

*The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette:  
Political Pornography and the Problem  
of the Feminine in the French Revolution*

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It has long been known that Marie-Antoinette was the subject of a substantial erotic and pornographic literature in the last decades of the Old Regime and during the Revolution itself. Royal figures at many times and in many places have been the subject of such writing, but not all royal figures at all times. When royal bodies become the focus of such interest, we can be sure that something is at issue in the larger body politic. As Robert Darnton has shown, for example, the sexual sensationalism of Old Regime *libelles* was a choice means of attacking the entire “establishment”—the court, the church, the aristocracy, the academies, the salons, and the monarchy itself.<sup>1</sup> Marie-Antoinette occupies a curious place in this literature; she was not only lampooned and demeaned in an increasingly ferocious pornographic outpouring, but she was also tried and executed.

A few other women, such as Louis XV's notorious mistress Madame du Barry, suffered a similar fate during the Revolution, but no other trial attracted the same attention or aired the same range of issues as that of the ill-fated queen. The king's trial, in contrast, remained entirely restricted to a consideration of his political crimes. As a consequence, the trial of the queen, especially in its strange refractions of the pornographic literature, offers a unique and fascinating perspective on the unselfconscious presumptions of the revolutionary political imagination. It makes manifest, more perhaps

than any other single event of the Revolution, the underlying interconnections between pornography and politics.

When Marie-Antoinette was finally brought to trial in October 1793, the notorious public prosecutor Antoine-Quentin Fouquier-Tinville delivered an accusation against her that began with extraordinary language, even for those inflamed times:

In the manner of the Messalinas-Brunhildes, Frédégonde and Médecis, whom one called in previous times queens of France, and whose names forever odious will not be effaced from the annals of history, Marie-Antoinette, widow of Louis Capet, has been since her time in France, the scourge and bloodsucker of the French.

The bill of indictment then went on to detail the charges: before the Revolution she had squandered the public monies of France on her "disorderly pleasures" and on secret contributions to the Austrian emperor (her brother); after the Revolution, she was the animating spirit of counterrevolutionary conspiracies at the court. Since the former queen was a woman, it was presumed that she could achieve her perfidious aims only through the agency of men such as the king's brothers and Lafayette. Most threatening, of course, was her influence on the king; she was charged not only with the crime of having had perverse ministers named to office but more significantly and generally with having taught the king how to dissimulate—that is, how to promise one thing in public and plan another in the shadows of the court. Finally, and to my mind most strangely, the bill of indictment specifically claimed that

the widow Capet, immoral in every way, new Agrippina, is so perverse and so familiar with all crimes that, forgetting her quality of mother and the demarcation prescribed by the laws of nature, she has not stopped short of indulging herself with Louis-Charles Capet, her son, and on the confession of this last, in indecencies whose idea and name make us shudder with horror.<sup>2</sup>

Incest was the final crime, whose very suggestion was cause for horror.

The trial of a queen, especially in a country whose fundamental laws specifically excluded women from ruling, must necessarily be unusual. There was not much in the way of precedent for it—the English, after all, had tried only their king, not his wife—and the relatively long gap between the trial of Louis (in December and January) and that of his queen ten months later seemed even to attenuate the necessary linkage between the two trials. Unlike her husband,

Marie-Antoinette was not tried by the Convention itself; she was brought before the Revolutionary Criminal Tribunal like all other suspects in Paris, and there her fate was decided by a male jury and nine male judges.<sup>3</sup>

Because queens could never rule in France, except indirectly as regents for underage sons, they were not imagined as having the two bodies associated with kings. According to the "mystic fiction of the 'King's Two Bodies'" as analyzed by Ernst Kantorowicz, kings in England and France had both a visible, corporeal, mortal body and an invisible, ideal "body politic," which never died. As the French churchman Bossuet explained in a sermon he gave with Louis XIV present in 1662: "You are of the gods, even if you die, your authority never dies. . . . The man dies, it is true but the king, we say, never dies."<sup>4</sup> It is questionable whether this doctrine still held for French kings by 1793, but it is certain that it never held for French queens. We might then ask why the destruction of the queen's mortal body could have had such interest for the French. What did her decidedly nonmystical body represent? In this chapter, I argue that it represented many things; Marie-Antoinette had, in a manner of speaking, many bodies. These many bodies, hydralike, to use one of the favorite revolutionary metaphors for counterrevolution, were each in turn attacked and destroyed because they represented the threats, conscious and unconscious, that could be posed to the Republic. These were not threats of just the ordinary sort, for the queen represented not only the ultimate in counterrevolutionary conspiracy, but also the menace of the feminine and the effeminizing to republican notions of manhood and virility.

Most striking is the way in which the obsessive focus on the queen's sexualized body was carried over from the pamphlets and caricatures to the trial itself. In the trial there were frequent references to the "orgies" held at Versailles, which were dated as beginning precisely in 1779 and continuing into 1789. In his closing statement Fouquier-Tinville collapsed sexual and political references in telling fashion when he denounced "the perverse conduct of the former court," Marie-Antoinette's "criminal and culpable liaisons" with unfriendly foreign powers, and her "intimacies with a villainous faction."<sup>5</sup> Herman, president of the court, then took up the baton in his summary of the charges against her: he too referred to "her intimate liaisons with infamous ministers, perfidious generals, disloyal representatives of the people." He denounced again the "orgy" at the château

of Versailles on 1 October 1789, when the queen had presumably encouraged the royal officers present to trample on the revolutionary tricolor cockade. In short, Marie-Antoinette had used her sexual body to corrupt the body politic either through "liaisons" or "intimacies" with criminal politicians or through her ability to act sexually upon the king, his ministers, or his soldiers.

