Wahnich argues that the revolutionaries used "universality" to imply "common ground." But, in fact, different interpretations of the universal "produced the material of political cleavages" ("a produit la matière des clivages politiques"). Sophie Wahnich, "L'Universel, Le Singulier, le Sujet, à l'Epreuve de la Révolution française," in *Universel, Singulier, Sujet*, edited by Jelica Sumic (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2000), 159.

opportunities for legal, commercial, and fiscal autonomy due to their occupations as female retailers. And heavy agricultural regulation and forced collections admittedly troubled the connection between volition and useful work for peasant-citizens.[10] However, most men could choose to conduct some kind of occupational work, be it farming, building, printing, or practicing medicine. Any man or woman could participate in civic work or political activism. They could also defend communal interests by smoking out counter-revolutionaries and agitating for favorable legislation. And men and women of all classes could engage in gendered work to bolster the nation. Soldier-fathers and mother-wives raised patriotic children, and their households formed the building blocks of the national family. In sum, various types of work could contribute to the public good. Although occupations divided social groups, work as a concept could override the great cultural divides of French society. Virtuous work could cut across the urban/rural dichotomy, transcend *and* incorporate gendered divides, and surpass factional particularities from 1789 to 1804.[11]

Second, the Dames' idea of useful work dovetailed with the revolutionaries' presumption that citizens were autonomous individuals who must act of their own volition.[12] If, as Abbé Sieyès explains, productive and freely-chosen work expressed political agency, the Dames could justify their citizenship through their personal labor rather than through institutional requirements. Moreover, all individuals' useful work could legitimize their membership across the factional phases. The legal prerequisites for active citizenship such as property, age, and sex

---

[10] Jean-Pierre Jessenne, "Une Révolution sans ou contre les paysans?" in *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, edited by Michel Biard (Éditions Tallandier: 2010), 262. According to Jessenne, 80% of the French population lived in the countryside in 1789 and more than two-thirds were peasants (253).

[11] James Livesey has contrasted the rewards of property against the rewards of labor during the Directory: "While property ownership was a fundamental element of civil liberty, labor, the common capacity for work, was the fundamental element that allowed participation in the economy and in society." James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 70.

[12] Peasants even promoted the idea of the autonomous citizen according to Jean-Pierre Jessenne, "Une Révolution sans ou contre les paysans?" in *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, 258.

changed according to different revolutionary regimes, but the various markers always sought to establish autonomy. Despite these legal fluctuations, the redeeming nature of freely-conducted work remained constant from 1789 to 1799.

Finally, the Dames oriented their understanding of citizenship toward the collectivity – the third prerequisite for dominant revolutionary imaginings. By arguing that society ultimately benefited from their occupational, civic, and gendered work, the Dames integrated themselves into the cooperative body politic that wielded one General Will. The Dames did not merely equate citizenship with loyalty to the state, but with fidelity to fellow citizens. They served the nation through their useful labor. By selling food at just prices, acting as republican mothers, and defending their communities, the Dames harmonized their work with the General Will.

Although revolutionary ideas of citizenship "centered on the individual and his or her rights and obligations" and a "compact among individuals,"[13] the Dames give us a window into how citizens maintained and transformed Old Regime collectivities. This sense of independence did not encourage isolated individualism. After all, the revolutionaries were transitioning from a profoundly corporatist society in which collectivities dwarfed individuals.[14] Despite dissolving their confraternities in 1789 and 1791, the Dames maintained a cultural and occupational identity that also allowed them to intervene collectively, even if they did not always agree with one another. The Dames reached across the capital's markets to form religious and political

[13] Philip Dawson, Introduction to *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), xxi. Sewell's analysis emphasizes who owns the work (i.e. is the worker a "dependent" or not) and concentrates on individual agency. In contrast, my alternative perspective focuses on whom the work benefits (i.e. who is on the receiving end) and considers how the individual serves others to position his/herself within the collectivity. This latter orientation presupposes that autonomy of will is a prerequisite for citizenship but that the individual's choice to transcend this atomization and integrate his/herself into the collectivity via social engagement earns him/her civic membership. Therefore, individuals practiced citizenship through useful work that served the body politic.

[14] Since the king endowed individuals with special "rights" or privileges during the Old Regime, then it is less surprising that the Dames continued to look to the state as a source of authority. This is especially true since the Dames held a semi-corporate identity bolstered by state recognition during the Old Regime.

processions. Fellow Parisians likewise saw the Dames as a cohesive cultural group and described them as such.[15] Paradoxically, the Dames' personal occupational autonomy enabled them to link themselves to a larger collectivity.

As the corporate world faded into the horizon, the Dames offer us insights into how group identities remained viable political identities. The Dames remind us that the radical autonomization citizens did not effect an immediate atomization of society. Nor, did the corporate identities of the Old Regime morph into proto-industrial class identities. Rather, the Dames demonstrate how the revolutionaries forged new socio-economic associations based on situational circumstances. The Dames responded to economic challenges such as currency reform by forming new alliances with powerful brokers, middling artisans, and their marketplace clients. By the time the Le Chapelier law and d'Allarde Decree dismantled the guilds and the corporate world in 1791, the Dames had already negotiated new alliances to protect their commercial interests. In effect, the laws legally confirmed the process that the Dames and their neighbors had already begun. The Dames' old inclination towards collective identities informed new definitions of citizenship at the crossroads of corporate privilege and liberal autonomy.

From their stalls in les Halles, the Dames offer an especially rich node for examining the history of work when the French dramatically pivoted towards free markets. On the one hand, much of the social history on work in the revolutionary era equates work with manual labor conducted by propertyless citizens. In this sense, work becomes the world of wage labor. On the other hand, the historiography of commerce spotlights entrepreneurs, wholesale merchants, and

[15] Cochin argues that the revolutionaries inherited the tradition of voluntary associations from the Enlightenment. However, in revolutionary form, he argues that the associations flattened and abstracted members into one seamless, and thus equal, group. In contrast, the Dames did not rally around a specific factional agenda nor did they have an institutional organ after 1791. Thus, the Dames give us an alternative model of voluntary association during the Revolution. Gail Bossenga on Augustin Cochin: Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Spring 1997): 230.

brokers.[16] When historians discuss revolutionary merchants, they usually ask questions about the bourgeoisie, capitalism, entrepreneurial nobles, the rise of new notables, and what constitutes commercial activity.[17] As retailers with little capital, the Dames remind us that work did not necessarily equal wage labor and that not all commercial agents were capitalist entrepreneurs or savvy notables. The Dames depended upon charity privileges from the state to secure places on

[16] Haim Burstin's article on work and citizenship focuses on male wage laborers because he limits "travail" to remunerated labor. Burstin seeks to use this category of "travail" to unhinge the passive/active distinctions among citizens. But since his main question is which actions does the government *compensate* and why, his definition of work only includes services conducted in exchange for wages. He argues that officials paid men in the National Guard, the army, and the sectional assemblies because they were reimbursing the wages the individuals would lose while sacrificing their time. However, this relationship between work and citizenship cannot apply to the Dames' occupation as retailers. Haim Burstin, "Travail et citoyenneté en milieu urbain sous la Révolution," *Citoyens et citoyenneté sous la Révolution française*, edited by Raymonde Monnier (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2006), 263-270. In addition, William Sewell's excellent history of work from the Old Regime to 1848 focuses on propertyless wage laborers, corporatism, collective action, and labor history as related to the manual laborer. Sewell argues that, by the end of the Revolution, "An opposition between propertyless wage earners and property-owning employers came increasingly to dominate the life of the urban trades; and at times it dominated the public life of the nation as a whole." William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the old regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 142. However, any organization of political power and fiscal responsibility based on property neglects service work like commerce. In such classifications, propertyless citizens and poor merchants like the Dames des Halles occupy an ambiguous position. In fact, the revolutionaries acknowledged this ambiguity in the 1786 patente reform by breaking the fees for the occupational license into two parts: a tax based on property and a tax based on type of occupation.

[17] Revisionists seek to delineate the cohesive traits of the bourgeoisie as a way of questioning the Marxist paradigm and challenging other revisionist proposals. For example, Colin Jones argued that new venal office holders acquired these positions as entrepreneurial investments rather than socially-loaded titles. He argues, "These groups were more genuinely bourgeois than ever before, and exuded a new civic professionalism which had its roots in a developing 'market-consciousness' and which clashed with the corporative values espoused by many of their fellows. They shared the reflexes of the commercial bourgeoisie of the Old Regime in a far more direct way than has hitherto been recognized." Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and social change," reprinted in an abridged format from *The French Revolution and Social Change*, ed. Colin Lucas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 69-118 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies,* edited by Gary Kates (New York: Routledge, 2006), 100. In his study of the Parisian bourgeoisie over the longue durée, David Garrioch also spotlights the availability of offices as a means to bypass corporations and solicit privileges from the government. Garrioch begins his study by focusing on local family networks to trace continuity among the bourgeoisie in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, he argues that in the second half of the century, "as the local kinship network became less important, the weight of other components of notability grew: personal reputation, size of business, and particularly wealth." He concludes that "An embryonic utilitarianism" formed a common trait among this expansive "Parisian middle-class ideology." Nonetheless, Garrioch only believes that the bourgeoisie did not solidify as a class until 1830. David Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 121, 281. William Sewell maintains that Sieyès wrote *What is the Third Estate* for a bourgeois audience, which he describes as "Old Regime category of wealthy non-nobles." William H. Sewell, Jr. *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*, 39. In contrast, Sarah Maza has argued that no self-aware bourgeois class existed, while Lynn Hunt reads revolutionary discourse as "bourgeois" in so much as "it expressed the will to break with the past of aristocratic domination." Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, orig. ed. 1984), 50.

the market square. However, the retailers are not easily lumped into the (usually faceless) laboring masses driven by consumer interests and above all subsistence concerns. The nature of the Dames' work does not allow historians to neatly categorize them as wage laborers motivated by consumer concerns, charity recipients dependent upon state assistance, commercial agents focused on long-term profit, or entrepreneurs with fledgling businesses. Instead, the Dames shuffled among all these categories through their occupations. They defy and disrupt predominant systems of socio-economic classification.

By framing their shape-shifting labor as a pillar of their citizenship, the Dames allow us to read socioeconomic relationships through fluctuating cultural, rather than Marxist, lenses. They used the politically charged, yet conceptually amorphous ideas of utility and public good, to create diverse associations. For example, the Dames justified their vertical alliances with brokers to protect marketplace credit systems. In the same vein, they created horizontal coalitions across occupations with other types of merchants to defend monetary networks. They assumed the voice of the patriotic popular classes to demand bread from the king in Versailles or compel officials to protect the subsistence trade. Finally, they harnessed gendered labor to paint themselves within a national tableau of republican mothers. As workers for their families and communities, they insisted the state assist their endeavors.

