



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women and the October Days of 1789

Author(s): David Garrioch

Source: *Social History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1999), pp. 231-249

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4286577>

Accessed: 23/02/2010 15:27

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=taylorfrancis>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Taylor & Francis, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Social History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

David Garrioch

The everyday lives of Parisian women and the October Days of 1789^{*}

One of the most surprising things about women's action in the French Revolution is the apparent suddenness of its appearance. Nearly every textbook on the revolution recounts how on 5 October 1789 thousands of Parisian women, led by the fishwives and fruit-sellers of the central market and by women from the Faubourg Saint Antoine, tramped twelve miles to Versailles to bring the king back to his capital.¹ Yet invariably the preceding chapters on the origins of the French Revolution fail to prepare the reader for this irruption of women onto the scene. We learn about the changing climate of ideas and about the political crisis. We know of the agitation among the people, the high bread prices and the insurrection of 14 July. But none of this prepares us for what is indisputably a gender-specific action, one of large proportions and immense consequences.

It is even more mystifying when we consider that, despite the tendency of contemporary male observers and of some revisionist historians to play down the political awareness and even the presence of women,² it is clear that this action was not only initiated and undertaken by

^{*} A version of this paper was presented to the conference on 'Women, Gender and Sexuality in Modern Europe', Monash University, 19–20 July 1996. I would like to thank Barbara Caine for her comments.

¹ The best account of the *journées* of 5–6 October in English is in Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto, 1992), 7–12. See also George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1959), chap. 5; Darlene Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, 'Women, democracy, and revolution in Paris, 1789–1794' in Samia I. Spencer (ed.), *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington, 1984), 64–79 (68–73), and Levy and Applewhite, 'Women and militant citizenship in revolutionary Paris' in Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (eds), *Rebel Daughters. Women and the French Revolution* (New York, 1992), 79–101 (83–5). The main source is the published enquiry of the Châtelet, *Procédure criminelle au Châtelet . . . sur la journée du 6 octobre* (Paris, 1790). Extensive extracts have been published in P. Dominique, *Paris enlève le roi* (Paris, 1973). A few

extracts in English may be found in Darlene Gay Levy, Harriet B. Applewhite and Mary D. Johnson (eds), *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795* (Urbana, 1979). The most detailed study of the October Days remains Albert Mathiez, 'Etude critique sur les journées des 5 et 6 octobre 1789', *Revue historique*, LXVII (1898), 241–81; LXVIII (1898), 258–94; LXIX (1899), 41–58.

² See the male witnesses in the *Procédure criminelle*, *op. cit.* The widely read history of the revolution by François Furet and Denis Richet, *La Révolution française*, 2 vols (Paris, 1965–6), in English translation *The French Revolution* (London, 1970), plays down the role of women and emphasizes the action of the National Guard. John Bosher, *The French Revolution* (London, 1989), does not mention women at all in the text, though his chronology does mention 'a crowd with many women' (xvii, 150). Another tendency is to refuse any political role to the women. For Claudette Hould, *Images of the French Revolution* (Quebec, 1989), the march 'had as its pretext the banquets given by the King's bodyguard', but 'the real reason for the march was hunger' (209).

them, but that some of the women involved had both a strong sense of female independence and some measure of political consciousness. This emerges, for example, from the account by Stanislas-Marie Maillard who, while doing his best to maximize his own role but minimize his responsibility, nevertheless gives details of what the women were saying and doing. At the Hôtel de Ville, where they congregated before heading off to Versailles, at least some of the women 'did not want any men with them . . . [and] reiterated repeatedly that the [Commune] was made up of aristocrats'. They broke into the building and tried to destroy the papers they found there, saying 'that it was all that had been done since the Revolution had begun and that they would burn them . . . these women repeated that the men were not strong enough to avenge themselves and that they would show themselves to be better than the men'. Police agents reported similar declarations: 'The men are holding back, the men are cowards . . . we will take over'. According to Maillard, it was the women who insisted on going to the National Assembly at Versailles and they would not be dissuaded. This was confirmed by other witnesses, including some of the women themselves, even though it was in their interest to play down their responsibility when interrogated by the commission enquiring into the event.³ Nor were such affirmations confined to 5 October: the bookseller Siméon Prosper Hardy also reported the (to him) extraordinary statement of a deputation of women who went to the Hôtel de Ville on 17 September to protest about the bakers: 'Men did not understand anything about the matter and . . . they [women] wanted to play a role in affairs.'⁴

The political awareness of at least some of the women is already clear from the very nature of their action. It directly targeted the centres of power – the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, the National Assembly and the palace at Versailles. Its object was to bring pressure to bear on the Commune, the deputies and the king, to get them to do something about the food crisis. The march was sparked by the trampling of the tricolour cockade at the banquet of the *gardes du corps* at Versailles on 1 October. The marchers were quite clearly linking the actions of the 'Court party' and its supporters with the economic crisis. Furthermore, when the women invaded the National Assembly in Versailles, many of them insulted the representatives of the clergy, who had tried to hold up reform. There is ample evidence that Parisian women of humble social origins, in quite large numbers, were demonstrating both a political awareness and a capacity for independent political action.

How was it, then, that many ordinary working women were willing and able to carry out, with little male presence, an explicitly political insurrection of huge proportions, and to do so very early in the revolution? How were these women, who almost certainly possessed less formal education than their male peers, who were excluded from the National Guard and who in general were less of a target for political journalists than the men, able to go beyond anything that men had attempted?

Two factors have conspired to prevent close study of these questions. One is that much of

³ *Procédure criminelle*, *op. cit.*, witness 81. Hufton, *Limits of Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, 16. Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her. A History of Women in Western Europe*, vol. 1 (London, 1995), 473. Darlene Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, 'Women of the popular classes in revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795' in Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (eds), *Women, War and Revolution* (New York, 1980), 9–35 (15).

Mathiez, in 1899, stressed the role of the women and commented on their 'sens politique': 'Etude critique', *Revue historique*, LXXIX (1899), 45.

⁴ Bibliothèque nationale, Paris [B.N.], Mss. 6680-7: [Siméon Prosper Hardy], 'Mes loisirs, ou Journal d'événements, tels qu'ils parviennent à ma connaissance', 1764–89 (6687, fol. 469).

the now extensive literature on women in the French Revolution has necessarily been concerned primarily to demonstrate the nature and extent of female involvement rather than to explain it. Even in 1988, Dominique Godineau's marvellous *Citoyennes tricoteuses* was still in part devoted to this goal, setting to rest the misperception of revolutionary women as 'furies'. The second factor leading to neglect of the October Days has been simply that most writers have been more interested in the women's clubs of 1793.