In Herman's long denunciation the queen's body was also held up for scrutiny for signs of interior intentions and motives. On her return from the flight to Varennes, people could observe on her face and her movements "the most marked desire for vengeance." Even when she was incarcerated in the Temple her jailers could "always detect in Antoinette a tone of revolt against the sovereignty of the people."<sup>6</sup> Capture, imprisonment, and the prospect of execution, it was hoped, were finally tearing the veil from the queen's threatening ability to hide her true feelings from the public. Note here, too, the way that Herman clearly juxtaposes the queen and the people as a public force; revelation of the queen's true motives and feelings came not from secrets uncovered in hidden correspondence but from the ability of the people or their representatives to "read" her body.

The attention to the queen's body continued right up to the moment of her execution. At the moment of the announcement of her condemnation to death, she was reported to have kept "a calm and assured countenance," just as she had during the interrogation. On the road to the scaffold, she appeared indifferent to the large gathering of armed forces. "One perceived neither despondency nor pride on her face."<sup>7</sup> More-radical newspapers read a different message in her demeanor, but they showed the same attention to her every move. The *Revolutions of Paris* claimed that at the feet of the statue of Liberty (where the guillotine was erected), she demonstrated her usual "character of dissimulation and pride up to the last moment" (see engraving in photo insert). On the way there she had expressed "surprise and indignation" when she realized that she would be taken to the guillotine in a simple cart rather than in a carriage.<sup>8</sup>

The queen's body, then, was of interest, not because of its connection to the sacred and divine, but because it represented the opposite principle—namely, the possible profanation of everything that the nation held sacred. But apparent too in all the concern with the queen's body was the fact that the queen could embody so much. The queen did not have a mystic body in the sense of the king's two

bodies, but her body was mystical in the sense of mysteriously symbolic. It could mean so much; it could signify a wide range of threats. Dissimulation was an especially important motif in this regard. The ability to conceal one's true emotions, to act one way in public and another in private, was repeatedly denounced as the chief characteristic of court life and aristocratic manners in general. These relied above all on appearances—that is, on the disciplined and self-conscious use of the body as a mask. The republicans, consequently, valued transparency—the unmediated expression of the heart—above all other personal qualities. Transparency was the perfect fit between public and private; transparency was a body that told no lies and kept no secrets. It was the definition of virtue, and as such it was imagined to be critical to the future of the Republic.<sup>9</sup> Dissimulation, in contrast, threatened to undermine the Republic: it was the chief ingredient in every conspiracy; it lay at the heart of the counterrevolution. Thus, for example, to charge Marie-Antoinette with teaching the king how to dissimulate was no minor accusation.

Dissimulation was also described in the eighteenth century as a characteristically feminine quality, not just an aristocratic one. According to both Montesquieu and Rousseau, it was women who taught men how to dissimulate, how to hide their true feelings in order to get what they wanted in the public arena.<sup>10</sup> The salon was the most important site of this teaching, and it was also the one place where society women could enter the public sphere. In a sense, then, women in public (like prostitutes) were synonymous with dissimulation, with the gap between public and private. Virtue could be restored only if women returned to the private sphere.<sup>11</sup> Rousseau had expressed this collection of attitudes best in his *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758): "Meanly devoted to the wills of the sex which we ought to protect and not serve, we have learned to despise it in obeying it, to insult it by our derisive attentions; and every woman at Paris gathers in her apartment a harem of men more womanish than she, who know how to render all sorts of homage to beauty except that of the heart, which is her due." And, as Rousseau warned ominously about women in the public sphere, "no longer wishing to tolerate separation, unable to make themselves into men, the women make us into women."<sup>12</sup> With her strategic position on the cusp between public and private, Marie-Antoinette was emblematic of the much larger problem of the relations between women and the public sphere in the eighteenth century. The sexuality of women, when

operating in the public sphere through dissimulation, threatened to effeminize men—that is, literally to transform men's bodies.

Central to the queen's profane and profaning body was the image of her as the bad mother. This might take many, even surprising forms, as in Fouquier-Tinville's charge that she was the calumniator of Paris—described in his closing statement as “this city, mother and conservator of liberty.” The queen was the antonym of the nation, depicted by one witness in the trial as the “generous nation that nurtured her as well as her husband and her family.”<sup>13</sup> The nation, Paris, and the Revolution were all good mothers; Marie-Antoinette was the bad mother. It should be noted, however, that the nation, Paris, and the Revolution were motherly in a very abstract, even nonfeminine fashion (in comparison to Marie-Antoinette).

The abstractness and nonsexual nature of these political figures of the mother reinforces what Carole Pateman has tellingly described as the characteristic modern Western social contract:

The story of the original contract is perhaps the greatest tale of men's creation of new political life. But this time women are already defeated and declared procreatively and politically irrelevant. Now the father comes under attack. The original contract shows how his monopoly of politically creative power is seized and shared equally among men. In civil society all men, not just fathers, can generate political life and political right. Political creativity belongs not to paternity but masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, *La Nation* had no real feminine qualities; she was not a threatening effeminizing force and hence not incompatible with republicanism. *La Nation* was, in effect, a masculine mother or a father capable of giving birth. Marie-Antoinette's body stood in the way, almost literally, of this version of the social contract, since under the Old Regime she had given birth to potential new sovereigns herself.<sup>15</sup>

Pateman is unusual among commentators on contract theory because she takes Freud seriously. As she notes, “Freud's stories make explicit that power over women and not only freedom is at issue before the original agreement is made, and he also makes clear that two realms [the civil and the private, the political and the sexual] are created through the original pact.”<sup>16</sup> She is less successful, however, at explaining the preoccupation with incest in a case such as Marie-Antoinette's.