As they negotiated economic citizenship, the Dames wrestled with the tension between democratic ideals of social equality and capitalist ideals of the free market. They drew on these discourses in contradictory ways and illustrate how the revolutionaries fluidly moved among conflicting notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity. On the one hand, the revolutionaries lifted the maze of Old Regime privileges to create free markets. On the other hand, the revolutionaries navigated how to translate fraternal and egalitarian impulses to economically antagonistic

relationships. The Dames are crucial because their fights over merchants' freedoms and their simultaneous demands for special treatment as poor citizens cut to the core of the democratic capitalist contradictions. They harnessed free market discourse to rent cheaper shelters in the marketplace. They bemoaned price maximums as unjust. They demanded equal treatment in their interactions with officials, police, and clients in the market place, yet they expected exceptions. Without special protections, their businesses would be overwhelmed by wealthier merchants. They defended their hodgepodge businesses and acknowledged that they blocked equal use of the public streets. They even agitated for specific price controls that accounted for their commerce as retailers.

Over fruits, vegetables, fish, and eggs, the Dames confronted the volatile relationship between liberty and equality. Through their marketplace experiences, the Dames not only reinterpreted these leitmotifs, they actively produced the salient paradoxes of nineteenth-century politics. The recurring debate over liberty, equality, and economic citizenship would eventually give shape to the barricades of 1848.[18] However, the Dames and other members of the popular classes did not cohesively interpret these ideas at the revolutionary starting gate. Rather, the Dames appropriated liberty and equality in highly contingent and inconsistent ways. Moving among different kinds of useful work such as occupational labor, civic activism, and gendered work gave them the flexibility to do so.

While the Dames strove to carve out their own revolutionary influence from 1789 to 1801, the revolutionaries seized the Dames' image to navigate the profound anxieties created by a rapidly evolving and ambiguous social order. Writers latched on to the Dames as shorthand for the popular classes. In doing so, they oversimplified socio-economic diversity to create

[18] For a perceptive genealogy of these debates from 1789 to 1848, see Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848.*

culturally-legible categories. While constructing fictive Dames des Halles, pamphleteers, playwrights, and Parisian audiences debated the role of the popular classes in the body politic. By channeling their opinions through the merchants' rough tongues and depicting the Dames sparring with others over current events, propagandists strove to capture the Dames' authority. Early pamphleteers assumed the market women could tap into sovereign sentiment and they replicated the Dames' legitimacy as a mouthpiece of the people. In addition, written and theatrical portrayals of the Dames continually depicted work as the primary duty of the popular classes in the nation. But the revolutionaries remained unsure of what concrete rewards working citizens should reap in exchange for their useful labor. Parisians used the Dames to grapple with these questions in plays from the Directory in particular.[19] Although the political rights of the popular classes remained in flux, depictions of the Dames des Halles from the Estates General to the Empire consistently affirmed the redeeming nature of useful work as a way to incorporate the popular classes into the body politic.

Like the revolutionaries, this dissertation has portrayed citizenship as a dynamic theory and lived practice that permeated all parts of life. The Dames did not react to a fully-fledged model of citizenship captured by the discursive letter of the law. Instead, this analysis has argued that the Dames forged one of many possible visions of embryonic citizenship that incubated in the marketplace. The Dames unveil the messy relationship between gender and modern citizenship in particular. The revolutionaries certainly inscribed gendered duties on citizens' sexed bodies, but gendered divisions did not fundamentally order every element of citizenship. The Dames compel us to reconsider the modern starting line for gender, work, and citizenship.

Scholars of post-revolutionary Europe often analyze work and gender according to the physical location of an individual's labor. That is to say, the scaffolding of labor history in the

[19] Diverging views over the merit or degeneracy of popular culture further complicated these conversations.

nineteenth century distinguishes work that occurs inside the home from work that occurs outside the home. The start of this metanarrative maintains that the revolutionaries, while defining legal citizenship as masculine, conflated gender and citizenship, then bifurcated politics as well as gendered work into separate spheres.[20] The spatial dimensions contained within the very metaphor of public and private "spheres" linguistically spur scholars to conflate gender and place. Our rhetorical toolbox bursts with vocabulary anchored in the physical world like "arena," "inside," "outside," and "boundaries." "Home" is the historian's and sociologist's code word for "domestic realm" or "familial space." In this symphony of meaning, gender and politics frequently take their pitch from the public or private value of space.

Yet, automatically correlating the theoretical public and private of politics with physical places of work creates two analytical shortcomings for the nineteenth century. First, if we presuppose that environments have gendered and political significance independent of the actors who inhabit these spaces, we lose sight of the ways historical actors assign gendered and political meaning to these spaces through experience. Second, assuming political and spatial congruency

[20] This idea of the two spheres has more in common with Philippe Ariès's initial Annaliste ideas of "private life" than with Habermas' Marxist political version of public opinion, which began in the private sphere since it was beyond the public state. Ariès concludes that the family became the center of the public sphere after 1800. For these nuances, see Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime." *History and Theory*, 31:1, [1992]: 8-9, 15, 16. However, gender historians frequently assume that gender crystalized the dichotomy between the home and the public during the Revolution and certainly in the nineteenth century. According to Goodman, in projecting this framework on the eighteenth century and the Revolution, feminist interpretations of those like Joan Landes have neglected Habermas's nuanced spheres with multiple components, locations, and participants. Goodman argues, "In attempting to construct an opposition between a male public sphere and a female private one, Landes has collapsed Habermas's fundamental distinction between the public sphere of the state and that of the private realm." With an eye to political culture and sociability, Dena Goodman has convincingly argued that the two spheres overlapped and did not "oppose" one another during the Old Regime and the Revolution. See Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988). In addition, Carole Pateman maintains that the stark binary between public and private has been key to feminist historical research. See Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). According to Rousseau, women must remain in the home to attend to their reproductive duties as mothers and morally educate their children. Consequently, Rousseau articulates public and private through a sharp spatial binary. See Rachel Fuchs and Victoria Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 9. Yet, we cannot solely attribute the formative rumblings of modern "separate spheres" to Rousseauian definitions of gender during the Revolution. No matter how much gendered components codified "public" and "private" during the nineteenth century, other elements including work propelled socio-political divisions during the Revolution.

between public and private risks making the mere location of an individual's work the gauge of its subversive or conforming nature. Historians using this binary roadmap interpret women working outside the home as transgressing gendered and political norms while their domestic counterparts reinforce the status quo. This methodical compass especially entices social historians of women and the popular classes since these subjects leave few discursive sources to categorize their experience. However, other means exists to ask how historical actors attributed political and cultural significance to their work.

In light of the Dames' experience, I argue that it would be productive to consider how the revolutionaries divided members of the body politic by the *type* of work rather than the *location* of work. After the collapse of the corporate world, work enabled individuals to frame themselves as autonomous liberal subjects who could do productive labor for the collectivity. Their service legitimated the demands they could make on the state as repayment. This political contract between the individual and the state as well as the parallel social contract between the individual and society formed the twin pillars of liberal citizenship.[21] Individuals whose useful work served society could make a stronger case for citizenship than those whose families alone profited from their labor.[22] Women and men conducted both types of labor throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, certain types of work, not places of work, posed the most serious ideological threat to a model of institutional citizenship that excluded women.

If we examine types of labor in the context of the Revolution, we clearly see how individuals who contributed to the community through their occupation could mark out their

---

[21] In the commercial terms of the nineteenth century, liberal citizenship involved reconciling self-interest and public good within a free market economy. Victoria Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money, and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 4.

[22] I do not maintain that this is a universally empowering concept determined only by free will. Indeed, socio-economic realities and familial survival more frequently dictate the contours of occupational choices than personal inclination. However, I am arguing that this perspective offers us new ways of conceptualizing society in which work and gender operate in the same discursive socio-political plane.

civic membership and incidental rights.[23] The revolutionaries distinguished those whose work directly served fellow citizens from those whose work was mediated, or one step removed. For example, a republican mother served the body politic by raising a moral son. But her son was the one whose work immediately impacted society beyond the family; therefore, the mother's work was mediated in relation to the wider collectivity. As the patente rules demonstrated, the same principle held true for a woman who labored in her husband's trade. By paying the occupational license for the couple, the husband mediated his wife's labor in relation to the nation. Even in abolition discourses in the French colonies, personal work and service formed bargaining chips in the pact of citizenship. On behalf of French officials in Saint-Domingue in 1793, Louis-Pierre Dufay argued that the Convention should ban slavery because "freedmen and women would indemnify France by producing workers for the *patrie*." A deputation of slaves testified, "We will fight for France, but in recompense we demand our liberty." In doing so, they enacted the basic reciprocal contract of citizenship.[24]

Rather than fusing together sex, space, and citizenship, this analytical approach spotlights how the revolutionaries built political categories upon work. Such an interpretation posits citizenship as earned rather than an innate, independent right. At the advent of modern society,

---

[23] At various points in the Revolution, a similar principle affected property requirements for voting and explained the revolutionaries' fear of charity. Citizens who depended economically upon others could easily be influenced. Some revolutionaries feared that this lack of autonomy made individuals unable to make independent political decisions and used this concern to disqualify them from citizenship. For a discussion of "active" versus "passive" citizenship, see William Sewell, "Le Citoyen, La Citoyenne: Activity, Passivity and the French Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship," in Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 2, Political Culture of the French Revolution (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), 105-25. Alan Forrest argues that "the Revolution consistently decried the concept of charity, seeing the government's role as one of intervention to help those members of the community who were unable to starve off poverty by their own efforts." Alan Forrest, *The French Revolution and the Poor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), ix.

[24] Quoted in Elizabeth Colwill, "Sex, Savagery and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France*, edited by Sarah Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 213, 211.

the Dames drew political legitimacy *without contradiction* from what would be considered domestic and public spheres by bourgeois definitions of politics and work.[25]

The long-term implications of this perspective on democratic society emerge if we contrast discourses of work, gender, and citizenship in the nineteenth century. Historians who reify public and private spheres in urban spaces agree that female factory workers disrupted bourgeois gender ideals by being outside the home. Tracing debates over work, wages, and the economic markets, Victoria Thompson adds another layer to this observation. She argues that, by the 1840s, women workers posed a double threat. On the one hand, they destabilized how the middle class imagined the masculine public sphere. On the other, they undercut male workers' calls for higher wages as family breadwinners.[26] In this formula, French men and women equated work with remuneration; in other words, they asked whom workers' *wages* benefit. But, if recalling Sieyès and the revolutionaries, we flip the viewpoint to ask whom one's *labor* serves, we again perceive how women producing goods ideologically unhinged male institutional citizenship. Society at large consumed the goods that a woman worker created, whether she performed her needlework at home or produced cloth in a factory. Focusing outward towards the collectivity as the direct beneficiary of their work rather than inward towards their family as the recipient of their wages provided a means for women to integrate themselves into the body politic.[27]

---

[25] Madelyn Gutwirth cites the examples of Germaine de Staël and Olympe de Gouges to illustrate that "even the most militant women... feel moved to make their pleas as *épouses et mères* or to disclaim their ambition in the very midst of sweeping pronouncements or demands." Madelyn Gutwirth, "Citoyens, Citoyennes*:* Cultural Regression and the Subversion of Female Citizenship in the French Revolution," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch, 21. However, the Dames show us that these gendered appeals do not have to be simple posturing nor insincere gestures. The Dames do not choose between gendered and militant discourses because the two are not inherently in conflict according to their logic of civic work.

