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THE ROLE OF THE COMMON MAN IN FRENCH
REVOLUTIONARY DRAMA

by

ARMAND COSQUER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
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1977

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE COMMON MAN IN FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY DRAMA

by

ARMAND COSQUER

Adviser: Professor Madeleine Morris

This dissertation is a study of the rôle played by the common man on the Parisian stage during the Revolution. Three major Parisian theaters--tragedy, comedy, and opera--enjoyed the patronage of the nobility and upper-middle class of the eighteenth century, and have held the attention of modern literary critics. The poor and the less-educated whose only theater was the Fair have been largely ignored. In the second half of the eighteenth century the Fair theaters evolved into the permanent Boulevard theaters. Thus two schools developed side by side: tragedy, comedy and opera on one hand, and farce, opéra-comique and vaudeville on the other, both with their own distinct following.

The Revolution and the disappearance of the nobility from the social arena forced the major theaters to compete with their minor rivals. The decree of 1791 establishing

freedom in the theater and abolishing all monopolies placed all stage companies on an equal footing before a much larger if far less educated public. This new public of citizens demanded fresh topics relevant to the momentous political upheavals of the time, forcing playwrights to introduce themes and characters with which the crowds could easily relate.

A description of the common people both in the audience and on the stage is followed by a study of their roles and ideals within the framework of history. The themes are drawn from a comparative study of four plays, representative of four phases of the Revolution: the first one, La Brouette du vinaigrier by Louis S. Mercier, was performed under the old regime; the other three are: Nicodème dans la lune, ou la Révolution pacifique (1790) by Beffroy de Reigny; L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles, ou les Vivandiers (1793) by Olympe de Gouges; L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain (1794) by Armand de Puységur. These themes are further developed in conjunction with other examples of revolutionary drama under the broad heading of "the Family and the State." Language, vocabulary, and style are studied in a separate chapter. An appendix gives a summary of each play, including the list of characters. A short biography of each playwright is also included.

The selection of plays for this study--many of them totally ignored by critics--has been dictated not only by the success they enjoyed but also by the presence of the common citizen as hero of the time.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE COMMON MAN DURING THE REVOLUTION	29
III. EVOLUTION OF THE ROLE OF THE COMMON MAN ON THE STAGE (1775-1794)	52
IV. THEMES RELATING TO THE FAMILY	115
V. THEMES RELATING TO THE STATE	145
VI. LANGUAGE, STYLE AND VOCABULARY	179
CONCLUSION	213
APPENDIX	227
BIBLIOGRAPHY	263

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution did not limit itself to the political sphere, but influenced all levels of French life. The artistic world as well as the everyday life of the common citizen was subtly and, at times, dramatically altered by the rippling effect of the Revolution. Neither the French theater, nor its audience escaped these waves of changes, and the playwrights created a theater reflecting the emergence of a new audience, the common people. It is this theater, and particularly its depiction of the life of the lower middle-class, that is the subject of this study.

The influence of the theater as an educational process could be compared to the impact American television has made on the most remote part of this continent. Collot d'Herbois could indeed subscribe to many of our patriotic and cultural programs when he writes:

La comédie, chez nous, peut-être extrêmement utile aux mœurs et à la politique que nous devons à notre heureuse Révolution. Déjà des magistrats philosophes ont voulu que son but tendît à l'instruction publique, à l'accroissement du zèle républicain. Que nos poètes tragiques nous présentent sans cesse des modèles de vertus patriotiques!

Que nos auteurs comiques poursuivent le modéré,
l'insouciant, l'égoïste, le faux patriote dans
leurs derniers retranchements . . .¹

The newly developed journalism did not reach the general population because of widespread illiteracy. Voltaire had already exploited the theater as a tribune for the ideas of the philosophes, and the stage was recognized by many revolutionary leaders as a means of educating the citizenry in the new values of the Revolution. Under the Terror the theaters were to be called "Schools of the Revolution." The Committee of Public Safety, at that time, saw the stage as an effective tool for the reeducation of the masses and used this medium as a propaganda device. Unfortunately, in the hope of attracting a wide audience, playwrights reached the lowest common denominator and produced mainly mediocre plays. However, in spite of its poor literary or artistic value, the theater filled a vital function in the dissemination of government policies.

The stage, we shall see, reflected the current political, social and financial changes with, perhaps, a time lag of just a few days between the time of the event and the day of the performance, offering a sort of instant replay for the people who for one reason or another were not present at the critical event. Mirabeau aux Champs-Élysées, for example, took all of five days to write and rehearse. The author, Olympe de Gouges, in her preface

apologized for the errors found in the play, explaining that haste was necessary if the playwright were to succeed in presenting a current political subject to the theater-going public. It is no wonder, therefore, that most critics today, such as Kenneth McKee, refer to most Revolutionary drama as "utter trash."²

Recent events in the United States have shown us that, when a nation is involved in a war effort, confidence in that endeavor is as important at home as it is on the front lines. For the same reason, the leaders of the French Revolution recognized the necessity of encouraging attacks on its enemies and extolling patriotic virtues among the great silent majority, for it was that great majority, who by supporting their leaders, would insure the success of the fight.

The involvement of the people in the theater during the Revolutionary years has been studied by numerous critics who treated the subject from various angles. Within the first decades of the nineteenth century, the theater of the French Revolution was the object of an immense research by both literary and social critics. The first of these studies which is still of great interest is Etienne and Martainville's l'Histoire du Théâtre-Français depuis le commencement de la Révolution jusqu'à la Réunion Générale.³ These writers regarded the turbulence in the theater as a reflection of the conditions

existing in revolutionary society. Their method was to recapitulate the history of the Comédie-Française through the Revolutionary era. Their study is constructed on three consecutive and parallel levels. First, the authors made a very detailed observation of the daily events of the Revolution as they were represented on the stage of the Comédie. Then they indicated whether the audience's reactions to the performance could have had either a beneficial or an adverse influence upon the theatrical group. Then they attempted to establish what influence those forces had upon the Comédie-Française. Of secondary importance is the literary analysis of the plays and the characters. Messrs. Etienne and Martainville concerned themselves only with those plays which were an important contributing factor to either the disintegration or the reunification of the Comédie-Française as an institution.

Paralleling the work of Etienne and Martainville, Théodore Muret in his work, L'Histoire par le théâtre,⁴ pursues generally the same goal. Granting that the stage mirrors society, he proceeds to prove this by showing that political matters had been transposed on the stage. Although other plays are mentioned, Muret's major interest remains Marie-Joseph Chenier's play, Charles IX, ou l'Ecole des rois. This play caused considerable discussion on and off the stage, and Muret asserts that the controversy was to lead to the eventual disintegration of

the Comédie. In the process of following the progress of the Comédie towards its schism and ultimate remerger, the reader discovers and follows the rise of the young actor, Talma and of the older playwright, Marie-Joseph Chénier.

In line with the preceding authors, Le Théâtre révolutionnaire,⁵ by Eugène Jauffret points out the passions and politics of the Revolution as represented on the Parisian stage. For this writer the theater faithfully pictures society and its concomitant political trends. The presentation of the Parisian stage as dominated by the waves of successive ideologies provides the unique aspect of this study. Seeking to identify current public consciousness, Jauffret is led to the study of the characters not as representatives of the different social classes, but as reflections of the viewpoints which he believes existed on the stage. Beginning in 1788, he chooses what he feels is a significant political event of that year. He summarizes it, explains it and, with the support of several often unknown plays, proves the assumption that the plays were the reflection of the contemporary political climate. For example, he sketches the history of the establishment of a Plenary Court in 1788 against the wishes of the Parlement of Paris. He follows it by the rather hasty examination of several plays relative to the same subject, contending that they were

written in reaction to the event.

By comparing the historical fact and its representation on the stage, Jauffret demonstrates that the public sentiment was, without doubt, violently opposed to the arbitrary and capricious use of power by the king and his minister. Pursuing the course he has set, Jauffret compares a given political event with its representation on the stage, and through each succeeding year of the Revolution demonstrates that, indeed, the theater reflects in all its shades the ever changing political climate of the time.

Continuing along the path set by his predecessors, Georges Duval, in his work, Histoire de la littérature révolutionnaire,⁶ discusses the stage as a rostrum for the morality and politics of the time. In the light of its potential influence the critic felt that the dramatists had set forth as their primal duty the betterment of their fellow-man, that writers had the moral obligation to use their skills to awaken in the spectators feelings of respect and devotion to the State. Duval focuses his attention especially on those plays which he feels had some impact upon the fortunes of the Comédie-Française, its actors and its playwrights.

Henri Welschinger,⁷ following this same general theme writes: "On y voit se refléter les sentiments et les passions de la société révolutionnaire . . ."⁸

Nevertheless, for him, the plays are worthless literary trash. The revolutionary theater is but a tribune for daily incidents and events which were reproduced as fast as they occurred. Welschinger feels that the main goal of the writers was to illustrate salient revolutionary actions to the spectators who had been absent from the original event.

Welschinger believes that the playwrights lacked historical perspective because of their closeness to the action. They became enmeshed in the daily banalities of the Revolution and could not disengage themselves.

Welschinger thus felt that the stage was nothing more than a rather poor reproduction of the political arena.

Maurice Albert⁹ leaves the well-beaten path of the previous critics. He traces the development of the theaters of the Fair to their final establishment as stable institutions along the Boulevard du Temple. These theaters, which were to rival the legitimate Parisian theaters, owed their success to two intrepid entrepreneurs, Audinot and Nicolet. Formed by the Fairs of St. Laurent and St. Germain, both had learned to sense the audiences' tastes. They responded accordingly, pleasing the audiences with their productions.

The picturesque and vibrant atmosphere of the Fairs helped attract a wide spectrum of citizens, thus bringing those popular theaters in open competition with

the established monopolistic houses. This particular investigation traces the history of the minor Parisian theaters, their successes, their failures, their competition with the legitimate theaters, using plays performed there as corroborative evidence.

Maurice Albert also examines the type of play offered to the public of the Fair. For the most part the farce prevailed, but drama was also popular for it attempted to describe life among the lower socio-economic groups which were especially attracted to the Fair theaters. The heroes in drama were always French, and simplicity was the key ingredient to the success of a play. Too many incidents or a complicated plot only resulted in confusing the audience. One event in the life of a simple soul was sufficient to develop an action with which the audience could relate.

Albert's work offers a significant contribution to this study because the Théâtre de la Foire represents best the common people. The plays introduce the modern reader to a variety of often neglected characters such as artists, peasants, workers. The characterizations are realistic yet simple paintings of people with kind and generous souls imparting to the spectators a lesson of morality.

In his following work,¹⁰ Maurice Albert follows the fortunes of Nicolet and Audinot through the

revolutionary period. A play, however important, is analyzed only in its relation to the fortunes of the two directors, for one successful play could easily save a director and his theater from ruin, and contribute heavily to its financial success. The plays of Beffroy de Reigny and the genre poissard are touched upon rather sketchily. Maurice Albert attributes the success of the boulevard theaters to the fact that the plays were a diversion for a public tired of the theatrical diet of the legitimate theaters:

Préoccupés surtout, dans leurs études sur le théâtre révolutionnaire, de suivre le mouvement des esprits, de peindre la société ou de mettre l'histoire en feuilletons dramatiques, MM. Muret, de Goncourt et Welschinger ont été naturellement attirés par les pièces à gros relief, Charles IX, l'Ami des lois, le Jugement dernier des rois, qui traduisaient le plus bruyamment les idées d'alors. Pour eux, le théâtre est une tribune, un club, voire un cirque, où les passions furieuses se cherchent et se prennent corps à corps, où les deux opinions se mesurent, se défient, se heurtent, gourdins contre épées. Il y a une exagération partielle. Même aux heures les plus troubles de la Révolution, les théâtres restent souvent de simples lieux de plaisir, où l'on oublie, où l'on se délasse et se divertit . . .¹¹

During the Reign of Terror, all theaters presented plays intended to instruct the crowds in republican virtues. During this dark period, however, farcical plays with a tinge of republicanism were by far the most popular plays, and those starring "Arlequin" and "Jocrisse" enjoyed special success.

Also leaving the path set by previous critics, Jacques Hérissay¹² gives us an anecdotal view of the Revolutionary stage. He proposes that there existed only four theaters in Paris: the Opéra, the Théâtre-Français, the Théâtre Italien, and the Théâtre de Monsieur. All others, he states, were merely a debasement of theater and performed nothing but vulgar farces. These could be of little interest to a public accustomed to the performances of the forementioned theaters.

The book presents a succession of anecdotes relative to the theatrical world throughout the revolutionary period. We learn, for example, that many actors, moved by the revolutionary spirit, were to join the National Guard. The author recounts their arriving late to theaters after a tour of duty, not having time to change, and acting their roles in uniform. Hérissay does not analyse any of the plays which he mentions, but uses the opportunity to recount some anecdote concerning a member of the theatrical world. In that vein, he narrates the life of Olympe de Gouges, who as a moderate, tried to play a conciliatory role in the Revolution. She wanted the different factions to come together for the good of the country, and was especially exasperated with journalists, such as Marat, who, according to her, exploited the people to their own advantage. In her play, L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles, ou les Vivandiers, she

attacks the politics and manipulations of Marat which were causing dissension among the patriots. Unfortunately for her, Marat and other Jacobin leaders had great political power and were able to have her arrested. Several months later she was guillotined.

With Jean Rivoire,¹³ we approach again that well-worn path of the stage as a tribune. This critic limits his work to a study of the political and moral ideas in what he called the serious theater of the Revolution, that is, tragedies. Before analyzing the plays he attempts to define the key words reflected in revolutionary theater. They are, according to him, patriotism, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Rivoire believes that the major role played by the theaters at that time was the propagation of the revolutionary spirit. He divides his study into three periods: the Constitutional Monarchy, the Terror, and finally the Thermidorian Reaction. Each period corresponds to a change in government which has obviously a direct rapport with the events of the day. Rivoire describes revolutionary patriotism as it becomes more fanatical in 1793, when France was being attacked on all fronts and experiencing everywhere a series of defeats. He contends that the people had the feeling of having been driven into a corner, an idea which was directly reflected on the stage. With the end of the Terror, the Thermidorian Reaction

brought a sense of relief from the Jacobin puritanism, and with it, a rash of anti-jacobin plays.

Marvin Carlson¹⁴ brings us full circle. The theater, he says, is a mirror of the daily events of the Revolution. According to him, each new crisis brought a visible change to the direction of the company, to the actors themselves, to their writers and even to their public. They become weather vanes, turning with each change of wind.

Just as Muret had done, Carlson takes Marie-Joseph Chénier's play, Charles IX, ou l'Ecole des rois, and examines the theme, the actors and the author in the framework of the first years of the Revolution. Carlson asserts that the performance of this play was instrumental in the schism of the Comédie. Each daily event which affected either Talma and his group or the royalist segment of the company is scrutinized and interpreted by Mr. Carlson. During the entire period from the schism to the reunion of the company each play, relevant to the fortunes of the Comédie is analyzed and discussed.

In all of the studies of revolutionary drama we have listed above, no critic has attempted to analyze the role of the common people on the stage of that period. Kenneth McKee published a fine analysis of the role of the priest on the Parisian stage. For that reason, even

though priests were members of the common element, little mention will be made of them in this work.

The only critic who approaches the subject of this dissertation to any great degree is Maurice Albert. His interest is focused on those plays which were performed first in the theaters of the Fair and then in their permanent locations on the Boulevard. His primary concern is to trace the development of the theaters themselves. The plays he examines are used merely to corroborate the success or failure of a given theater. He does not concern himself with exploring the characters of each play in relation to their role in society. We are not in complete agreement with his contention that the Boulevard theaters were popular because they sought to entertain rather than to instruct their public. We believe that both instruction and entertainment were the keys to a successful play.

Maurice Albert essentially followed a road parallel to that of the other critics. While they studied plays performed for the major Parisian theaters, he examined plays performed for the minor stages. He indicates that the directors and authors of the minor theaters were very sensitive to the taste of their public and sought first to please the spectators. The major theaters did no more and no less with their own audiences. Hence, at the beginning of the Revolution we find two levels of theaters

aimed at two distinct types of audiences. The major theaters performed operas, tragedies and comedies within the scope of their own privileges. The minor theaters, on the other hand, offered a greater diversity of genres.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century Paris was expanding westward. Much of its activity was concentrated in the area of the Place Vendôme, the Palais-Royal and, especially, the Boulevard du Temple. Being endowed with spacious areas favorable to promenades, the Boulevard attracted for a daily stroll all varieties of people from the upper bourgeois to pickpockets.¹⁵ A Fair atmosphere prevailed without the formalities found at St. Laurent or at St. Germain. The presence of so many people and the general ambiance of the area induced Nicolet to open a theater, which proved so successful that it remained a fixture well into the nineteenth century. This success in turn caused other directors to establish their theaters along the Boulevard, attracting even more people to the area.

All of the minor theaters, such as the Grands Danseurs du Roi and the Ambigu-Comique, offered a similar fare. At first their charters allowed them to offer only dances, tight rope and tumbling acts, and pantomime. However, the temptation to expand their presentations often overwhelmed them. As long as the major theaters did not lose their own public to the transgressions of

their lesser rivals, no problems existed. Nevertheless, the latter were often victims of their own popularity, for as the former theaters saw their audiences abandon them for the Boulevard, the prefect of police was requested to enforce the charters of each respective theater.

The competitive drive of the minor theaters in their rivalry with the major theaters was an important step in the development of the different genres. The pantomime soon became accompanied by music which sought to underscore every action, gesture or mood found therein. The scenery was very rich and expressive, leaving nothing to the imagination. The tunes were sprightly and gay, easily hummed or whistled. Soon, however, the directors became more audacious adding dialogue to each play. These were then called pantomimes dialoguées and were, in fact, the precursors of the melodrama. Composed of tragic events into which a comic relief is introduced, supported by music and dance, they were perfectly suited to meet the needs of the revolutionary playwrights as a medium to teach republican values.

Another popular genre was the vaudeville. It contained the essential ingredient for success; that of making the audiences laugh. It was especially used to provide a change of pace in the daily repertory. Despite the popularity of vaudeville, it was not until January

12, 1792 that a theater devoted exclusively to this genre opened in Paris. It aptly called itself, Théâtre de Vaudeville.¹⁶ The vaudeville plays resembled somewhat the pantomimes dialoguées in that songs instead of dialogue were added to the action.

They were initially called comédies avec vaudeville becoming simply vaudeville. Maurice Albert asserts that: "C'est depuis la Révolution que le vaudeville a retrouvé sa force et son véritable caractère."¹⁷

The minor theaters always cognizant of their public's taste, retained the farce as the most popular genre.

Les Grands Danseurs du Roi et Nicolet n'ont pas le seul privilège d'avoir, les premiers, acclimaté sur les boulevards les anciens spectacles des foires: ils en restent aussi, vers 1789, les plus fidèles représentants. Gardiens de la tradition, ils ne songent pas à modifier le caractère primitif de ces divertissements populaires. Comme ils connaissent bien leur public, un public de petites gens, amis de leurs aises, des cabrioles et des grosses farces, ils le servent selon ses goûts.¹⁸

Maurice Albert further points out that,

En 1793, et les mêmes semaines, on joue chez Nicolet le Mariage turc d'Arlequin, Hulla et les Précieuses Ridicules; au Vaudeville, Arlequin friand, Arlequin tailleur, Arlequin machiniste, et le duel d'Arlequin; aux Variétés, Arlequin marchand d'almanachs avec le Médecin malgré lui; au théâtre Montansier, Arlequin journaliste et le Lendemain des noces d'Arlequin; au Théâtre-Français Comique et Lyrique, Arlequin marchand d'esprit. Jamais on n'avait tant vu d'Arlequins sur la scène.¹⁹

Despite the upheavals caused by the successive crises that occurred in 1793, from the trial and execution of Louis XVI to the first months of the Terror, the public of the minor theaters was treated to a succession of farces worthy of the former Fair theaters.

The major theaters battled constantly to thwart the expansionist tendencies of their minor rivals. The Opéra, the Théâtre Italien, and the Théâtre de Monsieur were willing to reach a financial understanding with them. In return for an annual stipend they would have allowed the minor theaters to perform plays which by royal charter were their exclusive domain. The Comédie-Française, however, refused to negotiate and simply demanded the closing of a number of their minor rivals. Its greed was to have grave repercussions for all concerned. The Revolution, in its attacks against privilege, was to eliminate those of the theaters.

In January, 1791, in response to the request of a coalition of directors and authors of the minor theaters, the National Assembly passed the following decree:

Tout citoyen pourra élever un théâtre public et y faire représenter des pièces de tout genre, en faisant préalablement à l'établissement, sa déclaration à la municipalité.

Les ouvrages des auteurs morts depuis cinq ans et plus sont une propriété publique et peuvent, nonobstant tous anciens privilèges, qui sont abolis, être représentés sur tous les théâtres, instinctement.

Les ouvrages des auteurs vivants ne pourront être représentés sur aucun théâtre public sans le consentement formel et par écrit des auteurs sous peine de confiscation du produit total des représentations au profit de l'auteur. . . .²⁰

A number of entrepreneurs were to avail themselves of the opportunities granted by this decree. Within a few months the theater-going public was aware of the intentions of the establishment of many new theaters. In 1789 there were eleven theaters in Paris. The four major theaters were the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, the Théâtre de Monsieur and the Comédie Italienne. Their minor rivals were the Grands Danseurs du Roi, the Ambigu-Comique, the Associés, the Variétés-Palais-Royal, the Théâtre des Elèves de l'Opéra, the Délassements-Comiques, and the Beaujolais. Because of the 1791 decree, seven new theaters would be established by 1792: the Théâtre Français, the Vaudeville, the Louvois, the Théâtre-Français Comique et Lyrique, the Théâtre du Marais, the Théâtre National de Molière, and the Palais-Variétés.²¹

The decree had the effect of causing a veritable revolution in the already established theaters. Paragraph Two, by freeing the repertories of the major theaters, meant that henceforth the minor theaters would have the opportunity to perform whatever play they wished. The government decree is one of the main reasons for the mediocrity of revolutionary drama. The Boulevard theaters, as we have seen, had their own specialties for

which they were famous. Attempts by them to perform plays outside their area of specialization often proved disastrous. In fact, plays of the Comédie performed on the stage of many theaters were often unrecognizable. Furthermore, the establishment of new theaters did not, by the same token, have the effect of increasing the number of good actors or good plays. Rather, it had the immediate effect of producing an ever increasing number of theaters sharing the works of a limited number of playwrights. Despite the availability of the repertoires of the former privileged theaters, there continued to be a serious shortage of new plays from established playwrights. The inevitable result was that the directors of the new theaters in their quest for productions accepted plays of questionable value. This created a vicious cycle which led to a further deterioration of theatrical productions.

The revolutionary theaters had a public whose educational, social, and financial levels were greatly different from that of the pre-revolutionary period. Although many people picked up their pens, rather than their swords to rouse public sentiment, the majority of playwrights had had earlier works performed prior to this period. Moreover, any new playwright had necessarily been educated under the old regime, and most of the actors who had performed under the previous regime continued to do so during the Revolution. For all these reasons we

can appreciate the absence of revolutionary spirit at the various levels of the theatrical world during the first years of the Revolution.

Looking at the theater in a vacuum, totally dissociated from the events of the day, we see that the great change occurs in the theater-going public. Obviously, current events did have a momentous influence on the choice of subjects, but the main factor in the evolution of the theater remains the presence of a new public which demanded from the playwrights a new approach and a new language. Thus the writers adopted a genre which could be more easily understood by a generally less educated audience.

As the number of spectators increased, the educational level of the plays decreased, and we will see that the main objective of playwrights was to study the daily existence of the silent majority and attempt to glorify the banalities and the trivialities of their lives. With every new crisis the revolutionary government found itself constantly on the defensive fighting for its survival. Thus it soon became the rule to glorify the Family and the State, symbols of stability. Jealous husbands were mocked on the stage whereas faithful ones were praised. The new leaders of France used respect toward the institution of the Family as a unit to build a community spirit which, they hoped, would transform

France into one extended family. Revolutionary drama therefore preached individual virtues together with a democratic patriotism not found in the plays of the Old Regime.

This study will show that, because of this change of public, the playwrights had to introduce characters and ideals with which their new audiences could easily relate. The development of the role played by the common people as they appeared on the Parisian stage during the revolutionary period will be examined. The discussion of the ideals pertaining to the common people will be pursued according to a thematic approach. Chapter Three will compare four plays: one performed under the old regime and the other three during the various stages of the Revolution. Themes elicited from this comparison will be further developed in subsequent chapters under the broad heading of the Family and the State.

This study will be limited to the theaters of Paris, for then as well as now, Paris reflects France. The provincial theaters produced but few new plays, and their main effort was to create poor imitations of Parisian productions.

Before seeking to identify the new theater-going public of the Revolution, a final question has to be settled which concerns the selection of the plays

examined here. It was decided to use the Moniteur Universel which was the most stable of the revolutionary journals. Each issue from November 1789 to October 1795 was thus scanned and the total number of performances for each play written during that period was noted. The Fall of Robespierre which occurred on July 27, 1794 marked the end of Jacobin domination in France. It had been closer to an egalitarian ideal than any of the other political groups, and for this reason, it was popular with the lower middle class and the masses. Other political groups, such as the Girondists represented the more affluent members of the Bourgeoisie. The fall of Robespierre and the Jacobins marks the beginning of the decreasing importance of the common man on the stage.

At the same time that the number of performances of each play was being noted, additional plays mentioned in other works of revolutionary drama were taken under consideration. A number of plays were found in that manner. They complemented the list compiled from the Moniteur. The Journal des Spectacles was not published until a later date. The main fault with the former is that it placed the greatest importance on reporting the legislative sessions of the Assembly to the detriment of all other news. Therefore, during critical periods such as the trial of Louis XVI, the Moniteur did not report the activities of the theaters. It is for this reason

that the list of plays had to be filled out from other sources.

The critical criterion was not, therefore, popularity but rather the inclusion in a play written during the Revolution of common-citizen characters. Because characters representing the common people were lacking, a play such as Laya's L'Ami des lois was not included. On the other hand, Olympe de Gouge's L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles is on the list despite the fact that it was performed only twice. The reason for inclusion of this play is that it represents a transition in the importance of the role played by commoners on the stage, and is therefore of consequence to this dissertation. Oxtiern by the Marquis de Sade fared no better in popularity. It was included because it illustrated a given type of play often performed on the stage of the Théâtre de Molière.

Because of the interruption of the coverage of theaters by the Moniteur, the number in parentheses found after each play listed below, indicating the number of performances, is offered only as a guide. The absence of a number indicates that no mention of them was found in the Moniteur. The following plays were chosen to be discussed in this dissertation:

1. Mercier, Louis S. La Brouette du Vinaigrier. 1776. (6)
2. Dumaniant [Antoine-Jean Bourlin] Ricco. 26 ✓
November 1789. (70)

3. Dorvigny, Louis. Les Noces du père Duchesne. 26
December, 1789.
4. Ronsin, Charles. Louis XII, père du peuple. 12
February, 1790. (2)
5. Collot D'Herbois, Jean-Marie. Adrienne, ou le Secret
de famille. 19 April 1790. (9)
6. Gouges, Olympe de [Marie Aubry] Le Couvent, ou les
Voeux forcés. October 1790. (19)
7. Beffroy de Reigny, Louis [Cousin Jacques].
Nicodème dans la lune, ou la Révolution pacifique.
7 November 1790. (360)
8. Beffroy de Reigny, Louis. L'Histoire universelle.
16 December 1790. (62)
9. Carbon de Flins des Oliviers, Claude. Le Mari-
Directeur. 25 February 1791. (4)
10. Dupuis, Amable. L'Artiste patriote, ou la Vente des
biens nationaux. 1 August 1791. (11)
11. Beffroy de Reigny, Louis. Le Club des bonnes-gens,
ou le Curé français. 24 September 1791. (44)
12. Sade, Donatien, count, known as marquis de. Oxtiern,
ou les Malheurs du libertinage. 22 October 1791. (2)
13. Pujoulx, Jean B. L'Ecole des parvenues, ou la Suite
des deux petits Savoyards. 8 February 1792. (11)
14. Dorvigny, Louis. Le Désespoir de Jocrisse. 1792. (38)
15. Gouges, Olympe de. L'Entrée de Dumourier (sic) à
Bruxelles, ou les Vivandiers. 23 January 1793. (2)

16. Desfontaines de la Vallée, Guillaume. Le Divorce.
18 May 1793. (33)
17. Picard, Louis-Benoît. Arlequin friand. May 1793. (5)
18. Boullault, M. J. Les Brigands de la Vendée. 3
October 1793.
19. Gamas. Cange, ou le Commissionnaire de Lazare.
30 October 1794.
20. Gourgault, Jean-Baptiste [Dugazon].
7 November 1793. (15)
21. Plancher, Philippe-Aristide [Aristide Valcour].
Le Vous et le Toi. November 1793. (34)
22. Dorvigny, Louis. Jocrisse changé de condition. 1793.
(36)
23. Philipon de la Madelaine, Louis. Agricol Viala, ou
le Jeune héros de la Durance. 1 July 1794. (6)
24. Puységur, Armand-Marie, de Chastenet, marquis de.
L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain. 4 January 1794.
(36)
25. Pujoux, Jean-Baptiste. Les Montagnards, ou l'Ecole
de bienfaisance. 2 September 1794.
26. Ducancel, Charles-Pierre. L'Intérieur des comités
révolutionnaires, ou les Aristides modernes. 27
April 1795..

It will be noted that the first play listed above was written prior to the Revolution and that the last play was performed after the limits set by this writer. They were included in this dissertation for comparison.

Rather than give a summary of each play as it is cited in this dissertation, it was thought best to refer the reader to the Appendix. This was done for two reasons: first, since we are examining the development of the role of the common people, the characters of each play are listed to help the reader appreciate for himself the steady transition; then, since each chapter deals with a specific theme, it is possible for a play to be quoted in every chapter. It seems, therefore, preferable to refer to the appendix to refresh one's memory rather than to refer back to a previous footnote.

Typographical errors of the original texts have been carefully reproduced, for any changes would be purely arbitrary, unless the texts were completely modernized. It cannot be verified whether errors are due to carelessness or ignorance of either the author or printer.

Footnotes

1. Henri Welschinger, Les Almanachs de la Révolution (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1884), p. 147.
2. Kenneth McKee, The Rôle of the Priest on the Parisian Stage during the French Revolution (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1939), p. 11.
3. Charles G. Etienne and A. Martainville, Histoire du Théâtre-Français depuis le commencement de la Révolution jusqu'à la Réunion Générale (Paris: Barba, 1802).
4. Paris: Amyot, 1864-5.
5. Paris: Furne, Juvet & Cie, 1869.
6. Paris: Librairie de la Société des gens de lettres, 1879.
7. Le Théâtre de la Révolution (Paris: Charavay frères, 1860).
8. Welschinger, p. 6.
9. Les Théâtres de la Foire, 1660-1789 (Paris: Hachette, 1900)
10. Les Théâtres des Boulevards (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1902).
11. Ibid., p. 82.
12. Le Monde des théâtres pendant la Révolution (Paris: Perrin & Cie, 1922).
13. Le Patriotism dans le théâtre sérieux de la Révolution (Paris: Editions Gilbert & Cie, 1958).
14. The Theatre of the French Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).
15. Albert, Foire, p. 274.
16. Albert, Boulevards, p. 74.
17. Ibid., p. 75.

18. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
19. Ibid., p. 84.
20. Hérissay, pp. 56-57.
21. Carlson, pp. 289-291.

CHAPTER II

IDENTIFICATION OF THE COMMON MAN DURING THE REVOLUTION

Before we can begin our examination of the role played by the common people on the revolutionary stage, it is necessary to identify this little known yet largest group of the Nation. We will also examine in the present chapter the composition of the theater audiences, as well as the themes of revolutionary drama.

France in 1789 had a population of approximately twenty-six million inhabitants. Most historians, such as Lefebvre,¹ agree that the population was divided as follows:

Clergy - 130,000	upper - 10,000
	lower - 60,000
	monastic orders - 60,000
Nobility - 200-250,000	court - 20,000

The remainder of the nobles were those who had not been officially presented to the king and therefore continued to reside on their estates. Some had incomes that allowed them to lead a life of leisure, but many were very poor, so poor as to be indistinguishable from their tenants in dress or social status.

Third Estate - 25,500,000

Peasants and workers - 19,500,000

Serfs - 1,000,000

Bourgeoisie - 5,500,000

Despite France's overwhelmingly rural economy, the French peasant enjoyed a status unique in Europe. In Eastern Europe--for example in Hungary--the majority of the land was held by nobles who exploited it by means of feudal duties owed to them by the peasants, nearly all of whom were serfs. In England, on the other hand, all the feudal obligations had ended and the peasants were largely free. However, the lords had, either through the courts or by violent means, dislodged the peasants from their lands. English peasants had, indeed, greater liberty than their French counterparts, but they were landless. In France, at least three out of every four peasants were attached to some parcel of land. These were the tenured lands. However small, they were legally theirs and publicly acknowledged as such by their lord. Subject to the payment of manorial dues and services, the peasant was free to bequeath, inherit, sell or rent the plot which he worked. Many feudal obligations, such as that of peasant children working exclusively for the lord, had simply disappeared. Dues and services, in most cases, could be, and were in fact, accomplished by a monetary payment in lieu of physical labor.

It was once thought that the Revolution had created a propertied class among the peasants. This has been generally refuted, especially by Lefebvre, who pointed out that it was because the peasants had all the rights to their lands of a modern day proprietor that they felt the feudal dues to be an onerous and unjust tax.² The entire question of allegiance to one party or another during the Revolution was based on the issue of property. The majority of the nobles were poor and attached to the land. They were attached to it because they had no other way available to them to meet their financial obligations. A nobleman by definition could not work.³ Except on a managerial level in the various business or trade occupations, there was only one exception to the ban on physical labor. Because France was essentially an agrarian nation, nobles were always allowed to plow their fields and enjoy the fruits thereof without chancing the risk of derogating from their order.

Since the majority of nobles were poor, they needed the various feudal dues in order to supplement their needs. In fact, even with those dues, many nobles were obliged to enter into other fields of work and were eventually derogated. By the time of the Revolution many noble families had simply ceased to be part of the Second Estate.

Ownership of land varied from region to region, but, on a national scale, the peasants owned 40% of the arable land,⁴ the clergy 10%, the Bourgeoisie 25% and the nobles 25%.⁵ The problem with these figures is that since the peasants so greatly outnumbered the rest of the population, it can readily be seen that what property they owned, had to be quite small. In good years, their plots were scarcely large enough to sustain them, so that in bad years the family simply starved, unless it found some other employment.

The bourgeoisie comprised 10 to 12 percent of the population. The majority inhabited the towns and cities. They can be divided into three groups. The upper middle class were the wealthy business elite and government officials. They were people like Samuel Bernard with a personal fortune of thirty-million Louis d'or or Bouret with forty-two.⁶ The middle group comprised the independent craftsmen, such as jewelers, well-to-do merchants, traders, booksellers, printers, writers and lawyers. The lower group was more difficult to identify, because, in practice, it was difficult to distinguish between representatives of the working class proper, such as journeymen, apprentices, clerks and domestics, and the members of the petty bourgeoisie like small shopkeepers and neighborhood artisans.

The position of many of the craftsmen had changed drastically over the century. Once the master had been owner of his shop, reigning over a number of journeymen and apprentices, making all decisions as to the kind of product that his shop produced. But, slowly, many were to lose their independence and become practically salaried help. The craftsmen were sold raw material by a négociant, who then unilaterally quoted the purchase price of the goods produced. This forced the craftsmen to work longer hours in order to make ends meet. He still wielded a great deal of influence in that, socially, he outranked the journeymen and apprentices who looked to him for work and guidance. Aware of the steady decline of their former social and financial position in the community and especially afraid of being derogated to a lower social order, the craftsmen were to become the radical sans-culottes of the Revolution. Rudé⁷ lists the people who participated in the taking of the Bastille according to their occupations. The following is a partial listing:

Bakers -	5
Brewers -	2
Butchers -	5
Wine-merchants -	11
Locksmiths -	41
Masons -	16
Cabinetmakers -	48
Joiners -	49
Porters -	16
Engravers -	13
Nailsmiths -	9
Printers -	8
Boot and shoemakers -	28
Hairdressers -	10

The above list shows clearly that many of the people involved were craftsmen. Those selected from the list given by Rudé were people involved as a group. There is mention of a few solitary businessmen or journalists. One rarely saw deputies taking any active leadership role in the various crises of the Revolution. Most incidents sprang up by a ground-swell movement.

Many craftsmen resided near the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Its proximity to the Bastille partially explains their involvement in the attack on it. But it must be remembered that France was, at that time, a society based on orders, not classes. Just as a poor noble refused to consider his peasants his equals, despite their identical level of poverty, so were the craftsmen fearful that they would be reduced to the ranks of mere workers. This fear of being derogated to a lower order, and the subsequent loss of existing privileges, permeated the entire French social structure.

The following tables give an idea of the wages of Parisian artisans and how they had to budget merely to sustain themselves and their families.⁸

I. Occupation	Daily Wage	Effective Daily Wage	Expenditures on bread as a percentage of income		
			9s	14 1/2s	12s
laborer, factory	25 s.	15	60	97	80
laborer, builder	30 s.	18	50	80	67
journeyman, mason	40 s.	24	37	60	50
journeyman, locksmith	50 s.	30	30	48	40
sculptor, goldsmith	100 s.	60	15	24	20

Because of the numerous unpaid Feast days, it is necessary to compute what is called an "effective daily wage." The percentage of the cost of bread is then taken from this figure, giving a much more realistic computation.

II. Hypothetical budgets of a Parisian worker for June 1789 and June 1791:

Builder's laborer (wage 30s per day - effective wage 18 s)

June 1789	June 1791
4 lb bread - 14 1/2 s.	4 lb. bread - 8 s.
Rent 3 s.	Rent 3 s.
Balance for oil, vegetables, clothing, etc. 1/2 s.	1/2 litre wine - 4 s. 1/4 lb meat - 2 1/2 s. Balance - 1/2 s.