The charge of incest in the trial was brought by the radical journalist Jacques-René Hébert, editor of the scabrous *Père Duchesne*, the most determinedly “popular” newspaper of the time. Hébert ap-

peared at the trial in his capacity as assistant city attorney for Paris, but his paper had been notorious for its continuing attacks on the queen. Hébert testified that he had been called to the Temple prison by Simon, the shoemaker who was assigned to look after Louis's son. Simon had surprised the eight-year-old masturbating ("indecent pollutions"), and when he questioned the boy about where he had learned such practices, Louis-Charles replied that his mother and his aunt (the king's sister) had taught him. The king's son was asked to repeat his accusations in the presence of the mayor and city attorney, which he did, claiming that the two women often made him sleep between them. Hébert concluded:

There is reason to believe that this criminal enjoyment [*jouissance* in French, which has several meanings, including "pleasure," "possession," and "orgasm"] was not at all dictated by pleasure, but rather by the political hope of enervating the physical health of this child, who they continued to believe would occupy a throne, and on whom they wished, by this maneuver, to assure themselves of the right of ruling afterward over his morals.

The body of the child showed the effects of this incestuousness; one of his testicles had been injured and had to be bandaged. Since being separated from his mother, Hébert reported, the child's health had become much more robust and vigorous.<sup>17</sup> What better emblem could there be of effeminization than the actual deterioration of the boy's genitals?

As sensational as the charge was, the court did not pursue it much further. When directly confronted with the accusation, the former queen refused to lower herself by responding "to such a charge made against a mother."<sup>18</sup> But there it was in the newspapers, and even the Jacobin Club briefly noted the "shameful scenes between the mother, the aunt, and the son," and denounced "the virus that now runs through [the boy's] veins and which perhaps carries the germ of all sorts of accidents."<sup>19</sup> Since it seems surprising that republican men should be so worried about the degeneration of the royal family, it is not farfetched to conclude that the incest charge had a wider, if largely unconscious, resonance. On the most explicit level, incest was simply another sign of the criminal nature of royalty. As Hébert complained rhetorically to the royalists: "You immolate your brothers, and for what? For an old whore, who has neither faith nor respect for the law, who has made more than a million men die; you are the champions of murder, brigandage, adultery, and in-

cest.”<sup>20</sup> Although incest can hardly be termed a major theme in revolutionary discourse, it did appear frequently in the political pornography of both the last decades of the Old Regime and the revolutionary decade itself.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most striking example is the pornography of the marquis de Sade, which makes much of incest between fathers and daughters and between brothers and sisters.<sup>22</sup>

The official incest charge against the queen has to be set in the context provided by the longer history of pornographic and semi-pornographic pamphlets about the queen's private life discussed in several essays in this volume. Although the charge itself was based on presumed activities that took place only after the incarceration of the royal family in the Temple prison, it was made more plausible by the scores of pamphlets that had appeared since the earliest days of the Revolution and that had, in fact, had their origins in the political pornography of the Old Regime itself. When *Révolutions de Paris* exclaimed, “Who could forget the scandalous morals of her private life,” or repeated the charges about “her secret orgies with d’Artois [one of the king’s brothers], Fersen, Coigny, etc.,” the newspaper was simply recalling to readers’ minds what they had long imbibed in underground publications about the queen’s promiscuity.

Attacks on the queen’s morality had begun as early as 1774 (just four years after her arrival in France) with a satirical lampoon about her early morning promenades. Louis XV paid considerable sums in the same year to buy up existing copies in London and Amsterdam of a pamphlet that detailed the sexual impotence of his grandson, the future Louis XVI.<sup>23</sup> Before long, the songs and “little papers” had become frankly obscene, and the first of many long, detailed pamphlets had been published clandestinely. The foremost expert on the subject found 126 pamphlets he could classify in the genre of Marie-Antoinette, libertine.<sup>24</sup> Even before the notorious Diamond Necklace Affair of 1785, and continuing long after it, the queen was the focus of an always-proliferating literature of derision preoccupied with her sexual body.<sup>25</sup>

Although fewer than 10 percent of the anti-Marie-Antoinette pamphlets were published before 1789, they often provided the models for later publications.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to find out much about the publication (the precise dates or location) or authorship of the prerevolutionary pamphlets, since they were necessarily produced clandestinely. As Robert Darnton has vividly demonstrated, those authors who can be traced were from the French version of Grub



Street.<sup>27</sup> Men such as Thévenau de Morande and the comte de Paradès worked sometimes for the French crown (as spies), sometimes for rival members of the court, sometimes for foreign printers, and always for themselves. The connection to members of the court is most significant, since it shows the intensity of the interlacing of social networks of communication under the Old Regime. The author of one of the best-known pamphlets, *Portfolio of a Red Heel*, made the connection explicit, tracing the circuit from courtiers to their valets, who passed the verses on in the market, where they were picked up by artisans and brought back to the courtiers, who then hypocritically professed surprise.<sup>28</sup> The “popular” images of the queen, then, had their origin in the court, not in the streets.

Politically pornographic pamphlets were often traced to London, Amsterdam, or Germany, where the most notorious of the French Grub Street types made their living, and the French crown evidently spent large sums having such pamphlets bought up by its agents abroad and destroyed before they could reach France. Indeed, this new industry seems to have become a very lucrative one for those hack writers willing to live abroad, since large sums were paid to secret agents and printers, who were most likely in collusion with the writers themselves.<sup>29</sup> In 1782 the *Mémoires secrets* described the government’s reaction to the recently published *Historical Essays*:

The dreadful *libelle* against the queen, of which I’ve spoken [in a previous entry], and others of the same genre, have determined the government to make an effort on this subject and to sacrifice money, which is very distasteful; with this help they have gotten to the source and asked for the assistance of foreign governments. They undertook searches in all of the suspect printing shops of Holland and Germany; they took away everything that deserved to be, and they have even had the printer-book-sellers arrested who have taken the chance of coming to France to introduce their merchandise; they have had them condemned to large fines.<sup>30</sup>