These preoccupations have encouraged acceptance of the general explanations for popular involvement in 1789, most often those of George Rudé. 'Revolutionary crowds . . . absorbed and adapted the slogans and ideas of the political groups contending for power' – the bourgeoisie and the nobility.⁵ Recent writing, though, has generally rejected both the Marxism of this explanation and the idea of a dramatic break in 1789. 'The momentous march of women to Versailles', says Joan Landes, 'can be situated within a long tradition of women's participation in popular protest.'⁶ Darlene Levy and Harriet Applegate insist that the actions of eighteenth-century women displayed 'political motivation, political awareness, and a certain modicum of political skill . . . they understood how political power operated to affect their livelihoods'. They suggest, in passing, that the development of the centralized state placed increasing pressure on 'common women' across the eighteenth century, and that this contributed to their politicization. Yet ultimately, when explaining women's action in 1789, they too see political education from 'above' as highly significant, invoking 'the dramatic mobilizing effect of events that began in 1788 with the decision to convoke the Estates-General', and specifying political journals, clubs and elected assemblies as 'the principal agencies' of women's political education.⁷ Dominique Godineau, concerned above all with women's role in the popular movement of 1793–4, places more emphasis on work. She argues that political participation was more marked among women in mixed artisanal trades with a tradition of organization. She also demonstrates that the parts of Paris in which women were most prominent in clubs and sectional assemblies were also those where they worked independently as street-sellers, laundrywomen and in other similar trades. She stresses the consciousness-raising role of the spinning workshops created in 1790 to provide work for poor women, but also emphasizes the experience of industrial action during and even before the revolution.⁸

These suggestions are directed towards explaining women's revolutionary action in general. Olwen Hufton is one of the few recent writers to tackle directly the question of why the October Days were so overwhelmingly a women's movement. She emphasizes that concern about bread supply was central, and rightly insists on the intensely political nature of this concern, since the monarchy was all too closely associated with the grain trade. She suggests that women stepped forward 'in default of male action', likening the situation to that of an insulted woman whose husband failed to defend her: she was quite entitled to embark on her own action. Once the women's march began, Hufton argues, men were excluded because their presence would have turned a non-violent demonstration into a violent one: something which

⁵ Rudé, *op. cit.*, 196. Cf. Jeffrey Kaplow, *The Names of Kings* (New York, 1972), 153. See also Colin Lucas's analysis of Georges Lefebvre's very similar assumptions: Lucas, 'The crowd and politics between *Ancien Régime* and revolution in France', *Journal of Modern History*, LXI (1989), 421–57 (425).

⁶ Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the*

Age of the French Revolution (Ithaca and London, 1988), 109.

⁷ Levy and Applegate, 'Women of the popular classes', *op. cit.*, 10–12.

⁸ Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses. Les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Paris, 1988), 89–105, 202–3.

was allowed to happen only later, at Versailles, when the limits of peaceful action had been reached.⁹

This explanation is very persuasive. It does not fully explain, though, why the men failed to take action in the first place, as they had in July when Paris was threatened both by food shortages and (it seemed) by military attack. The present article builds on Hufton's suggestions, and on those of Levy and Applewhite, but makes more of the distinction between male and female political action. It argues that men did not take action in October because issues of food supply fell more into women's domain. Already under the Old Regime food supply and religion, although both political matters, were broadly accepted as legitimate areas of women's action, and indeed in some cases as issues in which women had the primary responsibility to act. Such responsibility arose from women's central role in the policing of the local community, which was itself shaped by the division of gender roles within the household and the neighbourhood. In this respect I am therefore stressing an important continuity in the actions and thinking of working women from the Old Regime into the revolution.

But I am not suggesting that there was nothing new about the October Days. It is not enough to present them as a large bread riot. They were unprecedented in their scale, in their grasp of the new political reality and in the fact that they involved women from many parts of the city. The second part of this article looks at these new features of the October Days, and suggests that a long-term factor – the gradual integration of the city across the early modern period – as well as a short-term one – the political education of July 1789 – explain these characteristics of women's revolutionary action.

Working men and women in Old Regime Paris had very different social identities. Central to male identity was paid work. It was the activity which took up most of a man's day, which determined his timetable, his dress and his income. It defined his social status, shaped who he was. For artisans, in particular, trade skills were a source of intense pride. Apprenticeship was both a form of training and a stage in the life-cycle, and even for unskilled workers beginning a man's work was the rite of passage into the adult world. For a smaller number of skilled workers, obtaining a master's certificate and setting up an independent business formed another stage in the life-cycle. It was even a central part of family identity, since a master's responsibilities in the workshop and as head of household were inseparable in the social imagination of the day. In 1776, when Turgot abolished the guilds, among the arguments used against his edicts was the threat to the family: the disappearance of guild structures would break down subordination and hence threaten the role of the father in his household.¹⁰ In a police inspector's report of 1769 we see this operating at the humbler level of journeymen, too: he could not arrest the leaders of a strike without higher authorization because 'they are domiciled . . . they have wives and children . . . they even have a certain standing' ('un certain état').¹¹ For men, work and family roles powerfully reinforced each other.

⁹ Hufton, *Limits of Citizenship*, *op. cit.*, 12–18. On the monarchy and the grain trade, Steven L. Kaplan, 'The Famine Plot Persuasion in Eighteenth-Century France', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 72, part 3 (Philadelphia, 1982).

¹⁰ Judith Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work. The Paris Garment Trades, 1750–1915* (Princeton, 1996), 34–5. In apprenticeship contracts masters were felt

to assume a paternal role: Steven L. Kaplan, 'L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Paris', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XI (1993), 436–79.

¹¹ Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal [B.A.], Bastille Ms. 12369, fol. 12, Bourgoïn to lieutenant général, 8 May 1769. See also Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural Law, Politics, and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, 1989), 86, 91.

Work structured a man's whole life. It gave him a place in the social hierarchy. It situated him in a metaphysical universe through the intercession of the trade's patron saint. It also provided his principal means of integration, whether as a migrant or native-born Parisian, into the city. On the one hand, work was an important factor in integrating men into neighbourhood communities and could help create a strong local identity. At the same time, though, it generally offered opportunities for developing wider loyalties. In addition, as Michael Sonenscher has shown, the culture of the workshop provided French artisans with the ideological and rhetorical tools to participate politically in struggles within the guilds and through the French courts, and to adapt quickly to the new political conditions of the revolutionary years.¹²

For the majority of women, on the other hand, paid employment played a very different role in shaping their sense of who they were. There are several reasons for this. One is that the large numbers of women employed in the corporate trades, which dominated industrial production, were usually confined to the worst paid, least skilled and least secure jobs. They often did finishing work: polishing wooden furniture or mirrors. In bookbinding they folded the sheets of paper and sewed them together. There were *éplucheuses* who cleaned and beat wool, women who threaded necklaces, others who wove the straw bottoms of chairs and put the stuffing in mattresses. For women in exploitative, monotonous, poorly paid and insecure occupations like these, such work was understandably not a central preoccupation.¹³

But even skilled seamstresses and other women workers employed in workshops, those who were closest to the masculine corporate culture with its strong work identity and city-wide

¹² For a valuable discussion of the role of work in the male artisan's life see Daniel Roche's introduction to J.-L. Ménétier, *Journal of my Life*, D. Roche (ed.), trans. A. Goldhammer (New York, 1986; first published Paris, 1982). On the role of work in creating or tempering neighbourhood identity see David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge, 1986), chap. 3. Michael Sonenscher, 'Journeymen, the courts and the French trades 1781-1791', *Past and Present*, cxiv (February 1987), 77-109 and *Work and Wages*, *op. cit.*

¹³ Angela Groppi, 'Le travail des femmes à Paris à l'époque de la Révolution française', *Bulletin d'histoire économique et sociale de la Révolution française* (1979), 27-46. Arlette Farge, 'Les Artisans malades de leur travail', *Annales: ESC*, xxxii (1977), 993-1006 (997). Archives Nationales, Paris, Y11705, 7 January 1775, witnesses 19, 20. Y12597, 20 November 1752. Y12596, 29 June 1752, witness 4. Y11705, 20 August 1775. (Henceforth all manuscript references are to the Archives Nationales, unless otherwise indicated.) For a more detailed description of women's work in the corporate trades see Godineau, *op. cit.*, 71-82. A similar range of work

was done in London, where it persisted into the nineteenth century, particularly in shoemaking, woodworking, tailoring, leather goods, bookbinding and hatting. Sally Alexander, 'Women's work' in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth, 1976), 59-111 (88-93). There were some exceptions to the low skill levels of women's work, though. The painters employed at the Oberkampf cloth factory just outside Paris, the women who painted fans and those who did enamelling, were all highly skilled and relatively well paid. See S. Chassagne, A. Dewerpe and Y. Gaulupeau, 'Les ouvriers de la manufacture des toiles imprimées d'Oberkampf à Jouy-en-Josas (1760-1815)', *Le mouvement social*, xcvi (1976), 39-88 (64). Alfred Franklin, *Dictionnaire historique des arts, métiers et professions exercés dans Paris depuis le treizième siècle* (Paris, 1906), 560. Y11705, 19 June 1775. Sabine Juratic and Nicole Pellegrin also stress the absence of a strong work identity among women, for the same reasons: 'Femmes, ville et travail en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle: quelques questions', *Histoire, économie et société*, xiii (1994), 477-99 (491-2).