[26] Victoria Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money, and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870*, 53, 61-62, 65.

[27] We can also consider the political ramifications for interpreting types of work through a male example: Male novelists could write novels and male journalists could compose reports from their desks at home. But the domestic

Writers who advocated for higher wages for women workers sensed the powerful link between those whom labor benefited and political legitimacy. In 1848, activists preferred to construct images of martial sacrifice to describe how women contributed to the community rather than appeal for higher wager to support their families. Journalists portrayed '"amazons of peace"' who promised to draw ranks, '"in order to prove, by energetic demonstration, that they also know how to devote themselves to the good of humanity."' Since the Civil Code granted some commercial independence to female merchants, some traders bolstered their political arguments through their work's public utility. In 1837, journalist Madame Poutret de Mauchamps agitated for women's legal and political equality by asserting, "'in Commerce, women are useful, necessary, almost indispensable.'" Nonetheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, the police in les Halles increasingly sought to regulate the Dames' occupational exceptions, public visibility, and commercial influence.[28]

Briefly comparing the market women of the 1790s to the male workers of 1848 reveals major benchmarks on the path of work and citizenship.[29] William Sewell demonstrates that socialist workers could trace the germ of "sovereignty of labor" to Abbé Sieyès, but the discourse had evolved over fifty years. [30] In contrast to the revolutionary Dames des Halles, we

---

location of their work would not emasculate them nor politically stunt them. The novelists' and the journalists' occupational products are aimed directly at others in society at large. Their work extends beyond their own family. Therefore, their work is unmediated with regard to beneficiaries in the community.

[28] Victoria Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money, and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870*, 76-77, 79, 99, 90.

[29] In order to know more about this interplay between understandings of work and citizenship, we would need to analyze the voices of male and female workers themselves rather than probing cultural representations of them by others. Yet, since debates over wages always nest work within the context of the familial survival, we would have to ask how individuals describe their labor while addressing issues besides remuneration such as better working conditions, the use of municipal space, taxes, or occupational exemptions. An inquiry similar to this dissertation would allow us to reconsider the relationship among gender, work, and citizenship as it reverberated from the Revolution throughout the nineteenth century.

[30] William Sewell, *Work & Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, 244, 245, 249. In contrast to Sieyès who conceptualized a broad range of useful work that spanned from production to services, workers in 1848 imagined the sovereign labor force as a more limited, class-based set of producers. In addition, Louis Blanc's February 25, 1848 decree on the "right to labor" succinctly illustrates the evolving

can see that male workers of 1848 focused on "the right *to* labor" more than rights *from* labor. In socialist imaginings of citizenship, work became the thing citizens demanded from the state more than a way to legitimize diverse demands on the state. If 1848 was a triumph of the "working classes," it could only be because the notion of "worker" and "labor" had been distilled into one dominant type of worker (the wage laborer) and type of labor (production) among the many types present according to the definitions of 1789. Work remained a salient component of citizenship in 1848, but its political meaning had shifted since the first Revolution.

This dissertation has told the story of the birth of modern citizenship among the market women as one of exploration, perpetual negotiation, and invention. The Dames derived their traditional authority from Old Regime state rituals, yet they deftly deployed revolutionary notions of popular sovereignty. They did not appeal to individuals' natural rights, yet they interpreted citizenship as an autonomous status. They did not esoterically discuss capitalist theory, yet they powerfully spoke with free market vocabulary. The Dames did not debate these ideas in salons, closed clubs, or coffee houses. Rather, they worked through an array of challenges, opportunities, and paradoxes as they encountered them in the streets and the marketplace. To tap into these diverse sites of negotiation, this dissertation has probed poissard pamphlets hawked from street corners; has peered into the assembly halls as the deputies debated fiscal policies; has intercepted police reports detailing price controls in les Halles; has listened in the courtroom as citizens explained themselves before the justices; and has watched Parisians laugh at Madame Angot's antics from the parterre. The Revolution cut across all aspects of the Dames' daily life and the Dames' daily life informed the Revolution in return. This dissertation

---

relationship between work and citizenship: "The Government of the French Republic commits itself to guarantee the existence of the worker by labor. It commits itself to guarantee labor to all citizens. It recognizes that workers should associate with one another in order to enjoy the legitimate benefits of their labor."

has attempted to holistically bring into dialogue the myriad components of the Dames' revolutionary experience as they lived it.

The Dames des Halles offer us a rich window on the revolutionaries' quest to remake society and politics. Rather than presenting us with a neat, comprehensive vision of the regenerated body politic, the market women illustrate how the revolutionaries forged a path to citizenship around unforeseen obstacles. Their mutable goals changed by situation. However, the Dames' logic of citizenship remained constant: individuals earned membership, and thus the right to make demands on the state, through useful work. The Dames included gendered duties as a pillar of citizenship, but did not posit gender as its cornerstone. In regard to European democracy, the Dames challenge us to move beyond the binary in which gender acts as the *initial* instrument for political differentiation. Historical analyses that, at the sweep of the deputies' gavel, divide individuals into rigid, gendered categories undercut the revolutionaries' complex socio-political imaginings. From the heart of les Halles, the Dames can nuance our understanding of work and nascent citizenship.

Works Cited

N.B. Full bibliographical details can be found in the footnotes.

Archival Sources:

Archives nationales

Archives de pouvoir exécutif (1789-1815)
AF^{II} 42, AF^{IV} 1329, AF^{IV} 1470, AF^{IV} 1472, AF^{IV} 1478

Ministère de la Justice
BB 87, BB^3 76, BB^3 81^A, BB^3 85, BB^3 91

Assemblées nationales
C 33, C 48, C 75, C 128, C 139, C 143, C 147, C 149, C 152, C 163, C 167, C 287

Missions des représentants du peuple et Comités des assemblées
D VI 1, D VI 8

Conseil du roi
E 2653

Esprit public
F^{1c} III Seine 14, F^{1c} III Seine 27

Ministère de l'Intérieur, Police générale
F^7 3491, F^7 3492, F^7 3688^3, F^7 3702, F^7 3830, F^7 7745^a

Subsistances
F^{11} 201, F^{11} 205, F^{11} 1185

Commerce et industrie
F^{12} 1239, F^{12} 1266

Instruction publique
F^{17} 1692

Maison du Roi
O^1 4000

Domaines
Q^1 1183, Q^1 1186, Q^1 1187

Biens des établissements religieux supprimés

S 4688

Juridictions extraordinaires
W 76, W 78, W 112, W 174, W 191

Parlement de Paris; parlement civil, minutes
X^{1b} 9084

Juridictions spéciales et ordinaires
Z^{3} 85

Archives de Paris

Tribunal de commerce de la Seine, Actes de société, 1786- an XI
D.1 U^{3} 35,

Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien
D.4 U^{1} 23, D.4 U^{1} 28, D.4U^{1} 29

Fonds Saint-Joanny: Arts et métiers de Paris (1500-1869)
D.4 Z 3, D.4 Z 5

Biens nationaux
D.Q^{10} 1, D.Q^{10} 39, D.Q^{10} 482, D.Q^{10} 742, D.Q^{10} 743, D.Q^{10} 1392

Affaires Économiques (Administration Communale)
V2F^{4} 9

Administration générale de la Commune de Paris 1789-1800
VD* 3, VD* 8, VD* 40, VD* 46

Archives de la Préfecture de police

Procès-verbaux des commissaires de police des sections de Paris, 1789-1820
AA 68, AA 72, AA 88, AA 166

Réglementation et vie quotidienne: commerces et industrie, mendicité, voirie
D^{A} 23, D^{A} 24

La préfecture de police: documents administratifs et coupures de presse
D^{B} 258, D^{B} 374, D^{B} 387, D^{B} 396, D^{B} 515

Dossiers de personnalités (originaux et coupures de presse)
E^{A} 68

Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris

10073 (tome II, n°57) in 8°. Municipalité de Paris par le maire et les officiers municipaux. "Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal." Du samedi 24 septembre 1791. Paris: imprimerie Lottin l'aîné et JR. Lottin, 1791.

10073 (tome II, n°59) in 8°. Municipalité de Paris par le maire et les Officiers-Municipaux. "Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal, Arrêté sur les échoppes et étalages fixes et mobiles." Du lundi 3 octobre 1791. Paris: Lottin l'aîné & J.R.-Lottin, 1791.

10073c (tome II n°68) in 8°. Municipalité de Paris Par le Maire et les Officiers Municipaux. "Extrait du registre des délibérations du Corps municipal Du vendredi 4 novembre 1791." Paris: Lottin l'aîné et J.R Lottin, 1791.

31598 (n°2) in 8°. "Grand détail concernant les dévots et les dévotes qui ont été fouettés par les dames de la Halle à Paris." Paris: Baudouin.

131912 in 4°. Municipalité de Paris, Département de police. "Le M. le Maire, M. le lieutenant de Maire et MM les Conseillers, Administration règlement provisoire, pour le Marché des SS Innocents." 2 mai 1790. Paris: Lottin l'aîné & Lottin, 1790.

600056. Claude-François de Beaulieu, Assemblée nationale. "Séance et suite des Nouvelles de Versailles du 8 octobre 1789. Découverte d'un complot contre la liberté nationale. Réclamation des dames des halles et marchés contre des faussetés publiées contre elles." Paris: Imprimerie de Seguin-Thiboust, 1789.

611177 (n°7) in 8°. Demautort. *Les Marchandes de la Halle, comédie en 1 acte, et en vaudevilles*. Paris: Vaudeville, 1794.

959739 in 8°. "Démolition totale des harangues de a halle, faite hier au soir par le peuple." Paris: LL Girard.

962985, in 8º. Camille Saint-Aubin. "Marchand d'oignons devroit se connaître en ciboules, ou Application de cette maxime à plusieurs articles d'un arrêté du comité de Sûreté générale concernant la vente des comestibles à la halle et aux marchés, rendu le fructidor, sur le 1794-1795.

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mitterrand

F 21216 (31). "Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi, qui fixe l'époque à laquelle seront démolies les échoppes du parquet à la Marée, du Carreau du Pilori & du Marché aux Poirés." Paris: L'imprimerie Royale, 1786.

F 23631 (891). “Lettres Patentes du Roi, sur un Décret de l’Assemblé Nationale, du 26 Juillet 1790, relatif aux droits de Propriété & de Voyerie sur les chemins publics, rues & places de villages, bourgs ou villes, & arbres dépendans.” 15 août 1790. Paris: Chez Nyon, 1790.

F 23675 (99). Parlement de Paris, Arrêts de Règlement du Parlement de Paris. “Concernant les Droits de Voierie, des 21 juillet & 27 août 1779.” Paris: Imprimerie de Ph. D. Pierres, 1779. 9-10.

HP 750. *Lettre de Marie Bon-bec harangère de la halle à l’auteur des ‘Reflexions occasionées par la Conférence d’un franc maçon et d’un profane.’*

Lb38 682. *Dialogue entre deux poissardes, sur la prise du fort Saint Philippes*. 1756.

Lb39 1635. *Compliment des Dames poissardes à leurs frères du Tiers-État.*

Lb39 1229. *Les trois poissardes, buvant à la santé du Tiers-État*.