III. Hypothetical budget for a journeyman locksmith for the years noted:

June 1789		June 1790	
(wage 50s - effective 30s)		(wage 50s - effective 30s)	
4 lb bread -	14 1/2 s.	4 lb. bread -	11 s.
Rent	3 s.	Rent	3 s.
1/2 litre wine	5 s.	1 litre wine	10 s.
1/2 lb. meat	5 s.	1/2 lb. meat	5 s.
Balance	2 1/2 s.	Balance	1 s.
	30 s.		30 s.

June 1791		June 1793	
(wage 50s - effective 30s)		(wage 100s - effective 78s)	
4 lb bread -	8 s.	4 lb. bread -	12 s.
Rent	3 s.	Rent	6 s.
1 litre wine	8 s.	1 1/2 litres wine	24 s.
1/2 lb. meat	5 s.	1 lb. meat	18 s.
Balance	6 s.	Balance	18 s.

As we can see by examining the previous tables, manual laborers lived on a subsistence budget. Any calamity, such as an accident or a long illness, could easily precipitate starvation for the entire family. Although his wages did not increase, he was eventually able to add meat and wine to his table, due to the government importation of wheat and the ultimate lowering of the price of bread. The addition of these few modest luxuries presupposed, of

course, several seasons of good harvests. But the balance, necessary for any emergency, remained fairly low.

On the other hand, the journeyman-locksmith did see his wages rise somewhat. His position became relatively comfortable in 1793 with Robespierre and his associates in power. The artisans made up the greater part of the sans-culottes, who controlled the Paris sections and thence the Commune to which Robespierre owed his power. His party was, therefore, reasonably rewarded in higher wages.

From these tables one can easily appreciate the importance of the fluctuations of the price of wheat and, therefore, of bread. The price rise could easily force huge numbers of people into dire need. This explains the hostility of both peasants and city folk towards the négociants, the wholesalers who were widely believed to hoard in order to drive up prices and then keep them high, in order to reap great profits. Since many of these négociants became allied to the Girondists, it can be easily seen why Robespierre and his allies, the sans-culottes, eliminated them so readily.

Of great interest to this particular study is the sum, remaining each day, from the artisans' budget. These tables show us which person would be more likely to go to a theater and to which theater. As previously mentioned, since more and more uneducated spectators swelled their audiences, the playwrights were obliged to relate the

characters and themes to their new public. It can be seen from the previous tables that the journeyman-locksmith would be more likely to attend the performance of a play than would the building or factory laborer. The latter might, on occasion, be seen on the Boulevard du Temple which for all intents and purposes was a country fair in Paris. However, he probably would not be able to afford the price of a seat, nor considering his lack of education, would he be attracted to theaters in the first place.

The journeyman-locksmith, being an artisan, had a certain education, however rudimentary. He also, as we can see, had the money to pay his way into a theater. The chances of his attending a performance at any of the official theaters were very slim. According to Desses-sarts,⁹ the Comédie-Française had a total seating of 1,913, distributed as follows:

Orchestra	180	6	<u>livres</u>	
First loge (5 & 6 seats)	108	6	"	
Balcony	80	6	"	
Galleries	120	4	"	
2nd loge (3 & 4 seats)	64	3	"	
<u>parterre assis</u>	500	2	"	
3rd loge (4 & 6 seats)	48	2	<u>livres</u>	8 <u>sous</u>
Amphitheatre	300	1	"	10 "
small loges rented yearly	513	500	"	per year

If an aristocratic revolt did initiate the Revolution, the bourgeoisie soon took it in hand and controlled it. The latter, however, could not have won without the support of the masses. The question is, then, why did the common people support the bourgeoisie? Historians

generally agree that high prices were a major contributing factor. July 14, 1789 marked the high point of prices for the eighteenth century.¹⁰ It was hunger and frustration before a galloping inflation that pushed the artisans of the Faubourg Saint Antoine to attack the Bastille in their search for guns. The tables showed quite clearly that the workers themselves were able to complement their basic meal with meat and wine, as the price of bread fell.

As the Revolution progressed peasants and workers as well as the lower bourgeoisie progressively lost their enthusiasm upon the realization that they had achieved nothing more than change masters. The haute bourgeoisie, on the other hand, through the acquisition of nationalized property, was able to legitimize its financial stranglehold on the country.

Up to 1789, prices rose faster than wages, which made the workers' earnings seem lower in comparison. But, during the Revolution, the workers were able to make up lost ground and, in many cases, to gain in the price race, so that they were much better off at the end of the Revolution than at the beginning.¹¹

The fact that it was the nobles who initiated the Revolution must be kept in mind because it partly explains the fears of the Third Estate. When Louis XVI called for the meeting of the Estates General, the common people interpreted this as proof that he wished to help them out

of their misery. Since, in their eyes, this could only be done by reforming the tax structure and by abolishing feudal dues, they easily concluded that the first two classes--nobility and clergy--would not renounce their privileges very readily. From this conviction came the ever present idea in the minds of the lower third estate of the hidden presence of an aristocratic plot, aiming at the destruction of the Third Estate as a political power.¹² Throughout the Revolution there was to be a lingering suspicion that the nobles would call for royal or foreign troops to suppress any new found liberties. Subsequent blunders and stupidities committed by the nobles only reinforced this suspicion.

It may seem an oversimplification to view the world as either good or evil. However, when dealing with the common man during the revolutionary period, such was the case. For him the Third Estate, with the exception of the upper level, represented Good, whereas everyone else represented Evil. The common people assumed that the rich and privileged were Evil, and invariably held them responsible for any abuses or temporary crises that might arise. For example, the "rich" were blamed for a lack of grain, which often was due to natural conditions beyond anyone's control. As a rule, the dominant class was represented in an unfavorable light while all the good traits were reserved for the commoners.

Attack on property was never an issue during the Revolution. Even the humblest peasant who owned a parcel of land or the craftsman who owned his shop, both of whom could easily have been working for starvation wages, considered themselves a little better than others, for the simple reason that they belonged to the propertied class. Robespierre best represented these small property owners since he defined property as a natural right. He felt that France should be composed of small producers, owning just enough to raise their families in comfort.

The artisans who supported Robespierre, because of the issue of property, found themselves naturally allied to the bourgeoisie, rather than to the workers to whom they were more closely related as a class. However, the artisans did fear the bourgeoisie, because they sensed in this class what were to be the beginnings of a capitalism in which they would ultimately be reduced to simple workers.

This last theme, property, is an important one, for we will find it dominating many revolutionary plays. We will find that a great many works will exhort the public to obey laws, to work assiduously, to do its duty for the Republic and the Country, to be faithful to one's spouse, to fight vice and corruption. All these themes are oriented to a stable property-owning class.

The common people and some of the themes found in revolutionary drama having been identified there, remain but two more elements to be discussed. We have seen that very few commoners were attracted, for various reasons, to theatrical productions. The question as to who comprised the theater-going public therefore remains. It is also important to identify the playwrights.

To a large degree, plays performed in what was generally known as the legitimate theaters--those enjoying privileges granted to them by the royal court--were for the well-to-do. These were either the nobles who resided in Paris or at the court, and the upper strata of the Third Estate. The latter were wealthy merchants, businessmen, financiers, lawyers. As indicated earlier, the nobles represented only a small percentage of the entire French population. From the breakdown of the population as cited by Lefebvre on page one of the present chapter, we can surmise that the potential theater public was approximately 60,000 people. To the courtiers and the members of the upper clergy, we would add an equal number of eminent and rich members of the Third Estate residing in Paris. Yet, John Lough¹³ states that:

Throughout the period the number of spectators who might be expected to support a new play during its first run remained, by modern standards, extremely small. Thirty or so performances, attended by something like 25,000 to 30,000 spectators, remained the utmost a playwright could hope for;

after that his play had to be taken off for lack of support and might not be revived for months, or even years.

The exception to the above was Beaumarchais' Le Mariage de Figaro, which attracted 100,000 spectators after a run of 73 performances at the Comédie-Française.¹⁴ Any play which drew 15 to 20,000 spectators was deemed a considerable success. Therefore, we must agree with Lough who felt that there was but one conclusion to be drawn from those numbers:

. . . the public willing and able to support a new play was still small, not indeed perceptibly larger than it had been at the end of the seventeenth century.¹⁵

With that in mind, we come to the question of a theater enthusiast's motivation. Many possible answers present themselves; all are plausible. One generally attends a performance to be entertained and perhaps even to be informed. However, it would seem that a play which is both a diversion and an instrument of instruction is likely to be more popular than one merely containing one aspect. It is our contention that revolutionary drama was used as a propaganda device to influence the greatest number of citizens possible.

It is also our feeling, which is supported by the work of John Lough, that the theatrical experience had been until then reserved for a limited segment of the population. He states:

Yet there is another side to the medal which we must also examine--the relatively restricted circles in which literature continued to appeal and the very restricted world for which it continued to be written. To take the second point first. The great bulk of French literature continued to be produced in Paris and was written, in the first instance, at least, for a relatively narrow section of the population of the capital. All sorts of works--plays, poems, novels and other books--were read aloud and discussed in the salons of Paris before they were placed before a wider public.¹⁶

Lough feels that, since the writers spent so much time mingling with the haute société in the various salons, their works were bound to reflect the tastes and thoughts of this narrow community.¹⁷ He also found it to be quite significant that, in spite of a permanent population in Paris of more than half a million and given the great enthusiasm for the theater at the time, the number of spectators was indeed so small. However, he considered only the Opéra and the Comédie-Française to be of any importance from a literary point of view, and therefore dismissed whatever popularity the other Parisian theaters might have had.

There were thus two distinct levels of theatrical entertainment in the eighteenth century in France: the minor theaters responded to the needs of the commoners whereas the privileged theaters sought to entertain the nobles and well-to-do. This was to remain the rule even during the first years of the Revolution. However, as the great upheaval progressed, the aristocracy, for

various reasons, but mainly for self-preservation, removed themselves from the active social terrain. That, coupled with the law of 1791 establishing theatrical freedom, tipped the balance so that from that time on the audience was dominated by the middle class.

It also must be remembered that the majority of the playwrights were themselves members of the middle class. A study of the Appendix will reveal the backgrounds of the playwrights whose plays are cited in this dissertation. A representative listing includes:

Collot d'Herbois, son of a bourgeois;
 Antoine-Jean Bourlin, son of a bourgeois;
 Charles Ducancel, son of a surgeon;
 Claude Carbon de Flins des Oliviers, son of a
maître des eaux et des forêts de Reims;
 Louis Picard, son of a lawyer to the parlement;
 Charles Ronsin, son of well-to-do farmers;
 Beffroy of Reigny, son of a well-to-do provincial
 family;
 Chastenet de Puységur, son of a vicomte.

What these various obscure playwrights had in common was their families' middle-class stock. Not only were they inculcated with middle class values as children, but these values were further reinforced by the schooling they received. The academic discipline, in turn, prepared them for professions restricted to the middle class. One is therefore not surprised that Abel Beffroy de Reigny, having become a fairly successful journalist and publisher in the first years of the Revolution, was contacted by his former classmate at the Collège Louis le Grand, Camille

Desmoulins. It seems that Desmoulins and another class-mate, Maximilien Robespierre, wished to renew their friendship with Beffroy.¹⁸

In substance, the restrictive nature of the old regime relegated the middle class to those positions, which, although important for the economic development of the Nation, were in themselves secondary to the government leadership. Consequently, the liberal professions were reserved to those whose parents were able to provide them with a good education.

What we have attempted to show here is that the majority of the playwrights were members of the middle class, and, that their public was itself predominantly of the middle class. It has been previously shown that as the Revolution progressed, its leaders were to come from the middle strata of the bourgeoisie.

As we have mentioned, there were two levels of theaters in Paris in the eighteenth century. The legitimate theaters were essentially reserved for an elite, even though John Lough indicated that the cheapest seats were often held by the middle class. The foire or Boulevard theaters, on the other hand, were the domain of the middle class. One might occasionally find the lower classes there, but as we have seen from Rudé's tables, very few could afford the luxury of attending theatrical performances. From time to time the upper classes would

venture out to these theaters, but as Albert Maurice stated, whenever the audiences of the legitimate theaters flocked in any great numbers to the boulevards, their directors would immediately demand that the police prefect enforce the respective charters of those theaters.

Many of these middle class playwrights aspired to have their plays performed by the Comédie-Française since it represented an undisputed literary success. However, the Comédie withheld that honor from many a worthy playwright. These authors soon learned that instead of success and celebrity, mediocrity and obscurity were the price they had to pay for their association with the bourgeois theater which had become an overwhelming obstacle to their pursuit of literary recognition. Probably the best example of that was Louis Sébastien Mercier, who despite his successes was unable to have his works performed by the Comédie which was hostile to his ideas. This hostility originated in Mercier's pamphlet Du théâtre ou Nouvel Essai sur l'art dramatique (1773), in which he attacked the classic models found in Racine and praised by Boileau, and proposed to renew the theater by replacing those models by representations of the common people.¹⁹

Although other playwrights were not as audacious as Mercier in their attack on the policies of the established theater, they often met the same fate. Their productions were often ignored by the official theaters

and their only recourse was to respond to the demands of their own audiences by limiting their literary invention to farces, vaudevilles, dramas and opéra-comiques. They thereby perpetuated the distinction between the monopolistic and boulevard theaters.

This situation continued into the first few years of the Revolution. Two events occurred which had a deep influence upon theatrical life. First, as we have mentioned previously, the decree of 1791, granting absolute freedom in the theatrical world resulted in partially erasing the distinctions between the theaters. This was accomplished by abolishing the tradition that each theater should specialize in its genre, by offering to their audiences genres previously monopolized by other theaters. We soon find the Comédie itself offering genres until then found only on the boards of the boulevard and the classical repertory presented at the Fair. The second event which ended the distinction between the theaters was the departure of the aristocracy from the audiences of the monopolistic theater for reasons of health and welfare. The vacuum left by the flight of the elite was soon filled by the middle class.

To be successful, playwrights must respond to the demands of the general public. Thus the role played by the common people found on the stage of the Revolution reflected middle class ideals. The fact that the majority

of the revolutionary leaders, playwrights and theater-going public originated in the middle class who resided chiefly in towns and cities explains the absence of farmers, serfs and workers in most plays.

The majority of roles depicting the common man on the stage were often people with whom the writers had had direct contact; artisans, shopkeepers, servants, artists and the like. The themes found in their plays often reflected the concerns, the values, and the work ethic of the middle class. Characters and themes concerning the aspirations and wishes of the bourgeoisie residing chiefly in towns and cities were constantly praised whereas those of the remainder of the population were rarely evoked.

Footnotes

1. Georges Lefebvre, La Révolution française (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), p. 18.
2. Georges Lefebvre, Etudes sur la Révolution française, 2e ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 283.
3. Roland Mousnier, Société française de 1770 à 1789 (Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1970), p. 76.
4. Leo Gershoy, The Era of the French Revolution, 1789-1799 (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1957), p. 17.
5. Lefebvre, Etudes, pp. 298-299.
6. Henri Sée, La France économique et sociale au 18e siècle (Paris: A. Colin, 1969), p. 75.
7. George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 246-247.
8. Ibid., pp. 251-252.
9. M. Dessessarts, Les Trois théâtres de Paris (Paris: Barba, 1777), p. 43.
10. Lefebvre, Etudes, p. 234.
11. Ibid., p. 236.
12. Ibid., pp. 384-385.
13. John Lough, An Introduction to Eighteenth Century France (New York: Longmans, 1960), pp. 272-273.
14. Ibid., p. 273.
15. Ibid., p. 273.
16. Ibid., p. 270.
17. Ibid., p. 271.

18. Charles Monselet, Les Oubliés et les dédaignés, figures littéraires de la fin du 18^e siècle (Alençon: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1857), p. 180.
19. Louis Mercier, La Brouette du vinaigrier, ed. Robert Aggéri (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1972), p. 10.

CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION OF THE ROLE OF THE COMMON MAN
ON THE STAGE (1775-1794)

In order to appreciate better the development of the characters representing the common people as they were seen on the stage, it is best to begin with a play performed during the old regime. Louis Sébastien Mercier, in his Du Théâtre ou Nouvel essai sur l'art dramatique, published in 1773, wanted to revitalize the theater by bringing the popular classes on the stage. In a protest against the ideas expressed in his essay, the Comédie Française refused to perform La Brouette du Vinaigrier, unless the author made a public retraction.¹ The play² was finally withdrawn from the repertory of the Comédie and performed on the stage of the Théâtre des Associés on the Boulevard du Temple.

It is only fitting that this play should have been presented to the public at a boulevard theater. It was precisely the place where the popular classes were attracted, both by the subject of the plays and

the price of the seats. The play was very well received by the public in spite of the critics who agreed with the Comédie that the lower classes were not suitable models for the stage.³ Moreover, it was to meet with an enormous success in the provinces and throughout Europe. The play was, however, not performed again in Paris until 1784. Once more it proved to be quite successful, so much so, that it was offered ten days in succession, an exceptional feat for that period.⁴

Not only did Mercier wish to use the stage as a means of educating the public, he wished also to democratize it in order to attract the lower socio-economic groups. Diderot had taken the first step in the democratization process by using the drame bourgeois to give a true description of the middle class. Mercier then took the next step, and used the theater as a means of reaching the lower middle class.

Mercier does not limit his choice of situations to that single segment of society, but we find that his heroes do come from this particular background.

In the first scene we meet Jullefort, who is a crass opportunist. His only concern is that Miss Delomer be amply provided for by her father, a widower. He makes sure that no secret heirs might appear to claim part of an inheritance which he sees as his. He is

completely aware that the law of the time legalized the subordinate role of women. Miss Delomer might very well inherit a fortune from her father, but her husband would control it. The audience of the period was not at all surprised to hear Jullefort say:

. . . un contrat est une chose bien imaginée!
D'un trait de plume, là, sans rien déboursier,
on acquiert des maisons, des effets royaux,
de l'argent, des meubles . . . il est vrai
qu'on a une femme; mais on vit avec elle à
son aise, on règle sa dépense; on est maître
après tout, de la Communauté . . . nos
aïeux n'étaient pas des sots . . .

(I.2.46)

The law is thus both attacked and defended on the eighteenth-century stage. The attacks, however, do not challenge the law itself but only deplore the abuses committed in its name. Since the playwrights belonged for the most part to the middle class, they were naturally very vociferous in defending its values. This fact is especially important to remember in a study of revolutionary drama. Once the middle class and its lawyers controlled the government, obedience to the law, whatever the abuses committed in its name, became necessary for political success.

The next person we meet is Mr. Delomer. Mercier brings a touch of realism to the stage by showing him at work: he is giving letters to a messenger who is about to deliver them in the St. Honoré section of Paris.

We find out that he is quite impressed by his prospective son-in-law, who has been highly recommended to him.

Mercier uses this play to denounce the prejudices of rank due to financial or social position. The remedy commonly used is the power of money, which was, and in fact continues to be, the great equalizer. Mercier's contemporaries were quite aware of this fact, since it was because of their fortunes that bourgeois fathers were able to marry off their daughters into nobility. Delomer appears then to be the typical bourgeois father when talking to Jullefort about the marriage contract:

. . . il est juste que chacun fasse ses conditions
 . . . une fille, avec des attraits, a toujours des
 adorateurs; mais ce n'est qu'avec une dot qu'elle
 devient femme.

(I.3.49)

Women being subordinate to men by law, the younger Dominique, heartbroken but resigned, expresses the general opinion when he remarks:

. . . mais il va l'épouser; fille soumise,
 elle n'osera désapprouver le choix d'un père
 . . . elle obéira, elle va être malheureuse
 pour toujours . . .

(I.7.67)

She is an obedient daughter and nothing indicates that she would be willing to oppose the wishes of her father. In fact, rebellion on her part, had it been expressed on the stage at that time, would have caused a scandal. Barely twenty years later it was going to be accepted. But in

Miss Delomer's time, a recalcitrant daughter was placed in a convent until she submitted to her father's wishes. We can therefore appreciate the position in which Dominique and Miss Delomer find themselves after they finally confess their love to each other:

Dominique fils - . . . apprenez que, malgré la barrière qui s'élève entre nous, il n'y a qu'un bonheur sans réserve qui puisse me toucher.

Mlle Delomer - Et comment résister à mon père? J'ai voulu dire quelques mots, il ne m'a point écoutée; il a fait parler son autorité, et je me suis trouvée sans voix pour lui répondre: Monsieur Jullefort, recommandé de toute part, a gagné sa confiance; il vous la devait plutôt; mais (vous le savez) c'est la fortune qui fait les mariages, aussi combien en compte-t-on d'heureux.

Dominique fils - Oui, la fortune m'a maltraité; et c'est ce qui m'a empêché, jusqu'à présent d'oser lire dans vos regards.

(II.2.71)

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Mlle Delomer - Pourrai-je élever la voix quand un père commande? Vous ne savez pas tout le pouvoir qu'un père a sur nous . . . je l'aime, je crains de l'offenser, et plus, je le chéris, plus je tremble de lui résister.

(II.2.72)

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Dominique fils - Et c'est là ce qui m'accable . . . Je ne puis aspirer, même en idée, à me mettre sur les rangs. J'offenserais votre père, j'aurais peut-être la physionomie d'un séducteur . . . les préjugés qui règnent . . . Allons je suis perdu, tandis qu'un autre, parce qu'il possède de l'or, aura de l'audace de vous conquérir . . .

Mlle Delomer - . . . C'est la première fois que nos coeurs s'expriment ainsi; ils ne jouiront pas longtemps de ce plaisir. La loi, les préjugés, tout est contre nous.

(II.2.73)

This exchange denounces the great social prejudices that existed not only in France, but throughout Europe at that time. The two pretenders, Jullefort and Dominique, represent completely opposite worlds. The opportunist Jullefort is pitted against the hardworking, honest Dominique for the hand of Miss Delomer, but because of the rigid social order Jullefort does not even suspect that he has a rival.

The younger Dominique represents the new order. His father, a blue-collar worker, wants him to make his way up the social ladder. The elder Dominique, first appears in his bill-collecting clothes: "en habit de drap avec un grand chapeau et de grandes manchettes." (I.4.54) Later, however, we see him in his work attire: "Dominique père en bonnet de laine et en veste rouge, conduit un petit baril sur une Brouette de vinaigrier à une roue, laquelle est à bras." (III.1.91) The elder Dominique is presented as a man who accepts his humble position and is not ashamed of it. On the contrary, he takes pride in his work, but like all fathers, he wants his son to rise above his own station. While he has taught him to be honest and hardworking, he is well aware that such qualities are no guarantee for success. He has therefore sacrificed certain amenities, to give his son the best possible education, so that he might compete on an equal footing with people more prosperous than he:

Voici la troisième année qui court, depuis que je l'ai fait revenir de l'étranger où je l'ai fait voyager de bonne heure, n'ai-je pas pris le meilleur parti? J'avais un parent, préfet de Collège, qu'on disait savant, et à qui je ne trouvais pas moi le sens commun, il me disait toujours d'un ton rogue: sans le latin votre fils ne parviendra jamais à rien . . . Tudieu! Mon cousin, lui répondis-je, vous avez beau dire, on ne parle plus latin dans aucune maison du Royaume. Si mon fils avait besoin d'une autre langue que la sienne, c'est en Anglais, c'est en Allemand qu'il lui serait utile et agréable de savoir s'expliquer; il trouverait des gens pour lui répondre . . . et je vous l'envoyai sur-le-champ dans ces pays-là dès l'âge de douze ans.

(I.6.58)

The younger Dominique, however, is a realist and he knows that in spite of his fine education, he still belongs to the lower class. He confesses his love of Miss Delomer to his father and then complains of the inequities of social order:

Dominique fils - . . . ah! mon père, mon père, pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas dans un état plus relevé . . . Avec tant de vertus, vous méritiez d'être tout autre que ce que vous êtes.

Dominique père - . . . rougirais-tu dans le monde d'avoir un père Vinaigrier? Aurais-tu conçu ce pitoyable orgueil? C'est une maladie commune à beaucoup d'enfants que leur père a faits un peu plus qu'eux . . .

Dominique fils - Mon père! je vous respecte, je vous chéris, je n'ai jamais rougi un seul instant de vous avouer aux yeux de tout le monde . . . mais le préjugé fait que tout le monde ne pense pas comme moi, et je suis malheureux peut-être à jamais, par cette seule cause.

(I.7.64-5)

The great equalizer comes to the rescue with the sudden reversal of Mr. Delomer's fortune. Up to that point there was no possible solution to Dominique's

problem. Society even today, liberal as it may be, frowns upon by-passing parental approval. However, the bankruptcy of an associate, with whom Mr. Delomer has invested a great deal of money in the hope of making his last big business transaction, has suddenly jeopardized his own financial health. In order to save himself and his household, he decides to resort to dubious business practices. Fortunately, his clerk, the younger Dominique convinces him to first investigate whether his assets would cover his possible liabilities. Dominique echoing the lesson of an honest hardworking father says:

On est toujours riche, quand on a tout payé.
 Croyez que vous serez cent fois plus heureux dans
 l'état le plus médiocre, lorsque vous ne serez
 exposé à aucun reproche . . . pourquoi acquitter
 des créanciers anciens aux dépens des nouveaux?
 C'est une réaction contraire à l'ordre des choses;
 c'est une injustice . . .

(II.3.78)

Mr. Delomer is impressed with Dominique's concern and, brought back to his senses since he is basically an honest man, he asks his clerk to study how to bring the situation under control. Moreover, Mr. Delomer thinks he may have a solution: his future son-in-law, Jullefort, is rich. Perhaps he will extend him some credit. Miss Delomer asks her father to allow her to explain their predicament to Jullefort. She does so with great trepidation, but is rewarded when, having been apprised of the crisis the future husband hastily exists. The way

seems now open for Dominique, but it will not be as easy as one could expect.

The third act opens with the elder Dominique forcing his wheelbarrow into the elegant Delomer residence in spite of the servants' protests. Earlier he had somewhat cryptically assured his son of his marriage to Miss Delomer, and at this point is still unaware of the reversal of Delomer's fortune. The younger Dominique, called to handle his father's strange behavior and seeing his father in his work clothes pushing his wheelbarrow, finds himself extremely perturbed; he feels that his father's attire will only reinforce the great social distance that exists between Miss Delomer and himself:

Dominique fils - Quoi! cet habit de travail, ce baril, cette Brouette dans une Salle frottée.

Dominique père, le contrefaisant - Oui, dans une salle frottée; voyez le grand mal! Eh bien! le frotteur recommencera . . . ce Baril te fait pitié, te fait hausser les épaules; va, va, mon garçon; c'est un petit supplément à mes paroles qui ne nuira pas, je pense: on réussit toujours bien dans quelque affaire que ce soit, quand on n'arrive pas les mains vides . . . D'ailleurs j'ai pour principe de ne jamais abandonner ma marchandise; et cet accoutrement qui t'offense, c'est là mon habit d'honneur, entends-tu? Je ne suis jamais plus hardi que comme cela.

Dominique fils - Vous avez résolu de m'éprouver, mon père; mais j'ai peur que vous ne manquiez aux convenances reçues dans le monde.

(III.2.92-3)

The elder Dominique is wearing his work clothes in order to point out that his position in society is a useful one. He is very much aware that by pushing his

wheelbarrow into the salle frottée he is informing everyone that there exists a social gap between his family and Delomer's. He knows that a tradesman does not deliver his merchandise through the main door but should use the delivery entrance. However, the merchandise that he is delivering on this particular day is of a special nature: it will, in fact open the main door to him.

The younger Dominique's reaction is interesting: although he is a victim of social injustice, he nevertheless is horrified when the very symbols of his subjection are challenged. He is at his wit's end to find a way to discourage his father from carrying out whatever plan he may have. However, Mr. Delomer arrives and suddenly the tables are turned. That same person who in the last act was ready to resort to any means to save his personal fortune, now preaches moral values to the same employee who saved him from personal disgrace.

M. Delomer - Dominique, j'aime à voir votre père dans cet habit de travail. Il lui donne un air utile qui ne déplaît point à la vue: son âge semble plus respectable, ses travaux entretiennent la sérénité de son âge . . . voilà l'état de l'homme . . . il est plus heureux, plus tranquille que moi. Oui, j'estime plus ce bonnet que ces têtes légères qui promènent partout le vide de l'oisiveté. Chacun dit: il n'est rien de tel que d'avoir un métier en main, et chacun court après les emplois les plus incertains. De là, naissent les malheurs, les vices et les crimes. Aussi l'honnête homme devient de jour en jour plus rare. On appelle la fraude au défaut du travail; les uns se font hardis fripons, les autres deviennent des intriguants adroits . . .

(III.3.96)

Seeing that his father intends to go through with his plan and ask for Miss Delomer's hand on his behalf, the younger Dominique leaves the scene for he is certain of failure. Mr. Delomer holds obviously the Dominiques in sincere esteem, but the younger Dominique is sure that the social prejudices will overshadow any personal consideration that Delomer has for him.

Mr. Delomer is taken aback when he hears the reason for which the elder Dominique has asked to see him. At first he suspects a conspiracy of the Dominiques, but the father quickly reassures him that his son loves Miss Delomer and that he ^{has} only ~~has~~ her interests at heart. Praising his son's honesty and hard work, the father reminds Mr. Delomer of the high esteem he just proclaimed to hold for the hard-working father. In view of this and considering that "tout est de niveau" (III.4.100) he can see no obstacle to their union.

Mr. Delomer, remembering the events of the day, suddenly realizes that the gap existing between both families is no longer as great as he thought. However, he nevertheless refuses to approve the marriage. He admits that the idea of a mismatch had crossed his mind, and apologizes for it. He recognizes that their businesses are very similar: selling in order to earn a profit. However, it is not because of their different social levels that he opposes the marriage, but rather

because of his own impending financial failure. He would send his daughter to a convent rather than see her living below the station to which she is accustomed. He agrees that if Dominique had 10,000 écus, he could see a possible union.

The entire scene reminds one of two farmers haggling over the price of a cow. In fact, it ends with the traditional handshake found at the culmination of a business transaction:

Dominique père, regardant son baril - Allons, mon baril, allons, parle pour moi . . . Vil argent, c'est donc à toi et non au mérite personnel qu'il faut devoir le bonheur de mon fils! J'ai bien fait d'y penser: (Reprenant la main de M. Delomer.) touchez-là, c'est une affaire faite.

(III.4.105)

He then shows Delomer the contents of the barrel, more than 30,000 écus. He says that it is the fruit of a lifetime of work and frugality. This money represents forty-two years of hard labor and saving for his old age and possibly his heirs. He surprises Delomer by telling him that he has brought this money in order to secure his son's marriage. Now that the union has been approved, it is no longer his business, for he has a house and land, and enough to live out his remaining years. Absolutely overcome by this development, Delomer exits to fetch his daughter and the younger Dominique.

Alone, the elder Dominique is saddened to see that his son did not win Miss Delomer solely on his own

merits, but needed all of his father's gold. But if, in the end money was to be of some use, then the effort was worth it.

Métal pernicieux! tu as fait assez de mal dans le monde, fais-y du bien une seule fois. Je t'ai enchaîné pour un moment d'éclat: voici le moment tant désiré; sors, va fonder la paix et la sûreté d'une maison où habiteront l'amour et la vertu.

(III.5.108)

Mr. Delomer returns. While waiting for the children to arrive, he asks Dominique what he would have done had he not had an heir. Dominique explains his alternative plan: he would search for an honest man who, because of events beyond his control, was in need of help. Dominique indicated that he would arrive one fine day with his barrel and offer the contents of the barrel, with the only condition being that he would dine with the family every Sunday at noon. Delomer recognizing himself in this description and, obviously moved, embraced Dominique.

The children arrive to see their fathers embracing. The younger Dominique had been afraid that his own efforts had been dashed by his father's behavior. He is therefore quite astonished to learn that Mr. Delomer consents to the marriage. He is even more surprised to hear of his father's fortune, for he knew nothing of its existence. His father had concealed his fortune in the event that his son had become a spendthrift rather than a motivated ambitious young man. In fact, had he turned out to be a

worthless being, his father informed him that he would have willed his fortune to a more meritorious person. The younger Dominique, showing that he had learned his lessons well agrees with his father's principle that idleness need not be rewarded.

The elder Dominique then announces to Delomer that he is the honest man whom he intends to visit ever Sunday at noon. He tells his son to empty the barrel into the family treasury while Miss Delomer has the servants serve supper. The barrel is pushed off by the younger Dominique, Miss Delomer and her father. The elder Dominique follows them wondering what the reaction of the servants will be seeing him at the dinner table in his work clothes.

Dominique père. . . . (arrétant M. Delomer) -
 Vos domestiques! . . . Ces drôles-là, ils vont être
 bien étonnés de me voir à table, avec mon bonnet;
 je ne le quitte pas au moins . . . ils ouvriront
 de grands yeux . . . tant mieux, tant mieux; cela
 sera plaisant . . . Ils ne voulaient pas que je
 misse là la brouette; n'ai-je pas bien fait d'en-
 trer malgré eux? . . . Oh! j'en rirai longtemps.
 (III.7.115)

This last scene represents the leveling of the social orders. Both families will now be symbolically joined at the dinner table. It is to be presumed that the younger Dominique's honesty and industry will finally be rewarded through a successful business career.

As can be readily appreciated, the play which extols middle class virtues was naturally very popular among the common people. We find herein a respect for

honesty, hard work, frugality, and the law. On the other hand, frivolity, spendthriftness, opportunism, and dubious business practices are condemned. These were universal themes which other playwrights, such as Molière, had also portrayed in their plays.

To Mercier, the Dominiques represented the common people. In reality, their upward mobility had already started, so that their position at the beginning of the play might well be called today, that of the aspiring middle class. The son does not become betrothed because of his virtues and skills, but rather because his father had the money necessary to buy his way into a bankrupt family. The pattern is the same vehicle which allowed the upper middle class to marry into bankrupt nobility.

The theme of money as the instrument by which prejudices might be ended is important, since, as has been noted in chapter two, the middle class owned the capital in France. At the time of La Brouette du Vinaigrier the bourgeois were angered by the fact that they were unable to control more of their own destiny. They were offended by the social prejudices which kept them from their rightful place in the affairs of the state.

As has been mentioned in Chapter Two, the common people when hearing of the convocation of the General Estates, had great hope to see an improvement in their condition, for they believed in the goodness of the King;

only the nobles were at fault because they misinformed him about the true state of affairs in his kingdom. The first part of the Revolution, from 1789 to the attempted escape of the royal family and their capture at Varennes the 20th of July, 1791, represents what we could call the honeymoon stage. The best play representing this period is Beffroy de Reigny's Nicodème dans la lune, ou la Révolution pacifique.⁵

The success of this play was due in great part to Beffroy de Reigny's having grasped the feeling of moderation prevailing among the audience at that time. There is no doubt about the popularity of the play: McKee⁶ says that it had 363 performances before being withdrawn from the stage by orders of the Jacobins; subsequently, it had 200 more after its revival in 1796.

During the moderate phase of the Revolution the King was revered as a father figure, leading his people out of their miseries. The masses felt that their problem could be solved if they could approach the king, talk to him, make him see the source of their unhappiness, and abolish the unjust laws. They were certain that the king himself would then take the lead in initiating reforms.

The main characters of the play, except for the Emperor and his entourage, are all members of the lower classes. Nicodème is a servant, Frérot and Lolotte are peasants, as are the old women. The parish priest might be more educated, but he is financially as poor as they. The poor and the Emperor represent Good versus the prelate and the nobles who represent Corruption and Evil.

The play starts with the peasants of the Moon toiling in their fields and complaining about the hard work. The village priest arrives. The peasants love him, and although they speak to him with great respect they feel that he is one of them.

Mère Bahu - Ah! ça, pour ça; c'est ben vrai,
Monsieu l'curé, q'sans vot'bonté, gnien a plus
d'un qui s'rait déjà mort de faim . . . dans le
village.

Mère Cassecroûte - Et si, c'n'est q'vous soyaïs
trop riche, dà . . . Mais v'la com'ça s'fait,
s'ti-là qu'en a l'moins, c'est toujours li, qui
donne l'plus volontiers.

Lolotte - C'est q'la richesse endurecit le coeur,
voyais-vous? Pardi! voyais plutôt l'Seigneur de
c'village, tant seul'ment! c'est pourtant zeun
homme ben riche, qu'a des ch'val, des carrosses
. . . q'ça fait trembler . . . Eh ben! gnia ti
un homme pus dur aux malheurs du pauvre monde?

Le curé - Schtt! . . . paix donc, mes amis, . . .
ne disons de mal de personne; celui qui fait le
bien, éprouve au fond du coeur une joie pure,
qui le récompense mieux que l'or qu'il garderait
pour lui. Celui qui fait le mal, en est puni
tôt ou tard par le remord.

(I.2.11)

As can be seen, the priest is a generous and kind soul. He knows the misery of his parishioners and has tried to help them lift their burden. When approached by the duke who wants the peasants to show at least a semblance of contentment when the Emperor arrives, the priest refuses to support such an act of deception.

. . . Ils ne le [contents] sont pas . . . Voyez cette fermentation, qui commence à passer des villes dans les villages! Le mécontentement est général; et le Prince, à qui on laisse ignorer le sort de ses peuples . . . le Prince, qu'on entoure, qu'on garde, de peur que les plaintes de ses sujets n'aillent jusqu'à lui, a bien pu jusqu'à présent prendre le change par des tableaux mensongers; mais aujourd'hui que le mal est à son comble, aujourd'hui que la patience est à bout, n'espérez plus lui faire voir des villageois gais et chantans . . . Ce sera peut-être un bien qu'il voie ses malheureux sujets tels qu'ils sont: . . . vexés, molestés, écrasés d'impôts, et de droits onéreux, et se consumant en vains travaux pour les plaisirs et les folies des Grands.

(I.3.14)

This tirade was aimed without doubt at the state of affairs in France. Indeed, the peasants were chafing under the yoke of unjust and onerous laws specifically made by and for the nobles to insure their own survival. During the honeymoon stage of the Revolution, this type of speech would easily enflame an audience, by the cogency of its accusations.