solidarity, very rarely seem to have formed professional associations or to have gone on strike.¹⁴ With inadequate remuneration and in the absence of any career structure, they could less frequently aspire to set up in business on their own. Furthermore, the all-female workshops were far more strictly supervised than male workplaces, in principle to protect the morals of the women.¹⁵ An undated agreement signed between two women, 'to form a partnership both for food and work' making lace, provided for the apprentices to be taken to church and for walks, and for one of the two employers to be present at all times, 'so as not to leave the apprentices and boarders alone' – clauses not found in the contracts of male apprentices.¹⁶ It is likely, in fact, that many women in these sorts of workshops were single and saw their jobs as temporary, to be abandoned when they married. Certainly, those who wed master artisans or shopkeepers normally gave up their former trade and joined their husbands in the family business, while wives of journeymen or labourers generally seem to have worked at home or on stalls.

But the difference in male and female perceptions of work also arose from the fact that whereas for men their trade provided not merely an income but also a lifelong asset and a recognized place in society, social pressure directed women's attention and energy towards marriage and family. It is not that women's work was seen as a problem or as undesirable. On the contrary, it was recognized that single and married women alike had to contribute to the family income and that poor girls had to earn themselves a dowry. But their sources of income were not necessarily central to their identity. While marriage contracts often specify the professional skills of men, and the master artisan's certificate (*maîtrise*) is included among his assets, usually only the woman's dowry and her material possessions are mentioned. For married women the dominant ideology recognized the complementarity of work and family but accorded women the primary responsibility for home and children, however indispensable their work might be for the family income.

Only one significant group of women had a work identity at all comparable with that of their male peers: the mistresses in the small number of workshop-based corporate trades that admitted women. Paris had a handful of exclusively female trades: women's hairdressers; seamstresses in women's clothes; the *linières* (makers and sellers of flax, hemp and tow); the *lingères* (sellers of linen and other cloth); and later the *marchandes de modes* (sellers of fashion clothes). But these women were never secure, for their organizations were constantly under attack from rival male corporations. The *linières* lost theirs in 1776.¹⁷ A small number of other trades were

¹⁴ On labour disputes and journeymen's organization see Sonenscher, 'Journeymen, the courts and the French trades', *op. cit.* See also David Garrioch and Michael Sonenscher, 'Compagnonnages, confraternities and associations of journeymen in eighteenth-century Paris', *European History Quarterly*, xvi (1986), 25–45; Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 97–112; Sonenscher, 'The sans-culottes of the Year II: rethinking the language of labour in revolutionary France', *Social History*, ix (1984), 301–28 (307–13). Sonenscher mentions one case of industrial organization among women in the hatting trade in Lyon: *The Hatters of Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1987), 147. During the strike by ribbon-makers in 1762 the only woman interrogated by the police for having

stopped work said that her husband and the other men had not wanted to accept the wages they were being offered – something that most of the men confirmed – but that she had only stopped because she did not know how to set up her loom. Y9525, 15 December 1762, witness 6.

¹⁵ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols (Amsterdam, 1782–8), vi, 306.

¹⁶ B.A. Bastille Ms. 10321.

¹⁷ Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire du commerce*, 5 vols (Copenhagen, 1759–65), articles *communauté, linier*. Franklin, *op. cit.*, 296. Charles-Louis Chassin, *Les Elections et les cahiers de Paris en 1789*, 4 vols (Paris, 1888–9), II, 534–7. Coffin, *op. cit.*, 22–38.

open to unmarried women – starch-making and the grain trade, for example.¹⁸ Yet the numbers of women in a position to develop a corporate identity were tiny by comparison with the mass of male masters and journeymen. Throughout the eighteenth century the mistress *lingères* numbered between 650 and 800, the seamstresses about 1700, and in 1783 there were some 140 *marchandes de modes*.¹⁹

Far larger numbers of women worked with their husbands or fathers in family businesses, and they too often developed a strong professional pride. The wives of members of the big merchant guilds actually took the titles of ‘mistress mercer’ or ‘mistress jeweller’, and this also happened in some of the manufacturing trades. Other people referred to them in the same way, as ‘Mistress Bouillerot, dyer’, or ‘the Widow Jean, perfumer’.²⁰ But this was primarily a local identity since – except in the luxury trades such as jewellery, rich furnishings, silk and velvet cloth – the customers tended to come from the neighbourhood, and particularly in the case of food shops. The men in these trades belonged to a city-wide corporation in which they had a place and with which they might identify to varying degrees,²¹ but women in shop-based occupations received no wider recognition. It was in the neighbourhood that they were known as *the grocer* or *the baker* (*l'épicière, la boulangère*).

For a variety of reasons, therefore, few women developed the sort of work identity that most men did. Rather than building a sense of self based on work skills and corporation, most female employment in eighteenth-century Paris encouraged an identity centred on the neighbourhood. This was true not only for the wives of masters and merchants, but particularly of one of the fastest growing areas of women's work, domestic service. The *abbé* Expilly estimated in the mid-1760s that there were around eighteen-and-a-half thousand female servants in Paris, and this number probably increased during the second half of the century and into the nineteenth century, as more and more middle-class families employed maids and as female servants became the norm. Most female domestics were single, most worked in single-servant households and the majority remained in service for a relatively short time, while they saved for a dowry or awaited an offer of marriage.²² For them too, therefore, there was little emotional investment in their work, little encouragement to see it as the central fact of their existence. The bonds that female servants formed in the city were primarily in the neighbourhood. They met other people, particularly other women, in the shops, at the well where they went each day to get the household's water, on the stairs and in the courtyards.

Similarly based in the neighbourhood were stall-keeping and hawking in the streets and markets, the archetypal form of female employment in the paintings and engravings of the eighteenth century.²³ There was in fact a huge variety in this sector, with enormous differences

¹⁸ An unmarried female starch-maker is mentioned in Y12597, 27 October 1752. On grain merchants, Franklin, *op. cit.*, 368, 437. Steven L. Kaplan, *Provisioning Paris* (Ithaca and London, 1984), esp. 203, 500–1.

¹⁹ Franklin, *op. cit.*, 437, 627. Marcel Reinhard, *Nouvelle histoire de Paris. La Révolution* (Paris, 1971), 409. Daniel Roche, *La Culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1989), 295. Juratic and Pellegrin, *op. cit.*, 484.

²⁰ Y12597, 10 December, 28 November 1752.

²¹ See Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 97–112.

²² Marc Botlan, ‘Domesticité et domestiques à

Paris dans la crise (1770–1790)’, doctoral thesis, Ecole des Chartes, 1976. I am grateful to M. Botlan for permission to consult his excellent thesis. See also Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 127–39. On the living standards, working conditions and income of servants see Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris. An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century* (Leamington Spa, 1987; first published Paris, 1981).