Lb39 2085. *Entrée triomphante de M Necker à l’Hôtel-de-Ville, accompagnée du compliment de M. le marquis de la Fayette & de M. Bailly, maire, suivie de la réponse de M Necker, & de la présentation du bouquet des poissardes.* Paris: Chez Cressonnier, 1789.

Lb39 2089. *Les Poissardes à la Reine*. Paris: Imprimerie P de Lormel, 1789.

Lb39 2239. *Bouquet du roi: Pour le 25 août 1789*. Versailles: De l’Imprimerie Royale, 1789.

Lb39 2352. *Réclamation de toutes les poissardes, avec un petit mot à la gloire de notre bonne Duchesse d’Orléans*. Paris: Chez Guillaume, junior, 1789.

Lb39 2411. *Les héroines de Paris, ou l’entière liberté de la France par les femmes, police qu’elles doivent exercer de leur propre autorité*. Paris: Knapen.

Lb39 2473. Jean-Gabriel Peltier. *Domine salvum fac regem.* Sur les bordes du Gange: October 21 1781.

Lb39 5296. *V’là c’que s’est dit et passé à la Halle.*

Lb39 5505. *Liste des Culs Aristocrates et Anti-Constitutionnels, qui ont été fouettés hier au soir à tour de bras, par les Dames de la Halle, et du Faubourg Saint-Antoine*. Paris: Imprimerie Patriotique, 1791.

Lb39 6234. *La Joie des halles, conversation entre Madame Giroflée, Marchande Bouquetière, Madame Saumon, Marchande de la marée, & Monsieur Jacquot-la-grosse-patte*, *Marinier, sur le Joyeux Avénement du Roi à la Couronne*. De l’imprimerie de D’Houry, 1774.

Lb39 6294. *Harangue des Dames de la Halle aux citoyens du faubourg Saint Antoine prononcée par Ma. Engueule*. 1789.

Lb39 7354. *Compliment des poissardes de Paris à MM. Les électeurs qui ont été à Versailles pour solliciter l'amnistie des Gardes Françaises*. 1789.

Lb39 7705. signé Lebois. *Procession solemnelle des dames fripierres de la Halle et des marchandes du cimetière des innocents, suivie du Compliment à M de la Fayette*. Paris: Imprimerie de la Jorry, 1789.

Lb39 7744. signé Lebois. *Récit exact de ce qui s'est passé hier à Saint Geneviève par les Dames du Marché Saint Martin; & de-la à l'Hôtel-de-Ville; avec Compliment prononcé au Roi par Mlle Bourbau, âgée de 17 ans au nom des dames du Marché Saint Martin; Et la réception agréable de la part de Sa* Majesté. Imprimerie Ballard.

Lb39 7744. *Compliment prononcé au Roi par Mademoiselle Bourbau, âgée de 17 ans, au nom des dames du marché S. Martin et la réception agréable de la part de Sa Majesté*. Paris: de l'impr. de P.R.C.

Lb39 7758. Reine d'Hongrie, Mesdame Pluvinet, DeVille, Chevalier, Lefebvre, Lamy, Doute, Genet, Cochois, Baronet. *Lettre d'invitation des dames marchandes du marché d'Aguesseau, à un Te Deum*. 1789.

Lb39 7802. Louise-Félicité Guinement de Kéralio, *Observations sur quelques articles du projet de constitution de M. Mounier*. Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789.

Lb39 8267. *Demande de la Reine d'Hongrie à M. le Directeur de la Comédie Française.*

Lb39 8416. *Le Goûter de la Courtille ou Dialogues sur les affaires présentes, entre quatre dames de la halle: Mme Saumon, La Mère Gogo, la mère Écorche-Anguille et Manon L'Écailleuse.*

Lb39 9028. *Avis important d'une dame des Halles pour la diminution des vivres*. Paris: De la Cloye.

Lb39 9193. *Départ de M. d'Artois pour se rendre à Paris et détail intéressant de la réception qu'il a faitte [sic] aux dames de la halle pour le ramener à Paris*. Imprimerie de Calais & Dubois.

Lb39 9451. *Adresse aux dames parisiennes. Le voyage à St. Cloud*. *Paris ou Le Service du Bout de l'An, Pour faire suite au Voyage de Versailles*. Paris: Imprimerie de J. Legueum, 1790.

Lb39 9542. *Le Club des Halles établi à l'instar de celui des Jacobins à la nouvelle Halle ci-devant le charnier des innocents*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie des Halles, 1790.

Lb39 9938. "Grand événement arrivé à un patriote de la Halle, à cause de l'échange d'un assignat. Grande difficulté à ce sujet. Formation d'un club aux Halles."

Lb39 10208. *Grande motion des Halles*. 1791.

Lb39 11705, *Le Roi d'Yvetot à la Reine d'Hongrie tenant sa cour plénière aux Halles de Paris* Paris: Chez Debray.

Lb40 1245. *Discours adressé au roi par les dames de la Halle, membres de la Société Fraternelle, dont, le 14 Février 1791, elles sont venues donner lecture au Conseil-Général de la Commune, qui en a ordonné l'impression à la distribution*. Paris: Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné & J. R. Lottin, 1791.

Lb40 1245. *Discours adressé au roi par les dames de la Halle, membres de la Société Fraternelle, dont, le 14 Février 1791, elles sont venues donner lecture au Conseil-Général de la Commune, qui en a ordonné l'impression à la distribution*. Paris: Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné & J. R. Lottin, 1791.

Lb41 4621. Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Les Subsistances du people ajournées.*

Lb42 2361. Joseph Hayard. *Prenez garde à vous, les Jacobins relèvent la tête, ils seraient plus dangereux que jamais*.

Lc2 513. Le Père Duchêne. *Je suis le véritable père Duchêne, foutre*, n°8. Paris: de l'imprimerie du véritable père Duchêne.

Lc2 961. Antoine-François Ève Demaillot. *Les Soupers de Madame Angot ou le Contradicteur*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Madame Angot, 1797.

Lc2 2268. "Du brave La Fayette on connaît la valeur. En suivant ses drapeaux, on suit ceux d'un vainqueur." *La Gazette des Halles* n° 1. Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789.

Lc2 2382. "Petit mot d'avis en passant. Lettre du général La Pique aux dames de la Halle." In *Journal des Halles*. n° 1 juin 1790.

Ld 188-9. Joseph Hayard. *Détail de l'Évènement Arrivé à Madame Angot, en Sortant d'une Société de Théophilanthropes: Sa Grande colère à ce sujet*. Paris: Imprimerie de P.A. Allut, 1796.

Ld4 7148. *Liste de toutes les sœurs & dévotes qui ont été fouettées par les Dames de Marchés des différents Quartiers de Paris, avec leur nom, celui de leur Paroisse, & un détail très-véritable de toutes leurs aventures avec les Curés Vicaires à Habitués desdites Paroisses*. Paris: L'imprimerie de Tremblay, 1791.

Le29 1729. *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 Août 1791*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791.

Le38 344. Jacques Louis David, Convention nationale. "Rapport et décret sur la fête de la Réunion républicaine du 10 août, présentés au nom du Comité d'Instruction publique." le 11

juillet 1793. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1793.

Le29 1729. *Adresse des Dames de la Halle, à l'Assemblée nationale, séance du 27 août 1791*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791.

LK7 31662. "Adresse à M. le Maire de Paris, ou à son lieutenant, pour les marchands merciers-fripiers-tailleurs, et autres habituellement attaché au marché des SS Innocens." Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Hérault, 1790.

Ln27 7287. Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *A-F. Ève-Démaillot à ses concitoyens*.

Ln27 8522. Georges-Louis-Jacques Duval. *Calembours de l'abbé Geoffroy, faisant suite à ceux de Jocrisse et de Mme Angot ou les Auteurs et les acteurs corrigés avec des pointe*. Paris: Imprimerie de Brasseur Ainé, 1803.

M 5336 Joseph Aude. *Madame Angot au sérail de Constantinople: drame, tragédie, farce, pantomime, en 3 actes, orné de tous ses agrémens*. Paris: Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, 1800.

M 12884. Mme Dupray. *Chanson des Dames des Marchés Saint Paul; des Quinze-vingts, la Halle & d'Aguesseau.*

M 17318. Pierre Boudin. *Madame Engueule ou les Accords Poissards, comédie-parade, en un acte. Avec prologue et vaudeville*. À Congo: 1754.

NUMM 42495. Jacques-René Hébert. *Grande colère du Père Duchesne contre les jean-foutres de calomniateurs des Dames de la halle, & des Bouquetières du palais-royal, au sujet du beau discours qu'elles ont fait au roi*. Paris: Imprimerie de Tremblay, 1791.

Rés. Yf 52. Jean-Joseph Vadé. *La Pipe Cassée, Poëme épi-tragi-poissardi-héroi-comique*. In *Oeuvres poissardes*. Paris: Defer de Maisonneuve, An IV (1796).

Rés YE 3065. *Motion des harangères de la Halle.*

Rés YE 3069. *Le Divorce, Dialogue entre Madame Engueule et Madame Saumon harangères, et M. Mannquin, fort de la halle*. 1790.

Yth 304. Clairville and Adolphe Choler. *Le Bal de la Halle*. Paris: Beck Libraire, 1852.

Yth 2459. Joseph Aude and Mirabernet. *Cadet Roussel barbier à la fontaine des innocens, Folie en un Acte*. Paris: Chez Barba, 1802.

Yth-2470. Joseph Aude, A. Hapdé, and J. Flan. *Cadet Roussel Misanthrope et Manon Repentante: folie en 1 acte*. Paris: Théâtre du Vaudeville, 1798.

Yth 7035. Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Figaro, Directeur des marionnettes, Comédie en un*

acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles et d'Ariettes. Paris, Chez Hardouin, 1785.

Yth 18672. Armand Gouffré. *Vadé à la Grenouillère, folie poissarde en 1 acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles*. Paris: Imprimerie au h. des Troubadours, An VII or An VIII.

Y2 33172. *L'esprit du bon vieux temps, ou à bas les calembours de Jocrisse et Mme. Angot: Compilation d'Anecdotes, Bons mots, Facéties, Saillies, À-propos, Naïvetés, Épigrammes, Calembours, Aventures du dix-septième siècle*. Paris: Chez Favre, an 8.

YE 970 (47). Léon Guilleman. "Les Aventures de la mère Caquet-Bon-Bec au bal des dames de la halle. Chansonnette comique." Paris: E. de Sote, 17 août 1852.

YE 3852. *Réponse de Madame Angot à la Deuxième Satyre Pancrace-Chénier*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie du Journal des *Rapsodies*, 1796.

YE 4787. *Justification des Messieurs et des Dames de la Halle de Paris, sur les crimes de l'exécrable révolution française, notamment de ceux des 5 et 6 octobre 1789, commis à Versailles, auxquels on les accusoit d'avoir pris part.*

YE 7180 (508). Louis-Charles Durand. "Les Dames de la Halle: Hommage aux Dames des Halles." Paris: Impr. de Beaulé, 1852.