The duke must therefore resort to his own devices and plans to entertain the emperor in his own castle. However, he does not hide his anger towards the

priest, and the peasants who have overheard the conversation promise the priest any help he might need. But Frérot upon hearing of the Emperor's impending arrival has plans of his own:

Frérot - . . . j'profit'rons de c'te occasion-là, pour li conter toute la misère où q'nous sommes.

Lolotte - I'n'aurait qu'à s'fâcher!

Frérot - Tout au contraire, ça li f'ra plaisir d'savoir la vérité eune fois dans sa vie; car, on dit com'ça, q'c'est eun honnête homme d'majesté . . . et qu'i n'sait rian d'tout c'qui s'passe, parce qu'on l'trompe . . .

(I.5.21)

The landing on the Moon of the balloon carrying Nicodème brings comical relief in a scene between him and the natives who wonder at that strange traveller. But their mutual fears are soon put to rest when they discover that they are all humans. Suddenly hunting horns are heard. The Emperor's hunting party is approaching. Nicodème is surprised to hear that the Moon also has princes. Further conversation reveals to both Nicodème and the reader that there are great similarities between France and the Moon, especially concerning the complains:

Nicodème - Vous avez donc des Majestés, aussi, vou autres gens de la Lune?

Mère Bahu - Seur'ment . . . et not'Empereur est un ben brav'homme; si on n'li faisait pas-t-accroire tout le contraire de c'qui est! . . .

Nicodème - Ah, ben, dame, ça, c'est l'ordinaire.

Lolotte - Oui, mais c'est q'nous sommes si misérables! . . .

Nicodème - Ah ben, dame, ça; j'dis, vous n'êtes pas les seuls . . .

Mère Cassecroute - Encore faut i's'asseurer l'pain qu'on gagne à la sueur d'son front . . .

Nicodème - Est-ce que vous n'avez pas d'pain queuq'fois?

Frérot - Mon Dieu! souvent ça arrive, ça; car quand i'faut payer tant d'impôts, tant d'droits, tant d'sotises dont les riches profitent . . .
(I.9.33-4)

These were the very complaints of the working people of Paris for they too, were being taxed unjustly. Many had been forced to abandon their small farms because after the feudal obligations had been met, they found themselves with not enough food to subsist until the following harvest.

A stately looking gentleman accompanied by a servant approaches and, Nicodème mistaking him for the Emperor says:

Un Roi souvent est détesté,
Quand i'mérit' qu'on l'aime,
Tout l'mond' li cach' la vérité,
Parc'qu'on abuse d'sa bonté,
Et c'est par-tout de d'même.
(I.12.38)

Unfortunately, the gentleman turns out to be the Emperor's minister. He reveals his identity, but decides to conceal Nicodème's presence from the Emperor, for fear to hear him describe the pitiful conditions he has found. However, when the Emperor finally arrives, Nicodème quickly manages to attract his attention. But the

appearance of a stranger does not interest the Emperor as much as the sad state of the peasants. He questions the duke closely attempting to obtain an explanation for the people's miserable condition. He is surprised at the duke's ignorance, for he believes that the care for his wards is a lord's first duty.

The attitude of the Emperor concerning his peasants may appear to us as paternalistic, but it is very much in keeping with the general feeling of the time, when the king was indeed called "le père du peuple." His concern therefore was the reasonable reaction expected from a king.

The duke, naturally is deeply embarrassed because he cannot offer the Emperor any satisfactory answers. Hoping for some help he turns to the priest and awakens further the Emperor's curiosity as to why a noble would ask a mere priest for assistance. Beckoned by the Emperor himself, the priest comes forward and says:

Cette rose est l'emblème
 de Votre Majesté;
 Chez vous le diadème
 Couronne la bonté.
 Mais, ce qui nous chagrine
 Hélas! Seigneur!
 Vos flatteurs sont l'épine;
 Et vous, la fleur.

(I.13.43)

The familiar theme of a prince surrounded by courtiers who seek to hide the truth from him finally has reached the emperor's ears. Making at once arrangements

for Nicodème and the priest to be brought to his palace, he declines the duke's invitation, suggesting that some complications necessitate his return to the palace. His courtiers are worried, especially when he claims to be aware that things have been hidden from him. Upon leaving he promises the peasants that he will lighten their burden.

In the beginning of the second act, Nicodème informs the audience that he has spent some time with the Emperor explaining to him the new developments that had taken place in France:

. . . Cet Empereur est eune bonne parsonne, qu'a du bon sens; il a eu l'courage de passer quatre heures à m'entendre raconter mon voyage; mais comme il ouvrait l's oreilles, comme i faisait d'grands yeux, quand j'lions dit comme quoi les Français aviont voulu faire dénicher l'esclavage d'leux pays; comme quoi ils aviont assemblé eune belle assemblée d'gens capables, pour faire d'bonnes loix; comme quoi leux roi s'y était prêté de bonne grace, et comme quoi il avait r'connu qu'on n'est jamais pus heureux sur l'trône, q'quand on est entouré d'gens vrais, et qui vous aimons sincèrement . . . Je n'lions pas dit q'gni avait eu par-ci par-là queuq'p'tite escarmouche; j'lions fait accroire q'tout ça s'était passé l'mieux du monde . . .

(II.1.48)

Nicodème would be proud to see a peaceful revolution on the Moon without any shedding of blood. His attitude reflects the sentiment then prevailing in France. The majority of the people wanted to see their rights acknowledged and the unfair imposition of taxes and feudal dues ended or reformed. There was no wish on their parts

to have a bloodbath.

The rest of the second act is filled with a series of comical scenes due to the prolific imagination of the author. We learn that the Emperor is allowed to have 602 wives, but that at present he has restricted himself to only three. Two of them approach Nicodème and ask him to take them back to Earth. When asked whether French men have more than one wife, he answers:

Ah j'dis, pas selon la loi: mais la loi n'i fait pas; on saute par-dessus; enfin, j'vous dis, moi; q'ces deux pays-là se ressemblont . . . faut qu'i gnialt là-dessous du miraque . . . faut croire qu'i s'ra v'nu autrefois des Français dans c'te Leune . . . et qu'ils y auront laissé nos coûteumes . . . c'est ça tout justement pourquoi c'qu'i gnia encore cheux nous tant d'lunatiques . . .

(II.4.63-4)

This view of the law was also found in La Brouette du vinaigrier. Nicodème's answer shows that it was indeed common to evade the intent of the law. As for the comic element found in the play, it is clearly aimed at the common people who could easily relate to the hero both by his language and his buffoon actions. Subtlety would have been lost on such a public.

The Emperor finally arrives to inform Nicodème that he has decided to start the Revolution himself, by initiating a series of reforms. Nicodème asks him to pardon his courtiers, and the Emperor answers that the reforms establishing equality in the realm would be punishment enough. Nicodème is quite impressed by the

Emperor and his intentions:

Qu'un bon roi soit la victime
 D'ceux qui l'poussont dans l'abîme;
 C'est-là l'sort de tout mortel;
 C'est ben naturel . . . (bis)
 Mais q'd'honnêt'gens, qu'il écoute,
 Le r'mettront dans la bonn' route,
 Chacun en rend grace au ciel!
 C'est ben naturel, sans doute . . . (II.11.77)

The Emperor asks Nicodème to go to the garden and make certain that the courtiers do not leave. He must take care of some last minute preparations and wants the nobles to be present for the start of the Revolution. Nicodème enters the garden and overhears the priest advocating to the archbishop the advantages of the Revolution. The Emperor's minister, a courtier, is informing the astrologer/hermit, who was the first to announce the arrival of Nicodème's balloon, that his patronage will be necessary if he hopes to enjoy any success whatever at court. This is an allusion to the considerations paid to court officials in France where government approval was needed prior to undertaking business ventures.

When the minister sees Nicodème he addresses him as "mon ami," to which Nicodème answers:

Oh! je n'sis l'ami q'des hommes justes, et qui
 consacront tous leux momens à faire du bien à
 leux semblables . . .

(III.2.80)

The archbishop, who has overheard Nicodème's remark to the minister, is angered and interjects a complaint common to

revolutionary times:

Voyez-vous ce ton? je gage que cet homme pervertirait tous les habitans de cet empire, s'il y restait encore quelque temps.

(III.2.80-1)

This attack on the well-intentioned Nicodème does nothing but further his anger towards the courtiers:

Gnia q'les mauvaises moeurs qui pervertissent les Etats; la justice et le courage n'y font jamais q'du bien . . . par ainsi, voyais qui d'nous deux est l'pervertisseux.

(III.2.81)

Even the priest is astonished by Nicodème's anger and attempts to calm him. The minister decides to teach Nicodème manners by informing him that politeness commands one to follow the custom of the country. This has an effect contrary to that which he intended. It sets Nicodème off into a violent tirade: although it was also the custom in his country to prostrate oneself to the will of a person wearing a habit, the people, ~~with good reason~~, soon ended that ridiculous custom and replaced it with a respect commensurate to a person's worth. Recalling that man had not been created to be idle, he points his finger at the courtiers, whose main goal in life seemed to consist in gathering various pensions and other pecuniary rewards, and who because of their idleness and greed were two-fold parasites.

The Emperor appears, and immediately starts his reforms. He announces to the archbishop his policy of bestowing high administrative positions to meritorious

people rather than to those with political influence. He suggests that the prelate therefore exchange position with the parish priest.

This particular reform was very close to the hearts of the bourgeois in France. As Albert Soboul⁷ said:

Le haut clergé, évêques, abbés et chanoines, se recrutait de plus en plus exclusivement dans la noblesse; il entendait défendre ses privilèges du bénéfice desquels le bas clergé était généralement exclu. Pas un des 139 évêques qui ne fût noble en 1789.

In addition, the aristocracy monopolized all high administrative positions in the government, the church, and the army. In 1781, a royal edict "réserva les grades de l'armée à ceux-là seuls qui feraient la preuve de quatre quartiers de noblesse."⁸ Buying a regiment for one's son was a widespread practice for wealthy nobles. The son then automatically became its colonel. People belonging to the middle class obviously resented the fact that they could not seek certain functions, reserved exclusively for nobles. What added to their indignation was the fact that a noble often relinquished his responsibilities to a subordinate, often a member of the bourgeoisie.

A servant rushes into the garden and announces to the Emperor and his courtiers that the people are assembling at the gates of the palace. The courtiers, immediately anxious, fear a revolt. The rumor that the people have been summoned by the Emperor arouses even greater anxiety. They wonder at the purpose of this demonstration. The prelate wants to leave as quickly and as quietly as possible, and invites the priest to join him. When the minister presses the Emperor for an explanation, the latter answers:

. . . ce palais est la maison du père de famille;
tous les enfants doivent y être bien reçus . . .
Le peuple est ma force, Monsieur; ce sont mes
sujets tout comme vous; pourquoi ne les verrais-
je pas auprès de moi? . . . Vous y êtes bien!
. . . vous! . . .

(III.5.87-8)

The palace doors open and the people rush in. They show a great respect and admiration for the Emperor. They are certain that, now that he has invited them into his home, he will seek to end their plight, especially since: "Le prince est notre père, Il sait tous nos malheurs." (III.6.89)

The Emperor instructs his guards to join the people. He has no need of them, since he is only surrounded by his children. He then proceeds to apologize for his previous lack of concern for their well-being. He promises to make their general welfare the first order of the day. His speech is so convincing that his own

courtiers, who were ready to leave, also repent and ask forgiveness for their actions. The Emperor then thanks Nicodème for his advice which has brought about this peaceful revolution, to which the latter replies:

Où, Messieurs, tout l'monde en France
 A tout d'suite été d'accord;
 Clergé, Noblesse et Finance,
 Ont cédé leurs droits . . . d'abord . . .
 Tout chacun, sans résistance,
 D'y r'noncer a pris grand soin . . .
 (à part, vers le Public)
 A beau mentir qui vient d' loin.

(III.6.92-3)

The play ends with a song of joy for the Revolution with all the characters adding a stanza.

The last scene showing the people entering the palace had occurred in France on October 6, 1789 when the women of Paris had invaded the Château of Versailles. They succeeded in bringing their King and his family back to Paris with them. In that episode, the Swiss guards had at first tried to oppose the people. Beffroy de Reigny had royalist leanings, but he did sympathize to a degree with the complaints of the people. He is suggesting in this last scene that if the King had opened the gates of the Château to the people, who were his children, much of the bloodshed would have been avoided.

The popularity of this play originates in its restatement of the theme of Good versus Evil, the Emperor versus the nobility. Nicodème is merely a catalyst who sets off the chain of events ending in a peaceful

revolution.

Revolutionary plays all possess one common element: they are propaganda devices. Similar persuasive tools have consistently been used by governments to motivate the citizens to patriotic fervor and belligerent hatred of the enemy. The same phenomenon could be observed during World War II when one never saw a good German or a virtuous Japanese in films. These men represented evil; they butchered our brave fighting men, whereas we fought fairly. So too, as the Revolution progressed drama became increasingly violent with explosive tirades against those in power.

By August 1792, France was at war both on its borders and within the country. The French armies were in retreat and the peasants of the Vendée had captured several cities. The royal family was incarcerated at the Temple prison. In Paris the population was becoming increasingly nervous at the possibility of a coup by some royal factions. Suddenly, a mass hysteria set in and the prisons of Paris were emptied by the indiscriminate executions of inmates. The retreating French troops finally made a stand at Valmy and routed the Austrians. With the subsequent victories of the army, the nation calmed down and continued its reforms. On the 21st of September, the National Convention in its first meeting abolished the royalty. On the 13th of November the trial

of Louis Capet began. The next day, the French army, led by Dumouriez entered Brussels. On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was guillotined.

Two days after the execution of the king, Olympe de Gouges, had her play, L'Entrée de Dumourier (sic) à Bruxelles, ou les Vivandiers,⁹ performed on the stage of the Théâtre de la République. A moderate who believed in the Revolution, she abhorred its excesses. Because of her attacks on those who she thought were responsible for the horrors committed in the name of the Revolution, such as Marat, she ultimately fell victim to the same forces and was guillotined on November 4, 1793.

In an open letter to Dumouriez, General of the Armies of the French Republic, which she added to the preface of the play, Gouges writes:¹⁰

Pour fixer l'opinion publique sur le gouvernement républicain, il falloit exciter, enflammer le courage de mes concitoyens qui restoient dans Paris. Il falloit enfin donner le dernier coup de massue à l'aristocratie, qui . . . guette le moment . . . pour nous remettre aux fers. . . . Ce n'est ~~pas~~ toi [Dumouriez] seul que j'ai célébré; comme soldat, tu partages mon hommage: mais ce sont mes concitoyens, c'est l'armée que tu commandois que j'ai célébrés; c'est la haine des tyrans, c'est l'amour de la liberté dont j'ai voulu pénétrer les peuples; c'est surtout la gloire de mon pays que j'ai voulu cimenter.

Gouges states in her preface, as an apology for errors found in the play, that it was written in four days¹¹ and was ready to be performed ten days after the surrender of Brussels.¹² This might explain the spelling error in the name of Dumourier. Her haste is revealed by the discrepancies in the spelling of names in the list of characters as compared to the same names in the play or in real life.

Typical of the revolutionary repertory, the play reflects the patriotic fervor of the times. The author extols the virtues of the people, especially the women, who, she feels are the equal of men. The theme constantly repeated here is that it is necessary for both men and women to fight shoulder to shoulder in order to ensure the continued existence of the newly founded Republic.

The play starts with Grisbourdin, a Carmelite Friar and Chaplain of the Austrian Army, exhorting the priors of the monasteries of Brussels to keep a constant vigil over their flocks lest they find themselves in the same unenviable position of their French colleagues. His tirade is filled with imprecations against those who would dispossess him. At the end of his harangue, all the monks taking out their knives are ready to resist all who oppose their plans. Grisbourdin is biding his time and has them put away their weapons for another day.

The scene reminds one somewhat of Marie-Joseph Chenier's Charles IX, where a cardinal blesses the daggers of assassins. During this period, anti-clerical sentiment was at its height. The revolutionaries were especially angered by members of the monastic orders who they felt were leeches, sucking the life blood of the new nation. Gouges, two years before, in Le Couvent, ou les Voeux forcés, had defended the clergy as good men. Times had indeed changed.

To Grisbourdin's perfidious behavior, Gouges adds a comic note. She has him announce to the other priors that he ~~has~~ fallen in love, but will nevertheless continue to perform his ecclesiastic duties. (I.1.19) The lady is Madame Charlot, the wife of the canteen keeper of the Austrian Army officers' mess. This thin intrigue links together the different sub-plots of the play.

As he leaves his colleagues, he meets Charlot who is in town negotiating the purchase of some wine. Both Charlot and the wine merchant poke fun at Grisbourdin, who promises to avenge himself for their insults.

Charlot, the canteen-keeper and Lafeuillette, the wine-merchant, continue their bargaining while talking about the news of France. Charlot is surprised to find that Lafeuillette supports the Revolution.

Lafeuillette; buvant de temps en temps quelques coups de vin - Vous en avez parlé trop long-temps; et moi, pour ne pas m'ennuyer . . . (Il boit encore)

Charlot, l'interrompant - Vous vous êtes achevé, n'est-ce pas?

Lafeuillette - Achevé! Je connois mon état. Je suis marchand de vin de père en fils. Mes ancêtres étoient des ivrognes, c'est vrai. C'est la rocambole du métier; c'est comme cela qu'on fait bien ses affaires, voyez-vous?

Charlot, le regardant - Vous êtes gai, père Lafeuillette! je voudrois comme vous, pouvoir noyer mon chagrin dans le jus de la treille.

Lafeuillette - Vous, du chagrin? Parbleu! Et depuis quand? Vous êtes Français; vos concitoyens s'approchent. Vous devriez en être réjoui; car moi qui ne le suis pas, je les vois arriver avec plaisir.

(I.3.22-23)

The patriotic fervor in France was such that almost everyone was convinced that when the French armies entered the neighboring countries they would be welcomed with open arms, since obviously all people believed in the principles of the Revolution. The awakening was rude. This, however, did not discourage the dramatists who kept on exploiting the myth of the enthusiastic welcome the heroic French soldiers would receive in foreign lands. This was a propaganda ploy to keep the revolutionary passions kindled.

Lafeuillette warns Charlot to keep his patriotism secret, but Charlot has made his decision:

Hum! J'ai pris mon parti; je m'attends à tout; je ne crains rien. Je suis venu à Bruxelles pour tâcher de me trouver ce décret en faveur des soldats étrangers; on est si fort aux aguets sur

cette épidémie, qu'aucun soldat autrichien n'a
connaissance de ce décret qui lui rend tous les
droits de l'homme.

(I.3.25)

Lafeuillette has met a person whom he thinks to be
French and who might have the pamphlets containing the
text of the Rights of Man. His wife arrives and berates
him for his drunkenness:

Ah! maître ivrogne, je te trouve enfin! N'as-tu
pas honte de te mettre dans un état aussi pitoyable?

(I.4.26)

Charlot tries to intercede, but she tells him that
he, at least is a good husband. She commends his indus-
triousness. On the other hand, Mme Lafeuillette complains
that she is obliged to tend to their business and to her
household since her husband is absent so often. She in-
dicates that she welcomes the arrival of the French. In
fact, she has decided to lead the women of Brussels in
welcoming them. She supports Balza, the city councilor,
leader of the patriotic party.

Gouges is carrying her personal involvement in the
role of women by juxtaposing a strong willed woman and her
weak husband. The real breadwinner is the wife who must
support the family while her husband drinks the profits
of the business. This is a further example of the use of
the stage to moralize the nation's citizenry. Paule-
Marie Duhet, in Les Femmes et la Révolution, 1789-1794
states that women had effectively taken an active part in

the Revolution.¹³ Mme Lafeuillette in wanting to lead the women of Brussels is following in glorious footsteps.

Balza, an ardent leader of the Republican cause, tries to convince the burgomaster to open the gates of the city to the French. But the latter is a cautious man and would prefer to wait before making any decisions. This causes Balza to say:

Ah! consultons plutôt la voix du peuple; s'il a résolu de rendre la place, les efforts de votre noblesse et de votre clergé seront impuissans!
(I.5.35)

In the second act we find that Charlot's daughter, Charlotte, has a lover. It is the son of the Austrian general. He has decided to attempt to convince her to elope and join the French army. He knows that he will never receive his father's blessing to their marriage. He has read the Rights of Man and knows that only in France will he be able to marry below his station and still retain respect.

. . . J'abandonne l'étendard des tyrans; je ne veux plus servir que sous les drapeaux des hommes libres . . . Allez livrer la bataille actuellement; hommes insensés, j'abandonne vos lois injustes, je ne servirai plus que comme simple soldat pour la défense des peuples et pour la gloire des nations . . .

(II.1.37-8)

This scene restates the well accepted cliché of the first act: the common people represent the force of Good, the nobles and the clergy personify Evil. The Chevalier is ready to renounce all his titles, his country and his father in order to marry Charlotte, the daughter of a canteen-keeper. By this choice he joins the Good cause and renounces Evil. He will even fight against his own country because he believes the French cause to be Good.

The Chevalier has difficulty convincing Charlotte, mainly because the presence of her mother stifles his ardor. But he manages to inform her that the Rights of Man include all people.

Le Chevalier - . . . les droits de l'homme se font sentir dans tous les coeurs. Ce sont les Français qui les ont ressuscités pour le bonheur du monde.

.
Charlotte - Et ceux de la femme, M. le Chevalier, y sont-ils aussi ressuscités?

.
Le Chevalier - . . . les filles y sont majeures à seize ans; et peuvent, en dépit d'un pouvoir abusif, choisir un époux à leur gré.

(II.2.44-5)

It comes as no surprise to learn that Charlotte is indeed sixteen. This discussion brings to the public one of the most important topics in the works of Gouges, the rights of women. French law was such that women had hardly any rights, and according to P-M Duhet, women individually or collectively took an active role in the Revolution to obtain the redress of their grievances.

Charlot returns with his wine and obtains from the French spy the leaflets containing the Declaration of the Rights of Man which he distributes to the German soldiers with great enthusiasm. He addresses some enemy soldiers:

Camarades, on vous trompe; les Français sont vos amis, ils ne veulent que détruire les tyrans pour délivrer les nations; ils ont commencé par le leur; imitez-les; les soldats sont tous frères, et doivent se réunir pour la cause universelle des peuples.

(II.4.50)

The appeal to the universality of the French cause was a most sincere belief of the revolutionaries, who trusted that their brethren in foreign lands would join them in bringing down the tyrants. Gouges~~only~~ reflects this prevailing sentiment when she has Charlot's efforts meet with such success, that 1,500 soldiers desert at once.

The Austrian General's aide-de-camp informs Charlot that he is suspected of sympathizing with the enemy. The only reason Charlot hasn't yet been arrested is that the General feels that he is the best cook in the army and would be difficult to replace. Charlot has set the table for the officers' mess, but the famished deserters wipe it clean. The French spy has been caught and is brought to the officers. Charlot attempts to defend him, but the General decides to hold him until after the battle. Grisbourdin has informed the General of Charlot's treachery, but because the General feels that Charlot is

indispensable to his officer's mess he wants to interrogate the prisoner himself before making any decision. However, the start of the battle interrupts his plans. Everyone leaves to attend to their affairs except for Mme Charlot, her daughter and Grisbourdin. Finally alone with his love, the latter makes advances. She is saved by the return of the aide-de-camp announcing Dumourier's approach. Grisbourdin and the aide-de-camp exit together. The two women are saved by Dumourier and his men. It is by introducing herself as Mme Charlot, the canteen-keeper, that she learns of her husband's complicity in the desertion of so many Austrians. She is angered that Charlot had not confided in her.

Dumourier - Quoi! madame, auriez-vous pu lui faire un crime d'avoir servi sa patrie et la cause de la liberté?

Mad. Charlot - Non, monsieur, je suis loin de lui en faire un crime. Puissent les Français que vous commandez, briser tous les sceptres des tyrans; rétablir, dans tout l'univers l'égalité, l'Union des peuples, cet amour paternel de nos anciens. Voilà le vœu de toute l'Europe, et c'est le plus ardent que je puisse former pour le bonheur du monde entier.

Dumourier - Madame, si vous n'êtes pas française, vous êtes faite pour le devenir . . . la révolution a fait les plus grands prodiges, même sur votre sexe. . . . Dans la politique, dans les batailles, partout les femmes suivent vos pas, et votre sexe rivalise actuellement le nôtre; c'est le fruit de cette souveraine révolution.

(II.16.73-74)

Madame Charlot is an Austrian, but she extols the fruits of liberty found in the new Republic, in a speech

intended to enflame the general public to do their patriotic duty. Olympe de Gouges advancing the cause of women's equal rights, has the greatest hero of the day pay homage to the bravery of women. Tributes from the leaders of the Revolution, whether actual or fictitious, were the rewards necessary to the civic education of the masses.

Madame Charlot then invites the French to refresh themselves at the Austrian's expense and soon Charlot arrives to warn the French of an Austrian trap.

Meanwhile, the Chevalier has finally convinced Charlotte to run off with him. They meet a group of French soldiers and join them, just before attacking a German detachment led by the aide-de-camp who recognizes the General's son. The Germans are beaten and retreat pursued by the French.

Tape à l'oeil, the French spy, appears again. He was saved from hanging by the deserting Austrians. Madame Charlot rushes in to inform her husband that Charlotte has been kidnapped. Just then the Germans, led by their General, return. Tape à l'oeil escapes, but Charlot is so angry at the Chevalier for having seduced his daughter that he storms up to the General and demands justice. The General, however, insinuates that it is Charlotte who has seduced his son and induced him to join the enemy.

Charlot - Complice? je ne me connois plus. Les voilà ces nobles qui ne sentirent jamais la vertu, et qui ne connurent jamais le véritable honneur;

ils pensent qu'il est de même étranger au peuple.
 Je n'ai que deux mots à vous dire; votre fils
 épousera ma fille, ou je lui brûle la cervelle
 . . .

Grisbourdin - Monseigneur, vous l'entendés; faites
 un exemple de ce misérable.

Le Général - Epouser votre fille? quelle audace!
 est-ce là le ton, le langage d'un vivandier, d'un
 homme de votre espèce?

Charlot - C'est celui d'un Français, d'un homme
 libre, et cette espèce vaut bien celle des esclaves
 comme vous.

(III.7.86-87)

A canteen-keeper talks to a general as if they were equal!
 The Rights of Man had declared all men equal, thus it was
 only natural that this new concept be illustrated on the
 stage so that the public could see it in action. The
 choice of characters is not innocent: the powerful man
 is Austrian, the little one is French, and a little
 Frenchman is no one's inferior.

The General, of course, did not share this view
 and has the Charlots arrested and sent to Brussels to be
 executed as an example for the rest of the population.
 The aide-de-camp arrives to report on the French vic-
 tories. The General retreats to Brussels, leaving his aide-
 de-camp to fortify the heights above the city.

Grisbourdin, left alone, rejoices at his ven-
 geance. But Tape à l'oeil comes upon him. Grisbourdin
 attempts to reason with him, however:

Tape à l'oeil, en colère - Moi, de ton métier!
 Coquin, je suis espion, il est vrai, je n'en fais
 pas le fier; mais c'est pour une bonne cause.
 Cet état m'honore, et je l'illustre aujourd'hui;
 mais toi, glouton, paresseux, lâche, inutile à la
 société, corrupteur des hommes, et profanateur de
 la morale d'un Dieu clément, reçois le châtement
 que sa justice te réservait . . .

(III.10.91)

Whereupon, Tape à l'oeil gives him a good thrashing.

It is interesting to note in this scene that although the clergy is brutally assailed, God remains untouched and still is held in great respect. The attacks are only leveled at those who have exploited the people through a misuse of their clerical powers. On July 12, 1790, the Civil Constitution of the clergy had been promulgated. By January 1793, it was fairly apparent which priests were on the side of the Good and which had chosen Evil. They had made their decision by either agreeing or refusing to swear allegiance to their new constitution. The time had not yet arrived when religion itself would be attacked.

Grisbourdin is saved by the arrival of the retreating Germans. They stop to assist him and are themselves all taken prisoners by the French led by Dumourier. He releases Grisbourdin saying with contempt: "Je ne prends que des hommes." (III.13.95)

Among Dumourier's soldiers are two sisters. In a fight against five German soldiers, the heroic Freling sisters kill one and capture the others. Very impressed,

Dumourier addresses the prisoners:

Vous étiez cinq contre deux . . . et quels sont ces héros de la République française qui vous ont défaits? Deux femmes! (Les deux Feling font un mouvement d'indignation contre le général.) Ne vous fâchez pas, mesdames, vous n'en serez pas moins méritantes, moins célèbres; mais il est nécessaire que je leur fasse sentir l'impuissance absolue de la cause qu'ils défendent, et du courage invincible que donne celle que nous servons . . . Eh bien! oui! oui, ce sont deux femmes, deux jeunes personnes qui vous ont battus et fait prisonniers. Enthousiasme belliqueux, si la gloire est un prestige, celle de la liberté a fait des prodiges qui serviront longtemps d'exemple au monde. Allons, guerrières, conduisez votre conquête, elle vous prépare de nouveaux lauriers . . .

(III.13.96)

In act four, Gouges introduces two shepherds in love, Suzette and Lucas. They represent the lowest social station in this play. Their presence, which adds nothing to the action, is simply another proof that all classes support the French in their Revolution:

Lucas - . . . Je ne savons rien de la tiopolitique; mais quoique ça, les Français sont braves; ils sont dans notre ferme depuis hier; ils n'ont pas seulement touché ça, (faisant signe du doigt), et les Allemands vous mangions tout.

Suzette - Ah! cela est bien vrai; t'as raison, Lucas, ils nous dévorent, quand ils passent près des vignes, c'est comme une grêle, il n'y reste rien, ils mangions jusqu'au souches.

(IV.1.98)

Here the propaganda is crude and coarse. Not until Napoleon, was the Quartermaster corps sufficiently developed to supply the troops of the line. Even then the system often failed to distribute sufficient provisions and supplies. During the eighteenth century the

custom was for the army to live off the land. In fact one of the major reasons that the French were ultimately expelled from Belgium, was that the soldiers committed exactly the same excesses that Lucas and Suzette ascribe to the Germans. History has shown that it is common practice for the mass media to present biased versions of the facts, favoring one's own camp and discrediting the enemy.

Meanwhile, Charlotte and her lover still wandering around the site of the military conflict, join a French detachment and Charlotte in a combat with some Austrians kills two men. When Dumourier arrives, the leader of the detachment, Général Egalité, lauds the bravery of the three women, Charlotte and the Freling sisters who are in ecstasy over their victory:

Freling, aînée - . . . général, nous n'avons pas laissé un autrichien, ils sont tous étendus par terre.

Dumourier, avec gaité - En ce cas, mes braves, je suis plus heureux que vous. Je n'ai pas tué un homme, et j'ai fait deux mille prisonniers.
(IV.5.110)

Dumourier is shown as a man of peace who does not enjoy killing, but fights only because his cause is just. His composure and his generosity are more admirable than the ferocity of the Amazons.

It might surprise the modern reader to find a superior officer leading a small detachment in the

general foray of the action, but at that time, it was common practice and generals were often killed on the front lines.

In the last act all the characters are in Brussels. The situation looks grim for the French spy and Charlot who are prisoners. Madame Charlot has been released because of her sex, and Grisbourdin is indignant at the incapacity of the general to be firm. He insists that no priest would be influenced by a woman's tears.

Grisbourdin and a criminal judge interrogate Tape à l'oeil in order to find his accomplices, but to no avail. Suddenly the tocsin is sounded. The people have gathered together to attempt to liberate Charlot and Tape à l'oeil. The crowd is led by Madame Lafeuillette. The criminal judge attempts to stop the demonstrators before they break the law:

Le juge criminel - Rentrez dans le devoir, je vous l'ordonne, au nom de la loi.

Mad. LaFeuillette - Tiens, cet autre avec sa loi! Oh! nous en voulons bien des lois, mais des lois pour tous, et non pas pour vous seuls, et vous verrez si nous saurons les respecter.

Mad. Charlot - La loi, cruel! en connois-tu une, qui ne te reproche pas ton injustice? Vil magistrat!

(V.8.125-126)

This exchange reminds us that the author belongs to the bourgeoisie, and is a member of the propertied class where respect of the law was important for the

preservation of ownership rights. The main objection of the middle class to the laws is voiced by Madame Lafeuillette who complains that laws were too often formulated for the benefit of a favored few.

The Austrian Archduke arrives to insure that his orders are executed. Madame Lafeuillette does not see him as he enters and inadvertently hits him. He is outraged that a member of the rabble has the audacity to strike him. Balza, the city councilor, informs him that the people will not defend his interests. The Archduke wants the prisoners executed. This brings a violent tirade from Madame Charlot:

Tigre, tes efforts sont impuissans, je te brave, et tu ne peux rien, ton règne est achevé. Il est tems que celui du peuple, celui de ton souverain commence; oui, mon époux a mis l'insurrection dans ton armée, je te le déclare, et je m'en glorifie; et moi j'ai développé dans l'esprit de mes concitoyens le germe de la liberté qui, depuis longtems, fermentoit dans leurs coeurs. Nous attendons le général de la république française, comme un Dieu libérateur.

(V.10.132)

Madame Charlot in her tirade has equalized their stations by the mere use of the "tu". This presages the law passed during the Terror forbidding the use of the polite "vous", which was interpreted as being indicative of a class structure.

However, the Prince of Wirtemberg arrives to announce the complete defeat of his troops. He urges the Archduke to flee. The latter refuses. Meanwhile,

the people have succeeded in freeing Charlot. Tape à l'oeil had been taken away by Grisbourdin and the executioner just prior to the capturing of the prison.

A French officer arrives with demands that the city surrender. The Burgomaster agrees. The Archduke had been hoping to persuade the city to resist the French. With a last harangue, he prophesizes that the people of Brussels are only exchanging one master for another:

. . . bientôt vous reconnoîtrez votre erreur. Semblables aux Romains, ces ravisseurs du pouvoir absolu des rois vous dicteront des loix, plus rigoureuses que celles d'un seul; vous redoutez un tyran, vous en aurez mille; vous abolirez la monarchie, vous aurez l'esclavage; vous voulez être égaux, vous le serez en apparence en droits, mais divisés par l'intérêt, par l'ambition, par les brigues, par les cabales de toutes espèce, vous vous arracherez mutuellement les places, les emplois. Tous, vous vous disputerez les lambeaux d'un seul; et fatigués de changemens successifs, de calamités sans cesse renaissantes, de misères perpétuelles, vous regretterez en vain le chef que vous aviez acquis par tant de siècles de sagesse. . . .

(V.16.138)

Considering the times, it is strange that Gouges included such a speech in the play. It offers a very good description of the situation in France and reflects the writer's position as a moderate. Such freedom of expression was premature, since it is for lines such as those that she was executed.

To everyone's surprise Tape à l'oeil appears. He announces that he had converted the executioner to his cause and that they had then ~~hang~~ Grisbourdin.

Dumourier enters the city with his troops. It was the custom for the burgomaster to hand the keys of the city, kneeling before the conqueror. However Dumourier releases him from such humiliation since it is a feudal custom which his nation was fighting to destroy. He introduces the women warriors to the Belgians to the great surprise of Charlot who recognizes Charlotte. The younger Freling sister then makes a plea to the women of Brussels (and to the women in the audience) to emulate them.

Imitez-nous; faisons plus aujourd'hui que les hommes; combattons pour défendre leurs droits, et vengeons en même-tems notre sexe d'un tyran- nique préjugé. Forçons la fierté, l'orgueil de ces superbes à rendre hommage à notre valeur; et qu'ils apprennent enfin que les femmes peuvent mourir à leurs côtés pour la cause commune de la patrie et la destruction des tyrans.

(V.19.144)

Dumourier then has a tree of liberty planted. Using it as an altar, he officiates at the marriage of Charlotte and the Chevalier as the play comes to a close.

The constant changes of fortune makes the plot difficult to follow, and the poorly constructed play consists of merely a number of vignettes, loosely tied together. But it offered Olympe de Gouges the opportunity to present various members of the lower Third Estate and to have them praise the achievements of the Revolution. Gouges, in a preface to the play, blamed the shoddy performance given by the actors for the play's lack of success.

Of interest to us is the tipping of the balance relative to the number of characters representing the lower middle class. The play itself is an allegory of the fight between Good and Evil. The Austrians/Germans, Grisbourdin and even the Burgomaster are on the side of Evil. The Charlot family, Tape à l'oeil, the Lafeuillette's are soldiers of the Good. It is only by renouncing his titles that the Chevalier joins the camp of the Good. In a naïve and almost primitive conclusion the heroes--the poor, the young, the victims--win in a total unmitigated victory.

By April 1793, Dumouriez had defected. Soon thereafter, the Committee of Public Safety was formed and given enormous powers. The Girondists were finally swept from office thereby giving all power to the Jacobins. On September 5, the Convention approved a resolution making Terror the order of the day. Meanwhile, although the Convention had up to that point maintained Catholicism as the religion of the people, doubts about the Church were emerging. It was known that the insurrectionists of the Vendée were being led by priests. The Constitutional Church had not succeeded in unifying all the religious factions in the country.¹⁴ Therefore, after a period of moderation towards the lower clergy who up to then were

considered very sympathetic to the complaints of the people, attacks against them suddenly appeared. The war was not going well anywhere, and someone had to be blamed. The priests became the target, and with them the established religion. On November 10, 1793, the festival of Liberty and Reason was celebrated. The new deities became the fad for the greater part of the Terror. But as with all such customs, their popularity was to wane quite rapidly. By January, 1794, the Convention had reestablished religious liberty.

A play that appeared at that time was Puysegur's l'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain.¹⁵ It could have just as aptly been called "the reeducation of Rose." She was the family governess. At the beginning of the play, she has just returned to Paris from a pilgrimage she had vowed to make at her husband's death. We do not know the length of her absence, but it was probably a few months, for during that time substantial changes had been made. Paul and his sister Amélie are waiting to tell Rose of the change in their education.

