

Traitors, Harlots and Monsters:

The Anti-Aristocratic Caricatures of the French Revolution

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Regina, 2011

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The opening of the Estates General in 1789 came at a time of momentous national crisis. France's separate Three Estates were summoned to meet and collectively decide about how best to remedy France's many ills. However, the initial collegial spirit between the privileged First and Second Estates and the assertive Third Estate quickly evaporated. Antipathy towards certain nobles, particularly those perceived as corrupt and debauched, quickly crystalized in 1789 into hostile attacks on the entire Second Estate, who were all labeled dangerous "aristocrats".

The rapid disempowerment of one of Europe's strongest élites is difficult to interpret without discussing the important role of widely produced anti-noble caricatures that targeted France's nobility. Anti-noble caricatures, ranging from the malicious to the comical, were an essential component in the rapid sidelining and demonization of the nobility. From approximately 1789-1793 anti-noble caricatures constantly degraded and demonized their targets, in unrelenting and accessible imagery, marking them out as traitorous enemies. Caricatures not only helped convince the public that nobles were not only inhuman, but so dangerous in fact, that persecution and violence became options in order to purge France of its alleged aristocratic fifth columnists.

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My love of French history and culture, as well as the French language has been deepened by my time spent on this thesis.

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Introduction

In 1789, a reluctant King Louis XVI summoned representatives of each of the three Estates – the clergy, the nobility and the commoners – to the Estates General, in an effort to address the acute financial problems the country was facing. Wealthy, educated members of the Third Estate, who had long been agitating for a share of political power, found common ground with noble members of the parlements who were resisting the King’s proposals for reform. The two groups were initially allied with one another against, on the one hand, “ministerial despotism,” and, on the other, real and imagined enemies at court. Many of the chief instigators of the upsets of 1787 and 1788 were nobles; they felt entitled to lead, seeing it as both their natural role and one that was supported – at least initially – by the Third Estate. After all, it had been the nobility, both those of old feudal lineages and those of more recent bourgeois extraction, who had led France politically, socially, culturally and militarily for centuries. And while France’s nobility was “the most open in Europe”, accessible to anyone with the wealth or talent to gain admittance, it was still a caste whose newer and older members justified their claims to social and political pre-eminence based on birth and lineage.¹ However, these traditional noble rationalizations were beginning to be seen as hollow by a public that questioned their social and political pretences on a growing number of fronts.

Challenges to nobles’ traditional roles came from a variety of sources, not least of all from nobles themselves. Some nobles longed to return to an imagined past where they

¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

formed the traditional military caste and acted as benevolent lords, while others sought a modern and reformed role that could adapt to the changing social and economic circumstances of the eighteenth century. While there was no single noble voice for these critiques, reforming nobles sought the improvement of their order, not its abolition. But within a few short years, this is precisely what would happen. Noble deputies voted to revoke their feudal privileges in August 1789, and the Second Estate as a separate political and social entity was abolished in June 1790.

While the nobility and the bourgeoisie would disagree about how far political and social reforms should go in 1789, they nonetheless shared many common interests and opinions. Both attacked the alleged moral and financial corruptions of the Court, and by 1789 both recognized that a different system of taxation and governance was needed to save France from ruin. Both orders counted members involved in producing the political, social and cultural critiques of the Enlightenment, and both orders certainly read them, as well as the more risqué commentary circulated by the underground presses. Voltaire's prose and the lewd *libelles* produced by "Grub Street" were equally familiar to many members from both orders.

Yet for all of their similar interests, attitudes and concerns, nobles and commoners in many cases fundamentally distrusted one another. In the decades preceding the Revolution, there had been a certain social and political alliance between nobles and bourgeois, but the two groups would begin to feel their differences, particularly over social and honorific privileges. To many in the Second Estate, nobility could not simply be voted away; ex-nobles still felt noble and resented being sidelined from their traditional positions of leadership. Commoners, on the other hand, suspected

that former nobles were not eager to become citizens of the new nation and feared that they begrudged the Revolution for their losses. Subsequent noble actions, such as their intransigence at the Estates General, the formation of reactionary groups and open displays of disdain for commoners, made this alienation much more pronounced. The rapid change in the way the public perceived the nobility early in the Revolution, from seeing them as tentative allies to potentially being dangerous counterrevolutionaries, was fanned not only by politicians and journalists, but also by a new force: caricaturists.

Anti-noble caricatures are a crucial barometer in examining not only how attitudes towards the Second Estate shifted early in the French Revolution, but also why nobles were subsequently ostracized, persecuted and harmed. Caricatures were both ubiquitous and versatile, and yet their role has been largely overlooked by historians; much more attention has been given to other media, the printed word in particular. But caricatures did matter, for they helped shape public perceptions of the nobility, effectively demonizing them and transforming them into treacherous outsiders, or “aristocrats”. Failing to respond in any effective or significant way, nobles lost control of the discourse, while the public was exposed to a slew of defamatory imagery. Widely produced and commercially lucrative, anti-noble caricatures tapped into a nascent market early in 1789, arguably becoming a powerful social and political force in the Revolution. In order to both examine both the importance of caricatures as tools to attack hated economic exploiters, and to explore potential deeper layers of meaning, we will begin by addressing the debates surrounding the French nobility, the use of the word “aristocrat” and the significance of caricatures within the French Revolution’s historiography.



Arguments about the nobility in the French Revolution are interconnected with the changing debates and narratives about the Revolution itself. That the nobility played an important function in the Revolution, particularly at the beginning, is not in question, but in further exploring this importance, historians have done significant work regarding the extent of their role, who opposed them, and how and why the Revolution affected them as a group. The re-examination of an older Marxist narrative of different groups in the French Revolution – which interpreted events from a purely social perspective – can be traced back to Alfred Cobban’s groundbreaking 1954 lecture, “The Myth of the French Revolution”.² Inspired by Cobban, revisionist historians have since questioned the way the French nobility was placed within the social narratives of the time. Investigating the role(s) of the nobility, their identity, allegiances, and composition, and the significance of the Second Estate in the eighteenth century, scholars have argued that a narrow social explanation of the events of 1789 and the subsequent downfall of the nobility is insufficient.

One of most significant contributors to this debate was Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, whose pivotal 1976 book *La Noblesse au XVIIIe siècle: De la féodalité aux lumières* specifically disputed the existing image of the Second Estate.³ Chaussinand-Nogaret’s work challenged traditional Marxist narratives about the nature of the relationship between a supposedly resentful bourgeoisie and a conservative nobility.

² Alfred Cobban (May 6, 1954 at University College, Cambridge, Cambridge, UK) cited in T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* (New York: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998), 1.

³ See: Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. William Doyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

According to that Marxist interpretation, the two groups had little of the same social, political or economic concerns, leading to a mutual antipathy. Noble-bourgeois tensions existed because a modern, economically dynamic and politically literate bourgeoisie chafed under the rule of a traditional, backwards feudal nobility; the fact that the nobility had refused to reform, change or compromise with the demands of this economically important but politically impotent group had led them into “inevitable” conflict in 1789. Chaussinand-Nogaret and subsequent historians would challenge these assumptions. Through his close examination of the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789 and substantial research pointing to the social, political, cultural and economic interactions between high nobles and wealthy bourgeois, he demonstrated that the two groups were not fundamentally at odds with one another, as previously thought.

While Chaussinand-Nogaret and other subsequent scholars’ research challenged the supposedly closed nature of the nobility, other ideas, such as the existence of an “aristocratic reaction” in the last years of the Ancien Regime and tensions between two allegedly hostile self-aware social classes, were not so easily overturned. As T.C.W. Blanning suggests, the questions can still be asked: “If the Revolution was not caused by the tensions between the ossified Old Regime and progressive forces of production, then where *did* it come from? If the Revolution did not represent the victory of the bourgeoisie over the monarchy and the aristocracy, then what *did* it mean?”⁴ According to Blanning, revisionists have not properly answered these crucial questions. Social

⁴ T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* (New York: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998), 7.

history, he argues, is “resting rather than dying”; history as a discipline has a cyclical nature, and the debate will inevitably return to the social.⁵

According to Jay Smith, historians today in fact practice a “methodological eclecticism” that takes valuable insights from both approaches, rather than categorizing their interpretation of history as either social or cultural.⁶ As a result, subsequent historical debates about this subject “traverse methodologically conflicted terrain.”⁷ Smith argues that historians of the French nobility must consider both social and post social interpretations, while addressing the question, “what *kind* of nobility should be re-inserted into the narrative framework of eighteenth-century history?”⁸ Despite the important revelations of Chaussinand-Nogaret and other revisionist historians, Smith argues that many scholars today, and the public more generally, still fundamentally misunderstand the French nobility in the eighteenth century. He maintains that the traditional Marxist theory about the inevitability of a conflict between an ascendant middle class seeking to overthrow a privileged aristocracy is still a primary narrative when it comes to explaining the roots of the French Revolution.⁹



Part of the analysis of the growing conflict between the Second and Third Estates involves examining what the label “aristocrat” meant before and during the Revolution.

⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

⁶ Jay M. Smith, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 6.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 1.

The word appears in speeches, prints and images throughout the period, and understanding its usage is important in showing how and why attacks on the nobility became so powerful during the Revolution. At times, scholars have been guilty of using the terms “noble” and “aristocrat” interchangeably, with little regard to the nuanced difference between the two or their historic roots and significance. Recent historiography has, however, pointed out the problems of such oversights, and outlined the development, employment and power of the label “aristocrat” in the French Revolution. Indeed, part of the reason there was such confusion about the difference between a noble and an aristocrat is because the revolutionary propaganda that labelled nobles as “aristocrats” was so effective; to quote Thomas Kaiser, “if by 1791 all those considered aristocrats had not been nobles, all former nobles were more or less considered “aristocrats”.¹⁰

In the pre-revolution, the term “aristocrat” was conflated with “despotism” and was used specifically in reference to Versailles courtiers, particularly the coterie surrounding the Queen.¹¹ Versailles and its residents were placed under an increasingly critical microscope by the end of the Ancien Regime, their real and imagined behaviours the subject of a growing stream of attacks. Labelled as “aristocrats” by their detractors, court nobles came to embody many of the social, economic, political and cultural critiques occurring in French society. This pre-revolutionary connotation gradually came to be used to describe not just the nobility, but also anyone who was or was perceived to

¹⁰ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Nobles Into Aristocrats, or How an Order Became a Conspiracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 189-224. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 222.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 207-208.

be a counterrevolutionary during the Revolution, an association which was not only damaging, but also dangerous.

In his work on the eighteenth-century political economy, John Shovlin has drawn a connection between moral critiques of the nobility and the public's awareness and resentment of the luxurious lifestyles of French elites. Such critiques were directed at the court nobility, but not limited to them; like other scholars, Shovlin has pointed to the blurring of lines between the worlds of finance and the upper nobility both in reality and in the public mind.¹² Financiers, farmers general and speculators were widely loathed for economic and social reasons by nobles and commoners alike; their marriage alliances and financial dealings with Versailles certainly did not help the image of the court. Shovlin argues that by the late 1780s, the alliance between court nobles and financiers left the whole Second Estate open to criticism because the public began to perceive the entire nobility as the "principal carriers and disseminators of luxury".¹³ The conflation of capitalist exploiters with feudal ones in the popular imagination at the end of the Ancien Regime helped make the construction of the dangerous "aristocrat" in revolutionary caricatures that much more significant.

The term "aristocrat" itself did not, of course, always have pejorative connotations. The *Encyclopédie* of 1751 defines aristocracy and aristocrat in completely different terms. An aristocracy was defined as "A sort of political government administered by a small number of the noble and wise; [from] ἄρης, Mars, or powerful, or from ἄριστος, very good, very strong, and from κράτος, force, power, or the power of

¹² John Shovlin, "Political Economy and the French Nobility." In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-138. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 131.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 138.

the great.”¹⁴ The *Encyclopédie* also outlines the principal characteristics and ideas of aristocratic governments, as demonstrated in the works of Montesquieu. Aristocracies have the potential for good, if certain conditions are met. For example, if nobles practice modesty and simplicity and if laws are “constrained to render justice to the people” then aristocracies will be stable and virtuous.¹⁵ The *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* first makes mention of “aristocratie” in 1694, and defines the nature of the word much in the same way as the *Encyclopédie* does, even after the French Revolution.¹⁶ However, the term “aristocrate” is not mentioned in the *Dictionnaire* until 1787, and is defined as a relatively new word, one with some negative connotations, such as the potential for abuse and anarchy.¹⁷ The explicitly political nature of the word is not mentioned until 1798, when an “aristocrate” is defined as a partisan supporter of the Ancien Regime.¹⁸

Such late inclusion in works of reference, however, does not change the fact that “aristocrat” became a politically slanderous term during two of the major crises in the 1770s and 1780s. The first time that the term “aristocrat” became prominent in political discourse was during the Maupeou Crisis of 1771-1774, and it was used again during the political crises of 1787-1789, when the royal Finance Minister, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, labelled the privileged orders a dangerous “aristocracy”.¹⁹ Thus, in the pre-revolution the derogatory use of the term appears merely to have had sporadic political

¹⁴ Denis Diderot and Edme-François Mallet. "Aristocracy." The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project. Translated by Thomas Zemanek. Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2011. Web. 22 September 2013 <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0002.503>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The ARTFL Project, s.v. “aristocratie”, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=aristocratie>

¹⁷ The ARTFL Project, s.v. “aristocrate”, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=aristocrate>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Nobles Into Aristocrats, or How an Order Became a Conspiracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 189-224. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 201.

connotations, but once the Revolution began it quickly took on many of the immoral and sexually debauched characteristics of the Ancien Regime courtier.²⁰ All nobles would be characterized as outsiders, traitors, conspirators, and émigrés, greatly expanding the notion of what an “aristocrat” was in the public imagination. While there certainly were cases of nobles conspiring against the Revolution both from within France and from without, portrayals of the entire noble order as involved in an organized plot stemmed from the conservative actions of certain individuals that became known early in 1789. Some nobles clung strongly to their separate cultural identities, regardless of any law abolishing their existence, while many others emigrated abroad out of fear of or disgust at an increasingly radical and hostile France.



The portrayal of the nobility in caricature was intrinsic to this shift in perception and in broadcasting the danger of this group of outsiders. Like the printed word, anti-noble caricatures not only described and denounced the “enemies” of the Revolution, but also illustrated them, giving them visual form. Caricatures contained numerous symbols familiar to ordinary people, infused with simple narratives clearly demarcating friends (commoners) and foes (nobles), helping people not only to understand larger issues, but to *see* them, something which the printed word could not do.²¹ The transformation of nobles into “aristocrats” by caricaturists involved elements of fiction and fantasy, which

²⁰ Antoine de Baecque, “Le discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: ‘Le peuple contre les gros.’” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Vol. 36, No. 1: Jan. - Mar., 1989), 9.

²¹ Rolf Reichardt, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 35-37.

was fed by the paranoia of conspiracies, which was common among revolutionaries. Plots both real and imagined exacerbated fantastic and irrational fears, resulting in all nobles being put under a microscope. Suspicions that nobles together formed a fifth column who planned to violently put down the Revolution in tandem with émigrés and foreign powers were constantly underlined by caricaturists, revolutionary politicians and journalists. The hatred of these groups was driven by several factors, such as personal experience, patriotic republican ideology and growing noble intransigence over reforms. Some caricaturists may have genuinely believed their own anti-aristocratic rhetoric, or they may have merely exploited a popular narrative for personal gain. What is certain is that anti-aristocratic discourse grew exponentially early in 1789, addressing real events, but also feeding into paranoia as the course of the Revolution became more and more unstable. Printed depictions of the nobility became filled with violent, hateful, dehumanizing and monstrous themes. As Antoine de Baecque has argued, myths and reality became convoluted, occupying the same ground.²²

While anti-nobilism had a long history in France, the groundwork for the explosion of the caricature as a potent political element during the Revolution emerged from the last decades of the Ancien Regime. Between 1760 and 1810 the arts, particularly ‘high art’, underwent a profound transformation, slowly separating from classical theory and technique.²³ In this new environment, the realism of caricatures, together with their focus on contemporary events and emphasis on the rupture with the past, made them a powerful new element in the arts and especially in politics when the

²² Antoine de Baecque, “Le discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: ‘Le peuple contre les gros.’” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Vol. 36, No. 1: Jan. - Mar., 1989), 16.

²³ Rolf Reichardt, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 7.

opportunity arose.²⁴ Politically focused images, whether copper engravings, wood blocks or brush and colour were sparse even shortly before the Revolution, as data from 1787-1788 indicates.²⁵ This contrasted sharply with the plethora of politically critical images created in Britain, by caricaturists such as James Gillray, Isaac Cruikshank, and Thomas Rowlandson. French political writings and politics were becoming much more radicalized at the end of the Ancien Regime, as written sources and events indicated, yet this did not translate into caricatures until 1789.²⁶

However, there exists some evidence connecting British and French caricatures before the Revolution, particularly those of a politically and socially critical nature. The 1780s were a period of political turmoil in Britain, where losses in the American Revolution and struggles between George III and Parliament helped created political disillusionment, and the conditions for satirical political caricatures.²⁷ The British caricatures of the 1780s, although not calling for the overthrow of the establishment, nonetheless used some of the same tactics to undermine their targets that would later be demonstrated during the French Revolution. British caricatures sought to “unmask” political figures, revealing their true natures.²⁸ And they used women, particularly the Duchess of Devonshire, as either as a scandalous figure or as a virtuous woman to rally people to a particular political cause.²⁹ There were many French expatriots living in Britain, particularly those who had run afoul of the royal government, who it can be assumed, saw these images, absorbing their tactics and witnessing their effectiveness.

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²⁵ Vivian R. Gruder, *The Notables and the Nation: The Political Schooling of the French, 1787-1788* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 221.

²⁶ Ibid., 222.

²⁷ Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 101).

²⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

²⁹ Ibid., 124-125.

By the mid-1780s English travellers had helped disseminate such caricatures in France, showing them in private and helping spur the first exhibition in 1785.³⁰ One of the biggest French collectors of English caricature was the Duc d'Orléans, whose Parisian property, the Palais Royal, became a major centre of political agitation in the early stages of the Revolution.³¹ Political turmoil in France, the observance of the power of caricature in Britain and the patronage of agitators, such as the Duc d'Orléans, may well have been what spurred caricature forward in 1789, with unintended and far reaching consequences.

A great debt is owed to two collectors of the French Revolution's caricatures, Carl de Vinck (1859-1931) and Michel Hennin (1777-1863). Very little information exists about these two collectors, but stamps with their names are common on the vast collection of caricatures housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Their motives for compiling caricatures are unclear; they may simply have been collected for aesthetic purposes or for preserving French history. Regardless of their intentions, the caricatures that they collected offer an unparalleled insight into contemporary attitudes and opinions, particularly where the nobility is concerned.

Caricatures escaped the interest of many historians until the "cultural turn" of the 1970s. In further questioning the explicitly social assumptions of the Marxists, some historians raised questions about the role that language played in the downfall of the Ancien Regime. Simply put, they argued that discourse shapes reality, and the steadily shifting nature of discourse over the course of the eighteenth century, particularly in the latter half, helped undermine traditional political and social structures. François Furet

³⁰ Ibid., 129.

³¹ Ibid.

characterized the Revolution as “a competition of discourses for the appropriation of legitimacy”, an idea that has led to an extensive analysis of texts and speeches.³² Expanding upon Furet’s ideas, Lynn Hunt, for example, argued that language was power, a “means of persuasion, a way of reconstituting the social and political world”.³³ Within the context of caricatures, these ideas are helpful, as a strong symbiosis exists between the linguistic and the visual. However, were images important in and of themselves, or merely peripheral to more important conversations about the power of language?

Several historians who study the role of imagery in the Revolution felt that the answer to this question had not been properly addressed or ignored entirely. These historians identified the interrelationship of images with pamphlets, texts and the dissemination of political arguments and argued for their importance in understanding the Revolution.³⁴ Thus, although Lynn Hunt dealt specifically with revolutionaries’ battles over the symbols and representations of the Revolution, her seminal work, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (1984) did not specifically address the role of caricature itself.³⁵ By the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989, caricature had started to be taken more seriously, and began to be explored on its own. Rolf Reichardt and Joan Landes, in particular, are notable for their specific focus on the role of popular prints during the Revolution. Landes, for example, has argued that not only did revolutionaries have an ambivalent view of caricatures, but so have many historians. She contends that scholars have carried over the linguistic bias of

³² François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*. Trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49, 73.

³³ Lynn Hunt. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 23-24.

³⁴ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6-7.

³⁵ Please see the section “The Imagery of Radicalism” in Lynn Hunt. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pgs. 87-119.

revolutionaries, while ignoring the “persistence of the visual”.³⁶ The graphic arts, she argues, addressed “the central issues of the Revolution” shaping ideas about individual freedom, political liberty, virtue, and vice.³⁷

I agree with Landes’ concern that many historians have marginalized revolutionary prints. When caricatures are present in academic and non-academic literature on the French Revolution, they are often used as illustrations of an event, not as a factor in events themselves. Their nature, authorship, and effects, as well as their place within historiographical debates, are seldom mentioned. Historians such as Jack Censer and Jeremy Popkin, both scholars of print culture during the Revolution, have either ignored them or dismissed them as peripheral and unimportant. Censer, disregarding printed images, argues that newspapers constituted “the most important source of information for the public”, and that by examining what the press was saying we can know what people thought and why they reacted to events.³⁸ Popkin argues that newspapers cut across class lines “unmatched by any other genre of printed material”, and that words were at “the centre of the struggle for power in France”.³⁹ Dismissing caricature (and other media), he states that newsprint was most able to keep up with events, reached a larger audience, and carried messages between its audience and the centre of power.⁴⁰ The absence of imagery from many of these discussions is striking. Caricatures were created just as quickly as the printed word, shortly after major events,

³⁶ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 169-170.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁸ Jack Censer, *Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press, 1789-1791* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), xi, 7.

³⁹ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 94, 96.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

contained all kinds of important information, and drew on a vast visual repertoire. And, unlike text, all people, both literate and illiterate, could view them.⁴¹

We know much about the political speeches people listened to and the newspapers and pamphlets they read, yet we have paid little attention to the imagery people in revolutionary France viewed on a regular basis. And while some scholars have attempted to rectify this absence, I would argue that something is still lacking from their analysis of revolutionary prints. Caricatures have been approached from a number of perspectives, including representation of gender, politics, religion, semiotics, or the portrayal of certain figures, like Queen Marie Antoinette. However, the study of nobles within caricatures has been either minor or completely absent. This is surprising, as historians have been actively re-examining the position of the Second Estate for decades, while others have explored the role and significance of imagery. Why have the two failed to intersect in any significant way? The interest in both subjects is clearly still relevant for many historians, as are wider debates about the role of politically and socially provocative imagery in mainstream and social media. Caricatures of the French nobility are not isolated in the distant past, for their ability to provoke debate and strong emotions, to challenge the powerful and powerless, and to create visceral reactions in ways that words cannot, are all testaments to their continued allure in the present.

In my first chapter, I will be outlining the long history of social and political anti-nobility in France, with attention to the infrequent, but significant representations of such critiques in sporadically produced caricatures. I will also examine the works of several noble reformers who sought the reinvigoration and purification of the Second

⁴¹ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 172.

Estate, by either embracing a romanticized past or a modernized future. Although both schools of thought intended to revive the nobility, their proposals largely failed, while the rhetoric they employed, against nobles they deemed either too materialistic or archaic, remained. A growing “public” was aware of these debates and read an increasing body of literature, some of it accompanied by caricatures, which criticized *all* nobles, and in some cases imagined a future free of their existence. High profile noble scandals - eagerly read by French society - seemed to confirm the worst excesses of the nobility portrayed in works of fiction such as Choderlos de Laclos *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Political battles between the royal government and powerful nobles in 1771-1774 and 1787-1789 saw the emergence of caricatures as slanderous weapons, not just social critiques. Both sides employed defamatory terms such as “despotism” and “aristocrat” to undermine one another. Politically savvy individuals realized the potential power of inexpensive and accessible imagery, especially when a power vacuum opened up in late 1788. The internal divisions within the nobility, their unreformed and ambiguous roles, the existence of a large body of works critiquing them in almost every way, and the largely untapped power of caricature would intersect early in 1789.

In my second chapter, I will explore the world of caricature, with particular attention to anti-noble work.⁴² First, I will explore questions surrounding the largely mysterious identity of caricaturists, and the motivating factors that may have helped contribute to their works. By drawing upon historians’ research into the identity and motives of other radical critics within the press, we can arrive at a clearer picture of caricaturists themselves. Second, I will discuss the socially barbed representations of the

⁴² The prime chronological focus of both my second and third chapters will be on caricatures from 1789-1793. The reasons why caricaturists mostly stopped focusing their attention on the nobility are explored on pages 165-166.

nobility by examining the portrayal of noblewomen, the “monstrous nature” of the aristocracy and the alleged foreign nature of the Second Estate. The representation of noblewomen as dangerous and debauched was used to insult the honour of the nobility, to highlight the danger they posed, and to juxtapose their immorality with the morality expected of revolutionary women. “Monstrous” imagery was meant to terrify, as well as to dehumanize and isolate the nobility, to highlight their moral and biological differences, and perhaps to justify their persecution and murder. Depictions of nobles as foreigners emphasized their supposedly “un-French” and unpatriotic natures, and their willingness to collaborate with foreign powers to violently crush the Revolution.