YE-16439. J-L. Cadot. *La Promenade de Mme Angot à la Grenouille; sa rencontre avec Jérôme.* De l'imprimerie de Madame Angot, à la Grenouillère.

YE 32173. *Riche en Gueule ou Le Nouveau Vadé publié par un enfant de la joie et dédié aux dames des halles et marchés*. Paris: Quai des Augustins n° 9.

YE 35763 (13). *Chanson Poissarde: Leur arrive à Versailles, & leur retour à Paris avec le Roi & la Famille Royale.*

Z Le Senne 2974. *Dictionnaire de voierie.*

Z Le Senne 4329. Anne Claude Philippe de Pestels de Lévis de Tubières-Grimoard. *Les Citrons de Javotte. Histoire de Carnaval*. Amsterdam, 1756.

Z Le Senne 5128. *Les Bienfaits de l'Assemblée Nationale ou entretiens de la Mère Saumon, doyenne de la Halle: suivi des vaudevilles*. Paris: Au Palais Royal, 1792.

Z Rothschild-4589. Antoine-François Ève (known as Maillot or Demaillot). *Madame Angot, ou la Poissarde parvenue, opéra-comique en 2 actes, joué sur le Théâtre d'Émulation*. Paris: Chez Barba, An V (1796).

BnF, Archives de la Bastille

BL 21306. Fr.-Ch. Huerne de La Mothe. *Histoire nouvelle de Margot des Pelotons; ou la Galanterie naturelle*. 2 parties en 1 vol. Genève, 1775.

BL 19584. *Étrennes aux Messieurs les Ribauteurs les Supplémens aux Écosseuses, ou Margot La Mal-Peignée en Belle Humeur, et ses qualités* (1759). In *Recueil d'œuvres comiques et poissardes*. 1756-60.

GD 1187 (3). Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Le Repentir de Madame Angot ou le mariage de Nicolas, comédie folie en deux actes, mêlée de chants*. Paris: Barba, an IX.

GD 9001. *Dialogue pas mal raisonnable, entre un ancien commis de barrière, un passeur, un couvreur, un charpentier et une Dame de la Halle*.

GD 11044. *La Gazette des Halles*. nº 2 Paris: Imprimerie de N.H. Nyon, 1789.

GD 13085 Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Madame Angot ou la Poissarde parvenue*. Paris: Chez Barbar, an VIII.

GD 23459. *La joie de la nation: dialogue sur l'heureuse naissance de monseigneur le Dauphin entre Bruletout, Dragon; Margot, Poissarde: Frisotin, Garçon Perruquier, et Mlle Fontanges, Marchande de Moses au S. Esprit par un clerc de procureur*. Paris: À tous les coins de rues, 1781.

Magasin 8-BL-12126. *Almanach poissard, ou étrennes grossières, inutiles, mais plaisantes et agréables, contenant plusieurs chansons grivoises des ports et des halles,...* À la Rapée: Giroux, 1757.

Reserve 8-BL-35485. *Mademoiselle Javotte, ouvrage moral écrit par elle-même et publié par une de ses amies*. La Haye: Chez Jean Neaulme, 1758.

BnF, Département des Arts du spectacle

P89 4640. Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Le Mariage de Nanon, ou la Suite de Mme Angot, comédie en prose et en un acte... représentée sur le théâtre d'Émulation*. Paris: Chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1797.

Ra4 659. Augustin de Piis. *Le Bouquet du vaudeville, ou Dialogue d'un charbonnier et d'une poissarde sur la naissance de Mgr le Dauphin*. Imprimerie de Chardon, 1781.

Rf 13872 *Oeuvres complettes de Vadé, ou Recueil des opéra-comiques, parodies et pièces fugitives de cet auteur... Nouvelle édition.* Troyes : F. Mallet, 1797.

Rf 13920, Jean-Joseph Vadé, *Nicaise, opéra-comique en un acte et en vaudevilles... retouché par le C. Léger représenté... à Paris, sur le Théâtre du Vaudeville, le 18 janvier 1792*. Paris: Cailleau, 1793 edition.

Rf 16230 Antoine-François Ève Maillot. *Madame Angot ou la Poissarde parvenue*. Paris: Magasin de pièces de Théâtres, an IX (1800).

Rf 16240, *Le Testament de Madame Angot ou Le Fonds du sac de ses Calembours* (Paris: Chez Barba, an X-1802)

Rf 18636. J. Aude and L. Lion. *Madame Angot au Malabar ou la Nouvelle Veuve, mélo-tragi-parade, en trois actes et en prose; A grand Spectacle, mêlée des Danses, marches, Chœurs, Pompe funèbre, Pantomime, etc.* Paris: Chez Farges, 1803.

Y 2390. *L'avant-scène*, n°887 (1991).

BnF, Département des Estampes

M 98953. "Médaille aux bonnes citoyennes le 8 octobre 1789, donné par la commune de Paris."

M 99404. "4e évenément du 5 8bre 1789: Les Femmes Parisiennes siégant à l'Assemblée Nationale parmi les deputés."

M 99412. "5, 8bre Départ des Dames de la Halle pour aller chercher le Roi à Versailles."

M 99429. Guyot. "Arrivée des Femmes à Versailles le 5 Oct 1789." Paris: Chez Graveur et Md d'Estampes Rue S. Jacques n°10.

M 99431. "Événement du 5 octobre 1789: Les Dames de la Halle et autres femmes partant de Paris pour Versailles."

M 99433. Ph. Caresme. *Dédiée aux Femmes: Bravoure des Femmes Parisiennes à la Journée du 5 octobre 1789, Paris*. Paris: rue de la Lune, n°38, 1789.

M 99442. "Vue du Château de Versailles à l'époque du 5 8bre 1789: Le Roi la Reine et Msr le Dauphin présentant au Balcon donnant sur la Cour des Miracles."

M 99448. "Le Roi reçoit les Femmes de la Halle."

M 99468. "Vue de la Lanterne de la Place de Grève: Le courage des Héroïnes Française passant le 6 octobre devant l'Hôtel de Ville et faisant porter devant elles les têtes de deux Gardes du Corps qui avaient eut l'imprudence de faire feu sur elles a leurs arrivées à Versailles."

M 99485. "Les Dames de la Halle de Paris vont complimenter la Reine aux Tuileries."

M 99487. Medal "Aux bonnes citoyennes le 8 octobre 1789."

M 99968. "J'sommes du Tiers."

M 100435. “Les femmes de la halle donnant à Mr Barnave un bouquet et le compliment sur son patriotisme.”

M 100570. “La Fanatisme corrigé ou La Discipline Patriotique.” Paris: Chez Villeneuve Graveur.

M 100995. “18 septembre Proclamation de la première Constitution.”

M 100996. “Proclamation de la Constitution Place du Marché des Innocens le 14 septembre 1791.”

M 100997. Detail of “Proclamation de la Constitution Place du Marché des Innocens le 14 septembre 1791.”

Microfilm B1247. *Costumes Parisiens de la fin du 18eme Siècle et du Commencement du 19ème, Ouvrage Commencé le 1er Juin 1797*, an 7. Paris: au bureau du *Journal des dames*, 1797-1821.

P 21379. “Eh bien, J… F…, dira-tu encore vive la noblesse.” London: 1789.

P 21381. Berthault. “Les Dames de la Halle Partant Pour Aller Chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789.”

P 21385. “A Versailles! A Versailles: ou la Journée du 5 Octobre 1789.”

P 21390. “Les Dames de Paris Allant à Versailles.”

P 21409. “Vive le roi! Vive la Nation ! Lang leeve de Koning ! Lang leeve de natie!” “Vive le roi! Vive la Nation!”

P 21428. “La terrible Nuit du 5 au 6 Octobre 1789.” Gravure anonyme.

P 22029.

P 22034. “Fait miraculeux arrivé à Pars l’an du salut de 1791, le six avril.”

P 22731. “Les Parques Nationale Parisiennes.”

P 23562. “La Correction Républicaine.”

P 23748. “Les dames de la Halle de Paris vont complimenter la Reine aux Tuileries.” Gravure à l’eau forte, anonyme, colorée.

P 23880bis. “Évènement de 14 7bre 1792.”

P 26733. Numéro de Vinck: 7400, tome 54, “Les Derniers Monumens [ou Moments] de la République.” Gravure à l’eau-forte, coloriée.

P2 6735. Numéro de Vinck: 7401, tome 54, “M…me Angot au Sérail.” Chez Bonneville, Rue St Jacques, N°195. Gravure à l’eau-forte, coloriée.

QB-1 (1789-10-08). “Les Dames de la halle félicitant leurs Majestés sur le commencement de la Constitution.” eau-forte, 1789 or 1790.

Reserve FT4 QB 370 (132). “Programme Complet et officiel des Fêtes et Cérémonies qui vont avoir lieu dans Paris le 15 Août 1852, à l’occasion de la Fête de Saint-Napoléon.” Paris: Boucquin, 1852.

BnF, Département des Manuscrits

Mf 34833. Mss fonds français 11697. Letters between Bailly and Gouvion, 23 juillet 1791.

Nouv. Acq. Fr. 2651, fol. 187. “Délibération de la section du Marché-des-Innocents.” 5 mai 1792.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris, Cabinet des arts graphiques

Histoire PC 007, G 2796. “Les Dames de la Halle félicitant leurs Majestés sur le commencement de la Constitution.”

Histoire PC 007, G 2796. “Le Roi Reçoit les Femmes de la Halle,” 1789.

Histoire PC 007, G 25375. “Vive le Roi! Vive la Nation!”

Histoire PC 007, G 26246. “Pariser Poisarden sonst Fisch Weiber.”

Histoire PC 007, G 26247. “La Journée Mémorable de Versailles, Le lundi 5 Octobre 1789.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27952. “Les Dames de la Halle partant pour aller chercher le roi à Versailles le 5 octobre 1789.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27952. “Le Roi arrivant à Paris escorté de plus de trente mille âmes le 6 octobre 1789.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27958. “Départ des Femmes de la Halle Pour Versailles.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27974. “Le Roi Réçoit les Dames de la Halle.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27978. “Epoque du 6 octobre 1789, l’après diné à Versailles.”

Histoire PC 007, G 27982, "Journée Memorable du 6 octobre 1789"

Histoire PC 007, G 27983. "Retour des Héroines Parisiennes après l'expédition de Versailles du 6 octobre 1789."

Histoire PC 007, G 29383. "La Journée a jamais Mémorable aux François où Louis XVI Restaurateur de la liberté Françoise se rendit à l'Hôtel de Ville le 17 du mois de Juillet 1789."

Printed Primary Sources

Aude, Joseph. *La Critique de Madame Angot au Sérail, Pièce en un Acte et en Vers*. Paris: Chez Barba, 1817.

Avis important d'une Dame des Halles pour la Diminution des vivres. Paris: Chez LaCloye, Librarie à L'Orme Saint-Gervais, 1789. Reprinted in *Réclamations de Femmes, 1789*. Paris: Côté femmes éditions, 1989.

Biré, Edmond. *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris pendant la Terreur.* "La Fête-Dieu," Jeudi le 30 mai 1793. Volume II. Paris: Librairie Académique Didier.