Needless to say, copies still made their way into France; in 1783, 534 copies of *Historical Essays Concerning the Life of Marie-Antoinette* were officially destroyed at the Bastille prison along with many other offensive productions.<sup>31</sup>

Many of the major accusations against Marie-Antoinette were already present in the prerevolutionary pamphlets. The *Portfolio of a Red Heel* (also condemned in 1783) begins in classic eighteenth-century fashion with a preface from the presumed publisher announcing that someone had found a portfolio while crossing the

Palais-Royal (the notorious den of prostitution and gambling that was also the residence of the king's cousin, the duc d'Orléans, who was assumed to have paid for many of the pamphlets). In it was found a manuscript addressed to Monsieur de la H—— of the French Academy. It began, "You are then out of your mind, my dear H——! You want, they tell me, to write the history of tribades at Versailles." In the text appeared the soon-to-be-standard allegation that Marie-Antoinette was amorously involved with the duchesse de Polignac ("her Jules") and Madame Balbi. The comte d'Artois was supposedly the only man who interested her. These charges, as harshly delivered as they were, formed only part of the pamphlet's more general tirade against the court and ministers in general. Speaking of the courtiers, the author exclaimed, "You are an abominable race. You get everything at once from your character as monkeys and as vipers."<sup>32</sup>

The short and witty *Loves of Charlie and Toinette* took up much the same themes, though in verse, but this time focused exclusively on the queen, the comte d'Artois, and the princesse de Lamballe (who would become the most famous victim of the September Massacres in 1792). Marie-Antoinette was depicted as turning to lesbianism because of the impotence of the king. Then she discovers the delights of the king's brother.<sup>33</sup>

The long 1789 edition (146 pages in the augmented French edition) of the *Historical Essays Concerning the Life of Marie-Antoinette* (there had been many variations on the title since its first publication in 1781) already demonstrated the rising tone of personal hostility toward the queen that would characterize revolutionary pornographic pamphlets.<sup>34</sup> In the most detailed of all the anti-Marie-Antoinette exposés, it purported to give the queen's own view through the first person: "My death is the object of the desires of an entire people that I oppressed with greatest barbarism." Marie-Antoinette here describes herself as "barbarous queen, adulterous spouse, woman without morals, polluted with crimes and debaucheries," and she details all the charges that had accumulated against her in previous pamphlets. Now her lesbianism is traced back to the Austrian court, and all of the stories of amorous intrigues with princes and great nobles are given substance. Added to the charges is the new one that she herself had poisoned the young heir to the throne (who died in early 1789). Characteristic, too, of many of the later pamphlets will be the curious alternation between

frankly pornographic staging—descriptions in the first person of her liaisons, complete with wildly beating hearts and barely stifled sighs of passion—and political moralizing and denunciation put into the mouth of the queen herself. The contrast with the king and his “pure, sincere love, which I so often and so cruelly abused” was striking.<sup>35</sup> The queen may have been representative of the degenerate tendencies of the aristocracy, but she was not yet emblematic of royalty altogether.

With the coming of the Revolution in 1789, the floodgates opened, and the number of pamphlets attacking the queen rapidly rose in number. These took various forms, ranging from songs and fables to presumed biographies (such as the *Historical Essay*), confessions, and plays. Sometimes the writings were pornographic with little explicit political content; the sixteen-page pamphlet in verse called *The Royal Dildo*, for example, told the story of Junon (the queen) and Hébée (presumably either the duchesse de Polignac or the princesse de Lamballe). Junon complained of her inability to obtain satisfaction at home, while pulling a dildo out of her bag (“happy invention that we owe to the monastery”). Her companion promises her penises of almost unimaginably delicious size.<sup>36</sup> In the much more elaborately pornographic *Uterine Furors of Marie-Antoinette, Wife of Louis XVI* of two years later, colored engravings showed the king impotent and d’Artois and Polignac replacing him.<sup>37</sup>

The Marie-Antoinette pamphlets reflect a general tendency in the production of political pornography: the number of titles in this genre rose steadily from 1774 to 1788 and then took off after 1789. The queen was not the only target of hostility; a long series of “private lives” attacked the conduct of courtiers before 1789 and revolutionary politicians from Lafayette to Robespierre afterward. Aristocrats were shown as impotent, riddled with venereal disease, and given over to debauchery. Homosexuality functioned in a manner similar to impotence in this literature; it showed the decadence of the Old Regime in the person of its priests and aristocrats. Sexual degeneration went hand in hand with political corruption.<sup>38</sup> This proliferation of pornographic pamphlets after 1789 shows that political pornography cannot be viewed simply as a supplement to a political culture that lacked “real” political participation. Once participation increased dramatically, particularly with the explosion of uncensored newspapers and pamphlets, politics did not simply take the high road.<sup>39</sup>

Marie-Antoinette was without question the favorite target of such attacks. There were not only more pamphlets about her than any other single figure, but they were also the most sustained in their viciousness. Henri d'Almeras claimed that the *Historical Essays* alone sold between twenty thousand and thirty thousand copies.<sup>40</sup> The year 1789 does appear to mark a turning point not only in the number of pamphlets produced but also in their tone. The pre-1789 pamphlets tell dirty stories in secret; after 1789 the rhetoric of the pamphlets begins self-consciously to solicit a wider audience. The public no longer "hears" courtier rumors through the print medium; it now "sees" degeneracy in action. The first-person rendition of the 1789 French edition of *Historical Essay* is a good example of this technique.