Paul - . . . c'est que je ris d'avance de l'effet que va produire sur elle le changement qui s'est opéré dans ton éducation depuis son départ.

Amélie - Le changement, était, tu en conviendras, bien nécessaire, car avec elle je n'apprenois rien.

Paul - Aujourd'hui, tu apprends tout avec facilité.

Amélie - La raison en est simple.

Avec ma bonne, tous les jours,
Tu sais que c'étoit son usage,
Il me falloir, sans son secours,
Dans ses heures lire une page.

Ce que je lisois,
Je le répétois,
Sans la comprendre d'avantage.

(I.1.2)

A number of new laws were being promulgated by the convention, carrying out the reforms that were to change France into a Republic. Not least of these reforms was that of the educational system, which up to then had been in the hands of the church whether private or public. Since the clergy was now suspect, public education, so important to the development of the new republic, had to be assured by the state. But the state at that critical time was unable to assume the additional responsibility of a program of education for all. Someone had to replace the priest as the educator: Chastenet de Puységur suggested that in the interim the parents act as educators.

Rose having left on her pilgrimage, Amélie's mother, influenced by the Revolution, has taken charge of her daughter's education. The first change she has made is revolutionary in itself. Instead of responding to Amélie's questions with a "you're too young to understand" (I.1.4), as Rose had done, she gives explanations to her daughter. Different text books have also been selected.

Amélie asks Paul why Rose has been travelling.
He responds that it is because of a vow she had taken.

Amélie - Un voeu! qu'est-ce que cela signifie?

Paul - Un voeu comme un autre serment,
A des devoirs saints nous engage,
D'en former bien légèrement,
Des dévots fut jadis l'usage;
Le seul aujourd'hui sans regret
Qu'on puisse faire pour la vie,
C'est à chaque instant d'être prêt
A s'immoler pour sa patrie.

Amélie - Patrie, république, tous ces mots paroissent
toujours nouveaux à ma bonne.

Paul - Je le crois bien; elle ne s'occupe jamais que
de ses prières, et toutes les histoires qu'elle nous
fait, sont puisées dans la vie des saints.

Amélie - C'est qu'elle est dévote!

Paul - Dis donc bigote.

(I.1.4-5)

When Rose arrives, they are impatient to tell her of the
changes. Amélie now loves to read and Paul knows his
history. However, Rose has no time for such trivialities,
for today is All Saints Day and she must arrive for mass
on time. Paul is surprised that she hasn't heard the
news:

Mde. Rose - Quoi donc, s'il vous plaît?

Paul - Les fêtes, dit-on, n'effroient plus
D'utilité ni d'avantage;
Comme de bien d'autres abus
L'on vient d'abolir l'usage,
L'homme pour adoucir ses maux,
Trouve en tout tems dieu secourable,
Et c'est à d'utiles travaux
Qu'il se rend favorable. bis.

(I.2.7)

The children inform her of the changes since her departure: the week has been lengthened, the names of the days changed, and Sunday and feast days have all disappeared. Poor Rose is overwhelmed. Her world has been tossed topsy turvy since her departure.

The changes had been made to generate a greater efficiency among the workers, and to increase productivity. The middle class, the emerging capitalists, were in power and tried to develop changes that would work for their own benefit. The proletariat was not to be duped since it was clear to it that having one day off every seven days was better than one day every ten. The idea of a revised work week was thus doomed to failure.

When Rose tells the children that she has just returned from a pilgrimage, they chide her for her beliefs in miracles. Paul is absolutely incredulous and asks her to prove they exist.

Mde. Rose - C'est possible, mon enfant, puisqu'enfin je vous dis que j'en ai vu un . . . il est vrai qu'en même tems vous devez apprendre que c'est une chose surnaturelle, et que l'on n'obtient que par une grace particulière.

(I.2.9)

Her proof is that having vowed to keep silent for a number of days, she had been able to do so, in spite of the provocation of some young men.

Chastenet de Puységur pokes fun at supernatural beliefs, ridiculing Rose and her ideas which were shared

by many in the audience. The Jacobins had declared that the stage was to be used as a school of the Revolution. The children's mother, citoyenne Mirville, arrives and tells Rose of the changes in their education. Foremost, she feels, is the choice of different books:

La Cit. Mirville - Tu trouveras un peu de changement dans leur éducation, mon mari et moi avons résolu de laisser pour quelque tems les livres de religions.

Mde. Rose - Mais le missel romain, les oraisons de St. Ambroise, la vie des saints sont et seront toujours des livres utiles aux jeunes gens, et dont M. Paul peut orner sa bibliothèque.

.

La Cit. Mirville - Justement, ce sont ces sortes de livres que je ne me soucie plus que mon fils lise dans ce moment.

Mde. Rose - Et par quelle raison, s'il vout plaît, madame.

La Cit. Mirville - (chantant)

Former le coeur et cultiver l'esprit
C'est là l'emploi d'une maîtresse;
A bien comprendre tout ce qu'elle dit,
Il faut appliquer la jeunesse. (bis)
Les livres saints, remplis d'obscurités,
Troublent la raison de l'enfance,
En lui disant qu'il est des vérités,
Au dessus de l'intelligence.

(I.3.11-12)

Again Rose is mocked for her ideas which are still prevalant today; if one doesn't read the books, at least they look impressive in one's library. On the other hand, from Citoyenne Mirville's song, we can see that progress is indeed slow for Montaigne had proposed the same reforms some two hundred years before.

Poor Rose is completely perplexed by this upheaval in her life. Every minute there seems to be a new change. When Amélie goes to fetch her map for her lesson, Rose stops her and says that she has the key to the cabinet, where:

. . . j'y ai justement renfermé ce matin le royaume de France et les tableaux généalogiques!

Amélie - Tu peux garder tout cela, ma bonne, je n'en ai plus besoin. . . .

Depuis que de l'indépendance
 Nous avons reçu des leçons,
 Il n'est plus question en France,
 De royaume ni de blasons;
 De l'ancienne politique,
 A peine nous nous occupons
 Connaître, aimer la république
 C'est là ce que nous apprenons. (bis)
 (I.4.13)

Paul continues to read history, but it is only so that he can better appreciate the reasons for the Revolution. Rose is extremely upset and cannot cope with this transformation. She informs Citoyenne Mirville of her intention to leave. However the latter suggests rather that she marry. Rose insists that the vow she has taken precludes this possibility. But Citoyenne Mirville persists indicating that she has already found a suitor, and insists that Rose at least meet him. Rose is quite taken by the suitor, Germance. When Citoyenne Mirville's husband inquires as to whether Germance has yet proposed, Rose is astounded that he has used the "tu" form with him. When Citoyen Mirville indicates that he is prepared

to pay for the wedding and offers, in addition, a dowry, she is overwhelmed. She requests time to consider this new development.

Meanwhile, Citoyenne Mirville continues with Amélie's lesson. Her husband joins the group. He indicates that the Revolution in forcing him to take charge of his children's education has made him a better person. Paul says that both he and Amélie have gained from the physical presence of their father. This scene gives us an idyllic family picture of parents concerned with the education of their children. This realism was necessary to strike the audience and educate them to the necessity of assuming the responsibility for educating their own children.

Rose arrives and soon agrees to marry Germance. Paul is extremely surprised at this turn of events, for he would never have thought that she would marry a priest. Rose thinks, at first, that he is teasing her, but when his mother says that indeed Germance is a defrocked priest, Rose lets out a sigh of relief; she has narrowly escaped a fate worse than death. She prays the Lord to forgive her and announces that she would never marry a priest.

Paul tries in vain to convince her. Germance arrives and is surprised at his cool reception. He had just been assured by Mirville of her consent and now he

finds her obdurately opposed to him. She has decided that his vows are an obstacle to their union. However, she finally agrees to listen to him:

Germance - . . . Reconnoître l'auteur de l'univers, l'adorer dans toute la nature, ne voir mon bien particulier que dans le bonheur de mes semblables; être toujours prêt à sacrifier mes jours à la défense de ma patrie? voilà ma profession de foi: jugez maintenant toi-même.

Mde. Rose - Mais, mais, . . . c'est la façon de penser du plus honnête homme . . . (Par reflexion) Ah! ça, cependant tu conviendras que tout culte est renversé, la religion détruite et tu ne peux . . .

Germance - Dis seulement que ce sont les erreurs; la vérité reste, elle est inataquable.

Mde. Rose - Mais, en ce cas, vous nous avez donc tous bien trompés.

Germance - Comment cela?

Mde. Rose - Mais en nous prêchant ce que vous ne croyez pas vous-même.

Germance - Beaucoup, peut-être, méritent ce reproche . . . mais moi . . . je fus toujours de bonne foi. . . .

(I.16.32-33)

She is soon persuaded that he is a Good man and accepts his proposal. Their announcement delights the family but Mirville wonders whether she has any regrets:

Mde. Rose - Je n'en ai plus, non, je n'en ai plus; et je sens qu'il n'est point de préjugés que le langage simple de la raison ne puisse détruire.

(I.18.35)

All the characters sing a song of joy at the happy ending to Rose's reeducation.

The main role here is taken by a member of the proletariat. A poor maid, believing in the precepts of the Church, Rose must be retrained in the teachings of the new Church, that is, the Revolution. Being a good person, she sees the error of her ideals and quickly adopts the teachings of the new order.

The examination of these four plays shows that there has been a definite progression in the importance of the role played by the common people. In La Brouette du Vinaigrier, the common servants are insignificant. Both Dominiques are technically in a service oriented field, but under no circumstances could their status be compared to that of the servant class. The son had already been elevated to the role of a confidential secretary. His father, although rich, is a tradesman and therefore is relegated to the service area. He does have an important role in the play, but it is only one of four major characters. Nicodème, also a servant, does have the leading role in Nicodème dans la lune. The Emperor and the priest have strong, but secondary roles. Minor roles are shared by the nobles and the peasants. The play is indicative of a change in the importance attributed to a man of the lower class. Two things have occurred. First Nicodème is a mere servant with little education. He is much poorer than the elder Dominique, but both are blessed with genuine common sense. Secondly, Nicodème does not have

to share the lead with any other major character, as Dominique senior was obliged to do.

L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles is a pivotal play due to the dominant role ascribed to the service-related classes. The Charlots represent the link between all the scenes of the play. All the other characters are only foils to illuminate the positive aspects of the Charlots' personalities. Grisbourdin, the chaplain has an important role, but portrays an evil person. It is no longer fashionable to set a good priest on the stage, for in real life it has been seen that they are far from models of exemplary life. L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain is primarily a propaganda play with the theme that everyone must reexamine his values in order to be able to better serve the Republic. It must be assumed, although it is not stated in the play, that the Mirvilles are well-to-do since they obviously have the means to maintain a comfortable home. Mr. Mirville indicates that he has been able to devote more time at home with his children. Referring to the tables in Chapter Two, it would be extremely difficult to find any workers or tradesmen who would be able to rearrange their schedules in order to spend more time with their families. The role played by the Mirvilles remains secondary compared to that played by Rose. Their characters are foils used to reveal Rose's major flaws.

Besides the progressive importance of the service-oriented persons, the plays often degenerate into mere propaganda for the Republic. In the last two plays especially, the balance between diversion and information is upset. Both plays deal in an exposition of values to be presented as models for the audience's benefit.

It was previously noted that the audience did not allow the second performance of L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles, to proceed past the second act. A reading of the play reveals indeed many faults, but one must also consider where it was performed. The Théâtre de la République was a major theater whose audiences were well-educated. They could not be expected to relate to the heroes of the play. In addition, the battle scenes which created much noise and fanfare did not appeal to audiences of the major theaters.

Most playwrights attempted to have their plays performed by the major theaters both for personal glory and pecuniary rewards. Those financially endowed theaters were able to pay more for plays than the lesser theaters. But the honor of having one's work performed on a major stage was often sufficiently rewarding. The major reason for the failure of Gouges' play is found in the lack of audience preparation. Had Miss Gouges been less vain she could have had it performed on the stage of the boulevard theaters. There the less educated audiences paid little

attention to style, but were much more receptive to the special effects of the machinists.

The moral lessons would also have better suited for the boulevard audiences who would have been moved by Mme Lafeuillet's revolutionary ardor and angered by the perfidious behavior of Grisbourdin. Gouges' play was intended to exhort the audiences with patriotic fervor, yet it was ahead of its time. Had Olympe de Gouges been a Jacobin supporter and had the play been performed during the Terror, it probably would have had a much better reception. In January 1793, the Jacobins were about to triumph over the Girondists, but they had not yet secured their hold on the government. Olympe de Gouges had certainly not endeared herself to the Jacobins by attempting to defend Louis XVI, yet her play contains lines aimed at stirring the audience's emotions. During the Terror, when the Jacobins were in greater control of the situation, such a play would have had a good chance of success. The Charlots who were sutlers had the same background as many of the members of the Paris sections. Their efforts to help the French would have endeared them to the Jacobins. The only major criticism by the Jacobins would probably have been the existence of Charlot's daughter's suitor, the Chevalier.

Beffroy de Reigny's plays were popular because he was able to gauge the wishes of the audiences. Olympe de Gouges was not so perceptive and her plays often failed.

The popularity of L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain can be ascribed to its attraction to the Jacobin interpretation of values. With the nation in peril by the time of the performances of the play, it was necessary to exhort the public to further commit itself to sacrifices for the preservation of its newly found liberties. It can therefore be seen that clarification of values became a necessity. A massive reprogramming of the citizenry was attempted by using the stage to reinforce the beliefs approved by the government and denigrate all other beliefs and values.

Plays such as the last two were necessary adjuncts to the efforts of the State to overcome its enemies. Rose, for example, is nothing more than the personification of the lower socio-economic class which had to be reeducated. The new republic needed a citizenry with remolded mores in order to achieve its goals of dealing with its foes, outside and within, and reorganize the political structure of the existing government. In short, the public had to be persuaded to have faith in its leaders.

This massive reformation of peoples' values had to be accomplished on a simplified level. Hence many of

the plays we will be reading in further chapters, will also present characters juxtaposed in Good-Evil situations. The Terror, for example, allowed for no middle ground. One was either totally committed to the goals of the Revolution or one was the enemy of the Revolution.

Footnotes

1. Mercier, p. 12.
2. See Appendix, p. 251.
3. Mercier, p. 13.
4. Ibid., p. 13.
5. See Appendix, p. 230.
6. McKee, p. 33.
7. Albert Soboul, La Révolution française (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), I, p. 34.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. See Appendix, p. 247.
10. Gouges, pp. 3-4.
11. Ibid., p. 4.
12. Ibid., p. 7.
13. Paule-Marie Duhet, Les Femmes et la Révolution, 1789-1794 (Paris: Collection Archives Julliard, 1971), p. 45.
14. McKee, p. 89.
15. See Appendix, p. 257.

CHAPTER IV

THEMES RELATING TO THE FAMILY

In the previous chapter the study of four representative plays illustrated the increased importance given to the common people in the distribution of roles.

In this chapter, as well as in the following one, the role of the common people will be further defined under the broad heading of the family and the nation. Within each of these areas themes which have already appeared in the previous chapter will be developed in relation to other revolutionary plays. For example, throughout the Revolution a popular theme which was close to the heart of all spectators was the theme of family life. A comparison of plays within the framework of the family will follow the evolution of cultural reactions among the common people from the beginning of the Revolution until the Directory. A study of the family must necessarily include a survey of themes such as the role of women, the work ethic, domestic virtues as well as vices such as drunkenness or laziness.

A number of crises faced the Estates General when it convened on May 5, 1789. The harvest had been

particularly bad, and Paris was literally starving. Within the next few months there would be countless demonstrations as the Court in Versailles attempted to intimidate members of the Third Estate into becoming a rubber-stamp assembly rather than a body initiating long awaited reforms. However, because of a total absence of leadership on the part of Louis XVI, government plans to deal with crises were often ill-conceived and rarely seen to a conclusion. Those plans, in their vagueness and lack of continuity, undermined the public confidence of a volatile population prompt to react in an uncontrollable manner. First, a fear of an aristocratic plot resulted in a search for arms in the various armories of Paris and finally to the storming of the Bastille. Later in the same year, as hunger spread through Paris, a demonstration by women turned into a march on Versailles, and forced the return of the royal family, virtually prisoners of the Parisian mob.

Because of this constant ferment in the capital, the theaters were very cautious about the type of play presented to the general public. The boulevard theaters continued to offer the various farces that were their trademark while the established theaters presented their classical repertory. The first new play of the year that is of interest to this study was Dumaniant's Ricco,¹ performed on the stage of the Palais Royal on November 26, 1789. It can be considered a successful play because it

had forty-five performances within the year.

In Ricco the three major characters are members of the lower class, in this case servants. Lisette, Constance's maid, is an especially strong willed person who is totally devoted to her mistress, even to the point of braving the ire of the Baron.

In the opening scene we find Constance distraught, for she misplaced a letter from the Marquis de Germancei. She is talking to Lisette, when they see the Baron approach:

Le Baron - Que faites-vous ici?

Lisette - Vous le voyez, nous prenons l'air du matin.

Le Baron - Taisez-vous, Mademoiselle, ce n'est pas vous que j'interroge . . .

Lisette - Tenez, Monsieur, dussiez-vous vous fâcher encore; vous me permettrez de vous dire que vous avez aujourd'hui un air de querelle qui est fait pour troubler et déconcerter l'innocence la plus innocente . . .

(I.2.7)

The letter arranging a rendezvous between Constance and the Marquis has been found by the baron who seeks an explanation from his daughter. Lisette tries to shield her mistress for Constance is a weak person ready to submit to the wishes of her father. The young lady is a very conventional heroine, another Mlle Delormer of La Brouette du vinaigrier. It is interesting to note that both ingenues have essentially the same background: both

have recently left the convent where they had received an education befitting a lady entering society. They had been taught to be properly self-effacing and timid, and yet to use wisely their feminine charms when receiving suitors or being officially presented to society. It is not surprising therefore that Constance, when asked by her father about her involvement with the Marquis de Germancei, should respond in exactly the same manner as Mlle Delormer had done with her own father:

Ah! mon père, soumise à vos volontés, votre fille se fera un devoir de son obéissance, et quels que soient les chagrins qu'elle éprouve, sa bouche ne se permettra jamais ni plainte ni murmure.

(I.2.9)

Both Constance and Mlle Delormer belong to the threatened old order, whereas Lisette represents at her own level the new revolutionary ideals. She is in effect living up to the precepts of the Rights of Man of August 26, 1789. Proud of her employment as a maid, she was equally proud of her individuality. She would have been a fine student for Olympe de Gouges, but in 1789 France was not ready for the equal rights of women.

In Adrienne, ou le Secret de famille (April 1790)²

Collot d'Herbois has François, a farmer, point out the dissimilarity between daughters of the rich and the peasants:

Ces Damoiselles de grande maison sont drôles aussi, les maris que leurs parens leur destinont ne sont jamais de leur goût. Vivent les filles du Village, elles aiment toujours le prétendu, tredame, c'est

qu'ils ne les *épousent* jamais sans s'être bien
connus auparavant . . .

(III.1.56-57)

Young ladies of marriageable age in society were expected to marry the suitors whom their parents had chosen for them. Proper young ladies did not question the wisdom of their elders. Marriage among the members of the lower classes was often decided the same way and Collot d'Herbois who was to be one of the more radical members of the Committee of Public Safety with Robespierre, was only projecting here his own beliefs and those of J.-J. Rousseau that the common people relied on their natural inclinations to reach a decision rather than on the authority of custom and tradition.

Beffroy de Reigny, a year after his triumph with Nicodème dans la lune, produced an equally successful, Le Club des bonnes gens, ou le Curé français (September 1791).³ According to McKee it would have had even greater success had it not met with the opposition of the Jacobins. The fact that Beffroy de Reigny was known for his royalist sympathies, together with the moderateness of the play and the exemplary actions of the priest, explain why the Jacobins wanted the play removed from the repertory of the revolutionary theaters.

The miller's club in the play resembled somewhat a Jacobin club where news concerning the Revolution was discussed. The miller, however, did not govern his own

family in accordance with the democratic principles he espoused at the club meetings. His daughter Elise, well educated as to her rights, is in love and intends to marry her lover, against the wishes of her father.

Mon père me chérit; je suis ici chez moi;
 J'y suis seule de femme, et n'y fais point la loi!
 Oh! j'y veux commander; mon père aura beau dire;
 Ses amis auront beau faire les orateurs;
 Je citerai mes droits qui valent bien les leurs,
 Et de mon sexe enfin j'exercerai l'empire . . .

No 22. Air (du Cousin Jacques)

Plus de peur; allons Mesdames,
 Livrez-vous à la gaîté.
 Laissez luire dans vos âmes
 Le jour de la liberté.
 Plus de terreurs, ni d'alarmes,
 En tout temps vous régnerez . . .
 Les droits fondés sur nos charmes,
 Sont toujours bien assurés. (bis)

(II.8.31)

The plot has the universal and traditional appeal of the victory of two lovers over the opposition of a despotic father. However, two years after the first performance of Ricco the feminine members of the Third Estate had made practically no progress concerning their rights, and had seen their aspirations of equality with men repeatedly thwarted.

As the Revolution progressed, the notion of equality for women seemed to be more and more remote. On May 18, 1793, the audience of Le Divorce⁵ by Desfontaines, was to hear Simone, the wet nurse say:

Les bons soins font la bonn' maman,
 Au village c'est not' système;
 Mais quant à ça, par-tout, vraiment,
 Ce n'est pas tout à fait d'même.
 Vous n'en prenez qu'à vot'loisir,
 Vous autres dames de la ville,
 Vous n'êt'mer' que pour vot'plaisir,
 Et la tâche est facile.

(I.11.40)

In January of 1793, Olympe de Gouges had presented to the public scenes of women fighting off the Austrian peril, shoulder to shoulder with their male comrades. Yet, six months later, we find on the Parisian stage a wet-nurse berating parents who had been negligent in the rearing of their child. She further chastizes the couple for having contemplated a divorce. Again we encounter a peasant enlightening an educated urbanite couple as to their parental duties. Simone represents crudely the ideals of Rousseau in that Society was to blame for what was wrong with our youth. Once more, we meet a common person educating others on a higher social level than herself as to their responsibilities. The importance of the role given to Simone is hardly surprising to hear on the stage of the Théâtre du Vaudeville. Its audiences, which came from the lower Third Estate, were the main support of the Jacobins. In barely three weeks, the Jacobins would be holding the reins of power and proposing a Republic of Virtue.

Even though the French were continually being exhorted to sacrifice themselves for the Nation and the ideals of the Revolution, this appeal was not to be taken

literally by both men and women for it placed women in extreme and unusual circumstances. The leaders of the Revolution had a definite role in mind for women. It was not, however, as Olympe de Gouges depicted it. On the contrary, the theme which is most prevalent in revolutionary drama is that the primary role of women should be to raise their children to become good patriots. The role does lack glamor and originality, but it became insidiously popular on the stage, at a time when women happened to play an active role in the public arena. Perhaps the need for stability was more clearly felt in a period of total chaos, or perhaps the glorification of the kitchen reflects the predominant position of men as writers and thereby their own fears and prejudices, which they alleviated by consistently depicting women in a child rearing capacity.

At the end of 1793, Philippe Plancher-Valcour presented his new play, Le Vous et le toi (November 1793).⁶ Except for a role representing a public prosecutor, all the other characters were farmers. Of these farmers, all except the mother praise the Revolution. The mother insists that she is a good patriot but admits that she is somewhat confused by all the changes:

Oh! j'n'entendons rien à toutes ces philologies-là, nous. J'sommes bonne patriote; j'm'en vante. Puisq'c'est la loi, faut ben y obéir: mais je n'pourrons jamais m'accoutumai à ça. C'est comme vos mois et vos jours; j'n'y connais pu goutte. Quoiqu'tout ça signifie?

(I.6.16)

In that role, la mère Marcel resembles Rose of Le Ménagement républicain. She calls herself a patriot, while insisting that her daughter marry a former public prosecutor, old enough to be her father. But, la mère Marcel has been impressed with his standing in the village and refuses to entertain the possibility that her daughter could marry a young farmer whom she loves. La mère Marcel may appear naïve to us, but she knows enough to want what she feels is best for her daughter, and uses the new found rights as expounded by the revolutionaries to insist that she has that right.

Her husband, Marcel, has somewhat traditional ideas as to the role of women. We find him talking to Thibaut, a gardener:

Marcel - Et qué que ça te fait, pourvu que tu vives? tians, not' ménagère; i'n'faut pas q'les femmes se mêlions d'tant de chose; faut qu'elles laissent faire les hommes; ou bien, c'est quelquefois le moyen d' tout gâter.

.

Thibaut - [referring to a character in a classical play, Cornélie, mother of the Gracques]. . . . Elle était renfermée dans son ménage; elle élevait ses enfants dans l'amour de la Patrie. Et tians, père Marcel, si tu te rappelles, elle fit, morgué, d'ses deux enfans, un Pelletier et un Marat; car i'pérèrent, tous deux, comme ces braves Représentans, que j'pleurons encore tous les jours, pour avoir pris l'z'intérêts du peuple trop à coeur. Et v'là, morgué, comme les femmes doivent être utiles à la Révolution.

(I.6.18)

Marcel is very adamant about what he feels is the role of women in the Revolution:

Dans leux ménage, ça tous les temps,
 S'mêler d'l'économie;
 El'ver avec soin ses enfans
 Pour servir la Patrie;
 Pour leu pays (bis) de jour en jour,
 R'doubler s'il se peut, leux amour;
 Contre tous les tyrans entretenir leurs haines,
 V'là l'devoir (bis) des Républicaines. (bis)
 (I.6.19)

By July 1, 1794 this sexist attitude concerning the role of women had not changed. On that day Philippon in his play, Agricol Viala,⁷ has the hero's mother say to her son:

Pauline - Ne nous occupons que de la République,
 mon cher Agricol; voilà ta véritable mère; et,
 si l'ennemi vient, ne songe qu'à elle; oublie ton
 âge; sois un homme! il faut qu'aujourd'hui le
 laurier de la victoire ceigne ton front, ou que
 la palme civique couvre ton cercueil.
 (I.13.22)

This is the type of speech made to raise the fighting spirits of every Frenchwoman. However, this lecture by a mother to her son is indicative of the prevailing inclination of playwrights as to what the role played by women should be. Pauline has done her duty which was to raise a son, who would fight to save the Republic. She has instilled in her son a great love for his country and a fierce hatred for the enemy. She is even willing to accept that final sacrifice, that her son die for his country.

The role of women as seen and presented by Olympe de Gouges was therefore illusory. Through the salons women had had a great influence on the thinkers of the eighteenth century and would continue to inspire the

leaders of the nineteenth. Yet, they were not to participate actively in the Revolution: Olympe de Gouge's fantasy betrays her yearning for a new society and her rejection of the traditional role assigned to women.

The subordinate role assigned to women as noted previously in La Brouette du vinaigrier remained in effect throughout the Revolution. Mademoiselle Delomer because of the laws then in effect, had no choice but to submit to the will of her father. Simone, la mère Marcel and Pauline sought to retain their primary roles of mothers. Of the three, Pauline indicated her readiness to accept her only son's sacrifice for his country. And the three authors are indeed men.

Another of the themes brought out by the study of both the common people and the representative plays in the previous chapter was the presence of a work ethic. This particular theme was to pervade the entire revolutionary theater. It is a reflection of the aspirations of the middle class which as part of the majority of the governing body of France wished to encourage the citizens to make great efforts for the survival of the Nation.

Gaillardin, the innkeeper of Beffroy de Reigny's l'Histoire universelle (May 1791)⁸ makes his views on work quite clear when upon surprising his daughter dancing with the village children on the square, he says:

Oh! oui, si ce train
 Ne prend pas de fin,
 Oui tous nos habitans
 Seront des fainéans.
 aux Garçons - A l'ouvrage . . .
 aux Filles - Au ménage . . .
 De paresseux qu'est-il besoin?
 (I.2.5)

It is not surprising to find that in contrast to Gaillardin, Gentil, his domestic, had a slightly different version as to the imposition of a great work load:

Ces gens-là se plaignent bien haut,
 Leux tristesse d'vient importune.
 Et pourtant . . . (3 fois) il ont d'la fortune!
 Et moi qui n'suis qu'un pauvre sot,
 Moi, dont la misère est l'pus grand défaut,
 J'les entends parler d'infortune . . .
 Moi, j'ai la chose; ils ont le mot.
 (II.1.21)

Beffroy de Reigny had previously spoken up for the miseries of the poor downtrodden oppressed classes. He may have had royalist sympathies, but just as most people he was only too aware of the injustices prevalent in the country. Because he was able to pinpoint the exact complaint of the majority of theater-goers without attacking the king, his plays were successful. In accordance with the majority of the Third Estate, Beffroy de Reigny attributed the reasons for the ills of his country to the nobles and rich middle class. It is interesting to note that it is precisely the latter--the upper middle class--who wished to reeducate the majority of the citizens and impose their own values concerning the sanctity of work.

With regard to the work ethic, the Revolution was instrumental in providing a transfer of authority from the nobles to the capitalistic middle class. In Nicodème dans la lune, it was the nobles who spurred the peasants to work hard in the fields, whereas in the Histoire universelle, that role has shifted to the innkeeper, who is a member of the middle class.

The teaching of new values to the common people is pursued in Pujoulx's L'Ecole des parvenus, ou la Suite des deux petits Savoyards (February 1792).⁹ The Savoyards were traditionally the chimneysweepers of Paris. In this sequel to the very popular Les Deux petits Savoyards, a rich uncle who has made his fortune in America has returned to Paris and has decided to take in hand the welfare of his sister and two nephews. The entire play is a work of propaganda presenting exemplary conduct to the audience in the hope that the public will seek to emulate the hero and help their fellow men.

L'Epine, the nephews' valet, is impressed with the boys' mother:

Et cette bonne Michéli, leur mère, quelle brave femme! Quand même son langage, ses manières gênées n'annonceraient pas qu'elle a changé d'état, sa bonté, son humanité prouveraient assez qu'elle a vécu dans l'indigence.

(I.1.3)

The first scene sets the stage for the model to be presented to the audience. We are faced with a woman who is saintly. The playwright uses the device of reverse psychology in describing her to the audience. It is made aware that the possession of natural virtues precludes membership in the upper classes. By this time the audiences were weary of the exhortations from high places found in most revolutionary drama. To hold their attention and to influence them, it was necessary to provide a change of pace as it were.

This reverse psychology is used here to educate the common people by subtle flattery. The play tries to sharpen their awareness of their own worth and rightful pride, and show them the way to gain self-esteem without destroying other people's values in the process. The results were often more lasting, since virtues were constantly being positively reinforced. The nephews are as generous in their behavior as their mother, as can be seen from the following interchange:

Joseph - Je n'me rappelais pas que j'n'avais plus qu'ça (un petit écu).

L'épine - Vous avez donné le reste de votre argent hier à la promenade.

(I.6.15)

However, the playwright constantly reminds the audience that his heroes are common people. By a juxtaposition of the virtues of the good healthful working

classes to the hypocrisy of the corrupt upper classes, he proves his contention that the former are of greater usefulness to the nation than the latter.

Mad. Micheli - Comm' à l'ordinaire, un peu d'lait, c'est la nourriture d'not'pays; et quoique j'tâchions d'prendre le ton et les manières d'un' belle dame, j'voulons, s'il se peut, conserver ma santé d'paysanne.

(Michel et Joseph s'asseyent, prennent chacun un gros morceau de pain, des pommes et mangent comme les gens de la campagne.)

(I.8.22)

The scene would be a tableau of a rural peasant family at supper were it not for the luxurious surroundings. Even the rich uncle has not forgotten his humble origins. In the final scene he shows his sister and nephews the contents of a wardrobe that he had been keeping locked.

Mad. Micheli - Le portrait de mon mari.

Verseuil - Oui, le portrait de votre père, de votre ancien ami, et sous l'habit de l'indigent qu'il fit toujours respecter.

Michel - V'là aussi ma veste, mon chapeau.

Joseph - Mes guêtres, ma grattoire.

Verseuil - Et cet habit, le connaissez-vous?
(habit en laine grossière)

Michel et Joseph - Non . . . non, mon oncle.

Verseuil - C'est le mien. Il y a quinze ans que je l'ai quitté; mais je me rappelle sans doute mieux que vous le temps où je m'en couvrais, car j'aime toujours et je choisis encore de préférence les honnêtes gens qui le portent.

(I.17.37-8)

It can be seen from Verseuil's dialogue that although he began his career as a mere Savoyard chimneysweep, he has become educated. He is now a prosperous member of the middle class. His sister, on the other hand, as can readily be seen from her style and grammar, is still a peasant. Her manners as well as those of her sons are those of the commonalty. However this heavy handed imagery is necessary for the playwright to stress the point, that it is the common people of France who possessed the virtues needed in times of national emergency. It was the hard work, abilities and energetic actions of the laborers which could overcome all obstacles, improve conditions and save the State. For as Jacques, a chimneysweep in the play so aptly put it:

. . . j'ai un bel et bon habit, j'suis hardi,
j'suis glorieux, parce que j'l'ons gagné en
travaillant, parce que j'ons mérité d'le porter
. . .

(I.10.28)

By his perseverance and his strong arms, Jacques has earned the right to be respected. The intention of this type of play is to show that the rich and powerful have not earned that right. Through an accident of birth they had inherited their rank and a fortune, often based on ill-gained wealth. The common people on the other hand had worked for whatever they owned. The theme of hard work--hardly a new one--was a frequent topic on the revolutionary stage because it proposed practical and

immediate solutions to obvious problems and provided the audience with hope, pride and a measure of self-satisfaction.

No public enjoys being submitted to a continuous barrage of proselytizing revolutionaries. The dramatists had to invent new techniques, fresh approaches and use some finesse in haranguing their public. The simplest method was to show a model which could be emulated by the members of the audience. Considering the composition of many of the audiences the dramatist had to be careful not to be too sophisticated. He placed on the stage characters who possessed some vice which could easily be interpreted as an obstacle to a happy resolution of a conflict. An example of this particular method was found in Olympe de Gouges' L'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles (January 1793). She introduced the character Lafeuillette, the wine merchant, a drunkard. Luckily for him, his wife was energetic and careful such that he did not drink away the profits of his business. It is Madame Lafeuillette who was presented as a positive model to the audiences: not only did she operate the business, she also had the energy to lead the women in demonstrating in support of the French. Lafeuillette's performance is in sharp contrast to his wife's stableness to better expose the negative aspects of drinking.

Other playwrights were also to point out the disastrous consequences of alcoholism. Beffroy de Reigny

in Le Club des bonnes gens (September 1791) introduced Thomas, the miller, as a rather heavy drinker. Thomas was the founder of a club which was creating much discord in the village. His neighbor was the curé who was well respected by the majority of the town for his benevolence and self-sacrifice. The first scene of the play presents the two neighbors in their respective gardens which are separated by a high wall. The curé's servants are preparing the garden for a feast and are happily singing and working, while Thomas is sullenly drinking a bottle of wine. Tired of drinking alone he calls out to his daughter:

Allons viens ça, j'te dis; j'veux q'tu prenn'l'habitude
D'trinquer d'temps en temps avec moi . . .
Chacun son goût; je n'aime pas t'à boire en solitude . . .

(I.1.6)

The curé's servant, Nannette, overhears this and is immediately infuriated at Thomas' behavior:

Ah ben, v'là d'joli leçons: et ça fait, par ma foi,
Un bîeau pass'temps pour eun' jeun'fille
Que d'vider la pinte en famille!

(I.1.6)

All of the characters in the play are members of the common people; and one can easily imagine the possible results of such a scene between a father and his daughter. In spite of all the new laws women were not the equals of men. According to the notions of the time Thomas' daughter would not dare withstand the pressure that her

father could place on her. In time she would share his bottle. This explains why at Thomas' request Nanette reacted with an indignation and a violence that the entire public felt justified and shared wholeheartedly.

Nigaudinet, the curé's gardener, is equally insensed at Thomas' general behavior. The miller's club has attracted all the malcontents of the village. The purpose of the club is to discuss the legislation of the National Assembly, but in reality the members spend their time drinking and complaining about their misfortunes.

Nigaudinet -

I'n'song' qu'à boir', c' Monsieu' Thomas;
 Et c'est en grisant tout l'village
 Qu'i'met les habitants dans l'cas
 D'faire dans l'pays ben du tapage . . .
 Quoiq'c'est que c'Croub qu'il établit cheux lui,
 Et qui doit encore aujourd'hui
 Dans son jardin t'nir un' séiance?
 Régler, l'verre à la main, les affaires d'la France?
 A la vill', passe encore; mais voir des paysans
 Pour faire un parlement laisser là leux ouvrages!
 Voir les femm' quitter leux ménages
 Pour jaser su' l'état! gnia ti'là du bons sens!
 (I.1.7)

Beffroy de Reigny pokes fun at the institution of the clubs which was an English import. The clubs had first appeared in the early part of the century, and had become very popular. The best known club during the Revolution was probably that of the Jacobins. The Miller's club was a thinly veiled description of the Jacobins at work and Beffroy de Reigny seems to have underestimated their power since they succeeded in having Le Club des

bonnes gens withdrawn from the stage. During the Terror Beffroy de Reigny was even forced to flee for his life in fear of the Jacobins despite his own previous association with Robespierre and Desmoulins.

As Beffroy de Reigny was going into hiding, Boullault was having his play Les Brigands de la Vendée (October 1793)¹⁰ performed. One of the characters is Grégoire, the father of one of the young heroes. Grégoire too is a drunkard. The following scene resembles very much those in Olympe de Gouges L'Entrée de Dumourier where Mme Lafeuillette berated her husband for his drunkenness. In this scene Nicole attempts to stop her husband from entering the inn.

Nicole - Comment! j'ai tort, vilain ivrogne!

Grégoire - A-t-on jamais vu déranger queuqu'un sur un verre d'cidre? Allons, fi donc! vous me faites honte, ma femme. On a soif; on entre dans un cabaret pour se désaltérer, et madame est tout de suite sur vos talons. Je retourne achever mon verre de cidre. Mais, je vous en prie, une fois soit dit pour tout, soyez plus honnête, ma femme. Au revoir, mon coeur, au revoir, allumette de mon âme.