The third and final chapter will explore the principal political events and symbols of the Revolution into which caricaturists wove images of the nobility. Caricatures depicting the relationship between the Three Estates represented as three distinct figures were prominent, and will be examined first; the relationship, at first positive, if somewhat ambiguous, quickly soured, and provides an invaluable resource to demonstrate not only when this happened, but also why. Second, the seizure of the Bastille, represented as a victory of the people over despotism, also came to be used a symbol of the defeat of nobility, while their ambivalence to its demise revealed their true intentions. Third, the destruction of feudalism and the abolition of titles were widely celebrated in revolutionary imagery, both to mock the nobility’s backwardness and to revel in their downfall. Fourth, much like the Bastille, the Constitution was used as a poignant symbol, reminding citizens of the disloyalty of the nobility, and as a foil to aristocratic plotting. Finally, caricatures of noble plots, real and imagined, at home and abroad, as well as the counterrevolutionary army of the Prince de Condé, will be

discussed. Nobles were represented as either dangerous fifth columnists, or buffoons whose military incompetence was to be laughed at, not feared.

Chapter 1

Sketching the Aristocrat

Early in 1789 the streets of Paris and other French communities were abuzz with talk of political transformation. Everyone, it seemed, was discussing the momentous changes happening within France, or was at least eager to listen to those who were. Passionate political speeches, newspapers brimming with stories, and the ubiquitous pamphlets were all involved in the debates surrounding the direction the troubled country should be taking as it faced down a crisis. Many of the opinions being voiced were also openly questioning and challenging France's privileged orders, the clergy and nobility, and while such questions were not the dominant ones in the early stages of the Revolution, they were tapping into deep-rooted criticisms of the country's elite.

Alongside these textual critiques, another genre appeared which seemed to have sprung out of nowhere: the caricature. While the production of caricatures certainly predated the eighteenth century, in the last years of the Ancien Regime there was a new emphasis on caricatures that explicitly portrayed the nobility in a critical and often negative light. In an extremely short period of time, anti-noble caricatures were everywhere, becoming a powerful source of information and creating political agitation alongside newspapers and pamphlets. In comparison with this sudden explosion, the dearth of pre-revolutionary caricatures that are critical of the nobility is not easily explained. True, strict press censorship, political contingency and the availability of a

lucrative market would have reduced the number of political caricaturists. Yet such explanations seem insufficient when we remember that these factors did not prevent the production and success of other subversive works - such as plays, books, journals and pamphlets - from penetrating different levels of society in the Ancien Regime. However, there are a few possible theories that help explain absence of pre-revolutionary visual criticisms of the French nobility. Political contingency and the ambivalent relationship between nobles and commoners provide us with some clues.

The characters, themes, language and imagery present in the anti-noble caricatures that circulated during the Revolution reflected the rapidly unfolding events of those years, but they were also deeply influenced by the negative representations of the French nobility that originated *before* the Revolution. The portrayal of “aristocrats” as debauched libertines, underhanded conspirators, immoral and dangerous noblewomen, feminized and two-faced noblemen, feudal exploiters, and demonic monsters – all themes which will be addressed in Chapter 2 – needs first to be understood in the context of evolving perceptions of the nobility over the previous century and a half. The Second Estate’s identity and power was far from secure even as they dominated almost every aspect of political, social and cultural life in pre-revolutionary France. Older paradigms defining who and what was “noble” were shifting, progressively challenged by noble and non-noble alike. The nobility had once rested their claim to authority on justifications rooted in tradition and divine sanction, but these were increasingly on shaky ground in an intellectual age that questioned and re-evaluated the assumptions of the past. Noble attempts to meet these challenges and to redefine and reinvigorate their order were not fruitless, but they would prove to be insufficient. When the nobility was asked in 1789 to

give up social privileges they could no longer justify and to dissolve their separate identities into a nation espousing equality, the Second Estate, divided and discredited, crumbled.

I: Changing identities

In 1789, the French nobility was a dynamic and open order, projecting power and influence in almost every field of French life. Nobles could be found investing in new and promising commercial ventures, real estate, banking and land improvements.⁴³ The Second Estate was accessible to those with the right combination of money, ambition, connections and talent, and the number of Frenchmen and women joining its ranks over the course of the eighteenth century was remarkable. From the end of Louis XIV's reign to the Revolution, between 8,000 and 10,000 men entered the nobility, bringing along their wives and children, with the result that, on average, about two commoners per day were ennobled.⁴⁴ Yet this seeming openness to newcomers and modern dynamism belied the image many of its members still held of themselves, for as much as noble identity was changing and adapting, it was still deeply moored to traditional understandings of what made someone noble and what did not. A distinguished lineage, honour, martial prowess, service to the King, and drawing wealth exclusively from land holdings were the ways that "nobility" had been marked out in the past. Such values remained central, and they retained a power over the imaginations and perceptions of much of the nobility as it sought to bridge the gap between its two contradictory identities.

⁴³ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 84-116.

⁴⁴ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.

Traditionally, French society was divided “since time immemorial” into three separate and distinct orders; the clergy, the nobility and the Third Estate.⁴⁵ The clergy prayed, the nobility fought to defend the kingdom, and the Third Estate worked. The nobility (in theory) was supposed to form a military caste whose service and bravery granted them political and social privileges. Ideally, a noble was entitled to serve and counsel the King, hold high office, administer justice, and as a result, enjoy high social regard and exemption from taxes. The central underpinning of all these advantages was noble birth. Nobility was something innate which was presumably passed on from generation to generation; the longer and more distinguished the pedigree, the better.⁴⁶ Nobles were also supposed to derive their wealth from their lands and feudal dues, and not to “degrade” themselves by engaging in trade or marrying anyone of inferior rank. Theoretically, nobility could not be gained except by the favour of the King, although other avenues to ennoblement opened up in the fifteenth century, when certain offices, or the purchase of a *seigneurie* began to confer nobility on their Third Estate owners.⁴⁷ French monarchs could increase their revenues, reward faithful commoners and play off the older *noblesse d'épée* with newer *noblesse de robe*, tacitly approving of the expansion of the nobility. However, opening up a supposedly hereditary military order to any commoner who could purchase their way in would be one of the first contradictory challenges to traditional noble identity and power.

Yet the exponential growth and sale of ennobling offices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not the only source of increased anxiety within segments of

⁴⁵ R.J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France: 1483-1610* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), 11-12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

the older nobility. The perception that nobles were being “softened” by opulence and domestication at court raised an alarm among many contemporary observers. The importation of Italian manners and the growth of luxury under Francis I contributed to an impression that the court was an unsavoury place; courtiers’ behaviour made them “unpopular with Frenchmen in general, who began to look upon the court as a centre of expensive frivolity, not to say debauchery.”⁴⁸ Political figures that came to be associated with these excesses could be undermined and have their authority questioned. For example, King Henry III was criticized by his enemies because of his love of lavish rituals and the perception that he surrounded himself with equally sybaritic courtiers.⁴⁹ Satirical engravings exacerbated accusations of weakness and effeminacy. In one such image, the king was depicted as a bejewelled hermaphrodite, implying that he embodied the sexual ambiguities and debaucheries of the court and in turn was also a source of contamination himself (Figure 1).⁵⁰ As the Abbé Reure was quoted as having said, the engravings against Henry III became “an effective instrument for the preachings [sic] of revolt”.⁵¹ While this print did not suggest that the institution of monarchy or the social hierarchy underpinning it should be rejected, it did imply that courtly extravagance had a corrupting effect on the virility and authority of the state and those closest to it.

⁴⁸ R.J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France: 1483-1610* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), 184.

⁴⁹ Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 330.

⁵⁰ <http://catalogue.drouot.com/ref-drouot/lot-ventes-aux-encheres-drouot.jsp?id=408458>

⁵¹ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship and Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 89.



- Figure 1 -

Not all engravings of the court and nobility contained such virulent imagery, but they did publicize increasingly lavish displays of wealth. The seventeenth-century printmaker Abraham Bosse (c. 1602 or c. 1604-1676) created dozens of images illustrating the nobles' involvement with fashion and its effects. One print from 1629, "Le Jardin de la Noblesse Française", shows a group of elegantly dressed noblemen

engaged in conversation while noblewomen and men wander around in a genteel garden (Figure 2).⁵²



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

-Figure 2 -

Apart from swords, this image does not contain typical noble accoutrements, such as indications of lineage or rank; rather, it is wealth and its conspicuous display that are the

⁵² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84021179.r=.langEN#>

focal point.⁵³ Without the title indicating that it was nobles in the garden and the presence of arms, the viewer might mistake the figures in this print for any wealthy individuals, noble or not. Anxiety over the confusion of ranks and the dangerous effects of sumptuous attire are, however, the subject of another Bosse image, “Le Courtisan suivant le dernier edit”.⁵⁴ In this print (Figure 3, next page), a courtier is depicted as having discarded his ornately embroidered silk clothes for a more modest outfit, suggesting that he is obeying the sumptuary laws of 1633 and 1634 that strictly regulated the attire of different classes. Although such laws proved to be mostly ineffective, their existence and the unease they expressed highlighted an anxiety over the nobility’s increasingly blurred identity.

⁵³ Carl Goldstein, *Print Culture in Early Modern France: Abraham Bosse and the Purpose of Print* (Greensboro: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 51.

⁵⁴ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84023474>



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

-Figure 3 -

Louis XIII's successor, Louis XIV, enshrined opulent displays and courtly refinement in his creation, the palace of Versailles. He also solidified the process of noble domestication, a process that had begun under the Renaissance kings. Nobles were still expected to serve in the army and church, but they were removed from their local

power bases and required to spend lavishly on ruinous display. By distancing themselves physically from their lands and tenants, and appearing to care more about the politics of Versailles than the political and social realities of the kingdom, nobles at court were perceived as increasingly apart from the concerns of the *patrie*.

Although Louis XIV tamed powerful magnates by making them wait on him in a court where he became the sole source of power and patronage, this was a system held in place by collective consensus.⁵⁵ Many nobles saw the Sun King's court as a desired residence where they would receive the access and attention to which they felt entitled, and which previous monarchs had neglected.⁵⁶ Proximity to the King for many nobles meant honour and distinction, not servitude. Louis promoted talented commoners to serve as officials in his government, but he also recognized the older nobility's longstanding complaints about commoners claiming noble status without proofs. Motivated by financial concerns, but also because of a recognition of birth as the determinant for honour and social rank, the King and his ministers combed the provinces to conduct *recherches* into dubious claims of nobility, weeding out imposters.⁵⁷ All of this was held together by a King who was constantly on display, successfully arbitrating factional court disputes while appearing to rise above them. Louis XIV's personality and the lack of any real challenges to his authority helped cement the political and social regime he established, and it is worth noting that his two successors would have much greater difficulty controlling the mechanisms of Versailles and keeping the nobility loyal and content.

⁵⁵ T.C.W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime, 1660-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41.

⁵⁶ Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

II: Criticism and Ideas for Reform

The debate about the role and identity of the nobility continued to grow along two separate avenues: critics of the political and social status of the nobility wrote polemical treatises with reform in mind, while the occasional caricature asked questions about the moral underpinnings of aristocratic pretensions with arresting images. One of the few engravings that explicitly critiqued the nobility before the eighteenth century was produced by the printmaker Jacques Lagniet (1600?-1675) in his 1663 edition of *Recueil des plus illustres proverbes divisé en trois livres*. This work included hundreds of engravings illustrating the everyday lives of the rich and poor, as well as the daily conditions affecting their lives in the mid-seventeenth century. One illustration from this book, titled “Le noble est l’araignée et le Paisan la mouche”, encapsulates some of the fundamental criticisms of the nobility.⁵⁸ (Figure 4)

⁵⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71523p/f44.image>



- Figure 4 -

The allegorical nature of this engraving pointedly represents the relationship between peasants and nobles as one between a predatory spider (the nobility) and a captured fly (the peasantry). The caption at the top right-hand side explains, “Plus on a de moyens, plus on en veut auoir. Ce pauvre apporte tout, bled, fruit, argent, salade / Ce

gros Milord assis, prest à tout recevoir.”⁵⁹ The image of exploitation captured in this engraving of a (literally) well-heeled nobleman extracting the fruits of labour from a peasant would continue to be a familiar and powerful theme until the Revolution.

It would be a simplification to say that all nobles were perceived as elegantly dressed parasites that remorselessly wrung money from their peasants, when in fact many were conscientious and respected community leaders. However, the basic relationship between the majority of Frenchmen and women and the nobility was still fundamentally one of exploitation, revolving around cumbersome feudal dues and growing monopolies (*banalités*).⁶⁰ The inclusion of this image in a book that was destined for a small and educated audience, many of whom were likely nobles themselves, makes Jacques Lagniet’s motivation mysterious. Perhaps it was a biblical commentary on wealth, or on the dearth and social chaos caused by the recent Fronde, or perhaps it was a genuine social criticism of the unfair relationship between peasant and noble. Regardless of its author’s goal, it was one of the first engravings expressing open criticism of the nobility. It was not a critique of the nobility as a political body, but as something much more insidious: a disinterested and unfeeling exploiter who behaved like a predatory animal, squeezing the life out of the poor. The presence of such a pointed social critique in the seventeenth century, when the position of the nobility remained unchallenged by the wider public, demonstrates how old and deep some of the criticisms of the nobility were.

⁵⁹ “The more resources we have, the more we want to have. This unfortunate brings wheat, fruit, money and lettuce (?). This great lord is seated, ready to receive everything.”

⁶⁰ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14-15.

A second caricature, dating from the 18th century but comparable to l'Agniet's voracious noble landlord in its portrayal of a reviled figure in French life, is that of the financier in the eighteenth century. At the opening of his 1763 book, *L'Anti-Financier*, Darigrand includes an engraved image depicting a just King Louis XV instituting a single property tax and removing the need for a tax farmer.⁶¹ To the right of the king, the figure of justice makes a financier return all of the money he had swindled from the people.

⁶¹ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House Inc., 1989), 71-72.



- Figure 5 -

Resentful nobles of older stock had been criticizing the growing presence of these outsiders within their ranks since the seventeenth century, but they became more widely despised in the eighteenth century. Many of the more powerful and established nobles, or *les grands*, had married their sons to the daughters of wealthy newcomers from *le finance*.⁶² The mixing of these two groups brought benefits to both: court nobles received

⁶² John Shovlin, "Political Economy and the French Nobility: 1750-1789." In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-138. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 131.

injections of cash to maintain their lavish lifestyles, while financiers made important alliances with those closest to the nexus of power.⁶³ This hybrid plutocratic elite made investments in monopoly trading, manufacturing companies, and tax farming, which was one of the most reviled practices in the Ancien Regime, the taxes falling especially hard on the poorest in France.⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly *le finance* became a vilified element in society, whose lives and property were menaced in the earliest days of the Revolution.⁶⁵ While the intermingling of *le finance* and *les grands* may have been mutually satisfactory, their ambiguous identities and parasitic reputations did not endear them to the public, either noble or common.

Although nobles were at times depicted as greedy feudal lords or capitalist exploiters, many of the harshest critics of the nobility were in fact nobles themselves, who sought to rejuvenate the Second Estate. Reforming nobles oscillated between two contradictory beliefs. Some felt that the nobility had devolved from its traditional role and should look to the martial values of the past to reinvigorate itself, while others felt that they should reject attachments to an idyllic by-gone era, and embrace trade and enterprise. Despite these very different opinions, each school of thought was highly critical of the court system of Versailles, the sale of offices and the ambiguity of the nobility's identity. Both disparaged nobles whom they considered to be outside their ideal vision for the Second Estate, viewing them as either money-grubbing parvenus or backwards conservatives attached to useless traditions. These polemics were never

⁶³ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21-22.

⁶⁴ John Shovlin, "Political Economy and the French Nobility: 1750-1789." In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-138. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 131.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

intended to undermine the existence of the Second Estate itself, but they divided the nobility in the Ancien Regime, and became forceful weapons against the entire nobility during the Revolution.

One of the earliest critics was the Comte de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722). Boulainvilliers was disturbed by changes initiated by Louis XIV, who he felt had undermined the traditional and sacred role of the nobility and the monarchy. Writing during the latter part of the reign of the Sun King, he sought to explain precisely why the nobility had lost its virtue and connection to its moral roots. Outlining the evolution of France's nobility, which he traced back to an idyllic past under the Gauls and the Franks, he claimed that it had been progressively compromised by its own greed and by the machinations of devious kings.⁶⁶ Boulainvilliers' *Essais sur la Noblesse de France* emphasized a theme mentioned earlier: he asserted that the introduction of Italian luxuries and customs into the court by Francis I had "softened" the nobility, encouraging them to pursue "the phantoms of the Court and of favour".⁶⁷ Contrasting a romanticized past with a degenerate present, Boulainvilliers and his acolytes believed that the nobility's supposed Frankish origins and historic credentials entitled them to govern.⁶⁸ This ahistorical viewpoint would have been appealing to a dwindling minority, as many nobles were of relatively new extraction and even those of "older" stock were contracting marriages with newcomers, whose hefty dowries increasingly outweighed any "racial" concerns.

⁶⁶ Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell: Cornell University, 2005), 37-39.

⁶⁷ Boulainvilliers, *Essais sur la Noblesse de France, contenant une dissertation sur son origine & abaissement* (Amsterdam), 221-2, 227 cited in Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell: Cornell University, 2005), 39.

⁶⁸ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45.

François de la Mothe-Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai and tutor to Louis XIV's heir, was equally alarmed by what he perceived as the despotism of the monarchy and the corruption of the nobility by luxury and display. Fénelon's widely read 1699 book, *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, was, on the surface, a tale about the adventures of Telemachus, son of the mythical hero Odysseus. Seeking out his lost father and guided by the character "Mentor", who was in reality the goddess Minerva in disguise, the two converse about the nature of kingship and its proper exercise.⁶⁹ Fénelon's book was an allegory for the political and moral state of France, which he felt was in a state of decay. *Telemachus* reached a huge audience, becoming "the most-read literary work in eighteenth-century France (after the Bible)."⁷⁰ It denounced the "despotism" of kings, and stated that political tyranny went hand-in-hand with unbridled social mobility and the proliferation of luxury.⁷¹ Much like Boulainvilliers, Fénelon suggested that the counterbalance to this was the restoration of the nobility to its traditional place by noblemen with untarnished pedigrees, who would emulate the patriotic virtues of ancient Greece and Rome.⁷²

Fénelon's *Écrits et Lettres Politiques* was much more explicit, openly proposing the moral reform of the court and the nobility. Concerning the court, he called for the "retranchement de toutes les pensions de cour non nécessaires. Modération dans les meubles, équipages, habits, tables. Exclusion de toutes les femmes inutiles. Lois

⁶⁹ Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cornell: Cornell University, 2005), 42.

⁷⁰ Patrick Riley, *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 47.

somptuaires comme les Romains”.⁷³ In regards to the nobility, he also made several proposals, with such prescriptions as “nulle place militaire vénale. Nobles préférés... Liberté de commerce en gros, sans déroger... mésalliances défendues aux deux sexes... Ennoblissemens défendus excepté le cas de services signalés rendu à l'état.”⁷⁴

Fénelon was no radical; his call to the nobility to reform itself and embody republican and democratic virtues as a counterweight to absolutism was intended to be a weapon in the hands of worthy noblemen. However, his ideas would become a potent tool used by slighted *noblesse d'épée*, but by those who increasingly questioned not just the monarchy, but also the role of the entire Second Estate in the eighteenth century.

The Sun King's death, followed by the brief rule of a polysynody of highborn noblemen, failed to satisfy those anticipating the dawning of a new age. Reformers who hoped for change along the lines proposed by Boulainvilliers or Fénelon soon had their hopes dashed.⁷⁵ Despite a brief interlude in Paris, the court remained at Versailles, with the same system left intact. The sale of ennobling offices, the growing prevalence of luxury and the confusion of ranks continued unabated. But new challenges to the monarchy and nobility, both direct and indirect, also emerged. Paris, with its expanding population and rich cultural life of salons, coffee shops and public spaces challenged the court's political and cultural primacy.⁷⁶ Although the court remained the source of

⁷³ Removal of all non-necessary court pensions. Moderation in furniture, carriages, clothing, tables. Exclusion of all useless women. Sumptuary laws like the Romans.” In Francois de la Mothe-Fénelon, *Écrits et Lettres Politiques*, Ed. Charles Urbain (Paris, 1920), 101.

⁷⁴ “No venal military places. Nobles preferred... Freedom of wholesale trade, without dérogeance... misalliances forbidden for both sexes... ennoblement prohibited except in cases of services rendered to the state” In Francois de la Mothe-Fénelon, *Écrits et Lettres Politiques*, Ed. Charles Urbain (Paris, 1920), 117-118.

⁷⁵ Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 192.

⁷⁶ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 10.

government and patronage, it lost some of its lustre as the behaviour of its residents came under increased public scrutiny. Louis XV's actions, including a cutting back of public appearances, withdrawal into his private apartments with mistresses, and failure to control court factionalism under intensive public scrutiny, all helped to undermine the court.⁷⁷ Like the dissatisfied nobles of the reign of Louis XIV, those disillusioned by Louis XV's behaviour and critical of his failures sought ways to reform the noble order and find modern ways to justify its existence.

Yet there were also changes from the earlier period, as the intellectual fermentation of mid-eighteenth-century noble reformers took place during a time when not only the French political system, but also the kingdom's economic and military strength was under scrutiny. France remained one of Europe's foremost powers, but the disappointing performance in the War of the Austrian Succession and the disastrous defeat in the Seven Years' War called into question the competence of the state and reflected poorly on a nobility whose prestige rested on a supposed military vocation. Rival court factions were perceived as controlling France's foreign policy, sometimes to the detriment of national interests.⁷⁸ International failures humbled France, and led many contemporaries to view the kingdom as being in a state of decline. Moreover, France's perceived impotency contrasted sharply with Britain's dynamic economy and strong navy and with Prussia's robust army.⁷⁹ French nobles could see that their counterparts in these two rival nations were actively involved in the economy and military, and in the

⁷⁷ T.C.W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime, 1660-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 385-387.

⁷⁸ Thomas E. Kaiser, "From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution: The Court and Foreign Policy, 1787-1789." In *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, eds. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley, 139-164. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 143-144.

⁷⁹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 76.

case of the British, wielded a larger degree of political power. Why was their nobility floundering while those of other countries were succeeding?

The pre-revolutionary debate began to take shape: should nobles retreat into their traditional roles or embrace values that had once been antithetical to their self-image? Two of the most significant noblemen to address these questions were the Abbé Coyer and the Chevalier d'Arc. Both men called on the French nobility to reform and redefine itself, but fundamentally disagreed over how this should be accomplished. Coyer's 1756 work, *La Noblesse Commerçante*, argued that the only way for France to compete successfully with Britain was for its nobility to embrace trade.⁸⁰ A rich illustration (Figure 6) on the inside of his book encapsulates Coyer's basic argument: it depicts a nobleman boarding a ship, casting aside his titles and hereditary honours, intent on going out into the world to make money through commerce in order to serve *la patrie*.⁸¹ An adjoining explanation on the following page states "Ce Gentilhomme qu'on y voit, las de vivre dans l'infortune & l'inutilité, montre ses marques de Noblesse, un Ecusson, un Tymbre ou Casque d'Armoires & un Parchemin qui renferme ses titres, présens de la naissance, dont il n'a tiré aucun fruit. Il s'en détache, & va s'embarquer pour servir la Patrie, en s'enrichissant par le Commerce."⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁸¹ <https://archive.org/details/lanoblessecommer00coye>

⁸² "This gentleman that we see, weary of living in misfortune and uselessness, shows his signs of nobility, a coat-of-arms, a helmet, and a parchment which contained his titles, all present since birth, which he has gained little. He is distancing himself from them and is embarking to serve the motherland, enriching himself through trade." In Abbé Coyer, *La Noblesse commerçante* (Paris: Duchesne, 1756), 1-4.



- Figure 6 -

According to Coyer, patriotic noblemen should abandon foolish attachments to “Gothic” notions of “honour” and embrace a new, commercial identity.⁸³ French nobles who

⁸³ John Shovlin, “Political Economy and the French Nobility: 1750-1789.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-138. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 117

snubbed trade were allowing France to fall prey to foreign powers whose nobles embraced it without prejudice.

Coyer's controversial ideas were significant for a few reasons. They attacked affinity to titles and suggested that they had little tangible value in a changing modern world, an argument that would be raised again during the Revolution. They also challenged centuries of prohibitions that had barred the nobility from engaging in almost any form of trade, which could be punishable by *dérogance*, or loss of noble status.⁸⁴ Patriotism, which Coyer argued should supersede archaic hereditary honours, could be expressed through the unashamed engagement in commerce, and if that meant abandoning paradigms that no longer served a logical purpose, then the nobility, like the illustrated figure in Coyer's book, should toss them overboard. The crown removed the last legal barrier to noble involvement in trade in 1765 and numerous nobles did invest in a variety of capitalist ventures; however, most of those involved were already well off, and were not from the mass of poorer provincial nobles.⁸⁵

The Chevalier d'Arc, in contrast, looked to the past, not the future, as the guide that nobles should be following. His book, *La Noblesse militaire*, appealed to many indigent nobles who sought to define themselves and earn money honourably in the army. They resented that the top positions in the army were the preserve of wealthy *grands* and social parvenus who received their commissions regardless of competence.⁸⁶ D'Arc responded sharply to any notion that the nobility embrace commercial values:

⁸⁴ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17.

⁸⁵ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House Inc., 1989), 118-120.

⁸⁶ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-25.