Obscene engravings with first-person captions worked to the same effect. The engravings that accompanied the long *Life of Marie-Antoinette of Austria, Wife of Louis XVI, King of the French; From the Loss of her Virginity to 1 May 1791*, which was followed by volumes two and three, entitled *Private, Libertine, and Scandalous Life of Marie-Antoinette of Austria, former Queen of the French*, are an interesting case in point. They showed Marie-Antoinette in amorous embrace with just about everyone imaginable: her first supposed lover, a German officer; the aged Louis XV; Louis XVI impotent; the comte d'Artois; various women (see photo insert); various ménages à trois with two women and a man (see photo insert); Cardinal de Rohan of the Diamond Necklace Affair; Lafayette; Barnave; and so on. The captions are sometimes in the first person (with the princesse de Guéménée: "Gods! What transports, ah! My soul takes off, words fail me"), sometimes in the second (with the comte d'Artois: "Groan, Louis, your *vigueur inactive*, outrages your too lascivious wife here"). The effect is the same: a theatricalization of the action so that the reader is made into voyeur and moral judge at the same time. The political effect of the pornography is apparent even in this most obscene of works. In volumes two and three, the pornographic engravings are interspersed with political engravings of aristocratic conspiracy, the assault on the Tuileries palace, and even a curious print showing Louis XVI putting on a red cap of liberty and drinking to the health of the nation in front of the queen and his remaining son and heir.<sup>41</sup>

That the pamphlets succeeded in attracting a public can be seen in the repetition of formulaic expressions in nonpornographic po-

litical pamphlets, "popular" newspapers, petitions from "popular societies," and the trial record itself. The *Historical Essay* of 1789 already included the soon-to-be-standard comparisons of Marie-Antoinette to Catherine de Médecis, Agrippina, and Messalina. These comparisons were expanded at great length in a curious political tract called *The Crimes of the Queens of France*, which was written by a woman, Louise de Keralio (though it was published under the name of the publisher, Louis Prudhomme).<sup>42</sup> The "corrected and augmented" edition dated "Year II" simply added material on the trial and execution to an already-long version of 1791.<sup>43</sup> The tract is not pornographic; it simply refers to the "turpitudes" committed by the queen as background for its more general political charges. Keralio reviews the history of the queens of France, emphasizing in particular the theme of dissimulation: "The dangerous art of seducing and betraying, perfidious and intoxicating caresses, feigned tears, affected despair, insinuating prayers" (p. 2). These were the weapons of the queens of France (which had been identified as the arms of all women by Rousseau). When the author comes to the wife of Louis Capet, she lists many of the queen's presumed lovers, male and female, but insists upon passing rapidly over the "private crimes" of the queen in favor of consideration of her public ones. Marie-Antoinette "was the soul of all the plots, the center of all the intrigues, the foyer of all these horrors" (p. 440). As a "political tarantula," the queen resembled that "impure insect, which, in the darkness, weaves on the right and left fine threads where gnats without experience are caught and whom she makes her prey" (pp. 445-46). On the next page, the queen is compared to a tigress who, once having tasted blood, can no longer be satisfied. All this to prove what the caption to the frontispiece asserts: "A people is without honor and merits its chains / When it lowers itself beneath the scepter of queens" (see photo insert).

The shorter, more occasional political pamphlets picked up the themes of the pornographic literature and used them for straightforward political purposes. A series of pamphlets appeared in 1792, for example, offering lists of political enemies who deserved immediate punishment. They had as their appendices lists of all the people with whom the queen had had "relationships of debauchery." In these pamphlets, the queen was routinely referred to as "bad daughter, bad wife, bad mother, bad queen, monster in everything."<sup>44</sup>

The movement from sexual misdemeanors to bestial metaphors was characteristic of much "popular" commentary on the queen, es-

pecially in her last months. In the *Père Duchesne* Hébert had incorporated the Frédégonde and Médecis comparisons by 1791, but still in a relatively innocent context. One of his favorite devices was to portray himself as meeting in person with the queen and trying to talk sense to her.<sup>45</sup> By 1792 the queen had become “Madame Veto,” and once the monarchy had been toppled, Hébert made frequent reference to the “ménagerie royale.” In prison the former queen was depicted as a she-monkey (“la guenon d’Autriche”), the king as a pig. In one particularly fanciful scene, *Père Duchesne* presents himself in the queen’s cell as the duchesse de Polignac (“that tribade”) thanks to the effect of a magic ring, whereupon the former queen throws herself into her friend’s arms and reveals her fervent hopes for the success of the counterrevolution.<sup>46</sup> After her husband had been executed, the tone of hostility escalated, and Marie-Antoinette became the she-wolf and the tigress of Austria. At the time of her trial, Hébert suggested that she be chopped up like meat for pâté as recompense for all the bloodshed she had caused.<sup>47</sup>

Local militants picked up the same rhetoric. In a letter to the Convention congratulating it on the execution of the queen, the popular society of Rozoy (Seine-et-Marne department) referred to “this tigress thirsty for the blood of the French . . . this other Mesalina whose corrupt heart held the fertile germ of all crimes; may her loathsome memory perish forever.” The popular society of Garlin (Basses-Pyrénées department) denounced the “ferocious panther who devoured the French, the female monster whose pores sweated the purest blood of the sans-culottes.”<sup>48</sup> Throughout these passages, it is possible to see the horrific transformations of the queen’s body; the body that had once been denounced for its debauchery and disorderliness becomes in turn the dangerous beast, the cunning spider, the virtual vampire who sucks the blood of the French.