²³ ‘The women of the populace were uniquely employed in peddling useless things like flowers,’ wrote N. Restif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris* (Paris, 1788–94), VIII, 1806–7, quoted in Kaplow, *op. cit.*, 55.

in standing and in wealth. The women of the central market – the Dames de la Halle – had an almost corporate status, sanctified by the privilege accorded them by Louis XV to congratulate the king on the birth of royal children or on the occasion of some victory. They were allowed to sit in the queen's box in the theatre on festive days when plays were put on free of charge at the Comédie française.²⁴ Even during the revolution the 'Dames de la Halle' continued to act as a distinct group, a deputation going to Versailles on 7 August 1789 to congratulate the king and queen on agreeing to the writing of a constitution, and in 1790 attending the National Assembly to wish the deputies a Happy New Year.²⁵ This strong identity, nevertheless, was based as much on neighbourhood as on work, and in fact most of the Dames de la Halle lived and had extensive kinship ties within the central market area.²⁶ The same was probably true of the other market groups who acted as unofficial corporations: those of the Place Maubert, of the marché Saint Jean, of La Vallée (the poultry market), and of the marché Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, who all went in procession to Sainte Geneviève in August 1789.²⁷

At the other extreme of status among the street and market trades were the many women who hawked wares through the streets, along with the female porters and water-carriers.²⁸ In between were the innumerable souls whose stalls cluttered every major street corner and the entrance to every busy shop. Even itinerant hawkers generally had regular routes and were well known within a particular area of the city. In defiance of police regulations they often traded in the same place. Like the permanent stall-holders, therefore, most of them were very much part of the neighbourhood community.²⁹

Even in the corporate trades, most tasks done by women were not undertaken in workshops at all, but at home. Outwork was very widespread, particularly in the textile industries. Spinning was, as in other places, done by women, who collected the raw cotton, wool or silk from their employer and spun it at home. Embroidery was also sometimes done on a piecework basis, as was the manufacture of garments. Of the sixty-six women working for a major button-maker, all but three took their work home.³⁰ Piecework was also done by women in other professions at slack times: one midwife made gloves when she was not fully occupied. In the furniture industry, too, there is evidence of *sculpteuses* (female wood carvers) being sent work to do at home.³¹ Many women also worked in their rooms for clients of their own, particularly seamstresses.³² Laundry work, while not exclusively female, did employ very large numbers of women and was partly done at home. Some of the laundresses also farmed out ironing to other women working in their humble dwellings.³³ Like the market women, the laundresses on the

²⁴ Jaubert, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers*, 4 vols (Paris, 1773), article 'Poissardes'. See also Franklin, *op. cit.*, article 'Poissardes'.

²⁵ Levy and Applewhite, 'Women, democracy, and revolution', *op. cit.*, 69. Pierre Rétat, 'Une année au jour le jour', *Dix-huitième siècle*, xx (1988), 32.

²⁶ On the neighbourhood community in the central market see Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 115–20.

²⁷ Hardy, 'Mes loisirs', 12, 17, 29, 30 August 1789 (B.N. Ms. 6687, fols 437, 438, 453, 455). On family ties around the Place Maubert see Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 120.

²⁸ For a husband and wife team of water-carriers see Y13760, 12 May 1752.

²⁹ Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 121–2.

³⁰ Y12596, 7 April 1752. Y12597, 15 November 1752. Groppi, *op. cit.*, 33. Godineau, *op. cit.*, 71–81.

³¹ Y14484, 4 March 1789. Y10994, 29 July 1752. Y13290, 30 September 1788. Y12597, 15 November 1752. See also Groppi, *op. cit.*, 34.

³² Y11239, 16 February 1752. Y10994, 20 June 1752, witness 5. Y15350, 22 November 1752, witness 6.

³³ Y13290, 30 August, 30 September, witness 1; 9 November, 23 November 1788. Y11705, 25 March 1775. Y15100, 26 July 1788, witness 2 and 28 August 1788, witness 2.

Seine had a strong sense of themselves as an occupational group. Each year, round about Mardi gras, they had a corporate celebration, electing a queen of the laundry boats, and they too marched as a group to Sainte Geneviève in August 1789. Yet like the market women, their sense of themselves was inseparable from the locality in which they worked and often lived. The procession to Sainte Geneviève was undertaken not by the laundresses of Paris, but by those of the Ile Saint-Louis (conveniently grouped in a single district, whose banner they carried).³⁴

What nearly every form of female employment shared, therefore, was a strong focus on the neighbourhood. In so far as paid work did contribute to women's social identity, very much more than for most men it gave them a sense of belonging within the immediate locality. It reinforced, therefore, the equally local focus provided by women's domestic responsibilities. It is true that eighteenth-century women had few of the housekeeping tasks – cleaning and scrubbing – that became so onerous in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but shopping, cooking and child rearing fell primarily on women. Even if a mistress had domestic help – and most artisan and shopkeeping families had a female servant – she would still take a direct part in the preparation of food and the care of children, getting the servant to do the more onerous chores. Women therefore necessarily spent more time at home and in its immediate vicinity than did men. If they worked elsewhere they would return before the men, like the wife of an inlayer who went home with her servant (doubling as shop assistant) to begin cooking an hour before her husband closed up the shop where they all worked.³⁵

These domestic duties, like most women's paid work, centred on the neighbourhood and on the apartment building and created powerful local networks. Matrons and their daughters and servants chatted at the well and in the local shops, paused to exchange pleasantries at the door of the house and in front of the street stalls outside. Poor women without adequate cooking facilities at home would run into each other when they took the family meal to the *pâtissier* to be cooked in his oven.³⁶

Equally central in the creation of women's neighbourhood networks was the bearing and rearing of children. Female neighbours provided the primary support for young mothers, particularly for the immigrants from outside Paris who comprised two-thirds of the population. The birth itself was usually a local event, for most mothers had their babies at home.³⁷ While a great many babies were sent to wet-nurses in the country, this was not universal: a butcher's wife living near the Place Maubert, for example, employed a wet-nurse in the rue d'Arras, a couple of hundred yards away.³⁸ As the child grew its mother relied on the neighbourhood women for help. Although there are examples of men minding small children, in general child care was women's work, so when another butcher's wife had to go off early to her shop just after Christmas in 1752 it was a female neighbour who got the son up and escorted him to school. Child-minding might also be done in common, as in a house in the rue Saint Antoine

³⁴ Hardy, 'Mes Loisirs', 31 August 1789 (B.N. Ms. 6687, fol. 456). Alain Faure, *Paris Carême-prenant* (Paris, 1978), 136.

³⁵ Y15100, 29 September 1752.

³⁶ Y15350, 4 June 1752. Mercier, *op. cit.*, v, 14. See Garrioch, *op. cit.*, chap. 1.

³⁷ According to A. Fauve-Chamoux 90 per cent of urban women in France gave birth at home, although no source is given for this figure. 'Inno-

vation et comportement parental en milieu urbain (XVe–XIXe siècles)', *Annales: ESC*, xl (1985), 1023–39 (1025). For examples from Paris, Y14484, 24 February 1789. Y11265A, 12 February 1775, witness 2.

³⁸ Y11705, 19 May 1775. For other examples see Y15350, 19 October 1752 and Y15747, 13 October 1700, witness 1.

where a seamstress, the wife of a master joiner and the wife of a lawyer gathered under the archway of the carriage entrance while their children played in the courtyard.³⁹ The paid and the unpaid work done by women thus converged on the neighbourhood to a far greater degree than that of men.