Noblesse Française voulez-vous être riche? Quittez ce luxe qui vous dégrade... C'est le fer, c'est le courage qui le guide, qui triomphent de l'ennemi & non les ornemens qui brillent sur le fer. Ce n'est pas sur vous que la sagesse du Gouvernement a dû compter pour mettre l'industrie en valeur. Laissez cette pompe inutile à ceux qu'elle peut consoler de n'être pas nés dans votre sein. Vos ayeuls, vos vertus, les services rendus à la patrie, voilà votre véritable grandeur..."⁸⁷

Although d'Arc believed that only noblemen should be officers, he was open to ennobling any patriotic and able commoner who proved himself.⁸⁸

The government was not deaf to the ideas expounded by d'Arc and his supporters, implementing the Ségur Law of 1781 that reserved places in the army for men whose families could trace back their nobility at least four generations.⁸⁹ However, these reforms satisfied few; courtiers still got the best positions, and the recently ennobled found that their costly status in fact opened fewer and fewer doors. Promotion to the role of officer became even more inaccessible to commoners than before, and many poor provincial nobles saw little improvement in their situations.⁹⁰ Unresolved conflicts between embittered nobles, combined with the failure of reforms to reconstitute the nobility into a purified separate order, purged of the undeserving and incompetent, made the patriotic, anti-luxury rhetoric of d'Arc that much more appealing to the

⁸⁷ "French nobility, would you like to be rich? Leave this luxury that degrades you... It's iron, it's courage that guides it, that triumphs over the enemy, and not the ornaments that sparkle under iron. It is not under you that the wisdom of the government relied on to turn industry into a value. Leave aside this pomp, useless to those who can't comfort themselves with being born in the same condition as you. Your ancestors, your virtues, services rendered to the motherland, there is your real grandeur..." In Philippe Auguste de Sainte-Foix, chevalier d'Arcq, *La noblesse militaire, ou le patriote française* (Amsterdam, 1756), 85-86.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

⁸⁹ Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 218.

⁹⁰ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-25.

disaffected. Like other reformers, d’Arc never meant to call for the destruction of the social hierarchy, but his writings proved a rich trove for attacks on many of the hated figures that remained in positions of influence.

The pre-revolutionary noble reformer who went the furthest in calling for the reform of the nobility was the Marquis d’Argenson. Although writing privately in the 1730s, his works nonetheless circulated in Parisian literary circles, becoming available to the public in 1764.⁹¹ D’Argenson attacked the historic role of the nobility, depicting it as a destructive force within contemporary society, and although he did not call for its outright eradication, d’Argenson felt that its privileges and hereditary basis should be abolished.⁹² “Une Monarchie n’arrive gueres au Despotisme que par l’Aristocratie; les Ministres & les grands travaillant pour le Monarche croyent travailler pour eux-mêmes; ils abaissent le Peuple, ils élevent le Trône, parce qu’ils y touchent de près & qu’ils dédaignent le vulgaire.”⁹³ To d’Argenson, hereditary nobility inevitably led to despotism; he proposed to replace it with a democratic monarchy, where nobility would be conferred on anyone deserving of it.⁹⁴ Like Coyer, d’Argenson rejected looking into the past to find idyllic models to remedy current problems besetting the nobility. He saw value in keeping separate orders, but the only distinction that nobles would receive would be purely honorific.⁹⁵ Nobility and all of its historic and mystical trappings had no

⁹¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 71.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ “A monarchy arrives at despotism only through aristocracy; ministers and the *grands* work for the monarch, believing that they work for themselves; they demean the people, they raise the throne, because they are close and they reject the vulgar.” René de Voyer de Paulmy, marquis d’Argenson, *Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France* (Amsterdam, 1764), 190.

⁹⁴ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House Inc., 1989), 113.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

place in the modern world for these two reformers, for there was no longer any justification for it - only the potential to do harm and corrupt society.

III. Criticism of the nobility from the 1770s onwards

This type of political criticism continued throughout the eighteenth century, often driven by reforming noblemen. Coyer, d'Arc, d'Argenson and their predecessors were by no means the only reforming nobles, nor were they even representative of all of the different arguments and proposals put forward to revive or alter the nobility. However, as William Doyle points out, "no new or even refurbished rationales for the pre-eminence of the existing nobility were formulated over the remaining decades of the old order." Most of the proposals made by reformers were either implemented with limited success, or were completely ignored.⁹⁶ At the same time that attempts at reshaping the nobility stalled, social criticism of the nobility in general, and of the court in particular, were on the rise. Financial and moral scandals, loud political battles between noble factions and the discrediting of the court were publicized to a growing socially and politically aware public.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the growth of "public opinion", that is to say, the awareness, judgement, and involvement of a wider segment of society, was becoming a dynamic force in French political life. The concept of an emergent "public", illuminated by philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, sought to explain how and

⁹⁶ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55-57.

why society changed over the course of the eighteenth century.⁹⁷ Simply put, this new importance of “public opinion” encompassed three elements: a larger group of people “developed a *continuous* interest in politics and were more informed”, “formed strong opinions about national events”, and “felt that their opinions should be taken into consideration by the government.”⁹⁸ While, in the past, the King had been the arbiter of justice, by the mid-eighteenth century, “the public” as a “concept and real force” began to be invoked as a new and important authority in judging controversies.⁹⁹ The people of France were moving away from being a mere “audience” of the representative absolutist royal government, to becoming an active “judging, debating, criticizing entity – a *public*”.¹⁰⁰ As a result, this powerful new entity was courted and spoken for by the government and by those who opposed it.

True, the vast majority of critical material that questioned the power of the monarch and the nobility was written; images with the same intent remained scarce until the beginning of the Revolution. However, this period laid the groundwork for the visual criticism that would explode after 1789. Frenchmen and women increasingly had the ability to purchase, read and share literature of all kinds. Illustrations were widely produced and available in numerous areas of Paris; in provincial cities and rural areas, they were carried by peddlers and merchants.¹⁰¹ Unlike contemporary Britain, where caricaturists like James Gillray had a large and profitable market for political caricatures,

⁹⁷ Please see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

⁹⁸ David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 178.

⁹⁹ Sara Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 32.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰¹ Vivian R. Gruder, *The Notables and the Nation: The Political Schooling of the French, 1787-1788* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 221.

French tastes remained muted, tending mostly to religious or genre subjects, even though the political temperature in the country in the latter half of eighteenth century was rising.¹⁰² This untapped market would remain dormant until the upheavals of 1789, but the criticisms and themes that would be illustrated in revolutionary caricatures were being built up in the decades before the explosion of anti-noble images.

To detractors of the nobility, there was much to find fault with. A key point of contention was the gaping disparity in wealth between a small elite and the large mass of the unprivileged. Louis-Sébastien Mercier highlighted such inequalities in his 12-volume *Tableau de Paris*, written between 1781 and 1789. His work was explicitly anti-noble, emphasizing the specious social and political claims made by the nobility, and the destructive effect they had on France. *The Tableau* contained numerous engravings showing different elements of everyday Parisian life, while also highlighting some of its greatest inequalities. One image (Figure 7), for example, contrasts the bounty of Versailles on the left with the slim fare of the urban poor in Paris on the right.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid., 222.

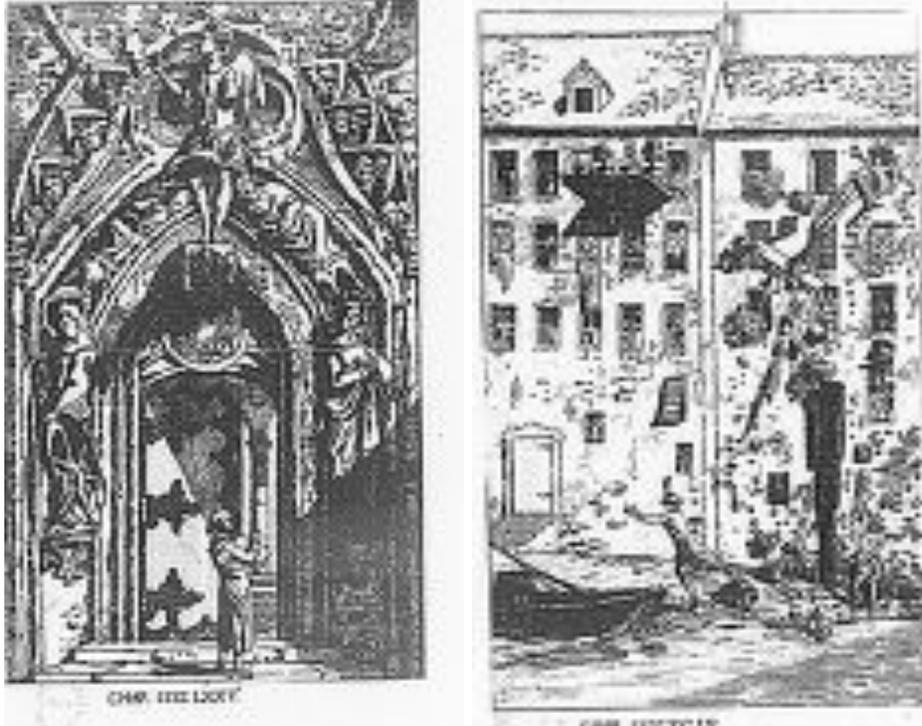
¹⁰³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b2000059g/f29.zoom.r=Scènes%20de%20moeurs%20--%2018e%20siècle>



- Figure 7 -

The residents of the court have access to multiple dinner sets and ample food, whereas all the poor man can pay for are meagre scraps. In an era when the court was more and more maligned and the resources of the poor were increasingly strained, this image indicates both glaring inequalities and observers' awareness of them. Moreover, Versailles was not the only example of the striking wealth gap within French society. Another image (Figure 8) in the *Tableau* contrasted the ornate wealth of a church with the dilapidated and miserable homes of the urban poor in Paris.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b2000059g/f31.item.r=Scènes%20de%20moeurs%20--%2018e%20siècle>



- Figure 8 -

The wealthy leadership of the First Estate was mostly noble, yet many of the church's parishioners lived in abject poverty. Mercier accused the high clergy of abandoning their charges, shirking their duties and fleeing to the capital to live in idleness or to engage in intrigues at court.¹⁰⁵ He also accused "capitalists", who may or may not have been noble, of being a useless and stagnant force in society who brought desolation to the nation.¹⁰⁶

Mercier saved some of his harshest words explicitly for the nobility:

“car si, de te tous les préjugés qui nous rendent stupides le plus déraisonnable & le plus insolent est celui de la noblesse (l'éducation & les lumieres ayant rangé presque tous les hommes bien nés sur la même ligne), il est juste qu'on frappe de ridicule cette foule d'hommes qui voudroient, au nom de leurs aïeux vrais ou faux, se séparer de leurs concitoyens, plus honnêtes, plus utiles & plus recommandables que ces nobles, gentilshommes ou gentilâtres, quelques noms

¹⁰⁵ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris: Nouvelle Édition 2* (Amsterdam, 1782), 289-290.

¹⁰⁶ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris, 2 vols., tome 2*. (Hamburg, 1781), 66-67.

qu'ils prennent, ou qu'ils usurpent, ou qu'ils aient recus pas le hasard de la naissance."¹⁰⁷

Mercier's 1771 book, *L'An 2440*, had already imagined a future world that had purged itself of much of the iniquity that he depicted a decade later in his *Tableau de Paris*.

L'An 2440 was a utopian novel that imagined a society almost seven hundred years in the future, which had been purged of many of the vices and vanities of eighteenth-century France. While Mercier's futuristic world did not envisage the total destruction of the nobility, the aristocracy would be stripped of its extravagances, live simply and in the service of the public.¹⁰⁸ Comparing the unassuming simple nobility of the future with that of the eighteenth century, he said:

“On ne connoît plus aussi parmi nous cette classe d'hommes, qui sous le titre de noblesse (qui pour comble de ridicule étoit vénale,) accouroit ramper autour du trône, ne vouloit suivre que le métier des armes ou celui de courtisan, vivoit dans l'oisiveté, rassasioit son orgueil de vieux parchemins, & présentoit le déplorable spectacle d'une vanité égale à sa misère. Vos grenadiers versaient leur sang avec autant d'intrépidité que le plus noble d'entre eux, & ne le mettoient pas à si haut prix. D'ailleurs, une telle dénomination dans notre république auroit offensé les autres ordres de l'État. Les citoyens sont égaux : la seule distinction est celle que mettent naturellement entre les hommes la vertu, le génie & le travail.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ “Of all the prejudices that make us stupid, the most unreasonable, and the most insolent are those of the nobility (education and enlightenment have ordered almost all wellborn men under the same line), we ridicule this crowd of men that want to in the name of their ancestors, real or false, separate themselves from their fellow citizens, more honest, more useful and commendable than these nobles, gentlemen or *gentillâtres* (slang: gentlemen without fortune), a few names they have taken, or they have usurped, or that they received by the accident of birth.” In Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris: Nouvelle Édition 2* (Amsterdam, 1782), 250.

¹⁰⁸ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante: Rêve s'il fût jamais, nouvelle édition* (London, 1774), Chapitre XXIV.

¹⁰⁹ “We do not know as much as this class of men amongst as, who under the title of nobility (that is packed full of venality), increasingly crawls around the throne, dans not wish to follow the occupation of arms or of the courtisan, living in idleness, satisfying its pride in old parchments, and displays the deplorable spectacle of a vanity equal to its misery. Your grenadiers spill their blood with as much fearlessness as the most noble amongst them, and don't put it at such a high price. By the way, such names in our republic offend the other orders of the state. Our citizens are equal: the only distinction is that which is natural between men, virtue, genius and work.” In ¹⁰⁹ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante: Rêve s'il fût jamais, nouvelle édition* (London, 1774), 300-301.

Mercier's social exposé was widely popular. *L'An 2440* was the best-selling "forbidden" book of pre-revolutionary France, while the *Tableau de Paris* became the fourth best seller.¹¹⁰ Mercier's works were important for a few reasons. The *Tableau* not only described the social ills present in Ancien Regime France, but also captured them in powerful imagery. Using straightforward illustrations and clear language, Mercier skilfully emphasized the inherent inequalities in a society where the most vulnerable lived in misery, while those with the most privileges were not just useless, but had no real justification for their entitlements. Mercier's futuristic writings also created an intellectual space where his readers had the possibility of imagining a fairer future where the injustices of the present barely existed. The pre-revolutionary nobility may have appeared like an unmovable fixture in society, but to many of the readers of *L'An 2440*, reform was not only possible but clearly desirable.

While critics of the Second Estate saw the potential to improve segments of the nobility, tales of noble improprieties in the news or in literature left the impression that the entire order was harmful and perhaps even beyond reform. The last two decades of the Ancien Regime were filled with stories, some true and others fictional, about the lurid lives of the nobility, which the public eagerly devoured. The publication of the sexual and financial peccadilloes of the upper nobility may have appeared to be nothing more than tabloid trash or material for a romance novel, but it was much more damaging than these modern comparators. Already questioned as competent military and political leaders, nobles increasingly began to be seen as decadent and depraved degenerates. Although these allegations were primarily focused at the upper echelons of the nobility

¹¹⁰ Robert Darnton, *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France, 1769-1789* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 194.

during the last decades of the Ancien Regime, they were quickly directed at the entire nobility at the start of the Revolution.¹¹¹

One of the most popular and accessible genres for stories about noble scandals was the trial briefs, or *mémoires judiciaires*.¹¹² Sarah Maza's comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon in the last few decades of the Ancien Regime is instructive.¹¹³ Trial briefs were published by ambitious and talented lawyers and were devoured by an enthusiastic public, who were eager to read stories of the dissipated upper nobility. Presented as accounts of legal cases between different plaintiffs, they were shaped into dramatic narratives by their authors, with a cast of characters, often containing aristocratic villains as the central antagonists. Similar accusations were made against noble abbesses in convents, who were also characterized in trial briefs as symbols of moral degeneracy.¹¹⁴ Trial briefs could sell thousands of copies - in some cases up to 10,000 - and they could be produced faster than any other literature at the time.¹¹⁵ Clearly a market existed at the end of the Ancien Regime for socially critical and lurid reading material. Although trial briefs were not illustrated, they helped create the negative aristocratic tropes that would become recognizable in caricatures during the Revolution.

¹¹¹ Antoine de Baecque, "Le Discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: 'Le Peuple contre les gross,'" *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, Vol. 36e, no.1 (Jan-Mar. 1989), 9.

¹¹² Sara Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 34.

¹¹³ Please see: Sara Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993),

¹¹⁴ Mita Choudhury, "Women, Gender, and the Image of the Eighteenth-Century Aristocracy". In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 167-188. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 171.

¹¹⁵ Sara Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 123; 37.

Trial briefs were not the only source of such information: a series of financial scandals tarnished the image of the court at the end of the Ancien Regime, further undermining the nobility. The most famous of these scandals implicated the prestigious Prince and Princesse de Rohan-Guéméné. In 1782, the couple were involved in what was described as “the greatest bankruptcy in the Old Regime” when it was revealed they had managed to rack up the staggering debt of 33 million livres.¹¹⁶ Public outrage over the scale of the debt and the idea that honest creditors had been ruined was compounded by the monarchy’s apparent knowledge of the debt and the fact that a commoner recently convicted of defaulting on 6,000 livres had been hanged as punishment.¹¹⁷ The Rohan-Guéméné couple retired in shame, but other scandals continued to highlight the financial fraud allegedly present amongst the court. Madame de Polignac, the unpopular favourite of the Queen, was incriminated in financial scandals as well. Her family and friends had a public reputation for being rapacious, gobbling up pensions, positions, titles and estates.¹¹⁸ They further implicated themselves by getting involved in what was perceived as a shady real estate scheme and property seizure in Bordeaux in 1786. The parlement of Bordeaux publically castigated the Polignacs, labelling them “agents of despotism.”¹¹⁹ These scandals were illustrative of the nepotism present in the highest echelons of court, but also of the pernicious and “unnatural” power wielded by female aristocrats. The perception that the nobility was tainted by “cultural femaleness” was a concern of many eighteenth-century observers, who saw the intersection of unbridled female power and

¹¹⁶ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Scandal in the Royal Nursery: Marie-Antoinette and the ‘Gouvernantes des Enfants de France,’” *Historical Reflections*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 412.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹¹⁹ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Nobles Into Aristocrats, or How an Order Became a Conspiracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 189-224. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 206.

politics as damaging to the nation.¹²⁰ Aristocratic scandals helped paint nobles as a hedonistic minority; in the eyes of the public, who largely failed to notice the internal divisions within the Second Estate, the nobility could easily appear to be nothing more than a rich group who preyed upon the poor.¹²¹

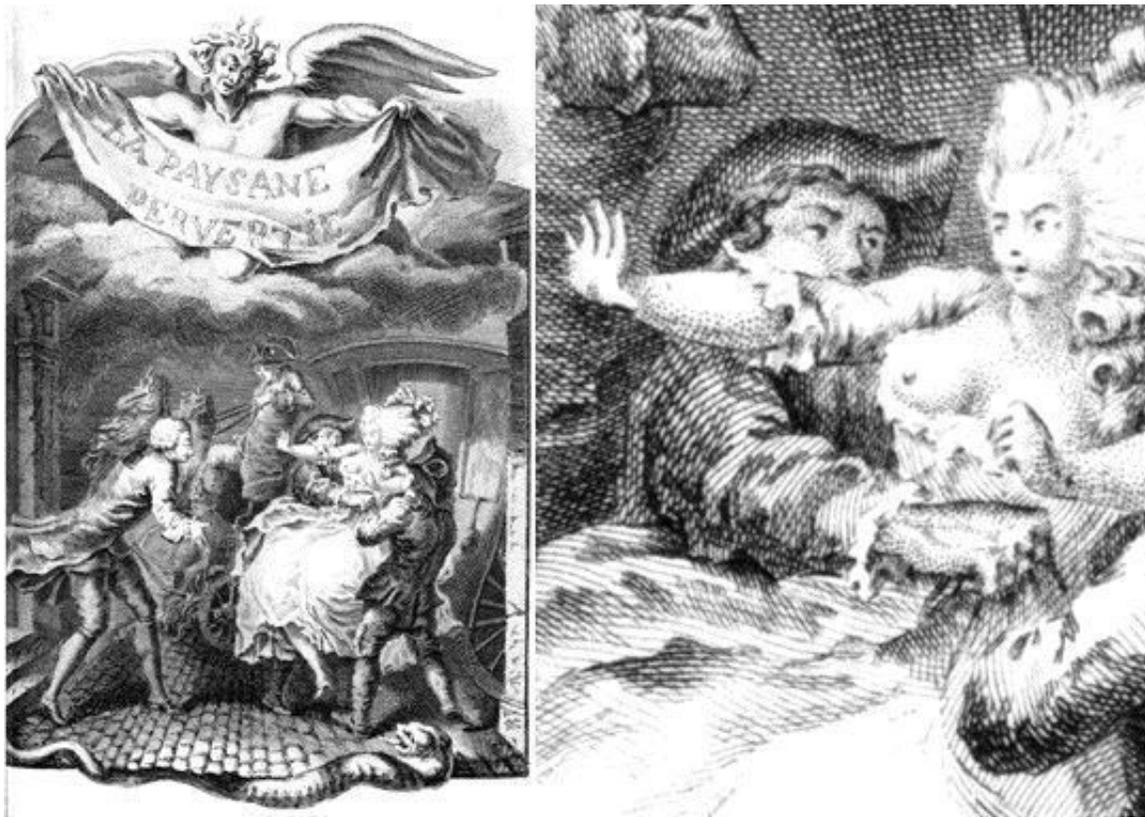
If Mercier had criticized the inequality of noble privilege, the stereotyping of the nobility as an effete and unscrupulous subsection of society was further enhanced by several popular novels in the eighteenth century. Including nobles as central protagonists within literature was nothing new – many authors were themselves nobles – but portraying them as debauched figures who preyed on the weak was significant. Two of the most important authors at the end of the Ancien Regime, Choderlos de Laclos and Restif de la Bretonne, both created dishonourable noble characters who appeared to be not that much different than the real life villains at court or in Paris. Laclos' famous epistolary novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, was published in 1782 and centred on a Machiavellian libertine marquise and vicomte, who manipulated their victims for pure self-gratification. The novel created a public scandal, which only increased its popularity. The book was perceived not only as a titillating novel, but as an exposé of the moral rot present in the upper nobility, who it depicted as idle degenerates.¹²² Laclos' popular work was not illustrated until 1797, but the equally pointed work of Restif de la Bretonne's 1775 novel, *Le Paysan Perversi* and its sequel, *La Paysanne Pervertie*, in 1784 were both full of illustrations. Restif de la Bretonne's novels were centred on two

¹²⁰ Mita Choudhury, "Women, Gender, and the Image of the Eighteenth-Century Aristocracy". In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 167-188. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 184-185.

¹²¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 148.

virtuous peasants, each of whom move to the city where they were corrupted by urban life.¹²³ Ursule, the protagonist of *La Paysanne Pervertie*, falls victim to the predatory approaches of noblemen, one of who, a marquis, is the first to initiate her into a life of corruption.¹²⁴ An engraving (Figure 9) of a subsequent encounter between the two depicts a helpless Ursule being dragged into a carriage to be raped, as the marquis who met her upon her arrival laughs.¹²⁵



- Figure 9 -

¹²³ Malcolm Crook, *Fictional France: Social Reality in the French Novel, 1775-1800* (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), 25.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁵ <http://utpictura18.univ-montp3.fr/Images/A/0/A0883.jpg>

Like others, Restif de la Bretonne viewed the nobility as “an undifferentiated group of irresponsible egoists”, and the nobles in his books were no different.¹²⁶ While both Laclos and Restif de la Bretonne wrote in different styles, their critiques of nobles, whether intentional or not, suggested that fiction mirrored reality.



Pre-revolutionary caricatures were effective alongside socially critical writings, but they also became utilized in public relations battles, further demonstrating their potential power. Attempts by royal governments to improve France’s administrative and fiscal state by reforming the parlements in the early 1770s or by forcing the privileged orders to pay a larger share of the tax burden in the late 1780s were met by open and public hostility. Although caricatures at the end of the Ancien Regime are sparse, it is in this period that they came to be used not just as socially critical tools against the nobility, but as barbed weapons in divisive debates, appealing to a broadening public which acted as arbitrator from the sidelines.

In 1771, Louis XV’s chief minister, Maupeou, moved to suppress the intransigent parlements and create new courts of law in their place. This attempt at reform by a disliked king and his minister proved highly unpopular, resulting in vitriolic accusations and a torrent of pamphlets to be thrown back and forth publically between the two opposing camps, each of which claimed to be speaking for “the nation”. Maupeou’s opponents called themselves “patriots” and accused him and his supporters of “despotism”; Maupeou and his supporters in turn labelled their opponents

¹²⁶ David Coward, *The Philosophy of Restif de La Bretonne* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991), 160.

“aristocrats”.¹²⁷ Allegorical caricatures produced during Maupeou’s “coup d’état” of 1771-1774 viciously attacked the minister in two different ways. First, Maupeou was depicted (Figure 10) in “Pièce allégorique sur la chute du chancelier Maupeou” as the biblical Samson or “Alterius Samsonis Vires”, guided by a winged monster, pushing over columns and the scales of justice, crushing a group of women who hold onto the coats of arms of different French cities.



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- Figure 10 -

¹²⁷ Sara Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 60.

¹²⁸“Another Strength of Samson”

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8409849v.r=Pièce+allégorique+sur+la+chute+du+chancelier+Maupeou.u.langEN>

In another engraving, “Canis Infandi Rabies”, Maupeou is depicted as a rabid dog being stoned by a large crowd, as a Bourbon sun, which was eclipsed by the moon, sheds light on the scene of popular justice (Figure 11).



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- Figure 11-

These two allegorical images, both of which were copied by other artists, were clearly directed at Maupeou, and by extension at the “despotic” monarchy. Both showed scenes of violence, the latter depicting the popular vengeance of the people against a hated

¹²⁹ The unspeakable madness of the dog”
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8409851x.r=Canis+Infandi+Rabies.langEN>

figure. While the print is written in Latin, they contained popular allusions that many of their viewers would have instantly understood. The subject avoided complex or theoretical debates about tyranny or liberty, focusing instead on simple and clearly defined enemies. Though not explicitly anti-noble, the anti-despotic language, allegorical technique, simple narratives, and clear demarcation of dangerous foes opposed to the popular will – all of which would come to be used effectively during the Revolution – were already present. These images also represent some of the first caricatures used in a polemic battle against a faction identified as the enemy of the country, worthy of moral sanction and physical destruction.