*Cahier des plaintes et doléances des Dames de la Halle et Marchés de Paris, Rédigé au grand salon des Porcherons, le premier dimanche de Mai, pour être présenté à Messieux les États-Généraux, Avec des augmentations sur la nouvelle du premier samedi du mois de Juin, au sujet du pain.*1789. Reprinted in *Réclamations de Femmes, 1789.* Paris: Côté femmes éditions, 1989.

Cailleau. *Le Café des Halles, Comédie en un acte*. Paris: Chez Cailleau, 1781.

Compliment des dames poissardes à leurs frères du Tiers État (1789). In Charles-Louis Chassin, *Les Élections et les cahiers de Paris en 1789*. Volume II. Paris, 1888-1889, 252-53. Reprinted in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795,* edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

"France: The National Fete in August." *New York Daily Times,* September 15, 1852.

"France: Preparation for the Great Fete." *New York Daily Times*, August 28, 1852.

Godard, M. *Exposé des Travaux de l'Assemblée-Générale des Représentans de la Commune de Paris, Depuis le 25 Juillet 1789, jusqu'au moi d'Octobre 1790, époque de l'organisation définitive de la Municipalité, fait par ordre de l'Assemblée*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Lottin l'aîné, 1790.

Granville Levenson-Gower Sutherland, George. "April 15, 1791." In *The despatches of Earl Gower, English ambassador at Paris from June 1790 to August 1792: to which are added the*

despatches of Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Monro, and the diary of Viscount Palmerston in France during July and August 1791. edited by Oscar Browning. London: C. J. Clay and Son, Cambridge University Press Warehouse, 1885.

"Letter IX on the French Revolution," December 1793. In *The Kentish Register and Monthly Miscellany, From August to December 1793*. Volume I. Canterbury: Simmons, Kirkgy, and Jones, 1792.

Maleissye, General de. *Mémoires d'un Officier aux Gardes Françaises (1789-1793)*. Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit, 1897.

Marivaux, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de. *Le Jeu d'amour et du hazard*. 1730.

Mémoires secrets de Fournier l'Américain, edited by Aulard, F.-A. Paris, 1890. Reprinted in *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, edited by Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Montaigne, Michel de. *Essais de Michel de Montaigne*. Volume 1. Paris: Chez Jean Serviere et Chez Jean-François Bastion, 1793.

Mulot, François-Valentin. *Joseph ou Fin Tragique de Mame Angot, Bagatelle Morale, mêlée de Chant*. Paris: Chez Geuffier, 1797.

Prévost, Antoine François. *L'Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*. 1731.

Procédure criminelle instruite au Châtelet de Paris, sur la dénunciation des faits arrivés à Versailles dans la journée du 6 Octobre 1789. Volume I. Paris: Chez Baudouin, 1790.

Prudhomme, ed. *Les Crimes des Reines de France Depuis Le Commencement de la Monarchie jusqu'à la Mort de Marie-Antoinette: Avec les Pièces Justificatives de son Procès*. Paris: Bureau des Révolutions de Paris, an II.

Rutledge, James. *Le Creuset, Ouvrage Politique et Critique*. Volume I, n° XVIII. Du jeudi 3 mars 1791. Paris: 1791.

Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris. *Règlement de la Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris*. Paris, 179?.

Vireau-Beavoir, Jean Loup de, and Giuseppe de Lama. *La Révolution française racontée par un diplomate étranger. Correspondance du bailli de Virieu, ministre plénipotentiaire de Parme (1788-1793)*, edited by Emmanuel Henri Vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois. le 12 octobre 1793. Paris: E. Flammarion, 1903.

Voltaire. *Candide ou l'Optimisme*. 1st Edition. 1759.

von Kotzbue, Friedrich Ferdinand Augustus. *Sketch of the Life and Literary Career of Augustus*

Von Kotzbue with the Journal of His Tour to Paris At the Close of the Year 1790. Translated by Anne Plumptre. December 31, 1790. London: C. Whittingham, 1800.

Weston, Stephen. "Letter XXXIX, August 1791." In *Letters from Paris During the Summer of 1791*. London: J. Debrett, Piccadilly, and W. Clarke, 1792.

Zola, Émile. *Le Ventre de Paris.* 1873.

Newspapers

Affiches, annonces et avis divers, ou Journal général de France

L'Ami du Peuple ou le Défenseur des Patriotes persécutés

L'Ami du Roi

Le Censeur Dramatique ou Journal des Principaux Théâtres de Paris et des Départemens

La Chronique de Paris

La Correspondance des dames, ou Journal des modes et des spectacles de Paris

Le Courrier de Lyon

Le Courrier de Paris dans les 83 Départements,

Le Courrier des Spectacles

Le Journal de Paris

Le Journal général de France

Le Miroir

Réimpression de l'ancien moniteur: depuis la réunion des états-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat

Révolutions de France et de Brabant par Camille Desmoulins

Les Révolutions de Paris

Reference Sources and Primary Source Collections

Aulard, François-Alphonse, ed. *Paris pendant la reaction thermidorienne et sous le directoire.* 5 volumes. Paris: Librairie Léopold Cerf, 1899.

---, ed. *Paris sous le consulat: Recueil des documents pour l'histoire d'esprit public à Paris*. 4 Volumes**.** Paris: L. Cerf, 1903.

---, ed. *La Société des Jacobins: Receuil de documents.* 6 Volumes. Paris: Librairie Jouaust, 1899.

De Baecque, Antoine. *La caricature révolutionnaire*. Italy, Presses de CNRS et l'imprimerie Arti Grafiche Vincenzo Bona, 1988.

Bély, Lucien, ed. *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime: royaume de France, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996.

de Boischevalier, Louis Joseph Hullin. *Répertoire, ou Almanach historique de la Révolution française*. Paris: Lefort, 1793.

Boursin, Elphège, and Augustin Challamel, eds. *Dictionnaire de la Révolution française: Institutions, Hommes & Faits*. Paris: Librairie Furne, 1893.

Buchez, Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin and Prosper-Charles Roux, eds. *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou, Journal des assemblées nationales, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815.* 40 Volumes. Paris: Paulin, 1834-1838.

Caron, Pierre, ed. *La Commission des Subsistances de l'an II: Procès-verbaux et Actes*. 2 Volumes. Paris: E. Leroux, 1925.

---, ed. *Le Maximum général: Instruction, recueil de textes et notes*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1930.

---, ed. *Paris pendant la Terreur: Rapports des agents secrets du ministre de l'intérieur*. 7 Volumes. Paris: A. Picard, 1910-1978.

---, ed. *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum (sept 1793-mars 1794)*, Volume I, [Collected and reprinted from *Bulletin trimestriel de la Commission de recherche et de publication des documents relatifs à la vie économique de la Révolution* , v.2 (1907). p.67-231], 1910.

---, ed. *Paris pendant la terreur: rapports de Grivel et Siret sur les subsistances et le maximum (sept 1793-mars 1794)*, Volume II, [reprinted from *Bulletin d'histoire économique de la Révolution*, v.11 (1920-21), p. 371-427].

Chassin, Charles-Louis, ed. *Les élections et les cahiers de Paris en 1789: Documents recueillis, mis en ordre, et anoté*. 4 Volumes. Paris: D. Jouaust, Charles Noblet, and Maison Quantin, 1888-1889.

Depeyrot, Georges, ed. *Monnaie et Papier-Monnaie Pendant la Révolution (1789-1803)*. Paris: Maison Florange, 1996.

Dictionnaire de l'Académie française, 4th Edition. 1762.

Dictionnaire de l'Académie française, 5th Edition. 1798.

Dictionnaire historique des institutions, mœurs et coutumes de la France. Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1855.

Elyada, Ouzi, ed. *Lettres bougrement patriotiques de la Mère Duchêne suivi de Journal des Femmes, 1791*. Paris: Les Éditions de Paris/EDHIS, 1989.

Franklin, Alfred. *Dictionnaire Historique des Arts, Métiers et Professions depuis le Treizième siècle*. Paris: Chez H. Welter, 1906.

Hould, Claudette, Annie Jourdan, Rolf Reichardt et Stéphane Roy, eds. *La Révolution par la Gravure: Les Tableaux historiques de la Révolution française*. Vizille: Musée de la Révolution française, 2002.

Lacroix, Sigismond, ed. *Actes de la Commune de Paris pendant la Révolution*. New York: AMS Press, 1974.

Leroux, Ernest ed. *Commission de Recherche et de Publication des Documents Relatifs à la Vie Économique de la Révolution.* Bulliten Trimestrial. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1907.

Lottin, Augustin Martin. *Catalogue Chronologique des Libraires et des Libraires-Imprimeurs de Paris, Depuis l'an 1470, époque de l'établissement de l'Imprimerie dans cette Capitale, jusqu'à présent*. Paris: Chez Jean-Roch Lottin de S. Germain, 1789.

Madival, J., and E. Laurent, eds. *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860; recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des chambres françaises imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés.* Series I. 102 Volumes.

Marion, Marcel, ed. *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: A Picard, 1923.

Quérard, Joseph-Marie. *La France littéraire ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*. Paris: Firmin Didot père et fils, 1827-1839.

Soboul, Albert ed. *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006.

Tuetey, Alexandre. *Répertoire Général des sources Manuscrits de L'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*. Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle (Association Ouvrière), 1890.

Tulard, Jean, ed. *Almanach de Paris: de 1789 à nos jours*. Paris: Encyclopaedia universalis, 1990.

Vermorel, A., ed. *Oeuvres de J. P. Marat l'Ami du Peuple*. Paris: Décembre-Alonnier, 1869.

Secondary Sources

Albert, Maurice. *Les Théâtres des Boulevards (1789-1848)*. Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1902.

Alpaugh, Micah. "The Politics of Escalation in French Revolutionary Protest: Political Demonstrations, Nonviolence and Violence in the Grandes journées of 1789." *French History* 23 (Fall 2009): 336-359.

Applewhite, Harriet. "Citizenship and Political Alignment in the National Assembly." In *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Applewhite, Harriet, and Darline Levy, eds. *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990.

De Baecque, Antoine. *La caricature révolutionnaire*. Italy: Presses de CNRS et l'imprimerie Arti Grafiche Vincenzo Bona, 1988.

Baker, Keith. "Public Opinion as Political Invention." In *Inventing the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Bassy, Thomas. *Work and Wages*. Read Books, 2009.

Baurit, M. *Les Halles de Paris des romains à nos jours*. Paris: Chez M. Baurit, 1956.

Bellanger, Claude et al. *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française: Des Origines à 1814*. Vol. 1. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969.

Biver, Marie-Louise. *Fêtes révolutionnaires à Paris*. Paris: P.U.F., 1979.

Blackman, Robert. "Did Cicero Swear the Tennis Court Oath?" Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society for French Historical Studies, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 4-7, 2013.

Bruno, Blondé, and Natacha Coquery. Introduction to *Retailers and consumer changes in Early Modern Europe: England, France, Italy, and the Low Countries*, edited by Bruno Blondé, Eugénie Briot, Natacha Coquery, and Laura Van Aert. Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2005.