A third area of women's experience, religious activity, was similarly distinct from that of men and also encouraged a more local sense of identity. Although we know even less about women's religion in Paris than we do about men's, it seems that some of the statues on street corners were particularly the object of female devotion. It was mainly women who flocked to pray beneath a statue of the Virgin in the Faubourg Saint Antoine in 1752 when its head was rumoured to have turned from one side to the other.⁴⁰ Another statue on the corner of the rue Neuve d'Orléans near Saint Médard was cared for by a female servant living in the house, and it was a local milkmaid who noticed when one day the alms box beneath the statue was broken open. The candles beneath another statue in the rue du Roi de Sicile were tended by a widow living in a nearby house.⁴¹

Women probably went to church more than men but were also, it seems, more likely to worship in locations outside the church. They spent more time at home, where crucifixes, representations of the Virgin and images of the saints were likely to be around them. It was the image of the Jansenist saint François de Pâris, detected among several others by the parish priest on his visit to Jeanne Tavignot, that led to her being refused the Easter sacraments. Women might even, like the wife of a worker at a china manufactory in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, read the Bible in their homes.⁴² Men, on the other hand, spent most of their waking hours away from home, and for those in the many occupational groups which until 1776 had confraternities, religion was as much centred on their professional organization as on the parish. The feast day of their patron saint was generally a holiday, or certainly the occasion for a celebration, and trade confraternities helped to create ties across the city.⁴³ Female worship was more likely to be undertaken in the company of neighbours, in the home or in the street where the statues of the Virgin or of female saints watched over the stall-keepers and their customers, very much a part of the local scene which was central to so many women's lives.

Religion, domestic duties and paid work therefore converged to create distinct male and female worlds. Not entirely separate worlds, to be sure: most men with a stable home formed strong neighbourhood ties, even if they had greater opportunities to develop contacts across the city and throughout the parish, and some household concerns were shared by men. Their neighbourhood affiliations were nevertheless more likely to be developed in the wineshop, whereas for women the bonds of proximity were reinforced by work and worship in and around the home.

This is not, it should be noted, a distinction between 'public' and 'private' spheres. On the contrary, women's concerns gave them a very 'public' role, making certain 'public' spaces and certain issues into female ones. During the day, the house and the stairs largely belonged to

³⁹ Y13290, 29 June 1788. Y12567, 29 December 1752, witness 4. Y14436, 3 May, 19 May 1788.

⁴⁰ Y10994, 12, 13, 14 June 1752. Ménétra, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁴¹ Y12597, 2 November, 13 November 1752. Y15968, 17 July 1769.

⁴² B.A. Ms. Bastille 10197, fol. 238, déclaration du

curé, 15 April 1733. Y13751, 29 September 1746.

⁴³ See Garrioch and Sonenscher, *op. cit.* The *frip-piers* celebrated the feast day of their patron, the Holy Cross, on 14 September. The celebrations in 1752 spilled over into a fight near the central market: Y11239, 15 September.

women. The typical Paris house was an apartment building of between three and six storeys, with a small courtyard giving access to a single narrow stairwell generally opening onto two doors on each landing. While it is true that many men worked in their rooms, it remained more common for male jobs to be centred on the ground-floor workshop, whereas women, even within the corporate trades, were more likely to work upstairs. As women went about their work they could not avoid meeting neighbours. It was common, furthermore, for women working at home to leave their doors open, so anyone climbing or descending the stairs would naturally glance in the open door as they reached the landing, and would often stop for a chat. If the work were portable a woman might take it to a neighbour's room or down to the courtyard or the door of the house where she could have company as she sewed or spun.⁴⁴

The areas which were most conspicuously female territory, though, were the food shops and markets. Customers and sellers alike were predominantly women, and their numerical dominance gave them an important local function. In the days before the appearance of the *concierge* – who only became a common figure at the very end of the eighteenth century – a person seeking directions or looking for someone would ask a woman selling flowers or cabbages in the street: she would know everyone and what they were doing. 'A nearby fruit-seller said that he was not at home.'⁴⁵ The location of stalls on street corners and at the doors of busy shops provided their keepers with a perfect vantage-point for observing everything that went on. And as authorities on local affairs, ever-present overseers of street life, these women had an important measure of control. The glazier Jacques-Louis Ménétra recalled one occasion during his boyhood in Paris in the 1740s when his father came to beat him for some misdemeanour, but under the jeers of the street women resorted simply to telling him off.⁴⁶ The female stallkeepers maintained a loud commentary on local affairs and even intervened physically to separate men or women who were fighting. At the central market they were notorious: 'les poissardes font la loi' (the fishwives make the rules) wrote that great observer of Parisian life, Louis-Sébastien Mercier.⁴⁷

The moral authority of women in the streets and markets gave them a central role in local community life. It also guaranteed them an important part in revolts against bailiffs who came to expel tenants, or against police agents arresting beggars or debtors. Whether in the marketplace or in the streets it was generally the neighbourhood women who rallied a crowd to the defence: a woman selling fruit nearby had 'excited' the populace to attack, recalled the bruised police agents who had tried to arrest a beggar in a central Paris street.⁴⁸ Such rebellions were most commonly directed against the police, the guilds or some other outside authority which came into the neighbourhood to arrest or expel someone, or to confiscate their goods. But on occasion women also expressed their displeasure with other authorities who refused to behave as expected. At Saint Nicolas des Champs in 1758 a priest complained that he had been attacked by local women – in this case not stallkeepers but a seamstress, a butcher's wife, a wineshop keeper's wife and the daughter of a spicer – who were blaming him for the ban placed on their *curé* by the Parlement of Paris.⁴⁹

In each of these cases women were fulfilling essentially the same role as when they intervened in fights or commented on the actions of passers-by. They were upholding, on their own

⁴⁴ Y15099, 21 February 1788, witness 3. Y14436, 3 May, 19 May 1788.

⁴⁵ Y10994, 10 August 1752.

⁴⁶ Ménétra, *op. cit.*, 38–9.

⁴⁷ Mercier, *op. cit.*, 1, 218.

⁴⁸ Y15350, 5 June 1752.

⁴⁹ B.N., Joly de Fleury Ms. 1569, fols 355–360.

territory, a community morality which frowned on certain types of behaviour. They might be preventing excessive violence or enforcing a certain notion of how far parents should go in disciplining their children; defending forms of religion which they deemed necessary for the well-being of the community; or protecting local people from the interference of outside authorities, which often had disastrous consequences for the victims and their families. The greater leniency of the authorities in dealing with female offenders, a direct result of the inferior position accorded to women, facilitated their role as the voice of the community in its dealings with bailiffs and other officials. Although they were intervening in the 'public' domain, it was not an intrusion. They were on their own ground, and their action was very much a part of women's function in the city in safeguarding the family and the local community.

The most studied example of this is, of course, food riots. The central position of wives in organizing the family budget underlay women's pre-eminent concern with food prices and (just as importantly) availability and quality. It was they who anxiously assessed the likelihood of shortages by surveying the bags of flour stacked in the market-place. It was the women who commented on government failure to ensure grain supplies, who denounced the use of poor quality flour and who exchanged bitter words with the bakers when prices rose. Parisian women played a major part in food riots which spasmodically shook both the city and the confidence of the police.⁵⁰ But this was not solely because of their centrality in the household economy. It was also because of their recognized role as community opinion-makers, with the primary responsibility for taking action on such matters.⁵¹ When women took action against neighbourhood bakers whom they perceived to be overcharging (the usual form of bread riots), they were assuming a regulatory role within and on behalf of the local community.