The controversy briefly subsided when Louis XV died and his grandson, Louis XVI, recalled parlement in 1774. The well-liked young king was even celebrated in print for this popular decision,¹³⁰ but he soon discovered that various attempts at reform would almost inevitably impinge upon some aspect of the nobility's vested interests.¹³¹ By 1786 France faced the spectre of financial collapse as a result of massive debts and the failure to pay them off with an efficient system of taxation, forcing Louis XVI to call a meeting of the Assembly of Notables, which had not met for over a century. What happened next is part of the well-known story of the months leading up to the French Revolution: the intransigent Notables' failure to approve tangible reforms, followed by parlement's subsequent refusal to register the smallest of changes, led to the expulsion of parlement and the dissolution of the Assembly. An open public relations battle erupted between the two different sides, with opponents of royal reforms claiming to be the defenders of

¹³⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942553f.r=parlement+.langEN>

¹³¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85.

public opinion, positioning themselves against the “despotic” royal government and court.

Like the fight between the crown and the parlements in the 1770s, political caricatures were produced in an attempt to sway public opinion. One image, “Assemblée des notables le 22 février 1787”, turned Finance Minister Calonne and the notables into zoomorphic figures.¹³² Calonne is depicted as a monkey and a cook, meeting an Assembly of Notables who are all represented as different types of fowl. Under a sign that reads “Buffet de la Cour” Calonne asks them “what sauce would you like to be eaten with?” When they reply, “We don’t want to be eaten at all”, Calonne declares, “You misunderstand the question”. This is a comical tongue-in-cheek image, yet it also implies that nobles are unwilling to do their part to help restore the finances of the kingdom by making necessary sacrifices - and may get cooked as a result.



- Figure 12 -

¹³² <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/fq145fs7620>

Caricatures were also used to boost the image of political figures in 1788, such as the Duc d'Orléans and Jacques Necker, both of whom were disliked by conservative factions at the court. The Duc d'Orléans was celebrated as a folk hero, who helped drowning children, or who gave sustenance to peasants (Figure 13).¹³³



- Figure 13 -

Necker, reinstated as Finance Minister in August 1788, was depicted (Figure 14) as a divinely sent saviour whose elevation had destroyed his enemies, represented as fallen figures with discarded masks and serpents.¹³⁴

¹³³ <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/kj311mz9400>

¹³⁴ <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/mq019rw3998>

sixteenth century, but caricatures would only become politically effective in the final years of the Ancien Regime and, especially, when the Revolution began. The nobility, divided and unreformed, increasingly perceived in both literature and public discourse as a self-serving and useless class, was highly vulnerable, and failed to grasp how the power of this potent medium might be used against them, especially because their power seemed so secure. Caricatures mocked the excesses of the court, the vanity of aristocratic titles, the parasitism of financiers, the chasm between the privileged and unprivileged, and the destruction of despotic foes – all of the themes that would be prevalent after 1789 were formed, however sporadically, in the Ancien Regime. When the right set of conditions presented themselves at the start of the Revolution, these isolated images would quickly evolve into a powerful torrent that helped corrode the ancient power of France's Second Estate.

Chapter 2

Monstrous and Degenerate – The French Revolution’s

Aristocratic Enemies

In the early months of 1789 the strained French monarchy did something it had not done since 1614. It asked all of its subjects, privileged and non-privileged, to express their opinions about the state of the kingdom, on the understanding that their concerns would be heard and taken into account when the Estates General assembled in May of that year. Both the monarchy and nobility were actively and publicly attempting to undermine one another, increasingly through printed mediums; but this appeal to “public opinion” had unforeseen consequences. When Loménie de Brienne, the royal Finance Minister, ended press restrictions and censorship in May 1788, it was in part an attempt to fight back against obstinate nobles who loudly denounced his efforts to reform France’s broken finances.¹³⁵ This fateful decision, coupled with the calling of the Estates General, helped create a massive, uncontrolled debate in French society, most of whose members had never been asked for their opinion. Besides the large collection of *cahiers de doléances*, which gave a voice to the people of France, a vast amount of pamphlet literature was also being produced by a budding press that claimed to be the expression of the country’s voice, a voice that was increasingly politically active and self-aware.

¹³⁵ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 25.

Between May 1788 and May 1789, over ten million pamphlets were produced, most of which called for some form of political and social change.¹³⁶

Everything about French society and government was open to discussion in the rapidly changing political climate of spring 1789. Nobles eagerly took part in these debates, sliding into their “natural” roles as prominent leaders and thinkers. Illustrious figures, such as the Duc d’Orléans and the Marquis de Lafayette, had led the revolt against the “despotism” of royal ministers in 1787 and 1788, to much public acclaim, despite the fact that many were in fact using the language of liberty. The confidence and sense of power that nobles felt as spearheads of political reform, however, belied the commoners’ bitter resentments and suspicions, which became apparent even before the Estates General met in May 1789. Yet negative sentiments towards the nobility were nothing new, as we saw in Chapter 1. Noble privileges based on birth and pedigree were increasingly questioned throughout the late eighteenth century. Even if wealthy commoners could buy their way in to the Second Estate, the notion that noble status, new or old, conferred social primacy, power and in particular, economic entitlements when the country was on the verge of bankruptcy became increasingly unsustainable. As William Doyle describes, “By December 1788 a rapid polarization was underway, and all the arguments advanced theoretically over the preceding century and beyond against the pretensions and powers of nobles were being revived and refined. Now, for the first time, there was isolated talk of destroying hereditary nobility altogether.”¹³⁷ Nobles may

¹³⁶ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 26.

¹³⁷ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177.

have taken lead positions against “royal despotism,” but would they agree to concede their political, social and financial privileges when asked?

This overarching question, as well as others that challenged noble prerogatives, became some of the most prominent issues up for debate by May 1789. A proliferation of pamphlets and newspapers openly engaged the public with ideas on how to reform French society, as well as publishing sharp criticisms of anyone perceived as reacting against the drive to change the structures of the Ancien Regime. These conversations and polemics were not confined to the printed word, however; they were also expressed in the visually and symbolically rich imagery of caricatures. Like critical texts, caricatures gave form to the ideas and aspirations of different groups within the increasingly assertive Third Estate. As described in the last chapter, politically and socially pointed imagery had appeared during the Maupeou Crisis 1771-1774, in the works of Restif de la Bretonne and Mercier in the 1770s and 1780s, and during the political deterioration that started in 1787. But by 1789, the output of subversive caricatures had increased dramatically, quickly shifting from sporadic productions to a daily deluge of politically and socially focused images.

The caricatures of the Revolution, like other revolutionary art forms, were by no means uniform in presentation or style: they ranged from the crude to the sophisticated, and used classical, biblical and folk motifs.¹³⁸ Yet if radical artists worked towards their goals in a variety of ways, the caricatures themselves essentially followed a basic and simple narrative. Presenting unabashedly partisan views, they all marked out who was a “friend” or “enemy” of the Revolution, highlighting the tension between these two sides

¹³⁸ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 32.

in each image. The purpose of this was to denounce or praise a wide array of real and imagined characters; caricatures intended to educate, convince, empower and communicate with “the people”, whom they declared to be “sovereign”. A politically engaged public eagerly consumed these revolutionary publications, creating a profitable market for anyone who could produce them fast enough. While economic motives are important in understanding why so many revolutionary caricatures were created alongside journals and pamphlets, the social, political and moral aims of their creators must also be taken into consideration.

I. Authorship: the Mystery of Caricaturists

If there were plenty of reasons why the public distrusted the nobility in the early years of the Revolution, the exact role of caricaturists in fanning hostility is somewhat obscured by the fact that they were largely anonymous. In my sample of more than 200 images of anti-noble caricatures, fewer than 20 caricaturists or engravers are named, and in most of those cases, the name is associated only once with an image. One of the most prominent caricaturists whose identity is known, and who was well known during the Revolution, is the engraver Villeneuve, brought back to life through the painstaking efforts of Annie Duprat.¹³⁹ Although his last name was relatively common, Duprat is convinced that the various pieces of work produced under the name “Villeneuve” were the product of one man.¹⁴⁰ This Villeneuve’s artistic style and his use of familiar

¹³⁹ See: Annie Duprat, “Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure ‘La Contre Révolution’”. In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 91-102. (Canadian Plains Research Center: University of Regina, 1998).

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, the Severed hand of the Poinards, temps passé/présent, le Grand Abus, etc.

symbols, including the *poignard*, lanterns, and guillotines help substantiate the claim that he was the same person.¹⁴¹ Some of his works were noticed and publicized in newspapers, such as Camille Desmoulins' *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* on May 8th 1791, which announced a collection of his caricatures.¹⁴² More significantly, his caricature *La Contre-Révolution* was commented on in *Le Spectateur national et le modérateur* on March 19th 1791, and in Condorcet's *Chronique de Paris* two days later.¹⁴³ According to Rolf Reichardt, Villeneuve appears to have been an especially motivated ideologue, compared other caricaturists, whose work he characterizes as fluctuating according to market needs.¹⁴⁴

Unfortunately less is known about other named caricaturists. Artists like Antoine-Jean Duclos (1742-1795) appear to have had pre-revolutionary careers, while the work of most of the others, like Jean-Marie Mixelle (1758? – 1839) and Jacques-Louis Copia (1764-1799) appears sparse before the Revolution.¹⁴⁵ Duclos produced many images in the Ancien Regime and during the Revolution. Most of Duclos' pre-revolutionary work was realistic, showing a high degree of attention to detail, while some of his revolutionary works are cruder and more simplistic, suggesting that he knew how to reach different audiences. Such sensitivity to marketability appears to be a common feature during the Revolution, where caricaturists were able to adapt their styles to the changing environment. Indeed, even though many textual or visual critics were

¹⁴¹ Annie Duprat, "Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure 'La Contre Révolution'". In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 91-102. (Canadian Plains Research Center: University of Regina, 1998), 97.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹⁴⁴ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books), 41.

¹⁴⁵ Information on these artists is sparse. Gallica is the source of information for these caricaturists' pre-revolutionary and revolutionary body of work.

clearly educated and schooled in the classical style, it became their *modus operandi* to cast their work as part of “popular culture” in a bid to appeal to the masses.¹⁴⁶ Such caricaturists could easily be enthusiastic revolutionaries, even if their works made the Revolution the “best seller of the time”, in Reichardt’s words.¹⁴⁷ While information on Duclos is scarce, it is interesting to note the shift from his pre-revolutionary work on commissions to represent important national and elite events, to new styles and subject matter that meant he would turn against some of the people who had employed him. Perhaps he was motivated by economic incentives, recognizing the new political and artistic climate, or maybe he became a convinced revolutionary. At any rate, not all artists with pre-revolutionary careers made such a switch; others who were seen as too close to the Ancien Regime ended up leaving France.

On the other hand, caricaturists who were not well educated or versed in the classics may have naturally drawn in a simpler, popular style that was highly appreciated in the Revolution, which rejected the cultural elitism of Ancien Regime society. The Revolution might have given opportunities to those artists who had existed at the periphery of the pre-revolutionary printing world, providing them with a platform to express their anger at and dislike of their former patrons. The sheer volume of anti-elite caricatures when compared to the minimal amounts of anti-revolutionary imagery, suggests that the visceral views they express were strongly held by their producers. And although the press had, in theory, become free with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, physical threats and violence against those publishing unpopular ideas

¹⁴⁶ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 156-157.

¹⁴⁷ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 41.

were omnipresent.¹⁴⁸ Printing was also an intensely democratic process, where talent, ambition and a small amount of capital could open up avenues to newcomers, such as former print-shop workers, provincial printers, and foreigners, and allowed voices that had previously been socially marginalized to be heard and – in the case of caricatures – to be seen.¹⁴⁹

Regardless of their provenance, caricatures were good business for their creators. Starting up a printing enterprise was relatively cheap, and could be set up for as little as 3,346 *livres*.¹⁵⁰ Labour and materials were equally inexpensive, and the etchings they produced, on loose sheets of paper - in contrast to labour intensive copper engravings used earlier in the century - produced twice as many copies, to an average of 1,000 to 2,000 prints per plate.¹⁵¹ The copying of original pieces was ubiquitous, as I discovered in my research. Images were clearly selling, if copycats were producing knockoffs. Reprinting and making multiple copies was increasingly common, and new editions of an image could be increased tenfold.¹⁵² This high production meant the cost of purchasing caricatures was relatively cheap, ranging in cost from one or more *livres*, to a few *sous*.¹⁵³ This is not to say that the purchasers of caricatures kept them to themselves; they could easily have passed hand-to-hand, not to mention generating discussion or laughter, spreading their popularity further. Free of the constraints of censors, the display and sale of anti-noble and anti-royal images could be done in the open. They were displayed in stores all over Paris, or by street-hawkers, at the Palais Royal, boulevards

¹⁴⁸ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 52-53.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵¹ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books), 35, 37.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

and on both sides of the Seine, with contemporary observers noting their ubiquity.¹⁵⁴

Traditional printmakers who could not or would not adapt their businesses to the needs of the changing market had to close their businesses or go bankrupt in some cases.¹⁵⁵

It is unclear how much caricatures permeated other French cities, towns or the provinces, but this does not implicitly mean that they were absent. They were tailored to appeal to the tastes of different classes, addressing their disparate concerns. Depictions of aristocratic feudal exploiters would have resonated strongly with peasants and the poor, while those complicated references to classic imagery or political arguments appealed to the educated. Other forms of news circulated throughout France, and caricatures, as much as the printed word, represented information about the Revolution. Historians of revolutionary news like Jeremy Popkin have argued that newspapers were mostly for city dwellers and the well-read, even if they were ostensibly for “the people”.¹⁵⁶ Caricatures transcended these limitations, and could have been viewed by anyone who came across them. Nonetheless, evidence thus far indicates that the majority of caricatures were produced in Paris.¹⁵⁷ This does not necessarily mean that caricatures never made it beyond Paris. Their profitability and the revolutionary zeal of their producers and readership could have spurred their sale, production or shipment to other parts of the nation.

The ability of caricature to influence public opinion on a national scale was not lost on government officials. The Jacobins saw the potential of caricatures, and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵⁶ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 85-86.

¹⁵⁷ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 37-38.

attempted to harness their power. In the autumn of 1793 the Committee of Public Safety set up a secret fund for political propaganda.¹⁵⁸ In September 1793, Jacques-Louis David, famous painter in the pre-revolution, now a citizen deputy, was commissioned to produce caricatures, particularly those directed at the British (Figure 15).¹⁵⁹



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- Figure 15 -

Other caricatures were produced to mock the sovereigns of Europe, and used as propaganda tools to stiffen the resolve of the French, who found themselves at war with many European powers by the end of 1793. It is interesting to note that by this date very few caricatures targeted at nobles exist, save those aimed at the émigré army of the

¹⁵⁸ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 40.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948213r.r=explication.langEN>

Prince de Condé.¹⁶¹ The insecurity of the Jacobin regime was caused as much by bellicose foreign powers as it was by noble-led rebellions, so it is interesting to note that – as far as we know – that the Jacobins did not commission anti-noble imagery. Why such a fanatically anti-noble regime, threatened by real and imagined aristocratic plots, failed to harness the power of caricature against its enemies remains a mystery. Perhaps because the nobility appeared to have been so effectively disempowered and broken by 1793 and larger and more important existential threats to the Revolution were increasing, that focus shifted away from the nobility? However, if nobles and foreign powers were tied together in the minds of many revolutionaries, then why not continue focusing on the enemies at home who supposedly colluded with France’s external enemies?

The fact that so many caricaturists produced their work anonymously makes it difficult for historians to piece together their identities. Yet in the context of the Revolution, radical caricaturists do not stand in isolation from the radical authors of other revolutionary literature. As art historian and media theorist W.J.T. Mitchell states, “all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous.”¹⁶² Both groups – authors and illustrators – reacted to the same events during the Revolution, imbuing their pens with the same sharp critiques of “aristocrats” and others perceived as “enemies”. Their works complemented one another, sometimes combining symbiotically to comment on a particular event or political issue.¹⁶³

As such, I would argue that we can extrapolate from historians’ research into revolutionary journalists and pamphleteers, to try to piece together who these artists may have been. Many journals and pamphlets attacked the same anti-noble targets found in

¹⁶¹ Please see Chapter 3 for more information

¹⁶² W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, 1994), 5.

¹⁶³ See Villeneuve’s “La Contre Révolution” in chapter 3 for example

the caricatures; they were infused with a similar ideology and addressed many of the same issues and personalities. Both groups were galvanized by the momentous events of the collapse of the Ancien Regime and the possibility of instituting far-reaching social and political changes in France. As Joan Landes writes, there was an “interchange that occurred between the metaphoric language of the pamphlets and texts and the visual images drawn to describe the new political society...there existed a similar repertoire of figures: the degeneracy of the nobility, the impotence of the king and the virility of the republic...”¹⁶⁴ Caricaturists, like journalists and pamphleteers, lampooned their enemies mercilessly, splitting the world into one of opposition between the forces of good and evil. Between these two archetypal extremes, there was very little room for nuance.

The identities and motives of different radical journalists and pamphleteers have been explored by a variety of historians. While the radical journalists of the Revolution have been most effectively researched by Jeremy Popkin and Jack Censer, Robert Darnton establishes a foundation that informs our understanding of the background, motives and ideology of radical journalists during the pre-revolutionary period. In *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Darnton investigates the composition of “Grub Street”, an underground press that existed before the Revolution. Grub Street writers were outsiders: educated and talented but resentful, they found that the avenues to professional and social success were closed to them by a literary world that had been appropriated by the elites.¹⁶⁵ These outsiders subsisted on producing scandalous and subversive works of literature that Darnton characterizes as part of the “Low

¹⁶⁴ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Enlightenment,” in opposition to a “High Enlightenment”, whose leading figures were dead, their ideas having been more or less accepted by the establishment. The “hacks” that produced these works were not (yet) calling for revolution, for they had no unified plan; yet they undermined the French elite, and the foundations of its authority, by suggesting that a degenerate ruling class was at the root of a rotting society, and created villains and heroes that became real in the public imagination.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, the writers of Darnton’s Low Enlightenment embraced many of the same themes and ideas that are present in anti-aristocratic caricatures both before and after 1789, drawing a clear link between textual and visual media in a climate of criticism.

Darnton’s work on the literary underground has prompted a debate about author motivation that is relevant to our understanding of caricaturists. Simon Burrows, for example, counters that “Grub Street” authors were not frustrated young men, but were driven by the potential financial rewards their works could generate in an eager market, an argument that echoes Reichardt’s views on Villeneuve and other artists.¹⁶⁷ Burrows also denies that hack journalists went on to become radical Jacobins during the Revolution as maintained by Darnton, arguing that they advocated first for constitutional monarchism and then counterrevolution by 1792.¹⁶⁸ Yet Burrows seems to have confined much his research sample to the hacks of Grub Street in London, which, although an important source of subversive journalism, was but one source for the production of anti-elite literature. Jeremy Popkin, on the other hand, supports Darnton’s thesis that Grub

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 15; 34-35; 204.

¹⁶⁷ Simon Burrows, “Grub Street Revolutionaries: marginal writers at the Enlightenment’s periphery?” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 1 (2008):, 154.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 160.

Street hacks who became the radical journalists of the Revolution were “united by their mutual rejection by the established intellectual community.”¹⁶⁹

The work of Popkin and Censer on revolutionary journalists also reveals substantial similarities in content with early caricatures. For example, the radical revolutionary popular presses espoused the notion of “popular sovereignty”, a theme which also appears in critical images; “the people” were the bearers of this popular sovereignty and were reminded repeatedly in the press that they had political agency and could and should use it if threatened by the allegedly hostile “aristocratie”. The press was not necessarily precise about who was or was not “le peuple”, but they were much more specific about who were the “aristocratie”.¹⁷⁰ Many nobles did, of course, side with the Revolution, even in its more radical and anti-noble phases, but in general the press and caricatures were silent on such nuances. Jack Censer argues that the “aristocrat” depicted in the in the popular presses evolved from the decadent and hedonistic courtiers of the Ancien Regime, who were obsessed with luxuries, into the fearsome political antagonists who wanted to use wealth for political ends, an observation that holds true for caricatures as well.¹⁷¹ Fears and suspicions about the intentions of nobles existed at the end of the Ancien Regime, but were magnified by the presses as the Revolution became more radical.

Popkin claims that the role of the press in the Revolution was more important than that of caricatures; journals, he argues, could reach a larger audience, keep up more quickly with events and carry the message between their audience and the centre of

¹⁶⁹ Jack Richard Censer, *Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press 1789-1791* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 7.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

power.¹⁷² In fact, historians who discuss the press during the Revolution have generally privileged the written word and have been sceptical of the value of visual evidence.¹⁷³ Popkin argues, for example, that it was the press that helped make the seizing of the Bastille significant. He suggests that while the “Day of Tiles” in Grenoble the previous year had many of the same elements (an angry crowd violently protesting government decisions, compounded by poor economic conditions) it remains a minor event, not one of *the* events of the Revolution, as the press was still largely muzzled in the spring of 1788, whereas in 1789 it was militantly active.¹⁷⁴

Yet the seizing of the Bastille was highly celebrated in images as well as in print. The power and appeal of visual representations of the French Revolution cannot just be reduced to the important role they played in educating and informing illiterate Frenchmen. Visual culture, unlike the written word, can influence and have an effect on all members of society, be they educated elites or illiterate peasants. While caricatures did sometimes include written text, they were accessible to anyone with the capacity of sight, whereas the written word could only reach those who could read or who were present when it was read aloud. Like radical journalists, the goal of revolutionary artists was to convey several key messages to all citizens: a new and democratic age had begun, in which the people were “autonomous, sovereign agents” as well as “militant activists.”

¹⁷² Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 181.

¹⁷³ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.

¹⁷⁴ Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 125-6,

They did this through the use of an “expressive and radical new symbolism” which both presented the people with arguments, and attempted to inspire them to action.¹⁷⁵

II. Unnatural and Debauched: Women and the Court

Caricaturists focused their biting satire and criticism on numerous targets, criticizing their victims on several fronts. One of these groups was the Second Estate’s women, who were mocked and tarnished in crude illustrations. Caricatures that depicted female nobles, however, stand apart from those portraying their male counterparts, as they were generally misogynistic and sexualized. Yet attacking the morals, sexuality and behaviour of female members of the nobility implicitly undermined the nobility in general. By calling the virtue of aristocratic women into question, the morality of their fathers, husbands and brothers was also scrutinized. Patriotic women were supposed to embody the bourgeois virtues of the Revolution: modesty, motherhood, chastity and virtue.¹⁷⁶ Men who could not keep control over the sexuality and morals of their women – like Louis XVI - were mocked and had their own masculinity questioned. Indeed, the implied feminization and inversion of gender roles within the nobility not only made aristocrats figures of fun, but also suggested that they had socially dangerous natures, which made them just as capable of endangering the political and moral welfare of France.

¹⁷⁵ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 63.

¹⁷⁶ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 91.

Mita Choudhury, Lynn Hunt and Sara Maza have pointed out how criticism of women and the “feminine” became implicitly related to criticism of the nobility. The development of the “aristocrat” in caricatures during the Revolution was partially based on fears of the feminization of the Second Estate by dangerous noblewomen in the Ancien Regime. Women with access to the levers of power, whether it be as a royal mistress or as the hostess of a salon, were perceived as subverting “the natural order” and corrupting traditional roles. The male nobility was increasingly seen as feminized by this behaviour, surrendering their masculine authority to the wiles of duplicitous females and, eventually, coming to take on these negative characteristics themselves. Portrayals of aristocrats in the Revolution contained these gendered critiques and associations.

Choudhury, through her analysis of attacks on aristocratic mother superiors in French nunneries and her research into the growing gendered attack on aristocrats at the end of the eighteenth century, argues that “...in the public mind, images of women and aristocracy intersected, to the detriment of both.”¹⁷⁷ Maza’s research on the “causes célèbres” of pre-revolutionary France, outlines how commentators such as Rousseau - who was almost a prophet for many revolutionaries - feared the “improper” role and power that women, in particular aristocratic women, had on the government of the kingdom. Comparing them to a “harem”, this orientalised “other” weakened male authority and had the power to undermine France and turn it into a “despotism”.¹⁷⁸ The Court and the monarchy were increasingly seen, in the public imagination, as embodying the very worst of these misogynistic anxieties. Dissimulation, denounced as “the chief

¹⁷⁷ Mita Choudhury, “Women, Gender, And The Image Of Aristocracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 167-188. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 170.

¹⁷⁸ Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 169.

characteristic of court life and aristocratic manners in general”, was also believed to be a particularly feminine attribute, which women allegedly taught men the art of.¹⁷⁹ The Abbé Coyer commented that the “aristocratic set had merged into one sex, gendered female” and Louis Sébastien-Mercier maintained that the nobleman “renounces his responsibilities and transforms into an aristocratic courtesan, a pathetic figure who prostitutes himself for his livelihood.”¹⁸⁰ Concerns about the feminization of France also overlapped with anxieties over the corrupting influence luxury was supposedly having on the kingdom.

Pornographic *libelles* first lampooned Louis XV and his mistresses (in particular Mme du Barry) and later Queen Marie Antoinette, as well as the morals of the “feminized” court. As Elizabeth Colwell explains, “when pamphleteers juxtaposed the immoral conduct of ‘titled’ (Sapphic) women to the ‘modest virtue’ of the (heterosexual) *bourgeoisie*, they conflated the unfeminine, the immoral, and the unnatural in the figure of the tribade...to reshape the political in the vocabulary of sex was also to remake the sexual order.”¹⁸¹ Thus, when the Revolution began, many in France were accustomed to reading about the residents of Versailles as sexually debauched degenerates, headed by a group of female libertines. These salacious rumours were quickly transferred from the printed word into the racy visual imagery of caricature in 1789. (Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)

¹⁷⁹ Lynn Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution.” In *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman, 117-138. (London: Routledge, 2003), 121.