Nicole - Comment, scélérat, pendard! Tu crois que je vas te laisser retourner au cabaret? Je t'arracherois plutôt les yeux.

(1.2.7)

Subsequently, Simon, a neighbor and two soldiers are captured by the rebels. Julien and Jacques, suitors of Simon's daughters, lead the rescue party. They attack the rebel camp and release the prisoners. Grégoire

appears at the end of the fighting very angry at himself and his neighbors because he had not been asked to join the war party.

Grégoire - . . . Et toi, femme, pourquoi diable m'avoir laissé dormir, tandis que nos frères se battaient?

Nicole - Ah! pardine, tu étais ben en état d'les aider! V'là ce que c'est qu'd'être ivrogne!

Grégoire - Tu as raison: c'est moi qui ai tort. Allons, je ne boirai plus que lorsque nos ennemis seront disparus.

Nicole - Serment d'ivrogne!

Grégoire - Oh! je le tiendrai: je sais qu'ça nous sera ben difficile, mais la patrie l'exige, et j'ferons tous nos efforts pour la satisfaire.
(I.8.35-36)

The lesson could probably have been presented in a less obvious manner, but it must be remembered that the audience of the Variétés-Amusantes was not refined and needed clear and solid statements. Although little is mentioned in the historical works consulted about the faults or vices found in the lower classes, alcoholism must have been a common problem. Drunkards vividly represented in the plays appeared as ridiculous, weak and even despicable. A simple lesson was thus imparted to the audience with the hope that it would cause some of the spectators to mend their ways.

Another theme found first in La Brouette du vinai-
grier and recurring during the years of the Revolution was

the popular example of a person of virtue. This was perhaps best staged in Beffroy de Reigny's Le Club des bonnes gens. It will be remembered that the priest had formed a club to rival that of the miller. The following scene succinctly points out the position of two of the priests' club members.

Alain - Eh! qu'on soit ce qu'on voudra,
Pourvu que l'on soit honnête homme!

Nigaudinet (singing)
C'est aussi comm'ça que pense
Vot'p'tit sarviteur.
Ben loin d'êt'enn'mi d'la France,
J'l'aime d'tout mon coeur.
Gnia qu'un seul parti qui m'flatte,
C'ti-là d'la raison.
J'veux ben êt'aristocrate,
Si j'sis bon garçon.

(I.4.13)

Nigaudinet's last sentence reflects Beffroy de Reigny's moderate stance. Alain and Nigaudinet had been discussing the dissension caused by the miller's club. Nigaudinet's words were appealing to most good souls who had become disenchanted with the ravages of the Revolution. The suggestion that they be reasonable may have been seen as traitorous by some, but most people felt that the remark was justified. It was especially appealing to those who, discouraged by the chaos and corruption of the Old Regime, had welcomed the Revolution. The dream of unified citizens working together harmoniously for a better country had vanished before factions working separately for their own interest.

A month later, the Théâtre Molière performed Sade's Oxtiern, ou les Malheurs du libertinage (October 1791).¹¹

The director of the theater, Boursault-Malherbe, with a skillful stroke of public relations, had led his actors to the rostrum of the National Assembly where they had sworn to perform only patriotic plays.¹² Boursault-Malherbe had understood that in order to compete successfully with all the other theaters he would be wise to specialize in one single dramatic genre. It was an astute decision since the theater was quite successful. However the plays performed were often so daring in patriotic fervor that theater critics would at times, conspire with each other to maintain total silence about a given play.¹³

Sade's play is an excellent example of the genre popular on the stage of the Théâtre Molière. Its two main characters, the Count Oxtiern and the innkeeper, Fabrice, once more represent the opposite values of Good and Evil. The Count is the wicked noble attached to unjust rights, while Fabrice asserts his natural rights in the Republican spirit.

The Count has kidnapped a beautiful girl, Ernestine, daughter of Colonel Falkenheim. The Count has sent his servant, Casimir, to reserve rooms at an inn where he had previously brought his victims. Fabrice, the innkeeper, at first indicates that he wishes to disassociate himself from the count's debauchery, but Casimir convinces

him that the best way to counter the actions of the Count would be to come to his victim's assistance.

Casimir - Oui, mais il paye bien.

Fabrice - Et c'est ce qui le rend plus redoutable: il n'y a rien de si pernicieux que l'or dans la main des méchants . . . Qui peut résister à celui qui possède le plus sûr moyen de toutes les corruptions . . . Mon ami, je voudrais qu'il n'y eut de riches que les honnêtes gens . . .

(I.1.101)

Fabrice agrees with Casimir that the best place to help Ernestine would be in his own inn. Casimir, meanwhile, has become very impressed with Fabrice's integrity.

Casimir - L'honnête homme! voilà pourtant où se trouve la vertu . . . Dans un être obscur . . . sans éducation; pendant que ceux qui sont nés au milieu de ce que la fortune a de plus brillant, n'offrent souvent à côté de cela, que de la corruption ou des vices . . .

(1.1.105)

Both Casimir and Fabrice belong to the Third Estate and both share common feelings about the necessity of being honest and virtuous. They are incensed that a man such as the Count would use his social position to corrupt young women. They represent the new order in the Revolution which planned to eradicate evil from the nation so that its youth might have good men as models, instead of lechers such as the Count.

Fabrice is not sure of the success of his plan, but his sense of duty commands him to deliver Ernestine from her captor:

. . . il faut que je sauve cette fille infortunée, ou que j'y perde la vie: l'honneur et la probité m'en font un devoir; ce sont les lois les plus sacrées de mon coeur.

(I.9.120)

At the conclusion of the play the Count is shot by Ernestine's suitor Herman, who was released from jail thanks to Fabrice's generosity. He too was a victim of the Count who had had him arrested on false charges.

Le Colonel - . . . Comment pourrons-nous nous acquitter? . . .

Fabrice - Par votre amitié, mes amis, je la mérite; j'ai fait de mon argent le meilleur usage . . . Punir le crime et récompenser la vertu . . . que quelqu'un me dise s'il est possible de le placer à un plus haut intérêt!

(III.6.170-1)

What inspiration for the Youth of the Revolution than to watch a mere innkeeper foil the plans of a member of the nobility. Again through Oxtiern and Fabrice the two main factions of the Revolution are pitted against each other, the common people against the nobles. In the first scene a rather base picture of the Count is sketched. He is a lecher who attempts to seduce a pretty girl. To insure his success, he has her suitor imprisoned on false charges, and then kidnaps her while her father is away. During the entire time of her sequestration he tells her nothing but lies in an attempt to seduce her. His perfidy reaches such a point of infamy that even his companion of debauchery is horrified. In the final scene the Count arranges that, unbeknownst to each other, the Colonel

should duel against his own daughter. They, in fact, start to do so in the darkened garden, but are saved when Herman shoots the Count and then rushes to separate father and daughter.

Throughout the play, the Count shows no emotion whatsoever. He is fully conscious of the nature of his deed, but is also aware that as a noble he is responsible only to his peers. Against him stands the virtuous Fabrice, a commoner, who has those qualities which set him apart from the contemptible nobles.

Fabrice - . . . les traîtres n'aiment pas la vérité, il n'est point d'hommes au monde qui désirent autant la flatterie; le crime fait tant d'horreur, même à eux, qu'ils voudraient, afin de s'étourdir sur la nécessité où ils sont d'être méchants, qu'on les crut, et qu'on les peignit toujours vertueux.

(I.7.114)

This speech would cause the audience to pause for a moment and question themselves. Why did the nobles as a group also wish to be depicted as virtuous? Was their compunction about defending their Honor only a masquerade? One could only wonder what honor could exist in men who allowed their vassals to starve; who were interested only in spending their money on frivolousness while those whom they considered beneath them on the social ladder toiled and made France great. This is the message which emanates from this play and others like it performed on the stage of the Théâtre Molière. Again we watch the eternal battle of Good against Evil which will be waged on the stage in

its most trite form.

The common people were the backbone of the Revolution. Robespierre and the other Jacobins owed their popularity to the Commune which in turn was indebted to the different Sections. These Sections represented the common people of Paris. During the Terror, when the Commune ruled Paris, and therefore France, it became important for the Jacobin leaders that the Sectionnaires be guided in both their action and thinking so that they would be exemplary citizens. What better forum for this purpose than to use the existing centers of entertainment. One of the playwrights most closely associated with the Jacobins, Marie-Joseph Chénier, had said: "Le théâtre est, comme la Chaire, un moyen d'instruction publique. L'instruction publique est importante pour tous les Citoyens,"¹⁴ repeating the by now well-worn comment of Voltaire.

The Jacobins had not explicitly set new directions for the theaters since the genre which they supported had already been popular for some time on the Parisian stage. However they did use different types of dissuasion, such as the guillotine and the prisons, to indicate that certain subjects were not to be presented on the stage.

Article II of the law of 2 August 1793, passed by the Convention stated:¹⁵

Tout théâtre sur lequel seraient représentées
des pièces tendant à dépraver l'esprit public et

à réveiller la honteuse superstition de la royauté, sera fermé, et les directeurs arrêtés et punis selon la rigueur de la loi.

La Municipalité de Paris est chargée de l'exécution du présent décret.

Payan, one of the members of the "Commission de l'Instruction Publique" of the Convention clearly stated the position of the government vis à vis the theater:

Jusqu'à présent les théâtres abandonnés aux spéculations des auteurs, dirigés par les petits intérêts des hommes des partis, n'ont marché que faiblement vers le but d'utilité politique que leur marque un meilleur ordre de choses . . . les théâtres sont encombrés des débris du dernier régime, de faibles copies de nos grands maîtres . . . Il faut dégager la scène, afin que la raison y vienne parler le langage de la liberté, jeter les fleurs sur la tombe de ses martyrs, chanter l'héroïsme et la vertu, faire aimer les lois et la patrie . . . Vous qui aimez les arts, qui, dans le recueillement du cabinet, méditez tout ce qui peut être utile aux hommes. Ecrivains, patriotes, déployez vos plans, calculez avec nous la force morale des spectacles. Il s'agit de combiner leur influence sociale avec les principes du gouvernement; il s'agit d'élever une école publique, où le goût et la vertu soient également respectés.¹⁶

Payan reflected the prevalent middle class sentiment of the period. Revolutionary theater as has been previously indicated was essentially bourgeois. That is, plays were written, directed, performed by and intended for the middle class. The different Sections of Paris, dominated by artisans and shopkeepers, were deeply affected by the many disturbances caused by the Revolution. They therefore supported old fashioned values, such as, respect for laws, order, usefulness, reason, etc.

The ascent to power by the Jacobins marked the beginning of the systematic utilitarian use of the stage for propaganda purposes during the Revolution. However, as we have seen, plays exalting ideals of merit, self-esteem, integrity and moral rectitude as espoused by revolutionary leaders had already been performed. Under the Jacobins, they became the only type of plays permitted. It is only with a multiplicity of such productions emphasizing a similar theme that the ideals of the Revolution could be constantly reinforced.

Plays revolving around family situations were an important part of revolutionary drama because the public recognized its own life. A man could choose to drink or even be a drunkard, but his first duty as a citizen was to safeguard his country and aid in its development. If his personal vice was to hinder and even possibly halt that development then he would be considered a traitor. As we have seen in a few plays, men recognized the error of their ways and promised to alter their lives to aid their country in its hour of need.

The confessing of one's sins on the stage was an extraordinarily effective means of reaching the public. It was designed to touch and visibly move the audience and replace the sermons no longer heard in the deserted churches.

Footnotes

1. See Appendix, p. 231.
2. See Appendix, p. 236.
3. See Appendix, p. 229.
4. McKee, p. 50.
5. See Appendix, p. 238.
6. See Appendix, p. 254.
7. See Appendix, p. 252.
8. See Appendix, p. 227.
9. See Appendix, p. 255.
10. See Appendix, p. 233.
11. See Appendix, p. 260.
12. Albert, Boulevards, p. 73.
13. Ibid., p. 74.
14. Marie-Joseph Chénier, De la Liberté au théâtre en France, Discours, 15 juin 1789.
15. Paul d'Estrée (Henri Quentin), Le Théâtre sous la Terreur, 1793-1794 (Paris: Emile-Paul Frères, 1913), p. 6.
16. Ibid., pp. 40-42.

CHAPTER V

THEMES RELATING TO THE STATE

In the previous chapter themes related to the family life of the common people were explored. It was seen that the attitudes of the nobility and those of the commoners were contrasted to demonstrate the superiority of the latter. The goal of revolutionary drama, however, was not only to insure the moral education of the theatre-going public in the hopes that it would reassess its values for the benefit of the Revolution, but it was also a way to teach the masses new attitudes in a political life they had to share. This chapter will, therefore, deal with plays where the role of the common people on the stage demonstrated a concern for the State. We will see that models of patriotic actions would be presented to inspire the members of an audience to emulate them and in that way develop an attachment to the Republic and to its goals.

As France became more and more embroiled in fighting for its survival both on its borders and in the heartland, there was an outpouring of exemplary actions on the stage. Boullault's Les Brigands de la Vendée (October 1793) is a prime example. In the previous chapter the

play was examined in respect to its models relating to family life. It will be remembered that Simon has been captured by the Vendée rebels. Julien who loves Georgette, one of Simon's daughters, rouses the town to go to his rescue.

Julien - Allons, mes amis, du courage! j'sommes menacés par les brigands, ne les attendons pas; marchons à leur rencontre, montrons-nous Français, et j'sommes sûrs de la victoire; d'ailleurs, ce sont des esclaves, et nous sommes libres; et j'voulons rester libre: mes amis, faisons tous le serment de périr plutôt que de reculer devant eux. (Tous s'écrient;) Nous le jurons. Vive la liberté! vive la république!

(I.13.25)

The use of the word "Brigands" in the title is indicative of the author's position. Julien shows his contempt for the rebels by referring to them as slaves. This description is then contrasted with himself and his fellow villagers who, being free men, can expect to be victorious.

One of the soldiers captured with Simon is recognized by the rebels as being a good soldier. The rebel chief, therefore, tries to enlist him into his group, but Le Franc, the soldier, has vowed to defend France and refuses to betray his oath.

Le Chef des Brigands -. . . Je veux te sauver;
tu peux échapper au supplice.

Le Franc - Comment?

Le Chef des Brigands - En t'armant pour combattre avec nous; embrasse notre parti.

Le Franc - Moi! j'embrasserais le parti du crime et de l'inhumanité! Ah! n'espère jamais une aussi lâche faiblesse de celui qui a juré d'être libre. Non, jamais je ne me rendrai le complice de vos atrocités. Je sais mourir, et ne sais point trahir mes sermens.

(II.2.28)

Le Franc, as is indicated by his name, is explicit in his reaction to the proposal of the rebel leader. The propaganda value of the play is recognizable in the use of words such as crime, inhumanity and atrocity to define the rebel party. Le Franc, on the other hand, is nothing more than an ordinary soldier imbued with Republican principles and who has vowed to do his duty. Furthermore, the use of "tu" and "vous" denotes the social distance which separates both parties and reinforces the concept that the rebels do not believe in the democratic and equalitarian principles of the Republic.

Julien and the rescue party have located the rebels in a nearby town. Before attacking, Julien has gone to reconnoiter and comes upon Simon and the soldiers to warn them of the impending battle.

Julien - J'venons à la découverte . . . Queue pitié, d'avoir ce pauvre bourg comme ils l'ont saccagé! On dirait que tout ce qui gnia d'Autrichiens et de Prussiens y ont passé. Ce sont pourtant des Français comme nous! Il faut que j'soyions obligés d'nous battre avec eux pour les ramener à la raison!

(II.4.31)

In a short paragraph the rebels are indicted as being no better than Austrians or Prussians. The difference

between the rebels and the foreigners was that even though the latter were the enemy, their action though not condoned, could be understood, since their countries were at war with France. On the other hand, the rebels were French and, as the audience knew, to be French was equated with being free. Therefore the rebels were looked upon as being insane for sacrificing themselves for tyrants. They were indeed fighting to keep themselves enslaved and had to be brought back to their senses. It can be seen that Julien was distressed to be fighting his fellow countrymen, but he has learned his lesson well. As a true Republican he knew that he had to sublimate his own repugnance in order to serve the Nation.

Boullault was aware of the type of audience who patronized the Théâtre des Variétés Amusantes. By 1791, this group of actors was the third to attempt a start in this particular theater. Unfortunately, by 1793, they were replaced by the Théâtre du Citoyen Lazzari which had no better luck, for the theater itself burned in 1798.¹ The spectators were for the most part artisans and shopkeepers and therefore most susceptible to characterizations of men such as Julien.

In the final scene, after Simon and the soldiers have been delivered, there is a celebration in the village. Simon rewards his saviors by agreeing to the marriage of his daughters with Julien and Jacques.

Simon - Mes amis, j'vous ont mariés tous les deux, mais ça ne vous exempte pas de voler à la défense de la patrie, quand all' exigera vos sarvices.

Jacques - J'sommes toujours tout prêts à marcher, quand all' nous appellera.

Par mon coeur et ma valeur
J'obtiens une épouse chérie.
Mais dans le sein de mon bonheur,
J'n'oublions jamais la Patrie.
Faut qu'au premier son du tambour;
On sacrifie
A sa patrie
Son bien, sa vie et son amour.

Julien - Oui, la patrie doit l'emporter sur tout, et l'on doit tout lui sacrifier . . .

Pour le salut de sa patrie,
Tout bon citoyen doit s'armer;
Quitter une épouse chérie,
Oh! non rien ne doit l'arrêter.
Amour, hymen, doux charmes de la tendresse,
Ah! pour son coeur vous n'avez plus de prix:
Au champ de gloire avec ivresse
Il doit voler pour son pays.

(II.8.37-38)

The play does not indicate the occupation of the characters, except of course that of the soldiers. We are only apprised of the fact that Jacques is penniless and that Julien is rather well off. However, we see that both are infused with a sense of duty, no matter what their station in life might be. This final scene is reminiscent of the scene in Agricol Viala (July 1794), where Pauline, the mother, asserts that her role was to bear a son whose duty was to die for his country. In an earlier scene Simon had indicated that although happy with his daughters he would have preferred sons, so that they might now be defending the homeland. In the final act, having gained

two sons-in-law, his wish comes true. And as good sons-in-law, they both pledge to come to the defense of the Nation.

These two heroes--both commoners--could only serve as fine republican models by their spontaneous outburst of patriotic fervor. For it must be remembered that France in October of 1793 was in the midst of the Terror. Dramatic authors were limited in their choice of subject matter by the threats of imprisonment or death on the guillotine. During this period theatrical managers would often team an "escape" play with a topical one. The former was most often a comedy which, according to Beatrice Hyslop,² was the most popular genre of the Terror. Topical plays were generally portrayals of Revolutionary ideals and heroism.

Authors were limited not only in the choice of subject matter, but also in the selection of characters. It is not surprising to see these authors attempt to demonstrate their own patriotism by increasing the importance of the role of the common people in their plays. They were in effect responding to an appeal by the Comité de Sûreté Générale (of the Convention) which had recommended that the theater directors establish on their stage "une école de mœurs et de décence, leur permettant de mêler aux pièces patriotiques que l'on donne chaque jour, des pièces où les vertus privées soient représentées dans tout leur éclat."³

Plays representing family life became increasingly popular during this period for it answered a need. By characterizing the problems of the lower middle class upon the revolutionary stage the authors were responding positively to the government decrees while at the same time allowing themselves some amount of choice. The popular theatre during the Reign of Terror did not produce works of literary merit for it was soon realized as d'Estrée says, that:

. . . un decret n'improvise pas un répertoire général et de haute moralité, que rêvait le Comité de Salut Public. Ils se rendaient bien compte de l'infériorité intellectuelle de leur rechauffeurs d'enthousiasmes patriotiques, car ils ne cessaient de faire appel à tous les artistes, pour fonder le théâtre idéal qui devait créer, à leur sens, la dramaturgie révolutionnaire.⁴

However, the importance of the role of the common people did improve rather notably.

Towards the end of October, 1794, Gamas had his play, Cange, ou le Commissionnaire de Lazare⁵ performed by the actors of the Théâtre de la République. The audience in this theater was more sophisticated than that of the Théâtre des Variétés Amusantes. This was due to the fact that it was the home of the self-exiled former actors of the Comédie Française, Talma and his associates. Not only was the acting better, but the admission price was somewhat higher than in other Parisien theaters. However, despite the differences in audiences, the subject matter of this play might have been well received by the houses

of the lesser theaters.

The play describes the noble action of a simple messenger. Cange has been sent by Durand, unjustly retained in the Lazare prison, to the latter's home in quest of funds. When Cange arrives there, he is distressed to find the family in an impoverished state.

Ces braves Citoyens sont malheureux, très-malheureux, cela se devine: je ne vois rien ici que n'annonce la misère. Un pareil tableau me serre toujours le coeur. Pourquoi tant de gens qui ne savent que faire de leur richesse? le voient-ils de sang froid? Après tout, tant pis pour eux. S'ils n'ont jamais goûté le plaisir qu'on éprouve à soulager son frère, à lui procurer quelques instans de bonheur, ils se sont privés par leur faute d'une jouissance bien douce, oh oui, bien douce! Pourquoi ne suis-je pas assez riche? . . . Je gage que cette honnête famille vivoit du travail de ce cher homme, et que sa détention. . . .

Le Citoyen Durand m'a dit de demander à sa femme quelque léger soulagement; mais à ce que je vois, elle n'est guères en état de le lui procurer, elle en aurait plutôt besoin pour elle-même et ma demande ne ferait que la rendre plus malheureuse . . . Si j'étais bien sûr! . . . mes moyens sont bornés . . . j'ai de la charge . . . n'importe! . . . justement depuis quelques jours j'ai plus gagné que de coutume. . . .

(I.4.10-11)

It is indeed a noble gesture from a person who has his own family obligations to offer his meager savings to a destitute family. Before doing so, Cange questions Emile, one of the Durand children, who confirmed his fears as to the family's impoverished state. He then presents himself to Mrs. Durand as a messenger sent by her husband to give her fifty Francs. She is relieved by the opportune

arrival of these funds for she can pay some pressing debts. She thanks Cange profusely for his timely arrival. She inquires as to her husband's health and is further relieved to hear that he is bearing well under the strain of his unjust conviction.

Cange leaves the Durand household moved by their family spirit under the extreme financial and moral strain caused by Mr. Durand's imprisonment. He then returns to the prison where he gives Mr. Durand fifty francs, saying that his wife received the sum from a generous neighbor.

Meanwhile, Verseuil, Durand's former classmate, has him released from prison. When they arrive home they are faced with the one hundred franc mystery. In order to resolve the matter, Cange is asked to come to the Durand home. Verseuil and Durand ply him with questions in order to find the source of his generosity. He insists that a person who wishes to remain anonymous had contributed the money. However a slip of the tongue reveals the true source of the money:

Cange - Tenez je suis un pauvre diable, j'ai une femme et six petits marmots.

Verseuil - Six enfans à ton âge!

Cange (avec bonhomie.) - Oh je dis, ils ne sont pas tous à moi; mais j'ai un beau frère qui se bat frontières contre les ennemis de la République. Sa femme, ma pauvre soeur vient de mourir, en laissant trois enfans en bas âge, et je me suis chargé de ces malheureux innocens.

Durand - Ne cherchons pas plus loin notre bienfaiteur; je le reconnais à ce trait, le voilà, mon coeur le devine.

(I.16.36)

Recognized as their savior, Cange accepts their thanks but generously responds:

Voilà bien des raisons, eh bien oui, c'est moi. Je vous voyais dans le malheur, je vous ai soulagées, j'ai fait ce que je devais, n'étiez-vous pas mes frères?

(I.16.36)

Le Moniteur Universel⁶ announced on December 4,

1794:

Tous les théâtres se sent empressés de célébrer l'action bienfaisante du généreux Cange, qu'une association savante, celle du Lycée des arts, a fait connaître et proclamée la première. Tous les auteurs sensibles se sont emparés de ce sujet intéressant . . .

The theater critic then went on to say that the successful dramatization had been put into operatic form on the stage of the Théâtre de l'Opéra Comique National. This means that by that date there were at least three dramatizations of Cange's deed. The Moniteur had previously reviewed two plays that were performed on the stage of the Théâtre de la République and the Théâtre de la Cité. The reviewer at that time indicated that Cange had been present for the premiere at the latter theater. When he was introduced at the end of the play to the audience, he was enthusiastically applauded.⁷

Even though Robespierre and his followers had been deposed and executed a few months earlier, their

admonitions and suggestions continued to be felt. The celebration of Cange's action was exactly the type of virtuous act which Robespierre had wanted to have represented on the stage. The popularity of the subject is therefore indicative of the mood which continued to permeate the theatrical world. Both actors and directors had been extremely wary in their choice of plays. They had seen too many of their colleagues incarcerated and/or guillotined for a poor choice of words. For example the actors of the Théâtre de la Nation had been imprisoned because of the line, "Le parti qui triomphe est le seul légitime," in the play, Pamela.⁸

In November of 1793, the Théâtre de la République had performed Le Modéré,⁹ a play by Jean Baptiste Gourgault, a popular actor known as Dugazon, closely associated with Talma and Chénier and therefore the Jacobins. The play reflects a major problem faced by any revolutionary government, the disinclination of its citizenry to become involved in the actions of the government. Instead of committing themselves to the principles and ideals of the government, people like Moderantin wavered between the two opposing parties, refusing to get involved with one in fear that the other would be successful.

Moderantin, therefore, continues to entertain nobles in his home, although he insists to his friends that he espouses revolutionary ideals. He has two servants, Dufour

who is a patriot and Manette who defends the ancien régime. Although France was divided into three estates, the third, which included everyone except nobles and clergy, was quite divided. The comparison of opinions held by Dufour and Manette illustrate the differences commonly dividing the entire Third Estate. Manette represents the servants, many of whom were liveried, who remained faithful to their aristocratic masters. Manette therefore sees nothing wrong with Moderantin entertaining nobles in the midst of the Terror. Many servants were deeply attached to the families they served. So deep was this attachment that, in a few cases, it was reported that servants accompanied their masters both to prison and to the guillotine. The reason for this was that many servants had been with a family from father to son for generations. Over the years these servants had developed close bonds with their masters, while they considered the general populace as no better than rabble.

Dufour, on the other hand, represents the newly emancipated citizenry, proud of the equality granted by the Rights of Man. Dufour respected his employer even though he disliked working for him. Dufour is aware of his rights under the law, as well as his responsibilities. He is duty-bound to serve his employer, but as a free and equal citizen before the law, he knows that he can speak his mind without danger of reprisal.

Moderantin's niece, Julie, has committed herself to the ideals of the Revolution and for that reason Dufour especially enjoys serving her.

Dufour - . . . je la trouve embellie;
 Son caractère heureux chérit la Liberté;
 Près d'elle on sent le prix de cette Egalité
 Qui nous fait supporter le dégoût du service;
 Aussi dans la maison chacun brigue l'office
 De prévenir toujours son goût et son désir,
 Et pour nous le devoir près d'elle est un plaisir.
 (I.5.8-9)

Dufour, as a fresh convert, is continually defending the Republic and its citizens. He allows no one to insult them, least of all Lestanville, Moderantin's foppish son. The latter has arrived to announce to his father that he has been drafted. He complains that he will have to mingle with the populace, to which Dufour retorts,

Sur mon âme,
 Je ne puis retenir le courroux qui m'enflamme,
 Je devrais être fait à tous ces sots discours.
 Respectez dans le Peuple une importante masse,
 Que vous qualifiez du nom de populace;
 C'est votre souverain; et votre ramonneur
 Vaut cent fois mieux que vous, ma parole d'honneur!
 (I.6.10-11)

The Rights of Man had proclaimed the equality of the citizens and Dugazon, through the voice of Dufour would defend the enforcement of government decrees. The audience was not surprised, therefore, at Dufour's rejoinder. Just as Lisette had confronted her master in defense of her mistress in Ricco, Dufour as a member of the proletariat braves the wrath of his employer.

There is a significant difference in each confrontation. The audience in 1789 was aware that Constance was unable, because of the law and society, to oppose her father's wishes. Therefore, another person was needed to be in a position to blunt the Baron's actions. In short, Lisette faced the Baron in order to serve her mistress. Dufour, on the other hand, confronted his employer in order to serve the Republic. However, it is interesting to note how often dramatic authors employed commoners when it was necessary to take a stand against a superior. This particular point should be of little surprise to the reader since it was already fairly prevalent in pre-revolutionary drama. In the plays of Beaumarchais, for example, one often finds a servant confronting his master. But what has changed is the reason for the confrontation. Aware of his rights, the revolutionary servant does so in order to protect the State which has granted those rights to him.

Le Vous et le toi (November 1793) of Plancher-Valcour, performed at about the same time as *Le Modéré*, followed the same theme. All the characters in the play, except for Glaçon, are farmers. The reader is not informed as to the financial status of Marcel and his family. But the fact that his daughter is able to have a maid and that there is a family gardener, leads one to surmise that they must have been relatively well-off.

It has been previously noted that most of the revolutionary dramatists were of middle-class background. Few, if any, had had any association with farmers. Plancher was, in fact, a non-practicing lawyer who was totally involved in the theatrical world as an actor, writer and director. It therefore becomes evident that the characters in reality are Parisians, who by the author's whim have been transplanted on a farm.

Justin, in his enthusiasm in welcoming the new government decree banning the use of "vous," reveals the author's artifice by his excessive lauding of the leadership emanating from Paris.

Justin - Oh! l'excellente nouvelle! plus de vous! toi! toujours toi, en parlant à un individu! En corrigeant cet abus de la langue, c'est resserrer les liens de la fraternité et poursuivre l'aristocratie jusques dans ses derniers retranchements.

.
C'est toujours de Paris que les bonnes nouvelles nous arrivent! cela n'est pas étonnant. Paris a commencé la révolution, Paris l'a soutenue, et Paris l'achevera.

(I.1.3-4)

He then proceeds to attack the idea of federalism. The Jacobins who believed in the idea of a republic "one and indivisible" were unalterably opposed to decentralization. However, many of the departmental administrators were of a more conservative bent than their Parisian colleagues. Prior to the Revolution many of the provincial towns enjoyed a certain amount of power and prestige.

These administrators felt that the formation of a republic would mean a loss of influence on their part. At the end of May 1793 provincial unrest had started. By the middle of the following June at least sixty departments were revolting against the Convention. Nevertheless, poor leadership and a suspected association with royalists and moderates, discredited the movement which lost support of the rural and town populations.¹⁰

Justin - (chantant)

Où, du fond d'un marais sangeux,
 l'hydre affreux du fédéralisme,
 Levant son front audacieux,
 Nous ramenait au royalisme;
 Mais l'on surveillait ses projets,
 Et, malgré Pitt, Rome et l'Espagne,
 Ce monstre, l'effroi des Français,
 Fut terrassé par la Montagne. (Bis)
 (I.1.4)

Plancher using Justin as a foil for his Jacobin sympathies lauds the actions of the "montagne," that is, the Jacobins, for their role in the cause of liberty.

With the Jacobins safely in power, censorship returned and was used in the theater. As Crane Brinton remarks:

Solaced by the knowledge that they were serving Liberty - in the high, true sense of the word - by a rigorous application of what to the unbeliever seems tyranny, the extremists go ahead to consolidate their power through institutions.¹¹

The revolutionary government wished to eradicate all vestiges of the aristocracy and forbade the use of titles and any vocabulary which would give the mere suggestion of

the old regime. As a result and to extol further the equalitarian principles of the new government, Plancher welcomes through Justin the new government decree banning the use of vous.

Justin - On ne dit plus vous, mon enfant, c'est défendu.

Barbe - Tiens! défendu! Et comment donc qu'il faut dire à présent.

Justin - Il faut dire toi.

Barbe - Toi! allons donc! vous badinez. J'sçavons trop l'respect que j'vous devons pour ça.

Justin - Du respect! je t'ai déjà dit que tu ne m'en devais point . . .

Barbe - Oh! tenez, Citoyen, c'est égal; j'ne pourrions jamais vous tutoyer; d'abord, ça m'écouterait la bouche.

(I.2.5)

The audience understood that there would be some difficulty in adjusting to the new decree and enjoyed the misunderstandings which were likely to occur from this new development. Marivaux in Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard had already used this device in the scene between Silvia and Dorante disguised as servants. The scene with Justin and Barbe, the servant girl, is followed by a lovers' quarrel. Virginie accuses Justin of flirting with Barbe because of his use of "tu" in addressing her. Justin informs Virginie of the new decree and easily converts her to the new mode. Similar scenes involving the different characters follow. The only one not to be easily converted is Citoyenne Marcel.

At that time we had seen that she wished her daughter to marry a lawyer, Glaçon. He, in keeping with his station, refuses to obey the decree.

Plancher-Valcour was, with many of his contemporaries, and especially the Jacobins, influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The playwright earnestly believed in the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which were espoused by the revolutionary leaders. His own thoughts are voiced by Justin when he sings:

Nous naquîmes égaux et frères:
 Mais séduits par la vanité.
 L'orgueil inventa des chimères
 Que réprouve la liberté
 Les préjugés de nos ancêtres
 Sont la source de tous nos maux:
 Mais l'homme, enfin, n'a plus de maîtres;
 Il ne connaît que des égaux. (bis)
 (I.2.6)

Justin continues in a similar vein in the following scene when he sings:

Les préjugés de la naissance
 Parmi nous ne subsistent plus,
 Et l'on ne reconnaît en France
 Que les talens et les vertus. . . .
 (1.3.8)

It was this last point which had especially infuriated the middle class. They chafed at their inability to obtain the positions to which they were qualified but which were reserved exclusively to members of the nobility.

Crane Brinton says,

In eighteenth-century France, the way to wealth and fame was open practically unrestricted. . . . The way to political power was much

harder. . . . On the whole, substantial political power, the power of making programs and policies, was open to the courtier talents even more than to noble birth; administrative power was almost entirely in the hands of the "noblesse de robe," an hereditary, conscientious and capable bureaucracy. Social position, the highest honors, we are frequently told, went only to those who could show four quarters of nobility. Moreover, there are signs that under the leadership of the "noblesse de robe" the French nobility of the eighteenth century was actually tightening its lines, making access to the top more difficult for ambitious non-nobles.¹²

Justin, just as Dufour in Le Modéré, is angered by the compromisers who steered a middle course refusing to commit themselves to either party. Contrary to Dufour who respected his master, Justin can find no sympathy for such people and vents his wrath in the following diatribe:

Et voilà justement son crime. Quiconque
n'est pas un ami chaud de la révolution, en est,
à coup sûr, l'ennemi le plus dangereux.
(chantant) Ce mot seul me met en courroux;
Un modéré! quel monstre infernal!
Oui, dans l'ombre, ces gens sans âme
Nous portent les plus grands coups.
Tous ces soi-disant patriotes,
Qui vont par-tout, prêchant la paix,
Servent au mieux les projets (bis)
Que forment les despotes. (bis)
(I.4.12)

Justin's anger is merely a reflection of the prevailing Jacobin sentiment. They were according to Crane Brinton few in number but fanatically devoted to their cause. As an ultimate goal they wanted liberty for everyone.

But such liberty at present would mean men corrupted by the bad old ways would be able to realize their wicked plans, restore the bad old

institutions, and frustrate the good men. On reflection, the extremist continues, it is clear that we must distinguish between liberty for those who deserve it, and liberty for those who don't, which latter is, of course, false liberty, pseudo-liberty, license or anarchy . . . Robespierre himself phrased it with classic neatness: the revolutionary government, he said, was the despotism of liberty against tyranny.¹³

In this equalitarian spirit, Plancher-Valcour has Thibaut, the gardener, say:

Chacun d'nous, à sa manière;
Se rend utile à l'Etat;
Les uns défrichont la terre,
Les aut'volont au combat.
Sous s't'honorable costume,
Le jardinier m'est avis,
Vaut mieux q'tous ces homm' de plume
Qui n'font rien pour leux pays.

(I.8.23)

Thibaut, adhering to the new decree forbidding the use of vous, had addressed Glaçon in the "tu" form. When the latter severely reprimands him for not knowing his place, Thibaut defends himself with the Rousseauist argument that all men are equal. He also brings up the utilitarian aspect of his trade which was an integral part of the theme of the work ethic which dominated many of the plays performed during the Revolution.

Even after the execution of Robespierre, nationalistic plays continued to be popular on the Parisien stage. In the previous chapter, Agricol Viala (July 1974) was discussed as part of the theme of women in revolutionary plays. We had seen that his mother was willing to sacrifice her only son for the good of the State. The

opening scene introduces Agricol Viala to the audience.

We know that he is devoted to the Republic when he says:

. . . Mais notre moulin travaille pour nos
frères d'armes, et j'ai envié à tout autre, le
plaisir . . . que dis-je, le devoir de sur-
veiller cette mouture importante . . . Peut-on
avoir trop de soin de ceux qui defendent la
République.

(I.1.3)

Agricol has been well-schooled in the patriotic
wisdom of the times. Both his mother and father had
taught him to look to the Republic as a parent, to be
obeyed and defended. His father had died two years before
with these last words:

. . . nous n'avons plus de maîtres. Vois la
Liberté nous sourire; consacre-lui ton âme
toute entière; qui ne l'aime qu'à demi, n'est
pas digne d'elle.

(I.2.5)

We again meet the inevitable attack against
middle-of-the-rovers, a recurrent theme in 1793 and 1794.
The Nation was in danger of succumbing to counterrevolu-
tionary forces within and outside its boundaries. Phil-
pote de la Madelaine in presenting this type of play was
merely responding to the wishes of the revolutionary
government which wanted good patriotic models to be
presented to the public.

Agricol would like to join his uncles fighting at
the front for freedom:

Agricol - . . . Hélas! . . . il m'en coûtera
bien de m'écloigner de toi.

Pauline - Ce n'est que quitter une mère pour
une autre, et celle-là doit passer avant tout;
il faut abandonner tout le reste pour la
défendre: car sans Patrie, il n'y a plus de
famille.