By implication, and more overtly, as the Paris police and the government experimented with the regulation of grain markets across the century,⁵² they were also defending the community against what they saw as the inefficiency or greed of the public authorities, who were failing to carry out their duty of ensuring cheap and plentiful supplies of daily necessities. The whole question of prices, supply and quality of food was a legitimate concern of women. The enforcement of this part of the 'moral economy' was first and foremost entrusted to them, and here they acted in a far more radical way than in most other domains. While the 'public' area of labour relations was one which concerned men rather than women, the equally 'public' domain

⁵⁰ Olwen Hufton, 'Women and the family economy in eighteenth-century France', *French Historical Studies*, ix (1975), 1-22. See George Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1971), 143, 156. Hufton, 'Women in revolution', *Past and Present*, LIII (1971), 90-108 (94-5). Steven L. Kaplan, 'The Paris bread riot of 1725', *French Historical Studies*, xiv, 1 (Spring 1985), 23-56. John Bohstedt's suggestion that women did not play a prominent role in food riots does not hold for Paris, and probably not for England: Bohstedt, 'The myth of the feminine bread riot' in Harriet B. Applewhite and Darlene Gay Levy (eds), *Women and Politics in the Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 21-60. See E. P. Thompson's rebuttal in *Customs in Common* (Harmondsworth,

1993; first published London, 1991), 306-22. See also Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War. Gender, Class and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (Pennsylvania, 1993), 224-5.

⁵¹ Thompson, *op. cit.*, 321-2. Arlette Farge makes this point, too, but sees public protest as a departure from, not an extension of, women's daily roles: 'Protesters plain to see' in Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (eds), *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, vol. 3 of Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (eds), *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993; first published Rome and Bari, 1991), 489-505 (496).

⁵² See especially Kaplan, *Famine Plot Persuasion*, *op. cit.*

of consumer consciousness was one in which women had undisputed rights and in which they felt comfortable and justified in taking action.

Their role in such cases was both 'public' and overtly political, if that term is applied to action which, in Colin Lucas's words, 'regulated, checked, and ultimately limited (albeit loosely) the exercise of state power'.⁵³ Parisian women knew perfectly well that the government controlled the grain trade closely. They were aware, even in the 1720s, that protégés and relatives of ministers and of the king's mistress were among the largest merchants. They were not slow to link sharp price rises with the pecuniary interests of people close to the government. The popular discontent of 1740–1 or the so-called 'flour wars' of 1775 were as much directed against the ministry as against the merchants who were more often the immediate victims.⁵⁴

In religious matters, too, women demonstrated a considerable capacity for independent thought and action. Much of the unorthodox religious behaviour documented in eighteenth-century Paris involved working women. Many responded to Jansenism, more personal and less church-centred than mainstream Catholicism, and particularly to popular Jansenism which combined these features with veneration for the *diacre* Pâris with his message of poverty, humility and charity, and his posthumous miracles. Women of humble rank figured prominently among the convulsionaries, both at the tomb of Pâris in 1731 and later in isolated groups in various parts of the city. Some contemporary reports suggested that three-quarters of them were women, and certainly most of the cases of refusals of sacraments concerned women. Some were nuns, but others were working women like Marie Vilmondel, a domestic servant who publicly attacked the parish priest of Saint Landry for his rejection of Jansenism.⁵⁵ Very much later in the century, but equally outside church control, were the religious 'assemblies of women' which the clergy in the Faubourg Saint Marcel denounced to the police in 1786.⁵⁶

Here too, the action of women was often overtly political. 'O king, prince, and worthy magistrate, father of the people', wrote an *ouvrière* in August 1770, 'give us ministers and priests worthy to govern the Church'.⁵⁷ Her scarcely literate petition was disregarded as the product of a sick mind, but it contained clear echoes of the conflicts over Gallicanism and over the position of the Jesuits (she singled them out for particular condemnation) in the preceding years. More coherent but equally political was the action of other women with Jansenist sympathies who, in 1752, gathered along the route of a procession to taunt the Archbishop of Paris with an *arrêt* of the Parlement which had been issued against him. In 1728 it had been female water-carriers from the Fontaine des Innocents who threw mud all over three anti-Jansenist proclamations by the Archbishop of Paris. The burning issues of the day were religious ones, linked in this case

⁵³ Lucas, *op. cit.*, 437.

⁵⁴ Kaplan, 'Paris bread riot', *op. cit.*, 33–4; and *Famine Plot Persuasion*, *op. cit.*, 27–46. Bouton, *op. cit.*, 259.

⁵⁵ Z1 O 233, November 1761. B. Robert Kreiser, *Miracles, Convulsions, and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, 1978), 250–4, 259 n. 47; and 'Beyond Port-Royal: popular Jansenism in eighteenth-century Paris' in J. Beauroy *et al.*, *The Wolf and the Lamb. Popular Culture in France from the Old Regime to the Twentieth Century* (Stanford,

1977), 65–91 (75). Dale Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Old Regime, 1750–1770* (Princeton, 1984), esp. chap. 3. F. Ellen Weaver, 'Erudition, spirituality and women: the Jansenist contribution' in S. Marshall (ed.), *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), 189–206.

⁵⁶ Y13978, 12 December 1786.

⁵⁷ B.N. Joly de Fleury Ms. 1567, fol. 39, petition to *procureur général* of the Parlement of Paris, 11 August 1770.

with refusals of sacraments and with the Archbishop's reforms to the central hospital, and all this was followed with interest and passion by many Parisian women.⁵⁸

Excluded from political office, women nevertheless drafted petitions urging reform. But more commonly they took action in their own physical space, in the streets. And their role of commentary and independent action on matters of particular concern to them and to the local community was tacitly accepted both by their own menfolk and by the authorities. There were instances of women being punished for their part in riots, and for seditious language, but they were not being condemned because they were women. They were not perceived to be stepping outside the sphere that nature had appointed for them.

Nor were they doing so in July 1789. 'The women and the children took up the cobblestones in the courtyards, right up to the houses, to throw down on [the soldiers]', wrote a shopkeeper in the rue de Hurepoix.⁵⁹ Despite their almost complete absence from the official lists of Bastille-takers, some women did assist with the attack on the fortress, like Marguerite Piningre who collected bottles to load the cannon. She, like most of those at the Bastille on 14 July, lived locally, in the Faubourg Saint Antoine: her action was as much in defence of the local community as of the city as a whole.⁶⁰

Seen against this background, the October Days seem less mysterious. They represent a continuation of women's action in defending the local community in matters of food supply. But whereas in July 1789 there was a threat of attack by the royal army or by much-feared 'vagabonds', necessitating that men take the dominant role, in October the threat was solely from food shortages. This placed the situation as much in the traditional domain of women as in that of men.

Why, then, had the women expected men to act? If the reports of eye-witnesses are accurate, they stepped in because the men were doing nothing. This makes sense if the men referred to were primarily those responsible for food supply: those of the municipality and of the districts, who had taken over the administration of the city from the Old Regime police, and the deputies of the National Assembly whom Marat and other journalists had been condemning for their betrayal of the people.⁶¹ At the same time, working men too might be expected to act, to put pressure on the new authorities on behalf of their hungry families. But male activists were by then largely integrated into the National Guard, under the command of local bourgeois officers and district committees (and more loosely of Lafayette), so they were difficult to mobilize. It was therefore left to the women to act, if anyone was going to.

Yet the October Days were very different from the 'traditional' bread riot. The march to Versailles appears to have been spontaneous, although the idea of going there had been aired over the preceding weeks.⁶² But the scale of the movement was unprecedented. So too was the

⁵⁸ Van Kley, *op. cit.*, 47. René L. de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson, *Journal et mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, ed. E. J. B. Rathery, 9 vols (Paris, 1859–67; reprinted New York, 1968), VII, 357 (17 December 1752). Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words. Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1994; first published Paris, 1992), 17, 23–7.