¹⁸⁰ Mita Choudhury, “Women, Gender, And The Image Of Aristocracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 167-188. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 185.

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Colwill. “Pass as a Woman, Act Like a Man: Marie-Antoinette as Tribade in the Pornography of the French Revolution.” In *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman, 139-169. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 153.



- Figure 16 -

¹⁸² <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/kg812py4439>



- Figure 17 -

¹⁸³ <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/kg812py4439>



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- Figure 18 -



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- Figure 19 -

¹⁸⁴ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942360w.r=Marie+AND+Antoinette+.langEN>

¹⁸⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410827r.r=Marie+AND+Antoinette+.langEN>



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- Figure 20 -

Some of the hated figures depicted in these depraved scenes with the Queen, such as the Duchesse de Polignac, fled abroad shortly after the seizing of the Bastille, but they did not escape the notice of caricaturists. Several noblewomen were later depicted as actively involved in counterrevolutionary plots with their male colleagues.¹⁸⁷ However, only a few well-known noblewomen participated in fighting the Revolution from abroad; thus, when they are vilified in caricatures, it is most often their social identity as sexualized and aristocratic enemies which is the focus.

¹⁸⁶ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942366c.r=Marie+AND+Antoinette+.langEN>

¹⁸⁷ Please see images of counterrevolution in Chapter 3

One image (Figure 21) portrays a countess, displays loose morals. The comtesse lewdly bears her breasts and suggestively spreads her legs, stating “Je n’aurai plus, quel désespoir... que ces lieux pour tout boudoir.”¹⁸⁸



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¹⁸⁸ “I have nothing, but despair...except for the location of my boudoir. ‘La Femme Aristocratique’ states, “thanks to the Constitution, we will soon go without our skirts.” In Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 120.

- Figure 21-

Clearly, noblewomen were seen as a political danger, a theme that was represented in a variety of ways. Another aristocratic lady is shown (Figure 22) as an old crone who curses (“maudissant”) the Revolution.



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- Figure 22 -

¹⁸⁹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69474579.r=comtesse+.langEN>

¹⁹⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948026p.r=aristocrate+.langEN>

Joan Landes' work on this particular image is worth citing at length here: "this startling direct image of the female grotesque," she writes, "does not require of its viewers any special knowledge of the classics...in place of the youthful, natural, and nurturing beauty that was so favoured in republican representations of female goddesses, this anonymous artist depicts a choleric old hag... her ferocious stare, clenched hand, and drawn dagger embody the aristocracy's vile opposition to revolutionary change."¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 120.



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- Figure 23 -

Caricatures also called on the people to chastise and punish aristocratic female deviants. Like the mythical Pandora, they were accused of bringing all kinds of ills on

¹⁹² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947482c.r=Pandore+.langEN>

the nation. One image (see preceding page) shows an orientalized woman whose indulgence has allowed her lover to open Pandora's Box, releasing the evils of the world, while another (see below) represents a woman who spoke ill of the Revolution and has her backside publically slapped by male commoners. If male aristocrats were perceived to be failing to keep their women "in their place", patriots were praised for doing so, as such women were perceived as a threat to the new society.



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- Figure 24 -

¹⁹³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84106895.r=femme+AND+de+AND+condition+.langEN>

III. The Nobility Cast as Monsters

While caricatures targeting aristocratic women for moral looseness drew on a long history of misogynistic anxieties, a new theme used to undermine the nobility appeared in the caricatures of 1789. New images purported to alert the public to the danger within their midst: aristocrats were in fact monstrous creatures and were organizing violent plots to strangle the Revolution. Depictions of these creatures were at their most literal between 1789-1791; multi-headed hydras and man-eating beasts were allegedly trying to devour the people and crush the Revolution. Even human portrayals of nobles depict their exteriors as misshapen and ugly, hinting at a rotten inner core. Representing nobles as sinister monsters or twisted humans, the artists' message was the same; nobles' very nature was threatening, both to the Revolution and to the lives of Frenchmen. Caricaturists drew upon both superstitious beliefs from the past and "scientific" ideas from the present to represent the monstrous aristocracy in all of its grotesque variations.

But how real were these "monsters" to those who viewed them? Were they merely artistic devices to convey the sinister nature of the nobility, or did viewers on some level perceive the subjects in these images as truly monstrous? While these questions are not easy to answer, it is still possible to hypothesize about the effect that monstrous imagery might have had on the public imagination. For many Frenchmen and women, monsters remained real on some level. French children were raised on folk tales, myths, and superstitions about malevolent wolves, witches, demons and devils, and the Catholic faith itself taught about the real and active presence of evil forces in the world.

Belief in witchcraft and magical practices continued well into the nineteenth century amongst ordinary people, despite attempts by authorities to clamp down on such activities.¹⁹⁴

Indeed, educated elites had distanced themselves from the traditional beliefs of the “great unwashed”, finding such superstitions a “critical social marker”.¹⁹⁵ They consumed the works of Enlightenment thinkers, who were openly critical of any teachings they perceived as rooted in religious superstition. However, intellectual changes do not imply that belief in monsters disappeared, even among the upper classes. These deeply ingrained superstitions were adapted to the emergent “rational” theories and language of the later eighteenth century, and were discussed in “scientific” terms. For example, the “Beast of the Gévaudan”, a wolf-like monster popularly believed to be terrorizing the countryside in Languedoc from 1764 to 1767, was discussed in pseudo-scientific language. Mixing anatomical science and physiological analogies with the imagery of myths and folktales, the beast was explained in both popular and “educated” language.¹⁹⁶ This fantastic tale was believed by the royal government and influenced rumours about other beasts lurking in the midst of the public, which spread rapidly in the 1760s as a result of the publications of writers and engravers.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Edward Bever, “Witchcraft Prosecutions and the Decline of Magic” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Vol. 40, no.2: Autumn 2009), 285.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁹⁶ Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 167.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.



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- Figure 25 -

The monstrous images produced by caricaturists were also rooted in a history of social and cultural critique, such as the demonization of the Queen in the last years of the Ancien Regime. In 1784, the “discovery” of a harpy in South America led to the production of numerous engravings (Figure 25) showing this hideous female creature. Images of this beast quickly became popular in elite milieus, but also with the wider public, who made a connection not only between the harpy and the “Beast of the Gévaudan,” but also, more importantly, between the harpy and the unpopular Marie Antoinette.¹⁹⁹ These illustrations lampooning the Queen underlined her alleged sexual

¹⁹⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942385q.r=harpie.langEN>

¹⁹⁹ Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 168.

perversions and inhuman nature.²⁰⁰ One of these images (see previous page) shows a highly sexualized bare breasted harpy. Its monstrous body – reptilian wings, scaly tails, webbed talons, pointed ears and horns – was a conglomerate of everything evil that its author could conjure up, a mixture of horrific characteristics that would also be found in the descriptions of the aristocratic hydra of 1789 and 1790.²⁰¹

Accusations against the Queen were repeated ferociously at the start of the Revolution, when the monstrous characteristics associated with her by caricaturists blended with those of the inhuman and counterrevolutionary aristocracy.²⁰² Much like the Queen, nobles' alleged degeneracy was presented not only in moral terms, but with a combination of supernatural imagery and crude pseudo-scientific terminology. Aristocrats were described as “parasites” and “tumours” with deformed and foreign bodies.²⁰³ Longstanding social critiques of nobles from the Ancien Regime were complimented by new biological ones.²⁰⁴ Nobles were degenerates not merely because of their decadence and corruption, but because of their repulsive “unnatural” natures. The critique was all the more powerful in that caricatures were not a private commentary on nobles' personal failings, but a public statement whose meaning was accessible to all viewers. And the critique was dangerous to its victims: the caricatures implied that monsters were not creatures to be reformed or understood; they were dangerous threats that should be resisted and violently put down.

²⁰⁰ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 116.

²⁰¹ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth Century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 55.

²⁰² Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 169-170.

²⁰³ Antoine de Baecque, “Le discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: ‘Le peuple contre les gros.’” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Vol. 36, No. 1: Jan. - Mar., 1989), 17-18.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

The true nature of the “aristocracy” in its most dangerous and subversive form is embodied in the 1789 image, “Aristocratie Démasquée”(Figure 26), a caricature which brings the theme of monstrosity together with a multitude of other themes.



- Figure 26 -

²⁰⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947710x.r=L%27Aristocratie+démasquée.langEN>

A two-faced figure, both male and female, suggests that aristocrats acted as seditious agents within French society in multiple ways. The female half embodies the amoral sexual power of the Ancien Regime courtesans denounced by moralists. Behind her seductive exterior lies a vicious priest, whose multiple arms wield daggers. A serpent acts as a belt uniting their two bodies, while masks, a symbol of dissimulation and courtly culture, lie on the table. Beneath the two-sided creature's robes, beastly claws and hooves reveal themselves. This image unites two groups feared and despised by radical revolutionaries: reactionary priests and sexually promiscuous noblewomen. Not only does it imply bisexuality or transexuality, both deemed unnatural vices associated with nobles,²⁰⁶ but the figures in the image are committing an even worse crimes in the eyes of the revolutionaries: dissimulation. Transparency and authenticity were important values within revolutionary ideology; anyone who deviated from them was criminally suspect.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Elizabeth Colwill, "Pass as a Woman, Act Like a Man: Marie-Antoinette as Tribade in the Pornography of the French Revolution." In *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman, 139-169. (London: Routledge, 2003), 143.

²⁰⁷ Timothy Tackett, "Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792" In *The American Historical Review* (Vol. 105, no. 3: June 2000), 706.



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- Figure 27 -

Even something as benign as a snail can be a representative of dissimulation, as shown in the symbolically rich image “Deguisement Aristocrate”(Figure 27). Snails, on top of being slimy, represented someone who was “poorly made” or “distorted”, words associated with the physically twisted aristocrats found in other caricatures.²⁰⁹ The power of this subversive snail, has according to its creator, been stopped by the barriers

²⁰⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69474987.r=Deguisement+Aristocrate.langEN>

²⁰⁹ The ARTFL Project , s.v. “escargot” , accessed March 10, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=escargot>

(“bornes”), which the nation has placed in front of it.²¹⁰ And despite his “beautiful mask”, the viewer “knows” about the horns that hide underneath. Narrowing his eyes, this aristocratic snail clutches to the branches of a tree, which is itself is a metaphor for someone who is attached to the old ways, authority and tradition.²¹¹ Although this caricature makes many of the same implicit accusations against the nobility, it is interesting because it shows the creative spectrum that caricaturists used to malign enemies. Playful and tongue-in-cheek, this zoomorphic image compared “aristocrats” to a small slimy creature, who used stealth to try to undermine the nation. Comical perhaps, but another image that dehumanized its enemies, comparing them to low creatures, associated with physical imperfections.

Other prints showed the double game that aristocrats supposedly played, by depicting them as deceptively two-faced figures (Figure 28) who masked their true feelings behind deceptive facades. Along with their political opposition, the caricatures suggested, some of these Janus-like aristocrats were hiding their true demonic nature. The warning in these messages is implicit: regardless of the pronouncements of pro-revolutionary nobles, they are disingenuous people who pose an internal threat that can only be checked by constant vigilance.

²¹⁰ The ARTFL Project, s.v. “Bornes”, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=bornes>

²¹¹ The ARTFL Project, s.v. “Arbre,” and “se tenir à l’arbre”, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=arbre>



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- Figure 28 -

Images of witches' Sabbaths were used to suggest that counterrevolutionary aristocrats acted not only alone, but within clandestine cells whose goal was to overthrow the Revolution. The caricature entitled "Fédération anti patriotique des ci-devant aristocrates" (Figure 29) dated 1790, reveals the nefarious counterrevolutionary plots of aristocrats.

²¹² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947509k.r=Portraits+des+Impartiaux%2C+des+Moderés.langEN>



- Figure 29 -

Demonic forces meet under the cloak of darkness to conspire against the forces of good. The strong gendered element of this image recalls the misogynistic anxieties discussed above: aristocrats, like the witches of the past, were seen in the minds of radicals as the very worst manifestation of feminine power.²¹⁴ Although most of the figures in the caricature appear to be male, a bare breasted, winged figure, possibly Medusa or Discord, presides over the unholy coven. All of these supernatural figures would have been readable to common people, though historical references to plots and massacres add further insinuations about noble intentions: a dragon on the right holds up the image of the 1572 “Massacre of St. Bartholomew”, for example, while a painting on the left shows

²¹³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6943197j.r=Fédération+anti+patriotique+des+ci-devant.langEN>

²¹⁴ Joan B. Landes, *Vizualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 123.

an auto-da-fé from the Inquisition. These events allude to the extremes to which the beastly clergy and nobles in the image will go to achieve their aims. To suppress the Revolution, they will organize mass murder and extirpate revolutionary heresy from French soil, an extensive plot which the author outlined in the script below the image. Belief in such plots, of course, informed much of the paranoia and violence of the early Revolution, when rumour and conjecture could quickly stir up mass panic.²¹⁵



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- Figure 30 -

²¹⁵ See, for example, the contributions of Tom Kaiser, Peter Campbell and Marisa Linton, eds. *Conspiracy in the French Revolution* (Manchester UP, 2007).

²¹⁶ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947500v.r=L%27instituteur+des+aristocrates.langEN>

Most grotesque images of aristocrats were meant to identify, unmask and dehumanize their inhuman subjects. Yet very few actually showed how or why they came to be such detestable creatures. “L’insituteur des aristocrates” (Figure 30) is an exception in this regard: it depicts the education of young aristocrats, who are taught all the ways to crush the Revolution and keep the people subjugated. In this image, a teacher, a demon named “Belphégor” instructs two young boys, one in officer’s clothes, the other dressed as a cardinal. The young officer reads about the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, while the young cardinal sits beside a cannon. On the board in their classroom, a series of “lessons” are written for them. Some of these include the art of destroying men, deceiving the people, and keeping them in ignorance. Pages from a lesson are strewn on the ground, presumably already learned, including stealing money from the state, a “poison sword”, and the invention of gunpowder. This image makes some implicit accusations while containing familiar anti-aristocratic refrains. It suggests that nobles are not only debauched from a young age by their environments, but are congenitally corrupted from birth. The idea that nobles were dangerous not merely for their social perversions, but because of their inherent racial qualities, was a familiar argument made by many anti-aristocrats.²¹⁷

Radicals claimed that through noble marriage alliances, and because of the various corrupt ancestors found in their lineage, the blue blood of the aristocracy was intrinsically rotten.²¹⁸ The implications here are serious: by suggesting that aristocratic children were tainted by their genetic heritage, and were as much a threat as their parents, the possibility of targeting the youth is not too difficult to imagine. Indeed, such

²¹⁷ Antoine de Baecque, “Le discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: ‘Le peuple contre les gros.’” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Vol. 36, No. 1: Jan. - Mar., 1989), 21.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

dehumanization did occur during the Revolution. The September 1793 “Law of Suspects” allowed the denunciation and imprisonment of any suspected former nobles *and* their children,²¹⁹ and during the civil war in the Vendée, 1793-1796, civilians, including children, were seen as inhuman and killed alongside adults.²²⁰ One of the most prominent victims of this mentality was the dauphin of France, Louis-Charles. After being taken away from his mother, he was imprisoned by himself, and although a child, was treated as an enemy, neglected, abused and left to die a tragic death.²²¹ While images of aristocratic children were rare, their inclusion in engravings shows the boundless ways that radicals both perceived monstrous threats, and indicated their willingness to slander the most innocent victims.

IV. A Case Study in Monstrosity: The Aristocratic Hydra

One monster in particular – the multi-headed hydra – embodied the multiple dangers that nobles posed to the Revolution. First appearing in 1789 and continuing into 1790, this theme was used to suggest that it was not merely reactionary courtiers that lay behind plots, but aristocrats of all stripes. The 1789 print, “L’Hydre Aristocratique” (Figure 31), for example, a beast with a dozen human heads, and the body, claws and tails of a frightening colossal frame, suggested the dangers posed by resentful former nobles, or “*ci-devants*”. Its human faces are not entirely clear, but it seems clear from the title that they are the heads of aristocrats. The hydra menaces a phalanx of patriots, who

²¹⁹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 288-289.

²²⁰ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 788-789.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 788-796.

by the light of “liberty”, the monster looks at a lantern, inscribed with the words “vengeur de la patrie/avenger of the fatherland”. This is a reference to the violent fate meted out to grain speculators (most of whom were noblemen) and suspected profiteers who were hanged from street lamps by Parisian crowds in the summer of 1789.²²⁴

²²⁴Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 55.



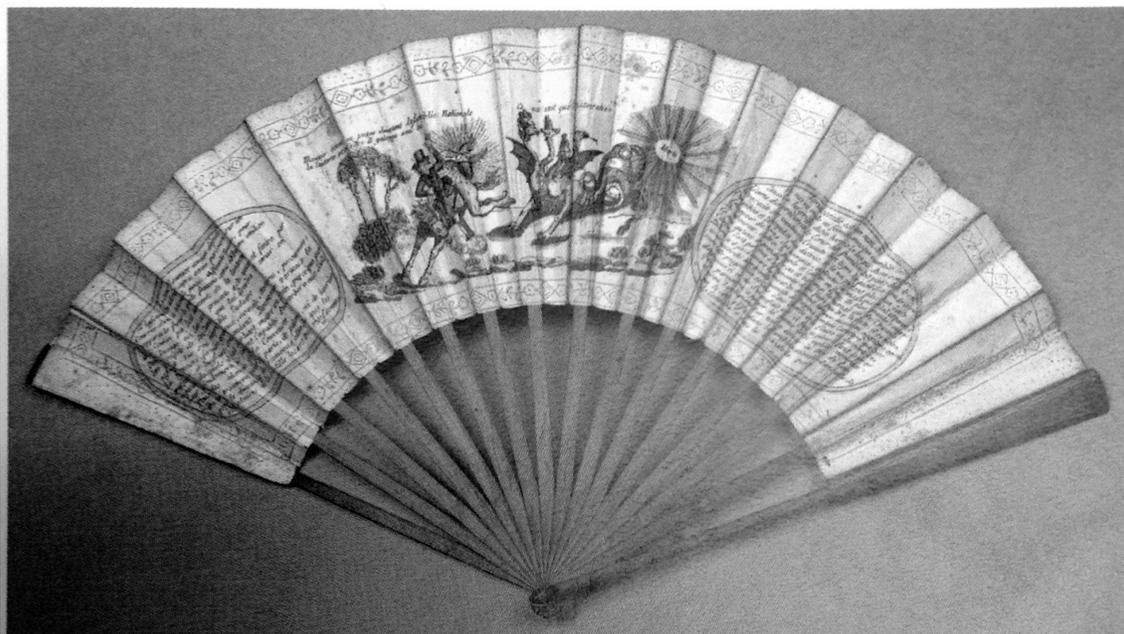
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- Figure 32 -

Revolutionary symbols and imagery such as this aristocratic hydra also proved to be popular outside of the printing world, and were quickly incorporated into material

²²⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947481z.r=Les+Fripons+craignent+les+reverberes.langEN>

objects. A lady's fan from 1789, for example, assimilated the image of the aristocratic hydra and the text from the "Almanach des Aristocrates".²²⁶



- Figure 33 -

Like other revolutionary images, this one became fashionable, and displayed the political loyalties and sentiments of its bearer. Using the same text and image from the Almanach the fan states:

The aristocracy is a monster, neither male nor female, but of both sexes together; it has the claws of a harpy, the tongue of a leech, the soul of a prosecutor, the heart of a financier, the feet of a billygoat, the voracity of a vulture, the cruelty of a tiger, the pride of a lion, the lasciviousness of a monk and the stupidity of a provincial judge; it has been seen for over a century slaking its thirst with the blood of men, wolfing the labourer's harvests and hopes, devouring the people and causing in France the greatest devastation.

While we cannot say to whom this fan belonged or where it may have been displayed, it does tell us a few things. The existence of this item implies that anti-noble caricatures

²²⁶ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 55.

were not merely “low brow” or solely for the illiterate, but that they permeated the middle classes as well. It also demonstrates the fashionable nature of some anti-noble caricatures, which people could use to convey political allegiances at social gatherings. The original print was produced by Duclos, who as we have seen was well known before the Revolution, a fact which might have helped influence the object’s appeal in fashionable society. While it is possible that owning such a fan was merely a passing fad, it still suggests that there was a market for luxury items containing anti-noble imagery.



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- Figure 34 -

²²⁷ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947480j.r=Un+Monstre+a+trois+têtes+designant.langEN>

The hydra remained a popular image in 1790, taking on even more threatening and gruesome characteristics. Similar to the popular tongue-in-cheek images of 1789 that showed nobles riding on the backs of commoners (please see images of Three Estates in Chapter 3) the image “Monstre à trois têtes” (Figure 34) takes the imagery of exploitation to extremes. Rather than a comical image of the privileged orders riding on the back of a peasant, the nobility in this image is a fearsome creature in the process of ripping apart and “swallowing up” the corpse of a commoner. Like the hydra of the Almanach, the aristocratic identity of this particular hydra is easily recognizable through its plumed helmet, bishop’s mitre, and the multiple heads suggesting collusion between the privileged orders. Two much more human-like figures appear on the right, accused of colluding with the beast. A nun, who is identified as “Hypocrisy”, rides a monk with pointed ears; in her arms she carries a fearsome snake, which allegedly contains “aristocratic poison”. This image contains not only dehumanizing slanders against the nobility and clergy, but carnal ones as well. The snake wielded by a nun who “rides” the monk, carries strong biblical and sexual undertones.

“Monstre à trois têtes” includes multiple themes – accusations of sexual depravity, greed, inhumanity and cruelty are levelled at the nobility – and hints at a transition that seems to have occurred between 1789-1790 in the minds of caricaturists and other revolutionaries, and which will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 3. Nobles were no longer figures of fun, but the source of the people’s suffering. Over the course of the first two years of the Revolution, famine and the fear of repression by aristocrats were two very real forces in the lives of many poor French citizens. The rapacious hydra represented in the caricatures of this period not only embodied these fears, but likely

inflamed them as well. The image of the hydra represented an evolution in anti-noble imagery, marking nobles out not only as economic exploiters, but also as those responsible for the deadly calamities befalling ordinary French people.

The preceding images of aristocratic hydras also bear striking similarities to the Beast of Gévaudan of 1764 and the Harpy of 1784. Their threatening natures and fantastic qualities mirror one another. The detailed descriptions of their physical bodies are also quite similar. The popularity of pre-revolutionary prints of fantastic creatures made revolutionary images of aristocratic monsters recognizable to their viewers, who could understand their symbolism and their message. However, instead of being presented as monstrous creatures in some isolated region or foreign land, these monsters were presented as a menace found in their very midst.

These hydras were presented as terrifying creatures, but ones that could be defeated with implicitly violent threats. However, in order to slay a hydra all of its heads must be severed and cauterized; cutting off a few does not deal with the problem. Although none of these images depict Hercules, the mythological figure who vanquished the hydra, “the people”, often equated with the heroic demigod in other engravings, act as the patriotic heroes who subdue the beast.²²⁸

²²⁸ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 96.

V. Foreigners in our Midst?

As we examine anti-aristocratic caricatures for their criticism of the innate social characteristics of the nobility, one final theme stands out, and will lead us into the politically-themed caricatures discussed in Chapter 3: the inherent foreignness of the noble orders. The belief that members of the Second Estate were prepared to suppress the Revolution through violent methods was intimately connected to anxieties about their connections to foreign powers. Nobles in the pre-revolution, particularly wealthy ones, had international social connections with their foreign counterparts. Xenophobic fears of Austrian influence were compounded by misogynistic paranoia that insidious female agents of a despised foreign power dominated the “weakened” Louis XV and Louis XVI, and by implication undermined the French state. These fears were intensified after 1789; immediately after the seizure of the Bastille, émigrés – both noble and clerical - found safe haven in foreign courts, bringing with them negative stories about the treatment of the King and nobility. The fact that noble émigrés took refuge in the lands of France’s ancient enemies, England and Austria, raised further questions about their loyalty and intentions. Allegations that nobles were secretly allied with foreign powers were magnified by claims that nobles themselves were foreign. Ideas that nobles had Germanic roots, which had been hypothesized by Boulainvilliers decades earlier, were revived, inverted, and used to question the Frenchness of the nobility.²²⁹ Betraying France therefore was not necessarily just about political convictions, but racial origins as well.

²²⁹ Antoine de Baecque, “Le discours anti-noble (1787-1792) aux origines d'un slogan: ‘Le peuple contre les gros.’” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (Vol. 36, No. 1: Jan. - Mar., 1989), 14.

Thomas Kaiser has pointed out how Austrophobia shaped the perception of Queen Marie Antoinette and Austria, but his analysis can also be used more generally to understand how xenophobic fears influenced views of the nobility. The Austrian national character shared similar characteristics to that of the “aristocrats” in revolutionary consciousness. Austrians sought to dominate through “corruption, oaths, gifts, promises, intrigue, caresses... in short, oblique methods of conquest that traditional misogyny characterized as ‘feminine’....”, an allegation courtiers in the Ancien Regime and nobles in the new one were familiar with.²³⁰ When war broke out between France and Austria in April 1792, accusations that nobles were conniving with the invading enemy increased. The Austrians were accused of purposely destroying the homes of the poor, while sparing those of the aristocracy.²³¹ “Foreign” and “aristocratic” became interchangeable words, and both came to be perceived as opposed to the interests of the “the Nation”.²³²

Collaboration between the Austrians and their aristocratic allies was represented in several different caricatures. Marie Antoinette, depicted as an agent of the Habsburgs, took centre stage in all of these images, but she was also aided and abetted by aristocratic figures. One print from 1792-1793 (Figure 35) traced this alleged collusion back to the moment the Queen came to France. This retrospective image shows Marie Antoinette, represented as Pandora, being introduced to the court by the Austrian ambassador. Some of the courtiers present are thrilled by the presentation of this “gift” to the French people,

²³⁰ Thomas E. Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie-Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror” *French Historical Studies* (Vol. 26, no. 4: Fall 2003), 590.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 595.