(I.2.6)

This rejoinder was likely to meet the approval of the audience. It is commonly recognized that the entire nation cannot be at the front lines. Others must remain behind in order to keep the troops supplied with the means necessary for ultimate victory.

Enemy troops have been sighted in the vicinity. Agricol has volunteered to be a lookout at the ferry, in case they attempt to use it to cross the Durance. Meanwhile the other neighbors attend the wedding feast of Petronille and Isidore. From time to time members of the wedding party come out to keep Agricol company. At one point Roger, a neighboring miller, joins him in a song:

Joli refrain! Ma foi, je n'en ai qu'un;
c'est toujours vive la joie et le travail! car
pour être bon Républicain, il faut qu'on travaille.
Les paresseux, les oisifs, ne sont pas patriotes,
voyez-vous. Je dis donc, vive la joie et le
travail! et puis encore vive le travail et la
joie.

(I.5.10-11)

It is no accident that both Roger and Pauline are millers. Philipon knew how unpopular millers were. The audience in turn was well aware that the distribution of bread was the one consistent problem facing the revolutionary government. Many of the most severe crises had

been engendered by the scarcity of this basic part of the population's diet. It was inevitable that millers be accused of hoarding flour for greater profit. It seems to us that Philippon is using millers as models here, to show both that not all were guilty of that crime and that due to their hard work they were in fact contributing to the war effort. This scene would hopefully awaken the audience to its responsibility of providing the State with the resources necessary for its survival.

While watching the ferry, Agricol is tricked by two spies and he fails to see the boat reach the other bank. However he manages to sound the alarm before the enemy is able to cross the river again. The men rush out from the celebration party and gather their guns. They send their wives and children, including Agricol, to safety. However he reappears half-naked carrying a hatchet. He swims out to the river and attempts to cut the rope attached to the ferry. The rebels fire at him but he manages to sever the rope and the boat is swept down-river by the current. Agricol swims back to shore, but he has been mortally wounded and dies in his mother's arms. The aide-de-camp who had arrived to join the defense eulogizes Agricol:

Ne le pleurons pas. Mourir pour la
Patrie, c'est vivre pour la gloire.
.
Un soldat qui meurt pour la République,
laisse autant de fils à sa mère, qu'il
reste de Républicains.

(I.18.27)

This play and others like it obviously met with the approval of citizen Payan of the Committee of Public Instruction of the Convention in that they eulogized the Nation's heroes while awakening in the citizens a desire to come to the aid of their country.

In addition to the models of patriotism and work which were necessary for the survival of the budding nation, another popular theme was that of education. An educated citizenry was the best guard against the return of tyranny. Its importance was most appropriately stated in the following scene from the Artiste patriote (August 1791) of Amable Dupuis.¹⁴

Louis - Pour moi j'aime à m'instruire,
Je suis très-curieux, et j'aime beaucoup lire.

Henri - L'ignorance abrutit, elle rend les mortels
Vils, superstitieux, stupides et cruels,
Elle rend l'ame obscure et la conduit au crime.
La science l'élève et l'éclaire et l'anime.
L'homme par elle apprend à supporter ses maux,
Elle fait les vertus, et forme les héros.
Les sciences, les arts éloignent l'indigence,
Font naître le bonheur, la paix, l'indépendance.
Les arts ont opéré la révolution.
Instruisez-vous toujours.

(I.1.6-7)

Henri, a poet and painter, who resides with his benefactor, Monsieur de Clerville, has taken an interest in Louis. The latter is a gardener in the Clerville estate. The Revolution has converted the Clerville family and their household to its cause. Henri therefore has become Louis' mentor and is attempting to guide him in his education.

The theme of education was often found in revolutionary plays because of the need to make citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities. Prior to the Revolution, education had been the responsibility of the church. Rose, in l'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain (January, 1794), as we have seen, used the missal, the orations of Saint Amboise and the Life of the Saints as the basic texts when educating her charges. Because of the close association of the church with education, the clergy was accused of depriving the masses of the benefits of instruction, as well as indoctrinating those they did teach in the beliefs of Rome. This particular subject is found in Les Brigands de la Vendée (October 1793). Le Franc, a soldier captured by the rebels, has been chained to a tree. Even though he is a mere soldier, he has been able to discern the reason for the rebels' cruelty:

Ils reposent, les barbares! le crime n'écarte point de leur paupière le sommeil bienfaisant . . . Le remords sommeille donc ainsi que la vertu! que dis-je? le remords! ils n'en ont point, les cruels! peut-il faire entendre sa voix à ceux qui outragent la nature? O fanatisme! à quelles ferocités tu portes les hommes! . . . Malgré leur barbarie, il en est encore que l'on doit plaindre. Privés de l'éducation, qui seule peut éclairer l'homme, ils croient facilement aux perfides suggestions de ces monstres, qui, dans tous les temps, désolent la société par leur fourbe religieuse. Ce fut par eux que l'homme fut asservi. Eux seuls firent naître le despotisme: aujourd'hui, ils s'agitent en tous sens pour reforge ses chaînes, que la raison a pulvérisées; mais leurs efforts seront vains; le flambeau de la vérité a lui, et ses rayons dissiperont les ténèbres dont ils veulent encore envelopper l'univers. (II.1.27)

The Jacobins had recognized the importance of an educated citizenry and were attempting to legislate reforms in that area. However they were so sorely pressed by the demands of the war and the economy that they had to postpone educational reforms to a later time.

J. B. Pujoulx dealt with the problem of educating the general population in his play, Les Montagnards, ou L'Ecole de bienfaisance (September 1794).¹⁵ The hero of the play is Candor, a teacher, who on a small pension has devoted himself for many years to providing instruction to Auvergnats. Early in the play we meet Cadet, a recent arrival from the Auvergne, who has come to see Candor, in search of education. He encounters Denise, Candor's maid, who informs him that her master provides education rather than wit.

Denise - Vous avez mal compris ce qu'on a voulu vous dire; ce n'est pas de l'esprit qu'il donne, mais de l'instruction.

Cadet - D'l'instruction ou d'l'esprit, c'est à peu-près tout comme parce que ceux qui disent qu'ils savent tout, et qui parlent toujours, ne passent jamais pour des bêtes.

Denise - Eh bien il ne donne ni de cet esprit, ni de cette instruction-là. Le Citoyen Candor n'enseigne à ceux qui viennent journellement ici, qu'à aimer leurs semblables, à leur être utile, en un mot, à connaître ses droits, et à remplir ses devoirs.

(I.2.5)

Not only does Candor teach his students to read and to write, but also instructs them to be aware of

their responsibilities and rights. As both Le Franc and Henri of previous plays had indicated, ignorance was not bliss, in spite of what is often said, but rather it was a drug which benumbed people, making them the gullible victims of despotism. On the positive side, instruction was necessary so that all men would learn to respect their government and its laws.

Denise - . . . comme la lecture et l'écriture sont utiles dans beaucoup d'états, il leur enseigne à lire et à écrire, ce qui les met à même de s'instruire des loix sous lesquelles ils vivent: parce que, dit-il, on n'aime et on ne respecte sincèrement que ce qu'on connaît bien.

(I.2.5)

Since the revolutionary government has not yet legislated the necessary reforms vis à vis public instruction, Candor has written the Convention asking to provide him with a list of acceptable texts for use in his classroom. Awaiting the reply, in lieu of books he has been teaching his Auvergnats to read and write by using a copy of the Rights of Man.

Candor - . . . mais jusqu'à ce que l'autorité nationale ait désigné les ouvrages élémentaires, mes élèves ne liront que les droits de l'homme.

Denise - La plupart les savent par coeur, et tous les comprennent parfaitement.

Candor - Cela ne m'étonne pas. Ces bons habitants des montagnes sont par leurs moeurs trop près de la nature, pour ne pas sentir facilement le code pur et immuable qui en est émané . . .

(1.4.9)

With such a description of the Auvergnats Pujoulx reveals himself here as being a disciple of Rousseau: he has Candor explain that being close to nature in their isolated mountains, the Auvergnats have developed a special rapport with nature which allows them to have a greater affinity to the Rights of Man than others, whom he does not mention, but whom we must suppose to be the natives of cities who have become corrupted by their association with civilization.

Candor's students are a mixed lot. They represent the various types of menial workers such as chimneysweeps, water vendors, menders, floor polishers, etc. found in a city such as Paris. They are men and women of all ages. The students are models of Jacobin virtue, supporting love of work, family and Country. The audience is presented with a series of tableaux indicating that sentiment.

Tous - Qui n'vit que pour soi,
N'aime pas la loi;
Ell'dit qu'chacun d'nous
Doit céder à tous.

(I.5.13)

Les Montagnards (chantant) -
Que chacun répète:
Sagesse est l'seul bien;
Sans ça, fillette,
Richesse n'est rien.

(1.5.16)

Antoine (chantant) -
L'Egalité, la liberté,
La sûreté, la propriété;
Oui, ces droits sont les nôtres.

La raison dit en effet:
 Ce que tu ne veux pas qu'il te soit fait,
 Ne le fais pas à d'autres.

(I.11.23-4)

On hearing these statements the reader might easily be mystified. Are Gervais and his companions stating the feelings of the common workers? Or are the principles of law, order and property those of the middle-class supporters of Robespierre and his followers? It appears to us that the proletariat had been crushed by the old regime, through the misuse of the government apparatus, that is, its laws. To hear, now, these laborers requesting the establishment of laws and defending the concept of property, would lead some people to suspect that something was amiss. And indeed it was, for as we have previously stated, the revolutionary playwrights were, for the most part, members of the middle class. Pujoulx was only having his characters voice his own bourgeois ideals. For as Daniel Guérin in La Lutte des classes sous la première république¹⁶ says:

Marx et Engels ont découvert que les formes de production et de la propriété conditionnent l'évolution des sociétés. Appliquée à la Révolution française, cette conception nous aide à comprendre que la grande Révolution fut une révolution bourgeoise, et que, dans ses résultats, elle ne pouvait être que bourgeoise. En effet, si les conditions matérielles existant à l'époque rendaient à la fois possible et nécessaire l'avènement politique de la bourgeoisie, elles ne permettaient pas encore le triomphe sur la bourgeoisie de l'embryon de prolétariat qui, déjà, avait fait son apparition.

The embryo had appeared, says Guérin,¹⁷ because France in the eighteenth century was composed of overlapping industrial means of production. In the rural areas cottage industry abounded, contributing to maintaining the population in servitude, whereas the beginnings of the industrial revolution had begun to concentrate a considerable number of workers in the cities.

Tandis que, dans les provinces arriérées, le féodalisme et le fanatisme n'étaient pas encore liquidés et que la révolution bourgeoise restait à faire, à Paris et dans un certain nombre d'agglomérations urbaines, une avant-garde laborieuse, poussée par l'aiguillon de ses intérêts matériels, exaspérée, au surplus, par la vie chère et la disette, conséquences de l'inflation monétaire, tenta plus ou moins confusément (et, en fin de compte, vainement) de franchir les bornes de la révolution bourgeoise. Deux mondes chevauchaient l'un sur l'autre. . . .¹⁸

The Jacobins may have based their power on the working class of Paris, but its leaders were members of the bourgeoisie. Members of the Convention were therefore not surprised to hear a representative of the people, such as Robespierre, haranguing them as to the necessity of maintaining the right of property. Nor, also, were the Paris audiences surprised to hear a character representing the working class utter defenses of middle-class values and objectives.

If the common laborers in Pujoulx's play in reality represented the middle-class, the reader might

wonder who Candor represented. He is what we would call today a liberal. He is a member of the middle-class, but totally involved in providing an education to less fortunate souls than himself. He is not influenced by personal interest or ulterior motive in helping his fellow men. Therefore, when he is notified of the loss of his pension he is disheartened in the knowledge that he will be unable to continue offering his services. He has but one hope.

. . . l'espoir le plus rassurant pour mon
coeur . . . est dans les Législateurs de la
République: ils s'occupent sans relâche de
l'instruction; . . . ils savent que l'ennemi
le plus redoutable du Gouvernement le plus
juste, est l'ignorance.

(I.13.29)

His students agreed that it would be a blessing if the legislators were to decree free education for all, but as Gervais points out

. . . ça ne suffit pas. La morale est plus
touchant' sortant d'la bouche d'un brav'homme.
Vous nous faisiez aimer la vertu plus encor'
par vot'exempl'qu'par vos leçons. Vous nous
êt'nécessaire: oui, vous nous l'avez dit
souvent; il faut des moeurs dans une République.

(I.13.29)

Candor's role in the play is revealed here. He is present in order to serve as a disinterested model to his peers in the audience. His role is subject to different interpretations. Is he condescendingly seeking to elevate lesser souls to his own social level, or is he, in truth, the representative of a new era? Does he

believe that all men are born equal and therefore, is he attempting to erase the disparities which exist in society by providing all men with the tools necessary to succeed in life? The reader will see that the latter is exemplified by Candor's response to Gervais' concern for the necessity of having a model of virtuous action.

La liberté épure toutes les âmes, et croyez qu'elle a déjà créé des hommes dignes de cet important ministère. Ce ne sera plus comme autrefois le vain étalage d'une science aussi fastidieuse qu'inutile, qui sera admis au concours. Non, on s'y présentera avec des connaissances simples, claires et utiles; et surtout avec le témoignage honorable d'une longue vie sans reproche.

(I.13.29)

Not only does Candor believe in free education for all, but he wishes to see a reform in the instructional process modeled on the ideas of Montaigne which had almost become commonplace in the eighteenth century. The latter's pedagogical concepts were, just as those of Candor, closely linked to virtue. In his Essays, Montaigne had said:

. . . Je voudrais qu'on fût soigneux de lui choisir un conducteur qui eût plutôt la tête bien faite que bien pleine, et qu'on y requit tous les deux, mais plus les mœurs et l'entendement que la science, et qu'il se conduisît en sa charge d'une nouvelle manière.¹⁹

Candor's last class turns into a celebration with the arrival of good news from the Auvergne. He has been willed 30,000 pounds by a person he had befriended many years before. To this joyous event comes word that the

Convention has just decreed free education for all.

Gervais exhibits great excitement at this last announcement and sings:

Pour l'coeur le plus grand des besoins
Est un'bonn' instruction publique:
Nous allons l'avoir, grace aux soins
Des pères de la République.
L'aimable et douc' fraternité.
Rend tout commun, biens, science;
Et l'écol' de l'égalité
Est celle de la bienfaisance.

(I.14.40)

The Jacobins were greatly affected by the writings of Montesquieu which is amply reflected in Pujoulx's play, as well as the others in this chapter. Montesquieu defined virtue as being a love of law and country. It is exactly that definition which the revolutionary government sought to inculcate in the minds of its citizens. All of the revolutionary factions professed the same sentiment of love of country above individual self-interest. However, it was the Jacobins, fanatically devoted to their cause, who showed the general population, that they were willing to sacrifice their individuality for the common good. That attitude is personified by one man during this period, Robespierre. According to Crane Brinton, "Robespierre of the Terror . . . was, as the Incorruptible, a living symbol of the Republic of Virtue in his public and private life."²⁰

FOOTNOTES

1. Carlson, p. 191.
2. Beatrice Hyslop, "The Theatre during a crisis: The Partisan theater during the Reign of Terror," Journal of Modern History, XVII, (December, 1945), p. 351.
3. Estrée, p. 34.
4. Ibid., p. 33.
5. See Appendix, p. 246.
6. Le Moniteur Universel (December 4, 1794), pp. 312-313.
7. Ibid. (November 4, 1794), p. 192.
8. Estrée, p. 19.
9. See Appendix, p. 250.
10. Albert Goodwin, The French Revolution (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), p. 140.
11. Crane Brinton, The Anatomy of Revolution, revised and expanded edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 167.
12. Ibid., p. 62.
13. Ibid., p. 166.
14. See Appendix, p. 244.
15. See Appendix, p. 256.
16. Daniel Guérin, La Lutte de classes sous la Première République, 6e ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 3.
17. Ibid., p. 10.
18. Ibid., p. 11.
19. Michel de Montaigne, Essais, ed. Pierre Michel (Paris: Editions Gallimard et Librairie Générale Française, 1965), I, p. 188.
20. Brinton, p. 116.

CHAPTER VI

LANGUAGE, STYLE AND VOCABULARY

As we mentioned earlier, after the 1791 decree *had* established freedom in the theater, the ensuing competitiveness between the different theatrical companies resulted in a veritable plundering of the repertoires of the heretofore monopolistic companies by their lesser rivals. At the same time, however, the major theaters in an attempt to regain the favor of their public performed plays generally found on the stage of their minor competitors. Unfortunately, the increased democratization of the theater of the Revolution brought in its wake a dismal uniformity in the very mediocrity of the new productions. As we have shown, the numerous theaters that opened their doors as a result of the decree did not contribute in a noteworthy increase in the number of good playwrights or performers.

Prior to the Revolution the poissard type of play was one of the most popular performed on the stage of the minor theaters. As Alexander Moore said: ". . . it depicts faithfully the manners and customs of the Vieux Paris."¹ Moore asserts that because the audiences had a

first hand knowledge of the poissard genre from their own personal experiences in daily life, playwrights had to present realistic reproductions of popular speech and life on stage, or else, run the risk of having their plays interrupted during the performance.²

W. V. Wartburg³ declares that Vadé created the poissard genre which had popularized the language he had heard around him in the Halles, the squares, the taverns, etc.

Sous l'influence de Vadé on prend plaisir à s'encanailler, et les dames de la haute société commencent à rivaliser de liberté de fait de langage avec les courtisanes sorties du bas du peuple. De là il n'y a plus loin à l'argot. En effet le peuple parisien ne distingue pas nettement entre sa langue à lui et l'argot proprement dit. Et celui-ci pénètre dans les classes supérieures. Ainsi cette poussée linguistique des classes inférieures n'attend pas le 19^e s., comme on l'a si souvent dit, ni même la Révolution. Les barrières sont ouvertes; elles ont même été supprimées par les classes supérieures elles-mêmes. Au point de vue de la langue le peuple fait irruption, surtout dans la 2^e partie du siècle, mais il y a été invité par la classe dirigeante.³

However, Wartburg qualifies this comment on language when he says that whereas a so-called noble style was obligatory in literature, one could distinguish two styles in both the oral and written language. He states:

Dès 1713 Fenelon écrit: "L'un est le genre élevé, comme celui des harangues et autres ouvrages ou discours de cérémonie; on y évite les termes dont chaque ouvrier se sert dans le détail de son art, et on a recours aux expressions qu'on croit les plus nobles.

L'autre est le genre simple, vulgaire et familier, où les termes des ouvriers sont en usage." Voltaire reconnaît les deux sortes de style: le simple et le relevé.⁴

Seventeenth-century society had demanded that certain words and expressions which it had deemed vulgar be expunged from the salons and literature. A courtier, at that time, might empathize with Don Rodrigue's rules of conduct found in Le Cid, but were he to accept similar rules expressed by commoners he would certainly feel that he had derogated himself.⁵

Eighteenth-century language pursued a different course in the salons of high society. Due to the influence of economists, physiocrats and philosophes, vocabulary relative to trade, agriculture and specialized fields became the vogue.⁶

Cette évolution de la langue nous étonne moins lorsque nous songeons qu'après le bourgeois Voltaire ce sont les prolétaires Rousseau et Diderot qui dominent et façonnent les esprits. Dans les romans dialogués de Diderot, dans le Neveu de Rameau les expressions triviales, populaires, foisonnent . . . On ferait un petit dictionnaire de vulgarismes en dépouillant les Confessions de Rousseau. . . .⁷

This is not to say that eighteenth-century society had accepted popular speech. Several styles existed on the different social levels. In fact, the young men who were to be the leaders of the Revolution greatly admired the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially the philosophes.

Ils avaient subi l'effet magique de la langue classique. Ils étaient imprégnés des sonorités de la phrase de Corneille et de Bossuet, et ils s'en servaient à leur tour pour galvaniser les masses. Robespierre, p.ex., qui composait laborieusement ses discours, avait toujours sur sa table de travail un exemplaire de la Nouvelle Héloïse, dans lequel il puisait à pleines mains ses périphrases et ses métaphores.⁸

Yet, the theatrical world was acutely aware of the different styles of speech heard in France. Many of the actors, and playwrights, had travelled with the various touring companies. Molière's success lay in his ability to listen, to observe the myriad mannerisms of the people and to reproduce them faithfully on the stage. His doctors on the stage resembled his own personal doctor. His servants, his bourgeois, all of his characters were modeled on people he had seen in the different spheres of his world. From the point of view of the vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar in his plays, Molière has shown himself to be a keen observer able to distinguish quirks of language endemic to the varied levels of society and, then, to reproduce them on the stage.

Although revolutionary playwrights did not have the psychological insights nor the genius of Molière, they had been inspired by the example of Diderot and Mercier in their attempt to present a realistic rendering of their characters. One of the more popular playwrights, before and during the Revolution, who depicted the common people

on the stage was Louis Dorvigny. He created the character of le père Duchesne in his play, Le Père Duchesne, ou la mauvaise habitude, which was first performed in 1789 on the stage of Nicolet's Grands Danseurs du Roi. Duchesne was a swashbuckling sailor, who, after having spent his life at sea, had finally settled down as a shopkeeper. The plot was quite simple. He falls in love with the maid of the Marquise and must overcome the scheming of Gilotin, the Marquis' valet, who also loves her. The play was so warmly received that Dorvigny wrote a sequel in the same year: Les Noces du Père Duchesne (December 1789)⁹.

Alexander Moore states that the popularity of Père Duchesne was such that the vogue of using him as a Revolutionary hero was started. "It is certain that from 1789 on,--the very year of Dorvigny's performance,--he was used time and again to symbolize the Revolutionary endeavors of the Parisians."¹⁰ In 1790, the famous Revolutionary leader, Hébert, founded his Journal du Père Duchesne. Although quite well educated, Hébert used the language of Père Duchesne in an obvious ploy to influence the lower classes with his rhetoric. Jean-Pierre Seguin¹¹ in La Langue française au XVIIIe siècle declares:

Une certaine grossièreté n'est pas l'apanage de la haute société, mais chez les révolutionnaires, au moins les plus en vue, on constate l'alternance d'une grossièreté calculée et de la dignité

maintenue, la violence immortalisant parfois des formules mémorables comme celles de Danton, que je citerai en respectant les pointillés de Brunot: "Si je prêtais ces c. . . à Robespierre, cela pourrait encore aller quelque temps." En fait, il s'agit d'une mode, ou d'une anti-préciosité: "L'ordurier devient un 'genre' politique. Il n'y a, d'une année à l'autre, pas de différence qualitative en ce qui concerne les mots grossiers; il y a surtout une différence quantitative; ces mots deviennent plus nombreux. Ils apparaissent aussi de façon plus ouverte; au lieu d'être réservés aux petits théâtres et d'être renfermés dans quelques écrits, dont la plupart circulaient sous le manteau, ils s'affichent dans des journaux largement répandus. Là est la seule nouveauté.

The language found in Les Noces du Père Duchesne is not vulgar, but rather picturesque, reflecting the naval background of the hero. Except for Lucille's brother, we find the same characters as in the preceding play. Gilotin has still not reconciled himself to Lucille's betrothal to Duchesne. He attempts by a ruse to create disharmony in their union. Meanwhile, the Marquis, in collaboration with Va-de-bon-coeur, Lucille's brother, plots to test Duchesne's valor. The plotting of both groups creates the hoped for rupture between Lucille and Duchesne. It also provides the hero with the opportunity to give the audience a taste of naval terminology in an urban setting.

We can appreciate the popularity of a character such as Duchesne within the context of the revolutionary spirit when, upon returning to his shop from the château, he is heard to say to Lucille:

. . . Nous v'la donc enfin nos maîtres! & nos langues en liberté! Ah! triple douzaine de fournaux! comme je m'en vas dérouiller la mienne! Y n'y a pas ni Marquis ni Marquise ici pour quetter les paroles & vous renfoncer les mots dans le ventre! . . . Cinq cens diable emporte la politesse! Si j'étais resté un heure de plus, dans ce maudit Château, j'y serions crevés! mais ventrebleu m'en v'la sorti, & je sens que je renaiss! Allons, mil-zieux, Duchesne, lâche, toi un peu, ça te soulagera.

(I.4.7-8)

He then leaves Lucille in order to further vent his anger at the constraints he felt in the presence of the Marquis and especially the Marquise. We again are apprised of the necessity of knowing several styles of speech in order to be able to converse properly on the different planes of society. On the other hand, the audience certainly felt empathy with Duchesne's reluctance to adopt, for reasons of convenience, an unnatural manner of speech. He was obliged, for expediency, to converse on an aristocratic level of language with the Marquis and Marquise, but was more comfortable in the privacy of his shop where he could revert to his "normal" form of speech.

Angered by Lucille, who has accused him of being unfaithful, Duchesne is further provoked by a letter from Va-de-bon-coeur posing as a buccaneer, indicating that he is a rival for Lucille's hand. Duchesne goes to the château to answer Va-de-bon-coeur's challenge.

Ah! triple salle d'armes! c'est donc ici que ce f . . . fameux flibustier m'a donné rendez-vous! Ah! mille gargousses! il a fait le bon

voilier, mais je veux que vingt douzaines de
requins me chatouillent les côtes, si je ne fais
pas venir du loff, moi . . . Attendons-le un peu,
& mettons nos armes en état. (Il les dépose l'un
après l'autre sur une table.) Voilà ma hache qui
a le fil; voilà mon fusil à double canon, tordu,
amorcé & épinglé de frais, & les pierres rebattues
à neuf. Voilà mon damas que coupe le fer . . . &
mes deux pistolets carabinés. . . . Et j'ai laissé
dans la cour du Château un petit canon que j'ai
trainé. . . .

(II.7.38)

It is not difficult to picture the extravagant
figure Duchesne made, hauling his artillery onto the stage.
The audience certainly must have reacted with laughter
upon seeing this preposterous figure with his speech
interspersed with nautical terms. The language needs no
translation for his meaning is indicated by his weapons.
He was merely preparing for any eventuality.

Before he can meet the buccaneer, the Marquise,
who opposes her husband's plan, has arranged to have
Lucille and Duchesne meet in an effort to resolve their
differences. Lucille insists that she has no idea who the
buccaneer can be. However, Duchesne is quite upset at
this turn of events and indicates his hesitation in their
union:

Mademoiselle, apprenez, qu'un galant homme n'est
pas f . . . fait pour qu'on le tienne à la cappe
et à sec de voiles comme vous faites-la, au
moins! . . . V'là déjà assez longtemps que je
louvoye pour entrer dans le port; mais milzieux
s'il faut craindre des écueils jusque dans la
rade, j'aime autant reprendre le large et
remettre en mer.

(II.10.45)

It is indeed a rather novel and truly descriptive manner of indicating one's hesitation in taking the marital vows. Obviously he visualizes himself in the role of the captain of a ship about to enter the harbor, which represents marriage. Lucille's actions have now raised dangers which the ship must overcome. So the captain wonders whether it would not be better to abandon his goal and set out to sea.

As Alexander Moore states:

Such was the choleric, high-spirited, outspoken sailor who, because of his indomitable bravery and unabashed frankness, was accepted as a worthy spokesman of the masses, when they also, in their inarticulate and crude vociferation, clamored for their rights and fought for their liberty during the Revolutionary epoch.¹²

The subterfuge is finally revealed and all ends well. The Marquis offers wedding gifts to the couple and to their first born. We can readily recognize that the radical stage of the Revolution had not yet been reached. Even though Duchesne feels constrained in the presence of aristocrats, and expresses these feelings to Lucille, he is nevertheless impressed with their largesse and is obviously pleasantly disposed towards them.

At this stage of the Revolution, the Marquis' paternalistic attitudes which pervade the entire play were accepted by the audience as a necessary evil. It was still possible to be considered a "Good noble" interested in the general welfare of commoners entrusted

to one's care according to one's feudal oath. However remote this picture might be to us today the members of the audience knew that many commoners had had fair and equitable dealings with their lords. However, they also were very much aware of the inequities of the system in which they lived.

Duchesne's speech betrays his humble origins. In French there is a general tendency to syncopate, that is, to elide one or more sounds from the middle of a word. Jean-Pierre Seguin states: "Il semble indiscutable [encore] que la prononciation de cet et cette était/stə/ . . .¹³ As for liaisons, he says:

. . . quelques phrases empruntées à Vadé, donc
artificiellement populaires, apportent
curieusement confirmation aux notations de
Vaudelin, comme si en voulant "faire populaire,"
Vadé ne faisait souvent que retrouver une
prononciation moyenne bien vivante dans les
classes aisées de 1700 . . . :
le vla dans un bel équipage
pour parler de note ménage
S'te vieille allumette sans souffre
T'nez voyez-vous tout ça. Vla t'y d'la fine
[orange.
Ly répondre ça serait pire
etc. . . .¹⁴

In the aforementioned scenes from Les Noces du père Duchesne we can see that the speech patterns compare closely with Vadé's. Not only did they resemble Duchesne's but also were used by many members of the audience.

In 1792, Louis Dorvigny created another comical character who was to be extremely popular during this

period, Jocrisse. Le Désespoir de Jocrisse¹⁵ was to have 38 performances, a very good showing for the time. The characterization of the stupid valet had occurred previously in literature, but according to Alexander Moore, it is due to the popularity of Dorvigny's play that the character of Jocrisse received a semi-official status.¹⁶ Jocrisse is, in a word, a dunce. He manages to do everything backwards or not at all. M. Duval, his master, attempts to impress upon Jocrisse the need to mend his ways, but the sermon falls upon deaf ears. Jocrisse is oblivious to any remonstrance and instead defends his actions:

Jocrisse - . . . queuque j'ai donc encore tant fait; là, voyons?

Duval - Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait? . . . qu'est-ce que vous n'avez pas fait plutôt? . . . Vous faites tout mal.

Jocrisse - Eh ben oui! tout mal! c'est bientôt dit, ça! V'là comme les maîtres sont tous; j'ai pas encore jamais pu en contenter un seul.

Duval - Je le crois parbleu bien! et c'est une preuve comme vous êtes bon sujet . . . paresseux, maladroit, malpropre, gourmand . . .
.

Duval - . . . Et les oeufs de nos poules, qui est-ce qui les déniche tous les matins?

Jocrisse - Ah jarni! ça ne sera pas moi qui m'aura relevé pour ça, pisque monsieur vient d'accuser que j'étais un paresseux.

Duval - Oui-dà, la belle excuse. (à part)
voyez-vous la malice d'un imbécile! (haut)
Oui, monsieur; oui, paresseux pour travailler;

mais quand il s'agit de mal faire, votre paresse
se réveille, et vous savez très-bien allier
à-la-fois tous les défauts les plus opposés.

(I.1.3-4)

Duval is ready to dismiss Jocrisse, when the former is called on an errand. He calls in his staff, composed in addition to Jocrisse of his mother and sister, in order to impress upon them the danger to their continued employment with him, if they were to admit anyone into the house in his absence. He instructs Nicette, Jocrisse's sister, to allow no one to speak with Sophie, his daughter. Before departing Duval places a poison sign on his case of wine in order to keep Jocrisse away from it.

Not only is Jocrisse a dunce, but obviously the malady afflicts his entire family. After tricking Jocrisse's mother into leaving her post at the front door, Dupont then gulls Nicette into allowing him to enter Sophie's room. Nicette, a simpleton, follows Duval's instructions to the letter producing the following dialogue:

Nicette - C'est que monsieur m'a ben défendu
aussi que je le laisse parler à qui que ce soit.

Dupont, à part - La peste soit de ses défenses!
(haut) Ah! oui, il me l'a dit aussi; mais . . .
vous pouvez être assurée encore de ce côté-là,
elle ne me parlera pas, elle; c'est moi qui lui
parlerai, comme je vous dis, de la part de son
père; mais elle n'ouvrira pas la bouche, elle.

Nicette - Ah! à la bonne heure, si c'est comme
ça, parce que, voyez-vous, j'ai si peur, si peur
d'être grondée, que je fais tout juste ce qu'on

me commande déjà; ni pus, ni moins . . . vous
m'en serez témoin avec mon maître.

(I.12.17)

Nicette is then tricked into leaving the room. Dupont convinces Sophie to accompany him to see his father in order that the latter might intercede with her father on their behalf. Nicette returns to find her mistress gone. Jocrisse also returns certain that he has committed enough blunders to ensure his dismissal. Therefore, when he spies the case of wine labeled poison, he entertains a final solution for himself and his unfortunate family.

. . . Ma pauvre mère! et vous, ma soeur, j'avons fait aujourd'hui des ben grandes sottises, et je n'avons pas de reproches à nous faire, pisque j'avons chacun la note . . . n'y a pus de pardon à attendre de note maïte, déjà . . . mais j'avons un moyen de braver sa colère. Emportons ce panier, venez avec moi dans le jardin, et si vous avez le courage de faire comme moi, je vous réponds que M. Duval n'aura pas le coeur de nous gronder tantôt. (Ils s'en vont . . . en se couvrant le front et en faisant de grands gestes d'un désespoir comique.) (Il revient seul et dit) Eh bien! puisqu'il faut périr, mourissons.

(I.21.23)

When Duval returns to his home, he is surprised to find it empty. He finally encounters a totally inebriated Jocrisse who recounts the devastating chain of events which has led to his family and himself drinking the poison. There follows a further exchange filled with double-entendres, confusing Duval all the more. The arrival of Dupont père finally resolves the entire

situation for he is able to obtain Duval's signature on a marriage contract between their children. In the resulting joy, Jocrisse and his family are pardoned with great reluctance by Duval.

The following year, Dorvigny had Jocrisse changé de condition¹⁷ performed. With 36 performances, its popularity equaled its predecessor. Now the valet of Monsieur Dupont, Jocrisse is still as stupid as ever, but his new master is amused by his extravagances. Madame Dupont, on the other hand, would like to see Jocrisse dismissed.

Not only is Jocrisse rather naïve, but he is easily duped. He is in love with Ursule, the Duponts' maid, and wishes to increase his savings in order that they might marry. A lottery vendor convinces him to invest his savings of six francs in a lottery ticket:

Eh bien! vous ne pourrez pas mieux l'employer que ça. Vous le placez à fonds perdus; c'est le plus haut intérêt.

(I.2.266)

Monsieur Dupont's opinion of Jocrisse is simply stated when he says of the latter:

Non, réellement, il n'est pas absolument bête; il n'est qu'un peu ahuri.

(I.4.269)

When Dupont sees the lottery ticket he is quite surprised that Jocrisse has purchased it and questions him:

Dupont - Eh! mais, c'est un billet de loterie!

Jocrisse - Tout juste; et qui m'a ben coûté six bons francs encore; mais le marchand m'a dit comme ça que c'était l'argent ben placé.

Dupont - Oh! oui, à fonds perdus.

Jocrisse - Ah! ma fine! v'là le même mot qu'im'a dit. Faut que ça soye un brave homme; car i ne m'a pas trompé.

(I.4.269)

Jocrisse continues to provide amusement for his masters to Madame Dupont's discomfort. However, when one of Jocrisse's blunders finally affects Dupont himself, the latter no longer views the antics humorously. Jocrisse, by leaving the window to Dupont's office open, has allowed bits of paper on the desk to be blown away.

Jocrisse - I en a qu'ont passé par la fenêtre. Ah! vous ririez de voir comme tout le monde court après dans les rues.

Dupont, enragé et piétinant de colère - Après mes billets de caisse! . . . Ah! misérable! Tiens-toi bien, malheureux! S'il faut que mes billets soient perdus, je reviens avec ma canne, et je vais t'assommer moi-même.

(II.11.316)

Jocrisse is dumbfounded. Of all the people, he would never have expected this reaction from his master who heretofore had laughed at all his blunders. He could not understand what the turmoil was concerning some bits of paper. He had been so certain that he would be protected by Dupont.

Là! fiez-vous donc aux maîtres, après celle-là! . . . Ah! jarni! j'étais si content de cette condition! . . . Oh! oui, je le vois ben à présent, les maîtres se ressemblent tous, et les domestiques sont toujours la dupe.

(II.14.320)

There was in verity much general truth in Jocrisse's words. Unfortunately his own misfortune was due entirely to his stupidity not to his master's unfairness. But Jocrisse was not a bad fellow. When he receives his lottery winnings he recognizes the assignats that had blown out of Dupont's window, and realizes the extent of the damages he has caused.

Que je les fasse voir au premier venu, et il va me donner des louis d'or en place! . . . Ah! sarpédie! C'est donc des louis d'ors aussi que j'ai fait envoler à monsieur Dupont, tantôt! . . . et i'n'avait donc pas tant de tort de se mettre en colère contre moi, ce pauvre cher homme! . . . Eh ben! j'étais pourtant ben innocent de ça, moi . . . Voyez ce que c'est de n'avoir pas l'habitude de magner ces monnaies là. J'étais piqué contre lui de me renvoyer, parce que je croyais que c'était un caprice; mais à c't'heure, j'y pardonne sa colère; et quand i'm'aurait donné les coups de bâton, je ne l'y en voudrais pas encore.

(II.15.325-6)

When Dupont returns home from his vain attempt to recover his money, Jocrisse apologizes. He shows his honesty and unselfishness by offering his winnings to Dupont. The latter is touched by this generous trait. Nevertheless he returns the winnings to Jocrisse to allow him to marry Ursule. Dupont then asks them both to remain in his employ.

We can understand that Dorvigny transcribed as best he could the language of his simple-witted characters. He wished to point out that they originated in the masses, but as we have seen, were basically good people.

Good-natured, unselfish, albeit uninitiated into the accepted codes of society, they represented the populace on the stage in perhaps an overzealous interpretation of the Rousseauist ideal of the basic goodness of man.