Bossenga, Gail. "Financial Origins of the French Revolution." In *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, edited by Thomas Kaiser and Dale Van Kley. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

---. *The Politics of Privilege: Old Regime and Revolution in Lille*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

---. "Protecting Merchants: Guilds and Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century France" *French Historical Studies* Volume 14 (Autumn 1988): 693-703.

---. "Review Article: Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime." *French Historical Studies* 20 (Spring 1997): 217-243.

Bouchary, Jean. *Les Compagnies financières à Paris à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. Volume II. Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Sociales Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1941.

---. *Les Faux-Monnayeurs sous la Révolution Française*. Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1946.

Boudon, Françoise, André Chastel, Hélène Couzy, and Françoise Hamon. *Système de l'Architecture Urbaine: Le Quartier des Halles à Paris*. Volume I. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977.

Braesch, F. *La Commune du Dix Août 1792: Étude sur l'histoire de Paris du 20 juin au 2 décembre 1792*. Paris: Librairie Hachette et C^{ie}, 1911.

Brive, Marie-France Brive, ed. *Les Femmes et la révolution française: actes du colloque international, 12-13-14 avril 1989*. 3 Volumes. Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1989-1991.

Burstin, Haim. "Travail et citoyenneté en milieu urbain sous la Révolution." In *Citoyens et citoyenneté sous la Révolution française*, edited by Raymonde Monnier. Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2006.

Cage, Claire. "'Celibacy is a Social Crime': The Politics of Clerical Marriage, 1794-1799." *French Historical Studies* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 601-628.

Carlson, Marvin. *The Theatre of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966.

Cerati, Marie. *Le Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires*. Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1966.

Choudhury, Mita. *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Cheney, Paul. *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy*. Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 2010.

Clément, Jean-Paul. "Les Goncourts, historiens de la Révolution et du Directoire." In *Les Goncourts dans leurs siècle: Un siècle de Goncourt*, edited by Jean-Louis Canaes, Pierre-Jean Dufief, Robert Kop, Jean-Yves Mollier. Villeneuve: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion, 2005.

Cobb, Richard. *The People's Armies*. Translated by Marianne Elliott. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

---. *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789-1820*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Cobban, Alfred. *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

Cochon, Anne. "Paris et les transports sous la Révolution." In *À Paris sous la Révolution: Nouvelles approches de la ville,* edited by Raymonde Monnier. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008.

Colwill, Elizabeth. "Sex, Savagery and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic." In *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France*, edited by Sarah Melzer and Kathryn Norberg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Crow, Thomas. *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Crowston, Clare. *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

---. "Moral Credit beyond the Old Regime: Making a Case for Continuities." Paper presented at the annual meeting for Western Society for French Historical Studies, Portland, Oregon, November 10-12, 2011.

Darnton, Robert. *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Davidson, Denise. *France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Dawson, Philip. Introduction to *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Delalande, Nicolas. *Les batailles de l'impôt: Consentement et résistances de 1789 à nos jours*.

Paris: Seuil, 2011.

Desan, Christine. “Making Money: The Invention of an Interest-Driven Engine to Create Liquidity.” Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Social Science History Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 1-4, 2012.

Desan, Suzanne. “‘Constitutional Amazons’: Jacobin Women’s Clubs in the French Revolution,” In *Re-creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, edited by Bryant T. Ragan Jr. and Elizabeth A. Williams. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

---. *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

---. “The French Revolution and the Family,” In *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter McPhee. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

---. *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France*. Cornell University Press, 1990.

---. "Transatlantic Spaces of Revolution: The French Revolution, Sciotomanie, and American Lands." *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 467-505.

---. “What’s after Political Culture? Recent French Revolutionary Historiography.” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): 163-196.

DiCaprio, Lisa. *The Origins of the Welfare State: Women, Work, and the French Revolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Dudley, Christopher. “Party politics, political economy, and economic development in early eighteenth-century Britain.” *The Economic History Review* 66 (2013): 1084-1100.

Durham Johnson, Mary. “Old Wine in New Bottles: Institutional Changes for Women of the People during the French Revolution.” In *Women, War, and Revolution*, edited by Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980.

Dominique, Pierre. *Paris enlève le roi: octobre 1789*. Paris Librairie Académique Perrin, 1973.

Doyle, William. *Origins of the French Revolution*, 3rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

---. “The Outbreak of the Revolution, 1787-1789,” In *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy. 5th Edition. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.

Elyada, Ouzi ed. *Lettres bougrement patriotiques de la Mère Duchêne suivi de Journal des Femmes, 1791*. Paris: Les Éditions de Paris/EDHIS, 1989.

---. *Presse populaire & feuilles volantes de la Révolution à Paris 1789-1792*. Paris: Société des Études Robespierristes, 1991.

d'Estrée, Paul. *Le Père Duchesne: Hébert et la Commune de Paris (1792-1794)*. Paris: Librairie Ambert, 1908.

Farge, Arlette. *La Vie fragile: violence, pouvoirs, et solidarités à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Hachette, 1986.

Fauré, Christine. "Doléances, déclarations et pétitions, trois formes de la parole publique des femmes sous la Révolution." *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 344 (2006): 3-4.

Fitzsimmons, Michael. "The National Assembly and the Abolition of Guilds in France." *The Historical Journal* 39 (1996): 133-154.

Alan Forrest. *The French Revolution and the Poor*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

Fraisse, Geneviève. *Muse de la Raison: la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*. Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989.

Friedland, Paul. *Political Actors; Representative Bodies & Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Fuchs, Rachel and Victoria Thompson. *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Furet, François. *Penser la Révolution française*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1978.

Garrioch, David. *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690-1830.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

---. *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

---. *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Geoffroy, Julien L. *Cours de littérature dramatique, ou Recueil par Ordre de Matières Des Feuilletons de Geoffroi, précède d'un notice historique sur sa vie et ses ouvrages, seconde édition.* Volume 6. Paris: Pierre Blanchard, 1825.

Gobin, Pierre. "C'était pas la peine..." In *Symbols, Myths and Images of the French Revolution: Essays in Honor of James A. Leith*, edited by Ian Germani & Robin Swales. Regina: University of Regina, 1998.

Godineau, Dominique. *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la*

Révolution française. Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1988.

---. *S'abréger les jours - Le suicide en France au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012.

---. *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*. Translated by Katherine Streip. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Goodman, Dena. "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime." *History and Theory* 3, no. 1 (1992): 1-20.

Gottschalk, Louis and Margaret Maddox. *Lafayette in the French Revolution: From the October Days through the Federation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Guibert-Sledziewski, Elisabeth. *Révolutions du Sujet*. Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989.

Guilhaumou, Jacques. *Sieyès et l'Ordre de la Langue: L'invention de la politique moderne.* Paris: Editions Kimé, 2002.

Gutwirth, Madelyn. "Citoyens, Citoyennes*:* Cultural Regression and the Subversion of Female Citizenship in the French Revolution." In *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Hazareesingh, Sudhir. "A Common Sentiment of National Glory": Civic Festivities and French Collective Sentiment under the Second Empire." *Journal of Modern History* 76 (June 2004): 280-311.

Hanson, Paul R. *Contesting the French Revolution.* Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

---. *The Jacobin Republic Under Fire: The Federalist Revolt in the French Revolution.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

Hardwick, Julie. *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Harouel, Jean-Louis. "La question financière et ses rapports avec l'aménagement urbain." In *À Paris sous la Révolution: Nouvelles approches de la ville,* edited by Raymonde Monnier. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008.

Harris, S.E. *The Assignats*. London: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Hénaff, Marcel and Tracy Strong. "The Conditions of Public Space: Vision, Speech, Theatricality." In *Public Space and Democracy*, edited by Marcel Hénaff and Tracy Strong. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Hesse*,* Carla. *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern*. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 2001.

Heuer, Jennifer. *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

---. "The Limits of Martial Masculinity? Revolutionary Veterans as Citizens and Family Men." Paper presented at the Society for French Historical Studies, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 4-7, 2013.

Higonnet, Patrice. *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

---. "The Social and Cultural Antecedents of Revolutionary Discontinuity: Montagnards and Girondins." *The English Historical Review* 396 (1985): 513-544.

Hufton, Olwen. *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Hunt, Lynn. "Afterword." In *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

---. "Engravings." In *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy. 5th ed. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.

---. *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

---. "The French Revolution in Global Context." In *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, edited by David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

---. "The Global Financial Origins of 1789." In *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, edited by Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2013.

---. "La visibilité du monde bourgeois." In *Vers un ordre bourgeois ?: Révolution française et changement social*, edited by Jean-Pierre Jessenne. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007.

---. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

---. "Relire l'histoire du politique." In *La Révolution à l'oeuvre: Perspectives actuelles dans l'histoire de la Révolution française*, edited by Jean-Clément Martin. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005.

Isherwood, Robert. *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Jam, Jean-Louis. "Politique musical du Directoire." In *La République directoriale*, edited by Philippe Bourdin and Bernard Gainot, Volume 1. Moulins: Imprimerie A Pottier S.A., 1998.

Jarvis, Katie. "Allez, Marchez Braves Citoyennes: A Study of the Popular Origins of and the Political Reactions to, the October Days of the French Revolution." Bachelor's thesis, Boston College, 2007.

---. "Crafting a Revolutionary Identity: The Political Practice of the Dames des Halles, 1789-1791," Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009.

Jessenne, Jean-Pierre. "Une Révolution sans ou contre les paysans?" In *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, edited by Michel Biard. Éditions Tallandier: 2010.

---. ed. *Vers un ordre bourgeois?: Révolution française et changement social*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007.

Jones, Colin. "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change." Abridged from *The French Revolution and Social Change*, edited by Colin Lucas. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990: 69-118. Reprinted in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routledge, 2006.

---. *Charity and Bienfaisance: The Treatment of the Poor in the Montpellier Region, 1740-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Johnson, James. *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

---. "Review of *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791* by Jeffrey Ravel." *The Journal of Modern History* 74 (December 2002): 854-856.

Jouhaud, Christian. *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots*. Paris: Éditions Aubier Montaigne, 1985.

Kaiser, Thomas. "From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution: The Court and French Foreign Policy, 1787-1789." In *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, edited by Thomas Kaiser and Dale Van Kley. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Kalifa, Dominique. *Les Bas-Fonds: Histoire d'un imaginaire*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2013.

Kaplan, Steven. "Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot's 'Carnival.'" In *Work in France,* edited by Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Kates, Gary. Introduction to *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Kennedy, Emmet. "History of the Problem and the Method of Solving It." In *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris, Analysis and Repertory*, edited by Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.

---. "The Most Performed Plays of the Decade," In *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris, Analysis and Repertory*, edited by Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.

---. "Taste and Revolution." In *Symbols, Myths and Images of the French Revolution: Essays in Honor of James A. Leith*, edited by Ian Germani & Robin Swales. Regina: University of Regina, 1998.

Kessler, Amalia. *A Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Krakovitch, Odile. "Le Théâtre de la République et la Censure sous le Directoire." In *Le théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, edited by Martial Poirson. Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2008.

Kushner, Nina, and Daryl Hafter, eds. *Enterprising Women in Eighteenth-Century France*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014.

Kwass, Michael. "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France." *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 631-59.