²³² Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 591-592.

who was placed in France to undermine the country and subject it to Austrian power.²³³

Only one courtier in the image expresses caution over her presence; the others receive her, fully aware of her true nature.



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- Figure 35 -

The supposed machinations of the Habsburgs, the Queen and the nobility were also represented in caricatures depicting contemporary events, such as the Flight to Varennes in June 1791. In “La Fuite du Roi”, the Queen orchestrates the flight of the royal family (Figure 36), advised by the imperial Habsburg eagle and a Papal devil, and aided by the half-human Swedish Count Fersen. “Seigneurs” are also present in the

²³³ *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Gallery, 1988), 184-185.

²³⁴ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6940054h.r=pandore.langEN>

image, disguised as patriots with the revolutionary cockade on their hats. The caricaturist claims that they have emerged from the sewers of the Tuileries Palace to help in the escape, but they have also stopped to cavort with prostitutes along the way. While these caricatures have been previously examined by historians for their meaning in regards to the Queen, they should also be looked at for how they depict nobles. The Queen and foreign powers, particularly the hated Austrians, are linked together by reactionary nobles who are actively involved in facilitating counterrevolution. Would foreign plots and the machinations of an “evil Queen” have been possible without their aid?



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²³⁵<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8411375d/f1.item.r=Fuite%20du%20Roi%20:%20Louis%20XVI%20déguisé%20en%20cuisinier>



The idea of a “grand conspiracy”, arguably present amongst the popular classes since 1789, had permeated different levels of society by the fall of 1791 and had become a key theme in anti-aristocratic caricatures. Growing belief in an unholy alliance between devious nobles, an amoral Queen and nefarious foreign powers is evident from the increased anxiety expressed by France’s Legislative Assembly.²³⁶ Particularly after the flight of the King, many more people were convinced by the idea, expressed by radicals since the start of the 1789, that nobles were traitors to the Revolution. Many nobles had come to oppose the Revolution by 1791, and some of them did turn to France’s enemies to help achieve their ends. As much as counterrevolutionary plots were at first mostly paranoid delusions, they became an increasing reality as nobles soured on the Revolution.

The Second Estate’s rapid loss of control in early 1789 cannot be explained by mere political expediencies. Noble pretensions of leadership and social pre-eminence, which seem so self-assured and natural at the beginning of the Revolution, quickly unravelled as radical critics again raised long-standing questions about whether the moral fibre of the court could taint the entire nobility with the stain of perversion, inversion and treachery. The anti-noble caricatures of the Revolution were pivotal in blurring these lines, skilfully transferring the worst characteristics of the small plutocratic court onto the entire nobility. How could the depraved elites of the Ancien Regime make claims to

²³⁶ Timothy Tackett, “Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792” In *The American Historical Review* (Vol. 105, no. 3: June 2000), 706-707.

lead, when their souls were rotten to the core? The Second Estate was clouded in a miasma, which was highlighted in grotesque and frightening caricatures. Critiqued on both the micro- and the macro-level, nobles were decayed inside and out. Twisted faces and decrepit bodies hinted at the danger lurking inside aristocrats, while multi-headed beasts and man-eating monsters left little room for subtlety. The threats posed by these hidden and overt enemies were multi-faceted; they were a danger to the physical, political and moral health of the nation, and would ally themselves with France's most hated enemies to satisfy their insatiable lust for power. Old superstitions, sexual anxiety, xenophobia, and misogyny were re-packaged in the political and scientific language of the time, and used to show how alienated the nobility was from the Revolution and its values. Presented as aged and sickly yet dangerous, the nobility was given three choices: purge themselves of their old and unhealthy identities and accept their role as citizens; leave the country; or face the consequences.

Chapter 3

Fratricide

For all of the monstrous and depraved ways the nobility was caricatured early in 1789, there still existed imagery that emphasized the sense of brotherhood that many in the Third Estate felt towards the Second Estate. The barriers between commoners and nobles were temporarily forgotten, or at least grandiose speeches by deputies at the Estates General or newly formed National Assembly led people to believe they had been. The abolishment of feudalism in August 1789, followed by that of noble titles in June 1790, was both symbolically rich and expressive of the desire for national unity. But how real were these fraternal feelings between nobles and commoners? And if they were real, why did they evaporate so quickly over the course of 1789-1790? The unresolved tensions and debates between the Estates in 1789 would be some of the first images the newly liberated presses would depict. And over the course of the Revolution, caricaturists would essentially be telling the story of the frayed and changing relationship between the nobility and commoners, which, according to them, decayed with every passing year. Caricaturists not only reported on events, but also attempted to influence their meaning and the message they wanted people to take from them. Ambiguously friendly to the nobility at first, they quickly juxtaposed the virtue and patriotism of commoners against the depravity and treason of the Second Estate. Through the depiction of symbolically important victories over the nobility early in the Revolution, to

broadcasting the threats posed by nobles at home and abroad, caricaturists effectively sidelined and “othered” the nobility, reducing it to a one-dimensional foe.

This was misleadingly simplistic, as not all nobles rejected the Revolution or took up arms against it. Former nobles fought against counterrevolutionary armies, joined the Jacobins and wrote anti-aristocratic publications. Yet thousands of images were produced which ignored these complexities, telling their viewers how quickly the entire nobility had rejected the Revolution and how they aimed to overthrow it. Nobles were not to be trusted and the threat they clearly posed must be met – viewers were continuously reminded – with the threat of violence. Indeed, by 1790, caricaturists had unambiguously painted all nobles with same brush, as enemies and traitors. This shift was consciously felt by noble observers, like the Marquis de Ferrières, who blamed the radical press for the destroying the credibility of the nobility in the eyes of the public, but the damage had been done.²³⁷

A close examination of caricatures focusing on the political relationship between the nobility and commoners is crucial to clarifying when, as well as why, caricaturists and many commoners turned against the Second Estate. First, symbolic depictions of France’s Three Estates, often represented in caricatures as three distinct human figures interacting with one another, particularly from 1789-1790, provide information about the changing relationship between the orders. Second, the portrayal of pivotal political events, such as the seizure of the Bastille, the ending of feudalism, the Constitution, and various counter-revolutionary plots were used both to warn the public about the danger

²³⁷ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Nobles Into Aristocrats, or How an Order Became a Conspiracy.” In *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 189-224. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 220. As I argue in chapter 2, we can extrapolate much about the political positioning of the radical press to include the motivations and actions of caricaturists.

posed by the nobility, and even to implicitly threaten their safety. Caricatures provide us with critical signposts, indicating when nobles went from being brothers in the Revolution to exclusion from the national body as dangerous outsiders.

I. Fraternity

The underlying tensions between nobles and commoners were encapsulated very early on in the caricatures of 1789-1790, which showed both the partnership among the Three Estates and the changing nature of their relationship. Early representations in 1789 are frequently positive, depicting all three Estates working in harmony together, and while negative portrayals do exist, drawing on some of the accusations that nobles were exploiters and traitors, even some of these could be playful and comical. However, by 1790, all optimism had vanished, replaced by images revelling in the nobility's loss of power and underlining their danger to the Revolution.

Clearly, caricaturists themselves were cognizant that a profound shift had taken place in the relationship between commoners and nobles from 1789-1790, and worked to depict the degree to which the power dynamic between the two groups had been altered. Indeed, while images showing the Three Estates are the most positive representations of the nobility in caricature throughout the Revolution, they remained cautious. The subject matter had to meet certain criteria: for example, images only showed nobles in a favourable light when they were embracing equality with commoners or dissolving their separate identities within the national body. Any aggressive actions, such as resisting the

political emancipation of the Third Estate or conspiring against the Revolution, were sanctioned in caricatures and broadcast to a wide audience.



- Figure 37 -

Images depicting the Three Estates followed a basic formula that would have been discernable to consumers. Three individuals - a noble, usually drawn as an officer with a sword, a priest in a black cleric's robe, and a member of the Third Estate, often

²³⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6944021c.r=A+faut+esperer+.langEN>

dressed in simple clothes - were portrayed in a scene interacting with one another. One of the most famous caricatures of the French Revolution, “A faut esperer qu’ca finira ben tot” (Figure 37) captures the essential perception of unfairness between the privileged Estates and the unprivileged commoners. Widely copied, this image depicts the literally backbreaking relationship between the rural majority of Frenchmen and women and their feudal overlords. A nobleman and an abbot sit astride a hunched-over elderly peasant, resting, as it were, on his hard labour. Spilling from their pockets are sheets of paper representing their numerous financial privileges, while rabbits and doves – which commoners were forbidden to kill – gnaw away at their meagre crops. The presentation of the relationship between nobles and commoners was simplistic, making it easy to understand, but it did gloss over what was a more nuanced reality, in which individual nobles held a variety of positions on the Revolution.

An inversion of the previous image produced in 1789 “J’savois ben qu’jaurions not tour” (Figure 38), depicts the same figures but has turned the relationship completely upside down. No longer exploited, the Third Estate peasant has butchered the ravenous rabbits and doves that feudal laws had previously forbidden him from killing. Triumphantlly wielding a sword that says “remplie de courage” he sits atop a humbled nobleman and abbot, who wear the same revolutionary cockade as he does. Their pockets are no longer stuffed with privileges, but with the tax bills that they now must pay. The abbot is balancing “liberty” and “equality” on a set of scales, trying to “bring relief to the people”.



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- Figure 38 -

This portrayal is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the previous image of feudal exploitation, and it also expresses a degree of triumph. Hated symbols of privilege have been destroyed, and the peasant who had been exploited by his social betters has completely switched roles with them. This image also includes references to contemporary events, such as the killing of doves and rabbits on nobles' estates and the

²³⁹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6944024m.r=J'savois+ben+qu'jaurions+.langEN>

abolition of feudal rights in August of 1789, which had piqued the interest of caricaturists and which will be discussed further, below. It is an open celebration of the victory over a despised social system and over those who had previously benefitted from it.

While criticizing the fundamental underpinnings of France's social order and taxation system, the images we have just seen were relatively playful as well. The tone is less hateful than it is mocking, victorious, and generally positive. Early images of nobles eagerly joining with their commoner brothers can be analyzed in the same vein of optimism. Regardless of the miserable conditions affecting most of the country, expectations were high and there was a general outpouring of enthusiasm for the upcoming Estates General. The hope that all three orders would come together in a spirit of fraternity can be seen in the image "The Reunion of the Three Orders" (Figure 39). All three estates appear as equal partners; the privileges and tensions dividing them – themes that we examined in the previous images – appear forgotten, literally tossed underfoot. The nobleman on the left is standing on top of his former "privileges"; the clergyman in the middle stands on the "benefices" he used to own and the commoner on the right is trampling on the words "hatred and vengeance" that his former exploitation must have aroused. At the bottom of the caricature, we read the caption: "This is what we always desired would be".



- Figure 39 -

In another image, “Monsieur des Trois Etats/Monsieur of the Three Estates” (Figure 40) is shown as a man made up of the attributes of all Three Estates .He wears the silk costume and the sword of a nobleman and the purple cassock of a bishop, and he holds a shovel, the symbol of a peasant. No one identity is superior to another; the peasant carries the same value as the two higher orders. Embodying the dissolution of all

²⁴⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410660p.r=Reunion+des+Trois+Ordres.langEN>

separate identities into a single national body, he represents one of the greatest hopes of the early Revolution: unity.



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- Figure 40 -

The positive depictions of nobles in 1789 are poignant, illustrating how a spirit of hope and a desire for genuine co-operation existed at the start of the Revolution. Liberal nobles and clergy had initially supported the Third Estate's demands for fairness, and

²⁴¹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69432722.r=Monsieur+des+trois+états.langEN>

won accolades for their solidarity with commoners. Indeed, this alliance led to optimism that eventually all nobles would willingly become citizens, embracing the liberty, equality and fraternity espoused in early 1789. However, no less significant is how this early idealism evaporated by 1790. As the deputies of the Third Estate began to assert that they alone represented “the nation,” eventually declaring themselves to be the National Assembly in the Tennis Court Oath of June 1789, caricatures again reflected the political shift. Declarations of brotherhood and unity amongst nobles and commoners had almost completely disappeared by 1790. The Revolution was not yet violently anti-noble, but it had turned decisively against anyone, nobles and clergy especially, who sought to maintain their separateness or who rejected what the Revolution was becoming. By 1790 well-known aristocratic conspiracies as well as the seizure of church property and the legal abolition of the nobles’ privileged status added to the enmity between radicals and conservatives. The profound political and social break between these two groups, a rupture that occurred in the space of just one year, is aptly illustrated in two particular images that make the change over time explicit.



- Figure 41 -

Published in 1790, “Le temps passé” (Figure 41) begins with the way the relationship among the Three Estates had been under the Ancien Régime.²⁴² The commoner on the left is emaciated, the noble in the middle a muscular and virile figure, and the cardinal on the right, well fed and opulent in his princely robes. Both privileged groups have benefited, suggests the caricaturist, from starving the Third Estate. Next to the cardinal, a giant predatory bird mauls and gorges on a lamb, an accusation of the ravenous way in which the Church had exploited its own flock. Similar to other images from the previous year that showed the exploitation of commoners, *Le Temps passé* is both a conscious rendition of past relationships while at the same time more malevolent in its accusations. The nobility and clergy were no longer presented as simply riding on the back of commoners; they were starving them and feasting on their carcasses.

²⁴² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6944036t.r=Le+Temps+passé.langEN>



- Figure 42 -

The companion image, “le temps présent” (Figure 42), shows how much things have changed.²⁴³ Unlike the previous images of feudal exploitation of 1789, the caricature from 1790 goes further, and is influenced by what has happened within the past year. Noble officers are no longer completely dominant, the Church is no longer wealthy and commoners have usurped the power of the privileged classes and asserted their own. In the image, the clergy has been stripped of all its fat and grandeur, a reference to the seizure of church wealth and land. The noble in the centre looks apprehensively at the member of the Third Estate, who has donned the clothes of an officer, and who keeps numerous guns at his side. The Third Estate man now wields a sword, and holds up his arm, perhaps giving an order to the nobleman, who has only one

²⁴³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69440392.r=Le+Tems+present.langEN>

gun. At the bottom of the image, we read, “It is here that the first are the last”. While this image is a triumphal inversion of the past, the hostility between commoners and the nobility is palpable. The image is not just antagonistic, still less playful; it is a serious warning to the enemies of an empowered and virile Third Estate.

II. Bastille: Aristocracy Foiled

Turning to a second theme present in early caricatures, the seizure of the Bastille represents the sense of empowerment that came from the triumph of the Third Estate over the privileged orders in one the most iconic moments of the French Revolution. The image of the Bastille itself became a powerful symbol, not only of a political victory by commoners, but also of the crushing of aristocratic plots. Unlike many of the images of 1789 depicting mutual co-operation between different orders, the nobility and clergy were naturally never depicted as fellow conquerors of the Bastille; its capture was presented unequivocally as the work of patriotic commoners. Many of these images were also suffused with threatening innuendo, suggesting that the use of violence was not only pivotal in seizing the Bastille, but also in ensuring the continuation of the Revolution, as a weapon against those who opposed it.

The Bastille was a poignant symbol even before it was conquered in July 1789. Physically imposing, it had come to represent much that was despised by critics of the Ancien Regime. Despotic government and arbitrary detention, embodied by a *lettre de cachet*, sometimes at the behest of an influential nobleman, had long been critiqued in the eighteenth century. By mid-July 1789 it became one of several targets attacked by

Parisians, many of whom feared they were going to be starved by speculators or butchered by foreign mercenaries loyal to the court. These fears prompted a general panic, as well as expressions of outrage towards hated symbols and figures. City walls on the periphery of Paris, together with dozens of customs houses which had been erected by the loathed farmers general, were torn down by large crowds. A worse fate awaited some hated Parisian noble officials, who were hanged from lanterns, mutilated and decapitated, their severed heads paraded around on pikes.²⁴⁴ The seizure of the Bastille was the culmination of these vengeful and defensive acts of violence, a level of significance which helps us understand its presence in anti-noble caricatures.

The print “Destruction of the Bastille over the enemies of liberty on July 14th 1789” (Figure 43) illustrates these different themes. Standing in front of a captured Bastille, a ferocious patriotic commoner has slayed a hydra with a sabre and wields a pike, topped with a liberty cap, on which is inscribed “long live liberty”. The familiar image of the hydra (see chapter 2) is representative here of the aristocratic threat allegedly posed to the patriots of Paris, and in this case it has been successfully slain.

²⁴⁴ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 405-406.



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- Figure 43 -

The viewer was meant to discern the killing of various Parisian nobles before and after the capture of the Bastille, and the subsequent parading of their severed heads throughout Paris. The patriot's pike and the pile of heads on the ground are a stark reminder of the violence that many felt was not only justified, but a necessary tool to stop aristocratic plots against the Revolution. The script in this print reminds us that the word "Bastille" was merely a name for "fortified castle", implying that all such places would have represented the same kind of oppression, and a link with the ransacking of noble estates over the course of the summer of 1789. Finally, this image reminds its audience that the *prévost des marchands* and governor de Launay were punished for crimes against the Nation, suggesting that other transgressions against "the people" should be met with

violent justice. In the background two figures, a nobleman and a priest, run away in terror, fearful of the strength of the patriot after the defeat of the hydra.



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- Figure 44 -

The empowerment of the common people, through violence and the fear that violence engendered in the privileged orders, is also captured in another image of the Bastille. “Waking up of the Third Estate” (Figure 44) is very similar to the previous caricature, appearing almost like a “before” illustration. The Bastille is also present, with miniature figures in red and blue outside its walls; the figures hold aloft pikes, some of

²⁴⁶ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942905r.r=reveil+des+.langEN>

which bear the iconic severed heads. The Third Estate figure at the centre is on the verge of liberating himself from chains, while a nobleman and priest look on in horror. He is using a rock to break free; he is reaching for the muskets and daggers that are next to him, implying that once he is liberated, he will turn them on his oppressors. Although not as explicitly violent as the previous image, this caricature suggests that commoners had purposely been kept in chains, which, when broken, pose a direct and potentially violent threat to the privileged orders. The Bastille, seen as a symbol of oppression before its capture, has been transformed into a symbol of the freedom and emancipation of the Third Estate. This had been achieved not through negotiation or through the good graces of the privileged, but by the direct actions of “the people”. This image was not only a warning to nobles, but also a celebration and reminder for ordinary people, many of whom felt empowered by the capture of the Bastille.



- Figure 45 -

In other images, the Bastille was understood as not just a victory of the people, but as the end of the nobility. One caricature, “L’Enterrement de l’Aristocratie” (Figure 45), depicts a public performance that occurred in Paris on July 14th, 1790, during the Festivals of Federation; both the event and the reproduction of it used the seizure of the Bastille as a centerpiece.²⁴⁷ As the Federation celebrated the events of the previous year, a “funeral” procession for the aristocracy was held, replete with “wailing women, the urn in the shape of a model of the Bastille... also a unit of the National Guard with banner, the musicians, a freshly dug grave and, finally, the monument, on which sculpted severed heads recall the popular justice of July 1789.”²⁴⁸ This very public and derisive performance would have been broadcast to even larger audiences, as it was the subject of an influential pamphlet inspired by the performance, and later, by this caricature, giving us a glimpse into the interrelationship between performance and print materials in revolutionary Paris. Public processions, such as royal entrances, funerals and religious rituals had been occasions in pre-revolutionary Paris where France’s stratified social system was put on display, with nobles taking leading positions.²⁴⁹ Public spaces were quickly repurposed during the Revolution, where displaying one’s noble status became not only taboo, but also dangerous. The staging and commemoration of this event in print, like images of the Three Estates from 1789 and 1790, demonstrate how much the nobility had been vilified in a short period of time. It also illustrates how the nobility could be taunted in inverted rituals and in public spaces that they had once dominated. The Bastille was a strong narrative device that quickly became a representation of the

²⁴⁷ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947469h.r=L'Enterrement+de+l'Aristocratie.langEN>

²⁴⁸ Rold Reichardt, “The Heroic Deeds of the New Hercules: The Politicization of Popular Prints in the French Revolution”, In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 19.

²⁴⁹ David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 24.

violence needed to subdue the nobility, as well as the tool that would help bury the former ruling classes.

Finally, caricaturists also turned their satiric gaze to a third symbol, one of the most meaningful representations of noble power and dignity: the coat-of-arms. Long held to be an external representation of a noble family's heritage and honour, coats-of-arms were one of the first symbols to be attacked by the people early in 1789, in assaults which were indicative of commoners' simmering resentment towards noble social and political pretensions.²⁵⁰ Heraldic symbols also represented feudalism, with all of its undertones of exploitation of the people, and the air of superiority many nobles gave themselves. To many revolutionaries they were also a material representation of the separation between the Three Estates, divisions that were widely portrayed by caricaturists in the early Revolution (see above). Noble deputies did renounce their seigneurial privileges in the patriotic session of August 4th, 1789, inspired as they were by earlier events that had culminated in the "Great Fear". Yet while this profound decision had financial implications, it did not abolish the nobility as a separate and distinct social order, and many nobles clung to their titles, separateness, and outward displays of their status. Over the course of the winter of 1789-1790, increasing calls were made to abolish nobility itself, which is what eventually happened on June 20th 1790, when noble deputies voted their order out of existence. Even this act did not end violence or hostility towards nobles or their treasured symbols, however; coats-of-arms and servants in liveries continued to be attacked.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 207-208.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 237-9.

Caricaturists were quick to depict these changes and to offer their own particular take on what the loss of nobility meant, as well as to insult the symbols still held as sacred by many nobles. “Le Marque des Sots” (Figure 46) or “The sign of stupidity” is a scatological and crude take on noble coats-of-arms.



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- Figure 46 -

Three devils, likely noblemen, as one of them has a sword, appear in a scene, creating heraldic pieces together, a device that only nobles were allowed to display. This process involves one devil defecating on a coat-of-arms, suggesting that his feces form part of its composition. Two devils beside him are engaged in painting another one, while smaller devils fly above them, farting out a plume of gas, which contains titles such as *vicomte*, *marquis*, and *fermiers general*. This particular caricature is “dedicated” to the

²⁵² <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69474401.r=Dédié+à+la+noblesse+savonnée.langEN>

“soapy/soaped up nobility”, which is perhaps a double entendre; the expression could imply cleaning off dirt, giving a dressing down, or just making life difficult for nobles. By depicting nobles as naked devils, the image lays bare any pretention that nobles are pure or cleaner than others; it suggests that they are in fact ridiculous figures with only titles to cling to. The symbols in which they take pride are covered in fecal matter, suggests the artist; noble status is in fact unclean and something that should be completely mocked. The image states on the bottom right that indeed, a man of worth does not need such distinguishing airs to his name.



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- Figure 47 -

The “*Marque des Sots*” is replete with humoristic allusions and imagery, mocking noble titles in the crudest of manners. The image “*L’Abolition des Titres de Noblesse*” (Figure 47) goes further, showing the complete purging of nobility in a massive conflagration. Reminiscent of a bonfire of the vanities, all noble titles and coats-

²⁵³<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947439c.r=L%27abolition+des+titres+de+noblesses+par+le+Decr+et.langEN>

of-arms have been gathered together to be purified in a revolutionary fire. A sheet of paper at the centre of this inferno provides a label, reading “the vanity of French vanities”. The flames of the fire are not only meant to destroy these vain objects, but also to burn up a multi-headed hydra at the bottom right of the image. This could be understood to be the aristocratic hydra found in other imagery, suggesting that aristocratic threats will be neutralized when nobility is obliterated. The destroyed feudal symbols, called “grand titles” and “vain honours” are fodder for the flames, which the text at the bottom claims are nothing more than “smoke”.

The physical and symbolic destruction of noble symbols, such as coats-of-arms, was indicative of the common hatred not only for France’s stratified social structure, but for its feudal economic underpinnings as well. Aside from taxes to the state and to the Church, rural Frenchmen and women owed cumbersome financial and labour obligations to their feudal overlords, many of which were highly resented. If the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789 give us a particular insight into these problems, the financially exploitative relationship was also highlighted by caricaturists.²⁵⁴ Many of the engravings of 1789, for example, depicted the oppression of common people in allegorically comical ways, yet “L’Ancien Pouvoir des Deux Ordres” goes further, both in terms of artistic representation and in tone.

²⁵⁴ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 191.



- Figure 48 -

At the centre of this image (Figure 48) lie two figures: a nobleman is on the left, dressed in archaic armour, bearing a cape, shield and sword and wielding a musket. He leans against an obese prelate in a cassock on the right. Both have banners behind them: the nobleman's banner reads "Pay up or else", while the prelate's states, "Fear God". The substance of these messages is demonstrated by how each of these two exploiters interacts with the somewhat dishevelled peasants in this scene. The nobleman holds a musket in the face of a peasant family, whose father appears to have a bloodied nose, and who hands over his money to the noble robber. The prelate commits a similar theft, although he uses the fear of God rather than force to get commoners to pay up. Both of these privileged figures lean against one another back-to-back, suggesting both collusion

²⁵⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410955d.r=L%27Ancien+pouvoir+des+deux+ordres.langEN>

and the ease with which they steal from the people.²⁵⁶ The peasants in this image look like starving vagrants - a sight that would have been familiar to many in France in 1789 - and stand in stark contrast to the plumper and better-dressed commoners found in other caricatures.