Alexander Moore states:

No doubt, the vast majority of the poissard production hides little social or philosophical mystery. It was written for mere amusement, for frank laughter, for boisterous revelry, but the very choice and the tonality of such amusement, frequently betray deeper tendencies of the authors and spectators. From the Regency to the Revolution, the genre poissard underwent changes sufficiently important to reflect the varying moods and tendencies of the epoch.¹⁸

Another comical character popular during the Revolution, but whose lineage reaches further back than the two preceeding characters was Arlequin. We have mentioned that the farce was extremely popular during the Terror because it was a relatively "safe" genre to perform. Other genres could be misinterpreted and cause the actors and/or playwright to be quickly arrested. The comical intent of the farce managed to remain clear and free of political connotation.

Louis Picard, a prolific writer and popular during the Revolution, wrote in collaboration with Fiévé, his first play which was performed in 1789 with some success. Soon after his comic opera, Les Visitandines, met with great popularity with more than 200 performances, which contributed greatly to his fame.¹⁹ In 1793 his play,

Arlequin friand (May 1793)²⁰ was performed on the boards of the Théâtre du Vaudeville.

As the title indicates Arlequin is fond of sweets. A poet, he is betrothed to Colombine, the daughter of Cassandre, a doctor. The latter would have preferred to see his daughter marry Gille, a druggist.

Cassandre - Tout cela est bel et bon; mais
j'aurais trouvé d'autres avantages avec M. Gille:
songe que je suis médecin, et que . . .

Air: Consolerez-vous avec les autres.
Gille sait fort bien son métier
C'est un fameux apothicaire,
Et chacun, dans notre quartier,
L'applaudit de son savoir faire.
Or, nous nous serions entendus,
Comme l'on fait entre confrères:
Des malades qu'il auraient vus,
J'aurais touché les honoraires.

(I.1.4)

The play contains a number of remarks satyrizing the medical profession and its adjuncts. It is merely part of a tradition pervading the French theater from the Middle Ages to Molière and into the present era. For a theme to have such a universal popularity would give some credence to the complaints found therein. As Wartburg states:

Les apothicaires étaient à l'origine de simples épiciers. Ils savaient tout juste assez de latin pour essayer d'en imposer au public. Il paraît même en 1553 une satire très vive, dont l'auteur, Séb. Colin, raconte de cruelles anecdotes sur l'ignorance des pauvres pharmaciens. Ce pamphlet, intitulé "Déclaration des abuz et tromperies que font les apoticaire", paraît annoncer la satire sanglante de Molière.²¹

Wanting to teach Arlequin a lesson, Nérine and Colombine pretend that he has eaten poisoned pastries. Cassandre arrives and is quite surprised to see his future son-in-law in great pain. Informed of the situation, he responds:

Cassandre - Eh bien, mes chers enfants, il ne faut pas se désespérer. Si vous êtes empoisonné, songez que vous êtes avec un médecin.

Arlequin - Un médecin! ah! je suis mort!

Cassandre - Oui, mon fils; mais vous aurez du moins la consolation de mourir avec tous les secours de l'art.

(I.8.20-1)

After some comical attempts to find an antidote fail, Nérine and Colombine admit their conspiracy to the great annoyance of Cassandre and Gille. Cassandre is angered by this turn of events, for he says:

Mademoiselle, vous moquez-vous de moi? M'exposer à voir et à guérir des maux qui n'existent pas!

(I.12.30)

Arlequin, understandably is quite happy to be safe:

Mon mal était imaginaire;
Mais j'avais pour le soulager
Monsieur Cassandre et son confrère:
Jugez si j'étais en danger!
C'est par une faute divine
Que j'échappe à leur art fatal;
Pour cette fois, la médecine
A fait plus de peur que de mal.

(I.12.31)

Whereas Picard continues Molière's tradition of savage satire against the medical profession, he offers a simple painting of a rather naive young man in love. This

play differs from most of the others studied thus far, in that, although all the characters are members of the Third Estate, they obviously belong to a different, higher social level. This is indicated by their speech which does not contain any of the phonetic spellings found in many other plays. The characters speak well because they are members of the bourgeoisie, and Picard respects fully the audience's expectation.

In the previous chapters we have met other comical characters who were presented to the audience as realistically as possible. In Nicodème dans la lune, ou la Révolution pacifique (November 1799), Beffroy de Reigny introduces us to Nicodème, a servant. The reader recognizes immediately from his unpolished speech that Nicodème is not an educated person. After his conference with the Emperor, Nicodème announces: "J'lions dit comme quoi les Français aviont voulu faire dénicher l'esclavage d'leux pays." (II.1.48). In these few burlesque lines Beffroy de Reigny has succeeded in creating a crude and coarse hero, giving us further information about lower class speech. Again we find that the e is often elided; the r in leur is not pronounced; -ons is a common ending for the first person singular.

Nicodème is not the only character whose origins are humble. In the first act, we met peasants lamenting

the harshness of their existence:

Mère Bahu - Gnia quasi d'quoi rire, pas vrai, dans tout c'qui nous arrive? Hom, nous étions ben pauvres, dans mon jeune âge, nous autres habitants d'la campagne . . .

Frerot - Eh ben; t'nez, c'est justement à cause d'ça que l'mal est à son comb'e, qu'i faut qu'i tire à sa fin. . . . Quand un arc est trop tendu, la corde s'casse; et pis ça fait quitte.

Lolotte - J'ons dans l'idée, moi, q'v'là l'temps d'la justice qu'est en route, et qu'i n'tard'ra pas d'arriver.

(I.1.4)

One finds inconsistencies in the spelling of certain words. The playwright has attempted to transcribe the speech of these peasants phonetically which produces several versions of the same word. But one wonders whether the cause lies in the printer's carelessness or the playwright's negligence, when, for example, the u after the q in Lolotte's first line is dropped but not from the q in the second line. Again we have the elision of the e which was very common. Furthermore we note that no differentiation was made with qu' since both the i and the e are elided.

Nigaudinet, in Beffroy de Reigny's Le club des bonnes gens, ou le Curé français is the priest's servant who provides a comic relief to the seriousness of the theme. Describing the miller (see Chapter Four, page 18), he says: "I'n'song' qu'à boir', c'Monsieur Thomas . . ." (I.1.7), further demonstrating the usage of eliding the e and the i. We note again that the r is not pronounced, as witnessed by

leux and su'. A foreign word receives a strange sound when club is pronounced croub.

These pronunciations were commonly ascribed to the lower classes on the stage. They were not reserved exclusively to comical characters. In Les Brigands de la Vendée we find a peasant saying after the capture of the rebels:

J'amenons aveuc nous bonne compagnie. Sans ce
Volontaire, je n'eussions pas pris ste peine:
mais i'n'a pas voulu qu'j'en fassions justice
nous-mêmes.

(II.7.33)

The same spellings and pronunciations found in Dorvigny and Beffroy de Reigny's plays are repeated here. The e and the l are elided; ons is used as the ending for the first person singular. In addition we find cette given as ste and avec written as aveuc.

These phonetic transcriptions of popular speech are confirmed by Seguin who offers the following examples of changes in pronunciation from 1700 to the present time.²²

graphie	1700 (Vaudelin)	1780	1970
oi	wɛ, ɛ	wa, ɛ	wa, ɛ
une	oen	oen, yn	yn
il	i	il	il
ils	iz, il	ilz	ilz
leur	lɔ̃, lɔ̃z	loer	loer
plaisir	plɛzi	plɛzir	plɛzir
notre	nɔ̃t	nɔ̃tr	nɔ̃tr
sur	sy	syr	syr
toujours	tuzu	tuzur	tuzur
lui	li	li, lyi	lyi
explique	ɛsplik	ɛksplik	ɛksplik
cette	stə	stə, sət (?)	sɛt

As can be seen there is little change between 1780 and 1970, whereas the first eighty years of the eighteenth century produced a noted modification in the speech of the population.

Wartburg reports that in the sixteenth century the diphthong oi had been pronounced in at least three different ways. Wè was the accepted form, whereas é and wa was attributed to the lower classes. The grammarians were opposed to acceptance of these two pronunciations, so that for two centuries oi was pronounced as wè by the members of the upper class.²³ However wè gradually lost ground in the

eighteenth century. Wartburg states:

Au 17e s. la bonne société avait maintenu wę;
 au 18e s. cette prononciation avait faibli peu à
 peu, mais la cour et tous ceux qui en dépendaient
 restaient fidèles à la prononciation antérieure.
 Survient la Révolution, qui disperse la Cour.
 Personne, à Paris, ne s'avise de dire rwe. Or,
 quand Louis XVIII revint en France, en 1814, il
 s'écria: C'est mwe le rwe. On dut lui faire
 remarquer que le dernier rwe avait été Louis XVI
 et que lui ne pouvait plus être que rwa. . . .
 La prononciation wa n'était pas nouvelle, mais
 avant la Révolution on la considérait comme
 populaire et grossière . . . ²⁴

Another area where lower class speech infringed
 upon the accepted mode was the field of orthography. Where-
 as today we must conform to an established set of rules, the
 eighteenth century was still in the process of formulating
 a stable code. As Seguin declares:

Comme aujourd'hui, il fallait de l'orthographe,
 et ce dès le début du siècle, sauf si l'on était
 grand seigneur, écrivain célèbre, ou à l'inverse
 homme du peuple, ou femme. Mais on ne savait pas
 encore quelle était la bonne orthographe.²⁵

The reform in orthography was initiated with the
 publication in 1740 of the Dictionnaire de l'Académie which
 was essentially the work of abbé Olivet. There were many
 complaints about the compilation of the dictionary. Most
 were from those who expected a complete orderly revision,
 whereas Olivet felt "l'usage est toujours le maître."²⁶
 This reform and its subsequent modifications account for
 many of the apparent contradictions in French orthography
 today. Although the reform did not result in immediate

changes throughout the realm, it succeeded in suppressing the phonetical evolution of certain words. Seguin asserts that:

Quand on regarde . . . les phonétismes populaires au XVII^e siècle, on s'aperçoit que la plupart, sinon tous, nous sont restés étrangers parce qu'ils contredisaient l'orthographe qui s'est maintenue en devenant définitivement au XVIII^e siècle la gardienne de la prononciation: voici ces phonétismes: "chouse pour chose, Maubart pour Maubert, biau pour beau, crere pour /krwer/, bian pour bien, voisaine pour voisine, paller pour parler, tendance à l'assibilation de r intervocalique, d'où Pasys pour Parys, chute générale des consonnes finales, réduction des groupes consonantiques finals." Bien de ces phénomènes étaient prêts à envahir le français en 1700. L'orthographe les a tués.²⁷

By invasion of French, Seguin means the invasion of the accepted mode of speech, for, as we have seen, the above pronunciations were used during the Revolution. We must therefore agree with Alexander Moore when he states that the transcriptions of popular speech by the playwrights supply valuable information about the pronunciation of a given word during that time.²⁸ We can appreciate the import of this statement when we refer to Seguin's chart. We note that some words had two variations in 1700 and 1780. It would explain the different spellings found in the plays, for the playwrights attempted to imitate the sounds they thought represented best those of the common people.

Thanks to the work of the French Academy a norm was established for all to follow. We have noted that prior to

the Revolution it was set by the members of the different salons or the Court. Unfortunately the commoners had no models and therefore the pronunciations they heard from their neighbors and associates became their norm. We also note that the stratification which existed in society required the knowledge of the accepted mode of speech as a prerequisite to admission in its ranks. Good speech was associated with upward mobility.

Revolutionary drama was, as we have seen, essentially a propaganda device. During the moderate phase of the Revolution, those who were newly arrived at the reins of the government found themselves obliged by the dictates of their own conscience to observe freedoms denied to them under the old regime, and this moral obligation led to the decree of 1791 which granted total liberty to the theater. Up to the coup d'état of June 2, 1793, rival political groups used the stage as a means of publicizing their ideals. However, under the Terror, the new leaders no longer felt obligated to observe the freedoms which had been granted by their predecessors. Therefore, censorship was restored in the theater, and the stage became the exclusive use of the government.

Not only did the revolutionary playwright wish to expose the audience to a series of models which he hoped its members would seek to emulate, but he presented them as

well, with a number of slogans, clichés, which served to condense the lesson of the play. Not all playwrights had Beffroy de Reigny's musical talents to compose popular tunes which were whistled in the streets. Many were obliged to create slogans which could be popularized and applied to current situations.

For those citizens not so fortunate to be born into wealth and position the only road left open for upward mobility was by dint of hard work and economy. For this reason the bourgeois theater was dominated by the theme of the work ethic. Even pre-revolutionary drama contained this idea, as we saw when Mr. Delomer in La Brouette du vinaigrier (1775) said of the elder Dominique's work attire: " . . . il lui donne un air utile . . . " (III.3.96). Nicodème in Nicodème dans la lune (November 1790) put the matter of work in another perspective: "J'travaille, parc' qu'on n'est pas v'nu au monde pour ne rien faire . . . " (III.2.82). It is clear that Beffroy de Reigny's own values are being stated here, for a peasant, such as Nicodème, might well have a totally different idea on the matter. In L'Ecole des parvenus (February 1792) we hear Jacques, a chimneysweep, say, "J'ai un bel et bon habit, . . . j'l'ons gagné en travaillant, . . . j'ons mérité d'le porter." (I.10.28) The basic complaint of the middle class in the eighteenth century was that positions should be

granted on the basis of merit, not birth. Jacques reflects that thought by the fact that he has earned the right to be proud of his property, be it merely the clothes on his back. Up to the Jacobin coup d'état the theme of the work ethic was related to individuals. After the Jacobins had taken charge of ruling France there was a redirection in the target of the theme of the work ethic from that of serving one's individual needs to that of serving the needs of the state. As Crane Brinton noted, the Jacobins were willing to subordinate their individuality for the common good.²⁸ Thibaut, the gardener, in le Vous et le toi (November 1793) presented that sentiment when he said: "Chacun d'nous, à sa manière/ se rend utile à l'Etat . . . (I.8.23). The following year, Roger, a miller, in Agricol Viala (July 1794) stated the matter of work in succinct Jacobin terms, " . . . vive la joie et le travail! car pour être bon Républicain, il faut qu'on travaille. Les paresseux, les oisifs, ne sont pas patriotes . . . " (I.5.10-11).

A theater written by members of the middle class for the enjoyment of their own social and economic group could not but include the theme which dominated their own lives. It is therefore not surprising to see the Jacobins, whose political power was based on the Commune, ensure that plays performed during their tenure in power reflected

their policies.

Les Montagnards (September 1794) performed during the Terror, reflects the prevalent Jacobin attitude that the citizens had to respect the law which was formulated for the good of all. During a lesson, all the students sing:

Qui ne vit que pour soi,
N'aime pas la loi;
Elle dit qu' chacun de nous
Doit céder à tous.

(I.5.13)

However the main complaint concerning the law during the Revolution and throughout the eighteenth century was the abuses committed in its name. In Nicodème (November 1790), Bibi, one of the emperor's wives asks whether Frenchmen have more than one wife. Nicodème responds, " . . . pas selon la loi: mais la loi n'i fait pas; on saute par-dessus." (II.4.63-64) Sade in Oxtiern (October 1791) has his hero state the abuse of the law more succinctly:

Derbac - Et les lois, mon ami, les lois?

Oxtiern - Je ne les ai jamais vu résister à la puissance de l'or.

(II.1.123)

Olympe de Gouges probably reflected best the complaint of the middle class when she has Madame La Feuillette in l'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles (January 1793) reply to the criminal judge who has just summoned her to obey the law: " . . . nous en voulons bien des loix, mais des loix pour tous, et non pas pour vous seuls . . . " (V.8.125)

Slogans concerning the necessity of an education were also popular on the stage. This again reflected the middle class influence in the theater. It was necessary to inform the public of the need to avail themselves of tools which would aid them in their professions or trades. In l'Artiste patriote (August 1791) Henri, the poet and artist, says to Louis, the gardener: "L'ignorance abrutit . . . Instruisez-vous toujours." (I.1.7) Le Franc in Les Brigands de la Vendée (October 1793) says: " . . . l'éducation . . . seule peut éclairer l'homme . . . " (II.1.27) Candor, the teacher in Les Montagnards (September 1794) repeats Henri's advice when he says to his class: " . . . l'ennemi le plus redoutable du gouvernement le plus juste, est l'ignorance." (I.13.29)

As previously mentioned, Olympe de Gouges' vision of the role of women in French revolutionary society as seen in l'Entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles (January 1793) was rather illusory. The most prevalent role attributed to women on the stage was in a child-rearing capacity. In Le Divorce (May 1793) we saw Simonne, the wet nurse, berating parents for not meeting their parental responsibilities, for as she said: "Les bons soins font la bonne maman." (I.11.40) In fact, based on the maternal love she had given the child as a second mother, she threatened to take the child from the parents saying that:

Je l'ai nourri,
 Choyé, bercé, baisé, chéri,
 Et si j'n'suis que sa second'mère
 J'ai fait pour lui mieux qu'la première,
 Je l'ai nourri.

(I.11.41)

Le Divorce had been performed prior to the June coup d'état.

In November 1793, le Vous et le toi reflected the Jacobin ideal of the role of women, when we hear Marcel saying:

"El'ver avec soin ses enfans/ Pour servir la Patrie . . . "

(I.6.19) We again meet the recurrent Jacobin theme of the necessity of each citizen to surrender his individual

liberties for the good of the state. Therefore, we hear

Julien in Les Brigands de la Vendée (October 1793) saying

" . . . la patrie doit l'emporter sur tout, et on doit tout lui sacrifier." (II.8.37-8) Pauline, in Agricol Viala

(July 1794) reiterates this sentiment when she states:

" . . . il faut abandonner tout . . . pour la défendre: car sans Patrie, il n'y a plus de famille." (I.2.6)

The previous quotes give the reader a feeling for the propaganda style of most revolutionary drama. The members of the audience, whatever their station in life, were able to glean from the play a number of slogans which would hopefully be repeated to friends and neighbors, thereby giving them a condensed version of the play.

Prior to June 1793, the themes explored on the stage were quite varied, due mainly to the enthusiasm brought about by the young republic's new freedoms. But

the coup d'état of June 1793 dampened many revolutionary spirits. Soon playwrights, actors and theater directors found themselves constrained to limit their ardor and instead create a school on their stage for the enlightenment of the general public. In Chapter Four we quoted a Jacobin member of the Convention, Payan, who clearly stated his party's position, that the theater was to be a school devoted to the reeducation of the public. In that context, it is quite apparent that the playwrights responded positively to his request for plays seeking to assist the public in reassessing its commitment to the State.

Footnotes

1. Moore, p. 3.
2. Moore, p. 178.
3. W. v. Wartburg, Evolution et structure de la langue française, 7th ed. (Berne: Francke, 1965), p. 197.
4. Ibid., p. 202.
5. Ibid., p. 186.
6. Ibid., p. 192.
7. Ibid., p. 196.
8. Ibid., p. 213.
9. See Appendix, p. 239.
10. Moore, p. 322.
11. Paris: Bordas, 1972, p. 250.
12. Moore, p. 322.
13. Seguin, p. 41.
14. Ibid., p. 41.
15. See Appendix, p. 240.
16. Moore, p. 323.
17. See Appendix, p. 241.
18. Moore, p. 363.
19. Dr. Hoefer, ed. Nouvelle Biographie Générale, 47 vols. (Paris: Formin Didot Frères, 1858), LX, pp. 49-50.
20. See Appendix, p. 253.
21. Wartburg, p. 149.

22. Seguin, p. 48.
23. Wartburg, pp. 155-156.
24. Ibid., p. 299.
25. Seguin, p. 48.
26. Ibid., p. 53.
27. Ibid., p. 47.
28. Brinton, p. 155.

CONCLUSION

The Revolution can be divided into three stages. In the first, which took place prior to 1789, we find the aristocrats attempting to recapture the dominance which they had lost to Louis XIV. In the second stage, we find the middle class in control of the Revolution. Greatly influenced by the philosophes, their concept of equality meant however, sharing power with the aristocracy under the rule of the king. In the third stage, the Paris Commune seized control. Its power and influence rested on the different Sections which were dominated by artisans and shopkeepers. Their leaders were members of the middle class such as Robespierre and looked to Rousseau as their spiritual leader.

Daniel Mornet states:

Il est certain que la Révolution a été, pour une part, la protestation aveugle de la misère et la révolte spontanée de la souffrance. Pourtant la philosophie y a joué son rôle précis. Elle n'a enseigné ni la Révolution ni la démocratie. Mais elle a transformé les esprits; elle les a déshabitués du respect et de la tradition; elle les a rendus aptes à réfléchir sur la révolution et la démocratie.¹

The convening of the first session of the Estates-General marked the opening of the second stage of the Revolution. The aristocrats had failed in their attempt

to regain their lost power. They had merely succeeded in reinforcing in the minds of the members of the Third Estate fears of an aristocratic revolt. Marie-Joseph Chénier² best described the situation in the theater in 1789 when he said:

Telle tragédie, telle comédie pourrait porter jusqu'aux rois la vérité, qui leur est si rigoureusement cachée. Par cet ingénieux moyen, les intrigues de leur cour, son insolence, et sa perversité pourraient leur être dévoilées. Mais en cela, comme en tout le reste, les rois de France sont esclaves des importants qui les approchent, et des créatures de ces importants.

The people continued to believe in the monarchy. Plays performed during both the Constituent and the Legislative Assembly attest to it. The villains found in most plays were members of the aristocracy, be they generals or cardinals. In Louis XII, père du peuple (February 1790), we saw a farm laborer cause the fall of a nobleman. The title of the play itself reflected the sentiments of the playwright, as well as those of the theater-going public. The parish priest was still highly regarded as we saw in Nicodème dans la lune (November 1790) or in Le Club des bonnes-gens (September 1791). At first the role played by the commoner on the stage differed little from what it had been in the seventeenth or the earlier part of the eighteenth centuries. We had seen Lisette, the maid, in Ricco (November 1784) confront the Baron d'Ormeuil in defense of her mistress. This scene could easily

have taken place earlier in the century. But as the Revolution progressed we find that the role of the commoner shifts from that of secondary character to that of the hero. Nicodème for example speaks to the nobility of the Moon as an equal.

Brinton states that: "the moderates [in revolutions] are particularly handicapped in their efforts to suppress [these] enemy organizations . . . The moderates found themselves obliged to observe certain "rights" of their enemies--notably those of freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly."³ The decree of January, 1791, granting freedom in the theaters was a result of the quandry in which the government found itself. It recognized the danger from the extremists but it also felt morally obliged to abolish the restraints that had existed prior to 1789. This attitude resulted in a certain amount of liberal legislation. As a member of the Legislative Assembly, the Marquis de Condorcet proposed a national system of education where: ". . . All social institutions should have for their aim the physical, intellectual and moral betterment of the most numerous and poorest class of the population."⁴ The proposal was part of a report he gave to the Assembly as the chairman of the Committee on Public Instruction. Although the idea was widely heralded, the Assembly deferred action on it for lack of funds.

Napoleon would later use it as the basis for his reorganization of education in France.

In keeping with the liberal attitude of the Legislative Assembly and underlined in Daniel Mornet's statement above, on September 20, 1792, that venerable body voted for passage of a law permitting divorce.⁵

The third stage of the Revolution marks the overthrow of the moderate forces. According to Crane Brinton this occurred on June 2, 1793, with the arrest of the twenty-two Girondist deputies to the Convention.⁶ With that coup, supported by the Commune of Paris, the Mountain was in firm control of the government.

As soon as the Jacobins controlled the government they called for a rule of Virtue. According to Crane Brinton, once in power:

There is a serious attempt by those in authority to eradicate the minor voices, as well as what some might feel inclined to call the major pleasures . . . in '93 and '94 there was an earnest attempt to clean up Paris, to shut up brothels, gaming houses, to eliminate actual drunkenness. Virtue was the order of the day. You couldn't even be lazy. Some Jacobin would be sure to report you to the club, with the suggestion that the best place to cure you of unrepblican laziness was the army.⁷

Two months after their taking the reins of government the Jacobins restored censorship in the theater with the law of August 2, 1793.

The majority of the plays performed during the Terror were comedies, stated Beatrice Hyslop.⁸

Playwrights realized that the audiences of the minor theaters had little or no formal education. Therefore they wrote comedies which required little or no knowledge of past history, philosophy or science. The daily life of the common people was presented as virtuous. The themes constantly exhibited were family, loyalty, faithfulness in marriage and community spirit. These plays preached the same morality as had the pre-Revolutionary church.

According to Maurice Albert there was another factor in the popularity of many comedies:

. . . ce sont les couplets qui faisaient surtout le mérite et le succès de ces petites comédies: ils en étaient le véritable clou; et les auteurs les plus appréciés sur les boulevards, Cousin Jacques, Radet et Desfontaines, avaient raison de dire "le genre du vaudeville devait surtout servir à la propagation des principes républicains, puisque le soldat sous la tente et l'ouvrier dans l'atelier peuvent avoir continuellement à la bouche un refrain patriotique."⁹

As we mentioned in chapter four, the law effectively dampened the spirits of the theatrical world. Directors, writers and even actors had to be careful in their choice of words, or else, run the risk of being cited before the revolutionary tribunals for unpatriotic actions. As Quentin explains:

Tout le monde se disait censeur; d'où la confusion des pouvoirs. Des Montagnards à la Convention, des membres du Conseil général à la Commune, des Sans-Culottes du Club des Jacobins, des patriotes aux Assemblées de section ou dans les Sociétés populaires récriminaient à tout propos contre les théâtres, signalaient

tels auteurs ou tels acteurs comme autant d'aristocrates irréductibles, réclamaient la révision des pièces les plus inoffensives, exigeaient une esthétique nouvelle.¹⁰

Robespierre, himself, became involved in the performance of François de Neufchâteau's play Pamela. He was bothered by what he thought were aristocratic remarks uttered by the actors. The play was suspended. However he did not allow the matter to remain there. He felt it necessary to pursue both the actors and the theater.

Assez longtemps les habitués de ce théâtre, qui est le repaire dégoûtant de l'aristocratie de tout genre ont insulté la Révolution et ses soutiens généreux . . . il faut que ce spectacle où l'on ose prêcher la contre-révolution avec tant d'impudence soit détruit.¹¹

The result of Robespierre's attack was that the Théâtre de la Nation was closed and its actors imprisoned. Therefore we can appreciate the importance of the intrusion by government officials and their friends and supporters in the life of the revolutionary theater. The government leadership expected certain subjects to be explored on the stage in the hope of edifying the general public. Crane Brinton says:

. . . one of the distinguishing marks of a revolution may well be that in revolutionary times the idealist at last gets a chance to try and realize his ideals.¹²

Robespierre's own ideals were certainly reinforced by a great deal of ambition and vanity. However, his position in the revolutionary government allowed him to impose his

own values on the Parisian stage. As we have seen, the stage reflected his reverence for the work ethic, as well as respect for the law and the state, which were similar to the ideals espoused by the shopkeepers and artisans of the Commune.

But not only did the Convention intrude in the theater regarding the genre to be performed, it also concerned itself with the characters that were to represent those ideals. On April 26, 1794, the following circular was sent to the actors of the Théâtre National by the police on orders of the Committee for Public Safety:

Nous vous enjoignons, expressément, citoyens, au nom de la loi et sous votre responsabilité personnelle, de faire disparaître sur le champ de toutes vos pièces de théâtre, soit en vers, soit en prose, les titres de duc, baron, marquis, comte, monsieurs, madames, et autres qualifications proscrites, ces noms de féodalité émanant d'une source trop impure pour qu'ils souillent plus longtemps la scène française.¹³

The role of the common people on the Parisian stage became increasingly important as the Revolution progressed. But, as we have seen, it was due to the pressure of the government upon the theatrical world. Imprisonments and executions of actors and directors had shown the importance of following the directives of the revolutionary government.

Referring to goals of the different genres performed during the Revolution, Jean Rivoire states:

. . . le grand ~~nombre~~ de tragédies (et surtout celles qui ont des sujets antiques) enseignent l'idéal politique. L'idéal moral, par contre, est surtout enseigné par les drames et les petits genres. C'est ce qui explique leur développement extraordinaire pendant la Terreur, quand l'Egalité et la Fraternité eurent leur plus grande vogue.¹⁴

The Jacobins needed the theaters to spread their propaganda. No better tool existed than to represent commoners on the stage depicting virtuous actions since the goal of the performances was didactic in nature. The plays were, in effect, replacing the empty churches with teachings which would benefit the State. This action on the part of the Jacobins is understandable in the light of the influence of the philosophes on the Revolutionary leaders. The philosophers had envisioned the State enacting a moral code for its citizenry:

Rousseau, dans le Contrat social prévoit une religion d'Etat . . . Les Encyclopédistes substituent à cette religion une morale d'Etat. D'Holbach . . . rédige une Ethocratie, c'est-à-dire le plan d'une politique qui se fonde sur l'organisation des mœurs, l'enseignement des vertus nécessaires à la prospérité de l'état. L'Esprit d'Helvétius consacre la plus grande partie de ses déductions à montrer comment un gouvernement habile peut former les esprits à la morale sociale, comment les sociétés peuvent être ce que l'on veut qu'elles soient . . . Mably est encore plus formel: "N'est-il pas certain que la politique doit nous faire aimer la vertu et que c'est le seul objet que doivent se proposer les législateurs, les lois et les magistrats?"¹⁵

With the ascent of the rule of Virtue, we find that many of the ideas previously espoused by an elitist

few begin to be applied to the masses. The best example probably was the question of education. Prior to the Revolution, according to Daniel Mornet:

. . . Presque tous les philosophes se défient de la "populace" et préfèrent qu'elle occupe ses bras plutôt que son esprit. C'est le clergé qui surveille et encourage les petites écoles. Car on n'y apprend que la lecture, l'écriture et le calcul et on n'y étudie que le catéchisme et l'histoire sainte.¹⁶

The lack of education was a serious obstacle to the revolutionary government. Wartburg reports that government emissaries sent to spread revolutionary ideas were at times met by citizens who spoke no French. But where the same emissaries were well received the main complaint was the lack of education.¹⁷ Tallyrand in 1790¹⁸ and Condorcet in 1792 both recommended the establishment of schools throughout France.

We saw that Pujoulx as well as other playwrights addressed himself to the problem of education in Les Montagnards (September 1794) and other works. Candor's school resembled the church-run establishment in all respects except one. Rather than studying the catechism and the history of the saints he used the Rights of Man to indoctrinate his students with the ideals of the Revolution. At the end of the play the students are heartened to hear that the government had enacted legislation making education free throughout France. Unfortunately this was

not the case for the government lacked funds to carry out this legislation. Until that time, individual families had to improvise a system of instruction for their children. We find the Mirvilles in Puységur's L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain (January 1794) replacing the Roman missal and the genealogy of kings with patriotic books as educational tools for their children.

The question of equal rights for women had been addressed by Olympe de Gouges. This matter would take some time to resolve, for, despite the idealism found in many playwrights, the majority did not envision their wives fighting the enemy but rather saw them at home caring for their children. Some, such as Philippon, went to the extreme of seeing women's main function as bearing soldiers to die for their country.

We have found that revolutionary plays, especially those performed under Jacobin rule, sought to inculcate the citizenry with virtuous ideals. However, as Brinton states:

Shut out from his ordinary pleasures and vices, constrained to fight for, or at least to cheer long, loud, and conspicuously for the revolutionary state in its struggle with foreign and civil foes, exposed to privation and suffering from scarcity attendant on war and the inevitable inefficiencies of the new government, urged to the "height of revolutionary circumstances" on every hand, in press, theater, pulpit, rostrum, mass demonstration, above all inescapably caught in the common and very exhausting nervous excitement which marks the crisis period . . .

[the ordinary citizen] . . . sooner or later finds these strains insupportable and gets ready to welcome anyone who can put an end to them.¹⁹

The Fall of Robespierre marks the end of the Terror because public opinion was strong enough to halt further shedding of blood.²⁰ With the recall of the remaining Girondists to the government it was the Jacobins' turn to go into hiding. But their departure from the reins of power also marks the diminished importance of the commoner on the stage. The Gironde, we must remember, represented the upper middle class in France. It no longer was in good taste to depict the populace in the role of hero.

Charles Ducancel reflects the reversal of roles between the populace and the middle class in his play, l'Intérieur des comités révolutionnaires (April 1795).²¹ The hero is no longer a commoner, but rather an honest merchant. He is supported by his family and servants, all of whom are devoted to him. His antagonists are members of the proletariat: an adventurer, a swindler, a hairdresser, a porter and a chair-mender. They enjoy the power of their position and are lining their pockets with the spoils of their crimes.

Ducancel derides the revolutionary mania of re-naming both people and things. The main source of names came from virtuous Roman republicans. In the play the

five crooked committee members have Roman names whereas the honest merchant is called Dufour. According to Crane Brinton, it was a common practice for revolutions to indulge in renaming things.²²

Vilain - une lettre en main, reconnaissant
Torquatus. Tiens! c'est Fétu le rempailleur!
bon jour donc, mon ami Fétu.

Torquatus - Qu'appelles-tu Fétu? je sommes
Torquatu.

Vilain - Va pour Torquatu. C'est pis qu'une
rage, on ne reconnaît plus aujourd'hui ni les
hommes ni les rues.

Torquatus - Les patriotes s'appelons tous par
des noms romains. Tiens, j'vou/ons te débatiser
toi, et t'appeller César . . .

(I.9.16)

Vilain, a messenger from the revolutionary tribunal, refuses to have his name changed. When Brutus, another member of the committee, arrives, Vilain recognizes him as Ficelle, a porter. Brutus quickly informs him of the change in name and position. Vilain, astonished, says:
". . . Si ça continue, je ne désespère pas d'être un jour
général d'armée . . ." (I.9.17)

The play continues with scenes depicting the criminal stupidity of the five commoners of the committee. We see them attempt to incriminate Dufour in a theft of funds. The play ends with the news of the Fall of Robespierre and the arrest of the five commoners for a variety of crimes.

Ducancel's play represents the reversal of fortunes of the common man on the revolutionary stage. His role had progressively increased in importance. Under the Terror the common people reflected the policies of the government. But with the demise of the Jacobins, they lost their function as models of virtuous actions. They soon became objects of scorn and ridicule for the upper middle class which had regained control of the government. Theatrical characters reflecting common men functioned as didactic and propaganda tools for the government during the Terror as well as for amusement. With the return of the upper middle class to power, plays lost their degree of democratization and returned to the elite language of the ruling class.

FOOTNOTES

1. Daniel Mornet, La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, 11th ed. (Paris: Colin, 1965), p. 208.
2. Marie-Joseph Chenier, Dénonciation des Inquisiteurs de la Pensée. (Paris: LaGrange, 1789), pp. 17-18.
3. Brinton, p. 138.
4. Will and Ariel Durant, The Story of Civilization: part X. Rousseau and Revolution. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), p. 895.
5. Soboul, p. 311.
6. Brinton, p. 129.
7. Ibid., pp. 180-181.
8. Hyslop, p. 338.
9. Albert, (Boulevards), p. 91.
10. Estrée, pp. 11-12.
11. Ibid., p. 20.
12. Brinton, p. 115.
13. Estrée, p. 90.
14. Rivoire, p. 192.
15. Mornet, pp. 151-152.
16. Ibid., pp. 182-183.
17. Wartburg, p. 211.
18. Ibid., p. 213.
19. Brinton, p. 182.
20. Ibid., p. 206.
21. See Appendix, p. 242.
22. Brinton, p. 179.

APPENDIX

Beffroy de Reigny, Louis Abel, called le Cousin Jacques (1757-1811) was the son of a well-to-do provincial family. He attended the Collège Louis le Grand in Paris. At 18, he entered the Lazarist order and became an itinerant teacher. In 1785 he founded his journal, Les Lunes du Cousin Jacques. The success of his first play encouraged him to continue writing. He had talent as both a lyricist and composer such that his tunes continued to be popular after the closing of the play. Nicodème dans la lune was a great financial success for the theater director who grossed 100,000 écus. However, the author was paid 1600 livres for the production.¹

L'Histoire universelle, comédie en vers et en deux actes (Théâtre de Monsieur, 15 mai 1791), Paris: Froullé, 1791.

Characters

Valsain - Lord of the village
 Gaillardin - innkeeper
 Fanchette - Gaillardin's daughter
 Gentil - domestic at the inn
 Elise - widow, traveller
 Mondor - financier, traveller
 Leonore - Valsain's former fiancée
 Lisette - Leonore's maid
 le père Laurent - hermit
 village youngsters

scene - a village on the boundaries of the realm

The first scene shows the village youth at play. Gaillardin berates them for their laziness. The lord of the village, Valsain, has been seeing to their needs and they have become dependent on his good offices. Gaillardin, angered by this dependency, argues with Valsain defending the need for the work ethic. Valsain, however, seems troubled and Gaillardin tries vainly to find the reason. However, when the latter describes his three guests, Valsain suddenly is interested. He has recognized Leonore. Her maid arrives and after some hesitation he agrees to a reconciliation.

Gentil wonders at the guests' complaints, since they are rich. Elise and Mondor commiserate but feel their own problem is worse than the others. They ask Gentil to judge but arrive at the conclusion that all three are to be pitied. Leonore and Valsain are again at odds. Père Laurent arrives. He recounts his life story in which all recognize themselves, except Gentil. Père Laurent proceeds then to resolve their difficulties. Lisette summarizes the problem: "Etre mécontent de son sort, c'est là . . . l'histoire universelle."

Beffroy de Reigny, Louis Abel.

Le Club des bonnes gens, ou le Curé français. Folie en vers et en deux actes, mêlée de vaudevilles et d'airs nouveaux (Théâtre de Monsieur, 24 septembre 1791), Paris: Cailleau, 1792.

Characters

Village priest
 Thomas - rich miller
 Dame Blaise - rich farmer
 Alain - son of Dame Blaise
 Elise - daughter of Thomas, Alain's suitor
 Nigaudinet - priest's gardener
 Nannette - priest's maid; Nigaudinet's suitor
 First peasant belonging to the priest's club
 Second " " " " " "
 Four other peasants belonging to the priest's club
 First peasant belonging to Thomas's club
 Old grandmother " " " "
 Little girl " " " "
 Men, women and children " " "

scene - village in Picardy

The priest is idealized by the majority of his parishioners because he continues to tend to their needs even though he has lost his property and bénéfices. He is extremely distressed at the discord caused by his neighbor's club. He is further disturbed that the neighbor, the miller, has refused to allow his daughter to marry Alain, as had been agreed upon prior to the Revolution. The priest establishes his own club to compete with the miller's. The main purpose of le Club des bonnes gens is to provide a diversion for its members from their hard work. The first meeting is very successful. The members of the neighboring club, surprised to hear sounds of laughter from the priest's garden, lean over the wall to investigate. Their weight causes the wall to fall. The unexpected reunion results in a general reconciliation of all parties.