⁵⁹ Gaston Capon, 'La prise de la Bastille. Lettre inédite', *Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux*, LXXXVI, 1582 (10 June 1923), columns 517–20 (col.

518).

⁶⁰ Rudé, *Crowd in the French Revolution, op. cit.*, 58. Godineau, *op. cit.*, 109. On Marguerite Piningre, wife of Bernard Vener, see F1cIII Seine 27. He is among the takers of the Bastille listed in T514 1, no. 96.

⁶¹ Mathiez, 'Etude critique', *Revue historique*, LXVII (1898), 265–7.

⁶² Mathiez, 'Etude critique', *Revue historique*, LXVII (1898), 249–55.

fact that it was city-wide, grouping women not from a single neighbourhood but from the central market, the distant Faubourg Saint Antoine, and all the quarters in between and from there along the rue de Vaugirard. Levy and Applewhite are right, I think, to point to the precedent of the combined processions to Sainte Geneviève, largely female in composition, in August and September. They are also right to recall the ferment of the months since the calling of the Estates General.⁶³ But given Parisian women's awareness of religious politics across the century, and their evident grasp of the role of many individuals and groups at the court, there was no sudden political awakening. The newspapers and clubs which had sprung up since July served to refine political understandings and provided a new and more precise language in which to express them: the language of the rights of man.

But for those in the streets of the city the events of July had already provided the most important political lesson. The taking of the Bastille marked a major turning point in the politics of the Paris crowd. For the first time, as Colin Lucas has pointed out, royal authority did not flow back into the streets and squares temporarily invaded by the crowd. The National Guard was soon to occupy the resulting vacuum, but the crowd had learned that their action could influence not just the policy and the personalities of the government, but the nature of that government. In October the women acted on that lesson, but went further and sought a permanent solution to the bread shortages by bringing the royal family to Paris.⁶⁴

In the background, though, lay another significant, longer-term change. Again, Levy and Applewhite are right to point to the effect of the centralizing state on the inhabitants of Paris. But that is only part of the story. Economically and socially, as well as politically and administratively, the city had become increasingly integrated, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. Alan Williams has described the growing role of the police: the ever-denser networks of information, of guard-posts, of patrols. Improvements to street cleaning, street lighting and traffic flow all improved surveillance. The new fire brigade and the more efficient municipal customs officials who monitored all imports into the city, along with the reduced number of trades corporations after 1776, now more closely supervised, all represented formidable extensions of authority into the streets, houses and workshops of the city. The moral power of the police was extended by their gradual usurpation of the poor relief formerly administered primarily by the parishes, and by their increasing role in conciliation of disputes. In local politics, too, there was a transfer of power as the police assumed most of the functions formerly undertaken by local notables. The powerful citizen militia of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, which had been led by local nobles and *bourgeois*, was replaced by armed soldiers under the command of the police chief.⁶⁵

Two new institutions were of particular significance to women. One was the Mont-de-Piété, the official pawnbroker, whose low rates of interest and generous terms saved thousands of Parisians from the usury of local moneylenders – and women in particular, given that more often than not they had primary responsibility for the family budget.⁶⁶ The other important new establishment was the service which put new mothers in touch with healthy wet-nurses.

⁶³ Levy and Applewhite, 'Women of the popular classes', *op. cit.*, 10–12.

⁶⁴ Lucas, *op. cit.*, 448–9.

⁶⁵ Alan Williams, *The Police of Paris* (Baton Rouge, 1979), chaps 5, 6. Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 209–17. See also Jean Chagniot, *Nouvelle histoire de Paris. Le*

xviii^e siècle (Paris, 1988), 94–5.

⁶⁶ R. Bigo, 'Aux origines du Mont-de-Piété parisien: bienfaisance et crédit', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, IV (1932), 113–26. Williams, *op. cit.*, 113–15.

Once an arrangement had been reached, the families went each month to the office – the Bureau des Nourrices – to pay the nurse's fee and to obtain news of their offspring.⁶⁷

All of this meant that the centres of power in the city shifted away from the quarter or parish towards centralized agencies. But government institutions were only one domain in which this process of integration was taking place. In the eighteenth century Paris developed permanent new centres of recreational activity. While the Pont Neuf had always attracted ballad-singers and puppeteers, the major attractions had in the past been the periodic fairs, held once a year. Across the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the new boulevards which had replaced the old city walls became a permanent fairground for popular theatre and cafés.⁶⁸ In the 1780s, the Palais Royal became an alternative venue for such activities, attracting people of all ranks from all over the city. Its role as a centre of agitation and perhaps co-ordination of revolutionary activity in July 1789 has long been recognized. But more generally, with the increasing prosperity of the middling sort and of many artisans, accompanied by the growth of a consumer culture, the leisure of Parisians was both more commercialized and more likely to be enjoyed in areas of the city specializing in such activities.

Although the economic history of Paris is little known, there is some evidence that in other respects too its economy was becoming more integrated. The development of the stock exchange and of a central financial market, again near the Palais Royal, is one aspect of this. By the early nineteenth century, luxury industries had begun to congregate near the Bourse, forming a specialized business area. The creation of an internal postal service in 1759 is further evidence of economic integration, as are the trade directories already in existence since the late seventeenth century, and the *Petites affiches*, a periodical specializing in announcements of objects for sale, launched in 1751.⁶⁹

The growth of consumer industries for middle-class markets, and in certain cases for even wider sectors of the population, particularly in textiles, had an impact on patterns of work, on bonds of economic dependence and on social interaction between quarters. This process is as yet little known, but Richard Andrews has explored the economy of the north-central district along the rue Saint-Denis and the rue Saint-Martin, adjacent to the central market. This area became the centre of the garment and accessories industry, as it remained until quite recently. By 1790 there were over 200 large-scale businesses of this sort in the area, employing huge numbers of outworkers, typically in the *faubourgs* – the mushrooming settlements outside the old city walls. The Aubertin brothers, lace and gauze manufacturers, had sixty workers in their factory in the rue Saint-Denis and another hundred doing piecework in the *faubourgs* and in villages near Paris. In the same industry, a few blocks further north, Dumas-Descombes adopted a different organization of work, centralizing production in two factories employing 350 people,

⁶⁷ Hufton, 'Women and the family economy', *op. cit.*, 12–13. George D. Sussman, *Selling Mothers' Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France, 1715–1914* (Urbana, 1982), chaps 2, 3. Williams, *op. cit.*, 241–4.

⁶⁸ Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy. Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York and Oxford, 1986), part II. Michèle Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theatre and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Ann Arbor, 1984).

⁶⁹ Christopher Todd, 'French advertising in the eighteenth century', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 266 (1989), 523–4. Guy Arbellot, Bernard Lepetit and Jacques Bertrand, *Atlas de la Révolution française*, vol. 1, *Routes et communications* (Paris, 1987), 81. Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment* (London and New York, 1994), 54–5.

two-thirds of whom lived in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Faubourg Saint-Marcel where rents were lower.⁷⁰

Typically, the workforce in these industries was female. There was therefore constant movement of women from the outskirts to the centre, and back again; a big overlap, as Andrews points out, between the social universe of the north-central manufacturing district, the Halles and the *faubourgs*. This was paralleled by similar movement from all parts of the city to and from the central markets: the market women of the Place Maubert, the city's second market and the main one on the Left Bank, got most of their supplies from the Halles. Presumably the other markets scattered around the metropolis did too. In addition, the transport networks between Paris and the northern and eastern provinces centred on the great hostleries just off the rue Saint-Denis, a few blocks from the central market, so there was continual coming and going. It is hardly surprising that news of events in the heart of the city should have spread quickly to the northern and eastern *faubourgs*.⁷¹ Against this background, the geography of recruitment for the march to Versailles becomes easily explicable.