This image does not merely depict the peasantry being exploited; it shows them being violently starved and robbed, left to wander the roads in little more than rags. Bereft of comical undertones, this caricature is a polemical indictment of the noble-commoner relationship experienced by most French people. Although this image was a gross oversimplification of the feudal relationship between the privileged and the peasantry, it would have resonated not only with its urban readers, but also with the numerous peasant vagabonds that had recently relocated to cities and towns, many of whom would take active roles in the politically assertive crowds of the Revolution.²⁵⁷

The symbolic and literal destruction of the nobility, through the seizure of the Bastille, the ending of feudalism as an economic and social system, and the abolition of the Second Estate, were all considered important steps towards realizing “equality” and “fraternity” during the early Revolution. But the elimination of many of these symbolic relics of the Ancien Regime was not all that was required to make the Revolution secure, nor did it smooth over growing tensions between nobles – who by 1790 were all labelled aristocrats - and suspicious commoners. In the midst of these underlying tensions, liberal

²⁵⁶ Although it is beyond the purview of my thesis, I have a few insights into how the clergy was depicted in caricature during the Revolution. All clergy, whether they appear to be cardinals, bishops, monks, nuns or parish priests appear to have been depicted as enemies of the Revolution. Like the nobles of 1789, there are ambiguous and somewhat positive depictions of the First Estate. However, all ranks in the church, from the wealthiest to the poorest quickly become depicted as enemies of the Revolution and in collusion with the nobility and vice versa. They were also labeled “aristocrates” as well.

²⁵⁷ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 324-325.

nobles and commoners had the task of providing France with a document that was hoped would heal the wounds of the past: a constitution.

III. The Constitution: Foil to the Aristocracy

In September 1791 the much-anticipated Constitution, idealized by liberal reformers since before the Revolution and actively called for by revolutionaries in the spring of 1789, was finally realized. Many nobles had envisaged for decades that a constitution would restrain the powers of France's absolutist government, and unsurprisingly some of its earliest proponents were members of France's Second Estate. However, the rapid pace of social change that had occurred over the two previous years alarmed members of the Second Estate, who quickly discovered that they would not be the ones to control the course of political change in France.

Unplanned reforms, such as the ending of feudalism in August of 1789 and the abolition of nobility in June 1790, helped sour the relationship between nobles and commoners. The seizure of the Church's property and the confinement of the King, both of whom nobles were duty bound to protect, struck at noble notions of honour and dignity. Aggressive behaviour, such as the "Great Fear" of summer 1789, the ridiculing of noble status – in caricatures and other media – as well as the growing verbal and physical abuse against nobles merely inflamed the resentment of the former Second

Estate. Commoners in turn were alarmed by the increasing number of noble emigrants, the desertion of noble officers, real and imagined conspiracies at home, and the formation of counterrevolutionary armies abroad. The ratification of the Constitution could not bridge these growing divides, nor reassure the many of the nobility who were agitated by drastic changes affecting their power and traditional identity. It was also hoped that its successful implementation would smooth over the social chaos and divisions that the Revolution had exposed. Despite these desires, and the national celebration of the Constitution's implementation, a growing chasm emerged between nobles and commoners.



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²⁵⁸<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84106509.r=Tôt+tôt+tôt+battez+chaud+tôt+tôt+tôt+bon+courage+il+faut.langEN>

Three particular images, two from 1791 and one from 1793 are good examples of this alienation. Although stylistically different, varying from simple and straightforward, to elaborately detailed, all three caricatures contain similar messages. Each image underlines stark differences between nobles and the Revolution, depicting the Constitution as a victory against the nobility and making implicit and explicit threats of violence against noble opponents. As we have seen, in 1789, caricatures had depicted the fraternal spirit between the privileged and unprivileged Estates working towards common goals, one of which was giving France a constitution. The caricature “Tôt tôt tôt battez chaud tôt tôt tôt bon courage il faut avoir coeur a l'ouvrage : nouvelles constitutions” (please see previous page) from 1789, depicted all Three Estates collectively attempting to manually hammer out a constitution (represented by a book) on an anvil. By 1791 revolutionary caricatures captured and emphasized the failure of this idealized goal. The Constitution was pictured as a partisan foil to aristocratic enemies, and another representation of how nobles stood outside the interests of the nation. Let us examine three post-1790 engravings juxtaposing the Constitution and the nobility.

“Etrenne, a la noble” [sic] dated 1791 is a simply drawn allegorical engraving that uses primary colours to depict a female figure representing the Constitution (Figure 49). Like the Revolution itself, the Constitution is an anthropomorphized young woman, dressed in Roman attire. She leads the viewer into battle, trampling over noble coats-of-arms in the process. The destruction of feudal symbols, as well as the breaking of chains, were both familiar motifs present in the earliest revolutionary caricatures. The figure of the Constitution indicates her triumph over these oppressive symbols by wielding a

sword and illuminating the path forward with a torch. Revolutionary progress, by implication, was achieved in a violently assertive way and at the expense of the nobility. This image is simple, yet forceful. There is little text, and the caricaturist avoids opaque classical allusions that an ordinary viewer might not understand. Its plainness and use of familiar symbolism makes its message accessible and familiar to its viewers.



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- Figure 49 -

Other caricatures in which the topics of the Constitution and the nobility appeared together were much more ornate and layered in meaning. “La France libre: celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots s'ait aussi des méchants arrêter les complots” (Figure 50) is one such example. Dated 1791, the image is split into two very distinct and

²⁵⁹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948154b.r=Etrenne%2C+a+la+nobles.langEN>

oppositional sides. God himself is the mediator, found at the top of the image, unambiguously blessing the Revolution.



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- Figure 50 -

The Constitution is mentioned twice, once as the pillar supporting France/the Virgin Mary, and the other (on the left) enshrined on top of the Rights of Man and underneath the National Assembly. Flanked by the National Guard, the people celebrate. The

²⁶⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948088s.r=La+France+libre%3A+celui+qui+met+.langEN>

“confounded” aristocracy on the right of the image sit in the pits of hell, while the figure of death holds the “book of destiny” in his hands, suggesting that their damnation was pre-ordained. Beneath them lies a medusa-like figure, named “discord”, grasping at serpents, another symbol strongly associated with the nobility in caricatures. While much more intricate compared to the previous engraving, the clear distinction between good (Revolution/Constitution) and evil (aristocrats), actively adjudicated by God, who bestows blessings and punishments, would still have been comprehensible to any Frenchman or woman. The Constitution is not just a secular document, but also a divinely ordained one, used to break the chains of slavery, and as a tool damning aristocratic enemies.



- Figure 51 -

The Constitution remained an important subject in caricature, being depicted almost two years after its implementation. The ornate engraving “La Revolution française, Arrivée sous le Regne de Louis XVI le 14 Juillet 1789 Dédiee aux Amis de la Constitution” (Figure 51) dated 1793 is even more complex than the previous images.²⁶¹ Significant events of the Revolution are illustrated, such as the seizure of the Bastille, the Rights of Man, and the forced return of the King from Varennes. Aristocratic figures are clearly discernable. Weaving their way through the centre of the scene, nobles form a large funeral cortege. Bishops, parlementaires, courtiers, and officers work from the left of the engraving all the way to the far right. Tearfully drying their eyes, they follow a coffin at the centre of the image, which is covered in Ancien Regime symbols and the *Livre Rouge* for all the “feignants”.²⁶² Noblemen and women are rowing the oars of the coffin, suggesting that they are galley slaves, the punishment meted out to deserters and traitors.²⁶³ A witch at the front guides the coffin, while a female figure, covered in peacock feathers, follows behind. Both of these characters had been used to negatively represent aristocrats, particularly female ones, for several years (see Chapter 2). At the bottom of the engraving, on the far right, the figure of Time crushes coats-of-arms and pushes over a pillar engraved “end of the feudal reign”. Behind him stand well-dressed nobles who look on in despair. Finally, at the far right of the engraving, a cart full of

²⁶¹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942930t.r=La+Revolution+française%2C+Arrivée+sous.langEN>

²⁶² The *Livre Rouge*, “a list of secret ‘gratifications’ distributed by the crown since 1774. Pensions and other handouts had been assumed from the start of the Revolution to be one of despotism’s more insidious instruments...” in Doyle, *Aristocracy and Its Enemies*, 228. “Feignant” (or fainéant) refers to a lazy or idle person. See The ARTFL Project, s.v. “Faineant,” accessed February 17, 2015, <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=faineant>

²⁶³ Galérer is still used in French slang today, and ARTFL indicates the negative connotations it had in the 18th century. See <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=galere>

people is led away, trailed by a large crowd. Although no guillotine is depicted, it appears by implication that these people are headed towards their deaths.

Reminiscent of the image “L’enterrement de L’Aristocratie ” the mournful noble procession in this engraving from 1793 also draws attention to the destruction of the nobility and mocks them for their losses. This image makes explicit all of the numerous elements involved in their downfall over the previous four years, such as the seizure of the Bastille, the Rights of Man, the abolition of feudalism, and the overthrow of the monarchy. Despite this engraving’s intricate nature, a line from the popular refrain “Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira, les aristocrates” can be read at the bottom, a song familiar to ordinary people. In conjunction with “Gare la Constitution”²⁶⁴, this well-known song makes explicit threats to aristocratic enemies. The Constitution, like in previous caricatures, protects revolutionary freedoms and warns its enemies of the dangers of opposition. This elaborate panoply is also dedicated to the “Amis de la Constitution” or Jacobins, who had gone from working on a constitution within a monarchical framework in 1789, to forming an anti-noble and egalitarian republic by 1793. Not only does this engraving show the evolution of the nation, but also that of the nobility. The aristocrats in this image have undergone a transformative process, from grief and loss, to punishment and mocking, and finally, to an uncertain and possibly violent fate.

Consider one final image (Figure 52), in which the Constitution, embodied in a female allegorical body, polices and protects France, ready to defend freedom and attack those who threatened its newfound liberty. This mother goddess warned not only France’s internal enemies, but also those who had left the country, of the punishment that awaited them: in the guise of a woman, the Constitution applies corporal punishment to

²⁶⁴ “Beware/Watch out for” the Constitution”

the backside of male officer, identified as “the counterrevolution”. There are several layers of meaning to this image. First, the Constitution takes centre-stage, as a symbolic protector and defender of the Revolution.



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- Figure 52 -

Her image is closely tied to that of the Bastille, which she wears as a crown on her head.²⁶⁶ Clutching the Rights of Man and the “Décret Clermontois” which appears like a rod, she prepares to swing it (“fustigeant”) against the bottom of the counterrevolution.²⁶⁷ Second, we see how the Constitution protects France against her external enemies, drawing its power from the Bastille and the Rights of Man. Like other

²⁶⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69482412.r=Décret+Clermontois.langEN>

²⁶⁶ As previously discussed in Section II of Chapter 3, the Bastille was used as a strong anti-aristocratic/anti-despotic symbol for “the people” over their aristocratic opponents.

²⁶⁷ My guess is the “Déclaration Clermontois” is actually the Brunswick Manifesto of 1792. The Prince de Condé helped draft it, and he held the title of Comte de Clermont.

images, it inverts the social mores of the Ancien Regime, by showing a noble officer getting publicly flogged in an army camp, something that would have been unheard of a few years before. The thrashed “Counterrevolution” is in fact the Prince de Condé - the primary leader of the émigré counterrevolutionary forces – who, the author claims, still threatens France, despite his “correction” by the Constitution. Third, this image depicts and threatens violence against enemies. Two patriots butcher a group of peacocks, labeled “*orgeuil*”, which are accused of trying to bite the Constitution; peacocks were symbols of aristocrats, representing their pride, vanity and decadence. Impaled and beheaded, their slaughter is witnessed by the “patriot army” which is “ready to march against those that want to bring harm.” Although this image is relatively playful, and the brutality allegorical, it demonstrates the position of its creator and of other revolutionaries. The constitution and the victory of the Bastille must be protected, we are given to understand, and internal and foreign threats must be dealt with by collective violence if necessary. By 1791, France’s revolutionaries were conscious of these existential dangers, and aware that many of them came increasingly from the disempowered nobility.



To this point we have considered four distinct themes which are present in anti-noble caricatures and which show the political development in the first years of the Revolution. However, existing alongside these symbols, and then becoming dominant after 1791, the portrayal of the supposed counter-revolutionary activity of the nobility was a key theme for caricaturists. From the beginning of the Revolution, many

commoners feared that nobles would not passively accept a loss of power, and that they would actively conspire to crush any reforms that usurped their political and social entitlements. Nobles were placed under a microscope, especially by caricaturists, who saw the forces of aristocratic reaction everywhere, but their focus on these alleged counter-revolutionaries from 1789-91 was expressed in two different ways. First, as indicated in Chapter 2, aristocrats were depicted as morally suspect or as monstrous beasts, which although unreal, revealed the early Revolution's insecurities about organized aristocratic military plots and the moral contagion posed by the nobility. Second, real conspirators such as the Marquis de Favras were shown, but they were often depicted acting alone.

Thus, in the early Revolution, noble conspiracies were either fantastic mirages or isolated incidents. But by 1791, members of the nobility were concerned by radical changes they could no longer control. Many stayed in France, passively resisting or keeping a low profile, but increasing numbers chose to resist by emigrating, by waiting for the Revolution to peter out, or by attempting to actively topple the Revolution with France's neighbours. True, only about 150,000 nobles emigrated during the Revolution, and an even smaller number involved themselves in counterrevolutionary schemes.²⁶⁸ Regardless, post-1790 caricatures of aristocratic conspiracies focused less on monsters or rogue agents, and more on recognized counter-revolutionary figures, real places and well-known identifiable plots. When war broke out in 1792, caricatures had made perfectly clear who was aiding France's enemies.

²⁶⁸ Simon Burrows, "The *Émigrés* and Conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789-99." In *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, eds. Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser and Marisa Linton, 150-171. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 154-55.

IV. Turncoats: Noble Conspiracy at Home

Radicals “knew” that dangerous aristocrats lurked everywhere, and many ordinary people clearly suspected nobles of complicity in “famine plots”. Both of these fears were largely phantoms of the imagination from 1789-1791, but were substantiated by widely publicized, but isolated noble conspiracies. People were aware of the counter-revolutionary plots of conservative courtiers, such as the Comte d’Artois and Prince de Condé, who had fled to neighbouring states shortly after the seizure of the Bastille. Rumours were rife that these lords and the Queen were plotting to attack the National Assembly, or to raise a force of mercenaries and encourage Austrian military intervention.²⁶⁹ However much this threat was either imagined or exaggerated, and inflamed by the daily insinuations found in caricatures and the press, it was informed by real stories of counterrevolutionary noble activities. While only a small fraction of the estimated 150,000 noble émigrés actually took part in any kind of counterrevolutionary conspiracies, those who did remained a destabilizing force with French politics for decades.²⁷⁰

Several specific events lent credence to the fear that nobles lay behind plots to undermine the Revolution. At first most plots appeared to be initiated by lone agents, but members of the public remained suspicious that they were but small examples of a wider

²⁶⁹ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 436.

²⁷⁰ Simon Burrows, “The *Émigrés* and Conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789-99.” In *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, eds. Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser and Marisa Linton, 150-171. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 154-55.

plot. A conspiracy by the Marquis de Favras in December 1789 to rescue the King from captivity in Paris was followed by his very public hanging (Figure 53) on February 18th 1790. A crowd of 50,000 people assembled to witness it, calling out for more heads, as it was believed that Favras had not acted alone.²⁷¹



- Figure 53 -

In February 1790 another scheme was revealed, when a plan to buy up 11,000 acres of land in Ohio by the Duc d'Epréménil and other alienated nobles became well publicized. They were accused of wanting to move national wealth and skilled workers

²⁷¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 225.

²⁷² <http://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog/br595xg7971>

abroad in order to replicate the abolished feudal system in America.²⁷³ Emigration was perceived not only as a personal rejection of the Revolution, but also as an act that could weaken the foundations of the new order. Both men were held up as examples of the subversive ways that nobles opposed the Revolution, and both were known or believed to have had numerous accomplices.

Even nobles who were part of revolutionary bodies, or who espoused reformist ideals, were treated with suspicion. In January 1790 all ex-nobles in the Paris National Guard were expelled, because their loyalty to the Revolution was questioned.²⁷⁴ A few months earlier, noble deputies very prominently stood up in the National Assembly, renouncing their feudal privileges, and would vote their order out of existence in June of that year. The very public pronouncements of reformist nobles were overshadowed by the actions of those guilty or suspected of treason. This disparity can be evidenced in caricatures, which by 1790 no longer celebrated reformist nobles, but highlighted the treasonous actions of dangerous aristocrats.

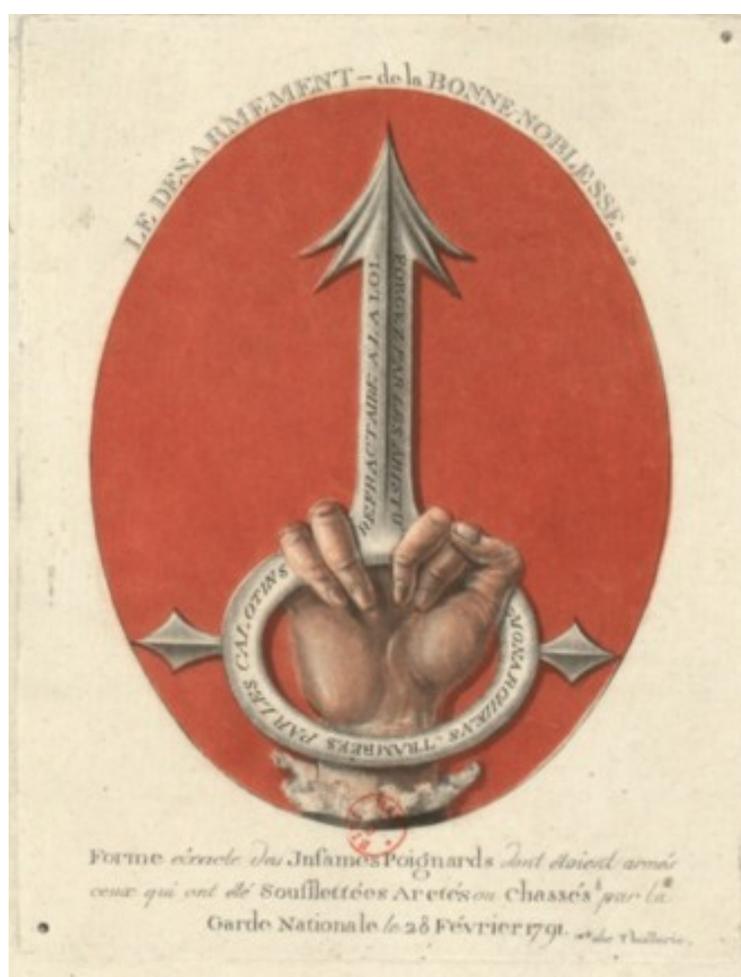
Tensions continued over the course of 1790, exacerbated by other aristocratic plots, perceived insults to noble honour and to that of the King. By 1791 many nobles, like the King, also felt alienated by the treatment of the Church and the controversial Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Service to Church and King was at the heart of many nobles' identity, the denial of which, alongside the abolition of their titles, proved to be an attack that an increasing number of nobles would not tolerate. These "slights" to the honour of the monarchy and nobility helped inspire a group of young noblemen to

²⁷³ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 230.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

haphazardly attempt to kidnap the King. On February 28th 1791 an armed group of them calling themselves the “Chevaliers du poignard” and attempted to kidnap Louis XVI.²⁷⁵ They failed, were disarmed, repudiated by the King (who was planning his own escape) and humiliated. Their defeat and disgrace became the focus of several caricatures.

Two particular images highlight the subterfuge and punishment of those involved in the “l’Affaire des poignards”. While one print is allegorical and the other, realistic, they both emphasize punishment, emasculation, and subjugation of the nobility.



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- Figure 54 -

²⁷⁵ *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Gallery, 1988), 193.

²⁷⁶ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69477046.r=Le+Désarmement+de+la+bonne-noblesse.langEN>

The first image, titled “Le Désarmement de la bonne-noblesse” by Villeneuve shows a severed hand, with a ruffled sleeve, holding onto an engraved dagger. The inscription reads “The Disarmament of the good nobility. Forged by the aristo-Monarchiens, plotted by the dogs that resist the law.” Beneath the blade, details are provided to the reader about the actual plot, stating “Exact form of the foul daggers carried by those who were beaten, arrested or driven out by the National Guard on 28 February 1791.” Although no conspirator was actually dismembered, the depiction of a severed nobleman’s hand had several implications. It suggested both the literal disarming of the nobility, prefigured the decapitations of the terror, and the shape of the dagger itself imply a castration.



- Figure 55 -

Other images of the Affaire were more realistic (Figure 55), attempting to portray the events of the conspiracy in an accurate way. Although different from the symbolic image produced by Villeneuve, they still contained elements of violence, humiliation and punishment. Each shows the hall of the Tuileries, where the National Guard, under the

²⁷⁷ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947701z.r=Triomphe+de+la+Garde+nationale.langEN>

watch of La Fayette and the King, disarm the aristocratic plotters. The conspirators are shown giving up their weapons, prostrating themselves and in some cases, physically assaulted with a slap or kick.

The punishment of the Marquis de Favras and the disarming of noblemen involved in “L’Affaire des poignards” were not merely acts motivated by fear, but expressions of the desire for retribution. The Second Estate had long been exempt from the normal punishments meted out to common criminals and traitors, maintaining the exclusive right to a beheading. Retaining a sword was also a public signifier of one’s noble status and feudal pretensions. By publicly humiliating nobles, commoners were openly defying the Second Estate, who had had separated themselves with their honorific and social privileges for centuries. Engravings broadcasted these acts of social vengeance, making it clear that insults to noble honour would not only go unchecked, but would be celebrated.

V. Traitors: Noble Conspiracy Abroad

Caricatures that focused on noble conspiracies, such as the previous ones, initially portrayed those formed by domestic plotters. By 1791 the focus on noble intrigues within engravings had shifted focus from home-grown schemes, to those allegedly formed abroad. Many of the most hated conservative nobles had fled France almost immediately after the seizure of the Bastille, setting up opposition bases, hoping that the Revolution would be put down. Though their scheming against the Revolution began in earnest in 1789, they remained relatively absent from depiction in revolutionary

prints for a few years. Several important events helped shift the focus from nobles at home, to those abroad.

These shifts are interesting to note, and raise questions about why caricatures in the early part of the Revolution go from showing tentative concord between nobles and commoners (1789), to fear about domestic and evil noble subterfuge (1789-1791), to mocking and triumph over foreign émigrés (1791-1793). There were more noble plots, and increased emigration after 1791, panic about “grand conspiracies” and European neighbours’ opposition to the Revolution, yet caricatures show a discernably lower level of fear and paranoia. This contradictory evidence leads to a few possible explanations. Perhaps caricaturists and their readers felt a degree of confidence. Several of the most hated nobles were gone, chateaux had been sacked, feudalism and separate Estates abolished, and several domestic plots had been crushed. Or perhaps the caricatures of 1791-1793 were being used to cover up the fear and uncertainty felt in the nation. The Flight of the King, the growing possibility of a European war, noble emigration and fears of a vast plot to overthrow the Revolution were deeply unsettling. Laughing at the misfortunes of émigrés or their impotent attempts to overthrow the Revolution from their bases on the Rhine may have been what some needed to allay their uneasiness.

Perhaps the torrent of grotesque imagery from 1789-1791 was not as popular, and more confident, less fearful images were selling. Printmakers were largely sympathetic to the Revolution, but were also driven by market forces, and altered the subject of their works with popular demand.²⁷⁸ Depictions of émigrés also involved an element of *schadenfreude*, for several of the figures depicted in these images were some of the

²⁷⁸ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 41.

wealthiest and prominent nobles of the Ancien Regime. The seizure of their property and the depiction of their financial misfortunes and military failures must have resonated on a personal level with many Frenchmen and women who had long harboured resentments against their privileges.

The flight of the King in June 1791 was a major turning point in the course of the Revolution and in the attitudes of many French nobles. The King, still loved and idealized before the flight, became a figure of hatred and suspicion. Any apolitical unity he may have symbolically embodied before was gone. Traditionally-minded nobles, already disillusioned by the abolition of their order in 1790, saw little reason to remain loyal to an alienating regime.²⁷⁹ The failed flight of the King, the sovereign to whom many nobles still felt honour bound, and his subsequent humiliation crystallized the unease and alienation they felt. Demands that noble officers take an oath first to the nation, the law, and *then* the King, offended their sense of honour, resulting in about a third of officers deserting their posts and leaving France in rising numbers.²⁸⁰

Many of the leaders of the Revolution were growing suspicious that the actions of the King and émigrés nobles involved the collusion of foreign powers. The Austrian army was on France's doorstep, having put down a rebellion by revolutionaries in the Austrian Netherlands who espoused many of the same radical ideas permeating France. The Austrians, whose Emperor was brother to Marie Antoinette, had come to an agreement with their hated enemies, the Prussians, in the Declaration of Pillnitz in August of 1791. Stating that the runaway King and Queen were not to be harmed, the two central European powers were attempting to mitigate any harm that might befall the

²⁷⁹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 255

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

wayward monarchs, but also to help less radical elements in the French government.²⁸¹ The declaration failed to have the desired effect, increasing suspicion of royalists and the power of the radicals. Paranoia was also seeping into the Legislative Assembly, whose members believed more and more in a “grand conspiracy” and in the collusion between domestic fifth columnists and hostile foreign powers. This is evidenced from the quantitative research carried out by historian Timothy Tackett, who analyzed the letters, speeches and correspondence of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies from 1789-1792.²⁸² His research strongly points out that by the start of the Legislative Assembly in September 1791, the deputies were “increasingly preoccupied with a ‘grand conspiracy,’ wherein all threats were viewed as part of a monolithic master plan, directed from a single source – which depending on the version, might be the emigrant princes, a particular foreign government, or French ‘executive authority’ itself.”²⁸³ These growing suspicions and the spectre of a European war all fed into anxieties about the loyalty of nobles, who were either increasingly leaving France, or had friends and relations who were.