Explicit in some of the more extreme statements and implicit in many others was a pervasive anxiety about genealogy. For example, the post-1789 pamphlets demonstrated an obsession with determining the true fathers of the king’s children (they were often attributed to his brother, the comte d’Artois). In a fascinating twist on this genealogical anxiety, *Père Duchesne* denounced a supposed plot by the queen to raise a young boy who resembled the heir to the throne to take the heir’s place.<sup>49</sup> The culminating charge, of course, was incest; in the trial, this was limited to the queen’s son, but in the

pamphlet literature, the charges of incest included the king's brother, the king's grandfather Louis XV, and her own father, who had taught her "the passion of incest, the dirtiest of pleasures," from which followed "the hatred of the French, the aversion for the duties of spouse and mother, in short, all that reduces humanity to the level of ferocious beasts."<sup>50</sup> Disorderly sexuality was linked to bestialization in the most intimate way.

Promiscuity, incest, poisoning of the heir to the throne, plots to replace the heir with a pliable substitute—all of these charges reflect a fundamental anxiety about queenship as the most extreme form of women invading the public sphere. Where Rousseau had warned that the salon women would turn their "harem of men" into women "more womanish than she," the radical militant Louise de Keralio would warn her readers that "a woman who becomes queen changes sex."<sup>51</sup> The queen, then, was the emblem (and sacrificial victim) of the feared disintegration of gender boundaries that accompanied the Revolution. In his controversial study of ritual violence, René Girard argues that a sacrificial crisis (a crisis in the community that leads to the search for a scapegoat) entails the feared loss of sexual differentiation: "one of the effects of the sacrificial crisis is a certain feminization of the men, accompanied by a masculinization of the women."<sup>52</sup> A scapegoat is chosen in order to reinstitute the community's sense of boundaries. By invoking Girard, I do not mean to suggest that the French Revolution followed his script of sacrificial crisis, or that I subscribe to the nuances of his argument. In fact, the Revolution did not single out a particular scapegoat in the moment of crisis; it was marked instead by a constant search for new victims, as if the community did not have a distinct enough sense of itself to settle upon just one (the king or the queen, for example). Nevertheless, Girard's suggestion that an intense crisis within a community is marked by fears of de-differentiation is very fruitful, for it helps make sense of the peculiar gender charge of the events of the fall of 1793.

The evidence for a feared loss of sexual differentiation in the Revolution is in fact quite extensive. Just two weeks after the execution of the queen (which took place on 16 October 1793), the Convention discussed the participation of women in politics, in particular the women's club called the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. The Jacobin deputy Fabre d'Églantine insisted that "these clubs are not composed of mothers of families, daughters of fami-

lies, sisters occupied with their younger brothers or sisters, but rather of adventuresses, knights-errant, emancipated women, amazons.”<sup>53</sup> The deputy Amar, speaking for the Committee on General Security of the Convention, laid out the official rationale for a separation of women from the public sphere:

The private functions for which women are destined by their very nature are related to the general order of society; this social order results from the differences between man and woman. Each sex is called to the kind of occupation which is fitting for it. . . . Man is strong, robust, born with great energy, audacity and courage. . . . In general, women are ill suited for elevated thoughts and serious meditations, and if, among ancient peoples, their natural timidity and modesty did not allow them to appear outside their families, then in the French Republic do you want them to be seen coming into the gallery to political assemblies as men do?

To reestablish the “natural order” and prevent the “emancipation” of women from their familial identity, the deputies solemnly outlawed all women’s clubs.

In response to a deputation of women wearing red caps that appeared before the Paris city council two weeks later, the well-known radical spokesman (and city official) Chaumette exclaimed:

It is contrary to all the laws of nature for a woman to want to make herself a man. The Council must recall that some time ago these denatured women, these viragos, wandered through the markets with the red cap to sully that badge of liberty. . . . Since when is it permitted to give up one’s sex? Since when is it decent to see women abandoning the pious cares of their households, the cribs of their children, to come to public places, to harangues in the galleries, at the bar of the senate?

Chaumette then reminded his audience of the recent fate of the “impudent” Olympe de Gouges and the “haughty” Madame Roland, “who thought herself fit to govern the republic and who rushed to her downfall.”<sup>54</sup>

Marie-Antoinette was certainly not in alliance with the women of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, with Madame Roland or Olympe de Gouges; they were political enemies. But even political enemies, as Louise de Keralio discovered, shared similar political restrictions if they were women. Keralio herself was accused of being dominated by those same “uterine furies” that beset the queen; by publishing, Keralio too was making herself public. Her detractors put this desire for notoriety down to her ugliness and inability to attract men.<sup>55</sup> As Dorinda Outram has argued, women who wished to



participate actively in the French Revolution were caught in a discursive double bind; virtue was a two-edged sword that bisected the sovereign into two different destinies, one male and one female. Male virtue meant participation in the public world of politics; female virtue meant withdrawal into the private world of the family. Even the most prominent female figures of the time had to acquiesce in this division. As Madame Roland recognized, "I knew what role was suitable to my sex and I never abandoned it."<sup>56</sup> Of course, she paid with her life because others did not think that she had so effectively restrained herself from participating in the public sphere.

Read from this perspective on the difference between male and female virtue, the writings and speeches about the queen reveal the fundamental anxieties of republicans about the foundation of their rule. They were not simply concerned to punish a leading counter-revolutionary. They wanted to separate mothers from any public activity, as Carole Pateman argues, and yet give birth by themselves to a new political organism. In order to accomplish this, they had to destroy the Old Regime link between the ruling family and the body politic, between the literal bodies of the rulers and the mystic fiction of royalty. In short, they had to kill the patriarchal father and also the mother.

Strikingly, however, the killing of the father was accompanied by little personal vilification. Hébert's references to the pig, the ogre, or the drunk were relatively isolated; calling the former king a cuckold ("tête de cocu") hardly compared to the insistent denigration of Marie-Antoinette.<sup>57</sup> Officials chose not to dwell on the king's execution itself. Newspaper accounts were formal and restrained. On the day of the event, one of the regicide deputies who spoke in the Jacobin Club captured the mood: "Louis Capet has paid his debt; let us speak of it no longer." Most of the visual representations of the execution (medals or engravings) came from outside of France and were meant to serve the cause of counterrevolution.<sup>58</sup> The relative silence about Louis among the revolutionaries reflects the conviction that he represented after all the masculinity of power and sovereignty. The aim was to kill the paternal source of power and yet retain its virility in the republican replacement.