Beffroy de Reigny, Louis Abel.

Nicodème dans la lune, ou, la Révolution pacifique, Folie en prose et en trois actes, mêlée d'ariettes et de vaudevilles (Théâtre Français, Comique et Lyrique, 7 novembre 1790), 3e ed., Paris: Froullé, 1791.

Characters

L'Empereur de la Lune
 First minister of the Emperor
 Bishop
 Aglae }
 Zilia } wives of the Emperor
 Bibi }
 Lord of the village
 Priest
 Ustuce - astronomer
 Nicodème - balloonist
 Mère Bahu } old women
 Mère Cassecroute }
 Jacquot - Ustuce's son
 Piqueurs - followers of the Emperor
 Seigneurs - followers of the Emperor
 Inhabitants of the capital
 Peasants of the village
 16 guards of the Emperor

The summary of this play was given in Chapter Three.

Bourlin, Antoine-Jean, also called Dumaniant, (1752-1828) at first studied law, but was attracted to the theatrical world both as an actor and a playwright. After a quarrel with his father he adopted the pseudonym of Dumaniant, the name of a distant relative. Dumaniant was a very prolific author and was especially successful with complicated comical plots.²

Ricco, Comédie en deux actes (Théâtre du Palais-Royal, 26 novembre 1789), Avignon: J. Garrigan, 1791.

Characters

le Baron d'Ormeuil - Constance's father
 le Chevalier d'Ormeuil - the Baron's nephew
 le Marquis de Germancei - Constance's suitor
 Frontin - the Marquis' valet
 Ricco - former groom of the Baron and Lisette's former suitor
 Constance - the Baron's daughter
 Lisette - Constance's maid
 A sergeant from the Invalides
 A footman
 Soldiers from the Invalides

scene - St. Tropez, Haute Provence.

Constance d'Ormeuil loves the Marquis de Germancei. However, both families have been feuding since 1534. Lisette, her maid, and Frontin, his valet, vow to resolve the dispute themselves by a plan which they hope will end in the marriage of their masters. The Chevalier d'Ormeuil, who also loves Constance, foils their plot by dueling with the Marquis. During the engagement the Chevalier falls from his horse and is thought to be killed. Frontin, fearing that the Marquis will be arrested, has him change clothes with a sleeping peasant. The latter, Ricco, awakens to find himself clad as a nobleman. Ricco is astonished at his change of fortune, which is short-lived, for he is suddenly arrested and brought to the Baron.

Lisette learns that the Chevalier is not dead. He had merely been stunned when his horse had thrown him. Meanwhile, the Baron is outraged at the "Marquis'" behavior, wondering what his daughter could possibly see in such a

coarse fellow. Germancei is introduced into the château in guise of his own cousin to mediate the dispute between their families. The Baron is impressed with him and announces that he could forget his hatred of the Germanceis if the cousin were the suitor rather than the "Marquis." Lisette reveals the subterfuge resulting in a felicific denouement.

Boullault, Mathieu J. No biographical information available.

Le Brigands de la Vendée, Opéra-vaudeville en deux actes, mêlé de combats et incendie (Théâtre des Variétés Amusantes, 3 octobre 1793), Paris: Toubon, 1793.

Characters

Simon - father of Louise and Georgette

Grégoire - father of Jacques

Le Franc - soldier (volunteer)

Julien - Georgette's suitor

Jacques - Louise's suitor
a volunteer

Nicole - Grégoire's wife

Georgette } Simon's daughters

Louise }

Peasants, brigands, brigand leader

scene - a village near St. Laurent de la Salle.

The summary of this play was given in Chapter Three.

Carbon de Flins des Oliviers, Claude (1757-1806) was the son of the administrator of water and forestry for Reims. Carbon de Flins studied in Reims writing poetry at the age of sixteen. In 1789, he owned a seat as councilor of the monetary exchange in Paris, which he lost as a result of the Revolution.³

Le Mari-Directeur, ou le Déménagement du couvent, Comédie en un acte, en vers libres (Théâtre de la Nation, 25 février 1791), Paris: Brunet, 1791.

Characters

The Abbess

Sister Petronille

Sister Appoline

Sister Eudalie

Agnès - novice, Dorval's daughter by his first marriage

Théotime - Cistercian monk, director of the convent

Gabriel

Deraphin

} monks who have left the convent

Jannette - turn-box attendant of the convent (a nun)

Nicolas - gardener of the convent

M. Dorval - district commissioner

Mme. Dorval - his wife

La Fleur - Dorval's servant

Nuns

scene - the convent

Nicolas informs the audience that the convent is about to be closed. He is rather bitter, for, as he says, he has nurtured both the garden and its occupants for the past thirty years but his handsome nephew has now replaced him in the estimation of the good nuns. Dorval arrives and announces that the State has decreed that whomever wishes may remain in the convent, but, if they wish, may be released from their vows with a pension. Everyone except the turn-box nun accepts the pension. Nicolas is informed that after thirty years of work he will receive nothing.

Dorval then starts an inventory of the convent. The nuns hurry off to see their confessor, Father Honorin. La Fleur gives Dorval a letter from the latter announcing

his acceptance of the pension and his departure from the convent. Dorval puts on Honorin's clerical robes and prepares to hear confession, starting with his wife. She exaggerates her complaints about her husband, for she has recognized him. Angered, he reveals himself, but she quickly appeases him. After she leaves, he examines the contents of a wallet and finds a letter from Father Théotime confessing his love for Agnès. The nuns arrive for a last confession. He discloses his true identity, asking for their pardon. He then gives his consent to Agnès to marry Théotime.

Collot d'Herbois, Jean-Marie (1750-1796) was born in Paris of middle class parents who provided him with a good education. He was a member of the Oratorian Congregation. Prior to the Revolution he was an itinerant actor and subsequently wrote plays. He was for a time director of the Geneva Theater. It is there that he developed his republican tendencies. The Revolution attracted him to Paris where he frequented the political clubs. He was noted for his eloquence, such that as his political fortunes improved, his literary production waned. His last play is dated 1792.⁴

Adrienne, ou le Secret de famille, Comédie en trois actes et en prose (Théâtre du Palais-Royal, 19 avril 1790), Paris: Duchesne, 1790.

Characters

M. de Franceval

Mme. de Franceval

Adrienne - their daughter

Fontreuil - also called Germain, Adrienne's suitor

Saint Fleurisse - friend of Mr. and Mrs. de Franceval

Francoeur - former soldier, Mr. de Franceval's valet

Rosette - Mrs. de Franceval's chambermaid

René - Mr. de Saint Fleurisse's valet

François - Mr. de Franceval's farmer

Françoise - François' wife, Adrienne's wet-nurse

Mathurin - peasant

Several peasants and valets

scene - acts I and II - the château

act III - near the François farm

Fontreuil, in love with Adrienne, has placed his servant, Francoeur, in the Franceval household. Fontreuil receives a letter from his father wherein he is told to return to his regiment or be disowned. His father also informs him that he has received news of a

daughter who had been kidnapped sixteen years ago. Francoeur informs Fontreuil of Adrienne's impending betrothal.

M. de Franceval reveals the family secret to Adrienne. He had eloped with her mother sixteen years ago. They had sought refuge in Cadiz with the brother of M. de Saint Fleurisse. Saint Fleurisse himself had recently attempted to reconcile both families. In recognition of his efforts the Francevals wish to unite their families. Even though she loves Fontreuil, she refuses to counter her parents' wishes and agrees to the wedding.

Fontreuil, worried by his father's threat to disown him, urges Adrienne to elope. She attempts to reconcile her differences with her mother, to no avail. While the Francevals meet Saint Fleurisse, Fontreuil, Adrienne and Francoeur steal away to the François farm to await further developments. Fontreuil had sent the Francevals a letter revealing his true identity. Mme de Franceval recognizes him as her brother. Saint Fleurisse arrives at the farm to clarify the situation. He tells Fontreuil that he has been raised by his uncle, not his father, which makes Adrienne "une petite cousine." All ends happily.

Desfontaines de la Vallée, Guillaume (1733-1825) was the secretary of the Duke of Deux-Ponts; a royal censor; a private secretary; and Librarian to Monsieur. He readily accepted the new revolutionary ideas despite the loss of a 4,000 pound pension. He wrote numerous plays, often in collaboration with Barré and Radet. The plays were especially successful in the minor theaters.⁵

Le Divorce, Comédie en un acte (Théâtre de Vaudeville, 18 mai 1793), Paris: Brunet, nd.

Characters

Isabelle - wife of Germeuil
 Germeuil
 Abbé de Forlis - Isabelle's lover
 Cécile - maid
 Simonne - wet-nurse

scene - the Germeuil residence

Germeuil and his wife are estranged. However, he has custody of their daughter. Isabelle arrives to see her, but father and daughter are out. Isabelle tells Cécile that she intends to divorce Germeuil and marry her lover, the abbé. The latter arrives and upon hearing Isabelle's intentions, attempts to dissuade her. They are interrupted by Germeuil's return. Alone with Germeuil, the abbé confesses his love of Isabelle. Germeuil, jealous, exaggerates her life style; her love of gambling; her expensive tastes in clothing, in an attempt to cause a rift. Cécile enters and asks the abbé to leave. She then attempts to seduce Germeuil who is about to rebuke her when he spies his wife in the background. He decides to appear to succumb to Cécile's advances. Isabelle, angry, demands to have her daughter. Germeuil refuses, citing the Law, she quotes Family ties. Simonne, the child's wet-nurse, arrives to berate them both and urge them to abide by their parental responsibilities. They are soon reconciled. The abbé exits and Cécile is forgiven.

Dorvigny, Louis (1743-1812) may have been a royal bastard. It also may have been coincidence that he became interested in the theater in 1775, a few months after the death of Louis XV. He wrote over 400 plays, the most popular of which was Le Désespoir de Jocrisse.⁶

Les Noces du père Duchesne, Comédie en deux actes et en prose (Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, 26 décembre 1789), Paris: Caillieu, 1789.

Characters

Le Marquis
 La Marquise
 Lucile - servant at the château of the Marquis
 Duchesne - shopkeeper
 Gilotin - servant at the château
 Va-de-bon-cœur - soldier in the Marquis' regiment,
 Lucile's brother
 Three workers in père Duchesne's shop
 Lucas - peasant

scene - act I - Duchesne's store
 act II - the Marquis' château

Duchesne and Lucile are to be married. However, he has lost a letter which has been found by Gilotin, Lucile's former suitor. Gilotin gives it to Lucile in hope of creating a rift. She is infuriated at her lover's apparent deception. She writes him a letter breaking their engagement. Gilotin volunteers to give it to Duchesne. When the latter receives the letter he is also angered. Wondering about Gilotin's part in the matter he locks him in his shop. Meanwhile another letter arrives, ostensibly from one of Lucile's suitors. Duchesne arms himself to meet this new challenge. Meanwhile Gilotin escapes and returns to the château.

At the château, we meet the Marquis and the Marquise. He had sent the last letter to Duchesne in order to test the latter's love of Lucile. The suitor mentioned in the letter is in reality Lucile's brother, Va-de-bon-cœur, a soldier in the Marquis' regiment. Lucile arrives, fuming, and wanting to end the betrothal. Gilotin arrives next, limping. Last of all, Duchesne, well-armed, and even dragging a small cannon, comes to meet his rival. He agrees to lay down his weapons in order that all the parties attempt a reconciliation. After a few comical scenes all ends amicably.

Dorvigny, Louis.

Le Désespoir de Jocrisse, Comédie-folie en deux actes et en prose (Théâtre Montansier, 1792), nouvelle ed., Paris: Barba, 1816.

Characters

Mr. Duval - wine merchant
 Sophie - his daughter
 Jocrisse - his valet
 Nicette - Jocrisse's sister
 Nicole - Jocrisse's mother
 Colin - Jocrisse's little brother
 Nicolas - Jocrisse's cousin
 Dupont Sr. - friend of Duval
 Dupont Jr. - Sophie's suitor

scene - the Duval country house near Paris

In the opening scene we find that Jocrisse is a lazy, clumsy oaf. Duval is about to fire him for his incompetence when he is called away. Jocrisse is therefore given a final reprieve. Duval, apprehensive about leaving a case of wine with Jocrisse, labels it "Poison." After his departure, Jocrisse, while cleaning the bird cage, starts a chain of events which ends with the canary and hunting dog gone, the cat crippled, and fine porcelain destroyed. His mother is duped into allowing Dupont Jr. into the house and her daughter allows her mistress, Sophie, to leave the house with him. Jocrisse and his family realize that they have failed in their duties and decide to commit suicide.

Duval returns and is surprised to find the house empty. Jocrisse arrives, totally inebriated and informs his master of the extent of the damages. When Jocrisse attempts to tell Duval that Sophie has been kidnapped, Duval misunderstands and thinks that his wine has been stolen. Dupont Jr. arrives to ask Duval for permission to marry his daughter. Duval thinks he is referring to his wine and a merry confusion ensues. When Duval finally realizes that his daughter is the subject of their conversation, he is incensed. However, Dupont Sr. arrives and the fathers come to an agreement. A general amnesty is declared.

Dorvigny, Louis.

Jocrisse changé de condition, Comédie-folie en deux actes
(Théâtre Variétés, 1793), nd.

Characters

M. Dupont
Mme Dupont
M. Dorval - painter, friend of M. Dupont
Ursule - servant
Jocrisse - Dupont's valet
Glaude - peasant
a Gascon hairdresser
a lottery vendor

scene - Paris, the Dupont home

Jocrisse is a bungling servant in the employ of the Duponts. He is also quite naive, which is shown in a scene where a lottery vendor persuades him to purchase a ticket as an investment. We find that Jocrisse wishes to marry Ursule and needs to increase his savings. The remainder of the play is merely a series of antics by Jocrisse, to the delight of Mr. Dupont, but to Mrs. Dupont's great discomfiture. Seemingly Jocrisse can do no wrong until he inadvertently allows some papers on Dupont's desk to blow out the window. Informed of the loss of his assignats, Dupont immediately fires Jocrisse. The day is saved, however, for Jocrisse has won the lottery. He presents his winnings to Dupont as payment of any losses caused by his blunders. Touched by Jocrisse's generosity, Dupont returns the money in lieu of a dowry for Ursule and invites Jocrisse to remain in his employment for as long as he wishes.

them. After his departure the members argue as to who will arrest the Dufours. They all wish to do so for they feel that they will be able to personally appropriate part of the Dufour fortune.

The Dufours are arrested. Their servants choose to be judged with them. Dufour Jr. saves the family by announcing the arrest of Robespierre, Saint-Just and Couthon and the end of the Terror. The members are themselves arrested and charged with misappropriating committee funds. They are then paraded about the stage wearing their bonnets rouges. Dufour, meanwhile, is thanked for his patriotism.

Dupuis, Amable. No biographical information available.

L'Artiste patriote, ou la Vente des biens nationaux,
Comédie en cinq actes et en vers (premier aout 1791),
Paris: Gueffier, 1791.

Characters

Monsieur Clerville - Elise's father

Madame Durosier - his sister, a ridiculous and coquette lady, in love with Henri

Henri - painter and poet, Elise's suitor

Elise - Clerville's daughter

Louis - gardener

Rosette - Mme Durosier's maid

Vernon - aristocrat

L'Evêque de . . . - another aristocrat

Dupré - follower of Vernon and the Bishop

Servants, National Guards, brigands

scene - M. Clerville's château

Henri and Elise love each other. However, Mme Durosier also loves Henri and through a misunderstanding, feels that it is reciprocated. Louis meets an old friend, Dupré, a counter-revolutionary. He attempts to gain Louis to his cause, but the latter, a patriot, chases him off.

Madame Durosier introduces Vernon and the bishop to Clerville. The bishop had once been abbot of the nearby monastery. They hope to induce Clerville to join their cause. But as they hear Clerville praising Henri's paintings, they realize to their dismay that they are in a republican household. Louis, meanwhile, has recognized them as Dupré's masters and follows them as they leave.

Dupré announces to his masters that Clerville has just purchased the nearby monastery. They are enraged and decide to attempt to involve Clerville in their plot. They arrive at Clerville's home in time to assist in the reading of one of Henri's poems. Louis has also been invited to sit among them, much to Vernon's discomfort. The latter is soon enraged at the patriotic nature of the poem, grabs it and tears it to shreds. Clerville is amazed at this behavior, but Louis informs him of their plans. Clerville has his servants eject the traitors from his house.

Madame Durosier remonstrates Clerville's behavior, thereby revealing her own aristocratic sentiments. She also announces her intention of marrying Henri, to Clerville's surprise. Nevertheless, he gives her his blessing. Meanwhile, Henri has been challenged to a duel by Vermon.

Clerville informs his sister that Henri does not wish to marry her. Elise tells her father that bandits are attacking Henri and Louis. Clerville goes to their help. Henri returns to say that the bandits have been repulsed. Louis then announces that the house is besieged by bandits led by Vermon, the bishop and his monks. Henri goes to help and saves Clerville's life. The bandits are captured. Clerville announces the betrothal of his daughter to Henri. All sing the praises of the Republic.

Gamas. No biographical information available.

Cange, ou le Commissionnaire de Lazare, Fait historique, un acte et en prose (Théâtre de la République, 7 octobre 1794), Paris: Toubon, n.d.

Characters

Cange - messenger

Durand - citizen incarcerated in the Lazare prison

Citoyenne Durand - his wife

Rose

Emile } the Durand children

Victor }

Verseuil - government representative

Picard - Verseuil's servant

scene - Durand residence

With her husband unjustly imprisoned, Citoyenne Durand must care for her poverty-stricken family. Cange, a messenger from the Lazare prison, arrives, seeking money for her husband. He quickly appraises the situation and presents her with 50 Francs ostensibly from Mr. Durand. Suddenly, Emile announces the release of his father. Durand arrives with Verseuil who had secured his release. Durand asks his wife to introduce the generous neighbor who lent the 50 Francs. She is taken aback and replies that it is she who must thank him for the money. Verseuil sends Picard to fetch the messenger in order to clarify the matter. Cange at first insists that another person had given him the money, but finally acknowledges that the 100 Francs came from his own pocket. He is praised and thanked by all for his good action.

Gouges, Olympe de, was the pseudonym of Marie Aubry (1755-1793). Although little is known of her early life, she claimed to have been an illegitimate child. She arrived in Paris at the age of eighteen, married Sire Aubry and soon was a well-to-do widow. She started to write in search of notoriety. Her first play was performed by the Théâtre-Français in 1785. An ardent supporter of the emancipation of women, she was politically inconsistent. She vacillated between her revolutionary ardor and the defense of the king. After his death, she turned her anger towards Robespierre and attacked him verbally which ended in her arrest and execution. She had a very fertile imagination, but her writing lacked style. She admitted that she had only a rudimentary knowledge of writing but that her violent temper easily dissuaded anyone from helping her to improve it.⁸

L'Entrée de Dumourier (sic) à Bruxelles, ou les Vivandiers, Pièce en cinq actes et en prose (Théâtre de la République, 23 janvier 1793), Paris: Regnaud, 1793).

Characters

Dumourier - general of the Northern Army
 Egalité - general under Dumourier
 French Adjutant-General
 The two Fernig sisters
 Charlot - born in France and sutler of the Austrian Army
 Mme Charlot - his German wife
 Charlotte - their daughter
 General Clairfayt - Austrian general
 le Chevalier de Clairfayt - son of the general and Charlotte's suitor
 Lucas - Suzette's lover

Suzette - Lucas's lover
Le Prince de Wirtemberg
An aide-de-camp of the Prince
A German officer
Grisbourdin de Molinard - Chaplain of the Austrian Army
Tape-à-l'oeil - French spy
Three Austrian soldiers
Albert - Archduke, governor of the Netherlands
The Burgmaster of Brussels
Balsa - city councilor of Brussels
A criminal judge
Lafeuillet - wine-merchant, a drunkard
Mme Lafeuillet - his wife
Le père Hilarion - prior of the Carmelite convent
Several monks and priors
Two commoners
French and German troops

The summary of this play was given in Chapter Three.

Gouges, Olympe de (Marie Aubry).

Le Couvent, ou les Voeux forcés, Drame en trois actes
(Théâtre Français, Comique et Lyrique, octobre 1790),
Paris: Duchesne, 1792.

Characters

The Abbess
Sister Angélique - Julie's mother and the Marquis' sister
Julie - novice
Sister Agathe
The Marquis of Leuville
The Chevalier - son of the Marquis
A Vicar-general
A priest
Antoine - gardener
Several nuns
A commissioner
Several soldiers

scene - the convent

The Chevalier is in love with Julie. He bribes the gardener to introduce him into the convent disguised as a monk. The Chevalier, aware that his father wishes Julie to take her vows, suspects some ulterior motive. The Marquis, the vicar, and the priest arrive at the convent. The latter shows the Marquis a letter stating that Julie does not wish to take her vows. The Marquis recognizes his sister's handwriting. The vicar and the Marquis then attempt to bribe the priest who insists upon carrying out his duties.

The Abbess pressures Julie to take her vows. Julie confesses to the monk that she is not ready to take her vows for she loves the Chevalier. The latter removes his disguise and urges Julie to flee with him. She refuses and they are arguing when the abbess appears. She calls for the Marquis and the vicar. The Chevalier's suspicions are aroused at his father's presence and he confronts him. The vicar goes for help, returning with a commissioner from the Tribunal. He enjoins Julie from taking her vows until the entire matter is clarified.

Despite the magistrate's injunction, the Abbess, the vicar, and the Marquis continue to pressure Julie who finally accepts to take her vows. But Antoine, having overheard their conversation, warns the priest and the Chevalier. Accompanied by the commissioner, they arrive in time to stop the ceremony. Sister Angélique reveals her identity and announces that she and her daughter had been brought to the convent by the Marquis after he had killed her husband. The priest asks the Marquis to repent, which he does, thereby reuniting the family.

Gourgault, Jean-Baptiste, also called Dugazon (1743-1809) was the son of a provincial actor. Mlle Dugazon and Mme Vestris, his two sisters, had preceded him on the stage where they all were very successful. He was especially popular in the roles of Crispin, Scarpin and Jourdain.⁹

Le Modéré, Comédie en un acte et en vers (Théâtre de la République, 7 novembre 1793), Paris: Maradan, 1793.

Characters

Moderantin - financier, Julie's uncle
 Duval Sr. - mediator
 Dufour - an old servant
 Lestanville - Moderantin's son
 Duval Jr. - Julie's suitor
 Manette - old servant
 Fablenville - aristocrat
 Julie - Moderantin's niece
 two commissioners, a judge and a clerk

scene - Paris, the Moderantin home

Moderantin's servants: Dufour, a republican; and Manette, a royalist, set the scene. They are arguing about Moderantin's association with aristocrats and his lukewarm endorsement of the Revolution. Dufour, who likes his master, states that he has personally warned him on several occasions of the danger of his being moderate. Duval Jr. appears to ask Moderantin for permission to marry Julie. When Moderantin refuses, Duval Jr. informs him that he was only asking as a matter of form, but that the law now requires only the consent of the two parties concerned. Moderantin immediately vents his anger at the Republic and its ideals. Two delegates from the local section arrive in search of food and clothing. Moderantin assures them that he has none to give them, but their suspicions are aroused by Fablenville's arrival. The latter, feeling that he can speak openly, attacks the Republic and praises the old regime. Moderantin, despite all his efforts, is unable to quiet him, and, therefore, in an attempt to show his patriotism announces the betrothal of his niece to Duval Jr., the war hero. But, because of some other blunder, he has been denounced to the local authorities and arrested. The Duvals and Julie attempt to save him, but the judge decides that a few days in prison will teach him that one cannot be a lukewarm patriot.

Mercier, Louis Sebastien (1740-1814) was the son of a merchant. He attributes his interest in the theater to his attendance of a performance by the Comédie-Française for the first time in 1757. For a while he was a professor at the Collège de Bordeaux, but in 1760, he resigned in order to devote himself exclusively to literature. His plays were successful in the minor theaters, but a dispute with the actors of the Comédie-Française effectively barred performances of his plays on its stage.¹⁰

La Brouette du vinaigrier, Drame en trois actes et en prose, ed. Robert Aggéri (Théâtre des Associés, 1775), Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1972.

Characters

Mr. Delomer - merchant
 Miss Delomer - his daughter
 Mr. Jullefort - Miss Delomer's suitor
 Dominique senior - vinegar vendor
 Dominique junior - Mr. Delomer's clerk
 Mr. Du Saphier - Jeweler
 Servants

scene - Paris, Mr. Delomer's residence

The summary of this play was given in Chapter Three.

Philipon de la Madelaine, Louis (1734-1818) studied for the priesthood, but rather than taking his final vows, returned to school to study law. By 1786 he was the administrator of finances of the comte d'Artois. Because of his involvement with the aristocracy he maintained a low profile during the Terror. In 1795 he was appointed librarian to the Ministry of the Interior. In 1814 he was granted a pension by the comte d'Artois.¹¹

Agricol Viala, ou le Jeune héros de la Durance, Fait historique et patriotique, en un acte et en prose, mêlé de chant (Théâtre des Amis de la Patrie, premier juillet 1794), Paris: Barba, 1794.

Characters

Isidore - Petronille's husband
 Roger - neighboring miller
 An Aide-de-camp
 Two enemy spies
 Pauline - widow of Maximin Viala, miller
 Agricol - her son, 13 years of age
 Petronille - her niece, Isidore's wife
 Members of the wedding party

scene - the banks of the Durance

Pauline has been raising Agricol as a good patriot in accordance with her late husband's wishes. Her niece, Petronille, has just married Isidore. As they arrive with some friends for the wedding celebration, an aide-de-camp informs them that rebels are planning to cross the river. Agricol volunteers to remain at the ferry on watch. Two spies arrive. While one distracts Agricol, the other frees the ferry. Realizing suddenly that he has been duped, Agricol warns the wedding party. They hastily form a defense against the rebels who start crossing the Durance on the captured ferry. Agricol, who had been sent off with the women, suddenly reappears armed with an ax. He swims out to the rope guiding the ferry and cuts it. As he swims back to shore he is shot. The boat is swept downriver by the swift current. Agricol manages to reach shore and dies in his mother's arms. The aide-de-camp then announces that tears should not be shed, for dying for the Nation is living for glory.

Picard, Louis-Benoît (1769-1828) was the son of a lawyer. He studied law, but drawn to the theater, he was encouraged to pursue his interest by Collin d'Harleville. His first major success was Les Visitandines in 1792.¹²

Arlequin friand, Comédie-parade, en un acte, en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles (Théâtre du Vaudeville, mai 1793), Paris: Toubon, 1793.

Characters

Cassandre - doctor
 Gille - pharmacist
 Arlequin - poet
 Colombine - Cassandre's daughter
 Nérine - Colombine's maid
 A lawyer

Cassandre would like to see his daughter marry Gille, a pharmacist, primarily to increase his clientele. However, she loves Arlequin. Finally, Cassandre bows to her wishes and gives them his blessing. Nérine is quite annoyed by Arlequin's sweet tooth. With Colombine's approval she decides to teach Arlequin a lesson. She places a plate of pastries on the buffet which Arlequin immediately notices upon his arrival. He is torn by his two passions; pastries and Colombine. With his mouth full he has some difficulty responding to Colombine's announcement that her father has given his blessings for their wedding. Nérine enters the room and she and Colombine simulate great distress upon noticing that the pastries-laced-with-arsenic have disappeared. Arlequin confesses that he has eaten them and is certain that he is about to die. Cassandre arrives with the marriage contract and is disturbed at the sudden turn of events. He assures Arlequin that he will use his medical skill to save him. Cassandre calls upon Gille to second him, much to Arlequin's exasperation. Before any great harm can be done, Colombine and Nérine reveal the subterfuge, much to Cassandre and Gille's discomfiture.

Plancher, Philippe-Aristide, also called Aristide Valcour (1751-1815), became a lawyer but never practiced law. He became interested in the theater in 1777 both as an actor and a dramatic author. In 1785 he founded the Théâtre des Délassements Comiques.¹³

Le Vous et le toi, Opéra-vaudeville, un acte (Théâtre de la Cité-Variétés, novembre 1793), Paris: Cailleau, 1794.

Characters

Marcel - farmer
 Virginie - Marcel's daughter
 Citoyenne Marcel - Marcel's wife
 Glaçon - Virginie's suitor
 Justin - Virginie's suitor
 Thibaut - gardener
 Barbe - maid

scene - at the Marcel home, in a village

The scene opens with Justin singing the praises of the Revolution. He is especially happy about the most recent decree abolishing the use of the word "vous," and convinces Barbe, Virginie, and Thibaut that it is unrep-
 ublican to use it. However using "tu" in its place results in a number of farcical scenes caused by misunderstanding its new application. Marcel's wife attacks the new decree, complaining that she is confused by all the changes. Keeping to the old ways, she announces the betrothal of her daughter Virginie to Glaçon, an old lawyer. The other characters plot to upset these plans. Barbe announces that someone has fallen into the river and needs help. Justin immediately goes to assist, whereas Glaçon refuses to move. Citoyenne Marcel, impressed by Justin's action, admits her mistake and awards Virginie to him. The play ends with everyone (except Glaçon) singing the praises of the Republic.

Pujoulx, Jean Baptiste (1762-1821) was a prolific writer in many different genres from plays to science textbooks.¹⁴

L'Ecole des parvenus, ou la Suite des petits Savoyards,
Opéra-comique en un acte (Théâtre Italien, 8 février 1792),
nouvelle ed., Paris: Bureau dramatique, an VI.

Characters

Verseuil - brother-in-law of Mrs. Micheli, born near
Champberry. Having amassed some wealth in
America, he has returned to reside in France.

Mrs. Micheli - mother of Michel and Joseph, formerly an
organ grinder

Michel }
Joseph } former chimneysweeps

Antoine - messenger

Jacques - chimneysweep, Antoine's son

Clermont - Verseuil's valet

L'Epine - Michel and Joseph's servant

scene - Paris, at the Verseuil house

Upon returning to France, Verseuil has befriended his sister-in-law and her two sons and has taken them into his home. He wishes to educate the boys and is looking for two people to assist him, as a tutor and a companion. The boys, who are good-hearted and generous but rather uncultivated, attempt to have their uncle hire two former companions by disguising them as tutors. When Verseuil announces to his nephews that he has hired two persons, Michel and Joseph fear that their plan has failed. Their felicity returns when introduced to their new tutors whom they recognize as their former companions.

Pujoulx, Jean Baptiste.

Les Montagnards, ou l'Ecole de bienfaisance, Comédie en un acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles (Théâtre de la rue Feydeau, 2 septembre 1794), Paris: Huet, n.d.

Characters

Candor - teacher
 Denise - his old governess and current maid
 Gervais - water carrier
 Gervais Jr. - child chimney sweep
 Cadet - young Auvergnat
 Pierre - young Auvergnat
 Pierrette - mender, Pierre's wife
 Antoine - polisher
 Luc - coal vendor
 12 or 15 other Auvergnats

scene - Paris, Candor's home

Candor, a teacher, has been educating Auvergnats free of charge. Using the Declaration of the Rights of Man as a textbook he has been teaching them to read and write. Denise is worried because Candor has been acting strangely of late. Pierre and Pierrette, whom Candor had agreed to help open a fruit store, arrive for the money. Denise gives them 50 Francs from her own savings. Other students have arrived and are planning a celebration for Candor's birthday. When he arrives they surprise him. He is moved by their good wishes and gifts, but is forced to tell them that this must be their last class, for he has lost a pension that had enabled him to educate them. Pierre is angry that under the circumstances Candor had given him 50 Francs. Denise's generosity is revealed and she is thanked. Suddenly, a letter arrives from the Auvergne announcing that a man whom Candor had befriended many years before has bequeathed his entire fortune to him. Now he will be able to continue with his work.

Puységur, Armand-Marie Jacques, de Chastenet, marquis de, (1751-1825) was the son of the Vicount of Puységur.

Promoted to Maréchal de camp in 1789 he welcomed the Revolution while his brothers chose to emigrate. He resigned his commission in 1792. A student of Mesmer, he became interested in magnetism and later used hypnotism in the curing of certain ailments. His first venture in the theater was La Journée des dupes in 1789, followed by an even more successful l'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain in 1794. His third and last play was performed in 1799. He died of an inflammation resulting from camping on the banks of the Vesle River, as was his right by birth, prior to the coronation of Charles X.¹⁵

L'Intérieur d'un ménage républicain, Opéra-comique, un acte et en vaudeville (Théâtre de l'Opéra National de la rue Favart, 4 janvier 1794), Paris: Lepetit, 1794.

Characters

la citoyenne Mirville - mother of Paul and Amélie
 Mme Rose - Amélie and Paul's tutor
 Paul }
 Amélie } Mirville children
 Mirville - Mrs. Mirville's husband
 Germance - defrocked priest

The summary of this play was given in Chapter Three.

Ronsin, Charles-Philippe (1752-1794) was the son of well-to-do farmers. After receiving a good education he became a poet and playwright. At the beginning of the Revolution he was known for his oratory skills. As a result he rose from the rank of captain to brigadier general in four days and was given command of the Vendée Campaign. His army was quickly defeated. Recalled to Paris, he was imprisoned, released, reincarcerated and finally guillotined.¹⁶

Louis XII, père du peuple, Tragédie en trois actes, en vers (Théâtre de la Nation, 12 février 1790), Paris: Potier de Lille, 1790.

Characters

Louis XII, Roi de France - also called Father of his country

Louis le Maire - Duke of Milan

Le Chevalier Bayard

Heroet - Finance minister

Montale - farmer

Lautrec - French officer

Volmar - Governor of the Pierre-en-Scize prison

An armed citizen

A crowd of armed citizens

Soldiers

Guards

scene - Lyon

Heroet has been ruling France in Louis' absence. The Duke of Milan, imprisoned in the Pierre-en-Scize prison, is joined there by Montale, a farmer. The latter had had the temerity of presenting a list of grievances to Heroet and has been condemned to die. Montale claims that the French countryfolk have been anxiously awaiting the return of the king who they are certain will bring needed changes into the government. As Montale is led off to be executed Bayard arrives and stays the sentence.

The king has returned and shows concern of the injustices meted out by the nobles in his absence. He reminds them of their knightly vows to defend the weak and

oppressed. Montale presents his grievances to the king and also appeals for the duke's pardon. Louis orders Heroet's arrest.

Heroet, brought before the king, attempts to defend himself. Louis is appalled by the contempt shown to fellowmen and is about to order his execution when Montale argues for Heroet's pardon. Lautrec takes charge of Heroet and escorts him to prison. However, en route, Heroet is siezed by armed citizens who wish to execute him. The king hastens to confront them. He appeals to them to allow the law to deal with Heroet and vows to remain in France in order to see to the happiness of his subjects.

Sade, Donatien-Alphonse François, count, known as the marquis de, (1740-1814) was the son of the count de Sade. He studied at the Collège Louis le Grand, but left to join the army where he rose to the rank of captain. After his marriage he led a life of debauchery ending in prison by lettre de cachet. While incarcerated in the Bastille he started to write. In 1790, when he was freed, his wife retired to a convent and he won a legal separation.¹⁷

Oxtiern, ou les Malheurs du libertinage, Drame en trois acts et en prose (Théâtre de Molière, 22 octobre 1791), Versailles: Blaizat, an huitième.

Characters

Count Oxtiern
 Casimir - the count's valet
 Fabrice - innkeeper
 Mlle Ernestine - the count's kidnap victim
 Amélie - her maid
 Charles - the count's servant
 Derbac - the count's companion
 Colonel Falkenheim - Ernestine's father
 Herman - Ernestine's suitor

Casimir has preceded his master to Fabrice's inn in order to reserve some rooms. Fabrice no longer wishes to be a party to the count's escapades and refuses to lodge them. Casimir persuades him that he can be of more help with them in the inn. When the Count arrives he attempts to placate Casimir, but in vain.

Derbac is appalled by his companion's behavior and attempts to dissuade him from carrying out his plan. The Count wants a companion, not a censor, and tells Derbac in no uncertain terms what role he is expected to perform. Ernestine has vowed to seek revenge for the imprisonment of her lover and her own kidnapping. She sends a note to the Count, ostensibly from her brother, saying that a young man dressed in white will defend her honor. Meanwhile,

her father arrives, talks to her and decides to challenge the Count to a duel.

Derbac warns the Count that the young man in white is in reality Ernestine. The Count is surprised at this, but finds a solution. When the Colonel challenges him, he responds that he will be in the garden dressed in white. Both Casimir and Derbac are horrified at the idea of seeing father and daughter dueling in semi-darkness. Derbac decides to part company with the Count, preferring to be poor rather than corrupt. The Colonel arrives in the garden, sees his enemy dressed in white and attacks without a word. As they cross swords, shots are fired in the wings. Herman, freed from prison by Fabrice, has just shot the Count. He rushes into the garden to separate father and daughter. The play ends as everyone thanks Fabrice for his generosity.

FOOTNOTES

1. Monselet, pp. 177-234.
2. Hoefer, XV, pp. 143-144.
3. Ibid., XVII, pp. 933-935.
4. Ibid., XI, p. 203.
5. Ibid., XXX, p. 979.
6. Ibid., XIV, pp. 657-658.
7. Ibid., XV, pp. 910-911.
8. Ibid., XXI, pp. 384-387.
9. Ibid., XV, pp. 82-85.
10. Aggéri, p. 2.
11. Hoefer, IXL, pp. 850-851.
12. Ibid., XL, pp. 49-52.
13. Ibid., XL, p. 402.
14. Ibid., XLI, pp. 192-193.
15. Ibid., XLI, pp. 219-221.
16. Ibid., XLII, p. 610.
17. Ibid., XLII, pp. 996-1000.

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