The changing social organization of the city, therefore, was itself a factor influencing political behaviour. In the years leading up to 1789, Parisians got used to greater centralization of amenities, of administration and of power. It was not just that the central government impinged more on their lives, though it certainly did that. But, in addition, many ordinary men and women developed wider horizons, simply through their daily struggle for survival. Gradually, they became more aware of the interdependence of the city and formed a broader sense of the way that events and people beyond their immediate sphere might exercise power over them. This was a long-term development, barely sensed by historians, even by those who in recent years have detected a growing political awareness among the people of Paris. At the time it went largely unnoticed, which perhaps explains why the events of 1789 came as such a shock.

Yet there were already hints of this change in the riots of 1787 and 1788, which unlike previous crowd action in Paris brought together people from disparate parts of the city.⁷² It can be seen most vividly in July 1789, when bands moved around the city in an extraordinary way, particularly between the Palais Royal and other quarters. On 14 July huge crowds flowed from the Hôtel de Ville to the Invalides and back to the Place de Grève, then to the Bastille and back. Although the strongest contingent among the takers of the Bastille came from the immediate vicinity, many parts of Paris were represented.⁷³ A new relationship both to authority and to urban space is also apparent in the women's processions to Notre Dame cathedral and to the church of Sainte Geneviève in August and September of 1789. The journal of the bookseller Hardy, who lived on or near the route they took, makes it clear that these processions were initiated by the women themselves, and hints at pressure on the clergy to follow. The first one he mentions involved laundrywomen and market women, marching to the beat of a drum and later accompanied by other musical instruments. Later groups are identified as coming from particular districts and then parishes, and the *curé* of Saint Eustache is mentioned as the first of the parish clergy to participate. The processions echoed a ritual familiar under

⁷⁰ Richard Andrews, 'Political Elites and Social Conflicts in the Sections of Revolutionary Paris: 1792–Year III' (D. Phil., Oxford, 1970), 313–22, 334–5.

⁷¹ On links between markets, Y11239, enquiry of

18 September 1752, witnesses 4, 5, 6. Andrews, *op. cit.*, 276, 315.

⁷² Garrioch, *op. cit.*, 201.

⁷³ Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, *op. cit.*, 57–9.

the Old Regime, which had frequently appealed to Saint Geneviève in the first half of the century, and as late as 1785. The women were organized in a conventional way, by parish or locality. But the role of women as organizers and principal participants, the almost military arrangement of some of the marches, the inclusion of the Hôtel de Ville in the itinerary, and the sheer numbers involved were all startlingly unprecedented: 'somewhat frightening', thought Hardy.⁷⁴ They demonstrate women modifying familiar ceremonial behaviour, taking it beyond the customary forms and the usual geographical boundaries.

The widening horizons suggested by these processions, and more dramatically still by the October Days, are not necessarily in conflict, in the short term, with continued commitment to the local community: outside contacts through work and even kinship could and did coexist with a dense local network. There is ample evidence from the Paris sections during the revolution that the primary loyalty of many men and women remained local. They tended to interpret national events and even revolutionary ideology through the filter of a local vision: to understand the sovereignty of the people, for instance, to be that of their own section.⁷⁵ But in the longer term, the extension of individual and group networks across the city facilitated an awareness of wider horizons and was a facilitator of broader national or class-conscious political education. But if we are to make sense of events like the October Days, we need to study the social and gendered context within which political awareness could grow.

It is also time to abandon the unhelpful and often condescending dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of collective action, the one seen as non-political, local and often female, the other as political, national and quintessentially male. On 5 October 1789, when Parisian women congregated rowdily outside the Hôtel de Ville, when they set off for Versailles through the drizzle, when they invaded the National Assembly, camped outside the palace and next day broke through the guard at the gates, they were acting in ways that were both highly political and at the same time entirely consistent with their role in a strongly gendered local community. Even in 1793, when 'la femme et la fille Mazurier' sat in the street outside their door and discussed the acceptance of the 'acte constitutionnel' by their section, they were re-enacting, yet extending, innumerable doorstep conversations about Jansenism, about the Archbishop's refusals of sacraments or Damiens' attack on Louis XV – about the 'affaires du temps', as Old Regime politics were called at the time.⁷⁶ The realities of daily life and work in eighteenth-century Paris gave ordinary women a major role in domains that revolutionary politicians were to redefine as 'public' and 'political', and male. But in the pre-revolutionary context there was no opposition between women's home, community and work roles. Primary responsibility for family and community, and hence in matters of subsistence, made the October Days women's business.

Yet they differed dramatically from women's action earlier in the century, in assembling unprecedented numbers of women from a wide catchment area, and in a very short time. The

⁷⁴ Hardy, 'Mes Loisirs', 11, 12, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24 August, 2, 3, 14, 17 September 1789 (B.N. Ms. 6687, fols 437, 438, 441, 443, 446, 450, 453, 455, 456, 458, 460, 462, 469, 475). On processions to Sainte Geneviève see Steven L. Kaplan, 'Religion, subsistence, and social control: the uses of Saint Geneviève', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, XIII (1979–80), 142–68.

⁷⁵ Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People* (Oxford, 1970), 198–200 and *Reactions to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1972), 116–21.

⁷⁶ Godineau, *op. cit.*, 26–7. See the police reports quoted by Farge, *Subversive Words, op. cit.*, 17, 23–7. Van Kley, *op. cit.*, 46–8, 50–1, 226–65.

ability to do so depended on networks built up as the urban economy changed rapidly across the second half of the eighteenth century, and as horizons were widened by the integration of the city. Once again we should avoid a false dichotomy, this time between home and work, between an explanation of women's action in terms of an unchanging 'household economy' and on the other hand an exclusive emphasis on changes in patterns of women's paid employment.

At first glance, stressing continuities and longer-term changes in this way might seem to be downplaying the importance of the political education afforded by the revolution. But as Levy and Applewhite have argued, education in citizenship was built on an understanding of the realities of power under the Old Regime.⁷⁷ The political awareness displayed by working women over the two days of action in October 1789 derived in part from this. The revolution and the popular movement in Paris developed precisely because it was a society already, by eighteenth-century standards, highly politicised – though levels of political understanding varied widely, and continued to vary across the whole revolution (as they do today).

But in October 1789 and after, the women were also acting in ways that would have been impossible only a year earlier. Their action reflected understandings fostered by the revolutionary experience, particularly in and since July. They knew where the new centres of power were located, no longer at the local level – in the markets, the districts or the Hôtel de Ville – but rather with the National Assembly and the king. They had learned that they themselves – the people – were powerful, and were working out how to operate within the new politics, how to bring pressure upon national institutions. They therefore gathered in unprecedented numbers and undertook action on an immeasurably greater scale than was possible under the Old Regime. They understood that the defence of their families and communities required action going beyond the boundaries of neighbourhood, parish and even of the city itself. Through this linking of older political conventions and new political understandings, the revolution rapidly reshaped the political landscape. The women of Paris were part of that reshaping, just as they had been part of the shaping of the political culture of the Old Regime.

Monash University, Melbourne

⁷⁷ Levy and Applewhite, 'Women of the popular classes', *op. cit.*, 11–12. Cf. Georges Lefebvre, 'Foules révolutionnaires', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, XI (1934), 1–26 (13): 'Aussi ne faut-il pas croire que la mentalité collective révolutionnaire se constitue subitement à la veille de la révolution.'