The republican ideal of virtue was profoundly homosocial; it was based on a notion of fraternity between men in which women were relegated to the realm of domesticity. Public virtue required virility, which required in turn the violent rejection of aristocratic degener-

acy and any intrusion of the feminine into the public. The many bodies of Marie-Antoinette served a kind of triangulating function in this vision of the new world. Through their rejection of her and what she stood for, republican men could reinforce their bonds to one another; she was the negative version of the female icon of republican liberty but nonetheless iconic for the rejection. She was perhaps also an object lesson for other women who might wish to exercise through popular sovereignty the kind of rule that the queen had exercised through royal prerogative. The republican brothers who had overthrown the king and taken upon themselves his mantle did not want their sisters to follow their lead. In this implicit and often unconscious gender drama, the body of Marie-Antoinette played a critical, if uncomfortable, role. The bodies of Marie-Antoinette could never be sacred by French tradition, but they could certainly be powerful in their own fashion.

## Notes

1. Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature," reprinted in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1–40, esp. 29.
2. I have used the report on the session of 14 October 1793 in the *Moniteur Universel*, 16 October 1793.
3. At least that is how many judges signed the arrest warrant on 14 October 1793, according to the *Moniteur*, 16 October 1793. For the workings of the Revolutionary Tribunal, see Luc Willette, *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire* (Paris: Denoël, 1981). Since it was not established until March 1793, the tribunal was not in existence at the time of the king's trial.
4. As quoted in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 409 n. 319.
5. *Moniteur*, 27 October 1793, reporting on the trial session of 14 October.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Révolutions de Paris*, no. 212 (3 August–28 October 1793).
9. I develop the notion of transparency in a somewhat different context in *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 44–46, 72–74.
10. On the philosophes' attitudes toward women, see Paul Hoffmann, *La Femme dans la pensée des lumières* (Paris: Éditions Ophrys, 1977), esp. 324–446.
11. I am indebted to the analysis of Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Dorinda Outram concludes that the Revolution was committed to antifeminine rhetoric because it ascribed power in the Old Regime to women. I think that this exaggerates the identification of women with power in the Old

- Regime, but it nonetheless leads to fruitful reflections about the way in which male revolutionary politicians tried to escape feelings of guilt. See Outram, "Le Langage mâle de la vertu: Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution," in Peter Burke and Roy Porter, eds., *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 120–35, esp. 125.
12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 100–1.
  13. Quotes from *Moniteur*, 27 October 1793 and 18 October 1793 (the latter the testimony of Roussillon, a barber-surgeon and cannoneer).
  14. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 36.
  15. Chantal Thomas argues that the anti-Marie-Antoinette pamphlets became especially virulent from the moment of her first pregnancy in 1777: *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette*, trans. Julie Rose (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 46–47. See also the article by Chantal Thomas in this volume.
  16. Pateman, *Sexual Contract*, p. 12.
  17. *Moniteur*, 18 October 1793.
  18. *Moniteur*, 19 October 1793.
  19. *Moniteur*, 20 October 1793.
  20. *Père Duchesne*, no. 298 (October 1793).
  21. On the last half of the eighteenth century, see Hector Fleischmann, *Les Pamphlets libertins contre Marie-Antoinette* (Paris, 1908; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine, 1976), esp. the chapter, "La France galante et libertine à la fin du XVIII siècle," 13–36.
  22. See, for example, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, where Sade offers a defense of incest in the parodic tract "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains" (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 229–30.
  23. Fleischmann, *Pamphlets libertins*, 103–9.
  24. Hector Fleischmann, *Marie-Antoinette libertine: Bibliographie critique et analytique des pamphlets politiques, galants, et obscènes contre la reine. Précédé de la réimpression intégrale des quatre libelles rarissimes et d'une histoire des pamphlétaires du règne de Louis XVI* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Curieux, 1911).
  25. This essay was written before I had a chance to read the interesting and lively book by Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*. Her account differs from mine in several respects. It is especially strong on the analysis of the anti-Marie-Antoinette pamphlet literature, but has virtually nothing to say about the trial records.
  26. Fleischmann gives likely publication dates for the 126 pamphlets that he found in *Marie-Antoinette libertine*, 277ff. These are not all separate pamphlets but include major revised editions. Fleischmann no doubt ignored some pamphlets in existence, but the basic balance of pamphlets is most likely correctly rendered in his bibliography.
  27. Darnton, "High Enlightenment."
  28. *Portefeuille d'un talon rouge, contenant des anecdotes galantes et secrètes de la cour de France* (reprint, Paris: Bibliothèque des Curieux, 1911), 22. Based on the edition dated "l'an 178-", De l'Imprimerie du Comte de Paradès." The passage is translated in Robert Darnton, "Reading, Writing, and Publishing," in *Literary Underground*, 201; see also 248, n. 63.