For all of the paranoid fears about emigration and conspiracy swirling around the nobility, the numbers that emigrated were relatively small. Noble émigrés only ever represented approximately 12% of the entire nobility.²⁸⁴ Although their numbers were minimal, the threat they posed was perceived as much greater. By 1791 many prominent

²⁸¹ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 590.

²⁸² For the full article, please see - Timothy Tackett, “Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792” In *The American Historical Review* (Vol. 105, no. 3: June 2000), 691-713.

²⁸³ Timothy Tackett, “Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792” In *The American Historical Review* (Vol. 105, no. 3: June 2000), 707.

²⁸⁴ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 256.

nobles had gone over to the Prince de Condé, the head of one of the most illustrious noble houses in pre-revolutionary France. These great names, combined with the fact that Condé named his émigré army ‘The Nobility’ helped make it appear like his band of noble exiles was large and representative of France’s nobles.²⁸⁵ His army, based the German city of Worms became the major focus in caricatures. Although even more hated aristocrats than Condé, such as the Comte d’Artois had formed counterrevolutionary groups in other European courts earlier than the Prince, they were largely absent from representation, or peripheral figures in Condé’s Army. And unlike images of aristocratic conspirators from 1789-1791, the nobles in these caricatures were not depicted as monstrous creatures, and many were meticulously individually labelled and identified in legends. These images of Condé’s Army were also materially and politically successful, and mentioned directly in the radical press.²⁸⁶

Although there is much evidence to indicate that the Revolution was becoming more and more paranoid after the Flight of the King in 1791, caricatures did not represent this level of panic when depicting Condé’s émigré court. Condé and the figures surrounding him were not drawn as hydras or demons, but laughable and pathetic human beings. While certain aspects of their physical appearances were exaggerated or mocked, nothing indicated that they were inhuman or menacing as many of the aristocrats were from 1789-1791. The most widely produced images were of Condé, his army and the émigrés clustered around his court, but there were a few caricatures that also mocked the

²⁸⁵ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 256.

²⁸⁶ Annie Duprat, “Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure ‘La Contre Révolution’”. In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 91-102. (Canadian Plains Research Center: University of Regina, 1998), 92.

plight and position of noble emigrants as well. Two such images are revelatory about attitudes and depictions of émigrés.

In “Retour d’un émigré”, a simple, yet evocative image portrays a returning and poverty stricken émigré. Dressed in the shabby clothes of a poor commoner, the forlorn looking émigré at the centre of the image has donned the red cap of the sans-culottes, while sadly reaching into his empty pockets. His attire also resembles that of the “beast of burden” or peasant whose back was ridden on by the privileged orders in 1789. Although nothing explicitly says that this man is a former noble, the attire of the child behind him (likely his own son) suggests that these two figures are from privileged backgrounds. Regardless of the émigré figure’s specific identity, it was produced in 1791 when laws were being passed against émigrés, which threatened their property, and in some cases, their lives for emigrating.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 264.



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- Figure 56 -

²⁸⁸ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947541s.r=Retour+d%27un+émigré.langEN>



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- Figure 57 -

“Projet tres assuré d’une cotrerevolution” portrays a large group of people congregated in a town square. At the centre of the image a large carriage transports a series of aristocrats, recognizable because of their knee breeches, swords, medallions and debauched natures. Reminiscent of some of the prints produced by Hogarth of the disorderly and amoral streets of London, this image emphasizes the various accusations of depravity levelled at the nobility. Behind the carriage, a large keg of alcohol is being consumed, resulting in drunk and disorderly scenes throughout the print, such as assaults, robbery and sexual molestation. Some of these nobles also have ugly faces and hooked

²⁸⁹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69482627.r=Projet+tres+assuré+d'une+cotrerevolution.langEN>

noses, and collude with monks and priests. The carriage contains the Comtes D'Artois and Provence, who cavort with courtesans and immoderately dressed women. As the carriage rolls away, it crushes a mother and child beneath them. This image contains a lot of information, but it suggests, like other depictions of counterrevolutionaries, that this group of malcontents are disorganized, lascivious and incompetent. Not much is to be feared here, but the comical noble figures are meant to be mocked for their incompetency and failures.



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- Figure 58 -

This derisive tone permeates other depictions of counterrevolutionary princes. Central to many of these was the Prince de Condé. In “Grande armée du cidev.t prince de

²⁹⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948234x.r=Grande+armée+du+cidev.langEN>

Condé” [sic] the Prince takes centre stage, standing up and smoking a pipe. Within the smoke, appear the same daggers that were drawn in caricatures about “L’Affaire des Poignards” This allusion implies links between conspiracies in France with those in Worms, suggesting co-ordination between counterrevolutionary nobles. Behind Condé, an image of the seizure and destruction of Worms in 1689 by the forces of Louis XIV, implies that the city may suffer the same fate (which it did in 1792). Condé’s Army is presented as a box of toy soldiers, which was sent to him from Strasbourg. His daughter, Mlle Condé, helps unpack them, as one of her breasts slips out. Mocking the female members of a nobleman’s family was, as we saw in Chapter 2, a device to slander the males within that group. Mlle Condé passes the soldiers to the Duc D’Enghien, which are shown as no major threat, being easily knocked over. A dog that is supposedly owned by the radical newspaper Père Duchesne pees upon these ineffective toy soldiers.²⁹¹

Seated at a table in this tragic and farcical scene, the Duke’s mistress, Madame de Monaco who opens *Don Quixote*, which implies the folly and futility of Condé’s counterrevolutionary army. The overall tone of this image is that of derision, not fear. Condé, his family, his army are all derided, shown as weak, naïve and immoral. The image employs humour and humiliation to achieve its message, not fear. An element of social revenge is also present in this image. Within the smoke Condé blows out, jewels appear; representing those pawned by the Prince after a lucrative pension of his was revoked.²⁹²

²⁹¹ *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Gallery, 1988), 207.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 207.



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- Figure 59 -

Condé, the figures at his court, references to *Don Quixote* and the ineptitude and weakness of the counter revolutionary cause were repeated in other similar images. Known by various titles, “La Contre Révolution” (Figure 59) or “Marche du Don Quichotte”²⁹⁴ or as “Défaite des contres révolutionnaires”²⁹⁵ the depiction of the defeat of Condé’s counterrevolutionary army was incredibly popular. Variations of the image corroborate how popular and commercially successful it was.²⁹⁶ Although radical journals and caricatures targeted the same figures and emphasized the similar ideas, caricatures were rarely included, let alone described in news print. “La Contre

²⁹³ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10225428g.r=La+Contre+Révolution.langEN>

²⁹⁴ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948257x.r=Condé.langEN>

²⁹⁵ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948257x.r=Condé.langEN>

²⁹⁶ Annie Duprat, “Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure ‘La Contre Révolution’”. In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 91-102. (Canadian Plains Research Center: University of Regina, 1998), 92.

Révolution” was described in detail in *Le Spectateur* and *Le Modérateur*.²⁹⁷ So popular was this particular image that it inspired both a bawdy song, mocking the Prince, as well as inspiring the creation of a hairstyle called “à la contre-révolution”.

Although the different versions of Condé’s Army are varied, they contain essentially the same elements. Almost all of the figures are numbered and clearly identified. Rich with detail, containing plenty of individual aristocratic figures and tropes, the tone is mockingly triumphant. Condé’s Army is composed of a motley crew of buffoonish, incompetent and comical looking nobles. Attempting to cross the Rhine, they fall all over themselves, fight amongst one another, and fail horribly. The “Rock of Liberty” lays across the river, strong and immovable. Condé’s Army falls beneath its strength, unable to overcome it. In “Marche de Don Quichotte” (Figure 60), the allusion to Cervantes’ romantic hero are clear. It is pure folly to oppose the progress of the Revolution. A mill, covered in coats-of-arms, and topped by the head of Louis XVI represents all of the feudal abuses of the past.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Annie Duprat, “Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure ‘La Contre Révolution’”. In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 92.

²⁹⁸ Emmett Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 262.



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- Figure 60 -

²⁹⁹ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947796f.r=Marche+de+Don+Quichotte.langEN>



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- Figure 61 -

Almost like a religious procession, the nobles in Figure 61 march behind the Prince de Condé. There are several important figures and symbols to note. A bare breasted female figure, named as the “pucelle” (prostitute/slut) of the Counterrevolution falls over herself in some of the versions. Hooked nosed prelates, old and wrinkled men in silk suits, parlementaires (robins), *hobereaux*, friars, officers, and hated figures like Mirabeau, Calonne, Breteuil and others make up Condé’s failed convoy. The *Chronique de Paris* joked that it might not just be an exaggerated caricature of the counterrevolution, but actually true.³⁰¹ This image compiled not just one or two hated figures or noble groups, but all of them. All of the villains of the Ancien Regime, save the Queen and the Polignacs, were present. Collectively they were failures and had lost

³⁰⁰ <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6948257x.r=Condé.langEN>

³⁰¹ Annie Duprat, “Autour de Villeneuve, le mystérieux auteur de la gravure ‘La Contre Révolution’”. In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 96.

in their attempt to overthrow the Revolution. Laws had been passed against them, their properties were being seized, and the attempt of their figurehead, the King, to flee, had failed. Triumph and revenge is explicitly present, and it is not surprising that this image was so popular, particularly as the Revolution became more unstable. People could rally behind a foreign cause, for it might help them forget their numerous problems at home. They were also reminded that the most notable conservative noble miscreants were off French soil and failing.

Condé's Army was ultimately represented little danger to the Revolution. It failed to be an effective or significant part of the Austro-Prussian armies when war broke out in April 1792. The military threat posed by émigrés during the Revolution was inconsequential, their numbers never more than 10,000 men at arms.³⁰² The overthrow of the King in September 1792, his trial and execution in January 1793 and the subsequent declaration of war by Britain and other powers, and the bloody civil War in the Vendée in March 1793 came to be greater sources of panic, not counterrevolutionary noble armies. These pressing concerns, particularly foreign wars, came to be the bigger focus of caricatures. The Jacobins, realizing potential power of caricatures even financed David to produce some satirical ones against their foreign enemies, particularly the British. Interestingly, when the Jacobin state focused its paranoid glare on its internal enemies, like former nobles, or anyone "aristocratic", a term loosely used, they did not employ the arts against them.

³⁰² Simon Burrows, "The *émigrés* and conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789-99." In *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, eds. Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser and Marisa Linton, 150-171. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 155.



Anti-noble caricatures were scathing of their targets from the start of the Revolution. And while they clearly responded to and interpreted events, they were never entirely consistent in their attacks. They appeared in torrents before the Terror, not during. And throughout the Terror “aristocrats” were accused of the most heinous crimes, one of the worst being that of treasonous disloyalty to the Revolution. However, no monsters appear in caricatures from 1793-1794, and counterrevolutionary nobles in foreign lands are barely noticeable. There were domestic rebellions against the Jacobins in the Vendée (1793-1795), spearheaded by many local nobles, yet depictions of these counterrevolutionaries barely make a dent in the historic record compared to the noble enemies found in the caricatures of the early Revolution. The more the Revolution became threatened existentially by tangible plots, the less its aristocratic enemies appeared in caricatures. Yet accusations of being an “aristocrat”, with all its undertones of inhumanity, conspiracy and menace remained a powerful and dangerous accusation, one that could cost an individual his life. These charges led many nobles to the scaffold, but they were assertions no longer present in revolutionary images. Being a noble did not mean one was automatically imprisoned or killed during the Terror, but it helped create the conditions for guilt.³⁰³ Perhaps they had been so successfully demonized as monsters, traitors and degenerates for so long, and had been effectively disempowered by 1793, that there was little need to satirize them, when France faced bigger problems. Nobles had been so thoroughly undermined, their proud and separate identities mocked, that it

³⁰³ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 291.

became impossible for them to ever wield the same power they had in the Ancien Regime. Nobles largely survived the Revolution, financially and politically scathed to an extent, but certainly not physically wiped out. Yet for all their losses, nobles, particularly émigrés, kept a hold on many people's fears, as clandestine agents of domestic subterfuge and foreign plots.³⁰⁴ Caricatures played an integral role in the transformation of nobles from equal partners at the start of the Revolution, into suspect outsiders, monsters and traitors capable of practically anything.



The Revolution was the culmination of all of the arguments against the nobility. Political and social criticisms of the nobility, present in France for centuries, became increasingly sharper over the eighteenth century, crystalizing in 1789. They were compounded by pseudo-scientific and racial critiques, which were new and unique, arguing that nobles were dangerous and inhuman, not because of social practices or history, but because of something innately biological. This change is important to consider, as marginalizing a minority group on the basis of race was to have important consequences in European history. Although it is hard to argue that an organized propaganda campaign by the press was launched against the nobility at the start of the Revolution, and even less so under the Jacobins, caricaturists as a group, even if

³⁰⁴ Simon Burrows, "The *émigrés* and conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789-99." In *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, eds. Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser and Marisa Linton, 150-171. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 156.

disunited and disparate, demonstrated the raw power of polemical images in a revolution. Visually compelling imagery produced on an industrial scale, saturating public spaces would be used by revolutionaries or the regimes they established to great effect in the future. Properly harnessed and directed, caricatures, which were able to undermine their targets in ways writing never could, would play significant and effective roles in future revolutions and against any perceived enemy.

Conclusion:

Anti-noble caricatures played a brief but pivotal role during the first French Revolution, raising important questions and observations for both historians and the broader public. One of the simplest questions is also one of the most useful: what connections do these caricatures have with their predecessors, their immediate successors, and with our present? This query is broad in nature, but it is worth exploring, even superficially, as any historic work that fails to link its subject material with the past and present risks becoming irrelevant. Moreover, investigating the place of anti-noble caricatures within a larger chronology, while important, is not all that merits consideration by historians. The power of image, as both a form of humour and a tool to educate, but also to ostracize and “other” is a theme of ongoing discussion within academia and of considerable relevance in the broader public. Discussions about the interplay between polemic imagery and violence are still relevant, as events in the twentieth and twenty-first century make clear.

The use of printed images to undermine and overthrow morally corrupt figures was not an anomaly of the French Revolution, nor was it unique to France itself. The effective employment of virulent caricatures was first demonstrated almost two centuries before, during the Protestant Reformation.³⁰⁵ The effective lampooning, sexualization, and demonization of foes in simple but evocative woodblock prints demonstrated the power of a new medium on influencing political, social and intellectual change. Would the Reformation (or the Counter-Reformation) have been as successful without mass

³⁰⁵ *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Gallery, 1988), 18-19.

produced caricatures? How did reform movements differ before the invention of the printing press? And while early caricatures, such as those of the Reformation, were successful in large part due to the illiteracy of the general European population, more literate societies, particularly those after the French Revolution, also recognized the inherent dangers of caricature.

Napoleon Bonaparte, viewing the satirical prints of the English caricaturist James Gillray, remarked that such caricatures caused him more harm than the entire British army.³⁰⁶ Recognizing the inherent danger posed by radical prints and an uncontrolled press, his regime would initiate a program of strict censorship, enforced by a secret police, dictating who could publish and display their work.³⁰⁷ Depicting Napoleon was extremely risky and could lead to charges of *lèse-majesté* and severe punishment.³⁰⁸ Learning from the downfall of Louis XVI, Napoleon recognized the political power of caricature, and commissioned his own prints to bolster his own regime and counter negative representations.³⁰⁹ Pro-government caricatures, used effectively by self-aware regimes, could both manage public relations and counter negative imagery. Yet despite Bonaparte's attempts at controlling the message in caricatures, and those of his successors, caricatures remained a subversive and at times uncontrollable force in French politics, satirizing their targets mercilessly.

Compared with the social criticism examined here, however, many nineteenth-century caricatures were aimed at political figures and their regimes. Neither destroyed

³⁰⁶ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth Century France* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 196.

³⁰⁷ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 97.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

nor fully disempowered, France's nobility was nonetheless weaker and undeniably changed by the experience of the Revolution.³¹⁰ Attacks on the nobility in caricature were brief, yet the way in which they undermined their targets contained powerful themes that would be effectively used in the polemic imagery of future revolutions against other loathed minorities. One of the most important ways that caricatures attacked their noble enemies was by repeatedly questioning their loyalty, Frenchness and even their humanity. The interplay between these slanders, and the power of the state was reflected in one of the most repressive laws of the Revolution.

The Terror has mistakenly been seen as the culmination of anti-noble activity in France, yet the law of 3 Brumaire Year IV went even further, explicitly excluding émigrés from public office. Under the Directory (1795-1799), the government established a commission charged with implementing measures to ostracize, exile and expel nobles by depriving them of their citizenship and subjecting them to the same conditions as foreigners living in France.³¹¹ Resulting in another exodus of former nobles, and condemning approximately 131 individuals to death, the worst excesses of these anti-noble moves were curbed by Napoleon's seizure of power in 1799.³¹² However, this small, yet significant event set of important precedents, namely, the collective loss of civil rights and the expulsion of a marginalized group, identified as "undesirable aliens."³¹³

³¹⁰ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 339-340.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 304-306.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 308.

³¹³ Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles During the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 138.

Revolutions and regimes, particularly in the twentieth century, continued to demonstrate a close connection between state sponsored persecution and imagery born during the French Revolution. The nobility, clergy and capitalists were all targeted in caricatures during the Russian Revolution, which employed many of the same techniques, format and message as their French predecessors.³¹⁴ Effectively used by both the Bolsheviks and the Whites during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), and later by the triumphant communist regime, caricatures were used to spread their message to a largely illiterate population over a vast territory. In Nazi Germany, caricatures centred on the allegedly perfidious nature of the Jews, much like caricatures had focused on nobles during the French Revolution. Both groups were identified as traitors, foreign agents, parasites, and manifestations of the darkest fantasies in the human subconsciousness. While the propaganda campaign against the Jews evolved over a longer period of time, and involved different historic contingencies, such as the co-ordinated direction of the state and industrialized production, comparisons are not without merit. Nobles in the Revolution, like Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were labelled with detractors such as “cosmopolitan, politically unbalanced... sly, cowardly, sectarian, selfish, godless, degenerate, hostile to manual labour, and sexually perverse...”³¹⁵

The demonization of targeted peoples, be they politically powerful and wealthy, or disenfranchised and destitute, is deeply connected to imagery as well as to words. Asking why the French Revolution was so bloody, Simon Schama came to the conclusion that verbal violence directly correlates with actual violent acts; based on the

³¹⁴ Beryl Williams, “The Impact of the French Revolutionary Tradition on the Propaganda of the Bolshevik Revolution, 1918-1921” In *Symbols, Myths & Images of the French Revolution*, eds. Ian Germani and Robin Swales, 297-306. (Canadian Plains Research Center: University of Regina, 1998)

³¹⁵ Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles During the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 217.

evidence presented here, I would include visual violence in his assessment. Regardless if this violence was exercised through direct force, or through banal bureaucratic decisions, it permeated the entire Revolution:

The history of 'Ville-Affranchie,' of the Vendée-Vengé, or the September massacres suggests in fact a direct connection between all that orchestrated or spontaneous screaming for blood and its copious shedding. It contributed greatly to the complete dehumanization of those who became victims. As 'brigands' or the 'Austrian whore' or 'fanatics' they became nonentities in the Nation of Citizens and not only could but had to be eliminated if it was to survive. Humiliation and abuse, then, were not just Jacobin fun and games; they were the prologues of killing.³¹⁶

Indeed, the correlation of images and words with violence, and the responsibility, both legal and otherwise, for the consequences remains a current debate in our society. At the Nuremburg trials in 1946, Julius Streicher, the publisher of Nazi Germany's weekly anti-Semitic publication, *Der Stürmer*, which was replete with crude caricatures, was found guilty and put to death, not for direct involvement in the Holocaust, but for inciting hatred.³¹⁷ Unlike publishers of the past, who were imprisoned or executed for producing material that offended politicians or the state, Streicher was hanged for using imagery to incite attack on an entire group of people, part of the newly demarcated offense of hate crimes.

Democratic nations espouse many of the values promulgated during the French Revolution, including freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and yet they have struggled to reconcile the inherent contradictions that these rights bring. France, with its

³¹⁶ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), 860.

³¹⁷ Randall L. Bywerk "Streicher, Julius." *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*. Ed. Dinah L. Shelton. Vol. 2. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 1001-002. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

strong traditions of *laïcité* and politically and socially biting caricature, both of which were born during the French Revolution, has recently had to engage again in discussions about the intersection of image and violence. The killing of the staff of Charlie Hebdo in Paris on January 7th 2015 tragically demonstrates how much power caricature continues to have in contemporary society. To make sense of those events, and to enrich the discussion they have generated, an understanding of the history of radical caricature is essential.

In this age of social media, which is so rich with imagery in the form of memes and gifs, is there any room for debates about eighteenth-century caricature? I would argue that there is, for several reasons. Internet memes³¹⁸ and gifs³¹⁹ can both be deployed to generate debate, to criticize and to attack their targets with biting satire. Like caricatures of the distant or recent past, they draw on a trove of rich symbolism, cultural references and the language of the everyday people to cause an immediate effect. The use of critical imagery by social media in recent revolutions such as the Arab Spring has demonstrated how powerful a force it can be. Even within stable societies, these modern heirs of the caricatures of the past can be deployed instantly to generate controversy as well as discussion and humour. Politicians and elites, sacred and taboo subjects, were all effectively pilloried during the French Revolution, and continue to be mocked in the modern world.

³¹⁸ A humorous image, video, piece of text, etc.. that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users.

³¹⁹ A loosleess format for image that supports both animated and static images.

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Gêne Au Luxe Des Prélats, et de Ne plus Nourrir Que D'orgueilleux Ingrats : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1789. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410955d>.

Unattributed. *L'Aristocratie Démasquée : Déffiez Vous de Ses Caresses. Ses Mille Bras Armés, Sont Prêts À Nous Fraper : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1792 1789.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947710x>.

Unattributed. *L'enterrement de L'aristocratie : [estampe] / [non identifié], 1790 1789.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947469h>.

Unattributed. *L'Hydre Aristocratique : Ce Monstre Mâle et Féméle N'a D'humain Que Ses Têtes ; Son Naturel Est Féroce, Barbare, Sanguinaire ; Il Ne Se Repais Que de Sang, de Larmes et de La Subsistance Des Malheureux ; Il Cherche de Tous Côté À Envahir, Pour Satisfaire Son Ambition et Son Insatiable Avidité... : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1789.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942926x>.

Unattributed. *L'instituteur des aristocrates : Belpégor étant venu Sur terre pour instruire les Hommes fut nommé Recteur de luniversité de paris ou il resta ensuite quelque temps au bout de plusieurs année ayant été chassé il se retira à Aristocratopolis ou il fut obligé d'enseigner les enfants on lui confia l'education de deux gentihommes dont l'un étoit pour le Service militaire et l'autre pour l'état celesiastique [sic]... : [estampe] / [non identifié], 1790.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947500v>.

Unattributed. *La Boite À Pandore : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1793 1792.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6940054h>.

Unattributed. *La complaisance de Pandore pour un de ses amans fut cause qu'elle lui laissa ouvrir une boëte que les Dieux lui avoient mise entre les mains, d'où il se répandit un nombre infini de malheurs : [estampe] / [non identifié], 1790 1789.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6947482c>.

Unattributed. *La Comtesse... : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1790.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69474579>.

Unattributed. *La Contre Révolution, 1793 1791.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10225428g>.

Unattributed. *La Marque des Sots : [estampe] / [non identifié], 1790.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8411131j>.

Unattributed. *La Reine Donne Le Serment de L'ordre À Ses Courtisans Dans Son Conseil Privé : [estampe] / [non Identifié], 1789.* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69423723>.

Unattributed. *La Vérité triomphante Le citoyen vertueux qui sert son roy sa Patrie Avec la verité un jour confond ses ennemie Digne sang de Henry pui je te méconnoître*

Que dis je il vit encore, et Sully, va renâître : [estampe], [ca 1788]. 1 est. : eau-forte, outils, monochr. bistre ; 27,5 x 35,5 cm (tr. c.) Notice et cote du catalogue de la Bibliothèque nationale de France A Paris.
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Unattributed. *Le Temps Passé : Le Tiers Etat, La Noblesse, Le Clergé : [estampe] / [non Identifié]*, 1790. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6944036t>.

Unattributed. *Le Temps Présent Veut Que Chacun Supporte Le Grand Fardeau &c. : Dette Nationale, Impôt Territorial : [estampe] / [non Identifié]*, 1789.
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Unattributed. *Le Trente Un Septembre 1789 Les Gardes Du Corps Regalèrent Les Regiments de Flandres Dragons de Montmorency Gardes Nationaux de Versailles et Autres : Plusieurs Troquerent D'uniformes et Ils Terminerent La Fete Par Fouler Aux Pieds La Cocarde Nationale et Mirent La Cocarde Noire, En Signe de Confédération Aristocratique Ce Qui a Donn   Lieu    La Revolution Du 5 Octobre 1789 : [estampe] / [non Identifié]*, 1789.
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Unattributed. *Projet Tres Assur   D'une Contrerevolution Form  e Par La Valeur de La Noblesse de France. ... : [estampe] / [non Identifi  ]*, 1794 1791.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69482627>.

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<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410660p>.
- Unattributed. *Reveil Du Tiers État : Ma Feinte, Il Étoit Tems Que Je Me Réveillisse, Car L'opression de Mes Fers Me Donnions Le Cochemar Un Peu Trop Fort : [estampe] / [non Identifié]*, 1789. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6942905r>.
- Unattributed. *Triomphe de La Garde Nationale : Un Grand Nombre D'aristocrates, Se Trouva Dans Les Appartemens Lundi Soir La Garde, Toujours Surveillante, S'appercevant de Tous Les Mouvemens de Ces Messieurs (et Qu'ils Étoient Armés) Leur Enjoignit de Vuider Leurs Poches. On Fut Averti Le Roi de Ce Qui Se Passoit, Il Vint Entouré de Ces Veritables Défenseurs Enjoindre À Ces Traîtres de Quitter Leurs Pistolets... : [estampe] / [non Identifié]*, 1791.
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