---. *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

---. "The Global Underground: Smuggling, Rebellion, and the Origins of the French Revolution." In *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, edited by Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2013.

---. *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Landes, Joan. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Lapied, Martine. "Une absence de Révolution pour les femmes?" In *La Révolution Française: Une histoire toujours vivante*, edited by Michel Biard. Éditions Tallandier: 2010.

---. "Histoire du Genre en Révolution." In *La Révolution à L'oeuvre: Perspectives actuelles dans l'histoire de la Révolution française*, edited by Jean-Clement Martin. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005.

Larrère, Catherine. "Sieyès, lecteur des physiocrates: droit naturel ou économie?" In *Figures de Sieyès*, edited by Pierre-Yves Quiviger, Vincent Denis, and Jean Salem. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008.

Leclercq, Henri. *Les journées d'octobre et de la fin de l'année 1789*. Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ane, 1924.

Lefebvre, Georges. *The Coming of the French Revolution*. Translated by R.R. Palmer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.

Lemoine, Thierry, Jérôme Douard, Jean-Marc Léri, and Aimée Fontaine ed. *Au temps des merveilleuses: la société parisienne sous le Directoire et le Consulat*. Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 2005.

Levy, Darline Gay, and Harriet Branson Applewhite. "A Political Revolution for Women? The Case of Paris," Originally from *Becoming Visible: Women in European History,* edited by Rennate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Weisner. Third Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998. Reprinted in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routledge, 2006.

---. "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris." In *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution,* edited by Sara Melzer and Leslie Rabine. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Livesey, James. "Free trade and empire in the Anglo-Irish Commercial Propositions of 1785." *Journal of British Studies* 52 (2013): 103-127.

---. *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

---. "The Political Culture of the Directory." In *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter McPhee. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Lombard-Jourdan, Anne. *Les Halles de Paris et leur Quartier (1137-1969)*. Paris: École Nationale des Chartes, 2009.

Loubinoux, Gérard. "Ambitions mal placées et extravagance dans le théâtre de Joseph Aude." In *Le théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, edited by Martial Poirson. Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2008.

---. "Les figures du théâtre de Joseph Aude." In *Les arts de la scène et la Révolution française,* edited by Philippe Bourdin and Gérard Loubinoux. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004.

Lucas, Colin. “The Crowd and Politics between the Ancien Régime and Revolution in France,” *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988): 421-457.

---. “Nobles, bourgeoisie and the origins of the French Revolution,” Reprinted in an abridged format from *Past and Present* 60 (August 1973): 84-126 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Lyons, Martyn. *France Under the Directory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Lytle, Scott. "The Second Sex (September, 1793)" *Journal of Modern History* 27, no. 1 (March 1955): 14-26.

Marion, Rene. “The Dames de la Halle: Community and Authority in Early Modern Paris.” PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1994.

Marsden, Kathryn. “Married Nuns in the French Revolution: The Sexual Revolution of the 1790s,” PhD. diss, University of California-Irvine, in progress.

Maslan, Susan. *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Mason, Laura. *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Mathiez, Albert. “All Republicans Benefited.” Originally from “La Révolution française.” In *Annales historiques de la Révolution* française 10 (1933), 19-24. Reprinted in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy. 5th Edition. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.

---. “Étude critique sur les journées des 5 & 6 octobre.” *Revue Historique* 67 (1898): 241-281.

---. *La Théophilanthropie et le Culte Décadaire, 1796-1801*. Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillère et C^{ie}, 1904.

---. *La Vie Chère et le Mouvement Social Sous La Terreur*. Paris: Payot, 1927.

Martineau, Jean. *Les Halles de Paris des Origines à 1789: Évolution matérielle, juridique, et économique*. Paris: Éditions Montchrestien, 1960.

Maza, Sarah. *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Mazeau, Guillaume. *Corday contre Marat: Deux siècles d’images*. Versailles, Editions Artlys, 2009.

McPhee, Peter. *The French Revolution, 1789-1799*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Merrick, Jeffrey. "The Cardinal and the Queen: Sexual and Political Disorders in the Mazarinades." *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 667-699.

Michelet, Jules. *Les Femmes de la Révolution*. 2nd ed. Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1855.

Minard, Philippe. "L'héritage historiographique." In *Vers un ordre bourgeois?: Révolution française et changement social*, edited by Jean-Pierre Jessenne. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007.

Montenach, Anne. *Espaces et pratiques du commerce alimentaires à Lyon au XVIIe siècle*. Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2009.

Moore, A.P. *The Genre Poissard and the French Stage of the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Institute of French Studies, 1935.

Morini-Comby, Jean. *Les Assignats: Révolution et Inflation*. Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1925.

Navarro, Joe with Marvin Karlins, *What Everybody is Saying*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

Offen, Karen. "The New Sexual Politics of French Revolutionary Historiography." *French Historical Studies*, 16, no. 4 (1990), 909-922.

d'Orliac, Jehanne. *Dames de la Halle*. Paris: Éditions Frances, 1946.

Ozouf, Mona. *Festivals and the French Revolution*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Palmer, R.R. *The Twelve who Ruled*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Parker, Lindsay. *Writing the Revolution: A French Woman's History in Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Pincus, Steven. "Empires and Capitalisms: Competing Political Economies and Eighteenth Century Imperial Crises." Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Social Science History Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 1-4, 2012.

---. "Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (January 2012): 3-34.

Plumauzille, Clyde. "La nouvelle publicité de la prostitution dans le Paris révolutionnaire:

information, marchandisation et banalisation d'une transgression sexuelle (1789-1799)." In *Le Genre entre transmission et transgression,* edited by Lydie Bodiou, Marlaine Cacouault-Bitaud et Ludovic Gaussot. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014.

---. "Tolérer et réprimer: prostitués, prostitution et droit de cité dans le Paris révolutionnaire (1789-1799)*."* PhD. diss., Université Paris I, 2013.

Potofsky, Allan. *Constructing Paris in the Age of Revolution*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Pouradier, Maud. "Le Débat sur la liberté des Théâtres: Le Répertoire en Question." In *Le Théâtre sous la Révolution, politique du répertoire (1789-1799)*, edited by Martial Poirson. Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2008.

Ravel, Jeffrey. *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1999.

Reinhard, Marcel. *Paris pendant la Révolution*. Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1962.

Rétat, Pierre. "The Evolution of the Citizen from the Ancien Régime to the Revolution." In *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, edited by Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Revel, Jacques. "Présentation" to the issue "Corps et communautés d'Ancien Régime." *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 43, no. 2 (1988): 295-299.

Roberts, Mary Louise. *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Roche, Daniel. *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*. Translated by Marie Evans. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Roessler, Shirley. *Out of the Shadows: Women and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution, 1789-1795*. New York: P. Lang, 1996.

Roy, Donald. *Romantic and Revolutionary Theatre, 1789-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Rudé, George. *The Crowd in the French Revolution*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Sargent, Thomas, and François Velde. *The Big Problem of Small Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Sewell, William. "Le Citoyen, La Citoyenne: Activity, Passivity and the French Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship." In *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political*

Culture, Volume 2, *Political Culture of the French Revolution*, edited by Colin Lucas. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).

---. *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What is the Third Estate?*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

---. *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Scott, Joan. *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Scott, William. "The Pursuit of 'Interests' in the French Revolution: A Preliminary Survey." *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 811-851.

Slavin, Morris. *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde*. Harvard University Press, 1986.

Sluhovsky, Moshe. *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France.* Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Smart, Annie. *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011.

Soboul, Albert. "Un Épisode des luttes populaires en septembre 1793; la guerre des cocardes," *Annales historiques de la Révolution français* (1961): 52-55.

---. "The French Revolution in the History of the Contemporary World." Reprinted and abridged from Albert Soboul. *Understanding the French Revolution,* Translated by April Ane Knutson. New York: International Publishers, 1988 in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and Controversies*, edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routledge, 2006.

---. "The Sans-Culottes." Originally from *The Parisian Sans-culottes and the French Revolution, 1793-1794*. Translated by Gwynne Lewis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. Reprinted in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy. 5th Edition. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.

---. *The Sans-Culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793-1794*. Translated by Remy Inglis Hall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

---. "The Triumph of a New Bourgeoisie." Originally "Classes and Class Struggles during the French Revolution." *Science & Society* 17 (Summer 1953): 252-257. Reprinted in *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations*, edited by Frank A. Kafker, James M. Laux, and Darline Gay Levy. 5th Edition. Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.

Sonenscher, Michael. "Les sans-culottes de l'an II: repenser le langage du travail dans la France

révolutionnaire." *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 5 (1985): 1087-1108.

Rebecca Spang, "The Ghost of Law: Speculating on Money, Memory, and Mississippi in the French Constituent Assembly," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques* 31:1 (Winter 2005): 3-25.

---. "Making Money in Revolutionary France." Presentation at the History Group Seminar, University of London Institute in Paris, 14 October 2010.

---. "Money and Liberty in the French Revolution." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Society for French History, Portland, Oregon, November 12, 2011.

---. "Money, Money, Money." *History Workshop Journal* 69 (Spring 2010): 225-233.

Szulman, Eric. "Les évolutions de la boucherie parisienne sous la Révolution." In *À Paris sous la Révolution: Nouvelles approches de la ville,* edited by Raymonde Monnier. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008.

Talamante, Laura. "Les Marseillaises: Women and Political Change during the French Revolution, 1789-1794." PhD diss., UCLA, 2003.

Tissier, André. *Les Spectacles à Paris pendant la Révolution: Répertoire analytique, chronologique et bibliographique, De la proclamation de la République à la fin de la Convention nationale (21 septembre 1792- 26 octobre 1795).* Genève: Droz, 2002.

Tulard, Jean. *Les Thermidoriens*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005.

Thompson, Victoria. *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Vardi, Liana. "The Abolition of the Guilds during the French Revolution." *French Historical Studies* 15 (1988): 704-717.

Verjus, Anne. *Le bon mari: Une histoire politique des hommes et des femmes à l'époque révolutionnaire*. Paris: Fayard, 2010.

---. "Gender, Sexuality, and Political Culture." In *A Companion to the French Revolution*, edited by Peter McPhee. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Verjus, Anne, and Denise Davidson, *Le Roman conjugal. Chroniques de la vie familiale à l'époque de la Révolution et de l'Empire*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2011.

Vila, Anne. *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

de Villiers, Marc. *Histoire des clubs des femmes et des légions d'amazones*. Paris: Plon-Nourrit,

1910.

de Villiers, Marc. *Reine Audu: Les Légendes des journées d'octobre*. Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1917.

Wahnich, Sophie. "L'Universel, Le Singulier, le Sujet, à l'Epreuve de la Révolution française." In *Universel, Singulier, Sujet*, edited by Jelica Sumic. Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2000.

Walton, Charles. "The Fall from Eden: The Free-Trade Origins of the French Revolution." In *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, edited by Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2013.

---. "*Les Graines de la Discorde:* Print, Public Spirit, and Free Market Politics in the French Revolution." In *Into Print: Limits and Legacies of the Enlightenment, Essays in Honor of Robert Darnton,* edited by Charles Walton. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011.

Zantop, Susanne. *Colonial Fantasies, Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770- 1870*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997.