29. Fleischmann, *Pamphlets libertins*, 117–29. See also Henri d'Almeras, *Marie-Antoinette et les pamphlets royalistes et révolutionnaires: les amoureux de la Reine* (Paris: Librairie Mondiale, 1907), 299–328.
30. As quoted in d'Almeras, *Marie-Antoinette*, 309–10.
31. Fleischmann, *Marie-Antoinette libertine*, 64.
32. Quotes from the edition cited in n. 28 above.
33. Sections of the pamphlet are reproduced in d'Almeras, *Marie-Antoinette*, 56–60. According to Maurice Tourneux, this eight-page pamphlet was published in 1779, and it cost 17,400 livres for the crown to have it destroyed. It was reprinted several times after 1789 (*Marie-Antoinette devant l'histoire: Essai bibliographique* [Paris: Leclerc, 1895], 42).
34. See d'Almeras, *Marie-Antoinette*, 399–403, for title variations.
35. Quotations from *Essai historique sur la vie de Marie-Antoinette, reine de France et de Navarre, née archiduchesse d'Autriche, le deux novembre 1755: Orné de son portrait, et rédigé sur plusieurs manuscrits de sa main* ("À Versailles, Chez La Montensier [one of her supposed female lovers], Hôtel des Courtisannes," 1789), 4, 8, 19–20. Some have attributed this pamphlet to Brissot, but d'Almeras and Fleischmann both dispute this (d'Almeras, *Marie-Antoinette*, 339; Fleischmann, *Marie-Antoinette libertine*, 67–70). Fleischmann reports the view that the marquis de Sade wrote the second part of this 1789 edition (68). Earlier in 1789 a shorter, eighty-eight-page work titled *Essais historiques sur la vie de Marie-Antoinette d'Autriche, reine de France; pour servir à l'histoire de cette princesse* (London, 1789) struck a much less violent tone. It was not written in the first person, and though it discussed the queen's amorous intrigues in detail, it was not particularly pornographic in style. This version was written very much in the vein of attempts to convince the queen of her errors: "Fasse le ciel cependant que ces vérités, si elles sont présentées à cette princesse, puissent la corriger, et la faire briller d'autant de vertus qu'elle l'a fait par ses étourderies" (78).
36. *Le Godmiché royal* (Paris, 1789).
37. The publication page after the title read: "La mère en proscrira la lecture à sa fille. Au Manège. Et dans tous les bordels de Paris, 1791." It is interesting to note that one of the early editions of Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* included on its title page the obvious parody: "La mère en prescrira la lecture à sa fille." This was the 1795 London edition. See Pascal Pia, *Les Livres de l'Enfer, du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* (Paris: C. Coulet and A. Favre, 1978), 2:1044.
38. See, for example, *Les Enfants de Sodome à l'Assemblée Nationale* (Paris, 1790), Enfer no. 638, Bibliothèque Nationale. For a general overview emphasizing the contrast between aristocratic degeneracy and republican health, see Antoine de Baecque, "Pamphlets: Libel and Political Mythology," in Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds., *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775–1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 165–76.
39. See the remarks by Darnton in "High Enlightenment," esp. 33.
40. D'Almeras provides no evidence for this assertion, however (*Marie-Antoinette*, 403).
41. Enfer nos. 790–92, Bibliothèque Nationale.

42. The correct attribution was brought to my attention by Carla Hesse. While working on another project, I came across a denunciation that verified Keralio's authorship. The anonymous pamphlet *Les Crimes constitutionnels de France, ou la désolation française, décrétée par l'Assemblée dite Nationale Constituante, aux années 1789, 1790, et 1791. Accepté par l'esclave Louis XVI, le 14 septembre 1791* (Paris: Chez Le Petit et Guillemard, 1792) included the following:

Dlle de Keralio. Ugly, and already over the hill; from [the days] before the revolution, she consoled herself for the disgrace of her *gray hair* and the indifference of men, by the peaceful cultivation of letters. Her principles were then pure, and her conduct was not at all inconsistent with the noble delicacy of her family. Giving way, since the revolution, to the demagogic disorders, doubtless dominated also by *uterine furors*, she married one Robert, a former lawyer, without talent, without a case, without bread, at Givet, and now a Jacobin-Cordelier. Abandoned by her family, despised by honest folk, she vegetates shamefully with this wretch, burdened with debts and opprobrium, working by the page, for the infamous *Prudhomme*, on the disgusting newspaper of the revolution of Paris. The *Crimes of the Queens of France* have pushed to the limit her shame, as well as her total wickedness.

43. The full title of the edition I used is *Les Crimes des reines de France depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à la mort de Marie-Antoinette; avec les pièces justificatives de son procès* ("Publié par L. Prudhomme, avec Cinq gravures. Nouvelle édition corrigée et augmentée. Paris: au Bureau des Révolutions de Paris, an II").
44. See, for example, *Têtes à prix, suivi de la liste de toutes les personnes avec lesquelles la reine a eu des liaisons de débauches*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1792), 28 pp., and the nearly identical *Liste civile suivie des noms et qualités de ceux qui la composent, et la punition due à leurs crimes . . . et la liste des affidés de la ci-devant reine* (Paris, n.d. [but Tourneux dates it 1792]).
45. *Père Duchesne*, no. 36 (1791).
46. *Père Duchesne*, no. 194 (1792).
47. *Père Duchesne*, nos. 296 and 298 (1793).
48. As quoted by Fleischmann, *Marie-Antoinette libertine*, 76.
49. *Père Duchesne*, no. 36 (1791).
50. *Vie privée, libertine et scandaleuse*, as reprinted in Fleischmann, *Marie-Antoinette libertine*, 173–74. This section concludes with the most extreme of all possible epitaphs: "Here lies the immodest Manon, Who, in the belly of her mother, Knew so well how to position her c——, that she f—— her father."
51. [Keralio], *Crimes*, vii.
52. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 141.
53. *Moniteur*, no. 39, 9 Brumaire year II, reporting on the session of 8 Brumaire, year II, 29 October 1793.
54. Quotes from Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 215–16, 219–20.
55. See quotation in n. 42 above.

56. Outram, "*Le Langage mâle de la vertu*," 125, quotation, 126. See also the chapter on "Women and Revolution," in Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, 93–151.
57. *Père Duchesne*, no. 180 (1792), for example.
58. Lynn Hunt, "The Sacred and the French Revolution," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 25–43; quotation, 32.